

PASSING OF THE SEAL HUNTER.



The award of the Paris tribunal was the first check to his career, but it was left to recent events to mark the final passing of the fur seal hunters in the water of the North Pacific.

It is not the lubberly landsman who on the rookeries his sturdy but harmless bull seal over the head with a club that is spoken of, but a far more picturesque individual, the hunter of the pelagic sealing schooner.

His was a calling that arose and flourished exclusively on the Pacific Coast, was in its heyday about five years ago and is now becoming a history. His was a life teeming with danger and adventure, demanding brawn and brain and daring; arduous, perilous and exciting. Although unsung in verse and unrecorded in prose save in the brief marine news dispatches his career will ever be honored by those who go down to the sea in ships, for they appreciate what he was and what glory he deserves.

Pelagic sealing and seal poaching are all one to the average reader of newspapers. "Seal poachers" is the term buried at the fur seal hunters by those journalists who know not of what they write, but think that to be patriotic they must condemn that to which the United States Government is opposed.

Whatever the merits of the controversy be-

tween the nations as to pelagic or open sea sealing outside of a protected zone encircling the Bering Sea rookeries it is a misnomer to term those brave and hardy men who hunted the seal on the bosom of the broad Pacific poachers. A poacher is one who a thorough sport-man detests; a pelagic seal hunter is one whom all sportsmen must admire.

To know what a pelagic seal-hunter was one must know something of how pelagic sealing was carried on. For over 100 years it has been known that annually, about February, the fur seals were to be found in larger or smaller schools, moving northward, off the Pacific Coast on their annual pilgrimage to the Bering Sea rookeries. Off the vicinity of Coos Bay, Oregon, is where the seals usually first appear.

They move leisurely northward, scattered over a wide area of sea. While their movement is general, it must not be supposed that large numbers are to be found in company. About July 1 they pass through the channels of the Aleutian Islands and enter Bering Sea, soon to haul themselves out on the rookeries. Year after year they have pursued the same course, varying hardly more than two or three days in entering the sea.

By reason of the fact that the United States

loses the rookeries and the right to kill a certain number of seals on them annually to a private corporation this Government has long looked with disfavor upon the operations of the open-sea sealers, who ply their vocation while the seals are moving up the coast. The theory of the Government is that the slaughter of seals at sea so reduces the number that the seal tribes will sooner or later be extinct, while if the number to be killed is limited to those killed on the islands no perceptible lessening would be experienced.

While the term "poacher" has been freely used there has been no instance of poaching for over five years, while there are only two on record for the last ten years. They took place when lawless sealers raided the rookeries and killed seals on the shore. True, previous to the first modus vivendi and in the seasons of 1888 and 1889 with possibly a few cases later, British schooners have sought to seal within the then prohibited area of Bering Sea, but since the Paris tribunal decided that the United States did not have exclusive jurisdiction over the whole sea this was hardly to be considered poaching.

It was about twelve years ago that the pelagic sealing fleet began to assume large proportions. In the season of 1892 when pelagic sealing was

at its height, there were ninety-five schooners in the fleet. All but twelve or fifteen floated the British flag.

It was the practice of the schooner to get to sea in February and endeavor to fall in with the seals as speedily as possible. Each schooner carried from four to eight hunters. For each hunter there were two boat-pullers. In addition to these the crew of the average schooner was made up of a captain, a mate, a cook and a boy.

Weather permitting, the boats would take leave of the schooner every morning and scatter about on the ocean, looking for seals. Sometimes the schooner and her little fleet of boats would be 400 or 500 miles off shore when at work. The boats would range away from the vessel to a distance of ten or fifteen miles. And here come in one of the dangers of the life. In the North Pacific Ocean fogs have a most depressing and annoying habit of shutting down on the water-escape without a moment's warning. They are thick and clammy, and to a sealer possess horrors untold. With such a fog shutting off a view of the schooner from the hunters the latter were in a dangerous predicament. They all carried compasses, and often water and a small amount of food.

On the appearance of a fog the schooner would commence discharging a small cannon kept for

no small danger is shown by the record—long and ghastly—of lives lost in this manner.

In hunting the seal the hunter stood upright in the bow of the double-ended boat, his shotgun or rifle ready across his breast. Aft sat the boat-pullers, facing each other, one pushing and one pulling the oars. Often they put up a small sail and took it easy while the hunter kept up his watch forward.

In good sealing the captain and the mate have often taken out a boat, sometimes leaving the cook and dog alone to watch the vessel.

The hunter was a superior individual. He often made from \$1000 to \$1800 a season lasting eight or nine months. He lived in the cabin with the captain and mate, and had nothing to do with the sailing or navigation of the vessel. His ability as a shot had need to be excellent and of a peculiar quality, for his task was a difficult one. All that is exposed of a seal above water is a nose and small bit of head. A shy animal, the seal is hard to approach. Add to this the necessity of shooting him while he is bobbing up and down on a wave and while the boat is also doing aquatic gymnastics and one may imagine a seal is difficult to hit.

To recover the body of a seal shot in the water it is necessary that the shot be so accurate as to cause instant death; otherwise the wounded animal sinks.

The boat-pullers worked on what was termed "lays." That is, they received a certain percentage of the value of the skins secured on a voyage. In addition they also received small wages. The hunter received a fixed price for every skin he took. Captain and mate received salaries and "lays."

The practice of the schooners was to follow the seal herds close up to the Aleutian Islands. There they would meet at a previously appointed rendezvous, the supply steamer from Victoria, bringing mail and supplies. The catch would be transferred from schooners to steamer,

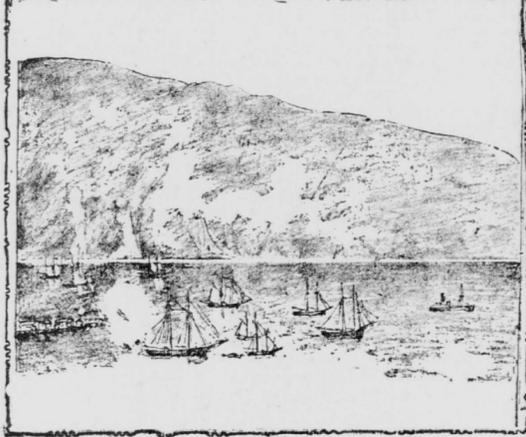
In 1892 I made the trip northward on the supply steamer, the Coquitlan of Vancouver, B. C., Captain E. E. McLeish. We had two appointed rendezvous. Besides making them we met several schooners at sea.

We brought the first news from home that the sealers had received in months. It was pathetic to note their eagerness as they swarmed aboard of us to get their letters, to hear the hungry shouts as they lowered into their boats the fresh fruit and delicacies we brought them. One appreciated them what this exile at sea signified.

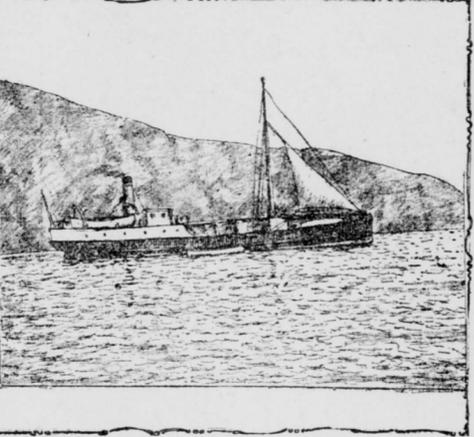
Commander Robley D. Evans, U. S. N., was that year in command of the United States patrol fleet. He went gunning for us with some of his fleet with the object in view of preventing our giving provisions to schooners, thus breaking up their work for the remainder of the season. He succeeded, although we tried our best to prevent him. It was the revenue cutter Corwin, acting under his orders, that finally caught us, but not until we had provisioned nine schooners and had given mail to seventeen others whom we were about to provision when the seizure was made. A prize crew saw us safely to Sitka, where the civil authorities looked after our physical comfort for a time. They say the Sitka jail has never been whitewashed half so well since the crew of the Coquitlan finished the job that summer.

But the authorities had to give us up after all, for the contention of the Government that it held jurisdiction over twelve miles from shore and that we should have gone beyond that twelve-mile and not the three-mile limit in making our cargo transfers was punctured eventually by the Circuit Court of Appeals, sitting at San Francisco.

The move of Commander Evans was a good one, however—from the Government if not from a just standpoint—for many of the schooners lost the latter half of their season. Since then no supply steamers have been seized. Strange as it may seem, most of the hunters



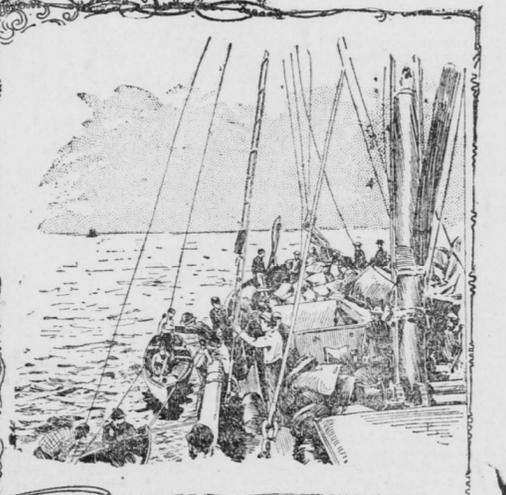
Sealing Schooners and Supply Steamer at Rendezvous Harbor on Afognak Island, Western Alaska.



The Supply Steamer Coquitlan.



Sealers Boarding the Supply Steamer to Get Mail, First News From Home in Five Months.



Transferring Bags of Sealskins to the Supply Steamer and Receiving Supplies at Sea.

that purpose to notify the boats of her presence. At that time, however, boats often failed to get back. There have been many cases where the three men comprising the crew of a hunting craft have gone off in the morning from the schooner far out to sea, and have never returned or been heard from. There are other cases where such crews have been picked up nearly dead from starvation and exposure days after they lost their home craft.

The danger of sudden gales and storms at sea was another one the sealer had to face. That it

and then the schooners would go on for the remainder of the season. They would cruise about the entrance to the sea for stragglers or would strike westward to the Asiatic coast to pick up the seals that had migrated northward on the Japanese and Siberian coasts. Sometimes a schooner would be rash enough to get within Siberian waters and would promptly be pounced upon by a Russian gunboat, seized and her crew hurried off to Petropavlovski, to be either sent to prison or allowed, after several months' confinement, to return home—if they could get there.

who were hunting seals from a British vessel were Americans, and not a few of the British vessels were British in name and register only, owners and crew being Americans.

With the Paris award prohibiting the use of firearms in pelagic sealing, and with the combined effort now seemingly being made to stop such hunting, the seal hunter will soon be a thing of the past. He goes, but he leaves an honorable record behind him. May some writer who loves to weave stories of danger and daring study him as he was and render him immortal in a tale of the North Pacific.

ASHMUN N. BROWN.

A TALE OF TWO WOMEN. AND BROWN AND WHITE.

BY J. F. ROSE-SOLEY.

"Well, then," started the old man, "when I first came to Apia I was a young man, with no wife to look after me, and I don't know but that I was better off for my loneliness, though I've been happy enough since. Now I'm alone again," and he heaved a sigh, for reference to his own marital experiences always made him heavy hearted.

"But to come back to my story," he continued, "being alone like that, I naturally wanted some one to do my washing, and the very first day I landed a little half-caste boy came to me. He was not more than five or six. I should think, with light curly hair, and a skin which showed only a touch of the tar brush. He seemed a fine, manly little chap, and interested me from the first, especially as I couldn't understand a word of Samoan, and he spoke English. So he acted as my interpreter.

"Please, sir, will you let me do your washing?" was the first remark he made to me.

"And who's mother?" I asked.

"Oh, mother's a Samoan. She washes for a lot of the sailors and men who come here. She does the things well, too. Only \$1 a week."

"But where's your father?"

"I don't know." And his blue eyes filled with tears. "But I'm white, I am. Mother says so, and I go to school with the white boys at the priest's, and I'll fight any boy who says I am a Samoan."

"I was interested in this curious tropical product, and, of course, gave the mother my washing to do. She seemed a decent kind of woman when she came for the clothes—not exactly pretty, but with an honest, faithful face. And she was fond of the boy, too; no mistake about that.

"By and by, when I got to know them better, I learned all about their life history, though the little drama was then only at its commencement. But afterward—many years afterward—I saw the last scene played out.

"Some half a dozen years before a discolored young man, by trade a blacksmith, had come to Apia, and, as a matter of course, had taken a native wife. But he found the climate too hot for his work, or

"I am afraid some of the Apia tradesmen, being not altogether hard-hearted men, failed to put on a profit when they supplied the poor woman with the dainty articles. But she never knew it, bless you. She was so independent that she would not have dealt at a store if she had thought she was being favored at all. She even tried to learn English so that she might talk to her son in what she deemed to be his proper language, but I am afraid she was not very successful at that. Her tongue could not manage our barbarous consonants, and 'Siame kea kume bele' was her nearest approach to calling the boy to her in English.

"Every night, when the day's work and play were over, she would dress the boy up carefully in his best coat and trousers, light the lamp and seat him before a colored picture-book which some kind lady had given her, at the one table their little hut possessed. Everything was neat and clean, the floor properly swept, the little bits of furniture polished till you could see your face in them, and there was nothing to indicate that the home might not have belonged to some English woman in humble circumstances.

"Many a night have I dropped in and found the couple sitting there, little Jimmy laughing at his pictures and the woman busy over her needlework. His father might come back at any minute, he would explain in her simple way; he would like to find his boy a papalagi gentleman and not a common Samoan child.

"For herself the poor soul had never a thought, her whole being centered round the boy. And when he got big enough the good fathers took him in at the convent school, and he was educated with the white children, so that he grew up speaking English perfectly. Though they never admitted it I am sure that the kindly priests stretched a point in the mother's favor, or else the poor woman would never have been able to pay the fees for her son's education.

"As long as I was in Apia I never lost sight of this interesting couple, but after a few years, you know, I got married myself. Then I went away trading in N.W. Briain, and so for a time I heard nothing of the mother and her son.

"When I did come back to the Navigators I found Jimmy quite a grown-up lad—a general favorite thron about the whole town. His education was finished, and he could read and write better than the majority of white men on the beach, let alone the half-castes. His mother's friends, and she had many, had got him a good position in one of the largest stores. He was already able to help her a little, and promised to do well for himself in life. The good woman was still single, she lived contentedly in the hope that one day Siame would return and find that his son had been well brought up and was really a papalagi. This was her one consolation, poor woman, and she had held to the idea so long that at last she had

grown to believe in it. I did not see much of her then, though, for soon after I got back to Apia I bought this store, and moved out of town altogether."

The old man paused and wiped his forehead. Talking always made him perspire, he said. And Siame, who seemed by some kind of instinct to understand that he had been conversing about women of her own race, beamed with her most engaging smile as she handed him the bowl of kava.

"But did Jimmy never come back?" I asked, when I saw that he had recovered his energy.

"Oh, yes; that's the second and saddest act in the drama. He did come back; worse luck.

"It was about two years ago and I was living quietly enough down here. I hadn't seen much of the young half-caste or his mother for some time, since it was seldom I went to Apia, a place where one only spends money and does no good to one's self. But I had heard that the boy had shown great business aptitude, and had advanced to a responsible position in the firm, so that he was able to keep his old mother in comfort. To do him justice, he was not like most young people who, once they are grown up and able to shift for themselves, think no more of their parents. Naturally, though, he didn't admire his father much when he saw him.

"He told me all about it himself. I was sitting here when I was surprised to see him turn up in grand style, with a large white boat and a big crew of natives. His firm was short of coira, he said, to complete the cargo of a ship they were loading, and had sent him round the islands to buy up all he could get. He offered a good price, so our business was soon satisfactorily settled, and then, as it was getting late in the afternoon, and it was a long way to the next station, I persuaded him to spend the night. When we were settled down comfortably over our kava, he said, 'I suppose you know father's come back?'

"What, and I whistled with surprise at the happening of the long expected, 'you don't mean to say, Jimmy, that the old man's turned up again?'

"Yes, it's true enough," Jimmy replied, "and a nice handiful we've found him."

"Tell me all about it,"

"You know, Jimmy went on, 'that mother always had a habit of getting everything ready in the evening for father's return. When I was a little child she used to dress me for the occasion, and, now I'm grown up, I try to humor her as much as I can. So, whenever there's nothing special going on I sit with her in the evenings and put on my best coat, just to keep her company. Well, about a fortnight ago we were there, quietly enough, when suddenly mother looked up from her work and said:

"Your father will come back to-night, Siame."

"She had said the same thing many times before, so I didn't take any special

notice, but just then the door was roughly pushed open and a fat, middle-aged man came in. He didn't look a very respectable party; his face was flushed, and he rolled in his walk as if he had been drinking, and he wore a ragged suit of clothes which would have disgraced a beach-comber. But mother knew him, and like a flash she had her arms round his neck and was hugging and kissing him. "Here's your father come back; I knew he would, I waited long, but now he is here."

"The man seemed dazed by this sudden display of affection, and said nothing for a while. I sat quietly at the table, wondering what would happen next.

"Then mother took the man by the hand and pointed me out."

"There's our boy, Siame," she said, as well as her tears would let her. "I have cared for him well. Look at him, is he not a fine papalagi gentleman?"

"The man seemed sort of dazed. He passed his hand over his forehead and then he recovered himself. "Oh, yes, I remember now; there was a kid when I went away. Blessed if I hadn't forgotten all about it. I never thought it would live; it seemed such a sickly little thing. But what did yer want to go and make a gentleman of the boy for, Meie? What I wants is a good hard-working boy, with a trade at his fingers' ends, who can be a help to his father in his old age."

"Mother was terribly disappointed, I could see, though she tried to hide the tears which would fall. Siame, he replied, "if he is a gentleman, he's a steady hard-working lad, and he's getting \$15 a week at the store."

"When the old man heard this his bleared eyes brightened. "Oh, all right then, Jimmy, my son; here's my hand, and I hope you'll be a good son to your dad, who's come all this way to seek you out."

"But I wouldn't take his dirty hand. He might be my father, so far as I knew, but I wasn't going to have anything to do with him. So I left the house, and I haven't been back since. I've tried to persuade mother to come away, too, but she will stick to him, though he's the drunkest old loafer on the beach. Every penny he can squeeze out of her goes in drink, and he tries the same game on me, but I turned him out of the store quick enough."

"What's he be doing all this time for?" I asked.

"Oh, he's been in Australia, and, from what I hear, he did pretty well at his trade for a while. But lately he's fed up, altogether, and then, when he found the colonies played out, he thought he would run down to Samoa and see what he could do here. I've told mother again and again not to give him any money, so as to make him go to work; but it's no use, she's too fond of him."

"This was all Jimmy's tale and next day he went his way in the boat, and I heard no more of the matter for a while.

"But a few months later I went on a Malanga up to Tununga, where, you know, there are several stores. I had some business there, for I was buying up tobacco, but I thought I would make a bit of a pleasure trip of it as well. So I went along by easy stages, stopping several nights at villages on the way. And, the last night before I got to Tununga, I found a white man living in a Samoan house. His name was Johnston, he said, he was a blacksmith by trade, and had been making some ironwork for a man who was building a schooner near by. But now the job was finished and he was just living on among the Samoans, waiting for something else to turn up. I couldn't help thinking that there wasn't much chance of getting work in that place, but he didn't seem to mind. He was a free and easy old fellow and I soon made myself quite at home with him. By and by he produced a bottle of gin, a rare thing in those parts, and we were soon friendly enough. He had a native wife, a good-looking young girl, and he seemed reconciled to his lot and to be in no hurry to go out and look for work where he might have had a chance of finding it.

"He was very talkative and told me a lot about himself and his family, and soon I began to suspect something. It wasn't the name—that was common enough. But when he said that he had been in Samoa twenty years before and had only returned a few months ago, it dawned upon me.

"Were you married when you first came here?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," he replied, carelessly. "I had a native wife, but I never thought any more about her after I went away."

"And a child, too?"

"Oh, yes, there was a boy born just before I left. He's grown up now into a fine young fellow and getting a good salary at So-and-so's store. But he won't have anything to say to his old father; much too great a swell for that."

"I thought the old father deserved all the treatment he had got, but, of course, it would not have been polite to say so."

"Then the fellow told me more of his family history and confided to me that he had come to Samoa after his business in Australia failed in the hope of setting up a blacksmith's shop. But he had gone on the spree when he arrived and soon spent the little money he brought with him. Now he didn't see how to send for his wife and children, much less how to keep them when they got here."

"Children, did you say?" I exclaimed, thinking of young Jimmy and the Samoan woman, with her unchanging fidelity.

"Oh, yes," said the old man, quite unabashed. "I've a wife and six kids in Australia. And they've got a good education, too, for I was well off then. Look here, 'He went to a battered old sea chest, which appeared to be his whole personal luggage, and from under a layer of rag-

ged clothing extracted a package carefully wrapped up in brown paper. It turned out to contain a cabinet photograph—a family group representing a comely middle-aged mother and six well-dressed children.

"There's the family," said Johnston. "There's Johnny, the eldest; he's a real clever boy; he's going to be a great architect some day; and he's in a good Sydney office. And there's Polly; she plays the piano fine."

"Thus the old man ran over the little accomplishments of his white children. I listened in silence, but I couldn't help thinking all the time of the plain, brown-skinned woman sitting so patiently with her little boy and waiting for Siame to come back."

(THE END.)

Learning to Ride.

I never recall my first attempt to ride a wheel without experiencing a thrill of pleasure to think that I am still alive.

With the aid of two experienced riders I had managed to mount a wheel. Hardly had I taken a firm grip on the handle-bars than the two accomplices released their hold and left me alone to the wild mercuries of an unmanageable bike. I knew well that everything depended upon my coolness, so I held the handle-bars with a stiff firm grip and endeavored to balance my body to the movements of the wheel, which was now sliding desperately from one side of the road to the other. Already I realized that I was in a hopeless position, and, as the wheel struck the curbing at this moment, I hastily dismounted. Perhaps I did not get off in a very graceful manner, nevertheless I struck the sidewalk with a force and enthusiasm that won the applause of the onlookers.

By the end of three weeks I was able to lay aside my crutches, remove the splints from my arm and take the pledge against beef tea. For a time I cared not to ride, so well satisfied was I in being able to walk; but in an unguarded moment I again fell a victim to the pernicious habit.

This time I was more successful, and became so well satisfied with my success that I determined to visit a young lady acquaintance.

It was not until I was about to leave that I realized my inability to mount. The very thought made me turn pale, and by the time I reached the gate cold beads of perspiration were standing on my forehead. After making several unsuccessful attempts to mount, the young lady came to my assistance; the gettors also came out to encourage us by bits of advice and kindly suggestions. With such failure I became more excited, my wheel became more unmanageable, until in sheer desperation I started off leading the bike, and praying that some friendly comet would strike the earth in my immediate vicinity.

NICK BOWEN.