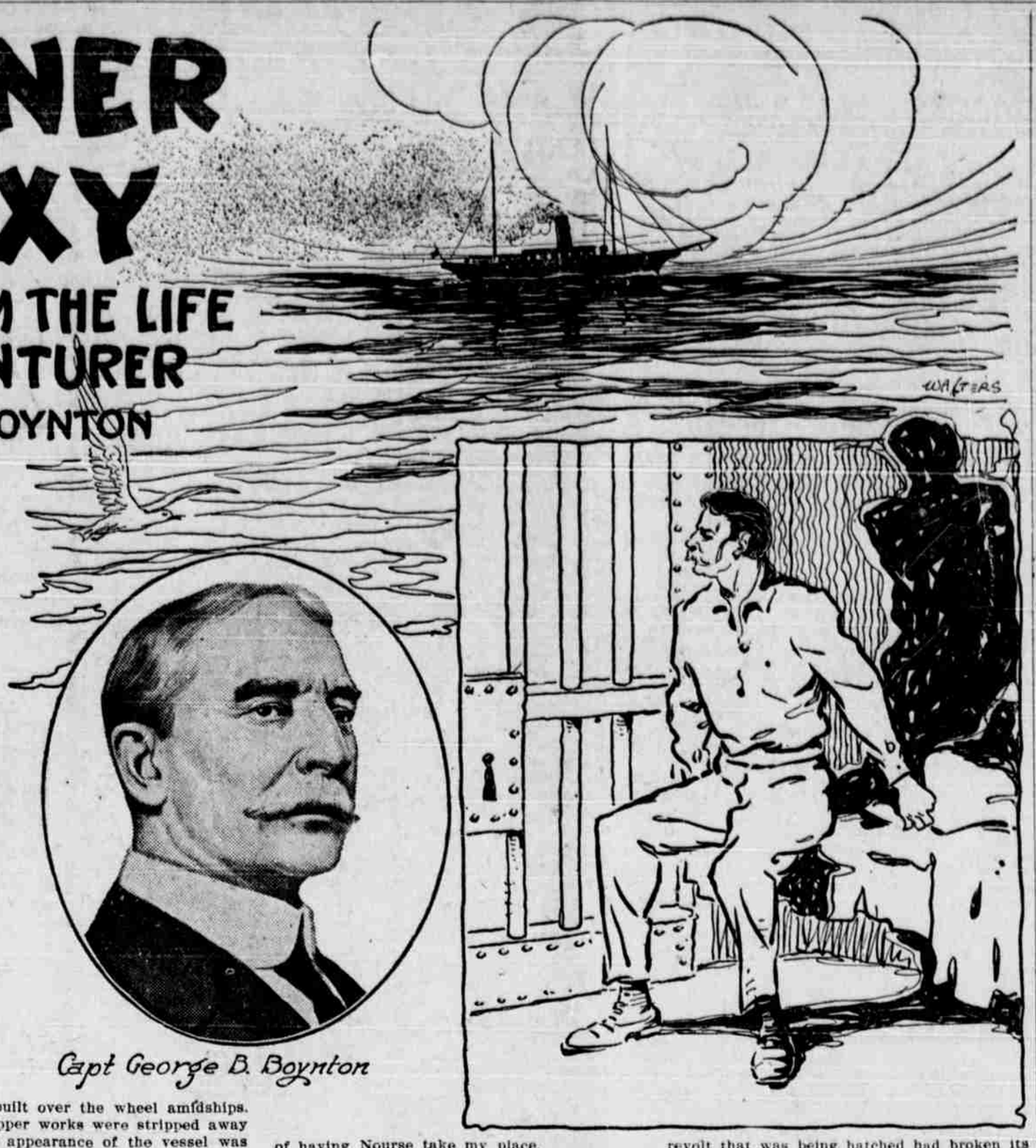
A PRISONER BY PROXY

REAL STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF A MASTER ADVENTURER

By CAPTAIN GEORGE B. BOYNTON



Capt George B. Boynton

(Editor's Note—Capt. George B. Boynton died a few months ago in Brooklyn. He served, all told, under eighteen flags and his life has furnished much material for fiction. This is a story of some of his adventures told by himself for the first time.)

IN the old days, when I was cavorting with contraband throughout the West Indies and South America I ran into one unpleasant incident which left me with a large moral—or immoral, according to the point of view—obligation on my hands. During a quiet spell I had bought, at a bargain, a little schooner at St. Thomas, loaded her with mahogany at Santo Domingo and started for Liverpool to see what was going on in that part of the world. We were caught in a heavy gale and were forced to run into Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, where we arrived in a sinking conditon.

On the false charge that my papers were forged, the agent for Lloyds', with whom the ship was insured, seized the vessel as I was having her repaired and had me arrested for barratry. I was taken to Halifax, where I was put to considerable inconvenience in securing bail.

I pleaded my own case and, as soon as I could get a hearing, was released, but in the meantime the agent for the underwriters had libeled my ship and sold her at auction, and her new owners had sent her away to South America.

My last real adventure had ended with the burial of the Leckwith, which sank in the Red Sea, and I was hungry for some new excitement—the very essence and sole enjoyment of my life. While casting about for something to satisfy my appetite, the recollection of the Yarmouth outrage came over me and I decided to steal a ship and let the underwriters pay for her, as partial compensation for the one they had stolen from me.

After a survey of the available supply, I hit on the Ferret, a handsome and fairly fast little passenger steamer belonging to the Highland Railway Company, which was lying at Gourock Bay on the Clyde. They would not let her out on a general charter, which was what I wanted, so I concluded to charter her for a year for a cruise in the Mediterranean, with the option of purchase for fourteen thousand pounds at the end of that time. All of the negotiations were conducted and the deal closed by Joe Wilson, my trusted aide, and I was careful to impress him with the necessity for the insertion of the option-of-purchase clause. I had so much confidence in him that I did not closely examine the charter papers and not until it was too late did I discover that he had neglected the one vital point.

My plan was to go back out East and dig up the guns Frank Norton and I had buried on a little island when we left the China Sea, and perhaps resume the unholy occupation of preying on the pirates between Singapore and Hong Kong. I wanted the option-of-purchase clause inserted in the charter partly as a sop to my conscience and partly with the idea that if we were, by any remote chance, apprehended before we reached the China Sea I could announce that I had exercised my option and was prepared to pay for the ship.

With the delivery of the charter, in proper form, as I supposed, I made a great show of fitting the ship out for a yachting cruise, at the same time smuggling on board two small cannon and a lot of rifles and ammunition. Lorensen, my old captain, was seriously ill, so I took on as sailing master a man named Watkins. He was well recommended, but it later developed that he had a strain of negro blood and a well-defined streak of yellow. Tom Leigh, one of my old men, was first officer, and next to him was George Ross, another new one.

We coaled at Cardiff and cleared for Malaga. We passed Gibraltar late in the afternoon, as was intended, and signaled "All well" to the observer for Lloyds'. As soon as it was dark we headed over toward the other shore for twelve or fifteen miles and then stood straight out to sea again. As we made the second change in our course we stove in a couple of our boats and threw them overboard, along with a lot of life preservers. I wanted to make it appear that the Ferret had foundered, and we ran into a heavy blow which dovetailed beautifully into my scheme. At daylight we were well clear of Gibraltar but within sight of the Moroccan coast. I called the crew aft and addressed them to this effect:

"Taking advantage of the option-of-purchase clause in the charter I now declare myself the owner of this ship and will pay for her, as stipulated, at the end of the period for which she is chartered. We are going on a very different trip from that for which you signed. It will be attended by some danger but, probably, by profits which will more than compensate you for the risk you run. Those of you who wish to go with me will receive double pay, a bonus of fifty dollars for signing new papers, and a share of the profits from the trip. Those who do not care to go may take a boat and go ashore."

Every man agreed to stay with me. I thereupon rechristened the ship the India—a name legitimately held by a vessel on the other side of the world, as was indicated by Lloyds' register—fired a gun and dipped the flag and declared her in commission. At the same time I rechristened myself, a ceremony to which I was equally accustomed, and took the name of James Stuart Henderson. I presented the ship with a new log and certificate of registry and other necessary papers from the counterfeit blanks I always carried, and all of the men signed the new articles. We then headed for Santos, Brazil, with the idea of keeping clear of British waters until the loss of the Ferret had become an established fact.

On the way the brass plate on the main beam, showing that the engines were built for the Ferret, was removed and the new name took the place of the old one everywhere about the ship. The chart-room and wheelhouse were taken off the bridge and rebuilt over the wheel amidships. Some of the upper works were stripped away and the whole appearance of the vessel was changed to such an extent that even her builders would hardly have recognized her.

At Santos I bought outright a cargo of coffee and headed for Cape Town, South Africa, where I consigned it to Wm. G. Anderson & Son, with instructions to sell it for cash, and quickly.

I made Leigh sailing-master, and we cleared light for Australia, with a short stop at the Mauritius for coal. We coaled again at Albany, West Australia. From there we went to Port Adelaide, South Australia, and then on to Melbourne, where we came to grief. Off Fort Philip Head we signaled for a pilot and a canny Scot came aboard. He seemed suspicious of us from the first and I noticed that he was studying the ship closely as we steamed up to anchorage off Williamstown.

I landed at once and went to the Civil Service Club Hotel to recuperate from a bad case of malaria which I had contracted at the Mauritius. While not alarmed by the apparent suspicion of the pilot I was impressed by it and gave strict orders to Leigh to allow no one to come aboard. Leigh's one weakness was drink, and to guard against his becoming helplessly intoxicated I instructed Wilson either to remain on board or visit the ship every day.

My fever grew worse after I went ashore, and in two or three days the doctor decided that I should have a nurse, as I was all alone. The doctor was with me when the nurse arrived, and as the latter entered the door the doctor made a quick movement as though something had startled him, looking in amazement from one of us to the other. I could not imagine what had happened until he said:

"That man looks enough like you to be your twin brother! I never have seen such a resemblance between two men!"

I surveyed the nurse more critically and saw that we did look strangely alike, even to the scarred face. The nurse said his name was William Nourse and that he had arrived in Melbourne only two or three days before from Tasmania, where he had worked in the Hobartstown hospital.

While I was recovering at the hotel, events were transpiring in connection with the ship. Wilson, it developed, soon relaxed his vigilance and gave himself up to pleasures ashore, but without coming near me, whereupon old Leigh blithely betook himself to his beloved bottle. After a few days the shrewd Scotch pilot paid the ship a friendly visit, found Leigh full three sheets in the wind, encouraged him to proceed with his potations until he fell asleep and then went over the ship at his leisure, taking measurements and making observations.

Naturally, his measurements corresponded exactly with those of the Ferret, which had been reported as missing.

I was greatly surprised when, late one afternoon about ten days after our arrival at Melbourne, I received word from Joe that the ship had been recognized as the Ferret and seized; that he had taken to the bush and that I had better disappear as quickly and quietly as possible if I wished to escape arrest, for the officers were looking for both of us.

I told Nourse that a warrant was out for my arrest on some technical violation of the port regulations, and that, while I had no fear of the result of a trial, I did not feel strong enough to go through with it, and therefore I intended to leave at once, and secretly, and stay away until the trouble blew over. He agreed to go with me, and soon after dark we left the hotel quietly by a rear entrance which opened on an alley.

We engaged a carriage and drove to a suburb on the railroad running to Sydney.

On the long drive to Longwood I became convinced that my capture was certain, for the country was so thinly settled that we were sure to attract attention and be easily followed, while if I stuck to the railroad I was sure to be apprehended. In seeking some new way out of the dilemma I conceived the idea of having Nourse take my place.

"What do you say, Nourse, to changing places with me and letting yourself be arrested, if it comes to that?"

"I had been thinking of that very thing," he replied. "I don't care much what happens to me, but I am not exactly hungry for a long term in Pentridge. If this thing is no worse than you say it is, though, I'll swap places with you and see it through for two hundred pounds."

I accepted his terms without argument.

As soon as we reached Longwood we exchanged clothing, even down to our underwear, socks and shoes.

We had just finished dinner and were sitting alone in the hotel office, rehearsing the part Nourse was to play, when a sergeant and two officers, who had got track of us at Seymour, rode up on horseback.

The orders of the officers called for the arrest of only one man, so I was not interfered with. I did not return to Melbourne on the same train with them the next morning, but went down by the one that followed it. The first thing I heard was that Joe, who had taken the train ahead of me, had been captured at Albury, and was on his way back, in charge of an officer, to join Leigh and my counterfeit presentment behind the bars.

I at once engaged Purvis, the best barrister in Australia, to defend them, and later employed Gillot & Snowden, another high-class firm, to assist him.

Nourse was as game as a hornet and played his part well.

The trial was held before Judge Williams and resulted in a conviction. I had expected no other verdict, for, with the option-of-purchase clause missing from the charter, it was a clear case.

Nourse and Wilson were sentenced to seven years and Leigh to three and one-half years in Pentridge Prison. With the time deducted for good behavior this meant five years and three months for Nourse and Joe and less than three years for Leigh. When the case assumed a more serious aspect than I had believed it would when I bargained with Nourse to take my place I sent word to him that I would pay him well if he would "play the string out," and as soon as I left the town I deposited $5,000 which was to be paid to him when he was released. I spent some time and considerable money in an effort to secure a pardon for my companions, but when I found that was impossible I returned to England, with a promise to be back in Australia by the time their terms expired.

With my return to London in the early eighties the old lure of the West Indies, with their continuous riot of revolutions, came over me so strongly that I could not hold out against it, nor did I try.

I was much interested in reports which reached me, through contraband channels, that a new revolution was shaping up in Costa Rica and that there was a prospect of trouble in Hayti and even in Venezuela.

I took the first ship for Halifax and went from there to St. John, New Brunswick, where I bought the fore-and-aft schooner George V. Richards. I took her to Bridgeport, Connecticut, where I loaded up with old Sharp's and Remington rifles and a lot of ammunition and, after burying them under sixty tons of coal, sailed for Venezuela to see what was going on in Guzman's absence.

I found that General Alcantara was acting as dummy President, while Guzman was enjoying himself in Europe, and I soon satisfied myself, from remarks dropped by his friends in response to my guarded inquiries, that he was ambitious to become the ruler of Venezuela in fact as well as in name.

The movement to overthrow Guzman was, in fact, taking definite form, and I sold a part of my arms to Alcantara's friends.

Guzman had heard of what was going on and, as I subsequently learned, he returned to Venezuela a few months later, before the revolt that was being hatched had broken its shell. The Government was promptly turned over to him by Alcantara.

The Costa Ricans were, I found, in the midst of one of their periodical but always quite futile efforts to depose their President, General Tomaso Guardia, and I had no difficulty in disposing of my arms and ammunition, which I exchanged for a cargo of coffee.

With the cargo of coffee we headed for New Orleans, where I sold it.

While the coffee was coming out stores were swiftly going in, and we were out of the river again and on our way to Hayti in record-breaking time. Though I had good cause to remember Santo Domingo I never had been in the "Black Republic," and, as I had heard there was a probability of some lively times there, I determined to visit it before I returned to New York.

But the crankiness of the Richards interfered with my plans. When we were about one hundred miles west of Key West the old ship committed suicide by burning herself to death. The fire started in the hold amidships, but we could not even imagine what might have caused it. It was so unexpected that it had a good start before we discovered it. We fought it, of course, but we might as well have tried to quench a volcano in eruption. The strange craft had made up her mind to go under, and there was nothing for us to do but take to the whaleboat, which was large enough for all of us, as I had only a small crew.

After we had shoved off we returned at considerable risk to rescue a big black cat which was on the ship when I bought her. We had christened him "John Croix"

Our humanity was well rewarded, for John saved our lives, or at least saved us from a lot of suffering. Eventually we drifted among the islands to the westward of Key West and we headed for the largest one in sight. In the heavy sea that was running we made a bad mess of the landing. Our boat was overturned and stove in, the bung came out of the water-cask and all of our supplies and most of our instruments were lost.

Early in the morning the cat awakened me by rubbing against my face. At first I thought he was only depressed, like the rest of us, and wanted company, but he pestered around until I got up and followed him. Calling to me over his shoulder, he led the way to a clump of mangrove trees, whose roots overhung the bank three feet above high tide. John trotted under the mass of roots and began to purr loudly. I started to follow him and then backed out, but the cat yowled so loudly that I got down on all fours again and followed him. I crawled along for ten or twelve feet until I found John standing over a rivulet of fresh water about as big as my finger.

I drank my fill from it and then awakened the others and told them of John's discovery. They hailed him as our savior, and when he came trotting into camp a couple of hours later with an oyster in his mouth they were ready to beatify him.

Strengthened and encouraged, we patched up our boat and, when the storm had blown itself out, put to sea again, and encountered a little schooner from St. Johns, Fla., which took us to Key West, where we soon got a ship for New York.

I returned to Melbourne in 1885, after an absence of about four years, and went to Menzies' Hotel, which was not the one I had stopped at before—when I was James Stuart Henderson.

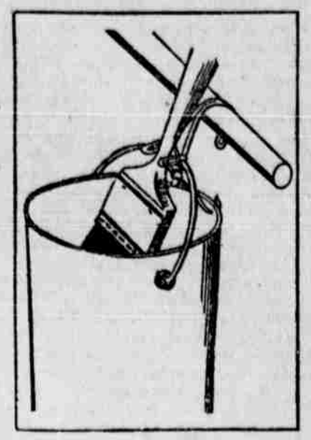
When Nourse and Wilson were released from prison the former scurried across Bass Strait, to his old Tasmanian home with the money I had paid him for so successfully impersonating me. He considered that he had been well compensated and expected to invest his capital in some small business, to which affluent position, under ordinary conditions, he never could have aspired with any degree of confidence.

INDUSTRY AND MECHANICS

TWO-IN-ONE HANDY HANDLE

Hangs Paint Bucket Up and Holds the Brush Straight—Useful for Other Purposes.

A little wire handle devised by an Ohio man will make life easier for painters. This handle, designed principally for paint buckets, can be used on other buckets, too. It has a hook at the top by means of which the bucket can be hung up within reach of the workman and a second downwardly projecting hook can be caught in the rim of the pail, if necessary, to shove the pail forward. In the center of the handle is a clip to hold



Handy Handle.

the paint brush, thus keeping the brush from tumbling about in the bucket or sinking over its head when the bucket is full. The bracing effect produced by using the bottom hook is particularly handy, as it inclines the handle so that it does not get in the way of the workman as he dips his brush into the pail.

STRONG WOOD FOR CARRIAGES

Hickory Is Most Important on Account of Lightness Without Losing Any of Its Strength.

The most important kind of wood which the carriage maker uses is hickory. The lightness, without loss of strength, for which American made vehicles are famous, is largely due to the use of hickory. It has great strength and elasticity. There is no other wood that equals it in these respects, and all kinds have been used.

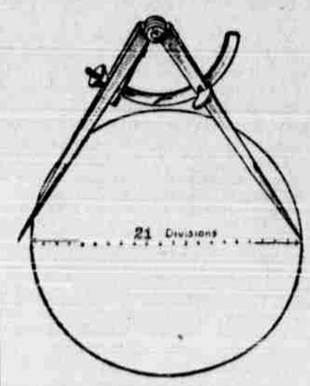
For one thing, the light wheels used on some kinds of pleasure vehicles would have to be fitted with very thick tires if hickory was not employed. Ash and elm have been tried in place of hickory, but these woods split too easily to be successful substitutes.

Many millions of feet of hickory are used every year in the carriage and wagon industry. It is feared that its rate of production may not keep pace with the demands of the trade, for hickory springeth not up in the night. Nevertheless, it does grow rapidly enough to hold out some hope that with careful supervision of the forests the hickory tree may be made to yield a sufficient crop.

FINDING LENGTH OF CIRCLE

Majority of Mechanics Much Prefer to Deal With Fractions With Divider Points.

The mechanic's handy method of finding the length of a circle is as follows: He first divides the diameter into 21 parts, and takes one of these parts and adds it to the diameter. Then he sets the dividers to this measure (1 1-21 diameters) and tak-



Length of a Circle.

ing three steps with the dividers obtains about the exact circumference. The majority of mechanics prefer to deal with fractions with the divider points rather than with figures, which must always be used in this calculation. The measurement obtained in this way is close enough for most kinds of work.—Scientific American.

Turkestan Petroleum Fields.

Petroleum fields covering a vast area of Turkestan, extending to the Chinese frontier and the Pamirs, have recently been surveyed by Prof. Hjalmar Sjogren of Stockholm. Although the new fields are not expected to revolutionize the petroleum market, they will help to supply the rapidly increasing demand for petroleum in China, and to some extent they will probably benefit consumers in other parts of the world.

Use Waste Products.

In Wilmington, Del., a use is being found for the waste products of paper mills which have been accumulating for years and have been thought valueless. One factory has dumped over 100,000 tons of residuum from its boilers on the neighboring flats, covering about eight acres. This is now to be treated by a process for extracting the carbon for the market and the rest will be converted into fertilizer.

QUALITIES OF FUSED SILICA

Latest Material to Be Used for Any Original Standard of Length—Light in Weight.

Fused silica is the latest material to be used for an original standard of length. Such a standard must continue accurate and invariable for a long period under all conditions of the air, and the metals tried—copper alloys, platinum, iridio platinum, nickel and invar—fall short of perfection. Fused silica claims a rare combination of good qualities. It is light in weight, cheap, and has small expansion; and its disadvantages—such as easy breakage, lack of elasticity, and slight solubility in water—are not important. The first meter of the kind, as described to the London Royal society, is a tube of silica with horizontal slabs of the same material fused into the ends. The slabs are accurately ground, with plane and parallel sides. The under sides are coated with platinum, and the lines of the standard are ruled through this film with a diamond. The annealing of the meter—by slowly heating to 450 degrees, maintaining at this temperature for eight days, and slowly cooling 14 days—cause a shrinkage of about one 50,000th of an inch.

"CANADIUM" IS A NEW METAL

Discovered by Metallurgical Chemist While Investigating Gold Mine in British Columbia.

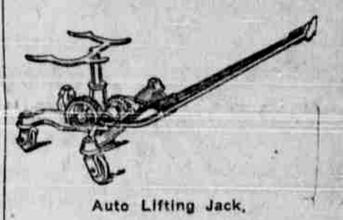
"Canadium" is the name given a new metal discovered by A. G. French, metallurgical chemist of Nelson, B. C., when investigating a large gold mine in that province. While examining a deposit of platinum metals, he discovered, sometimes isolated and sometimes in combination, another metal which was quite different from other members of the group. It has since been found in many other igneous dikes in the vicinity of Nelson.

Canadium is a beautiful white metal but little softer than gold or silver and melting at a somewhat lower temperature. It is not tarnished by damp atmosphere nor blackened or affected by sulphureted hydrogen, alkaline sulphides or tincture of iodine, which blacken both silver and palladium. When burnished, it is much more brilliant than either silver or palladium.

JACK FOR LIFTING AN AUTO

Geared Ratchet Implement Embodies Several Interesting Features—Easy to Operate.

This geared ratchet automobile jack embodies several interesting features, among which are the lifting arms or antlers. The working mechanism is simple and easy to operate. A pinion meshes with the large gear wheel, the motion being imparted from the gear-wheel shaft to a pinion engaging a rack on the tube which slides up and down in the frame. The tube is



Auto Lifting Jack.

threated on the inside, and into it screws the arms, which are called antlers because of their peculiar shape, says the Popular Mechanics. The antler form was adopted as one which would fit the rear axle of any make of automobile. The short horns are for lifting front axles, but the others may also be used for this purpose.

The jack is mounted on four rubber-tired casters, with both ball and roller bearings.

Interesting Old Mill.

An interesting old Long Island mill has been in more or less constant operations by tidal power ever since the close of the revolution. Originally power was developed through two undershot wheels, which in course of time were replaced by turbines, by which nearly 40-horse power is developed.

INDUSTRIAL and MECHANICAL NOTES

Sixty per cent. of the Brazil nut is oil.

Glycerine is a bi-product of the soap factory.

Both the Chinese and Japanese manufacture alcoholic beverages from rice.

The British empire supplies about three-fifths of the world's demands for gold.

New Zealanders consume more than seven pounds of tobacco per capita per year.

Russia supplies Great Britain with the greater proportion of her poultry and eggs.

Over 100,000 pedestrians and 20,000 vehicles pass over London bridge in one day.

A fleet of 250 refrigerator ships is engaged in carrying fresh meat to the British islands.

The cod fish shipped out of Newfoundland each year are valued at five million dollars.

A little glycerine, well distributed, often will renew life in a much used typewriter ribbon.

Shipping casualties of all nationalities last year totaled 108 vessels, with a tonnage of 114,231.

British beer consumption decreased from 36,841,000 barrels in 1899 to 33,619,000 barrels last year.

In one month the yield of gold in Southern Rhodesia exceeded 50,000 ounces, valued at $1,000,000.

Fish is sometimes colored with an inorganic dye, to give it the appearance of having been smoked.

An English mine horse which was recently brought to the surface had not seen daylight for 21 years.

Whiting and kerosene form an excellent silver polish and also will cleanse bathtubs and sinks quickly.

Pittsburgh's Smoke Nuisance

Over $500,000 worth of laundy of the male residents of Pittsburgh is destroyed every year by smoke, according to Prof. R. C. Benner of the University of Pittsburgh, in an address before a board of trade. And that is not all. Professor Brenner stated that from the lungs of a man who had lived fifty years here a quart of soot had been taken. He exhibited the soot, too. In a cubic mile of atmosphere in Pittsburgh, the professor said, there was four and three quarter tons of soot. The life of lace curtains in other cities is one-third longer than in Pittsburgh; house cleaning here is necessary twice a year and from 20 to 40 per cent. of the fog in the city is soot. Professor Benner was talking on the smoke nuisance and explained the wonderful strides now being made to abate the nuisance by scientific firing and the use of condensers.

His Face Not His Fortune.

M. Durand de Bellefond de Gournay, who a few months ago startled the simple folk of Coutances by appearing in a brilliant uniform covered with decorations and managed to swindle the local tradespeople of hundreds of pounds, cut a sorry figure when he appeared for trial at the assize court.

His only defense is that he swindled because he wished to create an impression on a woman with whom he was in love. The judge replied: "Don't talk to me of making an impression on the fair sex. You are far too ugly," and then sentenced him to six years' imprisonment.—Paris Correspondence London Daily Mail.

Boat Run by Soap.

A writer in Science tells of an ingenious little skiff about two inches long which he constructed and provided with a piece of soap for the motor. The boat was of wood paraffined to repel the water. The soap formed the sternboard of the skiff.

The boat was placed on still water in a bathtub and began to move as soon as the water came in contact with the soap. After gathering headway it reached a velocity of two inches a second. The power was derived from the potential energy of the surface water film set free by the diminution of surface tension, this reduction being due to solution of the soap.—Scientific American.