

EXTRAORDINARY CAPTURE OF WHALES IN BENBECULA.

[FROM A CORRESPONDENT.]

On Tuesday evening, as the assistant-surveyor on board H.M.'s surveying vessel Woodlark, at present stationed at Kallin, and two of the ship's hands were proceeding to the Kallin Bay to spend an hour or two at hand-line fishing, they observed a large shoal of whales quite near them; they at once determined to have a more exciting sport than cod-fishing, and accordingly pulled in the direction of the shoal, and got within ten or fifteen yards of them, when one of the men fired at a large one. The monster gave immediate signs of the ball having taken effect, for it plunged tremendously and made for the shore at full speed, all the rest following at an equal rate. Though numbers of people beheld this from the shore, none of them indicated any willingness to join the cutter's boat except one Stewart, a gallant tar, and at present a skipper of a fishing boat at Kallin. The two boats being now engaged drove the whales before them as far as a small island in the bay, where the water was but $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 fathoms deep. Here the "denizens of the deep" showed signs of not being quite inclined to proceed any farther, and so they returned. The boats, however, drove them to another and a deeper channel. Another shot was then fired by the cutter's boat into the eye of a large fish at the distance of two or three yards from the boat's side, the result being similar to that of the first shot. On the animals went on their course westward, until they shoved themselves high and dry on a sandbank near Gramsdale Inn. During the last mile of the race no fewer than forty boats joined the scene, many of them manned, or rather womaned; and it must be admitted by every person who observed the extraordinary presence of mind and intrepidity of those women, that, however appropriate the term "weaker vessels" may be in its application to women in other places, it undoubtedly misapplies to the ladies of Benbecula and its neighbourhood, the "weaker vessels" being in reality the male portion of the community. The conduct of the women was admirable in all respects save one—an absence of a proper regard to the laws of decency.

When the whales ran themselves ashore on the bank the women and the most courageous of the men jumped out of the boats and commenced to destroy them. There were some cowards who had not the courage to make the attack on the whales until they found them dead, when they fastened a rope in them and towed them away to deep water, where they anchored them; and it is to be regretted that these had more for their share than those who were busy killing all night. Those who actually killed the whales were so much excited that they did not observe that such cowardly work was perpetrated. The custom in other places on such occasions is to leave the whales at the spot in which they are captured until they are sold by public auction, when the proceeds are equitably and proportionally divided among those actually engaged, giving extra remuneration to such boats as first commenced the chase. Here there is no such law nor order, every man keeps all he can fasten a rope to. Such doings would not be tolerated in any other place, but the authorities within whose jurisdiction Benbecula is take no cognisance of the matter, but rather view them in another and different light.

I have not ascertained yet the exact number of whales captured, but I am told that there cannot be fewer than 450 on both sides of the bay. In other places the value of so many would be very great, but here it cannot be much, owing to the improper manner in which the people went about the work. The average size of the whales captured will be between 16 and 20 feet long, some of them 25 feet.

NEW RAILWAY BRAKE.—Messrs du Trembley and Martin have on exhibition at the Pendleton Iron Works, Manchester, the model of a "pneumatic railway brake," of very ingenious construction. The pressure of the atmosphere is obtained by means of a cylinder of a diameter proportionate to the power required. The cylinder is supplied with a loose fitting disc or plate, to which is attached a rod, the air-tight joint being a diaphragm of india-rubber. This apparatus being placed under the carriage, the rod is attached to the brake-crank, and when the air is exhausted, the exterior pressure, acting upon the diaphragm, presses the "shoes" against the wheels in the manner in which that operation has hitherto been performed by the screw. The air is exhausted by a pneumatic pump, worked by an eccentric fixed on the wheel axle. On the closing of the pipe which communicates with the exterior air, the pneumatic pump continues to work so long as the wheels are in motion, thus producing a vacuum always adequate to the power required to lock the wheels. For the formation of a vacuum, a small apparatus is also introduced, to which are attached the tubes communicating with the cylinders, being similar to a double tube, that forming the interior being a continuation of the one first mentioned. The distance between the two forms an annular space, through which rushes a jet of steam from the boiler, the speed of which, by friction, exhausts the air, and gives an exterior pressure of 10 lb. to the square inch on the diaphragms in less than two seconds, at the pressure at which steam locomotives are generally worked. It is thus claimed for the invention that the whole control of the train is left with the engineer, who can regulate an inlet of air so as to use the power which he may require, the vacuum gauge affording all necessary information.

THE DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE AS A DEFENDER.—Lieutenant Allen obtained at the Court of Common Pleas, on Wednesday, £200 damages for false imprisonment. His Royal Highness was, of course, in Court in his official capacity as Commander-in-Chief.