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THE SEMI-WEEKLY TELEGRAPH, ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 1904.

THE SEMI-WEEKLY TELEGRAPH.

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E. W. MORRIS, Editor.

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Semi-Weekly Telegraph

ST. JOHN, N. B., APRIL 16, 1904.

THE PORT ARTHUR DISASTER.

Fate, whose instrument sometimes is ignorance or incompetency, has dealt Russia another stunning blow. Official Russia is plunged in grief, the cause of which is as yet hidden from the great mass of her common people who will feel the disaster most keenly hereafter. The loss of the battleship carrying Admiral Makarov, and the death of that popular hero of the Slavs, appear from the reports which reach the outside world from Russian sources, to have been due to the explosion of one of the mines planted in the harbor some time ago by a Russian cruiser, which was herself sunk by a similar contrivance. Thus, if one accepts the version at hand, the loss of the Russian commander with 600 or 700 men, and a ship of the line, were caused by the frightful mismanagement, the awful climax of a series of suicidal occurrences which have held Russia's naval reputation up to the scorn of the nations ever since the Japanese struck their first daring blow at Port Arthur.

The loss of the admiral, his ship's company and his ship would be appalling in time of peace. The disaster takes on much greater proportions at this time, when the value of both Admiral Makarov and the Petropavlovsk were inestimable because of the position in which the nation stands, and because to replace them is an impossibility. There will be world-wide regret over the catastrophe, a regret which would be somewhat tempered had the news been that the fighting admiral had died leading a forlorn hope against the enemies who have, jaw-like, beyond the harbor mouth.

This blow will cause consternation in St. Petersburg. It must have a tendency to depress the spirit of the Russian navy, already somewhat weakened by previous reverses of a most serious nature. It fell where Russia has shown herself weakest in the East, and yet, where her pride was most engaged—in the Port Arthur squadron. Its sentimental value in lending new fire to the Japanese war fever will be considerable. Also it will increase the chance that Admiral Togo has of effectually sealing up Russia's remaining ships in the beleaguered harbor, hastening the fall of the city, and making more uncertain the already uncertain plan of the Czar's advisers to send the Baltic fleet 18,000 miles to the Yellow Sea and effect a junction with the harassed squadrons hiding at Port Arthur and Vladivostok. If the harbor entrance can now be closed, Japanese transports may use the sea without a guarding squadron, and troops and supplies may be landed at will. The growing weakness of Russia afloat means that the Japanese will have no difficulty in keeping their lines of communication open and will be able to send food and ammunition without stint to the legions they are pouring into the fighting zone for the great shove northward.

The glory of yesterday's disaster may take on another complexion when all the facts are known. We do not yet know that the Japanese were not responsible for it. In any case the Bear is sorely stricken.

A WORTHY CAUSE.

The New Brunswick School for the Deaf, which has been established by those interested in an afflicted class for whom there is universal sympathy, is to be incorporated. A delegation, consisting of Messrs. A. O. Skinner, O. H. Warwick, James Ready, J. Harvey Brown and Judge Trauman, is now in Fredericton to secure the necessary legislation. The school as a permanent and properly organized and maintained institution, it may be assumed, will now be in a position to receive the per capita grant fixed by a bill passed at the last session of the legislature.

The bill of last year specifies that in case a proper school for the deaf is organized and maintained in New Brunswick, it may receive a grant for each of such pupils as are sent to it by their friends or guardians. The bill does not make it compulsory upon New Brunswick deaf children to attend any particular institution. If some go to the Halifax school, for instance, that school would receive so much per head per pupil. As the New Brunswick school is a home institution, however, and will be a good one with an efficient board of managers composed of prominent business men who have kindly decided to devote

considerable valuable time to the good work, it is likely that most parents will select it in preference to a similar school outside the province.

If the New Brunswick institution comes up to the standard set by the government, as we have no doubt it will, there should be no difficulty about the per capita allowance. The government, it is assumed, will make an inspection and require certain information in order to satisfy the ministers that the school meets the requirements, and will then pay the sum fixed toward the support of such pupils as are enrolled from this province, just as it is proposed to do in the case of pupils attending the Nova Scotia institution. The gentlemen who have founded the school here and who will be responsible for it are citizens of high standing who are actuated by the most kindly motives, and the knowledge that they are meeting with support and success in their good work will be welcome to the people of the province generally.

THE WATER SUPPLY.

The citizens' meeting which is to be held in a few days to deal with the water supply will be likely to awaken the aldermen from their long sleep. Superintendent Murdoch has tried for years to awaken them, but in vain. Today the people of St. John are confronted by a big increase in fire insurance rates. They know, too, that there is not water enough to supply householders, and that men starting new industries requiring water have been told they cannot get it.

The Common Council is directly responsible for these conditions. They have not criticized or suspended Mr. Murdoch, and it is, therefore, to be assumed that they believe he is a competent man who knows what he is talking about. If they are convinced that he is incompetent they have a remedy in their hands. He has made several reports. These reports were received by the aldermen but they became necessary to refuse to supply water for manufacturing purposes and before the fire in Short's stable. Even the fire aid the action of the insurance men have not moved the aldermen perceptibly. Most of them are now too busy seeking reelection to pay much attention even to public business of vital importance. The present aldermen will be in office until May. If a majority of the present board are elected they may feel it necessary to get to work at once on the water supply question.

New or old, the aldermen who will have charge of civic matters in future must set about repairing the blunders and inactivity of the present board without delay. If a 36-inch main to Silver Falls is necessary, it cannot be laid too quickly. There is need of definite information on several points which should have been cleared up long ago. A suggestion has been made that to tap Donatson Lake would give the city a sufficient water supply. The superintendent is not sure about it. Some say a gravitation supply cannot be had without going to Loch Lomond. One alderman maintains that the money spent in trying to stop the famous leak which has been in existence since 1854 could have been used to increase the volume of water so much that the pressure would be sufficient to supply the high levels.

The superintendent suggests three or four remedies and estimates the cost of each. Had the council dealt with the reports as their gravity demanded, weeks ago, the work of reforming the water supply system would have been under way by this time.

The aldermen preferred to file the reports. This creates a peculiar situation. If the reports were worth no more than a pigeon-hole space, the superintendent is a useless official. If they were valuable reports, the aldermen who pigeon-holed them, and who have taken no further action in the matter, were not fit to transact the city's business.

The civic election this year will be no such farce as it has been on some occasions. General interest in civic business and a strong demand for competent city administration will cure the council of its lethargy. New candidates and old ones should be judged simply by their capacity and their determination to serve the city faithfully. There is no other test. The man who best serves the taxpayers is the best alderman. It is clear that there must be a change at city hall, whether it be made by the present aldermen or their successors.

The condition of the water supply, and the neglect which has led to that condition, show that a new spirit is necessary. And the present stir in civic politics gives some promise that the new spirit will be noticeable during the coming May.

IT IS A BUSINESS MATTER.

The circulation of a petition asking the withdrawal of the bank tax bill has led to a report that the movement against the measure is a political one, started by the Conservatives. This story, unfortunately, is calculated to weaken the attempt to kill the bill at Fredericton. St. John bank taxes do not constitute a political question in any sense. No one had a right to give political color to the petition which is in circulation. The whole question of taxation is a business matter and should be dealt with as such, here and at Fredericton.

The bill as amended is opposed by quite as many Liberals as Conservatives. Business men object to the bill as it stands because it will reduce the amount of money which the city should derive from the banks, and because it is a compromise which establishes a bad precedent and permits the Bank of New Brunswick to avoid paying a large proportion of the amount which the volume of its business and the

amount of its stock justify the city in making from it.

The average business man's taxes go up year after year. This year the increase will be considerable, and the public service will demand large expenditures. Under these conditions there is positively no excuse for the arrangement which those in favor of the amended bill propose to make for the benefit of the Bank of New Brunswick. The branch banks are willing to pay their share—if the burden is made equal upon all.

The Common Council should never have proposed a law such as that which the legislature was first asked to pass, for it would not give St. John an equitable and assessment law reaching all who should pay taxes. Having proposed it, however, the aldermen were foolish to consent to the amendment to which many of them are today opposed and which few would like to see carried into effect. As the matter is one of business, affecting St. John alone, the legislature should deal with it without being influenced by party politics. The bank tax bill received the three months' notice of the committee of the whole. The House should take the committee's view of it. And the aldermen should set about securing a law which will enable them to force all who should be taxed and are able to pay to walk down to the chamberlain's office and write. A bill which plays favorites is worse than no bill at all. Its passage would create intense dissatisfaction here.

EXIT ENGLAND.

One of the mildest and yet most convincing sets of resolutions ever devised by the human brain for the promotion of international comity has just been adopted by Penobscot Division No. 1, A. O. H., of Bangor, Maine, and forwarded to Senator Hale and Frye and Congressman Powers at Washington. The parchment on which these admirable sentiments were engrossed was decorated, no doubt, by the Revolution and the American, Irish and British flags intertwined. A portion of the delicate preamble follows:

"Whereas, a small, noisy, ignorant and persistent minority in America, composed largely of aliens, English servants, descendants of a country whose rule in Ireland, India, South Africa and China is the synonym of brutality and dishonesty; that we are opposed to it as it is certain to arouse differences, and, among the races, national feuds and that we call upon all decent Americans to join us in securing some form of friendship with all nations but extending alliances with none."

The authors of this pleasing resolution assert that "it was England alone who, in our war with Spain, attempted to cripple our movements by unprovoked Europe against us." This discovery is new. It had been thought heretofore that Germany, not England, was disposed to write Europe to join in denouncing the great American eagle and some tail-feathers. But that is aside.

The main thing is that perfidious Albion has been exposed once more and that "decent Americans" will now unite with Penobscot Division No. 1, A. O. H., of Bangor, Maine, in declining an alliance with a nation whose prime minister is not fit to occupy the humble post of janitor in the building from which Penobscot Division issued the burning words which will ever live in the annals of the world and serve as a warning to all who would betray their country to the enemy.

MAKAROFF'S FATE.

News from the Far East regarding the cause of the loss of the Russian flagship is still contradictory. In one quarter it is strongly asserted that the watchful Togo lured Makarov out from his shelter and that torpedo boats slipped in behind the Russian admiral, surrounded his ship and blew her up. The story lacks definite confirmation and is the more uncertain because the disaster occurred in the daytime. Torpedo boats are supposed to attack at night or during a fog. There has been no instance in which they have assailed battleships or cruisers in company during daylight and without support.

The "official" account of the loss of the Petropavlovsk which comes from St. Petersburg this morning is studiously vague. Though a mine is named as the instrument of destruction, the ship's boilers are said to have exploded first. Some such confused account followed the blowing up of the Maine in Havana harbor, and, as in her case, there is a suggestion that the explosion may have been wholly internal.

But even if we accept the St. Petersburg version it appears that the Japanese were really the cause of the catastrophe, for they were, by the Russian account, driving Makarov back into the harbor, over his

own mine field, and in the confusion of this retreat, the great vessel, the famous commander and nearly the whole ship's company were destroyed.

Early in February the Russian torpedo transport Yenisei ran aground on one of her own mines and was blown up, losing ninety-five men. Next day the Bayarin struck a mine and the death roll reached 200. Now follow the flagship, 700 men and Russia's greatest sailor. No navy ever encountered such a series of misfortunes traceable to incompetency. Russia is hard hit. Yet she has scarcely begun to fight.

NOTE AND COMMENT.

There will be no sorrow in Tokio.

The debate on the G. T. P. is to be wound up next Tuesday. The opposition cannot point out all the objections to the project before that day but they can briefly refer to the more serious ones.

Newfoundland will have an "old home week" in August. The government will contribute \$5,000. The New Brunswick government should do something along that line for the celebration here in June.

The report that Mr. T. C. Burpee, now engineer of maintenance, is to succeed Mr. Pottinger as general superintendent of government railways, is rumored. It is said that Mr. Pottinger is to be superannuated but neither he nor Mr. Burpee has confirmed the news.

Before the G. T. P. amendments are put to a vote the House and the country should have more detailed information about the route. Many sections of the Dominion have heard promises that the railroad would serve them. What points will the line really touch?

Mr. Hazen could not tell the Attorney-General what he thought of him last evening without lapsing into poetry. The other opposition speakers stuck to prose. The Attorney-General didn't appear to be wounded deeply by the metrical attack. He probably felt thankful that the opposition leader didn't sing it.

Mr. Sears is all right. He will get the votes of the boys, and they will elect him, because they know he will be too busy as mayor to write any more poetry.—Chat-Ham World.

Has the World been authorized to announce that Mr. Sears will forego poetry if he is elected? And, is it right to sacrifice the muse to worldly questions of civic business?

"Out with the present mayor and aldermen" was the cry in Labor Hall last evening. There is much to be said in favor of it. But no one would willingly replace even the present city fathers by men who are less competent. Beat your present representative if you can put a better man in his place. But sit up, you present representative in any case, for three out of four of the present board need stirring up.

During the Spanish-American war the cruiser New York, the flagship of Admiral Sampson, was very nearly blown up by an American torpedo boat during a night manoeuvre off Havana. The New York, with a couple of deck guns, was the commander, a son of Fremont the Pathfinder, saved the flagship and the admiral from destruction. Russia now feels such a blow as would have shaken the nation to the south of us had Fremont not been the man he was. In war with modern destructive contrivances the result of negligence or successful attack is likely to be of the most frightful character.

RECIPROCITY WITH CANADA A LIVE ISSUE.

Massachusetts Republican Convention Today Will Debate the Proposition.

Boston, April 14.—The Republican state convention which will elect four delegates at large to the national convention at Chicago, will be held in Tremont Temple tomorrow. The arrival of delegates began during the afternoon, and tonight in large numbers were in the city. Among the delegates were Senator Lodge and several former Governors. Those who were escorted to the American House, where to-night a reception was tendered the delegates by the state committee. The reception was followed by conferences among the party leaders.

There is a pronounced difference of opinion upon two matters that will come before the convention. Eugene N. Foss will also insist that a resolution concerning Canadian reciprocity, satisfactory to him, be adopted. Col. Benton's friends claim that delegates pledged to him were chosen at the recent primaries. Mr. Foss, who opposed Col. Benton at the primaries, will, however, carry the contest into the convention. Mr. Foss is also strongly in favor of the use tomorrow of the Australian ballot system, and the method of choosing delegates may give rise to some argument.

The other matters upon which a division is possible is the question whether the platform shall declare in favor of Canadian reciprocity. Mr. Foss, who has been active recently in behalf of a trade reciprocity treaty with Canada, had arranged for a vigorous opposition to the adoption of resolutions which omitted reference to a trade treaty with Canada.

Tonight, however, it was intimated at Republican headquarters that the platform to be reported would contain a clause favoring, in a general way, Canadian reciprocity, but it was also declared that the plank inserted would not be one which would satisfy Mr. Foss and his friends.

As an officer of the historic 22nd, General Sir Ian Hamilton fought side by side with the late Hector MacDonald and Sir George White. Then he went to South Africa and fought the Boers, and was one of the few present at Majuba who survive. Then he came to the South Sea. He has served under all the great living commanders.

THREE-QUARTERS OF CENTURY AGO

Life in the Aroostook Wilderness in the Days of the Pioneers.

A WOMAN'S MEMORY.

Nearest Neighbors Six or Eight Miles Away—Bears, Wolves and Indians—Millerites Preaching the End of the World—The Aroostook War—Lonely Winters—Money of No Value—The River the Only Highway.

Editor of the Port Fairfield (Me.) Review:

It is with interest that I have read the reminiscences of the Aroostook pioneers. It carries my mind back to those days, yes, even farther than those, back to the days when the country stretched away on either side of the Aroostook river a shaggy wilderness unmarked by road or footpath from Washington county to Quebec, back to the days when the river was the great highway, and the canoe in summer and the ox sled in winter took the place of the pneumatic-tired carriage and the fancy jumper of today.

I was born on an island in the Aroostook river, in what I believe is now the town of Washington. Though I am not quite sure, I think this is the same island that is now owned by our former townsman, John F. Currier, was known at that time as Mumford's Island; but since three-quarters of a century have passed since I was last there, I am unable to state its exact location.

I was quite small when my parents moved away from there, and there is but one incident connected with our story there that I distinctly remember. That is the time when two religious fanatics arrived there and began holding meetings in the log cabins of the local settlers that had located on or near the little island. I have named, this being the largest colony of settlers belonging to "No. 11" (now Ashland) and Andover, New Brunswick. These two religious ladies, Charles McMillan and Joseph Arnold by name, told the hardy pioneers that they had had a revelation in which it had been revealed to them that the end of time was at hand and that a certain day of that October had been designated when the coming of the Messiah was certain. Many of the colonists believed this to be so. And on the day in question quite a number gathered in the barn of Mr. Bulfinch, the largest structure available, and I believe, the only frame one on the Aroostook river. They prayed and awaited in vain the final blast of Gabriel's horn.

There they stayed all day and through the long night, though the weather was bitterly cold, and at dawn wended their way to the various camps, cold, hungry and disappointed company. Mr. Arnold, however, apparently deranged, took to the forest, and was only recovered from freezing and starvation by those who followed him and brought him back by force. When found he was in the top of a tall tree, and he refused to come down until he had been fed and clothed. In the spring of 1828 my father, leading his family and his worldly goods on a journey to the south, passed through the river, moved to a little log cabin, on what is now the farm owned by James Erb, of Presque Isle. This cabin, together with an anchor of the adjacent forest as he might desire, he purchased from a man named Elias Brown, for the magnificent sum of \$15. There was just enough land cleared around this cabin to spread the one fleece of wool which mother washed and spread out to dry shortly after our arrival. A good jumper could have stood on the threshold of our front (and only) door and leaped with one bound into the forest.

And here, in the face of a primitive as the mind can well conceive, I passed my childhood and early girlhood. Here it was an uncommon sight to see the shaggy-bear swim the river, and, after shaking the water from his rough coat, disappear into the neighboring forest. Here the gaunt gray wolf, with lolling tongue pursuing the frantic deer along the ice, was a familiar scene. Here mother has stayed alone winter after winter, tending her cow and two or three sheep, her nearest neighbor six miles away, seeing no human face but those of her own little brood of children, or perhaps those of a company of Indians on their way to their up-river hunting grounds. These occasionally sought permission to sleep on the floor before the big rock fireplace on some exceptionally wild night, promising to pay liberally for the privilege in moosemeat when they returned—a promise they never failed to keep. For father as soon as the river froze, after shoeing his oxen himself, started away over the ice for the lumber woods, to be gone until spring. Chas warned him that the fast weakening ice would soon run out and he must be moving homeward while he could.

Here many of the earlier pioneers, on their way to their new homes, stopped to seek shelter for the night, often being the first shelter after leaving Caribou stream, some eight miles away. It was here that I remember of first seeing the grandfather of the editor of the Review, Veranese Candler, who spent his first night on Aroostook soil at father's house, telling mother that his ready cash was somewhat limited, but offering her in payment for his lodging a pair of slippers, which she graciously accepted, they being much more acceptable than mere money, when it might be more than a

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year before an opportunity offered to spend it.

Here a detachment of troops, sent out to defend their country during the famous Aroostook war, tarried for the night, coming down the river on father's ox team, after having detained him for two days, as they did all travelers, to prevent the news of their coming being carried to "the enemy."

I have seen the unbroken forest of Aroostook developed into fine farms, thriving villages and handsome dwellings. The piano has taken the place of the loom and spinning-wheel. The Smyrna rug has supplanted the deer-skin mat. Fast express trains rush up and down on either side of the river over a right of way where, during my childhood, the traveler picked his way through tangled brushwood and the wild beast had his lair. I have seen many men who came here with the clothes they had on as their only wealth grow comparatively rich in this land of peace and plenty. And, though I have known all the privations and hardships that are inevitable to pioneer existence, though my married life has begun under circumstances that would dismay a modern bride, I cannot say that my life has not been a happy one, and I do not know that I would have had it otherwise.

MRS. CATHERINE ASHBY.

Port Fairfield (Me.), March 23, 1904.

NEW CONSULS TO CANADA.

More Trade Expected from Steamship Arrangement—The Dominion Vies a Subsidy of \$20,000—Canada Expects to Gain Business in West Indies.

Halifax, N. S., April 13.—Preparatory to the inauguration of the new steamship service between Canada and Mexico recently arranged for by Sir William Mulock,

postmaster-general of Canada, and President Diaz, the Mexican government will establish consulates in the principal cities of eastern Canada, the first of which will be in Halifax and St. John. The Canadian government has voted a subsidy of \$20,000 a year for this service, and at least two Canadian steamship lines are seeking to secure the contract. The steamships will run in summer from Montreal to Vera Cruz, calling en route at Havana and Progreso. In winter Halifax will be the Canadian terminus. Coal will also be taken from Sydney, as it is believed a good market can be opened in Mexico for Cape Breton coal; but the bulk of the exports will be manufactured goods, fish and lumber. Heretofore nearly all Canadian shipments to Mexico have been carried in schooners or sent to New York for transshipment by steamer from that port. It is believed that establishment of direct steamship connection will develop a large trade between the two countries. Canada will take in return, mainly, hemp and sugar from Mexico and tobacco from Havana. An effort also will be made to develop tourist traffic from upper Canada to Mexico during the winter months. The run from Halifax to Vera Cruz, twelve hours, railway journey from Canada, will be made in nine or ten days. Canadian exporters look also for largely increased trade with Cuba as a result of the establishment of the Mexican line.

L. Cortes, formerly Cuban consul at Boston, who has been transferred to Halifax, as chief consul for Canada, speaks enthusiastically of the prospects of increased exports to and imports from this country. Canadian manufacturers have been courting the West Indian and South American markets for some time, and in the future vigorous efforts will be made to secure the trade of these countries, which with a subsidized steamship line, they think, will not be very difficult.

A. C. McPhee is in the city in the interests of the Toronto Globe.

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