ON ENGLISH LAGOONS
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On English Lagoons

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE

VOYAGE OF TWO AMATEUR WHERRYMEN
ON THE NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK RIVERS AND BROADS

BY

P. H. EMERSON

With an APPENDIX

THE LOG OF THE WHERRY "MAID OF THE MIST"
From September 15, 1890, to August 31, 1891

Illustrated by Fifteen Copperplate Engravings and Eighteen Views from Photographs taken by the Author

LONDON
DAVID NUTT, 270-71 STRAND
1893

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TO

T. R. D.

AN OCCASIONAL COMPANION OF VOYAGE

This Volume

IS

DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR

Beaumaris, 1892
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“Nothing is constant but change—nothing certain but death.”
ON ENGLISH LAGOONS.

INTRODUCTION.

"I am bound, I am bound, for a distant shore,
By a lonely isle, by a far Azore;
There it is, there it is, the treasure I seek,
On the barren sands of a desolate creek."—D. THOREAU.

THE "MAID OF THE MIST"

Sept. 15, 1890.

FLOATED with a rakish and unmaidenly air
upon the clear shallows of Hickling Broad,
the wherry's low bulwarks and tall mast,
stepped far forward, giving her a devil-me-care appearance from the willow-embowered staithe towards which my messmate Jim
was rowing with jerky sea-strokes to ship the pile of cases
and packages upon which I sat contemplating the sandmartins alighting with twitterings upon the yielding gladen
leaves bordering the broad, for the September moon was
waxing full—that moon that inaugurated the meteorological
Annus Mirabilis 1890-1891.

Reader, will you pack up your impedimenta and join us?
Ah, you will—good! Jim is coming too, and here's a hand
upon it. I am skipper, and therefore must write the log,
so forgive any omissions or commissions which are not quite
to your taste, for what is called life is merely what we like
to make it. Kindly remember, then, that your appreciation
of the observations narrated in this log depends in part
upon your point of view.
But here we are alongside our future home. She looks clumsy as you step aboard, but is very handy and sails very close to the wind, is comfortable and well found, and Jim there is obliging and musical—what would you? Go below, kind reader, and be careful not to slip on the narrow plankways. Now, please judge what comfort you can get in a twelve-ton wherry. Down the steps there before you is a pantry. On the right, you see, is the kitchen; hasn't Jim made the pots and pans shine? On the left, through that sliding door, is the saloon—if you are six feet high you can just stand there, if you are over a fathom long then you can lie on the seat along one side, or you can sit on the other lockers by the tortoise stove—how that will roar in midwinter, and boil our grog water, when the Great Bear sparkles with a new beauty in the frosty skies.

Yes; open the door. There is the cabin—two good berths and shelves for our library and guns—cosy, isn't it? Never mind the rooms looking small now; they will grow bigger to you as the days shorten. . . . Yes; the polished match-boarding is cleaner than paint, and wears better. . . . Jim? He sleeps outside in his cabin, and is quite comfortable with a stove of his own.

Come now, messmate, make yourself at home, and arrange your household gods for a year's cruise, whilst I cook an omelette and curry you some shrimps freshly snared from the cold North Sea.
CHAPTER I.

HER HISTORY.

"My canoe is growing lazy
In the atmosphere so hazy,
While I dream,
Half in slumber I am gliding
Eastward, indistinctly gliding,
Down the stream."

E. P. JOHNSON: In the Shadows.

Perhaps no "conversions" are more interesting than those of Norfolk wherries. After having led boisterous and irregular lives, many of these strange craft don fresh dresses—become family house-boats, and settle down to respectable careers. The history of my own boat may serve as an exemplar of the innate virtue that lurks in the hearts of such craft, for the Maid of the Mist is one of a numerous class. Built in the year when the Prince of Wales took unto himself a bride, the Little Spark, as she was named, began life as a common labourer—she carried marl between the pits and the big river wherries—not even her beautiful lines, for she is one of the prettiest models afloat, saving her from such base uses. After "marling," she fell into the hands of the extinct Columbia fishing fleet, and was employed upon the baser toil of icing— that was terribly rough on her skin, and did much to spoil her complexion and age her. When that ill-considered venture collapsed, she fell into the possession of one Gaby Thomas. I know not to what base uses she was not put by him—she even carried ash-pit sittings—was once sunk and fished up again, and finally Gaby died, but the Spark flew onwards, passing through
many hands, until she fell into the clutches of old Tommy, the one-eyed winkle-seller. He, too, used her for icing, and it was at such work that I saw my beauty, and determined to possess her. The one-eyed winkle merchant hummed and hah-ed, and sold her for a small sum, his single eye glittering greedily as he signed the receipt and pocketed the money. I quickly gave her over to the dressmakers and she was in five weeks converted as you see her in the perspective drawing. Being like myself a lover and frequenter of mists as well as of, bright sunshine, I renamed her the Maid of the Mist, after the plucky little steamer that formerly lived in the foam of the falls of Niagara like a sea-diver on the edge of the rollers.

It is irksome not to know the Maid's pedigree when you have to live with her, for, as the reader will discover, many will tell him some new fact concerning his mistress which is perfectly untrue; but such is the way of historians—I have forewarned my fellow-passenger, and now he must only be amused at the myths and traditions thrust upon us. The Maid's attendants were a jolly-boat with a balance lug sail, and a gun punt with outriggers—a most handy craft, for it is comparatively easy to scull and very stable—one can safely stand and quant (pole) it along—if you know how. The Maid's sole tire-person was Jim, a light-haired, blue-eyed, unconventional waterman, whose ancestors, I suspect, came over with some Danish rovers. He never spoke of Friday, but of Fridá; never said lucky, but always lucká, and so on.

But come now, the omelette, aux fines herbes, is on the table, and the Beaune cork has been drawn—the curry smells savoury—and how cheery the dinner looks spread under the topmast light swinging from the beams overhead. We have music, too—the water-fays are playing upon our timbers—do you not hear them?—clapotemen, clap-clap: curious music, but their own.
CHAPTER II.

THE MONSTER EEL NEAR HICKLING BROAD.

"And then, with souls grown clear
In that sweet atmosphere,
With influences serene,
Our blood and brain washed clean,
We've idled down the breast
Of broadening tides at rest."

C. E. D. ROBERTS: Birch and Paddle.

Sept. 16.

E spent Tuesday in getting the running gear in good working trim, whilst two comely girls poled about near us in an old coble, smiling and chattering to each other like the last remaining swallows who were chasing the flies in the clear September day.

The wind blew warmly and softly from the south-west, veiling the bright sunlit landscape in a delicate haze brought from the sea. The reeds, already turning yellow in the stalk, with brindled tossing plumes, were greyed by the mist melting into the low sky. Still a band of rippled water gleamed like burnished silver beneath the green willows, breaking their low-toned reflections with shimmering light. This was the slack period of the seasons; lush summer had faded, and autumn had not come on many-coloured wings; the seasons wavered and hesitated, like a fickle beauty between two lovers. But to the seeing eye the signs of the multi-coloured fall were present. The martins flew low, and began to alight in little flocks on the ropes of a boat floating on the broad; they felt the subtle influence that yearly drives them south, and before nightfall the lines of rigging were crowded with their little bodies, recalling a fanciful Japanese decoration.
on a grey background. At eventide the sky was darkened at times as flocks of starlings flew across the broad, and spreading fan-like, alighted on the reed with scolding voices. As the black and gold flocks increase in numbers they will crush the reed stalks with their common weight and sharpen the watchfulness of the sentinel, who with rusty old muzzle-loader already keeps guard at twilight beside the swampy crop.

It was a good evening for darting fish—the water was "sheer;"* as Old Josh glided out from the reeds, pushing with dexterous strokes of his quant into the middle of the broad.

Peering into the depths, he saw a bubble rise—his arm instantly flashed in the sunshine; there was a splash as the barbed dart broke the surface of the water, the shaft trembled in his hand, and he knew full well he had darted his quarry, and "something like" was his prize.

He pulled up the dart with a huge eel wriggled round its prongs. Josh had got the "warmin'" this stroke.

Striking the end of the boat delftly with the shaft of his pick, the eel—a monster—fell on the flat bottom-board and coiled up, looking like a black snake ready to spring. Josh was a bit of a philosopher and naturalist. He sat down quietly and eyed his victim, who returned his scrutiny with evil-looking countenance.

"He be a wopper," muttered Josh, as the eel raised his head and came towards him with wicked-looking eyes.

"That won't do, though," he thought, taking up a piece of wood and striking the eel three hard blows on the tail, resuming his seat with an air of well-merited rest. The eel wriggled a little, its flat, broad head lying serpent-wise on the bottom of the boat.

"Thet's done fur him," muttered Josh complacently. Still the eel gazed wickedly at him from his bead-like eyes.

Josh determined to examine his prize more critically, so kneeling in his boat he scrutinised his capture, his thick, brown fingers hanging carelessly within three inches of the "wopper's" mouth.

* Clear.
Suddenly the evil eyes gleamed maliciously, the snake-like mouth opened wide, the shiny neck curved, and the serpent’s head darted at Josh’s finger. But Josh was too quick. Moving his hand swiftly away he muttered, “Noa you doan’t, my bewty.” Then drawing out his large clasp knife, he crushed its flat head with his heel, and divided the spinal cord.

“That will do for his bacin,” said Josh thoughtfully, as he replaced his knife into his huge pocket. “But he be a sharp shot, the warmin’; he know; that he dew,” he soliloquised, rising and shoving off to his ark-like house-boat moored in the gladen beds.

On reaching his eel-ketch, Josh brought forth his rusty scales into the well, and hooked on the eel. “Six pound and a harf! I knowed he was a wopper;” he said aloud, with a tinge of pride. “Now let’s see the warmin’s masure,” he continued, drawing a dirty tape from his pocket, and applying it carefully to the wriggling body. “Forty-tree inches. Hum! an’ gude masure, tew,” finished the man of science.

Going into his cabin, Josh fastened the eel’s head to a hook over his primitive fireplace, and began to flay his booty with zealous care. As he flayed, he moved back step by step until his broad shoulders were to be seen in the doorway. The eel and its skin reached from one end of his house-boat to the other.

After the skin was removed, Josh got down an old jar, and taking out a handful of salt, he rubbed it into the flesh. The dead eel wriggled and squirmed worse than ever.

“The warmin’!” Josh exclaimed, in astonishment; then added, addressing the eel, “Fare ter me, bor! you’re rare wicious.”

Taking up his knife, the experimental Josh placed it within the eel’s lips, and the jaw of that flayed and salted “water-wiper,” with its spinal cord cut asunder, closed with a snap upon the thin blade, gripping it fast.

“By goms, what a wicious warmin’!” exclaimed Josh, in admiration, as he withdrew the knife-blade, and proceeded
to cut the body into sections for his frying-pan, in which melted lard was already bubbling.

"He died wicious, but he ate werry nice," was Josh's epitaph.

Wednesday found us all ready to weigh the anchor, so Jim was asked in to smoke. I offered him some toddy.

"No thank you, sir; I don't live in that street!"

"Water Street, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Jim, did you ever get those photographs that fellow took at Heigham Fair?"

"Oh yes, sir, they have come; I thowt I was better-looking nor you, sir, but you bested me that time; looked as tho' I was in a fog a hundred yards off, and I sat afore you too."

I smiled at Jim's wonder; the itinerant "artist" had focussed me, since I it was who paid.

"How did you get on with the party in the summer, Jim?" I asked, referring to a family Jim had waited upon in August.

"Oh, werry well, sir; he wos a stockbroker, and he plained how that work. He say that's like this—if you owned that mash, and wanted to drain it, and had no money, and you could prove that would pay well to drain—well, you'd get up a company, and people as believed in it would shoot,* and they'd have stocks or shares, and get so much every year on their money."

"'Oh,' I say, 'that's good; I like that. Now, if all you Londoners wos to shoot a shilling a-piece, that would get me a rare big wherry.'"

"'Yes,' he say, laughing; 'I'll head the list.' He wos a good sort; so wos Miss ——, his wife's sister—she had a fine eye, and wos up to the nine score: stuggy."†

"Oho, Jim, what did she say to you then?"

"Said I had fine eyes, sir, and called me 'dear old Jim.'"

He remembered her only too well—her name was often

* Subscribe.
† Plump, well-favoured.
on our lips in the bleak winter—so does the spirit of a pretty woman haunt a lonely ship.

The stars shone brightly in the clear solemn night, and we could see swans floating near us.

"This place ain't wery cold * arter all," said Jim, turning out and disturbing the swans. They sailed away with dignity, and were lost in darkness, disappearing on the vast reed-fringed broad to the low banks where osier-trees and cottages broke the sky-line. Low down in the northern sky the Great Bear was rising, and the Archer and Sea Goat blazed to the south, whilst Pegasus galloped in the orient, and the Herdsmen Böotes stood ready to chase the rising Bear to the frigid North.

* Deserted.
CHAPTER III.

SAILING ON THE BURE.

"Leave old thinkers to their dreams,
The treasure of the ages;
Leave dusty scientific reams,
And study Nature's pages.

Her poetry is better far
Than all men write about her;
Old Homer's song of love and war
Had scarce been sung without her."

An Indian Summer Carol: Fidelis.

Sept. 18.

We left Hickling early on Thursday morning in bright sunshine, and sailed to Acle Bridge with a favourable wind, the river banks green with reeds and bright with sea-asters and hawkweed. On Friday we reached Yarmouth, and moored against an old barge at Runham. Near by a fisherman was tanning his smelt-nets (for shrimping was over and smelting had begun) with kutch. The fishermen hereabouts use either oak-bark or kutch. The old man filled his cauldron with water, breaking several pounds of kutch into it. When the mixture was boiling, he packed in the light, flaxen-coloured nets, cooking them for an hour, smoking his pipe stolidly meanwhile. After they were tanned, he and his boy spread them upon the dingy marsh. I saw them gathering up the dry lint in the yellow light of the setting sun. At eight o'clock they rowed past us in their coble under the young moon, the newly-browned nets piled high in their stern seat, on their way to smelt on Breydon flats.

The water felt warmer at Runham than at Hickling, and
the water thermometer registered five more degrees of heat, although the day seemed closing in cooler, thus exemplifying the law that when fresh water mixes with the salt tide the mixture is of a higher temperature than either constituent. The eels were already quick to feel the change of temperature in the river, for as we descended the stream eel-catchers told us "the eels were on the move"—like ourselves going seaward.
CHAPTER IV.

GREAT YARMOUTH AND BREYDON WATER.

"Slowly down the West the weary day is dying;
Slowly up the East ascends the mellow, mystic moon;
Swiftly swoop the hawks; the hooting owls are flying;
Through the darksome splendour breaks the lonesome cry of loon."

B. STRATTON: Evening on the Marshes.

SUNDAY broke cold and bright: the wind was blowing from the East, the branches and leaves of the trees rigid against a hard, flat, blue background. With the turn of the tide we started from our unsavoury moorings—a sordid land where flourished a scentless flora—wild wormwood, goosefoot, se-lavender, glasswort, and grass-leaved sea orache growing amongst rotting timbers and decaying boats. Pushing with lowered mast through the gloomy and austere bridges, we passed a picturesque corner of old Yarmouth, lighted up by the morning sunshine, discovering groups of fishermen clad in blue guernseys, all smoking clay pipes, as they watched the sailing craft go through this narrow neck of water that joins the Broads and Breydon Water. As we neared the bowling-green, a row of heads in blue caps bobbed up over the black fence gazing at us, some old friends hailing vociferously and running down to help us moor. Just off the green, the Harnsee, splendid in new sealskin cap, blue guernsey, duffel breeches, and tall polished boots, was mopping out his gun-punt. He stopped, and leaning upon his mop handle, said—

"How do, sir?"

"How do?"

"'Aint that the Spark, sir?"
“What! do you know her?”

“Oh yes, sir. She used ter belong ter Gaby Thomas, then she used ter ferry ice for the Columbia fleet out of the old ship what they kept on Breydon in them days.”

... The tide was running swiftly, eight jolly knots an hour, carrying a boatload of laughing girls up Breydon, past the codling fishers moored in midstream. Everywhere were signs of coming winter—loafing yachting hands, their yachts laid up under tarpaulins; and all around luggers taking in ballast, for the fishing had already begun, and the herring harvest was being garnered. We soon followed the laughing girls across Breydon with a fair wind behind us, passing old Darkel's Black Maria by the cross stake. In response to our greeting and chaff, he said—

“Yes; I take pertikkler care of my wessel. She's looked arter better than any wessel in the world—look at her paint!” He had not been painted for thirty years.

The water grew choppy at the junction of the Waveney and the Yare, and we had to tack so discovering the roofs of the smelters' house-boats peeping over the ronds. Some of them were cleaning their nets as we dropped sail and moored to the Berney Arm's staithe.
CHAPTER V.

BURGH SMELTERS.

"With dying splendour on her face,
Her robes of beauty laid aside;
The hectic Summer sighs to glide
From the flushed Earth, to yield a place
To dry foliage, sere and gold,
And trees whose rugged arms are bare,
And shrill moanings of the air,
And dim glories of the wold."

J. C. ASCHER : Indian Summer.

Sept. 22.

The first quarter of the moon was past and gone, the tides began to die away. This was of supreme interest to these smelters, living in their house-boats, moored in dikes cut into the soft round—a fringe of peat bordering the estuary formed by the meeting of the waters before they broaden over Breydon, finally to flow through Yarmouth into the North Sea.

Before the end of the August wane the smelters' old house-boats had taken up their stations. Any nightfall after those peaceful days you might have seen the yellow firelight streaming from their doorways, and shadows flickering to and fro, as they sat and joked cheerily on their rough wooden lockers that served them as beds by night; whilst the "boys" fried the "aufl"*—as they distinguish all fish taken in their nets except smelts—the desired quarry.

By day their black-pitched roofs cut the low sky line leading the eye up to the rows of posts, across which their kutch-stained nets hung stretched to dry. The wind had

* Offal.
shifted from the south-east to the westward, and was blowing freshly as the flood began to make underneath the tide, for the ebb was then gurgling past the bows of my wherry; but those men on the quays, in their souwesters, blue guernseys and duffel trousers stuffed into long sea-boots, knew well the flood was creeping up along the river bed. The wherries had already left Yarmouth—it was not far off. There sat the fishermen, like four cormorants, staring into their rowing boats laden with nets and gear, all talking and laughing. They wanted the ebb to run down a bit more. "Plenty of fish a-coming," exclaimed the patriarch of the party; "I can smell 'em." So could I. That repulsively clammy odour that betrays the passage of a shoal of fish was in the air; the smelt smell is, however, of finer quality than the bream bouquet. I believe armchair naturalists contradict this fact. I can assure them they are wrong. I can smell a shoal of fish as easily as a rose.

A flock of starlings flew down and alighted on the rond opposite, and one of the smelters drew up to me.

"Will you shoot some on 'em for us, governor?"

"Starlings—what for?" I asked a one-eyed man.

"To make a pie."

"Are they good?"

"Good? Yes, sir. Skin 'em, and soak 'em in salt and water, and cut their tails off."

I shot twelve with two barrels, and presented them to the Cyclops. He stowed them away in the house-boat.

At length another—the "old Crab"—arose; he had a rough-hewn face, like a piece of South Sea Island sculpture with bleared eyes. He entered his boat, throwing the line to the Cyclops, his partner in the strange vicissitudes of a smelter's life.

Seating himself comfortably, he began rowing across the river paying out the hundred and eighty yards of net, the Cyclops trudging slowly along the river wall with the line. Having pulled across the stream, the old fisherman eased to paddling, working laboriously along the dicky works—a wooden pier that separates the waters of the meeting
rivers. He was a good hour paddling slowly and with effort, whilst singing an old love song with croaking voice—

"O Joe, the boat is going over;
O Joe, you naughty man, she cried;
O Joe, I wish I was in Dover,
Before you took me on the water for a ride."

The Cyclops stumped down the bank until he reached an old swill stranded in the mud; then he stopped, exactly opposite his partner. Turning, he looked at the other smelters, who were shooting their net a hundred yards higher up the river. One of them suddenly stopped and began to haul the net in again.

"They've got foul o' summat," shouted the Cyclops to the Crab.

The old man looked up the river slowly and said—

"I nevar got on thar; thar's a steak agin the quay, I know; but I never heerd of nothin' thar."

"What is it, bor?" asked the Cyclops.

"I dunno," grunted the old Crab indifferently, still paddling, working his blades as a spawning or sleeping fish does its fins.

"They've lost their draught," roared Cyclops, "that's sartin."

The old man shook his head doubtfully.

The first sail away from Yarmouth on the young flood was 'already visible across the rond when the old Crab began to row towards the Cyclops. When within twenty yards of the rond, he climbed slowly out of his boat, stepping into the water, pushing his craft before him to the shore, pulling the line after him. For they only draw the nets into the boats in the neaps—it requires three men for that job.

Mooring his boat close to the salting, he hobbled up the slippery bank and stood on the rond, Cyclops having meanwhile drawn in his line and fixed the trammel stake firmly into the mud. I drew up like a gull on the look-out for "auffol."

Their partners had got their net off "the foul," and shot
it again. All was going well with them; their trammel stake had not disappeared under water "this journey"—they were all clear so far. Bending double, the old man started hauling, the line cutting his shoulder, crushing the sea-asters and hawk-weeds beneath his heavy-heeled boots as he plodded along in a straight line across the rond. When the corks described a segment of a circle, curving gracefully against the line of the shore, he stopped and turned, and they both began to haul in the "lint" slowly and with peculiar care, one standing upright, the other stooping against the picturesque background of windmills and cottages that loomed on the verge of the marshes.

As they reached the poke, there was a gleam in the sunshine, and the first smelt was drawn from the meshes and cast into a pail. Hauling in carefully, they recovered the belly of the net, and dragged it, dripping with sea water, festooned with seaweed, and gleaming with fish, on to the mud.

Sorting the fish, the Old Crab threw the codling aside contemptuously.

Here I made a remark.

"Them warmin' dew a lot of harm; they be arter the smelts. They eat the smelts, and the smelts eat the shrimps."

I nipped the beard of one codling; he jumped nearly a foot into the air. This was clearly his tactile organ. The air was full of the scent of freshly-cut cucumber. I have smelt it right across the river when they have been clearing their nets to windward of me.

At the end of his task the Old Crab straightened himself with a grunt and counted twenty-one smelts.

"Too much wind, too much wind," he complained; "that fare no good smelting in a wind," he concluded, turning to me with a serious face. . . .

"Well, I ha' taken twenty to forty score at a draw. . . . A hundred score be the master-draw as ever I heerd on about these parts.

"Wull I sell you any? Take what you like, sir. Smelts, two shillun' the score. Take' the 'auffol,' if you'll have it, sir, for them starlings."
The "auffol" comprised six codlings, two eels, one dab, a few shrimps, four sprats, and a fish a little larger than a sprat, which he called by a name since forgotten.

The Cyclops selected the smelts from the "auffol," and went down to the water to wash their mouths carefully.

"What's that for?" I asked curiously.

"Ef yow doan't dew that, sir, directly they're caught, yow can never get 'em clean." . . .

"Thar," he says, handing them to me in the pail; "doan't yow go and mix them with them other fish, or they'll go bad."

The Crab joined in here:

"You'll enjoy 'em. Smelts be on'y good when fresh taken. Them Lunnioners doan't know what smelts be like. They presarves them in ice. Now, directly you put a smelt inter ice, that go bad. 'If you was ter take a piece of ice an' put it inter a smelt, directly that ha' done melting, the smelt would be bad."

I ejaculated and went off with my booty. Our larder was low. They were cleaned at once; and that evening I rolled them in flour and beaten egg, and fried them in oil over a quick fire. Smelts and codling à la Juive. They were, as my man said, "up to the nine score."

On the way back to my boat I passed a famous poacher, one who had netted fish in the dark by tons. He was hauling in his net, and admonishing his young apprentice.

"Don't yow put yourself out; don't yow hurry, bor. Let them who I owe money to fret theirselves. Don't yow fret yourself, matey, though we only got seven fish the first draw. 'Tan't no weather for smelting, this ere—too much wind, bor."

Further up the rond an old sow, long and thin in the flanks, a true Norfolker, was trying to bite the end off a fish-box. I stopped and watched her; she looked at me suspiciously with her cunning eyes, and resumed her pastime. She caught the fish box in her teeth and turned it over; she tossed it with her snout, and (the rogue) a codling fell out, to be immediately gorged with gusto. Before I could cry, "Stop thief," the landlord of the inn—for it was
his sow—came running out and drove her off. She was a noted fish-stealer. All round my boat the smelters were hauling in their nets with varying success, but no one got many—there was too much wind.

Having done fishing, they washed their nets and hung them out to dry. The Cyclops went off to fill his water-bottle at a crystal spring that wells up on Burgh Flats, amid a garden of sea-asters. So moist is the soil that the trees growing there show bare stag-horned tops—that fell disease of excessive moisture—against the blue sky. Asters and coarse grasses alone flourish there.

As I fried my fish, I could see the beautiful evening landscape. The south-west wind had draped the distant trees and veiled Burgh ruins in a veil of vapour—a salt haze, whose fresh and invigorating breath reached me amid the fumes of boiling olive oil. The dew was already falling in the peaceful eventide; the dying sun flickered on the dew-bespangled plants and reeds. Larks rose a short distance and hovered, pouring forth their "full voice;" they and lapwings are the last birds to go to sleep, and the first to awake. A smelter came forth and stretched himself sleepily in the well of his boat; he had had a nap since I last saw him, and was now going to "on pan" for supper. Flocks of starlings-settled, after indecisive wheelings, into a bed of reeds, where their noisy voices were long to be heard as they were startled by wherries sailing past on the river. A girl dressed in white, with dark sunburnt cheeks and a lissome figure, beckoned to her father, who was coming home along the river wall, with dog and coil of rope, returning from counting the stock on the marshes.

It was one o'clock in the morning when I finished reading, and as usual I turned out to have a look at the night. The Maid of the Mist was rocking gently with the ebbing tide. A clear, still night saluted me; Pegasus gleaming brightly in the eastern sky, first attracting my gaze. Across Breydon I could see the eight lights of Yarmouth flash on the water-line as of yore in those happy days chronicled in
"Wild Life on a Tidal Water." I had thought, whilst smoking, that I heard a gruff voice on the water near by. It must have been one of the smelters in the house-boat moored alongside. It was. He came out again, stretched himself, remarked sleepily, "It's a fine night," looked at the water carelessly for a minute or two, and asked, "It doan't flow yet, dew it?"

"No," I replied.

He grunted "Good night," and turned in to his hard boards to snatch another sleep and dream of bursting smelt nets. Eels were smacking all round in the starlit water. The sharp cough of sheep came across the marshes; a dog barked hoarsely at a marsh farmstead, and I could hear rats feeding in the mud under our stern. A deep cough from the smelter's craft told me some one was awake in there—the ever-restless "Old Crab," I suspected. Peaceful as was the night, the air was filled with the murmur of life, as myriads of fish, flesh, and fowl fought their fierce battles in the air and water and on the earth. The horizon was shrouded with vapour, but in the zenith the constellations shone and blazed brightly with varied colours, the mist encircling the larger stars with delicate wreaths. I was lost in admiration and wonderment as I sat on the dew-spangled cabin roof looking up into the purple sky. Our world is exquisitely beautiful, and life joyous to the brave and the true-hearted. It is useless sighing for the knowledge that is withheld. Verily, as Heine has said, a fool is waiting the answer of the great mystery that the Lords of life and death have hidden from us. A slamming of doors and the sounds of gruff voices broke the spell—the smelter obscured my thoughts—the atom eclipsed the infinite—and I went below.
CHAPTER VI.

SAILING ON THE YARE—A MISTY NIGHT.

"Upon the glassy stream the boat
Glides softly, like a vision;
And, with its shadow, seems to float
Among the isles Elysian."

AN INDIAN SUMMER CAROL: Fidelis.

Sept. 25.

The mushroom or eel moon was "getting,"* as they would say in Norfolk; but the day was still warm, with a slight westerly breeze, as we hoisted our sail bound for Norwich. Soon after starting a fine rain began to fall, powdering the grass-blades with soft droplets, and bedewing the marshes that stretched far and wide about the misty clumps of sallow looming like veiled islands upon a misty sea. Far away on the verge of the landscape wind-mills and trees lazily stretched their arms against the grey sky as if awakening from a soft vapour-intoxicating sleep. Then the gentle breezes arose tossing the white-leaved grasses to and fro, rippling the still pools, and lulling our senses with their sweet low music. In such soft scenes the toil of man seems to become easy and pleasant, the ditches on the marshes dig more easily, and the wherries seem to float through the landscape and melt softly out of sight. The very smoke is reluctant to rise from the cottages hidden in a dreaming clump of elms where the old church bells have just struck the noontide hour with muffled voices. We sailed dreamily all day without adventure, but towards evening we witnessed a curious and beautiful

* Waxing.
phenomenon. Just before sunset a current of wind blew from the east bending upon itself the upper part of a column of smoke rising from a brick-kiln. Immediately a heavy dew began to fall and collect upon the marshes, suggesting in places pools of water that appeared to grow quickly, spreading and widening, until, lo! the marshes resembled broads extending right up to the marsh walls. A man with a cart drove through the water-like mist, the bullocks crowding up to him as he passed along throwing out lumps of cake on to the marshes. Pearly in the vapoury landscape, six bronzed men were poling the last of the marsh hay that had been left on the ronds during the more pressing toil for harvest.

The tranquillity and placidity of the landscape was marvellous—you might have heard a pin drop. The landscape seemed asleep, save where the smoke from the burning brick-kiln floated lazily through the air, shadowing an angler trudging home in the yellow splendour of the sinking sun.

Then pillars of mist began to rise from the river, and we sailed solemnly through an ever-thickening expanse of sea-like fog gathering on marsh and river, burying the herds and flocks. Already the cows stood dewlap deep in the rising flood, and the grey smoke of the first* day's burning at the brick-kiln, though still discernible, grew fainter as the encroaching grey from the plains slowly closed over the eastern sky. The herds and flocks had disappeared, and the sleeping windmills but just showed their heads over the grey sea. The moon arose silently growing like a flower in the night, a silver grey ball slowly flushing to a golden tinge. Higher and higher rose the grey sea, so that only the vane of a passing wherry was visible as we glided past each other on the hidden river. The sense of spaciousness and breadth was unpaintable, indescribable, wonderful. When we reached Cantley, through the grey world shone the inn lights, streaming yellow over the cold water where we dropped our anchors, or ever we went below with faces bedewed with the soft exhalations wherein the mushroom grows mysteriously.

* The smoke of a burning brick-kiln is dark on the second day.
Why is mortal permitted to gaze upon such perfect beauty, why is he allowed to lift the veil, for after such magic visions the greater part of life must be prosy indeed, and yet we poor worshippers try to preserve such scenes in paint or fetter them in verse, living with the shadow of the thing that was.
CHAPTER VII.

MOONLIGHT BY BRUNDALL.

"It is not Summer's fervid gladness,
But a melancholy glory
Hovering softly round decay."

S. S. Moodie: Indian Summer.


The exquisite evening of the mushroom moon heralded a storm. It was the wedge before the cyclone, for we were awakened next morning by a roaring gale. On looking out over the foam-tossed river, we saw the great wherries rushing past with reefed sails and dropped peaks. We determined, however, to essay the passage with full sail, for the sky looked dead. Truth to tell, this gale was but the outrider of the equinoctials, and by the afternoon it had died down to a light breeze, so that before we moored the night had settled down peaceful and moonlit.

We went spinning for pike on the white river, but without avail piscatorially, but the river was a dream of colour and delight. Our fishing was followed by a bowl of royal punch, so that the record of that September night should be written in gold.
CHAPTER VIII.

AT WOODS END.

"O youthful prime! O golden hours!
Ephemeral glories that have flown;
O future yearnings mellowed down,
Yet tinted with the hue of flowers."

J. G. Ascher: Indian Summer.

SEPT. 27.

PLEASURE-GARDENS for the citizen and his sweetheart — whither they come by steamers on moonlit nights to drink beer and walk stolidly along the flower-bordered terraces. But the season for such pleasures was over, and the cunning Caliban, Cerberus and groom, winked knowingly, chuckled hideously, and proposed skittles at eventide. It was a new game to me, but I was fortunate enough to "take the floor" the first shot—you must strike the foremost pin on the right or left cheek—voilà the secret. After this unexpected success, the landlord and myself played a match against Ben, the rustic champion, and a gardener, and beat them. Our game had provoked drinking, so the landlord was happy, and when we had finished the lights in the skittle alley were put out, every one adjourning to the drinking saloon, for the ways of the publican are devious and wonderful. In the bright saloon, with its commonplace, tawdry furniture, the peasants danced and sang songs, one man singing and accompanying himself by playing a tattoo with his elbow, knuckles, and finger-tips. As I was watching the labourers disporting themselves, a North country gardener drew up to me and began abusing the Norfolk men.

"They have no heart; that's no fun in 'em. Their
mawthers are fules, but," he informed me incidentally, "my father had heart"—he had been convicted for thieving. When these festivities were brought to an end, we wandered back to our ship, finding a tipsy fellow standing on the shore recounting the boat's history to a little crowd of listeners.

"The gentleman bought her; he gave ... sovereigns for her" (four times her actual cost). "She was built for a model, she was; she is older than me misself."

As we stepped aboard the crowd moved on down the dark roadway.

The next day being Sunday, a crowded steamboat arrived from Norwich, the pleasure-seekers scattering over the country side. About noontime two little girls passed our boat, the one a country-bred child, with a round, solid figure, simply clad in a plain print of chaste pattern, recalling grass pinnacles upon a pale lavender ground. Her dead black hair streamed luxuriantly beneath a dark trim straw hat, and her well-shaped legs were encased in home-knitted stockings. As she went along the road she turned her clear, calm eyes curiously upon us for a moment only, walking along with a bunch of reed tassels in her hand, her dress swinging loosely and gracefully from her swelling hips—hers was the dignity and grace of strength. After her passed a little town-bred girl, with hesitant, mincing steps. She was clad in a bright red dress, all puffed and puckered, fantastically distorted to hide her ill-developed little body. Her head was decorated with a tawdry little bonnet, partially covering some thin, sickly-looking curls. In her arms she carried a velveteen bedizened doll, magnificent with tinsel. As she passed, she pointed with childish joy to the doll's gilt necklace, saying proudly, "My other doll has got bangles."

Poor child, barbarously spoiled by a cheap civilisation. Was she the only one who was exchanging the kernel for the husk? I trow not, for the devil stalks through the land, and points with leering face towards the city where degeneration awaits the race, where all is vanity and artifice
—for the curse of nature is upon it. When the land shall be all built upon and enclosed, and the peasant is no more, then may old England go grovel before the world.

In the afternoon, two stalwart country girls, gaily dressed, came walking home from church along the river bank, passing the crowded steamboat on the point of starting. Coming to a stile, the girls climbed lightly over, amid the hoots and jeers of the steamboat rabble. Once across the stile, the foremost girl, superb in rage, planted herself firmly, and looking the mannikins full in the face, cried tauntingly, "Did you see what you were looking for?" They laughed stupidly, while the two girls strode off across the marshes to their father's little farm.

Again were the city-bred discomfited.

At sunset I saw these girls, with milking pails upon their arms, driving some cows into their yard. What were the browbeaten rabble doing then? Drinking 'arf and 'arf at the Jolly Dorg with their Pols.

As the moon rose, Jim looked wistfully at the sky, saying, "A spring-tide and a full moon—a good herring night."

The scene was peaceful and beautiful as a dream. The moonlight lay on the lone white road and misty river, the hush of the night being softly broken by musical voices stealing across the marshes from the old Norwich belfry, warning the people living in the dark, draughty streets of the old city that another midnight hour had passed. In the sleeping wood beside us a cow was cropping the tender shoots of the low tree branches, whilst in the silvery water fish were rising, marking the surface with curious patterns. These low sounds, hushed as they were by the deadening mists, increased the sense of calmness. Perhaps, too, that was why the rooks in the elms were quieter in their sleep that evening, for the night before they had started and cawed in the bright moonlight at every stroke of the cathedral clock.

Storm after peace again. On Monday morning our boat was rocking, and the waves, made fierce by the roaring equinox, slapped savagely against her timbers. 'Twas the breath of autumn bringing death to the leaves and water-
plants. All garnered was the golden wheat and bearded grain, stripped were the fruit-trees, and fruitless the vines. The hectic of death was creeping over the water-plants and bright marsh-grasses, for September is the painted month of England. Nature's features here are not so bright and gay as those I have seen in the maple-woods of Delaware still delicately bright and full of colour, more refined, perhaps, and less pretentious, but dear to painter and poet. At this season does the sanguine warm our blood, for the leaves are ripe and ready for the fierce harvest-man, the wind. Long has the death flush been creeping over the marsh crops—it was already visible in the wheat-harvest when the yellow sheaves were carried home in the long evenings; but men thought then only of yellow, for that is the colour of gold. After harvest, the sun awoke the sleeping daisies in the mornings, their drooping petals heavy with night-dews as they raised their heads from their grassy beds like laughing maidens. At this season, too, the wild parsley plants stream across the marshes, picking their way daintily through the watery grasses like some holy procession of young girls following the priest across the fields to some French village.

Around these plants the marsh thistles stand in serried phalanxes like scarred and weather-beaten warriors, and all adown the river banks as you wander you can still gather a strange and lovely posy—brindled reed with bright marsh marigolds blazing between, and leaves of ripe water-dock growing in the dikes; you may add to your bouquet the blood-red plants shedding their seeds in triple-faced shields, and white spots of water-celery and purple patches of loose-strife. If you go farther afield, you can still gather poppies and daisies, and many another blossom. But with September departs the Summer—the season of ripening and ingathering—and the face of the land bristles with yellow stubble, the moors are ragged, the dikes are full and characterless, and man is left with the homely partridge, the bright pheasant, and the rich and varied colour of decaying vegetation.
On the last day of September I had to row sixteen miles down the river to meet some friends. It was severe work against the tide, with a roaring beam wind blowing the water into grey hollows wherein my boat rocked. In my passage silver rain-storms glittered athwart the sky and hid the landscape ere they passed, leaving me dew-spangled. On reaching my destination, I met a telegram instead of my friends. Ordering a capon and a bottle of Madeira, I prepared myself for the return journey, starting when the sun had sunk so low that a soft twilight already reigned in the reed beds and danced upon the boles and gnarled roots of some willows overhanging a favourite gravel-bottomed perch-hole. The tide was again adverse, and the wind abeam.

Along Rockland Marshes flight shooters were busy blazing in the growing dusk at wood-pigeons flying home to roost in the coverts, or, on the sly, at pheasants, who dearly love the marshland.

Already the wild birds had begun that mysterious flighting at eventide; young flappers flew to the dikes from the broads, and clouds of starlings, peewits, and gulls filled the air—sure augury of autumn. As I rowed along in the lumpy water, I could see vast flocks of fowl high overhead, rolling through space in multiform battalions. Each company seemed to fly round a nucleus that changed not, but moved forward with mechanical regularity; but all about the nucleus the birds were for ever shifting and shuffling their positions, so that at one moment the flock resembled a mighty fish, then a balloon, and again a huge Chinese lantern, or at times a mighty skein of silk spun by some invisible goddess. Sometimes these figures were plainly defined against the sky, sometimes mysteriously lost and found, at others invisible, the visual effect depending upon the position of the birds' bodies in relation to the light and the observer.

The wind increased in force and roared through the latticed bowers on the banks, catching up the wan willow leaves as it would a maiden's skirts, blowing them slant-wise, half turning their white under-parts towards me. The
woods seemed to be showing their teeth vindictively in the twilight, for long since the autumn sun had sunk down a golden ball behind the alder carrs.

At last the welcome lights of the *Maid of the Mist* gleamed on the broad river, and I was soon aboard dining with my friend, who had remained behind to fish.
CHAPTER IX.

A STORMY PASSAGE TO NORWICH.

"V'là l'bon vent, v'là l'joli vent,
V'là l'bon vent, ma mie m'appelle,
V'là l'bon vent, v'là l'joli vent,
V'là l'bon vent, ma mie m'attend."

ST. LAWRENCE RAFTSMEN'S SONG.

Oct. 1.

OME men were trimming the hedge-rows in front of the wherry, though the equinoctials still rocked and moaned through the trees on the low hills above us.

After taking in all reefs, we started with lowered peak, sailing before the wind. It was an exhilarating journey to Thorpe Bridge, where we were glad to moor and go below for lunch.

After the meal, we started for the New Mills through the Grand Canal of the old city, a waterway delightful in colour, but malodorous. We had hardly passed under Thorpe Bridge before a soaking rain-storm burst upon us, driving the crew into their oily suits. Thus clumsily attired, we quanted through the silver rain-shafts, the unwonted appearance of a pleasure craft in these purlieus drawing towsled heads to the windows, and black-faced stokers to the quaysides.

"Here comes the Noah's Ark," cried a coal-heaver, sheltering under a sack, worn capote-wise, but the grave old maltsters and the apathetic flour-men merely gazed at.
ON ENGLISH LAGOONS.

us with wonderment Urchins on the bridges jeered, and drabble-tailed factory girls begged us to take them for a ride. The dark moat with its rich red walls, green with ivy-leaved toad-flax, seemed endless. We shot bridge after bridge, hoping each would be the last, but it was long ere the white walls of the New Mills gleamed before us, when we moored to a beacon; but the smell coming from the window of a warehouse, which we found to be full of stinking bones, drove us nearer to the dark arches of the Mill, where the water was once again clear.

"It can be drunk in winter, but it is only good for washing up now," volunteered a civil wherryman lying alongside.

As we were stowing up for the night, our tin maiden slipped overboard, whereupon a dark, lean, sallow-cheeked man came up softly and began to drag for her body, but his efforts were fruitless; yet he recalled sad visions of the crimes of town as he moved about stealthily in the dusk "creeping" for the maid's corpse.
CHAPTER X.

LOTUS-EATING ON THE WENSUM.

"We are waiting in the nightfall by the river's placid rim,
Summer silence all about us, save when swallows' pinions skim
The still grey waters sharply, and the widening circles reach,
With faintest, stillest music, the white gravel on the beach."

E. P. JOHNSON: At the Ferry.

PERFECT autumn morning, cool and tonic,
greeted us as we turned out after breakfast. Going above the Mills, we hired a boat.

"Beautiful scenery," volunteered the thick-featured rough, with dirty scarf and broken billycock, as he showed us a boat. The water was crystal clear, the shores furnished with cosy bathing-sheds shaded by willows. Here and there we passed picturesque inns, where the lads and lasses congregate in summer, exchanging vows and drinks in the latticed bowers fragrant with rose and honeysuckle. Colts followed us along the emerald stained banks with outstretched necks, pricked ears, and meek eyes, hoping mayhap that we should open the gates that kept them prisoners. Patches of reed, blown aslant by the wind, waved their purple and gold leaves, shaking their powdered crowns at us as they bowed gracefully before the music of the breezes like a bevy of trained dancers. When the wind died away for a moment, they
paused as if taking breath, but the ripples on the water and the music in the reeds showed its quick return, and immediately the blithesome crop started off on light feet tip-toeing, their branchlets quivering and fluttering like ribbons and flower-sprays. Then all was harmony till ruder gusts came down the river ending the dance in a wild rout.

Beneath the crystal waves, perch, rudd, and roach darted in shoals over the subaqueous gardens, already showing the sere in their lush leaves. We rested under an arcade of willows, and smoked whilst some cattle wandered down to the shore for coolness, so hot was this October day.

... When we got back to the wherry, the lean, rat-like man was dragging for our tin corpse, and beside him stood a city rough, thick-voiced, shiny-skinned, sleepy-eyed.

"We got it up nearly to the top," he volunteered.


They shook their heads doubtfully.

"Can you Norwichters swim?"] I asked the young rough.

"Best swimmers in the world," answered sallow-face decisively.

"Yes, I can swim," interrupted the rough.

"Can you see under water?"

"Yes; I dived off the second bridge for a dorg collar, and the gent gave me five shilling, tree pence, tree farthings, all he had in his pocket. ... See under water? Yes, we all see under water; never go inter the water without looking," finished the rough.

"Never dive in Norfolk without eyes," crooned sallow-face, looking aside at the New Mills in disgust.

"No, in course not," echoed a thick-featured, pasty-fleshed, watery-eyed, husky-voiced gamín from a quay alongside.

"Will you dive for it," I asked the rough, "when the water clears—early to-morrow morning?"

He shuffled, hung his head, and answered—

"I've got to go away at tree o'clock ternight."

I smiled, and they went on with their work.
We found our corpse next morning ourselves, and put her back on the mast-top, giving sallow-face a douceur for his trouble. He thanked us, and offered to sell us his creepers; they "might come in useful."

Jim looked upon these natives and the city with disgust. "I do like a countryman, and hate these loafers; they be all blackguards," he said.

As we were getting ready to start, the wherryman belonging to the craft alongside asked—

"Ain't that the Monarch?"

"No; Little Spark, that was."

"Oh! ah! yes, to be sure," he said, blowing a cloud of smoke; "used to lighter marl out of the marl-pits, was sold to the Columbia fleet, then belonged to Gaby Thomas."

It was all coming again, so I went below.

The gale was still roaring above us, but we felt nothing of it; we were lying, as it were, at the bottom of a pit, the storm raging over the mouth with the noise of a blast-furnace.

We quanted back through this dismal land of factories, sawmills, breweries, tanneries, and gasworks, and when we moored at last against a garden bank near the Cathedral, Jim ejaculated thankfully—

"I'm glad ter get back ter something green."
CHAPTER XI.

ROUND ABOUT NORWICH.

"Where is thy home? On what strange food dost feed,
Thou fairy hunter of the moonless night?
From what far nectar'd forest, or flowing mead,
Glean'st thou, by witching spells, thy shiny light?"

C. MAIR: The Fire Flies.

On Friday morning we moved down below Thorpe Bridge, and moored by a tree-shaded walk much beloved by the lads and lasses. As they passed to and fro in the dusky twilight, Jim grew sentimental, and began to talk of Miss ——

“She was a sharp shot,” said Jim.
“She’s forgotten you,” I suggested.
“Not a bit of it, sir; she’ll remember me at Christmas.”
“We’ll see; she was fooling you, Jim; wanted you to wait on her particular.”
“Not a bit on it, sir.”
“Why not?”
“Well, one day she axed me if I was single, and whether I’d have her or no.”
“And what did you say?”
“I said that all depended on circumstances, and she laughed.”

After I had turned in, I heard a loud voice saying in passing—
“Oh yes; she’s a market boat from Beccles—Little Spark she is; seven tons, that’s her measure.
That saying only proved to me that the mainspring of historians is vanity.
Saturday was Norwich Cattle Market, and the bridge was kept warm from morn till night. Every living thing passing across seemed to be in a hurry—collies, girls, drovers, sheep, cattle, waggons, vans—the fever of the city was upon them all. A girl in red stopped beside the wherry, remarking—

“What a dear little boat!"
Jim could have kissed her for that.
A beggar passed and said—
“What a fine little ship,” and asked for bread.
Jim gave it to him in open hands.

As we left Norwich we passed along park-like grounds and suburban houses, where the inhabitants seemed to me to lead a freer and saner life than in the city. Couples sat in gardens flirting, regardless of all passers-by. Below Thorpe you come upon the marsh land, bringing with it a sense of space and freshness. The very ponies and cattle seemed to be happier as they rubbed the bark off the dead pollarded willows.

Mooring to a new quay, we watched a great wherry glide past, the helmsman eating a savoury dinner as he steered. An angler was trying his flies on the small fry rising, but none of them caught on. He was evidently innocent of the habits of coarse fish. At Whitlingham, where we had moored, we saw the last of man spoiled by the city. A waterside loafer rowed up, speaking with quick short jerks of the head, his hand going automatically to his forelock. He had not altogether recovered from left-sided hemiplegia. Like most of these men, he was one of the “fancy,” and, of course, a great athlete. I listened with a grave face whilst he bragged of having beaten Chambers at rowing, of having jumped 22 feet on the level, of having cleared 5 feet 9 inches in height, and of being able to handle the gloves with most of “‘em now even.” After impressing me in this manner, he claimed a shilling for moorage. I laughed in his face. He grew angry. I suggested gloves, and he finally took a glass of whisky, and left in a good temper. Oh, vanity! whither wilt thou not lead a man? An old
ON ENGLISH LAGOONS.

naval officer who had in years gone by carried out the orders of one of the most abused colonial governors that England ever discredited, came aboard and helped drink a bottle of Madeira.

"You shot the niggers?" I asked.
"Yes."

"That was all there was to do. Any one who knows the negro knows that you must keep him in order by physical force and shoot him dead the moment he revolts; but the puny sentimentalists at home have ruined many a landlord abroad, and not satisfied with that, they are now busy with their own landlords here."

The old fellow smiled grimly.

"I don't often hear words like those in this country, but they know nothing of niggers," and he waved his hand in disgust.

"No; all they think about here is to encourage and bolster up the poor failures and drunkards."

We left on Sunday morning early, and saw no more of the man who had carried out one of the most sensible orders ever given by an English governor, but with the natural consequence that he had been neglected by his country, for the days of benevolent-looking and flabby old gentlemen have not yet gone.
CHAPTER XII.

AT BUCKENHAM FERRY.

"Amid the listening stillness, you and I have silent grown,
Waiting for the river ferry,—waiting in the dusk alone.

Far thro' the waning twilight we can see him quickly kneel
To lift the heavy chain, then turn the rusty old cog-wheel;
And the waterlogged old ferry-boat moves slowly from the brink,
Breaking all the star's reflections with the waves that rise and sink."

E. P. JOHNSON : The Ferry.

Oct. 5.

FLOCK of field-fares flew down on the marshes as we hoisted our sail, reminding us that the birds had begun to come over the seas.

As we sailed to Bramerton Woods end, we got on to a muddy shoal, and though Jim and I pushed our quants so deeply into the soft silt that we were unable to withdraw them until we had worked them about for nearly ten minutes—a new experience to both of us—still we hung on the putty. All other resources having failed, we pulled her off by an anchor fixed into the rond, and were happy once again to get afloat.

On Monday we descended the river by slow stages, until we reached Buckenham Ferry, where we made fast against a thorn-tree frequented by field-fares, some of which we shot and ate, but they proved rather bitter. This was a pleasant spot, with its busy ferry and Dutch-like avenue, recalling one of Hobbema's well-known paintings. Day and night the ferry-bell was jangling and the winch clanking as
the actors of country life passed before us in endless panorama. Milk carts, carriers' carts, waggons laden with grain, flocks of sheep attended by shepherds and barking collies, stylish ladies in smart Norfolk carts—the women I noticed were always more exacting than the men—and herds of cattle. Those animals nearest the water stood with fore-legs firmly planted and backs raised, bellowing with fright as they stared into the swift river as the ferry crossed over. After them passed an old granny with a child in perambulator, a shy-looking young couple with much luggage, a portly farmer going to catch a train, and lastly, the lord of the manor himself passed over.

Jim had been to get the letters, and returning breathless, he said, as he handed me a bundle—

"I have been hitting the road something to get here quick."

On Tuesday a shrimper sailed up the river. I signalled to the helmsman, whereupon he put about and came alongside, addressing me as an old friend. I bought all his fish, a few smelts and one codling. As he eased out his sheet and went on his way, a rough head peeped from under a tarpaulin as his sail filled. Jim was standing aft, staring at the vanishing boat; then he turned, looked at me, and shook his head mysteriously.

"Fare strange to me—all these here strange boats seem to know you, sir."

"What do you mean, Jim?" I asked, but he only shook his head and went to his cabin.

After we had breakfasted on the fish, a loafer came up and asked Jim where our boat belonged.

"She ain't got no go to, nor come from; she ain't no residence, she ain't," he replied sulkily.

"Aw! I know; she be a cabbage wherry; she've got a funny name; where did you pick that up, matey?"

Jim did not reply.

The reeds round us were already dying at the bottom, for the leaves were turning greyish green. The reed leaves last
longest when the plants grow in brackish water; they prefer "a fooza bottom," as the natives say, and love the ebb and flow of the tide; but for quality those growing on a hard bottom are the best—their shafts are like steel rods.

A bright day, with a north-easterly wind, so I determined to row on to Rockland Broad. The sallows were growing bare, discovering here and there old redpoles and sedge-warblers' nests. A cloud of peewits flew over and alighted on the marshes, and as I entered the broad I flushed a brace of snipe feeding on the ronds, and heard the metallic "ching ching" of the reed pheasant; but I could not see him, he was cosy in some reed bed. My boat soon got foul of weeds, which were already coming up from the bottom, though forget-me-nots were in flower, and wasps still troublesome. I have remarked that 72° is the wasp temperature; if the thermometer falls a degree or two below that every wasp disappears. . . . When I returned to the wherry I found Jim laughing contemptuously at a footman holding a horse.

"So pore he look," said the sailor pitifully. "I'll go to Smallboro' Hill if I could do that."

Towards evening the wind changed to the west, as I had foretold, for I had seen the mist creeping over the distance in the morning. The west wind brought a calm, and the constellations twinkled with unusual brightness; the stars, together with the lights on river and marsh, formed a world of bright scintillating points—the lights alone seemed to be living, for all around was silent as death.

Jim knocked at my door and shouted—
"Haul the trawl here, all. Busky, oh."

When I turned out it was five o'clock, and the landscape was whitened by the first frost of the hard winter of 1890–91.
"A rimer," said Jim laconically, as I appeared on deck.

The marshes were covered with mist, through which gleamed the rime, frosting grass blade and reed stem, and like an alchemist turning the money-spinners' webs to silver threads. Clouds of mist were rising from the still oily river, blowing across the marshes where some cattle in a line were following a cart from which a man tossed rimy beet on to the frozen grass. Little groups of bullocks stopped at every pile, betraying themselves by clouds of steam breathing from their nostrils. The sun shone through the mist, and at half-past six the rime began to melt; but it took another hour before the last crystal disappeared. Several men were trolling for pike, and as the sun rose the mists cleared away, the dew dried up, and a hot bright day followed.

At noontide, as I was watching the birds feeding, flocks of larks, starlings, and peewits suddenly flew up from the marshes and scattered like chaff before a hurricane. A marsh harrier was hunting for his dinner.

Two or three people were sitting in the gloomy inn parlour, drinking beer and talking of the bad news, for Old Warren, the children's friend, was dead.

"He has been sadla, but now he is gone," said an old woman, draining her pewter.

"Who was he then?" I asked.

"Allust fond of the children; would do anything for 'em, or give 'em anything; that's what killed him, you see, sir. He was climbing a nut-bush to get some nuts for Mrs. Reed's lectle girl, and he fell and he hurt his back, and died four days arterwards." And she sobbed, and ordered some more beer—for she was his wife.

"Did he die at the Orspital, then?" asked a carman.

"Yes; Hartley is going to fetch him from the Orspital; he dew make a beautiful corpse—I went and seed him myself. Will you come and see him arter he get home?" she asked the carman, but he explained he would not be about just then.

After dinner a butcher came down to the ferry with a pig, and they were both put across the river; but the pig,
thinking perhaps that the shambles was his destination, ran back, jumped into the stream, and swam across. Upon reaching the opposite shore it had not cut its throat with its feet, as it should have done according to tradition, but scrambled out, and stood on the shore with a wicked eye and lowered muzzle, showing his teeth and hissing when the ferry boy tried to drive him back.

All day long the money-spinners left their trailing cobwebs—sure forerunners of easterly wind. The moon arose watery, and the night was greasy-looking, curlews flying and whistling overhead—a change of weather was imminent. I was lying smoking in the deadly stillness, almost dozing, so quiet was the river, when suddenly we were struck by a heavy body, and harsh voices called loudly to each other. I ran on deck, and behold a black wherry sail towered like a cliff over my head.

"All right, guv'nor," volunteered a rough voice; "we ain't going to stop long; only to buy a loaf of bread and sixpennorth o' wittles."

They spoke truly, for I soon afterwards heard the splashes of their quants as they pushed off into the broad dark river.

I went up on deck to smoke and muse, but a mysterious light soon appeared on the river, and I could hear faintly the ringing of engine gongs and the churning of a screw. Plainly a steamer was feeling her way cautiously up the stream. What a flavour of romance those sounds brought from the sea. It was a poetical scene—the quiet steady lights from the inn windows, the gliding will-o'-the-wisp flash as a vehicle was ferried across the river, the flashing express roaring across the distant marsh—everything was filled with the poetry of the night; but the magic of the sea was about the steamer, and my regards were riveted to her topmast light, steadily approaching. Presently a lantern flashed along the river wall. I jumped ashore and followed it, stumbling through the wet grass.

"She's a man-o'-war," said the lantern-man.

"A gunboat," I replied doubtfully, running back, jumping into my jolly, and paddling out to her.

As I drew nearer an old tramp was outlined against the
sky, but she smelt of the sea, so I forgave the lantern-man.

Saturday, market day, our ferryman was exceptionally busy, and many of the passengers were wrapped in cloaks, for they felt that a change of weather was coming. Indeed the birds had deserted the marshes, and the winds and waters were rising—a nor'-wester was blowing on the North Sea. This was Old Michaelmas Day, and the apples and willows had begun to get bare, for they are the first to lose their leaves. Old Michaelmas Day is a red-letter day in Norfolk, for rents fall due then, and many people shift their homes; girls too return from service on holiday. A caravan stopped for dinner under the trees by the inn. They were small farmers, and had packed all their worldly goods in carts and waggons. The old people were dining in the tap-room, but the daughter, a comely lass, was eating her meal sitting on a cart-shaft, flirting with the driver of one of the tumbrils, and feeding him with plum-cake and beer.

Every one was cheery about the inn to-day—the air was full of meetings and kissings, as the old folks greeted their daughters who had just arrived by train. On the bank a little girl stood waiting for her sister. Presently the old father and mother and little brother rowed up in a little coble, and Sally Smart in town finery was ferried across to be hugged and kissed by the family. After refreshment at the inn, they started home with Sally's luggage.

The thermometer was standing at 60° in the shade at 4 p.m.—70° being the maximum for the day.

"I never seed such a Michaelmas Day, have you, sir?" said the old fellow as they passed; "look, it is quite clear and warm."

Just before sunset some swallows flew across the yellow sky, and so peaceful was the evening that the wherrymen's feet could be heard on their plankways from afar.

I prepared some caviare for dinner, and gave Jim a taste, asking him how he liked it.
“I don’t think much on it, sir; a good old high-dried bloater is better. I suppose high folks call this a grand dish—I’ll go to Repps if I do. I don’t see much enjoyment hang to it, not harf so much as I do to your short ends.”

“But it’s only meant to begin with, Jim.”

“Oh, I see; to take the rough tiles off, eh? to kind er get an edge on. Well, when I get my dinner, I like ter feel as though I’d got my dinner, and not ter feel as though I had been whistling past a cook-shop.”

Late that night I heard a loud conversation on the river bank between a man, a woman, and a lad.

“Good-bye, mother,” said the son.

“Your mother will do what she can for you,” jeered the father, in a drunken voice.

“Hold yer tongue,” cried the mother hoarsely to her husband, and then said softly to the boy, “Yes, Sam, I’ll do everything for you.”

“There’s a treat for yer, ha! ha!” jeered the father.

“Good-night, mother,” cried the lad.

“Good-night.”

The father went off towards the station singing “We won’t go home till morning.”

Then the lad called anxiously—

“Mother!”

“Hold your tongue, silly boy.”

... “I’ll try and come Saturday night.”

“Dew, boy, dew,” she finished, and ran after her husband.

On the Monday I walked with a flock-master and his wife to a pulk hole, called Hasingham Broad, all that is left of a once mighty sheet of water. On the brink of the pulk lived a keeper, a cheerful and happy man, who pointed with great triumph to a tom-tit’s nest built in a broken bow-net hanging in his porch. The sentiment of keepering and keepers’ homes is not far removed from the stable sentiment. Everything around Old Balls had the respectable air of the
retired *bourgeoisie*. All was smug. Strange, indeed, was the effect of these surroundings upon the bow-net. That picturesque tool bore a criminal and ne'er-do-well look upon its face as it hung in the arms of the smug porch, and yet it is a beautiful object in an old marsh boat amongst the gladen. You cannot mix the country and the town without spoiling both. *Rus in urbe* was a dream of that cockney Horace. To him alone was such a mixture possible. This is why the keeper and his cottage do not appeal to the imagination, like the poacher and his hovel. The keeper is a flunkey, with but a touch of the wild woods upon his plush, but—always a flunkey. My friend looked into old game-books and reshot old days with Old John, and they cursed the *nouveaux riches* who are swallowing up the shootings and ruining the good hearty old country ways. After our return, my friend went into the inn to drink a glass with the old landlord. In one corner sat an old character, a well-digger.

"Why, holloa, Lorin! how are all the old Loddon people?" asked my friend.

"Oh, all right; they are all going to heaven as fast as they can. They ain't changed much since you were there?" replied the scoffer.

"Ah, I remember that old mare of yours. She must be thirty-five years old."

"Ay, and she have done good work, tew."

"Well, it's a shame to work her so much now, then."

"Work makes her old; it's only good-for-nothings that keep young," the well-digger replied viciously.

"You've said it now," retorted my friend, pocketing the allusion.

"You've said it now," echoed the yokels, and the talk turned to turkeys.

"I've had one turkey lay a hundred eggs in a season," explained the landlord.

"And they only tread onest a year neither," joined in a yokel. "I'll tell you for why. There was a chap worked along with me on Breydon Mash onest. He had tree turkeys, all hen-bahds; he knowed when they wanted treadin', and he
used to take them old birds to Heigham to get 'em treaded, and he told me that would do for all the season."

Suddenly a drove of bullocks appeared crossing the ferry, and every one rushed to the window to see them land. The animals were suspicious of the gangway; they smelt at it and snorted, the herdsman urging them on, but they only hid their heads in each other's sides. At length the foremost animal was so hard pressed by those behind that he jumped ashore, clearing the gang-plank with a bound. Every other bullock did the same—such is mob intelligence.

In the middle of the night I was startled by a loud crash against the wherry's side. Jumping up, I ran on deck, but the mist was so thick that I could not see Jim, who had turned out too, and stood on the other end of the boat. We hailed each other through the fog, asking what was up; but not a sound was to be heard—so still was the morning that I could hear the thick vapour falling upon my pyjamas.

We examined the ship's sides carefully, but could find no damage. Something had run into us and got clear away. But it was all explained afterwards.
CHAPTER XIII.

ON ROCKLAND BROAD.

"Afar, the cottage roof
Glistens with gems; the bridge that spans the drain
Is carpeted with down; the harvest plain
Gleams 'neath a crystal roof."

J. Talon-L'Espérance: First Snow.


We left next morning in stormy weather, shoving to Rockland Broad. Towards sunset a thick mist arose and enveloped us, for the wind had dropped and left a fleet of wherries becalmed, whilst their crews busily boiled their kettles. As we turned into Rockland Dike the vapour got thicker and the willows seemed asleep. It is marvellous how clearly sounds can be distinguished in such weather—we could hear the clank of oars on the broad, voices on the distant marshes, and an accordion playing in the village accompanied with the silvery laughter of girls; but all these sounds seemed ghost-like. One felt as if the formless, silent grey world around us was peopled with phantoms whose voices sounded clearly though afar off.

The tide was ebbing strongly against us, and the mist hung heavily, filling our lungs and wetting us to the skin, as we navigated the heavy craft up the narrow dike, startling water-voles from the bank and moor-hens from the reed bushes. As we neared the broad the distant caws of rooks greeted us, and we could smell shoals of fish. At last, long after dusk, we planted our rond anchors in a floating hover, disturbing feeding rats and awakening the starlings roosting on the reeds. They flew up with devilish
chatterings at every sound, resettling in their misty beds, falling to sleep as we grilled our long-shore bloaters and made ourselves snug for the night, lulled by the chicken-like squeals of the water-rails feeding in the reed-beds.

Now began my explorings. Rockland Broad is neither beautiful nor very interesting; it is a ragged-edged piece of water with reed-islands growing here and there—useful screens for the wild fowler, enabling him to work cautiously up to fowl. The broad debouches into the river by seven mouths, locally called the Fleet Dike (the main entrance), Rockland Dike, Black Dike, Big Sallow Bush Dike, Little Sallow Bush Dike, Jerrymarsh Dike, and Short Dike. Through these seven channels the tide ebbs and flows over gasteropods and numerous water-plants. On the village side of the broad a breck, where you may catch in season bull-heads, gudgeon, and dace, flows into the water.

During my journey I met a gunner who was rather excited; he had just shot two ospreys. According to him, they chose their fishing-ground according to the wind. The wind had stood in the south-west for a week, and for seven consecutive days these birds had fished in the same corner of the broad. It was their habit to hover, like a hawk, some forty yards above the selected spot, suddenly striking down and seizing the fish with their claws. He shot one of the birds with a three-pound pike in its talons, the fish receiving a shot on its own account. This man informed me he had never seen them take any fish except pike. Their stuffed skins went to increase the collection of a collector—I would as lief have to do with stuffed men and women as with stuffed birds.

The gunner got talking of Darkel. He didn't like him.

"That won't do for dorg ter rob dorg," he said, "and Darkel don't stop for nobody; he'd take a poor man's ligger as quick as a rich 'un's; but he nor nobody else wouldn't take my liggers if I was nigh, for if any one come arter my ligger and took that up, I should shoot at that and say,
'That's *my* ligger.' I shouldn't shoot at him, but at my ligger; that's *my* property."

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Thientific, that's my name, sir, though some on 'em call me 'Chizzles,' 'cause I was prenticed to a carpenter."

"Who gave you that name, 'Thientific'?"

"Well, sir, I was crowding of coal. I was doing the job, and I crowded out about forty-seven ton of coal unloading a wherry, when a man whistles to me, *whet*. I went and shot eleven mallard out of twelve with one shot, and Mr. Jay see the shot and he say, 'That's Thientific,' and that name hev stuck on me."

I spent the rest of the day in exploring, and was surprised and delighted with the beauty and suggestiveness of many of the local names. For though some of the pulks were named "Tom's Hole," "Puppy Hole," "Slaughters," "Cob's Low," names more beautiful, perhaps, according to the gunner's idea, still there were "Sallow Bush Hollow," "Ling's Corner," "Southwater," "The Dam," "Mill Corner," "Ash Tree Corner."


That evening I curried a brace of water-hens, and I was convinced that the water-hen as a table-bird is second to none. After dinner, the gunner called with a widgeon and a brace of teal. He drank some rum for the screwmatics.

"Have you had them badly?"

"I had the screwmatic fever three times, that nigh killed me the last go—I wor in bed eight week, and them doctors not doing me no good. They killed the two Rogerses, and I saw them carried past time I was ill. They would have had me tew, only I hulled their medicines away, and when they come they found it took, ha! ha! I don't believe in 'em at all; seeing 'em two Rogerses carried past made me feel queer. Rum cured me, that's the truth."

... "Well, you see, sir, one is allust wet on the broad here, ha! ha! Sometimes we get werry wet. I had some
gentlemen here a little while afore you come, and when they went they say, 'Tedder, do you come and see us tomorrow night at Coldham Hall.' So next day night I got my concertina and my missus, and away I go rowing up there, and we had a glass and a sing-song. As my missus was rowing home across the broad, I was setting in the stern playing the concertina, when over I go backards. I had only got one hand free, but I went swimming to the shore, and my missus stood up in the punt screaming, 'Where hev you got to, where hev you got to?' 'Do you be careful,' I shout; 'I can get ashore.' She lost one paddle, and kept hollering out, 'Now yu'll be drownded;' but I warn't, ha! ha! The next day morning a gentleman picked up my cap and part of the concertina.

As he got into his punt to go away, I asked him if there was much shooting to be had on Rockland.

"Well sir, two gents hired the mashes for £10 each, so I shot it for 'em; then they gave that up. Then Old Jerry hired it for £12, so I allust reckon greater part of his birds is mine," he finished with twinkling eyes and pulled off home.

The next evening Tedder told me his history.

"Yes, sir, I'm a broad's man; I lived in a house-boat till I got the screwmatics; I wor a Jack-of-all-trades afore I took ter gunning—barrowing coal, carpentering, pork-butcherling (I remember they guv me a knife, and shut me up in a barn along with a pig—I did for him), then I worked in a brick-yard, but after I shot them mallard I told you on, I stuck ter gunning, 'cause I hed a hundred pound left me. So I bought a punt and a dorg, and a big gun, ha! ha! and the old woman . . .

. . . "Have I been pulled? Lor', yes, sir—'cause they ain't treated me fair. One Christmas as I was selling my gun at twopence a shoot ter shoot sparrows, I was loadin' when Mr. Brown come along, and pulled me for shooting on Christmas Day. So I go straight inter his planting and cut it inter the game, and that warn't any use their paying
any regard, for they'd pulled me already. As soon as they pull me I shoot like a wolf, I can't help it. As soon as I see the feather, I'm on ter it.

"Have I met with any accidents? No, sir; but onest my old woman blew down the gun and the wind come out of the nipple. 'That's unladen,' she say.

"Do you put a cap on and I'll see,' I say, so I aimed at her rose-bush and blew that ter ribbants.

"That's unladen now,' I say.

"So you want ter be careful. Onest I was out here shooting with some gents. We walked two marshes, and went home and got lunch. They come back late on ter the broad, and one of 'em see a heron sit on the rushes, so he laid one gun down and took t'other up. His man was betwixt us, and he took the gun up what the gentleman had laid down; and he was that excited that he shot his master instead of the heron, that blew his lungs on ter the rushes and he tumbled back inter my arms. We got him ashore on to a door and carried him into the New Inn, where he died soon arter, poor feller . . . Talk about getting shot; onest my old dorg shot off the big gun, and the shot came right clean past me like billy o' rook. You want to tie a dorg in a punt, for if they come back tired arter retrieving a bird, they lumber up and kill you perhaps.

... "Talking o' accidents—I had a comical kind o' accident. I was along with a couple o' gents shooting; we'd a boat away from Coldham Hall; they wanted to see some snipe—I showed 'em where the snipe lay. As soon as the snipe got up, they were so eager in aiming, they both pitched overboard head fust, and I sat straddle legs across the bottom of the boat to see the sport.

"All the guns was overboard and everythink.

"One of the gents weighed sixteen stone, t'other about twelve. I got hold of their hands and lifs 'em alongside.

"'Hang ter the boat, hang ter the boat,' I say, and I shouted ter some chaps cutting reed, so they come in a mash-boat and took 'em aboard.

"For Gord's sake find our guns,' they say; so I took
direction and found the guns whilst the mash-men rowed 'em home.

"You can drink the beer," they shout 'twixt their chattering teeth as they went off the broad, and there was the beer bottle floating in the water and all.

"Yes, sir, I allust shoot with both eyes open; I can tell a bird a quarter of a mile off by his fly.

"Dorg; yes, sir! I wouldn't take a hundred pound for her; she allust want to see what I'm going to shoot. She'll jump off the punt with a penny on her back and swim acrost the broad. Lor', I ha' seen her white with a rimer frost, but she's a rare dorg. She'll retrieve from a hundred to a hundred and fifty yards; if she isn't far enough, I say—

"Go further back, go further back," till she over the deeks. Onest she went back and got a swan in a deek, and I had to go arter her in the boat; she wouldn't leave that, and couldn't bring that.

"You must shoot three or four birds before a spaniel to teach that.

"Lor', I had a spree onest. I got a stuffed rabbit and set it on the mash, and a gent come up and I say—

"Thar set a rabbit, sir.'

"So he up and knock her over, and when he found what that was he said noathin', but one day he come down with several gents shooting, and presently I see something white up a oak tree, so I say ter myself—

"That's a white pheasant,' so I let go, and dang me if a stuffed old grebe didn't roll down. He bested me that day.

"I ha' held the swivel up agin the wall and fired at plover. That's as much as you can lift. I ha' got a lot of piwipes like that. Lor', that old gun make as much noise as all England! that roar the whole parish up. One night the natives all come out, and axed 'What's up?'

"That's all right,' I say; 'the sparks hev all gone upwards.'

It was getting late when he rose to go.

"I shall build a new boat and live in that, even if I get buried overboard; I shall stick ter that as long as I can sure as my name is Joe Tedder of Rockland Broad.
After he was in his punt, he said—

"My! the stars look something big—a draught of water is coming;" and he pushed off across the broad.

The next time I saw Tedder he was going liggering.

"Yes, that is sport," said the agile little broadsman, grinning and crowing joyously.

"But——" I began.

"Yes, I know, sir, I have heard gents talk about that being unsportsmanlike, and all that, but I never yet found a gentleman who warn't willin' to see a day's liggerin', and ter take the fish home afterwards, too. Ha! ha! . . . But that don't signify on our broad; we poor men mun get a living, and fish we mun have. But time is getting on. Howsumever, I go liggering ter-day, and if yer likes ter come along and have a look, come and welcome; and if yer don't, well, sir, go . . . as yer call it. Ha! ha!"

It was a gloomy day in October—St. Martin's summer had gone—the nor'-westerly gale had stripped the sallows, and left a delicate tracery of branch and stem upon the grey background of sky. Even now the reeds were yellow just above the water, their leaves spotted with black, their tassels powdered with grey; seen in a mass they look greyish green, like the olives of Tivoli. The whole broad was flecked with reed down and swan's feathers.

The fisherman had gone home, and I sat watching for the return of himself, gear, and old woman, for the old woman is a necessary actor in the sport, for she was to row him about when casting for bait, for as he justly remarked—

"That's a rum thing ter go overboard in cold weather, with an oily frock and eighteen pound of lead on your shoulders."

Presently his low punt, painted the "colour of water," darted out from the reeds on the far side of the broad. I could distinguish the broadsman in his sou'-wester and oily, his old woman and his faithful dog sitting on the end of the punt. As he approached he laughed his short "Ha! ha!" and playfully put two decoy ducks into the water.
"That's where the fish are. Ha! ha! That's thientific," he said, with a leer and a chuckle.

I noticed the barrels of his gun peeping above the gunwale of his punt.

"That's where the fish are, where them duck are," he repeated, pointing to the ducks. Then gathering his eighteen-feet cast-net over his shoulder and into his right hand, he stood like a statue gazing into the weedy depth while his old woman paddled along. Suddenly he gave a short, sharp direction; she stopped paddling, and swinging one end of the cast-net he made a cast, and spreading into a perfect circle, the net fell with a splash into the broad. The old lady hastily thrust her oar into the water and anchored the boat, while he began slowly to haul in the net. When the net was nearly half way out of the water, I could see by the strain he had fish. As he got the greater part of the net out of the water, he nimbly, with a quick steady pull, landed the leads upon his gun-punt, his old woman and his dog eyeing him eagerly; the fish glistened through the meshes. Hastily filling a large pail with water, he began to take out the finest bait—twenty-two roach, all told.

"I told you there was fish where them ducks were. Ha! ha!" he laughed merrily; then quickly clearing the net of weed, he pointed with one arm the direction his wife was to take, and prepared for another cast, but that time he got nothing.

"They never all get together, somehow. Ha! ha! They mean ter best Joey, eh?" he cried.

Looking round for a few minutes with his keen black eyes, he again pointed silently with his arm to a corner, and began to gather the net. His wife rowed him under "a lee," and the net was thrown as before.

"Ha! ha! come along with Old Joey," he said playfully, as he drew in the net and cast the fish into the pail. . . . "Ha! ha!"

After two or three more casts he had got enough bait. Then he cleaned his net deftly and placed it on the end of the punt by the dog, threw off his sou'-wester, and pulling
off his oily, he stood in his shirt-sleeves white against the leaden sky. A brace of mallard flew across the sky, and he squared up at them with closed fists, laughing, "Ha! ha! you warmint," and turning to me he said, with well-assumed indifference and gravity—

"Only some old mallard, sir."

Hastily donning an old felt hat and black coat, he pulled up a sack and turned the contents in the bottom of the boat, crying out—

"Liggers, ha! ha!"

And liggers they were. Little cigar-shaped bundles of thick gladen about eight inches long, bound together with string. Round each was rolled a ball of string.

He began to bait the double-brazed hooks fastened to thin brass wire casts, to which was attached about twelve yards of string.

"Meet you by the sallow bush pulk, sir!" he cried; hooking on a roach through the back, he undid the string and fastened it by a notch at the end of the lugger, giving the fish about two feet of line. This first one he held up and spat upon, saying—

"For luck! Ha! ha!"

After this his wife rowed him slowly towards the sallow bush pulk, while he was busy baiting the pulks—chatting and laughing all the time. The sallow bush pulk was to windward of the boat; he had already shot four liggers about two punt lengths apart, when suddenly there was a gleam in the water near me—a mighty swirl, a ripple—and the ligger changed its direction a quarter of the compass, the line unrolling regularly on the water as from a rolling-pin.

"He's struck! Ha! ha!" roared the little fellow. "Let him alone, sir; he'll take it under water presently."

The pike sulked, and it was long before he gave signs of life; but suddenly there was a ripple, the ligger disappearing. Away went the ligger to windward, leaving a trail in the water; now disappearing, soon to reappear on the surface some twenty yards ahead. Then down it went again, and up; then followed a rush and a ripple through the
ON ROCKLAND BROAD.

water, and up came the ligger to disappear immediately—the fish was now working.

"Go it, old friend; you're comin' ter Old Joe, eh? Ha! ha! ha!" laughed little Tedder. . . . "Away she go again. It's a good fish. Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Joe, as the ligger disappeared for the eighth time.

"Up she come," at last he said, rowing towards the fish. "Come along ter Old Joe. I love 'em, sir. Ha! ha! ha!"

Backing water, he approached the ligger, which was now lying motionless across the line, after having disappeared below the surface fifteen times, whilst being dragged all over the pulk.

"Expect there's a fish there," said Joe, as he picked up the line between the ligger and the fish. He was careful to put the ligger into the boat before he took the fish, in case it should run again. Slowly he began to pull in the line, and presently I saw the gleam of the greenish-gold mail in the weedy depth. Joe was busy talking and joking all the time. Presently the great eyes and sharp profile of the pike came to the surface. Drawing it deftly to the side of the boat, he seized it by the two eyes with his finger and thumb, and in a moment a nine-pound pike was lying on the bottom boards.

With his horn knife Joe rapped the fish smartly on the head, took out the hook, wound up the ligger, and threw it aside.

"I can catch 'em, sir! That's thientific, and warn't it pretty sport to watch 'em run? Ha! ha! ha! That 'quire some clever management, ha, ha! I ha' seen people come liggerin' here, and them as knowed somethin' tew, and they didn't get nothin'. Onest I had a liggerin' match along with a gentleman as liked liggerin'. I got eleven fish out of twelve liggers, and he got seven out of twelve. That's like everythink elst, comes ter yer by experience."

He laid nine liggers and caught four fish in less than an hour; weights, 9 lb., 4½ lb., 3½ lb., and 1½ lb.

It was growing dark and beginning to drop with rain, so I rowed back to my house-boat under the low sky, cleaned one of the small jack, put him in salt and water.
allowed him to drain, rolled his white flesh in beaten-up egg and flour, and fried the body in oil—pike à la Juive, in fact; and I never wish for a better meal.

As to the ethics of liggering, I leave them to some piscatorial Herr Teufelsdrösch.

I consulted the broadsman’s wind gauge. He had moored an old boat to a stake in the middle of the broad, and was able to tell by the number of turns the rope had taken round the stake how the wind had blown during the night. It was still blowing from the nor'-west, so I went casting à la Nottingham for pike. The tide was on the flood, and all things were propitious. I was fortunate in getting a nice basket of fish, but nothing of weight. It was exhilarating and real sport, the spoon glancing athwart the frothy waves like a sea-gull, the tugging and floundering of the fish, the wind playing its double music, a soft undertone in the ear and a loud concerto without raging with all the strength and spirit of contention through the sallow and reed bushes. Above all the roar the wind wailed shrilly through a ruined windmill. The songs of the wind are typical of life, where men contend and women weep.

As I fished, the waters slapped against our bows, dashing the cold spray upon us. That day decided me to put on winter garments.

The green sky last night was said to presage wind, and tradition spoke truly, for by the evening a heavy gale was blowing.

We cleaned the fish; many of them had begun to fill with roe, due, probably, to the recent warm St. Martin’s summer. All day the wind blew hard, the sky piebald with black nimbi and patches of yellow cloud. It looked tragic and threatening, resembling in places the colours of a mouldering corpse. Here and there a wan lonely star peeped forth from
the hollows between the clouds on to the dirty livid waters of the dikes and broad. The wind hissed through the torn reeds and tossed the frothy scum on to the ronds. At times heavy gusts fell upon us, shaking the boat from stem to stern. We put out the big anchor and sat smoking, watching the swinging light, and talking of the fishermen on the North Sea.

All night the wind roared and the rigging rattled so that we could not sleep. In the morning the gale blew fiercer, and sleet fell. The sky was wild with yellowish cumuli and gloomy nimbi. As the day went on the gale increased in strength, backing the waters up in the rivers, flooding the ronds, hoisting the floating hovers, and overflowing the low marshes. The weather was too coarse for shooting, but there would be plenty of fowl after the gale.

The wind seems to make the landscape pallid, just as some men turn white with rage. The wildness of the scene was increased by the passage of a flock of Kentish crows, blown across the sky with hoarse cawings.

During the night the gale abated, the wind blew lumpier and in gusts. In the morning the gale was dying, and flocks of teal and mallard flew over, some alighting on the broad near by. By noon the gale was dead, and the peace after the long roar of the storm by day and night was strange and welcome. Then we counted the dead after the fight. The willow trees stood almost leafless against the low grey sky, the reed leaves were frayed and torn, the lily leaves crushed and bruised, the gladen discoloured and broken down, and the lush green marshes covered with flood water. The face of the landscape was piteous, but these passionate outbursts helped to clear the air. The dead weeds that had hitherto been floating about the broad were swept out of sight into the pulks.

In the morning Jim looked wisely at the face of the sky and said—
"The wind is against the law; it will turn easterly."

Before ten o'clock his prophecy was fulfilled.

In the evening a gun-punt, with picturesque sail, sailed across the broad. At the helm sat a little dumb boy steering with a paddle, and in the well were his elder sister and two children. This little navigator had rigged out his craft with a piece of old wherry sail, binding it to a rough ashen stick for a gaff. His sheet was a bit of linen line running through a little block he had pulled up in the river. To crown all, he had roughly cut a little vane from a piece of zinc, to which his sister had sewn a piece of red flannel as a pennant. The little captain sat aft and handled his ship in fine style. It was his only joy, for the child had lost his speech in an early attack of scarlatina. 'Twas a pity, for he had a bright intelligent face. We made friends with them, and the little girl told us that a pike-fisher had had splendid luck that afternoon, the wind having turned to south-east.

At sunset the sky was a beautiful light blue colour; the effect was peculiar, for all that night we could not get rid of the impression that we had a day sky with a night landscape.

The dew on the cabin roof was frozen at bed-time, and yet we had seen two swallows fly over that evening.

On the 22nd followed another peculiar phenomenon, a remarkably low tide. On this day we saw some flies and a hornet, friends whom we thought had left us for a time.

The high tide floated us on the hover, where the ebb left us fixed, an easy prey to the hordes of rats that had been gradually collecting about our ship. At low water I rowed round the broad to see the effect of the ebb. It was not beautiful—the reeds looked naked, and stood triple-banded round the shores; the upper band—above water—yellowish green; the band usually affected by the ebb and flow of the tide was pale yellow and bleached in appearance; and the band that was generally hidden under water was a dark, dirty grey. The fish had all fled to the deep water, where
they generally congregate in winter. The bottom of the broad was a tangled mass of dying water-plants, whilst among the reeds and gladen roots were slimy, dismal swamps. It is not well to pry too deeply into Nature's secrets. Much beauty is born in corruption, and low tides expose the filth and overpower the beauty. The dikes, some impassable, were full of Canadian weed and highly coloured shells.

At eventide a hawk struck at some starlings, scattering the flock in great confusion. Everything was peaceful, and a threshing engine blowing off steam sounded strangely loud. The moon arose from a cloud of mist, silvering the swans sleeping on the broad, their heads laid back on their glossy bodies. A large rat dived from the pond and swam across the dike, carrying a widgeon's wing in its fangs, exactly as a retriever carries a bird. After we went to bed, our plank-ways were alive with rats, squealing, fighting, as they scampered to and fro.

The north-west wind blew for three days, the thermometer falling to $34^\circ$ on the third day. The moon was full, and the tide rose very high, flooding the marshes and keeping the fowlers on the alert, for plenty of snipe and mallard were over. After nightfall I practised on the rats with my rifle in the moonlight, curling up several fat old feasters. Wishing to try an experiment, we rowed out at ten o'clock to a flooded marsh, where we sat in the bright moonlight for exactly two hours with the thermometer at $32^\circ$. The experiment failed. When I returned to the cabin, I found the match boarding cracking and parting, while a friend, who had come down for a few days, looked rather sleepy. In explanation he said he had been reading, and he got drowsy. Upon looking up at the saloon thermometer he found it registered $120^\circ$. The cabin stove was evidently a success.

We opened the windows and let in the fresh air, together with the first snow, and then made ourselves comfortable with a bowl of punch.
In the morning Jim awoke us with a loud "Busky."

The ground was white with snow.

We were afloat before sunrise, watching the white powder melt and drop from the reed and gladen stalks. After it had melted, all vegetation had a new appearance, everything was withered and curled.

After breakfast nearly all the snow had melted, but large patches remained on the grassy upland and new-lays—it hung there longest.

My little friends came across the broad with a green sail, leaving us a small present of apples and walnuts. The cold had made the rats very keen set; I saw a big fellow dragging a big dead comrade along the hover, so I shot him for his cannibalism.

The vegetation began to look very ragged. In autumn all the elements combine to destroy life, the gales shake and beat down the reed and gladen beds with fierce delight. Vegetation fights and yields in turns, fights again and yields, then twists and turns, but there is no escape, for the cold comes with deadly fingers and leagues with the wind, preventing the plants from recovering strength in the calms between the storms. The winds shriek in derision as the plants grow weak, turn grey and blacken, then comes the icy rain and sleet, and beats upon them, and the days darken and the season's vapoury breath freezes and crystallises. In the end the water-plants have become dead frames for old winter to decorate with his beautiful gems and fairy-like fretwork.

It was the last day but one of October, and the snow had not quite gone—patches still lay on the "new-lays," but to-day summer weather returned; we sat in our shirt-sleeves making fenders and worried by wasps, the thermometer standing at 95° in the sun. At ten o'clock the little black spiders began to spin overhead, dropping their gossamer threads. The breeze was blowing from the south-west at the time, and true to their warning it
changed to the east. With the easterly wind a cool breeze, recalling the purity of Arctic snows, blew upon our faces, and the rooks began to caw with soft sharp notes, such as one hears in early spring. All the birds seem brighter and sprightlier to-day—coots were calling with reed-like notes, water-rails squealing, and snipe smacking. Tedder was eel-picking, smoking his pipe and prodding the soft bottom leisurely with light graceful thrusts, his boat swinging about with the tide. Wood-pigeons flashed to and fro against a rich background of oaks, needley firs, sycamores, yellowish-green alders, and reddish-brown reed tassels. From the brick-yard across the broad dense clouds of smoke floated softly up in the delicate spring-like sky. It was the last placid smile of Nature before the death of winter.

The evening was one of the most delightful I remember. Just before sunset flocks of starlings arrived from their feeding grounds, wheeling overhead, sounding like millions of delicate shuttles at work. They resembled black patches swimming in a blue bath of liquid air, forming a most charming decorative scheme of form and colour, accompanied by a silky sound of rustling wings, as, following their leader, they flew round in ever narrowing circles, until they dropped into the reed-beds to dream of the elysian fields they had deserted.
CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE YARE.

"The pine-knots cheerily blaze,
And shed a genial heat in wealthy homes;
The lords of earth, immured in cosy rooms,
Heed not the wintry haze."—LA CLÈDE: First Snow.

We left Rockland Broad on the last day of October in a drizzling rain. In the dike we passed a boat laden with bricks, the sailor leaning idly on his cabin-roof, his retriever squatting forward. Before him lay a fishing-rod and half-cocked gun. The rain fell all day, much to the disgust of the rooks moping in the trees. We quanted up to Strumpishaw Dike, when Irowed down the winding stream to the broad, but met with nothing but disappointment. I passed a fashion-plate keeper and an effeminate youth looking for snipe in such unlikely weather. How often riches bring but contempt to the possessor. By the sweat of his brow alone shall a man earn respect.

Jim was depressed when I returned, for though dressed in winter suit, he had caught cold, and it was a point of honour with us not to catch cold.

He was quick to explain, however, that "he only happened to come across the first one"—fortunately I did not come across the "first one" the whole trip.

We went on a little further and moored by a broad dike, making fast for the night. As we were sitting smoking after dinner, we could hear nothing but the drip of the rain, when suddenly there was a loud rap at the window—
we ran out to find nothing visible. These noises are very mysterious at night; perhaps the Psychical Society would like to investigate them; we decided this one must have been made by a bird.

"You are making a long summer on it!" shouted a passing wherryman, as we stood in the drizzle looking for the "bird;" but summer had gone with yesterday, and at midnight October passed away—October the ragged month—the month of decay and death. A changeful month it had been. We had experienced extremes of temperature varying between 95° and 30°—days of summer heat, and freezing nights; a month of fierce gales and floods, and of low tides, when all the water seemed blown out of the rivers and broads. But we little dreamt what was still in store for us.
CHAPTER XV.

NOVEMBER ON THE BROADS.

"O what are all ambitious gains!
What matters it who rules or reigns
While I have standing here!
Gleams of unutterable things."

A. M'LACHLAN: October.

HE month of drizzle set in, as it should, with a low grey sky and melancholy landscape. The villages were all forlorn, most of the men being away on the home-fishing or laying lines for cod along the shores. The labourers were carting muck and dumping the steaming loads on the bare land; or laying dry straw in the farmyard, preparing for stock.

I rowed up to a deserted brickyard where a lone old man kept watch. He was shaky and rheumatic, having worked there for thirty-five years. As we walked through the cold furnaces, he informed me he had stood for four days and four nights in cold water up to his waist, stoking the fires when the great floods were out in '78. The brickyard was like a city of the dead. Pompeii did not seem so lonely to me. This old man seemed the last survivor of some terrible plague. The place was reminiscent of manly struggles for bread—the clay-coloured sheds, the tile rooms, and the black, cold furnaces.

When I returned to the river, we shoved up to Coldham Hall, the banks decorative with yellow poplar leaves, blown endways by the breeze, a charming effect beloved of Corot. The marshes were bright, the river brimming up to piles of sodden litter that stood melancholy on the walls along which
the reeds stood shrunken and yellow. The rain had transformed the landscape, the raggedness of October had disappeared, throughout was greater breadth, due in part to the soft grey light bathing the scene.

After mooring at Coldham Hall, the evening turned fine, and a grey mist rose from the river, through which gleamed the many twinkling lights of Brundall. When the moon arose a closely muffled girl walked down to the ferry and rang the jarring bell. As I watched her cross, the scene recalled the white-green moonlit landscape through which I had fished for pike a few weeks before, but the scene was now greyer, the moonlight more mellow, not so pure and silvery. After dinner, I read to Jim: Crabbe's "Peter Grimes," asking his opinion.

"That's filling up stuff—that ain't gospel; he wanted it for filling stuff; I don't think but very little on it. Do you reckon him a poet what writ that?"

"No," I replied; "do you?"

"'Tain't jolly likely."

"Criticism is easy, but art is difficult," is written above the door of the École des Beaux Arts—so I told Jim.

On awakening I looked out of my window. A wall of dripping reed leaves faced me, their dagger-like points glittering with rain-drops.

As I got out of my berth, I jumped into water—the flooded cabin floor.

After breakfast I rowed on to Surlingham Broad, a commonplace, uninteresting piece of water. Some gay goldfinches accompanied me up the dike, flying to and fro amongst the dark elms, whence I started a flock of long-tailed tit-mice. I had to wait whilst a herd of calves forded the dike by a pollarded willow, a scene recalling an old Dutch picture. Passing, further up, an old man in a marsh boat, I inquired—

"Where's the old eel-catcher who used to live here?"

He chuckled maliciously and replied—

"Gorn."
“Gone! Where?”

“Dunno. He couldn’t make that pay, nobody can make that pay up this river now. All gorn;” and he dug his quant viciously into the river bed.

On the bank, two swans were preening their feathers. When they saw my boat they left off and came towards me, accompanying me round the broad which the late Mr. Stevenson, the local naturalist, loved. But this piece of water is to me dull and songless, but then Mr. Stevenson did not know shadows from reflections, nor, I suspect, beauties from commonplaces. As a naturalist, moreover, he was not to be compared to the late Mr. Booth, a true lover of birds and outdoor life. But in Norfolk every native goose is a swan.

Returning to the wherry, I sat on the cabin, studying the delicate grey picture made up by the ferry and its background of trees. It was Sunday, and a girl and her lover crossed over to Church; they were followed by two smacksmen just returned from Yarmouth; then came a melancholy man dressed in black—he had the air as of the village leech. On the river a man was casting for bait, and a young gunner was picking for eels. He worked sedulously for two hours, and caught seven little things as big as your finger. He who would be broadsman must serve a severe apprenticeship.

We sat expecting the tide to flow, but it never came; the water rose an inch, 'tis true, but the stream ran down all day, and we were soon aground, left by one of the low tides of that wonderful year. Jim consoled me by telling me he had seen the tide run out for three days and three nights in Yarmouth Harbour.

The sun set a fiery orange ball behind the reed-bed, and the silver roach began to rise in the river.

After dusk the lovers returned, nestling close as they were rowed across the ferry.

One must not rely upon changeless Nature. Sooth to tell, she is as full of vagaries as a maid. Relying on the "law of tides," we had moored by the reed-bed, in three
feet of water; but as I have said the law was not fulfilled—the tide flowed not; and so we were imprisoned "hard on the putty," waiting for a flowing tide. All day we watched the river anxiously.

"All along o' them sou'-west winds," grumbled another tide-bound wherryman.

"It's out of my latitude altogether," said Jim. "It's a cakestall."

At half-past seven we sounded the river channel in the deepest water—the oar sank up to the leather, so we sat in the cabin helplessly watching the yellow river flowing steadily down to the sea, whilst big air bubbles rose from the mud round our wherry and exploded with tiny pops. The "oldest inhabitant" came up and told us he had never seen such a thing all his lifetime, consoling Jim with, "It's a sign of still fine weather."

He came below; the yellow light from my swinging cabin lamp flared on his dark face as I asked him a question.

"Ha! ha! Howsumever, you want to know too much, sir."

"Humsoever, have a drink and think it over," I retorted. He sat down on the locker beside me, eyeing me suspiciously.

I looked up and met the eyes of that weather-beaten face, so full of deep ruts and high lumps; brown eyes that looked steadfastly before them—eyes like those of an old retriever, grave, patient, and passionless.

"Ha! ha! ha!" he laughed, turned in his seat, and leaning back began to sing in a croaky voice—

"Down by the old mill stream,
   How many happy hours have I seen!" &c.

Finishing with yet another croaky "Ha! ha! ha!"

I saw he required tender handling; he must be humoured, so I watched in silence. Suddenly his singing stopped, and slamming his fist on my table, he said—

"I'm Joe Jonas. Nobody care for me, and I don't care for nobody. Ha! ha! ha!"
"The bailiff?" I flaunted the red rag before him.

"What, that warmin'? He bain't no good, only for ter bully a poor man of a daytime, and to look arter the orcifers of the Angling Society when they come to fish in our broad. D—n 'em, what right hev they got here? None at all. What right hev he got here? None at all. Howsumever, they coam and fish and fish. Rot 'em for a parcel of furriners."

He was serious now, and looked at me as a retriever looks at his master when he is on the point of firing.

"But the preservation laws do good," I suggested.

"Do good? Not they, sir. There used to be more fish and fowl when we could fish all the year round. You see, sir, it would craze a donkey's heart to hear some of these gents talks as thinks as they knows something of fishing, 'cause they can throw a dead-bait kind of pernikity; but lor', they doan't know nothin' about fish. If I say to one on 'em, 'Wind is S.E., tide half flood, moon October wane, where be them pike?' none on 'em could tell me—no, not they. Howsumever, as I was saying, that presarvin' and all them lor's and bailiffs aint no good, 'cause for why? Fish, sir, as you knows, is like men; they 'quire a sartin amount of water holdin' a sartin amount of silt floatin' in it; each fish must have his share. Now if there be too many fish in a hole or river they'll work away to another place, so each fish can get his share of suction. Tain't no good them stockin' a stream above a sartin number what it will hold, for the rest will die or work away somewhere elst. Now, as I was sayin', the fish go to sartin places at sartin times, and the small fishes like places without much weed. Now, what do this 'cre land and water presarvin' do? It kill the fish, for why? 'Cause the preserved water is let grow right full of weed, and the fish doan't breed as they used to."

... 'Yes, another drain o' rum, if you please, sir. Well, howsumever, and now as to the liggerin' and line-laying, that don't dew no harm. Why, lor' bless you, I used to lay ten thousand hooks in the old days, and thar was more fish than ever."
"What does the harm then?"

"Why, them big draw nets, and them hamatures what catch all the young fish."

"But if they didn't preserve, how could the big draw net be stopped."

"Lor'! bless you, sir, them bailiffs don't stop nobody; they are allust a bed of a night-time. . . . Haven't you seen 'em all day on the move, sailing up with that orficer, and goin' to the station with this orficer to carry his things? Now, sir, 'tainst likely they can be up all day and all night too; 'tainst common sense that at all. They don't stop Darkel. When he go to get fish, he get 'em."

"But if the bailiffs were not about, Darkel and the rest would be at it all day and night too."

"That's true, sartinly, but if the lor was ter make 'em use a net of big mesh that would do no harm. I ha' lived on the waters all my life, and my father afore me, and I tell you, sir, you can hev too many fish in a river or broad, and what dew the real damage is the killin' of the young undersized fish by anglers, and by landlords letting all the pulks and broads grow up with weed; that's where the mischief is. Them salts, tew, dew a lot of harm, but that can't be helped. The mashes must be drained, and the rivers kept free for navigation, that we all know," he finished dogmatically, and drank half a glass of rum, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Of course you don't like the bailiff," I ventured.

"They don't trouble me," he said, with a knowing smile.

"Well, now, supposing you had to make the laws for the fishing, what would you do?"

"What would I dew? Ha! ha! ha! Well, I'll tell you, sir. I shouldn't have no bailiffs whatsomever. I should make a lor to prevent everybody taking undersized fish, 'ceptin' a few licensed bait-sellers, and I should make a lor prewentiing all nets being used under a sartin mesh. I I shouldn't hev no close season, 'tainst likely."

"But you must have bailiffs to prevent what you think is so damaging."

"No, no, no! I should offer a reward—a big 'un, mind
—for any one as informed against persons taking undersized fish—'ceptin' the bait-sellers, in course—in any manner whatsomever."

This is a poacher's view of the case. It is well to hear all sides.

Just before bed-time we gave a cheer of delight—the water had begun to flow. Hurrah!

Next morning we were afloat, so we hoisted our sail, the first time for five weeks, and found all the gear was stiff. As we took off the scutting, a wasp fell out from his winter quarters and was killed.

We sailed with a good breeze back to our old quarters at Buckenham Ferry, mooring as the sun went down—a bronze gold disk decorated with a flock of gulls.
CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNPLEASANT MOORING.

“Hark to the sighing of yon fading tree,—
Yon tree that rocks, as if with sense distressed;
It seems complaining that its destiny
Should send no job to desolate its breath;
Oh, heed it, wind! Oh, listen to it, sigh!"

C. Heavysedge: The Autumn Tree.

MISERABLE day. Of all the melancholy joys of life, perhaps a wet day afloat is the worst.

After dinner, a large, heavily-laden wherry came bumping against the little maiden, for the stranger’s skipper and mate were quarrelling whether they should stop at the ferry. Absorbed in their wrangle, they were oblivious of our presence, so I struck a match, and the mate saw the danger. We stood by with fenders as the great wherry, her sail towering into the sky, came alongside with grinding bulwarks.

The crew made fast, lowered their peak, and disappeared in the inn. It was not comforting to have this heavy craft nipping us; but whilst considering whether we should move, another sail appeared, moored alongside the heavy craft, the crew going below to supper. Soon afterwards a third, and then a fourth wherry came up, each mooring outside the last, so that five wherries lay side by side, our poor little maiden squeezed between their weight and the quay.

Occasional puffs of wind caught their sails, grinding the great hulls together. Just before bed-time a sixth wherry came up, and took her place alongside the outermost boat.
We went to bed, but could not sleep comfortably, the grinding of the hulls, creaking gear, and lapping waters kept us restless. I dozed off, but was awakened at a quarter past one by the rattling of winches as the wherrymen hoisted their peaks, for the tide had turned. Sitting up in bed, I opened my window and looked out into the freezing misty landscape, through which the pallid moonbeams struggled. The wherries had moved off, and loomed ghostlike on the river, their plankways resounding with the tramp of the men as they quanted, for there was scarce a breath of wind. In this silent midnight landscape one could realise the tremendous weight and force of these craft as they glided through the still water.

As the last boat left—its sails white with rime—I dropped into a restless sleep, and dreamt that I was sailing over the earth in a huge black boat, when suddenly I awoke with a start, and found myself sitting up in bed again—a tremendous jar had aroused me. Looking through the misty window, I could see a short, bent old man, his cap pulled over his eyes, run past with a rope to moor his craft. I listened, but Jim was not stirring, so I awoke him, and we turned out to look after our fenders, for an ugly, nameless old wherry, heavily laden with bricks, her plankways under water, lay alongside. A couple of lazy fellows, one the decrepit old man, the other a Norwich loafer, grunted in the freezing mist as they made their old ship fast.

Next morning I determined to move. The lazy fellows on the adjoining wherry would not use their quants, but sat on their plankways with their heels against our paint, grunting and panting, pretending to push as we squeezed out with trembling timbers, whilst the tide forced them into our berth, our jolly boat running a narrow escape of being crushed to splinters. These men took our curses meekly, but they would not exert themselves; they were about the laziest fellows I saw in Norfolk. After this escape we sailed down to the mouth of the Chet, turning into the narrow tortuous river, where, by dint of quanting, we
sailed through tracts of rushy marsh, plantations, and wastes of common land.

As we bowled along merrily with a good breeze, some buxom dairymaids waved their hands (to Jim of course), and flocks of jackdaws and rooks flew up from the marshes and pollarded willows, where they had been grubbing for worms. Near Loddon we met some dydlers at work; they stopped and pushed against the bank, allowing us to squeeze through. Had we been an inch wider we could never have passed them. After we got clear the old dydler said—

"That's the boat I should like to spend my time in; I should like £200 a year and that there ship, and I shouldn't want nothin'."

We moored at Loddon, a desolate little town with a mill.
CHAPTER XVII.

AT LODDON.

"With drop on drop, with everlasting flow,
With changing atom, and revolving sphere,
Our never-resting lives must downward go."

G. J. Lockhart: *Icicle Drops.*

Nov. 5.

T eventide it began to rain and blow, the
fitful flames of some damp, smoky bon-
fire, for it was the 5th of November, only
adding to the gloom.

Jim had been ashore, and bought a pig’s
fry, which he proceeded to cook with great
care, sorting out the precious parts with all the air of a
Vatel. I examined the mess in the frying-pan—pieces
of liver, “rather fat,” as Jim expressed it; chunks of lights—
“You 'on't like them, I know,” said Jim; “they’re best
baked;” midrib (“Midriff, that’s werry nice” . . . );
heart—“That's good . . . and the apron (omentum),
that’s nice . . . but the kell, that’s the thing, and the
nut of that is the sweetest part of all,” finished the chef.

Jim took great interest in this dish, and was loath to
divulge the tit-bits, cunningly explaining that it was all a
matter of taste: in sooth, the epicure is latent in all men.

I ate of all parts—the “nut” and the “mint”—“What
hang round the apron”—were really good.

Weary Loddon, where we were again left aground by
the tide, and my pastime was watching a mud-barge un-
loading. The river draining south-west wind was still
blowing, rising to a gale. A wherry below us laden with
coals was also aground. We got through the day by smoking, and went to bed early, the wind roaring, the rain beating down, through all the church-bells ringing the hours mockingly.

Friday was black indeed, rain, wind, and fog, and we lying aslant in a channel of soft black mud, through which a thread of muddy water trickled. All the wherries about us were aground, their masts toppling this way and that, for the water was not a foot deep in any part of the river, the oldest inhabitant averring it was the lowest tide ever known at Loddon. All day long little landslips kept falling into the gloomy river-bed, and as the water drained away heaps of coal were exposed. Jim collected a bucketful, saying that coal "what hev been in the water burn better."

A solitary chaffinch alighted near by, and looked with melancholy eye at the wretched scene.

Towards night the tide came up, the wind went down, and the rain turned to a cold drizzle. Our ship gradually righted itself, and a few minutes before nine we heard a voice shouting—

"Oh! ho! Maid of the Mist ahoy!"

We turned out, and found some wherries astern who wanted to pass to the granary. I took our cabin lamp and stood it on deck, lighting up the dark little basin on that drizzly November night. The mud barge was moored under some dripping trees, and a great wherry came up and slid between us, the crew in dripping oilies chaffing.

"What! going to haul the trawl, Old Robert," said one. Then another—

"Minds me of coming in to harbour fishin' time."

And a third—

"This ain't noathin'; I seed thirteen wherries in this 'ere basin onest."

And a voice in the dark cried—

"When is that high water?" but nobody answered.

At last, with much tramping and shoving, we got packed into our places. If you know Loddon basin, you can imagine
six wherries manœuvring there on a pitch black drizzling November night with only a lantern to work by—indeed, our chief amusement at Loddon was to manœuvr in the rain.

At daybreak I was awakened by a voice shouting—
"Is it high water yet?"
"Hearing the reply, "Yes," I looked out, and saw a dull, misty November morning, but it was necessary to start. We had to make way for others, so, hastily throwing on my clothes, I aroused Jim, and we quanted in the drizzly cold dawn down to a landing stage where we got breakfast. After breakfast the sun came out cheerily, and we sailed down the river through coverts full of game and marshes black with jackdaws and rooks. From a marsh not yet old enough for the growth of rushes a heron flew up and alighted on a fir-tree. Mayhap some day this place will be pasture-land, but the soil is probably too black and poor.

The laughter of children playing in the garden of an old hall on the hill was a welcome sound.

As we sailed along, the bare trees seemed still to have a character of their own. The alder trees, covered with berries, recalled a plumed dandy, the ash seemed the embodiment of melancholy, whilst the willows, stripped before the ash, breathed grace and delicacy.

At the mouth of the Chet we were delayed by the famous swift wherry *Fawn*, which lay aground, the strong Poley family loading her with oak logs.

The night was so fine and mild that I left my window open when I went to bed, and was only awakened by the cold air just before daybreak. Looking up from where I lay, I could see the stars burning clearly over the river bank, and the melancholy whistlings of curlew came in on the cool breezes, whereupon I got up and prepared a dish of *œufs-sur-le-plat*, on which we breakfasted, sailing to Cantley afterwards.
CHAPTER XVIII.

CURIOUS CANTLEY.

"Skilful artists thou employest,
And in chastest beauty joyest,—
Forms most delicate, pure, and clear,
Frost-caught starbeams fallen sheer
In the night, and woven here
In jewel-fretted tapestries."

C. G. D. ROBERTS: To Winter.

Nov. 9.

Mooring at Cantley, I went to the inn to buy some bread, and found the landlord just giving a man some halfpence.

"What are these for?" the recipient asked shortly.

"Well, you've got so many bastards, I thought the halfpence would be handy."

"What for?"

"Why, for 'em when they go to church this afternoon."

"Well, now, I hain't got so many bastards as you have."

"Well, I dunno as you have; I got some growed up nigh as big as you are."

The company laughed, but some months afterwards landlord became bankrupt: his family was too big.

At bed-time there was a rime frost; the wind blew softly from the north-east, and the stars burned brightly. The rooks had toppled in their flight at nightfall, foretelling, according to local tradition, coarse weather.

Nov. 10.

I got up at five o'clock, and found the landscape covered with rime, and the windows frozen tight. I had some
work to do before sunrise, so I awoke Jim at 6.30. It was
still freezing, the thermometer standing at 26° when we
turned out into the mist rising on the frozen marshes, where
a lark was already singing, and redwings searching for
berries in a thorn bush.

As I stood admiring, just before sunrise, the reed-tops
bending under their beautiful crystal heads, rooks came flying
from a wood near by, and a vast flock of peewits darkened the
sky. As the yellow sun arose in frosty splendour mists began
to rise on the river, and there followed a brief spell of magic
beauty ere the thickening mists began to bury everything
as they blew in fitful gusts from the river. The landscape
sparkled in the dazzling clear sunlight, the fretted silver forms
of plants and reeds being exquisitely illumined, the frozen
dikes gleaming like burnished silver; but gradually as the
temperature rose the crystals began to lose their sharp
outlines, and the mists floated through the tonic air, folding
the lovely pageant in a grey cloak.

In a few hours the rime and mists had gone, and the sun
was blazing hotly overhead. I stood on deck registering
the subtle changes of temperature recorded in the appendix,
when suddenly the sky on the horizon turned livid, blotched
with great patches of yellow above. It was evident by the
clouds that a breeze was coming from that quarter. The
puffs came quickly across the marshes, sweeping down on
some wherries half a mile away. On came the storm, the
black withering rime cloud stretching across the heavens
from north to south, appearing palpable as lamp soot, shifting
and rolling and twisting like a thick viscous fluid, one
portion crowding at times against another in rolls like the
scum on water blown against the shore by the wind. Next
it formed into a hollow cage-like shape, when all of a sudden
the mist on the river rose in a mass, floating up like a huge
caterpillar, stopping a hundred feet above the river channel,
where it hung poised, stretching as far as eye could see. In a
few minutes this caterpillar-like cloud began to move slowly
to the N.E., towards the great black rime cloud, as if attracted
thereby. They met in the heavens, and broke into thousands
of fantastic cloud forms, which scattered far and wide, to be
gradually dissipated. The most remarkable feature of this wonderful phenomenon was the solid appearance of the rime cloud. Jim said it was the rummiest sky he ever saw. After the rime and mist clouds broke up, the breeze dropped away again. This phenomenon took place at 9.15, the temperature being 34° at the time.

As we were looking at the broken cloud forms scattering, two wherries passed, the master of one saying to the master of the other, whilst pointing to our boat—

"She'd make your jolly, bor."

The master addressed turned his head, looked, and replied—

"Aw!"

"I thought we were going to make a lot of wind, bor."

Again the reply came—

"Aw!"

The old man had got to windward of the young one, so that the young master tried to distract the old sailor's attention in order to regain his position, but the old man was not to be outsailed. After them followed a collier with a determined and self-centred air—a sailing craft is more playful and joyous.
CHAPTER XIX.

PHILOSOPHIC REEDHAM.

"Would'st thou,—so the helmsman answered,
'Know the secrets of the sea?
Only those who brave its dangers
Comprehend its mysteries.'—LONGFELLOW.

Nov. 11.

T was blowing a furious gale as we reefed our sail before starting for Reedham. As we moved off from our moorings, a mixed flock of crows and starlings blew across the river; they were unable to fly; the augury was exciting. The strong wind soon filled our sail and made the ship rock, the cabins creak, and the sail flap loudly every time I put her about, for we had to tack through the first reach. It began to rain, making the sheet as cold as ice. The river went winding down to Reedham, but we weathered the first point close hauled, dropping in for a fair wind in the reach below, when she started off like a racer, the water foaming at her bows as her hull rocked delightfully with the swell, as we went flying past a panorama of tossing reeds, quaking ronds, and spinning mill-wheels. The water seethed and splashed along her plankways as we turned into a head reach again, through which we turned like a top, and leading through the next reach, we entered the stretch of water leading by Reedham. Passing the word to Jim to lower away when the bridge hove in sight, the great sail came rattling down, our impetus carrying us to our moorings, where we spent a quiet night.
A rainy morning, followed by mist, in the shadow whereof we made a new acquaintance—a philosopher. Reedham is a quaint old place, built half on the river bank, and half on some low hills overlooking the marshes. It was a busy place once, when the wherry trade was at its height, but now the chief industry goes on at the saw-mills.

A famous old boat-wright came aboard to caulk our plankways. He was full of stories of old days.

"Yes; the wherry trade is fading, though these pleasure-barges keep up the demand; but that will fade too," he said, with a resigned air.

His empty workshops attested the truth of his statement.

In the evening a wherryman moored alongside, his wife nursing a crooning baby in the cabin. This made Jim sentimental, and he began to talk of home.

The philosopher invited me down to his house to drink an excellent bottle of sherry. He was a jolly, happy man, who had the rare wisdom to stop business when he had gained a competency, with which he had retired to the country to enjoy life. He lived in his pleasant little house filled with chrysanthemums, with his wife and his pets, a dog and a heron. He was always smiling, and looked happier than any man I had ever seen. In addition to this peaceful life, he was a good sailor, a crack shot, and a master roach fisher.

Reader, consider, before it be too late, if you have not already accumulated enough of the filthy soot and lucre of the town to permit you and yours to seek some bower in the country where you may live and be happy. You can do it on very little, for your requirements will be small, should you have learnt in what real happiness consists.

The philosopher had mixed much in his day with men of all classes, but still the little village dramas were as interesting to him as the greater plays of the town. He told me of a scene occurring a few days before my arrival.
A buxom young woman married an old man, and naturally wished to go and live in the town.

"They always do when they marry old men," said the philosopher.

But the husband was reluctant, and would not hear.

"But you shall hear," she said. "You must take me out of this—it's a mile and a half to walk to church, the nearest doctor lives six miles away, and I can't get any fresh fish; we must live in London."

And they did.

Whilst dinner was preparing, the philosopher showed me his laboratory, for he is an excellent bird-stuffer, and though self-taught, his keen observation and artistic eye enabled him easily to conquer the initial difficulties.

At dinner Mrs. Philosopher gave us some of her home-made dandelion wine, and delicious home-brewed beer. I left them assured that they were following no false lights, were not storing treasure where moth and rust doth corrupt, but were enjoying with simplicity and good-heartedness their well-earned pleasures. I often think of my friend at Reedham, and look forward to cracking many another bottle with him, for I learnt much at his house, much of what is best worth knowing.

On Tuesday afternoon we sailed with a light breeze down the New Cut, the train tearing past on the marsh, making the railway foundations tremble. I could feel the vibrations in the well of my wherry as I stood steering.

As we neared Haddiscoe, with its signal lights gleaming through the mist, recalling a London station, I could not help thinking of the ferryman who started to go to London, rowing down one evening to Haddiscoe Station to catch the train, but no further would he go.

"Ef that be Haddiscoe," he remarked, on seeing the lights, "I don't want ter go ter London." And he never did.

The air felt like summer as we anchored in the New Cut at ten o'clock at night.
CHAPTER XX.

GLOOMY BECCLES.

"I remember the black wharves and the ships,
And the sea tides tossing free,

And the beauty and mystery of the ships,
And the magic of the sea."—LONGFELLOW.

Nov. 19.

The morning broke fine and warm, snipe were scaping, and tom-tits catching worms under the bridge, whilst some fish sported on the water beneath. We quanted past the uninteresting Herring Fleet Hills, whence it is said fishing-boats sailed in olden times, passing several eel-fishers, clad in overalls, spearing the river bed as they stood in their low gun-punts.

The quiet scenery of these waters seems to satisfy the æsthetic sense as fully as the physical, and our sleep that night, by the ugly church of Peter St. Burgh (much berated by artless writers, who mistake archæology for art), was calm as the peaceful river.

Sailing through some prettily-wooded country, where jays chattered in the plantings, larks and snipe fed on the marshes, pheasants wandered through the wood, and tufted duck floated on the waters, one was constantly reminded of the slow processes that have transformed the water to land. Originally there was the vast lagoon replaced by wastes of hover rising and falling with the tide, these quaking bogs
in turn becoming fixed hovers which grew solid, affording soil for the roots of alder carrs, sallow bushes, oaks and elms. Gradually the carrs died away, their skeletons becoming buried in the soft marsh; the land was now called moor-turf, whereon grew a poor crop of rush. Next stage the moor-turf gradually became marsh land, where grows litter; and last stage of all, if there be a good bottom, and the drainage be good, the marsh will develop into pasture land for cattle, a land bearing a rich crop of grass, though really nothing but hover (peat) twenty feet deep.

Nov. 20.

We sailed into Beccles at eventide, mooring below the bridge. Beccles never had any attractions for me in days gone by, but now that the old stone bridge was gone it was unworthy of notice. I asked a sallow-faced loafer how they were getting on.

"Thar's nothin' tew dew at Beccles neow but pray. They're allust prayin' mornin', afternoon, and night. The place is sadla, bor," he concluded, shaking his head and thrusting his hands deep into his pockets.

Almost immediately a boy appeared with a basket.

"Can I get you any hot rolls, sir?"

"No."

"Dates?"

"No."

"Newspapers?"

"No."

"New milk?"

"No."

"Hot buns?"

"No."

(Despairingly.) "Can I take you to a magic lantern show?"

"No."

"So I can't earn tewpence, then?"

"No."

"I ain't like my brother and sister, sir. I take my money home to my poor old mother; I'm a good boy, I am."
“Suffolk,” I muttered to myself, mindful of old days, and went below. The evening closed in with a mild depressing rain.

After breakfast the irrepressible boy reappeared, renewing his questions as if he had never seen me.

“Any new milk?”
“No.”
“Any sprats?”
“No; but we want some sewing done.”
“Oh yes, sir, my mother can do that; she’s a young woman.”

Last night he said she was old.

“Are you good at figures?” I asked.
“Oh yes, sir.”
“‘If four herrings and a half cost fourpence halfpenny, what do you want for a dozen?’”

After repeating the question several times, he answered promptly—

“Sevenpence.”
“‘No.”
“If you’ll give me a bit of paper I’ll do it.”
“‘No.”
“You can see, if you give me a sum, oh! ever so long, like multiply £1800, 12s. 4½d. by 2, I can do that, if only you give me a piece of paper.”

“Oh.”
“Well, will you let me come aboard and draw a map of the colony?”

“What colony?”
“Cape Colony.”

I questioned him. He knew the name of one town therein.

“Do you know grammar? I do,” he continued.
“No,” I replied.
“I can paze, yes, I can paze,” “Yon blue seas,” &c.
“Yon blue” qualifying adjective qualifying “seas,” &c. &c.

I went below and left to Jim this product of poll parrot
teaching. Oh yes! he could "paze" by heart, and this is the education bestowed on the masses.

Sunday at Beccles promised to be the dullest day of all the cruise. A billy-boy loaded with logs lay weather-bound alongside, for a sou'-west gale was blowing. The master sat in his cabin hoodway smoking, and staring dreamily at the murky sky, when, shiver my timbers, the boy reappeared.

He began in the same tone of voice—
"My poor old mother's nearly dead."
"Oh!"
"Taken very ill last night; I want tuppence for her."
"What's the matter?"
"Pain" (largely).
"Does she want a doctor?"
"No."
A pause. Then he continued—
"Old Gallinger is dead."
"Who's he?"
"A poor old man what can't walk. I dunno who's going to bury him."
"Oh!"
"They're going to make a gathering for him." (Slowly and impressively.) "I'm taking money."

Jim and I winked, but said nothing.

There was a pause, and he began again—
"Want any milk?"
"No."
"Bloaters?"
"No."
Another pause.
"I wish I had a berth with you."
"Why?"
"I should be happy."
"Why, arn't you happy now?"
"I can't only arn sixpence a week."
"You'll earn more when you're honest and work hard."
(Naïvely.) "I dunno when that 'ull be."
Another pause.
"Will you lend me your jolly boat for a row?"
"No."
Pause.
"Good day."
"Good day."

He walked off a few yards, turned, cried "Fare you well;" and this astonishing creature disappeared round the corner, leaving us filled with amazement.

The night was hideous with church-bells and rain-squalls. As I was dozing off to sleep a tremendous thumping noise arose; I threw open the window; a high tide had covered the quay, and our boat was bumping up and down on the quay-head. Awaking Jim, we turned out in the cold rain, mooring her off with quants, lest when the water ran down she should hang on the quay and capsize. After this unpleasant work we went to bed wet-headed, for we had not stopped to put on sou'-westers, and the night was unfit for a dog to be out in.
CHAPTER XXI.

SAILING ON THE WAVENEY.

"For the storm was in her—an' that's the place
That was the storm! Aye! aye! man, aye!
All out of the sea, and out of the sky,
Catching it with her mouth like suck,
Braving the strength of its heart till she shuck
And shivered again."—J. E. Brown: Christmas Rose.

After breakfast we lowered our mast and started for Geldeston Lock. It was the habit with us to speak to each other as messmates when sailing. On such occasions Jim would call me Bob.

The water was high, and we feared we should be unable to shoot the bridge. A bystander said to Jim—

"Well, bor, can you shoot the bridge?"

"I dunno; we're rather high; what do you think, Bob?"

"I dunno; the tide is rarely high; but I think she'll go."

"We shall have to ship a cargo if she 'on't."

"You think she 'on't, eh? Well, if she 'on't, we'll stop her underneen and shake her through. . . . Well, have you got her all tidy?"

"Yes; she's all right. Well, I shall let go here;" and Jim cast off the forrard anchor, whilst Bob cast off the stern anchor and said—

"She's all brandy. I'll steer—do you shove—I'll show you the way to navigate her underneen that bridge."
"Yes; I know you're a bit of a navigator. Well, I'll shove till she have got way enough, then she'll go without much steering."
"There yer are again; that's where you're wrong."
"How's that?"
"Why, when you get the tiller right acrost her stern, that won't do any good; it will stop her way."
"But who's going to put her tiller right acrost her stern?"
"Why, you'd have to if you got a lot of way on her, elst she'd go running into that yacht arter she'd got through."

Bob stood up and peered anxiously over the cabin roof as they neared the bridge, and Jim stood forward with a quant.
"Will she go?" asked Bob.
"I dunno; you can see better nor I."
"Don't you think you'd better get a rope ready in case we don't shoot it?"
"That's no use."
"Why?"
"Why, I dunno where to make it fast."
"Who said you did? You ain't no use for a navigator if you can't see danger two miles ahead on you."
"Let you her go; she's going all right; I'll hold her off if she catch underneen. . . . Will she go?"
"Yes; she'll go," said Bob, looking along the mast lying flat on the cabin.
"Yes; she'll go, and something to spare."
"Well, where be the other yacht what that boy said was here?"
"Gorn. He was a rare newspaper, he was."
"Yes; all right, Jim, hoist the mast."

In hoisting the mast, Jim knocked over the fore-hatch cover, and Bob asked—
"What's that there?"
"That's the carvel board now tumbled down—up she go," and the mast's foot fell into the tabernacle with a thud.
"That's bad knocking that carvel board over; minds me
of some of them amachures what we see in the summer-time. Do you remember that chap what let his boat run inter the bank every time he made a board, and then they shoved her off and started again."

"Oh, ah! them cockinays—bewties they are... look out for your sheet."

"Sheet's all handy."

Clank, clank, clank sang the winch as Jim hoisted the sail, and Bob remarked—

"There's that sun straight ahead on us—I can't see where to go to."

"Yer'd better pull the sheet in a little."

"What for? The weather part of the sail ain't lifting."

"Oh! all right then... Then Jim tried to find fault for chaff, and said—

"Don't you go foul of that tree there, look."

"All right, I 'on't go foul of the tree; I'll just show you the way to round that point."

"Yes; that's how you do—you pull in the sheet when the wind is all out of the sail instead of drawing on it in and keeping the sail full."

"Oh, all right; tell me how I aught have came round that corner, Mr. Know-all."

"Oh, all right; you aught have pulled the sheet in a wee bit sooner."

"This is a crinkly crankly river, this is, 'bout a boat's length wide. Before you get round you want to go about again!"

"Keep yer your tiller up a bit so the sail pull freer. You ha' slack'd too much o' that sheet out... Lee oh!"

"Lee oh!... What, is she aground?"

"Yes, she touched the ground; keep you that end, and I'll just give her a touch with the quant—so."

"We don't get a length in two boards... If you give her a shove, I think she'll weather that point, won't she?"

"Yes... no; she 'on't... No!... (Excitedly.) You'll have to go about again. Lee oh!—ah! that little boat spoilt us."

The wind had increased to half a gale, and it was all Bob
could do to manage the great tiller and sheet in the narrow winding river. Turning to win'ard and looking at the horizon, he said—

"Here come an old smoker."

"Yes; I think we're in for a drop or two of rain."

The rain poured down in torrents, streaming off the wherry and pouring into the river, when Bob said—

"You'd better get your oily, Jim; I must put a coat on."

They brought her up to the bank and moored, going below to put on their coats and light their pipes. After a bit Jim got up, looked out, and said—

"It's moderate now."

They reappeared in sea-boots, coats, and sou'-westers.

"I must fill my pipe again before we start," said Bob.

"Can you handle her alone in this wind?"

"I dunno; these are jolly rum winds, so squally, and the river's so narrow and crinkly crankly."

Bob went below, and reappeared in a few minutes, and Jim said—

"I think we'd better lower and shove her."

"Oh, the wind will shift after the squalls; we're getting on a little better now; she'll go as far as Dawson's boat-house."

As they rounded the corner, Jim exclaimed—

"What a fair wind! Well, I'll go to Smallboro' Hill, if it ain't shifted right agin us... I'd better help you pull your sheet in, hadn't I?"

They sailed into a long head reach, the wind dead against them.

Jim exclaimed—

"Keep the tiller up, lee oh!"

"Lee oh!"

The wind was so strong that the gaff gave a lunge, and the mast jumped in the tabernacle every time she went about.

We passed a draggled garden in a wood, against the borders of which was moored an old eel-boat from whose chimney smoke was rising. As we passed a sallow-faced man looked out—he was a water bailiff. The wind rattled
in the trees, gradually dying away in sighs and sobs as it got deep in the wood.

Jim asked—

"What do all them flowers do there of a winter-time?"

"I expect they belong to that man what have the boat. . . . It's peaceful here, and right quiet for a minute or two under the lee of these trees."

"Here come a funny old squall; the wind is northering; that do blow cold and gusky."

A heavy rain and sleet squall struck us, the rain coming down in torrents, the wind roaring over the trees, the gear creaking, and the sail flapping with loud reports. It was growing dusky, and Jim exclaimed—

"Whew! a wild night."

A free puff caught us every now and then, rolling the ship over on to her side, setting everything rocking and jangling amid the roar of hail and rain. Jim looked about him doubtfully, and rising up, said—

"I'll go and get agin the end o' that main sheet."

"Why?"

"I think that will be safer."

Bob went on deck, took the tiller and dripping icy sheet, and remarked as they pushed off—

"That sail stand better now it's wet."

"Yes; the ropes was put on that sail wrong—they are too tight when they are dry."

"I think she'll weather this corner now."

The wind had shifted, and was blowing hard abeam.

Bob could scarcely manage her, though his body was firmly braced against the cabin, and all his weight pressed against the tiller, whilst it took all his strength to work the sheet with both hands; it was hard and exhilarating work."

After a bit Bob shouted—

"I can't steer her round these sharp turns with this wind; she'll fly right out of the river on to the mash."

"All right; I'm just going to lower the peak."

Jim dropped the peak, but still she rushed along, rolling the water over the banks. The Maid rolled and jerked
through the water, making at least eight knots an hour with lowered peak.

"Keep you your tiller up."

"All right, matey."

She went slussing round the weather corners, rolling the water up in great waves on the shores as Bob lay back with all his weight on the tiller, his legs and arms rigid and aching. Presently he shouted—

"She fare all alive: haul the peak up; we are coming into a head reach."

After beating through the head reach, Bob exclaimed—

"That's the lock yonder; you'd better lower."

"She's all right; let her go a bit. Lee oh!"

"Lee oh! 'tis."

When she came up head to wind, Jim lowered quickly, Bob catching the guy line and holding on till he could get the end of the gaff, when he hauled on that till the sail was down. Jim exclaimed—

"You're right; she's all alive now even."

"You're right . . . this ain't a very safe place to lie."

"No; we'll go into that bight there. I'll tow her," said Jim.

"All right."

Jim took the tow-line and Bob the tiller, and she was towed into the bight. Then Bob shouted—

"That'll do now."

They planted the rourd anchors fore and aft, hauled her in close to the shore, and made fast to the timber heads. The weather was dark and stormy, with an icy rain falling. After making up the sail with numb fingers and getting everything ship-shape, they descended to the dark cold cabin, and Bob shouted—

"Dinner here, oh! . . . I've lit my fire."

"Yes; so have I lit mine: hear her crack," said Jim.

"Well, what about the fish; what did you get at Beccles?"

"Some plaice," said Jim.

"Are they cleaned?"

"All ready."
"On pan then, and plump the taters into the saucepan whilst I light the lamps and get the table fit. I'm as hungry as a wolf."

"So am I," said Jim.

In a very short time we had cooked and eaten our dinners, and sat drinking hot coffee and smoking tobacco, caring not a rush for the cold dark night outside. About nine o'clock the wind shifted to S.E. and abated, the sky cleared, and the thermometer fell to 33°. This was the night before the great snowstorm, the night preceding that Arctic winter. Though cold and tired, I went out at ten o'clock, and worked at some experiments for a couple of hours in the moonlight, the night was so tempting.
CHAPTER XXII.

THE GREAT SNOWSTORM—SNOW-BOUND AT GELDESTON LOCK.

"The snows outside are white and white;  
The gusty flue shoots through the night;  

The orchard bough creaks in the blast,  
That like a ghost goes shrieking past."


The night made us shiver in our blankets. This was a new sensation, and it is worthy of remark that throughout that eventful winter the temperatures, as registered by the thermometer, bore no relation to chilling power of the cold upon the system. We often shivered at nights when the temperature stood several degrees higher than upon other nights when we slept comfortably. I think the wind has much influence in the matter, a low temperature and easterly winds being worst for man and beast.

Upon going on deck a beautifully clear morning greeted us. Ahead stood the lock-house and lock sheltered by osiers. Before them stretched an islet, covered with willows, separating the river from the roaring flood water that flowed over the weirs and went eddying and roaring down the stream to the river below. All around stretched green marshes, many of them bright with flood water. Away to the right the village of Geldeston nestled among the trees,
from which peeped the gable of the ill-starred "House on the Marsh."

The birds were very restless. It was evident a great change of weather was coming, for they are the most delicate of barometers. Even a kingfisher alighted and moped on our rudder-post, and when frightened away, flew across to a poacher's house-boat moored in a dike; but it was cold there, so the gay little fellow returned to us, and began fishing in a half-hearted way, until we frightened him by rushing out to get a shot at a bunch of mallard that flew over. As we were looking after the mallard, great flocks of Kentish crows and peewits flew about restlessly, and we saw our first flight of golden plover—they went whistling over our ship.

I spent the morning chatting to the lock-keeper, an old acquaintance. He showed me a 5½ lb. perch, and two beautiful tortoise-shell marked sea-lampreys, caught by himself below the weirs. As we were talking and watching some men working in a dydling wherry, one of them suddenly slipped overboard. On coming to the surface, and spluttering out the water, he climbed into his wherry looking like a drowning rat. As they passed down by my wherry on their way home to change their things, one of them asked Jim, who was sitting for'ard smoking his pipe—

"Is that a water-bailiff spying out the land?"

Jim shook his head and replied—

"Not much."

"Is that the little grain wherry?"

"I've heerd so," answered Jim, with a smile.

"Aw, we thowt so," they said, moving on.

At noon a fierce hail squall beat down upon us, startling a flock of goldfinches feeding upon some dead thistles upon the opposite shore. It got colder towards evening, but the grey wintry afternoon was enlivened by the appearance of a hunting party on the hill opposite. They were out with the harriers, and the riders stood boldly against a hot lurid sky, for the sun was already setting. The hounds scoured the marshes in a business-like way, that recalled the absur-
díty of Herring's bourgeois hunting pictures. The very horses were eager for a run, but no hare was to be found, the hounds only putting up some mallard and a brace of curlew. After sunset, the cold south-east wind blew harder, and the old poacher, who was doing up his nets on the rond opposite, said he smelt something acoming; and he was fully prepared for a cold night, as the clouds of smoke streaming from his house-boat's chimney proved. The dydlers returned and moored their barge below the lock, where it stayed for weeks, although they little thought so that day. After dinner the air felt keener and more exhilarating. Snowy weather always makes me as lively as new wine. We sat smoking our pipes, when a sudden hailstorm poured down upon us, playing pretty music on the roof; then followed snow, with north-easterly squalls. In half an hour the marshes were white, the landscape hushed, and the river running a silver thread through the glittering snow carpet—for the moon had risen, discovering flocks of snipe, fieldfares, starlings, and peewits, feeding greedily in the newly fallen snow. Could they have foreseen the weather in store for us. I went for a two hours' walk in the moonlit snowy landscape, for such a scene is dear to me beyond expression. The silent, pure, radiant beauty of the world at such an hour seems to fill your life. It was a strange sight to see these birds feeding and fighting greedily in the white midnight. I returned a little after twelve o'clock, glowing from the biting snow and hail-squalls encountered in my walk; but the birds and myself had enjoyed a scene that the sleeping towns-folk at Beccles never saw in their wildest dreams. I lay in bed still listening to the snow-squalls sweeping against my windows with the swishing as of heavy embroidered garments or the tapping of leaves upon the pane; at the same time the wind blew overhead roaring hoarsely like an angry furnace, rocking the boat like a cradle. The moon lit up my cabin.
like a tropical night, and I sat up in bed at times and
looked out upon the glittering landscape and sullen leaden
sky, chequered with clouds blown swiftly over the face of
the moon. So attracted was I by the night that I opened
my window and leant out, watching the powdery snow falling
softly on the white carpet, until my hair was wet through,
but a fierce squall finally compelled me to shut the window.

It was freezing hard, but still I could hear the roar of
the water over the weir. It would be some time before we
should lose that music. Jim was right—we were having a
wind frost, and the running clouds signified coarse weather
ahead. I could hear Jim groan and moan in his sleep.
Then another heavy squall struck us, and he cried from
his cabin—

"Are you awake, sir?"
"Ay, ay, all awake oh!"
"Rum night this—hefty weather. Don't it blow and
snow. I shall be snowed up in the morning."
"Yes; this is the weather to put life into you."
"What's o'clock, sir?"
"Four."
"I can't sleep, sir."
"Neither can I, Jim; but I'm going to try."

Nov. 26.

I lay still a little while longer, but it was impossible to
sleep, so I got up and dressed by moonlight. Just before
daybreak there was a lull in the storm, and a bright spot
began to burn in the east, shining through a fine sleety snow.
I went out to look at the landscape, but was soon driven
back by a furious blinding snow-squall, and yet I had time to
see that the poacher was at work in search of prey, and to
hear some geese cackling at a farm near by through the
roar of the weir. A common wagtail alighted on our deck
after we had shovelled off the snow, and fed on some crumbs.
This was the only bird I could see about—all the large flocks
that were feeding on the snow the night before had dis-
appeared. It squalled and snowed all day, and in my walks
I found the snow marked with trails of water-rails and
stoats. Round the lock-keeper’s house a few sparrows and starlings nestled under the eaves, their feathers set out to keep them warm. All the dikes were covered with thin ice, and the edge of the river was fringed with an icy filigree, which was being broken down by a wherry that was towed towards the lock by three men in sou'-westers and oilies.

Later in the day I saw a few plover and snipe feeding by the water, and our friendly kingfisher came and sat on a tree near by. A few days afterwards an idiot from Beccles shot him on that very spot, to sell to another fool to be stuffed and set up in a glass case, to be bought by the third and biggest fool of all, that vain creature—the collector. As we got dinner ready, Jim remarked—

"The sky look wery black; it's going to blow hard and snow agin."

The wind shifted to the north, and the thermometer quickly fell, though hung under the lee side. All night long the heavy snow-squalls beat down upon us, but the lulls were longer. The dikes froze hard, and the water below the lock turned to a sheet of ice.

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In the early morning, the swift *Fawn* broke through with rimy sail. The master was determined not to be frozen up so far from home, as was the fate of many a careless wherryman that winter.

After breakfast, I found several larks on the marshes pulling up blades of grass from under the snow, and flocks of Royston crows—the earliest risers hereabouts—blackbirds, thrushes, and tit-larks were collected in the soft places where the snow was melted by water. A tom-tit came aboard to feed, and a few gulls scoured the marshes like harriers, while flocks of long-tailed tit, blue-tits, and a few goldfinches came to gather seeds from the dead plants on the
opposite shore. We spent the whole day on the marshes, and came home to dinner dead beat from the heavy work of tramping through the snow and facing the fierce squalls.

As we sat smoking our pipes after dinner, the squalls grew heavier.

"Nasty night at sea," exclaimed Jim.

"Nasty night to be off in; bad for the herring fleet, eh, Jim?"

"Ay, I expect some on 'em have steered up'ards," said Jim; "but the smacks is having a rough time on it—it's orful at sea ter-night; them snow-squalls make the sea and sky as white as foam."

Nov. 28.

In the morning we found the jolly-boat full of snow. As we were cleaning it out, a flock of linnets flew over to the seed hedge, and one or two snipe still scaped. At the inn, some miserable farm-labourers, "men off the land," sat with melancholy faces drinking beer. They could not work, and were losing pay, and looked as forlorn as the six-inch icicles hanging from our cabin roof. The lock presented a wild scene now the trees were all bare—the frost had torn the last leaf from their grey branches. All around were snow-drifts and glittering icicles. The backwater alone was alive, roaring cold and grey through the still white landscape. In the lock-keeper's garden the potato and nettle leaves looked lush and green though frosted with rime, but directly the sun melted the rime they turned black and shrivelled up as grass before the fire.

Much of the ice in the dikes was honeycombed, the result of a wind frost, for rime frost ice is as "sheer" as glass, down to the very last bit.
We were quite frozen in, our windows frost-bound, a large snowdrift on our windward side, and everything ice-bound. The lock itself was frozen tight, imprisoning two wherries. We remained ice-bound for exactly a week, so we made ourselves as comfortable as possible; but gradually all the birds left us, and besides the lock-keeper, and a few weather-bound wherry men, we scarce saw a living thing. That night the lock-keeper came in for a smoke. He envied our life.

"It's the jolliest life I know; I wish I could live it," and the old fellow sighed. . . . "To go anywhere, that is life."

As he turned out, it was snowing fitfully, and the thermometer in my sleeping cabin registered 35°.

"It will soon go down to Zooro," said Jim laconically.

The wind was so cold that though sometimes the thermometer in the saloon registered 110°, yet the ice on the windows never melted.

A north-easter kept that frozen.

I could not sleep that night, and it was not owing to the cold, for after the first snowy night I had taken precautions on that score, so I must, for want of a better explanation, attribute the sleeplessness during this snowstorm to some electrical condition.

During the day a few people appeared on the frozen, flooded marshes, and began skating, though the snow was 18 inches deep, and had to be swept away. The lock-keeper told us that his brother-in-law had once skated from Norwich to Geldeston.
A little powdery snow fell in the morning; but the squalls had abated, and the birds began to reappear, enabling us to shoot some peewits, fat and plump as butter. At noon a bunch of teal flew over, and another kingfisher appeared on the very spot where the Beccles idiot had shot our little friend; a flock of goldfinches, too, returned, and brightened the snowy hedge-row.

For dinner I had some river lamperns just caught in the weir, but they are not to be commended. They tasted like burnt shoe-leather soaked in fat. A little robin which had flown into the boat in the afternoon flitted to and fro pecking at some crumbs in a basin as we smoked after dinner. I determined to keep him until the frost went, but the best-laid plans of mice and men "gang aft agley." At bed-time he was roosting on my greatcoat, curiously enough just beneath "Yarrell's Birds." He was sitting on the coat's lining, with his feathers all shot out, looking like a round fluffy ball.

On Saturday morning I was awakened by Bobby fluttering at the window. I lay still, and watched him flying against the frosted pane, until suddenly he seemed to remember something, and desisted, perching on a shelf. As he looked about he espied the bread crumbs in the basin. Immediately his whole aspect changed. He shot out his feathers, erected his crest, looked at the crumbs and then at me, but I lay like one dead, watching him through half-opened lids; but he did not go straight to the bread—that was against all precedent and incautious. Habit had made a slave of him as well as of us, so he began to manœuvre in true redbreast fashion. First he played hide and seek in and out of the clothes piled on the shelf. I moved slightly, and he quickly disappeared behind the clothes on tiptoe. Presently he reappeared round a corner with great caution, and began pecking at the cracks in the match-boarding, feigning to care nothing for the crumbs, for he got no food where he was pecking. But this was a
joyless task, and when his eye again caught the bread, his scalp feathers stood on end—he was sorely tempted, so he flew lightly across the cabin, alighting on my portmanteau on the berth opposite; but he was not going to forget his ruses, so after a little hesitation he flew across, alighting on the foot of my bed; then he flew up towards my face, and hovered over it to see if I were alive. Being still doubtful, he alighted on the shelf overhead, and kept eyeing me, turning his little head this way and that; but when his bright eyes caught sight of the bread again, he got excited, and began to fly to and fro across the cabin near the roof, finally alighting on his roosting-place. Standing for a moment undecided, he flew up to a crack in the ceiling, pretended to pick out something, then flew back to his perch, and hopping lightly into the basin, began pecking at the crumbs. Whilst eating he was for ever on his guard, taking a few hurried bites, then stopping to look round. Exciting indeed must be the struggle for existence constantly waged by these delicate birds, surrounded as they are by enemies. I shouted to Jim to get breakfast ready, but did not move. Bobby merely stopped eating—he did not seem to mind the noise—indeed, I doubt if he could hear much of it; but if I made the slightest movement he was all anxiety. Sometimes he flew up from the basin and hid himself among the clothes. Whenever this happened, it was remarkable that he always reappeared by a different path; there was no exception to that rule. After eating a hearty breakfast, he began preening his feathers, finishing his toilet by spreading out his feathers and shaking himself at least a dozen times. I left him a prisoner in the boat all day with plenty of rations. After breakfast there was a slight thaw, softening the ice sufficiently to allow us to clean up the boats. The wherrymen got into a rough coble and began to break the ice below the lock. This floe was about an inch thick. Standing in the stern, they pushed the fore-foot of the boat on to the edge of the ice as far as it was possible, then walked forward, crushing it with their weight, for the ice was too thick to break by rocking the boat from side to side. Both practices we found very useful that
winter. After they had broken a narrow passage up to the lock, the sleepers were raised, and the water allowed to run down, the sail filled, and five men took a tow-line, and by means of these three powers, man, wind, and water, the two great 30-ton craft, loaded with bricks, were forced through the channel.

The signs of a thaw made the birds more cheerful and numerous. We saw a few gooseanders, herons, hawks, and dab-chicks, none of which had been near us since the snow began, but every peewit had disappeared. Several gunners appeared on the marshes, but they all had poor sport, for all the birds, though pinched with hunger, were remarkably shy.

Saturday ended with a fairy scene. About dinner-time the wind shifted to the west, and a rime frost powdered the trees with crystals. When the transformation was complete, the moon appeared, discovering the magic beauty of this silent silvery landscape. It was indeed a change, this pure and tranquil scene, after the furious gales of the week. I went to bed thinking how happy Bobby would be to get back to his haunts when the ground was soft. Before turning in, I went to see that he was comfortable on my ulster. Yes! there he was fast asleep. I went to sleep with my head full of the exquisite night, listening to the wherry crunching the ice as it rose and fell with the tide.

The last day of November broke as beautifully as the previous night had ended, but there was no thaw, for the thermometer had fallen to 14° in the night; but the rime had transformed the landscape into a fairy world floating in a tender grey mist that hid the garish snow background, an effect fully bringing out the beauty of the rimy tracery. Bobby looked like a puff-adder's head as he crouched on my coat; poor little fellow, he was cold. He awoke as I stirred, and began to play his usual tricks, but his movements were tamer—I had forgotten to spread his breakfast, so he fluttered over my head as if begging for his meal. Jim brought in some crumbs on a plate and tried to coax him to eat, but Jim in his sou'-wester was a stranger, so Bobby
ran away and hid behind the clothes. During the day I took him in my hand several times, and his little heart did not beat as it had done the day before. Decidedly he was tamer.

The ice round the wherry was now an inch and a half thick, but the water was still running, for a castaway boat came down the river. A great change was visible on the face of the snow. Yesterday's thaw had melted the top, and last night's severe frost had frozen the soft snow, so that the snow-fields were covered with a thick crystalline crust that gleamed in the sun like a burnished mirror.

The last day of November had sped, and I bid Bobby good-night as I turned in—his last good-night. On going to bed I had looked for him in his old roosting-place, but he was not there. After searching about, I found him, a fluffy ball, on a shelf a few feet over my head. He had evidently taken up his new quarters on account of the extra warmth given off by the stove in that corner.

In the night I was awakened by something fluttering on to my face. I instantly awoke, and fumbled about to find Bobby. Poor little fellow, he had fallen off from the shelf above, and though I was drowsy at the time, I noticed that he felt very small as I replaced him on the shelf, thinking no more of the matter, for I suspected he had fallen off by accident.

I slept on through the night, and when I awoke in the morning I missed my lively little friend flying about and asking for his breakfast. The events of the night flashed through my mind; I jumped up and looked on the shelf. Alas! poor Bobby was stone dead. He must have been dying when I picked him up in the night. His crest was erect as if with fear, his eyes closed, his wings pressed to his sides, his little legs bent double, and so he sat stark dead. Jim and I buried him sadly in the icy river, and we were gloomy all the morning, though the weather was mild and bright, for a change had come.

I went casting for pike before breakfast in the weir,
but without success; only the birds seemed eager to feed. The hawks were keen set, indeed, for as I returned I saw a sparrow-hawk chasing a blackbird. The sun burst forth hot, and the snow began to melt; bosses of grass began to show their green crests here and there through the white crust. The water was trying hard to reconquer its fields from the frost. A narrow swift stream was cutting its way through the ice-floes below the lock, and the river waters had arisen until the floods flowed over the foot-bridge crossing the weir, forming a roaring cataract. Skaters were cutting patterns on the frozen marsh, edged with mighty rhomboid crystals, and surrounded by snowfields, and all day long at the weir was heard the noise of crushing ice-floes carried down by the flooded river and jammed against the weir-bars. All day long the waters were struggling to throw off the fetters of the ice-king, and the sun helped them, and the night came up with big bright stars and a watery moon; but still the music of the crushing yellowish ice and roar of flood water showed that the fight continued.

I was several times startled from my sleep by loud reports like the explosions of pistols. This proved to be due to the expansion of our match-boarding—a phenomenon we afterwards found a sure forerunner of a thaw.
CHAPTER XXIII.

A WINTRY SAIL TO BUNGAY.

The sun, at length, with a more fervent fire,
Hath gained a subtle mastery of the dawn;
And, still more swiftly, from the less'ning spire
The hastening gems descend, till all are gone.
But lo! they come! The vanished one surprise
In golden mist, my wistful, musing sight;
Soul o' th' earth, its exhalations rise,
And soon the drops return to air o' light.”


On Monday night the weather seemed to hesitate between thaw and frost, for the thermometer fell 4° below freezing-point; but on Tuesday the thaw reasserted itself, and the snow began to be decorated with black withered stalks and shrivelled leaves. The channel through the ice to the lock was now wide enough to admit a punt, so I determined to cut a passage to the lock, knowing that the wherryman above would not attempt the work. The ice was tough and nearly two inches thick, so the rocking boat was of no avail. We began by drawing our jolly-boat on the ice, and with our combined weights managed to break a little bay sufficiently large for the bows of our wherry. After shoving the wherry's nose into this dock, we set to work with boat-hooks, breaking the ice from her bows and plankways, pushing the broken pieces underneath the good ice. At times the prods of our boat-hooks would only crack the ice, and we had to get down on to it hanging by the forestay, stamping upon it with one leg till the mass broke away. After breaking as far as we
could reach from the bows, we dug our boat-hooks into the smooth ice ahead and drew the wherry forward through the closely-packed broken ice, startling the robins feeding on the glassy surface. It was terrible hard work, and our shirts were wet through with perspiration after the breaking through that 150 yards of ice to the lock—the job taking us exactly two hours and five minutes.

"We aught to get a wherry-load of ice here and arnt something," said Jim, as we examined our blood blisters and rubbed our arms and legs to try to get the stiffness out, for jobbing down on the ice with boat-hooks for two hours had well-nigh paralysed our right arms, for the ice was so hard that unless the dig of the boat-hook was sufficiently powerful, it merely splintered like plate-glass, gleaming with spectral colours in the sunshine. After more picking and pushing, we broke through the narrow band of ice above the lock and floated clear, for the running flood water had kept the navigation free there, though a fringe of ice grew from both shores.

The breeze had fallen, so we shoved up to a bent and fantastically gnarled willow tree leaning over the snowy bank, where we moored for the night.

On preparing dinner, we found our stores low—indeed, things were looking serious, for tobacco, bread, and coals had nearly run out, and none of these things were to be had at the lock.

"The last loaf under the knife, the last shovel of coal on the fire.

"Miss stays, good ship, and come on to the beach," said Jim gloomily.

The sun went down on the wild wintry landscape with a clear cut edge and yellowish flush, the thermometer beginning to fall quickly after sunset, registering 8 degrees of frost before eight o'clock, when a fog crept over the landscape, hiding everything; and as we sat sucking our last pipe, all we could hear outside was the sound of the ice-floes grating against our timbers, and the distant roar of the weir.
Next day the thaw had begun in earnest; the fog of the previous night was a true omen. The air was calm; there was scarce a breath of wind to rustle the reed-stalks and fill our sail—indeed, we had to help her with the quant through the white landscape decorated with the black boles of trees, green clumps of grass, and screens of withered reed-stalks. In places in this snowy desert were oases of water dark with grass and mud, patches kept green by rills trickling over the banks of the brimming river. Round these tiny morasses the starved birds were feeding greedily—linnets, meadow-pipets, larks, and rooks mixing freely. A tom-tit shorn of its tail, field-fares, a few starlings, and here and there a bibbling snipe, fed by the rills, for cold makes strange board-fellows. As we glided softly through this wintry scene the textures of the snow-blanket differed widely, though everything was of nearly uniform colour. The snow had fallen in places upon flooded marshes, frozen hard, forming wastes now resembling large rolls of flexible and annealed snow and ice. In other places crystalline fields stretched away to the snow-covered roofs of the cottages and farm-buildings. As we sailed along we passed a few labourers filling their carts from a muck heap on the riverside, their horses, with steaming nostrils, standing on the wall. In the afternoon a thick yellow fog rose from the marshes, filling the distance, painting our wherry a sooty black, and transforming a pair of swans into dirty yellowish birds scarce to be distinguished. The river banks were decorated with picturesque groups of thorn-trees black against the white background, and sheep feeding on turnips beneath tall, leafless poplars. In one place an old heron stood by a dike, his head drawn into his shoulders, recalling a drawing of Hokusai, though the natural picture was more subtle and delicate. These birds feel the cold very much: a low temperature making them very sluggish. As we drew near a farmhouse, Jim got very excited; I could see him standing forward staring on to the marsh where fed a covey of partridges, though they looked more like guineahens in this peculiar atmosphere. Jim was much disgusted
as they flew off, nor was he consoled by a flock of field-fares feeding on some thorn-trees, forming a perfect little vignette full of the finest decorative quality, but alas, beyond the reach of any art.

Sailing was cold work on such a day, so we took alternate spells quanting and sailing by turns. On approaching Ellingham Lock we encountered large ice-floes, one of them nearly filling the river. I tried hard to break it with my quant, but only succeeded in shifting its position and wedging it tightly across the stream, so we brought up against the shore and attacked the great floe with ice-hooks, breaking it to pieces. Our blows startled a hare from his snowy form, and away he dashed across the white marsh with his awkward leaps, stopping every now and then and looking back until he disappeared through a hedge into a planting.

On the lock stood a poor "natural"—a melancholy object in this frigid landscape. In his face was the weak fierceness characteristic of crétins, yet he was full of good-will and desire to help us, but perfectly incapable of co-ordinated action, and full of indecision. His hands were restless and claw-like, his actions uncertain and jerky, and together with his stooping shoulders, shrunk knock-kneed legs, and unintelligible grunts, he was a poor object as he ran forward as if to fill the lock; but no sooner had he reached the sleepers than he mumbled and ran irresolutely back—in fact, like all weak characters, he was too anxious for our good opinion; but I think, after all, the poor fellow was happy enough, and that much of the false pity and sentiment in life is due to second-rate art, for your mediocre craftsman always describes humanity from his standpoint, as he imagines he would feel were he in the position of the pitied; but the sufferers seldom realise misery as does the sentimental writer. It is to my mind laughable for Zola and his school to describe themselves as realists or naturalists; they are as far removed from naturalism as are the works of Florian or the peasants of Bastien le Page. Theirs is the sentimental idealism of the morbid "cit'-a-field.

After helping us, as he thought, through the lock, the crétin burst into joyous yells as we sailed up the river, for a
gentle north-east breeze had sprung up; but nipping as it was, we hailed it with joy, for our pipes were as cold as the ice-floes, and the north-easter blew us towards Bungay—where was tobacco. On our right straggled the picturesque village of Ditchingham, discovered by dark tempest-bent trees, reed walls, and white roofs. On our left Wangford Mill loomed like a cathedral through the yellow fog that buried the willow-bordered patches of snow. As the sun crept down to the horizon I began to get cold, for it was freezing work sitting hour after hour sailing through this fog-laden, snow-bound landscape. Ditchingham Lock was therefore a pleasant change, for we had to work hard with our ice-picks widening the channel to the lock gates. A garrulous old maltster came out and helped fill the basin, then a black-haired man who had been lazily watching us from a malt-house came down and picked up a mooring rope, characteristically wishing to claim the reward for work done by others.

The old maltster was kind-hearted.

"This be weather, eh?" he said.

The black man looked at him contemptuously.

"How far to Bungay?" we asked.

"This is Ditchingham, this is Bungay," replied the kind old man.

Gloomy raven-locks smiled upon him superiorly.

After we had passed the lock I tossed the old man a shilling, for he had a heart. He ran off and showed it gleefully, like a child, to a sandy-headed carter on the bridge. To the black-haired man I presented a contemptuous smile.

As we sailed up between the dripping trees towards Bungay, our repeated yawnings testified to our lowered vitality, for we were chilled to the marrow. As soon as we espied the lights of Bungay, we moored. It was thawing fast, the melted snow was dripping on to our cabin roof, and the land was covered with a thick fog, as with icy fingers we lit our fires, raising the saloon temperature up to 100°, melting the candles so that they dropped over; the match-boarding cracked, the corks flew out of the bottles, the lamps flickered and would not burn in the hot air—the
top of the stove was red hot before we were thoroughly warm. At bed-time the temperature outside had risen to 38°, and the gloomy wood alongside was full of the melancholy dripings of melting snow. Through all the fog the lights of Bungay flickering like will-o' the wisps.

A south-west storm brought rain in the night, awakening us. Jim hailed me—

"Are you awake, sir?"

"Ay, ay."

"What's the time?"

"Four o'clock... This is a rum old gale, eh?"

"Ay, that'll wash the snow away."

"That's a good job—its beauty is all gone;" and after that remark we went to sleep.

Dec. 4.

In the morning an easterly wind and drizzly rain greeted us. The snow on the uplands had melted, flooding some of the marshes; the tree trunks were sooty and hideous to behold—indeed, several of the stacks and buildings looked black as pitch. All round lay dirty melting patches of snow, and the landscape exhaled a raw cold mist. I don't think I ever saw such a devilish scene in my life, such a real hell. The very birds looked black and ogrish in the curious light, for the sopping marshes were alive with mavis, linnets, larks, starlings, meadow-pipets, field-fares, and rocks, all eating voraciously. Hoisting our sail, we passed through this dismal scene, dropping anchor at the weir at Bungay, where we stayed a short time to lay in supplies and warm our pipes. All this was done before lunch; indeed, so anxious were we to leave the dismal scene, that we started back with the determination to moor at Geldeston Lock before we went to bed, even if we were compelled to boat all night.

We worked like jolly slaves throughout that raw day,
sailing and quanting through the dripping landscape. At Ellingham Lock the “natural” awaited us. I gave him a shilling as a parting gift; he clutched the coin with his claws, placing it into his breast pocket; then he stood laughing and uttering insensate clucks as we sailed away.

At eventide, when we drew near to Geldeston Lock, our jovial friend came out to meet us, and help us through the lock. When we cast anchor at our old moorings our hands and faces were like ice, and our clothes wet through with the icy drizzle brought in by the easterly wind.

Our arrival brought luck to the kind-hearted lock-keeper, for after dinner he put in his nets to catch me some lamperns, and he was rewarded by a splendid take of plump silver-eels, as the next chapter will show.
CHAPTER XXIV.

EEL-CATCHING.

"The winter night was full of wind and storm,
The Christian's festal season close at hand,
With frosty, glistening, snow-sprinkled form,
The winter spirit roamed throughout the land."


THE first wave of cold that heraided this Arctic
winter had passed, and the ice and snow
brought by the recent frosts and north-easterly gales were nearly melted at last;
the river was full of ice-floes and melting
snow; the temperature of the water was
34° F. by my thermometer.

I followed the old keeper to the weirs, as he went to
fulfil his promise. He shut two of the flood gates, dropped
the frame on which the nets are stretched into slots,
jumped on them to force them into place, fastened them to
a cross-bar above, and opened the gates. The icy water
gushed through the lock and carried the pods away down
the sluice into a roaring cataract of foam.

Then crome (shaped like a shepherd's crook) in hand, he
stood on the foot-bridge thrown across the weirs, and felt in
the troubous water for the pods. Each was seized in turn
and hauled out. He inspected the lashings to see they
were fast, and threw them back into the frothing torrent.

By this time it was pitch dark, and a light from a belated
wherry suddenly blazed in the sky. The lock-keeper let
the craft through the lock, whilst I went to dine on the
plump cockerel I had bought from him an hour before.

At twenty minutes past nine, as I was sitting reading,
some one tapped at the window behind me, and the lock-keeper said—

"I have just drawn them nets, sir."

I hastened out in the clammy night. There stood my friend, with his picturesque three-faced lantern and a new willow skep—looking something like a Pompeian wine jar—before him on the sopping island beside which we were moored.

"Got any?" I asked.

"A few, sir."

"Let's look;" and taking the lantern he held towards me, I thrust it into the skep.

A mass of beautiful silver-eels lay wriggling at the bottom amongst the green weed, their backs sea-weed green, their bellies shining like silver. They were in splendid condition, too, fat and frolicsome. A few roach gleamed here and there.

"Eels?" I said in surprise.

"Yes, about twenty pound," he drawled, without emotion. "Eels?" I repeated; "I thought they always muddled in winter."

"So did I," he replied calmly.

Then he drank a silent whisky and left.

At 10.20 another tap aroused me; he informed me he was going "to look on," so I turned out and followed him. He went ahead towards the weirs carrying his lantern, my man and I stumbling after him in the flood water overflowing the island. It was as black as a cavern, a south-westerly breeze was blowing, the temperature was 39° F. in the air, for I had looked at my minimum before leaving the boat. Across the marshes all was black, except the loom hanging over Beccles. Patches of unmelted snow looked like ghostly figures hiding beneath the leafless willows, and the roar of the water was deafening.

Ascending a hillock, the lock-keeper picked up his eel-skep and crome, and gave me the lantern. Then he led the way to the foot-bridge, and I, following closely on his heels, was in my turn dogged by my man; it was too dark to keep far apart. I held the lantern over the roaring, foaming
waters that shone with ghastly gleam against the black sky. The lock-keeper leant over the hand rail and thrust his crome into the torrent, feeling for a pod. They were both swollen with fish, and easy to find. Drawing his crook towards the middle of the net, he drew one of the pods up stream; it was taut, and heavy with eels.

"You've got a fresh lot," I exclaimed.

"Yes," he said. Pulling steadily, he drew the net up on to the foot planks dripping and glistening with eel's heads and tails protruding through the meshes, a mass of green, gold and silver. Quickly loosening the pod string, he shot the fish into the skep as I held the lantern, then refastening the pod, he cast it back into the foaming current. The second net was dealt with in a similar way.

I thrust the lantern in the mouth of the skep, and illuminated the wriggling mass.

" Beauties!"

"I never thowt this, and snowy water too," he replied. "I never looked for this," he repeated; "I thowt to get a few lamperne."

"So you said," I rejoined. "It's a rum thing; they say eels are hid up this weather."

"So everybody says; but these weren't," he added, with a chuckle.

"Have you ever known this happen before?"

"Never with the water so cold—snowy water, too. No; never heard of such a thing."

"Can you account for it?"

"Not I. I think they must have worked out of the sags (hovers), but it's a rum 'un."

He gave us three fine eels for breakfast, and we turned in, whilst he went home and built up his fire; he was going to sit up and "look on" every hour.

On Friday morning the minimum marked 39° F. The lock-keeper had "looked on" every hour; his last haul was made at 7.30 a.m. He only got one or two large eels that haul, but during that night he got fourteen stone of eels, two
weighing 3 lb. apiece. After midnight the catches had been smaller, but fish ran larger in size.

Friday night was warm and blowy, the thermometer stood at 38°F, and the lock-keeper got about ten stone more, but again few were caught after midnight.

On Saturday night his catches grew still smaller: the thermometer was falling (33°F at 9 P.M.), and an easterly wind beginning to rise. Nearly all the eels caught that night weighed half a pound each. An easterly wind blew all Sunday. The lock-keeper expected to get a few big ones that night. The thermometer stood at 31°F, and he got two eels weighing each 3 lb., and a few lamperns.

According to the traditions of eel-men, this was an extraordinary capture of fish. He got in all about twenty-six stone of the sharp-nosed or silver-belly eels, together with a few lamperns. The moon was waning, the river full of melting ice and snow, the water temperature 34°F the first night, the thermometer rising at first, the wind south-westerly, and the nights dark. Before midnight the biggest hauls were made, but the largest fish were caught after that hour, and not in company with the rest. Finally, as the temperature fell, and the wind went to easterly, the fish ceased working.
CHAPTER XXV.

A SLEEPY COUNTRY VILLAGE.

"Whence foaming waters roar
That winter could not bind.

As free and gay, and wild as they,
We'll speed 'en to the mystic way
Of the isle with cedars lined."

J. L. Stuart: Skating.

DEC. 6.

On Saturday morning the snow and ice were turned into water, the rivers were overflowing, and the marshes all flooded; the dikes and bridges were nearly covered, and the water almost lapped against the lower branches of the thorn-trees. The floods seemed to stretch right away to the gables of Beccles.

An easterly wind was blowing as we left the lock-house island to navigate this wild waste of waters, for I started with the lock-keeper in his light marsh-boat on a voyage to the village. As we pushed off, we flushed a snipe close to the water-gate, and some mallard feeding against some willows forming his boundary hedge.

As we glided over the marsh bottom, on which we could see beds of nettles, we encountered islands of ice, upon whose shores the waters lapped softly. Then we passed over hard gravelly reaches, steering between the tops of gate-posts and entering deep dike ways, at length stranding on a shallow, whence we had to push her off by jumping out into the water. As we went along in the bright sunlight, a few flakes of snow and a hailstorm tore across the floods. "An omen of hefty weather," the keeper said.
Reaching the village, we landed on a grassy knoll, and forthwith entered the sleepy little place. The first man we met was known by the name of "The Darning Needle;" he had a brother who was, much to his annoyance, often mistaken for him, for he would be tall. Further up the road we met two swarthy, dirty old men, with grizzly beards and ragged shoes; the one stooped, the other walked upright, and both were tramping in Indian file through the soft muddy roads carrying baskets of cheap earthenware, for they were brothers and pedlars.

"They're quiet enough, and have travelled these roads for years selling pan mugs," volunteered the lock-keeper.

Passing a group of cottages leading to the better class houses on a low hill, a girl with a bandage over her left eye and enough petticoats for a Dutchwoman came forth from a door and drove in a barelegged brat, whilst a wizen old face peeped from behind the blinds at us. A buxom woman in the adjoining yard was hanging out clothes; when her eyes fell upon us she stopped her work, called another woman from a house, and they began chattering about the strangers, for their looks were directed towards us.

As we proceeded a boy in a field left his work and stared stolidly at us over the hedge, calling the attention of a carter boy.

Passing the gloomy old house on the marsh, where a bright-eyed servant smiled upon us from behind a blind, disappearing almost immediately, caught, I'm afraid, by her mistress, we came upon a man unloading a waggon load of straw. He stopped, looked at us curiously, and resumed his task as we moved on, passing a railway porter loitering on his way to the station. At the post-office I called for letters—found the postmaster tying up a parcel of groceries for a little girl. Answering my inquiry for letters with hesitation, he scanned my face curiously, with the expression "anything for a change" writ largely upon his features. As we got into the street, an old beldame with evil eyes, bloated face, and rheumatism, hobbled past looking askance at us and mumbling to herself, but we went on, making our way to a cellar beneath an old malt-house, where we found the
village "snob" and church clerk at work before a slender wood fire.

"I'm rather busy just now," he said, clumping a new heel to a village maiden's boot.

"I have four pair to sole, the weather have been so fearful," he continued, jerking his hand towards a pile of old boots. He was a strong young man, full of energy, yet he was wisely content to live humbly in the old village.

On the way from the snob's shop down to the river bank we met two old men carrying buckets of water, one of them evidently a coachman. As we walked into the yard they stopped, placed their buckets on the ground, stared us full in the face, smiled at each other, the oldest man wishing us good morning, whereupon they resumed their buckets and passed on chaffing each other, whilst we walked to the river side. A lazy young maltster opened a door and hailed my companion familiarly, but after this act of courtesy his red cap was withdrawn and the door slammed. We stood watching a wherry come up the dike with lowered masts, when a window in the malt-house opened slowly, and another red cap appeared.

"Where's this here barley to go?" shouted the energetic wherryman to the lazy red cap.

"I dunno," answered the maltster sleepily.

"Yer oughter know then," retorted the wherryman sharply.

"You'll live to be told," replied the maltster quietly.

"Well, can't yer go and see?" asked the boatman, with irritation, as he threw his rond anchor ashore, my companion making it fast. Another door opened, and a third maltster appeared, and looked round sleepily from one to the other. The lively wherryman began to express his disgust at the delay, whereupon the maltster disappeared, to return with a clerk in flour-powdered clothes. They looked at the wherry for a moment, and both disappeared into one of the numerous doors cut in the malt-house. Even the ducks in this dike were lazy, and we left the wherryman cursing, and not a red cap to be seen.

As we went up the road, under a rudely-painted wherry
on a signboard stood an old woman of eighty-four sorting some of her goods in a donkey-cart.

"There are three old people over eighty living here," said the keeper; "they can't wear out." As if to emphasise his words, the London express came roaring through the floods.

As we walked back to the station, we passed a youth carrying a parcel, his face wreathed with smiles—the express had evidently left him a prize. After him followed a farmer's cart, driven by a hale, comfortable-looking farmer, who had evidently just come by the express. His steward sat by his side, and seemed by his actions to be telling the master of a good deal made during his absence, for upon his face was the triumphant look of the unscrupulous financier. The farmer smiled superiorly, listening with judicial patience, for he did not wish to rebuke the bailiff, nor yet did he intend to approve the transaction, and so become a party thereto. As we crossed the line, a porter stared lazily at us, and on the other side we met an urchin whistling and leading a white horse just released from work. Further on, in the middle of the road, a black-haired youth, with black moustache and clerkly finery, was gossiping with a sandy-haired dealer sitting in his cart. The youth looked vain and conceited, and had the air of one who thinks he knows a thing or two. He affected such a damned superiority, and was the sort of upstart who would no doubt have resented being *patronised*—a feeling known only to men of low birth. He pretended not to look at us; he did not wish to appear curious and provincial; he was probably the son of some labourer, and not half so much a gentleman as his father. On the other hand, to all dealers "knowledge is power"—the dealer remembers the gipsy saying, "Every one knows something," so he turned in his seat, stared at us blankly, was satisfied, and turned back to the youth, who had himself been furtively glancing in our direction meanwhile. Leaving this ill-assorted couple, whose only bond was avarice, we descended the grass knoll to our boat, and as we pushed off a boy with a muck-fork came up to the hedge and stared at us surprisingly. I plainly
heard him sigh as he returned to his work, and felt sure he would soon be "leaving his poor plough to go ploughing the deep."

When we got afloat the sun burst forth, gleaming on the floods, burnishing the starlings, rooks, and seagulls flying over the face of the waters. What a change from the sleepy village! what life the nor'-easter put into me! Fighting and not contemplation was its lesson.

The sun went down behind the floods a blazing yellow ball, wrapping the black church and cottage in fiery splendour; the whole sky was ablaze; the foreground trees black as charcoal—Nature yelled in colour. Gradually the yellow died, and a more solemn, greyish-yellow supervened; the scene had passed from the British public stage to that of the lady water-colourist—it was still vulgar, 'tis true, but not so repulsive, though still hard and wiry, and devoid of all refinement or charm, and such are the garish scenes some writers have said form the chief beauty of the broads—a beer-saloon and barrel-organ would have completed the joys of such artists (†).

It froze during the night, fringing the shores with ice. The floods were hurrying off the marshes, as if they did not wish to be caught again by the frosts. As the land reappeared, birds began to get numerous. Flocks of teal and mallard flew over, followed by some wild-geese, who went across the sky in a wedge—cackling as they flew.

It was a bad omen, as were the visits of a tom-tit, a robin, and a wag-tail—everything boded more frost and snow.

"They are having hard weather somewhere," declared the lock-keeper, as a second flight of geese appeared.

Jim in despair played his clarionet, startling a blue-tit from the osiers; nevertheless he played on with his long fingers and fierce face as though he wished to blow the nor'-easter away from us.

All the passing wherrymen complained of cold, and felt
a change of weather was coming. It seems to me that these men feel an easterly wind more than any other, because it dries up the natural grease on their skins, so nullifying the efficacy of that protecting coat of dirt so beloved of and invaluable to the Eskimo.
CHAPTER XXVI.

A DECEMBER SAIL TO OULTON BROAD.

"Beneath, his flying footsteps froze the ground;
And with his garments rustling fell the snow;
His lightest touch made icicles abound;
His breath, as when the keenest North winds blow."


SPRING-LIKE morning befell, but experience had taught us to look with suspicion upon such days or upon such promise at this season, especially when accompanied by easterly winds.

The floods had gone, leaving the marshes bright green, for the snow had protected the grass from the withering frost. Before starting, I paid a farewell visit to the old people at the lock-house, and they would not let me leave without a bottle of home-made mushroom ketchup, and a flask of their own bullace wine.

A soft south-easterly wind was blowing, and a warm sun brightened our sail as we were wafted noiselessly down the river. Howbeit, at Dawson's boathouse the peaceful scene was startled by a train that whizzed by on the bank alongside. Holding up the end of the main sheet, I shouted to the engine-driver, asking for a tow. He laughed, waved his hand, and was gone. Following the train, appeared a trolly, the working navvies resembling indiarubber dummies. We raced them for a few minutes, but they soon left us behind.

After laying in stores at Beccles, we moved on, accompanied by a flock of long-tailed tits and pickcheeses who fed from alder carr to alder carr. A young woman ran out
from a cottage at Sayer's Grove, and seized a child playing in the garden, exclaiming affectionately—

"I'll beat you, my beauty, I'll beat you, my beauty," but catching sight of us, she laughed and ran shyly into the cottage, and thus the "beauty's" skin escaped.

Sayer's Grove was alive with rooks, some sitting on the branches cawing, whilst others fed on the ground, or repaired their old nests, for the warmth and mildness of the air suggested to them the task. When we reached the open marshes, we found the peewits had returned. Amongst them dotterel fed all unsuspicious of a gunner, who with his dog crouched below the wall, waiting for a shot. We sailed till eventide, the wind eastering at noon-time, but flying back to the south-west before dusk, when the warm air raised a mist from the river.

We moored by Aldeby, and made snug for the night. The temperature was falling, and after dinner the thermometer already registered 20°, and thick crystals of rime were being deposited on reed bush and tree branch. The effect was charming, for a south-west wind following on an easterly breeze gives the bright blend of a grey and clear landscape.

Dec. 10.

The night proved to be very cold, the thermometer falling to 18°. In the early morning I was awakened by heavy muffled reports as of rockets bursting under water. In my drowsy condition I seemed to see stars shooting down a lavender sky. As I regained my senses I could hear a faint scratching noise, like that of a gnawing mouse. These sensations proved to be due to the reports of a snipe-shooter's muzzle-loader, and the dragging of ice-floes against our plankways by the tide. When I got fully awake I found the windows frosted with fantastic pictures, each pane a fairy scene of decoration. As I lay in bed I realised man's constant struggle with cold and death. Here was King Frost again ready to freeze our life's blood, an we would surrender. For without, the landscape was white, and even
now, at half-past six, the thermometer stood at 19°. All about us was a cold dead world; we alone were warm and living, and by our own energy we had to breathe life into the ship. We began by warming our pipes, the tobacco smelling delicious in the keen air. Then raking the cold ashes out of the icy grates, we piled in fuel, applied a match, and were rewarded by clear sharp cracklings as the frigid iron began to warm. Next we broke the icy fetters of our windows; and having boiled the kettle, we ate a hurried breakfast, smiling upon the wintry scene as we gazed out of a little window framing an exquisite picture—a patch of amber-stalked reeds drooping with rimy tassels.

Man must become refined when he is constantly living before such exquisite pictures, whereas the poor citizen looks forth in early morning upon dingy streets. We had begun the day with exquisite masterpieces and soothing natural sounds, whilst the dweller in the town is awakened by milkman's vulgar call and dull perspectives of brick and mortar. Nature is the great refiner, the poor man's poet and painter.

After a glass of bullace wine, we went abroad in the fairy scene, where flocks of birds were warming into life, snatching a scant breakfast from the frozen world. As the sun arose, a ball of orange fire, it shed a new light upon the rime, turning the marshes to a fresh, greenish, vegetable-like colour. As we walked along, crunching the crystals under foot, a crackling of ice and rustling of reed-stalks attracted my attention. We ran to the spot, and saw a monster pike dart off into the deep water, the rime tasselled reeds quivering in his trail. As the grey mist disappeared from the river, the reed-stalks gleamed a delicate amber, their heads crowned with white. An hour after sunrise the air felt so warm that, though the thermometer stood at 24°, I could lie on the cabin roof with comfort, watching a marsh-man shooting snipes with his old-fashioned flint-lock to be retrieved by his spaniel. The heavy air prevented the smoke from his discharge from rising quickly, so that every time he fired he ducked down to look for his bird beneath the little cloud. Neither he nor the birds seemed to heed
DECEMBER SAIL TO OULTON BROAD.

the steam mills, for they had already begun to pump the water from the drains. As I watched this simple sportsman, the marshes facing us became a pale lemon colour, the yellow turning green as clouds passed over the sun's face. Here was the effect Turner tried to render in his well-known "Frosty Morning," but he exaggerated the yellow. Sooth to tell, neither his perceptions were delicate enough, nor his hand deft enough, to express such a wonderful phenomenon. But such an effect is rarely to be seen, as I can testify. On the river wall dead thistles were drooping with the weight of silvery frosting, and the bare trees growing round a marsh farm gleamed like burnished silver upon a grey background. The tide was flowing, carrying fields of thin sheet-ice on its bosom—rough and frosted windows from which the sun was reflected. . . . At noon-tide the water was still freezing on the shady side of the wherry, rendering our plankway slippery as glass, and dangerous to the quanter. But as the tide was favourable, though the wind was shifty and perverse, we started through the lush-green landscape, for the wintry glory had long since departed. Floating ice-fields and ribbons of snow upon the uplands were the only signs of the recent heavy weather. Near Alderby Carr we met our first pochards, but they would none of us. The bare coppices were noisy with chattering jays, and a frozen pond on the marshes was black with rooks walking clumsily upon the ice and feeding upon some food they found in the little crevasses. They behaved so awkwardly that Jim remarked—

"Their skates won't bite." . . .

As we entered Oulton Dike in the afternoon, the wind dropped, and our craft scarce moved along.

"She don't want to go," said Jim, and indeed could we have foreseen that we should be frozen up for nearly eight weeks upon that commonplace broad, the Maid's wishes would have been consulted. We passed some swimming teal and came upon a party of navvies unloading mud barges, dumping their barrows upon the marsh. The dredgers were at work deepening the broad, and as we sailed in the evening light to the mouth of this piece of water, we passed several of these
uncouth craft, and not without danger and difficulty, for the navvies were clumsy navigators. They informed us that the broad was nearly frozen over. As the night was closing in, and our hands were numb with cold from sailing, and our plankways like glass, we moored against a rond opposite to the site of the lonely house where gipsy Borrow spent his last days. Methinks, had he been alive, he would have come on board and drunk a bottle of Madeira with us whilst he talked of the Chals. After making up, we studded our mutton with garlic teeth à l'Italiane, and later on the naked bone attested the keenness of our appetites. After dinner there were signs of a south-west gale and rain, but at turning in time the wind was back at the old quarter, and the thermometer falling.

On December 11.

Jim came excitedly into the cabin wishing me to go out and shoot some ducks swimming close by. I got my rifle and ran out to see four birds that at the first glance appeared to be pochards, but when I put my rifle to my shoulder I saw they were but wood and paint decoys placed there by a professional gunner. The sky looked frosty, and the ice in the reed beds was making a most curious and musical sound as it rocked up and down with the tide amongst the reed stalks. The sound of these pan-pipes recalled the hum of insects on a tropical night—a wild, irregular music, suggestive of broken metallic strings, that played harmoniously on occasion, but generally gave forth a fantastic, wilful, discordant song. Not even the steam-tug breaking a channel to the dredger for the lighters drowned the wild music. We began to navigate the jagged edged channel filled with ice-floes, wishing to get across the broad. We passed an eel-picker working with mechanical regularity; the heel of the pick shaft fitted to the hollow of his right wrist, as he prodded the tool into the mud, giving the shaft a half turn with his left hand, and withdrawing the tool with his right. As we felt our way cautiously through the broken ice, a flock of golden plover passed within a few
yards of us, with their necks thrust well back into their shoulders; they resembled dumpy cigar-shaped shells as they shot through the air. After passing the dredger, it was difficult to trace the channel, for the havoc made in the ice-field by the icers had caused the broken floes to shift and destroy the course of the channel. It was unpleasant to hear the sharp jagged blocks grinding against the boat’s ribs, and we did not bless the icers who were busy all round us gathering the cold harvest into old ship’s-boats, broken down wherries, and dismasted smacks, scooping up the broken pieces, tossing them into their holds with the sound of broken china. Having safely run this gauntlet, we moored to a buoy alongside of a lugger occupied by a Norwegian crew.

After dark the broad was still alive with busy icers, their ice-blocks rattling and clanking with an unnatural sound. Men’s voices sounded from the lock as the laden boats dropped through with their frigid cargoes down to Lowestoft Harbour, the lights of which just flickered on the horizon. Before we turned in we sounded, and found we were moored in nine feet of water, and the dredger knows how many feet of mud.
CHAPTER XXVII.

FROZEN UP ON OULTON BROAD.

"Come to the moonlit lake,
Where rays of silver bright
Their slender arrows break
On the glassy pavement bright!
For hearts are gay, and joy is rife;
And youth and beauty, love and life
Are out on the ice to-night."—J. L. STUART: Skating.

READER, bear in mind that we moored to the white buoy next to the Norwegian lugger on Thursday, December 11, 1890. We shall not leave these moorings until Monday, February 2, 1891, being frozen in for seven weeks and three days. Many a weary day and many a jolly day we shall spend together; you shall have all the fun.

The morning after our arrival, our vane pointed to the east, where it stayed for weeks, with an occasional brief shift to the south-west. On turning out, the thermometer showed three degrees of frost—a sufficient cold to keep our fetters rigid. Round about us the ice was cracking ominously, for the king's armour creaked as he stretched himself in the morning sun. The landscape was metallic—a hard, cold sky, and hard perspectives all about us. The air was filled with the clangour rising from the ice-boats; we seemed to live in a land of tinkling brass. Nature, it would seem, had provided an artistic achievement in that metal, and the sentiment was cold, if exhilarating—the very swans, with their cygnets, as they picked their way through the blocks of ice, seemed hopeless, as their white breastplates collided with the
shimmering floes. All day and all night the great floes kept passing backwards and forwards, tearing the paint from our sides.

On Sunday morning the alcohol had fallen seven degrees, and the channels were frozen over. The broad was now a sheet of ice from shore to shore, and the landscape covered with rime. Even the black-pitched old hulks were decorated with the pearly dust. I had been invited to spend the day at a little farm up the country, so after breakfast we broke a way to the shore. I tramped along the iron-bound, ringing road, passing some country girls, red as peonies; they were hurrying to church, for indeed the bells were already ringing through the frosty air. In a brickyard, I passed several loafers, with nine dog-curs of all degrees in leash. The loafers looked upon me sourly, for they were intent upon a little poaching. A young moucher was parting from his wife at his cottage door, and it seemed to me she was trying to persuade him not to join in the illicit sport. He hesitated, but on catching sight of me, shut the door decisively, and went down the road to his friends. Further on I came upon a gipsy encampment on a piece of waste land. After the fishing season has well begun, you may find many of these nomads round Lowestoft, for Silly Suffolk is a country dear to them, for "Selli" is the Romany name for Suffolk, and it meaneth "Fool's County"—so says Borrow. Some of the vain natives have tried to trace the "silly" to the Anglo-Saxon
"Selli," for "happy," but the acute Chal long ago gauged the character of this peasantry. Norfolk, on the other hand, they call the "Potato County." A dark, coarse-haired girl, with huge bony limbs and muscular body arrayed in showy finery, was dancing bareheaded in the cold landscape, some little gorgios looking on. I found afterwards that one of this family had turned preacher, and was a chapel militant in himself, fighting his beachman on Saturday night and preaching to him on Sunday morning. Passing through a turnip field near the Chal's encampment, I observed numerous hoof prints, and the turnip crop showed signs of depredations—the gipsies' horses fed there last night, for the old farmer was stingy in the matter of gates.

I spent a pleasant day with my friends, and we sat up far into the night, for he had a splendid flock of Christmas turkeys, and it was advisable, considering the gipsies, to keep an eye upon them, for it was known they were to be killed next day.

So I did not return to the ship, but when the heavy tramp of the horses outside showed that the team men were up, I turned into a civilised bed—but could not sleep—the room seemed stuffy after the nights aboard. After breakfast we went forth into a landscape more wintry than ever—the larks alone seemed alive as we came across the fields, their flight recalling that of a partridge. They are "gamy," it is well known, for a sporting dog will stop at their trail. Beyond a few hungry rooks and starlings, and one blue-tit, we saw no birds. Perhaps the ice-floes in the salt water of Lake Lothing had warned them of coming hard weather, for even the gulls were invisible. The lock-bridge at Mutford was crowded with men out of work, for the ice was getting too thick to harvest, and the plentiful crop had sent the price down. They were lounging on the rail watching the steamboat forcing a passage, for the ice-field was now two inches thick. She advanced for a little, her forefoot crunching into the glittering mass, then stopped, reversed engines, went at it again, gaining a few more feet, finally breaking across the broad, and disappearing round the bend of the river. Close to the land
a few venturesome skaters were cautiously gliding up and down. The scene from the lock-bridge was wintry indeed; below the locks, frozen-in fishing-boats were making up; in the lock the water was frozen hard; and above the lock spread a sheet of ice streaked with the freshly broken channel, and a wake wherein the swans fed on corn. We had to break our way back to the boat, the broken ice congealing almost as quickly as we broke it. Some labourers on a field were making a half-hearted attempt to cart muck, but they soon gave it up, and the land was deserted. In the afternoon a strange change occurred; the ice got suddenly darker, and a gloomy cloud came up behind the skaters.

"Snow," said Jim.

"A thaw," I remarked; "the ice looks soft and crumbly."

With the change of weather, the loafers on the bridge became very lively, and launching in various craft, began to ice furiously. They had refused to go out for three shillings a ton in the morning, but when signs of a thaw appeared they knew the price would go up, so they fell on the floes with crowbars and dydles. No sooner were they well to work than the wind shifted to S.W., and a breeze got up. We looked with delight upon a steam wherry as she broke through the broad, making the gleaming splinters fly as she belched forth clouds of black smoke with a sense of triumph. We began to heave in our dock, for we kept the ice broken round about us. Every one was full of hope, expecting a gale, and the breaking up of the ice. The change seemed to fill the landscape with life; the very ice seemed to rejoice. One could now understand that the want of change and movement, characteristic of Arctic regions, is one of the chief causes that takes the heart out of the explorer.

But alas for our hopes. At bed-time the wind was back to the east, and it was freezing hard as we curled up in our berths and tried to sleep in the jangling crashes from the icing boats.
On awakening we found a sheet of ice all over the broad again. We broke our way to a channel that had been made by a big icing smack, and rowing down, we dropped through the lock with a couple of ship's-boats piled with gleaming ice-cakes. On the shores of Lake Lothing thousands of gulls were feeding, regardless of the fishing-boats being hauled on to the yards, or the crew of an incompetent looking Belgian man-of-war that had just arrived in port, having been reported lost. These little men, with black moustaches and big swagger, looked like children alongside of the brown-haired, blue-eyed crew of the gunboat Hearty, lying near by.

In the harbour we moored against a wherry laden with Christmas supplies—plums, raisins, soap; but her cargo never reached home. The next day she was frozen up; she could not continue her voyage till after Christmas; and when at length navigation was reopened, though she was one of the first to cross the broad, at the far end she struck a block of ice and sank, plum pudding ingredients, soap, and all. Luckily the wherryman could not foresee these events, and he chatted cheerily of getting across the broad in a day or two. The harbour was full of fishing-boats making up, for the herring season was over. The quays were crowded with fishermen, with pockets full of money, and in and out amongst them glided tramps with sacks, collecting shot rubbish; German Jews selling concertinas; hawkers with nuts and oranges; and heavy-eyed girls with fringes and shawls—all after Jack's money. On our return we had a narrow escape of being crushed to splinters in the lock by a great smack navigated by two half tipsy icers with quants. After we passed through the lock, we found the channel already frozen over. As we were breaking our way to our ship, the skipper of the Norwegian ship came to our assistance. He proved to be a real Viking, and in this manner I made the acquaintance of Captain H——. He came aboard with his charts in the evening, and showed me a voyage he proposed to make within the Arctic Circle.

"Come with me; let us do it together," he said.
The Captain's mate was a Finn, and his cook a Swede.

Dec. 18.

It blew very hard in the night, and some snipe and mallard augured coarse weather. In the distance we could hear the ice cracking, and all around us the air was full of a vibratory sub-tone, sounds that seemed to indicate some one was breaking the ice-fields in the distance. As I dressed I could hear the Viking singing *Gamle Norge* on his white decks—I looked out and saw a figure in a pair of red drawers and a Tam o' Shanter walking up and down smoking and singing. However, a heavy fall of snow soon sent him below in search of trousers. In the forenoon one of the Beccles steamers tried to cross the broad, and we could feel the jar every time her forefoot struck the ice. The broad was now white with snow, streaked with a few dark highways—old channels made by the steamers and icing boats. The ice round us began to turn dark, an infallible sign of an approaching thaw, and we hoped, when the snow storm had abated, that rain might set us free. It began to thaw in the afternoon, whereupon the icers redoubled their energies. The Viking came to spend the evening, and sat up late, for he was full of strange stories. Suddenly the "waits" singing Christmas carols struck up on the lock-bridge. Our conversation ceased, and opening the windows, we looked out at one o'clock on the peaceful white night; but our pleasure was dashed, for the wind had once more gone back to the north-east, and it was freezing hard.

The thermometer fell to 23°, and in the morning the broad was one sheet of ice, and soon covered with skaters.

Dec. 19.

The new moon had brought no alteration in the wind, so we were very glum.

"You'll be laid up here all Christmas," I said to Jim, at breakfast.

"Fare like it," he said gloomily, shaking his sou'-wester.
After breakfast, a steam wherry tried to force her way across the broad in vain, and we were glad when she gave over, for every time she struck the ice-field, she drove the ice against us, making us rock and crackle like a pea on a drum. Heavy snow-squalls now visited us, blowing across the snowy ice, looking like fields of white flowers rippled by a summer's wind. Again, if you turned your back to the wind, you saw a misty landscape, with long lambent tongues of steam, issuing from the ice. In the afternoon a large steamer tried to force the channel, crunching into the ice, backing and dashing at it again, making the ice crack and rock all over the broad, but in vain—navigation was closed. A tom-tit came aboard, and flocks of gulls and mallard flew about restlessly—the hard weather was not to end soon. We broke our way to the shore in the Viking’s boat, the great blue-eyed, light-haired Finn sculling us, looking like a polar bear in his clumsy strength. The landscape looked strange indeed, for the weather was too cold to allow the snow to melt, so it lay in long sodden wool-like bands.

"Like Finland, like de Nord," grinned the Finn sailor.

The Viking and I walked to Lowestoft in a blinding snowstorm by the shores of Lake Lothing, but it probably looked its best in that perfect grey atmosphere powdered with falling snow. The gorse on the uplands were frosted, and except a tom-tit in a hole in the wall and a few starlings delving in the sand, not a bird was to be seen on the land; but on the water flocks of gulls sat motionless.

On our return along the quays we were asked several times—

"How's your temper?" which proved to be a customary way of asking for a Christmas box.

The next morning I left for London. "With a fair wind," said the Viking, who had flown the Norwegian flag in honour of my departure. Such are the little courtesies of this kind-hearted people. But that fog-buried city—
London—nearly suffocated me, and the wan faces of the people, stalking like ghosts over the snow beneath the yellow mephitic fog, suggested a hell peopled by phantoms of the former inhabitants.

It was cold and stuffy in the houses, and I immediately fell a victim to a "cold." I resolved then and there to leave the city for ever.

The Viking and Jim kept me posted, and news came that a boy had been drowned, a sheep had been roasted on the ice, and that our ship had sprung a leak, and for two nights a watch had had to be kept, and the ship pumped out every two hours, for Jim had no wish to sink in nine feet of water, under an ice-covered broad; but a handful of sawdust judiciously applied allayed his anxieties, and staunched the Maid's wounds.

Jan. 17.

On the 17th of January I returned to the ship. We passed through a decorative panorama such as winter alone can produce, for in snow and rime Nature is oftener artistically right than wrong, Mr. Whistler notwithstanding. Sooth to tell, the more one sees of natural effects the more is one persuaded that Nature sings oftener in harmony than many a painter would have us believe.

As we rushed through the beautiful wintry landscape, the wheels on the rails played a shrill music, recalling the voice of some gigantic cicala or the cries of some strange wild animal. On our way we passed ash-trees with bunches of seeds hanging from their snowy branches, looking like bats where the mists were thick. As we shot swiftly through plantations, the snow lying on exposed branches gleamed here and there with flashes as of steel bayonets. These bright patches of light seemed to give a fuller expression to the sense of loneliness and mystery that enshrouds a wood. The rivers at Ipswich and Woodbridge looked Arctic, frozen and piled up as they were with blocks of ice and snow-drifts.
In driving from Lowestoft to Oulton I passed a churchyard, the bent gravedigger filling a new grave. The recent carriage marks were sharp cut on the frozen road. The sun was setting behind the gravedigger a gorgeous yellow on a hard tinny sky. The sun's fulvous light flashed from the glass globes of everlastings, and seemed a ladder of light to lead the eye to heaven. This vision was a strange contrast to the cold iron earth and snowy ground. The everlastings and grave-stones were a sad satire in their ephemeral significance beside the cold graves and frigid snows. They stood like man beside the everlasting nay.

I alighted on the edge of the broad, and walked across the thick ice straight aboard. In fact, skaters were wheeling all about us, some sitting on our low plankways to tighten their straps. It was a novel sight to see this great field of ice crowded with skaters. The Norwegian flag was flying, and my farmer friend and the Viking were all ready for the capital dinner that Jim had prepared, so we sang songs and drank punch, and listened to the ring of the skaters far into the night.

Jan. 19.

Jim presented me with the table of temperatures taken during my absence, the results showing the greatest cold registered was nine degrees.

As I was smoking after breakfast, watching the skaters, a fox terrier came down to a rat hole on the frozen bank and began to dig furiously, whereupon two great rats, fierce with hunger, jumped forth, raised themselves on their hind legs, and showed fight. The terrier's hair was on end; he made a dart at one and shook it to death, and then dealt similarly with the second, shaking it with mighty passion. Rats were numerous about here, and they often came down to drink at the water round our boat—for the ice was seventeen inches thick elsewhere. Indeed our wake was a public drinking fountain for rats, birds, and dogs, who did not mind the dead eels that came to the surface occasionally. In the afternoon half a dozen Bewick swans flew over, cack-
ling, and they were followed by bunches of mallard; but it hardly paid to shoot anything, for all the birds were mere skin and bone. The broad was covered with skaters gliding down the grey roads swept in the snow. As I watched, I realised how graceful and yet how graceless this exercise can look; in fact, it was evident in this, as in all exercises, that self-contained strength produces grace. No movement must be exaggerated, and every muscle must work harmoniously. One had only to watch the fast skaters for an illustration of the truth of this law; they sacrificed grace to speed, and these objects with flail-like legs and arms were anything but attractive, being suggestive of assertive vanity. More disagreeable looked the self-conscious skaters, who glided along with eyes cast down, but showing by the use of their hands they were but imperfect practitioners. Presently I saw a group of graceful skaters, short, stout girls, skating along with a roll, together with tall, lithe women, gliding along with willowy motion. The stout girls seemed to progress with less effort, but for grace the palm was to the lithe. Throughout these groups the figure-skater performed, irritating me beyond measure, for he brought such an air of the circus to his work. Some of his evolutions were graceful, but they all had an artificial air, and he looked a poseur. Altogether one felt inclined to kick him; indeed, he recalled the foolish harlequin of the pantomime more than any one else. Out here on the ice Nature was avenged, and the prize for perfect art was to the strong, self-contained, lithe girl, who rolled along gracefully without effort. Such skating is perfect art, and the figure-skater is after all but the précieux among these craftsmen—a decadent.

Another matter—the character of a man seems accentuated on skates—pedestalled, if you will. His little traits and peculiarities are emphasised, his natural grace, clumsiness, or abandon displayed; and finally it may be laid down as an axiom that a bad girl-skater is intolerable to the sight.

Jan. 21.

The wind shifted during the night, and a south-west gale blew the next day. I went out to dine with a shore
friend, and when I returned it was still raining and blowing hard. As I felt my way down a plank, placed over the piles of ice and snow, where the ice-field rose and fell with the tide, and stepped on to the flooded ice, the water being half-way up my boots, piles of melting snow stood out here and there with ghostly gleam. Then I started to walk across the sloppy, slippery broad, with the accompaniment of the howling wind, and weird mysterious thunderings of the cracking ice. But I had taken my mark, a clump of trees, for I could not see our boat on such a night. Directly I steered for the mark, the wind took me behind, and filled my coat like a sail, and away I went half walking, half sliding over the smooth ice, and through the shallow water towards the trees. I could not stop myself, so it was rather exciting, for there were open wakes about. Every now and then the ice would crack like thunder, and I felt rather helpless, being blown along in the dark, out on that great lone broad.

Presently—in a lull—I anchored myself with my heels and yelled out—

"Maid of the Mist—ahoy!"

After the third call, Jim appeared with a lantern, and we got safely aboard. It thawed during the night, and the next morning the broad was a miserable scene of slush and water, which lasted all the following day and night; but on the second day the wind flew back to the north, and to our chagrin it froze again. Still the icers were busy, and one man near us was lifting great blocks of ice, ten and twelve inches thick, with his naked hands all the afternoon. He had yellow hair and blue eyes. On the other hand, the man who was breaking the blocks from the floes with a crowbar was short and dark, and complained of the cold; the yellow-haired Northerner simply saying "he did not wish to get rheumatecs!"

After lunch, a boy skated into a wake close by us, but was luckily rescued. When the moon got up, the ice was as smooth as glass, and the broad covered with skaters. As I was trying to get to sleep, I heard two men outside talking.
"That's the little wherry then," said one.
"Yes."
"Where does she come from?"
"Norwich; she belong to old Job; she was used for malting."
"Do she leak now?"
"They ha' stopped it."
"Where was that?"
"Never found no hole; that's the masterpiece."
He was right; that was the masterpiece. She leaked once or twice afterwards, but as suddenly stopped. Some weeks after I had her bottom examined, and the boat-wright could discover no hole whatever, and was reluctant to believe she had made any water. I can only suggest that during severe frosts some of the bolts may have contracted more than usual.

I had gone to bed after a wearisome day, for nothing fills me more with ennui than a long frost. I was reading and listening to the roar of the ice crashing and cracking at the far end of the broad, the uproar sounding like the continual falling of glaciers over a precipice. Anon a crack would begin afar off, and you could hear it come along, finishing right close to the boat, bursting like a clap of thunder. Then the sound of heavy feet marching along in heavy step shook the ice and cracked the thin sheet of glaze newly formed in our wake. I sat up in bed and looked out on the moonlit scene. A light vapour hung over the rimy Norwegian's bark. The tramp of men drew nearer, and a party of sailors in pea-jackets marched along in silence, dragging by ropes a ladder on which lay a corpse. Behind followed silent men marching in step, and the mass of black strode away in the cold moonlight, their thoughts full of death, and the strange pomp which always urges men to become theatrical in his presence. Away they tramped across the ice, passing behind the Viking's lugger, upon whose deck the Finnish sailor stood like a statue looking silently after them. Jim too was staring open-mouthed at the cortége—both were
absorbed with the mystery of death—all thoughts were riveted to that poor, icy, dead thing. The Finn went below thoughtfully, and I heard Jim shut his door softly as I turned from the window and fell asleep.

It snowed during the night, and Jim entered the saloon next morning with a long face, and said—

"Fare to me we shall never see summer again."

Before noon the snow had stopped, and long pathways were swept for the skating races. The crowd assembled before the site of Borrow's old house, the ladies skating gracefully in a small space which had been swept for them. The races were not beautiful to watch, for nothing but elbows and knees were to be seen flying about like mill-sails. Jim spent the evening writing with great effort to his wife. When he finished he said—

"I'd sooner row all day: that writing make my head go as numb as a beetle."

Next morning Jim came in with his sou'-wester dripping, and his face wreathed with smiles.

"A sou'-west wind," he said gleefully.

I jumped out with delight, for even this miserable day was welcome. It rained all day, and at eventide the smooth ice was becoming water-eaten. The swans in the wake knew a change was coming, for they were splashing and chasing each other all day, and far into the night. The Finn, too, was excited, and I saw him bathing in the moonlight. The wind blew the water along the ice, cutting channels, for wind is as great a thawing agent as water. At bed-time the ice was resonant with a curious low music, the music of the thaw. The ice-field, too, had fallen below the water's level: hitherto it had been above. I walked on the ice to test its strength, forcing the water through the minute holes, thus increasing the music of the thaw.
The ice was now only seven and a half inches thick instead of seventeen—the thaw had come indeed. The whole surface was full of funnel-like holes, and honeycombed round the edges of the wakes. So fast was it thawing that you could distinguish by various coloured patches where the old snow had been frozen into ice. Still a few skaters enjoyed themselves in the slush. We spent the day looking anxiously from the sky to the thermometer, and from the thermometer to the sky, but only the wind changed, and next day the thaw continued.

Jan. 25.

On Monday we decided to cut our way out, for the ice was soft, so the Viking, the Finn, the Swede, Jim and I began to work with saws, crowbars, picks, and ropes, for the ice was still four or five inches thick. After a hard morning's work we cut our way to the main channel, and were enabled to shove across and moor beside Mr. Everett's Staithe. We spent the afternoon in weighing the Viking's anchor and bringing his ship down to the lock. That was the last day's skating, for the day after the broad was full of ice-floes.

Jan. 27.

On Wednesday the Beccles steamer essayed the passage, but the ice was too strong for her. In the hedgerows young chervil plants were shooting up, though the snow still hung about in corners. The grass looked yellow and bleached in the fields. The following day we heard that navigation was free in the rivers and on the other broads, so a wherry-load of labourers was sent out to open communication with wherries lying at the far end of the broad. They succeeded in their task, and returned in the afternoon with a stove in bow, into which a red bandanna was thrust. As they approached the lock, they burst into cheers.

Jan. 29.

Thus navigation was reopened after nearly six weeks' cessation, but not without an accident, for the wherry afore-
mentioned ran into a floe and sank. We waited through Friday, Saturday, and Sunday for the ice to clear away, our only excitement being a flock of Bewick swans that alighted one afternoon; but they were frightened off before any one got a shot. Jim, who had just bought an accordion, played all day, and we celebrated our last day by giving the Viking and the farmer a farewell dinner.
"Ghost-like move the sails along the lake's dim distance;  
Faintly wafts the sailors' weirdsome song the waters o'er;  
Faint the wavelets' music, as with low insistence,  
Break they softly singing on the drowsy sandy shore."

B. Stratton: Evening on the Marshes.

On Monday morning the Viking flew the Norwegian flag, and the farmer, who was going a short cruise with me, came aboard, attired in a pair of velveteen breeches, a great brown coat, and a black astrachan fez, looking for all the world like an Irish squireen. The air was warm, and the sun was shining brightly, as we hoisted sail and moved off, amid cheers from the Viking's crew, and counter cheers from ourselves, passing crowds of eel-babbers as busy as the birds.

The reeds at the mouth of the broad were broken down and crushed, their tassels very black, and their stems bright yellow. On the marshes the larks were soaring as they do in spring, and the soft brown marsh-land was alive with the fittest birds that had survived the terrible winter. All the way to Somerleyton Bridge the marshes looked as though they had been scorched by the sun—such an effect as one sees after a long drought. As we passed under the bridge, the porters cried out—

"You've begun pleasuring soon."
"We never finished," Jim replied.

As we sailed down the cut, Jim got his accordion, and sat forward playing and singing until we dropped anchor before the philosopher's house. In the evening we had a
joyous dinner aboard, and it was a real pleasure to brew the punch in the mild air on the cabin roof beside a beautiful reed wall, fretted on a blue star-spangled sky, whilst Jim's accordion sounded sweetly from the cabin.

Feb. 3.

In the morning we sailed for the Muck Fleet, crossing Breydon with a splendid breeze from the west by north. The tide was out, and on the flats countless gulls, Kentish crows, and numerous heron were feeding. At the knoll some of the "pirates" directed us wrongly, but the rippled water betrayed the sand-bank, and we arrived safely at Runham, where we slept the night, proceeding to the Muck Fleet next day. All round the deserted marshes looked ragged and yellow. At this time of the year the marsh-farms look peculiarly conventional, as if laid out according to rule.
CHAPTER XXIX.

EXCURSION TO ORMESBY, ROLLESBY, AND FILBY BROADS.

"There are miles and miles of waters
That throb like a woman's breast.

There are birds that like smoke-drift hover
With a strange and bodeful cry,
Into the dream and the distance
Of the marshes that southward lie,
With their lonely lagoons and rivers
Far under the reeling sky."

W. W. Campbell: The Heart of the Lakes.

February 4.

With a yo-heave-ho! ho-yo-ho! yo-ho! Jim, the farmer, and I hauled our jolly over the sluice-gates, launching her in the basin of the mouth of the Muck Fleet. Jim returned to take charge of the wherry, and we began our expedition.

In former days these magnificent sheets of water were doubtless connected with the river by wide waterways, but by the device of sluices they had been cut off from the main river and artificially rendered non-tidal, a matter to be deplored, since the attractions of this district would be greatly enhanced could yachts sail from the river on to these broads. Since this piece of engineering, the only navigable channel is a ditch euphemistically called the Muck Fleet, which at this season of the year had a peculiarly well-shorn appearance—the frost and dike-drawers had groomed the shores well. We took an oar apiece, and stood in the boat propelling her by paddling and pushing. Before long a bridge compelled us to lie flat and draw our boat beneath—
there was not an inch to spare. Skirting the tree-bordered road, we passed a dead water-hen lying near a rat's hole, and beyond were galleries of the water-voles. On the marshes the larks were singing, and rooks digging for wire-worms. Before long we were stopped by a cattle bridge, where we had to pull the jolly-boat out and re-launch her. It was all we two could do. A little further on a ligger (a single plank) blocked the way. Here was a dilemma, for the shore was too steep to permit us to haul out the boat, and it seemed as though we could not force her beneath the plank. However, by both standing on her bows we forced her nose underneath, and then we stood on either gunwale, and with rocking and pulling we managed to get her through, only damaging her paint. As we progressed, we saw young water-cress, forget-me-nots, marsh-marigolds, and water-lilies coming up. Later on, needle-rush became common, a sign of poor marsh, and a sure sign we were approaching water and nearing the sea, as were the bunches of alder and sallow. A little further on we passed over a couple of pike-nets.

The fleet now divided into two streams, and since the floods were out, we could not distinguish the channel, so we decided to follow a couple of swans, and they led us wrongly, for soon the stream became ragged edged, and we found ourselves hard aground on a common with a donkey feeding close by on the gorse before some cottages on a hillock above. The water stretched like a lake before us, but below was hard grassy ground. My friend stepped out and disappeared up to his armpits in a hole, and since he was wet through, he carried me ashore, and began towing the boat across the flooded common, until we came up with a dark gunner, with curious, black, sluggish, bloodshot eyes. He helped us across this strange piece of water into Filby Broad, a splendid sheet of water edged with bright yellow reeds and a background of grey trees. Not a living thing was visible. We rowed across the mere and pushed under the miniature bridge that separates these broads, disturbing a huge pike that lay basking in a shallow on Ormesby Broad. After rowing about for some time, we came upon a ploughman who
directed us to the Eel’s Foot—a well-known summer resort; but in winter the inn is the most God forsaken spot imaginable—the service being disgraceful. My friend emptied his boots and wrung his stockings out on the landing stage, but it was long before the tardy management lit a fire, and we could get nothing to eat but biscuits and cheese. At last they found us some rooms at the house of one of the well-known Flegg raspberry growers, where lived a friendly couple with whom we passed three very pleasant days.

The evening turned out drizzly, and the raspberry canes and prisoned blackbird all looked dismal enough; but a good dinner, and a smoke, in which the market gardener joined, passed the evening quickly.

The gardener told us he had tried every lazy way of cultivating the soil, but for good fruit culture there was no way but to dig the ground with the spade. The earth could not be worked by any other method. He informed us he always cut his raspberry canes down every year, so that they did not “bangle” across each other, and pruned his black currant bushes. Black currants had paid lately, for they were now widely used as a dye; indeed, he informed us of a labourer who had sold his currants, gathered from an acre of garden, for £16.

Feb. 6.

In the morning the blackbird awakened us, and after a real country breakfast we went on an exploring expedition. It was a lovely, calm grey day, the woods, bathed in a tender grey mist, reflected in the bright silvery water. The market gardener accompanied us part of the way, and as we passed a great crested grebe swimming peacefully in a bight, he informed us that as a rule the birds stayed here all the winter, but the recent ice had driven them away, for there was never a wake in the broad—the whole of that great sheet of water had turned into a solid clear block of ice, enabling a carter to drive his horse and cart from Filby
Bridge to the Eel's Foot, where he had a glass of beer, and returned across the ice. The reeds here about had escaped damage, for the ice had broken up without much wind. As we rowed across the broad, we put up some tufted duck, and soon afterwards the sun shone, turning the reeds a bright yellow, and lighting up the green fir-trees and white stems of the silver birches growing in the grey coppices, all beautifully reflected in the water. We rowed on to the Lady's Broad, and instead of the joyous music of lasses, only a coot called, swimming away into some beautiful grasses growing on the shore. The gardener called these grasses "hassocks." The picturesque plantations round this little broad were dripping with moisture, and besides this soft music nothing was to be heard except the splashes of two large pike, who showed their fins as they swam lazily away. On the shores of Ormesby Broad an old man was ploughing—a dead crow uselessly suspended on a stick near by.

As we rowed on to Martham Broad, we disturbed a flock of gulls resting on the oily water, their watchman perched on a stake. As we glided into the silent scene, he gave the alarm, whereupon several of his companions flew up, cackled, and alighted again; but as we drew nearer a large grey gull flew swiftly towards us, passing overhead, and immediately the whole flock arose with cries and flew away, disturbing a number of pochards—we counted fifty-two. The ducks flew in ever-changing geometrical figures, forming and reforming in beautiful patterns on the blue, their necks and wings appearing long as compared with their bodies. Further on, by a planting, we flushed several flocks of teal from their favourite haunts—straggly reed near plantations. Teal dislike the open water, and when disturbed they keep flying round and round near the cover before they go right off. We stopped our boat and watched them. There were several parties varying in number from six to eighteen. When first flushed, they all arose, one bird whistling excitedly a short note with a little trill, one or two of the others at the same time making a peculiar sound resembling a snipe's escape, a sort of "juggle, juggle" in the
throat. As they grew more accustomed to us, and less excited, the leader's note grew shorter and less frequent, finally dying away to a long soft note as they alighted again into the reed. Each company was under the leadership of one bird—one voice did all the talking for each party. When they saw we did not move on, they flew up again, repeating the same manœuvres, their evolutions lasting for twenty minutes, when, seeing that still we did not move, they rose high in the air and flew away. As we were examining their floating feathers, we flushed a widgeon and a pair of ducks. It was evident these birds had already mated. The drake arose first, and flew in front of the duck quacking. All this time tufted duck and pochards kept flying overhead in large flocks—the broad was full of fowl. Already a straggly mass of pochards had settled on the open water, whence we had startled them. We rowed round Hemsby Broad, and returned home, passing a large oak-tree on which we counted sixty wood-pigeons sitting moping in the misty air, and with their feathers spread out they formed a beautifully decorative picture from which Hokusai would have produced a gem. One bird was sitting apart on a lower branch—he seemed to be the watchman; and as we drew nearer, was the first to fly off with loudly beating pinions, the rest following. I am sure the rook is not the only bird who sets a sentinel—in fact, this very day we noticed gulls and wood-pigeons do the very same thing. It is remarkable that wood-pigeons are always mopy in misty weather—a fact well known to poachers.

As we rowed home, startling the pochards from the open water, clouds of green plover flew across the broad, being the largest flocks I had seen since the early autumn. When I landed my head was full of the scenes we had just quitted—acres of still clear water, miles of ripe yellow reed, forests of coppice, and flocks upon flocks of wild birds.

The subtle augury of the birds pointed to coming spring. I had heard two cock pheasants challenge from the misty plantations, and we had flushed five pairs of ducks.
The following day we left for the wherry, doing the journey from the market gardener's staithe to the river in one hour and forty minutes. At the sluice-gates we picked up a dead weasel, and a stoat with a pure white skin except his black-tipped tail. On reaching the wherry, we worked up to Upton Dike.
CHAPTER XXX.

UPTON BROADS.

"Afar from the stir of streets,
The city's dust and din,
What healing silence meets
And greets us gliding in!"

G. O. ROBERTS: On the Creek.

HESE two broads are cut off from the river by sluice-gates, therefore seldom visited, yet the acreage is considerably larger than many of the better known waters.

Walking down to the edge of the lesser broad, we hired a marsh-boat, and a reed-cutter left his work to push us about. The day was calm and misty, with a fog at sea, for the melancholy notes of the horn on the Newarp Lightship could be distinctly heard. The reed-cutter informed us that the swans had deserted these waters, as there was some food they did not like. The water was shallow and clear, and the bottom muddy and soft, for we could see the furrows of the clams (*anodonta*). Their trails were numerous, crossing and recrossing, varying in length from a few inches to a yard, for progression is slow with them. The clam-shells were of various sizes, the largest being nine inches in length.

As we went round the broad, we discovered many of their shells broken on the banks, for they are greedily eaten by rats and otters in hard weather. Amongst the reeds were numbers of dead eels turned up by the frost. All round the margin, the chate (rushes) was remarkably green, more verdant and sappy than they would be in another month, for chate and watercress grow greenest in midwinter. We
heard neither the voice of coot nor water-hen—they had not returned since the frost; but we flushed a mallard, who did not startle an old royston crow silently watching us from a dead branch. Grey crows become mopy and lethargic, like wood-pigeons, in misty weather, when they sit still for hours on a leafless tree-top. The old reed-cutter told us that the great crested grebes were a nuisance, for they always stole the bait from his hooks, but never were themselves caught. He said all birds were disappearing from these waters, because the "stuff was full of warmin'." Himself had seen pole-cats on the shores in the old days, but none remained, though the place was alive with stoats. He assured us he had once met fifteen of them hunting like a pack of hounds, and much to his surprise they would not move out of his way, but merely raised their heads, glanced at him, and went on their trail "onconsarnd as passengers." We startled several large pike from the shallows, and this old man informed me that the water-soldier (stratiotes aloides) is commonly called pickerel weed in this county.

After making a tour of the broad, on parting with the reed-cutter, he asked us, concerning our ship—

"Is that wessel I see in the river the Great Eastern?"

"Yes."

"She 'ou't carry much more meal then," he finished dreamily.

As we walked to the boat, we saw a hawk chasing a Kentish crow, the hawk flying above the "Kentish-man" crying curiously "Curra, curra" every time the game bird darted at his big foe. The crow, however, did not retaliate, but flew straight on, till the hawk gave up the chase.

In a cottage I saw some miserable-looking pigs suffering from cramp, and in the dike a dead frog floated on the water—signs of the recent heavy weather.

Hoisting our sail, we set out for Thurne, passing a flock of wild geese feeding on the marshes. We heard afterwards that they had frequented this district for a month past.

We anchored at Thurne at nightfall, and on returning from the post-office passed a man with a lantern cutting some hay from a stack, a cow lowing in the manger behind
him. It was a picture reminiscent of Millet. As we groped our way along the edge of the dike, we stopped to listen to Jim playing and singing—

"Then 'twas I kissed her ruby lips
As she laid upon the grass,
And coming to herself again,
Then she cried, 'Alas,
Since you have had your will of me,
Make me your lawful bride,
And do not leave me here to mourn
Down by the Shannon's side.'"

We immediately fell to dancing in the slippery mud.
CHAPTER XXXI.

WINTER ON THE BURE.

"February fill dike,
The old house thatch."—Tusser.

EITHER rain nor wind, but calm grey days favoured us during the month, and the old distich was stultified in the year '91.

On the following morning four degrees of rime frost greeted us. It was Shrove Tuesday, when in old times the labourers held cock-fights, or "cock-fair," as Jim called it. To this day they feast upon Shrove Tuesday, but the holiday does not begin till the afternoon, as some marshmen, with their haversacks, shouting for the ferry-boat in the early morning, proved.

The still bright air excited the birds—blackbirds, thrushes, and larks were singing joyously.

After breakfast we started for Horning. The first thing to attract us was a reed-pheasant by St. Benet's Abbey, showing that some of these beautiful birds had escaped the cold. Suddenly a shrimper appeared on the river, and Jim looked at me curiously. Noticing this, I said, "Well, Jim?"

"I can't make that out, something hang to it all. Look at that 'ere shrimper follering us, and then that Norrawegian at Olton, he fared to know you right well as soon as he seed you, and then you fare to know everybody as own wherries, an' they allus seem to know when you're a-coming. I can't make that out, there's something somewhere."
I laughed, for I knew what was working in his mind—indeed, it had been a mystery to him all along that I should come and live out on a boat all that winter.

Beyond St. Benet's we passed a gang of marshmen digging out a ditch to top the wall, many of them hailing Jim as an old fellow-workman, whilst flocks of ducks flew overhead.

By Horning Church we came upon a flock of redpoles feeding upon an alder-tree, all singing merrily a song, half sparrow, half linnet-like. Beyond the Church was another sign of early spring—a boy was scaring birds from a fence, calling loudly "Car-whoo, car-whoo."

We moored at Horning and watched the villagers coming from the public-houses with foaming jugs of ale and porter to celebrate the holiday. On the land, ploughing-matches were taking place, and sparrow-shootings for legs of mutton and joints of pork.

We began to make our first batch of pancakes, sitting outside beating up the eggs, and listening to a crow perched on a thorn-tree calling to his mate some hundred yards off. Thrice he shouted "Quah, quah, quah!" his mate repeating the sounds, whereupon his voice became shriller and sharper, for he was getting excited. Then he cooled down, and dropped a note, calling with soft "Quahs," his mate always answering with the same number of notes, and much in the same key. As we were cooking our pancakes, clouds of rooks flew to the low carrs by the water to roost, for in winter time they do not always return to the rookery. In this district they seem to prefer to sleep near the water. The roosting rooks brought home the reed-cutters, eel-babbers, and tame ducks, which I saw curtseying to one another for the first time, making love in their ridiculous way. After dusk, the notes of an accordion and scraping of a fiddle, accompanied by voices, stole over the water from the windows of the houses where they were keeping up Shrove Tuesday. We brewed a bowl of punch to celebrate the occasion, and sang boisterous sea songs.
On Thursday at ten o'clock we started for Aylsham, a town proverbial for its stinginess, for "Aylsham treat" implies that you pay for yourself.

A light breeze was blowing as we left Horning, with its quaint houses straggling along the low hills, and passed ragged Burnt Fen, and the well-preserved Hoveton—the home of the black-headed gull. In the reeds bordering this broad we heard the "ching, ching" of a reed-pheasant, and as we sailed along the river we flushed a flock of tufted duck, who wheeled round and round over some reed-cutters working on the shores, finally resettling upon the broad.

Beyond Little Hoveton Broad two men were cutting a new dike. They stopped to look at us and some mallard flying overhead. As we sailed tranquilly along, we suddenly heard a great rustling like wind through the tree-tops, and immediately a great flock of gulls flew over, ere they wheeled and settled on Great Hoveton Broad. We noticed a mangled spot in the reed bordering the river, a wound made by a shotgun. Near by, a reed-bunting sang unconcernedly, the first we had seen since the ice, but a more certain sign of spring was the *peeh-wheet-wheet* of a coot, a sound characteristic of and peculiar to the breeding season. At this spot our sail startled a hen pheasant from the reed, and a moment afterwards, a large living object, looking like an otter, went creeping cautiously through the yellow reed-stalks. When it got into the clear, it raised its body, looking still more otter-like, but when it stood up, we beheld a cock pheasant.

The old woman's pulk was inhabited by some kittiwakes, and from the woods near Hoveton a flock of long-tailed tits crossed the river, alighting on an alder-tree where fed some blue tits, whilst a reed-bunting sat calling on a neighbouring sallow.

Next, Wroxham Broad appeared under our left bow, a couple of great crested grebe swimming with ever-widening circles towards the reed. On all hands we could hear coot calling, cock pheasants challenging, and at intervals flocks of wood-pigeons flew from carr to carr. By the entrance to the broad, a rook was chasing a great saddle-backed gull,
and in a dike opposite, two little dab-chicks were disporting themselves. The sky over the broad was darkened by a huge flock of green plover, and as we approached the bridge the air seemed alive with the chatterings of sparrows.

We moored above the bridge, and lunched in the open air in spite of the cold regards of a sparrow-hawk sitting on an elm-tree, and a yellow hammer’s sly peeps from an alder-tree. As we lunched, a mavis sang his love song. After a pipe, we proceeded through a more hilly country vulgarised by commonplace houses. Near Wroxham Church we saw the first sprouting willows, and flushed several pairs of ducks, and a flock of field-fares. Passing Little Switzerland, considered by artless tourists beautiful, we sailed round many wearisome windings to Beulagh. At sunset, 3.15, the temperature was delightful—50° in the air. We glided on till we sighted straggly Coltishal, with richly-coloured malt-houses and picturesque residences.

Following the winding river, we entered the tree-fringed stream below the lock, startling a water-hen feeding on the bank, and starlings and tom-tits from the tree-tops. At the lock the keeper inquired—

"Is this the Great Eastern?"

"Yes."

"I thought so: you’re expected."

Jim once more glanced at me and said—"You see, sir, he know’d we wos coming; that do fare wery strange."

We moored by the bridge, and I went to a friend’s house to smoke. There were gathered together some farmers discussing the bad times. One of them had known of land bought for £80 an acre, now worth £30. Another said—

"My father bought land at C—— for £40 an acre; when he died it was worth £34; and this very year it was put up for sale, and there were no bids, so it was valued at £8 an acre."

Feb. 12.

The next morning the landscape was covered with a heavy rime frost, which the sun melted completely before
ten o'clock. The water was remarkably low, for the winds had been in a bad quarter for a long time, and there had been no rain. We started a little while after a large, heavily-laden wherry, and soon passed her, much to the disgust of the surly fellow steering. The rooks by Burgh Church had returned to their nests, and were repairing them. At the bright little village of Buxton, the mill-hands turned out to watch us pass through the lock, wondering what we were about at this time of year. We sailed peacefully through the picturesque Lammas, and I ate my lunch as I sat steering through the silent plantations beyond. Through the bridge we came upon a mole-killer, hard at work kicking over the old heaps and placing poisoned worms in the runs. He destroyed the heaps so that he could tell in the morning whether any moles had survived to work. The wind had changed from west-north-west to east, so we saw but few birds. Further up the country the ploughmen were at work in the fields, and some were drilling peas and beans; the landscape assumed a greenish tinge as we drew near Aylsham, but with the evening chills the winter returned and we began to grow weary of the constant panorama of locks, mills, and bridges. Our spirits rose, however, as we saw the malt-houses on Aylsham Basin through the mist. As we moored after dark in the deserted basin, a wherryman came up and remarked—

“You've been expected.”

Jim looked at me, winked, shook his head knowingly, and disappeared in his cabin.
CHAPTER XXXII.

DULL DAYS AT AYLSHAM.

"You say the Injuns are alike,  
A bad and sneakin' lot;  
An' ain't no use for nothin',  
So the cusses should be shot?

Well, p'raps they be, an' p'raps they ain't,  
A lazy, worthless crowd;  
Yet durn my skin ef I kin see  
Why white men chin so loud."

J. E. LOGAN: The Injuns.


The heavily-laden postman reminded us that it was St. Valentine's day, when the lambing season begins in Norfolk. But rain kept us prisoners to our ship.

Sunday was quiet, and at first I thought we should be left alone in the deserted basin, but before nightfall I had learnt once more that the human animal is as curious as a wild-fowl in the mouth of a decoy, and though not to be attracted by a liver-coloured dog, yet a pleasure-boat in midwinter will draw him; but you shall see. In the early morning, a villainous tramp, with black hair, bleary eyes, and a dirty gaudy scarf round his neck, came up and addressed Jim, who was sitting on the stern eating his breakfast.

"What! are you feeding?" asked the tramp.

"Yes."

"What's o'clock?"

"'Bout nine," said Jim shortly, as he drew down into his cabin to stop further communications. The tramp walked off and sat on the bridge.
Next came a group of boys.
Jim reappeared and asked—
"Which of you boys slung that mud at us yesterday?"
One said—
"Not I."
And another—
"Sartenly I didn't."
And the third—
"I was never up here afore." They walked off sheepishly, one exclaiming critically—
"Only her bottom be a wherry; what be she, then?"
The tramp had changed his trousers and boots when he again drew up.
"The sleepers are open," he volunteered.
"How long will the water fall?" asked Jim.
"A good bit lower yet."
"Oh!"
"I s'pose she be on the mud."
"No," Jim replied, and went below, the tramp returning to his seat on the bridge.
After a bit Jim reappeared and began to slack the mooring ropes, pushing her off into deeper water. Immediately the tramp returned, bringing with him two fellows more evil-looking than himself.
"You'll lay better there," volunteered one.
"That's deeper that way," exclaimed a second.
"You want to put her a little more that way," suggested a third.
"She's all right," snapped Jim, and drew down to his cabin, and they to their bridge.
Then a labourer appeared.
"That's the Great Eastern."
"Indeed," I replied.
"I have seen her up here with eleven ton."
"Wonderful!" I continued, and he drew off.
Then an old man in a wideawake, his coat caked with wet flour, and carrying in his hand a white-painted walking-stick, appeared.
"What! are you going to take that old tree in?" he
asked, pointing with the white stick to a huge log lying on the bank.

"What old tree?" asked Jim quizzically.

"That one with the chain round. S'pose, though, that's too big for you?"

"That would just do for kindling," retorted Jim impassively.

"Oh, that ain't no use for that," said the old fellow seriously; "look at all these old lumber standing about here; take a long time to throw one of them down; then there's your waste time and slight of tools, and then arter all you can go and get a hundred of coal for a lot less money."

"Oh," answered Jim gravely.

"That ain't long enough for a mill-stick, neither," said the old man, pointing to the fallen tree. "If that be, that ain't thick enough," he finished, and struck it with his white stick. Then he measured its length, looked up and down the road with hesitancy, finally hobbling off.

Jim shook his head and went below.

Then two little girls came. The eldest asked—

"Will you have a cusky, sir?"

"What's in it? Something that will burn my mouth?"

"No; what, do you like 'em hot?"

"No."

"Why don't you go for a sail in your little boat?"

"There isn't any wind."

She looked me full in the face and remarked suspiciously—

"What! do you want any wind to go for a sail?"

"Why, of course."

Her companion remarked—

"I should like to go for a sail in that little boat; wouldn't you?"

"Yes," she answered, looking at me wistfully; but seeing no hope in my face, they walked off with reluctant feet.

A very fat' man and fatter woman dressed in Sunday finery took their places.

"Well, that's the smallest wherry ever I see," gasped the woman, and they waddled off, whereupon two street boys ran up, spelled out our name, shouted ironically, and ran
away stoning each other. They were followed by a little girl, who remarked innocently—

"You're painted with white; the other what came up here was all red," and she went on her way.

During the dinner hour the bridge and roads were deserted, except by an old man about sixty years of age, whose boyish face smiled from beneath a wideawake, and whose ample body and extremities were covered by a loose overcoat and corduroys. On his feet he wore old patent leather shoes. Pointing to the smoke coming from the funnel, he remarked to Jim—

"You're blowing off steam, then."
"Yes," replied Jim solemnly.
"You've got a nice little ship here, then."
"Yes," repeated Jim.
"She ain't a big 'un."
"No."

He drew off, stopping every now and then to look back. When he reached an opening between two malt-houses, he turned, stared at us, and began talking excitedly to himself, till he backed round the buildings and disappeared. A boy in corduroys ornamented with brass buttons passed on the road, where he found a pocket handkerchief. Holding it up by the corners with his fingers and thumbs, he hung it against the light, looked at it critically, then he scrutinised the border, and finally boisterously blowing his nose thereon, stuffed his prize into his pocket, and skipped off—

"Tiddle-wink the Barber
Tried to shave his father;
The razor slipt
And cut his lip,
Tiddle-wink the Barber."

After lunch, three servant girls, clad in rough finery, passed, walking with characteristic bumpiness, as if picking their way heavily and laboriously over the stones. They saw Jim, giggled, and hurried on, turning several times to giggle again. They were evidently going to join the Salvation Army, whose music and shouts proclaimed their
approach. The Salvationists came round the corner with a hideous burst of brass and impudence. An old bloated-looking man carried the banner self-consciously, followed by a bevy of buxom lasses, who looked rather too interestedly at Jim. Behind them the red-coated band jarred past, followed by a crowd of hysterical-looking creatures with the shifty eyes of the neuropath. A few servant girls flirting with young mechanics brought up the rear-guard of this tatterdemalion army, recruited from the hysterical and avaricious. Jim looked longingly after them—the music had stirred his soul. He began to beat time with his fingers on the cabin top: he could not keep still, so he followed them at a distance up to the bridge, where his old friend the tramp was lying in wait, and instantly button-holed him.

"So you're looking about the country."
"Yes."
"It looks very nice this fine still day."
"Yes."
"That station was all a bare place about nine year ago."
"Oh."
"I suppose I shall have to go that way to-morrow," the tramp said, looking sentimentally at his boots.
"Where do you go to that way?"
"I shall go to Cromer."
"What for?"
"Arter work."
"I should have thought you'd have got plenty of work about this part of the country, instead of going to Cromer."
"I was brought up here—I went to school here for three year—was brought up here just across where your wherry lay."
"What trade are you, then?"
"I'm a waterman."
"Oh, I thought, being that you was brought up here, you was a boat-builder," said Jim sarcastically.
"No; I'm a waterman. Say, are you all alone in that wherry?"
"No; my master is there."
"But there was another gent helped you up here."
"Yes; my master's friend."
"Well, you two be all alone then!" (eagerly).
"Yes."
"Say, can't you get us a berth aboard?"
Jim whistled, bid him good-day, and returned to me, when a portly old man in a wideawake, black coat, corduroy trousers with white stripes down the legs, and buskins, his hands thrust beneath his coat tails, hailed Jim with—
"What! are you all alone?"
"No; my master's here."
"I suppose she go like this all the year round; don't carry nothin'."
"No; don't carry nothin'."
"She look very comfortable; I suppose you lay her up in winter."
"Sometimes."
"Well, isn't she ongain for the bridges; she look a rare height."
"She's been through Ludham Bridge often enough."
"I suppose yo' can walk about inside."
"Yes; six foot clear."
"Oh! she look very comfortable—that and plenty of money would do."

... "Yes; that what makes the pony go;" and the old man walked thoughtfully away, two Salvationists taking his place. One said—
"If I'd plenty of money, that's just what I should buy, and live about on the rivers. That would be much cheaper than a house, because you see you wouldn't have to buy your land, and there'd be no rates, no taxes, no nothin'."

"'Ceptin' the brownkitis and the screwmatics," said his mate solemnly.
An artilleryman passed up the road, and the first Salvationist remarked—
"He's been away six years and six months."
A waterman joined the party, and observed to the Salvationist, who was smoking—
“So you like your pipe then.”

“That’s better than a pint pot,” he replied calmly, and they went off.

A crowd of boys came down and began fishing, some of them, like learned antiquarians, holding a spirited discussion over a straw bottle case. They could not divine its use.

The tramp and his companions lighted a fire on a waste place opposite, and made some soup, stirring the pot with a broken stick. They sat on a log and ate their supper, afterwards disappearing. At dusk, a stupid-looking woman, carrying a hungry-looking, peevish baby, came up, and said to Jim—

“Will you take us?”

“How to?” asked Jim, amazed.

“To Newcastle; you’re going to Newcastle, ain’t you?”

“Not to-day; not as I know on,” said Jim.

After dusk, a thick mist arose as usual, and hearing footsteps near-by, Jim went out. I heard some girls shout and laugh. Jim came back, saying he had chased them on to the road, and told them if they came about again, we should take them to Newcastle. They were our last visitors.

“These town joskins talk of us country joskins,” said Jim, the last thing at night, “but I’m blowed if ever I see such a lot of duzzy fools. The questions they ax too, lor’! they’re enough to craze a donkey’s heart. I shall be glad to see the green again, sir. Fare to me, towns spile men, sir.”

“Amen to that,” I answered, and we turned in.

The still misty weather continued. The picturesque old oak on the river bank seemed asleep. Near-by I found the first daisies. In the hedgerows flocks of sparrows were chattering, and on a freshly ploughed field a boy was calling “Car-whoo, car-whoo,” through the mists.

I stopped at the lock to listen to a mavis in full song, for he was the first I had heard sing in the day-time, for
the earliest had poured forth their courtship songs in the evenings only. The lock itself seemed asleep, and looked as though it would not like to be disturbed.

As I returned at noon in the bright sunshine (70°) a group of cart-horses passed me, their riders seated picturesquely sideways, looking like irregular cavalry, as they went on their way chattering and laughing, stopping at the picturesque old mill-pool to water their horses.

At noon-time the air was so mild that one’s personality seemed to melt away into nothingness, a characteristic feeling of early spring when your strength seems to ooze out into the languorous air, depriving you of all fighting spirit. Your being seems to relax and yield itself up to the soft influences of heat and moisture.

Feb. 17.

Four degrees of frost last night followed by another still day glorified by rime and softened by mist. The men at the granaries were busy selling flour to country people who drove up in light carts. An old maltster with red cap came down to examine his rat-traps set upon the piles under water; they had caught three huge brown rats.

In the afternoon the trees round about us were alive with the songs of thrushes. It seemed as if they had all decided to begin their love songs with one voice; but they gave us their best and fullest notes at closing-in time, when they poured out their full voices all heedless of the gathering mists.
CHAPTER XXXIII.

DESCENT OF THE BURE.

"Where mists and fogs—in ghostly bands,
Vague, dim, moon-clothed in spectral white—
Drift in from far-off haunted lands,
Across the silence of the night."

W. W. Campbell: To the Lakes.

Feb. 18.

THE next morning the sun rose, a pale silver plate upon a grey background, and melted the rime, scattering the mists; when the blackbirds, blue-tits, thrushes and sparrows began to sing joyously in the ruddy willows. We hoisted in a light N.N.E. wind, and left Aylsham, startling a pair of ringdoves, who flew to an ivy-covered tree. As we descended to the lock, we crushed some of the thin ice-tables left high and dry by the tide; tables supported upon reed-legs. By the lock a flock of thirty mavis flew across the river, and the trees overhead were black-with rooks calling to their friends who fed on a field green with the first blades of young wheat.

When we got within gunshot they flew down to a field scattered with frost-spoilt turnips. As we sailed along we had to stop frequently to lower and hoist, for we had to go through eleven locks and bridges between Aylsham and Coltishall.

At Burgh Bridge we moored for the night, when we were serenaded by a couple of joyous mavis from a roadside tree, and this was their song—

"Too-wheet, too-wheet, too-wheet, cheep, cheep, cheep, plu-wheet, plu-wheet, plu-wheet, plu-wheet," the last note dropping into a chuckling laugh. Every morning and
evening these birds sang, and to-day we passed several pairs of partridges, showing that the warm weather was doing its work.

When Jim lit the fire to cook the dinner our smoke rose a few feet into the damp air and floated softly towards the yellow sunset, forming a sky about thirty feet high of the most beautiful colour, in which artificial delicate grey clouds of rare form melted into a yellowish background. This phenomenon lasted but a few minutes, when our sky took a mushroom form, turned a delicate pale orpiment, and floated away.

One of the mavis on the tree was disturbed several times by passers-by, but he always returned to the same branch, singing in the quickly gathering mists that rose from the river until they buried the branches of the tallest elms. Still a cock-pheasant called and the thrush sang on until a quarter to six o'clock, when the love-sick bird suddenly stopped. After this the night brought some labourers across the bridge. They were talking excitedly of an argument they had had with their master. A lumbering cart followed, mid the sounds of neighing horses, barking dogs, and voices from the village which gradually died away, leaving us alone in the ever-thickening mist. When the moon rose an owl began shrieking, and we decoyed her so that she flew directly overhead, going to an ivy-covered oak. At bed-time we could hear the roar of the water through the weirs at Burgh Mill, and the ca-ak, ca-ak of a coot calling; and near by in a garden a man was digging and whistling in the misty moonlight.

Feb. 20.

Eight degrees of frost—"A rare old rimer and a S.E. wind," said Jim, as he laid the breakfast-table.

Our friendly mavis was singing half-heartedly from his tree, and a boy was digging in his cottage garden, while his old mother cleaned her churn. A wherry came up with lowered mast, one of the crew grumbling because we dared to navigate these narrow waterways, but his mate apologised, saying—"Don't pay no regard to him; he's allus like that; the fog have got into his lights."
We could hear the girls laughing in the cottages and the voices of men working in the fields; but we could scarcely see beyond the end of our boat, and as we passed the rookery by Burgh Church: the trees were invisible from the river, though we could hear the watchman and elders cawing—indeed, an old bird flew out to spy who we were. Lower down we passed a huge weeping willow-tree, on which the rime was melting and dropping with short sharp cracklings into the river—indeed, the whole tree seemed to crackle like tinsel paper, and the water agitated by the dripping crystals looked mysterious in the foggy air. The willow seemed alive and bewitched, and to be weeping solid tears. This was the only willow I have ever seen weeping. Several shoals of rudd swam past us ere we moored at Burgh Lock, where we determined to wait till the fog cleared.

The past fortnight's warmth and moisture had turned the marshes emerald green, and here we saw the first cattle grazing since the snow had melted. The fog-muffled mill-wheel was churning the water with a gloomy sound, and everything was so depressing that Jim got his accordion, and we sat singing songs amid the dripping trees and oppressive fog.

Feb. 21.

At daylight the fog was there again, together with another rime frost. A wherry passed up, the helmsman informing us the weather had been so thick at Yarmouth the night before that the wherries dared not move through the bridge.

At noontide the mist cleared up a little, discovering six dab-chickens feeding in the mill-stream. They swam near the shore, working up stream towards the weir. I think they sight their food before they dive; they seem to make their dives so suddenly, giving a quick dart forward of the bill when they dive, as if pecking at something visible. At a distance they appear to sink suddenly out of sight. When the mist cleared a little more, and as there was a nice S.E. wind, we hoisted and started down stream, disturbing starlings, jackdaws, and rooks from their marshy feeding-
grounds. At intervals the sun burst through the clouds, giving that peculiar chequered appearance of light and shade so characteristic of early spring. As we passed a coppice between Oxnead and Buxton, we noticed some sallows covered with bud-like bosses resembling silver. The oaks in the plantings still retained some of their old leaves, and the woods were full of the voices of birds singing of spring. The loud-voiced tom-tits called to each other, the softly shrill notes of the long-tailed tit-mice, together with the full voices of the mavis, the "spink, spink" of the chaffinches, the "weeping" notes of the blue-headed tits, the linnet-voiced greenfinches, with the soft cooings of ring-doves, were all blended in concert—all harbingers of spring.

We passed two hazels green with catkins, a still surer sign of returning life.

At Lammas, a group of men and children stood at the malthouse door, the children calling to us, until the elderly maltster with great delicacy reproved them. We moored below the lock at Buxton, and spent the day watching the flocks of mavis, starlings, and rooks feasting upon dew-worms and wire-worms.

Saturday turned out a lovely day, though it began gloomily enough, with a thick fog, in which flocks of teal and mallard flighted.

During breakfast, a young hawker and two draggle-tailed girls passed along the road—one of the wenches pointed to the boat, and asked the "chal"—

"How would you like that cottage?"

"If I had a pound a week, that's just the life I should like," he replied.

"Would yer, now? I likes the road best," retorted the girl.

"Do you, then?" he replied, and they went on their way. Immediately a gun fired, and a wounded mavis began to cry like a child. After breakfast, the rime fog, together with the east wind, still hung heavy and gloomy over the
landscape. These fogs are not picturesque and bright, like the S.W. mist, but coarse and indiscriminating. There are of course fogs and fogs—some mysterious, soothing, luminous, transfiguring the world; others heavy, oppressive, seizing your heart with heavy icy fingers.

On Sunday the wind shifted to S.S.W., breathing an air more congenial for bird and beast—indeed, the atmosphere was warm and amorous, as some swans seemed to think, for two couples began their love-making to-day, creating a disturbance in the silent mill-pool. The short, sharp, eager whistles of some hedge-sparrows showed they too were full of desire, and even the "grass lions" * were noisier and more musical than usual.

Monday brought a fall of six degrees in the thermometer; the landscape was again covered with rime, and the river laid with a thin sheet of ice. Directly the mill began to work, the current broke the fine crystal crust, then the sun arose and melted the rime crystals, staining the marshes yellow and softening the earth for the greenfinches and mavis now singing loudly in the tree-tops. The school-boys on the bridge breathed forth steam whilst they stopped with numbed fingers to play marbles in the frozen road.

After breakfast I rowed down to the bridge on a perfect spring day. Sitting in my boat, I felt to perfection the sentiment of rural peacefulness so often written about but so rarely experienced. A delicate haze shrouded the horizon, and a light south-easterly breeze blew sufficiently strong to flutter the bright linen bleaching on the village green in the white sunshine. Throughout the landscape could be heard a soft humming sound, lulling one's senses to dreaminess.

This music came from the soft churning of the distant water-wheel, the gently flowing river, the soft roar of the

* Donkeys.
water falling over the distant weir, the cawing of rooks, the voices of the women on the green, the champing of calves on the lush grass, the soft rumbling of the tumbrils rolling away from the mill with their great white sacks of corn, and the soft paddlings of the ducks swimming leisurely down the stream. All life was intoxicated with the new wine of awakening spring. The bright day had drawn all life out of doors, and I sat dreamily watching a poor old rheumatic labourer, who, with gnarled and twisted limbs, working loosely as flails, hobbled along the river bank. He was as significant a harbinger of the coming season as the birds.

What a feast of delicate colour too was the scene, gleaming white mills, lush emerald grasses, delicate masses of grey coppice, yellow and white red-tiled cottages, pearly water, and over all a clear blue sky, all combined in a luminous and reposeful picture of peaceful country life so dear to all who have once tasted of this purest of pleasures. But such atmospheric effects would have beautified a filthy court in Drury Lane. A really fine quiet day is the greatest refiner I know. Far more culture is to be gained by consciously living such a day than touring through the picture-galleries of Europe.

In the morning the thermometer had again fallen below freezing, and a thick rime and mist hid the landscape—only some depressed starlings were to be seen, scratching for food in a heap of frozen ditch-cleanings. The sun fought fiercely with the rime, the fog thickening as the frost melted; but before the battle was won and the mists dissipated the heyday of the morning was gone, and cold Death again began to bind the world in fetters. Nevertheless these rimey mornings were delightful; there was a crisp exhilarating freshness in the air; the atmosphere seemed full of an intoxicating electricity, and the frost did not seem to affect the young wild plants—indeed, the chickweed flowered through it all.
After the sun was well up I went over the mill, and from a little window at the top looked over the landscape, over mead and upland, upon such a scene as would have greeted the eyes of a baron in his castle in the olden time. Then we descended to the wheel-house, where the mighty giant was struggling in the dark with the waters. . . . After lunch we left Buxton, passing shoals of rudd and bream in the shallow water. The river was so remarkably fleet and clear that we, could see a sheep's skull lying on the bottom, and the dark corridors of the water-voles were above the water-line. In some of their holes we saw freshly gathered rush-roots. As we sailed along the banks, the fringing alders were already turning red with new catkins, and the willows told as green masses in the distance; the landscape had the effect given by a pastel, so soft and aerial were the tints. Our journey down to Coltishall was one triumphant procession through a gallery of exquisite landscapes such as no painter ever caught on canvas, but alas! they were so evanescent that on the morrow they would have disappeared. As we moored at Coltishall a sleepy fly came out from his hiding place.

Our first morning at Coltishall revealed another rime-frosted landscape. The wintry breath had decorated the dead _umbelliferae_ on the banks with exquisite silver frostings. Nature seemed to have preserved these dead stalks as skeleton frames for her ornamental work, so delightfully did she blend her silver crystals on the ebon stems; but alas, the sun soon destroyed her handiwork. The pure frosted stage, when the dead stalks are all white with snowy powder, lasting only till the sun got strong enough to melt some of the crystals disclosing the ebon stalks. At this stage, the work is the most beautiful; but as the crystals melt all their sharp outlines become blurred, their purity of colour is lost, the mass becomes greyish and formless.

In the evening the Salvation Band came jarring through the mist. We followed it to discover the hardiness of these
Christians upon such a night. This was as we expected; but a handful of devotees followed the music. Even the guinea fowls calling to the misty moon were more zealous than they. As we followed them up a street two girls stood giggling at a door.

"There goes Mr. Jones," said one.

"Oh, I ha' seen you, Mr. Jones," they shouted, and ran indoors. I found out afterwards that Mr. Jones was a respected native. In the mist they had mistaken me for him, surmising, perhaps, that I was on the spree, and thus easily originated a scandal. As we reached the higher parts of Coltishall the mists disappeared, but as the band of devotees did not increase, we retraced our steps, returning through the mist to our ship, round which the air seemed filled with the sounds of lovers. Low whistles and suppressed laughter greeted us on all sides. Coltishall is evidently an amorous town. As we stepped aboard, a great rat dived into the river, and we stood silently in the mist listening to two girls tormenting some poor fellow in a garden across the water. I shouted through the mist, the bridge echoed, and they fled with shouts of laughter, deserting the poor wight, whom we heard crashing like a mad bull through the hedge. A man with a lantern came down to his cucumber house and made up the fires, for a rime frost already covered the ground.


Six degrees of frost proved that the gardener was wise in looking after his cucumbers. After breakfast, Old Bob turned up, and we went into his little wooden house, where we drank a good bottle of old ale and smoked a first-rate cigar. Old Bob is another philosopher, a sterling good-hearted man, who, though he has met with many reverses, has with rare wisdom learnt therefrom how to live. Once Old Bob kept his pack of hounds, for a keener sportsman never breathed, but bad times came, and Old Bob, as his friends familiarly call him, buckled to and went into business, starting housekeeping in a snug little wooden home
where he has learnt that true happiness is to be found within doors and not in a showy exterior. Such a good fellow is he that the "little shanty," as his friends call the hut, is always full of laughter and jollity. Like the philosopher of Reedham, Old Bob is the philosopher of Coltishall, where he lives—a bachelor life with his sister, a real good-hearted woman, who keeps his house and helps in the business.

On our return to the boat, we passed several beech hedges covered with old leaves, warm and picturesque in colour and form; they make most suitable hedges for gardens. On the way home Old Bob told us that in the old times they used to breed hares for sporting purposes. They mixed the breed with hares procured from other districts, marking the offspring before they turned them off. They found these mongrels ran faster, and gave better sport.

"But hunting is going out here," said Bob regretfully; "no one has any money to subscribe to the packs or to keep hunters—the country is getting very dull."

I had run short of tobacco, and Bob was good enough to give me a square with a brass label thereon. I took the prize aboard, and gave Jim a piece. He looked at the metal label and then at me, and said—

"That fare rum, this don't look like bought 'bacca. I can't understand why, when we come up here, that lock-man said, 'You're expected.' Fare to me every one know when you're coming."

I am fully persuaded that Jim was quite prepared to see the vessel boarded any day, and his master arrested as a notorious smuggler.

Feb. 27.

On Friday we started from Coltishall. As we sailed through the thin ice lining the river banks, numerous birds were busy getting their breakfast. There were kingfishers, coal-tits, chaffinches, starlings, water-hens, wood-pigeons, rooks, and a hoody. The river was full of roach. A garden on the bank was bright with snowdrops bearing a fanciful resemblance to veiled communicants going through the
fields. The sun arose at noon, the thermometer rising to 70°, so that we lit no fire in the cabin. There was a nice little south-easterly breeze, and we sailed joyfully through the winding river, passing cottage girls beating carpets in the warm sunshine, and gardeners busy digging their beds. Below Coltishall some men were felling elm-trees on a patch of marsh-land. At half-past eleven Beulagh Church hove in sight, but so much does the river wind here that we did not lose sight of its square steeple till 2.30, except upon one occasion for a few minutes. In a garden at Beulagh we saw a white butterfly flitting through a hedge-row, and it is worthy of remark that exactly opposite was a dike covered with ice. As we sailed along we flushed several pairs of partridges and mallard. At Beulagh a girl stood on the bank holding a puppy; two boys joined her, one of whom remarked—

"You've got a fine boat there."
"You've got a fine place there," I replied.
"Yes."
"And a fine dorg," added Jim.

Near Wroxham we started a pair of teal who seemed to fly up very sluggishly, as did all the mallard. By Beulagh Broad we saw two shovellers, the first of the season. We passed through Wroxham Bridge as quickly as possible, for the scenery thereabouts is hateful; the enterprising builder has disfigured the face of the land. As we sailed down to the mouth of Wroxham Broad, we put up another pair of shovellers, but they soon alighted in a pulk. As the yellow sun went down in a greenish sky; a little group of midges played about a foot above the water. Each fly seemed attached to an elastic string worked by an invisible hand. When the midges disappeared, a bat flew across the river, and our spirits rose, for though the night was cold and wintry, the sight of butterflies, midges, snowdrops, and bats showed us spring was not far off. In the evening the landscape looked like a poor water-colour; a blue misty background under an orange sky, with blue sallows and silvery water in the foreground. The more one studied this effect from a pictorial point of view, the more fully did one under-
stand that it is absolutely essential to employ different media for the reproduction of different natural effects. In fact, it is perfectly correct to talk of a "water-colour effect," a "pastel effect," or an "oil effect." The perfectly equipped landscapist should be a master of all media, from oil painting to etching. By such versatility alone will he be enabled to fully occupy his time, and to interpret the different natural effects.

After moonrise rime began to crystallise on our cabin roof.

Feb. 27.

In the moonlight the wild duck began to call, and the grebe could be heard clanging. This bird's voice is as unlike that of a fowl as can well be imagined. It resembles a wild shouting, and expresses the loneliness of these wintry wastes of wood and water.

The following morning I arose before sunrise; the moon stood clear in the sky, shedding its beams over a landscape white with rime. In a few minutes an orange disc appeared in the sky between the oaks, looking down upon this serene and lovely scene. As the sun rose over a bed of curled and rimy reed stalks, it was wonderful to watch the darkness fly from the black hollows in the jungles, and the moon grow pale as the mists rose. Before sunrise the mavisies, coots, ringdoves, great crested grebe, water-hens, mallard, and rooks were calling on all sides, but never a mallard flew up, although on the previous evening the air was full of their voices. They like to lie close in thick weather.

As the sun rose a single peewit flighted, and two reed-buntings flew from a carr, alighting on a dripping reed stalk, where they began to feed in company with two blue-tits. All round us guns were booming and the rime was melting, pure crystal drops dripping from the chate and reed tassels. When I got up the temperature was 26°—soon after sunrise it rose to 46°, and in less than two hours the thermometer stood at 68°. At breakfast a tit-lark fluttered up and sang in a way suggestive of love-making.
CHAPTER XXXIV.

ON WROXHAM BROAD.

"Domed with the asure of heaven,
Flored with a pavement of pearl.

Rimmed with a vapour of rest,
These are the inland waters."

W. W. CAMPBELL: Vapour and Blue.

E had moored at the mouth of Wroxham Broad the evening before, so we shoved on to the broad.

Wroxham is a fine sheet of water, clear and deep, a good place for sailing. The shores are well wooded-and park-like, but not "fine" in the proper sense of the word. I walked up to a friend's house, and saw that his bees were out, and several blue-tits and coal-tits were feeding in his garden; but he was not at home, so I returned to the ship, and went for a row round the broad. The water was remarkably low, but this last day of that wonderful February was perfect. The air was calm, warm, and delightful; I heard a reed-pheasant "chinging," and saw several little flocks of blue-tits feeding on the alder-trees. On a staithe stood a pile of keel-muck, over which a crowd of rooks and hooded crows were feeding and fighting; I counted fifteen hoodies. As I passed they flew up sluggishly, as I have seen buzzards leave a dead ox in the West Indies. Alighting on a tree, they at once began polishing their bills upon the branches. The rooks flew up to higher trees, and began calling to each other; the crows, on the other hand, kept silent, regarding
me disdainfully. As I passed on they returned to their garbage.

I could not see a single fish, but found many clams. At the far end of the broad were a number of coot and grebe swimming close to the yellow reed wall, wherein they disappeared as I rowed up. Following a narrow dike, I came upon several dead silver-eels lying upon the bottom, eels killed by the frost. Near-by was a little pike, about six inches long, the only fish I saw that day.

This dike was a picture of sterility, yet within another six weeks it would be teeming with life, and choked with vegetation. Even the very gasteropod shells on the bottom were empty and crumbling. Towards evening the mavis began to sing, and four great crested grebe flew from one end of the broad to another. A little later two of the grebe came swimming back, the male twenty yards ahead of the female. They called to each other three or four times on their journey across the broad. They look a proud, stern, domineering bird, as they swim on the water. These birds did not cease clanging till eleven o'clock that night, when I sat talking to a farmer.

"Does farming pay now?"

"Why, yes, sir," he said. "Bad farming doesn't pay, and that's all along of them artificial manures and laziness. Why, I put ten loads of muck to an acre, and my turnips this year are good; but some I bought at £4 an acre were ruined by the frost; they were reared on artificial manure, so there was no substance in them. If you want to make farming pay nowadays, you must work the land well. Farmers don't work the land half enough."

He made farming pay, and it is a curious fact that the few men I have come across, who make a good thing out of the land nowadays, have not been brought up as farmers. This man was a case in point.

So ended the last day of February, a month remarkable for the regularity of its rime frost with mists, beautiful hot mornings, followed by misty evenings. Throughout the month the weather was mild and calm, with scarce a drop of rain—indeed, the four past weeks had been so spring-
like that the birds were completely deceived, and even the
cock-partridges had begun to fight for the hens, the rooks
to build their nests, and the wood-pigeons to croon in
the ivy-trees. But there was another winter to come
before they were able to breed.

On the 1st of March we went to bed with a sense of
perfect security—no moorings to look after, no tides to
watch, no collisions possible, for it must be remembered
that boating on these rivers in midwinter is a far different
thing from pleasuring in summer-time.
The weather changed in the night, and March came in
like a lion with a westerly gale. I rowed round the broad
in the morning, and got within a boat's length of eight
tufted duck; they swam before me, ducking their heads,
and as I drew near, flew to windward, their breasts and
wing-tips gleaming. At first they flew along the water,
gradually rising until their legs cleared the surface, their
crests shining like velvet, and their bodies gleaming greenish
black in the sun.
I could see no fish, though the broad was peopled by
anglers. In a pulk I came across eight great crested
grebe swimming athwart the wind, one ahead of the other.

March 1.

At times the laggards flew gracefully along the water,
sliding along as they alighted in front of the leaders. One
old grebe was calling hoarsely from the reed, getting very
excited, his voice growing sharper and quicker, until the
noise was deafening. Immediately the flock turned and
swam towards him, their breasts gleaming in the sunshine.
As they neared the reed, a couple appeared from the covert,
chasing each other in an excited manner, but soon all of them
disappeared in the stuff. A flock of coot then swam forth;
a cock-bird, known by his great whiteness, began to chase
a pair of younger birds who were courting. He turned the
hen, the young cock disappearing, and chased her into the
stuff. The grebe had returned, and directly I showed
myself, the nearest grebe dived like a stone, the rest following suit, when all disappeared in the stuff. I hid up when they reappeared and began preening themselves, some raising themselves on their tails and flapping their wings.

At eventide the sun sank to rest amid fiery bars of orange yellow, and grey streamers stretched across the sky like the bands of the Northern Lights. As the sun died a flock of bats came flying from an old woodpecker's hole in a rotten alder-tree. And we went to bed in a rising gale.
CHAPTER XXXV.

WROXHAM BROAD TO SOUTH WALSHAM BROAD BY WAY OF ANTINGHAM PONDS.

"Only the Sun-god rideth over,
Marking the Seasons with track of flame;
Only the wild-fowl float and hover,—
Flocks of clouds, whose white wings cover
Spaces on spaces without a name.

Stretches of marsh and wild lake-meadow,
Beaches that bend to the edge of the world;
Morn and even, sunshine and shadow;
Wild flame of sunset over far and meadow,
Fleets of white vapours sun-kissed and furled."

W. W. Campbell: Manitou.

March 2.

EXT morning we started upon a long cruise with a favourable wind. Soon after leaving Wroxham we passed a vast flock of peewits chasing each other and tumbling about as is their delight in blowy weather. Amongst them were a few golden plover.

We blew down to Horning without hoisting the sail, for the wind was strong. The weather was characteristic of March, with sunshine one minute, then big clouds, through the rifts of which the sun's rays streamed, playing like limelights on the reed-beds, blue waters, and grey plantations.

The storm scattered the soft, colourless, frayed reed tassels of March like thistle-down. As we blew through this March landscape, full of fierce and ever-changing contrasts, the wind kept the river in a constant ripple, the clouds changed from silver to black, then to blue, and lastly to opal, whilst shimmering shafts of fierce light shone through the yawning gulf's of a mighty nimbus. Chequered March,
this month should be called, for there is no fixity, no sense of rest these days—March is the month of battle between the wind and the sun.

We stopped for lunch by Little Hoveton Broad, and found the puit had returned to breed. Hundreds of them were flashing in the sun, flying and settling on the hovers, calling to each other. A passing reed-cutter informed us they had suddenly appeared that morning.

We moored at Horning for the night, and at sunset I heard a snipe drum for the first time.

There is a certain sadness in travelling from village to village—you always feel you are a stranger. They have their interests, allusions and references to the past, local jokes, all of which are unintelligible to the traveller; and when conversing with them, however kind they are, you feel you are not one of them. To be born, to live, and to die in a village has its advantages.

March 3.

A strong N.W. breeze blew us down to Ranworth Dike, where we anchored. All day long the landscape was a panorama of glinting white gables, flashing steeples, gleaming mill-sails, at one moment flashing like a gull on the foam, at another disappearing in the black landscape. All the birds were silent, for they hide in the stuff when the wind grows boisterous. Of singing birds, larks alone will brave a gale.

The gale grew tiresome, and the piebald landscape irritating. The reed-cutters were still at work, but they will stop directly the "colts" appear, as they must in a week or two. The wind decorated our fore-stay and windward side with fluff from the reeds. Towards evening the sky to the nor'ard cleared, but still small cumuli floated in the heavens, looking dark or white as the sun shone upon them. The rising gale was already scattering the tops of the litter heaps, blowing them into the river. At nightfall I rowed on to Ranworth Broads, the little broad picturesque as usual, with its old malt-house and cottages. On the large broad
some rooks were going to roost under the lee of some very low alder bushes, scarce four feet high. As we watched them going to bed a pair of shovellers flew across the broad, and an old man came out and said, pointing to an island—

"That's where the ladies bathe in summer."

He little thought what a picture he was painting for us in that dreary March evening. The beautiful figures of the lovely women, the greenery of summer, and all the poetry of the open air. I long looked at the island; it seemed sacred. As we rowed down the dike we met some reed-cutters returning in their marsh-boats, the sun sinking behind them in a stormy watery-looking sky. After dusk we saw flashes of lightning to the S.E.

"A sign of wind, hefty weather a-coming," said Jim, and as we went to bed the wind roared mysteriously in the reeds alongside.

March 4.

Next day a large flock of field-fares was blown across the river, and the reed-beds tossed like the waves of the sea. The rush of wind across the marshes shook the boat, making the match-boarding vibrate and the reed shadows dance upon the varnished boards. One felt as if rocked in a cradle slung in a reed bed.

"More wind," said Jim; "the stars looked very bright last night tew."

The rude gusts of wind brought vigour in their train, and one's life felt full. Man has no need to travel far after he has found what delighteth his soul. Some experiences fill his being and exclude all thought: thought so pernicious to happiness. Let the wise find his all-sufficing pleasure and be content, as was the Turkish Kadi who upbraided Layard for considering too curiously what little concerned him.

As we sailed down the river, reed-cutters could be seen moving about in the jungle, felling the plants in this fierce N.W. wind. We moored in the mouth of the old river opposite the mouth of the Ant, thinking ourselves safe, but
the best-laid plans "of mice and men gang aft agley"—we were nearly cut in two in our refuge harbour.

In the evening we saw a pair of bean-geese feeding on the marshes by St. Benet's Abbey. At dusk the wind leed a bit, and the clouds looked deader as eight snipe flew down before the wind, but westerly gales always blow hardest at the top of the day, so we were not sure of the future. The last thing we saw before closing in was a heron about a hundred and fifty yards above us trying hard to beat to windward.

March 5.

At five o'clock in the morning I was awakened by loud shouts. I sat up and looked out into the dull raw morning, and saw a big wherry with lowered peak just beyond us. I heard Jim turn out, and angry voices. It transpired they had come sailing out of the mouth of the Ant, meeting a strong flood tide on the river, when it was with the greatest difficulty they avoided crashing into us, instead of which they ran into the bank just ahead of us.

"We should have cut you in two," cried one man excitedly.

It was really no one's fault, so they went off grumbling, and we tried to sleep; but a feeling of insecurity would not allow it, so I listened to the birds. A lark began to sing immediately they had gone, then a mallard quacked, and after a short interval a rook cawed, and a flock of what looked like dunlins flew up the river.

After breakfast we took in two reefs, and started with a strong westerly gale up the tortuous Ant, with streaming flags, swelling sails, and wind whistling through the rigging. I sat steering with legs extended, my whole weight against the tiller, and my right arm, rigid as iron, holding the straining sheet, whilst Jim stood for'ard ready to lower the peak when necessary. Every block, every rope was straining as the vessel roared round the curves of the narrow river, the water rushing from her bows and gurgling along the low shores. The wind blew so strongly in our faces, and the crests of waves broke from windward so that it was
difficult to keep a sharp look-out for steering, whilst the tin maid above held her nosegay ever to windward, her pennant streaming a blood-red streak across the chequered sky. The ship was alive, every rope, every plank, every stitch of canvas, every block was strained to its utmost. At Ludham Bridge, we lowered, shot the bridge, and hoisted without stopping, turning up to Irsted Shoals, and sailing across Barton, where a sea was running, over which gulls hovered, finally bringing up below Wayford Bridge within an hour and a half of starting, several head reaches notwithstanding. It was an exhilarating sail. We passed but few birds, and but two or three reed-cutters at work. Having lowered our mast, we shoved through Wayford Bridge, mooring just above for the night.

March 6.

Though a strong head-wind was blowing, I decided to start next morning, so we had to begin by quanting against the back water raised by the wind as far as Dilham Lock. We passed Ruston Common, where we saw the first marsh marigolds in bloom. Of course there were the usual geese and some donkeys eating the gorse-bushes, which they had cropped into fantastic figures, such as stupid people delight in imitating upon their yew-trees. A dead otter lay on the bank, but we could not stop to examine him, for we had as much as we could do to get along by towing and quanting against the wind until we reached the lock, where the old lock-keeper helped us through. We moored in front of his cottage for nooning, the lock-keeper, a sharp-eyed old man, joining us.

"I like cheery people," he said; "I like them as enjoy themselves: used to do the same myself in my young days. What's the good of hoarding money for others to spend. . . . I know your wessel; she've been up here afore, often. I dunno if she can speak; but if she can, she'll tell you all about it."

I offered him a whisky. He took the bottle and filled his tumbler. I gasped, and asked him if he knew what it was.
“Yes; whisky.”
“But can you stand all that? Your welcome to it, but I don’t want to upset you.”
“Is it strong then?” he asked innocently.
“Like brandy.”
“Oh! oh! thank you, sir. I thought it was like rhubarb wine. Will you mix me a glass?”
I mixed him a mild drink, and he afterwards confessed that even that was too much for him, for after drinking it he said it warmed him so that “no mawther must come nigh him to-day.”
“Yes; I like them as enjoy themselves, but I don’t like them as swear and drink like hogs. Will you have some potatoes, sir?”
“Oh, we’ve got plenty.”
“Well, good-bye, sir. You’re a man after my own heart,” said he.
We left Dilham Broad, a small sheet of water full of half-bred duck, and after shooting the bridge, we met a head-wind. It was hard work quanting through the long gloomy plantation, from which a keeper hailed us with—
“A strong old breeze!”
At length we entered a lock, below a bridge, looking like a dungeon against a white mill standing alongside. Several idlers appeared, and one attached himself to us. He had the face and form of Sancho Panza, and I named him “the Puit” on account of a peculiar bird-like click in his speech.
“Are you fishing, sir?” he asked tenderly. “There are some good fish about.”
“No.”
“Can I sell you some eggs, sir?”
“No; but I can do with a fowl.”
He trotted off panting, and returned with a red face, saying—
“You can have one, sir; they’ve got two nice young cockerels over at the farm.”
“Will it take long to catch him?”
“Yes; a bit!”
"Well, we’ll have it when we come back." We pushed off, and started sailing through wooded country to another dark deep lock beneath a bridge. Whilst the lock filled, we sat and admired a really beautiful girl who was flirting with the miller, but as she coquetted her donkey ran off, helter skelter down the road, and she had to follow. The bump of the lock gates reminded us it was full.

After another bridge the water got shallow, and the river bed was full of old weeds, so that we dragged along the bottom. As we sailed through a pleasant country we came to a farm-house, in the door of which a white apron floated. We heard a girl’s voice, and immediately another girl appeared and a boy, and the three came running down to the river-side. The buxom girls stood locked in each other’s arms. Jim asked them to come for a sail. They giggled and said—"Next time."

So we left them, sailing on to North Walsham, where some important-looking clerks appeared from a low counting house, demanding four shillings for our wherry to pass through a series of disgracefully kept locks. A fat and pursy person asked me if I was after fish.

"No."

"What then?" he next asked, with bucolic stupidity.

"To see the reeds shake."

He looked at me "like a mazed willock," waved his hand largely, and said—"Plenty here."

I smiled. No doubt he would have shaken some for me, and criticised their movements. Such is the wonderful self-sufficiency of prosperous commerce.

The lock-gates recalled Ghiberti’s doors at Florence, but only in height.

Before passing through the lock we had to get over a muddy shallow in which we dragged. We sailed along the river by a recently repaired breach made by the floods.

Sailing round a bend, we came to a group of coal-sheds upon which the scores were chalked. Beyond this the water got very shallow, so that we had to quant up to a lock where a poor man sat angling. With his help we pulled her over the mud again—(N.B.—We had paid four shillings
for this honour)—and then proceeded to fill the lock; but when we got to the reach above, on pulling up the sleepers, we found the river was empty—nothing but a bed of ooze lined with reed. We had paid our four shillings, however. Jim walked to the lock above and let the water through, when a flippant miller and his boy appeared. The miller began to tell us the rights and wrongs of navigating this river.

"I have paid four shillings, and I am going to take all the water in the river," I said.

They ended by helping us through, after we had filled the lock and the reach above. It was quite dark when we got through, and the boy got talkative.

"There's only been one wherry up here since Christmas. . . . Do you want a man? I should like to come; that would be better than milling. It's better to travel about and see everything, and have plenty to eat and drink. . . . Have you any mawthers aboard?"

"No."

"What! no mawthers; that fare a rum un."

He came up to the next lock with us, where we put him ashore, when he asked—

"Are you going to Antingham to-night?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's a long way; I shouldn't like it. Good-night; I'm going to look after my ducks."

"Night you go," said Jim.

We quanted in the dark through a small broad, whilst over the marshes we could see the lights of North Walsham. We were tired and cold, but we persevered, determined to make Antingham Basin that night, though we could only see the leaden gleam of the water and the black shores as we quanted. At length the darkness got so thick that we could not see from one end of the wherry to the other, and we had to keep a sharp look-out to keep from running into the shores or falling overboard. Presently I spied a faint arch-shaped light ahead.

"Bridge ahoy!" I shouted, and took the tiller while Jim quanted. We went through without touching, which we considered a feat of navigation.
The wind began to sigh through the trees on the bank, and the river became so narrow that we trampled on the alder bushes as we quanted along the plankways. At last we distinguished a tall chimney against the sky, when we worked with redoubled energy, finally mooring against a malt-house in Antingham Basin at ten minutes past eight on a cold March evening. It was too dark to distinguish the ring of trees round the basin. Everything was silent. We were thoroughly tired out, cold and famished; so hungry were we that we lit a fire, and by half-past eight were making merry over boiled eggs, sardines, bread and butter, and bowls of cocoa. Intoxicated with our exercise and food, we soon turned in, but not till I had written up the log.

"My head would fare as big as a bushel skep if I was to write after all that work," said Jim, for we had quanted almost all the way from Wayford Bridge.

As I was writing a moth flew in at the window, the first we had seen since the autumn.

March 7.

In the morning I was eager to examine our surroundings. Uninteresting enough they proved to be—a pond, a spring, logs of timber, and a patch of common land. The wind had gone, and the day was tranquil as spring. I walked to Antingham Ponds—tame but pretty pieces of water fringed with reeds and trees, park-like in character. The woods were full of the songs of birds. On my return to the boat I walked through the dingles on the common, and found some gorse already bursting into bud. There were signs of gipsies: fires, tin-clippings, and pine chips, showing they had been making clothes-pegs.
flushed several yellow buntings singing *tit-tat-to, tit-tat-to*, *wheet!* in the gorse. A pair of tit-larks and two pairs of hedge-sparrows appeared to be courting. All round were signs of decaying trade—a deserted granary with rotting doors and rusty hinges, a decaying landing-stage and desolate roads. There was nothing to detain us, so we started down stream again after breakfast. The ruined corn-mill, with cracking walls, that looked so ghastly last night, was soon left behind. When we passed some rich marshes, where flocks of rooks, peewits, and puits fed in company, two white wag-tails flew across the river, that was so shallow that we could see the lily leaves bursting through the slimy bottom—in summer-time this stream must be impassable on account of weeds.

Leaving a picturesque farm on a hill, we startled a number of peewits washing themselves on the shore by the lock. This is a common practice with them to rid themselves of the mud collected on their feeding-grounds during the night. As we neared the lock some puits began to chase the peewits, but directly the plover saw us they flew up in a cloud, the cock bird calling them as they wheeled and disappeared inland. The puits, on the other hand, simply flew over the hedge, alighting on the adjoining field. Passing the lock and sailing down the reach that was empty last night, we found the miller and his boy sitting by the lock, looking vexed.

"Some one has run the water off," he said, "and I shan't be able to work the mill," and he looked at us as though we had done it.

Jim told him that we had only just come down, and had nothing to do with it, and like the little cad that he was he began to talk to his boy as if he doubted Jim. I treated him with icy politeness, when this curious, can-tankerous little man began to help us fill the lock, though grumbling all the time. We were both glad to get clear of the homunculus and his boy. A fisherman below the lock was catching bait, tethering them to an alder bush, for he had designs on a large pike, in the little broad, who was fastidious enough to require live bait. Below the next
bridge we found some wherrymen, the culprits who had let the water off the lock. Leaving them, we sailed down to Royston Bridge, where we moored for the night. Soon after our arrival a man led a stallion, gaily decked, across the bridge, another sign of approaching spring. After dinner the first warm spring shower fell, followed by a dark night, in which we could see the sky above North Walsham luminous with reflected light, and in another direction the flashes of Cromer light shot across the landscape gleaming and disappearing alternately. Men and girls were signalling to each other—truth to tell, these are characteristic sounds of village life after dark.

March 8.

On Sunday we passed under the bridge, sailing through the smiling country to North Walsham. By the lock stood a party of loafers, amongst whom was one, Wimble, with his big comical features, a born low comedian. Wimble helped to move a wherry that lay in our way, doing much business over the job, making every one laugh. After seeing Wimble and his party with whisky, we sailed through some newly-sown barley-fields wherein stood poles decorated with sacks—primitive scarecrows. A few had old gladen horse-collars cut in two as necklaces, as primitive as ineffectual. Beyond the barley-fields was a carr full of chaffinches, greenfinches, yellow buntings, long-tailed tits and sparrows feeding in large flocks through the plantings. Adjoining the carr were old dikes, depressions where the natives had cut turfs in old days. This practice has nearly died out, though hovers, as they are called locally, are still used for firing. The chimney of a ruined cottage stood close to the turf dikes, black with the smoke of many a good hover. The ridges between these depressions were fringed with alders, whilst in the hollows themselves grew a squalid crop of rush and stunted reed; and though some of these dikes afford the finest quality of reed, most of them only grow litter and soft rush, favourite nesting-stuff for water-hens and rails. Passing a lock, we sailed through a more open
country, coming upon cock sparrows fighting for their mates, and flocks of greenfinches and chaffinches feeding upon some newly-planted land. Near by a sparrow-hawk was hunting a flock of sparrows through a wood, the birds scattering like chaff before the wind. As we approached Dilham Lock, we put up several mallard and water-hens, after which we made fast for the day. The old lock-keeper soon appeared, dressed in his best velveteen, his coat and waistcoat ornamented with brass buttons, upon which were embossed grey hounds' heads. He informed us he had been reading his Bible, and said simply, and with feeling—

"I'd just been up planting some roots upon my old woman's grave afore you come."

I suggested that like David of old he should take a young bride to keep him warm.

"No; I ha' been through that mill; my father married twice—the second one a young woman about my own age. She soon ran through his savings... but I shouldn't mind marrying, if I could get an old woman of my own age with some money," and he shrugged his shoulders, snapped his eyelids together, and burst out laughing.

In the afternoon several villagers passed, and the Puit arrived mighty with eighteen stone and bloodshot eyes.

"I've been fishing," he said; "but that's no good—this warm February has made the fish get full, and they won't bite."

He was great on chemicals for fish-poaching, and as I went up the bank to smoke a pipe, he drew up to Jim and said confidentially—

"Your master must know a lot about chemicals for fish. I know he do by his talk, what he was telling on yesterday."

"Perhaps he do," answered Jim vaguely.

"Well, you can read, can't you; I'd go to his books and copy 'em out; they are wery useful."

"No, bor! I don't live in that street; I don't do business that way."

The Puit stared.

On my return he began to tell us of the days when he
was keeper, and decoyed all his neighbour's birds into his master's plantings by a trick learned in the Mediterranean. On questioning him, I found it was well known to the initiated. I walked with the Puit to the weir below the lock, and he began to tell me how the fish ascended the weir, looking all the time in the opposite direction. He was a cunning rascal, but didn't know much about fish. When the conversation flagged, he referred to the fowl.

"Shall I go and get that cockerel now?"

"Is he young?"

He hesitated, so I put him off, when he said "Ha!" and clicked his tongue. Then he turned and faced me with his brutish features, big lips, flat nose, and fat bloated cheeks, and asked—"Are you a poacher?"

"No."

"Have you an air-gun aboard?"

"No."

"What price is an air-gun?"

"Don't know."

"Ha!" and he clicked his tongue.

"Have you a pike-hook?"

I knew what he referred to, so I said—"No."

I gave him some whisky. When he had drunk it he asked—"Has that ever been in bond?"

I laughed, and caught Jim looking at me. The Puit said—"Ha!" and clicked his tongue.

"Will you sketch me in my boat?"

"No."

"Ha!" and another click.

"What price are eels now?"

"What price are pike?" I retorted.

"Ha!" and a click; and he looked at me mysteriously.

"Do you want to shoot a hare?" he continued.

"No."

"What do you reckon is the best time to shoot 'em?"

"Peep-o'-day."

"Ha!" another click, and he smiled. Then he walked up and down the bank, grunted, clicked once or twice, and went up to Jim to try and pump him, but Jim drew below.
A wherry passed through, the helmsman hailing the Puit with—"How go, old nights?"

He said "Ha!" in a low voice, clicked his tongue, and looked at me furtively. Then he walked up the bank talking to the wherryman.

"He hev a spare suit when he's ondrest," remarked Jim, referring to his ragged habiliments.

At this moment the old lock-keeper appeared, and referring to the old Puit, he remarked with disgust—"The old hulk!"

March 9.

On Monday morning a robin's song awoke us, and little redbreast was very welcome, for they were very rare after the frost. Almost immediately the Puit appeared, clicked, and said—"Shall I get you that cockerel?"

We could but laugh at this wonderful fowl. Whilst we were talking, the lock-keeper came aboard, and I gave him a little guide-book that took his fancy.

"Let's look at it," said the Puit jealously.

"No, no," said the old fellow, running off with childish glee to lock it up in his cottage.

"Ha!" remarked the Puit in a low voice, clicking his tongue; but he looked so crestfallen, that I gave him a little book, and this great lone forsaken man flushed like a child, looking at me with unutterable gratitude.

As Jim was undoing the sail, the Puit said—"Do you understand the stars?"


"And the early inhabitants of Britain and Domesday book?" thus showing quite another side to his character; but he was sorely puzzled to know what we were doing up that river in winter, so he began once more—"Have you ever shot a shell?"

"No!"

"You'd better go to Newcastle to find out a little about that, cause fare to me you go about finding out things."
I laughed. The old lock-keeper now came back, and they helped us to the river below. The Puit made a mistake, and the old man abused him roundly, but he took it good-naturedly, simply saying "Ha!" with the usual click.

As we hoisted our sail he came and said earnestly—"Won't you write me out one of them recipes, sir?"

"No," I replied.

"Well, will you get me a place on a yacht in the summer, if you can, sir?"

"I'll see," I answered, and he slipped ashore.

As our sail filled, he came down to the bank and said—"Shall I get you that cockerel, sir?"

"Oh, never mind it now."

"Oh, but it has such a beautiful tail," he said regretfully.

And so we left him on the bank staring longingly after us.

A little further down a man and a youth were planting an osier bed, with dips as thick as a whip handle, and as long as your forearm. They were planted in parallel rows about a cubit apart.

We made an uneventful voyage down to the entrance to Stalham Broad, and moored against a pile of reed standing on a wet marsh, for several violent snow-squalls had come upon us from the N.E. As we were getting the ship tidy, I heard the first red-shank whistle. During dinner the wind rose to half a gale, and as we sat smoking, rocking with the rough water, we heard a voice outside call—"Oh, oh! oh, oh!"

We ran out, thinking a great wherry was upon us, but we found a drunken marshman lying in his boat, sailing before the wind like lightning.

"Good night," he called cheerily; and disappeared on the rough water.

"You may know that's close to-night, for look, you can
see the lights of Norwich, Cromer, and Yarmouth," volunteered Jim.

March 11.

The snow-squalls did not let us sleep, and at daybreak a cold white morning greeted us. Our plankways were covered with a thin film of ice, to which the powdery snow was frozen. After breakfast we started with lowered mast to quant against the blinding north-easter to Stalham through a lonely white landscape, for not a living thing could we see—not a wherry, not a marshman, not a reed-cutter, not even a bird enlivened the scene. Nothing moved but a few shooves of reed blown by the wind into the river, where they floated with the tide, rocking on the rough water. We quanted on through a wild waste of reed and white marshland, with here and there a white-capped mill or white-roofed cottage. The snow scudded across the black background of trees. It was dangerous work quanting, for as you walked forward the snow stung your face and filled your eyes, so that you could scarce get your breath, for the wind was strong. Combined with this was the tarry smoke pouring from our funnel and blowing into our faces. These distractions prevented us from keeping our attention fixed on the plankways, which were slippery with glass-like ice, and our hands were wet through with icy sludge from the cabin top as we steadied ourselves in quanting. As we approached the staithe, we put up a reed-bunting, and stopped for a moment to watch a hungry marsh-harrier hunting over the reed-tops. A hooded crow appeared on the scene and gave chase, and they both flew off quarrelling in the snow-squall. This was strange weather after the mild peaceful February, reminding us that there is no security in the world, and one must be on the alert for storm in tranquillity, and be ever prepared with great heart to fight; for the battle cometh up quickly as a thunder cloud in a summer sky.

In Stalham Dike eleven ducks swam before us in Indian file, and we followed and moored, after which we went for letters.
That night the thermometer registered six degrees of frost, and in the morning the dike was fringed with ice. We started with a north-west wind for Ludham Bridge. The wind had blown the waters up, and the rivers were very full, the reed-beds being flooded. As we sailed down Stalham Dike we startled several red-shanks, and a reed-cutter told us he had shot some thereabouts the last week in February.

All the morning we sailed through wastes of reed, gladen, and bolder, until we reached the wide expanse of Barton, with its low-lying shores. A white apron shone in the sun at Barton Turf, and on the broad a flock of black-headed gulls were floating heads to windward, basking in the bright sunshiny ripples. As our sail approached they arose and flew inland. As we passed the island we startled two great crested grebe from the reeds. Below Irsted the rounds were closely cropped, for the reed-cutters had been busy in that icy weather, as the yellow piles of shooves testified. By Reedham we flushed several more red-shanks, who flew off with loud whistlings, alighting beyond some black “mockings” made visible by the reed-cutters. These scarecrows were simply made by placing an old sou'-wester on a piece of reed, and hoisting the lot on a pole. They are intended to frighten the starlings, and the marshmen say they answer the purpose; explaining that the birds think they are men's heads peeping over the reed tassels. By Ludham Bridge some rooks were repairing their nests. As we approached this miserable structure, and lowered, ready to shoot the low arch, we began to be filled with doubt, for the water was very high. But we went on, her nose going beneath, when suddenly there was a grating sound, and we stopped dead. We pushed and worked in vain, and finally shoved back and moored to the bank, where we sat gloomily watching the tide fall. Nor were we consoled by the remark of a passing wherry-man that the tide would not fall more than an inch and a half—nor did it. So we went to bed in the clear starlight, hoping to get through in the morning.
March 13.

At daybreak the landscape was covered with another thick rime frost, and the thermometer stood at 25°. The rounds were grey with ice, and a wild swan was feeding close by in the river. After breakfast we sat watching the tide run down like a mill race, but the water did not lower more than two inches, so we spent the day in watching a man and his son cut up and truss a haystack opposite. In the evening we sang songs.

March 14.

On Saturday the water had fallen a little, so we determined to try once again. Leaving the jolly behind, we shoved into the narrow throat of the bridge, the tide running down strongly. The Maid went through till she was stopped by the middle of the cabin, when we pushed in vain. Then we tried pushing her askew and then righting her. By repeating this manoeuvre several times we got the widest part of the vessel through, when we placed our backs against the bridge and pushed together in spells, forcing her inch by inch, and the longer we worked the quicker she went, until with a final effort we shoved clear and floated free, cheering as we brought up to the shore. After recovering the jolly-boat and hoisting, we sailed in the bright sunshine past a rookery built on some low alders scarce three feet high, turned into the river, where we sailed before the wind to South Walsham Dike, into which we turned, bringing up on the broad, disturbing a flock of tufted duck as we anchored.
CHAPTER XXXVI.

ON SOUTH WALSHAM BROAD.

"I, the invincible;
March, the earth-shaker;
March, the sea-lifter;
March, the sky-render;
March, the lion-throated."

J. V. Crawford: March.

SOUTH WALSHAM may be called the garden of the broads in the height of summertime, when it is gay with lily-blooms, iris, and willow herb; but all that is changed in winter.

I went to call on some acquaintances, finding one friend a perfect wreck, which had a saddening effect, and reminded me it is always dangerous to cross an old trail. When I returned, I saw a reed pheasant, the first I have ever seen on this broad. In the afternoon, I found the peewits on the marshes were tumbling about and crying as they do in the courting season. It was evident they would pair before long. As I returned and stood watching a snipe drumming, a huge flock of redpoles flew over to the alder carrs, filling the air with their chatterings.

March 15.

Sunday was a spring-like day, much to the disappointment of some men in an old wherry, who had come up the previous night from Yarmouth, hoping to get a cargo of ice. They informed us three wherries had got good loads on the Friday night.

In the afternoon, a loafer, drunk as his topsail sheet block,
came to the shore and gazed upon us, finally disappearing muttering unintelligible sounds.

March 16.

The tufted duck still frequented the broad, allowing us to approach quite close, for shooting had gone out, and the reed-cutters had left off work, for the young colts were peeping above the black silt, and the yellow gladen shoots bristled above water like pike points. I had a desire to explore some reed hovers, but it proved risky work, for these quaking swamps were full of holes. However, by walking only on the stubbs we escaped the holes. When I returned to the boat, I found a fresh-looking man, who wished “to try my skill,” as he expressed it. He showed me his lip, and remarked—“I think that’s diptera.”

Alas! it proved to be epithelioma. I did not care to tell this hard-working man the truth, and when he offered me a fee for my “skill,” I was sorely troubled. I recommended him to go to the hospital at once, and it was a sad sight to see him step ashore, saying cheerily, “I suppose they’ll soon put that right,” for I saw a doomed man pass between me and the light.

After dinner I went to examine two worthless portraits that a village tradesman had bought at a sale, thinking they were by Gainsborough. He had paid fifty shillings for the pair, but the trash was not worth one. He paid me with heads of celery, and they were worth their weight in gold to us, for we had had no vegetables except a few old potatoes for weeks. As I came home I heard a partridge calling, and near by a man was cutting hay for his cattle, with short, sharp, crisp sounds. All round the wild duck were calling as we went to sleep.

March 17.

In the morning we found another rime frost. I got up at sunrise—getting into the boat at 5.25 with the shadow of the night still upon everything. I pushed off on to the broad, where I could see a bar of light in the east. The
thrushes were already singing in the plantings—indeed, I had heard them before I turned out; and on the broad, coots and water-hens were shrieking and chasing each other. Suddenly the air was filled with a hoarse low chatter from a rookery on the left. They were chanting their matins, crooning together as with one voice, hailing the morning with their hoarse music. Since they were invisible, their voices sounded most mysterious, reminding me of the sounds arising from a swamp of frogs in early spring. Suddenly they came flying out of the wood croaking with many voices, amongst which were the sharper, shriller cries of jackdaws, breaking the stillness of the dawn. I think this mighty flock of birds came to inspect me, for they merely flew across the broad, alighting on some trees behind my boat, when their voices gradually became silent. For a few moments you could have heard a pin drop, then a calf lowed in a house against the yellow light in the sky, a cock crew, and a turkey-cock gobbled in a farmyard across the water. Immediately some ringdoves began to coo in a holly tree, and as I paddled across the broad, the flock of tufted duck swam away to the reed, examining me anxiously, but I rowed on without putting them up, flushing a mallard at the mouth of a dike, and hearing a cock- pheasant challenging in the planting. As I looked on the scene, the still face of the broad was ruffled by a slight breeze, and the tufted duck flew up, circling round like teal, as if they wished to alight again in the same spot. Finally they flew away. An old grey crow sat on a tree eyeing me suspiciously, and as I drew near he jumped from his perch, breaking the rotten branch upon which he had been perched. It fell with a splash into the water. As I rowed down the dike, I could hear puits and peewits calling on my right, and on the distant marshes sounded the long melancholy whistles of the red-shank. The yellow disc of the sun began to show itself, and immediately the air was filled with song. The orb brightened, and the dark night mists cleared away, discovering a wherry sailing in the river.

In the afternoon I went casting à la Nottingham in a south-east breeze, as our larder was low. Besides the usual
four pike, which usually fall to my lot on such occasions, I caught with the spoon a large full perch weighing 3 lbs., and measuring 16½ inches; but though he was sluggish, and gave no sport, he made a splendid fish for dinner.

On Thursday we had a return of snow-squalls, and the sun went down in a sky of white clouds resembling ice-floes floating in a blue sea. After sunset, the broad seemed alive with the cries of wild birds; great crested grebe, redshanks, coots, pheasants, and water-hens all gave voice. As the moon arose we witnessed a most extraordinary phenomenon; the dome of the sky was covered with irregular clouds resembling cotton wool, floating on a dark blue sky sown with brightly shining stars. These small clouds looked like half thawed snow floating on ice. The whole sky from the zenith to the horizon was piebald. Still there was sufficient light for a gardener to work planting his seeds, for Norfolk peasants say that plants flourish best when sown in a growing moon.

On Friday I rowed to St. Benet's Abbey and walked over the marshes, meeting with a beautiful maiden digging Lent-lily roots. In the distance I mistook her for an old "witchcraft" gathering herbs, but as I approached the magnificent lines of her body undeceived me. After some conversation I found that in days gone by she had served us as a model, but she had grown out of all remembrance into a beautiful maiden. I asked her if she had been to service.

"No; I have never been out of the smoke of my mother's chimley," she answered simply. Her father was working in a neighbouring ditch, and she laughed heartily and simply
when I told her he would think she was making love. Verily
the simplest women are complex problems.

March 21.

On Saturday we had another rime frost, followed by NE.
winds and snow-squalls which lasted all day, confining us to
the ship. After dinner, as we sat in the cabin smoking, we
heard a rough cry—"Maid of the Mist, ahoy!"
I went to the window and opened it, but could see no one
in the dark for some minutes—the moon was not yet up.
"Ay! ay!" I shouted; "who's there?"
"Captain H—— of the Ocean Wave."
"Good Lord! where did you drop from?"
"Ha! ha!" laughed the Viking, and came aboard with
his wife at nine o'clock at night. They were both shivering
with cold, for they had been out all day in the north-easter
and snow driving and rowing about the rivers inquiring for
us. We had a merry supper and bowl of punch, and when
they went to some rooms I managed to get, it was freezing
hard, so that the thermometer registered seven degrees of
frost, and the dikes were laid.

March 2.

Next morning the Viking said smilingly—"I thought I
should have had to call you in the night."
"Why?"
"We thought a young Viking was coming, ha, ha!"

After breakfast we started for Thurne, the Viking taking
the sheet, while Jim sat forward with his concertina, which
we accompanied with songs. The marshes were still bare in
places, but the hillocks and tussocks of grass had recovered—
they were emerald. It began to snow before we anchored
at Thurne, where we had to break the ice, making a dock for
our boat. The Viking and his wife had come to pay a fare-
well visit, for they were on the eve of sailing for Norway, so
we had a merry day with yarns and festivities, surrounded
by marshes alive with flocks of starlings, linnets, peewits,
golden plover, rooks, and crows feeding amongst the hoggets
(one year old lambs) just turned off to marsh. The Viking’s final story that night was about a man who was once complimented upon being a great liar, whereupon he answered simply—“Oh, I am not nearly so great a liar as I was once!”

The Viking and his wife bade us farewell early next morning, driving off amid cheers and shouts of Gamle Norge.

March 23.

The day after, we started with a south-west breeze for Somerton Broad, where my friend’s boat the Electra was lying. We sailed through the flat marshland, alive with birds, shot Heigham Bridge, and went on, glad to leave behind us the ugly modern houses clustering round that fine old bridge. Turning into the narrow Dungeon Dike, we sailed on to Somerton Broad, where we found Dick mooring his house-boat, for the wind had broken her loose. He looked very white and ill, for he had nearly died of rheumatism at Christmas, for such is the price true lovers of the broads must pay their mistress. The dilettante, fine-weatherflirts, carried about in summer, know little of the charm of these waters, and indeed it would not be wise for many of them to seek a closer acquaintance, for the grave would be their reward. It requires men to live on these waters at all seasons, and even they must pay for it sooner or later with many an ache or pain. We moored our boats within fifty yards of each other, and sat down to lunch.
CHAPTER XXXVII.

OLD FRIENDS ON SOMERTON BROAD.

"Bold, blustering Boreas from the heights
Of icy hills, where Esquimaux
Live through the weary winter nights
Lit by the weird auroral lights
As pallid as the snow."—J. E. LOGAN: The Winds.

March 21.

SOMERTON Broad, with its reed-bed and trees, makes a picturesque spot in midsummer, but the narrow Dungeon Dike makes the water difficult of approach, so this broad is not so frequently visited as the others, and indeed I do not think a visit will repay the ordinary tourist.

After lunch, we walked to the squalid town of Winterton in search of fish and vegetables. We were vegetable-starved, and when I managed to get a little basket of turnip-tops, my mouth watered as if contemplating some luscious fruit. On our way we passed farmers harrowing and ploughing, the unkempt shaggy horses telling black on the ragged marshes against the gleaming sand-hills. We passed through some woods, resounding with singing tom-tits, robins, blue-tits, mavisés, coal-tits, and chaffinches: above all these songsters some ringdoves could be heard. All the boys at Winterton seemed to wear sou'-wester and tanned slops. It was very quaint to see these urchins playing marbles in their seaman's dress. On the beach the villagers were breaking up a wreck, the Elizabeth, a bily-boy. Twenty-six men were carrying a chain cable walking in twos from the wreck to the sand-hills. On our return I pointed out some
beds of young nettles, remarking to Jim they were good to eat.

"I dunno how to cook 'em, sir," he replied. He did not like the idea of gathering them.

As we went aboard, we startled a flock of teal and red-shanks from the marsh.

March 25.

In the night I heard several snipe scaping, and peewits and red-shanks flying over. The wind arose, scattering the gladen roots in the water, some of them looking like fangs of drawn teeth as they floated on the surface. After breakfast, I explored the course of the old river—the Old Hundred Stream, that used to lead to the sea. We traced it to a delta by the sand-hills. Round about the soil was poor, the naked stunted hawthorns looking very black and ragged, as did the sandy marsh, when contrasted with the gleaming sand-dunes. The vegetation hereabouts looked a dull green and grey—everything had a dishevelled appearance, and was bathed in a murky atmosphere. The landscape looked pinched and sour, as if the sand-hills were ever-threatening sea-waves ready to swallow it up. The sails and passing funnels peeping over the tops of the dunes increased this impression.

I noticed several birds behaving as though pairing; I am sure several paired off in the warm days of February, but when the cold March came they separated and collected into flocks, and had just begun to pair again. As we returned we startled several sluggish-looking pike in the dikes. All round were clouds of smoke rising from smouldering heaps of spear-grass, and the air was full of the wailings of young lambs feeding by the side of the ewes on the rough marshes. They lie here by day and night whilst the shepherd sits watching the stars and listening to the melancholy cries of the moor-fowl.
March 26.

On Thursday another March gale roared through the trees, bringing snow-squalls.

"March is going to squall itself out," said Jim.

Suddenly in the middle of the gale we heard the rumble of thunder; the wind dropped and sank to a calm like magic, but ere long fresh squalls came scudding across the marshes telling a pale lilac against the violet sky, a background which made the sand-hills look hard, wan, and sickly white. We were sheltering behind a hawthorn-tree, when some peewits began to tumble and cry as though they had eggs. I noticed Jim quietly digging his heel into the earth. I surprised him in the act of taking a mark, and chaffed him, for like Thoreau's Indian companion, he was very loath to betray any of his woodcraft. On examination we found the peewits were "scrabbing" holes near a man who was hidden behind a hurdle watching for crows. Near him was a tethered hoodie that had been winged. As we returned the gleams of March were all around us—flashing clouds, shining steeples, bright roofs, staring white houses, bright rick tops, flashing birds, all bright against a dark and frowning background—that is March. A large flock of grey plover were flying before a coming squall as we returned to our boat full of vigour and the sense of exhilaration that accompanies a nor'-wester.

March 27.

On Good Friday the gale continued to rage, yet all the cottagers were busy gardening, as is the custom. Some tourists had turned out for a sail, and as I lay on some reeds watching some birds, the cockneys passed, attempting to tow their boat by attaching their lines amidships. It was an instructive and amusing sight. In the afternoon all devout Methodists walked in the teeth of the gale to a tea service of song held in the adjoining town. Dick and I brewed a bowl of punch after we had packed his pictures ready to send to the Academy.
It was a stormy night, blowing and raining and hailing. After breakfast Dick and I left with great rolls of canvas under our arms to walk to Martham, an interesting old town, where I deposited him and his canvases safe on a luggage train bound for London. On my return a great change had come over the fields. Everything looked greener, and the effects of the heavy rain were already visible. I found Jim sitting in his cabin looking miserably at the water.

"What is the matter?" I asked.
"My wife ain't writ to me lately."

A hen reed-bird alighted near the boat as I said—
"Oh, she've taken up with some other chap."

The reed-bird began to pick up crumbs.
"I don't care," said Jim; "I shan't write to her again."

In the afternoon the sky looked dead, and at night the wind went down. The smell of marsh gas was noticeable at the height of the gale; it nearly made us sick, and was no doubt raised by the agitation of the water by the wind.

This broad is filling up fast. Only twenty-five years ago wherries used to sail round the island, but now there is scarce water enough for a big jolly-boat to make the passage in summer. A gunner told me that the frost had turned up several pike, bream, and perch on the broad. At bed-time we could hear the roar of the sea—the weather was still at last.

March 29.

It squallled through the night, but stopped on Sunday morning, so we hoisted in a good nor'-west breeze; but before we started the wind blew stiff, and as we sailed across the broad we met a terrific hailstorm. In the Dungeon Dike I could scarce see to handle her, the hail stinging and cutting my face like a whip, filling all the depressions in my face with sludge. The Maid was all alive with her lee plankways under water. She was hard to turn round the abrupt bend into the river, but when she got round she
flew with the hailstorm behind her down to Kendal Dike, where we had to lower and quant in the teeth of the gale until we got on to the sounds, which were white with foam. We were now enabled to hoist and tack across these shallows, making a long board to windward and a short one to leeward, until we got to Narrow Ways, where the tacking became exciting, for we had to manoeuvre in a narrow channel scarce wider than the wherry. The wind was blowing so hard that I could not hear Jim speak as he stood forward ready to lower the peak. The ship creaked and groaned, every rope and stitch of canvas taut; but though we could not speak, we regarded each other with confidence, for we knew exactly what to do. At last we beat through that narrow difficult way, and sailed to our moorings in the Horsey District, where our sail came down with a rattle, when we made her up and settled in a snug little harbour for some months, for I had some special work to do, and wished to stay within sailing or walking distance of Dick.

The natives had several theories to account for our stay in that desolate country. One said I was doing "Summat for the engineers;" another, "I was land measuring;" a third, "I was arter something, but he didn’t know what;" a fourth, "That I was collecting birds;" but when I refused to buy their eggs and birds, they found that was wrong, and I did my work peacefully.
CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SPRING IN THE HORSEY DISTRICT.

"My view dreams o'er the rosy wastes, descrying
The reed-tops fret the solitary sky;
And all the air is tremulous to the cry
Of myriad frogs on mellow pipes replying."

C. G. D. Roberts: Frogs.

March 30.

Our first morning greeted us with three degrees of frost and a snow-covered ground—still the sand-hills gleamed below a dark fringe of marram. This was the last day of March—the minimum registered six degrees of frost, and the water round us was covered with ice. Throughout the day there were gusts and showers, though the sun seemed to hang on the sand-hills. A few birds were flying about through the heat rays that rolled across the marshland. Towards evening a calm settled on the face of the earth—March was going out like a lamb. The still warm air rejoiced the birds, and just before sunset tit-larks soared and sang, red-shanks called to each other on the slads, rails grunted, larks soared, snipe drummed, a heron flew across the disc of the sun, and flocks of midges hovered in the air. Suddenly we heard a sound—what was it?—a frog. The batrachian life of the swamps was awaking. A marshman told me he had heard the first three days ago, but it was evident from the few about that the winter had killed many. On the trees there was quite a green veil—spring was coming. After dusk a flock of widgeon flew towards the sea, the leader's note sounding like the voice of a rubber-doll. Afterwards a snipe called
"a-choho-choho"—a noise faintly resembling a man turning a badly-oiled grindstone.

April 1.

On the morning of April 1st the thermometer registered 10\(^\circ\) of frost. The March lamb had changed its mind, and April came with a rime frost white as snow, and the ice in the dikes a quarter of an inch thick. Yet we found a spawning pike and a swan building her nest amid the water-rushes. Near-by was a poacher's net set between two hovers to catch rudding pike—a three-pounder was already a captive. The day was lovely in colour, so we walked to the sand-hills. No painter has yet given us the faintest idea of the delicate colour of this district, nor ever will, for the effects are so evanescent and ethereal. As we lay on the sand-hills watching the sea, a dark, restless-eyed man seemed to spring from the hollow at our feet. In his hand was a huge clasp knife, and he sat down to eat bread and cheese.

"He ain't got his changes," said Jim, who knew him. So we moved on, leaving the silent man with evil eyes staring after us. As we walked by the shore we could detect the marshland peeping through the sand, for the dunes are working inland, leaving the marsh a square slab of black projecting into the sea. After a time we came upon a house built in the dunes and surrounded by wind-sculptured galleries, a romantic spot; but the loose sand was troublesome to the eyes. We walked along the crest of the hills to the ruins of Eccles Church, where it is said a service is held yearly in order that money may be claimed. Along the sandy path on the hill-tops we noticed the footprints of partridges, the spoor of rabbits, and the castings of hawks and owls. At the little village of Palling, nestling among the dunes, we found the coastguard leaning against a shed, asleep. Beyond Palling, a pair of desert wheatears led us to the dune-tops as we watched their actions. These rare birds are dignified and elegant. As we drew near Eccles the hills grew lumpier and the vegetation more
Spring in the Horsey District.

Variegated. Over the clumps of bramble and marram a flock of grey gulls were hunting like hawks. We found only the tower of Eccles Church remaining, inside of which a sandy heap was sculptured in a remarkable manner by the wind, which entered the door, flew round the tower, and out again, making a sand-screw on true mechanical principles. After studying this effect, we returned home by the wash of the sea, and arrived intoxicated by exercise, for of all your intoxicants none is so cheap and harmless as severe exertion.

April 5.

To-day we saw some bullfinches, several lily-buds, several pike spawning, and a male hen-harrier—all harbingers of spring. In the evening the frogs began their music, and perhaps the wildest sounds in these desolate regions are the voices of the swamp-frogs. As soon as the earth warms under the sun and the wind blows from the south, you may any nightfall hear their low croaking noise arising, as if from the bowels of the earth. If you look over the desolate marshes you see nothing, but if you examine carefully the low-lying water by a fringe of naked reed you may localise the sound; but suddenly it ceases, and begins again in another part of the marsh. Then you go to bed happy with spring fancies, and the next day, if the sun shine, and it is warm, you may walk down to the clear pools in the choked dikes, where you will see a splashing and discover frog’s spawn. There you may see them in the embraces of love rolling and tumbling in the clear pools and occasionally croaking; but they are very quick, and dive to the weedy bottom on your approach, leaving their spawn to look after itself. There you will see the pellets of life spring from the mud, floating in their hyaline albuminous bed, being nursed into life by the sun, and your mind will be filled with contentment, for when you see that sight spring has come. As I returned to the wherry I found Jacob, an old friend, planing a new mast for the jolly-boat. I watched him for some time, and it seemed to me that work in the open air did not seem work—
it seemed more dignified to plane a "yew-fir" in the face of Nature than in a cramped shop smelling of turpentine and glue-pots. Jacob had played many parts in life. He knew what words to whisper in the ear of a fractious horse, he could make a horse follow him like a dog, ay, he knew how to quiet a stallion on a roadway. . . .

"Yes, sir, I was once leading a vicious stallion, and though he was vicious, he kept pretty quiet for a time, then he got a bit rampy, so I cracked him behind the ear with my shillelagh—that's the place to hit 'em. That kept him quiet for a bit, but the artful owd willain watched his chance, and suddenly shot out his off foreleg and tried to stamp on my foot, and so I struck him a real warm 'un; but the warmint tried that again, so I got some—and rubbed on his snout, and he went quiet afterwards."

"Won't—do better?" I asked.

Jacob looked at me mysteriously, and answered with a smile—

"Perhaps."

April 9.

As I was at work three yellow wag-tails alighted near a pile of fresh horse-dung, and began to catch flies. There was one male and two females. I watched them for a long time flying gracefully up the dike following the horse. They are birds of delight, being the most beautiful and graceful of all British birds. The male looks a living flame of yellow as he flies elegantly, like a girl dancing, with graceful contractile flight showing his black and white tail spread fan-wise. Though poets have favoured our common birds, the yellow wag-tail has never had its poet: yet it is one of the most beautiful birds in the world, and his movements distinguished and graceful.

April 10.

Perhaps the gloomiest weather in England is that when an easterly or north-easterly wind accompanies rainy weather—
such days are hateful to all life; every bird creeps away and mopes.

April 11.

The easterly winds still continue, and the month bids fair to be as boisterous as March. The birds still keep in flocks, and are reluctant to pair. Spring comes on halting feet—yet the spring migration has begun, for yesterday I met two golden crested wrens in a hedgerow. They were very lively and singularly tame. They kept flying a few feet before me in the gorse bushes, calling each other with their delicate little voices, and at times allowing me to come within a yard of them. The hen bird was a homely little creature, and though the pair weighed but little over a hundred grains, these atoms had travelled from afar over stormy seas—great souls in little bodies.

An old boxer called on some business in the afternoon, and he was full of old fighting days at Norwich when Jim Mace was in his glory.

"Did you know him?"

"Know him? Yes; often had a go along with him."

"Well, what of him?"

"The quickest man you ever see, sir. For science there warn't one to touch him. His arms reached down to his knees. Put him in a mash, and no one could get nigh him—he'd a seven-foot guard; but lor'! he warn't no good in a room—many a countryman could do him in a room."

April 13.

The water fell so low that we lay on a hard green bottom. An old mill-man said this was the lowest tide he ever remembered. It was indeed a wonderful year. The river seemed to be always either empty of water or full of ice. Still spring was stealing on beneath the cold easterly winds, for the sun gained power daily. To-day the horses were turned on to
the marshes, much to the astonishment of the peewits. As Dick and I were lying on a bank sunning ourselves, there was a sudden flash overhead, and a kestrel struck down at his cap. He started up, and the bird seemed to flutter in his face before it discovered its mistake; the hawk had evidently seen his cap move in the grass from the other side of the wall, and mistaken it for a mouse. When we returned to the boat, a rat-catcher brought me some plover's eggs. He had found three nests, one lot set hard. I had a mind to get the full flavour of plover eggs, so I boiled some a short time, and some a quarter of an hour secundem artem, and some I fried. I ate them hot and cold, and came to the conclusion that they tasted not so good as a hen's egg. Those fried were insipid, whilst the cold hard-boiled, eaten with salad, Norfolk fashion, were also comparatively tasteless. I suppose these eggs are sought after on account of their clear gelatinous whites. They look pretty, too, in a dish. A snipe's egg alone tastes better than a good fresh, rich hen's egg, and I think I have tried every egg from a swan's to a sparrow's—birds of prey excepted. After nightfall a flock of curlew and a large flock of widgeon flew over: the last widgeon I heard; they were evidently on their way across the sea.

April 15.

Attracted by the mildness of the morning, I went for a walk. I found the first whirligigs (grypus natator) skating about on the water. When they saw me, they stopped their pranks and dived, resting on sprays of weed under water. When on the surface they seem to be fond of lying sluggishly head to head, which I take to be a form of courting. The dikes were full of toads floating sluggishly like crocodiles, with their heads just above water, many of them in the embraces of love. Other pairs were under water hanging to dead weed. As we walked through the marshes the midges began to be troublesome. We expected to find many pike spawning in the dikes, but the water was
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evidently too cold, and they were in the “deeps.” We came across a patch of bare land dotted with tufts of water-rush, proving it to have been an old broad. A man I know kept a boat there twenty years ago, and darted eels, having taken some a yard long, and now there was not water enough to float a toy-boat. It had been a “gladen-broad,” and they grow up quicker than the “reed-broads.” We startled some chaffinches and yellow wag-tails coming upon a bank bright with colt’s-foot and a dike ablaze with marsh marigolds. As we returned the wind shifted from west to north, then to east, and finally to south, giving us a most beautiful effect—a delicate harmony of grey and buff—the sky and the dried reed-covered marshland. This beautiful scene was enlivened by the first swallow who came flying in from the sea at 6.15 P.M.; the next day a friend at Reedham saw one at 6.30 A.M., mayhap the same bird. With the swallow the insects seemed to come from their hiding in the rush bottoms, moths sought our lamp, and a cockchafer boomed past after sunset, and yet the birds had not paired. To-day I saw a large flock of peewits and golden plover, and several flocks of greenfinches, chaffinches, and linnets, feeding on some newly-ploughed fields, all heedless of spring or love-making. The land-buntings were singing joyously in flocks, and yet we found a spray of blackthorn blossoming in a sheltered clump of grass, and the hedgerows were yellow with dandelions and gorse.

April 16.

The sand-hills attracted me to-day, and I followed the cry of the sea till I reached the dunes and nestled in a bed of marram. The sea was gorgeous in colour, full of ever-changing hues, but the liquid plains were not lonely to-day. Far as eye could reach were shrimpers, their prows pointed shorewards, all within gunshot of the shore. They were hauling their trawls, and ere long many let off their sheets and turned their prows homewards to Yarmouth. It was a wonderful sight as seen through my
wind-sculptured hollow in the sand-hills—the yellow beach below, overhead great bluish south-westerly clouds floated idly and gracefully, like the brown-sailed shrimpers on the many-coloured sea beneath. We returned to the boat, and were caught in a spring shower. On the way we met a cow, who first ran away from the rain, then stopped and turned her head to the storm, then once more turned tail with lowered head, but even that would not do, so round and round she went, finally raising her tail and galloping off towards a shed.

April 18.

Rain-squalls and gales all day. April was turning out a sad month; but when we could not get out there was something to be seen every day, which is always the case in spring. To-day, for example, we saw our first sand-martin. But it was a bore to get wet through every day, and to be constantly irritated by the wind; and as one heard the sand-pipers calling at dark, one longed for a quiet genial spring day.

April 21.

I sailed over to Dick's, finding several jewels on my way—perch spawn resembling lacework bracelets as they embraced the weeds.

We went for an excursion on some marshes. Jim was ahead, and I saw him return hastily, and burst through the reeds. We bobbed, and Jim came up, his face wreathed with laughter.

"I bested him," he whispered.

Some fellow was after him, so he had quietly jumped a broad dike with his quant as the man shouted—

"What are you doing here?"

But never a word spoke Jim, leaving the enemy looking foolishly at the edge of the dike.
SPRING IN THE HORSEY DISTRICT.

We sat laughing and listening to his foe breaking through the reed searching for one he would not find.

April 23.

The marshes by the sea were cut and smooth all ready for the flocks to graze. On some of the adjoining marshes they were compelled to burn the grass and rush. The stuff was too dead to eat, and would not do for litter, because the blades were dry and rotten. On several of the marshes rush-cutters were hard at work, for this dry weather is the most favourable for harvesting the crop, for though dry rush is harder to cut, it weathers quickly in this wind, and is soon fit for carting. We saw several rabbits feeding on the young corn.

April 24.

A little friend arrived in the night, a cock sedge-warbler, and took up his residence in the reeds by the boat, a demesne he never left all summer. He wakened me the first thing in the morning with his cheery little voice, and on going ashore I saw him sitting on a reed turning his bright eyes and striped head towards me. He was a happy little fellow, for blow high, blow low, come rain, come snow, by day and by night that little bird was always singing his little songs, and he had his trials too.

April 25.

We were favoured with another heavy rime frost, but still our little friend sang on, for he was still a bachelor—the hens had not come over yet.

April 30.

I was busily reading, when a man came up excitedly and said a huge bird was sitting on the notice board by
the broad. I turned my glasses, and there sure enough sat a bird that looked as big as an eagle. Instinctively seizing a rifle, Jim rowed me in the punt towards the bird, both of us lying flat as we approached. When we got within sixty yards, he espied us, turned his head leisurely away, stood lazily on tip-toe outstretching his wings, exposing his dark back, light head, and buff breast, then spreading his long powerful wings he launched into the air, throwing himself from his perch with a few short sharp screams, flying off sluggishly, beating low over the reeds like a barrier. On the adjoining marsh a pair of red-legs sprang up and chased him across the marsh to a post where he settled. Jim was disgusted that I did not shoot him.

"What for?" I asked.

"To stuff,"

"I'd as soon have to do with stuffed men and women as with stuffed birds," I replied. He couldn't understand this, for the natives are always taking eggs or killing birds for collectors whose vanity is delighted by glass-cases full of stuffed skins and drawers full of smelling egg-shells, all originally found and killed by the marshman, who are the men who should have the credit, if credit there be, for collecting them. I know of only one real collector who has frequented this district—that is, as I understand a collector. I refer to the late Mr. Booth, a man who lived out of doors in all weathers, and shot all his birds himself. He knew the habits of birds, too, in the best sense, and not in the foot-rule way; he was a true and profound naturalist and hardy sportsman.

The bird was an osprey. After his disappearance we examined the ground beneath the board, and found numerous scales and tails of rudd.
CHAPTER XXXIX.

MAY ON THE BROADS.

"The great buds swelled; among the pensive woods
The spirit of first flowers awoke, and flung
From buried faces their close-fitting hoods,
And listened to your piping till they fell,
The frail spring beauty, with her perfumed bell,
The wind flower, and the spotted adder tongue."

A. Lampman: The Frogs.

M

Y little sedge-warbler was singing, flying up,
then floating down like a great butterfly, settling in the reeds, when he began to whistle
and "chuck, chuck, chuck, chuck, chuck, chuck, chuck," changing his note to a grasshopper-like clicking, after which followed more
chucks, when he wound up with a low "wheet, wheet,"
whereupon he flew up into the air again, happy little fellow,
and spreading out his wings sailed down into the reed-bed. After a time he climbed up a stalk, and I began to whistle to him, whereupon he tried to imitate me, rolling
his first notes like the noise made by unwinding a steel
measure. I soon saw why he was so joyous—his wife, a
small brown bird, sitting shyly in the reed, had arrived.

Though May began so happily, I witnessed a tragedy
that morning. I had been watching a female marsh-
harrier hunting along the ronds for eggs and young birds,
until she came to the gladen on the broad, over which
she flew sluggishly, suddenly dropping down into the stuff.
I ran up to the wall and peeped over, but there was nothing
in sight, and no sound save the water lapping on the stones.
For a long time I looked in vain for the marsh-harrier in
the bed of old gladen. It was blowing hard from the S.W.
at the time, when suddenly beyond the rond I heard the air rent with the most distressed cries, coming from a clump of gladen about thirty yards from me. The shrieks were human-like in their agony and intensity, as any one who has heard the voice of a water-hen in distress can testify. Then I knew where my friend was. Hastily pushing to the spot in a marsh-boat, I heard a rustle in the gladen, and the wicked black thief flew up and disappeared over the water. We had caught her yellow-billed, for on pushing in a little further we found the water-hen's nest. The nest itself was undisturbed, but three eggs had been broken and partly devoured. One shell was perfectly empty and crumpled up, the second shell was half full, and the third egg nearly empty. Each egg had been broken by the harrier's bill tapping it on the side near the big end, cutting a circular hole about three-quarters of an inch in diameter with serrated edges. The eggs were quite fresh, so I turned out the broken shells, leaving the remainder to console the agonised mother, who was still crying in the reed.

May 2.

The gale in which I had witnessed this tragedy blew stronger in the night, yet my little friend was singing joyously next morning, for this little fellow, it would seem, has the bravest heart of all the birds, though his voice at times is like that of a hoarse canary. I greeted him with my morning whistle, and he flew up into the air and dropped gracefully into the reed.

As I was returning from the village I saw a beautiful male blue-headed wag-tail feeding by the water, the sun shining brightly on his magnificent dress. As I approached he flew off quickly, for they are shyer birds than the yellow wag-tails. A few days after, as I returned to the wherry, Jim presented me mysteriously with a card-board box. Upon opening the parcel, I found the body of the blue-headed wag-tail. They are rare in this district, so Jim had shot him. I only saw four cock blue-headed wag-tails and one hen bird all summer. They are bright creatures in the desolate landscape.
May 3.

I walked to the village to-day. The hedges were decorated with the white petals of blackthorn set in green frames of bramble, may, and elder, against a palpitating blue sky. Spring is the decorative season of the year. Everywhere are to be found natural decorative panels, such as Hokusai might have composed. At this season even the dikes are picturesque, slabs fretted with white flowers of the water crow's-foot and bordered with blue pimpernel and groundsel. 'Mid this charming decorative gallery, the soft voices of white-throats, willow-warblers, buntings, and linnets sounded melodiously. As we returned, we found an old hen's nest built in the hedge quite a quarter of a mile away from the farm. A few yards away from the nest was the lady herself, with ruffled feathers, clucking with vexation.

May 4.

I spent the day in a coppice by the water's edge. The woodland was full of sweet scents, and the air warm and love compelling, but alas! I found no nymphs wandering through the trees in the beautiful soft light—nothing but the greenish-brown, lichen-dusted willow stoles, their greenish grey leaves rustled softly against the blue sky overhead. Some chaffinches were flirting. They were in full plumage, and looked gay indeed, as two cocks darted about chasing a hen through the soft transfused light among the willows. They chased each other round and round, the hen bird following them, watching this strange rivalry. They rested at intervals on a willow branch, crying "spink, spink, spink," then they whirled off again to alight on an oak, where they sang their short melodious song with its abrupt and decisive ending—the hen answered with lowered voice and less decisive finish. Sinking into the damp moss to enjoy these wild wood notes, I soon espied some willow wrens working about the willows, fluttering over the branches catching insects. Their delightful song has a soft sucking sound mingled with mellow whistlings, songs in perfect harmony with the soft music of the breezes sighing through the willow leaves. These birds are very careful hunters, working up and down
each tree examining every bit of bark. As I moved to get a better view, a blackbird heard me crack a rotten stick, and flew off with loud screams. I do not like the blackbird; he is a noisy, excitable person, with some pretensions to being a songster, but there is something decidedly vulgar about him. I had just decided that he was the type of a certain aggressive social class, when a little sedge-warbler burst out singing vociferously at the top of a little thorn-tree by my side, his loud song quite drowning the cries of the lapwings coming over the marshes. I crawled over the stuff and got within two yards of him, and lay there watching his little throat pulsating with song as he called his mate.

Late in the afternoon we left the coppice with regret, but was consoled in the evening by hearing the insect-like voice of the grasshopper-warblers on the marshes—the first we had heard this season.

May 6.

As I was rowing past some reed-beds, watching the sandmartins, I heard my first reed-warbler. He has a more musical and sweeter note than the sedge-warbler, and the "side" of a professional musician; he is not spontaneous, like my little friend. Presently I saw him; he had evidently arrived the night before with a fixed idea of courting and bringing up his family. Could he have foreseen the dreadful weather in store, perhaps he would have gone further afield.

May 7.

The east wind suddenly changed to S.W., and a beautiful fresh spring morning greeted me on turning out early to go fishing for tench. As we walked through the bright country roads, the hedges were white with blackthorn, and the "May" was covered with buds and alive with white throats. Children were carrying breakfast to the labourers afield, some clad in thin spring dresses as brightly coloured as the king-cups in the ditches. We passed several field hands sitting on rollers, harrows, and heaps of earth breakfasting, whilst the great plough-horses stood by resting, and the women weeders, their heads swathed in linen to protect them from the sun,
were pouring out drink for the men. Further on some men were hoeing beans.

In several cottage gardens the cherry and plum trees were ablaze with white blossoms, and at their feet bloomed violets and primroses. The landscape was getting covered, and though the full candid beauty of June was not yet visible, still spring was coming on brightly and cheerily, for the baldness of the earlier part of the season had gone—even the fields were green with new corn, and only the mangold ridges were bare. The hedges were full of the songs of buntings, warblers, and tits, all singing merrily as they courted and wove their nests in the green screened hedge-rows, for the birds delay building until the cottages and farmsteads are hidden by greenery.

An old fisherman and I trudged along the road, meeting tumbrils laden with marsh-stuff, and passing women sitting at their cottage door singing to their babies, whilst their husbands ploughed in the neighbouring fields, whence you could hear their “wush” and “kepyar” resounding through the still morning air.

Arriving at the old reed-thatched boat-house, we crushed the cuckoo flowers as we launched an old marsh-boat into the dike. We quanted down a palisade of reed to the open water, pushing aside the masses of flowering water-ranunculus, and rocking the yellow king-cups by the shore, arriving at the haunt of the tench—a shallow piece of water with little weed growing on the bottom, where a sparse crop of reed and bolder stood like dead sentinels—the yellow bolders were so dry that when broken they snapped off like a clay-pipe stem. In this desert of dead stuff were oases of pond weed and lily leaves. Upon the lily leaves nestled numerous bronze, sluggish-looking beetles, some already devouring the great heart-shaped leaves. In the shallower places a few cat’s-tails grew.

As we pushed through the stuff, the water was clouded with mud, and felt hot to the hand. “A good day to bring ’em up,” muttered the old fisherman. When we got to the denser parts of the swamp, we were terribly harassed by midges, swarms of them rising from the dead plants and
water as we pushed along. Suddenly a pike started off, rattling the reed-stalks as he rushed—we knew him to be a pike, for bream dart away more sluggishly, and do not go so far; but we took no notice of pike or bream, for we were after tench, the sole of fresh water. We soon fell in with some of our quarry, knowing them by their short runs and bubbles. The old fisherman now got more stealthy, moving along almost silently. When he sighted a tench, he quanted softly up to the lump of stuff where it had stopped, and kneeling on the bottom of the boat, thrust his long white arm gently into the water, groping about for a moment or two, and bringing a rich brown tench to the surface, throwing it upon the bottom boards of his boat. In this plight these fish nearly always turn on their stomachs and gasp for air for a few minutes, when they turn on their sides and begin beating the boards in their death-throes, behaving like ordinary fish. We fished for an hour, and got a nice lot of rich, lusty tench, the heaviest weighing 2\(\frac{1}{2}\) lbs.

As we walked home, the old man told me that forty years ago the reed swamps where we had fished were all clear water. "Come twenty years they'll be mash mowing there," he said regretfully, as he plucked some sweet gale.

We fried the tench for dinner, and found them delicious; they were in prime condition. I have often eaten trout and salmon that could not compare with these fish.

We were lulled to sleep that night by the frogs.

May 11.

One morning soon afterwards I awoke long before dawn, and listened to the birds as they began to sing. The first was the lark, which sang long before daybreak; he was followed by a cuckoo; and then my little friend took up the chant, singing with tremendous energy to the moon; then some red-legs joined; after them my kettle; and lastly, ourselves.

May 13.

The water around our ship had become a beautiful mosaic pavement, resembling bluestone set with mosaics of red pondweed in a fantastic pattern. The richness and delicacy of
colour of this watery floor was marvellous—no cathedral ever had such a pavement.

As it was my birthday, Dick and his wife came over to dine, and we brewed a bowl of punch and sat smoking with the reed-warblers and sedge-warblers singing all round us, the warm night air rustling the reeds against our windows.

May 14.

We walked by the broad in a northerly wind—the water-colourist’s wind—the wind that brings out the intense local colour of the landscape. The grass was as bright as paint, the reeds brilliant, the clouds flecky and small, and the general brightness intense, recalling Italian weather. The colour is altogether richer, brighter, gayer than a bright east wind effect, though they resemble each other in hardness, and both smack of the chromo-lithograph.

I picked up an old snake’s slough, and a marshman saw me carrying it.

“What you going to do with that, sir?”

“Nothing.”

“That’s good for drawing points (thorns) out of your hand.”

“Oh.”

“Yes; but you must draw ‘em out from the side they go in at, not from t’other side.

“I’ll remember,” I replied.

May 15.

I met a strange sybil to-day, and the conversation turned upon evil reports of the doings of a comely mawther. Her virtue was a subject for dispute.

“She virtuous; she?” said the old sybil, turning away with disgust; “why, look into her eyes!”

“Her eyes; why?”

“Yes; her eyes! Don’t you know that? You can allus tell whether a man has lost his wertu; but you can only tell a woman if she han’t had no child, for as the child come the mark go.”

“How so?”
"Well, look here; you can see it's true for yourself. Do you look into any gel's eye you know haven't been virtuous, and see if you don't find a ——."

"And a man?"

"Look for a ——."

"I will," I said; and I have done so ever since, but I am not quite prepared to accept the old beldame's theory. . . .

May 10.

A good fellow lives near me. He is fond of good Saxon potations on market days, often returning home well-primed and more jovial than ever. From one of these excursions he brought on his cart half an ox for his wife's larder. She is surprised at nothing he does, but last night he came in heavy and merry, and threw a whole sheep's carcase on to the floor—he had brought it from market.

"There, missus, do you cut me two chops at once; I'm hungry."

"No; I 'on't, you old fool!"

"Go on—cut the chops, and salt the rest."

"Not I—salt mutton?" she cried; be you crazy?"

She went and examined the carcase, and found it maggoty.

"It's maggoty," she cried. "Here's some cold pork; sit you down to supper."

On the following Monday this generous provider drove back with the carcase, and got his money returned.

White sails on the river heralded Whitsuntide. A friend came from London to spend three days. It rained and hailed all the time, and on Sunday the ground was covered with snow. On Sunday morning the sky was purple all round us, and we seemed to be in the peaceful centre of a cyclone with hailstorms raging all round the horizon. The intense purple of the sky made the white snowy ground look pallid and unnatural—indeed, the smoke from the villages and farmsteads seemed to hang like an aureole over them. In the afternoon the squalls increased, and more snow fell. . . .
Whit Monday found the ground again covered with snow. Still my little friend sang cheerily in the reeds, though a hungry weasel had made his hole on the bank; we saw his spoor to-day.

After the snow came rain, so we spent the day in preparing a festive dinner as a consolation—Voilà le menu!

**Hors d'œuvres.**
Water cress from the broad.

**First Course.**
New potatoes and plover's eggs.

**Second Course.**
Fried tench and spinach.

**Third Course.**
Grilled bream—fried bream's roe.

**Fourth Course.**
Stewed rhubarb and jelly à la Maid of the Mist.

**Fifth Course.**
Salade à la Capriseuse (made from lemons recently sent from that island by a friend).

**Sixth Course.**
Café à la Wherryman—Cigarro de Habana.

**Anti-rain.**
Punch Royale.

On Monday night the water froze all round us, the thermometer falling to 26°, and my friend left on Tuesday in a wonderful hurry, "for fear of being frozen up,"
said. But the little sedge-warbler sang as loudly as ever. Death alone would silence him.

I notice that all Londoners, when they arrive in the country, look pale, white, and soft; their features are not clear cut like a countryman's. An unhealthy man looks like a clay model, done by a mediocre characterless sculptor, for all the sharp characteristics of the features are smeared over. The citizen's walk, too, is sluggish, and his gait shuffling, not springy, like a countryman's.

May 26.

I saw some trees by the sea to-day without a leaf—so tardy is the season...

I sailed down to the inn with a friend, who had just returned from Mexico, having previously spent three years in Lagos. I could not help remarking the caution with which he walked through the swamps. He couldn't shake off a habit so necessary for self-preservation in those hot countries.

"You couldn't live in such a place as this in Africa or Mexico," he said. "The alligators would soon get you."

One night he was looking out of the door, when a rat plunged into the water.

He started back, and then laughed.

"Lord! I thought for the moment it was an alligator."

When we reached the inn, we saw a man sleeping, his face to the grass, dead drunk.

"Who's that?" I asked.

"Kolly."

"What's he doing?"

"Lying on his belly."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Just been left forty pound."

"Ah!"

Presently he moved, got up on all fours, and began to reach for his money, cursing and swearing like a bargee. He had treated all the landlord's children to sweets and toys, paid for drinks for all his friends, had drunk all he could himself, but disease overtook him. One night he
jumped out of his seat, struck the ceiling with his fist, swore, turned yellow, and fell ill—his liver gave way, but he didn't die! Oh no! . . .

May 23.

Our little sedge-warbler has been married for several days; he is quieter now. The pair are building their nest in the reeds behind a screen of rush; his wife is a shy, homely little creature, but they seem very happy. I heard something crying in the weasel's grip last night. . . .

May 29.

One day at the end of May I started to sail with my African friend down a narrow cut within the sand-hills to Sea Palling. It is always pleasant to sail with a light breeze in these narrow water-ways, where you must handle your boat as if it were a thing of silk and threads, especially if the tide be against you. I remember once taking an hour and three quarters to tack through the narrow Dungeon Dike against the tide—the dike is about two hundred yards long and nineteen feet wide. We had a good breeze, however, to-day, when any one could sail, and as we sped across the broad we peered into the lambs' tails in vain, looking for rudding bream or roach, but we saw nothing on the water except some gulls washing themselves. As we entered the cut we saw a peewit tumbling, and two harriers shaling about on the look-out for young rabbits in the warren. A small farmstead nestled within the sand-hills, over the tops of which we could see the sails of passing colliers. Beyond Waxham, we passed a primitive and cumbersome bridge, and sailed down the cut, as straight as a ruler, turning at the end into a brick-yard, whence we walked to Sea Palling and lunched on shrimps. On our return we had a head wind all the way, and as we sailed along we disturbed linnets in the gorse and land-buntings singing on bramble sprays.

As we drew near home the wind dropped, and we could hardly hear the boat move through the water. The river banks were lush with richly-coloured wild flowers—there were clumps of reed with sedge-warblers singing thereon,
panels of green gladen with swans swimming before them, groups of sallows with sleeping pendulous catkins drooping in the evening light, flocks of buntings resting on their branches. Then we came upon a long panel of flowering sedge, rich with gold and black tassels reflected in the still water, enlivened by clumps of delicate cuckoo flowers standing timidly on the shore, like reluctant maidens peeping into the river. As we glided past on our watery highway, rich with red mosaic work and blue with reflected sky, every leaf and tint of colour was reflected in the river, and down in the blue depths could be seen an imaginary sedge-warbler with palpitating throat singing in the subaqueous garden, so indissoluble was the real landscape and its water mirror. The stillness was so intense that a plunging vole sounded harsh. Altogether it was a most delicate panorama, far beyond the wildest dreams of any painter, over which the sky was flecked with large delicately coloured clouds, through which, now and again, a snipe drummed or a peewit flashed.

We sat out late that night listening to the chorus of the frogs.

May 31.

On the last Sunday in May the landscape was wrapped in a dismal sea fog, through which the melancholy church bells and warning fog-horns at sea sounded gloomily, but still my little friend sang cheerily. During the day we heard some signal guns firing at the lightship, and so ended May in a cold and murky landscape.
CHAPTER XL.

JUNE ON THE BROADS.

"But skies are blue, and flowers bloom,
And roses breathe the old perfume,
And hear the murmuring of the trees
In all of lovelier mysteries;—
And maybe now she hears my song
Pouring the summer hills along,
Listens with joy that still to thee
Remain the summer-time and me."

E. W. Thomson: In June.

June 1.

My friend looked out of his window before
dawn, grunted, and said, "Looks like a
jolly November morning," and lay down
again to sleep. But I could hear my
little friend singing lustily. After break-
fast, I went to look at his nest, finished the
day before, and found the first egg—green as the sedge,
and marked with delicate hair-like streaks the colour of
sedge-flower. As I drew near, they were both lurking
about the nest—the cock flew up singing, and dropping as
usual into the reed.

After breakfast, Jim came in in a great state of excite-
ment; he had captured a young pike ten and a half inches
long, weighing three ounces, in the act of swallowing a
young perch measuring seven inches long and weighing
one and three quarter ounces. Both were alive when he
brought them into the cabin—two inches of the perch's
head were down the pike's throat. This piece of greed
would have proved fatal to both had they been left in the
water.

In the evening the wind turned to the east. . . .
June 2.

I intended visiting a classical grove this morning, so we started early through a lane melodious with white throats and bright with broad-petalled, black-anthered hawthorn flowers, mingled with a smaller kind of "May" with waxy green centres and delicate pink anthers. As we walked through the beautiful lane, the big hawthorn buds hanging against the sky reminded me of swelling orange flowers. We turned down a loke ablaze with broom, and reached a wet marsh, once a river bed, but now white with flowering cotton grasses, through which we walked knee deep in water, where flourished tussocks of sedge and straggling reed patches. We startled some reed-bunting from their scribbled eggs. After passing through this swampy garden we came upon the artistically perfect little plantation, standing alone like a sacred grove in the middle of the marshes. As you approach, its outlines and proportions are as perfect as those of a Greek temple; the grove of Egeria, as I saw it, is in no way to be compared with this coppice. Within the borders there was peace and beauty indescribable; the trees were mostly young birch and beech, and there was no undergrowth, so that you could walk on the springy turf as on a temple floor. These young saplings grew in fantastic forms, and many of them were decorated with flowering honeysuckle. Still they were not too close together, and left open patches where honeysuckle and sedge grew, standing like altars and bowers to the great god Pan. The grove was surrounded by a thick hedge of sedge, beyond which stretched the rushy wastes of marsh. We lay down on the turf contemplating this perfect little planting, when we found a missel-thrush had chosen the grove as her home. When disturbed, she flew off, and we saw she had three fresh eggs in her cradle. A turtle-dove, too, was building in a beautiful thorn-tree, and two ringdoves flew into the planting, but disappeared when they saw us. As we lay watching the thrush, a stampede of horse was borne upon the ear. They came galloping up to the planting, crashing through the sedge border; but when they saw us they galloped back like a riderless troop of cavalry. After a smoke, we left the little
bower and returned by the cotton grass swamp, walking where wherries used to sail in former days. My little friend’s wife laid her fourth egg to-day.

June 5.

I was awakened in the night by the rain dripping on to my nose. Outside it was pouring; still my little friend was singing. In the morning I found his little wife had laid her fifth egg and had begun to sit, whereupon he seemed to grow more lively, and to sing as in his bachelor days. As I went up to the nest she crept off sluggishly into the stuff like a mouse. He was never very far off, but to be seen round about sitting upon a reed-stalk singing. The dreariness of a wet day afloat was relieved by the receipt of a Shetland newspaper from the Viking, by which I saw that the young Viking that came near to being born on my ship, and who was born in a railway carriage, was already in training for a sailor—as witness.

An Adventurous Voyage.

“On Monday the boat Silvery Wave—H——, Master—bound from Lowestoft to Arendal, Norway, put into Lerwick Harbour in a disabled condition. The boat—which is the same size as our ordinary big fishing-boats—had been purchased by the master at Lowestoft, with a view to selling her at Norway. On the 7th May she left Lowestoft, the only persons on board being the master and a sailor, and the master’s wife and child. The boat had reached the coast of Norway, when she was driven off again by violent weather, in the course of which the mizen mast was carried away, and they were obliged to run before the wind. Lerwick was reached, as above stated, on Monday, after being eleven days at sea. The master is a hardy Norseman, sailing Captain out of London. He has taken several of these boats across to Norway in the same fashion, and last year in March, during the heavy weather which then
prevailed, he had a somewhat similar experience, being several weeks at sea. He seems to think nothing of the voyage, but this time he admits he was certainly undermanned. The master's wife is a native of London, and the child is only seven weeks old; but both apparently are quite enjoying the voyage, which is certainly a risky one with such a small crew."

June 6.

The next day the wind blew from the east, and still the rain continued, fulfilling the popular theory that if it rain with the wind in that quarter, it will continue to do so for twelve hours or for some multiple of twelve hours. However, the rain seemed to freshen the landscape and the lagging flowers. The water-lilies began to open, the yellow iris blazed in the dikes, and the marshes were red with cinquefoil relieved by white, red, rosy, and purple orchids. The newly-born leaves of the alders and beech glistened in the moisture, and the grass was lush. In the plantations the air was hot, moist, and full of midges, but the crushed mint smelt sweetly, though the marsh gas tried to drown it. As I walked along the marsh-wall, white with chervil, the weather felt as if summer had suddenly come upon us with a leap.

In the plantings the honeysuckle was in full bloom, the bugles gleaming on the trees like Virgil's gold on the holm-oak. The rush was green, and the water-sallows, growing where the broad and planting met, drooped with catkins that danced over the rippling wavelets of the pebbly beach. We sat in our punt enjoying the moist afternoon, when my African guest said pensively—

"A rare place for alligators."

On our way home we passed men still ploughing, harrowing, and hoeing beans, though the corn was yellow with straggly turnip flowers.
June 8.

On Monday I went as usual to pay my little friend a morning visit. As I crept up to the nest I did not hear the hen-bird move off, nor did I see the cock fly up. This was disquieting. When at last I looked into the nest I could see no eggs. Vexed, I plucked the nest from the three reed-stalks where it was fastened in the manner of the reed-warbler, hanging like a platform from a wall. I examined the nest, and found the bottom was pulled out, and below the débris was hidden one egg and the shells of the others. Some creature had sucked the four eggs and hidden the fifth. It was a sad sight, for we had grown attached to the little couple.

I sat watching the reed, and presently heard the little fellow chirping feebly, but I was glad to find that he had not been eaten too. We laid the blame at the weasel's door, and determined to dig him out at once.

The weather continued cold and dry with N.E. winds for several days, and life during that time was not pleasant.

June 9.

The mill-man's daughter was to be married to-day. We arose early, and walked to a coign of vantage to see the bride and bridegroom pass, for we had been let into the secret of the hour and the day, for it is difficult to find out anything about a wedding in Norfolk. It is the custom to keep everything a secret until within a few days of the ceremony, when brothers and sisters and friends are invited to dinner for the day—that is all. The road leading to the church was decorated with red handkerchiefs fastened to ash poles, for it is customary for every one to be married at the church, devout Dissenters though they be. Presently a spring cart drove along with the bride, bridegroom, and best man, followed by another cart loaded with bridesmaids. Towards dinner-time friends began to collect at the mill, for the dinner is the feast of the day, after which the wedding will be kept up till the next morning. Dick came over
and dined with us. After dinner, Dick, armed with a rifle, the Africander with a shot gun, and I with my revolver, formed in line behind Jim, armed with his concertina, when we marched in that order along the river wall, Jim playing "O Joe, the boat is going over!" and we firing salvoes in the dark, Arab fashion, until we got to the mill, where the bride's father was firing off an old blunderbuss at the stars. When we had exhausted our ammunition, we joined the wedding party in the cottage, depositing our drink offerings on the table. The walls were lined with lads and lasses and old folks all dressed in their best, all cheery and full of chaff; some drinking, others smoking. The bride sat opposite to me, upon the bridegroom's knee, busy eating Barcelona nuts, while he silently nursed her waist with his right arm. He never spoke a word except to thank people for good wishes. I got chaffing the bride very quickly, for the peasant girl is so much quicker than the man. The bride's mother sat next to me, a kindly, good-hearted old lady, who kept telling me what a grief it was to part with her daughter. I watched her getting nervous and restless for some time, when suddenly she burst forth into one of the saddest songs I ever heard. The words were trash, about a newly-buried bride, and that sort of cheap sentimentality, but the voice and feeling she put into the song were most affecting and terrible—it was a real lamentation. Every one sat silent as death, when she finished as suddenly as she had begun, her eyes dimmed with tears. Throughout the song the old mill-man sat smoking and gravely looking into the fire. After the effect of the song had passed away, laughter and flirtations were renewed, and several songs followed, accompanied by concertinas; the remarkable thing was the sadness of all the words. They sang of death and betrayals, of heaven and hell—there was not a cheerful, bright, manly song amongst them. It is disheartening to think to what a pass Methodism has brought the rural population. It is the great encourager of intellectual sottishness, artistic death, sentimentality and mawkishness; but what can one expect of any religion whose members sing of the agonies and sufferings of their Saviour. To what a besotted intellectual state we should
JUNE ON THE BROADS.

JUNE 10.

We left in the small hours, but the party did not break up till dawn, the newly-married couple retiring to the mill. Next morning at nine o'clock the husband was hoeing beans in the garden, but not so some of the courting couples who had slept on the floor. They walked past us, the girls blushing deeply, as we chaffed them with many a quiz and quip. It rained all the morning, so we posted the following notice in the window:

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SCIENCE & ART
WHISKY & TOBACCO
To be had within
on the
SHORTEST NOTICE
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This card stood on two empty cigar-boxes, and beside it was placed a whisky bottle and tobacco and pipes, a dirty palette and broken stethoscope. Jim, however, was our only customer—he came for tobacco.

JUNE 22.

The painters took possession of my boat for a week, and I went to London, where I found the air heavy and dead—all the oxygen seemed consumed, and the brightest sky was always greyed with a neutral tint, so that I was glad to get back, and my little friend's greeting was most welcome. He was so jubilant that I thought he must have built another nest, and so he had, and she had already laid therein two eggs. The evening was so quiet and refreshing after London, and were it not for the girls, the gold, and the restaurants, I believe most artists, who have the means, would leave the cities at once. On the marsh in front of my boat, a bird-
catcher in a new moleskin hat was trying his new sparrow-net, for he had got a job at a farm. We had stewed sparrows' breasts for dinner for some days after.

June 25.

It had been an extraordinarily bad year for the eel-babbers; no one could catch any. Still my old friend the fisherman persuaded me to go with him one night. "The wind was S.W., and the water had warmed," he said, as he sat on some wood preparing some babs, liggers, and nets, for he hoped to get something on his private water. When all his tools were ready, he lay down on the reed and slept. In summer-time this old man seldom returns to his house, but spends his nights and days in the open air, getting his meals at a public-house. He told me he had been a martyr to rheumatism in middle age, but as he grew older "that left him," and I found that this is not uncommonly the case with these amphibians. At ten o'clock he called for me. It was nearly dark, and the wind had changed to the east, rustling the reeds. We rowed silently past a man in a boat, who was moored under some willows babbing, but he had had no sport. We passed a silent yacht, and the occupants were asleep, thank God, for the cheap yachts have attracted a class to this district, who, with their loud-mouthed wranglings, accursed music-hall songs, cheap rifles, flimsy cameras, and servant-girl flirtations, are detestable. On the broad we passed eight liggers—a poacher was no doubt hidden in the reeds. The old fellow laughed as we rowed through them, and suddenly disappeared from the broad, pulling through the stuff into a hidden dike-way nearly choked with water-plants. A warm breeze blew into our faces as we quanted up the dike, startling a sedge-warbler in the willows, and alarming some stately swans who sailed over the dike like ghosts. The breeze brought us mosquitoes and gnats, as we passed along the water-way. Further up the dike a coot called, disappearing into the rush through the sleeping water-lilies,
and a rat ran along the shores, rustling the sentinel cotton grasses. At length we pushed out into a broad dike, which looked peculiar under the flashes of sheet lightning that brightened the clumps of willows sleeping on the marshes, as the old fisherman went about his business stealthily, scarcely disturbing the water-voles who were hunting for food. He laid several night-lines, baited with eel, against the shore, throwing in a ligger every twenty yards as we advanced up the water-way. When all our lines and liggers were laid, we stretched a net across the mouth of another dike for tench, and then moored under the lee of a large clump of willow and bramble, fastening our boat with withy, and awakening a sedge-warbler that slept in the clump.

At eleven, the moon arose, an elongated yellow ellipse, ringed with mist, and immediately a cock crew in a farm across the marshes. We threw our babs into the water, and sat silently bobbing our sticks up and down. We could hear a grasshopper-warbler reeling, eels smacking on the top of the water—a bad omen for babbing—and fish sporting. As we sat silent, clouds passed over the face of the moon, obscuring it for a time. When it peeped forth again, the still night was filled with the cries of birds—cocks crew, and numberless reed and sedge warblers sang in chorus from reed-bed to sallow bushes; red-legs shrieked, and peewits called. In short, the glimpses of the moon were signals that awakened the birds, who immediately began singing, gradually quieting down and dropping off to sleep. Midnight came, and we with aching arms were still babbing without result. At this solemn hour, little whirlwinds of cool breeze blew across the land, followed by a hot silence, the only distraction being the occasional notes of birds, who seemed to sing as restless sleepers talk during the night watches. At half-past one a frog croaked, and as we had only caught three small eels we decided to breakfast on our bread and meat and beer. As we ate our meal, a wild duck swam near-by calling her young, and a splashing fish struck the net in the dike; but he escaped. We spoke in low tones, listening at intervals to decoy ducks.
calling far away. After our food was done, a goose began
to cackle at the farm, and the warblers resumed their song.
It was remarkable how the least fluctuations in the atmos-
pheric conditions or in the light seemed to disturb the
birds; they all seemed to spend a restless night—domestic
fowls and all. At two o'clock it was getting light, and the
warblers sang continually, for the day was breaking. After
them snipe began drumming, red-legs whistling, and the
little reed-buntings were calling to each other all over the
marshes. We babbed on, listening to the morning concert
of birds—noticeing that a mavis joined in at a quarter past
two, and ten minutes after a cuckoo called.
"We'll go now," said the old man; "when he call the
day is come."

We rowed about silently in the water-way, took up our
net, gathered our twenty-four liggers, took in our fourteen
night-lines, and counting up we found we had captured
three small eels. Such are the vicissitudes of fishing, even
when you fish with a past-master. We drank a toast to
the morning, and pushed down the dike, driving shoals of
fish before us. The clouds in the sky were grouped in
weird and fantastic shapes, resembling a procession of
women with flying hair—the heralds of the morn rushing
from their beds to bear the messages of light and joy over
the world. As we pushed on to the broad, the reed-bed
resounded with the rich sweet music of the reed-warblers,
for this is the season when they are in full voice. As we
rowed through the bright clear morning, we passed ten
swifts sitting on a shed, and a large bird hawking for flies
over a reed-bed. It seemed shameful to go to bed, for
though it was only four o'clock, the day was white with
heat and light.

June 26.

When I re-arose I could hear the spotted fly-catchers
singing in the elms, a sweet song to be heard all day long
in the month of June.
The wind went back to the S.W. in the afternoon, so we tried babbing round the boat that evening and were more successful, Jim having the good fortune to catch a tench on his bab weighing a pound and a quarter.

"There," said the old fisherman, who saw the capture; "all the years I've been fishing I've never heard or saw such a thing."

June 27.

With June ends the chimney-sweep's work in this district. He came down to the water to-day with blackened face and a cartload of sooty sacks.

"I've finished my harvest," he said, as he took his old pony out of the cart and let him feed by the roadside, whilst he spent the morning in washing his black sacks, drying them on the marsh. As he was busy, a big cart-horse came along the road and playfully knocked the pony into a ditch. The old fellow was much upset. He ran to the pony's rescue, pulling him out, petting him as he stood trembling on the road, talking to him softly and soothing him with trembling hands; though the boys who were sailing boats of iris stalk jeered at him, still he paid no heed, his pony was his sole companion.

June 28.

When they began to cut the hay, the grass was in full bloom, and the marshes a field of cloth of gold, all yellow with crow's-foot, and the marsh-walls white with hawthorn, a beautiful scheme of decoration characteristic of marshland at the beginning of summer—indeed, the face of the earth is a blaze of colour; but this aspect is so evanescent that painters are unable to seize its fleeting beauty.

It was the Sunday after haysel began, when an original paid us a visit. He was called the naturalist, being a collector of eggs. He sat down with a good-natured
chubby face. He wanted to look at my bird-books, so he began with Yarrell, and he roared with laughter at its absurd illustrations, as do all artists and peasants who understand birds. As he was turning Yarrell's pages, he said—

"Have you read Pinley?"

"Pliny?" I said. "Oh yes!"

"I think he've got a good deal of information," he said. He told me he was a musician, phrenologist, and bird-stuffer. He was a great believer in phrenology.

"I can always tell a man's temper by his nose."

"How's that?"

"A long nose means a bad temper . . . then look at a stubborn man, he allust have a bit out at the back of his head . . . then them square-mouthed ones, they're allust like dogs in their ways, and a murderer have always a stuck-out chin."

Barring the phrenology, he was very intelligent. He explained to me that he didn't seem able to stick to any study for long.

"My head ain't right for that . . . I have been interested in them lunar observations, but then I got tired of them. The flatness on the top of my head account for that."

The conversation turned to books, and I asked if he had read many novels.

"No," emphatically; "I hate novelists—a passel of liars; they craze a heap o' people; writers should write and study what's right." He did not care for women, but he said, "People with big backs to their heads do."

He left me laughing.
CHAPTER XLI.

JULY ON THE BROADS.

"By his cart's side the waggoner
Is slouching slowly at his ease,
Half-hidden in the windless blur
Of white dust puffing to his knees.

Beyond me in the fields, the sun
Soaks into the grass, and hath his will;
I count the marguerites one by one,
Even the buttercups are still."—A. LAMPMAN: Heat.

July 1.

I was awakened early on the first by a marshman who wished to show me some young kestrel-hawks he had just taken from the box of one of the skeleton marsh mills. They looked, as they sat in their rough-looking cage, fierce and dignified youngsters; their large, clear, bold, black eyes rimmed with yellow were very beautiful, as indeed are the eyes of most young creatures—they are always so shiny and firm, their polish without one flaw. After breakfast we sailed to Catfield Dike, for I had to attend a meeting on the fourth. In the evening the bats came out in search of flies, and cuckoos flew across the marshes as late as half-past nine.

July 2.

I went for a long walk on some marshes, wastes little more than quaking hovers covered with rank moss and coarse
water-plants. One seemed to walk on feathers as you crushed the lesser crow’s-foot and lesser spear-wort under foot, stopping at times to gather a bunch of ragged robbin that flowered amid the grass on every little knoll of that quaking wilderness. We walked across a slad whence they had recently cut and carted the stuff, flushing a hen peewit who flew over us, directing her young, who crouched somewhere in the stuff, mayhap in the undergrowth of the clumps of sallow or alder. As we neared the broad, the marsh grew bright with flowers: meadow-sweet, claret-coloured cinquefoil, blue oxytrip, sweet pale mint, yellow rattle, and many-coloured orchids, amid which beautifully carved marsh-thistles stood erect. All these were sprinkled about amongst the soft rushes that formed the chief vegetation. As we walked along we found a sedge-warbler and a reed-bunting’s nest, with hard-set eggs, amongst a beautiful crop of claret-coloured hair grasses and bents growing luxuriantly at the edge of a planting. We found a dry tussock where we lay watching the red-poles as they flew high overhead to the alder carrs. A reed-bunting was flying to and from her nest with food in her beak. On resuming our walk, we passed a ditch sprinkled with mares’-tails, red-docks, and blue forget-me-nots. Scattered about here and there were little clumps of reed resounding with the song of reed-warblers now busy building. In a sallow carr we found a turtle-dove’s nest, the slight platform of sticks placed on a thorn branch. It was so delightfully cool by the nest that we rested there, the ground beneath us rank with rushes, iris, meadow-sweet, and a few straggly weeds. As we came out of the carr we flushed a hen harrier, who flew lazily across the broad white with sails, for a water frolic was held that day, and I heard the watermen shouting long after the birds had gone to roost.

On July 4th we sailed to Hickling Staithes. It was a marvellous morning; the broad appeared immense, and the
sky a vast, silent, grey dome, with gleaming windows, through which streamed shafts of sunlight, burnishing thousands of swallows and swifts that chattered and hawked for flies so far above us that they were scarcely visible. This mighty dome seemed to be resting on a big grey border of trees, and the floor of this aerial palace was paved with calm opalescent water, upon which flocks of swans floated. It was a remarkable scene, full of dignity and grandeur. I have never seen Hickling look so vast and beautiful. At the staithes we were greeted by eel-catchers, gunners, and many old friends, come "to tell the lawyers what they knew;" to tell how they had caught shrimps on the broad, how the salts came and turned the fish up, how they gathered weed and sold it to the farmers, and how they had always shot and angled without molestation time out of mind; how every one went coot-shooting; and finally, to grumble at the aggression of the rich man. It is sad indeed for country districts when *nouveaux riches* become landlords. They do not understand the poor, but treat them as they would their own clerks. They are greedy to claim every foot of land or water, and they are snobs to the backbone—all their distribution of blankets notwithstanding. The real old country gentleman is a very different man. He understands the peasant, and is jolly to everybody, and does not trouble his head about coarse fish and wild-fowl; unlike the citizen, he does not want everything for himself.

*July 4-9.*

I moored in Deep Go Dike for the next few days, doing some special work. The natives were curious to know what I was about, but they only found out the structure of our vane, which a fool in a Catfield wherry carried away by his gaff.

*July 9.*

On Thursday it was blowing hard from the N.W. when we hoisted and started for Somerton. The sounds were
covered with frothy waves. Dick had been expelled the broads by his doctor on account of rheumatism, so we were going to spend a week or two together while he put the finishing touches to his last Norfolk paintings. We passed some men cutting weed in the river, and after an uneventful voyage moored near the Electra in real November weather, both in feeling and colour. Knowing that I should not see my little friend for some weeks, I had paid him a visit last night. He ran up a reed-stalk and began to sing. I called on his wife, and found her at home; she was too shy to receive me, but I was glad to see five little eggs in her nest. All was right so far, and I fervently hoped she might hatch them off.
CHAPTER XLII.

FROLICS ON SOMERTON BROAD.

"I see the thunder clouds stoop down, and with their lean hands grasp
And hurl abroad their lightning fires—the mad winds halt and gasp;
The hills are sweating in their fear—the weary air is slain,
And through a whirling rain of fire unearthly cyclones roar."

H. R. A. POCOCK: The Legend of the Thunder.

THE broad had changed considerably since
March; the gladen and reed were lusty
and green, and the willows in full leaf.
An old gamekeeper passed by the next
day, of whom a story is told.

It is said that the Docto r met him
one morning, and asked—
"Holloa, Sam, you're deaf this morning."
"Ay, ay. I shall want you to do summat," replied the
keeper.

"All right; I'll come and syringe your ears."
"I'm dommed if you will. I'm dommed if I'll have my
ears singed for any doctor, that I 'on't, bor. . . .

Dick and I spent the next few days in making our jolly-
boats as equal as possible, for we contemplated a series of
private sailing matches. When we had got them so there
was scarce any choice between the two, we had a carnival of
seven days' sailing. . . .

Dick came over to smoke one evening, and as he got
into his jolly-boat at midnight he started back and called
me, pointing to the river. I looked, and saw what appeared
to be some wild animal, with fiery yellow eyes, glaring at
us from the water. The effect was due to the lamplight
shining on to some yellow water-lilies. . . .
ON ENGLISH LAGOONS.

July 14.

The broad was full of weeds—hair-weed, pond-weed, water-cress, and water-lilies in their prime; but their glory will be departed by Bank Holiday, which may be looked upon as the end of the lily season. It is remarkable that one year a broad will be full of one kind of weed, and the succeeding year you may scarce find a plant of the same kind. I think they must kill themselves by their exuberance, and when the soil grows fit for the plant by lying fallow the seeds take root and flourish another season.

Near our boat were several chalky springs devoid of weed, for the water had killed them.

In front of the boat grew some fern-like looking plants, recalling the beginning of the gigantic fern forests.

We came across several flappers, as these home-bred wild ducks are called. They are preferable for the table to any other wild duck. We had clear, hard, bright weather, with easterly winds, more welcome to the haymakers than to ourselves. Every one was occupied with the haysele, the marshes were dotted with cocks, and at eventide the marsh roads were alive with tumbrils lumbering home, followed by gangs of mowers carrying scythes and flail-baskets. On the rivers the boatmen were busy quanting the priceless crop, gliding along the water like floating haystacks. The bright easterly weather finally broke up, and we had a series of tempests, with rain, lightning, and thunder, after which the wind would keep in the S.W. for a day or two, but gradually worked back to the east again.

July 15.

A man passed to-day taming a thoroughbred colt. He had harnessed him with long rope-traces to a log; the driver stood on the log, keeping his balance with wonderful agility, driving the colt to an inn-yard.

After a glass of ale he came from forth for his team. As he took the reins he gave the colt a crack with his whip —the animal reared, and a trace got loose, which the ostler refastened with trepidation. This done, the horse-tamer drove the colt out of the yard, mounted his log, and drove
up a steep narrow lane, his collie running before and barking at the colt's head whilst he slashed the hedge furiously on either side with his whip, but always keeping balance with wonderful steadiness.

St. Swithin's day was like winter, and the night was cold, raw, and misty as December.

July 17.

On Friday we had a real summer's day at last, followed by a delightful evening. The wind was S.W., and the sky flecked with delicate clouds. Around the broad, the reeds, gladen, and trees stood quiet, reflected into the calm still water. As I pushed about in the punt, my movements seemed to ripple the whole broad. All round the fish were jumping, and the sand-martins hawking above the reeds and chattering. Some reed-warblers were singing, and at eight o'clock a kestrel came and hovered on the marsh opposite. A little time after a large flock of rooks flew to the trees by the sand-hills, their shiny bodies gleaming in the evening sun like bits of metal. They had scarce settled in their beds, when mallard and flappers began their flightings from the broad to the drains. At 8.30, two heron flew high overhead calling hoarsely, probably discussing which dike they should drop into to fish for eels. Across the broad a mavis was singing lustily, and a few minutes later a red-leg whistled plaintively, and moths began to fly about the reeds, while the water-beetles were still busy skating regardless of the smacking eels. At a quarter to nine a peewit called on the marshes, and a large bat appeared hawking for insects just above the water. At the same time a partridge in the field opposite began to call her young brood. A few minutes later the snipe began to scape: they and the partridge kept calling until nine o'clock, when they both ceased. The air was full of the hateful singing of gnats. A few minutes after nine an owl began to screech, and I could hear the herons calling in the dikes. At twenty minutes past nine a night-jar flew from the coppice, and hawked for moths, when all grew silent, and the watery tribe settled down for the night.
July 19.

After more gales and rain we had a lovely still moonlight night, in which we sailed to Kendal Dike, passing two men on the bank stowing up a shrimp boat. They were discussing yachting.

"I don't like yachting," said one; "you've got to be so clean and particular."

"Nor do I; fare to me those gents expect you to keep as clean as theysels; its owdacious, aint it?" said the other.

We sailed past like ghosts. When we returned, the wild duck were quacking all round us in the moonlight, but we could see none—the only moving objects being our silver-like sails in the silent moonlit water, round which the reeds and trees seemed to sleep. . . .

July 20.

As I was sailing the following day a young sand-martin alighted on my gunwale, and allowed me to take him in my hand. I examined the little fellow, and put him back on his perch, where he remained quietly until we got out of the Dungeon, when he flew off unceremoniously, disappearing in the reed.

July 21.

We began the races on Tuesday, and held them for a week through a series of terrific thunderstorms. Jim proved to be the champion. Dick and Jim drew to race first, the course to the first stake on Hickling and back. The day broke warm and breezy, but a black thunder cloud began to come up against the wind during the first race, but Jim won, and we all got aboard the wherry before the storm burst. Down fell the rain with tropical violence, the heavy storm cloud hanging exactly overhead for a long time. The lightning cracked like a whip, going "rip-z-z-z" all round us, and was immediately followed by loud thunder claps which shook the boat from stem to stern. Our mast stood up in the middle of the broad, and we were rather anxious while the storm lasted. Some men who had been boating stuff were hidden up under some reed on the opposite bank. After the storm they said—
“We thowt you’d ha’ been struck heaps of times—the lightning fared to play all round you.”

We looked out of the window at the lashing rain, which lasted for some time after the thunderstorm was over. When the rain stopped, we turned out and saw two fires caused by the lightning—a rick at Horsey and a barn at Somerton were burning. We heard afterwards that the lightning had struck several buildings, and scorched several trees and bushes, and in the evening we found it had played over the Electra, flattening her metal chimney; the heavy rain probably saved the boat. This great thunder cloud was like a solid black wall as it worked off to sea. During the storm the wind had shifted all round the compass, and died down to a calm immediately the storm cloud had passed. Rooks were tumbling about in the air and the martins chattering noisily as they hawked over the reeds, for these hot moist calms between the storms seemed to fill the air with myriads of insects.

As the competitors started for the second race large pointed cumuli began to work up over Martham Church, and the sky was all jagged, blown by the wind; carts were driving hurriedly along the roads, and men shouting to each other; the landscape looked thoroughly spent. Not a breath of wind stirred the drooping reeds and wet willow leaves. After the tide had carried the boats through the Dungeon, the clouds seemed to stop, and the sky quickly turned to a bluish and sickly yellow colour; then a breeze rippled the still water, the clouds began to move, and the sky grew piebald. The air felt fresher, and Nature seemed to revive after the tempest; fish splashed and reed-buntings called. The recently formed ozone was working. I felt much fresher as I stood in my boat waiting for the racers’ return; but before they came another black cloud worked up quickly and seemed to burst over the competing boats; the rain fell in torrents. Dick and Jim told me that they got shocks from the wet sheets, so that they both left their boats and crouched on the marsh whilst the storm raged, resuming the race afterwards. This second storm did not last so long, but the cloud as it passed seaward was a
terrific sight. It resembled a giant black dragon stretching across the sky in a serpentine form, its edges gleaming white. The water of the broad was black and hideous from the reflection, and the landscape dark and terrible-looking as if in mourning—the most terrifying natural landscape I have ever seen.

The wind shifted all round the compass, and died away to a calm. The lightning had a curious effect on me. The electricity seemed to charge my system, and I felt as though I must discharge the current somehow. I felt hot, prickly, and moist; but there was no time to think, for a third storm followed quickly; the lightning whizzing all round me, with sounds that I should think resembled the passage of shells through the air. After the storm the air was highly charged with ozone; I could taste it. The air felt tonic and pricking; it tasted keen and biting, like a highly charged mineral water. Still another tempest passed over, and the racers had not returned, so I got my saucepan of peas and pulled my punt alongside to row down to the Electra to take them to Dick's wife to cook. It was still raining and lightning when I started, but I had promised to have the peas there at a fixed time. As I was baling the punt out on the way, my rubber boots slipped and over I went into the broad, the rain pouring down on me as I came up. I tried to turn the gun-punt over and empty the water out, but it was no good; then I tried to climb into her, but though she would not sink, every time I tried to get in she turned round like a log, so I gave that up; so arranging the oars, I got hold of the line, and swam to the ship towing her; then I baled her out, took off my mud-covered clothes, and had a second swim in the rain; after I had comfortably changed Jim passed, the winner of the second race.

July 22.

The following day Jim and I had to race. We started in a fresh south-west breeze with the tide against us. It was terrible work turning through the Dungeon. In that narrow neck of water we passed and repassed each other, but the tacking in the river was worse still, for it was full
of weed and lilies, preventing us from properly handling the boats. I had the better boat for turning, so I led Jim in the long tacking down to Kendal Dike, but had the misfortune to break my tiller handle at the ferry, through sculling her round under a lee. On running into Kendal Dike I had a leading wind right up to the turning-post on Hickling. As I came back I met Jim in Narrow Ways, and arrived at the winning post 27 1/2 minutes ahead. We changed boats and started again, agreeing that the match should be settled by time. The wind had changed, but a fresh breeze was blowing. We had to tack across the broad, keeping a sharp look-out for the weedy shallows, for going aground on one of these meant delay for perhaps an hour, as we had made it a condition that no oars should be used, sculling with the tiller only to be resorted to for coming about if necessary. This race Jim had the boat that turned better, so he went ahead. He got into Kendal Dike, and led up to the first stake on the sounds. It took me longer to reach the dike, and when I got there the wind had shifted, so I had to tack all the way up to Deep Go Dike. When he passed me on his return he was half an hour ahead, which was exciting, for if he reached the winning post thirty minutes before me he would win by 2 1/2 minutes. After lying becalmed under the trees by Whiteslea on my return, I led into the river, and ran before the wind to the ferry, where I had to stop, for the ferry was fixed across the river, which was most annoying. Dick, who was looking out for me, noticed that I was twenty minutes behind Jim, and had I not lost this time I should have won by 7 1/2 minutes. However, it was hopeless. I began to move the ferry, when a man came over the marshes with some cattle and crossed it leisurely, then he helped me to move the obstruction way. I had been delayed three-quarters of an hour, and sailed into the broad with a protest flag flying. We decided to have the races over again on the morrow.

July 24.

Next day, however, Jim and I started again in a southwest wind, both tide and wind against us, through the
Dungeon, so that I took an hour and three minutes to tack through this narrow waterway. Jim had won the toss, and picked the best turning boat, so he led. In Kendal Dike I was unfortunate enough to have my mast's foot snap, and the mast fell aslant; it is surprising I did not capsize, as I had a lateen sail. I braced it up as well as I could and returned home, where a new mast was put in, and we decided to have the match over a figure of eight course on the inner broad, where no ferry could stop us.

July 25.

We sailed on Saturday, the course being marked out by four stakes, and we had to sail the figure of eight six times, each round taking on the average about twenty minutes. We had flying starts, and sailed with unballasted boats in a very light breeze; at times having to light our pipes to ascertain which way the breeze was blowing. It was a most difficult day for sailing, and the race could be lost by a single mistake. We were often becalmed for several minutes. This was the chance for Jim, whose superior knowledge told, and he won both races easily, sailing in a masterly manner, never making a single mistake. On the Sunday we sailed to Heigham for practice, and met an extraordinary person in a boat running before the wind, and steered by a smiling, good-looking girl. The extraordinary creature stood amidships in his shirt sleeves shouting to every one to keep out of his way. We heard afterwards that he got his mast and sail carried away, which was a just retribution—such neophites spoil the sailing—they should learn to handle a boat in some quiet place before they appear on navigable channels, where they are a nuisance and a danger to all.

July 27.

On Monday Jim and Dick sailed over the new course—the wind was light, and the day showery. Dick started fifty seconds ahead, but Jim caught him and outmanœuvred him at the first post. It was very pretty racing, for the least mistake might give away the match, for it was sometimes no easy matter to keep the boat going, so light was
the breeze, and any one can sail in a strong breeze. However, Jim won easily. They changed boats, and Jim won still more easily. But these races took a long time, and were not finished till half-past nine, when we were all properly wet to the skin. And so ended a delightful week's racing.

July 28.

The following day Jim and I sailed to Hickling with a good westerly breeze. At the mouth of the broad we passed a couple of "cockenays" in a small cutter; they had not hoisted her sail properly; they didn't know how to tack, and they knew nothing of the broad, so that they made a pretty mess of it. This is the type of person that nearly killed me some years ago. I was sitting in the cabin of a small yacht, over which an awning was spread, writing some letters, when there came a crash, and the bowsprit of a cutter had torn through the awning, carried the cabin door away, and brought up against the inside of the cabin behind me, within eight inches of my head. On board were a party of "cockneys" who hadn't the faintest idea of how to put a boat about.

At the ferry I met an acquaintance in a steam launch, and he towed us to the sounds, where we parted. As we tacked across Hickling the sky ahead turned purplish black, and patches of yellow and black clouds appeared on this dark background. Some rays of light appeared through a rift in the clouds, and fell upon a fringe of gladen, making it gleam a bright yellowish green strip between the purple sky overhead and the still more purple water underneath. The face of the landscape seemed to be contorted with a hideous death's head grin, the gladen being the grinning teeth. The water round the boat was so peculiarly lighted that it was perfectly transparent, and the weeds in the bottom were of a clear yellowish gold colour. The wind blew in fierce gusts, coming like the death gasps of a giant, and thunder rumbled. Gradually the water got bright yellow, and the weeds turned blackish, the broad glowing most unnaturally.

... We blew home, and as a passing marshman said
we looked "like a big sail coming along;" no boat was to be seen. Great waves followed us, and the sail gibed viciously at times; the gear was all taut and creaking throughout the journey. Altogether it was an exhilarating run home.

Martham Fair day was dismal and gloomy, cold, rainy, and half a gale blowing, and the steam hurdy-gurdies only added to the melancholy of the scene. . . .

July 31.

On Friday we left Somerton, and moored in our old quarters, and I went straightway to pay a visit to the little sedge-warbler. As I drew near his home, he popped up on a reed, and began singing cheerily, so I called on his wife. How anxious she was as I appeared in the reed-bed, hopping round and clucking; and no wonder—she had hatched off her young brood—there they were in the nest—five yawning maws that stretched up and opened as I looked in.

It was the last day of July, and all round us the marsh-mowers were busily mowing and carting the rush, for all the "outside" men turn to this work between haysel and harvest, for the stuff is wanted for the bottom of stacks. Another sign of ending July was the disappearance of the old cuckoos, and the presence of the silent young cuckoos flying about the marshes.

So ended July, the month of marsh-flowers and haysel, of young birds and marsh-mowing, of water-lilies and water-frolics, of school-treats and tempests, of hedgerow cleaning and turnip-hoeing, of wherry-dressing and fish-darting, of angling and love-making.
CHAPTER XLIII.

AUGUST ON THE BROADS.

"Past lonely haunts of gull and loon,
Past solitude of land-locked bays,
Whose bosoms rise to meet the moon
Beneath their silveryed film of haze."

W. W. Campbell: To the Lakes.

Aug. 1.

AUGUST came in with north-easterly winds, and they were useful, for they blew the water off the marshlands, for the heavy rains of July had flooded many a marsh, some of them being mere ponds bristled with white and purple thistles.

We walked to Palling to see the Hannah, a vessel that had been blown on to the Hasboro' Sands, towed ashore and sold to the beach company for a ten pound note to be broken up. Every plank had started, the caulking was loosened, her masts broken off short, leaving jagged stumps, and in places she had been ground to a rough surface by shingle and water. In the inn we met a postman who had walked eighteen miles a day, Sundays excepted, for thirty years, and he said he only felt the rheumatics at times. There was an old labourer there, too, who thought the poor would get their rights, now that education had come in, adding that they had been kept blind heretofore!

That night we went flighting for flappers. The midges were terrible, for the hotter we got the harder they bit, until our faces and hands were covered with bumps. As we trudged through the muddy wet marsh bottoms, we started some red-legs and heard some snipe, but most of these were "outside," and they would not come "in" until
they had been shot at on the broads. The evening was wonderfully still, for many of the birds had gone, and others were still occupied with their nurseries. As we took up our stations for the flighting, sitting on tussocks of rush within a hundred yards of each other, a marshman and I saw a hen-harrier come wheeling round after sunset and drop into the stuff. Thinking she might be nesting, we ran in the dusk to the spot, and I started across the marsh, the stuff up to my waist, and the water up to my boot-tops, arousing thousands of midges who were avenged. I had taken a mark—a clump of sallows—and made straight for it; the marshman stayed behind. In the sallows I saw much spoor, but no bird, so I retraced my steps, and presently flushed her from a dry grassy knoll within a yard of me. She flew directly into the arms of the gunner, who could not resist shooting her, when we found her to be a female hen-harrier. I could find no nest, and as it was pretty dark, we returned in search next day, but even then without success. Although we waited till late that night, we got nothing but the harrier.

Aug. 2.

The next day it rained and lightened and thundered, but nevertheless the devout Primitives went to their yearly open-air service, or camp-meeting. We had several tempests before night, and our only excitement was gathering mushrooms.

Aug. 3.

On Bank Holiday we determined to go to Barton Regatta, so we rose at half-past five, got an early breakfast, and started at seven, for Barton Broad was some twelve miles away. It was a lovely morning, with an easterly wind, and as we sailed down the river, startling several young water-hens feeding upon the fly-blown lily leaves, and passed several sleeping yachts. Whenever we came head to wind Jim and my friend rowed. As we approached St. Benet's Abbey, a thunderstorm began to work up, the steam mill chimneys
telling black and threatening against the leaden sky, and
the landscape put on a solemn look. Indeed August is the
month of decline; the vegetation grows ragged and dis-
coloured. As we turned into the Ant we joined several boats
going to the frolic, and at Ludham Bridge there was quite
a crowd of craft. But by rowing and sailing we soon over-
took them, and were overtaken by a terrific thunderstorm.
As the first drops fell the yachts and wherries made fast,
evry one going below, and the other small boats lowered
their sails and got underneath for protection. We had
brought our sou'-westers and oilies, and we put them on over
our summer dress, and went on our way with a freshening
breeze, regardless of the pouring rain, flashing lightning, and
roaring thunder. One felt something like running a block-
ade. When we got to Irsted the storm had passed, and was
going away to the right, a black mass streaked with lightning.
As a rainbow formed over the landscape, we appeared again in
straw hats and flannels. When we reached the broad, we
moored to the island. On the water floated all varieties of
craft. We had just time for a hasty lunch when the first
race started. It was a beautiful sight to see the Kittywake
so ably handled; she went through the water without stir-
ring it, her big jib and lug-sail being reflected beautifully.
But another fierce storm came, and the broad, as if by magic,
was cleared of small boats; a crowd collected on the island
holding a large sail over their heads. The rain and hail
fell violently, and the lightning cracked all about us—still
the sailing boats went on. We were back into oilies and
sou'-westers again, but it rained so furiously that we got
our feet and legs wet through, and had to bale the rain
out of the boat. After the storm we watched the wherries
start, and then we rowed down to the staithe, where we
came upon a couple of lovers in a boat-shed. Another
thunderstorm came up as we rowed back to the frolic, but
we began to feel pretty wet. When we reached the island
we found the wherries becalmed close to the winning-post,
and the crews sculling excitedly with their huge tillers. As
another mighty thunder cloud was coming up we started for
home. When we left the broad, the weather was as bright as
summer. We watched the cloud, anxiously hoping we could turn into the river, run before the wind, and get home before the tempest broke; but it caught us at Ludham Bridge. First came puffy squalls, next birds flying before the storm, then sudden shifting winds, flashes of lightning and their accompanying thunder, pouring rain and hail as the cloud passed over, and lastly a rainbow. Between each storm we reappeared in summer clothing, and had a short smoke. But by the time we got to Heigham Bridge and the last tempest was coming up, we were pretty well wet through. After shooting the bridge, I saw Jim looking with silent pitiful amazement upon some offensive "cockneys" trying to tow a yacht. The last tempest came up in a new and wonderful way. It appeared like a brownish yellow fog, the disc of the sun looking like silver as seen through this cloud. The sun's rays lit up a lush clear watery landscape, streaked with dark clouds of smoke from the steam mills. The colours of the landscape were harmonious, whereas a thunderstorm generally produces discords, purple and green being a favourite storm combination. The water too turned from a greenish to a brown, and the after images of the silvery sun looked pinkish where the water was green. Jim described it as a "lightning cloud," but some rain came down as it passed over to the sea. We arrived home in sorry plight, and having experienced thunderstorms enough for years to come. I noticed they came up either with or against the wind: there is no law. They all seem to work in a similar manner—first a bluish black homogeneous cloud rises up slowly from the horizon into a cumulus covered sky; then flashes of fork lightning dart across the cloud, and you hear distant thunder. Then you may notice flocks of birds flying before the storm. As the gloom approaches, little wind-squalls come up, and suddenly the bright landscape turns gloomy, although you can see it is bright behind. The trees now appear very green against the purple background, then come stronger gusts, and the wind shifts all round the compass during the storm. As the gloom increases a few drops of rain begin to fall, when the sky quickly gets very black, the rain pours down, the
lightning flashes and cracks all round you, and the thunder roars and rumbles with deafening noise. Then you may hear the crashing of hail, and you may know the storm is directly overhead. Then the rain gradually abates, turning to a fine shower, and the sun bursts out in front of you though it is still black overhead, and as the cloud moves slowly away, the landscape round you slowly brightens, but gets black behind. Against this dark background you may see two rainbows flash out, and the thunder dies away, and the wind sinks to a calm—such is the course of an east coast thunderstorm, and they are not pleasant. After a thorough change we sat down to a dinner of snipe and flappers.

This was a fearful summer, for the marsh-mowers were poling the litter through water this morning to a boat lying in a dike near where a skeleton was found a few years ago. The bones were supposed to belong to a Jewish pedlar murdered by two natives, robbery being the motive. Tradition says that one of them died raving mad, and the other disappeared to Australia. I found out that the murder did take place, and a friend heard two men in a public-house having an argument about the murderers. Each was claiming the honour for a distant relative—such is the power of vanity.

A friend arrived from town, and the weather was so cold and rainy that he spent the day explaining De Moivre's Theory of Chances; I think he had designs on the bank at Monte Carlo, but I'll bet on the bank.
CHAPTER XLIV.

BY THE NORTH SEA.

"Where the far elm-trees' shadows flood
Dark patches in the burning grass,
The cows, each with her peaceful cud,
Lie waiting for the heat to pass.

I lift mine eyes sometimes to gaze,
The burning sky-line blinds my sight;
The woods far off are blue with haze,
The hills are drenched in light."—A. LAMPMAN: Heat.

Aug. 12.

On Wednesday we said good-bye to my little friend and started for Waxham, intending to spend a few days by the sea, though Waxham is a lonely place. To the majority of people the attractions of a holiday at the seaside depend upon their fellow-men and amusements, but here we had all the beach to ourselves. Though the sand-hills were attractive at first, they soon began to pall, and even the beach to grow monotonous. As we sailed up the cut we passed several weed-cutters standing knee deep in the water clearing the channel, and after a quiet sail we anchored in a muddy little harbour.

Aug. 18.

It was marvellous to watch the changes in the consistency of the sand according to the direction of the wind. The beach was soft in a south-west wind, compact and hard in an easterly wind, being beaten together by wind and water.
Aug. 21.

The weather was wretched, but we made the best of it, doing a little shooting and sailing. They had begun to cut the oats the day before we arrived, but had to stop on account of the wet. On Friday they returned to their work, the land-buntins calling all day as they mowed their poor crop. At Palling we came upon some girls bathing. It is wonderful how round and jelly-fish-like girls look in bathing costumes. But the sea was lovely, the distance a delicate blue, the middle distance pink striped with green, and the foreground opalescent.

Aug. 23.

On Sunday, at nightfall, the lonely beach was frequented by lovers, but as we approached they disappeared like rabbits into the sand-hills.

However, we had our little adventure. As we were returning in a lonely sandy lane some fine girl said—

"Bon soir!"

"Bon soir," I replied; but when I tried to follow up the conversation the two girls (for another had appeared) ran away with loud laughter. This was unfortunate, for in the dark they looked comely and stylishly dressed.

Aug. 24.

I had a mind to taste some lesser ringed dotterel, so we went along the beach and shot some in the shallows. They make a delicious dish, nearly as good as snipe. At the Palling Inn we found an important cockney—a truly "manly" fellow as he ordered his "lemon and dash" in an offensive loud manner.

This set me thinking as to why the true bred cad is such an objectionable creature, and I came to the conclusion that it is on account of the damned affectation,
which pervades all the creature's actions and sayings. This evening I saw the backs of two figures sitting on the beach, a man and a woman; both were looking at the sea. I watched them from the sand-hills, and this is what I saw.

He drew near to her; she began to scatter sand idly with her right hand. He stretched his left arm out nervousness, looked up at her face, and said something. It was evidently something a little risky. She stopped her sand sprinkling, turned her head, and looked at him for a moment, and her head drooped. He drew off a little and sat up straight, and lit a cigarette. She, I assume, had parried his assault. Then they began talking in a commonplace way. After a little he drew near again. She looked at him, and did not throw so much sand about. Then he reclined on the sand by her side, stretched his left arm nervously, hesitated, put his right arm around her and yet a few inches off her body, looked up at her face, and began to talk earnestly. She shook her head. He withdrew, sat up straight, lit a fresh cigarette, and looked around uninterestedly. After a while she arose, he followed suit, and they walked down the beach a little way, he glancing wistfully at times at the sand-hills.

When they got to a gap in the sand-hills I saw them part, the man walking away pensively, and I thought I heard the devil chuckle maliciously at my elbow.

Aug. 25.

The talk is all of harvest. Seven pounds is the wage fixed this season, but things look bodeful on account of the wet. The oldest inhabitant I spoke to had never known harvest hereabouts begin later than August 20th, and on the other hand he had known stacks to be up on Martham Fair day. The labourers were beginning to think that the men who had gone herring fishing were going to have the best of it this year.

The greenery is frayed and dying, the sand-martins are assembling in flocks on the beach.
When seeking shelter from a rain-storm I came upon some wild-looking men in a hut amongst the sand-hills. They were eating bread and cheese. Around them lay the tools of their craft—a great sail, oars, coils of rope and lobster baskets, and from the rafters hung nets. They all spoke of the sea, criticising the handling of a brigantine caught by a squall in front of us. As I sat talking to them in this lonely spot they felt to be a gang of smugglers.


The corn harvest began to-day, and yet the wind rattled all night long as though we were at sea. The next morning all the moisture was blown out of the sky, which was full of ragged grey clouds sweeping across a bright blue, closely packed to windward and closely packed to leeward. On the sand-hills the wind ran up the marram in waves. If you went up the hills and sat to leeward a few feet below the crest the sand poured over your head a fine rain of silica blown out to the sea, which was choppy and angry, all sprinkled with foam and muddy with sand.

Aug. 27.

The weather was so wretched that we left Waxham, and after a breakfast of mushrooms, started in a drizzly rain and quanted through browning gladen fields, black tasselled reeds, and greying weeds to our old moorings, where we saw our little friends and their family feeding amongst the reeds, though the weather was as cold and raw as in autumn. They say in Norfolk that "a wet harvest make a moist loaf," and the agricultural labourers were all full of forebodings for the winter, hoping that a change of weather would come with the new moon. Fortunately their wishes were fulfilled, for the dikes, at this date, were full, the marshes under water, the corn laid, and the oats mildewed.
Aug. 28.

On Friday a gale blew, and I awoke and looked out. The marsh and water were black, the sky hard and blue, with a metallic-looking moon, and artificial-looking stars. Over this unnatural sky white cumuli sailed. In the eastern sky a huge bank of clouds reflected the rising sun.

The weather continued so bad that I brought my cruise to a close, and as I stepped out of my ship on the last day of August in the drizzling rain, my little sedge-warbler jumped upon a reed and began to sing joyfully, for his family was now strong on the wing. I stopped, took off my hat, saluting the plucky little bird—wished himself and family a safe voyage across the seas. As I walked up the wall, masses of thistle-down were blowing across the marshes, an unfailing sign of autumn, and the last marsh-note that I heard as I rode off was the farewell song of the brave little warbler.

"Then with the setting of the sun,
The circle of my dream was run,
And, half-awake, the reason flown,
I felt the bondage of the town

But recollection simply came;
I roused, and saw the East aflame,
And lo, before my raptured eyes
My dreams became realities."
LOG

OF THE

"MAID OF THE MIST."

SEPTEMBER 15, 1890, TO AUGUST 31, 1891.
APPENDIX.

THE LOG OF THE WHERRY "MAID OF THE MIST."

SEPTEMBER 15, 1890, TO AUGUST 31, 1891.

1890.


16.—Mooring—Hickling Back Staithes.

17.—Mooring—Hickling Back Staithes. Sand martins flocking.

18.—Mooring—Just below Acle Bridge. Max. temp., 95° in sun; water, 55°, 8 p.m. Rain.

19.—Mooring—Runham. Eels are on the move.

20.—Mooring—Runham. Max. temp., 70°; Min., 58°; water, 60°. Peewits on marshes; starlings in flocks on the ronds; sand martins flying low. Smelting. Samphire grows on Breydon.

21.—Mooring—Berney Arms. Light S.W. wind and vapour. Larks hovering; starlings on ronds. Old Smelter remembers when fifty wherries used to wait at Burgh to go over Breydon.

22.—Mooring—Berney Arms. Max. temp., 72°; water, 50°. Sow eats fish. Peewits flying athwart the wind.

23.—Mooring—Berney Arms. Max. temp., 64°; water, 48°. Wind easterly above, westerly low down; heavy dew falls in evening. Poling marsh hay and feeding bullocks on marsh at same time.

24.—Mooring—Brundall. Max. temp., 79.5°. Moonlit night; Mist.

25.—Mooring—Woodsend. Rooks cawing after 11 p.m. Fish jumping in the moonlight.

26.—Mooring—Woodsend. Max. temp., 72°; water, 50°. Rooks cawing after 11 p.m. Fish jumping in the moonlight.

27.—Mooring—Woodsend. Max. temp., 72°; water, 48°. Fish jumping in the moonlight.

28.—Mooring—Woodsend. Max. temp., 64°; water, 48°. Fish jumping in the moonlight.

29.—Mooring—Woodsend. S.W. wind. Roach and bream biting well; caught some ruffes.

30.—Mooring—Woodsend. Ringdoves; large flocks of peewits, gulls, and starlings on marshes.

Oct. 1.—Mooring—New Mills, Norwich. Gale; heavy rain; storms. Quantities of ivy-leaved toad-flax growing on old buildings at Norwich.

2.—Mooring—Puckthorpe, Norwich. Max. temp., 62°; Min., 47°; water, 42°.

3.—Mooring—Norwich.

4.—Mooring—Thorpe, Whitlingham. Max. temp., 74°. Wind changed suddenly from W. to E. Swallows; field-fares. Fish rising freely at night.
1890.

Oct. 5.—Mooring—Woodsend. Reed beginning to die at bottom.

6.—Mooring—Buckenham Ferry. Jim has known nine rime frosts running.

7.—Mooring—Buckenham Ferry. Min. temp., 48°; Easterly wind.

8.—Mooring—Buckenham Ferry. Min. temp., 50° at 5.30, 40° at 8.10. N.E. wind; changes to W. in evening, mist. Three snipe; long-tailed tits on poplars. Roach feeding at sluice-gates; fish jumping. Forget-me-nots in flower; water-weeds dying and coming to top; sheep and cattle on marshes.

9.—Mooring—Buckenham Ferry. Min. temp., 35°. First frost. Flocks of peewits. Several pike caught. Takes from 6.30 to 7.30 for sun to melt frozen dew on cabin roof; many spiders' webs.

10.—Mooring—Buckenham Ferry. Max. temp., 70°; Min., 39°; water, 44°. Mavis, curlew, starlings, larks, one marsh harrier. Many ruffes (fish) on Rockland Broad. Moon wavy; cobwebs.

11.—Mooring—Buckenham Ferry. Max. temp., 70°, 60° in shade at 4 P.M.; Min., 37°. Easterly wind. No birds to be heard on marshes; ducks go home at 4 P.M.; saw two swallows flying high, 4.45 P.M. Sallow leaves falling fast.

12.—Mooring—Buckenham Ferry.

13.—Mooring—Buckenham Ferry. Max. temp., 70°; Min., 30°; water, 42°. Saw a dead pole-cat, and cattle and sheep being ferried across. Saw an old tom-tit's nest, built in a broken bow-net, hanging on a keeper's cottage wall.


15.—Mooring—Rockland Dike. S.W. wind. Two osprey shot here last week. Old fisherman has taken eel pout in the Broad.

16.—Mooring—Rockland Dike. Max. temp., 68°; Min., 39°. Blowing a gale; N.W. wind. Got a ringdove weighing a pound, and a widgeon weighing a pound and a half. Pike begun to fill; cast for pike; caught four average fish.

17.—Mooring—Rockland Dike.


20.—Mooring—Rockland Broad. Min. temp., 46°.

21.—Mooring—Rockland Broad. Max. temp., 70° in sun; Min., 41°; water, 37°. Wind turns S.E.; mist; storm over. Pike fisher had 14 runs to-day. Cobwebs.

22.—Mooring—Rockland Broad. Min. temp., 39°. Saw a hornet and a fly. Broadman shot a male great crested grebe; flock of mallard alighted in the broad; saw a sparrow-hawk strike at some starlings. Extraordinary low tide; dike full of Canadian weed and burdocks; broad full of water-soldiers.

23.—Mooring—Rockland Broad. Min. temp., 37°.

24.—Mooring—Rockland Broad. Min. temp., 37°.

25.—Mooring—Rockland Broad. N.W. wind and rain; sleet;
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freezes at night. Water-hen; coots; rails. An eel-picker got a 6-lb, eel.

Oct. 26.—Mooring—Rockland Broad. Min. temp., 34°. N.W. wind; marshes flooded at high water. Bunches of duck fly over; snipe rise. Few fish caught; several persons fishing.

27.—Mooring—Rockland. Min. temp., 34°. N.W. wind; full moon; very high tide; sleet and snow.


29.—Mooring—Rockland.


31.—Mooring—River Yare, near Rockland. Rainy. Rooks on trees; several snipe, field-fares, and Kentish crows; coots.

Nov. 1.—Mooring—Coldham Hall. Min. temp., 37°; 10 P.M. Drizzling, grey day. Reeds yellow and shrunk.

2.—Mooring—Coldham Hall. Max. temp., 50°, 2 P.M.; Min., 35°. Rain, S.W. wind. Rooks fly home after sunset; fish jumping after sunset; saw eels swimming in river. Leaves dropping from willows; low tide; tide runs down all day and all night; water rises an inch. We are hard on the mud.

3.—Mooring—Buckenham Ferry. Max. temp., 40° in sun. Rain. Two goldfinches; field-fare eating haws; gull flying over marshes.

4.—Mooring—Buckenham Ferry. Max. temp., 47° in sun; Min., 32°. Wind E. Flock of long-tailed tits on poplars.

5.—Mooring—Loddon. Drizzly rain at night. Flocks of jackdaws and rooks on the marshes; pheasants numerous, two white pheasants; saw a rook chasing a sparrow-hawk.

6.—Mooring—Loddon. Rain; wind fresh from W.S.W.; got stronger as day went on.

7.—Mooring—Loddon. Diurnal rain; low tide, extraordinary. Chaffinch; coot.

8.—Mooring—Near Loddon, river Chet. Max. temp., 55° in sun; Min., 35°. Heron alights on a tree; pheasants, jackdaws, rooks, curlew; rooks and starlings on marshes.

9.—Mooring—Cantley. Max. temp., 55°; Min., 35°. Rooks and starlings on marshes.

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10.—Mooring—Cantley. Min. temp., 26°; at 6.30, 26°; water, 30° at 8.5 A.M.; air, 30.5°; 33° at 7.40 P.M.; air, 36°; dew frozen. Rime frost; N.E. wind in evening; curious effect of rime cloud, vide text. Early morning, order of awakening, (one) lark; (two) mavis; (three) redwing; (four) rooks; (five) peewits. Temperatures—6.30, 26°; 7, 27°; 8.30, 29°; 9, 30.5°; 9.15, 34°; 9.40, 38°; 9.45, 42°; 9.50, 44°; 9.58, 56.5°; 10.45, 40.5°; 11.35, 72°; 11.40, 74.5°; 12.5, 72°; 12.30, 77°.

11.—Mooring—Reedham. S.S.W. wind; rain. Flies.

12.—Mooring—Reedham. Min. temp., 28°; 30° at 6.30 A.M. Rime frost. Saw a haw-finch shot here last summer.

13.—Mooring—Reedham.

14.—Mooring—Reedham.
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Nov. 15.—Mooring—Reedham. Friend shot some snipe.

16.—Mooring—Reedham.
17.—Mooring—Reedham.
18.—Mooring—Near Haddiscoe Station. Max. temp., 9.15 P.M.,
40°; Calm day.
19.—Mooring—Burgh St. Peter's. Max. temp., 9.5 P.M., in air,
53°; water, 9.5 P.M., 46°. Warm like summer. Snipe;
tomtit; wren; partridges on ronnd; curlew; field-fares.
Fish jumping. Several eel-pickers in river. Fly seen.
20.—Mooring—Becles. Like summer. Tufted duck; larks
hovering; three snipe; rocks. Startled a pike in a dyke.
Killed wasp in cabin, and another flew past outside.
21.—Mooring—Becles. Min. temp., 42°. Rain. Two long-
tailed tits; a ringdove. Flies in cabin.
22.—Mooring—Becles. S.W. wind; rain at night; blows half
a gale; colder in evening. Flock of long-tailed tits.
23.—Mooring—Becles. W., drawing W.S.W., wind; half gale
blowing. Snipe.
24.—Mooring—Geldeston Lock. Gale and rainstorms; wind
drops towards evening; bright moonlight.
25.—Mooring—Geldeston Lock. Min. temp., 33°. Wind N.E.;
gets squally; snow in evening and snow and hail storms
through night. Kingfisher alights on rudder; mallard;
Kentish crow; peewits; golden plover (5); two gold-
finches; curlew (12); heard and saw snipe, peewits, field-
fares, and starlings feeding on the newly-fallen snow;
8 P.M. Saw a stuffed perch here; weighed 5½ lbs.; and
two sea lamprens caught in the Weir. Marshes flooded;
Harriers out.
26.—Mooring—Geldeston Lock. Max. temp., 38° at 2 P.M. in
air; Min., 30°; thermometer in air, 32° 8 P.M. Wind
N.E.; ground covered with snow; heavy N.E. snow
squalls all day. Heard no birds except tame geese cack-
ling; grey wag-tail perched on stern; few starlings round
lock house; two snipe; peewits; mavis; kingfisher.
Icicles on windward; one icicle 9 inches long.
27.—Mooring—Geldeston Lock. Max. temp., in air 26° 8 A.M.,
29° 1 P.M.; Min., 19°; thermometer under lee. N.E.
wind; snow squalls; water below lock frozen; blew a
gale in night. Robin and grey wag-tail alight on wherry;
peewits on marshes; starlings round lock house; larks;
wrens; Kentish crows; blackbirds; mavisises; seagulls;
ringedoves; blue-tits (8); linnets; snipe.
28.—Mooring—Geldeston Lock. Min. temp., 19°; 7.15 A.M.
30°. Much snow fell in night and all day; lock frozen; N.E.
wind moderating. Caught a starling with broken wing;
two mallard flew out of river 8 P.M.; peewits; sparrows;
robins; tom-tit; hawk (?). Temp. in sleeping cabin, 35°.
29.—Mooring—Geldeston Lock. Min. temp., 28°. Ice ½ inch
thick; wind N.E., shifts to W. in evening, and rime frost
with moonlight; ice cracking all round us in night. Saw
a trail of stoat and water-hen's feathers in snow. Rooks;
jackdaws; starlings; larks; goldfinches (12); teal (1);
kingfisher (1); grey wag-tail; dab-chicks (2); mallard
(3); linnets; herons (3); mavis; gooseanders (3); kestrel
hawks (2). Lock keeper caught river lampren; eels placed in cabin smacked all night.

Nov. 30.—Mooring—Geldeston Lock. Min. temp., 14°; 8 P.M. 32°. Everything covered with heavy rime frost; ice 1½ inch thick round wherry; snow crystalline; wind S.S.W.; no rime frost; stars bright at dusk, but watery at 9 P.M. Rooks; Kentish crows; larks; kingfisher (1); peewits (2); sparrow hawk chasing a blackbird; wren, black-headed tit-mice (2); starlings; linnets; snipe; robins (2); sparrows. Skating on flooded marshes.


2.—Mooring—Above Geldeston Lock. Min. temp., 28°, 25° at 7.30 P.M. Snow frozen on top; thawing slowly; ice over 1 inch thick; thick fog after sunset; thermometer began to fall quickly. Tracks in snow of rats, rabbits, and dog. Robin alighted on boat; saw three or four more on the ice; Kentish crows, rooks, blue-tits, sparrows, mavises; rook chasing a hawk; goldfinches, starlings, linnets, larks, field-fares; tom-tit; one snipe; six long-tailed tit-mice; tracks in snow of grebe. Cut a passage to lock; ice over 1 inch thick.

3.—Mooring—Above Ditchenham Lock. Max. temp., 31° at 7 P.M., 38° at 10 P.M. Calm; thawing; yellowish fog in distance; river full of ice-floes; marshes covered with mixture of ice and snow; N.E. breeze in afternoon. Some sheep turned out under some trees. Rooks, starlings, tit-larks, mavises, and larks feeding by melted snow; snipe (2); linnets; covey of partridges; heron in snow; field-fares feeding on thorn trees; tom-tits; dead blackbird; grey wag-tail; wren without a tail.

4.—Mooring—Geldeston Lock. Max. temp., 39°, 10.20 P.M.; Min., 30.5°; water, 34°; 9 P.M. Gusts of wind during night; wind S.W.; rain and thaw; wind easterly in morning; snow on uplands melted; some of marshes flooded; wind N.E. at noon; river full of floating ice and snow; S.E. wind changing to S.W. at night. Marshes alive with birds; rooks, mavises, field-fares, starlings, tit-larks, larks, linnets; water-hen; heron; sparrows; blue-tits; two yellow buntings; wren; snipe; Kentish crow. Set nets for eels; lock-keeper catch several stone of silver eels, vide text, few roach, and a few lampreys.

5.—Mooring—Geldeston Lock. Min. temp., 39°. Warm and moist; in evening S.W. gale; ice and snow not all melted. Rooks, jackdaws, starlings, blackbirds, mavises, larks, sparrows, robins (2), seagull, wren. Got several more stones of silver eels and a few lampreys.

6.—Mooring—Geldeston Lock. Min. temp., 37°, 34° at 7, 33° at 9. Wind easterly; marshes flooded. Floods have driven the rats to the lock-house; the dog chased one up a tree. Rooks on flooded marsh; starlings, larks, tit-
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larks, snipe, mallard, long-tailed tits, wrens, robins (2),
seagulls, kitiwakes, blue-tits, sparrows, Kentish crows,
blackbirds, mavises. Got very few eels in night; got four
lamperns. Marshes flooded.

shores lined with ice; floods falling. Bunch of thirty
duck and teal fly over; wag-tail (grey); yellow buntings
(2); flock of geese (7); wren; several flights of mallard,
chaffinch, starlings, rooks, mavises, sparrows, larks, and
seagulls on marshes; blue-tit on osier.

8.—Mooring—Geldeston Lock. Min. temp., 31°. N.E. wind;
ice on ronds.

9.—Mooring—Aldeby. Max. temp., 44°; Min., 33°, 20' at 9 P.M.
S.E. wind; day like spring; wind went to E. and dropped;
went to S.W. and a rime frost at 9 P.M. Larks, goldfinch,
Kentish crows, gulls, two robins, starlings, rooks, blue-tit,
wren, blackbirds, long-tailed tit-mice, stonechat; rooks on
nests and on ice; field-fares, peewits, snipe, kestrel, hawk,
ring dotterel, heron, linnets, mallard, teal. Started pike.

10.—Mooring—Mouth of Oulton Broad. Max. temp., 24°, 9 A.M.,
31° at sunset; Min., 18°, 19° 6.30 A.M. Heavy rime frost;
floating ice on river; wind changed to easterly at 12.30;
ribbons of snow linger in lanes; icy cold; wind changed
to S.W., and temp. rose to 33° before bedtime. Marsh-
man shot 4 1/2 brace snipe close by before breakfast; rooks;
larks hovering; curlew; crows from upland; starlings,
peewits, gulls, field-fares, mavis, jay, sandy-headed
pochard, curlew, wrens, blue-tits, long-tailed tits, gold-
finch, dotterel (ring), ringdoves, greenfinches, red-wings,
three herons, mallard, sparrow-hawk, kestrel hawk, teal,
jackdaws, tit-lark, robins, kitiwakes, water rails, golden
plover. Pike-hunting among the reeds. Steam mills
pumping; temp. in cabin, 26° at night.

11.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 31°. Wind easterly;
broad covered with ice; ice cracking and floating about.
Flock of golden plover; rooks; eight sandy-headed
pochards sitting on broad; blue-tits, wrens, jackdaws,
snipe, greenfinches; heard tame ducks cackle at nightfall:
larks; two teal; widgeon. Eel-pickers at work. Gather-
ing ice in the broad.

12.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 29°. Easterly wind;
ice cracking all round; much floating ice. Gull, swans,
and cygnets swim through floating ice; rooks, peewits,
mavises. Gathering ice.

13.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. The dredger ceased work; gathering
ice; navigation still open.

14.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 25°. Rime frost;
ice; broad frozen over. Poachers going after hares with
lurchers. Larks; peewits on land; gulls on Lake Lothing.
Several encampments of gipsies about; skating begins;
sleep at the White House.

15.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Max. temp., 32° 2 P.M., 34° 7 P.M.;
Min., 21°. Easterly wind; rime frost; freezing hard;
ice two inches thick; wind changed to S.W.; got warmer
in afternoon; thaw threatening; in evening wind back
of E. Larks, common bunting, rooks, starlings, blue-tits on land, seagulls. Skating; lock water frozen; large fields of ice on Lake Lothing; icing on broad in afternoon; steam wherry passed over broad.

Dec. 16.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 29°. Broad frozen hard all round; N.E. wind; freezing all day; ice three inches thick. Lake Lothing full of gulls; linnets feeding on seaweed; saw two mallard and a snipe on Lake Lothing. Skating.

17.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 30°. Blew hard in night; N.N.E. wind; snowstorm; ice cracking; thaw began in afternoon; wind S.S.W. Skating and icing; Beccles steamer broke through the channel.

18.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 23°. Snowing in night; wind changed in night to N.E.; freezing hard again; wind E. during day. Icing on broad; numerous skaters; waits at 1 A.M.

19.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 23°. Wind S.W., then N.W. and freshened; ice cracking loudly; snowed hard; wind changed to E., and heavy snow at night. Several gulls flying over ice; a wren alights on wherry; flock of mallard; Lake Lothing covered with gulls sitting on the water; starlings and rooks digging by water's edge; kittiwakes, blackbirds, mavises, and starlings on ploughed land; find half-frozen wren in wall. Steam wherry tried in vain to force the passage.

20.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Broad frozen hard all over. Channel frozen; navigation closed till February; skating; walked across broad with luggage; left for London.

21.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 19°.
22.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 18°.
23.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 17°.
24.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 18°.
25.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 17°.
26.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 23°.
27.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 23°.
29.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 18°.
30.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 15°.
31.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 14°.
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16.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 29°.

17.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 24°. Returned to Oulton; skating.

18.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 25°.

19.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 27°. Skating.

20.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 21°. S.W. gale arose at night; ice beginning to thaw at top; rain. Rats come down to drink round wherry where ice was broken, also dogs and birds; rat will eat his leg off when caught in trap. Six wild swans flew over 30 yards high; mallard; sparrows; robins; mavises in flocks. An eel 1 ½ feet long turned up dead in water round wherry; also 1½ lb. rudd. Strong frost, generally ends with rain.

21.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 30°. Wind N. and freezes. Rats make their nests under sacks in granary; have seen otters’ tracks in snow. A few skaters; icing going on; land springs at head of Breydon make ice dangerous in places.

22.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 27°. Snowed in the night. Coal tit; mavises; 8 wild geese; rooks; kiti- wakes. Ice cracking loudly; ice 6 inches thick round boat.

23.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 25°. S.W. wind; heavy mist and drizzle in morning; rain all day; ice sank to level of water. Swans chasing each other. Few skaters,

24.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 44°; water, 33° at 9.15 P.M. Rain and wind S.W. all night; ice 7½ inches on leeward side, 4½ to windward, and full of holes; thawing fast; W. goes in afternoon and rises to gale. Then picking for eels; get broad-nosed eels. Iceing, and few skaters.

25.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 35°. Wind changed W.N.W., going back to S.W. in evening; rain. Few skaters.

26.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 36°. Ice 4 to 5 inches thick. Cut our way to the staithe; few skaters on broad.

27.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Cut eats dead eels near us. Some swans very lively.

28.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 35°. Wind S.W.; the roads swamps. Sparrows alight on ice; kitiwakes, Steamship tries to break through ice, but failed; icing going on; chervil coming up in lanes; grass bleached.

29.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 36°. Ice 2½ inches thick. Swans excited; tomtit. Channel cut across broad; navigation is resumed; wherries pass across, and one is sunk; last day of skating.

30.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 35°. Five wild Bewick swans alight on broad.

31.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Linnets feed on seaweed on wall by Lake Lothing.

Feb. 1.—Mooring—Oulton Broad. Min. temp., 38°. N.E. wind; bright sunshine.

2.—Mooring—Reedham. Min. temp., 29°. Kestrel and sparrowhawk hovering; starlings and rooks feeding on marshes; starlings alighted on sallow bushes; larks hovering and singing. Eel-babbers and darters at work. Men still
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iceing; reeds have suffered badly from ice; marshes very barren, as they are after a long drought.


4.—Mooring—Mouth of Muck Fleet. Min. temp., 35°. Wind N.E.; bright. Saw cows and horses on the marshes; saw dead bare by water side. Hooded crows, skylarks, kestrels, partridges, tit-larks, snipe, starlings. Marshes look yellowish, but the roads are green.

5.—Mooring—Mouth of Muck Fleet. Watercress, forget-me-nots, marsh marigolds, and water-lilies coming up. Larks, rooks, starlings eating wire worms; blackbird; great crested grebe on Ormesby all the year round, saw two; saw nine tufted duck on Ormesby. Sleep at Ormesby; go up Muck Fleet; floods by Filby; Ormesby Broad frozen over this year; no wakes. A man drove a horse and cart from Filby to the Eel's foot and back.

6.—Mooring—Mouth of Muck Fleet. West wind; calm; misty. Rocks; flock of gulls on Martham Broad; flocks of pochards on Rollesby Broad; teal; several flocks, eighteen birds in flock; three pairs of ducks; one widgeon. Pike feeding. Sleep at Ormesby; another man rode across Rollesby Broad.

7.—Mooring—Mouth of Muck Fleet. Large flock of wood pigeons sitting on a tree. Sleep at Ormesby.

8.—Mooring—Acle Bridge. Saw a dead stoat (pure white except tip of tail), and weasel. Starlings, rooks, larks on marshes.

9.—Mooring—Thurne Dike. Min. temp., 42°. Thick and still; hear the foghorn on the Newarp light. Saw a dead frog in water; broadsman says he has met fifteen stoats hunting in a pack; and polecats used to be common, but are now rare. Mallard; yellow hammer; swans will not stay on Upton, there is some food they do not like; coots and water-hens have left the broad since the frost; thirty wild geese feeding on a marsh, reported to have been about for a month. Hundreds of fresh-water mussels moving about the bottom of Upton; numbers of dead eels turned up by the frost. Go on to Upton Broad; rushes very green.

10.—Mooring—Horning. Min. temp., 28°. Rime frost. Thrushes, blackbirds, larks, crows; hear a reed pheasant; pochard; mallard; flock of red-poles fly over; teal; pheasants; boy frightening rooks near Horning.

11.—Mooring—Horning. Min. temp., 33°. Wind N.W. Heard rooks calling till 9 p.m.; they say in Norfolk that rooks begin to build when the barley is put in; rooks roost in the carrs; some ducks making love.

12.—Mooring—Coltishall. Max. temp., 60°, 2.20 p.m.; 50°, 3.15 p.m. Sheep lie asleep in sun; temp. 50°. Wood pigeons; kestrel; field-fares; passed two reed-peedants; pochards in Hoveton Broad; rooks; coots; thrush; two pairs of ducks; teal; vast flocks of gulls; reed-bunting; pheasants; saw reed pheasant by Wroxham; two kitiwakes; flock of long-tailed tits; pickcheese; coal-tit; partridges; sparrows; yellow hammer; mavis; sparrow-hawk; great
crested grebe; cock pheasants challenging; rook chases a saddleback; dab-chick; green plover; water-hen; robin; blackbird; mavises singing in evening; starlings sitting on trees; pairs of partridges. Reed-cutters at work; sails sprouting.

Feb. 13.—Mooring—Aylsham. Min, temp., 30°. Heavy rime frost; melted by 10 a.m.; light easterly wind. Mole-catcher setting poisoned worms. Rooks sitting in pairs on nests in rookery by Burgh Church; three wild geese flying high; long-tailed tits; starlings; jackdaws; mavises; wood-pigeons; pickcheeses; water-hen. Saw two or three rime strikis; passed shoal of rudd.


15.—Mooring—Aylsham. Min. temp., 34°. Wind S.W.

16.—Mooring—Aylsham. Max. temp., 70° in sun; Min., 34°. Misty weather; calm. Tree sparrows on a field; mavis; Daisies in flower.


18.—Mooring—Burgh Bridge. Max. temp., 70°; Min., 20°. Heavy mist and rime frost; wind N.N.E. One hare. Mavis singing in tree-tops; blackbirds; pickcheeses; ring-doves; sparrow-hawk; sparrows; flock of mavises (35); rooks on newly-planted fields; water-hen; coot; starlings; tom-tit; three pairs partridges.

19.—Mooring—Above Burgh Lock. Max. temp., 36°; Min., 24°. Thick rime frost; S.E. wind. Blackbirds; cock pheasants challenge in the mist; mavises sing till 5.45 p.m.; owl; heron alights on a dead ash-tree. Fishermen caught three jack and several perch, first time since frost; passed several dead fish; passed shoals of small rudd. Marshes begin to look fresher and greener.

20.—Mooring—Buxton Lock. Min. temp., 30°. Wind S.E.; thick fog. Dab-chickens (6), mallard, rooks, jackdaws, hawk, long-tailed tits, mavises, chaffinches, pickcheese, greenfinches, red-poles, pairs of blackbirds, water-hen, ring-doves, missel thrush, mavises, coal-tits, robins (6). Sallows in bud; some leaves still left on oak trees; hazel tree covered with catkins; light till six o'clock.


22.—Mooring—Buxton Lock. Max. temp., 72°; Min., 31°. Wind S.S.W.; fog. Mavis singing; tom-tits, hedge sparrows, and greenfinches; swans making love; Kentish crow; greenfinches; rooks; chaffinches.


24.—Mooring—Coltishall. S.E. wind; thick rime frost; mist; wind goes to W., to E., and S.E. Starlings, sparrows, partridges, blackbirds, mavises, jackdaws, pickcheeses, robins scarce, crows. Shoals of rudd and some bream. Chickweed in flower; rime frost does not affect most wild plants, daisies, nettles, &c.; water very low.

rooks feeding in rime; tom-tit; coal-tit; pickcheese; coot; guinea-fowl restless; chaffinch.


27.—Mooring—Near Wroxham Broad. Max. temp., 70° in sun; Min., 28°. Rime frost; mist; S.E. wind; ice lining dikes. Three butterflies; midges out; a bat. Chaffinches; kingfisher; starlings; rooks; Kentish crows; several pairs of partridges; tom-tit; pheasants; pair of teal; mallard; long-tailed tit; pair of shovellers; pickcheeses; mavises; blackbirds; jackdaws; mallard; coot; waterhen; ringdoves; stockdoves; larks; sparrows; great crested grebe. Shoals of roach. Snowdrops in full bloom; wood-cutters at work.

28.—Mooring—Wroxham Broad. Max. temp., 26° sunrise, 40°; hour after sunrise, 68° 2 hours after sunrise, 96° in sun; Min., 25.3°. Thick rime frost. Bees are out. Birds before sunrise: mavises, coots, ringdoves, rooks, great crested grebe, water-hens, mallard, peewit; after sunrise: sparrows, pickcheese, wood-pigeons, long-tailed tits, blackbirds, Kentish crows, tit-larks, coal-tits, gull, kitiwake; hear a reed pheasant; royaton crows; four great crested grebe flew across broad. Could not see a fish; numbers of dead eels in dikes. Water low on broad.

Mar. 1.—Mooring—Wroxham Broad. Min temp., 42°. Wind W. Great crested grebe called till 11. Flush eight tufted duck; coots playing; eight great crested grebe on broad; pair of mallard; mavises. Lambskin green.

2.—Mooring—Horning. Min temp., 43°. Wind W., N., and then N.E. and S. Pickcheeses; flock of peewits; long-tailed tits; mallard; four great crested grebe; ringdoves; heard reed pheasant near Hoveton; two tufted duck; pheasants; coots playing; starlings; heard a snipe drum, 6.30 p.m.; black-headed gulls returned to Hoveton; rooks; long-tailed tit. Lightning in S.E.

3.—Mooring—Ranworth Dike. Min. temp., 34°. Strong N.W. gale; blew hard all day. Pair of mallard; long-tailed tit; field-fares; pheasants; lark; shoveller; coot.

4.—Mooring—Mouth of Ant. Min. temp., 33°. Gale still blowing. Pair of wild geese; eight snipe; mavis; heron; large snipe; reed-buntings; larks; pickcheeses; starlings; rooks; mallard; two cormorants on St. Benet's marshes.

5.—Mooring—Weyford Bridge. Min. temp., 43°. Wind still blowing strongly from W. Find otter's trail. Tit-lark; Kentish crow; peewit; mavis; larks; chaffinch; waterhen; rooks; sparrows; wood-pigeons; hawk; greenfinch; heard mavises' ventriloquism; heron. Several marsh marigolds in bloom.

6.—Mooring—Antingham Basin. Min. temp., 43°. Wind dropped in evening and mist arose. Donkeys eating gorse; moth flew in window, 11 p.m. Larks; tit-larks; hawks hovering; wood-pigeons; pickcheese; tom-tit; pheasants; coot; mallard; heard snipe just before dark; partridges; wood-pigeons; starlings; blackbirds; field-fares; kitiwakes.
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Mar. 7.—Mooring—Royston Bridge. Min. temp., 38.5°. Still, warm day. Saw twenty bats. Wild duck; yellow hammer; tit-larks; partridges; pickcheeses; larks; mavisves; pied wag-tail; flock of peewits and black-headed gulls feeding together. Pike; man catches roach; pike fishing. Water-lily leaves coming up.

8.—Mooring—Dilham Lock. Min. temp., 40°. Wind W. Starlings; water-hen; mavisves; partridges; plover; gulls; black-headed gulls; chaffinches; greenfinches; yellowhammers; long-tailed tits; sparrows; blackbirds; sparrow-hawk chasing sparrows; shovellers; water-hens.

9.—Mooring—Stalham Dike. Min. temp., 31.5°. Ice on forecastle deck; wind N.E.; stiff breeze. Sparrows; greenfinches; chaffinches; robin; sparrow-hawk; woodpigeons; larks; mallard; coot; water-hens; peewits; gull; kestrel; mavisves; blackbirds; goldfinches; rooks; crows; pair of partridges. Marsh marigold in flower; sallow in catkin; man planting osiers; men felling trees; saw a field of turnips ploughed up; reed cutting; Norwich, Yarmouth, and Cromer lights visible at night, also Hasboro' light.

10.—Mooring—Stalham. Min. temp., 30.5°. Snow squalls; wind N.E. Heard a red-leg whistle, reed-cutter said they had been over nearly three weeks; two coal-tits in reeds feeding in snow; storm and marsh harrier hunting in snow was chased by crow; three more red-shanks; blackbird flew across dike in snow squalls.

11.—Mooring—Stalham. Min. temp., 33°. Ice on forecastle deck; snow squalls in night and during morning; N.E. wind changed to N.W. by N. in afternoon.

12.—Mooring—Ludham Bridge. Min. temp., 26°. Frozen snow in patches over landscape; ice at edge of dike and lower down right across; wind N.W.; water very high, covering the ronds and reed hovers. Passed several red-shanks, mavisves, larks, flock of black-headed gulls on Barton Broad; coot, two great crested grebe, Kentish crows, flock of starlings on marsh; rooks in nests and flying about in rookery. Could not pass through Ludham Bridge.


14.—Mooring—South Walsham Broad. Min. temp., 36°. Wind E. Saw a bat. Wild swan feeding near wherry; tit-larks hovering; rooks in nests on low alder bushes; larks, kestrel, water-hen, flocks of peewits and pochards on South Walsham; coots chasing each other; cock peewits flying about as in breeding season; Kentish crows; flock of red-polos flew over; saw pied wag-tail. Three wherries loaded with ice on South Walsham Broad.

15.—Mooring—South Walsham Broad. Min. temp., 33°. Wind S.W. Another large flock of red-polos flew over; crow cutting at a cock peewit; reed pheasant. Some lily leaves above water.

16.—Mooring—South Walsham Broad. Min. temp., 36°. S.W. wind; mild like spring. Large flock of pochards and
tufted duck on broad; coots playing; large flock of reed-poles fly over; reed pheasant, Kentish crows, peewits on broad; pickcheeses; red-shanks; rooks; pair of mallard; large flock of peewits; grey gulls; heard a snipe drum; partridges; wild duck very noisy at night. Reed coots begin to peep above water, and gladen spikes are above water.

Mar. 17.—Mooring—South Walsham Broad. Min. temp., 32.5°. Rime frost, which was gone at 5.15 a.m.; warm spring morning; rain comes on; wind S.E. in afternoon and breeze. Mavis, coots, water-hens, rooks, jackdaws, ringdoves, tufted duck, pochards have gone; pair of mallard; cock pheasants challenging; crows; peewits; red-shanks. Go fishing in afternoon; get four average jack and fine full perch, weighing exactly 3 lbs.; length, 16½ inches; caught with spoon.

18.—Mooring—South Walsham Broad. Min. temp., 35.5°. Stormy all night; thick mist. Crows working about plantations; tufted duck on broad; coots playing; red-shanks; larks soaring. Go fishing in N.E. gales; no runs.

19.—Mooring—South Walsham Broad. Min. temp., 36°. Blew and hailed in night; wind N.; snow squalls in morning. Bat flew across. Birds scarcely to be seen except tufted ducks; coots after dark; wind goes down and I hear coots; great crested grebe; red-shanks; mavis; cock pheasants calling; also peewits and snipe.

20.—Mooring—South Walsham Broad. Min. temp., 35°. Rain and gale in afternoon; wind E.N.E. Saw dead stoat all white but tip of tail. Tufted duck; coots; crows; red-shank; peewits; two marsh harriers hunting; heron; crows. Girl digging Lent lily root on St. Benet's marshes.

21.—Mooring—South Walsham Broad. Min. temp., 32°. Rime frost; bright moon; N.E. gale with snow squalls all day; calm in evening; wind E.

22.—Mooring—Thurne Dike. Min. temp., 25°. Wind S.W. and calm; froze hard in night; dike laid with ice one-fourth of inch, and powdered with snow; wind shifts W.N.W. at 9.15; snow fell. Hoggets (one year old sheep) fresh turned out on to marshes. Mavis; crow; tufted duck gone; red-shanks; tame duck laid an egg on the bank; flocks of linnets on marshes; starlings; flock of golden plover.

23.—Mooring—Thurne Dike. Min. temp., 28°. S.E. breeze; ice on plank-ways; wind goes to S.W. and blows hard in evening. Flocks of starlings on marshes; golden plover; peewits; larks. Ice on lee side did not melt till noontime.

24.—Mooring—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 31°. S.W. breeze. Starlings; falcon; pair of tit-larks; red-legs; peewits; rooks in nests; pickcheese; tom-tits; missel thrush; puits on Somerton; water-hen; chaffinches; coal-tits; robins; ringdoves; red-legs; teal; crows; common wag-tails. Perch spawning in dike; little pike basking in dikes. Walked to Winterton; young nettles coming up; currant gooseberry bushes budding; ploughing the fields for barley; hawthorn budding; primroses coming up; apple and sycamore budding.

25.—Mooring—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 38°. Blowy night;
westerly gale; blows hard all day. See hare's trails. Heard snipe in night; three shovellers on broad; crows; red-shank; peewits; rooks; several flocks of snipe; pair of mallard; flock of golden plover; partridges; peewits tumbling; crows beginning to hunt the marshes and reed beds; curlew; starlings. Find purple dead-nettle in flower; chervil; dandelion; nettles; primroses; Lent lilies well forward; men carting litter on marshes; burning spear grasses on marshes.

Mar. 26.—Mooring—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 34°. Rained hard in night and blows hard in morning; wind worked round to N.W.; thunder; severe squalls came up from N. Lapwings; starlings; golden plover; yellow hammer; lark; tit-larks; red-shanks. Saw large pike in dike, apparently rudding; could not make sure. Man shooting crows on marsh.

", —Mooring—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 35°. Blowing strong as ever; N.W. gale; snow at 10 P.M. Starlings; peewits; red-shanks; crow chases peewit; find two peewits' nests; no eggs. Few boats turn out as usual on Good Friday.

", —Mooring—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 35.5°. Heavy rain and hail squalls in night; wind N.; hail squalls during day; calmed down at night. sparrows; rooks; blackbirds; mavisies; red-legs; reed-bunting; heard snipe drumming, partridge calling; a reeve's nest was taken here last year, the millman says. Trench not up yet; millman says the frost killed the fish in dikes this year, and that pike, bream, and perch were turned up on the broad. Trees look greenish; chervil, bed straw, and nettles well up; laburnums budding.

", —Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 35°. Rain squalls in night; N.W. wind; heavy rain and snow squalls in morning; wind rose to a gale. Saw a hare on marsh. Partridges; red-legs; shoveller; great crested grebe; pochard; tufted duck; wigeon; reed-bunting; larks; gulls; hen harrier.

", —Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 29°. Ground covered with snow and hail; N.W. gale; snow squalls during the day.

", —Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 26°. Ice over the dike in morning. Heard the frogs for the first time; midges. Tit-larks flying upwards; peewits, red-shanks, water-rails, coots, water-hens; wigeon fly over at night; snipe calling; heron, larks, kestrels hovering; sparrow-hawk. Heat-waves over marshes; trees look green.

April 1.—Mooring—Horsey District. Max. temp., 12° in sun; Min. temp., 21.5°. Heavy rime frost; dike laid with ice 1-inch thick; S.E. wind. Swans building; find an otter's trail; owl-hunting over reeds. Kestrel hovering; snipe drumming. Perch rudding; pike spawning.

", —Mooring—Horsey district. Min. temp., 31°. Rime frost; wind goes to E. in evening. Found several owls' castings. Larks courting; peewits tumbling; red-shanks pairing; greenfinches, golden plover, common bunting starlings
not paired yet; saw the first yellow water-wag-tail; flock
of sea-gulls along sand-hills; large flock of greenfinches
fly over; large flock of peewits not paired off; saw a
pair of desert wheat-ears on sand-hills. Saw some dead
eels in dike. Twenty-five years ago Eccles steeple was at
the foot of the sand-hills; there is now seventeen yards
between them, and thorns are put in between to keep the
draught from blowing the sand away.

April 3.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 32°. E. wind.
Find hare's fur in runs where they have been fighting;
find a cast of a mouse. Pair of red-shanks; find five
peewits' nests, no eggs; greenfinches, chaffinches, linnets
in flocks; five hooded crows, pair of mallard; find two
"cock swan's nests" near the swan's nest; whin chat,
male hen-harrier; three young Montague harriers taken
here last year, saw photograph; hen-harrier's eggs taken
here eleven years ago. More pike rudding.

4.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 35°. S.E. wind.
Saw two stoats on marshes; found several casts of mice,
1½ inches long; one large one measured 3 x 2 inches;
fish bones in one cast; saw a weasel, dropped a mouse
when he saw us; dug up several moles' nests, but no
young yet. Find peewit's nest, no eggs; bullfinches,
Kentish crow, flocks of starlings and linnets. Docks
coming on; water-lilies in bud; gorse in flower.

5.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 38°. S.W. wind;
showery. Frogs croaking; found frog's spawn; frogs shy.

6.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 35°. Red-shanks
very noisy.

7.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 36°. Crow cutting
at peewits. Mare died this morning, and the foal was
found sucking after she was dead.

8.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 36°. Blew hard in
night from S.W. Five tufted duck. Snipe drumming;
Kentish crows.

9.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 40°. Rain. Frogs
silent. Pair of mallard; three yellow wag-tails; skylark;
flocks of starlings; kestrels.

10.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 33.5°. Killed a
male adder. Cock yellow wag-tail.

Found several bodies of frogs disembowelled, probably
done by rats. Flocks of greenfinches and starlings; larks
courting; saw two rooks treading on a marsh; saw pair of
golden crested wrens; kestrel made a kill at a friend's
cap. Saw a pike take a frog; was brought a pike, found
a marsh mouse in its stomach; spawn was running out of
this pike.

Three hares on marshes; large moth flew at cabin lamp.
Pair of mallard; pair of shovellers.

13.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 38°. N.W. wind
fight, changing to E. Went rat-catching; four or five
hares; killed one rat 18½ inches long. Peewit's egg
taken to-day; common bunting; yellow hammer; stone
chat; flocks of starlings; passed flock of bramblings and
chaffinches; mole-catcher brings nine peewits' eggs; says
he took five from one nest, the rest from two others, and
found a nest with three hard set; flock of curlew;
widegeons fly over just after sunset; robin's nest with two
eggs; mavis's nest, one egg; hedge sparrow's nest, two eggs.

April 14.—Mooring—Horsey District. Pair of mallard; yellow wag-
tails; larks; chaffinches.

15.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 38°. W. wind,
changed to N., then to E., then to S. in evening. Saw
gyrus natator for first time; saw several toads in dike
fecundating; several midges about; humble bees. com-
mon wag-tails catching midges; yellow wag-tails catching
flies round freshly dropped horse dung; first swallow,
6.10 p.m.; a friend saw one at Reedham, 6 a.m. next day;
five mallard; two kestrels treading; found three pee-
warts' nests, four eggs in one; saw a swan sitting; re-
legs. Few pike spawning in shallow water or in dikes.
Common coltsfoot in flower; sallow buds green; spray of
blackthorn in flower.

16.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 36°. W. wind;
rain. Toads spawning. Saw large flock of peewits still
unpaired; land-buntings; eight golden plovers; flocks
of chaffinches; greenfinches and linnets; larks courting;
saw a hen's nest in hedge; pickcheeses in old ivied wall;
pair of falcons (?) hunting along the sand-hills; pair of
white wag-tails; heard snipe drumming in moonlight.

17.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 35°. Heavy rain;
wind W.N.W.; blowing hard. Found two water-hens' nests,
one six, one five eggs; swans still sitting on their empty nest.

18.—Mooring—Horsey District. Max. temp., 35° in sun; Min.,
38°. Still blowing strongly from same quarter. Saw two
sand-martins first time; heard sand-piper.


20.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 38°. Saw peewit
dusting itself like a lark in a field.

21.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 40°. Hailed in
night; wind E. Toads fecundating. One egg in swan's
nest; red-legs; flash several snipe; pair of red-buntings;
find tame goose's nest on marsh; had hatched off a few
days before; peewits tumbling. Find first perch span-
pike spawning. Water very low; king cups in flower.

22.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 40°. E. wind;
rain. Saw wild goose flying seaward; reed-buntings;
yellow wag-tails; gunner saw woodcock.

23.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 35°. Small tortoise-
shell butterfly; frogs croaking; toads croaking. Hen-
harriers; saw first cuckoo, heard second 10 a.m., 6
notes; mallard; pickcheese eating sallow buds; red-
legs; peewits; cormorant; snow bunting first shot to-
day; robin; whimbrels; saw a peewit cutting at a crow;
estrels. River full of perch spawn; bream getting
sluggish and collecting. Water very low—never known
to be so low within memory of natives; drain in which
we lay was dry.
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April 24.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. tem., 38°. Wind N.W. Hare sitting on a form; saw several rabbits eating the young corn; saw stoat swim the dike with two forefeet at once, dog fashion, like an otter; several farmers sent sheep and cattle to marsh to-day. Linnets have left marshes to build; found two linnets' nests begun; hedge-sparrows; three Kentish crows; yellow wag-tails; pied wag-tails; larks; starlings; and ring ouzels; rooks; gulls; two eggs in swan's nest; pair of partridges; mavis sitting on five eggs; blackbirds; got close to cuckoo, sitting on heap of stuff, looked very blue like pigeon; heard first sedge warbler; marshman heard grasshopper warbler; saw a willow wren; a friend had a pochard given him three days ago—when opened it was full of eggs; several wheatears about; curlew on the ploughed land; flocks of green finches and chaffinches disappeared from the marshes; saw starlings on ploughed fields. Water few inches higher; marshes newly cut ready for stock.


26.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 29°. S.E. wind. Saw the whirligigs working in moonlight. Pair of goldfinches feeding on thistle; saw tit-lark chasing a cuckoo.

27.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 39°. Wind N.W. Tadpoles hatched. Marshman saw ring ouzel; four field-fares and a redwing to-day; whitethroats are over; yellow wag-tails, sedge-warblers, reed-buntings now common; snipe; red-legs; cock shoveller; female blue-headed wag-tail; more linnets building; snipe drumming.

28.—Mooring—Horsey District.

29.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 33°. Wind W.; rain. Killed a female adder 23½ in. long; weighed ½ lb. Pair of mallard; sedge-warblers; reed-buntings; reed-geese; cuckoos. Perch spawn abundant.

30.—Mooring—Horsey District. Strong S.W. wind and rain. Pair of goldfinches; got close to an osprey; red-leg struck at the osprey; swan's nest with five eggs; marsh harrier.

May 1.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 34°. Blew strong from S.W. in night; dike full; heavy rain. Waterhen's nest, seven eggs.

2.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 39°. S.W. gale all night; thunderstorm. Saw a cock blue-headed wag-tail. Hedge-rows full of whitethroats, wood wren, yellowhammers; flock of tree sparrows in field; took two tree-sparrows' eggs; nest of young blackbirds two or three days old; found four peewits' eggs; wheat-ears; linnet's nest with eggs; chaffinches; swallows courting; tit-lark's nest, three eggs; one cock whinchat and three females; two goldfinches. Water crow's-foot in flower; blackthorn in blossom; elder in leaf; groundsel; blue pimpernels in flower.

3.—Mooring—Horsey District. W. wind. Sand-martins hawking for flies over water. Tench are up.

4.—Mooring—Horsey District. E. wind. Kentish crow, red-legs,
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chaffinches courting; mavis’s song getting poor; the lark’s song falling off; whinchats; crow beating the marsh sedge-warblers; whimbrels, plovers, cock redstart, grasshopper warblers reeling; saw a snipe on top of willow tree; wheatears.

May 5.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 33°. Flocks of greenfinches and corn buntins, cock redstart, go to a rookery, many young birds on edge of nests, one fell and we caught him; wood-wrens, willow wrens, robins, tom-tits, wheatears; pheasant sitting on fourteen eggs; French partridge’s nest, six eggs; puit, tree sparrows, whitethroats. Burning grasses on the marsh.

6.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 36°. E. wind. Marshman found two reed pheasants, one with young, one hard set—I saw both; marsh harrier; two great crested grebe, cuckoo sitting on a signboard; hear the first reed warbler; find four peewit’s eggs, hard set, and several red-legs’ nests, three with eggs, one of the eggs exactly resembling a water-hen’s; nest of young thrushes fully fledged; chaffinches, blackbirds, pick-cheeses; wren’s nest, no eggs; found a dead hooded crow. Several small pike washing in dike; man picking for eels in marsh drain; marshman caught a 1 ½ lb. tench. Plum trees in blossom; saw cuckoo flowers; labourers docking in field.

7.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 35°. E. wind, turned to W.; mist. Examined forty moles’ nests, young in two, and four dead in another, about three weeks old. Flushed a pair of garganny teal; peewit’s nest, two eggs; marshman heard night-jar; night-jar laid here last year; blue-headed wagtail; whimbrel.

8.—Mooring—Horsey District. S.W. wind; changed to S.E. Midges. Reed-buntins, yellow hammers, whitethroats, tom-tit, robin, garden warblers, blackbirds, mavis, peewits, snipe, tit-larks, putis, yellow wag-tail, black wagtail. Went fishing in private water; got four tench, 2 lbs., 1 lb., 1 ½ lb., 2 ½ lbs.; several bream, heaviest 2 ½ lbs.; some of tench had spawn in them. Women docking; cherry and plum trees in blossom, primroses, dog-violets; found sweet gale; water low; water-lily bud above water.


10.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 33°. Whimbrel; marshman brought a reed pheasant’s nest for me to look at, five eggs; grasshopper warbler reeling.

11.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 34°. E. wind.

12.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 42°. N. wind. Killed an adder; frogs croaking. Reed warblers; a wheatear; find a pair of swallows building; blue-headed wag-tail (cock) shot close to boat; find its nest, one egg; linnet’s nest, three eggs; house martins over.

13.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 40°. Wind N.W. Saw swallow-tailed butterfly in reeds; killed a young weasel. Mallard; flock of starlings on marshes; blue-headed wag-tail laid another egg; three ringdoves; whimbrels; perch spawn hatched; rudd and bream shoaling.
May 14.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 38°. Wind N. Common wag-tail’s nest, four eggs; young thrush on the wing; saw an osprey. Hedgerows covered; apples beginning to blossom; pears in full bloom.

15.—Mooring—Horsey District. Thunderstorm. Saw some young peewits in nest.

16.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 35°. Wind N.W.; hail squalls all day. Marshman took reed pheasant’s nest, seven eggs; found a sedge warbler’s nest; osprey; gunner saw field-fare on a barley field.

17.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 30°. Hailstorm in night; awoke and found ground white with snow. Six eggs in blue-headed wag-tail’s nest; saw some young robins in hedgerow; saw large flock of ringdoves.

18.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 30°. Ground covered with snow; E. wind; rain. Blue-headed wag-tail sitting; snipe’s nest, four eggs.

19.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 26°. Ice in dike thickness of half-crown. Marshman found duck’s nest with young, they fled directly he went up to it; saw first swift to-day; something has sucked all the blue-headed wag-tail’s eggs—probably weasels; pair of turtle doves’ eggs; dead swallows found, killed by cold.

20.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 35°. Wind S.W. Swallows flying very low; saw three swifts; marshman found sedge-warbler’s nest with cuckoo’s egg; took it out; the cuckoo laid another next day.

21.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 42°.

22.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 43°.

23.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 35°.

24.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 43°.

25.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 43°.

26.—Mooring—Horsey District. S.W. wind. Young lark; several field hunting; rooks in flocks; red-backed shrike shot; saw large flock of turtle-doves feeding on marsh; pied wagtail’s nest, their last year’s nest next to it with a dead tom-tit in it; whitethroat’s nest, one egg; greenfinches nest building; yellow wag-tail’s nest full of water, two eggs; yellow hammer’s nest with eggs; red-pole’s nest, two eggs; whitethroat. Red campion in flower; several trees near sea have not a leaf yet.

27.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 30°. Wind S.; rain. The yellow wag-tail laid another egg in nest, though full of water, but deserted it from that day.

28.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 34°. Wind S.; squally. Young moles all out, and as big as the old. Marsh harrier; two herons come to feed. Babbers get no eels—too cold; tench have gone down; old fisherman saw a roach rudding a week ago.

29.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 42°. Wind S.W. Gulls on Horsey; pair of marsh harriers, swallow building; few hawks about lately; yellow wag-tail’s nest, three eggs; tit-lark’s eggs sucked; found pair of reed-buntings building; yellow wag-tails scarcer than they were. Tench very shy.

30.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 39°. Rained in night; wind turned to E.

June 1.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 40°. Looked like a November morning; E. wind. Sedge-warbler’s nest, one egg; reed-bunting’s nest, five young; some rooks, puits, and peewits following plough; cuckoo chased by tit-larks. Shoals of bream collected; man caught a young pike, 3 oz., 15½ inches long, swallowing young perch, 1¼ oz., 7 inches, both alive when taken from water.

2.—Mooring—Horsey District. Wind E., shifted to S. at night; thunderstorm. Flocks of rooks and starlings on marshes, both with young birds; sedge-warbler’s nest, four eggs; greenfinch’s nest, no eggs; tree-sparrow’s nest, two eggs; missel thrush’s nest, four eggs; reed-bunting’s nest, four eggs. Bream rudding.


4.—Mooring—Horsey District. Broom in flower.

5.—Mooring—Horsey District. Rain; easterly wind. Several ants’ nests with eggs. Five eggs in a sedge-warbler’s nest, bird begun to sit; reed-warbler’s nest, four eggs; tree-sparrows lying; several nests: wren’s nest, thirteen eggs; wren’s nest, no eggs; sedge-warbler’s nest, five eggs; chaffinch’s nest, three young; coot’s nest, two eggs; large gulls. Mustard plants in bloom.

6.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 42°. Easterly wind. Lambs on marshes. Marshes full of rooks and starlings; turtle-dove’s nest; reed-warbler’s nest, five eggs; three tree-sparrow’s eggs, very tender shells; tree-creeper’s nest, one egg; thrush’s nest, one-half rotten egg, and full of maggots. Bream and roach finished spawning; babbers getting a few eels. White orchis; men hoeing beans; white water-lilies in flower; cotton grasses in flower; yellow water-lilies open; walls white with chervil.

7.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 43°. Half a gale from N.E.

8.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 44°. E.N.E. wind. Sedge-warbler’s eggs sucked; saw sparrow-hawk in stack.

9.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 44°. Blew strong from E.N.E.; rain. Reed-buntings have young; young linnets. Marshman finds a red-pole’s nest.

10.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 44°. N.E. wind. Two red-pole’s eggs; saw Kentish crow feeding with rooks at Caistor.

11.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe.

12.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe.

13.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 35°.

14.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 42°.

15.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 39°.

16.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 47°.

17.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 44°.

18.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 51°.

19.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 53°.

20.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 51°.

21.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 47°.
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June 22.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 43°. Two hen-harriers, and a Kentish crow. Man shot a widgeon and a hen-harrier in my absence.

23.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Some young wag-tails; marshman saw eighteen turtle-doves on marshes; a black crow shot here.

24.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 50°.

25.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 42°. Red-legs; puit; pickcheese with young; swan and four young cygnets; tom-tit. Go babbing, get next to nothing.

26.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. Min. temp., 37°. S.W. wind; rain. Flycatchers singing in the elms; peewits flying home. Get a few eels babbing; a babber close by caught 1½ lb. tench on his bab.

27.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. S.W. wind. Find flycatcher's nest, four eggs; saw two young long-tailed tits feeding in willow trees; some common sparrows' eggs in trees; tom-tit's nest, one egg; pickcheese's nest, young birds.

28.—Mooring—Hickling Staithe. S.W. wind. Marshman heard a spotted rail last night; puits.

29.—Mooring—Catfield. S.W. wind. Haymaker caught a young land-bunting; English partridge sitting; cuckoo flying as late as 9 P.M. Haymaking begun.

30.—S.W. wind; rain. Flycatchers singing; flappers have begun flighting; man went by with young kestrels taken from a skeleton mill; passed a mallard and young duck; linnets; reed-buntings; peewits; red-legs; herons; found a water-rail's egg; snipe's nest with four eggs fresh; partridge's nest, eighteen eggs; grasshopper warbler reeling; reeds full of reed warblers; red-poles; young sedge-warblers; heard curlews; caught young water-hen. Caught several tench. Ragged robin; water grasses in flower.

July 1.—Mooring—Catfield.

2.—Mooring—Catfield. Min. temp., 52°. S.W. wind. Several lats. Two young herons; swifts; sedge-warblers on eggs; peewit with young; reed-buntings with young; red-poles flying with food in beaks; mavis's nest, eggs sucked; turtle-dove's nest; found a dead swan; red-leg with young; marsh harrier; reed-warbler's nest with young; heard grasshopper warbler at 10 A.M.; several young sedge-warblers about in reeds; night-jar; snipe. Pike getting into good condition.


4.—Mooring—Deep Go Dike. Min. temp., 52°. Wind shifts to S.E. and E. Swifts flying very high and calling; snipe; red-leg. Saw a large eel taken from a pike's stomach; pike 4½ lbs.

5.—Mooring—Deep Dike.


7.—Mooring—Deep Dike. Min. temp., 48°. Rain. Red-leg still at his post; have heard no cuckoos the last day or two; few sand-martins fly over the water; sedge-warblers and buntings most common.

8.—Mooring—Somerton Broad. N.W. wind. Red-leg still at
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his post; cuckoo called twice; reed-bunting common. Cutting weeds in Dungeon Dike.


10.—Moorings—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 48°. Blowing all night from N.W. Heard cuckoo call; snipe drum; and saw several flappers. Babber gets some fine silver-bellied eels.

11.—Moorings—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 48°. N.W. wind, moving to S.


13.—Moorings—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 46°. Easterly wind. Hear a cuckoo; peewits have begun to fly; saw some turtle-doves; pair of swallows flew into friend’s house-boat and examined rafters as if intending to build—child frightened them, and they flew to the window, one striking the glass; water-hen with two broods.

14.—Moorings—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 47°. Wind E. Stout chasing water-hens through reeds. Nest of young chaffinches; young sand-martins over reeds; one red-leg. Eels smacking on top of water; man got an 18 lb., pike with a dart; tench rudding.

15.—Moorings—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 46°. Stormy, like winter; rain; towards evening wind goes to N.; thick mist.

16.—Moorings—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 47°. N.W. wind; dull.

17.—Moorings—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 47°. S.W. wind. Bats; gulls; reed-warbler’s nest that we found begun has an egg in it; two coots’ nests; partridges calling; night-jar, owl, snipe, red-leg, herons, peewits, ducks, rooks, hawks, martins, coot, reed-bunting. Pike basking.

18.—Moorings—Somerton Broad. S.W. wind; rain; squally; rainbows. Marshman shot a flapper weighing 3 lbs. when plucked; saw young water-hen die on a lily leaf. Tops of gladen spindles dropping off.


20.—Moorings—Somerton Broad. S.W. wind and squalls. Many ducks about in evening; saw an old water-hen with one young one; water-hens very fond of getting on to islands of stuff in broad to feed; young sand-martin alighted on boat and went for a sail.

21.—Moorings—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 53°. Dull but breezy; thunderstorms; lightning struck several places round us. Rooks turning and twisting in air; martins hawking for flies; swift martins hawked after each tempest; sea-gulls. Fish splashed after each tempest. Strawberries plentiful, 2d. per lb.


23.—Moorings—Somerton Broad. Rain; east wind in afternoon.

24.—Moorings—Somerton Broad. S.W. wind; thunderstorm. Heard reed-pherant; water-hens; grebe; flock of sand-martins; young herons; reed-warblers (few); reed-bunting; yellow wag-tails; hawks about again—saw one flying with a piece of bramble in its beak; sedge-warblers scarce. Convolvulus in flower.
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July 25.—Mooring—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 48°. S.W. wind, changing to W.
26.—Mooring—Somerton Broad. N.E. wind.
27.—Mooring—Somerton Broad. Rain. Flappers; snipe; peewits.
28.—Mooring—Somerton Broad. Westerly breeze; thunderstorms. Heard no cuckoos for long time; reed and sedge-warblers nearly silent; sand-martins busy after flies; few swifts and swallows and herons; birds flying; young cuckoo. The fly has got at the turnips, as they are ploughing them up; farmers getting the muck out of yards.
29.—Mooring—Somerton Broad. Cold, rainy; W. wind, half a gale; night looks like winter.
30.—Mooring—Somerton Broad. Min. temp., 42°. Gloomy, cold; rain, thunder. Coot.
31.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 46°. N.E. wind. Flocks of peewits on marshes; greenfinch crying; several reed-buntings; young cuckoo; hen-harrier. Men marsh mowing.

Aug. 1.—Mooring—Horsey District. N.E. wind; rain. Midge terrible. Linnets; greenfinches; land-buntings; larks; turtle-doves; nest of young land-buntings; nest of young tit-larks; nest sedge-warblers; yellow hammer's nest begun building; ring dotterells; marshman shoots female hen-harrier; snipe; red-legs; peewits. Water very high; rushes in full flower.
2.—Mooring—Horsey District. Rain; thunder squalls; double rainbow. Midge fearful. Saw male hen-harrier. Snipe. Marshman shot snipe; starlings in flocks. Most birds in the corn now; mushrooms.
3.—Mooring—Horsey District. Thunderstorms. Find reed-bunting's nest, four eggs.
4.—Mooring—Horsey District. Poling litter; water very high.
5.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 40°. N. wind; rain; thunderstorms. Snipe; reed-bunting. Millman puts in eel net. Mills hard at work; water thick.
6.—Mooring—Horsey District.
7.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 40°. W. wind; cold and miserable. Kittiwakes; forty curlew fly over; twelve snipe fly over.
8.—Mooring—Horsey District. S.W. breeze, changes to W. and S.W.; squally.
9.—Mooring—Horsey District. Hear the curlew in night; marshman shot night-jar; birds in flocks on marshes; lapwings; snipe; curlew; rooks; starlings; herons (4); have heard no reed or sedge-warblers for days, and only an occasional bunting. Mushrooms.
10.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 41°. Thunderstorm.
11.—Mooring—Horsey District. Min. temp., 39°. Gloomy and squally. Two or three snipe; larks; tit-larks; buntings; reed-buntings; blackbirds in beans; tree sparrows in corn; marshman shoots snipe; marshman finds three land-buntings' nests, all with eggs. Carting marsh hay.
12.—Mooring—The Cut. S.W. wind puffs. Pickcheese's nest, four eggs. Weed-cutters at work.
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Aug. 14.—Mooring—The Cut. Min. temp., 52°. Wind W. Ring dotterel; gulls; hawk; turnstones; swallow's nest, four fresh eggs; yellow hammers; saw large flock of sand-martins on sand as if leaving.


16.—Land-buntings; heard young partridges; curlews, peewits, and a flock of turtle-doves. Ragwort in full bloom.

17.—Mooring—The Cut. Min. temp., 42°. Wind S.E. Ring dotterels.

18.—Mooring—The Cut.

19.—Mooring—The Cut. Min. temp., 49°. A large bat, 12½ inches, shot. Two leverets on marsh. Gunner shot two swallow-tailed terns; wheatear seen; larks on the marshes; linnets; peewits in large flocks; few rooks; saw Kentish crow; hundreds of sand-martins collected on field yesterday. Mushrooms plentiful.

20.—Mooring—The Cut. Blowing N.; rainstorms. Ring dotterel; larks; land-bunting; linnets; starlings; peewits; mavis's nest, three young birds not more than week old; red-backed shrike; reed-buntings; five red-legs; ducks flying at sea.

21.—Mooring—The Cut. Min. temp., 41°. Wind W, and then N.W.; drizzly; gloomy.

22.—Mooring—The Cut. Min. temp., 42°. N.E. wind, half a gale. Lot of snipe came over boat.

23.—Mooring—The Cut. Min. temp., 42°. Blew hard all night, wind N.E.

24.—Mooring—The Cut. Heard reed-warbler.

25.—Mooring—The Cut. Min. temp., 41°. Wind blowing stormy from S.W. Young house-martins just left nest.

26.—Mooring—The Cut. Blew hard all night. Flocks of peewits on marshes; few larks, linnets, and swallows; marshman found land-bunting's nest, with fresh eggs, two days ago; swifts hawking about sand-hills. Farmer near begins harvest.

27.—Mooring—Meadow Dike. Max. temp., 70° in sun; Min., 42°. Drizzly rain; heavy rain squalls. Terns hawking for flies; large flock of swallows and swifts; starlings and peewits on marshes; flocks of curlew, snipe, three mallard, gulls, sandpipers. Dikes full, and marshes full of water.

28.—Mooring—Meadow Dike. Blew gale in night; rain. Swifts; very few migrants to be seen this month; fearful spring and summer for birds; rails remarkably scarce, and all other eggs comparatively scarce; no very rare eggs taken this year.

29.—Mooring—Meadow Dike. The frost has killed off the greater part of the reed pheasants, many water-hens, and most of the rails.

30.—Mooring—Meadow Dike.

Opinions of the Press.

"Has he or has he not discovered the secret of turning the open into art? The question was idle did we not hold him miles in front of the common 'Nature-poet,' who babbles through a list of birds and grasses, make the sun glint and the wind moan, and then thinks he has made you a picture from life. Mr. Emerson is neither an imitator nor a word-spinner, but a student not unworthy of contrast with Gilbert White and Jefferies and Thoreau. . . . At any rate, he has tried to impart some touches of the charm of fiction to his work by introducing at great length the populace of Breydon. . . . There is no plot, yet there is a certain amount of inventive and dramatic climax in the incidents, and if a face is thrown on the screen, 'tis always with a purpose. . . . The chapter entitled 'A Drowning Accident' affords what is perhaps the strongest example of Mr. Emerson's realism. It is powerful but unpleasant."—National Observer.

"Mr. Emerson has the art of describing even unimportant things in a way that makes them interesting. Above all, he has presented a series of admirable photo-etchings which convey a wonderfully vivid impression of the various scenes reproduced."—Nature.

"'Wild Life on a Tidal Water' is a book that makes one long to be out of doors enjoying the glamorous beauty of 'lee' shores, or having the blood stirred by 'sport and storm.' Mr. Emerson is a man with an eye for Nature both on its picturesque and its tamer sides; he uses his senses, and, though he shows no lack of imaginative sympathy, he never indulges in vague description. . . . The book is written in a most fascinating style. It is a book by all means to be procured by the lover of Nature."—Publishers' Circular.

"A book instinct with the character of the people and the district it describes. He has carried a feeling for art into the practice of photography to an extent that has not been realised by any other man. . . . As a whole, the book is one of those delightful mixtures of art and literary excellence which never fail to give pleasure to the possessor and to be a continuing pleasure."—Scotsman.

"All the plates have a surprisingly artistic touch."—Manchester Guardian.

"Mr. Emerson's luxurious quarto represents nearly the highest point to which reproduction of pictures has yet been carried."—Queen.

"A volume of great beauty and of high artistic value. . . . This is by Mr. P. H. Emerson, whose former art-volumes are now ranked among the treasures of the book world. . . . The descriptions are most enjoyable. The author has a graphic style and a strong sense of humour. . . . The plates are remarkable for delicate finish. . . . The work has thus many features of interest, and is in every respect a memorable one."—Glasgow Herald.

"As an ardent lover of Nature and a man of letters, the scenery of East Anglia long ago made a deep impression on Mr. Emerson's mind. . . . Beneath a pleasant exterior there are striking qualities of ability and good comradeship, and the reviewer feels, above all things else, that he may undertake his task with complete confidence, because the author will neither be troubled by adverse criticism nor elated by the warmest compliment. It will never be said of him, as it was of a great poet, that he was 'snuffed out by an article.' . . . The distinguishing characteristic of the written sketches—as of the illustrations, too, in a minor degree—is a certain frank, fearless, and plucky determination to 'gang his ain gate,' without any deference to conventional notions. . . . The book is full of indications of this cheerful audacity. There is one chapter, describing an interview with a young lady upon Yarmouth Pier, which few English authors would have dared to write at all, which fewer still would have touched with such perfect but not repulsive realism. A misty and half-defined love story is reflected in some pages, so dimly that it can only be compared to a mental photo-etching, and these passages of sentiment—manly always and refreshingly cynical—are cunningly set amid the strongest and sturdiest bits of word-painting. . . . It seems to us a brave and cheery record, marked out by a welcome individuality from the great bulk of similar productions. Taken altogether, it is a most charming and delightful book. . . . It could never have been gathered, indeed, had not the author possessed keen powers of observation, a genuine sense of humour, and power of description which fulfill the rarest obligations of literary skill with such an apparent unconscious and unparalleled freedom."—East Anglian Times.
"Wild Life on a Tidal Water" affords fresh testimony to Mr. Emerson’s fidelity to
the charms of open-air existence. ... He succeeds in suggesting a lively impression of a
pleasurable sojourn in the wild flats and waterways round Great Yarmouth. ... The
natives are capital sketched. ... Tragedy there was to record, and an episode of
romance, of which Mr. Emerson is at once frank and reticent. He tantalises us with an
explicit account of the meeting, and leaves the sequel in mystery."—Saturday Review.

This book claims regard as well for some results in its particular local topics as for
the high artistic value of its plates. ... Their execution is perfect; nothing better can be
done by such processes in the reproduction of landscape or water effect."—Illustrated
London News.

"Many of the engravings are veritable gems of art."—Norfolk Daily Standard.

"In lively style Mr. Emerson tells us of sailing adventures on Breydon. ... The photo-
etchings are distinguished in an unusual degree by their beauty and delicacy. ... They will
be welcome to all who love the East Coast of England and its social life."—Speaker.

"Mr. Emerson writes the letterpress in a lively style, etching in the local types of boat-
men and fishermen with a pointed pen, and reproducing the provincial dialect phonetically.
The frontispiece is a remarkably delicate and finished piece of workmanship."—The Times.

The photo-etchings are by Emerson and Goodall, 'and therefore,' says the Baron,
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there was nothing material for an author in treating upon 'Wild Life on a Tidal Water'—the
said water being Breydon flats; but Mr. Emerson in his descriptive matter and in the
types of character he introduces soon dissipates this notion, and enlists the attention of the
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Yarmouth Independent.

"The author is happy in his descriptions of the amphibious folk."—St. James' Gazette.

"As a conscientious attempt to elucidate the avifauna of a particular district, it forms
an acceptable addition to the literature of the subject."—The Zoologist.

Decidedly superior, both in literary and artistic merit, not only to ordinary gift-books,
but even to works of the de luxe order. ... Mr. Emerson is, as is now tolerably well
known, a writer sui generis, and what he describes is sure to be well received by all who are
pleased ... by his pictures of East Anglian life. ... Some of his phrases are better
than happy. ... Nor has he many equals to-day in the difficult art of describing a storm.
He has, finally, a decided mastery of the horrible, as is shown in a gruesome fashion in his
narrative of a crab in the act of tearing out a sole's eye. ... Mr. Emerson does full justice
to the humour, mostly of the grim unconscious sort, which is impersonated in the char-
acters to be met with in the Norfolk Broads. In spite, however, of the cleverness of Mr.
Emerson's writing—and of higher qualities than mere cleverness—the abiding charm of this
book lies in its photo-etchings."—The Spectator.

"Wild Life" is an amusing book, ... You see the English peasant drawn from
life and to the life."—Truth.

The only fault of the book is that it is too good to take as part of the kit for an
expedition to the Broads, but for the library it is an admirable volume."—The Graphic.

"He has, moreover, an eye for character, and his descriptions of the Norfolk folk
whom he has come across are no less entertaining than his account of the birds and
fishes whose ways he so thoroughly well knows."—Daily News.

"We have before had occasion to praise the singularly attractive work of Mr. Emerson's
pen in sketching scenes of wild life. ... In this volume we find the same delicacy of
observation and truth of rendering, together with a certain sentiment of landscape hard to
characterise, ... At all events, its low-lying flats and shallows at an ebb-tide seem to
have more than the usual fulness of life on the edges of the sea, and in Mr. Emerson the
place finds an artist as fond of natural history in its own home as of landscape effects.
The charm of the book, however, lies in the reality with which it conveys the sense of the ocean in
the full range of its life. ... In one point he has been especially successful. He gives the
ambitiousness that always belongs to the sea. ... The pictures are not closely related to
the text, but come in like a margin in which the feeling of the text is found again in another
mode of artistic expression. The entire volume is thus a sea-book."—New York "Nation.

"His work is novel, sincere, and admirable. ... The taste for character is genuine
with him. ... There is a drowning accident, for example, which for true realistic power
is very remarkable, even in these days of so much would-be realism; it is pathetic in itself,
but the circumstances are so rendered and the words and actions of the spectators are so
directly set down that it seems the thing itself. This, however, is fortunately only an
episode; the body of the book is in the mood of a free, natural love of out-doors, of the
fresh sea and all it affects with its wide presence."—Evening Post (New York).
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