

# A FORGOTTEN WORTHY OF TERRA NOVA—CAPTAIN RICHARD WHITBOURNE.

(By our Newfoundland Correspondent.)

In this paper I have to bring before the readers of the *Canadian Illustrated News* the name of one far inferior in renown to the two illustrious characters already treated of—namely, Sebastian Cabot and Sir Humphrey Gilbert; but the name of one to whom Newfoundland is deeply indebted, and who though in a rather humble rank of life did her incalculable service. Captain Richard Whitbourne, mariner, of Exmouth, Devonshire, is one of England's forgotten worthies. He belonged to that bold race of seamen who in the days of Elizabeth and James laid the foundation of England's maritime supremacy, and discovered those distant lands which are now homes of industrious and thriving millions. For forty years Captain Whitbourne traded to Newfoundland, and so that he acquired an accurate acquaintance with the country and people, and formed almost a romantic affection for the Island and all connected with it. Having done what he could, during the active part of his life, to promote its interests, he returned to England in his advanced years; and the brave old sailor, to whom the use of the pen must have been rather irksome, sat down and wrote an account of this country, with the view of promoting its colonization by Englishmen. Captain Whitbourne's book on Newfoundland is an honest and truthful one; and making due allowance for the state of knowledge in those days, and the small inaccuracies into which such plain simple men might naturally fall, it may be affirmed to contain nothing regarding this Island which has not been fully borne out by after experience. The shrewdness, honesty and good sense of the writer are apparent on every page. A brave man was Captain Whitbourne; one who could fight in extremity as well as write a book, and sail a ship. When the Spanish Armada was approaching the shores of England, he fitted out a ship at his own cost, for the defence of his native land, and when the invader appeared off Berry Head, he was one of Elizabeth's gallant pack of Devon Captains, who dashed out of Torbay into the very thick of the Spanish galleons, undismayed by their size and numbers, and harassed and kept the foe at bay till the London fleet came up, and Britain's Salamis was fought and won. No wonder that Elizabeth called the men of Devon "her right hand;" and among these patriotic worthies was our stout-hearted Captain Whitbourne. He was present in St. John's, he tells us in his book, when Sir Humphrey Gilbert took possession of the Island, and his voice helped to swell the cheer down by the beach, when the flag of England was first unfurled. He was the first to say a favourable word for Newfoundland, and to make known to Englishmen the great natural capabilities of the country.

Captain Richard Whitbourne's book made a great impression, and must have given a strong impulse in favour of settling the Island and working its fisheries. So highly did King James think of the volume that he ordered a copy to be sent to every parish in the Kingdom; and the Archbishops of Canterbury and York issued a letter recommending it, with the view of promoting emigration to these shores. Thus, two hundred and fifty years ago, Newfoundland was a name on the lips of most Englishmen. The Island then loomed large and important in the eyes of statesmen, and was much more generally known than at the present day. Whitbourne, in his little book, told the people very truly that the soil of Newfoundland would grow abundantly "corn, cabbage, carrots, turnips, lettuce, and such like," when duly cultivated, and that it yielded spontaneously "fair strawberries and raspberries," and multitudes of bilberries which are by some called whortles; (whence our modern corruption "hurt") "and many other delicious berries, which I cannot name, in great abundance." He told them too of the hares, foxes, beavers, deer, bears and wolves, and among wild fowl enumerated our plump "partridges, hawks, ravens, crows and thrushes, but above all the penguin, as big as a goose." This was the great auk, then abundant on all the islands round the coast, but which has been exterminated by the reckless cupidity of man, so that for the last seventy years not a single specimen of it has been seen. Of the abundance and excellence of the fish Whitbourne wrote in rapturous terms. Then, waxing enthusiastic and eloquent, he exclaims, "what can the world yield to the sustentation of man which is not to be gotten here? Desire you wholesome air, the very food of life? It is there. Shall any land pour in abundant heaps of nourishments and necessities before you? There you have them. What seas so abundant with fish! What shores so replenished with fresh and sweet waters! How much is Spain, France, Portugal, Italy and other places beholding to this noble part of the world for fish and other commodities! Let the Dutch report what sweetness they have sucked from thence by trade! The voices of them are as trumpets loud enough to make England fall more and more in love with such a sister-land. I am loath to weary thee, good reader, in acquainting thee of those famous, fair and profitable rivers; and likewise those delightful, large and inestimable woods, and also with those fruitful and enticing hills and delightful vallies, there to hawk and hunt, where is neither savage people nor ravenous beasts to hinder their sports."

It is only of late that we are getting to understand how true are these representations of the shrewd, observant old captain in regard to our soil, given to the world two hundred and fifty years ago. We are actually beginning of late to find out that there are fertile valleys and splendid coal-fields in the western portion of the island. Alexander Murray, Esq., F.G.S., our able Geological Surveyor, in the course of last summer, may be truly said to have discovered for us the noble valley of Exploits, seventy miles in length and from two to ten miles in breadth, almost free from swamps and boulders, the soil in many places equal to the best in Lower Canada, and the pine, birch and fir of the best quality and the largest size. Here is a single valley in which 70,000 inhabitants might find a comfortable home, and it is still uninhabited and till recently all but unknown.

With such facts before us we must not laugh at good old Richard Whitbourne's enthusiasm. Perhaps in his love for the country he went a little too far at times. So tender was his regard for Newfoundland that he tried hard to apologize even for our blood-thirsty mosquitoes, representing them as a kind of police-force, very serviceable in driving lazy loiterers to their work. Here is what the delightful old skipper wrote

of our mosquitoes:—"Neither are there any snakes, toads, serpents, or any other venomous worms that were ever known to hurt any man in that country; but only a very little, nimble fly (the least of all flies) which is called a miskieto. Those flies seem to have great power and authority over all loitering and idle people that come to Newfoundland; for they have this property, that when they find any such lying lazily, or sleeping in the woods, they will presently be more nimble to seize on them than any sergeant will be to arrest a man for debt. Neither will they leave stinging or sucking out the blood of such sluggards until, like a beadle, they bring him to his master, where he should labour, in which time of loitering those flies will so brand such idle persons in their faces that they may be known from others, as the Turks do their slaves." This fine old sea-rover must have had a quaint, dry humour of his own. It is very clear from his exposition why mosquitoes are so "rough" on all who go trouting. They regard such intruders into their domains as idle scamps who are trying to shirk their work, and they send them home branded on the face as "lazy loiterers."

Our dear old captain was not afraid of the devil or of Spaniards, but he had a sailor's dread of mermaids, especially after a narrow escape he had from being carried off by one in the harbour of St. John's. He has left to posterity, in his book, a full and faithful account of his interview with one of these bold, unscrupulous sea-nymphs, who in the exercise of "woman's rights," evidently designed to hurry him off to her sea-caves, there to make a merman of our stout Devonshire captain, leaving Mrs. Whitbourne a disconsolate widow. The event, he tells us, took place at River Head, where, in the grey dawn of the morning, the captain chanced to be meandering along the beach. Suddenly he beheld "a strange creature swimming swiftly towards him, looking cheerfully into his face, as it had been a woman," and very beautiful and graceful in face, neck and forehead. The soft-hearted sailor could not but admire the fair proportions and well-rounded bust and shoulders of this fascinating female of the deep. But when he saw that she did not pause for an introduction, but came straight towards him, evidently intending to spring ashore to him, he did the very wisest thing he could have done under the circumstances, and, Joseph-like, turned and ran for it. How was he to know whether her intentions were honourable or otherwise, or whether she meant to claim him as her "affinity?" When at a safe distance, he turned and saw her gambolling in the water, showing her white shoulders in a decidedly coquettish way, and throwing reproachful glances at him for his want of gallantry from her soft, brown eyes. In these degenerate, sceptical days, when William Tell and the shooting of the apple on his son's head, and poor dog Gellert of our early days are scoffed at as myths even by youngsters, I am afraid few will be got to believe that Captain Richard Whitbourne, mariner, of Exmouth, Devon, actually "interviewed" a living mermaid in the harbour of St. John's, N. F. An unbelieving generation will heartlessly take all the poetry and romance out of the adventure, by saying that the simple captain merely saw a large seal sporting in the harbour, and that his excited imagination filled up the picture. All true lovers of the marvellous and mysterious will, however, scout such a theory with indignation, and stand up stoutly for the mermaid.

Our brave captain had, however, dangers more real than mermaids to encounter. He tells us that in the year 1612, being again on his favourite coast, he fell in with "that famous arch-pirate, Peter Easton, who had with him ten sail of good ships, well furnished and very rich,"—an arch-pirate, indeed! Peter appears to have treated our captain very kindly. He had realised a handsome fortune by piracy, and wished now to retire honourably from the profession. After keeping Whitbourne a prisoner for eleven weeks, the prudent Peter despatched him to England with a message to the authorities to the effect that he was open to accept a pardon. It shows what the spirit of the times was in those days when we find that a pardon was at once sent to this bold pirate. Before it reached him, however, Easton got weary of waiting and "sailed for the straits of Gibraltar, and was afterwards entertained by the Duke of Savoy, under whom he lived rich." Wealth in those days, as in our own, covered a multitude of sins, and when a pirate became rich, and had ten good ships and stores of gold, arms and fighting men, even sovereign princes took him by the hand.

In 1615, Whitbourne sailed for Newfoundland on official business, carrying with him a commission under the seal of the High Court of Admiralty, authorising him to empanel juries and reform disorders on the coast. He did his work well, but got only "barren honour" as his reward. In the following year his ship of 100 tons, laden from Newfoundland to Lillsbon, was riddled by a Rochelle pirate, whereby he suffered loss to the extent of £800—a large sum in those days. Once more he made the attempt to colonise the country, and sailed for Newfoundland in a ship of his own, victualled by a joint-stock company. Again he fell into the hands of pirates and his project came to nothing. Then it was that finding his individual efforts futile, he sat down, in his declining years, and penned the appeal referred to above, addressed to the King and people, urging earnestly the settlement of the island, and this for the curious reason, among others, that it would afford an outlet for the superabundant population. "Considering how your Majesty's kingdom do abound and overflow with people." If this reason held good in the days of James the First, as a justification, how much more would it apply in our days!

In the conclusion of his quaint book, Whitbourne thanks God that although he had often suffered great losses by pirates and sea-rovers, no casualty had ever happened to any ship in which he himself sailed; and he takes this comfort that if, after more than forty years of naval life, he had reaped little other than the peace of a good conscience, he has at least the knowledge that he had ever been a loyal subject to his prince, whilst he has enjoyed the comfort of never yet, in all his time, having been "beholding to any doctor's counsel or apothecaries' drugs" for the preservation of his health. After all the buffeting of fortune, he enjoyed an honourable and tranquil old age in the land of his birth, and was "gathered to his fathers" in peace. "Light be the turf on thy breast," brave, honest Richard Whitbourne! All true Newfoundlanders must ever revere thy memory.

We are glad to hear that Mr. William Law Gane, of 85 Gracechurch Street, London, son of Mr. Gane of Ottawa, is appointed Commissioner for taking oaths and affidavits in England in all matters pertaining to the Canadian Courts.

## FIELD AND FLOOD.

The Guelph races took place on the 26th inst.

The Toronto Rowing Club intend having a sailing regatta this day (Saturday.)

John Mann, in the "Star of the North," won the scull-race for the championship of Halifax Harbour.

The Montreal Foot Ball Club is making arrangements for a series of matches to be played during the season.

The "Silver Star" base ball club of Port Hope defeated the "Beaver" club of Newcastle last week by 65 to 26 in eight innings.

A grand yacht race is to be held at Kingston on or about the 10th inst. The yachts "Gorilla" and "Ina" will compete.

A yacht race of forty miles between the "Meta," "Vision," and "Grace" took place last week at Sandy Hook, and was won by the "Meta" in 6h. 55m.

The "Excelsior" base ball club of Woodstock, junior champions of Canada, defeated the "Young Victorias" of Ingersoll last week by a score of 7 to 5.

The Quebec regatta on Saturday was a great success. The race of most interest was the four-oared race, which was won by the "Lady Dufferin," the "Hibernian" second.

The sixth championship game of the series between the Athletics of Philadelphia and the Baltimores of Baltimore was won last week by the former with a score of 11 to 6.

A match was played on Saturday between the smokers and non-smokers of the Montreal Lacrosse Club, and was won by the latter, who took the first, second, and fifth games.

The State Fair at Sacramento closed with a race between "Goldsmith Maid" and "Lucy," mile heats, best three in five, for \$1,000. "Goldsmith Maid" won in three straight heats.

Mr. Douglas, of the "Sappho," has issued a challenge to sail any schooner in England from the Nab to Cherbourg and back three races: the winner of two out of three to take the prize, say a 50 or 100 guinea cup.

A cricket match was played at the Toronto Cricket Ground on Thursday of last week, between the Yorkville Cricket Club and the Whitley Club, which resulted in a victory for the Yorkville, by 114 to 85.

A match game of base-ball was played last week between the "Silver Star" club of Port Hope and the "Beaver" club of Newcastle, resulting in favour of the former by a score of 65 to 26, decided in eight innings.

A cricket match was played at Toronto on the 24th and 25th ult. between the Toronto club and an eleven selected from gentlemen residing north of Toronto, resulting in a victory for the former, winning by 256 runs.

One hundred and ten miles in eleven and three-quarter hours was accomplished the other day on an Ariel bicycle by a young gentleman residing in the vicinity of Norwich. Starting from the Great Ryburgh Station at 4.45 am, he reached Ware, in Hertfordshire, at 4.30 p.m., having accomplished a distance but little short of 110 miles in 11h. 45m., including stoppages.

The Montreal Hunt Club has resolved upon holding two days' steeple-chasing on the 17th and 19th inst. On the first day there are to be races for horses owned by members of the Hunt that have never won a hurdle race or steeple chase or open race, and a race for half-bred horses. On the second day a race for a cup presented by members of the Hunt, open to qualified horses; and last a handicap.

On Saturday afternoon a match was played on the grounds of the Montreal Cricket Club, between an eleven of the Montreal Club and an eleven of residents of Lachine. Play began at half-past one o'clock and the Lachine men winning the toss, went first to the bat and played a fair innings for 55. The Montrealers went in at a late hour, and when it became too dark to play longer they had run up a score of forty-eight with three wickets down.

Speaking of the English cricketers who lately visited Canada, *Land and Water* says:—"There, as at home, Mr. Grace sustains his pre-eminence. His last performance of 140 against a 22 must have been a great one, although we are somewhat surprised that seven other wickets should succumb for 100 runs. Our friends across the water must bowl and field fairly, or men like Mr. Lubbock, Mr. Hornby, Mr. Hadow, and Mr. Ottaway, would have scored more than the present totals show that they have done."

The annual race, under the auspices of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club, took place at Toronto on the 23rd inst. Four yachts started. The "Oriole," schooner, 95 tons; "Geraldine," schooner, 25 tons; "Gorilla," sloop, 33 tons; and "Brunette," sloop, 22 tons. The race was taken by the "Gorilla" in 3h. 51m. 25s.; "Oriole" second, 3h. 52m.; and "Brunette" third, 4h. 2m. 10s. A silver cup, given by the club in connection with this race for second yacht in, was won by "Brunette," the "Oriole" having to give her half a minute per ten time, barring protest.

The cricket match between the English gentlemen and 22 of Boston and vicinity, came off on the 26th ult. The crowd of spectators was large. The 22 went first to the bat, and scored 51, when the Englishmen followed, and had barely tied them when the last wicket fell, Mr. Grace making 260—the highest single score. In the second innings the 22 made 43, and then the Englishmen went again to the wickets, and when the stumps were drawn they had scored 22 with the loss of 6 wickets, including Mr. Grace, who was caught after making 5. No further play took place in Boston as the Englishmen left for Quebec the following day. On Saturday last the Eleven sailed for England in the "Prussian."

We have received from Mr. E. C. Barber, the Secretary-Treasurer of the Ottawa Turf Club, and a gentleman by pedigree and performance well qualified to be "all that," the programme of the Ottawa Fall Races, to be held on the 8th and 9th October. The purses amount to \$1,800. No Trotting. There are several races confined to horses in the city or county, a step well calculated to encourage accessions to the turf and to inspire local interest. There is a steeple-chase, \$300, over three miles of hunting country, for which some of our Toronto nags ought to be entered. Entries close on 5th October. Our reminiscences of the Spring Meeting at the Capital are so pleasant, that we cordially wish our Ottawa friends the success they deserve.—*Toronto Mail*.