

[Tiverton Fisherman]

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[The Tiverton Fisherman?] (R.I.) 1. [11 11/?] [?]

The warm August sun sent little heat waves dancing along the old dock while the water lapped lazily against the wooden piles creating an atmosphere of mid-summer serenity. High over head the gulls screamed and called.

Fishing boats were coming in one by one, sliding gracefully to their moorings, deftly handled by practiced hands. Soon the whole place was in action as the morning's catch was landed. Glistening like silver dollars, the butter fish and squiteague were quickly bailed out of the wells into the waiting barrels. After being iced and covered they were rolled onto the truck, which was to take the load direct to the New York market at Fulton St. That

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business over, the fishermen turned to cleaning their boats, greasing the motors and the hundred and one things that must be done to make ready for the next day's run. This detail was left to the crew whilst the captains talked of luck and prices.

Captain Nat, seeing his last barrel tagged and checked, lighted a cigar and settled down on a pile of rope to have a "draw and a spit." Turning to a young lady who had been watching the morning's work with great [interest?], he called, "Good morning, Effy. Do you still want to know why I'm a fisherman and not a farmer, or a lawyer, or a doctor like your dad? Now that my busy time is over, sit down, child, and your old Uncle Nat will talk to you.

"Fishing seems to be in the blood around these parts and I was born a fisherman just as were my father and grand-father before me. For generations we've sailed out of Tiverton, fair weather and foul. Hail, rain, snow or blow we'd be out in it, beating down the wind or up with the tide [.?] [a hardy race of men, with great bodies and healthy appetites, but like their own winds and tides, at times cold and hard.?] [They are?] We're slow 2 to take up with anything new but appreciate improvements when finally adopted. You take my old boat the ' Mizpalj Mizapah ' — she was as likely a craft as ever caught a breeze. Noank built she was and able. She'd beat any of the fleet to the traps and back. That meant getting the best prices for your catch as it does today. She went by sail alone and when power came in Dad put in a Lathrop but kept the mast in her just in case. But the mast was in the way when it came to the bridges. For you see in In those days the Stone Bridge and Railroad Bridge both went off worked by hand, which, if the tide was wrong , meant an hours hour's delay between the two of them. So one day when Dad was in Fall River, we boys sawed off the mast. On his return father simply Dad shook his head when he saw his sloop thus dismantled, and said that we'd managed to ruin his boat. Later he had to agree that it was an improvement and that he liked it.

"But there wasn't much said any further about it cause we Yankees don't talk much unless we see the pint point in so doing. Maybe that's why folks call us queer, and sot, even cold-

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hearted. Now when it comes to talking with strangers, we can't see why we should answer all their fool questions. They'd be just as wise after we'd lallygagged to 'em all day as they were before. Most strangers seem to be awful shaller, and if there is any one thing a fisherman hates it's shoal water.

[“Tell me, sis—have you ever been out where the water is deep,—tall and green we call it—had your boat rollin' scuppers under? Now that's what you mought call living, with the old ground swell rollin' you 'round and the foiard for'ard end of your boat looking you in the face every time she starts to climb. Never seen much of it, hey? Well suppose you've had lots of book l'arnin, tho , being's how your Dad's such a big doctor. Shucks I can remember your grandsir plain as day, a boat builder he wor and?] 3 [no better man ever swung an adze. Allus loved 'lowed his son'd be a doctor and so he is.?] Now take me I had a bit of schooling in my time [.?] too. Was mighty good at figgers and took my Latin and navigation easy enough. Got what I could right in that old academy yonder. Had lots o' teachers, men and women too, but for downright larnin Miss Peace could help a fellar no end. A lady, too! Oh, yes! Twas her uncle as discovered the Columbia River — a real Yankee fisherman, by thunder. Tell ye, gal, some great men's come from this old port. “To be sure it It does look like a drowsy [sleepy?] old place now but change comes to a place changes than it does to the people as was born in it. Take my mothers folks now — old whaling aristocracy. Regular old sea dogs they was. Sailing in those days — maybe round the Horn to China, beating up and down the Pacific searching for whales, they'd be gone sometimes two and three years at a stretch. One time they'd be on the African coast, then beat away down around Cape o' Good Hope and over to Indo-China then up the China Coast toward Bering Strait and back down the Pacific. [They'd see such sights as you wouldn't believe, but we can prove they were true, gal, true as preachin'.?] [Now sometime you get your Cousin Lucy to show you the old whalin' letters and they'll give you some idee of why we Yankees are so proud of our sea history. Take your cousin Hatty — she's prouder of her father's sextant and sea chest then she is of that new hundred thousand dollar house o' hers over there on the neck. Purty house too as I ever see, but she told me settin' right where you

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be this minute she hadn't drawn a happy breath in thirty years. You see they went out West and struck oil, got rich as all get ont, but whalin' blood can't rest happy on a western prarie, so Hatty's back home now where she can breathe the clean sweet smell of the old Atlantic.?) See [Note?] 4 The Eel Catch xxx

["What's that you say? You'd like to go out in the sloop with me some day, to pull trap? Well now, sho?] as As soon as the tide is right today we're setting seine for eels, but we only use a skiff instead of a power boat because the set is to be made just up the beach a ways but [but you're welcome to come if you care to. All right. I'll take a look to see how things are progressing. No,?] it wont take long to make a set — about an hour — according to the catch.

"The boys are putting the seine on the rack now [.?] and you step into the skiff and go well for'ard. If you don't you'll get caught in the running lines or the dipsies, and maybe get hurt. The seine does look like a pile of hay, but its on that rack systematical enough [.?] as you'll find when they start to let it run. "Let's take a look at the tide. If [she's?] the tide's about ready to drop then it's time to set, as the eels will come out with the falling tide. So hop aboard and we'll get going. We leave John is on the beach holding one running line, Sam rows the skiff and I'll [say?] the line out (about three hundred and twenty feet), then Harry starts throwing the seine over, or just letting it run. As Sam rows slowly the boat , the lead line sinks and the cork line floats. She's like a big tennis net with a long bag in the middle and as Sam rows the boat he makes a half circle of the net and she looks like a little coral stoll we've seen in Bermuda. Yes, the The seine is seven hundred and [fifty feet from tip to tip?] so you see she's no play toy." "Here we are back Back at the beach [?] give the other line to Jim. Now with both lines on the beach we pull on these and haul the seine in. She picks up everything on the bottom as we drag her ashore. We'll gradually close the net and keep hauling until she's on the beach. Here she [comes?], the The arms come first; then, when the twine is finer, that's the bunt and in the 5 middle is the bag of still finer

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twine. When the boys bring the ends of the net together the fish will run back into the bag. [?] sure, sis [md] you can help pull on the rope too if you wish. All out now.

“Look up the beach there! Just as I thought. Every woman and child and dog in the colony is down to help, too. The women folks tell me that it's great sport for them to haul on the lines. The kids get in the way mostly, and the dogs bark at the crabs we throw onto the beach. Altogether it's nearly as much fun as a three-ring circus.

“Keep a hauling, boys! Keep the lead lines down, and the corks floating. If we haul too fast we pull her under and the eels will go over the top. Keep your fingers out of the twine or you'll tear it. Haul on the ropes — that will pull her in. Here comes the bag, so cross the lead lines over the mouth and we'll have her ashore in a jiffy. Yes ma'am she's loaded! Got to be something in her after you've dragged her in over more than five hundred feet of the river bottom. Plenty of culch! That's where the eels are, tho, under the cabbage and kelp. Throw out the sea weed, then we can see the eels. There they are! Roll the twine and see their golden bellies. We've a mess this time. Bail em out boys into the eel car. A nice catch.

[“Yes, sonny you can have the crabs. Grab them like this. That's it. Now you've got the idea. You'll be a fisherman yet. What's that? Your father says that you're to be a broker like him — well that's not so bad. Ah! but you'd rather be a fisherman. I see, Sho — tell you what now — I'll sell you my boat whenever you're ready to take over. “Yes ma'am; that That long silver fish is a squiteague. Wouldn't you like it for your dinner? Have it and welcome.?”] [Stop?] skip to page 9. 6 Delete [whole?] page

“Yes, indeedy there's one for you too, Mrs. White, Oh! that one. That's a tautaug and fine for baking ma'am. Here she is.

“No, all we want is the eels ma'am. You folks help yourselves to the mixed stuff.

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“Good morning Professor! Looking for specimens? Well there may / be some more of those queer ones like we hauled in yesterday — ho now , here is a bill fish and a silver dollar. Look at this little beauty — size of a wafer all striped in blue, black and silver with long pale blue chiffon streamers. What is she, professor? A rare southern fish! Well I swan — they do come up here in the summer. I've caught them before. Save them for you? Sure — All I see. Help yourself to anything you can use.

“Ready, boys. Guess you've got all the fish and eels out of her by now. Is the car covered so they can't get out? All right. Haul in the running lines, shake the culch out of the seine, load her onto the rack ready for another set. “ —— xxx ——

“So, miss, you think it takes a long time to haul that line into the skiff. 'Tis a bit of line, three hundred and twenty feet on each arm, so you see what with the seven hundred and fifty foot seine, this shore seine is quite a piece of gear. Oh! yes indeedy. It costs a pretty penny to go fishing and do it right. Each season has its own expense.

“What's that? How many pounds was there in that haul? Well, about two hundred and fifty, I should say. And they'll have time for two more sets before the tide falls off.

“Yes, these eels will all be shipped to New York. That's the best live eel market.

“Now I must go back to the dock and talk to Leander about a 7 Delete mug up. Do you want to come aboard the schooner and find out what a good cook Lee is? Alright, come along. Guess we'll find something in the galley worth stopping for. Here we are, gal, drop aboard.

“Smells good you say. Has to be good. A fisherman eats only the best and plenty of it. So pitch right in and make yourself to home. There's a big pot of tea, plenty of cold meats,

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quantities of doughnuts, stuffed cookies, layer cake, pies — three kinds — all good stuff so sit right down and have a mug up.”