PILCHARD FISHING IN CORNWALL.

AS the county of Cornwall lies in such a far-away corner of England, it is to most people a *terra incognita*, in so far as its history and industries are concerned. Everybody, however, has a vague idea that it is famous for its mines, but beyond that very little is known of one of the most interesting and romantic of our English counties.

In the autumn of the year most of the villages on the Cornish coast are engaged in the pilchard fisheries, to which occupation the inhabitants look for support to a great extent during the winter, especially since the minerals of the country have been almost driven out of the markets by the cheaper produce of the colonies. Pilchards are fish about the size of a small herring ; they visit the coasts of Cornwall, and sometimes of Devon, in large shoals, passing up Channel from the west and then returning to deep water. Although not in much request throughout this country, these fish find a ready market in Spain and Italy, to which places they are exported, when cured, in large quantities.

There are several stations for this fishery, those at Megavissey, Gerans, Cadgwith, and Mullyon being the chief ones on the south coast, while good catches are sometimes made at St. Ives, Sennen, Newquay, and Padstow, on the north coast. This year the little fishing village of Cadgwith has been the most successful of any of these places, having taken several large shoals of pilchards, which have brought a very considerable sum of money into the pockets of the fortunate shareholders and fishermen.

No wonder, then, that excitement follows the news that fish have been seen off Land's End. The telegraph flashes the tidings from station to station, and soon all are on the *qui vive* to gather in the approaching harvest. We will take up our abode for awhile in Cadgwith, and watch with the rest for whatever the gods may send. Cadgwith lies about two miles east of the Lizard. It is a narrow gorge in the line of cliffs, beginning with a sandy cove surrounded by rocks and rapidly running up to the table-land above, which stretches a bleak and treeless moor for many miles round the Lizard Point. Snipe and wild-fowl are the sole denizens of this waste, with the exception of here and there the occupants of some small farm hidden away in a hollow.

Into this cove of Cadgwith the fishermen have crowded for shelter, building their cottages on the sides of the steep incline, and drawing up their boats on the beach amongst the rocks and boulders. Most of these men carry on a regular calling all the year round, and send various kinds of fish every day up to London and elsewhere. But the prospect of pilchards at once changes the routine of ordinary life, for every able-bodied man in the district is engaged directly the signal is given that a shoal is approaching, and farm-labourers, shop-keepers, and workmen of every kind rush from their occupations down to the boats and push out to sea. Some of the men will come from a distance of four miles, running at full speed with their coats in their hands, just as they left their work.

All along the coast watch is kept on the cliffs by men called "huers" (the same word being found in the phrase "hue and cry"), who can tell when a shoal is coming by the colour it gives to the water, and by the crowd of sea-birds hovering over it. Then it is the duty of the "huers" to raise a "hubba" or alarm, which they do by coming to the top of the hill which overhangs the cove, and shouting and waving their hats. Lat-

terly they have hoisted a small flag on the edge of the cliff, which can be seen for miles along the coast.

Instantly the wildest excitement takes possession of the usually sleepy little village. Men, women, and children run down to the beach and launch the boats, which in a few minutes are making their way out to the "stems," as the points are called, at which the fishers take up their position to wait for the "huer" to give them the signal to commence work.

Two large and two small boats are allotted to each "stem," the large boats containing a "seine," 200 fathoms long, and the small boats the "stop" net, which joins the two ends of the "seine" directly it is shot, thus securing the shoal in a most effectual manner.

There are two or three "stems" at Cadgwith, so that if the first lot of boats miss the shoal, the second immediately sets to work to remedy the failure.

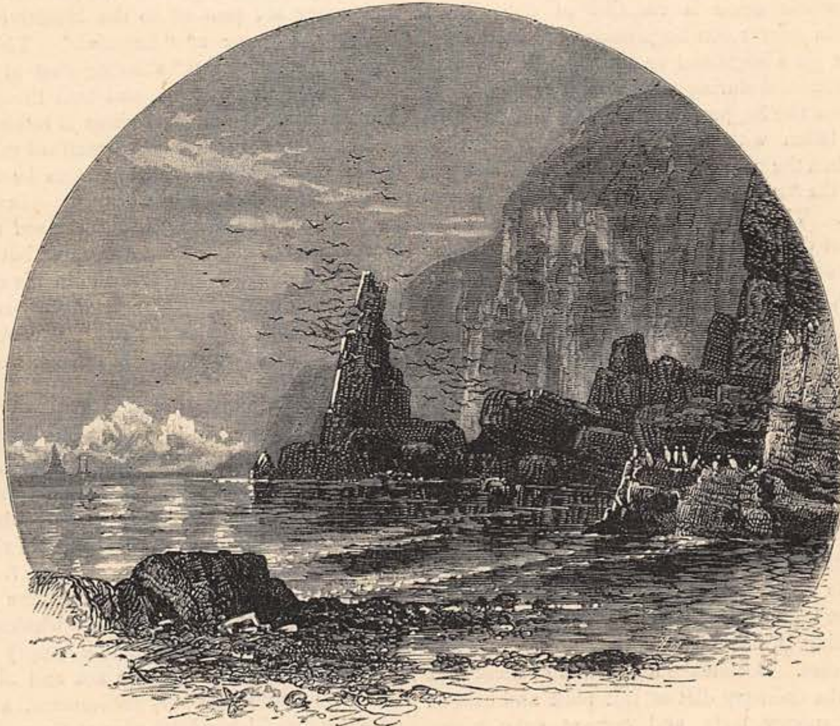
The expense of keeping up this fishing flotilla is by no means inconsiderable, particularly as one set of boats has a regularly paid crew during the season, who are always on the look-out. These men get so much per week and a quarter of the value of the fish they catch. The other boats are manned by scratch crews—immediately a "hubba" takes place any man is allowed to go—and these get half the value of what they catch. The latter are called in consequence "hubba" crews, to distinguish them from the paid ones.

PILCHARD FISHING.

For three years nothing had been caught in Cadgwith, and the last season had been looked forward to with no little anxiety, till one morning we were all awakened by an unusual commotion in the village below. The sun had just risen, and was dyeing the sea and sky a deep blood-red, lighting up the serpentine rocks of the cove till they seemed on fire. From every cottage were streaming the men, their wives and children, many of them with only such garments on as they had been able to snatch up in the hurry of the moment—for nearly all the men, having been out fishing during the night, were taking a little rest before beginning the labours of the day. On the opposite hill the "huer" was dancing about like a madman, and shouting, "Make haste, make haste!" At last the long-looked-for pilchards were coming, then, and every man must make the most of the opportunity. With shouts and hurrahs the boats are speedily got ready and launched, everybody down to the smallest child lending a hand. The men jump in, and away they row to their different "stems." The first lot of boats proceed to the most westerly "stem," from which direction the fish are coming, and immediately

make preparations for shooting the seine. The first thing to be done, however, is for one of the large boats to anchor close under the cliff, having on board a capstan, to which is attached a hawser joined to the seine on the other boat. This second boat, at a signal from the "huer" on the cliffs above, rows slowly out to sea, paying out the hawser as it proceeds. Suddenly the "huer" waves the little bush in his hand violently round and round his head — this means, "You have reached the shoal; begin to shoot the seine."

The remainder of the hawser that is not paid out is thrown overboard, and immediately drawn taut by those in the shore-boat, while the man in the stern of the seine-boat begins to shoot the large net.



ON THE CORNISH COAST.

Out it goes, as they row rapidly round in the direction indicated by the "huer," until they have shot the whole seine and nearly completed a circle round the shoal. In the meantime, the small boat with the "stop" net has been busy fastening it on to the end of the seine already in the water, and now joins it to the other end, completely enclosing the fish inside the circle. To this end of the seine a hawser is also attached, and the seine-boat rows quickly to shore, paying out this second hawser all the way, and finally anchors near the boat which had remained under the cliffs. They then set up a capstan, such as the others already have done, and both boats begin to work the seine by degrees closer and closer to the shore. Not much is now to be seen beyond a large circle of corks floating on the sea, inside which the water is much disturbed by the movements of the imprisoned pilchards beneath the surface. A swarm of gulls keep diving into this circle, and coming up again evidently satisfied by their transactions with the shoal. At high tide the seine is brought as near to the shore as possible, and then firmly anchored at different points to await the arrival of the luggers which have been already telegraphed for, and which will take the fish away to Newlyn, a small village near Penzance, where they are cured and then packed in casks for exportation abroad.

Loud cheering now bursts from the men in the boats, and is echoed by the women and children, who have been eagerly watching the proceedings from the rocks and cliffs, for the morning's work means comfort and, perhaps, luxury to them during the coming winter.

In a few hours the brown sails of the Penzance luggers are seen making their way round the headland of the Lizard, and then we know that it is time to begin the process of "tucking"—that is, getting the fish out of the large seine by throwing in a smaller net, called a "tuck" net, and drawing it gradually to the surface, full of struggling pilchards.

Before, however, this is done the fish are all driven into one corner of the seine by beating the water and throwing stones. As they move away from any part, the seine is closed in after them, so that at last the fish find themselves confined to a very small space, which, of course, varies according to the size of the shoal. When the circle has been made sufficiently

small, the "tuck" net is let down at one end and slowly drawn along underneath the fish the whole length of the enclosure, so that now the pilchards have a net not only round them, but beneath them as well. The "tuck" net is supported by a line of boats ranged outside and full of men, who soon begin to slowly lift it to the surface. The water now becomes greatly agitated as the thousands of pilchards are being drawn up, and soon they begin to jump out of the water in all directions to escape from the crush below. A good "tuck" will bring up as many as 300 hogsheads of pilchards, or over 700,000 fish.

A "tuck" does not always succeed, and very often the operation has to be repeated three or four times before the whole seine is emptied of fish. Some shoals contain over 1,000 hogsheads, and as the fish sell at about £2 a hogshead on an average, the work is very remunerative during a successful season.

By this time the luggers have arrived, and one after another is laden with fish, in the order of their arrival. When the turn of a lugger has come, it makes fast close to the "tuck" net, one side of which is drawn up on board. The fish are now in a large bag of net, some four feet deep, and twenty feet long. The upper ones are out of the water, wriggling and writhing in a silvery mass, into which baskets, attached to ropes, are let down by the men on board the lugger. Other men poke these baskets under the water with poles, and then they are hauled up full of live fish and emptied, like a sack of coals, into the hold of the vessel.

Lugger after lugger fills up and sets sail for Newlyn, till all the fish are gone, and then the nets are taken up and brought on shore to be dried, ready for another catch.

Unfortunately, no sooner do the people here find themselves in possession of an unusual amount of cash, than the majority rack their brains to discover a way of spending it, instead of saving up against less prosperous times. Beefsteaks and joints of meat take the place of the ordinary diet of salt pork and fish, as long as the money lasts, and currant cake reigns supreme all day long in many of the cottages—no common bread-and-butter for those who can afford cake.

Let us now follow the pilchards to Newlyn and see what becomes of them there. From the boats they are carried by women and children to the cellars, where they are "bulked" or piled up against the walls between layers of salt. Here they remain for about a month, at the end of which time the fish are washed and placed in barrels full of holes, through which the oil runs out of the fish on their being pressed down by heavy weights. This oil is preserved, and afterwards sold for various purposes. Finally, when as many pilchards are packed in the barrels as they will hold, they are sent off to the Mediterranean markets under the name of "fumades." This word really means "smoked fish," showing that at one time they were cured in that way, and that though the process has changed, the original name is retained.

The scenes we have just described may be taken as a fair representation of what is to be seen at all the other fishing stations in Cornwall. Instead, however, of "hubba," the word "heva" is used at some of the northern stations, the derivation of both words being doubtful; though Mr. Harvey, in his charming little work on Mullyon, says that "heva" is probably derived from the Celtic "helfa," a draught of fishes. "Huer" is, no doubt, the old French word meaning to cry or shout.

At Cadgwith about five-and-twenty men are employed on each "stem,' and at other places the number is more or less according to the scale of the venture, and the size of the boats, so that the profits must consist of a fairly large sum, to be able when subdivided to really benefit all those concerned in the affair. To those who would retire for awhile from the busy world, to those who would combine the vigorous health of a primitive life with the wholesome economy so necessary to comparatively empty pockets, and lastly, to those who love the sea and all that belongs to it, we would earnestly recommend a brief sojourn amongst the pilchard fisheries of Cornwall.

H. S. B.

A HERO'S REST

HANG not rich textures round about his bed;
Leave him with only rest, for he was poor;
Fold not his hands in praying, for be sure
The long prayer of his life has all been said;
You must not put even flowers about his head,
For he without them *living* did endure—
Else, for some other men there had been fewer—
And now they must not mock him, being dead.
Only undo the shutter, let the sun
Shine full upon him, for he loved the light,
And need be no more severed from his friends;
What if he seemed to fail, where others won?
He missed the world's mark, with a clearer sight,
Aiming beyond it to diviner ends.

A. J. B.