

HUNT'S

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CRUISE TO THE BRISTOL CHANNEL.*

CHAPTER III.

FRIDAY, the 12th of August, we devoted to preparing for our further cruise to the westward. Having taken on board what coke, water, and other stores we wanted, we got underway in the afternoon, and beat down to Lymington, but owing to light winds and a strong flood, we did not reach the anchorage off Jack in the Basket, till nearly 9h. p.m. We had hardly let go our mud hook, when the Victoria and Albert, with the Royal Standard flying, came to a little way astern of us. This was the first easy stage Her Majesty made on her way to the Channel Islands. With her usual activity, she was past the Needles and out of sight before we were astir next morning.

Early on Saturday we pulled up Lymington River, where we found a number of yachts, including the Irish Lily (cut.), Harlequin (sch.), &c., lying at anchor inside Jack in the Basket, much the safest berth, as there is a nasty sea comes into Lymington Roads when the wind is southerly. This river, or rather creek, is easily navigated at low water, and for some time afterwards, but subsequent to half-tide, when the grassy flats on each side get covered, it is, notwithstanding the stately avenue of withered fir trees, placed to guide the errant boatman, no easy matter to find one's way. In coming down when the tide was pretty nearly full,

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we got aground half a dozen times. -In Mr. Inman's yard we found few vessels building, and but few even on the mud. At this season of the year, this great storehouse of yachts is well nigh exhausted. A few there were—and among them the well-known Lulworth, which but for her shovel bow would be a very handsome vessel, and the much decried Cyclone, a vessel we were well pleased to have an opportunity of seeing; if she don't sail, the fault is not in her model, she is as pretty a craft to look at as ever swam. She was getting additional ballast and other alterations, which will doubtless improve her much. Among the more disconsolate looking craft, whose unpleasant fate it had been to spend the whole summer on the hot ooze of Lymington River, we recognized an old friend—a little schooner, called the "Ugly Duck," built by a scientific amateur in the Clyde, some years since, on a pet theory, and in exemplification of some peculiar curve generated by a carriage wheel while performing its task under difficulties of a remarkable nature—like all such mathematical creations, she had proved but very partially successful. It had been with great difficulty she had been brought round, and when brought was found unsaleable. Luckily she is not large, so the loss is not very heavy. She is badly named; she has little of the duck about her, and her ugliness is by no means apparent, indeed she is a comely little craft to look on, and would make one would think a good enough cruiser for the Solent.

Anxious to secure the ebb for our passage through the Needles, we tore ourselves away from Lymington before our curiosity was half satisfied. We could have spent the whole day—aye, two or three whole days there with much satisfaction had time permitted. We got on board about half-past 11 a.m., and immediately got under way. The wind was right ahead, but with a six knot tide under our lee we did not heed that much. Two schooner yachts had passed shortly before we got on board, and we were all impatience to be after them. The day was perfection—bright sun—clear blue sky—fresh breeze, yet warm, pleasant temperature—the coast all the way to Portland, whither we were bound, was new to us, and everything combined to put us in capital spirits. These were no way damped by the fact that we had hardly cleared the buoy at the extremity of the Shingles before we passed the hindmost schooner, much to the annoyance of her crew, who took to skeeting, and various other dodges to make her sail; but though a vessel of upwards of 60 tons, she had no chance with our cutter on a taut baw line, whatever she might have done with a slack sheet. The leading schooner had a much longer start, and besides took a course which did not answer our book, standing away to the southward