

**PETER GOTT, THE
CAPE ANN
FISHERMAN**

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Peter Gott, the Cape Ann fisherman by J. Reynolds

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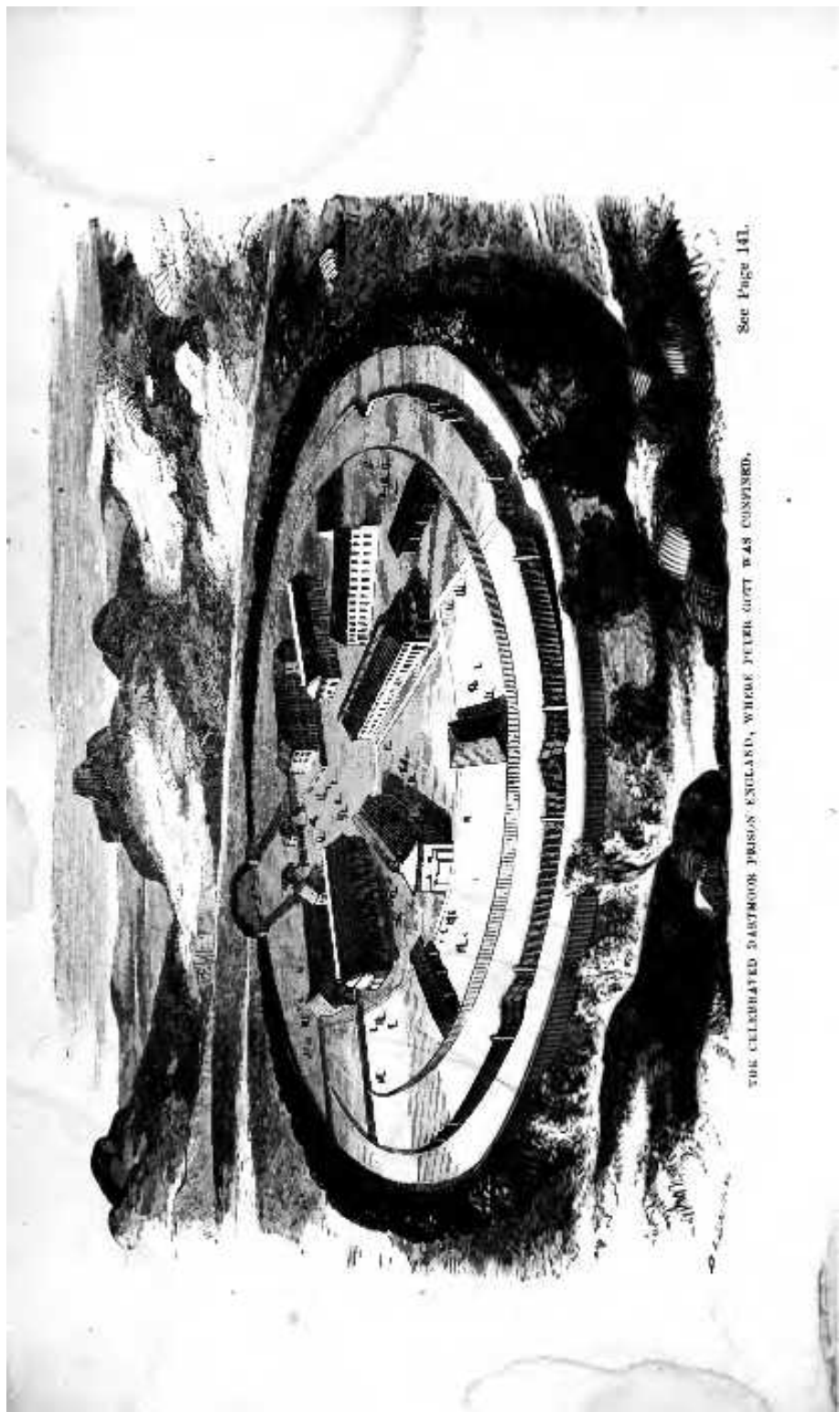
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J. REYNOLDS

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FISHERMAN**



See Page 141.

THE CELEBRATED DARTMOOR PRISON ENGLAND, WHERE JAMES GUY WAS CONFINED.

PETER GOTT,

THE

CAPE ANN FISHERMAN.

J. Reynolds
J. REYNOLDS, M. D.

FOURTH THOUSAND.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE object of the following pages is to exhibit the every-day life of the fishermen, whether ashore, on the Banks, or at the Bay. The incidents are not fictitious, are not exaggerated, are not too highly colored. They may not have occurred in the exact chronological order in which they are here set down, but hundreds of fishermen can testify to their truth, from their own experience.

Very few of his fellow citizens understand any thing of the nature of the employment by which the fisherman is enabled to draw his daily bread from the briny deep. Some may have dozed over the pages of "gentle Isaak Walton," and enjoyed the pictures of still life, which he has so graphically

drawn. They see the old man seated under the shade of a decayed willow, in the quiet autumn days, or stretched at length on the grassy brink of some gently flowing stream, watching his baited hook,—and they will think they have some idea of fishing. Others may have whiled away some hours, with a pleasant companion, on a cloudy morning, angling for trout or pickerel, and think they know something about fishing. Some may have visited the shore, in the sultry days of August, to enjoy the cool breezes from the sea;—they may have sailed-out into the bay, with a fishing party, under the care of a trusty skipper, furnished with all the fixings necessary to enable them to have a good time, and returned at evening, tired with the day's sport,—and this is all they know of the life of the fisherman.

Landsmen, I believe, generally suppose that fishermen pursue their business only in pleasant weather, when the sun shines, and the waves are calm around them. Little do they think of the storms, the howling winds, the heaving billows, the rock-bound coast; the long, dark nights, the

anxious hours and days and weeks, in which they stand their watch, battling with unremitting strife and sleepless eyes, the fiercely assailing waves. They are lying to, on George's Bank, in a stormy night. They must keep their little craft head on to the sea. If they suffer it to broach to for a moment, the coming wave, thundering and roaring, with its foaming crest higher than the head of their mast, may bury them many fathoms deep beneath the green waters. A watchful eye, a steady hand and a bold heart needs the fisherman on such a night as this. He thinks not of himself alone; his thoughts are with the loved ones at home; and he knows, too, that they are thinking of him,—that their prayers are besieging the throne of Mercy in his behalf. He, too, prays to the God of the orphan and widow, for he doubts if he shall see his wife and children again. O, how he longs for the morning! And when it comes, it brings him no relief from his life-struggle. He rises upon the crest of a mountain wave, and far as his eye can reach, the ocean is one white field of foam. But he catches, or fancies that he

catches, a glimpse of the schooner with which he sailed in company, lying upon her beam ends at no great distance from him, and he thinks of the fate of these playmates of his boyhood and youth;—and then he goes down, down into the green depths of ocean, until he fears that the next moment his keel will strike upon its oozy bed. And now only the master and mate, and one well-tried hand, can be trusted with the helm, and they must be lashed, in turn, to the rudder head. And thus they heave and toss through the livelong day. As the sun is setting, a gleam of light is seen in the west. The wind hauls round in the course of the night, and the wild and broken clouds disperse, the stars shine out, and the storm is past. The morning sun, as it rises from its ocean bed, shines brightly upon him. O, how glad and thankful is his heart.

But he cannot resume his labor. The ocean heaves and swells for two or three days, before it becomes so calm that he can drop his line into its depths. He waits patiently, and at length begins anew his toil. But, perhaps, before he has completed his fare of halibut or cod, the wind suddenly

chops round into the north-east, and he has to encounter a storm from that quarter. The wind is cold ; the sharp sleet cuts like a knife, whenever he turns his face to the wind. His deck is loaded with snow : his rigging is stiff and immovable from ice ; he stands through his long watch, in the face of the howling wind, noting the sleet and snow as they drift past him upon the surface of the water. No cessation, no rest does he know. And thus, for two, three or four days, does this second life-battle last ; and at the end of sixteen or twenty days, he returns to port, with half a fare, and with the loss of his boats or of a cable and anchor. In hundreds of instances has this experience been verified in the winter fishing on George's Bank. Scarcely a season passes in which two or three crews are not lost in this business. How little do we, who are lying snugly in our beds, know of the matter !

Believing that the Life of PETER GOTT would interest landsmen as well as seamen, not only in his simple, brave and affectionate character, but in the class of men which he represents, I have told his