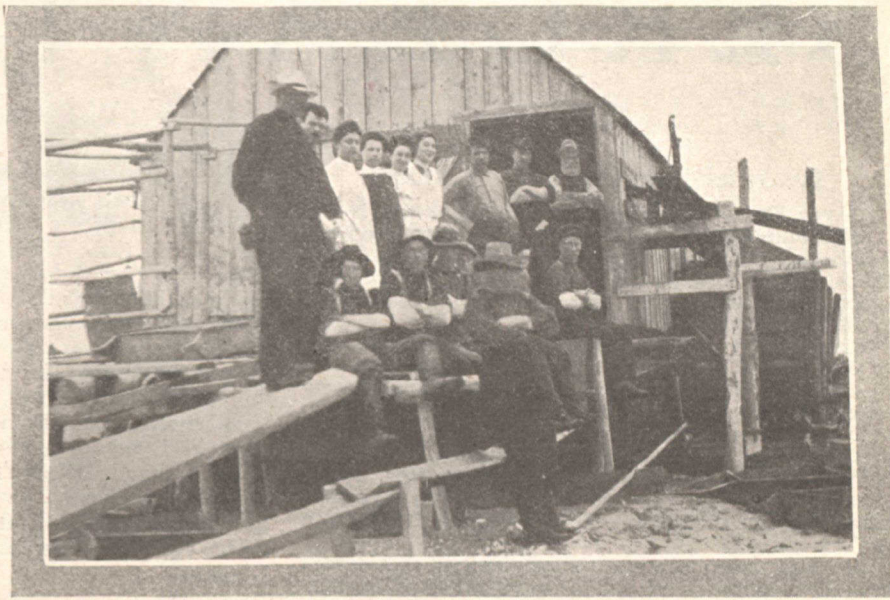




SOME OF THE NORTH SHORE FISHER-FOLK  
In from the dories and the trawls, and happy as a happy-go-lucky fisherman knows how to be.

Photos by Lauson, Charlottetown



A BRAWNY CREW OF SEA-FARERS  
Glad to be on shore among the family folk after the long drives over the foam.

## THE NORTH SHORE FISHERMEN

By A MARITIMER

WAY up on the north shore of Prince Edward Island, where the dreary night winds, laden with mystic murmurings out of the north, sigh along the sandy coast, and the thundering roll of the Atlantic, in the mighty magnificence of its November storms, washes the shore—here where the Storm King revels at night, and his swirling gusts sweep over the everchanging hills and hollows, with weird moan—a hungry moan out of the silent Arctic sea, low and fretful betimes and rustling strangely along the storm-swept beach—here dwell the hardy fishers of the great "North Bay," toilers of the deep—children of the sea—of the mists—of the "Unknown."

Night has fallen over the little fishing village of "Tracadie," over the harbour, and the oblivion of the ocean beyond. The catch for the day has been cleaned and salted, and the fishermen wearily strolling homeward across the sand, discuss the probabilities of the morrow's luck. It may be the last run of the season, for it is November weather and a dangerous coast—so I have asked Capt. "Dockie" for the privilege of this last trip with him. "Sure," says he, "come in for the night"—and—well, I have never needed a second invitation from "Dockie" to share his hospitality. Now "Dockie" is the best cook in the three counties, at least he pretends so—and his picked-up supper that night substantially corroborated the fact. Supper over, and a game of "Draw," we retired, for we must be up at an early hour to catch the tide.

The grey dawn of the next morning found us aboard the *Clifford Arnold*, a trim little schooner-rigged packet of the harbour, owned by one "Jim McKinnon," who had her fitted out with every necessity for heavy weather. It is blowing a stiff breeze from the west'ard, and sails are run up hastily as we cast off. "Haul in your mains'l—" "Dockie" gives his first order from the stern. With a creaking of blocks, the idly-flapping sail is drawn taut, and as the bellying canvas fills before the wind, and the other sails are sheeted home, we heel over, rushing on through the darkness, on and out over the swirling black waters of the "Harbour." "Keep her 'way 'bit 'Dockie' to I get the marks—, ther'—little mor' f'r the pint—ther'—ste'dy as y'r—" and sturdy big-hearted "Jim" with a knowing squint of his weather eye "for'ard," dives into the foc'sle to light his pipe.

The clouds of the early morning are now breaking, and suddenly out of a fiery mist in the east, pops the sun, his dazzling rays stretching slowly towards us, over the vast heaving ocean, and as the light travels rapidly westward, solitary sails loom up around us, rising and falling with the swell of the sea. On and out we run, until the land becomes almost dim in the distance, and we can scarcely see our marks. Then as "Jim's" keen eyes descry a certain church spire over a certain hill, he shouts, "low'r for's'l, an' b'lay jib t' wind'ard." Slowly our little ship rounds up to the wind, and then "Zip-Zip," lines are over, and the fishing is on.

It is yet early morning, and away in on shore, for the sun is again darkened above us, a golden streak of light rests along the water, stretching upwards to the rounded hill-tops of the sand-dunes, and there lost in the still dark shadows of the valleys. But no time for dreaming. Fish! Hake and

pollack, gamey fish every one of them; cod and haddock that make the line spin through your fingers with a burning. All day long the fishermen, standing erect, their bodies swaying with the rocking motion of the boat, see-saw back and forth, hauling and throwing their lines in this rhythmical movement. Hand over hand, their muscular arms bared to the weather, they tug at the fish, slatting them over the rail, with scarce a break in the monotonous grind of pulling. Out in a dory, two men are hauling the trawls, and the sight here, when fish are plenty, is one that cheers the heart of every fisherman. The line is taken over the bow of the dory, and far ahead into the green depths of the water, you can see the fish at intervals along the line, their silver bellies shimmering in the light. Up they come—immense big fellows, each one a silver dollar in himself, running all the way from twenty to one hundred pounds.

Rising and falling with the swell of the sea, the dory is pulled from one end of the line to the other, the hooks, freshly baited, as the fish are taken off, being thrown over again, and then, with a scupper load of fish, the men pull for the larger boats, and throw their catch aboard. Scarcely is there any respite from the muscle-grinding work, and with the wind and the wave to watch warily, the life of the fisherman is a lonely and perilous one. Oftentimes the catch is destroyed by that great pest of

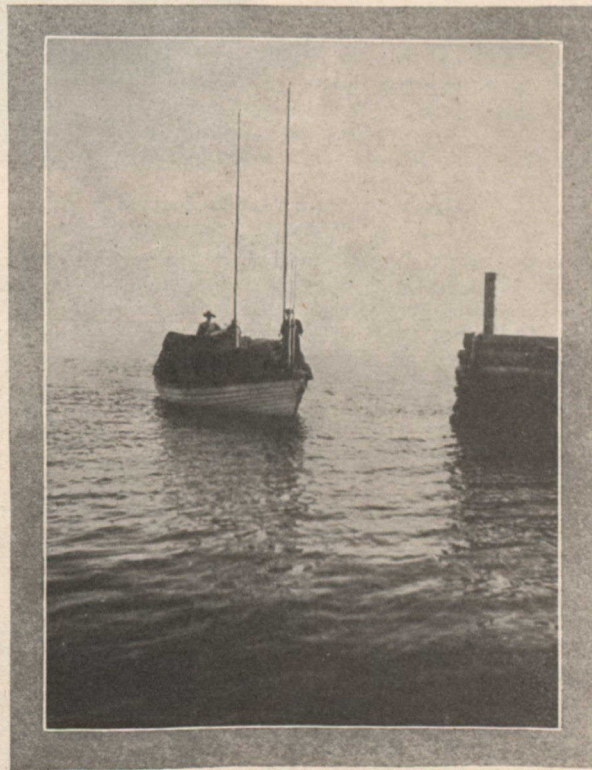
the cod-bank, the "dogfish," which, swarming around the bait in great numbers, drive off the other fish, and so hated are they by the fishermen, that the very word "dogfish" will make a "salt" grind his quid of tobacco between his teeth. We aboard are still hand-lining and doing well. Hake, cod and haddock comprise the general run of the catch, and with these, their respective berths are well-nigh filled, each large fish being bled with a dexterous slit of the knife, in order that they may be cured white and firm.

"D—m the dogfish," mutters Jim, as he slats a pair on the deck,—and not so easily slatted either, for their skins are like leather—"Nuthin' mor' doin' here, b'ys, too many of 'em." Then up sail, and down shore a little farther, and while we are waiting, hot tea is prepared in the tiny foc'sle, by "Ben-nie," and in a short time we are enjoying the contents of the steaming pannikins, enticed by a series of well-buttered pilot biscuit. How hungry we are, and how good tastes this meal of scraps, on the water. No one can beat a fisherman at making tea. It is part of his daily life, from the first pot at three in the morning until the last at night, when he comes home from the wilderness of the sea and its storms, tired and weary. Hot and strong, it tingles your insides with a mighty pleasing sensation, and I would not exchange for a "nip" of "House of Commons" at any time, though I am sure I do not exactly know "Dockie's" opinion on that matter.

It is now twelve noon, and a dead calm, with the cold glassy seas wriggling our shadows into a hundred fantastic shapes as they slobber past. This is the fisher's hour of rest, as the biting is always slack around noon; so stretching our cramped limbs a bit, we lie back to enjoy our smoke, with nothing to disturb the solitude about us but the idle slatting of the sails, and creaking of blocks, as we wallow in the swell.

Will wind ever come? "Sure," says Jim. "Look ther'—" and he pointed. A broad darkening ripple was gradually stretching towards us from the west, and we could see other boats in its way standing up to the breeze. "Ther'll be wind, and plenty of it 'fore night," said Jim. A light draught now struck us, shoving us further off towards the "shoal," the fisherman's *Mecca*, and home of the cod. Land is almost out of sight, and though it is getting late, and a dangerous coast, yet we still hang on the edge of the "shoal," where there is good fishing, a larger size, and fewer dogfish to bother us.

The wind has died again, making it precarious for us to remain longer, yet the lure of the fish is mighty to the toilers of the "deep," and often they have to weigh to a hair the chance of a safe run home. Yet Jim's forecast, that "afore night we may have it stiff enough," may soon be realised, for in the north a heavy cloud bank is rising, wild and dark, having hung there low and threatening all day. A strong steady breeze would now be acceptable, for no wind and a "lop" coming up, would place us in a dangerous position; so waiting and watching the dark cloud in the north, we can make no other shift, but fish and "whistle for wind." Thus from berth to berth, through the long, long day, from morn till night, never wearying, we follow the fish, and now



HEADING INTO PORT  
All canvas down, hold full of fish and a rippling tide reaching away black in the shadow.

CONCLUDED ON PAGE 21.