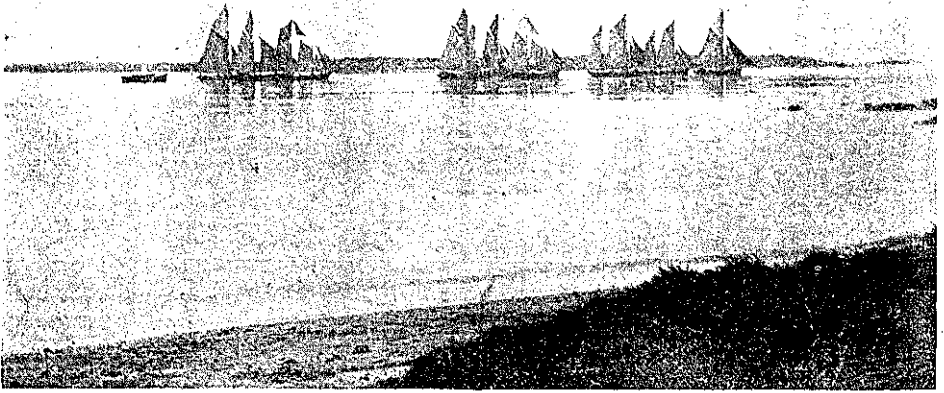


When the young larvæ settle on the bottom, if they find a congenial surrounding and something to fix themselves to, they thrive; but if they find themselves in a sandy bottom, they die, consequently the beds are scattered here and there in the Straits, and have to be found by the cutters employed dredging for them. The young larvæ have many natural enemies, before they take to themselves a shell, even then, in the Old Country, the dogwelk manages to introduce himself to their notice by means of a little gimlet he possesses. He quietly seats himself on the shell and proceeds to

to Dunedin in a twelve ton ketch, and sold them for £1 each kit. That started the business; after that, cutters came on the scene, and the industry gradually developed to its present extent. There are nine different beds in the Straits, which have been worked at different times.

There are, at present, about fifteen cutters employed dredging for oysters, and it is a very pretty sight to see the fleet going out. The average catch is from one to two thousand per day in good dredging weather, but often a cutter has to be content with four or five hundred dozen, or even less. Calms and



UNDER WEIGH FOR THE OYSTER BEDS.

bore his way till he reaches the oyster, much, I imagine, to the astonishment of the latter at finding himself taken in the rear in that fashion.

Oysters have been taken from the Straits for the last thirty-five years, and at present seem as plentiful as ever. They were first found at Port Adventure, in Stewart Island, in the "sixties," and were picked up at low tide. Charles Traill was the first to find them by dredging. He was dredging for shells off Half Moon Bay, and, on pulling up his dredge, he found oysters amongst the shells. A man named Cross, and George Newton, of Ruapuki, took eighty odd baskets

high winds are equally bad for the cuttermen, as, in calm weather, they cannot make their marks, and in high winds, there is generally too much sea, so that, taking the winter through, they have to put up with a lot of broken weather. The cutters leave the Bluff for the Straits, and when they have got their marks for the beds they are going to work, they keep the mainsail up and, if cross-drifting, keep the foresail with bowline to windward. Having got on to the bed, they put the two dredges over first and, in about ten minutes, they start one. As soon as that one is up, they empty it and throw it over again, and directly the line tightens, they start on the