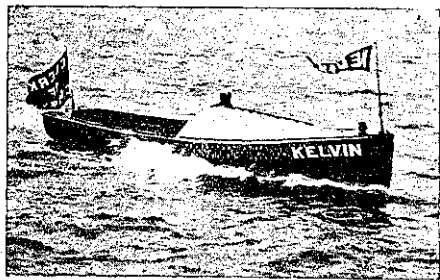


The Record Motor Boat Voyage.

Sailing craft of the mosquito fleet have done all kinds of voyages in all sorts of weather. And some of them have come to signal grief. Canterbury folk talk of the trips of Professor Scott from Akaroa in great gales of wind, and Otago men of twenty years ago were never tired of yarns about the voyages of Mr. Rutherford, now of the Parliamentary staff, and his comrades between Invercargill and Dunedin. One such trip, when he was caught in a Southerly gale off the Nuggets, and after a desperate struggle got under shelter of the lighthouse, furnished a never forgotten story of hardihood and skill.



THE "KELVIN."

The motor launch, however, until the other day did not take up the parable of the sea in the same manner at all. Good staunch sea boats, these craft have, of course, over and over again proved themselves. But before June of the present year there was nothing like a record trip. In that month this was put up by the Kelvin, with a voyage in very bad weather, for the most part, between Dunedin and Christchurch. She was under the charge of her owner, Mr. W. J. P. McCulloch, and Mr. C. Keenan, the commodore of the Otago Cruising Club; and these two showed what cruising is like, on that memorable occasion. When the Latin poet declared that the men who went down to the sea in boats had hearts of triple brass, he had in his eye just such men.

Our readers will remember a description and illustration of this boat published in these columns some months ago. A 25 foot launch with a 14-10 horse-power Kelvin engine, of a steaming capacity of fifteen knots or better; above all things a good sea boat. This quality made the trip we are about to narrate safe and eminently successful, as well as uncomfortable. The story of that voyage is the wonder and admiration of the whole east coast, and these feelings are spreading wherever print can take them. She was decked over for a run, with a canvas cover over the after part. The adventurous crew of two aforementioned believed in the engine of her so thoroughly that they took never an oar or sail with them. Had anything happened to that engine we should now be writing an obituary and pointing a moral. But nothing happened, although there was much provocation on the part of the sea, which was high, and the wind, which at times was a gale.

One afternoon at Dunedin the Kelvin steamed down the Bay, passed Port Chalmers, going full speed, and was off the heads by seven. A dirty night, a big nor'easter outside, with a heavy sea, as seas go when the wind is in that very un-

welcome quarter. But the men put her head right into it, steering for Oamaru as calmly as if they were in Waihola Lake making for the Taieri ferry, with smooth water all the way. The craft staggered and jumped and dived and reared and shivered. Great seas sent green water all over her. The deck was afloat and the air was full of spray, cutting the face like a whiplash, and it grew wondrous cold. But the craft went rattling ahead, and the men set their teeth and thought but little of it.

Over and over again they had to give up driving her. Well they knew with the threshing that would have meant that she would have broken her back. So they just swung her off the head seas, big, curling, heavy fellows, such as the nor'easters raise on that coast, seas that the men even of the biggest craft do not hanker after. The craft can not be said to have made good weather of it. But she made good time, for she got into Oamaru a few minutes after midnight. Considering that neither of the men knew the coast a little bit, the night trip was a magnificent success. Possibly the men were glad to be tied up to the wharf inside the big breakwater. At the same time they said they had enjoyed themselves. Which is true enough, for there is nothing your true sailor likes better than a dusting in a stand up fight with the sea. They were glad, too, because of the staunch behaviour of their craft.

They had a spell in that snug berth for four hours, at the end of which time they started out for Timaru on the track that was followed by the Maori craft of the early days—whalers belonging to "Bloody Jack" and men of his race—passing close to the spot where that famous chief beloved of the whale men of that day, was drowned on a voyage down from Akaroa, in a southerly of the black order. The time to Timaru was five hours, and the craft again behaved as a craft ought to behave when she is a beauty.

At Timaru they rested four hours, after which they cleared the big breakwater and steered for Akaroa. On the way up, a Southerly gale caught them up off the Ninety Mile Beach, and they had a lively reminder of what used to befall the whaling craft that ran a regular service between Akaroa and the South sometimes as far as Stewart Island. Those, by the way, were remarkable boat voyages, and the service was the original idea of the Maoris, who had conceived the ambition of becoming great traders.

The gale did not stop the Kelvin. Just gave her a dusting as she made time before the big seas, heading for the Peninsula like a first-rater with a big freeboard. Mr. McCulloch looked after the engine and Mr. Keenan handled the tiller, and both had a merry wet time of it. The sea rolled and tumbled the craft about, the water getting in under the canvas kept them rather more than cool, and whenever they began to think there might possibly be wetter berths elsewhere, a sea would give them a playful whack as it passed, searching their backbones by way of the collars of their oilskins. It was the last straw; a wetter last straw than is usual with that legendary article; and there were, on the whole, a good many of those last straws. But there was more than a straw effect on one occasion. Off

Green Point the navigators who were making the trip for the first time, knowing as much about the coast as the coast knew about them, got a start; the craft bumped on a rock, with no worse damage than the bending of the propeller blades. Only that and nothing more. Mr. McCulloch told the Akarovians afterwards that it was "the only incident worth mentioning."

At ten p.m. they were going through Akaroa Heads, and half an hour later were tied up at the wharf. They told the inhabitants that they had seen the clock twice round without sleep—they must have spent their spells at Timaru and Oamaru in overhauling the gear and seeing the world—and they were loud in praise of the behaviour of their craft and its engine. They patted the sides of her as they told how well she had taken her bumping on the big rock. The open-eyed natives said "it was an experience," and your Akarovian knows what he is talking about when he gets down to matters nautical.

Next day the water in the harbour was very lumpy, as it not seldom is in those parts, and the craft was taken out to give the natives a treat. She was put to full speed and scampered along right merrily through the white water. Was she soured? Sousing is no name for it. But your racing craft takes to sousing as a matter of course. One of the Akarovians on board very forcibly expressed his enjoyment of the treat given him by describing the craft as "dirty little beast." To which the man at the helm quietly said it was not a circumstance to what had happened on the run up the coast. Other residents, more courteous, dubbed the Kelvin "the fast and furious flyer." During the stay of a few days at the popular waterside resort there were many of these little excursions, head to sea, in the teeth of the sparkling breezes for which the place is remarkable, and most of the residents decidedly preferred to take their pleasure in the craft by looking on from the shore, where jackets could be kept dry and spray did not flog the cheeks, and water did not have a trick of running down the back by the gallon without notice. The owners, however, revelled in the fun of the trips. They put in some useful work, too, for having observed a seven h.p. Kelvin—the first example of these handy craft to show up in Akaroa—they gave its owners some hints which enabled them to get twice as much out of the boat as they had thought possible. Thus do the sailor men of the motor boat persuasion go about doing good to their fellow creatures!

All this time it is well to remember there was not a single engine trouble of any kind, the engine did not stick them up once. Once she ran a five hour speed stretch on a consumption of four gallons of petrol. How is that for economy?

Touching the seaworthy qualities of the Kelvin and her turn of speed, it is well to bear in mind that she was built from designs supplied by the makers of the engine.

On the way to Lyttelton the boat had a half gale for company and did so well that the owner and his boatsteerer were inspired to declare that the meteorological unit was decidedly more sorry to leave them than they were to part company,