

did not augur very well for the weather ahead,' the skipper related. 'As soon as the pilot was dropped, the crew started to make the ship snug by lashing everything that was moveable, and as the steering was hand gear, we made and fitted relieving tackles to the rudder head. At 7 o'clock that night we reached the mouth of the Clyde and passed out into the broad Atlantic, and met with a high wind and fierce hail squalls and a heavy confused sea, which tossed our little ship about like a cork.

'Our decks were awash from bow to stern, for we were only separated from the Atlantic Ocean, in looking over the rail, by a distance equal to the lower part of a man's leg. At midnight the weather was even worse, as we struck adverse currents, with the result that the ship was barely moving. In fine weather the best we can make is about eight knots, and with head winds and adverse currents we were practically stationary insofar as speed is concerned (but we were certainly not stationary in any other sense) until the tide changed.

'There was one comforting feeling at midnight on the first day, that the barometer had gone up slightly. By 10:25 the next morning, we were off Innistrhull, which is the last point of contact with Ireland on the trip across the Atlantic. We looked at Innistrhull rather longingly after our first 24 hours of battering in the heavy seas and wondered just when we would see those friendly shores again.

'The weather was equally as bad as the first day. The vessel jumped about like a horse pirouetting in a circus arena. Our condition was made even worse by the fact that the propeller turns at 300 r.p.m. and with the stern coming out of the water repeatedly, the vessel shook like an aspen leaf in the wind, and so we had to nurse the ship for safety's sake. There was no let-up in these conditions, and by noon the barometer had risen about half an inch, but even this promise of better weather did not turn out very well, because by 10 p.m. we were in the teeth of a gale in a confused sea and travelling at greatly reduced speed.

'The gale continued on the third day and practically everything on the ship was awash. We were soaked to the skin, our spare clothes were sodden, and everyone on the ship, including myself, was violently sick due to the continual buffeting and the fumes from the engine and to the vibration. The vessel was kicking so badly that we could not prepare any food, as it was impossible to hold pans on the cooking stove. The wheel was kicking like a steer and even with two men steering by hand, it was almost impossible to hold the ship.

'To add to our troubles, the compass became very unsteady about noon, and the barometer began to fall, until by late in the evening it was down to 28.82". Sleeping was out of the question, owing to the motion and vibration and the fact that we were all so sick. It simply became a question of the ones who were the least indisposed holding on to the wheel, with the hope that on Sunday, weather conditions would improve.

'But our hopes were not fulfilled, as the gale continued unabated. By noon Sunday the compass went out of action and began swinging in complete circles. By this time we estimated that we were about 230 miles from the Irish coast, and we debated very seriously about taking the ship back, in order to get the compass repaired, but what was the use, as we did not know whether we could strike Ireland?

'We had compasses in the lifeboats, so we lifted these out and rigged them up alongside the steering wheel, with the hope that they would bring us somewhere in the neighbourhood of Canadian shores. During the day we travelled about 41 miles. The engineers below worked knee deep in water, and to this day I do not know how they kept the ship going. On the fifth day out we were still bucking a strong wind with hail squalls of hurricane force, but we had the satisfaction of finding out that we had done the best day's run since leaving Scotland - 152 miles.