

THE CRUISE OF THE PEESWEEP.



ILLOA, boys! I'm hanged if here isn't the Jennie lying alongside."

We were a crew of Corinthian yachtsmen, and the shout came from one who held the by no means enviable position of cook and steward. We were bound, we might say, for *anywhere*, and nowhere in particular, having come out to make fair weather of it, and in the Clyde, as most yachting folks know, you need never have a head wind if an anchorage only is wanted. Our boat was the well-known little 10-tonner Peesweep, and we were lying, stormstaded, under the windows of the old White House in the Holy Island in Lamlash Bay. We had been cruising for two days in company with the Jennie, when the fellows on board the latter, in a sort of Viking-like spirit, resolved to visit fresh shores, and went off to round the dreaded Mull of Cantire, and drop their anchor in Belfast Lough. That they were so soon back again rather surprised us, but there could be no doubt whatever as to the craft alongside being the little Jennie, the schooner bow and the cock-up stern showing her to be the wee cross-bred cutter at a glance. Side lights in the rigging indicated that she had run-in in the night time, most likely from up-channel, as the weather was very rough outside, and grey seas came tumbling round the corner of the island at the south entrance in a manner which showed to us plainly that it would be no joke to try and venture in that direction.

"Ahoy! the Jennie, ahoy!" shouted our Corinthian steward, our crew being all amateurs. After a few seconds the lid of the companion was shoved back, and we saw the face of one we well knew cock his head up.

"Been to Belfast yet, eh?" was the second salute from Jenkins, who acted as a sort of cabinboy, all he was capable of doing on board a ship being the setting of the tablecloth.

"Why, I'm hanged if it isn't the old Peesweep," we heard him shout to someone down below.

“Hang his impudence! the old Peesweep,” said Jenkins to himself; “the Jennie could be the Peesweep’s grandmother. However, we won’t quarrel; we’ll bring them on board for breakfast, for they won’t have much in the locker, and they’ll be too sleepy to do much cooking; so rouse up, some of you fellows, and take the punt across to Lamlash, and get hold of some victuals, for there isn’t as much as a bit of bread left.”

Though the prospects of a row across Lamlash Bay in a yacht’s punt when half a gale was blowing, and the spindrift flying in showers, were by no means pleasant to contemplate, we knew we must obey or starve; so while he went forward into the fore-castle, the skipper, as we familiarly termed the owner of our craft, jumped from off his berth on the cabin cushion, to which he had retreated after a peep from the companion, and, quickly dressing himself, was ready to accompany me to the little Arran town to do our shopping. Perhaps there is nothing connected with Corinthian yachting that one likes so much as looking after the ship’s stores, the buying of milk, butter, and eggs, let alone the laying-in of the liquor, the bargain-driving with greengrocers, and the searching for the town pump from which to fill the water casks. On this particular morning, however, no one need have envied us the job, for against the head-wind and running sea it took us three-quarters of an hour to make the pier, and we were very glad to seek some comfort and warmth at the Lamlash Arms, where we landed. Visiting the grocer’s and the butcher’s we soon completed our marketing, the landlady of the Arms kindly supplying us with a pile of oatcakes. The water casks having been filled, we bent to our oars, and very soon were back alongside the Old Green Plover, as the Peesweep was sometimes termed. The bumping of a boat on our ship’s side let us know that the Jennie’s crew were alongside, and the skipper jumped on deck and welcomed them.

“Will you have breakfast?” cried out Young Wilson, who was literally a passenger, and only useful for opening sodawater.

“Will we have breakfast? will we have supper? will we have anything? I should think so; but come on with some brandy and soda to begin with,” was the chorus. “We’re eaten out, and we’re drunk out, and I don’t believe there’s as much as a glass of good fresh water on board even. By Jove we’ve had a fearful time of it outside: indeed it’s a wonder we’re not all holding on

by the sand at the bottom somewhere between Ailsa and the Mull of Cantire. No more trips to Ireland in the Jennie for me, say I, so if you're on for a cruise in convoy in the Channel here, we'll hang by you for a week. Two's company even in the matter of boats, and I think we'll make fair weather of it at home. Besides, it's too late for the Irish coast, any way; all the regattas are over, and what boats are not away round Land's End for the Solent, are up cruising amongst the Western Highlands. So here we are, and we're game to race the Jennie against the Peesweep for the next three days for dinners, drinks, suppers, anything you like."

"Done with you!" shouted the Steward, as the other buried the half of his weather-beaten face in a tumbler of fizzing yellow mixture. "Let's us make the best of the last of the season cruising canvas, no paid hands, and a fresh anchorage for a rendezvous every night. Breakfast was followed by the soul-soothing pipe, and for good part of the morning our time was devoted to jawing. In the afternoon the wind fell, though there was still a heavy sea running up, and, after a council of our little admiralty had been duly held, we resolved not to get under way till the following morning, when our first day's race was to be a sail as far as Loch Ranza, the cruise to be continued next morning up Loch Fyne as far as Ardrishaig, or down the Sound of Kilbranna, just according to how we found the weather. The evening we spent most happily on shore, and next morning we were ready to start. Who that has awakened upon a nice August morning on board a yacht here can ever forget the lovely scenery which greets his eye on either side when he goes on deck? Behind you are the yellow fields of ripening oats, running away back into purple seas of rich bell-heather, above which are the mist-clad summits of Ben Gnuiss and Goatfell, while before you is the picturesque peak of Holy Island, with its long masses of granite boulders shining in the morning sun, and the dim coast of Ayrshire away over the green Firth of Clyde. Happy is he who has let go his mud-hook midst the boats of the fleet of the Royal Clyde or Royal Northern Yacht Clubs in the evenings of those merry opening and closing cruises, and rushed on deck in the morning to see the eight o'clock gun fired from the Commodore's ship, while burgees are run up to the mast-heads, the band of the Cumberland training-ship striking up "A Life

on the Ocean Wave." Then who can forget those memorable starts, when nineties, sixties, and forties, schooners and cutters, all crowded down to the starting line, filling their canvas to the rain-laden squall which came from the hills, while the "Yeo-he-ho's" of men straining at topsail-halliards were resounding from shore to shore? But a truce to old reminiscences, however happy. The Peesweep and the Jennie are getting ready to start. The reefed bowsprits have been run out and the top-masts set up, and the stays tautened on both, and beyond that there is not much else to do, for cruising canvas only is to be allowed. Jibheaders having been got up on each, and the start having been fixed to take place sharp at eleven o'clock, a friend agreed to give us a five-minutes gun from the right barrel of his fowling-piece at 10.55 to the tick, and the left at the "10.60," over a line between his garden gate and the mainmast of a barque lying at anchor. Then we took a turn down the South Bay to see what the wind was likely to do. Trying our run from a mark on shore we knew when to put about again for a flying start, and, as the five-minutes gun was fired at the garden gate, filled on our right tack, and easing off sheets went down snoring. Almost at the same time our opponent did the same to leeward, but before he could cut across windward, for weather berth, as he wanted, we had our jib over him, and we streamed down to the imaginary line about level. Just as we neared the line a shower, in the heart of which there was a squall, which laid us over till the scuppers were roaring full, made a beautiful arch of a rainbow from the Arran to the Holy Island shore, and with foam flying at the stem, and a white wake churning at the stern, we stemmed the line with the bowsprits' ends just as the second barrel of the gun was fired.

"Ease sheet!" was the call as the squall laid us over, and, with sheets checked a little, we soon travelled through the North Sound, the Peesweep and the old Jennie going as fast as if they were again sailing their maiden races. The latter's best point was reaching, so we were quite content to hold our own, though drop her we could not, and so, with as much as we could stagger under, we held on through the North Sound. Up under the rugged bluffs of the Corriegills we found the wind westerling a little, no doubt drawing more out of Glen Rosa and Brodick Bay, but the pinched sheets were all in our favour,

and the Jennie soon fell astern. Across Brodick Bay, with the wind falling as we went up, we literally rushed through, with but little time to glance at the banner on the walls of the picturesquely situated castle, or watch the puffs of blue smoke which burst out every now and then in the heathery slopes and told of the death of grouse at the hands of the members of the ducal party. Getting under the shadow of Goatfell, the breeze died down softly, and we almost crept past Corrie, while the Jenny closed up, and, much to our chagrin, got a light air all to herself, and slipped away through her lee.

“This is what they call the pleasures of yacht racing,” said the Steward, who was taking his trick at the tiller, “when an old scow like that catches hold of a fluke after we have almost left her hull down, and sails almost out of sight. However, the race isn’t always to the lucky—whistle, somebody, for wind.”

After a time the breeze answered our coaxing, and we were seen streaming along again, and to our great joy found the Jennie in the doldrums off Glen Sannox. Just in the middle of our congratulations, however, our boat came to an even keel also, and, leaving one of the fellows to take care of the stick, we went below to drown our cares in a mouthful and enjoy a pipe. We had just got to discussing the chances of our finishing the race that day when the boat went over with a thrash and going on deck we found her laying over to a fine fresh breeze, and the Jennie just ahead. Fresh wind, fresh life, we were soon at it again as eager and as excited as ever, and with the breeze drawing more ahead as we came up to the Cock of Arran we weathered on our competitor, and with three or four tacks across the Sound fetched up under the old castle of Loch Ranza, a victor by five minutes, after a pretty hard-sailed race. With lights up, however, it was a case of pipes out, resolving to eat our well-won dinner at Campbeltown or Ardrishaig the next day.