

THE SKIPPER

The Sailor of the Great Lakes

By William Davenport Hulbert

With Photographs by the Author

THE Kid was leaning on the tall-rail of the *Sir Humphrey Davy*, looking down Conneaut Harbor, past the snowy wharves, the waiting steamers, the giant unloading machines, and the small mountains of iron ore, toward Lake Erie, where a heavy gale was howling and raging across the water.

"Gee!" he exclaimed. "I wish it would quit blowing, so's't we could go. I want to see what it's like."

I, too, had wanted to see what it was like, and one November afternoon I had boarded the *Sir Humphrey* at Sault Ste. Marie, bound first for the Lower Lakes, and thence for Duluth or Two Harbors. During the next three or four days we had run St. Mary's River, looked into a head sea on Lake Huron, blown a salute to the captain's wife as we passed his home on the banks of the St. Clair River, lost our tow on Lake St. Clair and picked it up again, spent Thanksgiving Day and part of Friday at Detroit in company with a fleet of other vessels, all waiting, like ourselves, for the water to rise on the Lincoln Crossing, and soon after daybreak Saturday morning arrived off Conneaut. A tug came out in answer to our whistle, jumping and dashing and floundering in the heavy sea kicked up by a strong west-

erly wind, swung round in a wide half-circle, and came up under our starboard bow. The mate threw the heaving line, and, with our small leader pulling us by the nose, we passed in through the narrow harbor-entrance and up to the wharves.

By half-past seven that evening the last of our six-thousand-ton cargo was out of the hold, and an hour later our fuel was aboard and the *Sir Humphrey* was ready to sail. It was then that the Kid joined us. At any other time of the year we would hardly have shipped him, for he was only seventeen, according to his own story, and he looked considerably younger. But deck-hands are not easy to find for the last trip of the season. Several of our crew had left us, and had to be replaced in some way, the Kid wanted very much to go, and, altogether, the mate decided to take him—much to his delight. But even now, with an empty cargo-hold, crowded bunkers, and a full crew, the *Sir Humphrey* lingered. The wind had been rising steadily all day. Sheltered by the low hills that lined the harbor, we had not felt it much; but when, late in the evening, the captain went out to the lighthouse for a look at the weather, it nearly lifted him off his feet and tossed

him into the lake. Even if he had been minded to take his vessel out in the teeth of that November gale, there was probably not a tug in the harbor that would have helped him; and to attempt the narrow entrance without a tug, and with the wind blowing square across our course, would have been a very dangerous experiment. And so we waited, and the Kid grew more and more impatient.

Sunday was a quiet day, with little doing either on or off the *Sir Humphrey*. Outside the harbor two or three vessels lay at anchor in the open lake, pitching and rolling in the heavy sea, waiting for the wind to go down before they tried to get inside the breakwater. It was growing cold, very cold; and on the silent wharves fires were burning around the great hydraulic unloaders, to keep the water from freezing in their pipes.

That evening the Kid had a scare. I was sitting alone in the captain's office when he came to the door, inquiring anxiously for the mate. Some one had told him, probably as a joke, that he was not to go up the lakes after all, but would be discharged before the boat left Conneaut. The mate was the only man who could speak with authority, and the Kid was seeking him in much distress of mind. He must have been reassured, for the next morning I saw him flying about the deck, so happy and excited that he could not keep still. Now he went up to the ship's bell, where it hung from the foremast, lifted the clapper, and touched it gently to its metal wall; now he picked up a scupper-plug and examined it curiously; now he danced a double-shuffle on the steel deck-plates; and two or three times I saw him wave his hands toward a house that stood a little way back from the wharf. Perhaps—I do not know, but perhaps—some woman was watching him from its windows, and wondering what fate had in store for her boy, just starting out on his first voyage. And at last we cast off our mooring-lines and made our way down the harbor and out upon Lake Erie, where the wind had fallen to a fresh breeze. Off Ashtabula, thirteen miles away, we picked up our tow-barge, and stood for the upper lakes, and the Kid had really gone for a sailor.

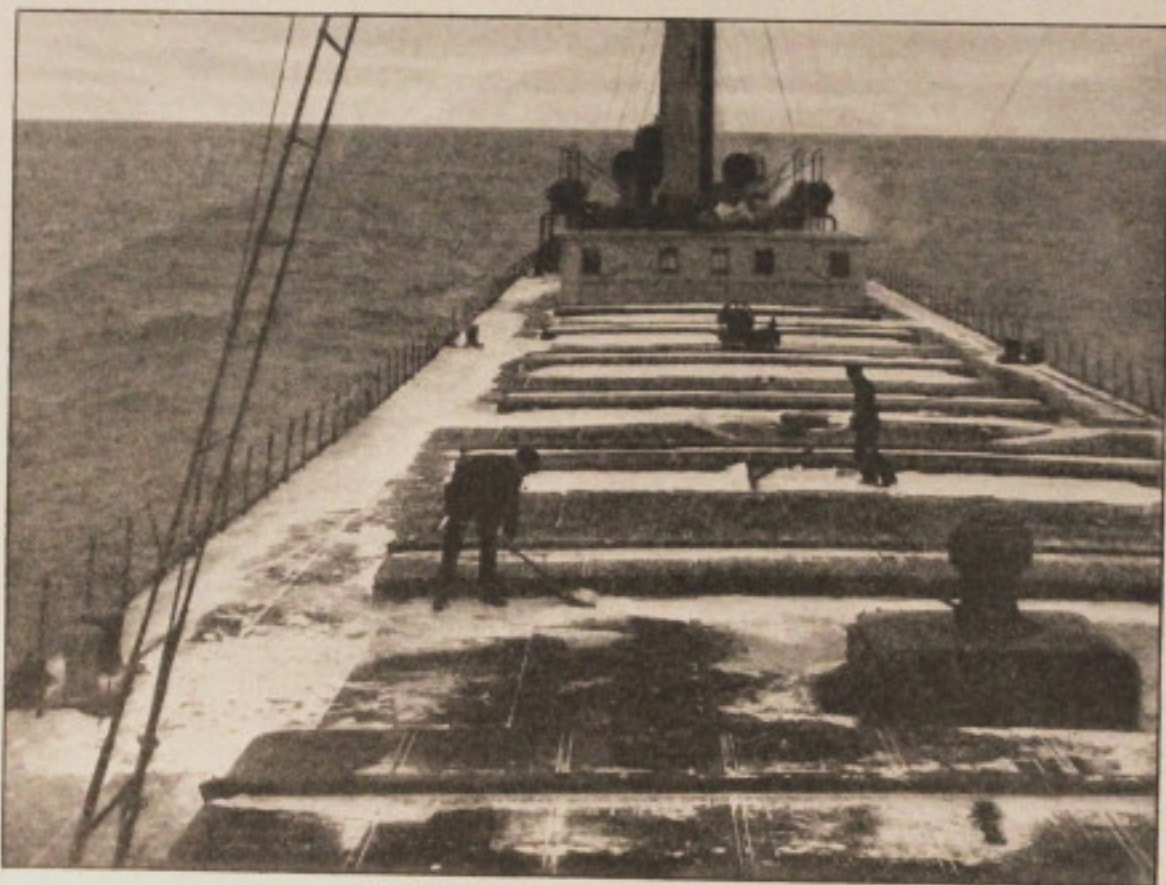
As I watched him I could not help thinking of the contrast between the life which probably lay before him and that of another acquaintance of mine—a captain, now seventy-odd years of age, who began his career when he was only thirteen or fourteen years old, by running away from home and shipping as fore-castle boy on a small sailing-vessel carrying lumber from Lake Huron to Lake Erie. One of the duties of that ship's boy half a century ago was to carry a huge pannikin filled with coarse food, three times a day, from the galley to the fore-castle, where he set it down in the middle of the room, and the men gathered around it and helped themselves. Aboard the *Sir Humphrey* Davy the Kid sat with the other deck-hands and the firemen at a table exactly like the captain's, and ate exactly the same food, prepared at the same time and in the same pots and pans, and served on the same sort of dishes. If there had been any difference at all between the two messes, a wise steward would have seen that it was in favor of the men. It happened one day, a year or two ago, that the steward of an ore-carrier plying between Lake Superior and Lake Erie found that he had on hand enough young onions for one mess, but not enough for both; and he very ill-advisedly put them on the cabin table. One of the firemen, passing the door or looking in at the window, caught sight of them, and immediately made for the fire-hole and told his mates. There was a firemen's strike, right then and there, and the boat lay helpless in mid-lake till they had received full assurance that thereafter they should have young onions whenever the cabin did. As for the rest of the *Sir Humphrey's* crew, aside from the steward and his assistants, they all ate with the captain—the "old man" at one end of the table and the mate at the other, the engine-room force down one side, and the second mate, the wheelmen, and the watchmen opposite.

On the old-time lumber-carrier the fore-castle was small, dark, dirty, and ill ventilated. On the *Sir Humphrey* the quarters of the crew were all above deck, where there was plenty of light and air to be had, and where it was the men's

own fault if their rooms and beds were not always as clean as they might have been, while every man aboard had the use of a bath-room whenever he wanted it. In the former days captains and mates were often brutal men who ruled by dint of profanity, hard language, and sometimes physical force. To-day few officers have any desire to govern by such means, and all of them know very well that they could not do it long if they wanted to. The fore-castle boy and his shipmates were obliged, not only to

is thus done away with, and of that which remains the heaviest is all done by steam-power. She is steered by steam, the anchors are weighed by steam, the capstans revolve by steam, and another year she will probably have steam winches to handle her mooring-lines. There are not even any lamps to clean and fill and trim, for she is lighted throughout by electricity.

What wages the fore-castle boy received I do not know, but sailors in his day were paid only ten or twelve dollars a

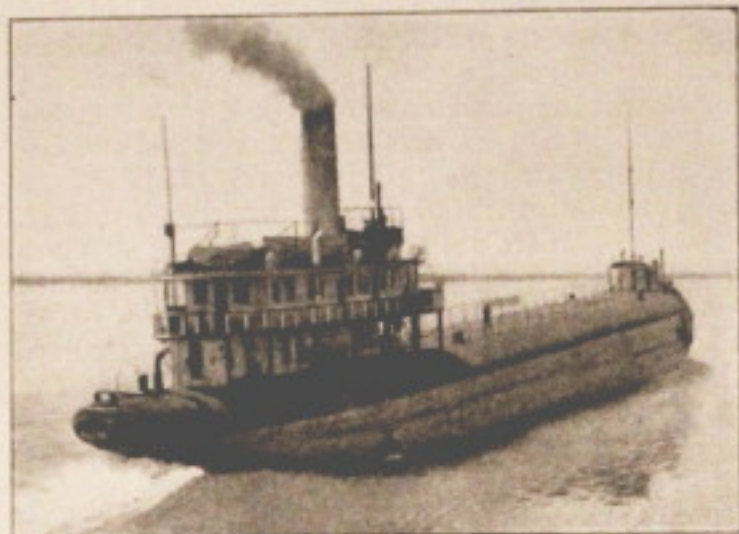


CLEARING THE DECKS OF SNOW

sail the vessel, but to load and unload her; the crew of a modern freighter never touches a finger to the cargo, unless some of it shifts in heavy weather and has to be replaced in order to keep the vessel on an even keel. The fore-castle boy worked under the old system of four-hour watches; for the *Kid* it is six hours on and six hours off. And the change from sails to steam has greatly lessened the labor of handling the vessel. The *Sir Humphrey Davy* has not a yard of canvas, and though she carries two masts there is no running rigging whatever. A vast deal of work

month and "found." The deck-hands of the *Sir Humphrey Davy* were paid twenty-five dollars a month through the summer, and thirty-seven dollars and a half after the first of October, while look-outs, watchmen, and wheelmen received forty-five dollars a month up to the first of October, and sixty-five thereafter—all, of course, with "found."

And all these bright features of the *Kid's* prospects are in contrast, not only with the old times on the lakes, but with the present day on the ocean, for the sailors of the Great Lakes are the best paid, best fed, and most comfortably



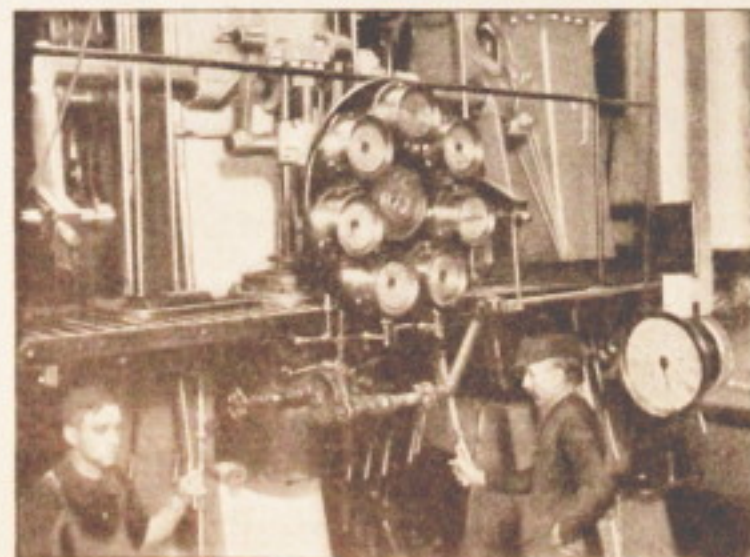
A WHALEBACK

housed seamen in the world. The watchman of the first watch on the Sir Humphrey was a Norwegian who had formerly been second mate of a sailing-vessel on the salt water. When he first shipped on a lake steamer, however, he was obliged to do so as a deck-hand, for the rules of the seamen's union forbid any man to watch or wheel till he has spent at least three months in "decking," and the closed shop was very strictly enforced on the lakes during the season of 1904. And yet Chris earned as much money as a deck-hand on the Sir Humphrey Davy—even at summer wages—as he had ever earned as an officer on the ocean; and when he became a watchman, in the fall of the year, his earnings were more than two and a half times his salt-water pay. As to his living aboard

the Sir Humphrey, the difference, as compared with that on the ocean, is sufficiently indicated by the fact that the supply department of the line estimates that it costs thirty-five cents a day to feed each of the two thousand two hundred men who sail their hundred and twelve ships, whereas many ocean lines feed their crews for less than half that sum. The Thanksgiving dinner which was provided for the fleet—and of which I ate my full share as the Sir Humphrey lay at the coal dock at Detroit—cost the

company a thousand dollars, and its bill of fare included a ton and a half of prime young turkey hens from the Saginaw Valley and a hundred and seventy-five gallons of oysters.

Undoubtedly the explanation of the lake sailor's fortunate lot lies mainly in the fact that he has shared in the prosperity of the surrounding region. When wages are high in the lake States, they must be as high or higher on the lakes themselves—else the lake vessels could get no crews. But I think there is no doubt that the difference between the sailors of fresh and salt water extends to the character of the men as well as to their pay and the conditions of their lives. A few years ago a steamer built at South Chicago and manned by lake seamen made a voyage to Liverpool by way of the St. Lawrence River and the North Atlantic; and both in Canada and in Great Britain those seamen attracted attention and drew forth comment by their orderly behavior and gentlemanly appearance, and by their failure to observe the riotous traditions established in most ports by visiting sailors. As the boat lay at Montreal she was boarded by the skipper of a large British freighter, who looked her over and then expressed his astonishment at the luxuries provided



"STANDING BY"

for her crew, and, among other things, at the fact that the firemen and deck-hands had pillows and blankets in their bunks.

"We would not dare give such things to our men," he said. "They would steal them at the first port, to sell them for liquor, and would sleep on the bare boards after that."

Now, any one who attempts to inquire into the way of life of the lake sailors is told over and over again that there are two classes of men on the boats—one composed of the deck-hands and firemen, and the other of everybody else. The men of the first class, he is told, usually leave their vessels at the end of each trip, spend their wages in a few hours of drink and debauchery, and then look for new boats—or are put aboard by the police. But it would seem that, at least, they are not in the habit of stealing the blankets out of their bunks to sell them for liquor. And I know men who are, or have been, deck-hands, and who are steady, hard-working, industrious citizens bent on rising in the world. The same can be said of many firemen, who look on the fire-hole as a step toward the engine-room.

The men of the second class—look-outs, watchmen, wheelmen, water-tenders, oilers, etc.—are not infrequently married men who would prefer to live ashore, but who are tempted to go sailing from the middle of April till the middle of December for the sake of the high wages which are offered them on the boats, and which enable them to provide for their families more comfortably than they could if they stayed at home the year round. I shall not soon forget Walter, the wheelman of the first watch on the *Sir Humphrey*, nor the long, quiet, pleasant talks that we had while he steered the



THROWING OUT THE HEAVING-LINE

boat up the lakes. He had a wife and two children who lived not far from the captain's home—just out of reach of the whistle—and he told me one day that it made him homesick to go up and down the St. Clair River, and that, for that reason alone, he would rather be on the Chicago run. One snapping cold morning on Lake Superior the captain came into the pilot-house and said he hoped it was not so frosty "down below"—that is, in lower Michigan.

"So do I," said Walter.

"It takes the fuel," said the captain.

"Yes," said Walter, "and it'll make a lot of chores for Mary to do. That's what I'm thinking about."

And there was Andy, of the second watch, who had the wheel from midnight till six in the morning, and from noon



LEAVING THE HARBOR

till supper-time. One afternoon Andy got to singing, and his song was not of the "Nancy Brig" nor of the "Midshipmite," but of the trials of a bridegroom who has bought his furniture on the installment plan and is having difficulty in keeping up his payments:

"I got a piano, and curtains and things;
I got some rick-a-rack;
Now I've got three dollars a week to pay
If I don't want them taken back.

Chorus:—What kind of a show has any one
got
With the furniture man?

the Western Ocean. On the afternoon of the second day out of Conneaut we crossed Saginaw Bay, with the wind blowing fresh and strong from the southwest. We were in the trough of the sea, and the Sir Humphrey was rolling rather heavily, when the mate came into the pilot-house and Andy asked him how the Kid was getting along. The Kid was supposed to be down in the hold, helping the watchman with some painting.

"He dropped down behind a timber-



THE HOT-WATER HOSE

If you've got no dough, then you'll stand no
show:

To the door he will back his van.
He'll take away all of your earthly goods,
From a bed to a frying-pan.
If the devil was born without any horns,
He'd make a good furniture man."

The rhyme and the rhythm may halt a little, perhaps, but that is probably the fault of the phonograph from which, Andy says, he learned the words.

When all is said and done, however, there is one thing in which the lot of a boy on his first voyage is always the same—yesterday, to-day, or to-morrow—on the Great Lakes, the South Seas, or

head half an hour ago," said the mate "and he's there yet."

"Why!" exclaimed Andy, in mock incredulity, "he ain't sick, is he?"

"Well," replied the mate, rather soberly, as if, perhaps, he were thinking of certain painful experiences in his own dim past—"well, he don't feel very good."

But the Kid got over it, as we all do, and the next time I saw him he looked as happy as ever.

At four o'clock on the morning of the third day I saw, from the windows of my stateroom, the lights of Detour

Village, at the mouth of St. Mary's River, twinkling over the starboard quarter; and I dressed and went up to the pilot-house, where, during the next few hours, I watched our skipper do things with his boat that would have made a sea captain's hair turn gray. "Running the river" in the dark—poking a four- or five-hundred-foot ship through passages some of which are only three hundred feet wide—is never the simplest and easiest sort of a proposition, even when all the aids to navigation are there to show you the way; but when the gas buoys have been taken up for the winter it is still more difficult, and in snowy weather it is worst of all. But it is what the Kid will have to do, now and then, if ever he comes to be a skipper. Fortunately, there were four or five lighthouses still doing business, and the lower part of the river is the broadest and easiest.

The captain was up on top of the house and was giving his orders to Andy through a little trap-door in the roof—"Port some!" "Starboard!" "Starboard some more!" "Steady!" "Nothing to port!"—and the wheel whirled almost ceaselessly, while from below came the heavy rattling of the steam steering-gear. Past Pipe Island, and Sweet's Point, and Lime Island, and Round Island, and Point aux Frenes, we made our cautious way, shifting our course every little while to follow the windings of the river; and when the morning broke, dim and gray, we were crossing the broad expanse of Mud Lake, steaming through a fleet of twenty-five or thirty large vessels, all lying at anchor, waiting for daylight before attempting the difficult passage of the Sailor's Encampment. If we could pass them before they got under way, and be first at the locks of the ship-canal at Sault Ste. Marie, we might avoid a delay of several hours; so we pushed on as rapidly as possible, and when we reached the Encampment there was only one boat ahead of us. By that time it was quite light, and we threaded the narrow, crooked channel at greatly reduced speed but without very much difficulty. Half an hour later we passed the Middle Neebish, one of the worst places on the

river, without any bad luck; but within the next mile a snow-storm struck us, and for an hour and a half thereafter we saw little but its thick, gray-white curtain. Sometimes the low shores of the river were dimly visible, or a tall range-tower loomed up to right or left, and sometimes there was nothing at all in sight but the whirling flakes. Once in a while it would break away entirely for a moment, and there would be a gleam of sunshine on the water; then down it would come again thicker than ever. Suddenly, when we were within two or three miles of Sault Ste. Marie, the order "Starboard!" came quick and sharp from overhead, and Walter, who had come on duty some time before, threw the wheel hard over. A small Canadian freighter lost in the snow, and fearing to go any farther lest she should run aground, had dropped anchor in the fairway, and we had almost run into her before the captain saw her.

But a few minutes later, as we were entering the canal, there came a quick transformation scene. The snow ceased, the clouds broke away, the sun came out, and the wind, which had been light from the northeast, swung around to the west and blew much harder. As long as it snowed it had not been very cold, but now the air grew keen and sharp as needles. They had been having zero weather at the Soo, they told us.

All the rest of the day we drove up Lake Superior, while the wind rose and the sea grew more and more violent. At mid-afternoon we passed Whitefish Point, and saw ten or a dozen vessels lying at anchor under its lee, waiting for quieter weather. We debated whether or not we should join them, and for a few minutes we even headed in toward the land. Then the captain decided to go on, and we struck out past the lighthouse and laid our course for Keweenaw. Presently the wind lulled, and the next time the skipper came into the pilot-house Andy greeted him with, "What are them fellows waiting for, anyhow?"

"We may find out before we've gone much farther," said the captain.

And we did, for by nightfall it was blowing a heavy gale. The boat did not roll much, for the wind was nearly

ahead; but she pitched more or less, the spray came like shot against the windows of the pilot-house, and now and then there was a sudden shock that made her tremble from stem to stern, as if Thor's hammer had struck her square on the prow. At six I left the pilot-house for the captain's office, and had to make part of the distance across the hurricane deck on my hands and knees, and then fairly to drag myself down to the main deck by the hand-rails, so fiercely did the wind blow up the icy stairway. The captain came in a few minutes later, and said he did not see how I could ever get back along the three hundred and fifty feet of open deck to the dining-room.

"I guess I won't try it," said I. And I didn't.

The captain went out, and a few minutes later the ship rolled violently several times, and then settled down again to a more even keel. It was growing colder in the office, in spite of all that the steam radiator could do, and it seemed to me that I felt more draught, and that the wind had a different sound as it whistled around the corner of the cabin. By and by the captain came in again for some heavier clothing, and I asked him if the wind had shifted, or if we had changed our course.

"We've changed our course," he replied; "we're going back." And then he added, rather soberly, "If we can find the way."

"It's clear, isn't it?" I asked. It had been starlight when I left the pilot-house.

"It snows every once in a while," he answered, and went out again into the storm.

But an hour or two later, when I laid my book down and looked out of the window, Whitefish Point Light was flashing right abeam, the stars were shining, and not far away were the signal lights of another steamer, also running for shelter. A little later the boat rolled heavily again as she rounded the point in the trough of the sea and headed in toward the land. Then she quieted down once more, and we were evidently in still water. Another half-hour, or less, and there came the thunder of the anchor-chains.

"Well, captain," I said, as the skipper came in, red-faced, cold, and tired, "it doesn't take long to come back, with the wind behind us."

"It takes long enough," said he. "I guess you'd think so if you'd been up on top;" and he wearily pulled off his big, handsome fur overcoat and sat down in his easy chair with his feet to the radiator. There is a story about that big fur coat, I believe, though the captain didn't tell me so. It was given to him several years ago by the owners of the line—so I am told—in recognition of his part in the rescue of two men, the only survivors of a crew of nineteen, who were found clinging to the topmast of a sunken steamer out in the middle of Lake Erie.

The next morning the wind had fallen considerably and had shifted to the north, and the fleet started out again, most of the boats, including the Sir Humphrey Davy, keeping well up toward Michipicoten Island, so as to be under the lee of the north shore. The Sir Humphrey is faster than the average lake steamer, and in the course of the day we passed several other vessels, and by nightfall were well in the lead, with only one or two ahead of us. By day-break we were alone. Some of our companions had taken different routes, and in one way and another we had drawn apart so that there was nothing to be seen of any of them save one or two small smoke-clouds on the horizon.

"Where are we, captain?" I asked.

"Well, sir," he replied, "we're *here*. That's about all I can tell you."

One of the most important lessons which the Kid will have to learn if he is ever to become a good, reliable lake skipper is that he must never depend too much on his compass, his patent log, or anything else but a sure sight on a known point of land, to tell him where he is. Aboard a steel ship—and especially on Lake Superior, where portions of the shores are highly magnetic—the compass is seldom quite right and is liable to vary more or less from one trip to another, from day to day, and even from hour to hour. Many a good boat, trying to find her way through the dark, or through a fog or a snow-storm,

has bumped up on a rock, a shoal, an island, or the mainland, when her skipper had every reason to think that there was clear water for a day's run ahead of him.

"Oh, of course," the captain added, "I know somewhere near where we are."

"Is that Isle Royale?" I asked, pointing to something ahead that might have been land and that might have been merely one of the dark, low-lying clouds.

It was not yet light enough to see very clearly, and the captain admitted that he was not sure.

"That may be a bunch of land," said Walter, later on, pointing to another dark-gray apparition on the horizon.

"It *may* be a bunch of onions," retorted the captain with gentle irony, and he went up on top to get his glasses.

But it proved to be Isle Royale, without any doubt, and for several hours we coasted its desolate, sparsely wooded southern shore. The wind was light, it was warmer than it had been since we left the Soo, and occasionally there was a fleeting gleam of sunshine on the gray water. Altogether it was very favorable weather—for the last trip of the season—and we made a good day's run. During the forenoon the second mate and the Kid shoveled most of the snow off the deck, and the watchman followed them up with the hot-water hose. It was a long job, but when it was done we were clean and dry again.

That night I had not been long asleep

when I was wakened by the watchman of the second watch.

"We won't get in for a few minutes," he said, "but I thought maybe you'd like to take a picture of the lights."

Shades of Daguerre! Photograph the lights of a city from the deck of a moving steamer at three o'clock in the morning! But I wished with all my heart that I could have done it, for I have seen few finer pictures of its kind than that of the twinkling, shimmering arc lamps of Duluth, rising row upon row, tier above tier, against their black background of hills and clouds. The wind had died away, and the water was still as glass. Two steamers, outward bound, met us at the harbor entrance—dim, shadowy shapes that flitted past us and vanished down the lake. Then a tug came out, and took charge of our tow-barge, for the Sir Humphrey Davy and consort were about to part company—the Sir Humphrey to take on another cargo and sail again for the lower lakes, and the tow-barge to lay up for the winter. Through the darkness I caught sight of something big and black which I thought at first was the end of a breakwater, but which proved to be a whaleback, also bound for winter quarters. As she and our consort moved away up the harbor, the mate looked after them and said, half-wistfully, "Them fellows' troubles is over."

But, as it turned out, his own troubles were also at an end—for that season—for before we could take on our cargo the rivers were locked with ice.



A REMINDER OF OLDEN DAYS



THE IRREGULAR, ANGULAR LINES OF A BIG MODERN CITY

Winter on the Great Lakes

BY GEORGE HIBBARD

AWAY off as far as the eye could follow stretched the dull even sea of ice, steely smooth in places, in others shattered and piled in jagged heaps. A picture of loneliness, a presentment of desolation. A polar bear poised on a frozen cake would hardly have been astonishing, so natural would the appearance have seemed. A swooping gull, however, was apparently the only living thing in sight. And yet life was not lacking. Here and there many dark dots maculated the white monotony of the snow. They might appear no more than the black, ice-caught pieces of driftwood or wreckage near at hand. A closer view, though, showed movement. A speck developed into a man. Nor did the look of such a one as emerged into recognition go far to dissipate the impression of arctic conditions. He might well have led one to believe him a dweller of the farthest North. Landscape, snowscape, icescape, whatever the scene might be called; the flora—or the absence of it; the fauna, man and dog,—all added to the impression of a magic transference to another zone. And if everything else

failed, the temperature would have come to sustain the fancy. Escape from that conclusion was impossible. With a cruel bitterness the wind drove over the open in a fury. The cold was great enough for the arctic regions. One might easily feel that the limits of human advance had been reached and a new record established. One's nose and one's ears and one's toes all ministered to the illusion with a painful realism that was most convincing.

Out there on the lake two miles from the shore the breath seemed to freeze, and there appeared to be every likelihood of the blood doing likewise. The sense of remoteness was depressing. The loneliness might have been appalling. A relief expedition at the least might easily be considered necessary to restore one to humanity. An arctic explorer far from ship and "cache" apparently could not be more hopelessly lost.

A turn of the head, however, made a difference of half a hemisphere, for there were the irregular angular lines of a big modern city. The smoke trailed heavily across the sky. The



THE IRREGULAR, ANGULAR LINES OF A BIG MODERN CITY

tall piercing chimneys proved the presence of busy factories. The whole complicated life of modern civilization was within sight and within reach. Not far away locomotives moved restlessly. At a short distance trolley-cars clanged through the streets. In the "skyscrapers" elevators darted up and down. Jostling crowds filled the sidewalks. A little farther away people were driving to country clubs. In rich, warm drawing-rooms women were having afternoon tea. The contrast was another of the many presented by our American life.

Nowhere in the world does winter work greater change than on the Great Lakes. In no other place does the power of cold cause such arrestment. As they are the busiest sheets of water in the world in summer,—in the winter, by contrast, they appear the most deserted and dismal. Where a goodly part of the commerce of a country has passed, for the most part nothing moves. A lonely bird takes the place of the great freighters; a few fishermen come instead of the big propellers. The harbors are closed, each vessel held in its icy bonds. The rigging of the few visible sailing-ships is frozen hard. From the funnels of the steamers rises no smoke. They are all inert—dormant—hibernating until life comes again with the passing of the winter months.

In the quiescence and solitude the

boats rise more darkly and immensely even as the elevators seem to tower in greater volume. The mightiest freighter is held as helplessly as the smallest harbor skiff, and one may approach them as one might some other enchained mammoth. Indeed, in the lake ports perhaps more than elsewhere can the winter aspect of the Lakes be felt and seen. The tugs even—the busybodies of the harbor—are silent and idle. Nothing moves except perhaps a big fire-boat, which strives to keep a way open and often fails. No one stirs on the docks. Hardly a sound can be heard. The chains of the drawbridge are quiet, for no boat passes. All has paused—all is waiting. The temporary end has come, with activity and stir only to be resumed when winter is gone.

The last craft to get through at the end of the season often gains something of a reputation. Practical reasons prevent any stoppage until the last moment possible. The longer a vessel runs, the greater the freights earned, and often chances are taken. No boat ever had a more typical and exciting trip than the *Hutchinson* in the year just passed. On the evening of November 29 the *Hutchinson* in a high sea and driving snow-storm ran on an uncharted rock in Lake Superior. The sharp points tore a hole through the bottom of the big vessel.

In sudden terror some of the firemen and crew made for the small boats, but were driven back by the captain. Rockets pierced the darkness, and a huge bale of inflammable stuff soaked in kerosene was set flaming at the masthead. Fires were lighted on the steel decks, and all night long the signals of distress burned. With the notification of the life-saving station



EALE VESSEL IS HELD IN ICE BONDS



EACH VESSEL IS HELD IN ICY BONDS



SIDE BY SIDE CANAL-BOATS LIE IN WINTER COMPANIONSHIP

the life-savers put off through the winter seas. During two days the crew and the life-saving men remained upon the ship. In the mean time the underwriters had learned of the wreck; and the *Hutchinson* being abandoned by the owners, Captain Charles M. Davis—a lake veteran of seventy, a famous wrecker—was sent to take charge. Wrecking outfits were summoned from the "Soo," and a working party engaged. At once the work of jettisoning the cargo began. Six-inch centrifugal pumps poured water into the holds filled with flaxseed, until fourteen-inch pumps could suck up the valuable stuff and force it overboard. Fifty thousand bushels, worth fifty thousand dollars, were pumped into the lake in thirty-two hours. A wrecking-tug then started to pull the *Hutchinson* off, but so violent a storm came on that the immediate breaking up of the vessel seemed unavoidable. With this apparently inevitable, the crew and the wreckers left her. Before leaving, the heavy anchor was let go. On the following day, however, with the subsidence of the tempest the astonished wreckers found that the waves instead of destroying the *Hutchinson* had lifted the boat off the rock and that she was riding in safety.

Then began one of the runs to be celebrated in lake history. Nineteen feet of water was in one compartment and fourteen in another. The remaining cargo had to be stowed so that it would not shift in the heaviest seas. The pumps were kept going the entire time. In this condition the vessel ploughed steadily through the heavy waves, the thickening ice. At one time in zero weather and with a blinding snow-storm a fifty-mile gale blew about the boat. She rolled heavily, and because she was so weighted down with the thick coating of ice the water broke over her at every plunge. Two ferry-boats opening a way were needed to help her to make Pointe au Pelée.

At the port of destination the appearance of the battered warrior of the waters aroused the greatest enthusiasm. The whistle of everything that had steam up was set going. The wailing sirens of the great boats, the tooting of the smaller, welcomed the arrival in a cacophonous chorus. Three hundred and fifty thousand dollars were saved to the underwriters by the exploit—and the last beat of the year was "in."

Notwithstanding the happy termina-



SIDE BY SIDE CANAL-BOATS LIE IN WINTER COMPANIONSHIP



A BIG FIRE-BOAT TRIES TO KEEP A WAY OPEN

tion of this adventure, however, other boats have been caught in the ice and obliged to remain there all winter. In the beginning of the winter of 1898 a number of vessels were imprisoned at the head of Lake Erie. Thirty-five in all were ice-locked, but with a shifting of the wind and the help of tugs and fire-boats sent out from Detroit they were finally set free. The same fortune has not always been found. An "old-timer" of the Lakes has recorded that in one case long ago a vessel—the *Badger State*—once frozen up did not escape. The crew was obliged to live on oats and corn all winter. The ice was so thick the boat could not be got out, and yet not solid all the way to the shore so that the men could reach land. As the narrator states, "they had to stay aboard and eat oats until the ice broke up."

of their own. Often the short smoke-stacks or, as the twilight deepens, the glowing windows show that they are still inhabited. Indeed, a collection of them frequently is a very socially active spot, with indications of much gossip.

Commerce has stopped. Business is dead. In the absolute suspension is a certain impressiveness. An unmistakable solemnity is the result of the complete negation. Where much was, nothing is, and the contrast is very striking. The



FISHING BEHIND A WIND-BREAK

With the close of the Lakes comes the closing of their outlet—the canal. Even as the big lake vessels are laid up, so the canal-boats are tied up during the time of ice and snow. Side by side they lie in frozen companionableness—held like all else in the grip of winter. Connected by bridges laid from deck to deck, they form a little commonwealth



A BIG FIRE-BOAT TRIES TO KEEP A WAY OPEN



FISHING BEHIND A WIND-BREAK

barges piled high with the yellow freight of pine boards from the mills about Duluth, with the forests of the Northwest for "hinterland," have disappeared. Indeed, we are told that in a few years they will not be seen at all, or will only be found in very diminished numbers. But other industries have come instead, and they are growing places of manufacture and trade.

The great "whalebacks," surfeited with their thousands of tons of ore swallowed ravenously, no longer wallow on their way. The massive lumps are not allowed to go spouting down into their holds, later to be sucked up, sometimes six thousand tons in a day. Escanaba, St. Ignace, and L'Anse have ceased for the winter months to send iron over the Lakes. No

copper comes from West Superior, Lake Linden, or Manitowoc. In Chicago and Milwaukee the fleet of grain-vessels is held helplessly. They cannot be despatched either with their sides swelling with corn or wheat or decks piled with the white barrels of finished flour. The hundreds of thousands and millions of tons of coal are not now conveyed westward from the Lake Erie ports. The black colliers rest darkly on the white snow, more grim of aspect even than in the summer.

Nothing moves on the Lakes which have been crowded highways of ships. They are "regions of thick-ribbed ice." To be upon them is indeed to be "imprison'd in the viewless winds." Still, they are not absolutely deserted. Human life and activity in a measure still exist upon them. In a sense a limited industry is still actively pursued. While navigation of the waves may not

offer gain, a profit may be drawn from beneath them—or rather from beneath the thick frozen coating.

The fisherfolk, who are fully occupied in summer, do not with the approach of winter give over their occupation. Only the method and manner of it change. As has been said, Esquimau-like figures



FOR HOURS THE FISHERMEN STAY AT THEIR POSTS

might indicate an arctic environment. The fishermen are the "human element" of the winter, and with them the dogs might almost be included, they are so much a part of the life and endeavor. The winter fishing, however, is rather a "by-product," as it were. In following it the fishermen only work up so much "waste material," employing useless time. The fisheries of the Great Lakes exist as a summer business—and something of a business, too. Over six millions of dollars are invested in it. Over a hundred and thirty millions of pounds of fish have been caught in a season. Over two million dollars has been the value of the "catch." The fishing in the winter has nothing the same proportion. Still, from a large lake port in the dead of winter from five hundred to a thousand men may go out in a day.

The occupation is arduous enough, and not to be followed without hardship and



FOR HOURS THE FISHERMEN STAY AT THEIR POSTS

risk. The mere facing of the cold is bad, but there are perils—sudden and appalling. The professional fisherman sets out in the winter as near five o'clock in the morning as possible. Often he goes ten or fifteen miles to the fishing-ground, and by early afternoon the fish, famished as they are, have ceased to bite in commercial quantities.

The deepest dark which comes before the dawn—and in midwinter the dawn is still far off—meets the fisherman at the start. The thermometer is quite as often as not well below zero. The wind, driving in over the bleak levels of ice, bites and freezes, until human flesh is unequal to the attack. In fact, the fishermen frequently venture out only with a mask of some thick stuff, with holes cut for eyes and mouth. In truth, a follower of the gentle craft of Izaak Walton under these circumstances goes about his work in the disguise and with the look of a train-robber. A request for your money or your life might seem more likely than a cheery "Morning."

The dogs with almost arctic hardihood scarcely appeared to feel the cold. In-

Specimens are to be found which might seem to offer an entire bench show in one exhibit. For the most part, however, they are distinguishable and creditable examples of mongrel breeds, and some are very good examples. They trotted away with the sleigh containing food, bait, material for the "wind screen," and all needed for the work of day.

When day broke, the lake was dotted as far as the eye could see with separate fishermen or isolated groups. The canvas guards fastened to poles set in the ice keep off the blasts, for the hardiest cannot sit or stand with no exercise but the lifting and lowering of the fishing-line without such protection. The hole cut upon arrival at the proper place is about six or eight inches across, and through this the hook with its bait of minnows is lowered. A peculiar arrangement enables the watcher to take a few steps occasionally and beat the hands for warmth and yet know when he has a "bite." A crosspiece of perhaps a foot is fastened to a stick of perhaps two feet. To the shorter end of the longer piece beyond the crosspiece the line is

attached. The crosspiece is put athwart the hole, the longer end of the stick extending over the ice. When a fish swallows the bait the long end is lifted up, notifying the fisherman of his prize. From the nature of the device the name "tie-up" is understandable. Indeed, with the use of this contrivance a number of holes may be cut and a single man watch a number of lines.



HOMEWARD BOUND IN LATE AFTERNOON

deed, their high spirits were the only enlivening features of the expedition. They are of all kinds—or perhaps in most cases one might more properly say that each is all kinds of dogs in one.

For hours the fishermen stay at their posts. We found one man, more luxurious than the others, seated directly on an oil-stove, an interposed board serving for protection. The most of them,



HOMeward BOUND IN LATE AFTERNOON



FLOATING ICE THROUGH THE CHANNEL

though, faced it out without other help than the "wind-break." Four, five, six hours must sometimes pass before a start can be made for home, and even an hour is a chilling experience. On a man's eyebrows and mustache and beard icicles gather. And perhaps the fish may not come. Often after all the toil and endurance the fisherman may return with his sleigh empty. And to render the experience more trying, another party not many hundred yards away may be drawing them out as quickly as the lines can be pulled up. The fish sell from five to seven cents a pound. Often the fisherman gains only a few pennies, though sometimes as much as ten and twelve dollars have been made in a day.

The dogs huddled together for comfort. For them there was nothing but waiting for the time to go. And they know well when the time has arrived. The joyful yelps prove their dislike of the monotony and the cold. As nearly as they can have their will the return is a race. They would make as much as possible a straight way "across country," and take everything in their course—ice hummocks or spreading cracks. For them home-going would be a steeplechase if

the man did not restrain them. Anyway, he has difficulty in keeping up. But after half a dozen miles they tire a little, and generally they approach land with lolling tongues and dragging steps. In a weary walk they fall into what becomes almost a procession in the middle of the afternoon, and slowly reach shelter.

All returns are not so easy and fortunate—a burst of speed with joyous barks across the frozen Lakes. Indeed, there has been no coming back. A blizzard a dozen miles from shore with the thermometer below zero is a very serious matter. No landmarks can be seen—there is nothing by which to direct a course. A man may easily be lost and wander until overcome. Too often this has happened, and hardly a winter has passed without some such disaster.

A man so lost will often trust to the instinct of the dogs to find a way home through the bewildering storm and gloom. Sometimes, however, even the animals have been at fault. In a recent case a fisherman with three dogs was overtaken on the homeward way by a sudden tempest of wind and snow. To see even a few feet must have been impossible, and even the dogs must have been over-



FLOATING ICE THROUGH THE CHANNEL

come with fright or found that they were unable to guide themselves in the right direction. Still, though two were loose, they did not desert the man. When the searching parties found him on the following day he was dead, frozen to death, but the dogs with him were alive. One dog, which had not been unharnessed, was mad, however, and had to be killed at once.

Fish are not the only yield of the winter Lakes, for the ice itself is a plentiful crop. The harvest is of good proportion, and the chilly harvesting a large operation. The blocks are floated to the ice-houses down canals of clear water a mile or two in length, and a small army of cutters is busy with the work. With the great cities on the shores, a great deal of this has to be done, but the character of it is not so different—except as to the size of the operation—from the process elsewhere.

As a result of conditions existing on the winter Lakes the ice-crushing ferry-boat has been evolved. In other lands in consequence this has come into use—another example of what was once called "a Yankee invention," and is now named "a Yankee invasion." Russia sent her foremost admiral—Rear-Admiral Makasoff, who recently met his death—to study the ice-crusher *Sainte Marie* at work between the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan. No boat of the like—except the *Saint Ignace*, a smaller predecessor—had ever been seen. Three hundred and five feet over all, able to carry eighteen loaded freight-cars—with a screw at the bow as well as the stern, the first to suck the sustaining water from under the ice so that the boat climbing upon it could crush it down and break it and throw it out of the way. Often two, three, and even four feet of solid blue ice have been broken in this fashion. In Russia ice-crushers are now at work on the Neva, in Lake Baikal, at Vladivostok itself. The *Nadesburg* and the *Ersmark* and others have been built upon models furnished by the winter Lakes, and in many of the cold parts of the earth ice-crushing boats are now to be found.

For the most of the time and through the greater part of their many square miles of frozen surface the inland

seas are deserted and desolate. A deep unbroken silence is over them. A white uniformity of aspect distinguishes them. No living thing moves upon them, or flies above them—except an occasional bird, making the solitude the greater by its solitary contrast. In the imprisoning hand of winter they lie and must lie until the winter is gone. Then, as the change in autumn is great from activity to stillness—almost as might appear from life to death,—in the spring the transformation is as complete. After the trance of absolute inanimation seems to follow new being. With the first sunshine the ice begins to crack. With the first warm breeze of April it is set adrift,—the mad debacle down the Niagara to the wild plunge over the Falls showing best the wonder of the breaking up. Even before the ice is fully gone the freighters have started. The setting out of the first boat is an event of even more importance than the arrival of the last one "through" in the autumn,—as a beginning with its promise is always more significant than any ending with its unfruitful conclusion.

With the "opening of navigation" a new season of commerce has begun, with all it means of losses and failures and hopes and accomplishments. With the "opening of navigation" all the lake cities insensibly feel a new stir and vigor, and show it. Through the winter something of the torpid apathy of the Lakes has unavoidably lain upon them, but with the change in their watery provinces, which are their reasons for being, they change in look and life. The Lakes are the real tributaries of the most of them, and with this dependence on them they relapse and revive with them. "The opening of navigation" is an "open sesame." With it they reach their golden treasure-jars. To be sure, these are only cargoes of golden grain, mighty loads of precious metal if not the precious metals, barges full of "black diamonds," but in value they exceed the output of the most famous mines, and are far in excess of any robber hoard. With the spring the flood begins. The harbors are alive with the moving craft, the docks are stirring with the busy crowds. All is changed. In short, "navigation" is "open," and the life of the Lakes has begun once more.