

from the sea, the steady flourishing of the whole country-side as long as the cruises are gainful; the building of new vessels, the eagerness of the young for the life of adventure, unchecked by the terrible disasters that ever and anon mar the good fortune of the fleet, disasters that may sweep away nearly all the men folk of the place and check its growth for a dozen years,—such phenomena are common to our fishing life now-a-days, and to the old Northman's buccaneering life so long ago. And when crossing the North Sea one steams through the Grimsby or Lowestoft fleet, hundreds of big boats out for the herring, one can form even a visible image of what a wicking fleet must have looked like as the ships in great groups sped out with a fair north-easter, eager for the work before them, or hurried homewards with a sou'-wester behind them, deeply laden with English and Irish gold and silver, and raiment and jewels, and slaves and wine and weapons.

The "Helge Lays," best of all the Eddic poems, express the spirit of the wicking.

Messengers thence the king sent
 over land and sea to call out the levy :
 Gold in good store
they were to promise the warriors and their sons.¹
 "Do ye bid them get aboard forthwith,
 and make ready to sail from Brandey [*or* Sword Island]."
 There the prince waited until thither there came
 warriors by hundreds from Hedinsey.

¹ Of course, when a chief or king held a levy for a wicking cruise, not a war, men came or not as they chose, and the prospect of booty and certainty of pay would be the chief attraction.