

THE RUDDER CUP, CHRISTMAS, 1907.


IN the year 1904 several leading American Yachtsmen, prominent amongst whom was that leading spirit in the American Yachting world, Mr. T. Fleming Day, editor of the "Rudder," conceived the idea that the existing system of yacht racing as conducted in all Club circles was not conducive to the best interests of the sport, inasmuch as the more wholesome type of cruising craft was, in the stress of class racing and machine building, in danger of being utterly neglected, and that instead of developing a class of amateur seamen capable of handling their vessels and safely navigating them in an ordinary summer voyage over a long distance, facing the perils of the deep, the tendency was to make the amateur an ordinary cabin passenger with a large vessel and a professional crew to handle her.

As the result of much consideration several trophies were offered for long distance ocean races, and to-day the race from New York to Bermuda, limited to small cruisers, has become an established institution.

Mr. Day, seeing the unbounded success attending these races, and the impetus given to the sport, very generously decided to extend his liberality to yachtsmen in other parts of the world, and early in 1907 wrote to his friend Commodore T. A. Dickson, of the Geelong Yacht Club, offering a trophy for competition provided he or his club would undertake to carry out the necessary arrangements for an Ocean Race in local waters.

After receiving promises of support from several prominent yachting men here, the kind offer was accepted, and a race to be sailed from Port Phillip Heads to Tamar Heads, Tasmania, a distance of 196 miles direct, was decided on.

As will be seen by perusal of the conditions, every precaution was taken that all competing crafts should be decked vessels, well found and capable of making the voyage in perfect safety under any



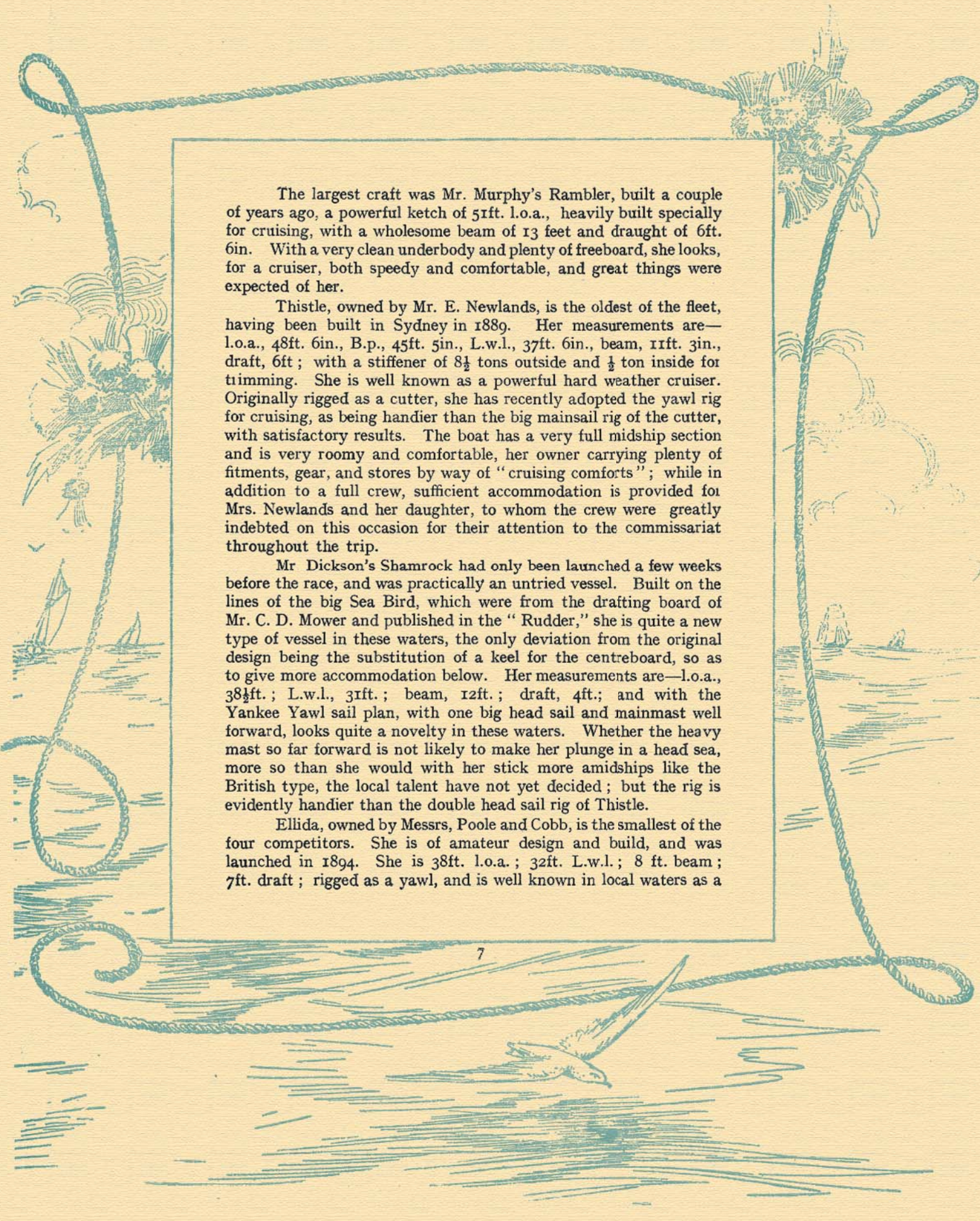
conditions of weather, and these precautions were fully justified under the very abnormal weather conditions prevailing throughout the race.

It must be borne in mind that in an open water race starting from Port Phillip Heads to any other port over one hundred miles distant, there are no ports every few miles to run to for shelter, and although for the whole way across Bass Strait there is land within a half day's run in any direction, the conditions are such that some of the ugliest seas to be met with around Australia may at times be found there, and the little vessel must be capable of making the whole passage.

The race has proved also that an amateur crew is quite as capable of handling their little vessel as a professional one. The advantages that an amateur crew have, is their unquenchable enthusiasm and boundless faith. The watch below to them is a punishment, and, given a skipper in whom they have confidence, they will follow him anywhere. We have not yet reached that pitch of a yachtsman's ambition, i.e., a large number of amateur skippers able to dispense with a professional navigator, but two of the four crafts were skippered by amateurs, and the navigator of the winning craft was merely a stand-by to fall back upon in case of uncertainty.

Some discussion took place in several of the Club circles as to whether our local cruisers were suitable for the work, but after the performances of the competitors very little requires to be said. But we would point out that very little difference exists between Thistle, the winner of the race, and Tamerlane, the winner of the first race from New York to Bermuda, sailed in 1906, the former being somewhat the larger boat; while Gauntlet, who took part in the Bermuda race, was only 28 feet water-line, and sailed with only four hands, one of whom was a lady.

When the entries for the race closed there were only four nomination papers lodged. But the donor of the trophy would have been fully satisfied had he seen the four, they being just the very type of vessel he is trying to encourage, namely, good healthy little ships which the cruising man loves. However, it was well known that they were all certain starters, the greatest difficulty being experienced in getting amateurs who could spare sufficient time to make the trip and a short holiday cruise before returning home.




The largest craft was Mr. Murphy's Rambler, built a couple of years ago, a powerful ketch of 51ft. l.o.a., heavily built specially for cruising, with a wholesome beam of 13 feet and draught of 6ft. 6in. With a very clean underbody and plenty of freeboard, she looks, for a cruiser, both speedy and comfortable, and great things were expected of her.

Thistle, owned by Mr. E. Newlands, is the oldest of the fleet, having been built in Sydney in 1889. Her measurements are—l.o.a., 48ft. 6in., B.p., 45ft. 5in., L.w.l., 37ft. 6in., beam, 11ft. 3in., draft, 6ft; with a stiffener of $8\frac{1}{2}$ tons outside and $\frac{1}{2}$ ton inside for trimming. She is well known as a powerful hard weather cruiser. Originally rigged as a cutter, she has recently adopted the yawl rig for cruising, as being handier than the big mainsail rig of the cutter, with satisfactory results. The boat has a very full midship section and is very roomy and comfortable, her owner carrying plenty of fitments, gear, and stores by way of "cruising comforts"; while in addition to a full crew, sufficient accommodation is provided for Mrs. Newlands and her daughter, to whom the crew were greatly indebted on this occasion for their attention to the commissariat throughout the trip.

Mr. Dickson's Shamrock had only been launched a few weeks before the race, and was practically an untried vessel. Built on the lines of the big Sea Bird, which were from the drafting board of Mr. C. D. Mower and published in the "Rudder," she is quite a new type of vessel in these waters, the only deviation from the original design being the substitution of a keel for the centreboard, so as to give more accommodation below. Her measurements are—l.o.a., 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ ft.; L.w.l., 31ft.; beam, 12ft.; draft, 4ft.; and with the Yankee Yawl sail plan, with one big head sail and mainmast well forward, looks quite a novelty in these waters. Whether the heavy mast so far forward is not likely to make her plunge in a head sea, more so than she would with her stick more amidships like the British type, the local talent have not yet decided; but the rig is evidently handier than the double head sail rig of Thistle.

Ellida, owned by Messrs. Poole and Cobb, is the smallest of the four competitors. She is of amateur design and build, and was launched in 1894. She is 38ft. l.o.a.; 32ft. L.w.l.; 8 ft. beam; 7ft. draft; rigged as a yawl, and is well known in local waters as a



splendid hard weather boat. On several occasions she has made the trip to Launceston and right down to Hobart, her owner being confident in her weatherly qualities, which we have seen demonstrated in many a hard tussle in home waters.

There is no doubt the little vessel was unfortunate in meeting with such unexceptional weather, and the time at the disposal of the crew being so limited, her skipper thought it better to fight out the gale and then return to his head quarters rather than go on when all hope of the race was gone. A better testimonial to her seagoing capabilities could not be desired. On Christmas Eve there was a general exodus of yachts, both large and small, from the various harbours in the port to Queenscliff (Port Phillip Heads), some 32 miles from Melbourne, all anxious to see the start of the race, fixed for 6 a.m. Boxing Day; and on arrival during Christmas Day the various competitors, especially the American designed craft Shamrock, were objects of much interest to their fellow yachtsmen. At sundown on Christmas Day the wind began to harden up, and by daylight next morning had settled down to a strong Northerly breeze with a rapidly falling Barometer and a very wild sky overhead, which forecasted a shift of wind to the Southward, and with plenty of "bone" in it when it did come. The Northerly breeze, however, meant a dead run while it lasted, and it was expected that by the time the wind broke, the boats would be well on their way across the straits, when, with the wind from the Southward, they would probably lay the rest of their course. Punctual to time the four yachts got away on their journey, all under very snug canvas, and before they were lost sight of it was evident that when well clear of the shelter of the land they would find the "salt hills" a pretty stiff climb.

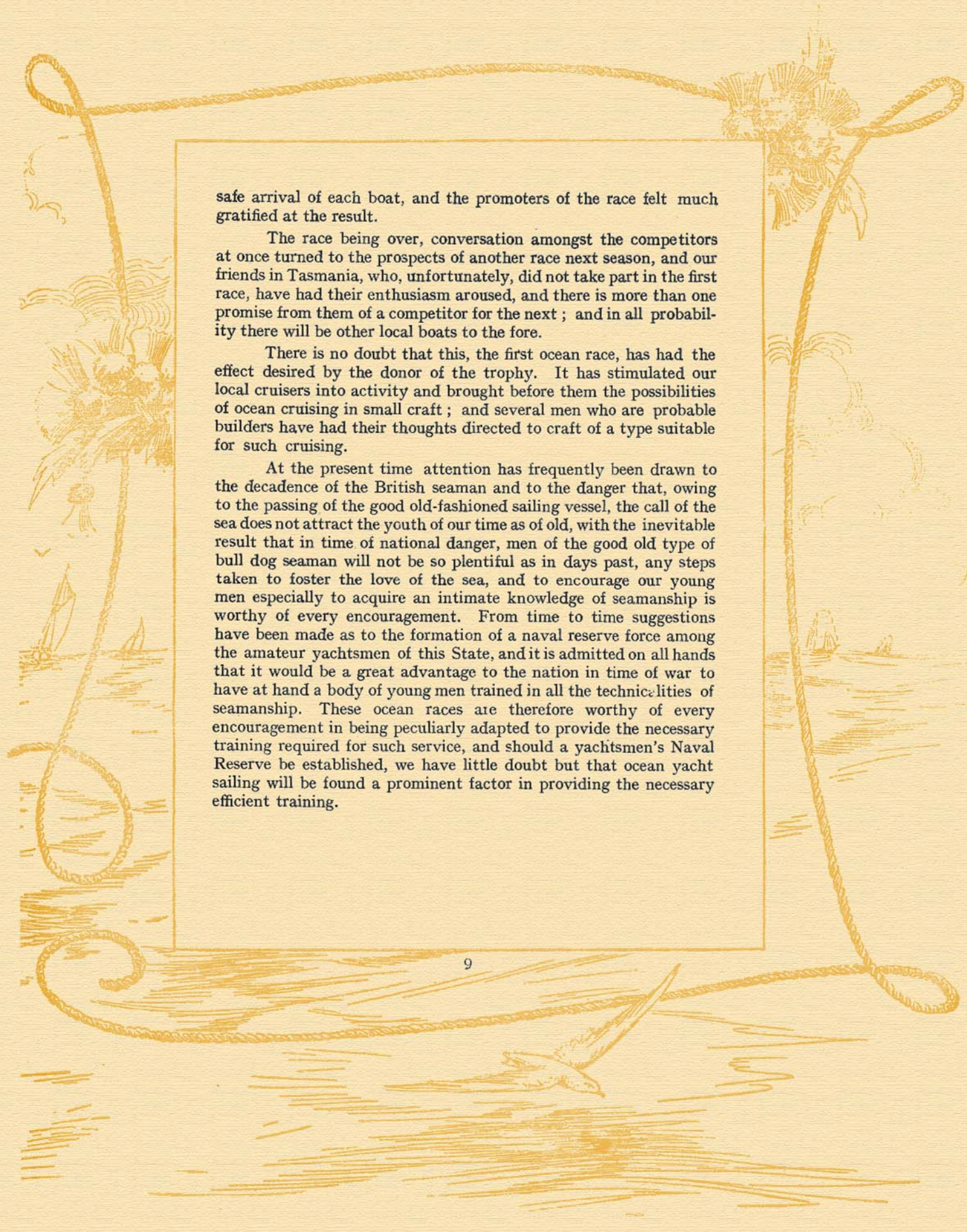
As the day wore on the wind hardened to a gale, with very heavy sea, and for the next couple of days the weather prevailing in the straits was, according to local seamen and fishermen, the worst experienced for over twenty years.

The wind later in the day broke in the West, then shifted to the South-west, later on to South, and during the next day blew a "black Sou-Easter."

Being the first race of this kind in these waters, much anxiety was felt at both sides of the course until word was received of the



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| 1. Thistle and Rambler. | 4. Pilot leaves us. |
| 2. Tamar Yacht Club House. | 5. At Anchor, Queenscliff. |
| 3. Low Head Lighthouse. | |



safe arrival of each boat, and the promoters of the race felt much gratified at the result.

The race being over, conversation amongst the competitors at once turned to the prospects of another race next season, and our friends in Tasmania, who, unfortunately, did not take part in the first race, have had their enthusiasm aroused, and there is more than one promise from them of a competitor for the next ; and in all probability there will be other local boats to the fore.

There is no doubt that this, the first ocean race, has had the effect desired by the donor of the trophy. It has stimulated our local cruisers into activity and brought before them the possibilities of ocean cruising in small craft ; and several men who are probable builders have had their thoughts directed to craft of a type suitable for such cruising.

At the present time attention has frequently been drawn to the decadence of the British seaman and to the danger that, owing to the passing of the good old-fashioned sailing vessel, the call of the sea does not attract the youth of our time as of old, with the inevitable result that in time of national danger, men of the good old type of bull dog seaman will not be so plentiful as in days past, any steps taken to foster the love of the sea, and to encourage our young men especially to acquire an intimate knowledge of seamanship is worthy of every encouragement. From time to time suggestions have been made as to the formation of a naval reserve force among the amateur yachtsmen of this State, and it is admitted on all hands that it would be a great advantage to the nation in time of war to have at hand a body of young men trained in all the technicalities of seamanship. These ocean races are therefore worthy of every encouragement in being peculiarly adapted to provide the necessary training required for such service, and should a yachtsmen's Naval Reserve be established, we have little doubt but that ocean yacht sailing will be found a prominent factor in providing the necessary efficient training.