



WRITTEN BY AN ENTHUSIAST.

ILLUSTRATED BY T. RYAN.

TERRIBLE indeed would be this life of ours with all its strange problems and its struggles were it not that most of us have been endowed with that thrice happy faculty which enables us to look forward to the future, in which we usually see a gleam of brightness, or back on those days of the past when our paths lay in pleasant places. And it is a thousand pities that more people do not realise what a splendid investment is obtainable in healthy enjoyment when opportunity offers. Take, for example, a summer's holiday. Not only does it afford endless pleasure in anticipation, but after it is over how many of our pleasantest hours are spent in fighting our battles o'er again, especially if our pleasures have been taken in the open air in the pursuit of some favourite sport—shooting, cycling—or best, far best of all, yachting.

The pleasures of cruising in a staunch little yacht, stiff and handy, have been sung before, and by far abler writers than he who now takes up the song, but certainly by no greater enthusiast. And this excuse—that he is an enthusiast—must be that offered by the writer for the telling of the very simple story of a brief holiday cruise in a centre-board yacht in the beautiful waters of the Hauraki Gulf. If it induces one reader to join the ranks of yachtmen it will not have been written in vain, for that man will probably leave a trifle in his will to the amateur scribbler whose random article first led him to try and to enjoy the greatest of human pleasures.

And now let me up anchor, so to speak, and get on with my yarn. Long before the holidays came we had decided, I and my pals, that our 'week off' should be spent cruising round the Hauraki Gulf in the little four tonner Waitangi, a worthy little namesake of the Wellington crack both in stiffness and in possessing a fine turn of speed. The weather had been so consistently easterly this season that we determined to run down to the Great Barrier by way of a starb. The splendid scenic and fishing attractions which would in any case have inclined us thither were supplemented by a certain amount of curiosity to see what was left of the poor Wairarapa at the foot of Miner's Head.

light, when we met her again off the Watchman, where we kept in company for a short time. As she was going to Fitzroy Harbour she bore away from us on the starboard tack whilst we kept on beating to windward to make Blind Bay. Shortly after the Viking parted company with us we got a good breeze. We eventually reached Blind Bay at 9.45 a.m. on the 22nd after a rattling good sail to windward, doing the sixty miles in 16 hours, not a bad performance by any means.

On our arrival in Blind Bay, we were met by Messrs J. and T. Ryan, and with true colonial hospitality did these gentlemen entertain us during our stay. They never allowed us to have a meal aboard scarcely, and in every way laid themselves out to make our stay an enjoyable one.

In the afternoon we went shark hunting—thoroughly equipped for the fray with harpoons, swivel hooks, and all the paraphernalia for hooking monsters. It was probably this that caused the brutes to disappear when we came on the scene, for not one did we catch or even see, though before we arrived there were any number of them about. We could see their fins in plenty above the water.

Monday morning saw us early astir, as we were going to visit the scene of the wreck of the Wairarapa at the other end of the island at Miner's Head. We got off at 6 a.m., and a nice light easterly breeze prevailed, so we soon skipped past the lovely Wangaparapara Harbour, and through the picturesque islands outside Port Fitzroy, where some marvels of nature can be seen. We passed between the high-wooded Nelson Island and Wellington Island, and soon were across Port Abercrombie, where we saw the Viking coming out of Maori Bay. The breeze now began to freshen, and we got some stiff puffs of the high land round Miner's Head. As there was a good breeze and ocean roll in at the wreck, we decided to go into Coppermine Bay with the yacht and leave her at anchor there, because there would be no anchorage near the wreck. We left the yacht snug at anchor and went round Miner's Head in the dingy to the wreck, about three-quarters of a mile away. The wreck was in just the same position as when she sank, but all the hurricane deck was carried away, so that she appeared to be deeper in the water. There was a great quantity of wreckage floating about, and we secured some relics of the ill-fated vessel. After taking some photos we left the wreck, and had a rough trip back in the dingy to the yacht; in fact, we nearly got swamped with two heavy seas which came over us.

When at last we got safely back to Coppermine Bay we went ashore to see the deserted copper workings. Busy indeed must the scene have been here when the fifty houses of the settlement were full of miners, and when there was the clank of the heavy machinery round the mine mouth. There is nothing left now. Ti-tree and scrub once more reign supreme, and the only sign of life left was the numberless herds of wild goats. All round this coast it is literally lined with them. We had some very good sport stalking them whilst in Mine Bay, and got several.

After having a good meal we got underway again for Maori Bay, where we went on shore and visited the lovely cemetery where so many of the Wairarapa passengers are laid to rest. A more beautiful spot could hardly have been chosen on all the Barrier for a cemetery. After chatting with the Maoris on shore for a time we got underway again for Port Fitzroy. The wind was now very light, so progress was slow. When we reached Port Abercrombie it died away to a dead calm, so we started to tow the yacht to Rarohara Bay, which we reached at 9 p.m., very tired after a very good day's outing. We anchored off Mr Warren's residence. He soon came off and invited us ashore for the

On the Saturday before Christmas, then, we were on the yacht as soon as ever we could get away from our offices.

There was little stowing to be done, but it was getting on for five before everything was right and tight—not ourselves, of course—and we could get away. A strong N.E. wind was blowing, this being, of course, dead ahead for us if we stuck to our programme, and this we decided to do. Come fair or foul, to the Barrier we would go, and we dropped our moorings determined to beat out the whole 50 miles to windward—not a bad undertaking for a four-ton half-decked centre-board all things considered. The last of the ebb tide was nearly done as we slipped the moorings and stood well down the harbour past Bean rock lighthouse and then down Rangitoto Channel. We made a couple of short boards, and about six o'clock passed close to the Beacon. The Viking, also bound for the Barrier, was now in our company, and a fine picture she made with her noble spread of snowy canvas, and her magnificently shaped hull, threshing through the water like a proud sea queen, the sea roaring away past her bows in baffled anger. Over to the Wade shore we both stood putting round on the port side in due course, so as to weather the Noises' rocks. Thence we stood away for Cape Colville, a nice

open course. There was now a fine wholesail breeze prevailing, so the good little yacht moved through the water at a very fair pace despite the heavy ocean swell against her. And now we began to feel that we were fairly away on our cruise. Our spirits were high and our hearts glad, as those of all good yachtmen must ever be when the fresh wind blows boisterously round, driving away blue devils, cares and worries as if they had never existed, and when each dash of salt spray seems like the welcome of an old friend—as indeed it is. As the dark came down on the sea we were just able to see the Viking at about half a mile to windward. She was plunging away heavily, making more of the weather than we were. We did not see anything more of her all night till day-



OFF THE WATCHMAN.