

THE NETHERLANDS CUP RACE AT COWES.



COWES, the little capital of the Solent, the Goodwood of the water, never looks more gay than when, in the second week of August, Society, tired of its *fêtes* and festivities, its morning rides in the Row, and its afternoon strolls in the Park, resolves to pay it a visit, and have a little of the garish complexion of the gaslight washed away by the salt sea spray ; and the bloom renewed by a breath of the bright, fresh air which blows in from the Channel, and down over the woods of the fair Isle of Wight. And never was Cowes more gay than it was in the first week of August, 1883. The Queen was at Osborne, and Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, together with the youthful Princesses, had come down to favour that regatta, which, since the days of Waterloo, when the patriotic men connected with the fleet formed the premier club, the Royal Yacht Squadron, has been recognised as the most fashionable and interesting aquatic gathering of a nation which claims to rule the waves. Many and many a grand match has been sailed since those early days in the Solent, and many and many a change has been made in the type and rig of the competing vessels. Broad bluff bows have disappeared, as have the sails which the proud poets of the day sung as “bellying beautifully to the wind,” but which would have been talked of by modern racing-men as bagging like an unmentionable balloon ; and so with them have disappeared the ancient blow-hard school of mariners who could talk ship from masthead to keel. How these men would have looked when they saw from the club-windows the narrow hulls, straight bowsprits, tall spars, and straight-carried sails of modern days tearing past them at a rate which would have astonished the proudest owners of the hookers of an older day, which in a long stern run seemed according to the opinions of those novelists who wrote the romances of their time, to be the fastest boats that it was possible for man to build. The days of Paul Jones, Long Tom Coffin, and others of the schoolboy’s heroes have long gone, but

though steam has taken the sails out of their wind, to reverse a familiar expression, there still survives, amongst true-bred shore-born and sea-born Britons, a love of a boat with

“A wet sheet, and a flowing sea,
And a wind that travels fast.”

Indeed, it is gratifying to notice that during the past few years this love of sailing has been on the increase, notwithstanding the Sybaritic attractions of the huge floating palaces, some of which are bigger than our ocean-going Transatlantic liners of twenty years ago; much more powerful in a seaway, and twice as safe and as comfortable. But the sea-dogs of Cowes, Kingstown, Clyde, and other yachting resorts sing with Tennyson, “Comfort, comfort, scorned of devils,” and prefer a real good bucketing and a drenching of salt water, to a snug sofa in the richly-fitted cabin of a big steamboat.

In the snug little town all the talk was highly nautical. The man who did not know a schooner from a yawl was a nobody, while the man who could cast his memory furthest back, and a bit beyond, and tell you, “sir, yes, sir, I remember the America schooner, sir, when she came over, sir, and the Titania, ay, bless you, sir, and that day when the Prince out there was a little lad at his father’s knee, in white flannels, sir,” was a man to gather a knot of younger ones round him at a street corner, as a hero and a veteran to be listened to and gazed at with admiring wonder. Here and there one would come across a name that brought back to racing yachtsmen the pleasantest of memories—memories of old friends, old breezes, the very puffs of which were not forgotten, and anxious moments watching for starting and for winning guns. There, with his name woven in white on his breast, is one of the crew of the once-famous Clyde clipper Kilmeny; here, in red, is a man belonging to the famous Belfast flyer, Quickstep, and as we look round we read that once-magic word Fiona, the terrible yachting namesake of the heroine of Ossian, the bride of Fingal. All have had their day, but their names in yachting circles, no more than those of numerous others, can readily be forgotten.

But while we watch, we miss the stir that is going on at the Royal Yacht Squadron Clubhouse. Here are the brave yachtsmen assembled, and here the fair which the brave deserve, or have already been rewarded with. Tall men in blue serge

occupy the balcony next the sea, each carrying a telescope, the binocular being still despised by the old-fashioned school of sailors as only fit for landsmen to look through ; the ladies, less fond of looking at the canvas which the boats are carrying than at their own, remain by their wicker chairs on the green lawn, as much at sea possibly as they care to be, either in a nautical sense or with regard to a knowledge of what is going on. But some are there who are fond of the water, and so every now and then a stately cutter, with a fair one at the yoke-lines, pulls off to some big craft in the bay, while steam-launches puff and blow with screws squirming in the water in every direction. Less difficult to describe than the costumes of Goodwood, the Cowes ones are still bothersome to those unacquainted with the millinery art, and the sailor who pointed out one with a tucked skirt as carrying a double-reefed mainsail, was no doubt somewhat so perplexed.

But the real salts are interested only in the sailing, and the racing boats have been gradually getting ready for the race. They have "weighed out," as a turf frequenter would say, and are now weighing anchor. It is an anxious time on board each vessel, as the crew know hard work will soon commence ; their song of their day is—

With a strong man here and a stout man there,

The mainsail up we're riding ;

And a pull, pull here, and a pull, pull there,

The topsail up we're sliding.

And a click, click here, and a tick, tick there,

For the line, my boys, we're sailing.

Then we get the gun and begin the fun

As the boat bends down to the railing.

With a tack, tack here, and a tack, tack there,

For the weather berth we're trying.

With a puff, puff here, and a luff, luff there,

To windward now we are flying.

Now we gybe right round and we're homeward bound,

And for Commodore we are laying.

We've the winning gun, and the cry's " Well done ! "

And now we are hip-hooraying.

Possibly the yacht which achieved most distinction in the early part of the week was Lord Ailsa's little Sleuthhound, which

secured, as she did last year, the cup given by Her Majesty the Queen, and that against a fleet of far more powerful vessels. Though not so fast as the other 40-tonners, she has won many good races, and the pluck with which her owner has sailed boats in the 40-ton class for the past eleven years made her victory a popular one. The crack racing-vessels of the fleet are, of course, *Samœna*, *Marjorie*, and *Miranda*, together with the 40-tonners *May*, *Tara*, *Silver Star*, and *Annasona*. The Cowes Town Cup is a very much coveted trophy, and it resulted in a good race between the rival cutter *Samœna* and *Marjorie*, the latter finishing only 46 seconds outside of her time allowance, although the former would have finished much further ahead had she not parted her jib halliards in the course of the second round.

Next morning saw the commencement of the most interesting sailing matches of the week, there being down on the programme a cup, value £300, presented to R.Y.S yachts by the King of the Netherlands, while a prize of £150 was presented by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales and Lord Londonderry for vessels above 30 tons belonging to non-squadron members. A hard breeze blowing all morning, the two latter, which had to go off first, hauled down a single reef in their mainsails and housed topmasts, and with the yawl *Neptune*, third starter, tore down to the mark in the last minute, each manœuvring for weather berth. Their jockeying made them reckless of their time. They crossed too soon, were recalled and sent on again, the Scotch cutter leading. In the run up, with spinnakers to the masthead and small jib-headers up, *Samœna* early got past her rival, and after that was in front all day. There is not space in a sketch to describe their sailing, but in the beat down to Yarmouth, in which both worked the far shore, was seen some of the hardest and finest sailing of the 1883 season. About and about they went in the long, dead thrash, the well-peaked mainsail of *Samœna* being seen disappearing in the heavy haze of the shower blasts, while *Marjorie* was coming off on starboard, her mainsail shining in a golden sunset. In the run up the latter made on her opponent somewhat, but could never get within winning distance, and the former had the £150, the best prize for one of the best-sailed races of the season.

An hour after they start, is begun one of the races which will ever be remembered in Cowes. The blasts have not softened

much when Waterwitch, Cetonia, Lorna, Corinne, Sleuthhound, and the Aline, on which flies the Royal Feathers of the Prince, get under way and go out to do battle for the Netherlands trophy.

The crowd have gathered by the flagstaff where the signalman stands ready to shift colours should the guns refuse to go off; the officer of the day keeps a look-out with telescope in hand under the shade of the little corner-portico of the clubhouse, and the four minutes of the five from the first gun have ticked slowly off, when, with a squall tearing up grey from a dark cloud which hangs right across, Cetonia gybes to starboard, and Sleuthhound, with the watchful Diaper, shoots up for a lead and a clear weather berth. Slowly the seconds tick out, while anxious eyes can be seen through the binocular straining club-ward for the signal, while their timekeepers stand with deck watch or chronometer in hand. Many a time have we felt such moments, and our hearts are almost on board. The officer on duty, who has retreated momentarily before the shower, which has caused the crowd to scamper to leeward, reappears; the first gunner has affixed his lanyard, and the second beyond has followed his example. The officer's telescope is gradually raised from forty-five degrees to almost a right angle; the lanyards on the guns are correspondingly stented, and the flag signalman almost bends his weight on the halliards. The telescope is lowered, the gun goes with a roar, the yellow flag is run up, and in the thrash of the shower Cetonia eases off sheets and goes off across the line, followed by Sleuthhound and Corinne, Waterwitch and Lorna, Aline being last. In the long hard run and reach to the Nab there is much incident and much excitement; the little Sleuthhound sticking to her opponents like the faithful hound she is named after in the trail of a wounded stag. Back down again by the Calshot to Yarmouth, bursting through northering blasts Cetonia leads the way, followed by Waterwitch and Lorna, and the little Sleuthhound hanging to them all. It is a tearing run home after the long hard beat, the schooners bursting masses of foam o'er their bows, as the rain showers come chasing up behind them. Cetonia maintains her position, and Waterwitch and Lorna follow, but the Hound is going breast high to a strong scent. With boom eased off to starboard she races

home, and not needing spinnaker, which was once essayed, she wins the best prize which was ever sailed for on British waters by two minutes and a half.

Never did hound on burning trail
Run so hard as this Hound did sail ;
Ne'er did boat yet sail the sea,
Sail so bold and so gallantly.

And sailors all will answer the call,
When each regatta-time comes round.
And make the roof ring for Netherlands' King,
And his Cup which was won by the brave Sleuthhound.

