

Days of Sail Made Hardy Race of Men

Heroes of Fiction From This Coast Handled Ships With Rare Skill

BY DEWITT HARRY.

IN SPINNING the yarn of the days when the search for food brought the world to Portland and the varied winds scattered the wheat, lumber and other products of the northwest over the face of the globe a race of men strange to the present world is described. They who ventured on the great briny wastes were lost from sight of land for months at a time and came into intimate touch with the infinite. Their simple, hard life bred a set of beings different from the usual and as they sailed away, their ships a cloud of snowy canvas, they learned to appreciate their vessels. The result of this admiration can be perceived in the practice among seafarers of speaking of their ships in the feminine gender. Who ever heard of a ship that was so inanimate as to be called "it"? The sweet sailing vessels were treated and spoken of as would a well-behaved young girl, the others according to the nature they developed.

In a casual association with the men who spent a big portion of their lives journeying on the high seas the greatest impression is made by their familiarity with the many craft of their day. There is not a world of books, they remembered and needed no historians, for did they not live history in the making? The tales of their races from continent to continent with the entire ocean for a course puts to shame most of the sporting events of this day. There was the real test with a reward in charters and extra money for fast passages. As the spume flew about the figureheads on the prows of their fast ships they were living one of the bravest epochs in romance. Men were lost at sea, ships went on voyages from which they never returned, hazards and tragedies were many, but what life was ever worth while that did not present some extra dangers? Frank W. Bullen was a member of the crew on the Lutterworth when he wrote his book, "With Christ at Sea."

They Made History.

Clustered about them is a halo of heroic achievement. Their daring when gales were encountered, the sheer courage with which they met, undaunted, the severest of tests, the hardships, the manifold instances of where they proved their worth are simply attested and possibly so predate them more now as the ocean is made safer. The bleaching skeletons of ships that have come to grief along the Pacific prove the chances they took. The roll of honor among seafaring men in continually getting additions. The gulls of that day saw some terrible sights as magnificent craft went on the rocks and speedily became massed or tangled wreckage at the mercy of the breakers. Navigation then was a science and skippers were skilled in reading the stars, for slight mistakes in reckoning would throw them off hundreds of miles in their course.

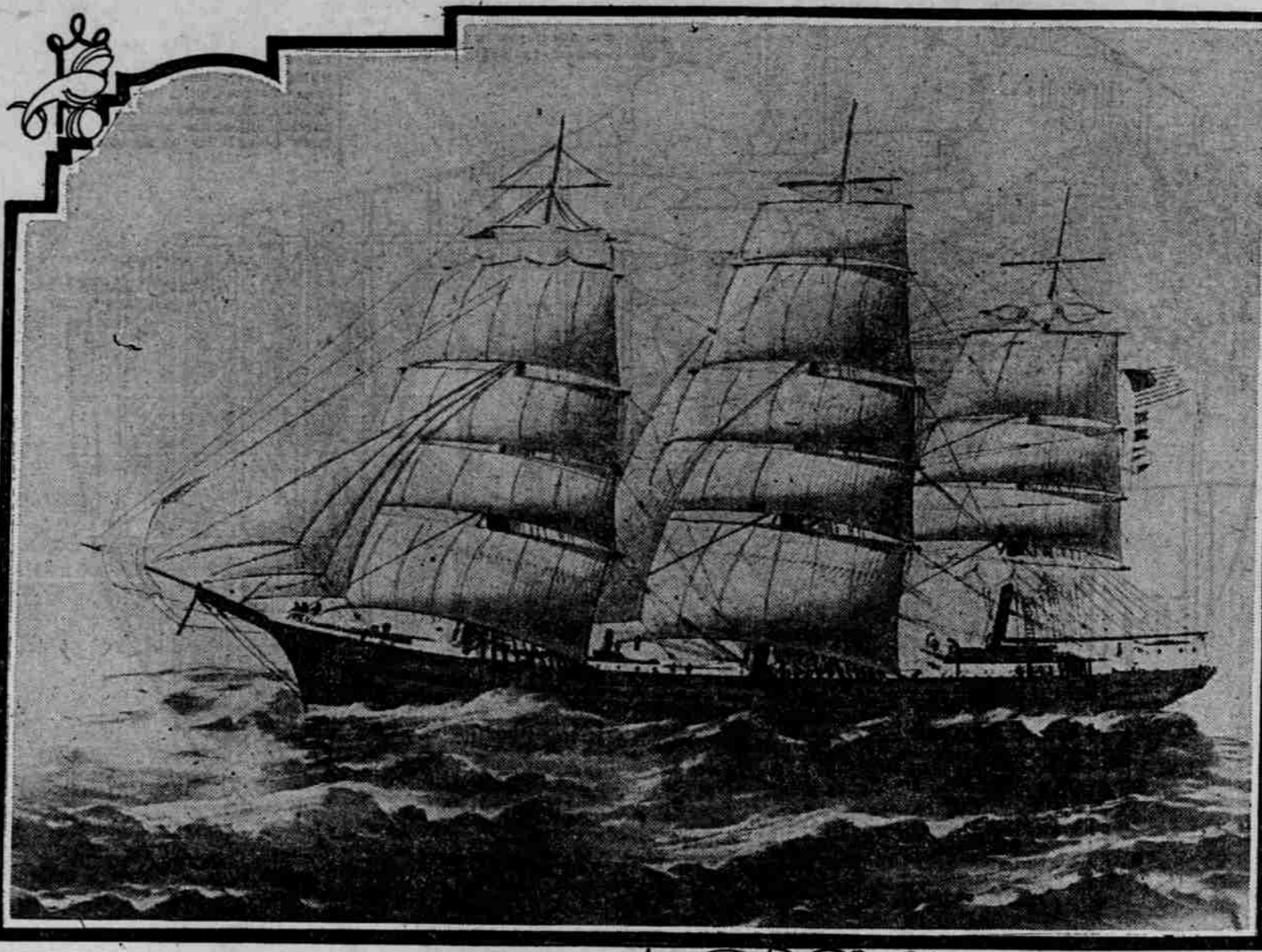
Shanghaiing sailors came into great use at times, especially when some particularly hard master came into port and many were the ruses adopted to get full crews. Crimps made big money dealing in humans and many were the stories of brutality that floated in with the ships. Tales of spoiled food, so many that it crawled, of scurvy and other disease that attacked the crews as a consequence, were usual. This gave rise to the lime-juice remedy to prevent scurvy in the British marine, but all the bad practices were not of food alone. There were masters who would stop at nothing that promised them a profit. It must not be taken that all shipping was bad, but there were enough savage mates and masters abroad to make it anything but a nice life, and then on the other hand the officers had to keep a stiff upper hand over their crews who were often ready to adopt any measure to capture the ship.

Crimps Took Advance Money.

One custom generally in use was the wage advance. Sailors were supposed to be given a portion of their salary at the time they signed the ship's articles, so that they might equip themselves for the voyage. In most cases this went to the sailor boarding-house man who had the seaman in his power and loaned money that was wasted ashore. The result was that many of the men came aboard with little warm clothing and were forced to purchase what they needed from the ship's store, which was in charge of the master and which contained rough clothing, tobacco and such necessities for sale at about four times their value. It was a neat little adjunct to the ordinary officer's ways at the time.

The story is told of the skipper who came ashore here to sign his crew and who was very suave with promises. He gave the maximum advance, spoke to the men, took them shopping with him, helped them in their selections, and urged that they get plenty of clothing and necessities so that they would have a comfortable trip. He was very solicitous and liberal and marshaled his crew at the water front, put them into one boat with their belongings on another, sent the boat with the men's things ahead to unload and then followed at leisure. The men saw the boat with their things at the side of the ship and the luggage hoisted aboard, but they did not see the boat at the other side that received their stuff as it was carried across the deck and reloaded for its trip back to the shops. It is little wonder that men resented this system and when forced to sail after having been ushered aboard under such circumstances took the first opportunity for revenge.

Some people seem to think that a harbor must be a vast expanse of navigable waters. This is not the case. The real need is for cargo. The port that can furnish the freight and that can handle the incoming stuff is the place that will get the business. All that is necessary is for a place large enough and safe enough for ships to get to warehouses and load and unload. European ports have been created out on the ocean by means of breakwaters, and here ships have ample room for all they need except to turn after leaving their docks. In the old days when sail was the motive power Portland had a number of noted docks along the river from near where Broadway bridge now is to Jefferson street and there was only one bridge then and



First American Iron Ship, Tullie E. Starbuck, Taking Pilot Aboard.

the docks and channel development have kept pace with the growth of the harbor. Late reports are to the effect that the Columbia river handled twice the tonnage the first quarter of 1921 that it did in 1920 and this seems about to increase.

First Wheat Cargo Shipped.

In the old days it was a rare thing to have more than 15 feet of water at the mouth of the river but now, with the elimination of the bar, 30 feet and more is the low stage. The real start for Portland as a grain-shipping port came in 1869 when the Helen Angier took out the first cargo of wheat. The same year the American bark Sallie Brown arrived direct from New York and took out a full load of wheat and flour. The first iron ship to enter the Columbia was the Montgomery Castle which arrived in 1870 and took cargo for Liverpool. The bark Sparkling Dew was the smallest ship to ply from this port in those days and left here in 1872 with 450 tons of grain. The grain fleet, as the men of sail knew them, began to go out in the 90s, the first steam cargo being that taken by the Florida in 1896. After the start of the steam merchantmen the sailing vessels continued their visits for a number of years until their ornate carved figureheads began to lose out in the race with machinery.

Possibly the most noted of the old ships that came to Portland was the Tullie E. Starbuck, the first American-built iron ship. She was constructed especially for the North Pacific trade and arrived in Portland on her maiden voyage in 1884 with a million-dollar cargo. The Tullie E. Starbuck was built for the Northern Pacific interests and carried 300 tons of freight. Captain William Rogers was her master and she loaded in Philadelphia. The first day out she was dismantled and put back into New York for repairs. Again venturing out she was dismantled for the second time and made the Falkland islands under jury rig with a badly shifted cargo. The most important item aboard was the immense Kalama railway ferry Tacoma, though she also had 22 locomotives in her hold and an immense quantity of rails.

Starbuck Completes Maiden Voyage.

In the storms it was a wonder that she was not battered to pieces by the loose heavy freight, and had she been a wooden vessel it is doubtful if she ever would have survived. Her holds presented a sorry spectacle when opened here, a mass of tangled locomotives, rails and iron that seemed bent out of shape and a total loss of the heavy materials were unloaded and a crew of men put to work straightening them out, and outside of some 25 beams of the Tacoma being cracked, everything was found fit for use. The Tacoma is yet in service on Puget sound and after discharging her large consignment here the Tullie E. Starbuck loaded a full cargo of grain and made the run to Liverpool in 104 days. George Taylor yet has the 24-foot ensign sported by another ship of the same line, the William H. Starbuck.

On her arrival here the Tullie E. Starbuck attracted a great deal of attention, for she was felt to belong to the port. Her fittings were magnificent and the cabins were splendid examples of the cabinet makers' art. She was like a parlor from stem to stern. In 1885 Captain Eben Curtis took command and made six voyages to the Pacific coast. In her, one to India and one to Japan. Captain Curtis brought his family with him to the Pacific coast and they are now living in Oakland. His son, Leif, is following the sea and has made an enviable record in salvage operations. Captain Curtis was killed about eight years ago when directing a crew of men who were trying to save a ship that had come to grief in an Oregon port.

Matt Troy, superintendent of Brown & McCabe, is likely as in Portland for men who served before the mast.

Troy yearned to be a sailor and learned the trade in Liverpool harbor, where he spent the greater part of his childhood on the ships that called there. When but a lad he was frequently left in charge of vessels while the crews went ashore and when 16 years of age shipped for his first voyage, to Quebec. On this trip he proved his worth and was soon rated as an able-bodied seaman.

One of Troy's memorable voyages was to India aboard a British merchantman. For six weeks their ship was becalmed within 15 miles of the Andamann islands, a place as painted ship on a painted ocean. Though they had little water and needed exercise and food the crew did not dare go ashore as the natives were cannibals and had killed the British victor but a short time before. The men of the crew were allowed but a pint of water a day and, needless to say, they did little washing. "We put the water in bottles and sipped it through a slit in the cork," Matt related, "and lay about in the shade as much as possible so as not to get thirsty. We nearly dried up, I can tell you, and when the wind came made all sail for the Bay of Bengal and the Bassen river. Our water was completely gone when we reached the mouth of the river, about 7 o'clock one night. It was 40 miles upstream to the first fresh water. We got out the boats and started to row, expecting to make the fresh water by midnight, and it was a hard struggle to keep from leaning over the side and drinking the brackish fluid that was so plentiful. After about four hours' hard work, sweating when we hardly had any sweat, an American ship passed and gave us a cask of fresh water. The pilot had to stand over us with a club to prevent our drinking too much and getting cramps. I guess it was such experiences that drove so many sailors to take up life ashore."

Most of Troy's Pacific experiences were aboard the Dashing Wave, a yacht-like vessel constructed in civil war days for fast sailing. It was time the Union merchantmen had to be fast if they wanted to keep away from the Confederate privateers, and the Dashing Wave had the proud boast of having outtailed the famous Alabama, showing a clean pair of heels and getting away with a neat round-shot in her stern. The balls fired by the Confederate raider were extracted from the Dashing Wave some 20 years back as she lay in drydock at San Francisco. The Dashing Wave carried a windmill near one of her rear masts and this queer addition to her rig, that proved of practical use, attracted a great deal of attention. She was a yacht-like ship and made exceedingly fast time beating the steamer Forest Queen from San Francisco to Puget sound in 1879. The Dashing Wave is just Matt Troy's age today and is yet afloat, serving as a barge in the Alaskan trade. One year she made 12 round trips from Puget sound to San Francisco and once loaded 800,000 feet of lumber at Puget sound, carried it to San Francisco and unloaded in but 19 days.

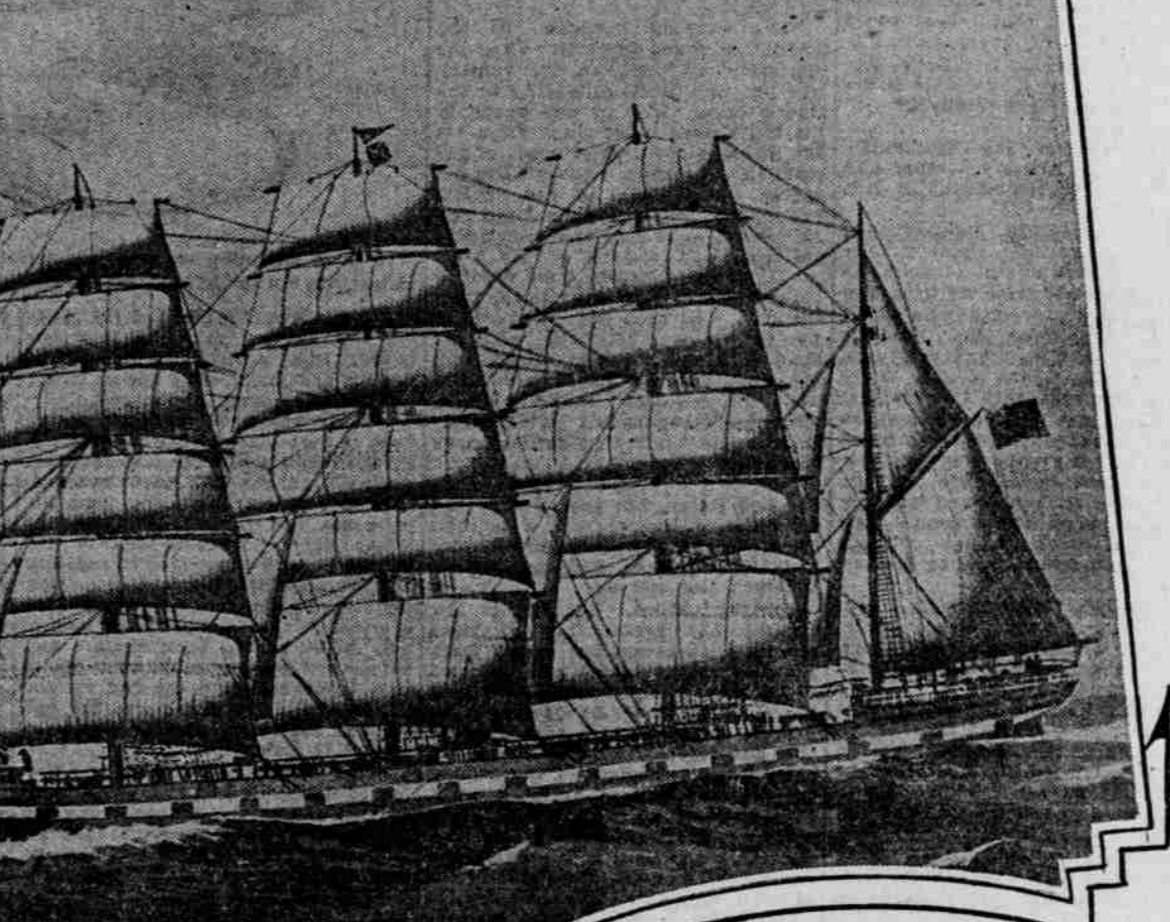
But let's list some of the disasters that took place with the Portland fleet, review the tales of men who went down to a sailor's grave. The year 1881 was a bad one for the Columbia river fleet and more vessels were lost than in any other year. At this time a government crew, Matt Troy among them, were placing the lighthouse on Tillamook rock, about the most western point on the American continent. The gang lived on the rock in tents and about 8 P. M., January 3, Captain Wheeler, who had charge of the work, was astonished to hear voices close by. There was a strong southwest gale blowing and the water was thick, but the men, rushing to the margin of the rock, sighted the red light of a ship close ashore and heard a terror-stricken voice give the command, "Hard astern." Captain Wheeler immediately ordered lanterns placed on the uncompleted tower and a bonfire was lighted. In the glare the crew on the rock could plainly see a vessel

trying to escape less than 600 feet away. Her yards were aback and she seemed to be working out of the narrow trap and soon afterward the light disappeared and as no further cries were heard the watchers were hopeful that she had succeeded in working out of her perilous position.

Ship's Dog Only Saved.

When morning dawned a shattered topmast and other portions of rigging were discovered above the surface of the waters close inshore. Investigation proved that the wreck was that of the British bark Lupatua from Higo for the Columbia river in ballast. Not a soul was left alive to tell the tale. The next day was a beautiful calm day and a boat launched from the rock and plied about the scene of the disaster but failed to discover any of the bodies. A man named Grimes, who carried the mail between Tillamook and Astoria, made the first gruesome find when, peering down from the high cliffs, he saw 12 bodies floating in the backwash in a tiny cove. Men lowered by ropes from the high rocks went into the cove and there found a half-grown shepherd dog, the ship's mascot, whining about his dead companions. The dozen members of the crew were buried under stones and their bones are likely there yet. The Lupatua was in command of B. H. Raven her mate, her master, Irvine, having died on the passage out from Antwerp. There were 18 men in the crew.

Vessels that have reached the port of missing men keep the thread of tragedy ever present in any composite sea tale. Even with the many new developments that tend to make the sea safe there are disasters. But a week ago we read of the sinking of the passenger liner Governor in Puget sound by the Portland-bull freighter West Hartland with the loss of nine lives. On April 1 Lloyd's listed the schooner Harvester as missing. She was commanded by Captain A. Olson and her crew were shipped at Eureka, Cal., last summer. The Harvester, the latest recruit to the ranks of missing ships, left Vavua, Tonga islands, for San Francisco November 4, 1920, with a cargo of copra. Had



British Bark Torrissdale, Driven On Westport Jetty During Gale.

the Portland vegetable oil plant not recently been destroyed by fire this port likely would have been her destination. Her crew may be marooned on some tropic island and may reach civilization in the course of time.

Roll of Missing Ships Cited.

The Retriever was lost not long ago in the south Pacific. The British bark Torrissdale whose picture under full sail is shown with this article, came to grief December 27, 1911 on the sands at Westport jetty. She was bound for Portland. It is impossible to call a complete roll of the missing ships out of this port, but just a few of them may be noted so that the dangers of the deep may not be lost to the reader. The topsail schooner Americana sailed from Portland and never returned from the south seas. In the cemetery at Ilwaco are the bodies of Captain Cuthell and several of the members of the crew of the British ship Strathblane that was wrecked on the sands at North Beach November 3, 1891. The vessel was 20 days out from Honolulu for the Columbia river and approached the mouth of the river in a dense fog followed by a heavy gale. No observations could be taken for several days and the ship's chronometer was defective. Soon after striking the sea began breaking over the decks and the hull was battered to pieces. The crew remained to the last and then started through the surf for shore. Captain Cuthell was the last to leave and entrusted a message to his wife in England to one of his mates who reached shore safely. "I suppose this will be put down as another case of reckless navigation," spoke the mariner who rests in his Washington grave, "but tell my wife that God knows I did the best I could." James Murray, the mate on the Strathblane who received this message and reached shore safely, is now captain of the tanker Katrina Luckenbach and was a caller in the Columbia river this week.

Interested tourists of late years have spent many hours roving over the rusty skeleton of the iron ship Peter Iredale, that drove on Clatsop beach near Gearhart during a stiff gale. Salvage operations have attracted a great deal of attention along



Micky Okouzke, Engineer of Columbia River Lightship, Proved Hero of Fiction.

the coast, and while some have been successful the majority have not been money-makers. Captain J. H. Roberts snaked the Poltaloch across the Shoalwater bay spit at Willapa harbor on the skids and stood to make a tidy sum, but he reported that even with the great ingenuity displayed he lost money. Late in 1883 the bark C. D. Bryant struck on the bar coming in with a full cargo of Chinese merchandise. She was a small vessel and as there were no drydocks at that time was "hove down" on the east side near the Burnside bridge and her hull repaired as she lay on her side in the harbor mud. In addition to striking on the sand spit she tripped over her anchor in the lower harbor and her cargo was found badly damaged.

Another ship repaired in the same manner was the Chesborough, which dragged her anchor one Christmas eve and piled up on Clatsop spit. She was fully loaded at the time and was brought to Portland and put on the river bank near the Albina ferry, where she was stripped of masts, a new section of keel put in place and her hull caulked.

Record Voyages Result of Rivrity.

The spirit of rivalry among captains and crews was a noticeable factor in the old days and many stirring races were the result. The cross-Atlantic record for sail from the Columbia river fleet is held, so far as known, by the Calthloch, dispatched in 1879 by Henry Hewitt. Her actual time from land to land, Columbia river to Liverpool, was 89 days. Another comparatively modern fast passage was that made by the Machrialand of 93 days from land to land. George Taylor has the log telling the story of this last-named passage as a souvenir and it shows that this was the master's honeymoon, as he brought his bride with him. The element of tragedy is again injected into this voyage by the news that the skipper's wife died at sea on the homeward passage.

About 25 years ago Captain Brander sailed the Selkirshire across the Pacific from Yokohama to the Columbia river in 25 days, a 3000 mile trip and a record that is likely to stand for some time. In contrast to this fast voyage is that of the Alahabad from Hongkong. This ship also consigned to Taylor, Young & Co., was given up as lost after not reporting for over 100 days. One day a message came to the Portland office that a ship under charter to them was in Astoria and as they could not figure out what boat it was they wired for information. The answer was a surprise, for they had given the Alahabad up. The master later told of gale after gale and how, when 50 days out, they were blown back to within 100 miles of Hongkong. Later this captain was drowned in the harbor when he fell between the side of his ship and the dock.

Ed Wright Buys New Hat.

But let Ed Wright tell of the time he "covered" the water front in Astoria and published the story of the Reaper and predicted a slow passage for Captain Taylor to Rio de Janeiro. The captain called on Ed Wright who had said that "with good luck the Reaper should reach its destination in six months," and offered to bet a new hat that he would berth in the South American city within 90 days, "even with a motley crew." Wright lost for Taylor came back with seven affidavits that he reached his destination in 59 days from the Columbia river. Remember in all this that voyages then were around the Horn, there was no Panama canal. Then there is the Muskoka, a fast clipper ship with towering masts and great spread of sail and a yacht's hull. She never made a slow time when under Captain Crowe, but when he sold her she never made any fast time, proving that a great deal depended upon the master. Captain "Muskoka" Crowe, called so to distinguish him from the Yankee master of the Semantha, who was known to like Oregon and when he sold that he did not need sailors, he made them. One time the tale is told of how a boarding house keeper signed on a crew of "stiffs" and how Crowe went home to England with them in 102 days, as well as the best masters with good men could have done. Captain Crowe was another who learned to like Oregon and when he sold the Muskoka he went into the ship lining business in the firm of Anderson & Crowe. He lost his life on Nehalem bay when he and 15 of his crew were drowned while trying to salvage the German ship Mimi. The hull turned turtle and they were drowned in the hold.

Yacht races there are nowadays that attract a great deal of attention on account of the true sportsmanship displayed. The spirit of rivalry is accentuated by the fact that there are no gate receipts, that the sportsmen spend hundreds of thousands merely for the honor of winning. What of races across two seas such as the Cockerboth and the Devenby put on? They left Liverpool side by side and reached the Columbia river, half way across the world, on the same day, a dead heat. The Dovenby called at Portland 11 times in all and the time the Lupatua was lost on Tillamook rock she was lying outside the bar, close-reefed and was feared that she had failed to ride out the gale and had piled on the rocks. And the Kenilworth that crossed the Atlantic in 13 days. And the Western Shore, a staunch craft built at Coos Bay that sailed from San Francisco to Astoria in 60 hours, beating all the steamers on the run. Then we get the contrasts such as that of the brig Tanner that took 60 days to reach the Golden Gate from Puget Sound.

This yarn could be spun out for innumerable pages, for there were so many famed craft in the days of sail that it is impossible to do them all justice. No matter how much care is exercised in a chronicle of those brave days some are overlooked and there is material for volumes of fact yarns that would rival the best red-blooded fiction.