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From Out the Storied Past.

BUSINESS 100 YEARS AGO.

(H. F. SHORTIS.)

ARTICLE 5.

That Trinity Bay, and Trinity proper in particular, has produced a hardy and fearless race of men cannot be denied. They can rank with the most enterprising, competent and successful planters, seal-killers and foreign-going masters that were ever identified with the commercial affairs of our country. I have but to name such famous mariners as Ash, Hiscock, Doherty, White, Facey, Connolly, Dwyer, Eagan, Coleman, etc., to establish this fact. In the days of which I write Trinity was a hive of industry. Not alone had they a splendid fleet of sailing vessels prosecuting the seal and codfisheries, but they had a superior class of ships in the foreign trade. They had also several ship-building docks in that thriving town, amongst which I may mention Stoneman's, Brooking's and Slade's. From these docks were turned out such fine ships as the Cosmopolite, Dart, Gazelle, Times, Henry Thomas, Isabel, Dorothy, Trinity, Catherine and the Angler. The latter ship was launched, sparred and fully rigged, ready for sea. Besides these there were some scores of others, built in Trinity Bay, viz., the Corsair and Jim Crow for Mr. Richard Howley, St. John's, father of the late Archbishop Howley, by Pittman, of New Harbor. Amy, 71 tons, 1821; Margaret and Jane, 45 tons; Phoenix, 110 tons; Swallow, 67 tons; Lester, 204 tons (brig); Caroline, 101 tons; Sally, 98 tons; Anna, 91 tons; Robert and James, 137 tons; Edward, 76 tons; brig Jane, 150 tons; Beaver, 156 tons; Eclipse, 99 tons; Active, 71 tons; Providence, 70 tons; Five Sisters, 79 tons; Success, 63 tons; Seal, 57 tons; Agnes Ann, 32 tons; Bee, 40 tons; Hope, 96 tons; Vestal, 133 tons; Maria, 91 tons; Amy Ann, 74 tons; Deborah, 158 tons; Hannah, 90 tons; William, 145 tons; True Blue, 115 tons; Mary, 93 tons; St. Patrick and many others. The chief and most famous master builders in Trinity Bay were the Newhooks, of New Harbor, who built such splendid ships as the barques Fleetwing and Queen and many others—the Pittmans and Reuben Bemister, of New Perlican, and Mr. Rowe, of Heart's Content. Mr. Rowe built the brigt Naomi for Capt. Stephen Parsons, of Bay Roberts, and she was pronounced to be as staunch a vessel as ever floated from the docks. Bemister built the Archie, Gypsy and many others, and the Pittmans put out of hand so many that it would take up too much space to mention them. But probably the prettiest model ever launched in Newfoundland was the Corsair (Pittman), and I understand there is a painting of the ship still in existence.

Local Poets.

Much of our knowledge of those days of yore is to be derived from the effusions of the local poets, and nearly every settlement possessed one or more of them. Some of them may be somewhat crude in their composition, but they record the facts all right, although not in such beautiful and classic language as that of Tom Moore, Campbell, Mangan, Davis or Bobbie Burns. All the same they may be looked upon as history in verse, although not possessing the grace and culture of Sir Walter Scott. Many of the poems were real gems, but unfortunately they have all, or nearly all, been lost. The most of them related to the dangers of the ice-floes, the heroism, hardihood and capability of the masters and men who composed the crews. In fact there were songs composed upon every subject relating to our country and our people. We had no printing presses and **Evening Telegrams** in those days, and such songs were sung by the people at social gatherings or at their work and handed down to their children. I shall now give your readers one as an example, composed, in all probability, by one of those "youngsters" of whom Mr. Kelson tells us so much about in his letters. These "youngsters" were very proficient in music and song, and as they were all a happy-go-lucky crowd, they composed those songs to be delivered at the social gatherings which occurred every night in the week, more especially after the busy spurt was over, that is, between 31st October and the middle of February, when they would "go in collar" for the sealfishery. You will notice that there is not much of the "hatchet and saw" poet about the composer of the following verses, and they have a ring about them that would remind one of "Ye Mariners of England," "Paddies Evermore," or the "Cock of the North." They are all couched in nautical phraseology as was the custom in those days even in ordinary conversation. "Where is Mr. Bond?" said Sir Wm. Whiteway to Capt. John Halley, one evening. "Arrah! begob," said Capt. John, "he's just gone along there with his studding-sails set; just crowd every inch of canvas on her, royals and all, and you'll overhaul him before he rounds the Cape." "Thank you," said Sir William. He understood him. And now for one of the old-time songs that so often rung out from the throats of 70 Newfoundlanders, as they worked on the windlass or warped their vessel into the wharf with a load of seals on board.

Lines Written in 1852 to the Sealers of that date when the Sealing Voyage was prosecuted by sailing vessels:

We'll sound the hardy sealer's praise,
a wild and fearless strain,
Who coast each creek and shore along, or cross the billow's main;
Not Winter's storm or Sea's alarm can daunt their daring mind,
Unknown to Fear away they steer, Old Neptune's place to find.

The merchant men cease voyaging when the wintry Stars appear,
The men-of-war are cruising far, propelled by southern air;
But the hardy hands in Newfoundland wait not for Season's change,
'Midst ice and snow they'll daring go where Billows loudly range.

The stormy month of March has come —"Boys muster and prepare
To leave your home o'er seas to roam and take the sealer's fare"—
"Away, away, through storm and sea, a trackless course to trace,
Where sea-dogs lie and sea-gulls fly to find your favorite place."

When storms prevail, to shorten sail, aloft bold seamen go,
On slipping shroud while piping loud the stiff northeasters blow—
While slipping shroud is piping loud they mount the quivering yard,
The canvas roll, the Billows foam, for each wild lurch regard.

The gales increase, "take in close reef," our gallant skipper cries—
"Luff, helmsman, luff, to give relief whilst mountain billows rise;
Let all but few descend below, lest threat'ning seas o'erwhelm—
The smartest hands on deck must stand—the steadiest to the helm."

When night's dread moon with fearless gloom o'ershadows sea and land,
And breakers o'er the tempest roar, proclaims the ice at hand—
With courage true our sealing crew for dangers then prepare
And they boldly wedge to the water's edge, where none but sealers dare.

In yonder skirt begins the sport, where the sought-for whitecoat lies—
With gaff and gun, each man has sprung, to seize his distant prize.
Now here and there old seals appear the whitecoats are at hand;
"Your hauling gear and guns prepare, and let the punts be manned."

Yon iceberg's wake has formed a lake that lies our course along—
To warp her through on our sealing crew round bows and bulwarks throng,
Now the storm has passed, we've stowed the last, the hatches batten down;
'Tis homeward now our ship shall plow, the sealer's hopes to crown.

Then and Now.

I have so often described the scenes which occurred in St. John's and the outports when the great fleets of sailing vessels were moving through the harbors on their voyage to the sealfishery, that it is unnecessary for me to do so in this instance; in fact, I would not have done so at all, only I am contrasting the ten steamers that are prosecuting the fishery this Spring with the **hundreds** of sailing vessels and the **thousands** of men who prosecuted our great industry when I was a boy. The young generation have no idea of the interest that was taken in the sailing of the fleet in those days, and even the schoolboy would, by some means, find an excuse to absent himself from school and his books to witness the sight. And now there is hardly a cheer, and little or no interest is taken in their departure. The only interest is taken in the first arrival by the lucky one who "holds the ticket."

Fish Prices.

And now for Mr. Kelson's next epistle:—

Trinity, July 13th, 1815.

Mr. Robert Slade,—Sir,—This goes by Capt. Biel in the "Alpha," which vessel has in a full cargo of oil, blubber, skins and staves as per invoice enclosed, and which I hope will be delivered to you in good order. I notice with much pleasure your observation in your letter No. 9 respecting sending her out again with something or other, in the hope that I should find vent for it. Of this there is not the least fear even if she was three times as large. I regret much the small assortment the "George" has on board, and the "Active" keeping off so late is a great disappointment. Time will not permit my making out a regular Indent for the "Alpha," neither can I well ascertain what will be most wanting, as I, of course, cannot tell what the "Active" may bring. However I beg to refer you to the enclosed rough sketch of a cargo for her which you will be able to correct as the "Active's" cargo may render necessary, and still to let her be well filled. Respecting the old fish, I was rather unfortunate in purchasing 250 qtls. mble. at 30s. per qtl. in different parcels from 3 or 4 of our dealers early in the Spring, when it was 32s. in St. John's, thinking to make up (with what we had of our own) a cargo for the "Alpha," and being at that time in hopes of raising seal oil enough for one of the larger vessels and which would have been the case had our schooners been as fortunate as our neighbors.

I have sent to St. John's 314 qtls. mble., 532 qtls. Madeira and 68 qtls. West India fish, being all that we had (excepting 422 qtls. which the "Swallow" carried thither of which I have not yet received an account), and which sold for merchantable, 314 qtls. at 24s., 532 qtls. Madeira at 22s., and 68 qtls. West India at 20s.

Master's Ventures.

Capt. Biel requested me to let him have 20 qtls. for a venture, which is the first instance of such an application I have yet met with, on shipping off a cargo of oil; we gave for it 21s. per qtl., being a part of 180 qtls. which I bought this Spring at that price, and I have charged him 22s. 6d. If you do not allow of ventures to the Captains when taking oil you will please say so, and I will thank you to be particular also in stating to me everything respecting their agreements. We are busy discharging the "George." On opening her hatches I was sorry to see the quantity of spare room there was in her hold, plenty for the iron pots we wanted, and for 10 or 12 crates of earthenware, etc., etc. It is a great pity and disappointment to me, I suppose it must have been owing to the negligence of Messrs. Earle and Co., as they have not stated their reasons for not having sent more and the pots. As we shall have the "George" nearly discharged to-day, I hope to get her away for St. Andrew's in the course of 4 or 5 days at furthest. Our large new boat has been out fishing some time past and we shall have another out to-morrow, besides two small ones (one of the latter from Rowe's Room, where we have erected a new stage and which job hindered us a day or two from getting the seal oil ready for the "Alpha") and occasionally a cod seine. I look for the "Swallow" hourly.

By the Catalina papers per "Swift" you will see that we shall have out from there one large boat and perhaps one small one, and a constant bait-skiff to tend upon the Planters. The prospect for bait and fish is mending. I remain in the hopes that the voyages may be tolerably fair, sir.

Your humble servant,
WM. KELSON.

P.S.—Please to send by return of the "Alpha" one thirty rand herring net, small mesh, same as the Scale A in No. 6 for Wm. Cook of Ship Cove. I have delivered the two last year's copy ledgers to Capt. Biel, also poor Cutler's Bible for his widow with a few papers which belonged to Osgood and Wright. I approve of the magazines you choose for me and will thank you to continue them. Enclosed are the accounts of the late James Cutler, John Wright and Frederick Osgood arising from the sale of their clothes at auction by a sworn auctioneer, by which it appears there is now due to the several estates as under:—James Cutler, £26 19s. 0d.; Frederick Osgood, £10 5s. 10d.; John Wright, £3, 11s. 8d. But you will please refer to the personal accounts of each which were sent home last Fall, and which you have also now in the Books per this vessel.

WM. KELSON.

Rough Sketch for a Cargo per "Alpha."

30 hhds. coals, 12 hhds. lime, 100 bags of fine biscuit, 50 barrels pork, 10 tierces beef, 20 cwt. good Irish butter, 30 half hhds. good kiln dried flour, 20 half hhds. good beer, 50 grapnells —from 30 lbs. to 50 lbs. each, 10 barrels tar, 6 brls. pitch, hemp rope—the same quantity asked for last Fall, 5 boats' anchors—from 60 lb. to 1 cwt. each, 60 pairs men's good fishing boots, 20 prs. boys' do, 80 prs. men's good stout shoes, 80 prs. men's fine shoes, 60 prs. boys' large shoes, 40 prs. middling do. do, 40 prs. small, do. do, 80 prs. children's shoes, assorted sizes; 60 prs. women's half boots, same sort as came by "George" last Fall; 80 prs. women's shoes made to tie (leather), 80 prs. women's fine Morroco slippers, 1 cwt. colored thread, chiefly blue and black; 50 pieces Russia canvas, 20 pieces assorted ships' canvas, 2 or 3 crates tinware, 2 or 3 do earthenware, if room; 30 pieces swanskin, 20 do blanketing, 25 do flannel 2 do red baize, 200 pairs good large double knit gloves, 100 prs. good large corn do gloves for heading, 10 pieces blue serge, 200 men's red flannel shirts, 100 prs. men's large canvas trousers, 100 meen's large canvas frocks, 80 prs. do course blue cloth trousers, 60 men's do. do jackets, 100 do red worsted caps; hats, assorted, 3 or 4 boxes; 40 women's fashionable corsets, different sizes; 8 best twistd rodes, 1 caplin seine, 21 ft. deep and 40 fathoms long; 1 caplin seeine, 21 feet deep and 30 fths. long; 1 do. do. 24 feet deep and 40 fths. long; 1 do do, 24 feet deep and 35 fths. long; window glass, the same quantity and size asked for last Fall for the new country house; 2 or 3 hundred panen glass, 8 by 10; 2 or 3 hundred do do, 10½ by 13½. Paint, a few 28 lb. kegs of white, the Planters are always wanting it; 10 cwt. good soap, 10 dozen hatchets, same size as asked for last Fall; 80 bags nails, assorted; 40 girls' cloth dresses, assorted; 40 pieces black cotton (none left); 10 pieces fine blue broad cloth, 20 pieces printed cotton, 30 women's black silk bonnets, 20 do do beaver with feathers, 30 children's black beaver bonnets, 8 pieces cambric muslin, 8 pieces do worked cap muslin, 2 or 3 hundred pieces of ribbon, 30 or 40 women's capes, assorted; 40 prs. women's leather gloves (short), 40 prs. do cotton do, 50 prs. men's leather gloves, 4 doz. black silk handkerchiefs, 10 pieces assorted lace, 2 doz. women's muslin handkerchiefs, 2 pieces Jackn muslin, 40 pieces tape, 40 pieces binding, 50 pieces gartering, 60 women's shawls, assorted; 30 spotted rugs, 30 green do, different sizes; 30 green do. 60 prs. blankets, different sizes; 60 women's cotton gowns (none left), 30 or 40 girls' frocks, 20 children's frocks, 20 Bibles (the people of Catalina are very religious), 40 or 50 reading easies, 400 quilts, 20 pairs bellows, different sizes; 30 pairs tongs, herring nets the same as asked for in letter No. 6, 30 or 40 guns, 20 watches, 5 or 6 doz. plated tea-spoons, 5 pieces striped dimity, 100 pairs men's braces, assorted; 4 doz. pairs men's cotton hose, 3 doz. children's (worked) caps, 5 doz. boys' leather

(Continued on 9th page.)

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