

# YACHTSMEN ASHORE

## The Little Ships Feel The Shock Of War

LAST summer we did our best to pretend that the war was only an affair of armies sitting comfortably behind concrete emplacements, that yachts could still sail wherever winds blew outside the North Sea. We sailed our little ships and managed to forget Europe in our preoccupation with the set of sails and the lie of keels against white water flashing under.

It is difficult to think of anything else than the craft and its sailing when a light racing hull is all you have between the wind and the water. Except on those few days of easy winds and flat water, so rare in New Zealand latitudes south of the Waitemata, the little ship demands all your affections. She must be caressed into some sort of docility, and when she does obey for a minute the touch of your hand it is only to rest before she drives off into some new caper of coquetry. She is inconsistent as the wind. She must be chased after like a flirting beauty always keeping a step ahead of her suitors.

### Mars is a Rival

But this season she will have her rivals. The greatest of them is Mars, an ugly brute, but having his own special demands that must be met. Already she has lost many of her suitors, has the little ship. This one is in the army, that one cleaning brass on an air force tender. She would be happier, perhaps, if she knew that more were still on the sea, with the Navy. It does seem a pity that the men from the one Dominion that sits in the sea most like Britain, should be able to contribute so little to the keeping of Britain's seas. There is much more material available than has yet been used. Maybe the time will come when one race of islanders will be better able to help the other in its own good way.

### A Famous Leak

My own little ship, for example, is laid up, perhaps for the duration, perhaps even for the six months after. The proprietary use of the pronoun is only meant to indicate affection. She is not mine. She is laid up, in fact, because her owner is about other people's business, one of many who will miss the tingle of salt in his skin this season. She has her faults, that one. She possessed a leak, for instance. It was a very well known leak, but in spite of its fame we could never find it. After a run we would come back to the boat harbour and everyone would ask us, solicitously, "How is the leak to-day?" In the evenings during the week someone would go down to bail her out. "How many bucketsful to-night?" he would be asked. The tally would be kept, it seemed, as carefully as the boat harbour keeps tally of the number of times you lose your spinnaker in the season's racing, or the number of times you miss your mooring coming in at the end of the day. They notice such matters in the boat harbour.

Leak or no leak, she is still a fine boat, long, slim, high-masted. She had a hull that would go through the water

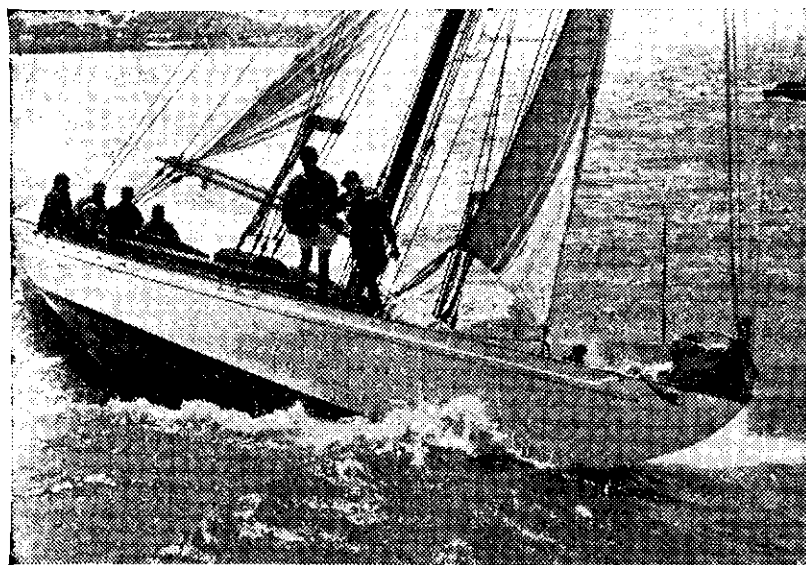
very sweetly and she would turn on threepence. Now she is laid up, and it seems a great waste of so much wood so finely put together.

Other sails and other hulls will have to keep up the appearances. She is not the only one that will float lonely at her moorings this season and perhaps the next and the one after as well, with no master to keep her deck damped down in hot summer, or to join battle with the seagulls in care for her paintwork. Some, however, are left. They will be manned mostly by those old-timers whose caustic comments are so much feared and respected as they sit "on the hard" smoking critical pipes. They will have trouble finding crews, but they will keep the boats afloat and

to go over them all again. In a fit of experimentation he may even alter the whole rig of his craft, and this by itself will mean weeks spent arguing with the sailmaker, drawing great sweeps of lines with chalk on the floors of the sailmaking loft, and badgering the man to get it done in time. Then there are all the incidentals. Is the petrol cooker working well? Is it worth while re-wiring for the lighting system and a radio set? Or shall we stay within call of shore this season? What about a shelf in that corner?

### Labour of Love

For every hour the yachtsman spends in the harbour he has only a minute of recompense at sea. For every week



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do those so necessary tasks that day by day, week by week, season after season, take such heavy toll of the yachtsman's time.

### Small Things that Count

To be frank, it is these tasks which are the whole business of yachting. A crew will spend all its spare time, for months before the racing actually starts, toiling at jobs large and small in the harbour or on the hard.

Go down yourself to the moorings and even now, in October, when the southerly is losing its sting and you might think all the boats that can go will be out feeling the strength of the spring-time winds—even now you will see them working patiently with scraper and pumice and sandpaper and paint brush. This season there is not so much re-fitting to be done. Last season, for the big regattas, at least half the boats were completely refitted. The ordinary annual overhaul is a big enough job this year. The boat must be slipped, scrubbed down, usually repainted all over. There are a hundred small jobs to do. Then, when she is back in the boat harbour, the mast must be stepped, and before that all the gear must be checked. Sails were washed clean before winter came, but now the particular owner may want

labouring at these small jobs and big, he has only an hour under sail. There are few paid crews in New Zealand. Every owner is his own skipper, every crew's interest in the boat is a personal interest. The work must be done in spare hours of an evening or during week-ends. It takes time, for no job is so small or so easy that it can be glossed over in a professional minute. Everything must be exact and precise, every piece of paintwork must be smoother than the corresponding piece on the boat at the next mooring, every patch of varnish more shiny, every inch of standing rope or running gear better suited to its purpose.

Their reward is brief. Only one in a hundred keeps his boat in commission through the winter. After the spring overhaul come a few months of summer sailing, broken by changes in the weather, interrupted by the need for doing the new jobs that are always cropping up, and then there come more weeks in the harbour when the boat is prepared for the laying up time.

### Is It Worth It?

Yet none will say it is not worth it. In the movement of a yacht on the sea there are recollections of the sensations experienced by the first men who pushed

### WATCH FOR IT!

We are looking forward to printing next week the further adventures of that trio of anglers Gaffern, Batecan, and Irideus, by Irideus. Irideus describes how the day he anticipated in his introduction to the fishing season dawned at last, and how an accident which befell him and Gaffern left Batecan momentarily triumphant. Between laughs, we hope to get it into print in time for the next issue.

the first coracles out clear of the reeds. Water is a foreign element for us and our pride in conquering it is more than mere personal satisfaction. Success under sail is the success of native ingenuity against natural opposition far more than travel with steam or oil engine as the motive power. With the machine a man can do anything he pleases, but his satisfaction is only fifty-per-cent., like the satisfaction of a man whose suit has been bought second-hand. It is the machine which is doing the work. Its creation and its action are something remote. But with the sailing ship a man is close to the simple things that clear his mind and freshen his body. With his own hands and eyes and brain he is getting the better of unfriendly wind and water. Anyone can go on the sea in a motor boat or a steamship. A fisherman could fill his creel in an aquarium, if he were so minded. But you will find the fisherman most at home where rivers run through open country, just as your true seaman is most at home when there is the least possible mechanisation between him and his much-loved enemy, the sea.

Watch him ashore and you will see something of the merit of his sentiment as he concentrates over his work. But to know him properly you have to see him on open water, and even there you will find that it is his ship that is the heroine of the story. His strength and skill are only part of her mechanism. She demands much of him when he is ashore. At sea she asks even more, but she says it in words that rhyme. He answers to a poetry that no one will ever hear in the rattle of an engine turning screws.

—THID

## GOODBYE CORNS!

Why suffer the excruciating pain of corns when a few drops of GETS-IT will bring instant relief. A few days later the corn will peel off and your corn troubles are over. G1365

