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CONFEDERATION LIFE ASSOCIATION

Dugald Munn & Ernest Fox
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Poole's Golden Age.

When Newfoundland Trade Flourished

(H. F. SHORTIS).

A few days ago an old friend of mine, sent me a paper of recent date, giving an account of a lecture delivered by Mr. H. P. Smith, the local historian and antiquarian, before the Poole (England) Rotary Club. This, of course, immediately attracted my attention, as not alone has my friend, the late Rev. Canon Lockyer, of Trinity, written much upon this subject, but I have also contributed a considerable amount of information about the "good old days, when the trade of Newfoundland was in a most flourishing condition with the British markets, of which, Poole, in those days, was the great centre. Not alone had we a most extensive trade with Poole, but also with Exeter, Plymouth and other ports of England, and all this was continued up to my early days. We had also a very considerable trade with Ireland, and many cargoes of codfish and herrings were shipped year after year to Waterford, Cork, and Wexford. Nor would these be small cargoes. Some of the vessels, such as the Marion Ridley, Willow Crest and others, were vessels of over 150 tons. With regard to Scotland, the records of the great and time-honoured firm of Messrs. Balne, Johnston & Co., would show, that cargo after cargo of fish and herring has been shipped to Greenock and other ports during the past century. Then the question presents itself to my mind—"Why have we lost or abandoned these markets?" There must be a cause. We had also a most profitable market in Belgium, notably Antwerp for our herring, and also in Germany. All this happened in my early days, and I can give the names of some score of vessels which brought our products to these markets. In the hotels of Belgium, in all the cafes and restaurants, the herrings are cut up in small blocks, like sugar, and partaken of as (to use our own expression) as a "grog bit." It used to be the same in Germany and Russia. I have these facts from my brother, who was for over two years a student in Louvain, Belgium, and certainly studied these matters more carefully than I have.

Now the point I must arrive at is— we know that the North Sea fisheries, since the War, have been what they were previous to that great upheaval. Then why not our merchants endeavor to once more capture, not alone the markets of England, Ireland and Scotland, but also Belgium, Germany (more particularly the Rhine portion), and extend their operations to Russia, which, I understand, they are endeavoring to do with regard to the latter country.

But let us look at what Mr. H. P. Smith has to say regarding the great trade carried on between Poole and Newfoundland in the early days of the past century, and (to my knowledge), up to the seventies. Mr. Smith said that the most brilliant and stirring of all the varied phases of Poole's storied past, the days when it was almost possible to pass from quay to quay across the decks of Newfoundland trading vessels.

In the glorious epic of Poole's lengthy connection with Newfoundland, Britain's oldest colony, there was much over which Poole men might enthuse. Poole at that period

might have been described as the "Venice of the West Country." Despite the great disparity of size and population between the two places, the metaphor was not altogether ill-chosen. The geographical likeness was marked, the lagooned-enclined dwellings of Harnworthy and Poole having reminded more than one traveller of the Adriatic seaport.

MAKING HARDY SEAMEN.

Just as the rich argosies of Venice brought home their precious cargoes from the East, so, in the hey-day of Poole's Newfoundland trade, did five score Poole vessels return annually from the West, laden with the rich harvests of the Great Bank and the Arctic waters. The amphibian existence produced both in the Venetians and the Poole men of old, a race as hardy, expert and fearless sailors.



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is unnecessary to labor the common-sense so far as to liken the fine old "Venetian" mansions in West Street (Trinity Street), with the princely palaces of Venetian nobles, but the elaborate Georgian exterior and the luxurious furnishings within are a sufficient evidence that the period when they were built must have been Poole's golden age.

LIFE AND BUSTLE.

Mr. Smith described the scene on Poole Quay, 150 years ago, the life and bustle, following the return of the "Newfoundlanders, moored four and five abreast, their masts and canvas showing signs of the storms encountered. The ships had gone out early in the year with supplies for the Newfoundland fishery, and left laden with salt fish, seal pelts and furs, some of which was bartered away on the way home, in Naples, Oporto and other places, for the wines of sunny Mediterranean. Here, preparing their vessels for the winter rest, were the picketled sailors of Poole, representatives of a hardy race that had done business on deep waters for seven centuries. Apart from the bustle in connection with the Newfoundland trade, were other activities on the quay, prominent among them being the building of the ships at Hamworthy.

PIONEERS FROM POOLE.

Referring to some of the more famous ships that regularly sailed between Poole and Newfoundland, Mr. Smith remarked that on Aug. 10th, 1497, King Henry VII. paid to John Cabot—"hym that found the new isle"—the reward of £10. In the town's records there were entries showing that within a century of this date quite a dozen Poole ships were engaged in the Newfoundland codfisheries. During the early days of the industries the actual fishing was carried out by the Poole fisherfolk themselves, but in time the island became peopled with a race of sturdy colonists, many of them of Poole extraction, who devoted their energies to the seal and codfisheries.

In 1581 twenty-one vessels belonged to the port of Poole, and perhaps two-thirds of these were engaged in the new trade. The largest was the "Castell of Comforte" (70 tons), and the smallest the "Peter" (14 tons). What cocklesheils compared with the modern Leviathans! What expert sea-

men the crews must have been! These Newfoundland fisheries, in the establishment of which Poole seamen took so prominent a part, were the finest training grounds in the world for the Navy. One honored the great Admiral, but was apt to forget the comely, temporary, though nameless, Poole seamen, who braved the terrors of wind and wave, fog and icebergs.

Gradually the Poole merchants established on both sides of the Atlantic and carried on a successful barter; seal, fish and oil in exchange for provisions and clothing. In the face of the perils, not only of the weather, but of the sea rovers and privateers, the trade was carried on. Ships were lost, some were captured, and at least one—"The General Wolfe"—recaptured. During the last 60 years or so of the trade, Poole ships enjoyed immunity from the attacks of marauding vessels, but still had the fiercest of foes to contend with.

A MEMORY.

The Newfoundland trade is nought but a memory to-day. Now it has gone, never to return. The period of 1783-88 marked the crest of the wave, with the astounding total of 300 vessels belonging to Poole. Those "Good old days" had a tale to tell of noble endeavor which could not fail to inspire. They should fill Poole men with renewed zeal and a keen determination to support enthusiastically every movement to revive the Maritime trade.

Let us hope the renaissance is at hand, and that such full and wise use will be made of the undoubted natural advantages which Poole and district possess, that a fair measure of Poole's pre-war commercial splendor will be restored.

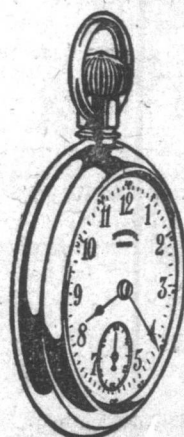
I wish the readers of the Telegram to pay particular attention to Mr. Smith's reference to the ship "General Wolfe," wherein he states that she was captured and "recaptured." Fortunately I am in a position to give the learned gentleman some information about that vessel, and if my friend, who so kindly gave me the newspaper, containing a synopsis of Mr. Smith's lecture in Poole, will send him a copy of the Telegram, it may be of interest to him, and show the heroism of the crew of the "General Wolfe" in the stormy days past and gone, on the coast of Newfoundland.

In the early days of the past century, the splendid ship "General Wolfe," owned by the firm of George and James Kemp, of Poole, England, and Carbonear, Newfoundland, left the latter port (Carbonear) bound to some Mediterranean market with a full cargo of shore fish. Everything went

along well with a favorable breeze, until nearly half passage, when she was captured by a French pirate, and her captain, who was named Tallock, was transferred to the frigate with his crew, except the mate, one seaman, and a young Newfoundland boy. Incredible as it may seem, the mate formed the daring idea of taking possession of the ship from the pirate crew of ten men, commanded by an officer. The mate of the "General Wolfe," made all his plans and carried them out successfully in the following manner. He secured a gimlet and bored holes in the companionway, fore and aft, procured nails to fill the holes, and when the ship was nearing the French coast, in broad daylight, the seaman was given the signal to close the fore-scuttle, place the ash in the holes and secure the crew when at dinner, which he did satisfactorily, and the boy was employed to secure and throw upon deck the French officer's pistols, which he was in the habit of taking off when at meals. The boy was a native of Carbonear and was about fifteen years of age. At a given signal, after attending to the Captain's requirements in the cabin, the boy seized the belt and pistols, ran for the companionway and threw them on deck. The mate of the "General Wolfe" caught the belt and pistols and immediately covered the man at the wheel, determined to shoot should the occasion require it. The boy was seized by the French officer as he lay, as he endeavored to gain the deck, and the mate, jumping down, seized the youngster by the arm, and then came the tug-of-war for possession of the boy; the Frenchman endeavoring to pull him back to the cabin, and the mate exercising all his powerful strength to draw him through the companionway to the deck. After some time the great strength of the mate succeeded in wrenching the boy from the hands of the Frenchman; but, such was his grim determination to hold on to the boy, that when the mate succeeded in his efforts to secure him, his boots were left in the hands of the Frenchman, having been hauled off his feet. The ship was now once more in the hands of the Newfoundland crew, of two men and a boy, and she was headed for the English coast and in due time arrived safely in Poole. The Insurance Company, recognizing the bravery of the two men and the boy, presented the mate with five hundred guineas, the seaman with one hundred and the boy with forty. I may here mention that it was the "General Wolfe" that upon another occasion, under command of old Captain Tallock, sailed for Quebec for a load of

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Fads and Fashions

The rosy and mauve beiges are the smartest. Beading must be of a light, very subtle nature.

Heavy head fringe may edge the evening frock. In woollens, natural shades and navy blue lead.

The turtle-neck sweater is a note for sportswear. Paris is at present indulging in a whim for tassels.

Waistlines are generally low and almost unmarked. Several large Paris houses sponsor the bolero effect.

The décolletage may be deeply oval or pointed in back.

Mannish topcoats are worn in two-piece jersey frocks.

The inverted pleat is a darling of the fashion at present. Many of the new ensembles are fashioned entirely of silk.

For afternoon the circular or slight flare is well liked. The popularity of the frock-cape ensembles is increasing.

Elaboration in front and flatness back is a rule of the mode. For the one-piece sports frock the shirtwaist front is smart.

One notes that most of the new de chine frocks are two-piece. If one chooses, the chiffon dress frock may be of a vivid print.

Printed crepe frocks button in long line straight down the front.

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WE'LL SAY IT'S LUCKY JEFF'S SUCH A NIFTY DODGER.

—By Bud Fisher

