

## YACHTING!

*The following extract from Yachting, a book published in 1894, was found on a wet Sunday afternoon in the Royal Ulster Yacht Club and forwarded for publication by Commander K. Needham, R.N.*

*The Author seems to have digressed from 'Yachting' to a violent attack on 'monsters . . . . fitted with machinery'.*

It is a familiar sight to see H.R.H. the Prince of Wales taking part in yacht racing, but 1893 was the first occasion in an English yacht race at any rate, that the Kaiser donned his flannels and joined personally in the contest. I suppose there is no monarch who is so dosed with ceremony and etiquette as the Emperor of Germany. What a relief, therefore, it must be to him to put aside the cares of monarchy for a whole week, and sit for hours in two or three inches of water, hauling away at the mainsheet as if his life depended on it, happy as the traditional king, if, when he has gone about, he finds he has gained six feet on his rival!

But beyond all this—the heartiness, the equality, the good feeling, the absorbing interest that attends yacht racing and yacht cruising—there are some very interesting questions that suggest themselves in connection with the great increase of speed lately developed by the new type of racing yachts.

There is no doubt whatever that whereas the Pleasure Fleet of England is progressing and improving every year, and is a subject of congratulation to everyone concerned with it—designers, builders, and sailors—the Business Fleet, the Royal Navy, is the very reverse : not only has it not improved, but it appears to have been going steadily the wrong road ; and instead of being a joy to designers and sailors, it is confusion to the former, and something very like dismay to the latter.

In James I's time the fleet was not held in very high estimation. It was said of it that ' first it went to Gravesend, then to Land's End, and then to No End ', and really that appears to be its condition now. Whilst yachts are developing all the perfections of the sailing ship, our ironclads seem to be developing most of the imperfections of the steamship.

Whilst our yachts can do anything but speak, our ironclads can do anything but float. Of course this is an exaggeration ; but exaggeration is excusable at times, at least if we are to be guided by the debates in Parliament. At any rate, it is no exaggeration to say they are very disappointing. If they go slow, they won't steer. If they go fast, they won't stop. If they collide in quite a friendly way, they go down. One sinks in twelve minutes, and the other with difficulty keeps afloat. In half a gale of wind, if the crew remain on deck, they are nearly drowned : if they go below, they are nearly asphyxiated.

They have neither stability nor buoyancy. But this does not apply to English ironclads alone. French, German, Italian, American, are all the same. Some of these monsters are fitted with machinery as delicate and complicated as a watch that strikes the hours, and minutes, and seconds, tells the months, weeks, and days, the phases of the moon. &c. &c. Some of them have no fewer than thirty to thirty-five different engines on board. If the vessel containing all this wonderful and elaborate machinery never left the Thames or Portsmouth Harbour, all well and good, very likely the machinery would continue to work ; but to send such a complex arrangement across the Atlantic or the Bay in winter seems to me contrary to common sense.

The biggest ironclad afloat, a monster of 13,000 tons, in mid ocean is, after all, only as ' a flea on the mountain ' ; it is nothing ; it is tossed about, and rolled about, and struck by the seas and washed by them, just as if it were a pilot

boat of 60 tons. It is certain that the concussion of the sea will throw many of these delicate bits of machinery out of gear : in the *Resolution* in a moderate gale the engine that supplied air below decks broke down ; the blow that sank the unfortunate *Victoria* threw the steering apparatus out of gear, so that if she had not gone down she would not have steered ; more recently still the water in the hydraulic steering apparatus in a ship off Sheerness froze, so that she could not put to sea. If such accidents can happen in time of peace, when vessels are only manœuvring, or going from port to port, what would happen if two 13,000-ton ships rammed each other at full speed? Is it not almost certain that the whole thirty-five engines would stop work?

We have, I suppose, nearly reached the maximum of speed attainable by steam ; have we nearly reached the maximum attainable by sails? By no means. When Anacharsis the younger was asked which was the best ship, he said the ship that had arrived safe in port ; but even the ancients were not always infallible. The *Resolution* did not prove she was the best ship by coming into port ; on the contrary, she would have proved herself a much better ship if she had been able to continue her voyage. What we want in a man-of-war, as far as I understand the common-sense view of the question, is buoyancy, speed, handiness, and the power of keeping the seas for long periods.

Racing cutters of 150 to 170 tons are now built to sail at a speed that two years ago was not dreamt of. Where a short time since the best of them used to take minutes to go about, they now go about in as many seconds. The racing vessels of the present day will reach thirteen or fourteen knots an hour, and sail ten knots on a wind ; with hardly any wind at all they creep along eight knots. They do not appear to be able to go less than eight knots ; double their size, and their speed would be immensely increased.

Now if thirteen and fourteen knots can be got out of a vessel of 170 tons, and seventeen knots out of one double her size, what speed might you fairly expect to get out of a racing vessel of 10,000 tons? Rather a startling suggestion certainly, but, if carefully examined, not without reason.

We have nothing to guide us as to the probable speed of a racing vessel of that size. Time allowance becomes lost in the immensity of the question.

I see no reason why a vessel of 10,000 tons, built entirely for speed, should not, on several points of sailing, go as fast as any torpedo boat, certainly much faster than any ironclad. Her speed, reaching in a strong breeze, would be terrific ; and if *Britannia*, *Navahoe*, *Valkyrie*, *Vigilant* and vessels of that class can sail ten knots on a wind, why should not she sail fifteen? She would have to be fore and aft rigged, with an immense spread of canvas, very high masts, and very long booms ; single sticks would be nowhere ; but iron sticks and iron booms can be built up of any length and any strength, and with wire rigging I see no limit to size. Such a vessel amply provided with torpedoes of all descriptions, and all the modern diabolisms for destroying life, would be so dangerous a customer that no ironclad would attack her with impunity. Of course there would occasionally be conditions under which she would be at a disadvantage with ironclads ; but, on the other hand, there are many conditions under which ironclads, even the best of them, would be under enormous disadvantages with her. She could circumnavigate the globe without stopping. I believe her passages would be phenomenal, life on board would be bright and healthy, she would be seaworthy, able to keep the seas in all weathers, easily handled, no complicated machinery to fail you at the moment when you were most dependent on it ; and then what a beauty she would be! Why, a fleet of such vessels would be a sight for gods and men. We have sailing vessels of 3,000 and 4,000 tons, four-masted, square-rigged ; they are built for carrying, not for speed, but even they make passages that to the merchant seaman of a hundred years ago would appear incredible.

I probably shall not live to see the clumsy, unwieldy, complicated, unsea-

worthy machines called ironclads cast aside, wondered at by succeeding generations, as we now wonder at the models of antediluvian monsters at the Crystal Palace ; but that such will be their fate I have no doubt whatever. For our battleships we have gone back to the times of knights in armour, when men were so loaded with iron that where they fell there they remained, on their backs or their stomachs, till their squires came to put them on their legs again. I am certain that neither the public, nor the naval authorities of the world, realise what an ironclad in time of war means—positively they will never be safe out of near reach of a coaling station. Suppose—and this is tolerably certain to happen—that when they reach a coaling station they find no coal, or very possibly find it in the hands of the enemy. What are they to do? Without coal to steam back again, or to reach another station, they will be as helpless as any derelict on the ocean : a balloon without gas, a locomotive without steam, a 100-ton gun without powder, would not be so useless as an ironclad without coal.