



ARRIVAL AT CHURCH.—A NORWEGIAN SCENE.

—By Hans Dahl.

have reached the fishing grounds, they let the sails drop; the hooks are baited, and the lines are flung overboard. Those who have had nets set over night haul them in and row home, returning later in the day; for in order to give the deep line fishers a chance, the law prohibits the encumbering of the sea with nets during the daytime.

There are now government signal stations along the coast, which give warning of the probable state of the weather. But for all that, scarcely a year passes without a multitude of accidents. As we all know, such official "probabilities" are extremely fallible, often weakening whatever confidence people might repose in them by prophesying storms which fail to make their appearance; and failing to prophesy those which make widows and orphans by the score. Only recently a calamity of this sort made havoc in many humble homes in the north of Norway. Day after day and night after night every knoll and

rock about the fishing villages would be crowded with anxious women, spying along the horizon for a glimpse of the well-known sail which they were never to see again. At the end of a week or two an arm or a leg with a sea-boot on would perhaps drift ashore and would be recognized by some mark by one of the many mourners. And then a funeral would be held over that ghastly remnant; and hymns would be sung and tears shed, and a lugubrious feast prepared in honour of the dead.

It is, in fact, regarded as a normal death to end one's life in the waves. I remember, as a boy of fourteen, visiting a relative of mine who was a clergyman in the north of Norway. Being greatly struck by the small number of graves in the cemetery, and those, as the headstones showed, nearly all of women and children, I asked my kinsman, jocosely, if the men were immortal in his parish.

"No," he answered gravely;