

From Out the Storied Past.

BUSINESS 100 YEARS AGO.

(H. F. SHORTIS.)
Article XX.

In Article XVIII. Mr. Nelson writes about the fishermen hunting the seals in skiffs and punts, and it would appear that they risked going off a long distance and, of course, it often resulted in loss of life. It is an historical fact that about the days of which Mr. Nelson writes, the famous Capt. William Bartlett, of Brigus, went to the sealfishery in an undecked boat, and when he arrived at Bacallieu there was no sign of either ice or seals. "Well, boys," said he, "well follow on," and follow on they did until they sighted the Funks, with the same result. Again came the order "follow on," and on they went until they arrived off the Spotted Islands, Labrador, where they struck the seals in thousands and quickly secured a full load. "Follow on" has been the slogan of the Bartlett's from those far-back days to the present, and no greater example can be offered than the fearlessness and heroism displayed by Capt. Bartlett a few years ago, when he accompanied Peary to the Pole and was deprived of the honor of being the first to plant his foot on the top of the earth owing to the petty jealousy of the commander. In due course the skiffs had to give way to a larger class of vessels styled galleons, and they in turn were replaced by fore-and-aft schooners. The first schooner to prosecute the sealfishery (of over ninety tons) was called the Experiment, built and sent out by the firm of Pack, Gosse and Fryer of Carbonear, and the critics of those days were of the opinion that she was too large and could never be turned in the ice. About 1824 Capt. Wm. Munde of Brigus had the first vessel of over one hundred tons built. She was called the Four Brothers and was brigantine rigged, and Robert Brown of the Commercial Bank remarked, "that he always had the highest opinion of Billy Munden until he built the Four Brothers; that she was too large for the prosecution of the sealfishery and would become unmanageable." I presume the reason the first large fore-and-aft schooner was called by that name was that they wished to try the experiment and see how it would work. In the galleons there were always about 13 of a crew, and from an old agreement I have in my possession, the forward gunner as well as the after gunner were always allowed fifty shillings and a free berth, others were given free berths, while the majority of the crew had to pay for their berths. And so the evolution went on until we arrived at the leviathans like the Stephano, Florizel,

Nascopie, etc. What would have occurred were they still engaged in the prosecution of the fishery is a moot question, because those experienced in the sealfishery now say that the seals are not to be found on the coast in any great numbers, and truly it looks that way judging from the reports sent in from the front the past ten years or so (and particularly last year) that when one hundred and fifty thousand have been killed there are no more to be found, the main patch being cut up. However, a year or so will settle the question.

The House of Danson.

Mr. Nelson also makes reference to the House of Danson in his letter to our last article. Danson's was indeed a most extensive and enterprising firm, the principals being Thomas and Hugh. Their business premises were situated on the same ground in Harbor Grace on which stand the premises of Munn & Co. and Murray & Crawford. They got into financial difficulties about 1824, and the creditors in England had no consideration for their temporary financial troubles, but determined to wind up the firm, which they did, and that to their own loss, because, even as they put the winding-up business into operation, every one of Danson's vessels arrived from the sealfishery with full loads of seals. It was nothing short of commercial murder, and the Danson's became disgusted and threw up the whole business, which was a great loss not alone to Conception Bay, but Trinity Bay as well as other parts of the island, because the great firm had ramifications at Holyrood, Bay de Verde and elsewhere. After the failure of Danson's house, Puntun & Munn commenced business and continued extensively and successfully until the year of the crash (1894), when they too were commercially sacrificed. The great fire (Toussant's) 1855, wiped out the greater portion of the town of Harbor Grace, and amongst the premises that of Puntun & Munn. Of course in those days we had not the great insurance companies such as the Queen, Phoenix and others to take up large risks on property as we have to-day, and the firm must have suffered very considerably. However, the hard-shelled Scotchman did not despond, but determined to build even more extensively than, probably, they would have done had not the old premises been destroyed. That Spring Captain Larry Keefe in the brig Maria and Captain Noddy Pike in the Whigantine Glide brought in two full loads of seals, and, of course, funds

being rather short, owing to the great expense in building up the premises, those two famous seal-killers told Mr. Munn, "Never mind paying for the seals. Let them go into the business. And they did so. I consider that such an act is unprecedented in our commercial history and is well worthy being recorded. It goes to show the determination of the men as well as the faith they had in the business capabilities of the managers of this firm.

Almost Committed.

I may here state that Mr. Thomas Danson was, for many years, Magistrate in Harbor Grace. He was a man possessed of marked ability and great experience. He maintained the dignity of the Bench, and upon one occasion he all but imprisoned an innocent man for what he considered contempt of court. A fiery little old Irishman named Billy Doig had a case in court about the boundary of a piece of land or some such dispute. "Tommy" Danson tried the case, and, of course, was as dignified and was clothed in as much authority as the Lord Chief Justice of England. The argument waxed warm between the plaintiff and defendant, and Danson to uphold the majesty of the law and dignity of the court broke in with some remarks enforcing silence. Billy Doig was as deaf as a post, and spoke broken English and that badly. While Danson was addressing them, Billy gave the man sitting next to him an elbow in the ribs, and nodding his head towards Danson on the Bench exclaimed in a voice which resounded over the court, "Mush! what the devil is that fellow saying?" Danson stood (or sat) on his dignity and was going to send Billy down for six months for contempt of court, when Mr. Stark, Clerk of the Court, who knew him well, explained matters and convinced Magistrate Danson that Billy intended no offence, that he was a decent old soul, but that was the way he had about him, as he could not hear a word that was said unless one hollered into his ear. After a time Danson was satisfied and the case proceeded.

Mr. Nelson's remarks brought these circumstances to my mind, and I shall now let him continue his letters, and no doubt we shall have further reference to other great firms as he (Nelson) runs down the years of the "Long, Long Ago."

TRINITY, July 16th, 1811.

Lists of Articles Wanting for the Trade.

1 doz. large copper tea kettles, 10 doz. small hinges for carpenters, 5 doz. skillets from the same man you had them from this Spring. You can't be too particular in procuring good ones, the price does not signify. 1 doz. boys' large shoes, women's shoes made to tyre, women's black silk bonnets, black thread, black mode ¾ wide rather low priced, small books for

T. J. EDENS,

151 Duckworth Street.

Butter is Cheaper.

Just received, Selected CANADIAN CREAMERY in boxes; also P. E. L. BUTTER in 2 lb. prints. Perk & Beans—Libby's, 20c. tin. Corned Beef, 25c. lb. New York Corned Beef. Salmon, 1 lb. tins, 30c. each.

BONNIE BELLE BAKING POWDER—Guaranteed Pure. 2½ oz. tin 3c. ½ lb. tin 10c. 1 lb. tin 20c. 1 lb. tin 30c.

MOIR'S CHOCOLATES—5 lb. 1 lb. and ½ lb. boxes. Assorted Bars, 60c. doz. Kisses and Caramels.

25 boxes CANADIAN CHEESE. INGERSOLL CHEESE. KROFT CHEESE, ½ lb. tins. PARMESAN CHEESE.

CALIFORNIA ORANGES. CALIFORNIA LEMONS. TABLE APPLES. BANANAS. GRAPE FRUIT. NEW TURNIPS. RHUBARB. FRESH EGGS.

T. J. EDENS.

151 Duckworth Street. (Next to Custom House.)

children first learning to read, women's blue worsted hose, good black cloth and blue serge. When you send garden seeds, you need not send any other than the following, viz: Cabbage, lettuce, turnip, radish (2 sorts), carrot, parsnip, broad beans and early peas. (Please send a similar amount for next spring.) I don't expect Pratt will bring any flour from Nova Scotia, and if you make any difference, I would rather you would enlarge on the quantity of provisions indented for Mr. Falcon. A small spy-glass is very handy and necessary for the schooner ice-hunting. I have one of my own which I always lend Spencer in the Spring, but next year we shall want another.

New Sails for Vessels.

I shall be obliged to let Captain Hamon have a new fore-and-aft mainsail, perhaps it will be better to let him have it here than to run the risk of his getting it anywhere else at a dearer rate, and the Active when she returns will in all probability want some more canvas also; besides, I shall want to use some in the Winter or Fall for the boats next summer. This with making the new schooner's sails will take a good deal, perhaps more than we have here at present, and you will therefore please guard against it by sending out at least, in addition to what I mentioned yesterday, 4 pieces best canvas, 3 pieces LL and as much more as you please. Please also to send a few coils good bolt rope of different sizes.

More Competition.

There is not now the least doubt but that McBride & Co. mean to establish a large trade in this place, and the opinion I at present entertain of Trinity is, that it will soon become similar to St. John's with respect to the mode of carrying on business. The planters give of course the preference to those who state the price of goods at the time of delivery, and the habit of giving bills of parcels with it, as in St. John's, will become general. Our skills returned this morning, but fish not so plentiful as last week. The bait is still in and I hope will continue. It is not too late to make a good voyage yet. The Lester I understand goes to St. John's to join convoy, and I write Messrs. P. K. & B. concerning the tea. I have heard from the Cosmopolite by a schooner from Quirpon 5 days since. She was then nearly loaded, and by the accounts James Dwyer sends, I have a right to expect her by Sunday next. We have had for several days past very strong breezes of wind, which has prevented the fishermen from making much of a hand of it this week, but the prospect now seems favourable.

Current Price Arranged.

After what I wrote you in No. 16, you will no doubt be surprised to find that the Alpha is now loaded. Since that period we have had such a continuance of dry weather as was scarcely ever remembered, which has enabled the planters to get their first fish (although caught very late) in order to ship much earlier than usual. I have not yet heard positive accounts from the different Bays, but from what I have known of this Bay, I am inclined to think that the quantity caught will not average or be equal to 2-3 of last year's catch, even if half and fish should be plenty from this time forward. As I expected, the price is very high and 26½ has been given in St. John's for an early cargo. I have been informed by our correspondents there that there has been a

meeting on the 1st inst. between the merchants and planters. The price upon the 20th August was settled at 21½-merchandise, 18½-Madeira, and 16½-West Indies, but since that I understand they have disagreed and many have given 22½ and 23½, which latter price I have reasons to think from the different accounts I have heard, will be the established one for a time. In the last letter I received from H. E. G. & R., dated 3rd inst., they say the prices are not likely to be lower until it comes in more plenty, but when the news reaches them from the different outports of the shortness of the catch, I rather think it will continue at that price, if not higher. Of course we have no general fixed price yet, but owing chiefly to Mr. Durrell's giving some of his planters 22½, if not 26½, for a quantity he collected to carry to St. John's to sell perhaps for 26½ (most likely calculating that he would have sufficient to load his vessels afterwards) and which was not the case with me, therefore could not think of sending any to St. John's, I found it almost impossible to obtain fish from our own dealers early without also mentioning a price. This I have done in order to dispatch Alpha and Gannet very early, and the price I have promised is from 18½ to 21½, in some cases part-bill in the Fall, and in others where no bill will be required I have agreed for their whole voyage of merchandise at 18½. This certainly is a very long price and a very great risk. But I expect to get a good quantity early and even if the Allies should not be altogether successful against the French under Bonaparte in Portugal, I am pretty certain that owing to the shortness of the catch the price must keep up.

Equalling Neighbors.

We have 2-3 of the Gannet's cargo of salt discharged and are getting out the remainder as fast as possible. She will begin to take in new fish the moment she is ready, and should the weather (which now and for the past day or two has been wet) take up again for dry, I expect she will be loaded by the last of the month, before which time I hope to hear again from you, as you have yet written for only one vessel to go to Portugal. But if I do not hear from you before she is ready to sail, nor any bad accounts from Portugal, I shall not detain her but send her to Lisbon to McMahon & Co. for orders. We have collected on the whole new merchantable fish up to date 1439 qtls. and weighed into store 319 qtls. of our own catch, out of which, deducting Alpha's cargo, including the captain's adventure, 1151¼ qtls. leaves now in store 606½ qtls. ready to ship. I expect by the time the Gannet is ready to take in, we shall have half a cargo collected, and if the weather should be good, we shall not be long getting the other half. The Cosmopolite returned from the French Shore on the 21st ult. with about 300 qtls. split fish and sailed again on the 26th, since which time I have not heard from her, but I hope will return again loaded by the last of the month at farthest. Our own catch I calculate to be (reckoning the schooner's first trip) 650 qtls., the greater part of which is cured and part goes in Alpha, which I believe is as well as any of our neighbours. At present, and for the last 8 or 9 days, there has been no bait, and of course little or no fish caught, consequently useless to keep our boats out. They have been employed collecting dry fish and will be until the vessels are loaded, or a sufficient quantity is collected for that purpose. But it is impossible for me to say yet whether I shall be able to get that quantity or not (reckoning a second cargo for the Alpha) which vessel I expect you will order back with salt. However I shall try and I entertain hopes of being able to accomplish it without offering a higher price than others. Parker & Knight's agent offered several of our dealers 20½ for their whole voyage after I had agreed with them for 18½ (as he himself says), because I offered one of his independent planters 20½ for 50 qtls. prime fish to go in Alpha. The planters who have not agreed will not now, for 18½, expecting the Harbor price will be settled at more. However, be it as it will, my pushing off too early cargoes (the Alpha's being the first out of this place or any other except St. John's, at least I think so) will, I hope, be giving a chance to make up for the extra price I may have given, should the settled price be lower. From the accounts we have yet had Trinity and

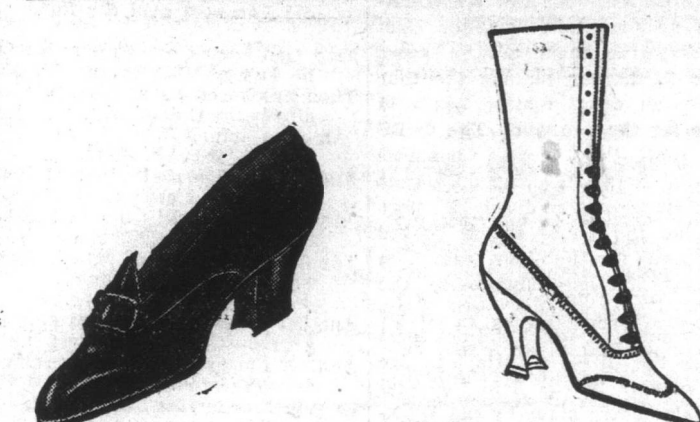
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SALE

LONDON

From Out the Storied Past

(continued from 8th page.)

its neighbourhood have done much better this season than most other places.

Delighted With Approbation.

I with pleasure acknowledge the receipt of your letters Nos. 10 and 11, and am well pleased to find that conduct has hitherto met your approbation and your letter of 26th June I shall not fail to notice particularly by the next direct conveyance, if can in the meantime make myself serving of the liberal encouragement you offer me in the above-mentioned letters, I shall be extremely happy. The screw you mention for seals will be useful. I am sorry you cannot insure the stores, or, at least, certain sum on them, being composed as well as the houses of such combustible matter, should either one of them on the Room take fire, the destruction of the whole would be inevitable during the late dry weather. I assure you I passed many uncomfortable nights, especially after Mr. Spencer's house with all his goods, clothing, etc., was destroyed at King's Hole, the 30th ult. The smoke reached this place. I sent most of my hands with many others belonging to the Harbor to prevent its progress through the woods, which by the means was fortunately accomplished, otherwise the way the wind was blowing the whole Harbor would soon be in danger. Mr. Garland's stores soon afterwards had a very narrow escape, of their oil staves having taken fire. I yet hope you will be able to insure a certain sum, as having property here to such a large amount is indeed extremely hazardous. The whole might be destroyed in one hour.

Marine Insurance.

Are the small brigs insured? I send them up the Sound? The Alpha was very near going ashore this Summer on her passage through the Narrows. The Alpha is supplied with provisions etc. for the passage out from Portugal. I must beg for the future that you will not omit advising me of any privileges you may allow the captain Hamon declares upon a word and honour (which I this time take) you promised him the privilege of carrying 30 qtls. fish, which is a great deal in so small a cargo. I closed the Alpha's Bill of Lading 1121¼ qtls. only, which is all we got into her exclusive of the captain's 30 qtls. Some fruits, say chiefly raisins, I think would answer very well by return of Alpha.

I remain, sir,

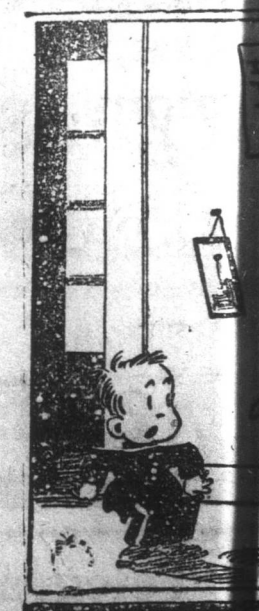
Your humble servant,

WM. KELLY

Note of Explanation.

In several issues I made partial reference to James MacBride, and said I was of opinion that Mr. Kelly and he were great friends and touch with each other. At the time I said so I had no idea MacBride was about to start business in Trinity. But you will observe Nelson's nothing whatever to say against MacBride going to Trinity. Mr. Kelly was his great rival, and he (Kelly) never omitted the opportunity of proving himself a keen and able journalist had he adopted that more execution amongst his opponents in political warfare by the use of the rapier than is done at the present with the bludgeon. James MacBride was one of the founders of the

Miss Information.



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