

WORSE THAN GRIM WAR.

THE BATTLE SHIPS OF ENGLAND
THAT WENT DOWN

To the Sea Bottom in Time of Peace—Thousands of Brave Sailors Who Perished While on Duty—Thrilling Stories of the Disasters.

In surveying the annals of the British Navy during the present century, one is startled at the frequency with which our finest and strongest ships have been lost, often with all hands, and almost invariably through no fault of those in command, says an English paper. It is satisfactory to know, however, that the last hundred years have seen no disaster so appalling as the wreck of the Victory, which happened off Alderney Island in 1744, when over 1,000 men went down. And only once during the same period has there been a catastrophe equal to the foundering of the Royal George on the 29th August, 1782, when 600 men, including Admiral Kempenfeldt, perished.

In the early years of the century great wrecks followed each other so quickly that it is impossible here to do much more than catalogue them. In 1801 the Invincible went down with 454 men, and, in 1806, 491 men were swallowed up with the York. In the following year the Blenheim, under Admiral Sir T. Troubridge, met her fate in the East Indies, and 400 sailors were drowned together. Three years later the Minotaur, with a crew of 360 men, came to utter grief off the Haak Bank.

But all these disasters were dwarfed by the treble loss which we sustained on the day before Christmas, 1811, a day which stands out as being the blackest, probably, in our naval history. The Hero, conveying 120 sail in the German Ocean, was compelled, under stress of weather, to part company with the fleet under her charge. Towards night heavy squalls set in, and she grounded on a sandbank near Texel. At dawn she was dismantled and on her beam ends the crew, numbering 590, being huddled on the poop and fore-castle. Her plight was observed by other vessels, but it was quite impossible to render assistance, and every man on board perished.

While this tragedy was enacting, the St. George, in charge of another convoy, sustained serious damage in the Baltic Sea. Eventually, in company with the "Defence," she left the Baltic, only to be caught in another storm. On the 24th Feb., both vessels stranded on the west coast of Jutland.

The "Defence" went entirely to pieces in thirty minutes, only six men escaping out of 593. The St. George withstood the waves a little longer. Most of her crew, however, perished on board. The cries of the survivors could be heard till far into the night, and by Christmas morning all, except eleven who had managed to get ashore on spars, were dead. The "St. George" carried 742 men. Thus nearly 2,000 souls and three fine ships went to the bottom within the space of a few hours.

After this our warships enjoyed comparative immunity from serious accident till the year 1852, when the famous wreck of the Birkenhead happened. The details of that disaster are familiar to everyone.

Turning to recent times, it may be stated that for the last quarter of a century a distressing calamity has occurred pretty regularly about every three years. In 1863 the Orpheus, a corvette, belonging to the Australian Squadron, was lost in attempting to enter the dangerous harbor of Manukau, on the west coast of New Zealand. At 11 a. m. on February 5th she received a signal from shore that the bar might be crossed safely, but in trying the passage she unfortunately struck and broached to. The weather was beautiful, but her boats, exposed to the full roll of the Pacific, were immediately swamped. Many men jumped overboard and were carried away by the currents which abound in these parts. A tiny steamer went out to the rescue, towing some lifeboats, and a few of the crew reached these safely. Towards night the waves increased in strength. The lifeboats were helpless, and could only watch the gradual destruction of the vessel. At dawn all that was left of her was the stump of a mast and a few bare ribs; 190 men perished.

In the following year two serious wrecks occurred. The Racehorse, cruising in the China Seas, struck near Chefoo in comparatively smooth water. A gale sprang up suddenly, swamping the boats. The ship's masts were then cut away and an unsuccessful attempt made to run her on shore. As night approached the storm increased and the crew were sent aft, and told that if they could hold out till morning there would be a chance of life. The discipline was, as usual, perfect, but the great majority of men were washed away in the darkness. The survivors at sunrise took the last remaining boat and after drifting for a day and a half were picked up by a native junk. Ninety-nine men perished.

Only a month later the Bombay was lost by fire at Flores Island, thirteen miles from Monte Video. The outbreak was discovered at 3.15 p. m., and the flames spread with such rapidity that the main-mast fell in forty minutes. The launching of the boats was not successful, and at 8.25 p. m. the magazine blew up and the ship sank. The victims numbered ninety-one.

Many people will remember the loss of the Captain, off Finisterre, in 1870. She was a six-gun turret ship, one of the finest of her time, and formed one of a squadron of eleven ships manœuvring off the Spanish coast. On the night of the 6th September a storm arose and the signal was given to take open order. Until 1.30 a. m. on the 7th the Captain's lights were distinctly seen from the flagship, and then they disappeared. When morning came only ten ships were afloat, and all that remained of the Captain was a few bits of wreckage. The handful of survivors stated that she had heeled over to starboard and "turned turtle" in a squall; 472 men went down with her.

The next great disaster was the foundering of the "Eurydice" off Vevnor with over 300 men, of whom only one lived to tell the tale. This, as every one knows, was in 1878. In January, 1880, the "Atalanta," a sister ship of the "Eurydice," left the Bermudas with 280 men on board. She was never heard of again, and it is supposed that she perished in the terrible

storm which swept over hundreds of miles of the Atlantic in March of that year. The "Eurydice," curiously enough, was also lost in March.

In September, 1884, the "Wasp" was wrecked off Tory Island with fifty-two men, and just three years after another "Wasp" was lost in the China Seas with seventy-three men. Lastly we have to note the loss of the "Serpent" in November, 1890, with a death-roll of 173.

SHOOTING AT BISLEY.

Conditions of the Competition for the Queen's Hundred.

Beyond the comparatively small number of Volunteers who shoot annually for the "Queen's Prize," and those whose ambition it is to do so some day, very few people have an idea what the "Queen's Hundred" is, or how keen the competition to get into the "Hundred," says an English paper.

In a word, the "Queen's Hundred" is the hundred men who make the highest scores in the "Queen's Prize," shot for at the annual meeting of the National Rifle Association, which is now held at Bisley.

The "Queen's Prize" is restricted to efficient Volunteers, and is practically open to all such. From India, China, Canada, and every part of the world where the British Volunteer is to be found, competitors come. There are 600 prizes given in cash, amounting to £2,400. The first prize, £250, is given by Her Majesty the Queen, and the rest of the money, with a gold, silver, and a bronze medal and 100 badges, by the National Rifle Association.

Each regiment may enter three men per company, or in the Yeomanry two per troop, and two more per regiment whom the commanding officer may nominate. The men who are to represent their regiment are selected by competition, which is open to all, and are entered by the commanding officer and adjutant; the entrance fee, 2s. each, is usually paid by the regiment.

The number of men who actually shoot for the "Queen's" at Bisley, is somewhat over 2,000. The competition is divided into three stages. The first stage takes three days to shoot off. On the first day, seven shots are fired at 200 yards; on the second day, seven at 500; and on the third day, seven at 600. The competitor who makes the highest score at the three ranges receives the bronze medal and badge. The first three hundred are entitled to shoot in the second stage. The next hundred receive £2 each, the next hundred £1 each and retire.

There are also one hundred prizes, of £1 each, given to the hundred "tyros"—that is, men who have never won a prize at the National Rifle Association's meetings—who make the best scores in the first stage.

The second stage is shot off in one day; ten shots are fired at 500 yards and fifteen at 600 yards. The 600 competitors who in the first and second stages make the highest aggregate scores are the "Queen's Hundred." They each receive a badge, and are entitled to shoot in the third stage; the man making the highest score receives the silver medal and badge.

The hundred competitors next below the "Queen's Hundred" receive £4 each, and the next hundred £3 each and retire.

We now come to the third and final stage, in which only the "Queen's Hundred" compete. This is shot off in one day, ten shots being fired at 800 yards and ten at 900 yards. The competitor who makes the highest aggregate score in the three stages wins the "Queen's Prize," £250, the gold medal and badge.

The other competitors in the final stage, receive prizes varying from £60 to £5. There is only one man who can claim the honor of having won the "Queen's Prize" twice. There are several who have been many times in the "Hundred," one having been in it as many as nine times.

The Value of Lettuce.

Various medical properties have been ascribed to lettuce, and it has especially been recommended as a good soporific, inducing pleasant sleep after eating at night. There has been some doubt in the medical world as to the value of lettuce for any medicinal purposes, and the medicinal preparations from the plant were finally dropped in England and the United States. But recent investigations and experiments show, says Dr. Atkinson, that the narcotic constituents of the plants are very noticeable and of value. It is established by the proper authorities now that there is present hyoscyamine, the principal alkaloid of belladonna and henbane, not only in the cabbage and cos varieties of the common lettuce, but also in the wild lettuce. The amount in young plants is not very great, but in the green extract the alkaloid occurs to the extent of over two per cent. The value of both the wild and cultivated lettuce for medicinal purposes has consequently increased in the minds of many. The soporific value is not, in the meantime, lessened by this discovery. The plants were used years ago by common people for inducing sleep, and science has simply proved that there were some truth in their belief by tracing the soporific properties to their source.

It Cost Him Dear.

The deer parks in England exceed 300, and the property market is not without a few of them. The largest in the kingdom is Windsor; Lord Egerton's park at Tatton is a good second, while amongst the remainder the most prominent are Eastwell, Grimthorpe, Thoresby and Blenheim. The decline of the deer park dates from the time of the great Rebellion. Unless ground is ploughed up or the deer killed, the parks are exempt from tithe payment. Lord Abington is at present paying tithe for a deer park that up to a short time ago was exempt from this tax. It appears that the grass was let to a farmer, but to save the tithe two deer were kept on the land. These accidentally partook of some poisonous herb one day and died. The broken link could never be repaired. Not a few of the parks at present existing were enclosed shortly after the Doomsday survey.

The Essence of Misery.

"This," passionately shouted the lecturer, as he held up before the audience a large black bottle—"this represents the very essence and concentration of misery."

"It certainly do," assented a tramp, who had drifted in to escape the rain; "it certainly do. The blessed thing is empty."

Mrs. Challoner, the widow and the sister of well known horse jockeys, is said to be the only woman who trains race horses.

THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE.

How a Wounded Officer Escaped the Indian Torture.

During General Custer's attacks on Black Kettle's camp, some of the prisoners, taking advantage of the thick brush broke through the line of the troops, and escaped to the prairie.

Major Elliott, calling some of his men to follow dashed off in pursuit of the fugitives. Not one of the nineteen cavalrymen was ever again seen alive by a white man.

Intent on his purpose, and not suspecting the vicinity of other camps, Major Elliott found his little party surrounded by an overwhelming horde of Indians.

Dismounting, loosing their horses and forming in circle, the little band of brave men prepared to sell their lives as dearly as possible. In less than twenty minutes every man but one was dead.

Wounded in several places, his ammunition expended, Sergeant-Major Kennedy stood alone, sabre in hand.

No shot was fired at him, no effort was made to kill him, but several of the Indians approaching him with hands thrust out, saying: "How? How?"

Too well he knew the meaning of this kindly demonstration. He was to be reserved for all the horrors of the torture.

He saw that his only hope of escaping torture was in so exasperating the Indians that they would kill him.

Seeming to surrender, he advanced toward the chief. They approached each other, hands extended. Quick as thought Kennedy's sword passed through the chief's body. One instant of terrified surprise on the part of the Indians; the next, twenty bullet-holes in Kennedy's body. The merciful death had come to him.

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