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Historical Records

HARBOR GRACE IN FLAMES.

(H. F. SHORTS.)

Article XVI.

In my last article I told how Harbor Grace and the other settlements on Conception Bay were combating the Asiatic Plague. How committees had been formed in all the towns of Western Bay to Brigas. A list of subscribers in Hr. Grace to build a hospital, etc. The Cholera had in Great Britain assumed alarming proportions. In July, Greenock having 446 cases; Glasgow 1523 cases; Liverpool 11 cases, the total on record for England and Scotland being 17,535, and about 7000 deaths, and the disease was even in vessels in St. John's. I wonder our friends were alarmed taking all precautions, but when the bell rang in Hr. Grace on that Sunday afternoon, August 18th, 1833, Hr. Grace had trouble and lots of it at home. Here is an account of the fire as it happened:—

On Saturday afternoon, between two and three o'clock, the most alarming fire which ever occurred in this district broke out between the premises of Thos. Marks and those of Messrs. Thos. Ridley & Co. in the centre of the town. The cause from whence it proceeded, or the precise spot whence it appeared, are from all that we have been able to ascertain, matters of conjecture, for when discovered the flames assumed an appalling power, and were burning forth simultaneously from the dwelling house of the former and a store belonging to the latter, which were only separated by a very narrow space. The wind blew a fresh breeze from W.S.W. and so rapid was the progress of the fire that in about ten minutes from its discovery, the whole body of those buildings was enveloped in flames, and soon after a quantity of gunpowder which had been deposited in the upper loft of the store exploded shaking the tottering walls like an earthquake, and the moment the atmosphere for a considerable distance was filled with burning embers. The flames now communicated to the houses on the right and left of both sides of the street

with awful rapidity and assuming a most formidable and terrific aspect, they were seen passing from house to house with almost as much celerity as fire kindled among stubble, embracing each in rapid succession until the immense range of buildings on both sides of the street from the vicinity of where Victoria Street is now in a direct line to the westward as far as Mr. Candler's below Kerry Lane, became a burning mass. The scene that ensued baffles description, females and children were seen running about in all directions, shrieking in the most piteous manner, and endeavoring to save themselves from destruction. The owners of houses occupied themselves in casting their property out in the street—merchandise of every description—beds, bedding and pieces of furniture lay promiscuously heaped together and were trodden under foot. The little time given for preparations prevented the removal of these to a place of safety, and little if anything, of the property of individuals could be saved, whilst the wildness of the looks of the sufferers, and the incoherence of their expression to solicit assistance, excited the compassion of the spectators, and the alarm and distress pictured in all their countenances rendered the scene truly appalling.

At the very first alarm such of the inhabitants whose property was not immediately endangered, collected in great force, with the two fire engines belonging to the town, and after a fruitless attempt to subdue the flames upon the spot where they broke out, directed their attentions to the preservation of the extensive mercantile establishment belonging to the estate of W. H. Danson, which was in its immediate vicinity to the westward, for which purpose the engines were brought into play upon various points, but the fire had got to such a head before they arrived, and the materials were so inflammable as to render all their exertions to check the progress ineffectual. A quantity of gunpowder was deposited here also, and in several other stores that destructive article had been imprudently lodged, which exploded from time to time, terrifying the people and paralyzing their exertions, and fatally increasing the conflagration by hurling the flaming

fragments accelerated by the wind to an astonishing distance. The aforementioned premises were now reluctantly abandoned, and the crowd retreated to the dock between them and Peter Brown's premises. Here the houses had been covered with blankets which were constantly saturated with water by the engines, the neighbouring fences and pallings were cut down and by these continued efforts the fire had first received a shock, and the wind providentially veering at this time to Northwest, co-operated and at length happily prevented the flames from extending to the west part of the town. All the buildings, however, in the contrary direction as far as before stated, except a few in the rear, among which were Mr. Parkin's (now the residence of H. Archibald), the Parsonage, and the Newfoundland School, were totally destroyed. Entirely built of wood and containing great quantities of Pitch, Tar and Resin, and other combustible articles, besides being thickly interspersed with large manufactures of Oil, they were in the short period of two hours reduced to ashes. No lives were lost, but the loss of property was great, in consequence of the rapid progress of the destructive element, and has been, as accurately as circumstances would permit, estimated at the value of £100,000.

The Episcopal Church, which has ever been the pride and ornament of the town, was certainly the most handsome edifice of the kind in this Island, was consumed at an early period. It cost about £4,000 in building about fifteen years ago. The establishments of all the supplying merchants in the town, with only three exceptions, shared the same fate together with all the goods and merchandise, which they contained, besides seven retail shops, The Waterford Arms, Kee's Hotel, and the Commercial Rooms; twelve public houses, and upwards of sixty premises occupied by Tradesmen, and others, were entirely destroyed. In all at least one hundred families forming about six hundred of the inhabitants were deprived of their dwellings in the short period, we before mentioned, and reduced to take refuge in the houses of such fellow townsmen as were beyond the reach of the destructive element and to a dependence upon public benevolence for that compassion and relief which their industrious exertions had enabled them, in common with the rest of the community, promptly and generously to afford to the unfortunate upon every similar occasion.

Among the principle sufferers are: Mr. Foley, Mr. P. Rogerson, Messrs. T. Ridley & So, Messrs. J. & R. Henderson, Mr. W. Innott, Mr. J. Innott, Mr. Jas. Prendergast, Sr., Mr. W. Mitchell, Mr. G. P. Gillard, Mr. T. Marks, Mr. D. Candler, Mr. Joseph Soper, Messrs. Stephen & Samuel Bennett, P. Danson, Esq., Mr. J. Knight, Mr. T. Dunford, Mr. John Richards, Mr. D. Donovan, Mr. R. Donovan, Mr. M. Green, Mr. F. Lynch, Mr. D. Keeffe, Mr. W. Meagher, Mr. D. Green, Sr., H. Garland, Mrs. F. Garland, Mr. Jao Murphy, Mrs. Quinlan, Mrs. English, Mr. Grubert, Mr. T. Woodley, Mrs. St. John, Geo. Bayley, Esq., and Sir Henry Fyde.

Indications of the alarming conflagration had been easily perceived at Carbonear and much to their credit the principal merchants and inhabitants of that town hastened promptly to the scene, and in conjunction with our terrified and distressed townsmen exerted themselves to render effectual assistance in the dreadful emergency, and prolonged their compassionate assistance until the flames became exhausted, retiring only with a promise of a speedy supply of food for the immediate subsistence of the sufferers. On this calamitous occasion, as soon as apprehensions of further danger to the remaining houses had in some degree subsided, the Rev. J. Butt, J. Starke, and N. Stabb, Esq., the Rev. Messrs. Nolan and Burns, and Messrs. J. Fitzgerald and R. Anderson, A. Mayne, repaired to the Court House and proceeded to take every expedient into consideration for providing for the unfortunate, and it was immediately resolved to dispatch the cutter Dolphin to Portugal Cove with a communication to His Honor the President, relating the deplorable

intelligences. The Magistrate also issued a notice offering temporary relief to the sufferers and directions were given to the destitute to repair to the Court House, for shelter. The Rev. Messrs. Nowlan and Burns announced the humane offer of the Very Rev. Mr. Ewer of the Roman Catholic Chapel as a place of refuge and the Rev. Mr. Tompkins also, very promptly tendered the Methodist Chapel for the same humane and benevolent purpose.

About 12 o'clock on Sunday two boats came into the harbor laden with provisions forwarded by several gentlemen of Carbonear, for the relief of the unfortunate sufferers, and in the evening His Honor the President, accompanied by Lieut-Col. Oldfield, R.E. arrived from St. John's via Portugal Cove. His Honor having received the intelligence sent by the Committee of the deplorable condition of the town, left Government House at an early hour, after leaving directions for the forwarding of supplies, and crossed the Bay in a small rowing boat in order to make himself personally acquainted with the extent of the distress and to afford suitable directions and relief. This act of His Honor is the most prompt and paternal which we have ever witnessed from so exalted an individual and has called for the gratitude and admiration of all hearts. After visiting the scene of desolation, His Honor proceeded to the Court House and remained in conference with the Magistrate and Town Committee, for upwards of two hours—His Honor embarked for Portugal Cove in the Cutter Dolphin, shortly afterwards. On Monday afternoon a boat, with the following supplies despatched by order of His Honor the President, arrived here to the care of the Committee of Relief, for distribution among the sufferers of the late fire: 50 Bags Bread, 10 Brls. Pot. 10 Brls. Flour, 2 Brls. Sugar, 1 Brl. Oatmeal, 1 Qr. Chest Congo Tea, 46 Tepts and 1,000 Blankets.

HARBOR GRACE, Monday, Aug. 20, 1832.

At an adjourned meeting of the inhabitants of this Town, notified by public advertisement, held at the Court House this day for the purpose of receiving a report of the Directors of His Honor the President, founded on the Letter of the Committee dated yesterday.

The Rev. J. J. Butt in the Chair: The Rev. Chairman after stating the object of the meeting, called the attention of the numerous persons present to the great benevolence and promptitude evinced by His Honor the President not only in affording the Town the extensive benefit of His Honor's personal directions under the present calamity but in affording the immediate supply of Bread, Pork, Flour, sugar and camp equipment, which were dispatched in boats round Cape St. Francis, and overland to Portugal Cove, and from thence to this place by the packet boat express. And then commented on the kind of co-operation of Col. Oldfield in accompanying His Honor and further rendering valuable assistance in reference to the camp equipment for the accommodation of the destitute inhabitants. He next informed the meeting of the directions of His Honor the President respecting the appointment of a Committee of Relief to distribute the above supplies and such other articles as might be forwarded, particularly impressing on every one concerned His Honor's injunction that the strictest economy be observed and the proper discrimination, which should be made as to their former circumstances and mode of living in dispensing the same to such as might apply. The humane contributions forwarded so promptly by the gentlemen of Carbonear were then brought to notice and after stating the number of issues made from the supply of provisions received from that place, and notified the time when further distribution would be made—the Rev. Chairman briefly summed up and requested the general sentiments of the meeting in connection therewith—when the following resolutions were proposed and carried unanimously:—

Proposed by Mr. J. Soper and seconded by Mr. J. Fitzgerald, that this meeting begs to offer to His Honor A. A. Tucker, Esq., President of His Majesty's Council and acting Governor of this Colony, their most heartfelt gratitude for His Honor's benevolence in visiting the scene of distress, and for the prompt measures which His Honor has taken to alleviate as much as possible the great wretchedness of the sufferers, by the late calamity and to secure His Honor that he has thereby inspired in the hearts of this community, these feelings of gratitude and respect which neither distance or time can ever obliterate.

Proposed by Mr. Comer, seconded

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| <p>MEN'S RUBBERS</p> <p>in every known shape and style. Men's Tan Rubbers—Low cut, medium toe and heel. \$1.55</p> <p>Men's Black Storm Rubbers—all sizes. Special Prices:</p> <p>\$1.45 \$1.60</p> | <p>LADIES' HIGH GRADE SPATS</p> <p>In dainty shades of Dark Fawn, Medium Grey, Dark Brown and Black. Very snug and neat fitting.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>14 Button</td> <td>16 Button</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$2.00</td> <td>\$2.25</td> </tr> </table> <p>Lots of other styles to choose from.</p> | 14 Button | 16 Button | \$2.00 | \$2.25 |
| 14 Button | 16 Button | | | | |
| \$2.00 | \$2.25 | | | | |
| <p>MEN'S GAITERS</p> <p>Men's 4-Buckle Gaiters, very warm and comfortable, extra strong soles and heels; all sizes. Special Price:</p> <p>\$4.75 the Pair.</p> | <p>LADIES' RUBBERS</p> <p>to fit any shape shoe. Ladies' Tan Rubbers—Low cut, medium toe and heel; all sizes. Special Price:</p> <p>\$1.05 the Pair.</p> <p>Ladies' Black Rubbers—Storm and Low cut, medium and low heels; all sizes. \$1.10 the Pair.</p> | | | | |

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C. P. Eagan

TWO STORES
DUCKWORTH STREET & QUEEN'S ROAD.



by J. Starke, Esq.: That the thanks of this meeting are hereby given unconditionally to Lieut. Col. Oldfield, Royal engineers for the interest he has evinced in endeavouring to extenuate the distress endured by persons affected by the late Fire—in accompanying His Honor the President to this town, and for the timely supply of tents and blankets which (His Honor informed the town committee) were so handsomely offered and given by him for the use of the sufferers.

Proposed by Mr. J. L. Prendergast, seconded by T. Ridley, Esq.: That the thanks of this meeting are gratefully tendered to the Merchants and other inhabitants of Carbonear for their prompt assistance in endeavouring to extinguish the late fire, and for the timely supply of provisions sent for the relief of the destitute so expeditiously the next morning, and that they beg to assure them that their kind exertions and benevolence in the hour of need will ever be remembered by the inhabitants of Harbor Grace, with feelings of the warmest gratitude.

Proposed by Mr. A. Mayne, seconded by Mr. A. Drysdale: That all persons having gunpowder in their possession, be earnestly requested forthwith to remove the same if at present deposited in any shop or store in the town, to a place of the greatest security they can conveniently provide.

Proposed by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mr. D. Donovan: That a committee be appointed to propose a plan

to regulate the width of the main and cross streets in the future rebuilding of the town, and that the plan be submitted to a general meeting on a future day.

Proposed by Mr. Geo. Garland, seconded by Mr. J. Richards: That J. Parkin and B. Henderson, Esqs., and Messrs. J. Innott, Geo. Garland, and W. C. St. John, and that the committee submit their plans on this day week.

Proposed by N. Stabb, Esq., seconded by Mr. J. Richards: That this meeting pledge themselves to use their best endeavours to obtain from the Legislature of this Island during its first sitting, an Act to compensate such individuals as may give

up property to widen the streets for the public good.

Proposed by T. Ridley, Esq., seconded by Mr. Oke: That a respectful Memorial be addressed to His Most Gracious Majesty humbly soliciting the Royal consideration to the present state of the sufferers, by the late fire, fully embodying all necessary particulars connected therewith, and praying that His Most Gracious Majesty would direct such a grant of money may be appropriated as the Royal wisdom and benevolence may suggest; And that His Honor the President be earnestly solicited to take the memorial under His Honor's conduct that it be duly forwarded to the foot of the Throne, and to give the same the weight of its extensive influence and local knowledge; And further, the Rev. J. Butt, Rev. D. Mackin, Rev. Mr. Nowlan, Rev. Mr. Birnie, Rev. J. Tomkins, W. Strirling and J. Parkin, Esq., Magistrates, and J. Stark and A. Mayne, be requested to take upon themselves the duty of a Committee to prepare the said document, and use their best endeavours to facilitate the object thereof.

The meeting was then declared adjourned to Monday next at 12 o'clock.

The following gentlemen were appointed by His Honor the President, a Committee of Relief, to receive the disburse contributions for the sufferers by the late fire:—Rev. J. Butt, Very Rev. T. Ewer, Rev. Fr. D. Mackin, Rev. Fr. Nowlan, Rev. Fr. Birnie, Rev. J. Tonkins, John Starke, Esq., Clerk of the Circuit Court, N. Stabb, Esq., Deputy Sheriff, and three nominated by the town namely, Messrs. J. Hippenley, J. L. Prendergast, and J. Fitzgerald.

(To be continued.)

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THREE FLOWERS COMPACT
With Puff and Mirror
Meets the requirements of those wishing an individual box of Rouge or Powder. Supplied in all Popular Shades.

Household Notes.

Parsnips are delicious parboiled, sliced, dipped in egg and bread-crumbs and fried.

Cake pans should be a little over half full, with the batter pushed well up into the corners.

Finely-chopped suet makes excellent shortening for puddings and crust for meat pies.

The crumbs left on the breadboard should be scraped into a glass jar and dried slowly.

