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GLOUCESTER FISHERS.

A GROUP of women, their garments fluttering in the wintry air, gathered daily toward the end of February, 1882, on the great hill that overlooks Eastern Point, Gloucester. With straining eyes they searched the horizon oceanward. A sea-bird skimming the crested billows, or a great ship hull down in the far off, was hailed as the vanguard of "the fleet," at that time anxiously awaited. For these women were fishers' wives whose earthly treasure, whose all, was embarked in the frail craft that tempt the gale on Georges and the Grand Banks.

Minutes swelled into hours and hours into days, yet Skipper John and Angus, Antoine and Robert and their bold comrades came not.

One day which was long to be remembered in Gloucester, brought with it gusts of snow and piercing winds from the northward. The little band still kept its vigil on the hill, praying for a messenger of hope from the eastward. It came. Between the gusts of snow a little weather-beaten vessel was descried passing the Point. Her sails and spars were shattered, her bulwarks stove, her flag at half-mast. A cry, at once of joy and anguish, went up from the group on the hill, and women and children ran to the nearest point where could be learned the name of the incoming vessel.

"It's the *Revere!*" "It's the *Carroll!*" "It's Donald's vessel!" and kindred exclamations followed in quick succession as the craft came nearer and nearer. From deck to cross-trees, from shroud to shroud, from stem to stern, she was covered with ice; her very sails were coated with it. Notwithstanding her crippled condition, the skipper brought her into the harbor and up to the wharf in the face of a head wind with masterly hand. All Gloucester awaited with bated breath and fast-throbbing heart the news from the fleet.

The hardy skipper and his crew, bronze-visaged, ice-bearded, had faced the tempest, battled with it hand to hand without quailing; but the sight that greeted them on that wharf was too much even for those hearts of oak.

"Have you seen the *Water Spirit?*" "Have you seen the *Bellerophon?*" "Is my brother's vessel safe?" were some of the questions demanded of them by the throng of men by whom they were surrounded.

Their tale was soon told. They had been on Georges in company with the fleet when the gale of February 5th burst upon them. They reported seeing two vessels on their starboard quarter crash together and then go down with all hands. While hove-to, drifting to leeward, they saw a large fishing-schooner bottom up, and later on another lying on her beam-ends, with part of her crew clinging to her ice-covered sides; the remainder, no doubt, having already been swept from her decks. On the following morning — the 6th — they saw three dories, with two men clinging to the life-line of each, about one-quarter mile distant on their port beam. Two of the crew had attempted a rescue and were lost. Such were the first tidings from the fleet, and such were those brought the following day by another incoming vessel.

But the names of the lost, if known, were not given by the crews of either, and therefore there was yet hope, and each woman convinced herself that her husband's vessel at

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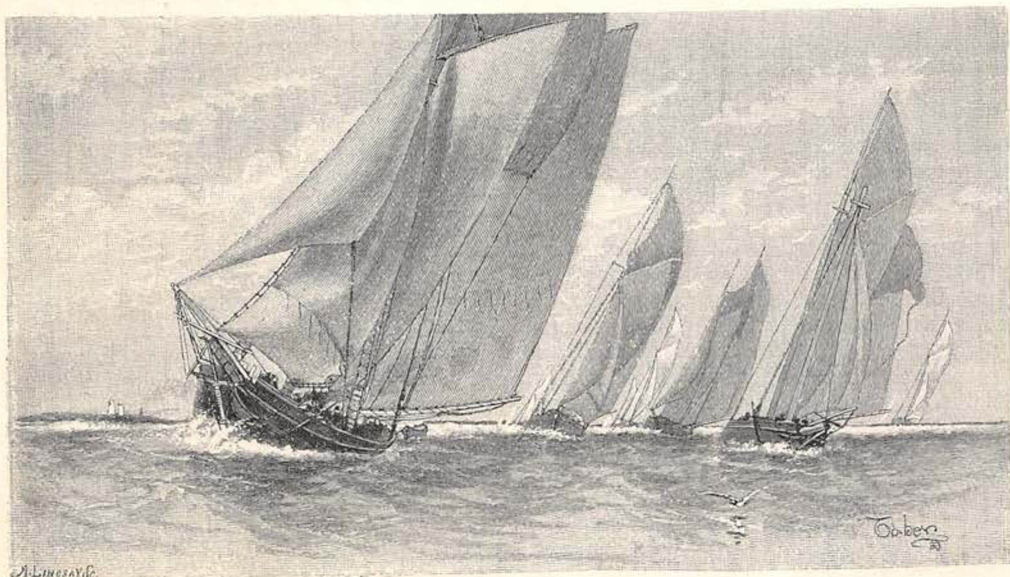
least was safe; for had he not weathered the gale before and returned unscathed?

But, as weeks rolled by and nothing was heard from the missing vessels, they were given up as lost by their owners, and then by the underwriters, and the insurance paid. But these faithful women never lost hope. They counted up the days in the almanac that the vessels had been out, and persuaded themselves against reason that they were not so long overdue. As the season wore on, the news of other gales and disasters came from the Banks, and the band of watchers was doubled, trebled, quadrupled. But a short time before a splendid fleet of clipper schooners had left Gloucester for the Banks, with bellying sails and light-hearted crews. One by one for successive days the graceful craft weathered the Point, squared away to the eastward, and sped onward with no laggard prows. Now a few battered hulks with torn sails and shattered spars struggled one by one into port. Each crew had a new story to tell of disaster, of hair-breadth escapes and lives lost.

Deep sighs of regret went up from the assemblage on the wharf when the announcement was made by one of these incoming vessels of the loss of the *Bellerophon* and all on board, including Angus Alexander McCloud, than whom a braver heart never sailed out of Gloucester. Still deeper sighs went up from a little cottage on the hill beyond, where dwelt his wife and children. In the winter of 1879 Angus was on the Banks in the same vessel with his brothers Malcolm and John and his cousin Philip. Among their shipmates were the McDonalds — William, Donald, John, and Neal. Their vessel was in the gale of 1879 on the Banks — a gale the like of which had seldom before been experienced by the fleet. Thrown over on its beam-ends, the little bark still held to its anchor, and finally rode out the gale with her crew lashed in the rigging. Another vessel was in the same position in their immediate neighborhood, and others were being tossed about to windward and to leeward of them. Two poor fellows, washed from one of the former, were swept between the two vessels that had been knocked down, and were not one hundred feet from either. The crews of these vessels, clinging to the icy rigging, looked anxiously from one to another to see if any one was bold enough to attempt a rescue. Angus McCloud cast off the lashings which bound him, seized a lanyard, made it fast about his waist, and stood for a moment poised on the shroud-lashings. Then he sprang boldly into an advancing wave and was carried toward one of the struggling men. Soon he had him by his oilskin coat, and soon the crew were hauling them in. Angus assisted in the rescue of another comrade before the gale was spent and his vessel righted.

In a little over two months in the winter of 1882 one hundred and two Gloucester fishermen, stout-bodied, fearless men, were lost on those tempestuous Banks where the fathers and brothers of many of them had gone before. The experience of the fishermen that winter was by no means an unusual one. In 1879 two hundred and forty-nine men were lost; in 1876 two hundred and twelve; in 1875 one hun-



OUTWARD BOUND.

"HOVE TO."

dred and twenty-three; in 1873 one hundred and seventy-four and in 1871 one hundred and forty. In the last ten winters over a thousand Gloucester fishermen have laid their bones on the drifting sands of the fishing banks.

The Gloucester fleet, by which the markets of the country are supplied with fish, in 1882 was composed of four hundred and fifty-two sail. The masters of most of these vessels devote themselves the year round to the cod, haddock, and halibut fisheries, while a smaller number of schooners are occupied in mackereling during the spring and summer months. There is no other deep-water fishing fleet of similar importance in these waters, and, though Gloucestermen sometimes go directly to Boston or New York, when the market is favorable, to land their catch, the salt water fish consumed from one end of the land to the other may safely be said to come largely by way of Gloucester. So great is the demand for fish on some occasions that the fleet, large as it is, is often unable fully to supply it. Indeed, it often happens that the large fish-buying firms of Gloucester bid the one against the other for an incoming cargo of fish.

Few men who fish on the Banks live to be old, and the result is there are comparatively few old fishermen in Gloucester. In all parts of the city may be seen the cozy houses of the fishermen, the high land in the north-eastern quarter being the favorite locality because commanding a view of the seaward

RUN DOWN.

was midwinter, and the waters, lashed by the gale, threatened momentarily to engulf them. A brig and a schooner were standing off and on in the vicinity; their masters not liking to leave the men to their fate, and yet, owing to the tremendous seas, fearing to launch their boats. Captain Lane put his wheel hard down, brought his vessel up into the wind, and hove her to under a close-reefed foresail to leeward of the rock in question.

"Now, boys," said he to his men, "we must get those fellows off, or Mark Lane 'll not sleep a wink this night."

It was a hazardous undertaking. It was more. There seemed to be no chance of getting a boat to the poor fellows, and the crew, naturally enough, protested.

"Then I'll go myself," said the old man. "Stand by there, my lads, to lower away a boat from the davits!" But the crew relented when they saw that the skipper was determined, and two stout fellows drove their cockle-shell of a dory over the huge seas toward the rock. The men were saved, and a certificate of the Humane

approaches to the town. Here when their voyage is made they pass the few days remaining to them before they again set out, in the enjoyment of domestic life, surrounded by their wives, their children, and the comrades who share with them the perils of the Banks off the Newfoundland and Nova Scotia coasts. Captain Mark Lane is one of the oldest fishermen of Cape Ann. Since the average career of a fisherman on the Banks falls short of ten years, the captain is looked upon, naturally enough, as a veteran by his fellows, for he is seventy-eight years old and has "followed the sea" for fifty-three years. The captain quit the sea some time since, and devotes the remaining years of a well-spent life to working a kitchen garden and spinning long yarns. In all, he has commanded forty-eight vessels. Some were "knocked away from under him," as he describes it, some were driven on the rocks of the Nova Scotia and Labrador coasts, while others, since he left the sea, met the not infrequent fate of Georges men, and went down at their anchors while riding out a gale.

Some years ago Captain Lane, then skipper of the schooner *Edwin*, while on his way homeward from the Banks, discovered two shipwrecked men on a half-submerged rock near the Fox Islands on the Maine coast. It

WET WEATHER.

Society of Massachusetts, hanging in an oaken frame in the parlor of the captain's dwelling in Gloucester, attests that a careful examination into his conduct on that day proved him worthy the recognition of that admirable society.

While riding out a gale on the Banks, many winters ago, the captain had a singular experience. Between the fierce gusts of wind he heard the voices of men in distress. "The sounds were to windward of me," said the old skipper, telling the story, "and I stood by to throw out a line if anybody drifted down toward me. By and by I heard the voices plainer, and soon, though it was dark, I see two men in a dory a-driftin' down upon the starb'd bow. They seemed to be a-holdin' of somethin' over their faces, and I no sooner hove them a line than their boat turned over and the men disappeared. Where they went or what they was I never found out. It was mighty cur'us. So I ses to myself, ses I, nuthin' good won't happen to us arter that, and I was right. The next day the gale moderated, and I ran down the coast for Newport. The weather was thick, but what o' that? I'd been in there a hundred times afore. I was a-feelin' my way in with the lead when all of a suddint some one sings out, 'Breakers ahead!' 'Hard down yer wheel there!' I sings out to the helmsman. 'There's been rocks put down here within a fortni't; if there ain't I'm a lobster!' But I swore I'd go into Newport that night, and I did, but I didn't bring the vessel with me; I left her piled up on the rocks of Brenton's reef. While I was lookin' at the almanac to see how the tide was a-runnin', a big sea come aboard and hove me and the almanac overboard. I never heered how the men got ashore. I was washed up by the breakers, and near froze to death. To thaw me out the men laid me in a drain and built a fire around me, and pretty soon I come around all right. It was very cur'us though, and I allus knowed it all came along of them drownded men in the dory."

A CHANCE.

The captain is a great reader of poetry, and is especially fond of Longfellow, but says he regrets that the latter hadn't the advantages of a seafaring education, for then he would have known that the *Hesperus* could not have come ashore from seaward on the reef of Norman's Woe — which can be seen from his house — in "a gale from the north-east."

The crew of a Gloucesterman is by no means made up of ordinary sailors. The discipline that obtains aboard merchantmen and men-of-war has no place here. It is not needed. The master of a merchantman, like the captain of a war-ship, has the cabin to himself. The crew sleep in the fo'c's'le, and dare not speak to him on terms of equality. Aboard a fisherman all this is changed. A part of the crew of fourteen or sixteen men bunk in the cabin with the captain, or skipper, and all hands for'ard and aft are on terms of intimacy and equality. In fact, it often happens that the captain and some of his men are relatives. In the schooner *Paul Revere*, lost in the winter of 1882 on the Banks, Captain

HAND-FISHING.

John Bentley shipped his father-in-law, Martin Costello, as cook. Captain Publicover, of the schooner *Charles Carroll*, also lost, carried his brother-in-law, Herbert Norton, as cook. Indeed, the cook, or "Doctor," as he is called, is a very important personage aboard in more senses than one, for, besides supplying the four, and sometimes five, meals a day of the crew, he catches fish with the rest and has a larger "lay," or portion of the catch, than any man aboard, after the skipper himself. The crew only get one-half of what they catch, while the cook generally gets one share besides this, almost equivalent to one man's whole catch. The stores aboard, which, by the way, are the best the market affords, are paid for by the owners, a small charge being made against the crew only for the bait and ice, of which latter article a large quantity must be carried in some fisheries even in winter. This is broken up ton by ton, and at the end of each day's work the fish are packed in it in order to preserve them fresh. Frequently, however, the fishermen make "salt-trips," and the entire catch is salted.

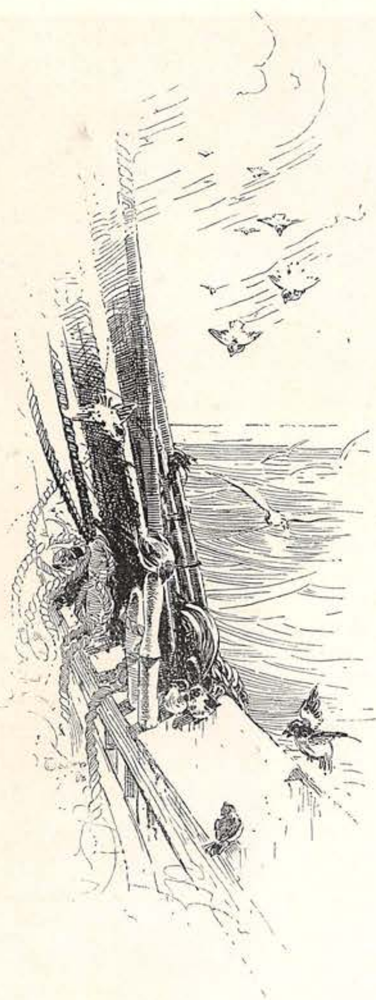
When catching fish by hand-line, each man cuts out the tongues of his fishes, and at the close of each day delivers them to the captain, who counts them carefully and credits him on the ship's books with the amount of his catch. Most of the Bank fishermen are trawlers, and the management of these trawls constitutes

DRAWING THE SEINE.

the most dangerous work performed by the fishermen. Unlike the trawl of the North Sea fishermen, the Gloucester trawl is simply a line from one to two thousand fathoms long, having innumerable depending lines of three feet to a fathom's length with hooks attached. The trawl is anchored and buoyed in a straight line by two men from a dory in from twenty to two hundred fathoms of water. Six of these trawls are usually set by the crew of a schooner. The method of setting varies with the fishery, but cod-fishermen generally set one trawl dead ahead, one dead astern, one off the starboard quarter, one off the port quarter, one off the starboard bow, and one off the port bow. As has been said, two men set a trawl after baiting the hooks, of which there are from six hundred to two thousand, and two men haul it also. To do this they must leave the schooner in a dory in varying conditions of weather. Now, as is well known, dense fogs prevail on the Banks. These last sometimes for two and even three weeks. The waters thereabouts are never still, and the fierce currents, by which the Banks were formed and are maintained, are treacherous in the extreme. Thus it happens that the loss of men in the dories is by no means an infrequent occurrence.

They generally begin to haul a trawl at the end farthest from the vessel, though this is not always practicable in dense fogs. When they have it all in the dory with its load of big fish,— for the trawl catches everything on the bottom, — the little boat has about all she can hold.* They carry a compass, maybe, but if they have drifted much while hauling their trawl, as often happens, the compass does them more harm than good; for by following it they may steer two points, or even a quadrant, out of the true course to their vessel. If they happen to get to leeward of her, they may hear her bell or fog-horn, which is kept sounding incessantly; but when the wind hauls or veers while they are out, they often lose their reckoning and are apt to weather her, and then, if the wind blows hard, they cannot hear a sound, and are lost in the fog and tossed about for days, mayhap, in the heavy seaway. At this juncture a landsman would be apt to heave the cargo overboard and relieve the boat at least from this incubus, but the sturdy fisherman rarely does this. The sea does it for him, though, sometimes, and overwhelmed by breaking waves the dory turns bottom up, and all hands "lose the number of their mess." The liability of a dory to capsize in the great seaways of the Banks has led to the wise precaution of sometimes reeving a life-

* The catch of a trawl varies exceedingly, and may be a half-dozen fish or three or four dory-loads.



VISITORS.

line through two iron staples on the bottom. Upon this the men cling until picked up or torn away by the billows.

When a fishing vessel arrives on the Banks the crew must get to work fishing immediately, if the weather be at all suitable; for the bait they have brought out with them will not keep fresh more than ten or fifteen days. After this it "sours," and the fish will not take it. Thus it comes that the skippers of the fishing fleet will anchor near each other on the Banks when the fish are plenty, even at the greatest risk. Should one break adrift while the sea is running high, there is but little hope for her if she collide with vessels to leeward. Those who have seen the terrible seas on the Banks from the deck of an ocean steamer will readily understand this.

The schooners pay out from two hundred to four hundred fathoms of hawser in a gale. When one breaks adrift, the anchor failing to hold, she is driven along rapidly by the mountainous waves, and much skill is required to prevent her from fouling vessels immediately a-lee. If two vessels collide, they are usually torn to pieces by the concussion, and go down locked in each other's embrace.

When anchored on the Grand Banks, no amount of precaution will prevent a fisherman from being run down by the ocean steamers, for he lies directly in their track. He keeps his bell tolling, but if a steamer is approaching to windward of him, her lookout may not hear it and, before anything can be done, the relentless iron prow cuts into the schooner, which for a moment quivers and then disappears into the depths. Some masters of ocean steamers will lay-by and make an effort to pick up the poor fellows that lie struggling in the waves. But an ocean steamer under full headway cannot be quickly stopped, and even then it is usually too late to do anything — that is, in thick or foggy weather; and it is only under such conditions that these accidents happen. By law, steamers are restricted to half speed in thick weather; but it is a fact well attested, and one that steamship masters themselves would scarcely deny, that they run under full headway in nearly all weathers in order to insure quick passages. One of these great iron ships might cut the bows off a fishing schooner of sixty or eighty tons and not, perhaps, experience a sufficient shock to alarm the passengers sleeping calmly in their staterooms.

"DINNER!"

MEAL-TIME.

There is always great rivalry among the vessels of the fishing fleet, for the skipper who catches the most fish is "high-line," a title of no little consequence on the Banks as well as on Cape Ann. The attributes of a "high-line" man are iron nerve, fearlessness, ay, recklessness or a perfect contempt for danger or death itself. No doubt there is such a factor as luck that goes to make up that sum of qualities which, taken together, produce this specimen of manhood; but it is not counted upon, and is that description of luck that attends the hero of a hundred hotly contested fields, in all of which he recklessly exposes himself. It is said that the greatest "high-line" of the haddocking fleet between a January and a May landed 800,000 fish of all kinds, valued at $24,300. Each of his crew of fourteen men received nearly eighty dollars per month after all expenses were paid.

The struggle for the honor of "high-line," besides encouraging the "Banker" to battle with the tempest, sometimes necessitates a resort to subterfuge in order to prevent another from dividing a school of fish with him. Thus a Georges skipper who has struck fish, if seen, will be beset by others passing to and fro on the Banks, and, unless he misleads the new-comer, his success will be greatly interfered with. Therefore, the crew of a vessel that is being rapidly filled with fish will sometimes be ordered to pull in their lines and desist when a sail is made out coming up. The fish are quickly thrown into the hold and the crew ordered to man the windlass, as if preparing to leave their anchorage in disgust.

"Are you getting any fish?" comes from the skipper of the stranger as he brings his vessel up into the wind. "No!" gruffly and sarcastically shouts back the other skipper, "I'm getting my anchor!" At this the stranger generally sheers off and squares away for pastures new and less sterile.

The crew of the anchored vessel heave

A RACE FOR THE SCHOOL.

away at the windlass as if they intended to leave, and thus keep up the delusion. But the anchor is not disturbed, for their shrewd skipper is paying out the cable as fast as they heave it through the hawse-hole.

When the mackerel fleet fished with handlines the pursuit of this industry was often attended with much excitement. Occasionally, when massed together in great fleets, the vessels carried away their main-booms, bowsprits, jib-booms, and sails by collision in what might not inappropriately be called a hand-to-hand encounter, and when the manœuvre of "lee-bowing" was the order of the day. A fleet of sixty odd sail descry a schooner whose crew are heaving and pulling their lines. The glistening scales of the fish sparkle in the sunlight. The fleet as one vessel turns quickly on its heel, and there is a neck-and-neck race for the school. The first that arrives rounds to under the lee of the fortunate craft, the crew heaving the toll-bait with no niggard hands. The new arrival now shakes up into the wind close under the lee bow of the fish-catching vessel. The fish forsake the latter and fly at the lines of the new-comer. Now comes up the balance of the fleet, and each vessel on its arrival performs the same manœuvre and lee-bows its predecessor. Those to windward, forsaken by the fish, push their way through their neighbors, fill away, and round to under the bows of those to leeward. The hoarse bawling of the skippers to their crews, the imprecations of those who have been run down and left *hors de combat*, rend the air, while the crews setting and lowering sail and hauling fish freely exchange with each other language not to be found in any current religious work. Things are different now in the mackerel fleet. Large seines have taken the place of lines, and the skippers and men, from their lofty perch at the mast-head, keep a constant vigil, watching for schools of mackerel to appear at the surface.

The mackerelers do not keep together so much as formerly, but scatter about. When a school of fish is sighted, the boats go after it, and what is called a "purse-net" is brought into play. This is sometimes two hundred fathoms in length. It is cast ahead of the fish and in the direction they are swimming. The ends of the net are pulled dexterously around the school until the fish are completely encircled. Then the under part, twenty fathoms deep, is drawn together like a purse or bag, and the school is trapped on the surface and below. Gradually the circumference is contracted by the fishermen until the fish can be conveniently bailed out on the schooner's deck with large dip nets. Recently a "pocket" or "spiller" was devised by which, if another school is sighted before the fish are cured, the first catch can be quickly transferred into this easily handled small net and the large one released. The "spiller" is only thirty-six feet long, fifteen wide, and thirty deep. It is stretched from the vessel's side by means of outriggers, and will hold about two hundred

barrels of mackerel in the water. Made of stout, coarse twine, it proves an effective defense against the assaults of the dog-fish and sharks, which easily tear through the fine twine of the larger net used in catching. It answers still another and by no means less important purpose,— it keeps the fish alive while the new catch is being cured. Formerly it not infrequently happened that the fishermen suddenly found that they had caught more fish than they could handle; for mackerel must be cured in a few hours after being taken out of the water.

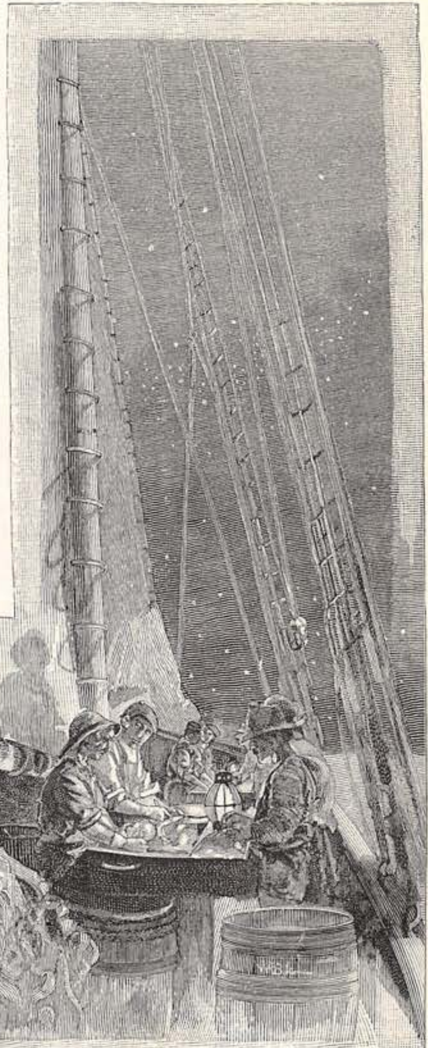
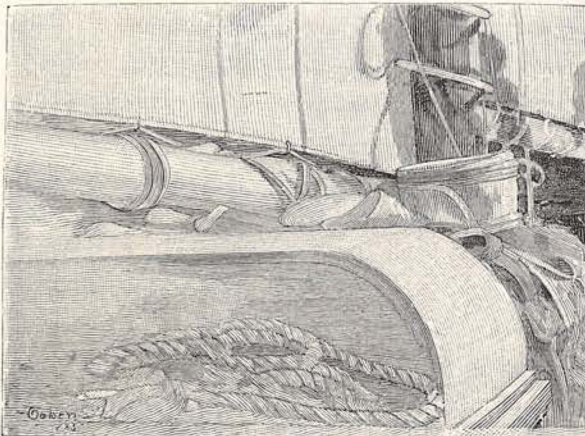
The "Bankers" who fish for cod and halibut during the winter in tempestuous seas rather look down upon mackereling, which may be called smooth-water fishing. For them it does not seem to possess a sufficient element of danger.

A berth on a "Banker," as may well be supposed, is by no means a sinecure. Its possessor must be able-bodied and adventurous; know how to hand, reef, and steer; and soon learns that vigilance and skill, as well as daring, are necessary to success.

The North Sea fisheries, it is said, abound with Dutch luggers, that are nothing more nor less than floating dram-shops. Aboard these, when the fishing is bad, the English fishermen are apt to congregate, and here they often barter their nets, trawls, and tackle for liquor; so that it often happens that English fishermen return to port from the fishing grounds with cargoes of Holland gin instead of fish, and the Dutchmen come back from fishing laden with English nets and fishing tackle. Happily there is no such institution as the floating dram-shop on the American fishing grounds. As a matter of fact, liquor is seldom carried aboard the "Bankers," and if any should be discovered on board some of the vessels, it would be seized by the skipper and thrown overboard. Going to sea with the legendary

> "Compass and log
> And pot full of grog"

is the exception rather than the rule in the port of Gloucester to-day, though the curse of intemperance is far from being obliterated among the fishermen. Every man has a division of the catch, and it is therefore to his interest to have everything ship-shape and orderly. Though there are few written laws for the guidance of a fishing crew, and no attempt is made toward discipline, the work usually moves along satisfactorily. But, although the authority of the skipper is commonly acknowledged, and a well-organized crew will jump to do his bidding, it sometimes happens that drunken or

DRESSING FISH BY NIGHT.

JACK AT PLAY.

refractory men become troublesome and even mutinous.

Old "square-riggers," who have gained a competence in the merchant service and lost it, are often found aboard the "Bankers," as well as fishermen who have been alike unfortunate. A good sample of the latter class is found in Captain Upham, who many years ago made on the fishing banks the nucleus of a fortune that, through judicious investment in fishing schooners, amounted later on to seventy thousand dollars. But subsequent investments proved by no means so fortunate; the money was lost, and the old mariner, with admirable pluck, some time ago shipped in a fishing schooner, and it is to be hoped has by this time repaired his shattered fortunes.

The Nova Scotia coast is iron-bound, and many a fishing schooner running into port for refuge or water is driven ashore by treacherous winds and currents in thick weather. If the fishermen may be credited, some of the wreckers along this coast are eligible candidates for Mark Twain's "Incorporated Society of Mean Men."

As may naturally be supposed, men constantly compelled to run their vessels in foggy and thick weather soon become adepts at the science of "dead-reckoning,"— that is, sailing by time, course, and lead-line. An experienced "Banker" knows the sea-bottom well. Give him only a compass on the Banks, and it is ten to one he will bring his vessel straight and safely into port by the free use of the lead-line. He has two checks in sounding: one the depth and the other the character of the bottom; for the sounding-lead has a cup to it,— that is to say, it is scooped out at its lower extremity,— and, by means of a little grease inserted therein, a sample of the sea-bottom may be brought up. This kind of navigation recalls the ancient and oft-told story of the old Nantucket skipper who was so expert as to be invariably able to tell where he was by examining the lead. In order to perplex him, his crew put some garden loam from Nantucket in the cup of the lead, and, having made a pretense of sounding, asked him to name the position of the vessel. The old skipper tasted of the dirt on the lead,— his favorite method of determining his position,— and suddenly exclaimed, as reported by Mr. J. T. Fields:

"Nantucket's sunk, and here we are,
Right over old Marm Hackett's garden!"

Some of the experiences of the fishermen would scarcely be credited were they not corroborated by a vessel's whole company. During a hurricane in 1876 on the Banks, almost an entire fleet was disabled or lost and one hundred men were drowned. The wind, which had been blowing a gale from the south-east, veered suddenly to west-north-west. Skipper Collins, of the schooner *Howard*, one of the vessels that escaped, had a remarkable experience. His vessel was "hawsed" up by the current, which set strongly to the southward and nearly at right angles with the hurricane. He had just time to tie up the clew of his riding-sail — a sort of storm-trysail — and lash the bottom hoops together, thus making a "bag-reef," when the hurricane burst upon the little vessel with terrific force. A ponderous sea boarded the schooner and carried off one of the

best seamen that ever sailed out of Gloucester, George Miller. Later on, while standing on the bit-head of the fife-rail and grasping the riding-sail halyards ready to let it run if necessary, a ball of lightning burst between the masts and knocked the captain insensible to the deck, whence he was dragged below by his crew. The lightning severely burned his right arm and leg and disappeared through his boots.

The schooner *Burnham* was struck so suddenly and with such violence by a sea as to turn her bottom up and throw her skipper, James Nickerson, and his crew who were below, upon the ceiling, where they lay sprawling for a moment until the vessel righted herself. There was one man on deck when she was struck, Hector McIsaac. He saw the wave coming and leapt into the shrouds. With his legs locked in the ratlines he went down into the foaming sea, and when the crew came on deck of their dismasted hulk there was Hector McIsaac still clinging to the shrouds.

Captain Nickerson was subsequently lost in a dory from the *Bellerophon* on the Banks. Hector McIsaac went down in the *Nathaniel Webster* in 1881, together with his brother Roderick; his cousins John and Michael went down in the schooner *Maud and Effie*, in 1879, during a gale on the Banks; and his brother Duncan was lost in the schooner *N. H. Phillips* at about the same time.

There are sad phases of life on the Banks, but there are enlivening and joyous ones too, and chief among these is the run home after the "fare" is secured. Sometimes as many as thirty sail get their anchors simultaneously, and such skillful handling of tacks and sheets is rarely found in a yachting fleet; for seamanship is to Bank-fishing what quinine is to Peruvian bark—the active principle. The start for home usually takes place late in the day. Then it is a strong wind which is too stiff for all sail; every rag that the little vessel will stagger under is set, and the race begins.

"Now, now, the night breeze freshens fast, the green waves gather strength,
The heavy mainsail firmly swells, the pennant shows its length;
Our boat is jumping in the tide — quick, let her hawser slip;
Though but a tiny thing, she'll live beside a giant ship.
Away, away! what nectar spray she flings about her prow;
What diamonds flash in every splash that drips upon my brow;
She knows she bears a crew that dares and loves the dark rough sea.
More sail! I cry; let, let her fly! this is the hour for me."

Though there are probably not many men besides Captain Mark Lane in Gloucester who have lived to grow old on the Banks, there are some who quit fishing with a competence when young, and who since then have been engaged in buying and selling fishing vessels or their cargoes. Such a man is Captain George W. Plumer. In furthering his business Captain Plumer often visits Prince Edward Island. It is ten miles thence to the New Brunswick coast. All winter great masses of ice pass continually between the island and the mainland, and, as the current runs here at the rate of four and even five knots an hour, it may easily be imagined that navigation is precarious, if not perilous. As a consequence there is no communication from the island and the shore, save by cable and an occasional expedition across the ice made by fearless men who jump from block to block at the imminent peril of their lives. They drag boats after them,—light shallops,— and when they fall into the water between the blocks of ice they are usually enabled to get into the boat with the assistance of their companions. Many sturdy fellows have been lost in this undertaking. It was therefore with great surprise that the natives heard in the winter of 1881–2 that Captain Plumer, aged sixty-four years, had organized a party to cross this icy flood to the mainland. He was urged not to make the attempt, and the perils of the undertaking were described in vivid colors. But Captain Plumer had defied the tempest and the gale on Georges and the Grand Banks in his younger days with his brother Gloucestermen, and the element known as fear was not made a component part of his organization. Boldly he tied a life-line around his waist and started across the floating ice-cakes, jumping from one to the other. His right arm he kept on the gunwale of the boat, and when he found himself slipping into the tideway he threw his heels up into the air as nimbly as many a younger man, and vaulted into his boat. Though the distance is but ten miles in a straight line between the two points, it is, owing to the strong current, necessary to make a detour of thirty miles in crossing. This was successfully accomplished by old Captain Plumer, to the great surprise of the natives of the New Brunswick shore as well as of those by whom he was accompanied.

Next in order to the "high-line" man comes the champion fish-cutter. When it is remembered that one-half or more of the codfish that leave Gloucester are incased in wooden boxes in the shape of slices and boneless, save for the presence of the ribs, the magnitude of this industry may be understood. This cutting process is conducted in large factories. "Dan"

TIRED OUT.

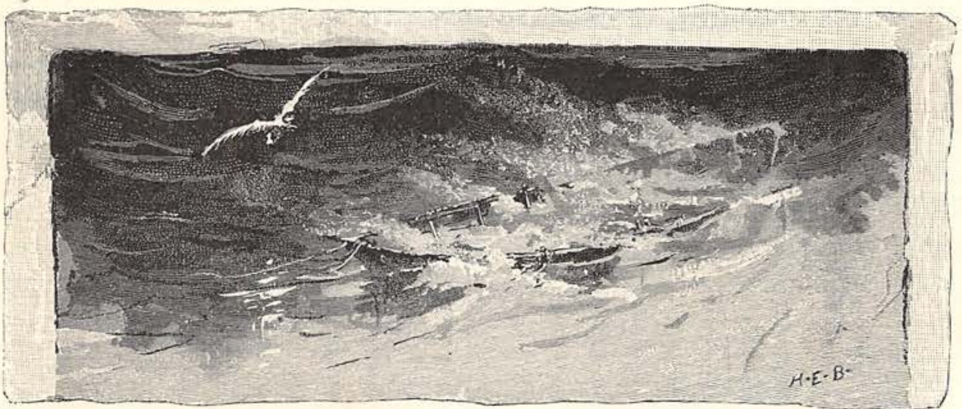
Marlin, otherwise known as "The Claimant," was carried up to the photographer's in great state by his employers, some time since, where he was photographed with a card on his hat bearing the legend, "Champion Fish-Cutter." But his claim to the title was laughed at by the other experts; and Edward Graham, who has cut up thirty-five quintals of fish in ten hours, became the recognized champion.

There would have been no little suffering in Gloucester in the spring of 1882, had not many charitable persons visited it; for nearly forty families were left fatherless and destitute by the gales on the Banks. But no amount of disaster can dissuade the hardy youth of Gloucester from tempting the Banks in winter. The mere stripling of a lad, led by his mother to the bluffs whence he may watch for the father that will never come, hungers for the time when he too may ride the boisterous seas on the distant fishing grounds.

In their cheerless cots, the bereaved women sit listlessly while the waves of the pitiless sea beat on the sands without.

Franklin H. North.

[See also Captain Collins's article, "The Outlook of the Fisheries," in "Open Letters" for this number.—EDITOR.]



SILENT.