

The S.S. BELLA VENTURE Arrives With the Dead

And Suffering Sealers--Heartrending Scenes as Ship Enters Port --- Wide-spread Sympathy With the Afflicted --- Arrangements for Public Funeral Being Considered.

A morning of gloom followed a weary night of waiting for the s.s. Bella Venture with her sad freight of dead and suffering sealers. Never in the history of the Colony has such a sad scene been witnessed by the anxious relatives and friends of those involved in the marine disaster. The only scene approaching it was that witnessed sixteen years ago when the Greenland brought in some twenty-five bodies of the forty-eight who met a like death that spring. All the morning crowds were to be seen wandering fearfully along the street and awaiting the arrival of the Bella Venture. At frequent intervals messages were posted up at the Evening Telegram Office and at the Board of Trade windows, telling of the progress the Bella Venture was making through the heavy ice. News was flashed in that she was off Pouch Cove, and that three steamers had been sighted from Bay de Verde making south, and later that the Beothic was abreast of her at Torbay, with the intention of escorting her in the Narrows. The harbor with its background of buildings intensified the sadness of the scene with flags at half-mast in token of respect and as a sign that Newfoundland mourned her brave sealers that are no more. Every arrangement has been made with stretchers and bearers to take the worst cases into the hospital at once, and the less serious cases will be accommodated at the Seamen's Institute. Later the bodies will be landed. Before one o'clock a cordon had been arranged to keep the space open necessary to carry on the work with facility.

STEAMER ARRIVES.

One o'clock came and the story spread that the Bella Venture could not arrive until three or half-past three. When that hour drew near it was learnt for a certainty that the Bella Venture was practically clear of the ice and would arrive at 4.30. When that hour approached the different squadrons from the Brigades and Frontiersmen lined up and formed a cordon around the rope and a squad took up their positions in Harvey's store to keep the public from the wharf, and the Bella Venture, in order that the landing might be effected expeditiously. The Ambulance corps, under Dr. Macpherson, assisted by members of the corps brought down the stretchers and the Reid vans fitted out with beds took up their positions in the sheds. With these were nurses. Everything was ready as the Bella Venture with its flag half-mast was seen slowly proceeding at a funeral pace through the Narrows to make fast to the wharf.

A GRUESOME SPECTACLE.

As the steamer slowly made its way to the wharf in front of the bridge, was seen a sight which sent a shudder through those who saw it. For in that pile covered with a tarpaulin lay the sixteen bodies of the victims of the ocean tragedy. The bodies had been laid there just as they were brought in from the ice many of them with limbs contracted and drawn up in all postures which

the cold had brought about. The order of the day was, however, to deal first with the living, who needed human care and the dead was to be reverently removed at a later hour.

LANDING THE DEAD CASES.

The ship was made fast and Dr. made the necessary inquiries as to the health of the crew, and finding it satisfactory, permission was given for the sealers of the Bella Venture to land. They quickly got ashore and the ship was cleared and made room for the most important part of the work of the Ambulance Corps. A stretcher was equally placed on the rail and with a doctor in attendance the first case was dealt with. The stretcher was kept level on the rail and a covered up body of one of the worst sufferers and the most serious cases was slowly, tenderly and carefully lifted from a state-room and placed on the stretcher and they were very carefully covered with blankets and coverlets and very carefully removed from its difficult position on the rails and lifted down to the wharf and carefully removed to the shed and placed in the ambulance car and driven slowly up to the General Hospital in care of a nurse.

FROZEN FEET.

This is a typical case of the way in which each of the worse cases was handled. In a short time several stretchers were in use. A doctor in attendance examined each case and superintended the removal of it. In all there were twenty-two cases, although they were not all extremely bad cases, where there was a need of the use of the stretchers. This arose from the fact that on the Tuesday of the storm, the first day when the blizzard came up, many of the men fell in the water and got their feet soaked with water and their boots filled. This led naturally to frozen feet, and this is what many of the men are suffering from.

FIFTY HOURS OF EXPOSURE AND COULD WALK.

Another form of suffering was ice-blindness and a number of those landed wore dark glasses. Some of the men who had not frozen feet were able to walk. Typical examples of this were Dick McCarthy and J. S. Haddock, of Carbonar, who were able to walk, although one of them had on his boots the first time since the disaster, to walk to the Institute. Both of these had swollen wrists, swollen necks and bore sores and marks which were the results of frost bites. They had come through it all some way. They hardly knew how. But they had managed to get back to their own ship after fifty hours' exposure on the ice. They had been out all Tuesday afternoon and night, all Wednesday and passed through the bitterness of death in the terrible blizzard of Wednesday and somehow or other they managed to walk back to their own ship, the "Newfoundland," and reached her early on Thursday morning.

BROKE DOWN.

One of them had lost a brother, and when he saw his father in the Institute, both sat down and wept. All the serious cases which might need surgical aid and careful medical attention were removed to the General Hospital, where everything was available for giving speedy attention to all cases where gangrene might set in. The less serious cases were taken to the Institute, where doctors and nurses were in attendance.

BOARDED STEPHANO.

Capt. Winsor told us that his barometer on Tuesday morning gave no indication of the approaching storm. His own men were out, but only a few of them as there were not many seals around, during the morning he got them all in as he saw a storm approaching. The storm came on very quickly and in a short time it was impossible to see the length of the ship. The Newfoundland men who had boarded the Stephano, under the direction of the Captain, Wesley Kean, as they were leaving the Newfoundland made for a patch of seals two miles off the Stephano, being directed thither by Capt. Abraham. They found the seals, about 200, but then the storm came up and they could get back neither to the Stephano which they knew had left, nor to their own ship. They kept much together and nearly all the dead bodies were found together, many of them falling never to rise again and knocking down others in their fall, some of these never rose. Others rose and struggled on.

HOW THE NEWS REACHED THE BELLA VENTURE.

Early on Thursday morning, a man was seen struggling towards Bella Venture, and then there were many astray. The straggler told them two others were following. Capt. Randall ordered his men out. "Never mind the seals, boys, get out and look for the men." The men took with them food, medicine and spirits to revive those in need.

DIED ON HIS KNEES.

As they moved along they found a boy of seventeen whom they gave food and a drink and after that he manfully made for the ship. Then they moved and came to the pans containing the dead, dying and sore stricken sealers. Most of them they found dead, others barely alive. Some fell down and died as they reached them. Capt. George Fowlow tells us one man died sitting on his knees as he was being held up and stimulant offered him.

REMOVAL OF DEAD.

Shortly after six o'clock the afflicted sealers had all been removed and the tarpaulin was removed from the bodies heaped in the well of the ship. Reverently they were lifted, removed to a van, and taken to the Grenfell Hall to be laid there for identification. Their relatives and friends are being admitted to-night to identify them. The dead who belong to the outposts will be sent home, as their friends

wish. The others will be interred here probably on Monday.

IMMENSE CONCOURSE.

The S. S. Bella Venture, Capt. Randall, arrived in port from the icefields at five o'clock this evening, bringing besides her own crew and 14,000 seals, 60 dead bodies out of 77 and the injured men belonging to the S. S. Newfoundland, who were caught out in one of the worst blizzards that ever swept the Northern Atlantic and which caused the most horrible marine tragedy ever recorded in Newfoundland history.

The coming of the Bella Venture had been anxiously awaited by the whole country which is left to mourn the loss of 77 of its hardy toilers and seafaring men.

Long before the ship put in an appearance an immense concourse of people blocked Water Street near the King George Institute, which was also besieged several times during the day when "Bell" was reported to be within speaking distance of St. John's but unfortunately since last night she was jammed in the ice coming through Baccalieu being unable to make any progress and in consequence was detained several hours. However, the hoisting of the signal at Cabot Tower denoted that she

SHIP WAS NEAR

and when she rounded the Northern Head, a great multitude of people, men, women and children, hastened to the waterfront to hear the sad story of the disaster from the survivors who had undergone a terrible ordeal. The ship stamed up the harbor with flags half-mast and berthed at Harvey and Company's pier. Dr. Campbell, Quarantine Officer, was the first to board the ship, examined the crew and gave a clean bill of Health. Several newspaper men then went on board.

STORY OF THE SURVIVORS.

A Telegram representative first interviewed three rescued men, belonging to the Newfoundland, who figured most prominently in the disaster. Their names are Jessie Collins and Cecil Tiller, of Bonavista Bay, and Michael Sheehan, of St. John's. They said after leaving here on March 10th the Newfoundland, in charge of Capt. Wesley Kean, proceeded to Wesleyville, where 35 more sealers were signed on, making a total crew of 189. On March 12th the ship left for the north in company with the Eagle, Bloodhound and one other. Very little progress was made owing to heavy ice conditions. On March 17th (St. Patrick's Day) when the ship was off Cape Fogo jammed 250 old seals were killed and stowed down. Search for the whitecoats was then made only to be impeded badly by ice so much so that after 13 days steaming, butting and making little or no headway each day she reached the Funk Islands.

ON MONDAY, MARCH 30th.

All the sealers directed by their master watches left the ship at 7 a.m. and walked until they were out of sight of the ship, a distance of about 15 miles.

At 11.30 a.m. that day the Newfoundland's crew boarded the Stephano to have something to eat. At 12.30 when they were finished their "mug up" there was a heavy swell on in the sea, accompanied by snow flurries, but even then the weather glass did not indicate that a storm was approaching. However, some of the Newfoundland's crew, notably the second hand, we were told by the three survivors mentioned, were doubtful about leaving the Stephano on account of the apparent weather outlook, that is, judging by the snow flurries and heavy seas. Capt. A. Kean told the Newfoundland's men to go to a patch of seals two miles off which was then in the direction of the S. W., as he had to leave and go pick up a contingent of his own men who were six miles off. The Newfoundland's men acted upon Capt. A.'s advice and again took to the ice. They made for the seals and found about two hundred.

THE STORM WAS THEN BEGINNING.

They were divided into three watches of nearly 40 men in each and separated about a half mile apart. Towards evening it became dull, with the snow very thick, but nothing of any great consequence and nothing to warrant anxiety. The wind was S. E. but when the night was well advanced shifted to N. E. The men began to feel hungry as the lunches, comprising a few cakes of hard bread each, were exhausted. The men were unable to see beyond the length of themselves and made "houses" out of plinacles of ice. Shortly after midnight or early Tuesday morning the wind increased in violence. The temperature was not very cold, though thirty men, including four master watches, died on the ice.

DIED HARD DEATHS.

We were told in a rather dramatic way how these unfortunate 30 men succumbed. Some died dancing, others cheering, more singing, others became frantic while a few dropped dead. During the balance of the night some of the survivors who had stout hearts lit fires and burnt seal pelts and gaffs to try and console those who were getting despondent. Some of the men after suffering a certain amount of untold hardship and exposure would lay down on the ice to die. Some poor fellows became afflicted with "mirage" and would say "I am going into the forecave" when they walked into the water and got drowned. These bodies were never recovered and supposed to be the eight missing from the entire list. Others when they came to an advanced delirious state grew frantic and almost tore themselves to pieces. Many men did not become unconscious fought against death and are still alive. A particularly noteworthy feature is that there was a total

ABSENCE OF COWARDICE DISPLAYED.

Every man played a man's part heroically and well. On Wednesday, April 1st, the survivors badly worn out, frostbitten and in a half-dying condition and with their fellow shipmates lying dead beside them, hung their coats on gaffs and attracted the attention of the Bella Venture which proceeded with all haste and took the survivors on board by the aid of stretchers first, and then the dead bodies were hoisted aboard and iced down. All the survivors, though badly frostbitten, improved while on the Bella Venture and though some were in a serious condition, will, no doubt, recover. When the Bella Venture was picking up the corpses on the ice the Newfoundland hove in sight and 13 of her crew who were rescued by the Bella Venture went on board. The Stephano picked up two bodies and the Florizel nine. These were transferred to the Bella Venture and brought on here.

STORY OF CAPT. RANDALL.

Capt. Randall's story is in brief a confirmation fairly exactly of that related by the survivors. He says he never saw such heavy ice and reports terrible weather experienced. Capt. Randall picked up a wireless message on his way home stating that the vessel reported off Cape Pine was a square rigger and not a sealer.

To Board of Trade.

From Quaker Oats Co. of Peterboro, Ontario:—

"Learn with sorrow and sympathy goes out to bereaved and to your members who are financially interested."

AT THE ICE.

Story of Mr. Arthur English on Board the Beothic---Boisterous Weather --- Rough Ice --- Thick Snowfalls --- Blind Travelling--- Beothic Gets About 28,000, Averaging 58 lbs.

In the opinion of sealing masters and other experienced men, the spring of 1914 has been the most boisterous on record, high winds prevailing during the greater part of the voyage. Blinding snow storms accompanied the high winds, making it exceedingly dangerous for men to go far from their ships. Added to that was the broken and rafted condition of the ice, which added manifold to the danger. Generally, so old sealers inform us, the whitecoats are found on large level fields of ice, where often men might travel for miles without encountering any water. This year, perhaps it is not too much to say when it is stated that there could not be found a single unbroken sheet whose surface area exceeded one acre in extent, and such sheets were rare indeed. The blinding snow-drifts filled the spaces between the pans with a treacherous slob. These men had to beware of, and despite the greatest caution many a man "fell in." Often that happened when miles from the ship, and the poor fellows had to spend the day in their wet clothes, a condition to try the hardhood of the best.

On March 13th the large steel ships of the fleet left St. John's. The weather conditions were most favorable and all hearts were light, with no thought of disaster to mar the keen sense of delight experienced by the crews of hardy fellows that sailed out the Narrows that day. The conditions that prevailed on the Beothic may be taken as typical of the others. Soon after leaving the master watches selected their crews and things began to settle down to something like order. Those not otherwise engaged soon were planing gaff handles and seeking the gaff to the poles to be in readiness for the slaughter when the whitecoats were found. Colls of tarred rope were brought out by the boatswain, and from those men cut out their hauling ropes. With his gaff, hauling rope, belt and sheath, knife and steel, and a small canvas bag hung on his shoulder, the sealer is fully equipped for the terrible work. The little canvas sack holds his ration for the day when he goes on the ice, and no sealer ever goes over the side of her without it for when once on the ice he cannot tell when he may get on board again. The sealer has no means of providing against thirst, and consequently he suffers much from that cause. He sometimes drinks salt water and even the blood of the seal that he kills, but these but add to his suffering. I have known a man to drink at one effort two quarts of water after having come on board.

We steamed through clear water till past Cape St. Francis. Only a lane of water, however, along the land could be found, and outside, as far as eye could see, was nothing but one vast expanse of ice. Vast clouds of smoke marked the position of each ship and sometimes hid them from view. The seven ships kept pretty well together for a day or two and then began to scatter in an effort to find a passage through the heavy ice. On the 14th we passed through a small herd of hoods. Some of them had pupped but most of them seemed to have their young unborn yet. Next day we passed some old harps or bedlamers. These were swimming, and old hands said we should soon strike the young ones. A flock of gulls was seen and was also regarded as a sign of whitecoats near at hand.

On the 17th it was reported to us by wireless that Belle Isle had heard the crying of thousands of whitecoats and a course was set in that direction. On the 18th, in the afternoon, the first whitecoats were taken and there was great expectancy on board. One of our firemen, who was three sheets in the wind, delivered a great political speech to the listening crews of the Beothic and Stephano, which ship lay quite alongside. He rated the Morris Government very severely for having taxed his cigars and champagne,

He was loudly applauded at the close of his speech. We secured about 200 seals that day, which cleaned up the whole patch.

On the 19th we struck the seals early in the morning, and all hands were on the ice at daybreak or soon after. We were now about 7 or 8 miles east of Cape Bauld. I had my first opportunity of making some enquiry among the seals. I "sculped" two old harps and examined their intestines. In the stomachs and gullets I found no trace of food, but an abundance of small worms about two inches long and about as thick as needles. Most of these were clung into the walls of the stomach and gullet, some of them free. No trace of anything like food on the ice. One small deposit voided by some old seal gave up, on being screened through a very fine screen, some fibrous stuff which may be either animal or vegetable. A further enquiry must reveal what it is. It is likely animal in substance. I also examined the whitecoats for sex, and found both genders balancing. Of 40 examined, 20 were female and 20 male. Listening at night to the cry of the little creatures I could plainly distinguish two voices, one high pitched and shrill, the other soft and plaintive. Evidently the voices of male and female.

Already some of the young ones were shedding their white coats and were in that stage known as "ragged jackets." We took about 3,000 on board that day. The seals are scattered over a very large area and not as usually found, in large patches. If one were asked to state where the main patch was located it would be hard for him to answer with any degree of exactness. The fleet of big ships were, it may be presumed, in that one patch, and some of them were so remote from us as to be below the horizon. To secure the 10,000 killed by the Beothic's crew on the 19th, an area of about 25 square miles had to be hunted over. Spread out in all directions over that area were the men, and these the captain had to keep in view or keep a record of their positions, so that should thick weather come on he may be able to pick them up. An error in locating these men may result in disaster. The master of a sealing ship has a tremendous care on him when those men are on the ice. His anxiety is heightened by approaching night and a coming snowstorm. The searchlight of the ship has sometimes to be used in order to locate the men. They are out on the ice and may know the position of the ships, but they have no means of signalling their position. In such a case they are utterly helpless as regards making their position known, and may hear the steamer passing even and not be able to reveal themselves. When she has a searchlight of course the chance of her missing them is greatly reduced. Nobody but those who have experienced it can realize the degree of anxiety felt on board a ship in a snowstorm when her men are somewhere out on the ice. In such a time the master feels an anxiety that none but he perhaps can estimate. On him the lives of those men depend. On his skill and knowledge their safety depends, and an error on his part may spell disaster. In such an hour the captain earns all he gets as his share of the voyage.

On March 21st a small crew was kept on board to pick up pans. The most of the men are out killing and panning. The heaviest seals were taken on this day, their average weight being 64 pounds. From day to day the pelts were weighed, and gave the following results from the 18th to the 30th of March: 52.7, 62.5, 62.8, 64.0, 54.8, 56.5, 57.0, 55.8, 54.1. It will be seen that from the 18th to the 21st there was an ascending scale, but from that, although as a rule decreasing, there was some fluctuation. Indeed it is a remarkable fact that with some of the lightest seals were mingled some of the heaviest. On the 18th

Continued on 10th page.