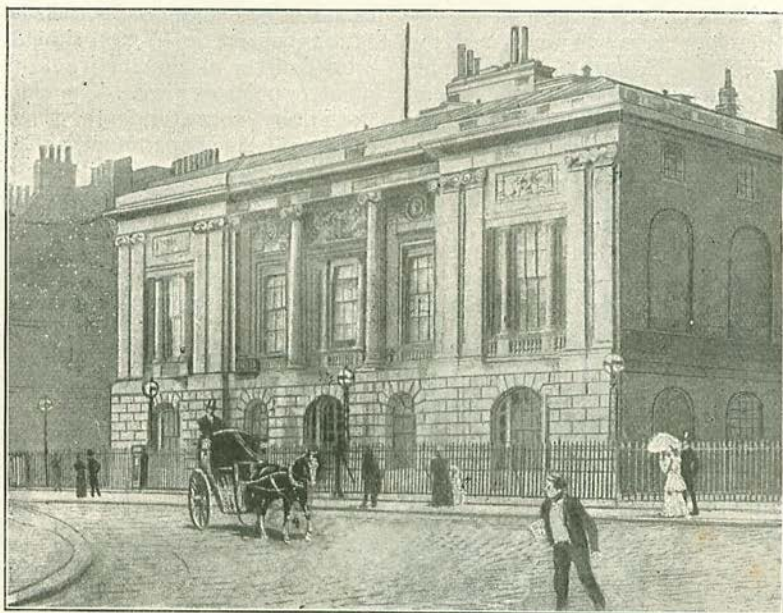


Pilots.

BY ALFRED T. STORY.

I.



From a]

TRINITY HOUSE.

[Photograph.



ONCE, when on board a large steamship coming from the south, we were boarded in the reach below Gravesend by a pilot and the captain's wife. She was only newly married, this being the husband's first voyage since their union. Both, therefore, were anxious to meet the first possible moment, and so the captain had written to her from the last port at which he had touched, giving her the address of the pilot, and informing her that that worthy was instructed to bring her off with him to the ship. We were much amused with the lively little lady's account of her journey to Gravesend, of her meeting with the pilot, and of their coming on board the big P. and O. steamship. The most interesting part of the narrative, however, was her description of the surprise into which she was thrown by the sight of the pilot and his home.

Her cabman drove her up to a substantial-looking house, having a garden in front, and with every appearance of comfort and respectability. "I thought," she went on, "the cabman had taken me to the wrong house, and I told him so; but he said 'No, this is the house of Mr. So-and-so, the pilot.' I

had expected to be driven to a fisherman's cottage, in a low quarter, or in some narrow thoroughfare, and was immensely astonished to find myself where I did. My surprise was still more increased when a neat domestic opened the door, and I was ushered into a cosy sitting-room, with a piano, pictures, books, and other evidences of culture about. When the pilot himself, a gentlemanly-looking man, came in, I said I was afraid I had made some mistake, telling him who I was and what I wanted. He replied that I was quite right: he was the pilot, and that I must make myself at home, as we had plenty of time, the boat not being due yet." The good lady was presently introduced to the pilot's wife, tea was set before her in dainty china, and then, something like an hour having elapsed, the pilot said it was time to be going, and after a short run in a small steam launch, they were on board.

This is no fancy picture, but a reality; and the idea it conveys as to what a Thames pilot's social position is will come as a surprise to many, no less than to the worthy captain's wife. It must not be imagined, however, that all pilots are like this one. There are, as one may say, pilots of high and of low degree—pilots who take charge of the

humbler craft that ply along the coasts, and pilots of the more leviathan structures that do their business in the great waters, going to and from the ends of the earth, carrying hundreds of passengers and thousands of pounds' worth of freight and specie.

It may not be generally known that the pilot is in reality a State official, owing his position to Government appointment, superintended by Government authorities, and all his acts and doings watched with scrupulous and almost jealous care. His wages are regulated, too, to some extent by Government, and when he has earned them they cannot all be said to be his. In short, the pilot works under special and very rigid Acts of Parliament, and though his masters are not the same all over the country, he is controlled by the same rules.

As to those "masters," they are, in what we may call the London district, which is the most important one in the three kingdoms, the Elder Brethren of the Trinity House. This is a society incorporated in 1514 by Henry VIII. for the promotion of commerce and navigation, by licensing and regulating pilots, and erecting and ordering lighthouses, beacons, buoys, etc.; and consists of a Master, Deputy Master, a certain number of acting Elder Brethren, and an unlimited number of Younger Brethren; the Master and honorary Elder Brethren being chosen on account of eminent social position, and the other members from officers of the Navy or the merchant service.

But while the Trinity House has a general supervision over the corporations which have charge of the lighthouses and buoys of Scotland and Ireland, it has the appointment of pilots on certain parts of the English coasts only, other parts and districts having their own local Trinity Houses or corporations for the control of pilotage. As, however, London is the chief maritime centre in the world, and the estuary of the Thames, and the waters leading thereto, are among the most difficult and dangerous known to seamen, this article will be in the main

devoted to those pilots who come directly under the province of the Trinity House of London.

As it is at the old house of the Brethren on Tower Hill that the pilots undergo their examinations and obtain their licenses, it is fitting that our description should begin with a brief survey of the service from the headquarters point of view. The chief official at the Trinity House (under the Elder Brethren), for the pilotage department, and whose name is as a household word to all the pilots in the service, is Mr. David Keigwin, who has been intimately connected with the department for the last fifty years. If there is anyone, therefore, who may be said to have at his fingers' ends all the ins and outs of matters relating to pilotry — and it is a most intricate subject — that man is Mr. Keigwin. He is suffused, so to speak, with pilotry, and he has only to be plied with a few judicious questions in order to extract from him most, if not all, he knows on the subject — not excluding even the gist and tenor of numberless Acts of Parliament.

With these latter, however, we shall have little to do in this article, except in so far as it is necessary to quote them in order to make clear the duties of the pilot, although this in the main will be done from the mouths of the men themselves. But in the first

place it should be stated what constitutes a pilot, and how he is constituted such. These were the first two questions put to Mr. Keigwin, and as his reply to the second question answers both, it will suffice to give that.

In brief, then, a man must have served as mate for three years on board of, or have been one year in actual command of, a square-rigged vessel of not less than eighty tons register for the North Channel upwards, or not less than 150 tons register for the North Channel downwards, or for any of the South Channels; must have been employed in the pilotage or buoyage service of the Trinity House for seven years, and have served in addition two years in a square-



MR. DAVID KEIGWIN
(Principal Clerk of the Pilotage Department,
Trinity House.)

From a Photo. by Boning & Small, Baker Street.

rigged vessel, or have served an apprenticeship of five years to some licensed pilot vessel, and also two years in a square-rigged vessel, before he can become a pilot for the London district.

What is known as the London pilotage district extends from Orfordness on the north to the Isle of Wight on the south. But there are also under the jurisdiction of the Trinity House a number of so-called outport districts, extending from Rye round the south coast as far as Milford, besides Carlisle, Barrow, Holyhead, and other places on the west coast. The qualifications necessary for these outport duties are much the same as for the London district, except that for the London district no man can be appointed who has passed the age of thirty-five, whereas in the outport districts pilots may be licensed after that age in certain circumstances.

Any man having these several qualifications, or intending so to qualify himself, may become a candidate for the pilot service. But this is not all that is required of him. These represent only the general qualifications; the special ones required of him are that he shall be thoroughly conversant with the channels for which he desires to act as pilot; which for the London district means that he must have a thorough knowledge of the various channels of the estuary of the Thames, and of the waters leading thereto; or, if he wishes to be a river pilot only, of the Thames from Gravesend to London Bridge.

But here it is necessary to discriminate between the different classes of pilots. For the London district, then, there are:—

(1.) River pilots, who are licensed to take vessels from Gravesend to London Bridge, or *vice-versâ*.

(2.) Outward pilots, who are licensed to take vessels from Gravesend to sea; and

(3.) Inward pilots, who are licensed to bring vessels from the sea to Gravesend.

But there are again differences and distinctions in these three classes. For instance, among the pilots who ply their trade between Gravesend and London, there are three separate categories: compulsory pilots, pilots for exempt ships, and home-trade steam passenger pilots—of which I shall have more to say anon. Then among the outward and inward pilots there are differences in degree and in extent of license. Thus, when a man first goes up for examination in order to be passed as a pilot, he has to choose either the North or the South Channel of the Thames. If he chooses the South Channel, and he

passes, he is licensed to take charge of any ship drawing not more than fourteen feet of water in that channel or in any of the channels leading thereto or therefrom; but at the expiration of three years he may go up for re-examination, after which he is able to take charge of vessels of any draught in those channels. After a man has served as pilot two years in the South Channel, he may go up and pass his examination for the North Channel, when he is licensed for vessels of fourteen feet draught and under for that channel. Thus it takes him five years to obtain full qualifications for an outward and inward pilot. Some, however, go a step farther than this, and pass an examination for the Isle of Wight, whereupon they are able to pilot a vessel as far as that island. There are some, however, who never pass for more than one channel—it may be either north or south.

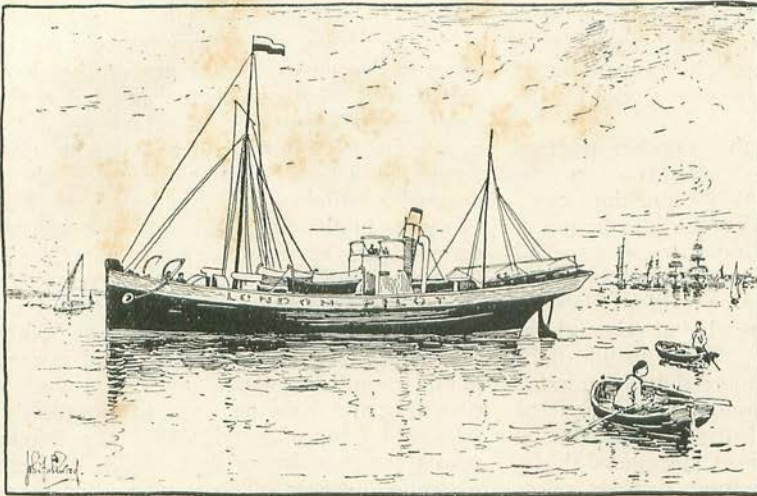
“Formerly,” said Mr. Keigwin, “a man might act both as outward and as inward pilot, taking a vessel out and then waiting on the station for an inward-bound ship and pilot her to Gravesend, or *vice-versâ*; but that system was found to be so unfavourable, especially to the cruising pilots, that in 1886 it was done away with; and now a pilot taking a vessel out, either by the North or the South Channel, is not allowed to bring one back.”

“How does he get back, then?”

“He returns by train.”

It should be explained here, perhaps, how the system works. The outward sea pilots are stationed at Gravesend, which is probably the largest pilot station in the world, the staff of river and sea pilots permanently stationed there numbering upwards of 300. The river pilots bring the vessels down from London to Gravesend, where they hand them over to the sea pilots. These, if the vessel is bound north—that is, to the Baltic or North Sea ports—carry her by the North Channel as far as the Sunk Light, or Orfordness, on the Suffolk coast, and there leave her, being put on shore by one of the pilot cutters that are always cruising on that station, in order to intercept ships coming from the north.

If the vessel be southward bound, she is taken away from the Thames by the South Channel, the pilot quitting her at the Downs, at Dover, or at the Isle of Wight, whence he returns home by train. Formerly, there were four cutters constantly cruising between Dungeness and South Foreland, to meet the needs of the inward service, as at Orfordness; but two or three years ago



From a sketch by [unclear]

STEAM CUTTER PILOT.

[John Pultwood.]

they were replaced by two steamers. When a vessel comes up wanting a pilot she is supplied with one from the steamer on duty, which is kept fed with pilots by one of the old cutters, each pilot going off in rotation. Like the outward pilot, the inward pilot returns home by train.

Asked why the system by which the outward pilot could also take a vessel inward was done away with, Mr. Keigwin said:—

“Well, as a matter of fact, because certain men took all the cream of the work. But I can best explain the thing by letting you into another peculiarity of the pilot system. There are among sea, as well as among river pilots, what are called ‘choice’ men, that is, men who are chosen by companies having a large number of vessels, such as the P. and O., the Orient, and other lines, to do all their pilot work. These men have the pick of the service; they have their own regular boats, and whatever other work they can get in between in addition. Thus, one might take one of his own boats down to the Isle of Wight, Plymouth, etc., and then ship on board a vessel coming up, and so deprive one of the ‘turn’ men, as they are called, of a turn. Hence, in fairness to the ‘turn’ men, the system was done away with.”

“According to this, then, the pilots are not paid by salary, but for work done?”

“For work done, certainly.”

“And how are they paid?”

“There is a regular fixed scale of charges, reckoned by draught of water and by distance, and any deviation from this scale is punishable by fine or suspension.”

“And what will be the average income of a pilot?”

“That is hard to say—they vary so considerably. As I have already said, the ‘choice’ men take the pick of the work, and some of them enjoy a very handsome income. Look at this: it will show you what the men’s incomes are better than I can tell you.”

The document produced was the report of a committee

of inquiry into the system above referred to, and now abolished. According to it, in the year 1886 two men employed by the P. and O. Company earned respectively £1,656 and £1,635. One of the two British India Company’s pilots earned £1,579, and three others (‘choice’ men) earned respectively £1,332, £1,159, and £1,032, less expenses. Out of the whole number of London pilots, fifty-seven earned over £300, whilst of the Cinque Ports pilots (those plying off Dungeness) only one earned £400, the majority earning between £200 and £300. The following scale shows the earnings of the London pilots in a still better light:—

6 Men earned over	£1,000	
9 Men earned between	£700 and	£1,000
6 “ “ “ “	£600 “	£700
11 “ “ “ “	£500 “	£600
11 “ “ “ “	£400 “	£500
14 “ “ “ “	£300 “	£400
18 “ “ “ “	£200 “	£300
13 “ “ “ “	£100 “	£200
6 Men earned under	£100	

In the same year outward pilotage earnings, between Gravesend and the sea, in both North and South Channels, and inward pilotage through the South Channels, amounted to about £70,217, being an average of £337 per man. Of this sum rather more than one-eighth, or £8,393, was earned by six men alone out of two hundred and sixteen.

Asked if all vessels coming into the Thames were obliged to take pilots, Mr. Keigwin answered that they were not. “This,” he continued, “is one of the difficulties of the pilotage system. Shipowners, not liking to pay the pilot charges, have

obtained exemptions from time to time by putting on board captains or mates who have passed the necessary examinations and obtained pilotage certificates. These exemptions, however, relate principally to the North Channel, and chiefly concern home-trade and coasting vessels and colliers. All vessels from ports south of Brest approaching by the South Channels are obliged to take pilots on board; and in any case, if even an exempt vessel employs a pilot, he must be a duly licensed man. There are heavy penalties for employing an unlicensed man. In spite of all the precautions and the great cost taken to prevent irregularity, however, a good deal of evasion of the law takes place in this respect. There are always a lot of men—men who, for the most part, have failed to pass as authorized pilots, and, in other respects, men without character—who are always about, ready to take ships in or out for a lower price than the licensed pilots, and who are, therefore, ever welcome to a certain class of masters of vessels. These men are well known, and, though they are constantly being prosecuted for illicit piloting, they still continue their practices."

Some amusing stories are told of these men and their shifts. One instance is worth relating. The worthy in question has been times and again before the magistrates, but all to no purpose. Though he has repeatedly gone on to his knees to them and implored forgiveness, promising not to offend again, yet he has immediately returned to his old practices. Not so long ago he went to the pilots in charge of a cutter, and said if they would put him on board a vessel just steaming out, he would point out to them an unlicensed man who was on board. Pilots are always pleased to have a chance of convicting those who are poaching on their preserves, and so they accepted his offer. But as soon as they came alongside the steamer the tricky fellow skipped on board, at the same time giving the cutter a shove with his foot that sent it yards away, and before the crew could recover command the vessel was too far off for them to do anything. Having thus, by a ruse, got on board free when he had not the means to hire a boat, he carried the vessel out to the Sunk Light; and then by another trick, that is, by giving the name of a licensed pilot, he secured a free run to shore in one of the pilot cutters. Of course, the men owning the cutter could have sued him for their fee, but they knew it was no good, as he had nothing wherewith to pay.

"And as to the relations of the pilots

to the Trinity House. What is their position in regard to it, Mr. Keigwin?"

"It is their governing body. All irregularities have to be reported here, and for any violation of the rules of the service a man's license can be suspended. Then a pilot has to report, through the head of his district, all his earnings. This is in part to show that he is working according to scale, but also for the reason that he—that is, the compulsory sea and river pilot—has to pay a percentage of his earnings towards the fund for management and pensions."

"What is the pension?"

"It is at the rate of a pound a year for every year that he has been in the pilot service. The 'exempt' pilots, that is, pilots for exempt ships, neither pay to nor receive any benefit from the fund.

"I have a letter here," continued Mr. Keigwin, "that may be of interest to you. It is from Sir John Franklin—possibly the last he ever wrote—asking for pilots to take out the ships of his ill-fated expedition."

The letter in question is so interesting, never having been published, that we reproduce it in *facsimile* on the next page.

Having giving all these particulars of the pilotage system in general, it is now time to go into the subject more in detail, and to present the *dramatis personæ*, so to speak, *in propria personâ*; in other words, to introduce a few of the pilots themselves. And to do this we cannot do better than take a run down to Gravesend, the headquarters of the London district. As already stated, there are some hundreds of pilots stationed here, where they have for headquarters the Royal Terrace Pier, which is their own property, purchased, repaired, refurbished, and, I may add, reopened (with civic honours, too) at their own expense within a few months past. Here, any day and at any time of the day or night, may be seen scores of pilots, full-blown and in the making, by anyone who wishes to examine samples of the craft. But if he wishes to "sample" them according to their rank and status, he must obtain permission to see them and speak with them in their several quarters or offices. For each kind of pilot has its separate "house," just like the Lords and Commons, and the member of one body has no place or lot in the house of the other.

The "house" of the compulsory river pilot is at the end of the pier, and on the side looking towards the sea. Here the men next on the roster for duty are in attendance; and there are generally two or three scanning

the horizon for incoming ships. To one of these I said: "I suppose you know the ship you have to take up when you see her?"

"Oh, yes," was the reply.

"And in the night?"

"We know her by her lights, and by her whistle."

"Oh, she whistles for you, does she?"

"Yes."

"And each one has a distinctive whistle?"

"Yes, mine gives a crow and two yaps."

The office of the sea pilots is on the opposite side of the pier to the compulsory river pilots, and, of course, looks up the river, whence, naturally, come the vessels that they have to take out to sea. Other offices are allocated severally to the exempt river pilots (that is, pilots who take up vessels that are not compelled to employ pilots), and to home-trade steam passenger pilots. This is another class composed of men who are freemen of the Watermen's Company, and are licensed to pilot home-trade steam passenger ships up and down the Thames between London Bridge and Gravesend.

Here, too, the "Ruler" of the pilots has his headquarters. It is through him that all business has to be transacted with Trinity House, and through him come all communications therefrom to the men. The present Ruler, Captain Ronaldson, has held the office for nineteen years. He is one of the Younger Brethren of the Trinity House, and has of course spent years in the mercantile marine. What he does not know, therefore, in connection with the pilot service is not much worth knowing. After kindly piloting me about the pier and showing me the steam launches of the sea and river pilots, the Ruler patiently laid himself out to be

*A Mr. J. P. Erbeus
Greenhithe 15th May 1845.*

Sir

*A Mr. J. P. Erbeus & Term
being about to leave this River -
I request you will be pleased to cause
an experienced Pilot to be sent to
accompany ^{at this place} each vessel with directions
to be ordered by Saturday afternoon*

*Shew the honor to the
Sir*

*John Franklin
humble servant*

*John Franklin Captain &
London Office House*

*The Secretary
of the Trinity House*

FACSIMILE OF SIR JOHN FRANKLIN'S LETTER.

questioned and otherwise "pumped" for information.

"You know," he said, "that between here and London Bridge we have three classes of pilots—the compulsory river pilot, the pilots for exempt ships not carrying passengers, and the pilots for home-trade passenger steamers. The compulsory men, sea and river, cannot enter after thirty-five, and they have to pay 5 per cent. of their earnings to the Trinity House—2½ towards management and 2½ for superannuation. This entitles them to a pension of £1 a year for each year's service; that is, after forty years'



ROYAL TERRACE PIER, GRAVESEND. HEADQUARTERS OF THE SEA AND RIVER PILOTS.

service, they will get £40 a year. The compulsory pilots have an office, a launch, etc., found for them; the exempt men have to find and pay for these things for themselves. Then, compulsory pilots are liable to be mulcted in damages to the extent of £100 if injury is occasioned by their carelessness."

"Are they ever called upon to pay it?"

"Yes, every now and again such a case occurs."

"How many pilots have you here?"

"About sixty compulsory river pilots, about one hundred 'exempt' pilots, twenty-five home-trade passenger pilots, and between eighty and one hundred sea-going pilots. The latter are divided into North and South Channel pilots, and some are licensed to the Isle of Wight. Thus there are the 'choice' and 'turn' men—both river and sea. The 'choice' men are always looking after 'choice' work. They are selected by the companies to attend to their ships; large companies always do in that way. Some of the 'choice' men would look down upon 'turn' work. Their names are on the roster, but they cannot take a turn: they are so far ahead on the list that if they were discharged by the companies, some of them would have to wait for years for a turn."

"That is because they get so many more vessels than the 'turn' men?"

"Yes."

"And what is your special duty, Captain Ronaldson?"

"My business is to settle any grievances that crop up. I have to see that everything is carried

out properly. Any complaint a pilot has to make is made to me. If they do not like what I decide, I have to send the complaint up to the Trinity House. All the big seaports have a ruler; the smaller ones have a special commissioner, who is generally connected with the Custom House."

"How many vessels requiring pilots pass here in a month?"

"Of vessels going to sea there must be on an average four or five hundred. Things, however, are so bad just now that a large number of steamers are laid up."

"When a pilot has taken a ship to Dungeness or to the Sunk Light, how does he get on shore?"

"My men have virtually to find their own landing. They are entitled to charge £1 for landing. They usually leave southward-going vessels at the Downs or Dover. There are generally boats looking out for them. Out of vessels going north, the pilots are, for the most part, taken by the cutters cruising off the Sunk Lightship, and run into Harwich. From Dover and Harwich they have, of course, to return by train."

"How many pilots will leave here in a day?"

"The number varies. If there is a glut of shipping going out, it takes pretty well all the men we have at command. I have known as many as ninety vessels wanting pilots to go up the river at once."

My next talk was with Mr. Thomas Rhodes, who resides in a pleasant outskirts of Gravesend, and presents nothing of the "rough, weather-beaten fisherman" type of pilot.



CAPTAIN RONALDSON.

From a Photo. by F. C. Gould & Son, Gravesend.

He was going on board an outward-bound P. and O. boat in the course of an hour, but willingly chatted for half that time in his pleasant parlour over things relating to pilots and their trade.

"You know," he said, "our life is arduous, responsible, and hazardous. People on shore, I am sorry to say, very seldom recognise this. Not seeing us piloting ships through the streets of London, they think all we have to do is to get our orders, and come on shore and cash them. It has been my lot, however, to pilot out large steamers, on board which were personages of rank and importance, even members of the Cabinet; and when they have seen us at work, while they have acknowledged that some of us are fairly well paid, they have said they would not undertake the life for twice as much. It is sometimes my duty to take to sea one or other of those beautiful ships that are like floating palaces; and never do I do so but I think of the awful responsibility resting upon me, seeing the number of precious lives we carry, to say nothing of the specie, sometimes amounting in value to half a million. Often this has to be done in hazy weather, when the slightest error in judgment or want of forethought would lead to great sacrifice of life and loss of property. I know of nothing that requires more coolness and nerve than to take one of these leviathans through the crowded English Channel, especially in dirty weather."

"Do all the large companies adopt this method of having special or 'choice' men to do their piloting?"

"I should say all. Certainly all the large ocean-going companies employ these expert men to conduct their ships in safety to the broader waters of the Channel leading to the ocean. Their feeling of the importance and the necessity of having expert pilots on board

is shown by the ships actually calling in some port in the Channel to take up their pilot."

"What is the worst condition of weather you have to do with?"

"Fog, undoubtedly. It is then that all the nerve you possess is required. You are compelled to run some risk, and no one but the pilot knows how much risk you do run."

"I was told the other day—not by a pilot, however—of a narrow risk run by one of those palace steamships to which you have referred, and should like to ask you if you have known anything like it."

"What was it?"

"She was going down the Channel, and was somewhere off Southend, when for some reason she touched ground. It was night, and the tide was running out: there was no hope of getting her clear until the return of high water. She began to list a little; and the fear was lest, when the tide was right out, the water should not be sufficient to prevent the list from becoming greater. In short, the ship was in such a critical position that she was in the gravest danger of heeling quite over. Had this happened, the loss of life must have been terrific, as there were something like two hundred first-class passengers on board. The pilot

kept his head, however, and ordered the anchor to be lowered; and the captain, none the less cool and collected, went below and suggested music and a dance. In this he had two objects in view: first, to keep the passengers from inquiring into the reason of the ship's being at anchor, and so to obviate a panic; and secondly, to prevent as many as possible from going to bed, since, in case of disaster, the loss of life would be greater if the people were surprised whilst asleep."

"Both the captain and the pilot evidently knew what they were about; but they must have had an anxious night of it."

"Yes: the captain said he never spent



MR. THOMAS RHODES.

From a Photo. by J. Wille, Gravesend.

such a night in his life, although he had had some rough experiences during his twenty years at sea. He was up and down between the deck and the saloon all the time, watching the tide on one hand, and encouraging the dancers on the other. As soon as the tide was fairly on the turn, his anxiety lessened, and he told the dancers they had better go to bed. Towards morning the ship floated and proceeded on her way; but from that day to this the passengers never knew of the imminent peril they ran during the hours of their merrymaking."

"It is a likely enough thing to happen, and I have heard of something very similar. In the case I refer to the ship met another steamer, and in complying with the rule of the road, she was placed in such a position that she was obliged to run one of two risks—that of going ashore or of being sunk. The pilot acted upon his matured judgment, and chose the lesser of the two evils. The anchor was ordered to be let go, in order to deceive the passengers with the idea that they were simply waiting for the tide. We have frequently to run the risk of the ships grounding in order to avoid a collision."

In reply to a question as to how long he would be with the ship he was just going to take out, Mr. Rhodes said: "I shall pilot her to the Isle of Wight, which is usually a run of about twenty-four hours, though sometimes it may extend to thirty-six. Piloting is

very different now to what it was formerly, when we had to do chiefly with sailing vessels. Even now, when taking out a sailer, you may be on board two or three weeks; it all depends on the weather; but, shorter or longer, you get no more for the job. I remember the time when the skipper used to keep the last porker or the last fowl for the pilot; and when he came on board the first question was, 'What's the news?' But everything is changed now, and though things are done with more speed, the risk is greater and the anxiety is greater. Personally we have to run so much risk, especially in leaving ships, that, although some of us may be well paid, yet on the whole piloting can hardly be said to pay for the danger incurred. In my time many pilots have lost their lives in following their calling. I have piloted ships on which there have been old and experienced sailors, and after taking careful notice of the work required of us, they have said, again and again, that whatever some may get, generally pilots do not receive enough."

Incidentally, Mr. Rhodes remarked that he thought it was a pity the authorities could not see their way to give them a clear channel of 130ft. from the docks to the sea. It was, he said, quite feasible; and in the crowded state of the river, it would not only be the means of saving much time, but of doing away with much risk.

Pilots.

BY ALFRED T. STORY.

II.



R. J. T. POSGATE, another "choice" pilot, employed by the Orient Company, when asked if he had any information to give about piloting, at once remarked: "Well, I can tell you of two or three incidents that may be interesting to you. One is this: After the Franco-German War, when it was a question of bringing their prisoners from Germany, the French Government applied to Trinity House through the Foreign Office for a supply of London pilots to conduct the vessels containing them from the ports of Hamburg and Bremen to French ports. The state of affairs in France was such that they did not know whom they could trust. The Trinity House replied that their pilots were for the English coast only; but the answer to that was that they knew the English pilots, and could trust them. They asked for twelve, and six were granted them; and these men ran the vessels, loaded with prisoners, to Havre, Boulogne, and Cherbourg. We are, of course, supposed to know the line of the French coast as well as our own.*

"Here is another little incident that may be of interest to you. While the war was in progress, as you may remember, M. Thiers came to England to try to get our Government to use its good offices with Germany in behalf of peace. He came in one of the Imperial men-of-war, and anchored off Gravesend, going up to London by train. One of our pilots was especially engaged to conduct her in and out. When M. Thiers's mission was concluded, the pilot was ordered to take her to the Downs; there she was met by another French vessel, which sent despatches on board. Then the pilot was approached and requested to take the ship over to Cherbourg, and great was the captain's surprise when he declined. The fact is,



MR. J. T. POSGATE.
From a Photo, by A. Caccia, Le Havre.

when war was declared we all received from the Trinity House a printed notice, informing us that we were not to conduct ships of either of the belligerents beyond the three miles limit. This the pilot produced to show the reason for his refusal. Neither the captain nor his officers appeared to be able to make it out. Then M. Thiers was brought on to the bridge and shown the document. He perused it very carefully, and then said: "Ah, yes; he is right; he is not allowed to come." The vessel then proceeded without him.

"You know, of course, that a Trinity House pilot can, in case of war, be drafted on board Her Majesty's ships to pilot them wherever required. In 1854 a large body of London pilots were drafted on board men-of-war bound for the Baltic."

"But what good would a Thames pilot be in the Baltic?"

"Well, in the first place, a man who is experienced in the navigation of narrow channels, estuaries, and the like, is a safe man to have on board in similar navigation, because he knows the methods; and, in the second, most of the London pilots, during their years of active service at sea, have gained considerable knowledge of the North Sea and Baltic ports, and of their navigation generally."

"And as to your personal experience, Mr. Posgate?"

"I have been very fortunate. I did once run over a Danish vessel. She had no lights on. We put her owners in the Admiralty Court and got £900 damages. There is not now anything like the hardship that there used to be in the time of sailing vessels; steamers have relieved us of much of that; but the anxiety of the pilot has been greatly increased because of the

immense size of the vessels and the narrow waters we have to navigate them through. Then the traffic is so enormous—and it is growing continually—that it makes the navigation very dangerous, especially with the big ships."

"And you have no 'yarns,' Mr. Posgate?"

"No; that is, if you mean by that a specially sensational incident. For an event

*By 43 George III., the Lord Warden is required to make regulations for pilots taking charge of His Majesty's ships on the coasts of France, Flanders, Holland, and in the Baltic.

of that kind you must go to my brother; he can give you the most stirring adventure of that sort that I have ever heard. The most striking thing that I have experienced in that way was on board one of the New Zealand boats a few years ago, when we were struck by a blizzard. I shall never forget that blizzard. Blowing great guns was nothing to it. We were in no special danger that I know of, and yet some of the passengers who were on board went on shore at Plymouth, and would have no more of it. One lady was going out to her husband at Gibraltar, but she refused to proceed, deciding to go overland. I represented to her that the storm was now over, and that she would be with her husband much sooner by travelling with the ship than by going by train through France and Spain. But nothing would induce her to go on board again. 'No,' said she; she had had enough of it, and preferred to forfeit her passage-money.

"There is another little incident that may be interesting to you. You know from time to time there has been a good deal of talk about abolishing compulsory pilotage; the ship-masters grumble at the charges, and think they could reduce them if compulsory pilotages were abolished. And so no doubt they could—in fine weather. But there is where the moral of my story comes in. Some years ago, when the question was being warmly agitated, I was on board a vessel making for Liverpool. It was a nasty night, and we were beating up off Point Lynas, at the corner of Holyhead, on the lookout for a pilot. There was such a storm blowing that we hardly expected to meet with one—and little would they have been to blame if they had kept at home on such a night! But presently we saw two cutters beating up towards us, and after a good deal of difficulty we got a pilot on board. He was a fine, handsome, intelligent fellow, and I remember in the morning, when the storm had abated and we were chatting together, the question of the abolition of compulsory pilotage was touched upon, whereupon the pilot said, with a smile: 'Let them abolish it! For a night like last night we should have wanted £200

to come aboard your ship.' And now you had better get my brother's yarn."

Mr. Richard Posgate was found at home, in a comfortable house overlooking the river with its multitudinous shipping. He did not plead, like the "needy knife-grinder," that he had no story, but when the name of the ship *Pareora* was mentioned, began at once to narrate his adventure.

"Yes," he cried, "I know the *Pareora*; she was a large passenger ship belonging to the New Zealand Shipping Company; and I remember the circumstance to which my brother refers. It occurred in November, 1881, as we were going down the Channel. Practically, I had done with the ship, as we had reached the Downs; but the captain asked me to stop by him for protection, as a gale came on in the afternoon, and it threatened to be a dirty night. And well it was that I did remain with him, otherwise he would never have weathered that night. I had brought the *Pareora* up in the Downs with a single anchor; but on the gale increasing, I gave orders for the second anchor to be let go, and veered out nearly all our cable. Long before midnight it was blowing a terrific gale, and was as black as pitch. Suddenly I saw two vessels close upon us: one was the *British Navy*, a large merchant ship, which foundered during the night



MR. RICHARD POSGATE.
From a Photo. by Brown, Barnes, & Bell.

and drowned twenty of her crew; the other was the *Larnaca*, of Liverpool, both large sailing ships. Presently I saw the *Larnaca's* second anchor had parted, and that she was driving upon us. She came athwart our hawse and parted our cables. When I saw what was going to happen I was on the fo'c's's'le. I saw there was no time to lose when she was on our cables, and I gave orders to slip our cable chains. This was done, and we parted. If we had not been prepared to do this we should undoubtedly have collided, and probably have gone down.

"The carpenter said to me the next day, 'I couldn't make it out, sir, why you wanted to arrange so as to slip the cables so easily; but I see now.'

"It was well for us that we were prepared. We had then a lot of ships to contend with.

We had our foresail, foretopsail, and a jib blown out, and were going broadside on to the sand. I called out for some of the men to go up and cut away the foretopsail, which was blowing loose; but all refused to go aloft. They asked: 'Have we time to get down again before she goes on the sand?' Said I, 'It doesn't matter where you are when she strikes, for not a man of you will outlive it.' They finally went up and cut away the sails; that saved us, and we cleared the sand, just touching the spit of it. There was an awful sea on, which struck our rudder and carried our wheel clean away. But we got clear into the North Sea, where we drove before the wind four or five days. When the storm moderated, we worked our way down again to the mouth of the Thames, and the same tug that took us out of the river met us again near the Kentish Knock, and brought us back to Gravesend to refit, as we had neither anchors nor chains. Phillimore—in the Admiralty Court—awarded the tug £2,000 for the service rendered to the ship. That was the most ticklish bit of business I have experienced."

"That is certainly a good yarn."

"I daresay some of the pilots have told you of Mr. Letten's exploit in 1891. It was a splendid bit of work, and one of the insurance companies presented him with a gold watch for it. He was on the *Ariadne*, and was sheltering in the Downs, the tide running N.E., and hard squalls of wind blowing from the W.S.W. The ship had just let go her port anchor off Deal Castle, and about sixty fathoms of cable had been put out into the water, when suddenly the windlass pawl-wheel broke in two, disabling the windlass, and causing the chain cable to run out its full length and part. The *Ariadne* was then driving athwart another vessel, and the starboard anchor was let go, but the chain parted at the end lashing. The ship's head, however, was checked round, and by manœuvring the yards, and hoisting the foretopmast staysail, she was kept clear of the shipping, but continued to drive towards the Breaksand. Signal was then made for a steam tug, and the *Burma*, of London, came and took hold of her, towing her into

the Gull Stream, and proceeding with her towards the North Foreland. The captain of the *Ariadne* said it was a marvel how Letten managed to keep her clear of all the shipping."

The next man to whom I was introduced was Mr. A. J. Couves, a sea-going pilot; he said he was nine years captain of a merchant vessel before he became a pilot, and he had been sixteen years in that service. He considered, so far as the pilot himself was concerned, that no danger that he ran was equal to the peril of the landing. The danger attending that was sometimes terrible. The worst landing was at the Isle of Wight. "There," said he, "we have to go from the ship to the cutter in a little cockshell of a punt no longer than this table" (an office table not more than 5ft. in length), "and that often in the teeth of a gale. I daresay you know that a pilot and two boatmen were drowned in May last when landing from a vessel."

Asked as to the character of the navigation of the Thames, Mr. Couves said he had seen most of the principal ports of the world, and he considered that of the Thames was the most difficult of any. "From London Bridge to Dungeness," he said, "is 110 miles, and the whole of that navigation is intricate and difficult in the extreme. In some parts the width of the channel is not the length of the ship you are piloting. There is no port in



MR. A. J. COUVES.

From a Photo. by F. C. Gould & Son, Gravesend.

the world that has got a quarter the length of intricate navigation. You are constantly on the stretch. You cannot even go below to get your dinner. We never think of leaving the deck between here and the Isle of Wight. That is about eighteen hours on your legs, and twenty-four or twenty-five before you get home. I have been very fortunate. I have twice touched ground, but never had an accident. I saw the collision between the *Borderer* and a collier in this reach. The collier went down end on. When she touched bottom her bowsprit stood bolt upright, but the instant she touched it fell forward and disappeared. Several lives were lost. The tug that was towing my ship, the *Grecian*, of the Allen line, saved about twenty men. One man died on board the tug.

"Formerly," continued Mr. Couves, "the same pilot took ships from London Bridge to the Downs and to the Isle of Wight; but since 1854 no more licenses of that kind have been granted, and there is only one man left who still holds one: that is Mr. Thomas Martin, who is a town councillor and a J.P." Mr. Couves himself, it should be added, is a town councillor and churchwarden.

Mr. Frederick Pattison, the oldest of the compulsory river pilots, and, like Mr. Couves, holding office in the town, said the danger of the river pilot was the fog, and the smoke from the cement works in Northfleet Reach, which was often as bad as fog. Sometimes they would have a fog that would last for twenty-four hours. Then they were placed between two perils—that of colliding with some other vessel if they went on, and that of grounding if they stopped.

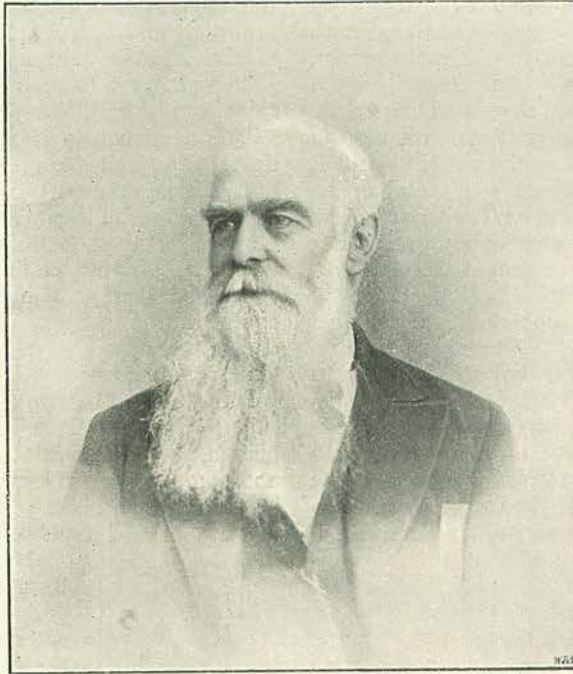
Questioned as to the rule in case of fog, Mr. Pattison said: "The rule is that you must not go on if there is fog; and yet it is very hard to obey the rule at times, because you know if you stop you will go aground."

"How is that?"

"Because the river is so narrow, and, in places, so shallow. Moreover, the traffic is so enormous. It is no uncommon thing to pass five or six hundred vessels on your way up to London Bridge, to say nothing of the dumb barges."

"What are dumb barges?"

"The barges that have no sails we call dumb barges, or dummies. They go up and down with the tide, large sweeps being the only propelling power they have. Sometimes we have to thread our way through three or four hundred of them. There is another thing you may mention as greatly adding to the difficulties of the navigation, and that is



MR. THOMAS MARTIN, J.P.
From a Photo. by J. Willis, Gravesend.

the dredging. The dredging of the Thames is simply a disgrace to the community. In fact, there is no dredging, properly speaking."

On this point all the river pilots were unanimous: there was not a dissentient voice; although many betrayed great hesitancy as to allowing statements to go forth in their names. The general complaint was that the dredging was partial, and was done rather for the purpose of getting gravel to sell for building purposes than to

clear obstructions from the river. Then, the machinery was condemned as insufficient.

"There is one dredger," said Mr. Pattison, "that is at least ninety years old. I have known it on the river for fifty years myself, and when I first knew it 'twas said to be about forty years old."



MR. FREDERICK PATTISON.
From a Photo. by J. Willis, Gravesend.

"It is simply pounds, shillings, and pence with the Thames Conservators," said another pilot. "The navigation of the river and the safety of hundreds of ships are sacrificed to

a question of ballast. They won't go where the shallow water is, and they leave the mud at once for gravel. In the next reach, where we have five or six fathoms of water, you will often see five or six dredgers at a time, and there they stick."

Mr. Pattison expressed the opinion that there ought to and might be twenty feet of water at low tide, all the way from Gravesend to the Tower. "Dredging," said he, "should be done to make the river navigable, and not for individual advantage. It should also be done in the summer, and not in the winter. Pilots have constantly to complain of the way in which dredgers are laid up the river in foggy weather."

Much has been said about the Cinque Ports pilots; but it will be necessary to give a little more detail, and that from the lips of members of the corps, in order to make their position clear. Although known as the Cinque Ports pilots, they are in reality Thames pilots. Each of the Cinque Ports, as well as all other small ports, has its local pilots. But the Trinity House Cinque Ports pilots are a body by themselves, just like the sea-going pilots of Gravesend. They have their headquarters at the Pilot House, just off the end of the pier at Dover. Here a number are always on duty, night and day. They have their bunks, in which two or three of them may sleep if necessary, and they have their look-out room, which allows them to sweep the sea with their glasses in every direction. The majority of the Cinque Ports pilots are stationed at Dover, but there are



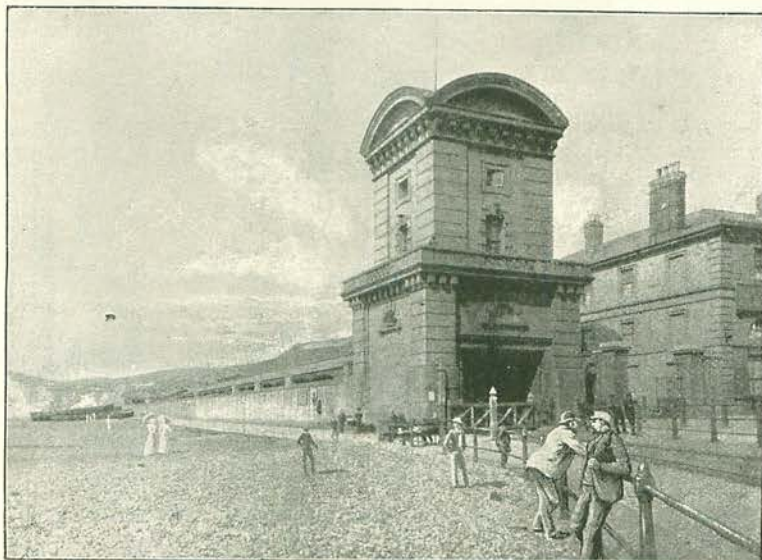
PILOT CUTTER—OLD STYLE.
From a Sketch by Pilot Charrosin.

also a number at Deal (where they have also a look-out station), and several at Ramsgate.

They are divided into "choice" pilots and cruising pilots. The "choice" pilots are, of course, those who are engaged by companies to take charge of their ships; but it is a rule that no man shall be employed by more than one company. These men are not called upon to take their turn on the steam cruiser, and so have much easier times of it than the turn men. Of the latter, from sixteen to twenty are always on board the steamer,

which is kept replenished from shore as the men go off in rotation. She cruises off Dungeness in all weathers, where also French, Dutch, and Belgian pilot cutters may be seen cruising about, making that part of the Channel a scene of busy and picturesque life. The old style of pilot cutter will be seen from the above sketch by Pilot Charrosin.

"Yes," said Mr. Wm. Ransom, one of the pilots stationed at Dover, "it is a



From a

THE PILOT HOUSE—DOVER.

[Photograph.]

very busy part just off Dungeness. You see, all vessels coming up the Channel, whether going to London or to the Dutch ports, make for Dungeness; outward ships, too, make for the same point. Every sailing master's own knowledge is sufficient to bring him to Dungeness; but from there he needs a pilot, or in most cases he does."

Asked as to the system pursued at Dover, Mr. Ransom said: "We keep eighteen men on the steamer, and the next four men on the list are on duty here to catch those ships that pass Dungeness without getting a pilot."

"How do you know when a vessel wants a pilot?"

"A jack on the foremast is the signal for a pilot in the day-time, and a blue flare is the signal by night. We know when a ship has a pilot on board, because we see the pilot flag flying. Every pilot has to carry the red and white flag with him, and hoist it as soon as he gets on board. In addition to that, each Cinque Ports pilot has a private flag, which he hoists under the pilot flag. My private flag is a yellow cross on a red ground; and when I pass here, they know from my flag that I am on board. By this means they can keep count how many have left the steamer, because we all go in regular rotation. But you should see Mr. Henry Foster, he would be able to give you more information than I can. He is the selected pilot for Her Majesty's yacht, the *Victoria and Albert*."

Mr. Foster was found at his residence, and though he was expecting a call to go out, he willingly gave half an hour to a talk about piloting. He had had, he said, seventeen years at sea before he became a pilot, and had visited most parts of the world. During all those years he kept a journal, and to that journal, in no small degree, the boys of England are indebted for many a stirring scene and incident in the late Mr. Kingston's sea-stories. The two were friends, and Mr. Foster's journal was lent to Mr. Kingston to draw from as he liked.

After a few minutes' talk on general matters, I said, "You are the pilot of Her Majesty's yacht, I believe, Mr. Foster?"

"Yes, I am the selected pilot for the *Victoria and Albert*. I was appointed in the Jubilee month, 1887, and I have held



MR. WILLIAM RANSOM
AND HIS FLAG.
From a Photo, by
Alexander Crossman, Dover.



the appointment ever since. Whenever the Queen goes on board I am sent for. Only just recently I took the yacht to Flushing. I can tell you a little incident that is very interesting to me. I fell from the fore-yard on to the deck the night the Queen was married. The curious part of it was, that though I fell about forty feet I was hardly in the least hurt, my fall being broken by a spar. But it was a narrow escape, and it made me very careful ever afterwards. That was my first voyage, and a long one it was, beginning in January, 1840, and finishing May, 1844. The vessel was the *Sussex*, South Sea whaler. I resigned my position as captain of an Indian and China trader in 1856, to become a pilot. Piloting then was much more difficult than it is now. It has been greatly lightened by the introduction of steam, although the responsibility has increased. It



MR. HENRY FOSTER AND HIS FLAG.
(The Queen's Pilot.)

From a Photo, by Austin & Co., Hackney.



was a science to work a sailing ship up the Channel, as we had to take them up by the lead. The substitution of a steamer, too, for

the four cutters that used to cruise off Dungeness is a great improvement. The cruising is done much easier, and we all like it, though we have to pay for our own food on board, which we did not do formerly."

Asked if he had ever had an accident, Mr. Foster said: "I have lost anchors, chains, and masts, and have been on shore, but I have never lost a ship, though I have piloted 1,200. Nor have I ever been called in to question in regard to competency and seamanship.

"Formerly I used to take a good deal of interest in regard to public questions touching pilotry, but now younger men have stepped into my place. When the question of the abolition of compulsory pilotage was before Parliament, I gave much attention to the subject, and spent some days going over Lloyd's Register. I found from it that out of about 60,000 vessels that had come into the Thames in the twenty years previous to 1870, only two had been lost that had Trinity House pilots on board. That is something to say for our pilot service.

"A great many casualties are due to nothing but carelessness. There hardly ever need be a collision if people would be careful. It is only a matter of observing the rule of the road—keeping to the port side. But some of the colliers and some of the companies' ships are reckless in navigation; they do not seem to care whom they run into."

William Collins Harrison, Deal pilot, was found on the water teaching his boys to row, they being destined, like their father, to the salt water. He left them to their divagations in order to come on shore and talk about the Cinque Ports pilots, a member of which body he became in 1866, being originally stationed at Ramsgate. "We begin at Ramsgate," said he, "then, as vacancies occur, we are moved up to Deal and to Dover. There used to be eight pilots at Ramsgate, now there are only three. There is not much call for their services, but it is necessary for some to be there, in case there be a call for them to go on board vessels that have passed the Downs without getting a

pilot. This may occur in foggy or stormy weather, though it does not often happen. In the same way, it is necessary to have a number of men at Deal, in order to serve the vessels that get into the Downs. There are twenty-seven stationed here; but we all have to take our turn on the steamer. In all, the Cinque Ports pilots number eighty-seven. There have been no appointments for some time, because we were too many. It is proposed to reduce the number to eighty, and keep it at that figure.

"Formerly," continued Mr. Harrison, "the Cinque Ports pilots were under the authority of the Lord Warden; but on the death of

the Duke of Wellington they came under the jurisdiction of the Trinity House. While he lived the Duke would have no change.

"All the navigating officers on board Her Majesty's ships are piloting officers to the Downs, and whenever they require a pilot they ask for one from here. The ships of the Channel Squadron are not allowed to have pilots at all, although foreign men-of-war are. All Her Majesty's ships can go in, if they like, without taking a pilot; but if they take one, they pay the regular pilotage dues. A pilot may take a man-of-war in and bring her out, which he cannot do with other

ships. The same rule holds good in regard to Her Majesty's yachts."

"In cruising, I suppose you have to take what comes, in turns?"

"Yes, we have to take what comes, from a line-of-battle ship to a billy-boy. There is no choice in that matter, although I dare say you have heard of our 'choice' system. But it is worked very differently here to what it is at Gravesend. Here we 'pool' all the money, turn or choice, and the system works very well."

"How does the system work?"

"Well, say a man has a turn which comes to £10, and my turn next to him comes to £15, I have to put £5 into a common fund. Then, if the next man's turn does not come to £10, at the end of the month he takes from



MR. WILLIAM COLLINS HARRISON
AND HIS FLAG.

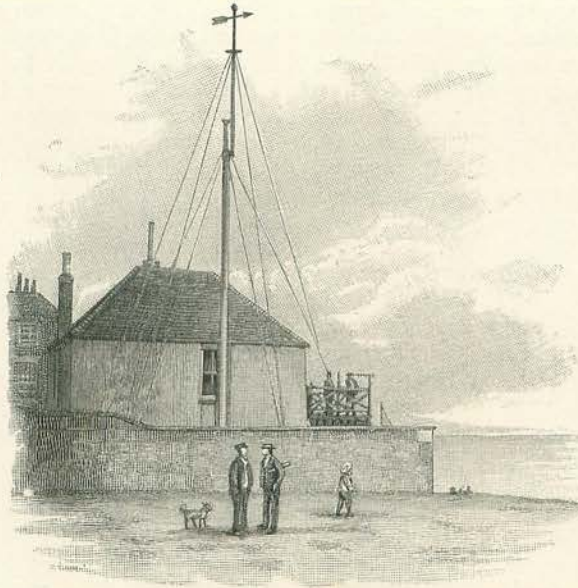
From a Photo. by A. & G. Taylor.



the pool enough to make up that sum. At the end of the quarter, any surplus that remains is shared according to turns; so that if a man has had ten turns in the quarter he gets ten shares; if he has had twelve turns, he gets twelve shares."

Speaking of the dangers of the calling, Mr. Harrison said: "I do not want to magnify the difficulties of piloting, but we go many times on board with our lives in our hands. We have to cruise at Dungeness in all weathers—storm or shine. The steamer is not allowed to anchor under any circumstances, except in dense fog. Occasionally, of course, storms arise when nothing can hold up against them, then you are obliged to run; but so long as it is humanly possible to put a boat off we keep at sea. During the whole of my twenty-eight years' experience I have never known a cutter to anchor except in times of absolute necessity. The service has been greatly improved by the steam cruisers. It used to take us all our time to keep the cutters on the station in bad weather with a lee wind and tide, because we had not enough power to beat up. We had to continue beating up to windward in order to keep the station, as often under water as on the top of it. A greater danger than the cruising, however, was the boating from the cutters to the ship you were going on board in bad weather. I remember once, about 1872, being put from cutter No. 2 on board one of the British India boats in a gale of wind off Dungeness. The weather was so bad that when I came on board the captain said, 'I did not expect to get a pilot; I did not think any boat could live in such a sea. I would rather you had the job than me. I would not have gone into the boat for the ship and all her cargo.' If it had been his duty, however, he would have done it just as I did.

"But it is often ticklish work. The



From a

PILOT HOUSE—DEAL.

[Photograph.]

least hitch and over goes the boat. I have seen cutters jump right on to a boat. She has gone under the lee-bow and come out on the weather-quarter—smashed to pieces, naturally. We have just managed to pull the crew out of the boat before she went under. I have seen some narrow shaves. I remember the *Edinburgh* cutter being run down off Dungeness, in 1879, and ten

pilots drowned. The cruising work is the worst part of our life. When once I get on board a ship, if it is a good one, I feel that my difficulties are largely over."

"And now, as to the pilot charges?"

"That varies according to the size of the ship, and it is charged by stations—from Dover to the Downs, from the Downs to North Foreland, and so on. The charge from Dungeness to Dover is eight shillings, no matter how big the ship. It seems rather absurd, twenty-eight miles for eight shillings! In addition to the pilotage tariff, there is a charge of £2 5s. for boarding: that goes to Trinity House for keeping up the cutter. At Harwich the boarding money is £3 3s.

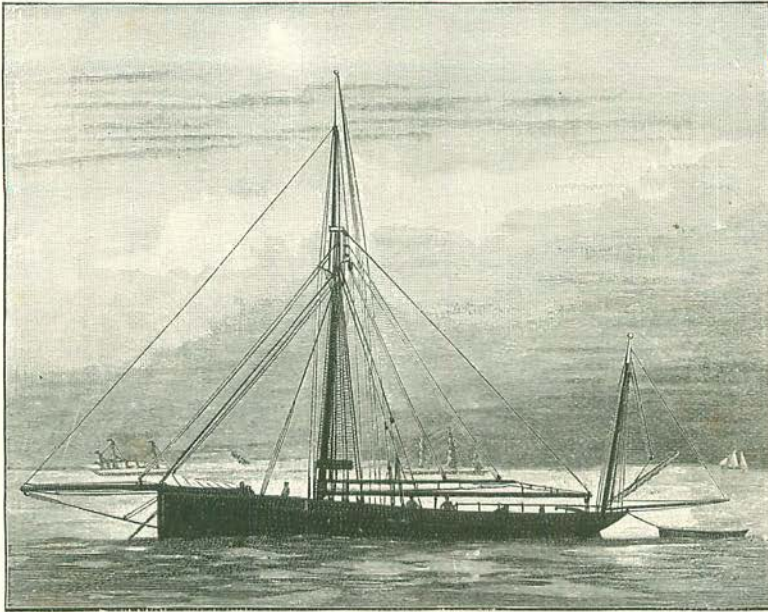
"The average time for taking a ship in is about twelve hours, but I have been detained four, five, and six days. In the old times, when there were more sailing vessels, this was a common thing."

"I suppose piloting has changed very much since then?"

"Very much. I could tell you some amusing stories of those times. I remember on the Australian ships—often full of gold—the arrival on board of the pilot was a great event, and was looked forward to with much curiosity. When you got on board you saw the little children peeping at you, half afraid, between their fathers' legs, as though they expected to see a monster of some sort."

"Perhaps they had heard of pirates as well as pilots, and did not know the difference."

"Perhaps so. Then the passengers used to



From a]

NORTH SEA PILOT CUTTER.

[Drawing.

bet on the pilot—sometimes for a week or two before they reached the Channel. They would lay wagers on his personal appearance, whether he was young or old, dark or fair, short or long, or whether he had a boss-eye or a crooked nose. Or it might be that the bet would be on the manner he came on board. I recollect once, as I was going on board, a lady rushed up to the rail and exclaimed: ‘Oh, pilot, please put your left leg over the rail first!’ She had a bet on, of course. I said, ‘You are not fair, madam,’ and put both legs over at once, and so caused that bet to be off.”

The North Channel pilots are a somewhat different class of men to those at Gravesend and at the Cinque Ports. They seem, if possible, more bronzed and weather-beaten, and they certainly have a rougher time of it; their receipts also, on the whole, are less. There are in all forty-eight Trinity House pilots for the North Channel, and their cruising stations extend from Smith’s Knowl on the north to Orfordness or the Sunk Lightship on the south. This is, of course, to catch all the vessels making for the Thames. The “Sunk,” however, is the chief station, and here two of the eight cutters owned by the North Channel pilots are constantly cruising. But I had better let Mr. S. T. Whitnall, whom I found at Harwich, having just come in with a large steamship, tell the story of the pilots of this coast. After premising that he had

spent twelve years rising from ship-boy to captain, and then had spent another eight years as skipper before he got his license as pilot, he said: “Since I became a pilot I have navigated all classes of vessels, including P. and O. and Castle Line steamers.”

“Your system is different to that existing at Dover, I believe, Mr. Whitnall?”

“Yes, we run our own cutters, and we retain the boarding-money to keep them up

instead of paying it to the Trinity House. We have to add to it also from our earnings. This, together with our keep on board the cutters, our railway fare from Gravesend to Harwich, when we have gone up with a vessel, and our expenses at both places, makes a considerable inroad upon our incomes.”

“How do you manage about your food?”

“We carry a quantity of meat on board when we start, and keep as much of it fresh as we can; the rest we pickle. We have a cooking stove in the forecabin, with which we prepare our food. Then we have a good supply of soft bread and biscuit, and such other things as we require. Sometimes we do not come on shore for several days, and I have been out as long as ten days.

“You know, of course, we have no choice—we must take what comes. As the saying is, ‘Pilots are made for ships, not ships for pilots.’ If a ship comes from an infected port, like Hamburg—infected with cholera or small-pox—as soon as she arrives in our waters we must go on board; we dare not say nay. However great the risk, we have to board the ship, and there we must remain until the sanitary officer thinks fit to allow us to depart. If we leave the vessel without his permission we are liable to a heavy fine, or to dismissal. Three years ago one of our pilots had to remain on board the *Janna*, with cholera raging on board, for three days. If a pilot wantonly takes his vessel beyond the clearing station without permission, he is liable to a fine of £100.

"You know, probably, that the system of 'choice' pilots does not exist among us—at least, only to a very small extent."

"And you have no pooling, as at Dover?"

"No, we each keep what we earn—and little enough it is when all deductions are made, including the three guineas a year for our licenses."

"Are none of your men stationed at Harwich?"

"We have a second-rank man here, that is, a man licensed only for ships of fourteen feet draught and under. The reason for that is because, if a first-class pilot were here, and he saw a second-class man bringing in a vessel of over fourteen feet, which sometimes happens if there is not a first-rank man at hand, he could go on board and order him off the ship."

"But how would he know?"

"He could tell by the man's flag; a second-rank man's flag having the red and white stripes running perpendicularly instead of horizontally."

"That is the rule, is it?"

"Yes, a second-class man has no business on board a vessel above his draught, although he can pilot a ship of any draught if there is not another pilot at hand. Well, if he is obliged to take such a ship, and even then be liable to be turned off her at Harwich, and lose his fee, it would be pretty hard. So we have only a second-class man here. You get very funny feeding on some of these foreign ships. On a vessel from Finland, however, I had the strangest fare of all. For breakfast it was black rye bread and coffee. For dinner we had a strong soup made of very solid beef, with rice in it, and black bread and coffee. Supper, between six

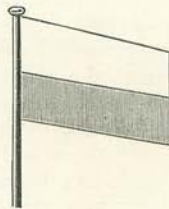


MR. S. T. WHITNALL.
From a Photo, by Alfred Price, Great Yarmouth.

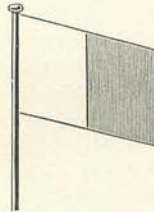
and seven, consisted of black bread and coffee again—hardly anything all day but black bread and coffee. When I got to Gravesend I was so ravenous that I thought I should never have done eating.

"But the oddest of all my experiences was on board a Dutch ship, the *Antelope*, Captain Hutt. Soon after I got on board I was introduced by the captain, who could not speak any English, to his wife and daughter, and was invited to go down into the cabin.

There I found a bottle of Hollands on the table, with glasses for six, and a bottle of bitters. The skipper filled the glasses with the gin and bitters and invited me to drink. It is not a thing I care for, but for politeness sake I managed to dispose of one glass. Then he poured out another and insisted on my taking that also. I took a little of it, and then excused myself and went on deck. This was early in the morning. Before dinner I was invited to go down again, and the same performance was gone through, all—the captain, his wife and daughter, and the two mates—taking their two big glasses of the gin and bitters, except myself. I sipped a little, then again excused myself, and went on deck. But I had not been there many minutes before the skipper's daughter came up and invited me to return to the cabin. The young lady was supposed to know English, and came with her father and mother to act as interpreter, and this is the form her invitation took: 'Captain speak me speak you come cabin mit captain gin mit de bitters drink um?' This ceremony of drinking 'gin mit de bitters' was gone through four times a day—before breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper, and on each occasion two big glasses were drunk."



FIRST-CLASS
PILOT FLAG.



SECOND-CLASS
PILOT FLAG.