

# THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

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## A CRUISE ON THE NORFOLK BROADS.

WITH PICTURES BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

**B**ETWEEN the sea beaches of Yarmouth and Lowestoft, the grainfields of Wroxham, and the crowded river-wharves of Norwich, lie the plains and valleys through which flow the Bure, the Yare, and the Waveney. Before losing themselves irrevocably in the sea, these rivers turn aside, as it were, now and then, from their more serious duty of providing a watery highway, to frolic in a series of wild lakes and meres. These limpid waterways have been used for generations by the homely Norfolk barges. For generations also it has been an open secret to sportsmen and anglers that in summer the Broads are an angler's paradise, and that in winter wild ducks are almost as numerous as thrushes in August. In time the secret was whispered abroad. Following in the footsteps of the men of the gun came others with palette hooked on thumb; and once the smoke from an anchored house-boat—the artist's improvised studio or the journalist's den—rose up among the reeds and grasses to rival the vaporous column circling skyward from the fenman's cottage, the land of the Broads was summarily annexed to the domain of pure romance. This its magnet still holds good; and now, as one may see during the whole of the long summer, the sails between the meadows are almost as thick as cabs on Piccadilly.

For more than a decade cruising on the Broads has taken a foremost place in the long list of sports and pastimes yielded by that amazing little island where, by utilizing every

rill and rivulet, every hill and upland, man has doubled the size, and tripled the pleasure-giving capacity, of the stretch of earth he calls his England.

### I.

WOULD you hoist sail from the heart of a rustic village? There is Wroxham, set upon the river Bure seven miles from Norwich, an admirable collection of thatched cottages, tall hedges, rose-gardens, rustics, and clucking hens. This yachting-station in a meadow is one of the favorite points of departure for a cruise on the Broads. But if you are one of those who must have the scent of the sea in the nostrils, Great Yarmouth, down upon the coast, will send you forth as well equipped for an inland voyage into poppy-land as for the rounding of the Cape. Lowestoft, farther south, will rival that perfection, with the added attraction to fishermen of offering a swift approach to Oulton Broad and its fresh-water catches.

We were in pursuit, not of fish, but of adventure, and therefore it was that Wroxham had cast its spell upon us. We were curious to see how an inland village, of strictly agricultural habits and rural traditions, would arrange the *mise-en-scène* of a yachting-station.

The booths and shops of the highroad running from the railway at Wroxham to the Bridge displayed their tawdry flannels and cheap yachting-caps with naïve, rustic ostentation. Peddlers were dancing fish-hooks in the eyes of dragon-flies, and offering worms in tin

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boxes. Butchers' shops led the way to an inn, and some farmers' carts starting forth from the stable-yard showed us the road to the Bridge. Beneath the latter flowed a river,—a stream, rather,—along the banks of which were grouped the promised village beauties of rose-vines, thatched roofs, and bits of emerald turf, set in a frame of golden grain-fields. A blackbird, singing on a reed-stalk, sent his song forth as if in invocation to the beauty of this pastoral landscape. Would any marine mind, in full possession of its nautical faculties, have looked to find a yachting-station in such a setting? Yet where there seemed barely room for a wave, there a fleet lay at anchor, or was hoisting sail. Twenty or more yachts, yawls, steam-launches, barges, and smaller sailing-craft gave to the river an animation commonly associated solely with the sea. The scene could hardly have been gayer under an Italian sky, and there was in the very air a gala note that made this pool that had become a yachting-station, and these yachts that were sailing forth to cruise between the meadows, assume an aspect of unreality.

Meanwhile, both on the yacht decks and on shore, the preparations for immediate departure were being carried on with great bustle and gravity; this cruise among the grasses was obviously undertaken with all the seriousness of a genuine sea voyage. Dinghys and row-boats were spinning about, carrying luggage and passengers to the more distant crafts. Hand-carts and wheelbarrows were being trundled over the Bridge, for the Norwich train was in, and the new arrivals were in haste to be off. Shouts, commands, orders crossed and recrossed one another from deck to shore, sailors, rustics, grooms, and yachtsmen all talking at once. The river was busy with a multitude of reflections: the limpid blues would be obliterated by the whites of flapping sails, and the blacks of painted hulls as quickly replaced by dashes of crimson or streaks of cobalt-blue—movable dashes that followed the figures of the yachtsmen, the placing of deck pillows and of cushioned chairs. All the while the soft gold of an English noon was flooding the scene, the overarching sky carrying its own argosies of sun-whitened clouds.

About a certain low shed close to the river-bank, where the yachts lay thickest, we stood watching the putting forth of the boats on their river journey; noted the dexterous storing away, in lockers and cabins, of the mounds of trunks, portmanteaus, boxes of provisions, guitars, banjos, fishing-gear, and "silhouettes," or vast-rimmed straw hats. Imperceptibly the hubbub and noise had died out; the strong-voiced young yachtsmen, the agitated parsons, and the ladies in distress over missing pieces of luggage, had all sailed away, re-

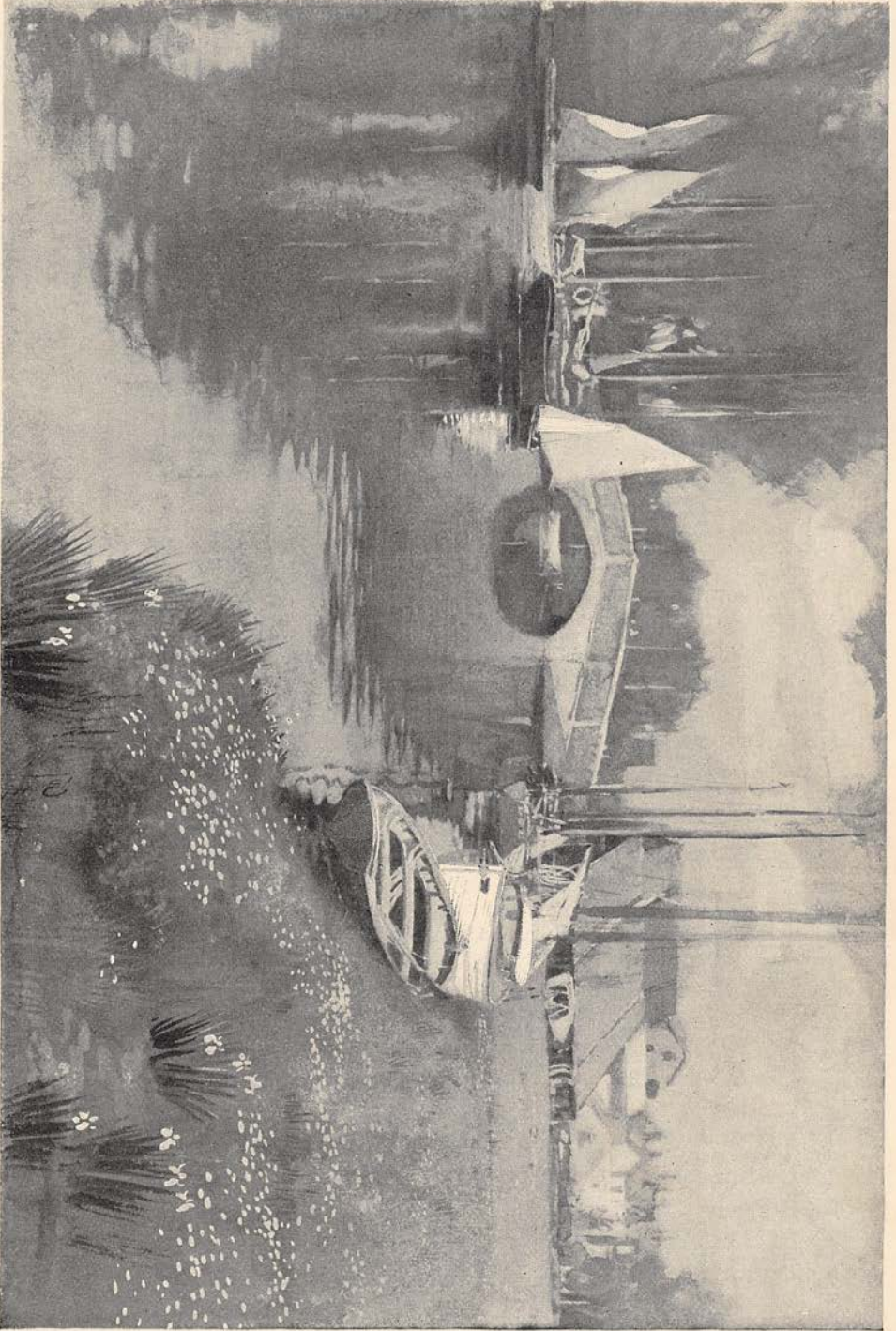
lapsing into composure now that the sails, in their turn, had begun to flutter in the breeze.

It was noon, and it was now quiet on the river. A flock of white ducks were swimming into the very middle of the stream; their quack, quack made a pleasing recitative to the accompaniment of the lapping water. A figure, coatless, hatless, lean of shape and keen of eye, stood beside us. The lean man had crossed his arms, for now at last he had a moment of leisure. It was for that moment we had been forced to wait, that our inquiries concerning boats and dates might be answered.

"Sorry indeed I am, sir; but there 's not a boat left. Those two are off to-morrow. The very last boat I had was that yawl yonder." The man's eyes followed the boat, now going down stream, as they might the vanishing shape of a friend.

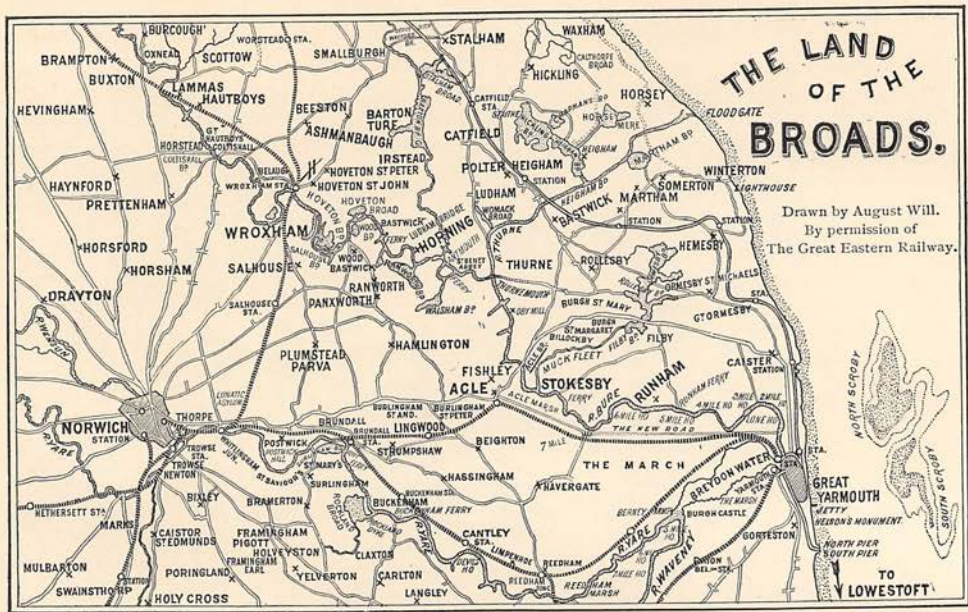
This was a dispiriting announcement. It was certainly not the one we had come up from London to hear; and J. Loynes, owner of cabin yachts, yawls, and wherries, "fitted with every convenience for cooking and sleeping," was now paying us the compliment of showing a disappointment as keen as our own. Presently he proffered a seat on the top of an overturned barrel, that we might be the more at our ease to be lamented over and sympathized with. Then he began again, with cheery civility: "An' now we must see what can be done about a boat. If it was only to the Hook you were going, I've a beauty in—just the very thing." The Hook? An illuminating smile upward toward the low shed was our enlightenment; for on the shed we read: "Yachts for Holland, the Hook, and Zuyder Zee. On hire. To be had of J. Loynes." Once more we looked at the river, at the simple, nodding grasses, at the lily-pads, and the ducks swimming through them. Were expeditions for the north pole also fitted out in this amazing little stream? Loynes had caught the question in our smile, and was answering it.

"You see, sir, it 's as easy to do the Hook and Holland as it is the Broads, an' in a way, as you may say, it 's a better business; for Holland 's better known. It 's been more writ up; an' there 's nothin' like writin' up a country to make it known." In Loynes's mind, at least, literature had its solid uses. "There 's a gentleman, a painter, whose writin's have made Holland very fashionable—a Mr. Boughton. You may have heard of him. An' now the Broads is beginnin' to be writ up, and business is gettin' better every year. In the heavy season, as you see, there ain't a boat to be had. I 'm more sorry than I can speak it, I am, I can't oblige you; but—" here he paused suddenly, and unhooked his lean arms, clutched at his



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

YACHTING-STATION, WROXHAM.



long beard, let his eyes sparkle a little, and cried out exultingly—"but there 's the *Vacuna*, I do believe; Jimpson has her to let." With the excitement of his discovery still strong upon him, Loynes hailed a man just then crossing the Bridge. "I say, Mills, bring round the jolly-boat, will you; and—Jimpson—I 've got a party looking for a yacht—tell Jimpson." And in due time the mysterious jolly-boat, with the unknown Jimpson in it, was duly brought round.

Meanwhile Loynes was hurrying us along the river-bank. He began a swift enumeration of the yacht's merits: she was small, but she was fast; she had, indeed, been built for the Broads. Being only a five-tonner, and carrying just the right amount of canvas, she was particularly quick in coming about, a great feature in sailing these narrow rivers. A moment later, and we were boarding her. She was a beautiful little toy of a yacht, with a neat finish of woods and brass mountings to announce her as a Brahman among her kind.

Another short half-hour, and she was ours. Jimpson himself, owner of the King's Head inn, and the letter of the yacht, had come up in the jolly-boat to witness the signing of our lease. After the formalities of the law had been attended to, we were informally asked to assist at a short council. "Now that the boat suits you, sir, have you thought of provisioning her?" We were forced to admit that we had not; and thereupon our counselors grouped themselves about us. Loynes promptly chose the deck-rail; a brown piece of paper stretched across

his knee became his improvised tablet. Jimpson, a large man, was already comfortably seated on the cabin. One other figure, a silent one, lent its presence to the proceedings: it was that of the sailor who had brought the jolly-boat and Jimpson up from the inn gardens.

He had swung himself from the dinghy to the yacht's deck with the air of a man who was taking possession of the boat. He was indeed the *Vacuna's* skipper, and we were to be his "party" during the week's cruise. From the forward hatchway, into the depths of which he had slid his sinewy body, his searching blue eyes were now fixed upon us; they were taking a series of purely professional observations. "As handy a man as is to be found on the Broads," was Jimpson's commendatory introduction at the other end of the boat. "He 's known from Lowestoft to Norwich, an' from Norwich to Wroxham Broad—is Mills of Yarmouth. A family man, ma'am, an' as handy with a rope as he is civil an' steady. An' now, sir an' madam, there 's the essentials, if I may so name them—tea an' coffee, sugar, a bit of flour, an' marmalade. If you 're lookin' for a tasty bit, sir, there 's nothing like bacon an' a cut of good ham. But salt beef, that 's the thing you 'll want by you, first and last, for the men, sir." Salt beef, it was agreed, should be the bed-rock of our supplies. "Jimpson," asked Loynes of the innkeeper, "is there anything else?" Jimpson quickly responded, without reflection: "There 's the beer—for the men. The King's Head can supply you, sir, an' Mills will see it 's put aboard. An' a fowl or two cooked, an' some fresh lettuce, is tasty the first

day or so out. The missis will see to that, sir. Mills, is there anything else?" Mills, still within his hatchway, took a moment in which to make the tour of his memory; with no inn ledgers on his mind, he approached the momentous subject with the caution of a family man. "Who 's to go with me?" he finally asked, lifting his head inquiringly. "I 'll send Grimes along," Jimpson answered slowly, as if the gift of Grimes cost him an effort. On Mills's face was written the patient acceptance of the inevitable; all the spirit went out of his voice. Resettling his chin on his crossed arms, he answered, "I believe there is n't any potatoes." And with the additional entry of the neglected potatoes the council came to an end.

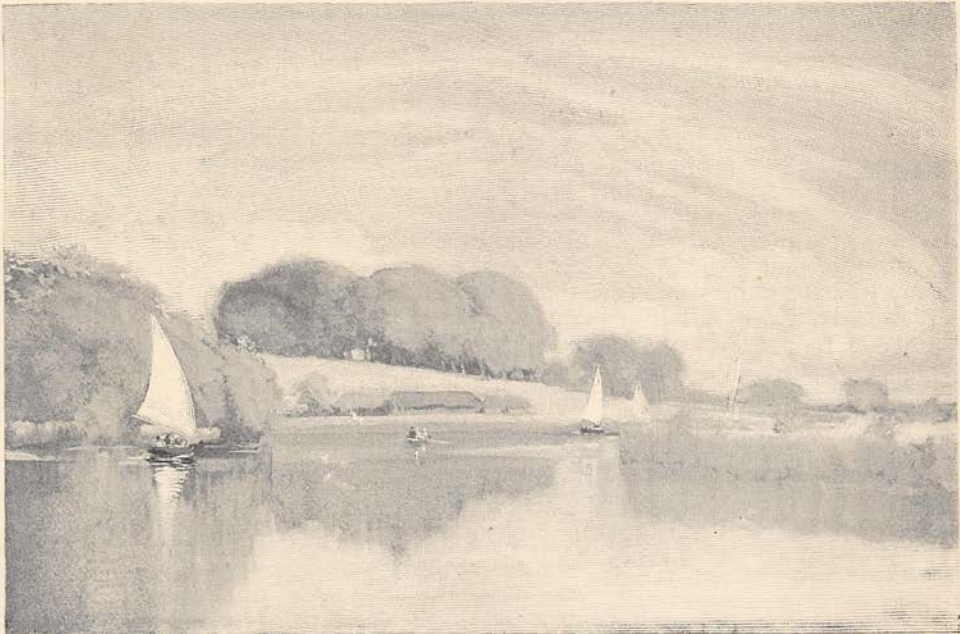
## II.

Now at last the great moment had come. Our sails were set, the two-foot gang-plank had been lifted, communication with the shore was at an end, and we were drifting into mid-stream. Now that we were fairly afloat, there was an instant of speculative suspense. Would the yacht fit into the river? The width of the deck would surely fill the stream, and its rails overlay the grassy banks. Yet, narrow as was the watery highway, a boat under full sail was coming up stream; she was to be met and passed. Again there was a curious mounting of the pulse-beats. We passed the up-coming boat without so much as grazing the bank. Imperceptibly all the while we were floating farther

and farther out upon the river; fainter and fainter grew the faces of Jimpson, of Loynes, of the farmers and plowboys assembled to see us start forth; and between the bushy tree-boughs the outlines of the Wroxham houses were soon merged in the blur of the blue and green distances.

Meanwhile, from the first moment of our starting forth there had been pregnant signs of trouble aboard. Mills the skipper and his mate were at odds. The mate was a buttonless stable-boy with a face and smile as open as his shirt. Ten minutes before we started he had been rubbing down a sweating roan. But neither the lad's boyish smile nor his deftness in the art of stowing away had power to soften the sharp edge of our skipper's dislike; he took no pains whatever to conceal his scorn of stable-boys playing at sailing. We had barely gone a dozen yards on our way before there came the deep growl of his displeasure; for our sails were hanging as limp as wet linen, and the infant mate was ordered to test his strength at quanting. Against his shoulder he had promptly proceeded to plant one of the long poles that lay along the cabin; securely fixing its padded leather top against his narrow chest, he then began slowly to walk the deck, pressing the long pole into the mud of the river-bed.

"Here, take the helm! A little more strength 's what 's needed over that pole," Mills cried out, with a note of impatience in his voice, after watching the lad's purpling face. But even under the pressure of his own



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

SAILING ON THE BURE.

strong muscles the yacht was still crawling at a snail's pace. Another ten minutes, and Mills had hailed a man going up-stream in a rowboat. "Davy! I say, Davy! Give us a start, will you?" The man stopped rowing, swung his rope aboard, and himself immediately after. Without a word he seized the remaining pole, and began walking the deck on the port side. For a good fifteen minutes there was only the sound of the men's deep breathing to be heard. "We don't get a true wind till we get to the open," puffed Mills in an explanatory aside. In another moment we had swept clear of the green shores. A fresh breeze, blowing across the meadows, now filled our sails; the poles came presently to a rest, and Mills was once more at the helm. "You see, sir, I had to have help round that first reach. That 'ere," and Mills, with a dig of his thumb in the air, contemptuously indicated the figure of Grimes bending over the ropes in the stern — "that 'ere ain't no more use 'n a baby — for polin'." Then the lad was sharply ordered to "stand by the ropes."

But with the advent of the wind came also our skipper's good humor. The mere study of tides, a patient acceptance of the caprices of the wind, and knowing one's river as a man knows the face of his own child — these are only the rudiments of a science every skipper must master before he is counted worthy to sail a boat. But sailing on the Broads demands the finishing grace of an art. A Norfolkman, on these rivers of his, must feel himself to be both host and guide: his courtesy must be lined with conscience. We had gone only a short quarter of a mile when Mills, in an opening speech, gave us the text of his sermon on the ethics of nautical conduct.

"You see, sir an' madam, if you 'll allow, this is how I looks at a cruise on the Broads. It all depends on the skipper, I says. You may never see me again, sir, or you, madam; but as sure as I 'm talkin', the pleasure of a party on board a yacht is in the skipper's hands. If he 's rusty or crabby, your pleasure 's void an' your money 's wasted. Grimes, my lad, you may bring me a glass. I drinks to our voyage an' your good healths. An' lively, mind, Grimes, for there 's a boat comin' up to windward."

Deep was the glass in which the success of our cruise was drunk, and swift was the tossing of the foamy beer by our skipper's practised hand; for there was not only one, there were a number of boats, coming up to windward. The river was a thronged highway. Yachts, barges, yawls, rowboats — such was the flotilla riding between the meadow-banks. With the sunny whiteness of the bulging sails was con-

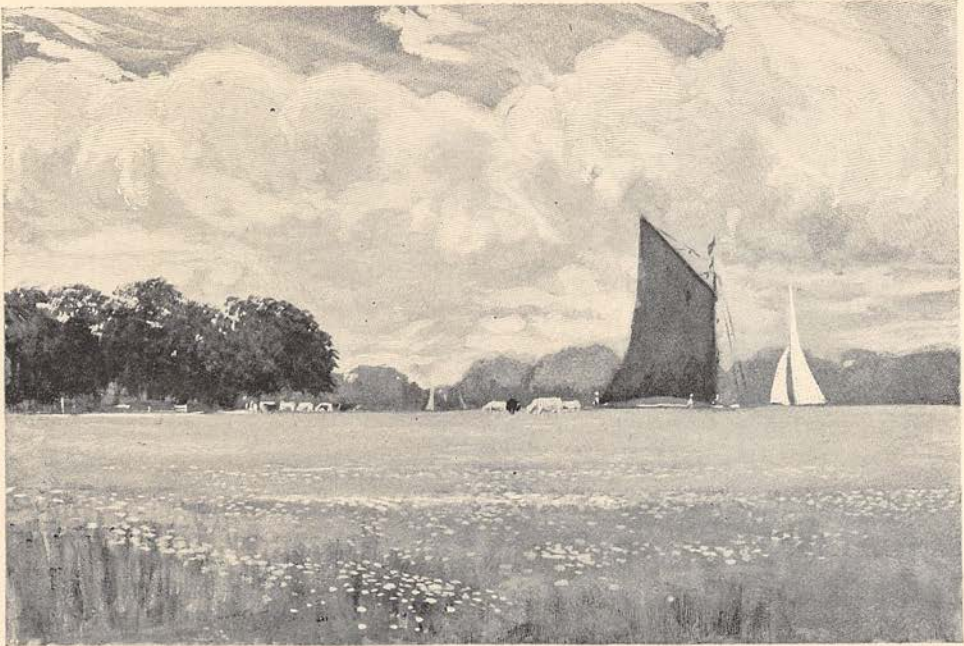
trasted the novelty of the prevailing background: trees, farm-houses, hay-ricks, garden walls, herds of cattle, windmills — a landscape through which the moving sails seemed to play the rôle of winged figures. Gradually the charm and beauty of this river life began to work their spell. The zigzagging of the yacht from shore to shore was soon accepted as a novel way of getting into closer touch with a river-bank, the narrowness of the river and the low, close shores giving one the sense of being at one and the same moment on land and on water. All the usual signs and sights seen and looked for from a yacht's deck must be forgotten, to be replaced by fresh and novel experiences. For the usual horizons seen from aboard a yacht, there were fringes of larches behind which the blues of the hills and of the sky came together; to test the course of the wind one looked at the tossing of tree-boughs, and to note its strength there was the waving grain to take the place of foam-capped water. The sails we met came from behind barns, and the bows rounded the bark of tree-trunks. To speak a ship one had only to shout across the meadows. As far as the eye could see, the landscape was dotted with white wings. Rarely above the low shores did the river show its sunned face, and the boats in the narrow channels seemed to walk upon the meadows. The church spires of Horning and Hoveton crowning the hilltops alone appeared stable, for the ever-moving sails gave to all the landscape a shifting and fluctuant aspect.

And now the breeze had strengthened. Our sails were full, and for a good fifteen minutes or more we had a true bit of sailing. Along with the wind the tide of our skipper's spirits had risen. In his eye there shone fresh life and vigor; his shrewd face, with its long, thin nose, and the clever wrinkles on brow and chin, was set about with smiles. A sun high in the heavens, a fair wind springing up, full lockers, and only two cabin passengers — what could man or sailor ask more? Mills's voyage from shore to shore, as the *Vacuna* tacked and came about, was a saunterer's gay meeting with succeeding groups of friends and acquaintances. I have rarely known a man whose bowing acquaintance was at once so large and varied. No bargeman passed us but it was, "Hallo, Jim! Any news down Yarmouth way?" or it was, "How are you, sir? Glad to see you down so early this year," to two elderly gentlemen sailing their own yacht. It is certain if any man could humanize an English river, could thaw its reserve into a Gallic fervor, it was Mills. For rustic on shore and for bargeman, for the fisherman mending his net and the girls working in the fields, Mills had his smile and his jest. He was as full of gossip as a provincial



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

A FARM IN THE BROADS.



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

SAILING ACROSS THE FIELDS.

newspaper, and as generous with his news of the day as a street bulletin.

For my own part, I had never been on such intimate terms with an inland country. We brushed the reedy banks as if the grasses were a friend's garment, and the branches of the trees, in their turn, swept the puffing cheeks of our sails. Geese and swans betrayed their hiding by sailing forth from their ambush to menace and, if possible, affright; and finding we meant no harm, ranged their battalions in line, forming a winged escort. The cows, lying or standing, took their place in our talk; they would lift their heads as we bore down upon their clover-patch, raising their mild eyes as they stopped to listen; and then once more we would hear the sound of their slow breath upon the grass, and the rhythmic switching of their tails. The open cottage doors took us into the privacy of family life; the farmer, shouting to his plowboy across his garden patch, told us dinner was ready; and the voices within denoted the exact temperature of the mistress's temper. Rustic calling to rustic proved the Norfolk preference for continuing a strictly apostolic succession in the matter of name-giving. As for the houses themselves, when you have sailed into a man's front door, missing it by a mere matter of a few feet; when you have managed to graze the side of his barn in lieu of demolishing it; when your bow has swept his wife's milk-cans hanging on the fence—why, for the life of you you cannot help feeling that somewhat close re-

lations have certainly been established between your boat and the shore.

All the while the wind and river between them were taking us on with quickening speed. The outlook changed with kaleidoscopic swiftness. A sweep of turf with grazing cattle would be replaced by a fenman's cottage blocking the sky-distance at the head of a dike; and then a thatched farm-house, with its wall-spaces abloom with roses, would be succeeded by the Georgian Gothic gables of a gentleman's seat; on the next tack a daub-and-wattle hut beneath a thick growth of trees was a significant reminder of those more economical builders in brushwood and clay, with their more strictly utilitarian purposes.

"It's a bit ticklish, this wind—a bit ticklish," Mills suddenly broke out. "I don't like the way it's dodgin' about. It's verry treacherous—full of variety, that's what it is. It's a good deal like women, beggin' your pardon, ma'am." And he brought his helm round with a quick turn. A reach farther on there was a "quieter bit of sailin'," as the skipper termed a steadier wind; and then he went on with what was still in his mind.

"Variety! Lord bless you! No woman as is worth havin' but is full of it. There's my wife. God bless her! I would n't part with her for all the gold in England. But you'd have all the variety you'd want on a washin'-day when it's wet, an' neuralligly is a-settin' in. I've been through all that, I have. There's nothin' like it—for variety. An' when you come in



yourself, wet to the skin, an' lookin' forward to a bit o' rest an' warmth by your own fireside, an' you see your wife's head tied up, an' she a-bendin' over the wash-tubs, you know what's before you,—you do!—an' you just haul in your sheet an' drop anchor, you do. An' you do it very quiet. I've been through all that, I have. Lively there, my lad, lively! I've a bit of tackin' to do just here—very ticklish she is." And Mills, with his eye on his sail, relapsed once more into silence. The silence was soon broken; the wind sent us headlong into an eel-hut, and only Mills's skill in a quick handling of the ropes kept us clear of the bank. No sooner were we fairly started on our course amid-stream than Mills had brought his tiller round with a mighty sweep, and was shouting to Grimes:

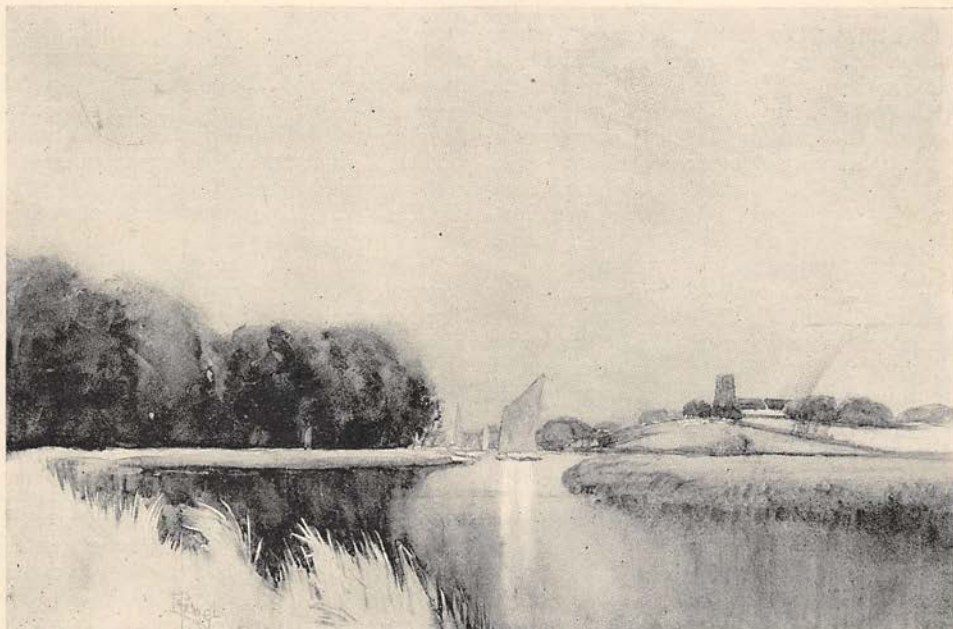
"Let go your jib! Let her go, I say! Can't you see there's a boat comin' up to windward?"

### III.

THE boat that was passing us to windward was a sight to enchain the eyes. It was a huge craft, yet it was riding the narrow waters with a swift and confident ease that put to shame the paces of our own deft *Vacuna*. As the full, mahogany-tinted sail bore down upon us, for one dark moment its convex surface made a brown tent between us and the sky. Then the tent sailed by, and the foreground was clear once more. The boat itself, we then saw, was as myriad-hued as the plumage of a tropical

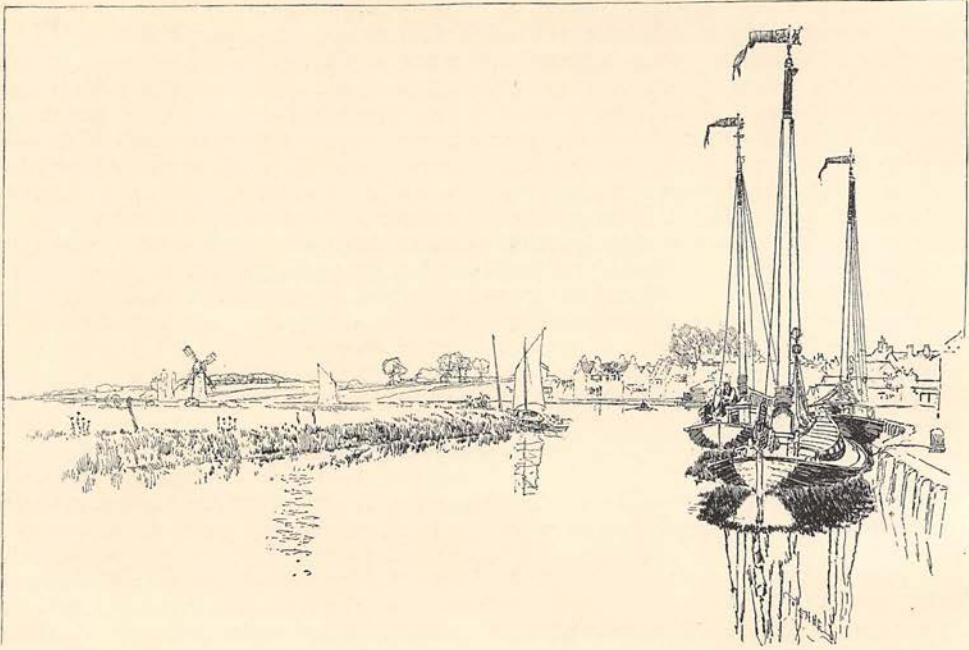
bird. Crude, strong colors had been lavished on hull, cabin, and mast; even the poles lying along the ocher-tinted deck were a vivid cobalt-blue. The boat's deep crimsons, greens, and yellows presented strangely un-English color contrasts, and the sober grays and greens of the landscape were all at once surprisingly intensified. A caique strayed from the turquoise blue of the Adriatic and adrift among these Norfolk lily-pads could scarcely have brought to the eyes a greater surprise than did this survival, doubtless, of the old Norse love of the barbaric in color.

Meanwhile our skipper was giving the boat and its crew his customary greeting. "How are you, Cross? How 's the missis?" The man at the helm gravely returned the salute. Standing waist-high above the low cabin, with hand on tiller, he might have been cut in bronze. Only his eyes seemed alive. Mills, the set of our sails, Grimes tugging away at the ropes, those of us grouped along the stern—all these details had been taken in at a glance, with that swiftness of vision which is the gift of birds and mariners. The skipper gave no more concern to his own full sail, which was tied, than if it had been a solid piece of nature rooted in the meadows. A single passenger was to be seen on deck. On a mound of nut-brown silken pillows, close to the mast, reclined at full length a young and lovely girl. As she lay there, her eyes fixed on the pages of a book, her hair, a light-brown glory, was spread about her, drying in the breeze. The other accessories to the pic-



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

HOVETON CHURCH.



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

WHERRIES.

ture, the pale, esthetic silks curtaining the cabin windows, the glimpses of rugs and hangings within the cabin, a mandolin lying on the low divan, a blur of pink roses massed in a huge blue vase—all these were only insignificant details beside the one compelling presence, that of the young beauty lying on her bed of pillows, with the tendrils of her hair afloat in the wind.

"She 's only a pleasure-wherry," was Mills's somewhat contemptuous comment. There were others, "true" wherries, he would have us know, that for centuries past had been the merchants' carriers. Up from Yarmouth and Lowestoft they had made their way by day and by night through these winding river-courses. It was only of late years that something of their dignity as a commercial flotilla had been lowered by some of the newer, later-built craft having been turned into pleasure-boats.

"The wherry 's built for trade, an' not for pleasure, I hold," Mills broke forth, with a vigor of condemnation in his tone. "They goes light over the water, that I can't deny; they rides the water like a bird. But a yacht seems more shipshape for a gentleman's pleasure, I always says. They 're a wonderful handy craft, an' 'll sail as close to the wind as any ever I did see, an' they 're just made to order for these 'ere reaches an' rivers, sir. You see, sir, it 's the way a wherry's mast is stepped that makes her handy—that an' the sail's bein' without a boom. Her mast yonder is to the extreme for'ard. An' the length of her, an' the breadth,

—they runs from forty-five to fifty feet long, with a beam of ten to twelve,—an' the lowness of her hull, it all helps. Just look at that 'ere wherry roundin' that reach. Ain't she a purty sight?"

The wherry that was rounding the reach was evidently no light "pleasure" craft: this was the "true" wherry. Its patched and darned sail had an unmistakable professional seriousness; the man at the helm, as we came alongside a tack or two farther on, was as patched and darned as his sail. Both the skipper and his craft told their own story: it was one of long days' and nights' sailing in open and narrow waters; of innumerable loadings and unloadings at the crowded Norwich and Yarmouth quays; of a life lived in a perpetual round of weighing anchor and hoisting sail.

Mills had his usual interchange of river courtesies with the rough-featured helmsman. Then, as the breeze went light, our skipper set his foot once more upon the seat, resting his body against the tiller as he held it lightly with one hand. By these signs we knew that the gift of speech was once more to descend upon Mills of Yarmouth.

"Many 's the long month I 've wherried it," he now mused, "along these rivers. Man and boy, I 've lived my life on the Broads, all but the seven years I was at sea; an' long years they was, though a man ought to see the world, whatever it costs, I 've always held. Well, sir an' madam, if I may make so bold, I 've known

what it was to sweat an' shine like the darky cooks we'd take aboard on the Florida coast; an' my beard an' hands have been froze with the cold in the Russian seas; an' I've been lyin' like a dead man with the yellow Jack in African waters: but for poorness of livin' an' hardship, give me a Norfolk wherry. Poorest fodder on record, is it, on board a wherry. A piece of sour bread an' an onion, a red herring with no head on an' no gills, that 's what it is week in an' week out. If I got a piece of sweet pork I felt I was a magistrate; a cup of tea without milk, I was a mayor; a bit of homemade bread an' cheese, and no king was happier. Grimes, my lad, another glass. That breeze do bring a thirst to a man."

It was no breeze that was imparting the bibulous impulse to our skipper: he was only toasting the present moment of prosperity. There was an entirely honorable elation and a desire to prolong the lyrical moment in the knowledge that with the dark winter he had turned his back on such a past of hardships. And what more hospitable or kindly than for one at a full table to wish to share the good things of the feast with his brethren that were passing him by?

Mills had hardly finished his glass before a wherry was seen slowly creeping up stream. The lowered sails told us what we knew already, that both wind and tide were against the boat.

"You've the wind dead ahead; it'll be better further on," was Mills's spirited greeting.

Two bronzed, bearded faces were lifted, for both men were at the poles; and both began to speak in the unintelligible Norfolk jargon. The quants came to an abrupt rest, and presently the eyes of the two giants glistened as if with some fever of anticipation. It was a form of fever that appeared to move to compassionate interest not only Mills, but Grimes, who disappeared, to reappear on the instant with two foaming glasses of beer. The quanters sat themselves down on their cabin, the glasses were emptied at a single toss, and as they wiped their beards they rose to send across the water the civilities common to men the whole world over when drinking at another's expense. A sentence or two more of the jargon, and the wherrymen were again bending over their quants.

In point of beauty I have never seen a craft, whether made for man's pleasure or for the furthering of his commercial intercourse, more exactly to my taste than a Norfolk wherry. Far across the meadows a wherry might be seen lying among the tree-boughs, or it might be creeping or sailing or flying before the wind. Whatever its office or its attitude, to look upon a Norfolk wherry was for the eye to rest on the most picturesque thing afloat. Not the least among its qualities was the way in which a wherry did its hard work: it had an artist's grace, or that ease which comes with a perfection of adjustment in making labor take an outward festival aspect. Not even the most ancient and weather-worn of wherries ever appeared



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

THE MOUTH OF WROXHAM BROAD.

aware of the sobering fact that it was earning its living.

## IV.

"GRIMES, my boy, tie your sheet, an' bring me a glass. We 're on the Broad the next tack, an' there 'll be some sailin', then, there will!" and Mills emptied his glass. A moment later he took the *Vacuna* so close to the tree-boughs that our sail swept the whole breadth of the green façade. The next instant there came a thunderous command: "Ease your mainsheet! Ease her, I say! Can't you see there 's a boat comin' off the Broad? We 'll have to make another tack. Quick with your jib!" We were more than half-way about before Grimes had loosened his sheet; for in moments of emergency the space between Grimes's ears and his intellect seemed lengthened to stellar distances.

"That lad ain't worth tuppence, he ain't," was Mills's growl as he watched the infant mate's leisurely fingering of the ropes. Grimes greeted this low commercial view of his marine abilities with a serene smile.

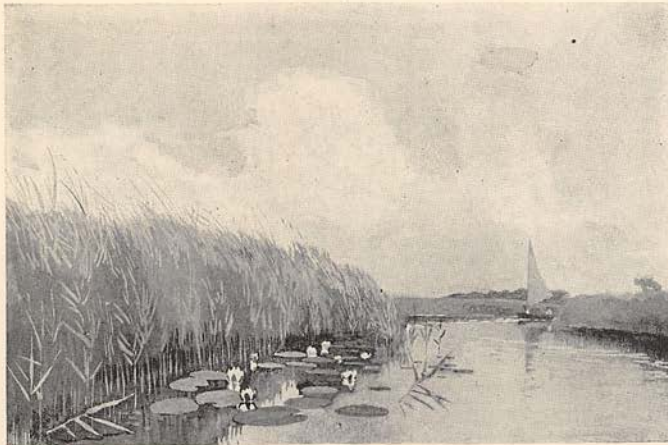
Mills meanwhile had steered our boat sharp to the right, and with a swift turn had sent us flying through a narrow opening. The river was left along with the bushes guarding the gateway, and we found ourselves entering a wide, open space of water. The water-piece was an inland lake the glittering surface of

portions of a captive sea. To sail to the distant upper end was surely to undertake a voyage of formidable length; and doubtless, if one chose the spot with care, one might have the luck to run the chance of a drowning adventure. Wide and long was the stretch of the water, and few and distant were the signs of man's habitation. The beauty of the Broad consisted in this remote and isolated aspect: it was a bit of wildness set in the finish of English lawns. Beyond the screen of the trees yonder there lay another world; this wide lakelet seemed set apart as a home for wild birds and a watery refuge for the coyest fish. To one of us, at least, the moment had brought exhilaration in its train.

"Ha-ha-a! This is sailin', this is! Grimes, my lad, get me my racin'-cap. You may tie your mainsail. No more miserable dodgin's in and out between banks o' daisies and willow-boughs." Now it was that the true mariner in Mills's stanch sailor's soul came to life; eye and hand were as quick in response as an instrument to the touch of a master. The red of the racing-cap framed a face aglow with delight; and it was impossible, I think, for a man to look more lovingly at a full sail.

"Sailing on the ocean —  
Sailing on the sea — a——"

Seven years of it, sir, and then back to old



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

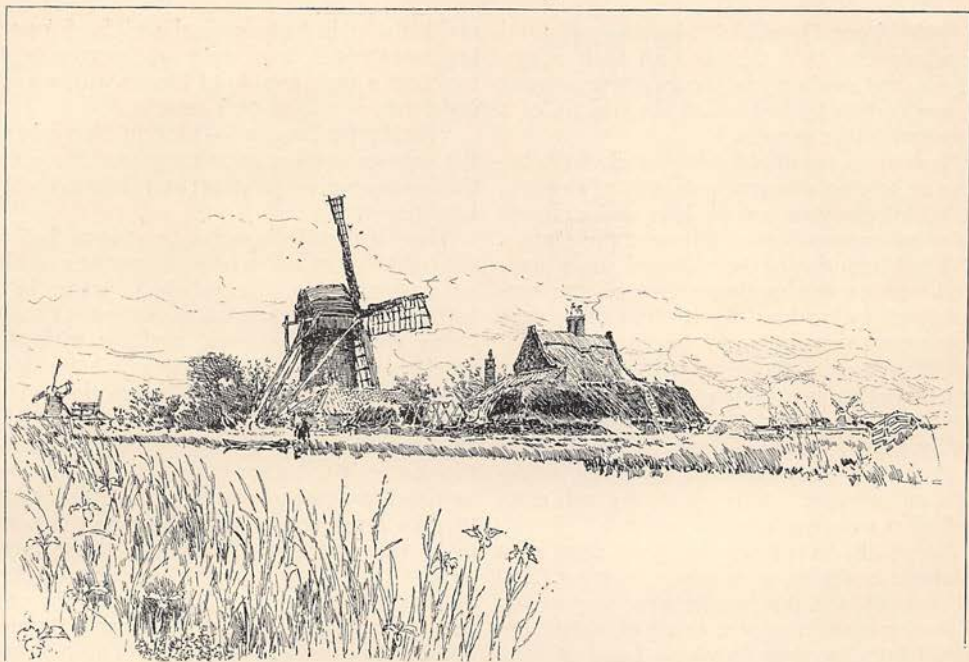
IN A NARROW CHANNEL.

which seemed overbrimming earth's shallow cup; for the shores were low, their level lines accentuating the breadth of the liquid acreage. The lake was Wroxham Broad.

In America, on Long Island, this pretty inlet would have seemed a water-piece of fairly respectable area. Here, in this tight, compact little island, Wroxham Broad took on the pro-

Yarmouth. That 's right, my bird! Go, fly — on with you, *Vacuna!*"

What with the height of Mills's spirits, and the surprise of his breaking into song, we had barely noticed the fairly racing speed our cutter was showing. Her sails were in the water, and below there was an ominous rattle of glasses and crockery. With the quickening of



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

AN OLD MILL.

our pace Mills broke out again as we took our second turn across the lake.

"As I was sayin', sir, this is a grand piece of water, this is. She 's rightly named the Queen of the Broads. There 's none to match her." Then he went on to explain that the shape of the Broad was peculiarly adapted for sailing, being oblong, with rounded corners. "A wessel can sail right round it and back, with a jibe or two, an' no tackin' needed. An' you should see the water frolic on her when the regatta 's on, an' all the banks as crowded with craft as a Yarmouth quay. That 's a sight! Ah! but it 's grand sport, a Wroxham regatta!"

Of the crew and passengers of the *Vacuna* Grimes alone had remained unmoved. During this hour of free, swift sailing he had sat with an impassive serenity, with his hand on the ropes and his eyes fixed on the most distant points. When the order came to go about, he awoke as if from a trance.

"That boy ain't no more a sailor than I be a corpse," was Mills's contemptuous growl.

"What is it, Grimes? What do you see?"

"Them 's eels, ma'am, them is. He 's a-skinning 'em. I likes eels," and in the eye of Grimes there was the hunger of the growing boy. Bread and jam from the nearest locker, it was suggested, might be made to suffice as a temporary substitute for eels.

On our next jibe we came about in a hurry, for a lively breeze was churning the lake into a

little racing sea; and as we scudded through the water the figures on shore seemed by contrast as immovable as statues. The skinner of the eels might have been an automaton. Farther on there were yards and yards of the filmy lace of a fisherman's net hung on poles; through this lace the landscape became suddenly idealized, as a woman's features assume a more perfect unity through the harmonizing meshes of a veil. Near by a pale townsman was holding forth a fishing-rod with the rigid solemnity of the amateur. He had cautiously chosen a still and glassy surface. According to Mills, the spot was one backed by a reputation of past good "catches," and yet nothing was biting. As we swept by Mills had his fling at the townsman's ignorance. "Them tofts ["toft" is Norfolk for "swell"] comes down from the cities, an' think the flingin' of a rod over a boat is the whole history of fishin'. Their empty catches ought to teach 'em, but they don't never l'arn anything."

The *Vacuna*, meanwhile, was making her very last trip up to the farther end of the Broad. The wind had strengthened, and our decks were wet, and so were we. But what was a dashing of spray when one could feel the swift flight of the boat through the water; when the waves were of a height to make the yacht dance; when our sails were stretched to their utmost limit, and the breeze was whipping the cheek till the whole frame was aglow? The geese and ducks were doing their sailing closer

in to the shore. Overhead, snipe, sea-gulls; and wood-pigeons beat the air with their wings, circling and swirling, and the sportsman among us was certain he had heard the whistle of a pheasant in the grasses.

Now upon the hills the hay-stacks were beginning to cast a warning length of shadow. Mills took one glance at the hills, and a ringing order to "come about" followed the glance. A skilful handling of the sails and some practised steering sent us flying through the narrow gateway, and no fewer than three sails were near to do justice to the grace and dignity of our exit. Once upon the river, there was again the quiet lapping of the water along the fringe of grasses, the breeze was coming puffily, fitfully, and the shores seemed to close in about us. The trees were again our neighbors, and the round, full eyes of the gentle cows looked at us above the low bushes.

Across the meadows the giant arms of a windmill could be seen pawing the air. Another reach, and this picture gave way to one of more romantic aspect: a strip of water, separated from the river only by a band of tree-trunks, was covered with water-lilies; it was gravely announced as another broad — Little Salhouse Broad. It was a bed of lily-leaves. Close to its inlet two fishermen were bending over their rods with the fixed tension which true passion for a sport brings to sinew and muscle. What to them was the loveliness of the low rising of the hillside behind them, or the lovely massing of the greens in this Goose Island with the yellow of the mustard-fields? Some snipe flew out of the bushes; a pheasant made a great stir among the reeds, heavily winging its low flight to the opposite shore; some water-hens were riding the stream; and above, high up, dipping into the blue of the sky-spaces as a swallow dips into water, there circled and swirled a company of black-birds.

All the while the river itself was a marigold-bed, and the landscape was lighted with delicate tones. Had we not known the hour, we should soon have been told it by the signs abroad on the river. A sail-boat, lying under some willow boughs, was having its deck turned into a temporary banqueting-table. Two girls in broad hats and loose blouses were pouring tea for two curates. As we sailed past, London "at homes" were brought suddenly very near. The air was filled with the tones of the clear English voices, and with certain questions and answers which seem as much a part of English interiors as the wall-paper. "Do you take cream or lemon?" and "The cake, please." "Thanks, awfully; I don't mind if I do." A river-bend, a dash of shade, a boat and two white ties—where is the English

maiden who, in India or in the wilds of America, could not manage with such surroundings to set up a little temple of Home, with a hissing kettle as a form of incense?

"At Hornin', ma'am,—Hornin' Ferry," was the skipper's answer to an unuttered, but none the less expressive question; and Grimes visibly brightened.

There was still a broad or two to pass before the bubbling of water beneath our bow could be exchanged for the bubble of water in a kettle. Hoveton Broad, like Salhouse Broad, shone through the trees, a-glitter with the sparkle of shallow waters on which the lily-leaves rose and fell in ceaseless motion. The river, between its banks of yellow buttercups and purple irises, gallantly made an upward turning, as if to salute the pretty lakelet, and as quickly dropped away to the southward, to take broader sweeps and a fresh outlook over wide marshes. From one of the more desolate, wilder plains some hundreds of gray and white wings were beating the air, and out of the medley of cries there came the unmistakable squeal of sea-gulls. The heavens were peopled with them; the marshes were alive with the tremor of beating wings and moving claws; and the river was flecked with the down of their feathers. Across our bows a troop of youthful swimmers were taking a trial trip, and our masthead moved amid the mass of beating wings. Mills was making the most of the moment. "It's the close season now, sir; the gulls spends their summers here along with their young. It's fine feedin' they gets on the reeds, and the marshes is what the young ones need. There's thousands of 'em every year here at Ranworth Broad. They're all at sea in the winter."

The swirling and circling of the big white wings had hardly ceased to darken the sky when a cluster of red roofs told of man's habitation. Rows of straggling houses, a windmill set high on a hill, a series of gardens brimming over with pinks and hollyhocks running parallel with the river—if anything could make one feel at home in Horning, it was the pretty ways and graces with which it came out to the very edge of the river to meet one.

A row of children suddenly filled the river-front. They seemed to come forth, as if at a pre-concerted signal, through the low doorways and over the narrow door-steps of the Horning cottages. Without further delay they burst into a song. They were in excellent practice, for the words of the song were made quite clear.

Ho, John Barleycorn!  
Ho, John Barleycorn!  
All day long I raise my song  
To old John Barleycorn.



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

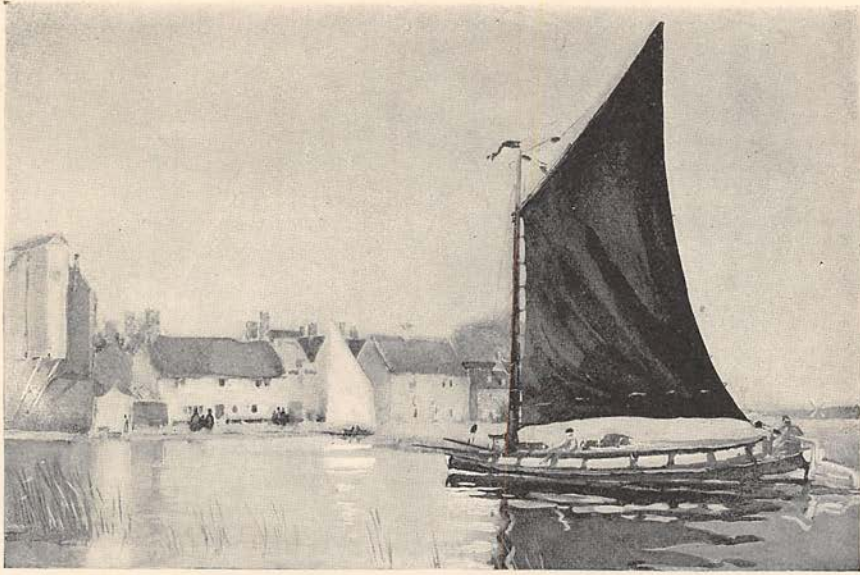
A NORFOLK WHERRY.

When the song was done some twenty-four childish eyes were fixed on the strangers in the boat.

"They always sings — Hornin' 's famed for that. Two hundred years, they say, the children o' Hornin' have sung to the passin' boats. But it's the yachts that they makes their money off of," was Mills's unblushing introduction of the waiting choir. Something of the youth and freshness of those clear, high voices, that only a moment ago had mingled so deliciously with the pinks and the rose scents in the homely, old-fashioned gardens, had gone. The chil-

dren, after pocketing their pennies, had turned unnaturally incurious backs on us and the river. They had learned already, apparently, to take a strictly professional view of the world as it passed. There were still two miles of sailing, and much jibing and tacking, before a picturesque grouping of sails, trees, and houses proclaimed that we were nearing one of the favorite river-stations.

"Let down your jib! Let her go! An' do it tidy; don't want no blunderin'," Mills was shouting out, for the eye of his world was upon him. A yacht, a lugger-rigged boat, and two



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

HORNING

wherries, some open sheds, two low thatched houses, and a group of rustics—such was the world we had come upon as we rounded the tree-boughs. Just below the thatched houses Mills brought the yacht round with a swing.

“Is your anchor ready? Is it ready, I say?” he was shouting again, as he flung himself against the tiller, heading the yacht bow on to the meadows. Grimes answered the shout by a plunge overboard into the grasses; another second, and he had buried the anchor in a mound of daisies. And thus it was that we made our first port; for this was Horning Ferry.

Our arrival, meanwhile, was making a mild stir along the shore. The life and movement among the boats and on the river-banks recalled the animation we thought had been left behind at Wroxham. On the decks of the boats there was much moving about; people were getting into jolly-boats, or were already amid-stream rowing across to the inn. Two Cambridge boys came out of their cabin to take a look at the newcomers. Of the two wherries one had the look of a friend: it was the “pleasure” craft we had met just after leaving Wroxham Broad. The beauty was still on deck; she was seated now on her mound of pillows. A group of men gathered about her, and they were serving her from a tray filled with a tea-service, as they might a queen. Her gurgling, girlish laughter came across the water, filling the air with its youthful music. To those cadences succeeded a grinding noise as of ropes working on rusted iron. It was the noise of raft-pulleys working a rusty chain, for the raft was being ferried across the stream.

On the raft was a particularly smart-looking trap; a groom was standing at the horse’s head, and a girl was on the box seat, her perfection of attire recalling the Bond street tailors. The rustics gathered about the ferry-landing watched the approaching equipage with slow, dull gaze. A few seconds later they were fixing the same glance on us as we were boarding the jolly-boat, for Mills had brought the boat round quite as a matter of course. “That kettle takes an hour or more to boil,” had been his sole explanation of our trip across to the inn.

The little inn was as modest a tavern as had ever set itself up in the business. It boasted the trimmest of gardens, the neatest of barmaids, the most irreproachably bare of sitting-rooms. But one of us, from the river, had seen a church tower among the trees on the hillside; and not even the august names in the visitors’ book, of the Marquis of Lorne and party, and of the late Duke of Abercorn, and of the more familiar and home-sounding name of our own Mark Twain, could keep us indoors in a stuffy inn coffee-room.

Once on the road, the perfume of the woodbine in the hedges seemed of a superfine essence of sweetness. All the earth scents were doubly good to breathe after the salt in the air along the river-marshes. The road behind the inn stables took us between fields of the blondest of oats and the most bridally attired buckwheat. The hedges were gardens full of hawthorn and sweetbrier; and the blackbirds, the thrushes, and the twittering wrens made the wild seafaring notes of the gulls of half an hour ago seem as far away as the sea itself. Through the trees beau-



tiful were the river-distances: over the tree-tops and through the tree-boughs the river made a series of radiant lakes and ponds in which the shores were mirroring their tranquil loveliness. Horning Church sat on the top of a hill, looking down upon this scene. It was set like a jewel in its crown of green trees. But for all its flowery, foliaged adornment, the church had a separate, abandoned appearance. The village had forsaken it, as many other river villages have forsaken their churches; it had wandered down the hill to the shore, where it might the better earn its livelihood, leaving its church alone. We ourselves were soon taking our journey across the river on the raft. Returning to the yacht, we found the table set for tea; the cake and jam were flanked by huge bunches of wild flowers. The tea was excellent: perhaps the concert of black-birds in the bushes, and the butterflies among the blue corn-flowers, gave to the little feast an extra flavor. It is only on a yachting cruise on the Broads that one can always be so sure of a flower-garden and an open-air orchestra. Half an hour later Mills was sounding the growling note of his displeasure. "We sha'n't be able to get that boy down the hatchway: he's

ticklish bit of wind, an' she won't last long," was our skipper's warning comment as once more we swung out into the channel. And so soon does the mind take on the garment of habit, wearing it with ease, that the yacht's motion and the being under sail seemed by far the most natural methods of getting on in the world.

"The breeze is fallin' away." This had an ominous sound at six. "It 's fallin' very light. We 'll never get to Acle Bridge. We 'll be caught at Hornin' Hall."

Acle Bridge, Horning Hall, the end of the world — were they not all alike to us? Was not this the loveliest, the most perfect moment of the day? We were sailing through a land of pure gold, with horizons dipped in purple; the river was turning from saffron to palest violet, and every goose and swan was a transfigured creature, clad in dazzling plumage; cows, yachts, windmills—we were drifting past them as one who passes things seen in a dream. The slowness of the speed was a part of the charm of the hour; one had a sense of floating, of being borne onward by means unseen, unfelt; and the languor of the breeze was an indolent music in tune with the softness of the sunset hues.



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

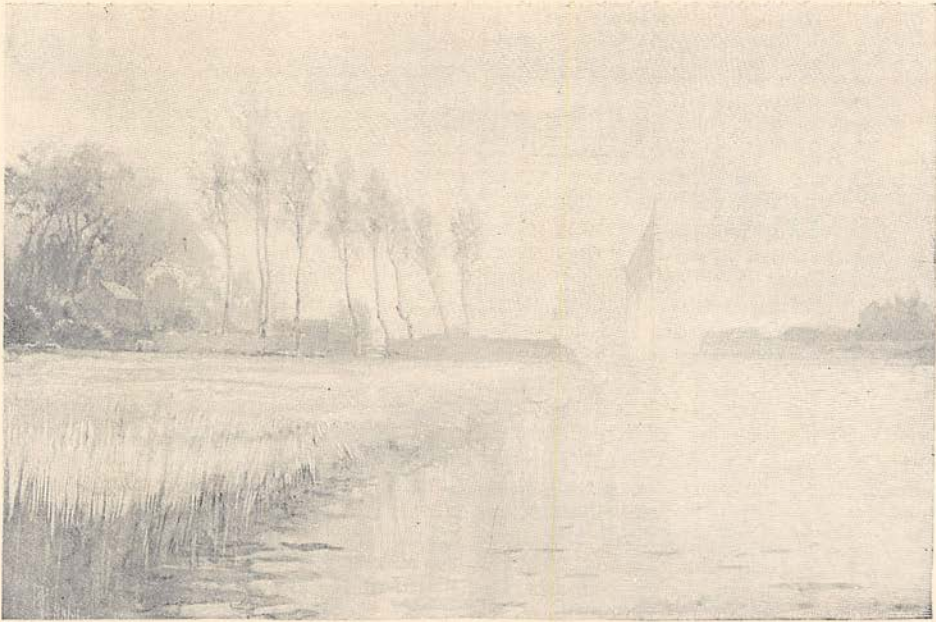
THE VILLAGE OF HORNING.

takin' in his winter provisions, he is; an' here 's the wind goin' light!"

Grimes was rescued from the jam-pot in time to help in the hoisting of the sail. Some of the fleet about us were gone already, for the wind was beginning to drop with the sun. "It 's a

Suddenly we had stopped; once more we were bow on to a meadow piece. Again our anchor had been flung forth into a mound of daisies; and Mills was furling his sails.

"It 'u'd 'a' come to polin', an' I doubt if we could have made the reach roun' the abbey.



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

A MISTY MORNING ON THE BROADS.

An' at the Hall we 're sure of our milk in the mornin'."

Two yachts, and our old friend the pleasure-wherry, had also been "caught" at Horning Hall. They lay just below our own boat, and some of their passengers were abroad upon the meadow-banks, awaiting their dinner. One by one the groups were recalled to their respective boats, the appearance of the skipper on the gang-plank being the Broads form of announcing dinner. We took many a turn from the farm-house dike to where the path sank into the marshland before Mills's rosy face was beckoning us aboard. As we entered the cabin the hand of Grimes was again seen in the arrangement of the lamps and the floral decorations. As a sailor he might be a failure, but he had in him the soul of a born butler.

The stars were well out before our coffee was served beneath them. The sunset had all but died out along the marshes. Through the trees, as the night fell, along with the light of stars there came the glow of farm-house interiors; and upon the river there trailed the reds and yellows from the yachts' lanterns and their open port-holes. And as we "turned in," from the boats' decks there came the noise of college and music-hall songs and the strumming of banjos.

v.

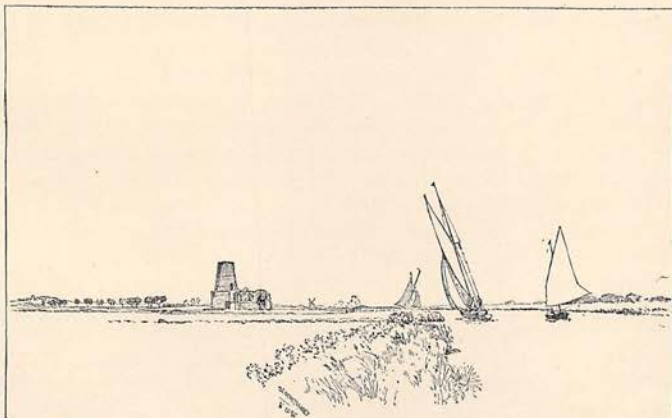
WE awoke next morning to an ominous sound of falling raindrops. One look through the opening of our tent-like awning, and we knew

what was before us: it was as wet a prospect as the eye could light on even in England. The skies seemed to have come down several thousands of miles nearer the earth, as if to make their downpour the more effective. The river had lost all its spirit; whatever turning of the tide it was, the river itself, under that merciless pelting of the rain, had come to a dead standstill. Trees, shrubs, reeds—all were in floods of tears; and the landscape in general had the same look as the cows out in the open—that of standing about with the great patience of animal resignation. After so dreary a prospect the cabin seemed a little corner of warmth and coziness. The discovery that Mills made French coffee sent our spirits up several degrees above the zero of disheartenment. In spite of the gloom without, there was an early-morning spirit of contentment within. Both the cabin and the library—the latter unopened until now—had been singularly neglected: within certain closed boxes there was the best of company. Alas! our reading was enlivened by a painstaking series of well-planned interruptions. To Mills, indeed, as to so many true men of action, books and reading were so poor an occupation that any man possessing rudimentary organs of compassion must do his best to mitigate the evil; by the bracing effects alone of cheery and continuous conversation could a man be expected to get through his page. Finally, down the hatchway the news that the "fish was bitin'" was followed by the moving appeal:

"Have a line, now; do, sir. There 's a scud goin' by." When he found fishing in a pelting rain failed to rouse us to action, he turned in despair to giving us news of the weather. "It 's lessenin'; the clouds is breakin', and the wind 's risin'. We 'll have a fine day—there 's a bit of blue now." And with that news even our heroine was left incontinently to her fate. After luncheon it cleared in earnest. The clouds were rolling up their white curtains, and the face of a soft, melting summer noon came from behind them. On deck the breath of the wet, moist earth, laden with the vigor of an unbreathed sweetness, swept the nostrils; and in every bush and tree the thrushes and black-birds were singing as if to burst their throats with gladness. The river in a twinkling had become a bed of radiance.

Presently a voice sounded from below the deck-railings. Mills was calling upward from the seat of the jolly-boat, which he was holding alongside. "I 'm goin' for milk and eggs, ma'am, to the Hall. Perhaps it 'u'd be your pleasure to take the trip up the dike." A moment later, and we were gliding across the sunlit river. What could be better, after a morning in a stuffy cabin, than a trip in an open boat, and a descent upon an English farm-house? One or two skilful strokes of Mills's oars sent us skimming from the brilliantly lighted river surface to the quiet of a placid creek: it was like turning from a busy highroad into a lane. The green waterway

seen leaning over a rustic stile. It was a traditional pose in which to discover feminine rusticity; but the living loveliness of the girl's fair face, and the soft, animal wonder in her hazel eyes, made one oblivious of all other less genuine models. "Is it milk or cream?" was her strictly professional question. "It 's milk, my lass, an' eggs, if you 've got 'em fresh." Mills was obviously entirely at his ease with the rustic divinity. With a long, sailor-like lurch forward he took his place beside the girl, leaving us to follow. "An' the guv'nor, how is he? An' your aunt, an' the stock?" we heard him say as the two bent their steps toward the back of the farm-house. Mills took his way to the barn while the girl seized our own moment of indecision to grasp the milk-jug and cross the courtyard. As we stood watching her, noting her young, fresh loveliness, why was it that suddenly other equally fair and comely shapes took their places beside her—that Maggie Tulliver, Hetty Sorrel, and Tess of the D'Urbervilles should also be crossing that sun-flooded courtyard, trailing before our eyes the memory of their tragic fate? The peace, the perfect stillness of the farm-house inclosure, the wet and dewy earth shining through the tree-boughs, the herds of cattle and the droves of sheep moving under the fresh sunlight yonder, the very drone of the bees in the bushes, had brought vividly to mind those immortal types of women whose histories seem forever interwoven with such homely notes as the pour-



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

ST. BENET'S ABBEY.

seemed to have captured the secret of perpetual twilight, the day finding its way only through the dense arch woven by the osiers and willow-boughs.

Presently stood forth through the glistening tree-trunks the fair façade of a stout, substantial mansion mantled in ivy. It was Horning Hall. Close to the farm a girlish shape was

ing of milk into tin cans, and the rhythmic thud of the churn. The farm maiden meanwhile had filled our milk-jug, and Mills's visit within the barn had come to an abrupt end. We were about to depart when, in an inspired moment, we ceased gazing at a live picture and dwelling on tragedies to confront both in one. As we turned toward the dike a stone building rose

up before us. It was as unexpected a building to meet in a remote country farm as might have been, say, the Tower of London or the New York Produce Exchange. The structure was sturdily buttressed; it had beautiful early-English traceries in its regularly spaced windows; and although its porch and belfry had long since disappeared, it was as unmistakably a chapel as if rows of choristers were still intoning within its vaulted roof, instead of the impatient stamping of the beasts stalled within its walls.

"It 's a barn, ma'am. A chapel? Yes, ma'am; it was St. Benet's chapel. But it 's been a barn since before ever I was born."

Here Mills announced abruptly: "The wind won't hold, sir; it 'll be fallin' light as the day wears. We 'll never get to Acle Bridge." The threat brought us to our senses and also to the boat.

It was good to be under way once more, and pleasant it was to hear again Mills's familiar refrain: "Ease the mainsail; let out your jib! Ease her—start her—shake her up! Oh, ho! now I think we have the weather-gage—an' as fine a day as one can hope to see on the river. We 'll make Acle in no time."

The chapel proved to have been part of the old abbey, and we soon sailed past what was left of it. The marshes to the left were an unbroken plain. Out of the tufts of grass there rose up suddenly the huge outlines of an ungainly draining-mill, from the lower, southern

side of which blossomed a lovely Gothic portal. Clearer and clearer became the shape and form of it; here and there within the portal were bits of time-worn border traceries, tottering canopies, and a pile of shapeless capitals and rib-vaultings. The bank along the river showed faint traces of broken bits of walls, of sunken towers and ramparts, now but mounds of turf.

For many a turning and twisting in and out among the river-marshes were the outlines of the mill and the abbey portal to mark for us the brevity of human grandeur.

## VI.

WIDE and flat were the marshes that led on to Acle Bridge. The reaches were longer, and the sailing was smooth and free. Below the mouth of the Thurne the land was one vast plain, broken by the dim outlines of distant windmills, of church spires, and clusters of farm-house roofs. In such a breadth of earth man and his works played an unimpressive rôle. Far away in the dim perspective of a narrow dike, strange, primitive craft bore down toward the river; the men poling the high-heaped mounds of flags and rushes seemed to be navigating haystacks. In the rich, warm light these moving rafts lent a singular charm to the river life; their shadows in the clear streams were dense and soft, for land and water were being lighted by the glow of a perfect English afternoon.



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

STOKESBY.

The sails we met were drifting toward one goal. From dikes and streams, yawls and lateeners were quanting toward the Bridge. Presently there came the stirring notes of a vigorous command:

"Let down the jib! Do it tidy! Don't want no blunder here! Is your anchor ready?"

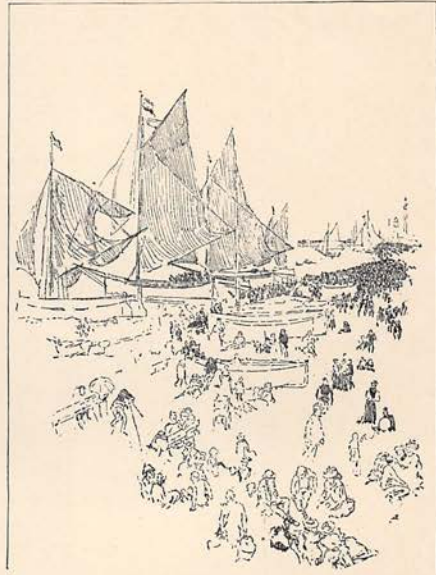
Once again, as at Wroxham and Horning, the river had widened suddenly below an arched bridge. A fleet of yachts lay moored along a grassy river-bank. Here also the boats' decks were crowded with figures — with girls in sailor hats, with sunburned youths in frayed "silhouettes," and with bronzed sailors in their yachting-caps. Several hundred of these heads were lifted as we sailed by. Another tack, a bearing down hard on the helm, shouts and some inarticulate profanity from Mills, and we had come to our moorings at Acle Bridge.

The inn was set close to the river, and although the highroad ran a mile farther inland, the Angel inn had the air of having seen more stirring times. The little inn sitting-room was parlor and taproom in one; its chairs opened friendly arms, bits of old silver gleamed on the mantel-shelf, and low settles, cupboards, and tables of antique make were suggestive of the dead-and-gone figures that had peopled the cozy room. In the smile of the genial host there was the welcome which imagination lends to mine host of the coaching period.

As the preparations for dinner were going on below deck, we wandered up toward Acle. The town was a wandering assemblage of houses, with shops that gave themselves metropolitan airs. But a church dedicated to as mythical a personage as St. Edmund the King was more alluring than the sight of London fashions abbreviated to the timidity of provincial taste. Pretty suburban villas, perfectly kept lawns, and trim gardens, led the way to the church, the tower of which had turned its back on the town, the chancel facing the street. The quaint Norfolk structure was placed in a perfect setting; for the cemetery was a garden where the gravestones seemed decorative slabs in high relief amid the sober gaiety of the flowers and the blooming shrubs.

Through the trees the sunset was pouring a flood of softened light, and the river, as we crossed the bridge, lay beneath our feet, a bed of gold. Every bush and weed was of a transfigured beauty, and the cows, as they came down to the shores, seemed to be drinking, not water, but a Pactolian stream. The wide marshes were now at their best, suffused with light, while above them arched a sky that was one vast cup of coral.

Aboard there were the miseries of a belated dinner written on Mills's anxious brow. "You

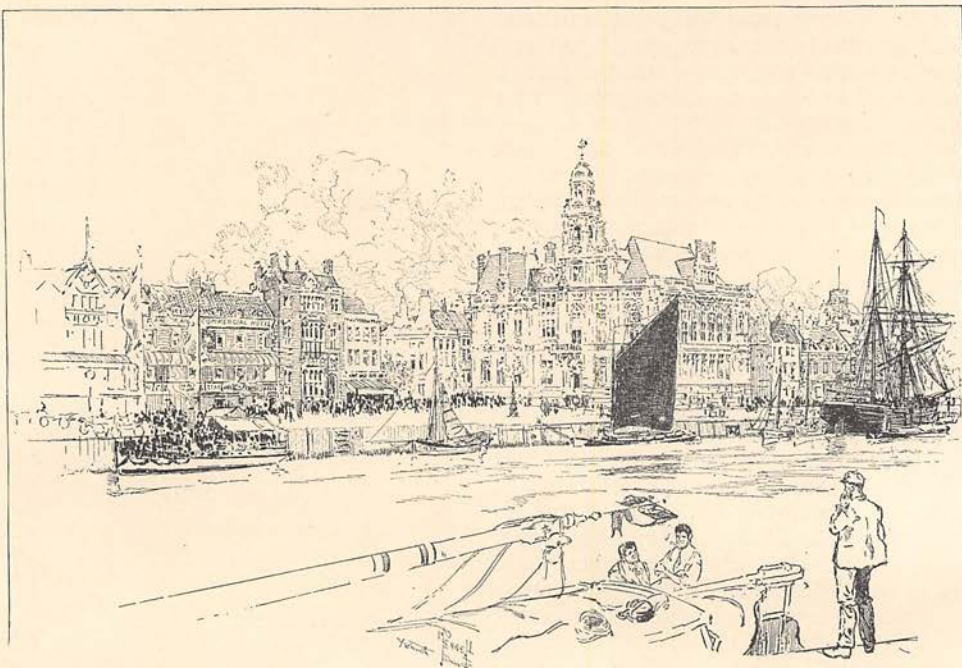


DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

YARMOUTH BEACH.

see, ma'am, I 've five courses — soup, an' fish, an' chops, an' 'taters, an' hot plates; an' this 'ere stove is the wery de — I beg pardon! But it 'u'd try the patience of a wery saint." His explanation given, Mills and his red racing-cap — his signal-flag of exultation or of distress — disappeared with a Jack-in-the-box quickness into the hatchway depths. There were worse things than waiting for dinner, we agreed, with such a sky and earth for entertainment. These failing us, there was still the inn. It was the hour when taverns the world over do a prosperous business. There was an endless procession of farmers' and carriers' carts stopping before the tavern door; beer or something stronger was handed to the less sociably inclined rustics, while within the tap-room a crowd of sailors, yachtsmen, and ruddy-faced farmers were standing about, or were grouped along the benches. London drawing-room tones, the boyish tenors of Cambridge students, the rough jargon of the Norfolk dialect — these sounds poured out through the door, making a strange babel.

To us on deck, long after dinner had been eaten, the noisy little inn continued to send forth the sound of its prosperity, while the noise that rose from the yachts was neither mystic nor devotional: the twang of guitars and banjos, the jingle of pianos out of tune, and a discordant chorus of after-dinner voices, made an early "turning in" out of the question. No sooner were the stars fairly out than a rival show of fireworks made the river a blaze of yellow and crimson lights. The yachts and



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

THE QUAYS AT YARMOUTH.

their passengers and crews, the cows lying in the meadows, the furled sails, and the ropes of the rigging — again and again did this world abroad upon a river-bank spring out of the dark, unreal and of an amazing brilliance, to be as swiftly engulfed in the abyss of night.

VII.

WE were up and away so early the next morning that the cows were still at rest in the meadows. The inn shutters were as tightly closed as the yachts' awnings. Not a sign of a reveler was discernible; we alone had kept good our engagement with the dawn. We might have made a meal of our boastful pride if we chose, for we had no other for a good hour at least. The wind was already abroad upon the meadows, and was blowing in the right quarter. With Yarmouth twelve miles off, and the dreaded prospect ahead of several hours' poling if the breeze should fall away, the gnawing of the early-morning hunger affected Mills as little as an appeal to a wooden idol. The getting of his boat "tidily" through Acle Bridge, the restopping of the mast once we were on the lower side of its stone arch, the hoisting of his sails, the *Vacua's* swinging into the channel, and our subsequent swift running before the wind — these were acts and events which made our skipper sublimely indifferent to a breakfastless state. We were of

less heroic mold: coffee and rolls at seven in the morning assume an importance out of all proportion to the part they play in the rest of one's day. We turned a cool eye on the fair earth, and, wrapped in our cloaks, sat on deck, hugging the grievance of our hunger. Stokesby would be more beautiful to look upon than in the early morning, for there our breakfast was promised us.

No town dweller, I presume, who is a lover of nature ever remains wholly insensible to the charms of a sleepy earth throwing off its night mists. Acle Marsh, just below the Bridge, stretched its breadth to the horizon with such an alluring early-morning freshness as to stir even our spiritless state. The cows were now walking about in search of their meal. Long lines defiled slowly between the few widely scattered trees and windmills. The skies were full of clouds, and the clouds as full of light; they were traveling across the zenith as fast as we were scudding through the water.

"Stokesby 's round that 'ere reach. We 'll be layin' to in a jiffy. But it do seem a shame to lose such a wind, it do!" was Mills's plaint as at last the roofs of the village began to define themselves among the trees. Stokesby was set close to the river, upon a low and fertile marsh. A windmill beckoned us onward through a light ambushade of trees, and close beside the ambushade we dropped our anchor. The time of our lying to was brief; doubtless the spires

of Yarmouth were beckoning Mills onward, for we were out again upon the river before the table was cleared. We had gone but a brief quarter of a mile on our way when Mills began to apostrophize his native town. "Yes, sir; it's Yarmouth town we'll see inside of an hour or two. Her chimbleys and church spires 'll be lookin' out for us. Lord! but the years they've been my beacon lights, with Polly Ann waitin' along with 'em! Yarmouth's a great town—few finer. An' the Rows—they're a great show if you're not used to 'em; an' so is the herrin'-quays. Haul in the main, my lad, an' when you've tied your sheet bring me a glass. I'll drink to Polly Ann, bless her! Here's to Polly Ann!"

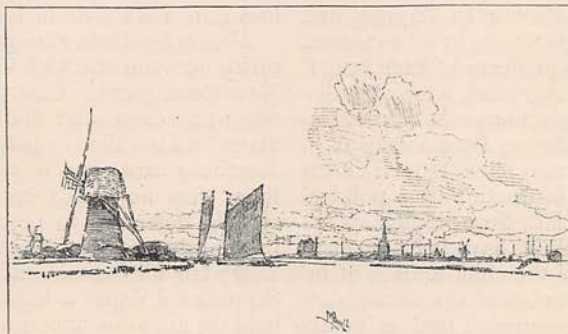
Long and frequent were the toasts to Mary Ann, and nearer and nearer drew Yarmouth town. Out of the dull wastes of the marshes the dim, dusky mass that lay along the southern horizon slowly resolved itself into the outlines of a city. There were the signs of its movement and life abroad upon the river long before we swept its quays. Grammar-school boys, with Eton caps and wide collars, trooped along the low, rising shore; soldiers were loung-

ing beneath the trees; and the river was alive with shipping, with floating flags, and the pennants of yachts.

Here at these Yarmouth quays must end for us the sweet return of the day's rising over river-banks, of the floating between the reeds and flags, of the soft-colored halcyon hours beneath the blue of the sky and the starry nights. To replace such joys, would Yarmouth send forth to greet us the people we have thought of and loved as peopling that islanded city? Would Little Em'ly stand upon the marshes, shading her soft eyes? Would Peggotty's boat-house be there? Would Steerforth's wraith rise out of the sea to wave its helpless arm in air?

Along the quays there lay a Sabbath stillness. The hush of the old town was broken only by the clangor of St. Nicholas's chimes. But louder than the roar of the ocean, stronger than the blare of trumpets from unseen barracks, from the beach there came upon the ear the mighty murmuring of a great multitude. It was only some thousands of pleasure-seekers crowding the Yarmouth quays and sands. Then it was we knew for a certainty we had indeed come back to the world of cities.

*Anna Bowman Dodd.*



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

## THE TIDE OF THE PAST.

SOMETIMES the troubled tide of all the past  
 Upon my spirit's trembling strand is rolled;  
 Years never mine — ages an hundredfold,  
 With all the weight those ages have amassed  
 Of human grief and wrong, are on me cast.  
 Within one sorcerous moment I grow old,  
 And blanch as one who scarce his way can hold,  
 Upon a verge that takes some flood-tide vast.  
 Then comes relief through some dear common thing:  
 The voices of the children at their play;  
 The wind-wave through bright meadows, moving fast;  
 The blue-bird's skyward call, on happy wing;  
 So the sweet present reassumes her sway;  
 So lapse the surges of the monstrous past.

*Edith M. Thomas.*