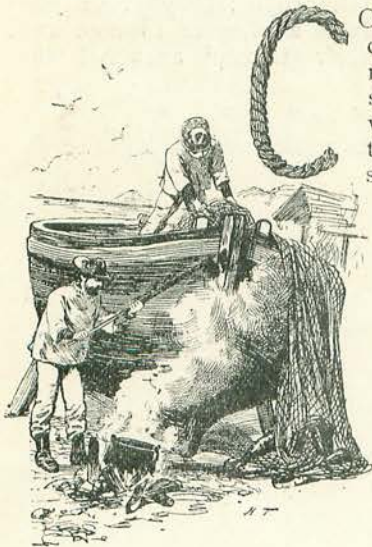


A Silver Harvest.



SHOOTING SEINE-NET.



flourishing industry; but, at present, owing principally to the large increase of drift-net boats which, in their more regular expeditions, tend to break up the "schools" or "shoals," the old picturesque way of catching them by the "seine" boats is

CORNISH pilchards are, no doubt, sufficiently well known to create some interest in the method by which they are caught. Some years back the fisheries were worked almost entirely by the "seine" net system, and had developed into a most

more or less falling into desuetude. The glory and excitement of the pilchard fishing belongs, however, to the seine-net almost exclusively. For weeks the cliffs are patrolled by anxious watchers, and when once the red streak in the water shows to the practised eye the "school" slowly moving, the cry "heva" or "hubba" is heard shouted from one to another, and every man, woman, and child rushes to the beach. A volunteer colonel the writer once met touring about Cornwall with a camera had skilfully arranged a characteristic group of fishermen and lasses in a disused fish-cellar, and had carefully had an artistic background of nets, lobster-pots, &c., built up after some hours of trouble and difficulty, when, just as he was about to raise the cap, a tap at the little window, a cry of "hubba," and his group flew off like lightning out of the place. He never got them again. For many weeks they were all busy with the pilchards.

Another visitor, not knowing the colloquial terms of the fisher-folk, was alarmed to hear his landlady, in great excitement, shout to a neighbour, "Shot at Cadgwith," and anxiously inquired whether anyone

was hurt or killed. Though the fishing villages as a rule are in communication only through coaches, or more often carts, the news of the first catch rapidly flies; naturally each place anticipating the advent of the pilchards at any moment.

Many of the fishermen are almost practised athletes. Down a long "way" or "slip" the big seine boat is shot, the men hanging on, pushing, or clambering on as the boat is launched into the sea. In a second the big heavy oars are shipped, every man in his place, and pulling with all his strength for the "shoal," guided by the "huer" who, on the top of the cliff, directs

times turning out too young and small, and, though these latter are valuable to the sardine factories, many of which are established in Cornwall, the cost of packing and drawing the fish over many miles of rough country prevents it being worth the labour and trouble. And the roads in some places, say, for instance, the way down to Sennen Cove, Lands End, are most decidedly rough, the writer having once seen a poor old blind man, who perambulated the country with a donkey-cart and apples, once literally hung up on a huge boulder of rock in the middle of the road. The fish once reached, the net is thrown into the sea



LAUNCHING THE TUCK-BOAT.

them by waving two branches of furze-bush in the direction required. The turn-out of a metropolitan fire-engine is not accomplished more expeditiously. This work, as may be supposed, is very arduous, and on many parts of the coast the manual labour is superseded by steam seine-boats, which are constantly kept at sea on the look-out, the men being paid weekly wages by the proprietors. Occasionally the "school" is missed, and sometimes, in the difficulty of manœuvring the heavy boats in a comparatively rough sea, a small portion only is secured. Many tries have often to be made, the fish some-

and a complete circle made round them, the net righting itself in the water by the leads at the bottom and the corks at the top. Then comes the "tuck-boat," often launched by women and children, carrying a smaller net, which is fastened inside the bigger "seine," and partly under the fish, by means of which, by gradually lessening the circle, the precious catch is forced to the surface. Large heavy boats, characteristically called "loaders," are used to convey the fish to the shore. Stalwart young men dip the "tuck-basket" into the shoal of live fish, the water naturally draining out when it is raised to the surface, while the pil-

chards are stowed in the "loader" by large wooden shovels, to the accompaniment of the screams of thousands of sea-gulls.

It is almost alarming, too, to see how deep in the water the boats are loaded, within an inch or two of the gunwale, Mr. Plimsoll's load-line evidently not applying; though, fortunately, accidents are rare.

Upon arriving at the shore or landing-place many from their own and neighbouring villages are there to take them up in "creels" to the cellars. We have once seen a large influx of Cornish miners for this work only. They are paid 2d. a basket, and can make £1 a day, though the work is comparatively laborious.

Of course the natives manage at these times to get fairly well provided with fish. The children are very busy picking up the stray pilchards, and the stray ones getting scarce, an apparently accidental stumble on the rough stones may upset a large creel full, which is not worth gathering up when fish is plentiful.

The pay is pretty good for this work, the children even getting 3d. per hour. The pile is then undone, the fish packed with great care in barrels, and by means of a long lever with a heavy stone hooked on at the end, pressed down tightly. It is then ready for the market.

The inland villagers are good customers for pilchards, and, indeed, for all sorts of fish, conger and mackerel being especial favourites with all. They are usually supplied by the country dealers called "jow-ters," though how the word arose is uncertain; but the biggest market is Italy, several Italians being permanently established in Cornwall in the business. It might be supposed that the fishermen themselves would care but little for fish, but experience shows that few people are so particularly fond of it. We have often heard the natives declare that a bit of fresh or salted fish was better at any time than meat, roast or boiled. In the winter, when unable to go to sea, the storms and gales



DIPPING FOR PILCHARDS.

If large catches, or perhaps two or three catches fill the cellars, an interesting sight is to see the fish packed on the ground by the women and children, salt being plentifully used, of course, and the heads placed outwards. The row of carefully arranged pilchards is then thatched over and left to pickle for about a month.

preventing the men from doing anything for a livelihood, the salted pilchard is the staple article of food. Served with a boiled potato it makes a savoury enough dish, though I think, perhaps, it needs an acquired taste on behalf of the town dwellers to enjoy it thoroughly.

Most of the fishermen have their plot of



PACKING.

land, and in their intervals of enforced leisure are assiduous gardeners, cultivating generally sufficient potatoes to last the winter.

The oil which is pressed out of the fish is drained by little gutters into a small well, and although after some lapse of time it becomes anything but odorous, or even agreeable to the view, it is very valuable to the men for dressing their boots, &c., which become so hardened by the sea-water. Many of the fishermen in days gone by have made a considerable lot of money by

Cornish pilchards. In some of the fishing villages it is not at all uncommon for the men to have built their own cottages out of their earnings and to have put a little by besides. Formerly, too, the "schools" came along as early as August, but now they are seldom seen until October. No satisfactory reason either for their present apparent scarcity or the change of the time of their appearance can be given, the fishermen themselves being at a loss for an explanation.

