

## A DANISH NEWLYN.

BY A. E. FLETCHER.

**W**ITHIN the shadow of the tall lighthouse at the point of the narrow peninsula stretching out into the sea where the waters of the Kattegat and Skagerak meet, lies the quaint little township of Skagen, the *Ultima Thule* of Denmark. Though not so picturesque as some of the Danish villages which nestle amongst lovely lake and upland scenery further south,

are deposits from the great clouds of light sand driven northward from the western coast before the North Sea's gales. Up to a time within the memory of men still living, all efforts to arrest the shifting of these great sand-drifts failed, and Skagen in times past was sometimes threatened with being buried alive by them. In a terrible visitation of the winds years ago the old parish church,



"WILL SHE CLEAR THE POINT?" BY MICHAEL ANCHER.

Skagen has nevertheless a charm of its own. The level country round it is bounded on the seaboard by long ridges of sand-dunes whose almost snowy whiteness throws up sharply the colours of their environment of blue ocean, green meadows, and red-roofed cottages and farmsteads. These long tracts of sand-dunes bear silent witness to the energy and skill with which the Danes have contended with the forces of Nature. They

which is said to have been built by Scottish fishermen who frequented the Skagen coast in the fifteenth century, was thus buried, excepting the upper part of the tower, which is all that can now be seen of it. The Danes, however, have now discovered a grass, locally known as "marchalm," which will grow upon the dunes, shooting down its roots to a great depth and thus binding the grains together. When the grass has grown for a certain time



PETER SEVERIN KRØYER. PORTRAIT OF HIMSELF.

states of the tide there is here perfectly safe and delicious bathing. Our reproduction of Krøyer's clever picture, "Children Bathing," will give the reader an idea of what a dip in the sea means at Skagen.

There is just a danger that Skagen may be spoiled by the excursionist, for it is now possible to get there by railway, and a fine hotel in the old Norse style, commanding a splendid sea view, has just been built. Skagen, however, has nothing in common with the conventional watering-place beloved of the mere tripper. The Skagen folk rather pride themselves on being the butt of an old Danish saying that they are beyond the confines of civilisation. They are an honest, simple, and primitive people. The hotel stands amongst the sand-dunes in a rather desolate spot at considerable distance from the village, and would no doubt be voted a dull place by the Cockney holiday-maker, for whom life would not be worth living even at the seaside without the help of nigger minstrels, lion comiques,

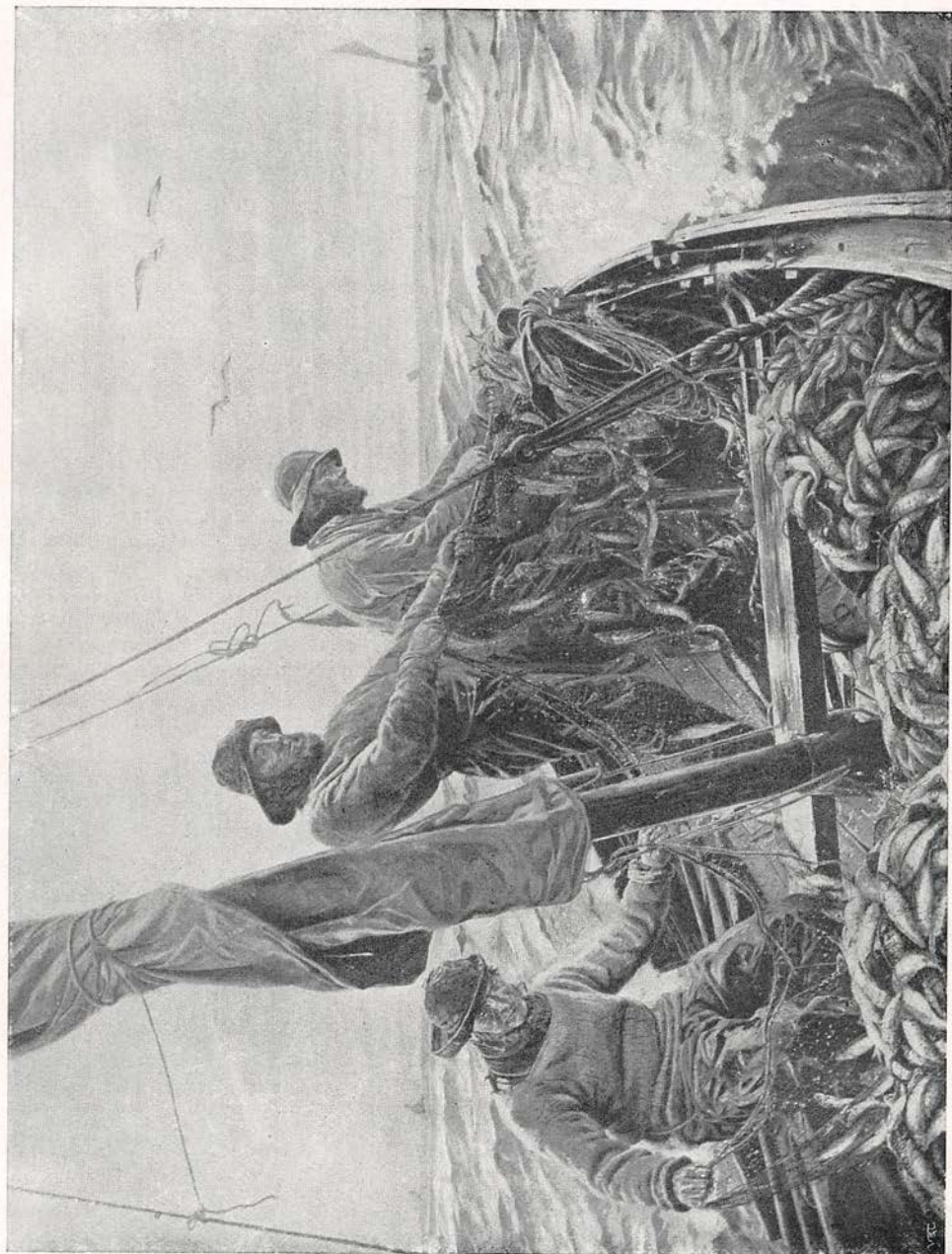
the nature of the sands is so far changed that firs can be made to grow upon them.

Thousands of acres of barren sand have thus been converted into forest, and Denmark has enlarged the borders of her small territory by a policy of expansion by the spade, which compensates her to some extent for her loss of territory by the sword. That part of the Skagen beach washed by the tides at the base of the sand-dunes is hard and smooth, and here, at low water, the cyclist may spin along for miles to the murmur of the sea, while at all

Aunt Sallys and merry-go-rounds. This new hotel, however, equally with the old



TWO FISHERMEN. BY MICHAEL ANCHER.



A HERRING CATCH. BY P. S. KRÖYER.



CHILDREN BATHING, SKAGEN BEACH. BY P. S. KRÖYER

hostelry which is one of the attractions of Skagen village, is a delightful resort for those who do not care to have their quietude broken otherwise than by the minstrelsy of rolling tides, the whistle of the winds, and the screech of sea-birds. I do not think, therefore, that, although Skagen has now been made accessible to the unconventional tourist, it is likely to lose its unique character.

For the artist and man of letters this quaint seaboard parish is never likely to

lose its charm. Not only has Nature here as a colourist done some of her best work, producing atmospheric effects of rare richness and variety, but she has peopled the place with as sturdy a race of men as ever braved the hurricane or gave inspiration to bards of heroic song. We give some illustrations of types of this hardy race, descendants of the dauntless Norsemen who, under Hengist and Horsa, sent the expedition to found the first Norse settlement on



THE NORTHERNMOST POINT OF JUTLAND.

our shores. With the exception of the new hotel, to which I have already referred, Skagen has no buildings of any pretension to architectural beauty, but it contains one public monument which is both a work of art and an object of inspiring interest. It is a memorial raised by public subscription to Lars Kruse and his companions, the brave captain and crew of the Skagen lifeboat, that foundered in a gale on Christmas Day, 1862. Kruse and his men on that fatal day put out to the rescue of the crew of the *Daphne*, a British vessel wrecked on the sand-reef off Skagen Point. Time after

Hans Christian Jensen Bagh, the present captain of the lifeboat. I called upon him with a Danish friend who acted as interpreter, and had a long chat with him. He is a tall, well-built man, with a kindly, weather-beaten face, and eyes finely moulded by long looking out on far horizons. As some three hundred vessels pass the lightship off Skagen Point every day, and as near that lightship there is a very dangerous reef, the services of the Skagen lifeboatmen are more often needed here than elsewhere on the Danish coast. Captain Bagh, who has been twenty-two years in command of the boat,



SKAGEN FISHERMEN RETURNING HOME. BY MICHAEL ANCHER.

time the brave fellows pulled off to the wreck, and succeeded in taking off the whole crew. On returning for the last time the boat capsized, and the women of Skagen "were weeping and wringing their hands for those who will never come back to the town." Lars Kruse is the subject of a fine ballad by Holger Drachmann, Denmark's most popular poet, a man of striking personality, whom I had the good fortune to meet at the house of Herr Krøyer, when I was in Skagen a short time ago. Drachmann is also a painter of considerable merit.

Another fine type of Jutland fishermen is

has a splendid record, and has received decorations and other acknowledgments of his services from the governments of most of the maritime nations of the world. He was also awarded a diploma for a set of fishing-nets at the International Fisheries Exhibition held in London in 1880. The distinction he prizes most, however, is the medal of a Danish order for distinguished service (the Order of Dannebrog), awarded to him by King Christian for the rescue of the crew of an English brig during a gale of such violence that, although the crew was got off the wreck, it was impossible to take



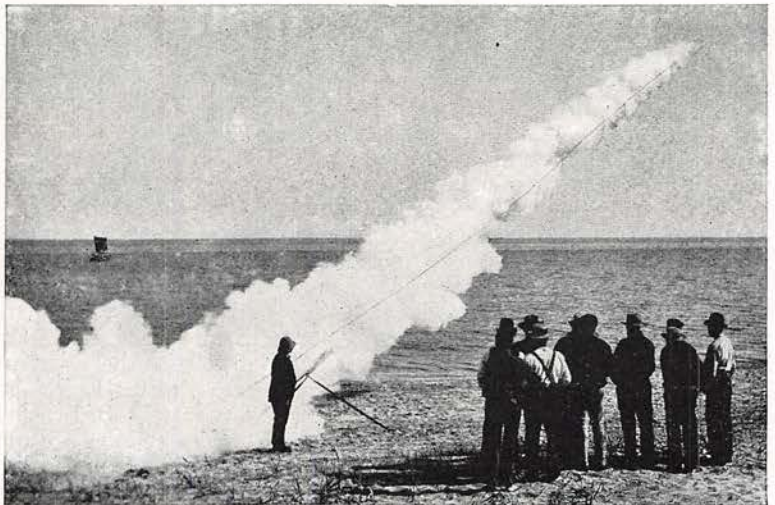
THE SLAGEN LIFEBOAT.

them ashore. Captain Bagh so skilfully managed the boat that he was able to keep her afloat until a passing steamer came to his rescue. For this service Captain Bagh and his men received from England a gift of one pound each—a rather poor acknowledgment, I think, of the heroic conduct of these Danish fishermen by a nation which prides itself both on its wealth and its generosity. Possibly the real worth of the service rendered by Captain Bagh and his crew on this occasion was not rightly represented to the Board of Trade. The lifeboat service is managed much better in Denmark than in England. In Denmark it is organised by the State, but in England it is left to voluntary effort. It has been charged against our British method that it tempts our brave lifeboatmen sometimes to think as much of saving cargo as saving life, as they share in the salvage of wrecked vessels. In Denmark the sole object of the lifeboat service is to save life. The rocket apparatus as well as the lifeboats are provided by the State, and the crews, selected from experienced fishermen, are paid a fixed sum per head each time the boats put out. The Skagen lifeboatmen receive eight kroner for each call. When

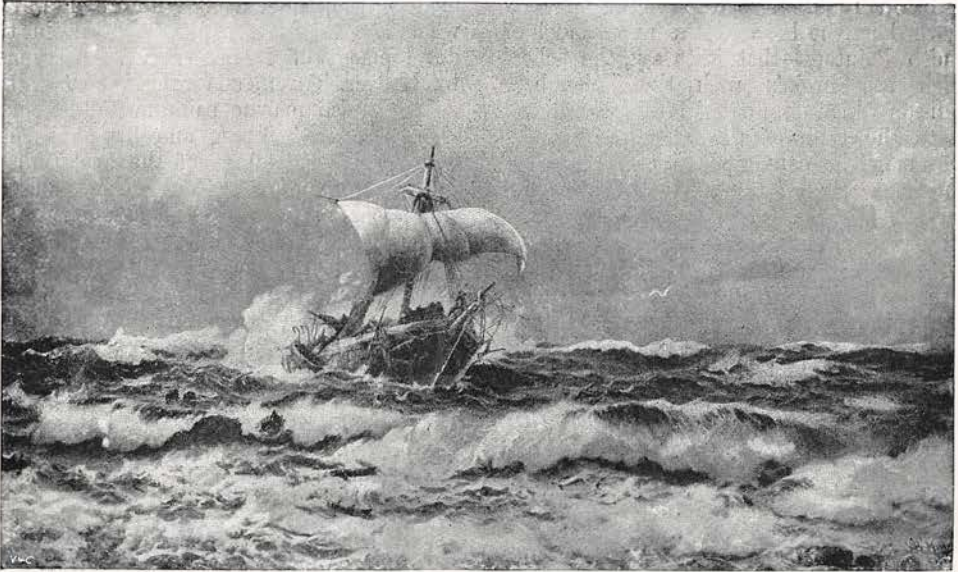
the boat passes over a submerged reef, known as the Revler, the men receive twelve kroner each. They are not allowed to make any claim for salvage.

Like our own delightful fishing village of Newlyn, on the Cornish coast, which Mr. Gotch, Mr. Stanhope Forbes, and the rest of the Newlyn brotherhood have

made famous, Skagen and its wild surroundings have given inspiration to a school of painters. Three of Denmark's most famous artists, Peter Severin Krøyer, Michael Peter Ancher, and his wife, have made Skagen their home, and other artists, not only from Denmark, but from Norway and Sweden, have chosen it from time to time as their headquarters. Krøyer is the most famous of this group, whose portraits, painted by him, adorn the walls of the dining-room of the old village inn, where they were wont to meet at "the feast of reason and flow of soul." Krøyer is the son of a well-known Danish naturalist, a professor in the University of Copenhagen and author of some important scientific works. The painter was born in 1851 and received his early training at the Copenhagen



FIRING A ROCKET AT SLAGEN.



STRANDED. BY ANTON MELBYE.

Academy of Art, which he left in 1870. He was first brought into public notice by a picture which he exhibited in the following year. He continued to paint with success until 1878, when he decided to complete his studies abroad. He spent a considerable

time in Paris, including one year in the studio of M. Bonnat, and afterwards studied in Italy and Spain. He has been awarded gold medals at various foreign exhibitions, including that of the Paris Salon and the International Art Exhibition at the Crystal



FISHERMEN ON THE SKAGEN BEACH: NIGHT, BY P. S. KRØYER.

Palace in 1882. Krøyer is now generally regarded as the head of the new school of Danish Painters—that is to say, the school which has broken with the Eckersberg tradition which dominated Danish art almost up to the time of the earliest efforts of Krøyer and his contemporaries. Eckersberg, though he had not the genius of his pupil Marstrand, the most famous of Denmark's painters, was yet the real founder of the old national school of Danish Art. He flourished in the earlier half of the century, after studying for some years in David's studio in Paris.

modern French School." Before, however, what Lange calls the abrupt break in the development of Danish national art made by Krøyer, Toxen, and others, some of the older Danish marine painters did much to prove that Eckersberg and his pupils had not marked the limits of the evolution of art. One of the most gifted of these painters, who stands midway between Eckersberg and the Skagen School, was Anton Melbye, of whose fine picture, "Stranded," we give an illustration.

The abandonment of the traditions of the



TAKING THE LIFEBOAT OVER THE DUNES. BY MICHAEL ANCHER.

The Eckersberg School was bound to pass into the region of history before the later European movements. It was incapable of solving the problems arising out of the new interpretation of Life and Nature. As Julius Lange, the well-known Danish art critic and writer, points out, "Richness and brilliancy of colouring, truthful rendering of picturesque phenomena, and a thoroughly realistic interpretation of human life: these demand light, air, Nature—in short, all the characteristics displayed with such brilliant ability by the powerful and flourishing

older Danish masters for those of modern foreign art was a departure made not exclusively by Danish painters, but also by the younger sculptors who were not content to follow too devoutly in the steps even of the incomparable Thorvaldsen. This, however, was but a transition. The men who had been brought under the influence of the foreign schools were never in serious danger of producing merely imitative work destitute of originality and national characteristics. "If the artists did not intend to leave their own country altogether," says Lange, "the





THE LIFEBOAT TO THE RESCUE. BY L. TOXEN.

claims of their home would return in full force, although on a somewhat modified technical basis. Realism, above all things, demands that the objects shall be before one's eyes, that they may be familiarly and intimately handled. Realism at a distance is an impossibility. Krøyer, who had already produced scenes from the Danish coast-life and fisherfolks' doings, now returned to this branch of painting with renewed vigour and success. This style had great weight with Michael Ancher, who has rendered with great breadth of style the Danish seaman; the same may be said of his wife Anna Ancher. Both had carried on their studies principally at home, as had Viggo Johansen and Julius Paulsen, painters of such great natural ability that they rose to the standard of



CAPTAIN OF THE SKAGEN LIFEBOAT.

foreign art with but little study in its schools." Michael Peter Ancher was born in 1849, on the rocky island of Bornholm, in the Baltic. His parents, though poor, were intelligent and well educated, as, indeed, are most of the Danish peasantry. They were ambitious of making a student of their son, whom they were quick to perceive had been endowed by Nature with more than average ability. They had not the means, however, to gratify this praiseworthy ambition, for at that time Denmark had not fully developed the splendid system of education which she has now placed within the reach of the humblest of her citizens. Disappointed of the hope of becoming a student of the University, Michael had to submit to the drudgery of a clerkship in the office of a great landowner.



THE DINING-ROOM OF THE OLD SKAGEN HOTEL.



MEMORIAL TO LARS ANDERSEN KRUSE.

Here, however, he was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of some travelling artists, from whom he caught the inspiration that decided his future career. In 1871 he was able to enter the Academy of Arts at Copenhagen, where he studied for four years. He made his *début* at the yearly exhibition of the Copenhagen Academy in 1874, and two years later he achieved a marked success with his picture of a scene from fisher-life. In 1880 he was awarded the highest honours of the Academy of Arts both at Copenhagen and Berlin, by his great picture, "Will She Clear the Point?" This fine piece of realistic painting will probably ensure his enduring fame. It has been secured for the Danish nation, and hangs amongst the masterpieces of modern Danish art in the National Gallery at Copenhagen. The picture represents a group of fishermen watching the efforts of a vessel to escape shipwreck on the dangerous reef of which I have already spoken. In certain states of the wind vessels sometimes beat about for days to

avoid this dangerous point if they cannot clear it. To fail in the attempt to clear it means that the services of the Skagen life-boat will be needed. There is another very fine picture of Ancher's, "Taking the Life-boat Over the Sand-dunes," of which we likewise give an illustration. Madame Ancher is also a fine painter. She received her first training from her husband.

Krøyer and Ancher live near to each other in picturesque bungalows, bowered in trees, and built in the cosy, unpretentious Danish style. Krøyer makes a spacious old out-house do duty for a studio. He spread out for me on the floor of this interesting sanctum several newly finished and partly finished sea-pieces of great power and suggestiveness. He has a wonderful eye for distance, and wonderful skill in painting atmospheric effects. I confess, however, that, much as I admire Krøyer's pictures, I prefer Ancher's, whose subjects, if not the treatment of them, appeal to my poor imagination with greater force. I am not an art critic, and therefore have no reputation to risk in giving expression to this heretical preference. After the kind way in which both artists received me, it is perhaps a little ungracious to speak of preference for one over the other. Both are strong and inspiring personalities, possessing the modesty of



Lars A. Kruse.



SAND-DUNES AND LIGHTHOUSE AT SKAGEN.

genius and the kindly characteristics which make them honoured and beloved by the humble fisherfolk amongst whom they live. Both, too, have had the good fortune to be married to clever and beautiful women. It has been objected to the paintings of these artists that they cannot claim to rank with the highest order of works of art, as they are too realistic of what is, after all, but a

rough phase of life in the work-a-day world. They are not, I am told, suggestive enough of high ideals. To this I reply that the more I study the works of Krøyer and Ancher—the more I gaze upon the sturdy forms and look into the calm, beautiful, heroic faces they have grouped and painted, the less I wonder why Christ should have chosen fishermen for His companions.



ON THE DUNES, RAABERG, NEAR SKAGEN.