

A SUCCESSFUL SMALL TENDER

Winfield M. Thompson

EVERY little while I read in *THE RUDDER* the plaint of some small-boat owner who wants a practical tender, something that (1) will carry at least two in smooth water with safety; (2) can be stowed on deck or in cockpit of a single-hander; (3) will tow well; (4) will be of simple construction and moderate cost. The seekers for the ideal small-boat tender appear always to write as if seeking the unattainable—the lost mines of Peru, or the treasure of Captain Kidd. They snatch at every passing sunbeam and examine the motes therein, hoping to find what they seek in the form of some stray skiff or punt or other light boat, that will make them happy. From such random pursuit of the perfect tender they get nothing satisfying. I have seen the fruits of such a quest, and know them for Dead Sea apples. They are represented up and down the coast in a string of the worst little death-traps ever floated on water. They are misshapen offspring of disordered desire, having nothing to commend them. Generally skiffs of the elongated flatiron pattern, they have neither form, weight nor substance in the right place. They know not the laws of stability nor buoyancy. Some appear in wood, some in canvas. I once used one, a wooden sieve, that went with a boat I chartered. I named it Coffin Lid, owing to its resemblance thereto in shape and general proportions. Coffin Lid was a skiff. She had not a curve in her, but was all straight lines and obtuse angles. It was necessary to board her with great circumspection, and ride her as you would a bareback horse. Crossing a harbor in her was like a journey on a slack wire. One day I took a landsman friend on board. He came down the beach jauntily, and stepped into Coffin Lid as if he were going aboard a battleship. I cautioned him to sit down in the stern gently, as I shoved her off. He did so, and as soon as we were afloat began to lose his carefree air, and to measure the depth of the water with his eye.

"It's nothing," said I, anticipating an exclamation from him. "She seems ticklish, but she isn't really so. All you have to do is sit still."

He sat very still indeed, as the little waves rippled softly in over the stern with each stroke of my oars, and communicated their dampness to his person. I confess I did some calculating as to how many of them could come over the stern before we lost our buoyancy, and estimated it might be about 13. That meant 13 strokes, or an advance of about 30 feet at best. We were passing a swimming raft, and I decided, quite suddenly, and offhand, to land on it. My friend got out of Coffin Lid with great alacrity, and once on the raft said hard things of me and my judgment. As he refused to go further in the Lid, I was obliged to fetch a dory to land him.

On another occasion a young woman of my acquaintance expressed a desire to go out in Coffin Lid. I

tried to head her off by telling her the boat was not safe. She knew better, and coyly said any boat was safe when I managed it. I leave it to you, gentle reader, could I resist such a soft blandishment as that? I put my disturbing premonitions in the locker, and took her out. She was a substantial sort of young woman, and when she sat down the Lid was about an inch free. We were in a harbor with some swell going, and the young woman expressed a desire to go to the other side, say a quarter of a mile.

I rowed her across, and I am sure I never before suffered such painful suspense for a given period as I did on that trip. Beads of cold sweat stood on my brow as the fair young thing in the stern prattled on about the sea, and all that, and the little waves lapped, and lapped level with the sternboard, and seemed to want to kiss the young lady. At last, when the trying journey was over, and my innocent freight was landed, I took my first long breath since leaving the other shore.

After that, no emergency, no guile of soft-spoken female, could lead me to put two persons in the Lid; and when I said good-bye to that pernicious craft I was joyful.

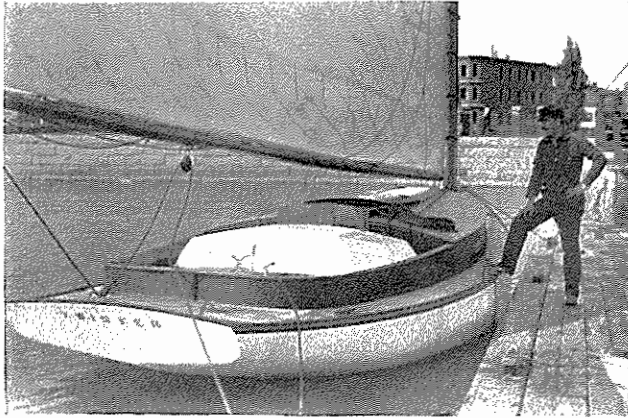
I mention this incident at length because of its effect on my mind and its assistance in forming my opinions as to what to avoid in my next tender.

Another tender of this kind I was obliged to use was owned by the Editor of *THE RUDDER* (who should have known better), and was towed behind that celebrated tabloid yawl *Sea Bird*. This also was a skiff, and was represented as having been built as a patent collapsible boat. It seemed always on the point of collapsing at the wrong moment, though I do not recall that it could be made to collapse when we wanted to stow it; and the skipper had his doubts about his ability to make it stand up again if we ever did succeed in getting it to collapse. The last time I used that famous tender was in making a landing at Block Island. After wetting both feet and nearly foundering, I swore an oath, by the shades of my ancestors, that I never would be caught in the thing again; and I never was.

Only last season I had an example of the danger of these flatiron skiffs, when one upset and dumped five youths into the water. They were a scared lot of boys when I got to them and yanked them out. But on getting ashore they bailed out their skiff and started again, having learned nothing by their adventure.

Mindful of the pitfalls that beset the path of the single-hander, I, on ordering a catboat of the cruising type, bethought me of a tender that should be unlike most small tenders. Indeed, I found I was traveling the same road as the average yachtsman of my kind, in wanting what, at that time, was not. I had seen safe tenders for small boats; but they were nearly as large as the boats themselves. Also they cost much money.

Punt—(Latin *Ponto*; see pontoon). A flat-bottomed, square-ended mastless boat of varying size and use.—*Century Dictionary*.



In the Cockpit

I knew of one good man who paid \$100 for a catboat and \$65 for a tender. It seemed to me the ratio in this transaction was not right. I wanted a tender costing less than 65 per cent. of the amount I was to pay for my boat.

So, knowing full well that the kind of tender I wanted did not exist among the tenders I had seen on the section of coast where kind fates had cast my lot, that is, Massachusetts Bay, I set about to design such a tender as I believed would realize my lofty ideal.

Before telling about the design, or its origin, I will anticipate enough to say that a season's use of my tender convinced me it was as good as could be made of its size; first, for safety; secondly, for handiness; third, for economy. Having proven that there is balm in this particular Gilead, I want to give the results of my experiment to my fellow yachtsmen of the mosquito fleet. Some doubtless will find my tender all wrong, and myself an idiot to recommend it. But others there may be who will see merit in it; and to such I will say that I can get similar tenders made where this one came from, and shall be glad to forward orders to the good, honest old boatbuilder who turned out my tender.

From the first thought of designing my tender to the last act of putting her away at the end of the season, the record of my venture is one of satisfaction. Designers of boats, I believe, never copy. This has become well enough known to be accepted as a truism. I merely mention the fact here to show the depth of my depravity in beginning my design for a tender, for I frankly copied the lines and dimensions of a Monhegan fisherman's punt. I remember the day I measured the punt, and made a sketch and photograph of her. The fishermen on the beach thought me a little wrong in the head. The only redeeming feature of the job to them was that I had a very pretty girl helping me, and they had a good chance to watch her as she held the end of the tape measure, unconsciously striking charming poses.

I was thinking serious thoughts, knowing how far I was departing from the ways of designers, but I took the lines away with me when I left the island. In the long Winter evenings—all Winter evenings are long, so why do we always refer to them in that way?—I labored over the drafting board, making punt lines, and changing my dimensions to suit the requirements of my boat that was to be. In the first place, the punt must be short enough to stow across the cockpit of my boat. The boat was to be 10 feet 6 inches wide. That meant a cockpit about 8 feet wide. To be on the safe side I would make the

punt 7 feet six on top, and about 6 on the bottom. This I did, drawing the ends with rather less rake than those of the Monhegan punt, raising the freeboard a bit, and increasing the sheer. When the plan was done, my dimensions worked out as follows:

Length on top, 7 feet 6 inches.

Length on bottom, 6 feet 4 inches.

Width of ends: Top, 26 inches; bottom, 18 inches.

Width amidships: Top, 39 inches; bottom, 29 inches.

Freeboard at ends (from base line): Bow, 20 inches; stern, 19 inches.

Freeboard, amidships, 15½ inches.

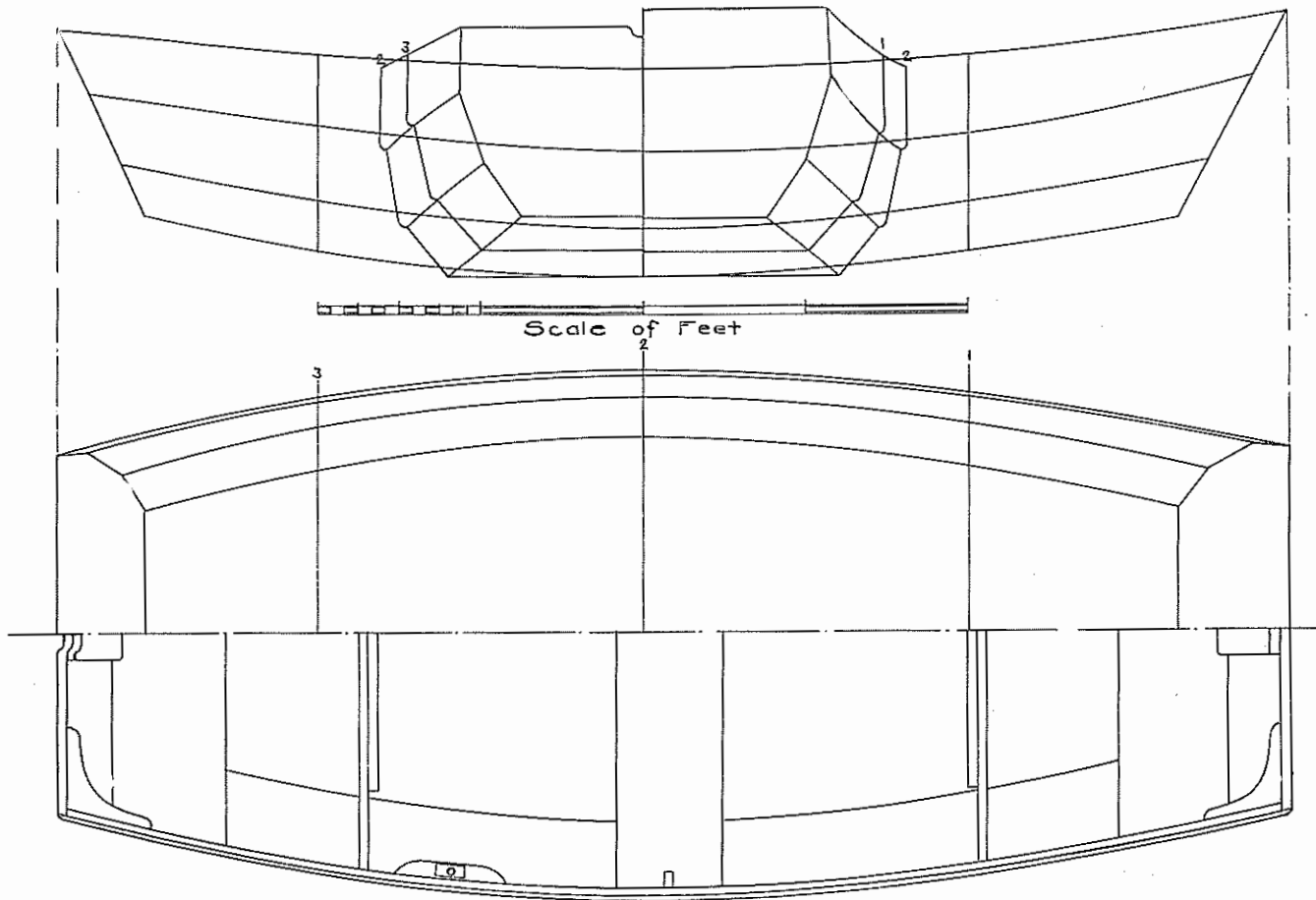
When I sent the lines to my friend the boatbuilder, in my native town, on the Maine coast, he made no sign; but in due time I got a line from him, saying: "Your tub is done. What shall I do with it?" I answered that he should ship it to Boston. It came, and with it a bill as follows: "To one tub, \$15. The next one will be \$20." That was all right, thought I. The craft is worth \$20, any man's money. But I sent him a check for \$15, as he had not asked for more.

The design, printed herewith, gives accurately the dimensions of the punt. (Not trusting my own lines, I had Mr. Norman L. Skene take off this set from the hull itself.) The material used in her construction was light but strong—pine, ½-inch, for planking; oak for frames and ends, the latter ⅝-inch, reinforced by a strip up and down the middle; seats pine, ½-inch, and the knees at the rail, bow and stern, of beech. A bumping strip, visible in the photographs, was of hard pine, ½-inch. The fastenings were brass screws. A galvanized ringbolt was fixed to the middle of the bow, and to this was attached a short painter, by means of an eye-splice with the other end turned through it. A pair of 6-foot pine oars, neatly leathered and varnished, and galvanized oarlocks, were included in the outfit by the builder, who gave the punt three coats of white, inside and out, before delivery.

When I got the way-bill for the punt I went down to the Portland boat wharf to look her over. The bag-



Launching



gageman grinned as he pointed up to a pile of boxes and barrels, on the top of which rested the punt, and asked, "That yours?" His grin was the first link in a chain of grins that followed me and the punt whenever we were seen together throughout that season. I never saw an inanimate object with such a power to raise a smile as that punt. The longshoremen who lifted it down off the pile of freight grinned, and made jokes about it, after their kind. The expressman who took the thing aboard his wagon, to haul to South Boston, also made jokes and grinned, and assessed me "a couple of shells of beer" on the strength of it. When I got the punt over to the clubhouse the janitor, who is a dignified man named Olaf Stream, smiled as I had never seen him smile before, and asked solicitously if I wanted any help in getting my tender into the water. I did not, for the thing only weighed 65 pounds, and taking it on my shoulder, I trotted down the float with it.

I confess I was more pleased with that punt than I was with my boat. It was a fine plaything, and I had faith to believe it would be useful. To test it forthwith, I put in a load of outfitting truck the expressman had brought from Morss', consisting of the following: Lead, 300 pounds; anchor, 40 pounds; two boxes, 60 pounds; add self, 175 pounds, and the total is 575 pounds. This was not bad for the maiden try of a 65-pound runt of a punt, but 6 feet 4 on the bottom. There was a nice little breeze, with a nice little chop, as I started out to row off to the cat. I noticed people along the parkway stopping to watch me, and an old chap rowing past in a Whitehall boat said, with conviction, "Guess you won't git far in that," and watched me over his shoulder so long I

feared he would take a kink in his neck. I must admit I rowed off to the cat very slowly, and somewhat carefully, but I got there without shipping a ripple, and unloaded the stuff without accident.

After such a trial trip, I felt rather proud. The punt was a success, so far as carrying went. Would she fit in the cockpit? I hustled her aboard and tried her. She fitted. Then I put her on the stern, and found she could be carried there nicely. Therefore, from every point of view, thus far, she was satisfactory. Only two things remained to be done, and they were to see if she towed well and would carry two men. I got underway at once and tried towing her. She skittered along on the water like the flat stones I used to scale from the beach when a boy. The position of the ringbolt to which the painter was attached was just right to cause the bow to lift when going at good speed, while it was not low enough to pull the punt up on her stern; while with it nearer the top the tendency would have been to keep the bow down. This, with a blunt craft like the punt, would be disastrous. Frequent trials at towing, in all kinds of going from slow to fast, and in all kinds of water, from smooth to rough, satisfied me before long that a better little boat for towing probably could not be devised. With that I was much pleased. I am better than most designers, said I. My first boat is a hit. But now I recall I gave little or no credit at the time to those to whom it was due, namely, the practical fishermen who originated the Monhegan punt, and doubtless would be much astonished to find a man writing so much about so small a boat; and the equally practical boatbuilder who knew just where to attach her painter.

In due time I invited some of my friends to come out for a sail, and with them I tested the carrying capacity of the punt in passengers. She carried two comfortably. If the man in the bow sat low any kind of common chop could be withstood. If he sat on the seat she seemed a little uneasy; so I formulated the rule that a landsman passenger should sit in the bottom. A like test with three men aboard showed that this number was an average smooth-water pattern, while four could be carried all right in a calm, and with enough buoyancy in reserve to sustain the weight of another man could room have been found for him.

Four of the accompanying pictures show the punt carrying, respectively, one man weighing 175 pounds;

ing plenty of room for the helmsman to move about. The position on the quarter has its merits on short runs. Launching from such a position is the simplest thing imaginable, as a single push from one hand sends the boat free of the stern, right side up, and following as faithfully as Mary's little lamb.

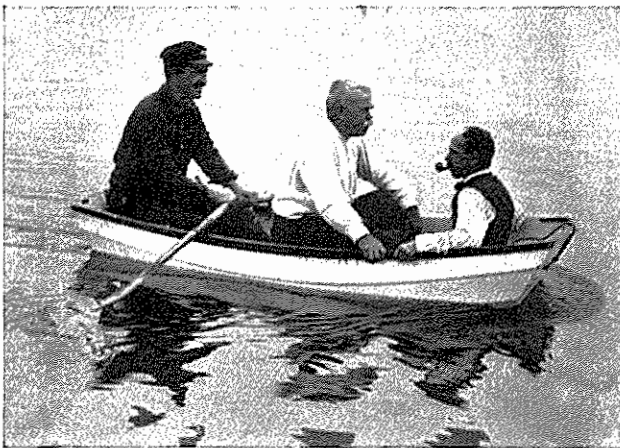
All Summer I reaped sheafs of bouquets from all sides on that tender. Nothing like it had ever been seen in Boston waters, and people were as pleased with it as a cat with two tails. I was as busy as an old maid with twins, telling its good points, and showing it off. My friends took special delight in making sallies about it, and choosing names for it. One called it The Pup. I was for calling it Kitten, as I never knew a cat to have



Carrying 175 pounds



Carrying 305 pounds



Carrying 522 pounds



Carrying 692 pounds

two men, weighing 305 pounds; three men weighing 522 pounds, and four men weighing 692 pounds. The others show: (a) The method of carrying the punt down a float for launching; (b) the method of carrying her stowed across the cockpit; (c) the method of carrying her on the weather quarter when running free; (d) method of towing, with painter made fast to the main-sheet traveler, with a double hitch, a loop being left in the second, easily pulled out; (e) sponging out. Sponging was necessary only to clean the paint, as the punt, being well made, never leaked. The punt was stowed in the cockpit only on cruises, where her bottom presented a fine place on which to lay a chart. The space between the punt and the wheel is about 18 inches, leav-

a pup; but as one of my party with a bit of Scotch in him voted for Pup, by saying "Me for the Wee Pup," I accepted on the name, though I could not commend his grammar, and Wee Pup it became.

I soon became accustomed to the grin that spread through the fleet as I came up, and also to the remarks sure to be directed at me, or overheard. These remarks I soon learned to group, as they were much alike. The chief form of hail, if I were seen rowing, was, "Which way are you going?" This indicated that the bow and stern looked just alike. One day at Hull a bright individual hailed me, when I was rowing along peacefully toward him, and said: "Put her around bow on." That was a good one, so I swung her around side to



Sponging Out

him, and he guffawed and chortled with delight to see his little joke had got to me.

Reference to my log for the season shows that no cruise was complete without an entry about the punt. Here are a few of them:

May 25—Ashore at 6 P. M.; blowing fresh; stiff chop; punt perfectly dry.

May 27—Visited Quincy; punt raised a laugh at the yacht club.

May 30—Boarded regatta committee float off South Boston in punt; warm greeting from the committee; much interest in the punt. Rowing ashore, passed floating U. S. life-saving station. Some women guests aboard rushed to the side to see me pass, laughing and asking me "where I got it," and "which way I was going."

June 4—Quincy Bay. Punt greatly amuses all we pass. Received several hails on strength of it.

June 11—While at anchor inside the Brewsters, for dinner, greatly amused guests (and demonstrated seaworthiness of my tender) by rowing in the punt several times through breaker over a half-tide ledge. She seemed to like the purring white surf. Sensation of riding a breaker not unpleasant under the circumstances.

June 17—Continued joy of the populace in my tender.

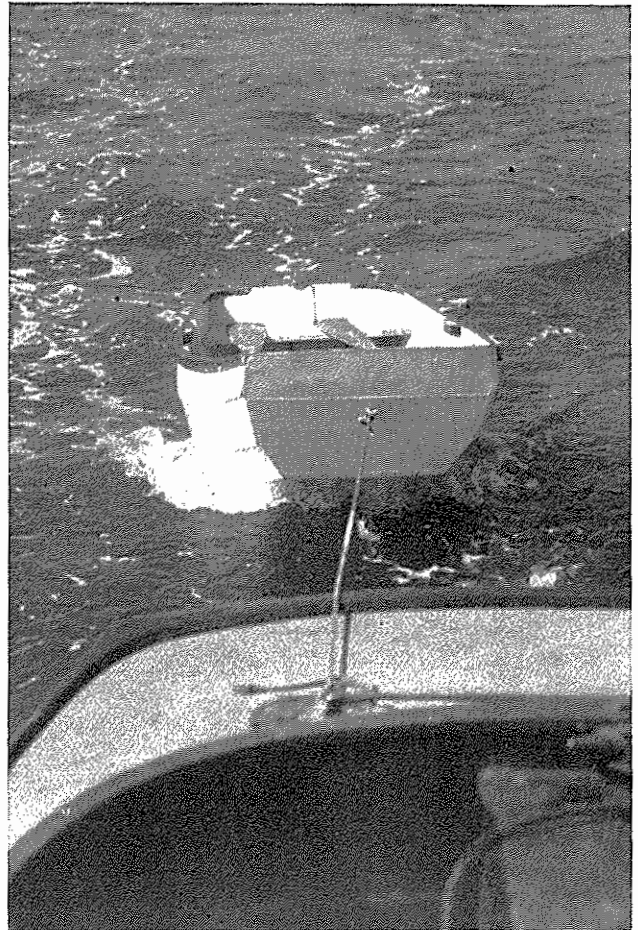


On Weather Quarter

Some laugh, others indulge in satire. Meanwhile I am a public benefactor in furnishing so much merriment to so many people.

July 31—Marblehead. Northeaster, breezing up gradually in the night; got to be half gale in the forenoon. Lay to a 25-pound anchor, but just as I was considering whether it would hold during the day, it broke ground, and I began drifting down on a small black cutter. No room to pay out, so got the 40-pound anchor into the punt, and ran it out to weather with 25 fathoms of cable, in a smart chop. Men on other boats watched me as if expecting a spill. Met with no accident and shipped no water. The two anchors snubbed the boat, and she lay to them throughout the day.

August 1—Wee Pup slipped her collar, and went



Towing

adrift this morning. Did not miss her until a square-head from a big yawl came alongside in a dinghy with her in tow. Asked him if he would take a little something, and he said, "Ah tank yes." Poured him four fingers of Medford. Great joy.

August 2—Rowed about Marblehead Harbor, being hailed by friends on big yachts with derision and gibes. Rowed up alongside one of the biggest schooners just to show that yachting knows no distinction. Was greeted like a prince by her owner. Sensible man.

August 3—Standing out of Marblehead Harbor today overheard one fisherman say to another, in passing power dory, as he indicated my punt, "Sensible little tender, ain't it?" I felt that at least here was a man of intelligence.

THE RUDDER

August 9—Passed a party of girls, while rowing in punt, one of whom said, "Isn't that cute?" Felt flattered.

August 13—Anchored off Boston Light to fish and swim. Tried diving out of the punt and getting in again. Found I could do both without her shipping water.

August 14—Many smiles for the punt. One large yawl in Hull Bay hailed: "Great tender you've got there!"

September 2—Met strong head tide in Hull Gut. Got through, but wind fell and could not fetch anchorage, so got into the punt and towed in.

In the course of the Summer I noticed the punt developed certain habits. She was fond, at the anchorage, of butting up alongside the boat, like a sucking calf. This scarred the paint on the boat, so I tethered the affectionate tender at the end of the mainboom, with the painter passed under her middle thwart. She often rode that way when we were at anchor, but sometimes, when the wind blew strong, and she spanked on the chop, and always at night, I took her on the stern. On one occasion, at Hull, when she was thus stowed, the rain fell in torrents, and she gathered about a barrel of water. On turning out I intended to pour this water out at once, but something else claimed my attention, and I left her until after breakfast. Then, starting aft, I remarked that I would launch the tender. At that

moment the water in her lurched aft, and she slid off the stern, parting her painter, and went adrift, down toward the Pemberton steamboat landing. It was blowing a good 25 miles an hour, a hard Southeaster, and raining torrents. It was up to me to get underway, and pick up the punt before she struck the wharf at Pemberton, a lee shore, a quarter of a mile off. To get underway I had to put three reefs into a soggy mainsail, without any one to help me, as my companion was a landsman, and had no oilskins. I got in the reefs, dropped my mooring, took a turn out into the bay, tacked—I didn't dare jibe—and bore off for the punt. She appeared to be close against the pier, but on getting down to her I saw she had not reached it by about 50 feet. That I thought would give me room to cut in between her and the wharf, luff, get a hold on the punt with a boathook, and stand off on the other tack, without losing headway or striking the pier. I executed the movement as planned, but when I got the hook under the bow seat of the punt the sudden yank on her nearly pulled me overboard, as she was then half full of water. I gave her a quick lift to the stern of the boat, the water ran out of her, and as we filled away, trimming sheets, I slid her into the cockpit; none the worse for her run-away. The whole performance of actually picking her up and stowing her had taken not more than a minute.