

where the mud and spray are being whirled vigorously about..

"Give him a shot in the neck." Missed! but no matter.

Now we're within twenty yards of him. "Stop, Joe; don't row up any farther. Keep well out of the reach of his tail." Now, pump another ball at his head or neck to break his cervical vertebræ "Good!" He rolls off the log, but "rolled off dead, shoo," says woolly-head, showing his ivories, and getting the long-pointed hook ready for use when the blood-stained waters shall have cleared away.

While the darky busies himself with removing the alligator's skin, you start off for a shot at a flock of teal which has come dangerously near, and perhaps you also secure some plover. There is every reason to be satisfied as you turn your boat down

stream for home. The waters are aglow in the evening sun; not a breath of air is stirring; everywhere calm and quiet. You puff away at your pipe, and as you gaze at the 'gator skin in the bottom of your skiff, you find a use for every tooth and every inch of hide, and you picture to yourself the pleasure you are going to give to numerous friends. It is well to dispose of your cargo in this way before you make your landing, for there at the wharf you will find assembled the usual contingent of pretty girls waiting for the evening steamer and the return of the different boating and shooting parties. Hard-hearted will you have to be to withstand the pleadings for mementos, etc., and there is every probability that when you reach your hotel all that you have left will be the memory of a pleasant afternoon with a 'gator.

THE CRUISE OF THE FROLIC.

BY S. G. W. BENJAMIN.

THERE is no cruising-ground on the coast of the United States equal to that around Massachusetts Bay, and north as far as Portsmouth. The ports are frequent and generally easy of access, and the variety of scenery, the picturesque nature of the coast, the sea flavor about the character of the people, and the quaintness of the towns of that region invest it with singular raciness and an endless variety of charm. Our yachtsmen are fast finding this out, although I think one can better enjoy and appreciate these attractions when cruising in a small five-tonner than in a large yacht, or in the company of a fleet, for there are many curious nooks which only such a wee ship, off on a roving commission by itself, would think of visiting. And it is this very dodging among these odd corners of our coast that adds especial zest to the enjoyments of your cruising yachtsman.

So much by way of preface to the statement that a lot of jolly sons of Gotham made up their minds, on a certain summer in the eighties, to fly the hurry of Wall Street and the temptations of a sinful metropolis for the pure breezes of ocean, following in the wake of the sea serpent and of the Pilgrim discoverers.

No seaport in America offers so many small craft handy for inexpensive cruising as Boston. And hither Benton, our Co-

rinthian skipper, and the writer of this log hied in search of a suitable sloop or schooner obtainable at a reasonable sum. The keel sloop *Frolic* was finally selected, and put into proper condition by the addition of fresh paint, new cushions and curtains, a yawl, and the like. Charts and compass, lead and fishing-lines, a new cable, and a stock of provisions, including a supply of fluids, were also put on board; the rigging was set up anew, and last, but not least, the crew was engaged. It consisted of one pock-marked, grizzly-bearded mariner, whose appearance was not altogether in his favor. But he came well recommended; had been mate of a brig, it was stated, and had also sailed in many yachts. He declared himself able and willing to pilot us into every port as far as Eastport, to do "light cooking," to serve as steward, and bear a hand in working the sloop; he was, in fact, a paragon of nautical excellences. My experience has led me to doubt those who lay claim to such versatility and virtue, whether on land or sea, whether in matters horsey or matters marine. But Mr. Brown was the best who offered, and was therefore regularly enrolled on the ship's list of the *Frolic*.

Scarcely was everything in readiness when Will Hallett and Frank Weller arrived from New York, and made signals,

from the wharf that they desired to be taken on board with their traps. For them the proposed cruise was one of unusual interest, as they were novices in cruising, although not altogether ignorant on the score of boat sailing. They anticipated no end of fun, far more, doubtless, than is generally found in these summer wanderings along the coast, which are sources rather of quiet, healthy relaxation than of stirring adventure, and we older hands thought it unwise to quench their young ardor.

There was little wind, but the weather was fine, and it was hoped that with the sunset a breeze might come up that would float us down to Marblehead before midnight. While Brown was loosening the sails a propitiatory libation was offered to Neptune or his representative in those waters. All hands then fell to and set the mainsail and gaff-topsail, and got up the anchor. It was two hours yet until the turn of the tide, and with this to aid the sloop we might easily drop down past the islands, and the moon would light the night watches. But as evening drew on the light westerly air entirely died away, followed shortly after by signs of a fog from the bay.

Under the circumstances the sloop was headed toward Long Wharf, and anchored, amid a cluster of yachts and coasters, south of the main channel. About midnight, the night being very still and ghostly, and a heavy, dripping fog lying on the water, through which the moon and the nearer anchor-lights were barely visible, Benton was aroused by a steady thump, thump, thump. He recognized the sound at once. A large schooner, swinging with the tide, was bearing down on the sloop, threatening to carry away her main-boom. For Benton and Brown to rush from the cuddy in *vestibus naturalibus*, bstride the damp boom and jump into the boat and pull the stern of the sloop out of the way, was but the work of an instant. But, as everything was dripping with fog, the Spartan simplicity of the costume produced a chill which it was thought best to modify without delay by a searching prescription of rye.

The following day opened windless and foggy. In the middle of the forenoon the fog lifted and showed a sullen, ominous offing. By noon a breeze set in from the northeast.

"Let's get up the mainsail," said Benton.

"You ain't agoin' to sea to-day, be you?" asked Brown.

"Why not?"

"Don't you see the wind's dead ahead? We'll have a dead beat of it down to Marblehead, and if it comes on to blow I guess we'll get caught out and have to run for a lee, and the fog on the coast just as thick as mud."

"Oh, I guess not. At any rate, there's a breeze, and we'll try it! We've got a chart and compass, and if it don't blow harder than this we're sure to fetch up inside of Marblehead Light before dark."

Reaching down to Apple Island, through the main channel, the *Frolic* fetched a tack up to Shirley Gut, a tortuous channel between Deer Island and Point Shirley, which is impassable except for small vessels. The tide was running out, while the long swell was rolling in. The two meeting on the bar made a mass of boiling foam that looked a great deal more savage than it was in reality, if met with a steady eye and a firm hand at the helm. The tacks here were short, and the *Frolic*, carrying a stiff weather helm, and buoyant as a duck, rapidly and gracefully shivered her sails and fell off on the other tack every time, flinging the spray aft in sheets. But we were soon clear of this and riding on a green swell enveloped by a mizzling fog. Now and again a coaster suddenly loomed out of the mist and hailed the yacht to learn the bearings of the land. The bold red cliffs of Nahant and Egg Rock were successively passed. Ram Island, off Swampscott, and Roaring Bull, off Marblehead Neck, were gradually seen, or rather the cold white foam that beat against their faint coast line; then the cruel ledge called Tom Moore's Reef, which the sloop passed with a rush, glad to be clear of such a dread foe under the lee beam. Soon after, Marblehead, lighthouse was hailed with satisfaction, for the rising sea and strong gusts coming with growing frequency, made it desirable to reach a safe anchorage before nightfall, now rapidly approaching with the settled foreboding gloom of a gathering storm, Moll Pitcher, the presiding witch of those shores, was evidently brewing foul weather.

Rounding the Light, and easing off the mainsheet, the *Frolic* flew down the little port and took a snug berth near the quarters of the Eastern Yacht Club. That night it blew great guns, and rained in torrents; but with both anchors down and plenty of scope, in one of the snuggest

harbors in the world, we realized that there is nothing more cozy under such circumstances than the cuddly of a trim yacht, with a warm supper and a jolly game of whist.

The *Frolic* was not much to boast of in the way of size or splendor, but she was comfortable, and that is the chief thing. She was thirty-two feet long over all, and twelve feet beam, and, of course, a keel boat. A centerboard box so reduces the space in the cabin of a small cruising yacht that it should be avoided. A small stove was placed in the forepeak, leaving a narrow transom for the sleeping quarters of the crew. The skipper and friends entirely occupied the main cabin, as it was called with a certain grim humor, where we had just five feet of head-room.

The day broke pleasantly, contrary to expectation, the blow being merely a summer storm. It was Sunday morning, and all hands except Brown went ashore to buy beans and bread for breakfast. That meal over, we turned out for a quiet smoke, when Brown followed instead of remaining below to wash the dishes, a homely but necessary duty which falls on the crew in small yachts. If there be no crew, strictly speaking, the passengers are naturally expected to contribute their labors toward the domestic duties of running a sloop down the coast. It was evident from the look and manner of the aforesaid Brown that trouble was brewing in the forecabin.

"It looks like good weather for running down to Gloucester, Mr. Brown," said Skipper Benton; "how soon do you think you'll be cleared up below?"

"I guess you'll have to go without me," replied Brown, gruffly.

"How so? What's up now?"

"Wall, you see, this 'ere job ain't what I kalkilated on. 'Tain't for me, who've been mate of a brig, to be washing of dishes and cooking of food. 'Twan't so understood when I agreed to go in this 'ere sloop. I'm willin' for to steer my trick and bear a hand in making sail and the like o' that; but I understood I was to be skipper aboard, and not steward. I ain't goin' on no such job as you are givin' me; you'll have to find somebody else in my place."

"But you understood perfectly well what we expected you to do, and I can bring witnesses to prove it. What you are after is perfectly plain; you want to get an increase in the wages I agreed to give you."

"Well, and what if I do? You don't expect me to keep on with you at a dollar and a half a day, and work in this blamed fashion?"

"I certainly did, and I could hold you to your bargain. But we'd rather have you go at once, without another word. We'll put you ashore, and the sooner you clear out the better. We want no lily-fingered hands on this sloop."

Brown growled and grumbled, evidently disappointed at the result of the mutiny, but Benton was firm.

The boat was hauled alongside, and the mutinous crew was rowed to the nearest wharf. Lest he should poison the loafers on the wharf against us, one of the party kept within earshot of him, while another went in search of a man to take his place, which was by no means an easy thing to accomplish under the circumstances. Happily Benton had acquaintances among the sea-folk of Marblehead, and by their aid was soon able to engage Uncle Joe, who came on board the *Frolic* immediately after bidding his wife good-bye. His only fault was his age. He was really too old for service, having passed a good part of a long and well-spent life on the Banks. In other respects he was an admirable specimen of a Marblehead sailor; a clear, honest blue eye gleamed under a broad brow, frosted with white, and a thick snowy beard fringed the lower part of his bluff yet kindly features. He had seen seventy winters, yet stood erect and firm as when he first walked a schooner's deck; his conversation was a racy combination of simplicity and shrewdness, Uncle Joe's outfit for the trip was comprehended within a cotton handkerchief. He was a steady smoker of the pipe, but had sworn off from anything stronger than tea and coffee.

Ten minutes after he came aboard, the *Frolic* was under weigh and bowling across Salem Bay with a stiff westerly breeze abeam. There is not a finer yachting port in America than Salem Bay, with its cluster of islets protecting it from easterly gales, and the group of little harbors—Marblehead, Salem, Beverly, Manchester, and the Misery diverging like the fingers on a hand. For sea picnics in which ladies and children can join, there is no water safer, and at the same time more attractive on our coast,

The *Frolic* stowed her jib at Misery Island, and came to anchor in its little port, where a boat may make a landing on its miniature beach in all weathers. A quiet

night was passed there, and in the morning, while some of our party were bathing, Benton strolled over to the east side of the Misery and painted the beautifully colored rocks of House Island, close at hand. We hasten to add that he did not actually paint the rocks themselves, but made a sketch of them on canvas. This explanation is given because many on that coast would not so understand the phrase. A friend of mine went down to Salem from Boston to take studies of old schooners. Seeing a rusty, picturesque craft lying at Derby Wharf, he said to the old skipper:

"How long are you going to be here, for I should like to paint your schooner?"

"You needn't bother yourself about a paintin' of her. I guess I can do all the paintin' she needs," replied that ancient worthy, squirting out the tobacco juice, and not condescending to look up from the sail he was mending.

There was to be a yacht race that day at Marblehead, and toward noon the *Frolic* stood out toward Halfway Rock to see the racers on the home-stretch. The wind was sou'west, a green hump of a sea was heaving up foam to the southward, and the sky looked very hazy to windward. In other words, it was blowing a smoky sou'wester.

Glancing often and anxiously toward that quarter, Benton said:

"I don't altogether like the look of things to windward; it's going to blow, and I'm thinking we had better be making tracks for port."

"I don't think it'll amount to anything; it'll go down with the sun; don't you think so, Uncle Joe?" asked Frank.

Thus appealed to, the old salt, puffing vigorously on his pipe, closely scanned the offing, and said, "I don't know about that; it looks kinder measly to windward; one can't tell much about these sou'westers; they don't never tell what they're goin' to do; but I guess 'twon't be no harm done if we stand in and smoothen the water a mite afore it comes on to blow. I'm thinkin', too, we'd better haul the topsail while we can."

"Aye, aye, take her in, Uncle Joe," replied Benton, as a smart puff laid the *Frolic* down to her trunk. Scarcely was the topsail stowed than it became necessary to take a reef in the mainsail as a precautionary measure. The sloop was headed for the Marblehead shore in order to have a lee if the breeze should develop into a heavy squall, as now looked more than

probable. The racing yachts were now sweeping by, burying their lee rails and reefing down for the coming blow.

All went well, however, until we came abreast of Marblehead harbor. One glance at that port was enough. The water, an inky black, was furrowed and lashed to foam by a furious squall that was advancing with frightful rapidity. I have never seen the surface of the sea look more wicked.

"Now, boys, be lively! Let go all!" cried Benton, grasping the tiller with both hands and bracing his feet for a good hold.

Frank sprang to the jib downhaul, while the others let go the mainsail halliards, just as the squall struck the yacht. The jib went down on the run, but the throat halliards jammed, and the pressure on the canvas was such that the sloop failed to fall off with the helm hard up. She lay over on her side, half buried in the water, and in the most imminent peril. Springing up the mast and hanging to the hoops, Frank started the gaff. As soon as this was done she began to pay off before the wind. But for the mainsail being reefed the *Frolic* would have gone down; as it was, her standing room and cuddy were half full of water when she righted.

Brought down to balance-reefed mainsail, the *Frolic* was steered handsomely under the lee of Peach's Point and came to anchor in Doliber's Cove. During this exciting episode a small schooner, caught as we had been, capsized and went down in shoal water, and the crew clung to the mastheads until picked up, while in every direction vessels were seen carrying away spars and sails, and running for a lee.

The squall proved short as it was violent. In two hours everything was balmy and serene, and we decided to steal across the bar by moonlight, leaving it to circumstances to guide us. The idle wind of evening wafted us to the entrance of Manchester port, and under the jib we let the sloop drift until she brought up in the mud and eel-grass, for it was ebb tide. We lay half dozing and dreaming on deck until the turning tide lifted the yacht, and a light air from the southward coyly filled the jib. Thus we glided until fairly among the wharves of a wee little haven inclosed by hills, houses and thickets. The mud-hook was dropped, and with every prospect of a good night's rest after the vicissitudes of an exciting day, we all turned in, but, as it proved, alas, not to sleep.

The quiet of the cuddy was suddenly

broken by a strong English monosyllabic exclamation. Then Frank was heard to give his cheek a smart slap; expressions more or less desperate were now heard from every quarter of the cuddy with alarming frequency and distinctness. It was too true—the ubiquitous, merciless and innumerable mosquito had invaded the *Frolic*. He came attended by ten billions of miniature demons thirsting for blood and buzzing a song of triumph, like the distant tuning up of an orchestra of bagpipes in an approaching thunder-storm: these atmospheric sharks drove us pell-mell on deck, but there they seemed not less numerous and infuriating. At length, as a relief, the dingey was drawn alongside, and leaving Uncle Joe to look out for the yacht, the rest of us slowly paddled about the little port. There was no fault to find with the night. It was absolutely serene. The sky's fathomless purple was without a cloud, spanned by the Galaxy's illimitable train of mystic splendor reaching up from the south. The moon was at the full, and its argent light turned the little fishing haven into a cave in the land of dreams; by that magical glow old farmhouses and barns were transformed into fairy pavilions, and the fireflies darting hither and thither appeared like the flicker of torches lighting phantom halls. A weather-worn schooner leaning against a barnacled wharf might have passed for Cleopatra's barge, as she lifted her moon-silvered masts against the stars, her maintruck jeweled by a planet. The stillness was almost awful. "Dear God, the very houses seemed asleep!" At intervals only a melancholy whippoorwill in a distant thicket dared to utter its complaint on this perfect summer night.

Toward dawn the tide began to slacken, and with a line attached to the end of the bowsprit we towed the *Frolic* to the mouth of Manchester port. Finding no mosquitoes there, and no likelihood of a breeze to disturb us for some hours, we again dropped anchor and enjoyed a delicious slumber until the noisy cocks on the neighboring shores insisted that we awake and see the dawn.

What can equal the solemn splendor of a summer dawn in such a spot! A gradual glow deepened in the cloudless east, and the morning star shimmered on the brow of the coming day, casting a quivering trail of silver on the pale, glassy surface of, the ocean. The shores of islet and mainland were thinly veiled by a gray

gauze of mist, and the songs of awakening birds came from far and near. The metallic beat of oars on the tholes, heard faintly in the distance, announced that the early fisherman was going forth to catch the early fish. Benton, who had been quietly feasting his artistic eye with this enchanting scene for some time, when the vane of the Manchester-by-the-Sea church caught the first flash from the sun bursting above the sea, put his head down the companion-way and shouted:

"Come, boys, come! Turn out! Sun's up, and we've no time to lose if we are going to get to the Shoals to-day!"

"Oh, pshaw! why not let a fellow sleep awhile?" yawned Hallett; but the discipline of the ship, or rather the delicious fragrance of the morning air, could not be resisted, and ere long the seductive aroma of coffee was noticed stealing from the cuddy. Breakfast dispatched, all sail was made, and before long the *Frolic* was abreast of Kettle Cove and the pretty settlement of Magnolia. After passing the Cove the breeze freshened, and when off Gloucester harbor the kites were taken in, as the puffs off the land were fresh and frequent. Standing across Milk Island Channel, then impassable owing to the tide, we sailed around Thatcher's Island, whose trim granite lighthouses, 130 feet high, towered grandly above us. The wind here was very fresh, and the *Frolic* fairly scooted. To make it easier going we took the dingey on board, laying it across the cabin trunk. The day was fine, and many sails were seen, including those of a number of yachts. Having safely passed Hallibut Point, as the day was warm notwithstanding the breeze, it was deemed prudent to go below and partake of what Dick Swiveller called a "modest quencher."

Uncle Joe being weary, and Frank being willing to show his seamanship, he was left for a few moments in charge of the tiller, the sloop being under mainsail and jib, and the wind on the port quarter. He knew how to steer reasonably well, and we never knew exactly how it happened that at the precise moment that Benton declared the lemonade to be exactly right the *Frolic* gybed her main-boom and went over almost on her beam ends. We were all thrown together in a heap; and as for the lemonade—well, the less said about it the better, for it mingled with the flood of water that deluged the cuddy. Puffing and blowing we scrambled on deck, where, happily, nothing had been

carried away, but we had a close squeak of it.

After this drenching we found the sloop was just abreast of the entrance to Essex. As we were off on a cruise to nowhither except the land of fun, it suddenly occurred to us that none of us had ever been to Essex. Why not put in there and take a look at things? Out came the chart, which showed a clear but narrow channel hedged by shifting shoals, and with sand-bars on each side. The weather being fine, we were soon inside the snow-white sand-hills of the bar, and came to an anchor, as the channel thence to Essex is tortuous, beset with rocks and impassable, except with a favoring tide.

The sunset came on serenely, the golden glow tingeing the white sand-dunes where lay an old wreck. The plaintive wail of the sandpipers hopping on the sand gave an indescribable effect to the quietude of the scene. How pleasant was our long chat that evening with our pipes! Sometimes one spun a yarn of the sea, and then followed an interlude of silence, or a bit of humor that elicited a genial laugh. The stars were thick that night and the dews heavy when we turned in to enjoy a night of calm repose, after voting that there is no out-of-door sport that offers more charms than cruising in a yacht.

The *Frolic* was left in charge of Uncle Joe the next day. There was a dead calm and promise of a continuance of the same for a day or two, so we started for Essex in the dingey. It was a pull of five or six miles along a winding channel, but we proceeded in a leisurely manner, stopping at various attractive spots on the way. One of these was Cross' Island, in mid-channel, a hilly islet containing a clump of trees to relieve its bareness. A few shanties were scattered along its slopes, of which the oldest were thrown up years ago for the gentlemen who were in the habit of spending a week or two in October shooting in the neighborhood for water-fowl. One of these shanties was on a rock at the water's edge, having bunks built into the sides as in a ship. On our return from Essex, two of our party passed the night there, and the sound of the tide rushing under the shanty as one lay in his bunk conveyed the impression of being at sea.

We found Essex a quiet, old-fashioned village of two or three thousand people, offering no special attractions beyond the stock of provisions we obtained there. It was formerly one of the chief ship-building

ports of New England; but now one sees only here and there a fishing schooner or coaster on the stocks. The most striking characteristic of the population of that worthy burg is, that the people belong mostly to three families: the Burnhams, Storys and Choates. If one should throw a stone in the streets of Essex, the chances are three to one that it would hit some one bearing one of those names. It is evident that, as in Plymouth, the people are still largely of the old New England stock, a hard-headed, sturdy, close-mouthed, shrewd, sensible, conservative race, not easily swayed, not given to sentiment, but liable to occasional impulses of popular feeling that surprise one who would not look for it in that quarter. During the period of the witchcraft delusions, the people of Essex yielded to the notion that the devil was marching on their place with a legion of evil spirits.

Leaving Frank and Will at Cross' Island, Benton and the writer returned to the *Frolic* towards evening. Uncle Joe was seen quietly smoking his pipe on deck, and was rejoiced to see us back. The position of the sloop was exposed, and he was old, and did not care to be in charge alone all night. The boys promised to be back in good season the following morning, hoping to come off in a passing dory. But either they failed to get such conveyance as early as expected, or they found life on the island too agreeable, for they did not put in an appearance until afternoon. The breeze was then too light to reach any place before night, and we were forced to lie at Essex until another day.

The sky looked hazy at sunset, the sun was yellow, and the surf had a deep hollow roar on the bar, all signs indicating a gathering storm of some duration. We therefore moved the *Frolic* a little north of the berth where she was lying, and kept a watch on deck all night, lest it should come -on to blow before dawn. I do not know of a more wild and desolate scene on our coast than where the *Frolic* was anchored, especially at low tide; on all sides white sands and dunes, or gray sands reaching miles and miles, and the air filled with the spray from the ever-rolling surf, beating on the bar from age to age.

It was scarcely dawn when the writer, the watch on deck having fallen asleep, was awaked by a cold sensation on his side exactly like a snake creeping up his leg. That it must be a slimy reptile was the first thought that flashed across my mind, the

more naturally, perhaps, because I once had a centipede leisurely creep on the bare skin from the ankle to the knee. But as soon as I was wide awake, I realized that the *Frolic* was lying aground on her bilge, and that the bilge-water was pouring into the lee bunks. Either she had not been pumped dry the night before, or her garboard had opened with the strain of lying high and dry. That we should be left by the tide in such a position was due to the extreme low ebb, and the fact that the boat had swung out of the channel. In any case there was, nothing to be done but await the course of events.

The sun arose out of a cloud-bank, and the weather looked threatening, but while we were waiting, two of the party walked off across the sands to obtain fresh milk from the house where Rufus Choate was born, which was in plain sight of the bar. While they were gone we put our oil-stove into the dory alongside, and put the kettle on. The crabs were running out to sea by the myriad, and when the water was boiling we picked them out of the water and tossed them into the kettle. It is needless to say that that portion of our breakfast that morning was fresh and appetizing,

By the time the breakfast was eaten it became evident that the sooner we found another port the better, as the wind was piping up out of the northeast and the sea was rising so fast it would drive us ashore when the *Frolic* floated. But as the tide rose we saw to our surprise that the *Frolic* did not rise with it, but had settled and lay on the sand like lead, while the water flooded her lee decks. There was not a moment to be lost. Unshipping the block from the jaws of the gaff we attached it to one end of a hawser, at the other end of which was an anchor. This we carried out into deep water in the dingey; then, bowsing on the throat halliards, we brought the *Frolic* upon an even keel, when she floated. In ten minutes we were under mainsail and jib and beating out to sea. The *Frolic* staggered under that canvas, but was forced to carry it in order to meet the heavy sea and tide and hold her own in the quick, short tacks in a narrow channel, hedged by sand-shoals white with breakers.

Fairly past that danger, we had to face the question as to the course to be followed. To beat up to the Isles of Shoals or Portsmouth against a freshening northeaster on a lee shore, seemed foolhardy unless for a good reason. We had to choose between running for Cape Ann and a lee, or heading

for Newburyport, by way of Plum Island Channel, Ipswich Bay, its entrance being on our lee beam. This being a *terra* or *aqua incognita* to us all, offered the zest of novelty. We decided in its favor *nem. con.* The helm was put up and the sheets eased away, and the *Frolic* galloped over the high seas like a racehorse. The channel here follows the southern shore of the bay past the light-house. That was the only course for us to take, but under the exhilaration of the sea wind we recklessly headed directly over the bar, a piece of folly to which I now look back with amazement, as it was absolutely unnecessary. The *Frolic* steered rather wildly with a quartering sea, and the swell rose steep, hollow and furious as we approached the bar, which had been bare and above water two hours before. Happily for us, the *Frolic* whooped over the bar on the top of a great roller, and a moment after we were gliding in smooth water. Had the sloop gone in on the fall of the sea she would have left her bones there, and perhaps her crew as well.

It was a short run from the turning-point to Grape Island, a section of the long, low breakwater called Plum Island which has been thrown up in the course of ages to protect the pastoral shores between Essex and Newburyport, and offer a hunting-ground for sportsmen. Plover, sand-pipers, rail and duck abound there, and the hummocky character of the surface of the island, tufted with sedge and salt grass, and intersected with creeks, offers fine opportunities for stalking the game. Many a rare spirit has found solace on those lonely island moors in the fall of the year in times past, and the region is haunted by legends of wrecks and sporting characters, who have made it a "happy hunting-ground." One story may not be generally known concerning a certain well-known worthy of thirty years ago, remembered for handling the long-bow as well as the rifle.

"Sand-peeps?" said he to one, who was asking about game on Plum Island—"sand-peeps? why, bless you, there's millions of them! I crossed over to the island one afternoon in October, and left the dory in a creek. Then I just clamb a little hill and up flew an all-fired big flock of sand-peeps. I up and let fly both barrels at them, but I aimed a leetle too low and they all flew away; but just to show you how thick they are, I picked up a bushel-basket fall of legs! A fact!"

There was a cheap hostel, a sort of fifth-rate saloon "for transients," on Grape

Island. The piazza overlooking the sea had a certain attraction, and we decided to try our luck there for a chowder. A clam-chowder was what we got, served without any assumptions of cleanliness. We were waited on by a tall, slender woman, dark complexioned and wearing large yellow earrings. She had been handsome once, but now wore that spiritless, faded look one sees so often in our seaport towns down east, as if hardship, disappointment and a diet of saleratus biscuit had filled life with a general disgust. She was evidently of the mixed race one sees in that region, formed by Pilgrim stock intermarrying with the Portuguese who settled at Marblehead and Cape Ann. The chowder was poor and the beer very small beer indeed, but I look back with intense pleasure to the hours idly passed that summer afternoon on the porch of the inn, quietly smoking and gazing over the green slopes of Ipswich dotted with peaceful farms, the winding steel-gray waters of the channel, the russet moors of the island, and the vast expanse of ocean deeply blue and flashing with white crests.

The storm we had expected seemed deferred to another day, for the sun set clear and took away the wind with it. In the twilight a little whiffling air came up from the sea, and we concluded to run up to Ipswich. But the wind died away, and at ten o'clock we were merely drifting with the tide, under the jib. The sky was clear, but the moon was still not risen, and it was exceedingly dark. It was a weird night, whose silence was only broken by the sudden, startling scream of a seabird, the distant boom of the surf and the swash of the tide on the shallows and against the bow of the yacht. We became aware, at last, that the hills were closing in around us, and the anchor was dropped within a few yards of the shore.

We were awakened by the low of cattle, apparently not a dozen yards from the sloop, and the rumble of a wagon over a bridge. But on putting our heads above the companionway we could see nothing, the fog was so dense, excepting here and there the faint ghostlike form of a tree. There was nothing until the dripping mist thinned out for a moment and enabled us to discover that we had run up the Parker River, and were anchored within a stone's-throw of Oldtown Bridge, a venerable stone structure erected in 1718. If we had continued 100 yards farther than we did in the dark, the *Frolic* would

have carried away her mast against the bridge.

The tide left us this time flat on the ooze of the river bed; there was nothing to be done but go on a foraging expedition after milk, eggs, fresh bread and meat, all of which provisions were now scant in our lockers. The village seemed to number about a dozen houses and as many barns, and the people appeared to have been born and brought up in a fog, to judge from the obfuscation of their faculties. They acted as if they had been asleep since the days when pirates made descents on the coasts, robbed henroosts, cast sheep's-eyes at the women folks and hid treasure in caves. The good people glared at us as if they had never seen respectable men in sea-boots, blue-flannel shirts and sea-caps. The young girls peeked at us through cracks behind the doors, giggling in a most entertaining manner. We little thought when we set sail that we were destined to give as much pleasure to these simple-minded rustics of Newbury Oldtown as an Italian with a barrel-organ and monkey, nor that we should be the cause of such breaking of the tenth commandment on their part. The barnyards were well stocked with cows, and healthy brahmas were cackling before every door; but at every house we were told in the most emphatic manner that milk and eggs were not to be found in Oldtown at that particular time. One man plucked up courage to answer a few of our questions, but like the rest, his cows were short of milk and his fowls did not lay enough eggs to pay for their keeping. To take these people at their word, Oldtown was the most god-forsaken spot on the globe. One dried-up specimen of womanhood was hanging out her clothes on the line when we appeared at her gate: hearing the latch click, she looked around sharply and received a shock that must have shortened her days. Exclaiming, "Sakes alive!" she dropped the garment from her hand, rushed into the house and slammed and bolted the door in our faces. It was useless to apply for provisions there.

Finally, at the very last house in the village we found a family who actually asked us to walk in, offered us seats and a drink of milk, and supplied us with fresh eggs, milk and buns for a reasonable price. Their hospitality was thoroughly appreciated and is not forgotten.

When the fog rose the wind rose also, a regular stiffener out of the northeast. The

little *Frolic* beat up the exceedingly narrow and winding channel under a press of sail, working beautifully in the short tacks with her lee rail buried half the time. When we reached Newburyport the drawbridge flew up, and dashing through we anchored in the Merrimac, near the railroad-bridge, at three P.M., just as it began to screech out of the northeast; and howl it did for two days, while the rain fell in torrents. The *Frolic* hung on, with both anchors down, and a long scope of cable. But when the wind backed into the nor'west the second night for an hour or two, and blew down the swollen river, which ran like a mill-race, it looked as if the yacht would drag her anchors and be blown on Plum Island or out to sea. Luckily everything held, and the wind was soon back in the old quarter. We had a fine period of leisure during the gale for sleeping, reading up all the old novels on board, and living like fighting-cocks on shore, where we found a fine old negro, whose thrifty wife has no superior on that coast for roasting chickens and cooking coffee.

It came out fine after the gale, the wind soft and bland and the sea as enchanting as if it had not been doing its level best to shift the sands of Newburyport bar and strew the coast with wrecks. We hung out all the muslin and stood over to the Isles of Shoals. After dining at the Appledore, we started for Portsmouth. The glow of a superb sunset suffused land and sea and sky as we slid past the Whaleback Light and anchored in the Piscataqua, off Newcastle.

The following morning, when the flood-tide set in, we ran up past Pull-and-be-dam Point, and the other intricacies which render the approach to Portsmouth a matter of care and patience, and anchored in a creek opposite the Navy Yard. Here we were detained for nearly four days by a dense fog, sometimes accompanied by rain, which made it inexpedient to run along the coast. While lying at Portsmouth we repeatedly availed ourselves of the hospitalities of the Rockingham House, a small but admirable hotel. Finally the fog cleared away, and, in company with several other yachts detained like the *Frolic*, we were able to put to sea. Our long detention at the last two ports made it necessary

to head for home. We passed the first night of our return voyage at Pigeon Cove. The entrance is only wide enough to admit the passage of one ship. The following day we towed the *Frolic* out in a calm, and took a breeze off Straitmouth Channel. The tide being well up, we concluded to try this hazardous passage, which is only reasonably safe at high tide with a leading wind. We were bowling along quietly and comfortably, when in a most unexpected manner the *Frolic* landed on the top of a rock scarce four feet below the surface. She was caught only by the stern-post and the bow lay loose. The rock was evidently steep and pointed, for the yacht rocked dangerously from side to side and threatened to capsize. We all ran forward to the bow, and our weight depressed the bow and caused the stern to float. Our escape was such a relief that we felt it essential to offer a libation to Bacchus.

Once through the channel, we took a staving nor'west breeze, which swept us down to Point Shirley by four o'clock. By careful manœuvring we succeeded in bringing the *Frolic* safely back to her berth opposite Long Wharf in time to go on shore and take a bath, followed by a jolly dinner at one of the excellent restaurants with which Boston is better supplied now than it was only a few years ago.

Thus ended a cruise which was attended by no remarkable adventures nor extended over much time, but was none the less attended by much pleasure as well as decided advantages to the health of all concerned. We earnestly recommend a similar experience to the reader, simply adding that cruising on that coast requires experience in things nautical, and is sufficiently hazardous not to be trifled with by those who are ignorant of seamanship and boat-sailing. Before closing, the writer would suggest that for cruising and dodging from port to port, I find the schooner rig preferable to that of the sloop, and should not again select a sloop for such a purpose. Small schooners of the size of the *Frolic* are much more common in New England than New York. But such are the advantages of this rig that it is singular it is not more the fashion for cruising in an inexpensive manner.

