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# Sea Spray

THE NATIONAL AQUATIC MAGAZINE



The "Yvonne" (see story page 16).

YACHTING — POWER BOATS — ROWING — SWIMMING  
SEA SCOUTS

Week-end Yachtsmen Put to Sea, by Lieut.-commander R. E. Willson.  
A Trip to White Island, by "Spinnaker."



# STEEPLE-CHASING ON A 12

By R. J. SCOTT.

**B**ACK in the year 1909, a year of boisterous weather in New Zealand, the late Thomas Fleming Day presented a 50-guinea cup to the Otago Yacht Club as a prize for a 100-mile race for small craft. He thereby earned the enmity of my for'd hand, Sam, an old shellback, for I had entered my 12-ton cutter "Yvonne" for the event.

In view of her subsequent extraordinary performances, a somewhat full description of the yacht seems desirable. The "Yvonne" was built in 1894 by that master craftsman, Robert Logan, of Auckland. With the exception of mahogany deck fittings and rata wood floors, she was entirely of kauri pine, flushed decked with a low rail. The deck was broken only by a fore hatch, a skylight, and a small cockpit, at the fore end of which folding doors and a sliding hatch formed the companion.

Her hull was formed of three skins, two opposed diagonal layers each  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch in thickness, and one fore and aft layer  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an inch, all closely laid without caulking of any description. Her decks were of similar construction, but, though deck beams were fitted, there were no lodging or hanging knees, and no vertical frames or timbers, the hull framing consisting only of the usual shelf or clamp and two longitudinal stringers each side running the whole length of the boat. The hardwood grown floors terminated at the level of the transoms, giving a smooth inside skin without lining. All Robert Logan's yachts were constructed in this excellent fashion, giving increased internal room, lightness, strength, and durability, also elasticity. This made for speed, but sometimes necessitated the vessel being eased to allow the opening of a locker door.

"Yvonne" was a great boat to windward, and fast on all points of sailing, but, owing to her fine ends, low freeboard, and comparatively great draft, she was a dirty boat in a seaway, whilst the excessive rake of her sternpost helped to make steering a nightmare when running heavily at sea.

Her principal dimensions were: Length overall, 44ft.; length W.L., 31ft. 6in.; beam extreme, 8ft.; draft extreme, 7ft.; ballast, lead, all outside, 5 tons (11,200lbs.); working sail area, 1000 sq. ft.

The vessel was newly rigged some two years before this race, when, owing to a fire destroying the shed containing her gear, only the bare hull was left to me. Her sails and gear were thus in first-class order; but to make sure of things, the new running ropes were rove off.

As a short time before the Muntz metal keel bolts had been found to be rotten, and had been replaced with Delta metal, I was doubtful of the condition of the Muntz metal dumps which secured the planking to keel floors and deadwood. The dumps were therefore reinforced by some 200 very heavy brass screws. It is probable that to these precautions we subsequently owed our lives.

Otago Harbour is some 230 sea miles from my home moorings at Lyttelton, but as the longest run without shelter is under 100 miles, the trip has usually been made without discomfort. On this occasion, however, I was short-handed, and the weather was such that much time was spent in way ports. Communications with the Weather Bureau were frequent, to the affected disgust of Sam, who one evening at Akaroa, on handing me a telegram to the effect that we must expect northerly winds, strong, increasing to a gale after 10 hours, remarked, "Pity we ain't fitted with wireless, sir, then that bloke in Wellington could tell us when to reef the mainsail." However, when told to get the boat on board and make ready for going to sea that night he seemed to be of a different opinion, and was heard mumbling his ideas of a suitable end for the donor of the cup. They were certainly original.

A brisk breeze took us outside, but unfortunately died away, so that at daybreak we were only a few miles from Akaroa Light, with a rapidly falling glass and Timaru the next port, some 80 miles distant. As the day wore on the breeze increased, and noon saw us running at  $5\frac{1}{2}$  knots under lower canvas, and from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. a steady 7 knots was maintained. At 8 p.m. it was necessary to heave to and harden down three reefs in the mainsail, the foretold gale having overtaken us. The sea was now breaking heavily, and we were in discoloured water. Finding it impossible to pick up the leading lights of Timaru, we saw fit to bear away for Oamaru, some 50 miles distant. We made that port at daylight, using a little oil when passing through the break at the entrance to the harbour.

While making off shore at Timaru, "Yvonne" had given me a taste of her qualities in a seaway. I was going below to consult the chart when she pitched me from the companion step the whole length of the saloon—some fifteen feet—without touching anything until I was brought up by my head coming in contact with the for'd bulkhead. A day's rest in Oamaru while the gale blew itself out was consequently much appreciated.

The next day the remaining 50 miles of our journey were completed in a reaching wind under topsail and balloon headsail in ten hours, and a most delightful sail it was with dry decks the whole way. My guest now departed for his home and I to my club in Dunedin, leaving Sam to superintend the slipping, cleaning and painting of the vessel. The course for the race determined on by the committee was from the entrance of Otago Harbour round a mark boat off the entrance to Oamaru, 50 miles distant, return and finish at the starting line.

Otago Harbour has an average width of one and a half miles, and extends from the heads some 14 miles to the city of Dunedin, which large vessels reach through a dredged channel. As the entrance to the harbour is barely two cables width, it will be readily understood that on three and one-half knot ebb there is a heavy rip in bad weather. This is often accentuated by the sea formed in the channel

# TON YACHT

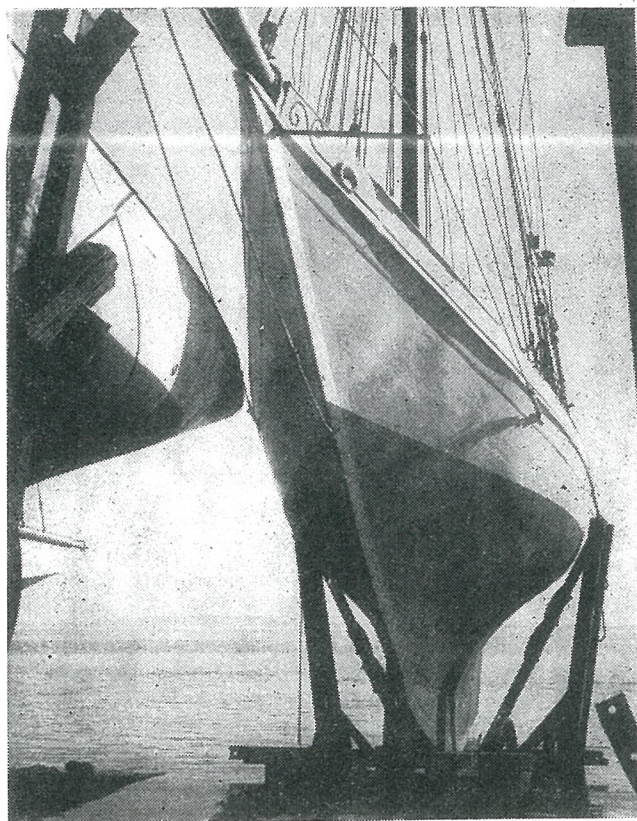
by a heavy break on the bar. Passage is then dangerous for small craft.

The entrance lies between Taiaroa Head on the east and on the west a mole or training wall some 4000 feet long running out N.E. from a low sandy beach. This mole is of rubble about 50 feet wide on the top, surrounded by the remains of the trestle work used in the construction and studded with old pile heads. The outer end of the mole has suffered considerably from heavy easterly seas.

It would have been hard to select a more treacherous spot for the start and finish of a yacht race, especially as the start was timed for 7.15 p.m. on Christmas Eve (dusk), and the finish might readily occur after nightfall. On the day of the race a sullen easterly sea was breaking heavily on the mole and occasionally on the bar, it was dead calm, with an overcast, lowering sky. The glass had fallen to 29.40, and was steadily dropping. There was, in fact, every indication of an approaching storm. Efforts to secure a postponement of the race or alteration of the finishing line having failed, my crew of five members (amateurs) and old Sam being aboard, we were towed the six miles from our moorings at Port Chalmers to the Heads. There we found our competitors, a nondescript lot ranging from 15 to 5 tons, lolling about in a faint southerly air and light drizzle. We soon made sail—mainsail, No. 2 topsail and No. 1 jib set with No. 2 headsail in stops.

The commodore's launch, from which we were to be started, was now making for the entrance, with the Blue Peter flying. The fleet of some eight yachts following, running before a light fair wind. Suddenly all was commotion on the "Iorangi," a 10-metre racer abreast of us, hauling her wind on the starboard tack, she began to douse topsail and headsail. Looking back, I saw a wall of cloud, spray, sand and debris, flying towards us down the harbour. Jamming the helm down, I reached across to the east side of the channel (there was little enough room to manoeuvre) and stayed to port to lower the topsail which was set on that side. We had hardly got this down when the blast was upon us. The jib sheet having been started, part of the sail went down wind like a puff of smoke and the vessel heeled down till first the rigging screws and then the whole of the lee deck to the mast disappeared under water. She tripped by the head and would neither pay off nor come right up in the wind, but was practically on her side trailing her mainboom—the water cascading from her, she tore across the narrow channel.

Suddenly out of the dust and driving spray the "Iorangi," equally out of control, swept across our bows, missing a head-on collision by a few feet. Then came a wild cry from those for'd: "The mole!" Though by this time the jib purchase had been cast off and the main sheet eased, it was evident that she was not paying off fast enough to clear the mole, over which a tremendous sea was now breaking. At the last moment, with, I think, some idea of running the vessel up as far as possible, I put the helm hard down, she then struck heavily square on to the mole.



The "Yvonne" on the hard.

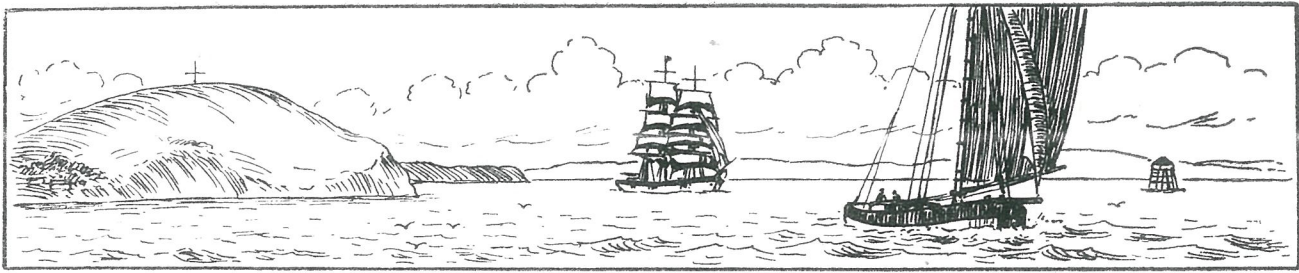
Her head rose high in the sea that broke for'd. This was followed by another sea that struck amidships, but hove down by the wind on one quarter and thrown ahead by the break on the other, she still drove on. "Glory be to God, she ain't stopped yet," yelled Sam. Then a sea broke over aft, completely smothering us; her bows disappeared, and her stern rose high in the air and she suddenly came up on an almost even keel. She had taken her seven feet of draft across 50 feet of rubble wall awash in the breaking sea.

We were now outside the harbour in comparatively smooth water under the lee of the mole. The mainsail was clawed down, and the headsail, which had broken stops and was lashing about, lowered, and we drove out to sea under bare poles.

A hand sent below reported, to my astonishment, the vessel practically dry and making no water, so we let her drive whilst the head sheets were cleared and the sail reset. Then we hauled up the harbour under this sail alone whilst the mainsail was being reefed. Thankful, indeed, I was when, in that vicious sea, the sail was reset without accident. Through the darkness and blinding hail squalls we beat up the narrow channel to Port Chalmers, overtaking on the way more than one launch and sighting some of our competitors brought up under the various headlands, and finally the Government steamer going down to their assistance.

I think "Yvonne" never sailed faster, for at 9.30 p.m.

(Continued on next page.)



## Sea Songs and Shanties

By J. T. L.

(Acknowledgments to "MAESTRO," N.Z. Musical and Dramatic magazine.)

It is peculiar that songs of the sea have been so much before the public on the concert platform in solos and choral arrangements, when the palmy days of these melodies were fifty years ago. We have had books of sea songs collected by John Masefield, Christopher Stone and others, and a valuable volume issued by the Navy Records Society, for which an Oxford professor is responsible. Now, all these smell of the British museums. Most of the old songs have been forgotten, but in old records, ballad sheets and such like, much musty stuff has been unearthed. Many celebrated sea songs have appeared, and many presented on the platform are not real sea songs, but imitations by landsmen.

In this category are "The Death of Nelson", "The Anchor's Weighed", "Hearts of Oak", "The Arethusa", and many others of a like nature. Nearly all those songs appeared originally upon the stage during the long period when we were engaged at war with Continental Nations. No doubt many of these songs were sung in the ward room but not before the mast. Marryat tells us that Shields song, "The Heaving of the Lead," which is from the operatic farce of "Hereford Bridge", was a favourite with the officers, and many a good example may have reached the forecastle.

The destruction of the Spanish Armada no doubt gave birth to such songs, and of those that have found favour on to-day's stage revised versions of old sailor songs, many of which in the untrained lingo of the old salt were of the veri-

(Continued from page 17.)

we picked up our moorings, the whole adventure having occupied only a little over two hours. Remarkable to relate, a few strokes of the pump cleared all of the water which had found its way below during the violent squall, the bumping over the mole, and the heavy beat up the harbour, and so, after one of my wildest yachting experiences, we were safely moored in a tight ship. With the exception of the jib, not a rope yarn had been lost, for, curiously enough, I had left the useless tiller to retrieve the binnacle lamp which was leaving us in the height of the gale on the mole.

After stowing ship and absorbing a liberal amount of cherry brandy, my friends and myself caught the last train to town, and changed into dry togs in the car.

By the next morning, Christmas Day, the weather had settled down to a steady 50 m.p.h. blow, the first squall having swept on over the length of the Dominion, doing much damage to vessels, buildings and crops, and also

est filth and unprintable. Male choirs can do worse than explore the products of the ocean spaces and the white sails for interesting additions to their programmes. Some of the best are "Admiral Benbow", "Banks of the Sacramento", "Blow the Man Down", "Boney", "Bound for the Rio Grande", "Stormalong", "Caws and Bag", "Dixie", "Farewell and Adieu", "The Female Smuggler", "Haul Away Jo", "The Hay Eye Man", "One More Day", "Reuben Rawzo", "Sally Brown", "Shenandoah", "Will Watch" and many others.

The shanty, as an aid to labour, died at sea and has been buried with full honours, but it has come to life again ashore as a song, and, although in the process it has lost its old friends, it has made new ones. The old "shell-back" remembers it in its previous life as something rude and unkempt, a fine help in hoisting sail or weighing anchor, and an excellent vehicle for working off his groushings about the officers and the cook, or telling the story of his loves and longings, but as something that had no independent existence apart from work on the ship. He never sang it for pleasure.

For good or ill, shanties have now become songs, pure and simple. They must take their stand with other songs and conform to the conditions of public performance common among landsmen. They will be popular in concert halls when the wind-jammer and the tea clipper and their great traditions are but a memory; they will be arranged as part songs to be sung at Competition Festivals by girls under ten when the Capstan survives only as a tobacco advertisement. It cannot be denied that much will be lost in the transformation, but it is useless to complain. The old sailor made an initial mistake. He could have ensured the passing of the Shanty with the sailing ship if he had not made such first-rate tunes. But good songs, unlike good ships, do not pass away. We have jettisoned the tackle but we have salvaged the songs and have thereby added a rich prize to our musical inheritance.

causing some loss of life. At 6 a.m. I telephoned the Harbour Office and learned that all the yachts were safe with the exception of "Peru," which had been dismasted and blown out to sea. She was picked up by a fisherman and towed into Oamaru later in the day. I then arranged for the slipping of "Yvonne"; on this being done, the hull was found to be scarred on the starboard side, but not a seam started or a plank split. The lead keel, however, had suffered; there was a cavity in the fore end, and much of the copper sheathing was torn and displaced, but so well did the shipwrights work that in a couple of hours everything was in order and "Yvonne" was in trim for a race on the following day.

From then on she has shown no evidence of the battering she endured—eloquent testimony to the strength and elasticity of the diagonal system of construction, and an example of the desirability of maintaining everything in the very best of condition, for failure of hull or gear on the mole must have meant the total loss of vessel and crew.