

Across the Atlantic in a Twelve-Foot Boat.

BY FREDERICK A. TALBOT.



THE majority of travellers nowadays, when their peregrinations necessitate an ocean journey, invariably seek out the largest vessel afloat, since by this means the inconvenience and discomfort of *mal-de-mer*, if not entirely obviated, are at least considerably reduced. Yet there are one or two intrepid adventurers for whom the sea possesses no terrors, and who apparently court fate by crossing the Atlantic in small boats no larger than the emergency boats carried upon our ocean liners. The *doyen* of these solitary voyagers is Captain William A. Andrews, who, owing to his curious propensity for crossing the Atlantic in a small boat, has earned the sobriquet of "The Lonely Skipper." He holds the record both for having crossed the Atlantic in the smallest boat and in the quickest time by a craft of these diminutive dimensions.

It was at Atlantic City, the Blackpool of New York and Philadelphia, that I encountered this interesting and daring navigator. Although bordering on his sixtieth year Captain Andrews is still hale and virile, and his weather-beaten face is a telling index of his sea-roving experiences. When I met him he was busily engaged in fashioning a small model of the collapsible boat in which he intends to cross to England this year.

"Surely such an enterprise is fraught with considerable danger?" I ventured to remark, as he explained the principles of the construction of the frail argo, having an indelible impression of the fury of the Atlantic in a hurricane, and the havoc it wrought upon the greyhound upon which I was travelling.

"By no means," he replied. "Personally I feel far safer in my little boats than I do upon the deck of a steamer. You see, you have plenty of sea-room, and should unfavourable weather be encoun-

tered you can let the boat run before it. The only real danger incurred is from passing vessels, especially from the liners. I always endeavour to keep out of the track of the latter. I never carry lights at night, but simply trust to Providence. On one or two of my journeys I did display a white light at my mast-head, and from what I subsequently learned from the reports of vessels which had passed me during the night, my solitary will-o'-th'-wisp light occasioned considerable speculation among the superstitious sailors as to its origin."

Captain Andrews is not, as his name might imply, a captain in the strict sense of the word. He holds no certificate and, in fact,

has never had a lesson in navigation in his life. He was originally engaged in a piano factory at Boston, but the trade became indifferent and he decided to establish a business of his own. That was in 1878. Before proceeding to this step, however, he desired a holiday and to see the old country. The Exposition Universelle was being celebrated in Paris in that year, and so he determined to visit it with a view to extending his knowledge.

"The chief point I had to consider, however," he continued, "was how to

get across. I was not in a position to pay for my passage in the ordinary way, but I had heard that a man named Johnson had crossed the ferry in 1875 in a small boat 20ft. in length, and since success had crowned his effort I saw no reason why I should not emulate his achievement. I mentioned the matter to my brother Walter, who immediately approved of the idea, and we at once completed our arrangements for our novel journey. I went down to Gloucester to the shipbuilder who had constructed Johnson's boat and ordered a similar craft 16ft. in length. But the boat-builder refused to build it less than 20ft. in



CAPTAIN ANDREWS—"THE LONELY SKIPPER."
From a Photo. by D. P. Romero, Sevilla.

length, as he was apprehensive of its being sufficiently safe. Seeing argument was useless I let him have his own way, and in five days the boat, which we called the *Nautilus*, was delivered to us. We set out from Boston, Massachusetts, on June 8th, 1878. A huge crowd gathered to wish us *bon voyage*, and a large fleet of boats accompanied us for a short distance. We did not get far before we encountered our first disaster in the shape of a broken compass. We put back into Beverley, and I seized the opportunity of waiting for the re-adjustment of the compass to have the sleeping accommodation rendered more comfortable. My bunk was only 11 in. in width by 8 in. high, and I had to lie upon my side with the hatch open. This was due to the centre-board of the boat. The advantage of having such a small bunk is that one can brace oneself securely therein, so that when the vessel pitches and rolls there is no danger of being hurled out of the berth. The boat was not ballasted, and is the only craft that has ever accomplished such a journey under such

conditions. When the alterations had been made and the compass re-arranged we made a fresh start. The weather was frightful, the wind blowing from the north-east, and no vessel would put to sea. Nothing daunted, and chafing at the delay already caused, we decided to put off, though everything augured an unsuccessful passage. Fortunately, however, the weather moderated when we got well out to sea.

"When we dropped out of sight of land that night we vaguely wondered whether we should ever see it again. I had never been to sea before; I had no idea of navigation, and naturally had never taken an observation of the sun. Our plight seemed hopeless and the attempt foolhardy. But we resolved to continue the journey, come what might. We took the observation of the sun whenever possible, and settled upon our course as well as we could. During the trip

we spoke thirty-seven vessels, and by their aid could rectify any errors that we had made in our calculations regarding longitude and latitude. In spite of our deficient knowledge in this respect we struck the Bishop's Rock off the Scilly Islands, and for which we had been making our way dead in a fog, so that we had not erred much in our observations. We made up to the Scilly Islands, and the following day entered the English Channel and ran into Penzance, being under the impression that it was Falmouth. We experienced a difficult time in these waters. A north-east gale was blowing and we got into the Lizard Race—the terror of all mariners. The sea was running high, and the tide was sweeping us along backwards against the wind at a speed of nine

miles an hour. We finally landed at Mullion Cove, and right glad we were for the opportunity to get ashore to stretch our limbs after being cramped up in the narrow confines of our little boat for forty-five days. We subsequently made our way to Havre, thence to Paris. After the exhibition we returned to England,

where we stayed for several months exhibiting our boat, since the episode had aroused considerable attention. We then returned to the States, and shortly after our arrival home my brother was taken ill and succumbed to the malady."

Since the death of his brother Captain Andrews has always entered upon his various expeditions alone. Although his first trip had been so uniformly successful it was not until ten years later that he decided to undertake another similar excursion. Curiously enough, on this occasion, as with the former, the incentive was the Paris Exhibition. But this time he determined to reap some pecuniary benefit from the undertaking, owing to the public interest that had been created by the accomplishment of his former trip. He thereupon set to work to construct another vessel. The *Nautilus* had been considered small, but this next craft was still more



CAPTAIN ANDREWS AND HIS BROTHER LAND IN MULLION COVE, CORNWALL, AFTER CROSSING THE ATLANTIC.
From a Photo. by E. Chickering.

diminutive, being only 15ft. in length over all. He originally intended to christen it the *Mermaid*, but when his projected trip was noised abroad an enterprising showman, scenting dollars in such a side-show, induced Captain Andrews to take his boat upon a short tour, and to call it the *Dark Secret*.

"At first," commented the Captain, "I was not in favour of calling her by such a name. It sounded ominous. But he was adamant. At last I told him I would only consent to do so for £100, thinking that the mention of such a high figure would preclude further insistence upon his part. To my surprise, however, he closed with me immediately. He also made another contract with me that I should tour with him with my boat for forty-seven weeks at a weekly remuneration of £20 and expenses.

"I started from the pier at Point of Pines near Boston on June 17th. The advantage of starting from Boston is that the journey is some 250 miles shorter, and one enters the Gulf Stream much earlier, the warmth of which is very appreciable, while it carries you along at a splendid pace. More than 28,000 people witnessed my departure, and as I had contracted to receive a percentage of the pier receipts for this event I netted a further £280. On this occasion I had the boat constructed with a hollow keel in which I intended to carry my water, but before I sailed I was supplied with hygeia water in bottles. I then admitted sea water into the keel to ballast the boat. I had scarcely got clear of the land, however, when I experienced rough weather. A strong head wind was blowing and the seas were running very high. Still I pushed on steadily, hoping that the elements would become more propitious. But my anticipations were doomed to disappointment, for the weather became worse. I was buffeted about for sixty-two days and made no progress. In fact I was driven back. After I had been out for a month I spoke a vessel which informed me that I was only 150 miles off Boston. This news depressed me, but at the end of another fortnight when I spoke another vessel I was informed that I was only 100 miles out.

"To aggravate matters my water gave out, and when I spoke a Norwegian barque a few days later I was glad in one sense of the word to get on board and to sit down to a hearty meal in the captain's room after two months' subsistence upon canned food.

"When I reached America I learned that a Mr. J. Lawlor had successfully crossed over to England in a small boat, and had created a tremendous sensation. This put me upon my mettle, and I resolved to make another try. I ordered another boat, the *Mermaid*, the same dimensions as the *Dark Secret*. While the boat was being built I met Lawlor and we agreed to race across the Atlantic for £1,000 and a silver cup. This was the first trans-Atlantic race with small boats, and it aroused widespread interest. We started

together from the Ocean Pier near Boston on June 17th, 1891, just before nightfall, amid the huzzas of a large concourse of people. The weather was extremely rough. When we got away from land we decided upon our respective courses. Lawlor went north and I went south. Lawlor, however, must have changed his course soon after leaving me, since I passed his sprit, which he had cast adrift. By this I saw that he was taking the same course as I projected. My theories in this direction were further substantiated when I spoke a vessel which informed me



CAPTAIN ANDREWS IN THE "DARK SECRET," AT POINT OF PINES.
From a Photo. by E. Chickering.

that they had passed Lawlor, 'all well,' three days before about a thousand miles ahead of me. As for myself I encountered successive disasters. My boat capsized seven times, and on one occasion I was clinging to her bottom for half an hour. She was wrongly constructed. Lawlor had fitted his boat with a lead keel, so that if she capsized she would right herself immediately. My boat would not do this. I had to right her the best way I could. To make matters worse, five days after we set out I ran into a cyclone. The seas were so heavy that my boat was practically crippled. All my stores were damaged and my water was lost. Under these circumstances I decided to seek assistance from a passing steamer. I sighted the *Elbruz*, of Antwerp, and was taken on board. I proceeded with her to Antwerp, and sold my boat for a handsome sum to a syndicate

of showmen. I then went to London and met Lawlor, who had safely made a place near Land's End, and then went to Portsmouth, having accomplished the journey in about forty-three days."

Although the last two attempts to cross the ferry had resulted in failure, Captain Andrews was by no means daunted, and wagered Lawlor that he would cross in thirty days. Lawlor also decided to endeavour to lower his own record, and for this purpose both competitors set to work to construct special vessels. Captain Andrews christened his the *Flying Dutchman*, an auspicious name. Lawlor called his the *Christopher Columbus*.

"While my vessel was being built I was commissioned by the manufacturers of a well-known domestic commodity to name the vessel the *Sapolio* and to undertake the trip on their behalf. I communicated to Lawlor my projected course, which was to be from Cape Race to Queenstown, a distance of only 1,800 miles. Lawlor replied that his designs were precisely the same. But I suddenly learned that a celebration was to be held in Spain, in honour of Columbus, since the year was the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America. It then suddenly occurred to me that it would create a sensation if I were to sail for the very town from which Columbus had set out on his expedition. The *Sapolio* was 14ft. over all, with a beam of 5ft. and a depth of 2ft. 3in. She was collapsible. I had thirty-

Boat breaking badly
 Have sailed just two nights
 Feel a little clumsy
 Return to asylum ward
 Dr. H. Morgan, Son Co
 439 West St
 New York City
 Wm Andrews

MESSAGE THROWN OUT BY CAPTAIN ANDREWS EN ROUTE TO SPAIN.

nine square feet in the sails. Lawlor, anxious to reap primary honours, started on his trip before I was ready, but he never reached his destination, for he was never heard of again. His tragic end did not deter me from my purpose, and so I set out on July 20th, 1892. On this occasion Fortune was kind to me. The weather was all that could be desired, and the wind was so favourable that I reached the Azores in thirty days, a distance of 2,500 miles. Profiting by my previous experience with the *Mermaid*, I had a lead keel provided to the *Sapolio*, and it was a gigantic success. From the Azores I proceeded to Portugal, made my way up the coast, and finally reached the Spanish towns of Huelva and Palos."

Upon his arrival in Spain the population became demented with delight. A large crowd met him at the landing-stage and the air was filled with vigorous cheering. The ladies with their courtly

THIS BOTTLE was thrown out on the Atlantic Ocean

about 50 miles east of Iruya, Azores Tuesday Aug 30th 1892

All Will. Wm Andrews,
 from the boat "Sapolio" (14 feet, 6 inches in length), making a trip from Atlantic City, New Jersey, to Palos, Spain. The "Sapolio" is sailed by Capt. William A. Andrews, who formerly crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the "Mermaid" and the "Nautilus," and was 62 days on the Ocean in the "Dark Secret"

The present trip is to the point where Columbus started, to show that men of more modern days can discount in many lines the great achievements of the past. The finder of this bottle is requested to fill the blank below and return it by mail in the attached envelope.

Found by Manuel Rodriguez

at Porto Formoso - St. Michaels - Azores -

Date, 15th September 1892



CAPTAIN ANDREWS'S ARRIVAL AT HUELVA, SPAIN, AFTER CROSSING THE ATLANTIC.
From a Photo. by D. P. Romero, Seville.

Spanish grace waved their handkerchiefs and greeted him with flowers as he was paraded round the streets upon the shoulders of some of the swarthier citizens. Distinguished celebrities entertained him upon every side. The streets were thronged with enthusiastic sightseers. One old lady was heard to remark by the Captain that the event ought to be recorded in "natural history." The papers published glowing and lengthy accounts of his wonderful voyage. The Government paid his expenses until his departure, making him a guest of the Crown. The Queen herself sent him an invitation, of which the Captain cherishes pleasant memories. Photographers besieged him upon every side. He distributed no fewer than 560 photos of himself and boat to interested and curious sightseers. One enthusiast requested a piece of the American flag which had flown at the masthead of the *Sapolio*, but as his request was not complied with he satisfied himself by taking the whole flag. Another gentleman was anxious to secure a photograph of the Captain. The latter, desirous to oblige, withdrew five photographs from his pocket in order to let the gentleman make his own selection. But the Spaniard excitedly grabbed the whole five photographs and decamped exultingly.

"I thought he not only took the cake," remarked the Captain, when relating the incident, "but the wind out of me at the same time."

"Surely the monotony of travelling alone for so long must exert a depressing influence?" I queried.

"I do not notice it. You see, I have a regular routine of work to perform during the day. In addition to attending to the boat I keep a log, and also write an account of my experiences as I progress, for the American papers. These packages of manuscript, together with letters, I hand to

the captains of the various ships I meet, with the request that they will kindly post



CAPTAIN ANDREWS ON LANDING AT HUELVA.
From a Photo. by D. P. Romero, Seville.

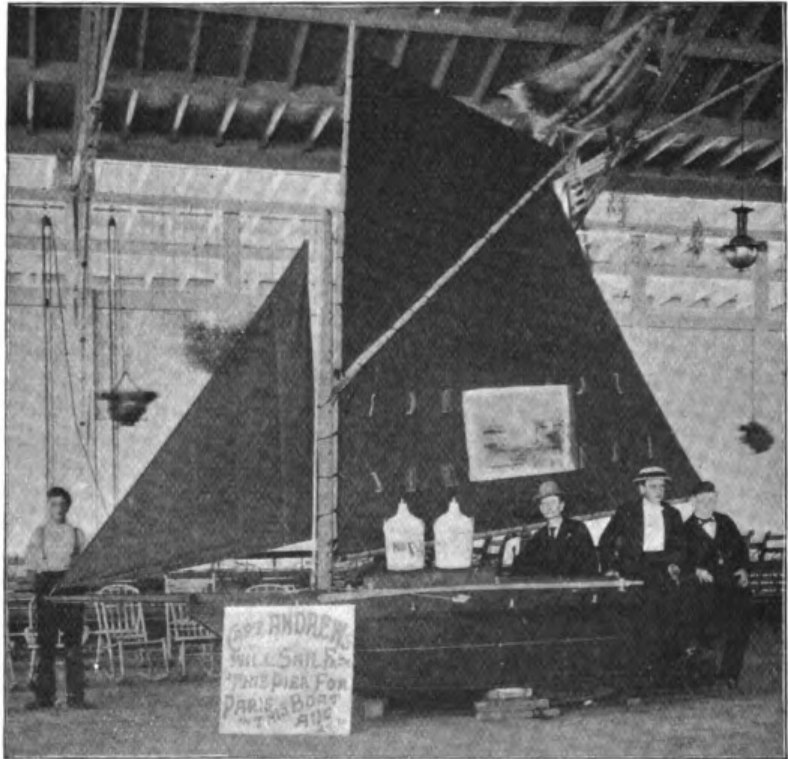
them when they get ashore. I sleep when I feel so inclined. Formerly at night time I used to 'heave to' while I slept, but now I have fitted a device by which I am able to set the vessel's course before I turn in and she will steer herself during the few hours I am asleep. I average in fair weather about 100 miles every twenty-four hours, which is by no means a despicable daily run considering the size of the boat."

Since Captain Andrews completed his memorable trip to Spain in thirty-five days he has made two other attempts to cross the Atlantic, but on neither occasion has he achieved his purpose. The first of these two trips was made in 1898 in the *Phantom Ship*—an unlucky name according to marine traditions—13ft. in length, and carrying twelve square yards of sail. Curiously enough, the boom of this craft was longer than the boat itself.

"From the very commencement this voyage was unfortunate. Owing to unforeseen circumstances I could not take my departure until August 24th, and as a consequence I encountered the full force of the September gales. I started from Atlantic City. I had not got far out when my first trouble overtook me.

My boat leaked like a sieve, and I had to work might and main baling the water out, otherwise she would have foundered. The sea was rough and the boat constantly heeled over and lay upon her side, with the result that the water swamped her. The tins containing my provisions were knocked about and punctured, so that their contents were spoiled and rendered unfit to eat. By September 20th I found I had no food. I had been twenty-seven days at sea and was now progressing very favourably, making about 100 miles a day. But I could not subsist upon nothing, and I soon realized that unless I fell in with a ship it would go hard with me. On September 27th I espied a vessel. I hailed her, but she took no notice. I put on all sail and sped after her. They did not observe me for the reason that they were busily engaged in taking in

their sails, which had been damaged by the storms. I presently attracted their attention, and they hove to. When I came alongside they hauled me aboard and my boat after me, which they stowed away. You can form a comprehensive idea of the diminutive size of this boat when I tell you that when folded up she was only 4in. thick. Curiously enough, this vessel fulfilled the superstitious traditions of the sea, which is that any vessel which 'speaks' a phantom ship



THE "PHANTOM SHIP," LENGTH 13FT., AFTERWARDS CUT DOWN INTO THE "DOREE," LENGTH 12FT. [Photograph.]

is eventually lost. This ship subsequently went down off Dunkerque. No doubt had the sailors observed the name of my boat they would have refused to take me aboard, so strong are their superstitious natures.

"When I again reached Atlantic City I could not rest, but immediately set about making preparations for another voyage. I had the *Phantom Ship* dismembered and rebuilt, only on this occasion she measured but 12ft. in length, and is the smallest vessel that ever essayed to cross the Atlantic. I christened her the *Doree*."

Captain Andrews was to be accompanied on this expedition by Professor Miller, who created a tremendous sensation by stating that he was going to cross the herring-pond by means of Shanks's pony. He interviewed the Captain on the subject, and although the

intrepid lonely voyager was naturally very sceptical of Miller's ability to achieve the feat, he consented to construct the necessary walking shoes in which the latter anticipated accomplishing the journey. In our illustration Professor Miller is seen with his special walking shoes under either arm. They each measured about 5ft. in length. As will be seen, they resembled miniature canoes in design, with a small orifice in the centre to admit the foot, and were furnished with corrugated soles. Being manufactured of wood they were, of course, buoyant, so that Miller had little fear of being dragged under water. The absolute impracticability of his being able to withstand the enormous potency of the waves in mid-Atlantic never appealed to the Professor. Confident of unqualified success he started upon his foolhardy trip, but it was not long before the folly of his scheme dawned upon him very forcibly. He could not maintain his equilibrium, and, as was to be naturally expected, he was simply drifted about at the mercy of the waves. After vainly endeavouring to make headway Miller was at last reluctantly compelled to abandon the idea of walking from Atlantic City to England.

"I think this was the most remarkable trip I have undertaken, since, although I did not accomplish my object, I passed through a succession of experiences such as I never wish to meet with again. I was supplied with a large stock of Saratoga water, a natural effervescent drink. I sailed on June 17th from Atlantic City and made very fair progress. The weather was hot, and for some inexplicable reason I felt peculiarly drowsy. I had

never experienced the sensation before. When I commenced writing my log, for the first few minutes the writing was quite bold and distinct, but it soon resolved itself into an unintelligible scrawl and I would fall asleep. At first I attributed the peculiarity to the heat. I took my observations in the usual manner, and conjectured that I was keeping a good course. One day when I fell in with a vessel, wishing to rectify any errors that I might possibly

have made, I asked the captain for the longitude. He gave it to me, and you can judge of my surprise when I found that his observation was three days ahead of mine. That is to say, I had travelled three days farther than I imagined. I thought he must be in error. I asked him the date of the month. 'July 1st,' he retorted. 'You must be wrong,' I replied; 'it is only June 27th.' He quickly dissipated my doubt upon this point, and I was at my wits' end to account for such a flagrant error in my calculations. I continued my journey in a dazed condition. One day when it was abnormally hot I laid down in my bunk. Immediately I experienced a strange feeling of asphyxiation. I jumped up in alarm. Thinking it must be fancy on my part I once more lay down, and the same curious sensation overtook me. I thereupon sought to discover the reason for this peculiarity. It was not a difficult search, for I found that the cork stoppers to my bottles of Saratoga water had shrunk under the influence of the intense heat, and that the carbonic acid gas had escaped and had collected in the bottom of the boat. This was the solution of my curious drowsy feeling. I could now account for my error in longitude. I must have been

unconscious for those three days, since I never had the slightest recollection of them. Since I had now discarded my water I kept a sharp look-out for a vessel to replenish my supply. The first ship I spoke was bound for Liverpool, where I was eventually landed."

The trip Captain Andrews is going to make this year is in reply to a challenge issued by Captain Blackburn, of

Gloucester, Mass., who a short time ago successfully crossed to England from his town. It is to be a race similar to that organized by Andrews and Lawlor. The stipulations are that the boat must not exceed 20ft. in length. Captain Andrews proposes to make his attempt in a boat 12ft. long, since his experience with the *Doree* convinced him that a craft of this dimension was splendidly adapted to such an expedition.



CAPTAIN ANDREWS WITH THE "DOREE" UNDER HIS ARM, AND PROFESSOR MILLER WITH THE WOODEN SHOE - BOATS IN WHICH HE PROPOSED TO CROSS THE ATLANTIC.

From a Photograph.