

THE NEWFOUNDLAND SEAL FISHERY—6.

those already in use, building punts, procuring firewood, gullstems, bats, pokers, oars and other material left nobody with an excuse for being idle, and when the 25th of February arrived and the sealing crews went in collar, all was rush and activity until they sailed with great demonstration for the icefields on the first of March. In these days, Twillingate, Fogo, Greenspond, Trinity, Hant's Harbor, Carbonar, Barbor Grace, Cupids and Briggs were great centres of industry. Many vessels sailed from these places and in some of them the seals taken were manufactured into oil. There were vats in Twillingate, Greenspond, Trinity, and in some places in Conception Bay which have long since gone into disuse.

In 1857 there were 400 sailing vessels, of from 70 to 200 tons, engaged in the seal fishery; their crews numbering 13,000 men. The average annual value of the industry at this period was from one to one and a quarter million dollars.

In the year 1863 steam was first employed in prosecuting the seal fishery, two comparatively small steamers being sent to the ice by Walter Grieve & Co., and Baine, Johnston & Co. The great innovator, steam, did not meet with popular favour, but its great power and usefulness in contending with heavy ice-packs had been amply demonstrated and the number of steamers went on increasing from year to year, until by a gradual process sailing vessels were forced out of the business.

In 1866 there were 177 sailing vessels and five steamers; in 1873 there were 18 steamers; in 1882 there were 25 steamers, and at the present time there are 22 steamers engaged in the industry, and only one sailing vessel, the *Island Glen*, Capt. Martin Sharpe, crew 20 men. She sailed on February 27th and went north of Cabot Island and did not see a pelt, and arrived at Bay Roberts, April 1st, clean.

With the introduction of steam there has been a consequent decline in the number of men employed in the seal fishery. This is one of the inevitable results of the application of steam to mechanical and industrial enterprises. The following tabulated statement is significant, showing the average catch of seals for 20 years up to 1863, when the decline in the industry began with the introduction of steam;—

YEARS.	SEALS TAKEN.
1815	126,315
1820	213,679
1825	300,082
1830	297,000
1835	357,523
1840	578,942
1845	686,836
1850	508,407
1855	384,321
1860	621,375
1863	585,330
1848	521,004
1852	534,278
1853	298,083
1856	361,317
1858	507,624
1859	329,185
1861	447,202
1861	375,282
1863	298,100

I have no doubt that if the number of breeding seals killed by steamers, during first and second trips, since 1863, and the average catch for these years, as compared with former years, were put in evidence it would be amply demonstrated that the decline in the number of seals annually taken since the introduction of steam is a direct result of the indiscriminate slaughter of breeding seals. The restrictions imposed upon sealing steamers by the law now in force will prevent this indiscriminate slaughter and help very materially to give permanence and stability to a very important industry.

The Sealers' Strike.

The sealers strike, in the spring of 1902, marked a new and memorable epoch in the history of the seal-fishery. The sealers going in the steamers getting but one-third of their catch up to that time and being compelled to pay certain charges which they regarded as unfair and excessive, resolved on putting labour against capital in a mighty struggle for better terms of agreement for the voyage.

On March 10th, when the time of sailing had arrived, and the several steamers were all in a state of readiness to proceed on the voyage, their whole crews, numbering 3,000 men, left their ships and a most exciting scene immediately followed on the streets of this city.