

WARSHIPS

Schooner Days

DCXII

OFF COBOURG

By C. H. J. SNIDER

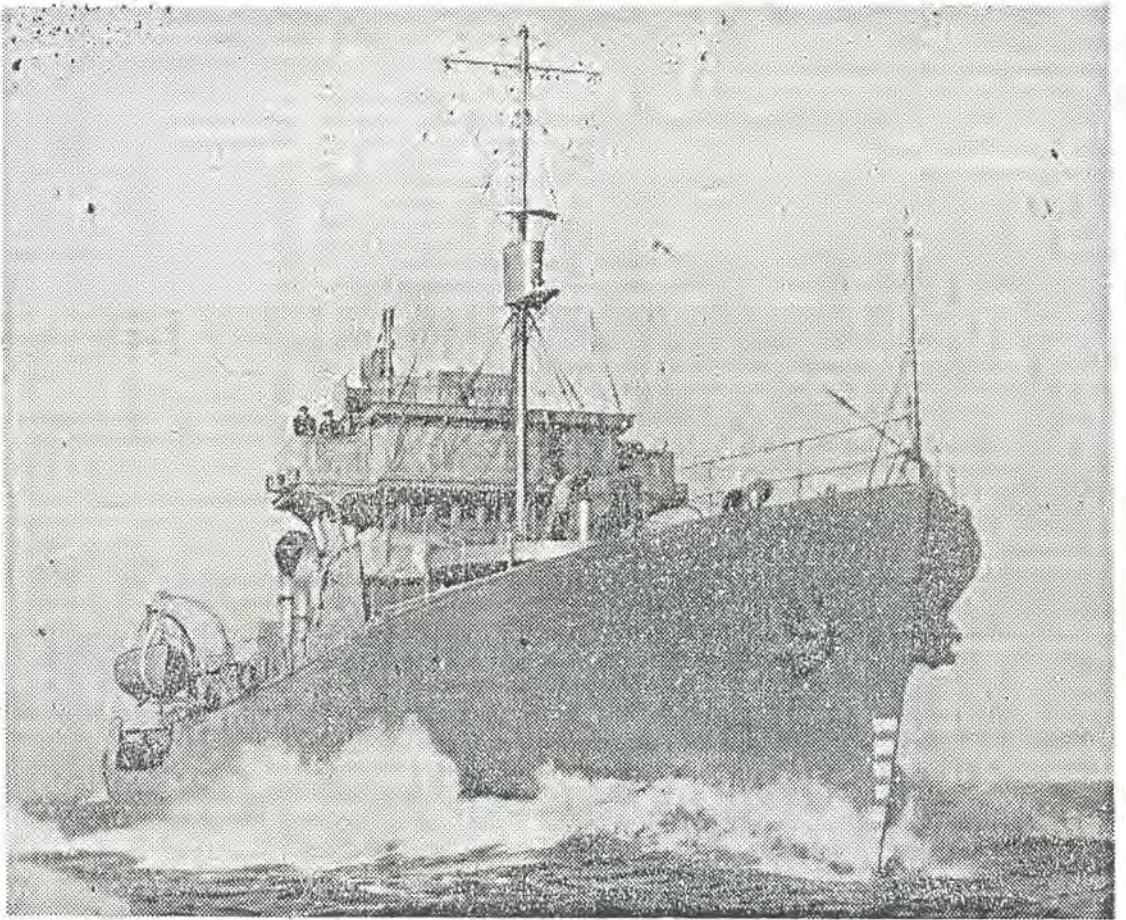
ONE of the hundred Telegram boys on active service sent Schboner a little outward-bound present this week which he had picked up when a thousand miles on his way. It was an old print of W. H. Bartlett's well-known engraving "Light-ship, near Coburg, Lake Ontario" published in London in 1841. It proves, among other things, that the Bull Rock light, still shining, had been built by 1840, when Bartlett concluded his tour of "the Canadas" in our two infant provinces were then known.



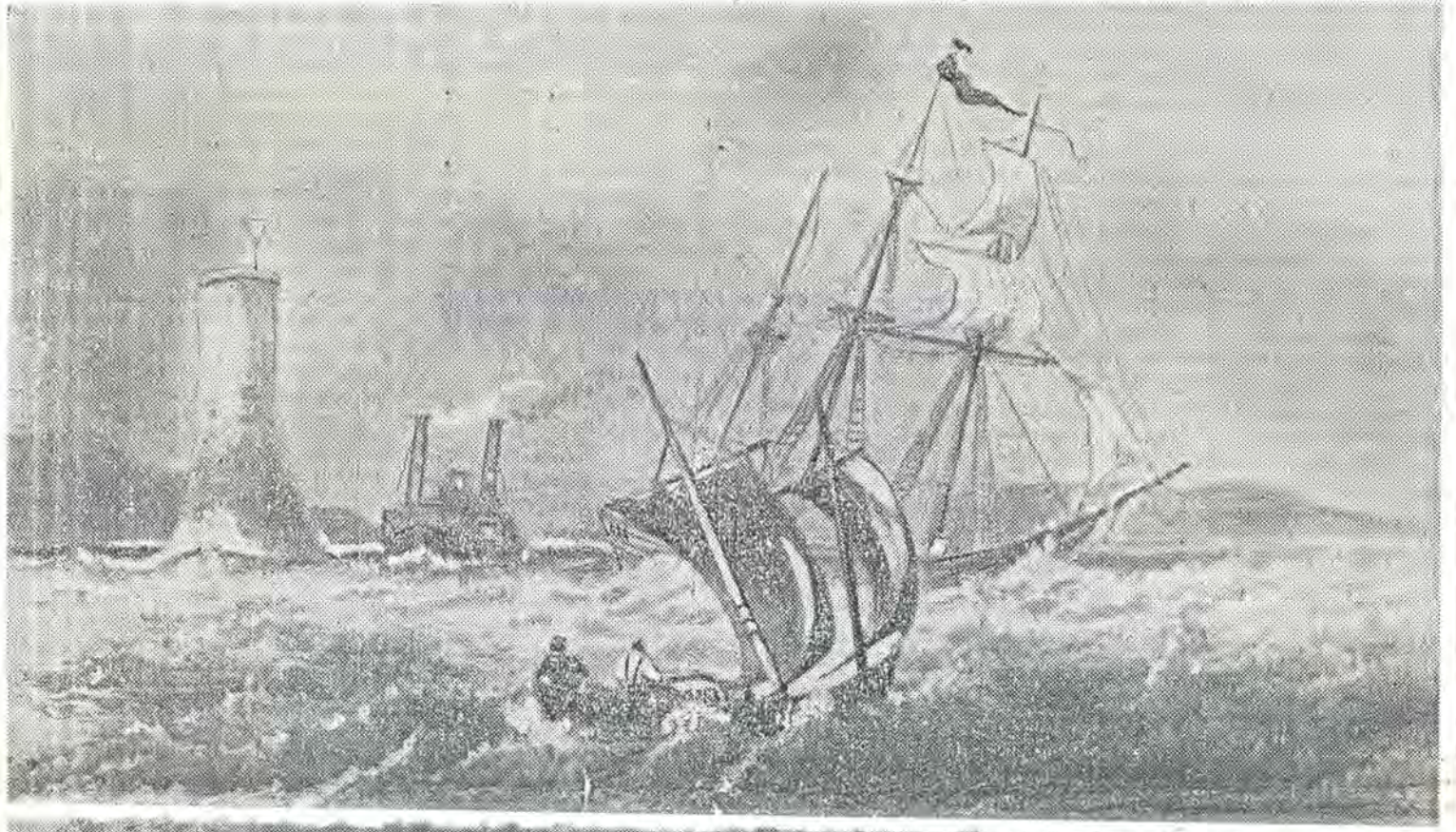
It is a lively composition, smacking somewhat of the Miller engraving "Spithead," from the Turner picture in the National Gallery. The ship-artist used to enliven it has been commented on before. With the portrait of the steamer Queen Charlotte, shown last week, in mind—first of the ancient Gildersleeve line—it seems quite probable that the paddle-wheel steamer, without masts and belching flame and smoke from her forward-ship funnels, is intended to represent this same old woodburner, the second steamer built for Lake Ontario.



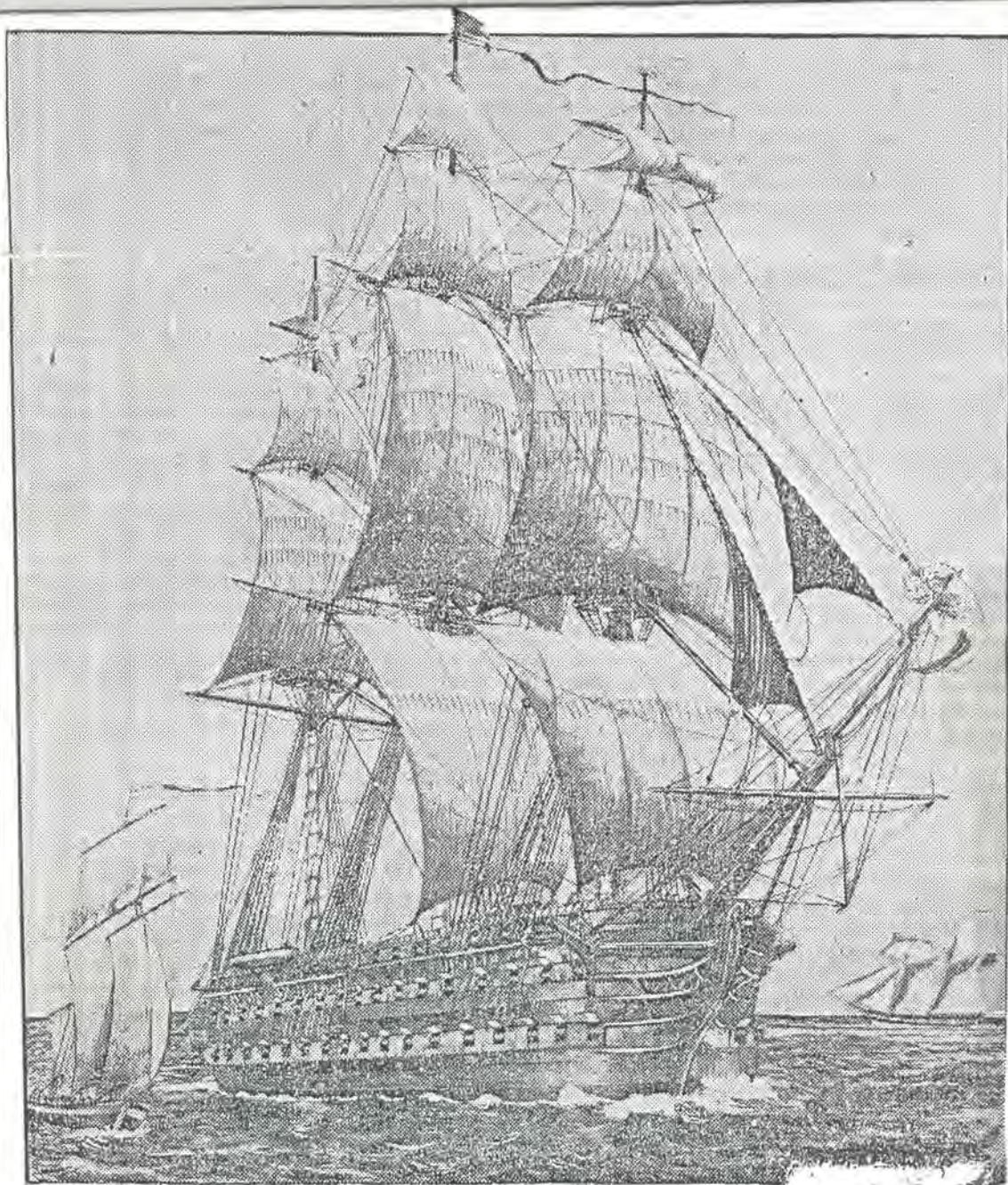
The fishing boat in the foreground, with two baggy sails of the antiquated dipping-lug variety, may be due to the time, and the three-masted shown standing off from the



H.M.C.S. COBOURG, CORVETTE, SPONSORED BY THE TOWN, 1943.



GULL ROCK LIGHT, STILL SHINING WEST OF COBOURG, as shown in the well-known Bartlett engraving, with a warship in the background supposed to be H.M.S. ST. LAWRENCE.



H.M.S. ST. LAWRENCE, 1st RATE SHIP-OF-THE-LINE, 1814, from the drawing by C. H. J. Snider for the John Ross Robertson Collection, Toronto Public Library.

land may represent Bartlett's recollection of some of the fighting ships of the War of 1812, which were still above water in Kingston harbor when he made his tour. Three-masted schooners were rare on the lakes in 1840, the first being the Owanunga, built at Moy, in the present city of Windsor, in 1836. The vessel in the picture has three masts, but she is not a schooner at all, but some sort of cut-dawn square rigger.

Although no guns or gunports are shown in this vessel she has the distinctive quarter-badges and head-rails of the men-of-war which fought on Lake Ontario a quarter of a century before the drawing was made. Some of these were used for commercial purposes afterwards.

The three-master mentioned appears to have lost all her sails except

one jib, a fore topsail and a fore top-gallantsail, although there are indications of the fragments of another jib on the bowsprit, unset. She has been barque rigged, which would call for at least six square sails, but both her main and mizzenmasts are bare, or as the old sailors said, "barren," with no canvas at all.



It has been suggested that this vessel was Commodore Sir James Lucas Yeo's late flagship St. Lawrence, built in 1814, and afloat 40 years afterwards, until she was beached at Kingston to form a cord-wood dock. It is possible that in Bartlett's time she had been cut down by the removal of her guns and upper decks and spars, in accordance with the disarmament agreement, but kept in commission as the flag-

ship of the "one gun navy" which still ruled the lake waves.

Bartlett must have noticed her, for she was the most remarkable ship of her time, as large as Nelson's Victory, which took 14 years to complete in the Royal dockyards, and as heavily gunned. But the St. Lawrence was rushed together in 10 months in the Canadian wilderness, and won a war without firing a shot.

When she was launched, from sheer respect for her unprecedented armament, the heaviest ever assembled on fresh water, the enemy fleet withdrew from the lake and blockaded itself in Sacketts Harbor for the duration. With Ontario thus swept clear of all hostile force the St. Lawrence, manned by a crew of a thousand men, poured troops into the Niagara peninsula, still held by the enemy, and by the time the bells of

*midnight unwittingly signalled the Treaty of Ghent and the end of hostilities on Christmas Eve, 1814, Upper Canada was cleared of invaders and the war was really over. It took months, however, for the news to cross the Atlantic.



So Bartlett, with a proper respect for the picturesque, introduced the figure of the valiant 100-gun man-of-war into the peaceful scene "near Cobourg" a quarter of a century after the St. Lawrence's great feat. There is one identifying mark which clinches the argument for this being an intended portrait of the old flagship, and that is the long commission-pendant and the commodore's broad-pendant above it at the main truck. No commercial vessel was allowed to fly such bunting, even in celebration of a great victory or national festival. There was a fine of £500 for such an offense.



PORT HOPE AND COBOURG, the one the county town of Durham, the other of Northumberland, were long rivals for the trade of Lake Ontario. Each had its fleet of schooners, each had its steamers making daily calls. Port Hope offered a new hat for the first captain to make three round trips a week with lumber to Oswego. Cobourg countered with a Canadian challenger for the America's Cup, the blue ribbon of the yachting world. Capt. Dan Rooney, born in Cobourg, can this day tell you how the Countess of Dufferin was launched on the east side of the harbor in support of the challenge. He used to pick up chips where she was being adzed smooth.

The Gull Light, midway between Cobourg and Port Hope, at the end of a reef or ridge of boulders extending a mile from the north shore, has been flashing directions to lake craft like an imperishable and impartial traffic officer—

"Port Hope? Port your helm. Three miles west.

"Cobourg? Four miles nor' east. Hard a starboard!"

For a hundred years the Gull has been an essential aid to navigation, a pillar of stone by day, a gleam of light by night.



And now it is fine to see how the Gull Light, like the war itself, has got us all pulling together.

Last week came a pressing invitation to attend the opening ceremonies for the barracks on John street, Port Hope, for the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets, Port Hope-Cobourg Division—and the man who was making the wires hot was phoning from his office in Cobourg!

A year ago Port Hope had a visit from H.M.C.S. Port Hope, corvette built in Canada for this war, piloted by Port Hope's grand old man, Capt. Jas. H. Peacock, who celebrates his 90th birthday this month.

And while his latest birthday is

being celebrated in both ports, the town of Cobourg is in the midst of the Fifth Victory Loan campaign and expecting a visit from another corvette, H.M.C.S. Cobourg, if you please. (You may note that we spell it Cobourg now, though Coburg was fashionable when Bartlett drew his picture). The corvette was launched at Midland and is now being outfitted.



It costs money to build corvettes, and the people of Cobourg and of Northumberland County, by purchasing victory bonds to help finance the building of H.M.C.S. Cobourg and her fighting sisters, are doing their duty in the best traditions of the past—right back to the 100-gun St. Lawrence, all Canadian battleship, off Cobourg in the picture a hundred years ago.

They have proved their patriotism, in the midst of the Victory Loan campaign, by also forming a large committee to raise \$4,000 more to sponsor H.M.C.S. Cobourg and equip her crew with comforts. The rivalry between the county towns has settled down to the wholly admirable one as to which can do most towards winning the war. This week Port Hope's mayor challenged the Mayor of Cobourg to see which town would raise the most for the Victory Loan.