

When the Great Lakes are Tricky

By Aubrey Fullerton

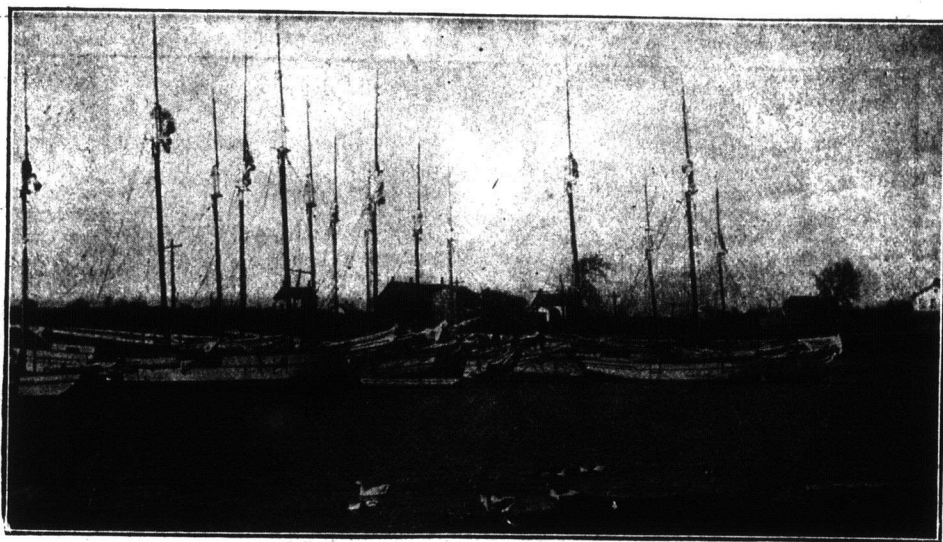
THE Great Lakes that so effectively separate the West from the East are great in every mentionable respect, which therefore means in adventure-making capacity as well as in size, and in danger as well as in beauty. It would be strange if those inland seas had everything else to offer and had not the possibility of thrills. As a matter of fact, their records are spread with adventures and escapades, freely mixed with commercial advantages and wonderful tourist attractions.

You may take any one of the Great Lakes as you like it: you may estimate its money value, or revel in its scenery, or delight yourself with its opportunities for fun. But also you must reckon with its chances for giving you the excitement of your life.

There have been more adventures on the five-linked chain of fresh water lakes than can now be counted up. Only the oceans themselves have surpassed them in thrills and perils, and the sum total of their past record, if it could be known, would be surprising indeed. It is said, for instance, that more wrecks of one kind and another lie at the bottom of the Great Lakes than in any other similar body of water in the world. This does not indicate, however, that the Great Lakes are essentially dangerous waters; the six million people who live in the cities, towns, and hamlets along their international borders know better, for they know them as familiar

Even at the height of summer the Great Lakes play tricks in the way of weather conditions. On an early July trip a couple of years ago one of the big passenger boats very nearly came to grief just because of a more than usually heavy fog. A short way out from Fort William the fog settled down in a dense pall that no eye could penetrate, and the engines were slackened to slow speed. The passengers were having a good time in the music hall and dining saloon, and a few miles of fog didn't seem to matter very much. But the men up on the bridge suddenly saw looming out of the mist, close ahead of them, the huge bow of an ore freighter. It was so near to them that the officers on the freighter could be seen quite distinctly, and a collision seemed inevitable. On each boat, however, the men on the bridge threw themselves upon the wheel with such desperate vigor that they cleared a channel between them. The two vessels slipped past, with barely eight feet to spare, and the merrymakers down below knew nothing of it. Not always are Superior's fogs so fortunately managed.

The wreck of the steamer Monarch in the latter part of 1906 was a good sample of what it means to be cast ashore on Lake Superior. During a blinding night storm, which made objects a hundred feet away quite undiscernible, the captain found that his compass had frozen up. At the same time he dis-



Fleet of sailing vessels ("hookers") in harbor at Port Credit, Ont., during a storm

and friendly highways. But it does indicate that at times even the best of waters will be tricky.

Last year saw some very good illustrations of this trickiness, with its usual proportion of mischief. It was an extraordinary season on the Lakes, opening badly and closing with record-breaking activity in inter-lake navigation. The bulk freight handled during the year was something more than 89,000,000 net tons, an increase of twenty-two per cent over the preceding year. Eleven vessels were lost, with 831 lives, including the Eastland disaster in Chicago. But the wonder was that there were not more mishaps, with such a spell of weather as struck the Lakes in November.

One of the severest gales that was ever known on these waters swept over the western lakes in the second week of the month, and for nearly two weeks it tied up the traffic more or less seriously. Lake Superior naturally got the worst of it. At fifty miles an hour the wind cleared everything before it, and toward the last heavy snow storms also set in. Vessels went to shelter all along the coast, and at some places, such as Whitefish Point, large fleets of all kinds and sizes of craft were driven into port. Whitefish Point, by the way, is known as the "Graveyard of the Lakes," for more boats have been lost there than at any other place on the entire chain. It so happened last year, however, that despite the bad weather and the fact that a good number of vessels ran aground, there were comparatively few total losses. Old Superior, in particular, showed his ugliest mood, but it was more bark than bite, after all.

covered that he had lost his bearings. He rang for half-speed, and did the best he could with his eyes and hands to keep a safe course. In a half-hour's time, however, the vessel struck a rock which no one had seen until that moment, immediately listed, and began to fill. Within another half-hour the stern of the vessel was completely submerged, and only the bow stood high on the rock, which was a piece of Isle Royale.

There were forty-one persons on the Monarch at the time she struck. One by one these were put ashore on a rope cable with just enough clothing to keep them from freezing. On that part of the island coast there were no buildings, and the best that could be done in the way of shelter was a brush wind-break, which the men at once put up, a little back from the shore. A fire was lighted, and the available clothing distributed as well as possible; but all that night and all the next day there was nothing to eat. On the second day the storm abated sufficiently to allow the sailors to get out to the wrecked vessel again, where they secured some flour, and out of this the castaways made hard-tack and baked it in the ashes. They had nothing else all the time they were on the rock.

It was only through the stern vigilance of the captain, who still exerted his authority as commanding officer, that some of the men did not perish. They were many times on the point of falling into the fire from sheer fatigue, or lying down in the snow, and the captain found it necessary to threaten them with personal violence in order to keep them awake and active. One woman was in

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