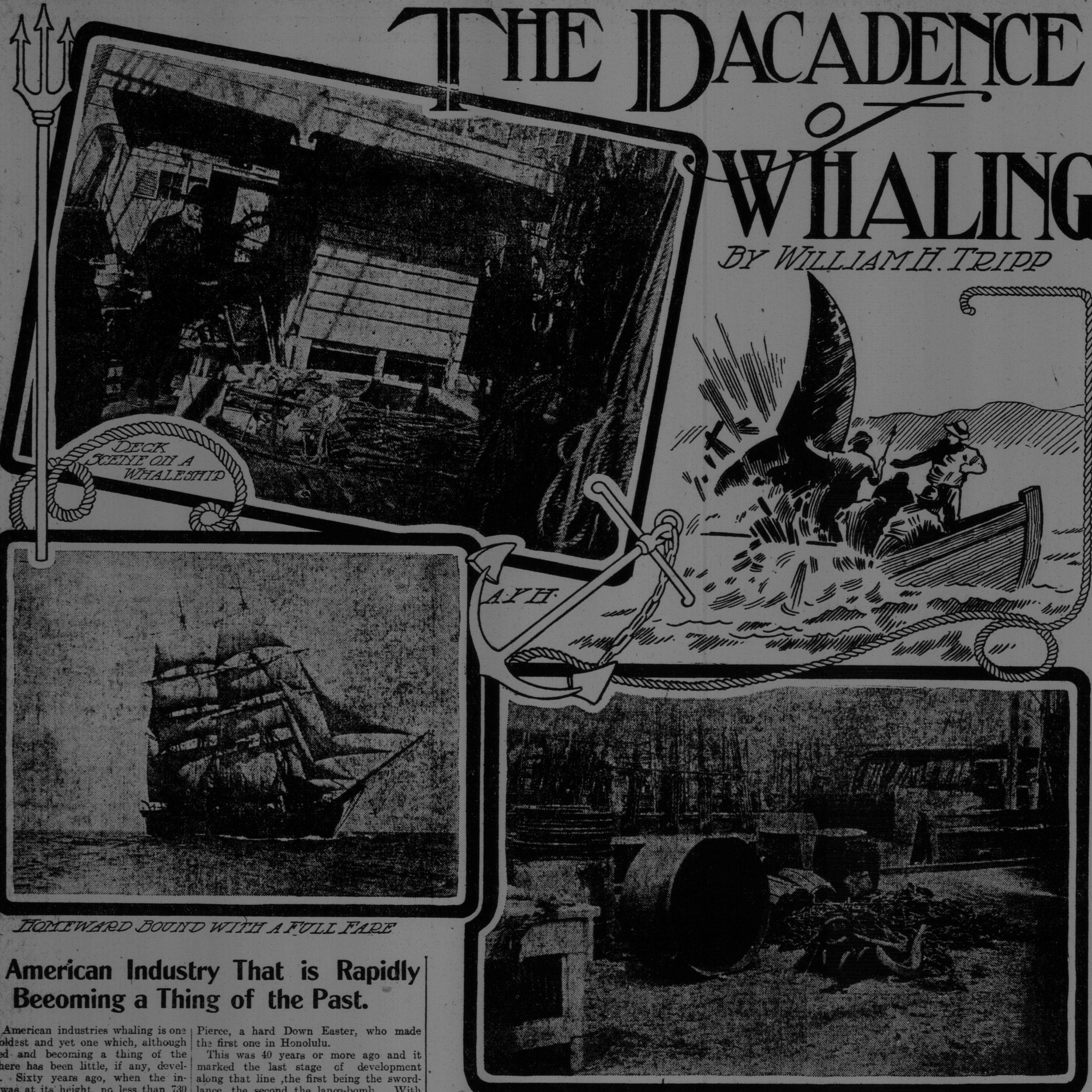


THE EVENING TIMES, ST. JOHN, N. B. SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 21, 1907



An American Industry That is Rapidly Becoming a Thing of the Past.

Of all American industries whaling is one of the oldest and yet one which, although neglected and becoming a thing of the past, there has been little, if any, development. Sixty years ago, when the industry was at its height, no less than 139 vessels were scouring the seas in search of the leviathans and everyone of these men knew the American seamen.

The New England states, and particularly Massachusetts, were the principal whaling centers. In 1854, for example, from New Bedford alone there were sailing 113 whaling ships to every port on the globe. In 1894, half a century later, there were but 10 ships sailing for the whaling grounds. The latest issue of the Whaler's Directory shows that there are today 30 vessels representing all that is left of the great industry.

What is the cause of the decline? one may ask. It is the result of an evolution. When the whaling industry was in its high-water mark the discovery of petroleum was made, a discovery that instantly created a revolution in more than one sense. At that time whale oil was used for lighting but petroleum, cheaper and more plentiful, speedily came into general use.

With the demand for the cheaper fuel came a drop in the price of whale oil, not much at first but as the various by-products of petroleum developed and many vessels that were formerly made of oil are superseded by petroleum the price of the oil gradually but surely declined, making the death blow to the industry the deep.

Some idea of what this means may be ascertained when one learns that in 1863 sperm oil sold for \$2.25 a gallon whereas it is quoted at 51 cents a gallon. One of the remarkable features of the industry that in all these years there has been but little development there has been a steady decline in the number of vessels employed in the pursuit of the whale, and what little development there has been is chiefly in the use of a few modern vessels and the adoption of modern sailing ships.

The use of the steam whaler is adapted to the Arctic waters, where it is more handy in dodging vast floes and escaping a danger of being ripped by the ice, a danger that has sent so many staunch sailing ships to the bottom. Then too the steamers employ steam for the trying out of the oil, instead of boiling it as is done in the sailing craft. Donkey engines for lifting are modern features on many of a sailing craft, while iron tanks take the place of wooden ones.

If the apparatus used in the capture of the whale is modernized it is more change and the implements now used were in vogue half a century ago. The death-dealing appliance the shoulder bomb gun and lance play the most important part, and every whaler carries a full supply of them. The bombgun is a bit but powerful and effective weapon. The bomb consists of a brass tube from 18 to 24 inches long and filled with gunpowder. Like a torpedo it is not intended to explode until it has pierced the vital of the whale and its work is almost instantaneous. The weapon and its projectile is the invention of Captain Eben

Pierce, a hard Down Easter, who made the first one in Honolulu. This was 40 years or more ago and it marked the last stage of development along that line, the first being the sword-lance, the second the lance-bomb. With these instruments it was necessary to go alongside the whale and it required the utmost skill in placing the lances in just the right place. With the gun the approach was less close and yet, despite the fact that there are today whalers who disdain to use anything save the sword-lance.

The process of "cutting in" and "trying out" a whale is almost exactly the same as it was 50 years ago, except, as stated, the steam whalers use steam instead of the fire.

There is one incentive, however, that keeps and will always keep a few whalers aloft and that is the high price of the whale. The industry is divided into three classes—those who hunt for sperm whales alone, those who hunt for sperm and right whales and those who hunt for right and bowhead whales.

The length of a whaling voyage nowadays varies from four months to three years whereas in the palmy days a vessel rarely returned in less than four years and was frequently gone for five or six years. The whalers went in search of both the right and the sperm whales and as the habitat of these species is widely separated the cruises of the early whalers necessarily involved traversing the warm and cold seas alike. At the present time there are but few craft that combine the two kinds of whaling.

The officers and crew of a whaling bark number about 35 men. Instead of being given fixed wages, the old way of shipping on shares is yet in vogue. Each member of the crew, from the highest to the lowest, goes on a "lay." When the voyage has ended, the catch figured out, the expenses of the vessel deducted and all debts made good the "divvy" is made and each receives his pay according to his lay. The lay of the captain may be one-fourteenth while that of the cabin boy may be as little as one two-hundredth and fiftieth, this portion being known as the "long lay."

The fitting out of a whaling bark that is to be gone on a cruise of three or four years is not a simple task. It is more than a matter of outfitting a vessel and then to start well provided against the ordinary contingencies of those who go down to the sea in ships.

For the vessel there is the deckyard overhaul and she is carefully gone over from stem to stern and from keel to truck, every seam caulked and painted, the copper on her hull renewed in necessary places, her topsides painted, her decks smoothed, her rigging, running and standing, overhauled, set up and renewed, her spars examined and a hundred and one things done in order that she may leave port in as good condition as possible.

There are times, too, when they need much attention for now and then they limp home from a voyage in which Father Neptune has pretty nearly handed them over to his son, Davy Jones. But, so long as they come home laden with oil and each member of the crew receives a handsome lay there is little to complain of and the ship yard men are not sorry.

When the whaler has been dropped from the ways glistening with fresh paint and varnish she is placed alongside of a pier and the work of fitting out begins. There are spare ropes by the bale, two or three complete suits of sails, bolts of canvas, casks of paint, varnish and tar and many other articles for the ship itself.

Then comes many small timbers and cedar planks for the small boats for in the chase after the whales it is not unusual to have a boat or two stove in. Sometimes they are so badly broken as to require practically setting up a new time of it. Last, but not least, are the stores for the crew. The "salt horse" of yore days no longer repulses in the "harem" cask for tinned meats have taken its place but there are many other things and the outfit for a cruise would cost a good sized grocery store.

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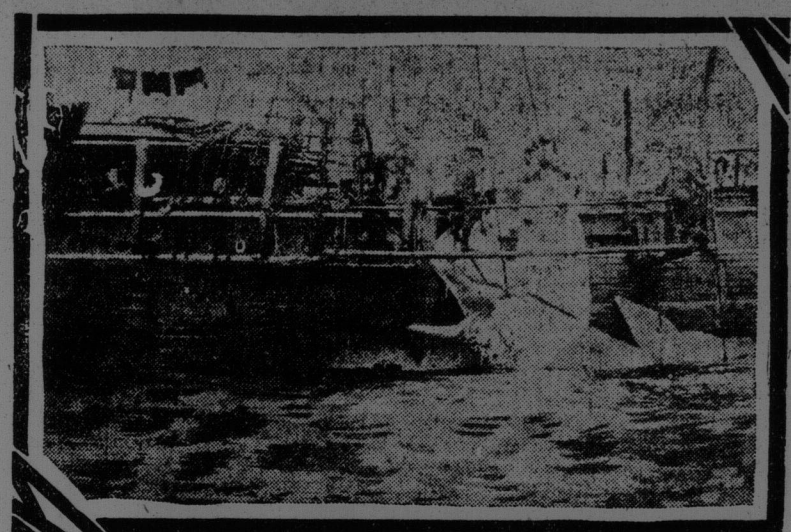
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CUTTING IN THE WHALE

his astonishment at the prick, another iron is thrust into him. With a mighty sweep of his tail the monster darts head down for the bottom of the sea, the whale line runs out of the tub and over a brass roller in the bow with such rapidity that it fairly smokes from the friction; indeed it is often necessary to pour water on it.

At last when the 75 or 80 fathom mark is reached there is a slackening of the line, then a stop and the men know that the whale has turned and is ascending. This is the most ticklish part of the work. The sperm whale is a great fighter, using its tail and jaw with fearful effect and many a gallant crew have become victims to its ferocity.

As the whale comes toward the surface the line is watched, the slack hauled in and coiled back in the tubs for sometimes the whale has to be played, especially if his struggles consist of numberless soundings. Sometimes the whale will rush away dragging the boat through the water at terrific speed, so fast that if there is any sea, the lines have to be cut to prevent being swamped.

While this is going on the other boats, if there be no more whales in the vicinity, lay around and wait. Very often it is well they do for now and then a whale will sound and come to the surface along side of the boat. A swish of the tail and there is a badly smashed boat and six men swimming for their lives. It is then that one boat goes to the rescue and the other after the whale.

When the whale has been played until it is exhausted and lies still the really critical part of the work comes—placing the lance. Again the boat is placed alongside and the long swordlike weapon is plunged into the monster's side. There is another rush or sounding but the death sound has been given and in a little while the whale turns on its back and expires.

It is curious to note that almost every whale dies with its head toward the sun and also that when dead it rolls over on its side exposing one of its fins, hence the whalers use the expression "fin out" when referring to death.

With the death of the whale begins the real work. The huge fish is towed to the ship and laid along side tail to the bow. All whalers "cut in" on the starboard side and the ship's rail is removed and a platform rigged out. On this stand the cutters and they work with long spades.

First a hole is cut near the whale's eye while other cuts are made, four feet apart, until a great strip, known as the "blubber piece" is outlined. Then from the rigging a block and fall with a blubber hook is lowered, the hook fastened in the hole, the windless manned and the sheet of blubber, like a great piece of sod is raised. The blubber, a foot or more thick, is then cut in small pieces and lowered into the hold to be treated later.

In the meantime a man is cutting off the whale's head, a task of much difficulty requiring from two to four hours but it is time well spent for the head of the sperm whale is valuable. It is divided into three parts—the occiput, the junk and the bony part. The case is the upper part and has a cavity filled with clear oil known as spermaceti, sometimes as much as 25 barrels, which is the most valuable of the yield. The relative value of the head is such that it usually yields two-fifths of the oil from the entire whale.

The junk is a wedge-shaped mass of cellular formation of flesh that contains several barrels of oil. The bony part is the skull and the lower jaw bone and this is usually saved for making ornaments, canes, etc., called "skrimshanking" by the whalers.

When all parts of value have been taken from the whale and placed on board the remainder of the carcass is cut adrift—food for sharks which quickly gather for the feast. In the blubber room men with knives and spades cut the meat into his foot and a half long and six inches wide—"horse pieces"—and these are then carried into the "mincing house" a table where men slash them into thin slices that just hang together like pieces of bacon. These pieces are then known as "books" and they are then ready for the troy.

The pots are huge iron kettles beneath which fires are built and as the oil tries out of the blubber it is balled into copper receptacles to cool and is then barreled and stowed away in the lower hold. The residue of the blubber—the scrap—is used for fuel and thus it may be said the whale furnishes its own fuel.

The trying out is the hardest and most disagreeable part of whaling and aside from a quick voyage with good returns means that there has been very little if any idle time either fore or aft.

Whaling as an occupation is an exciting one and as long as there is a profit in it there will, perhaps, always be a few adventurous spirits who will ship on such voyages.

There is a saying in Europe that every man who works for a living carries a soldier and a non-producer on his back. According to Dr. Charles J. Bushnell, a Washington statistician, it costs the people of the United States \$100,000,000 a year to support their criminals and paupers. These figures stagger imagination, but they do things over there in such a big scale that one is surprised at nothing in the way of millions however applied. Dr. Bushnell, whose accounts are connected by his wife, claims that his figures are taken from authoritative sources and challenges anyone to disprove their accuracy. He describes this criminal and pauper affliction as "The Social Illness of the United States," a correct designation surely, if his statistics be accurate. He points out further that the increase of wealth in the Republic is only five thousand million dollars a year, which goes to show that the criminals and paupers are devouring the wealth of the nation faster than it accumulates, and must in time, if not checked, end in national bankruptcy. This public has here carried his statements further than they will carry conviction. But it is undoubtedly true that the parasite classes referred to do impose an enormous burden upon the producers and workers. Every honest man who marries and raises a family in respectability carries a heavy burden, and, in addition must bear a share in supporting the families of the vicious and improvident, from whom the criminal and pauper armies are recruited.

Paddy on learning that his married sister had given birth to a child hastened to pay his respects to her and make inquiry as to the sex of the child. Meeting the nurse at the door of her sister's home, Paddy smilingly said: "Please, ma'am, carry me congratulations to me sister and ask whether I'm an uncle or aunt."

Just as deep a commercial secret is the texture and dye of the wonderful robes worn by the Cardinals at the Vatican at Rome. It is an old family secret and strange enough this family is said to be not of the Roman Catholic faith.

The Bass family, now ennobled, made its fortune on an old woman's secret method of making soap. An old carrier or express wagon driver is said to have first made Bass ale for sale at Burton-on-Trent. There are many priceless trade secrets which have been lost in various professions and trades. The marvelous Toledo blades cannot now be produced. The famous Italian violins of 150 years ago were made by processes no longer understood and vainly sought after by modern experimenters and workmen.

Generally the first warning that the whale has is the report of the gun and he plunges for the bottom. Too late, however, for even as he makes his first movement the deadly bomb has exploded in his vital and the water is reddening with his blood. There is no sport at all in this method of whaling and many men, although it is a matter of business, will not adopt it. They prefer to give the mammal a chance.

With the harpoon there is a difference. The thrower standing in the bow of his boat hurls the iron with all his might. Then before the whale has recovered from

THE NON-PRODUCERS

(Montreal Witness.)

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