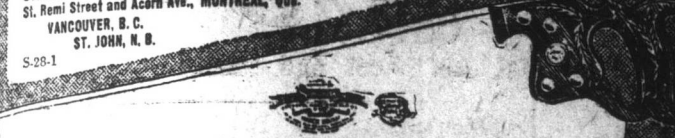


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Experience of a Telegrapher

And Some Reminiscences.

(H. F. SHORTIS.)

The account published in the *Evening Telegram*, during the recent past, of a small craft had been driven out to sea, and had to buffet with the wind and sea, and the remains of an experience when I was a young telegraph operator in the seventies of the last century. I have told the story many times, but I am sure it will bear repetition, and here it is:—

Perhaps the most interesting and amusing of the dead past, then the telegraph operator of the early days of telegraphy in the Island of Newfoundland. Go back to the days of the New York, Newfoundland, and London Telegraph Company when operators were few and far between—stationed from Cape Race to Cape Ray—the labor and miraculous groups of those days would, in themselves, fill a very large volume, and to do full justice to such a task would require the words of such experienced telegraphers as the late Superintendent, M. Mackay or Alexander Saunders, or repairer William Tobin, at present hale and hearty after over fifty years connected with telegraph construction in this country. William Tobin and Wm. Savin are now the only remaining connecting links of the old school, who saw telegraphy in its infancy, and who taking it by the hand helped it over the numerous difficulties, until it has attained the present position of connecting the two hemispheres—the Old World and the New. All their old associate operators such as Abbott, Lerner, George Henderson, Lily, George Lemoine, and Tom Foley, have passed away. It is impossible for me, in one article, to compare the present condition of telegraphic communication with that in practice when Stott, Hadden, Jim Hagen, Adam Martin, and the last of the Old Guard were over half a century ago.

I remember when a single line ran in many places, under the name of the house, and insulators were made of zinc and other materials were nearly as large as the old-fashioned coffee-mills. I remember William Tobin, of his experiences in the old West Line, and the various anecdotes that he told, and the numerous matters that have come under his hand, I have decided to write, which shall never be lost from my memory, while I am still alive. There is hope that I shall live long enough to tell the story of the "Flash" and the numerous matters that have come under his hand, I have decided to write, which shall never be lost from my memory, while I am still alive.



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packed to its utmost capacity. Scores of people drove from all the neighboring towns and settlements in sleighs or walked the distance; in fact, by any and every means, so as to be in time for the performance. Hundreds had to go away from the doors, not being able to gain admittance. There was not a kink in any of the proceedings. The talent of the performers was well-known and their fame, as musicians had penetrated every town in the Island. Seven o'clock came—the curtain was to rise at eight, sharp. I remember, it was a cold, foggy evening, the wind being about southeast, with rain and snow at intervals. I believe that I was the only person in the town at work that evening, but I had made arrangements as to a mode of admission by a private door, should I be detained too late on duty. The hands of the clock were drawing towards the appointed time, and I called up St. John's office to let me off, five or ten minutes earlier than usual, as there was nothing doing—all hands being at the hall. That was all right, but before I finish this part of the story, I must describe where I was, also the respective surroundings. The Drug Store and Telegraph Office were under the same roof. The former was closed at an early hour, and any person requiring to enter the office should ring the bell at the hall door, and, if he had business, pass through the hall, inside the shop counter, and into the office, which had a glass door, and also a wicket about four and a half feet high. This wicket was the last entrance to the office. No person but one of the household or privileged person, would dream of entering without ringing the door-bell, or knocking at the outside door entering the shop. There, in array, stood scores of bottles, of all sizes and shapes, like grim sentinels guarding the entrances, and dangerous customers were those silent sentinels for a person to interfere with. In a word they contained drugs—from the simple opium salts up to deadly poison—from the sweet perfume of attar-of-roses to the villainous assafoetida. The gas in the shop was turned on, so as to give me sufficient light to get out and lock the door. I have now endeavored to describe my position and the surroundings. Ten minutes to eight, by the clock, and I wished St. John's office "good night," fixed myself for the road, and as lively as a merry widow for a second marriage, I lowered the gas, so as just to leave the house sufficient light when he would come in after the performance, and made for the entrance. Great Scott! Shall I ever forget it? There, leaning on the wicket, was the face and form of Skipper Charlie Matthews, his face aglow with good nature and dirt; his teeth shining like polished ivory, and his eyes scintillating with happiness—the whites being more than ordinarily visible, owing to the outward coating of black. There he was with his unkempt hair, a broad grin illuminating his visage. I don't think I am able to describe my feelings. I am sure I am not. I remember something went through me like a current from half a dozen galvanic batteries; my upper and lower jaws clapped together like a rat-trap by hair stood out like porcupine quills (or at least I thought so); my face must have been like marble, while my legs refused to support my body and my hands and arms refused to move. I must have presented a pretty picture!

NO GHOST, BUT SOLID FLESH.

What happened for a short time I know not; yet it seemed a life-time. There I was staring at Skipper Charlie's ghost, as I thought, with eyes glassy, unable to move, a fit model for one of the idols for a Brahmin temple, should one be started. I was as cold as ice. Skipper Charlie laughed heartily, reached out his hand, which I had set the power to take at the time, and, in a stentorian voice, so well remembered by me, exclaimed, "How is yer, Mr. S.—mortal starmy wedder we's 'avin'—how be all the folks?" Somehow I managed to get to a chair, and fall into it—still keeping my glassy eyes riveted on the ghost. I said I had not power to describe my feelings, and I shall not attempt it; the reader's imagination must do the rest. However, everything is bound to have an ending, and it was so, with my trance. By the kindness and assistance of Skipper Charlie, I rose from the chair to circulate the news over the wires, but not a letter could I make for a long time. When I did so, somehow, such seemed incredible to those at the office at Heart's Content. But at last I convinced them that Skipper Charlie was alive and kicking, and at my elbow at the time. Then messages were despatched in all directions, people were called out of their beds (people in outports retire early), salves of musketry and artillery rang out, and the clergyman hurried to tell the glad tidings to the sorrow-stricken families. There was not an eye closed in the neighborhood for that night.

THRILLING RESCUE.

In the meantime, Charlie, in his own imitable manner, described his adventures to me. The night after he had encountered a heavy gale off Beccalieu. The canvas was torn in atoms from the bolt rope, and the little vessel was at the mercy of the wind and waves. They were drifting about for four or five days, when they were seen by the brigantine Arctic. Capt. Grestie Foote, which sailed from Harbour Grace some days after they were taken on board (some two soon for

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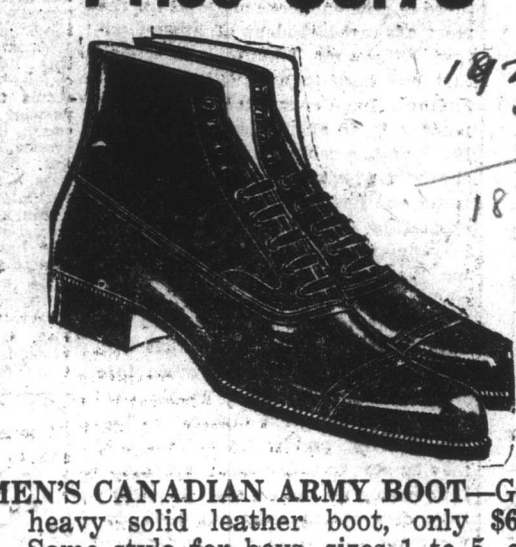


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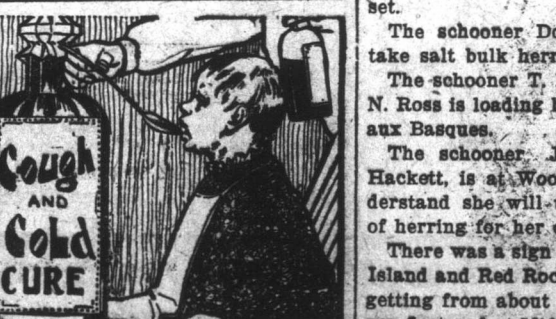
Same styles in Black, only \$7.00, without rubber heels.

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the Flash was sinking) and brought to the West Indies. It must be remembered there was no direct telegraph communication with West Indies in those days. In the night of the concert, the Arctic arrived in port—the boat was launched, and Skipper Charlie was landed immediately opposite the Telegraph Office, and having the run of the house, noiselessly entered the office, to give me one of the greatest freights it has ever been in my experience to undergo. After a few minutes, and taking the necessary stimulants for strengthening our nerves—his being overtaxed with laughing, whilst mine were sprung asunder with fright—we proceeded to the hall, to make an interesting addition to the audience. As we entered, it was then the cheering, clapping of hands, etc., were indulged in. People could not believe their eyes. The concert had to be cut short—the history of the voyage, escape and arrival had to be given, and it was late at night when we dispersed to dream of the



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our Cough and Cold Cure, because it is composed of pure and harmless drugs. No cough remedy has ever been discovered that will cure every cough, but we think we have one that comes a little nearer to doing it than most of them. We have prepared it for years, it has been tried in all manner of cases and given satisfaction. We ask you to remember and try this:

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Herring Fishery.

There was very good herring fishing at French Island and vicinity on Monday.

It was reported on Monday that the price of herring commenced at \$2 per barrel from the nets.

Herring have entered Humber Arm, and there were two tubs to the fleet yesterday off Davis Cove.

One to two tubs of herring were taken at Melvers on Monday. Many of the fish, however, were badly eaten by squid.

At Middle Arm on Monday one boat secured fifty tubs of herring and other boats who had gear set, did well. There were only a few nets, however, set.

The schooner Donald Silver will take salt bulk herring.

The schooner T. M. Nicholson, Capt. N. Ross is loading bulk codfish at Port aux Basques.

The schooner Judique, Capt. J. Hackett, is at Wood's Island. We understand she will take away a cargo of herring for her owners.

There was a sign of herring at Green Island and Red Rocks on Friday, boats getting from about half a tub to a tub per feet and at Middle Arm on Sunday boats had from eight to ten tubs. The herring on Sunday were up to Womel Cove. The storm prevented the hauling of the nets on Saturday, and when the storm abated the fishermen who had gear set went out and picked them—Western Star.

as a passenger, cannot carry, a pair of blankets as your own luggage. Of course, this is done, and, so long as the articles are not overweight, no objection is made by the company's servants, but if such luggage is lost, the company is not liable for compensation. An interesting point is this—that a servant may not take his employer's goods with him as his own luggage. Eat MRS. STEWART'S Home Made Bread.—oct18.6mo

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Ladies' White Voile and Lawn Blouses; big value offering. Come, pick them over, all one price, only **\$1.49.**

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Regular price \$2.20 pair. For Friday, Saturday and Monday only **\$1.49 pair.**

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Hose of exceptional value; hem tops; best quality fleece, fast black, only **55c. pair.**

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