

The Morning Chronicle

Vol. VIII.

St. John's, Newfoundland, Thursday, August 31, 1865.

No. 197.

THE MORNING CHRONICLE

(Having a larger circulation than any other Newspaper in Newfoundland)

Is issued every morning, Sundays and Holidays excepted, by the Editor, Publisher and Proprietor,

FRANCIS WINTON.

From his office, corner of Duckworth and Cathedral Streets, St. John's, Newfoundland, where all communications, advertisements, &c., should be delivered.

The subscription rate of the MORNING CHRONICLE is

Five Dollars per annum

Two Dollars fifty cents for six months.

One Dollar Twenty-five cents for three months, and

Twenty-five cents for one month.

Single copies may be purchased of our carriers at two cents per copy.

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FRANCIS WINTON,
CHRONICLE OFFICE
St. John's, Newfoundland.

SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

[Under this head will be found the Editorial matter of the Newfoundland Press for the day preceding each issue of our Paper.]

(From the Telegraph of yesterday.)

As we are aware that our oft repeated arguments on the impolicy of outport electors trusting solely to St. John's men as their representatives, have induced many outport gentlemen to come forward as Candidates at the General Election in November next, we have republished from the *Royal Gazette*, the names of the Polling places, and several forms which must be complied with by Candidates, and Electors who live more than fifteen miles from the nearest Polling place, and do not wish to vote in person. We know something of nearly all the intending Candidates, and trust that those we do not know, are as well qualified for the highly responsible position they aspire to fill. Being a resident is not the only qualification required. Electors should be assured that the men of their choice will well and truly represent their opinions on all subjects, before they pledge themselves to support them.

It is the fashion amongst the self-styled liberal party, publicly to decry all religious distinctions at Election times, but we all know too well what efforts they make to return men of their own persuasion, or failing that, men who have sold themselves to the party body and soul, who in fact have a religion in name only. We cannot see why the Protestant party should be more lukewarm. Have they not as great interests at stake as Roman Catholics? Do they set a lighter value on the political privileges? Or, do they feel their obligations to be of less importance? If they do not think so, we

beg of them to do what is right without fear and without hesitation. In the whole colony, Protestants greatly outnumber Roman Catholics—the representation in the House of Assembly should bear a corresponding proportion. In every district where Protestant Electors are in a majority, however small, there they should elect Protestant members. If this be not done in any one instance, the Electors will have failed to do their duty.

Extract of a letter dated Burgeo, August 21st, 1865:—

"We are very much excited here on Election affairs. Mr. Prowse had a meeting here on Saturday last—no hearing."

(From the Daily News of yesterday.)

Quite a lengthy examination was held on Monday and yesterday before their worships, the Stipendiary Magistrates relative to a fire which took place on Sunday morning last between one and two o'clock, on board the steam-tug *Diamond*, but which was happily extinguished before any great damage had been done.

It appears that some cotton waste used in cleansing the machinery, and which was pretty well saturated with oil had been thrown somewhat carelessly into a bag, and placed in the fore-castle of the boat. Both the Captain and first engineer during the afternoon or evening of Saturday, remarked that there was fire on board the vessel, and observed some smoke not only in the fore part of the ship, but also in the cabin. The fire broke out about one o'clock on Sunday morning, but the engineer being on the wharf at the time, was fortunate enough to get it extinguished; otherwise, had he not been up at the time, the boat would in all probability have been destroyed.

The conclusion arrived at by the magistrates, we believe, was that the waste being in a condition to generate heat and fire, must have smouldered for some considerable time before it took fire, and that the accident was purely the result of carelessness,—being produced by the spontaneous combustion of the waste, where it was thrown in the fore part of the vessel, and at no great distance from the boilers and flues of the machinery.

Too much caution cannot be practised by those in charge of machinery, for nothing is more certain than that woollen or cotton cloth or waste, when saturated with oil, will take fire at a certain temperature—and that not a very high one. Many inexplicable and unfortunate fires have no doubt taken place from such causes; and great care should be exercised with regard to the disposition of such material after it has been used upon machinery.

SEAL-FISHING.

(From the St. James's Magazine.)

Some years ago I took the whim to sail from Boston, Massachusetts, to St. John's, Newfoundland, and after wintering there, to try my hand at seal-fishing.

You see it was sheer foolishness, my going to St. John's in the first place, and that I suppose was the reason I did it—for when was I ever known to do anything sensible?—but that affair was mighty wisdom compared with the one that followed it. You must know that in my multiplied perambulations about that interesting town, I once upon a time fell in with the captain of a seal-fishing vessel of some hundred and fifty tons burthen (the vessel I mean, not the captain,) and he, the captain, being a good fellow, and myself another, we exchanged some clever compliments over a bottle of brandy, and soon got as intimate as two thieves.

Well, the result of that night's operations, directly and indirectly, was that I went a seal-fishing. The captain said I had better go—the captain said it would be a good thing for me to go—I knew the captain was a good judge of liquor—had good liquor—carried good liquor with him—and I went. Now I am going to tell you something of what happened.

We sailed from St. John's about the first of March, on a cold, raw, disagreeable day, having on board forty-seven souls, including myself, who am supposed to have more soul than brains. Our object was—and this is the peculiarity of the Newfoundland seal-fishing—to run out seaward till we should come to a field of ice floating down from the colder regions of the North, and then run into it, work our way by various clever contrivances into the very centre of it, and there get frozen up, to be thawed out again when and where it should be the Lord's will.

Well, this we did in a reasonable time after leaving St. John's—got frozen up in the very centre of a tremendous field of floating ice—and then came the sport, as some people call it, killing seals. Seals, you must know, bring forth their young upon the ice-beds of the polar seas, which, acted upon by the warmer currents direct from the Gulf of Mexico, gradually crumble up and float down on the return currents, bearing the seals that remain upon them to a milder climate. Thousands and millions of these animals thus annually pass along the coast of Newfoundland, between the first of March and May, and hundreds of adventurous crews every year compass their destruction, by getting themselves wedged into these floating ice fields, and assailing them with clubs, spears and guns.

It is an exciting sport; but it is necessary for a man of any feeling to get pretty well used to it before he can enjoy it—that is to say, he must get used to shooting, stabbing and beating out the brains of a poor dumb mother, who, with moans and groans that seem to unaccustomed ears the last pleadings of human despair, is trying to save her young by coming between you and them and offering her life as a sacrifice.

Well do I remember the first one of these poor creatures that I saw murdered—for murder is the only word that will express what I felt at the time. We had worked our way into the ice and got a good position, and nearly all had started off in small parties, in different directions, in search of game, I accompanying the captain, who desired the pleasure of initiating me into the mysteries of seal-killing, for which he of course has all the thanks that my admiration of cold-blooded butchery will allow me to bestow. This exploit consisted in finding a cow with two calves, spearing the little ones first, and then, while they made my heart ache, as well as their poor mother's, with the most piteous moans I ever heard—beating, spearing and shooting her, as she struggled like a human mother in their defence.

"And have I come all the way into this shivering region to see human cruelty displayed on a dumb beast?" said I.

"Haw! haw! haw! A pretty good specimen of greenhorn!" laughed the captain. "Take another drink, Mr. Smith."

"Yes," said I, "I think myself that liquor is needed to make a man oblivious of such infernal work as this! Now, captain, I dare say you expect to see land again?"

"Of course I do—why shouldn't I?" he replied.

"Because Heaven's justice never sleeps, only slumbers," said I.

He said he didn't understand me, and wanted to know what I meant.

"Well, then, how can you expect to have fair weather after such foul work? It wouldn't surprise me if the piteous moans of these poor beasts should arouse the wrath of the storm-god, and your vessel and crew be hurled down into the fathomless deep!"

"Pretty good for you, considering the subject!" laughed the captain. "Take another drink, Mr. Smith."

I did so—twice.

Finding it was no use to talk to men who had no hearts, I went back to the vessel, and took to brandy, tobacco and philosophy.

Three days after, while about half the crew were scattered for miles over the frozen field, there came up a terrific storm, and we heard the awful thunders of the breaking, crashing, crumbling mass, and were rocked and tossed about like a feather in the air.

"Ah! God help the poor fellows who will never get to us again!" said the captain, as our vessel began to move off, thumping and bumping among the dangerous fragments of the broken ice-field.

"And God help us!" said I, as at the moment our vessel seemed to be seized and squeezed even to cracking, like a nut in the jaws of a vice. I thought it was all over with us, and so did every one who heard and felt that awful pressure; but after holding and grinding us for a few moments—pressing out the life of the ship, as it were—making it quiver to the heart, and moan and groan like the poor creatures it had come to destroy—the icy monster suddenly let go his grasp, and it seemed as if I could hear and feel the poor vessel choking, gasping and catching its breath.

"She's sprung a leak, sir!" I soon after heard some one tell the captain.

"All hands to the pump!" was the order that soon followed.

"All comes of this accursed sea-butcher

business!" I took occasion to mutter, just so that the captain could barely hear me.

It was blowing great guns at the time, and I richly deserved the cat for making one annoying remark in the presence of as good a fellow as ever lived.

"Mr. Smith," said he to me, with a polite bow, you will find some very excellent brandy down in my cabin. Pray go down and drink my health!"

I went. It might have been a couple of hours after this—I don't exactly remember, for the vessel pitched about a good deal, and I felt rather obliquely sick, and didn't take much note of time—that the captain came down, and said to me, says he:

"Mr. Smith, how do you like the brandy?"

"Clear!" said I; "and I hope it may never be watered."

"Can you pray?" asked the captain, without seeming to see my miserable joke.

I told him I thought I could at a pinch, though I had never done much in that way.

"Well," he replied, "I suppose it won't require a great deal to save your innocent soul that has no seal-blood upon it, and so you will probably have time to prepare for the change that will soon take place. Within two hours, Mr. Smith—perhaps one—this vessel will be at the bottom of the sea."

Now, as I profess to be an honest man, with perhaps, a slight leaning toward good brandy as one of my weaknesses, it behoves me to say, that I am not positively certain that at that particular juncture I was perfectly sober. On the contrary, I am inclined to think I was not—for I have an indistinct recollection of remarking what a pity it would be to lose so much good liquor, and of hearing the captain mutter something about somebody he knew being—drunk. At all events, it is sufficient for me to say that, whether drunk or sober, I have no remembrance of any thing after that till I found myself in an open boat, out on a black sea, exposed to the fury of a freezing storm, and chilled to the very bone. That I was not frozen to death I have always attributed to the fact of my having previously laid in a good supply of my favorite beverage.

"What does this mean?" was my first sensible inquiry.

"That ten of us are still living," said the voice of Captain Wright, in a sad, mournful tone.

I afterwards learned that, before the vessel went down, two boats had been launched, the first of which had swamped, and carried ten of twelve of the crew to a watery grave. The other, by skilful management, had been kept afloat; and into this, by the great personal exertion and positive command of the captain, I had been conveyed, in an unconscious state, to the imminent peril of all who had saved me. Six hours had passed since then, and we had been fortunate enough to get clear of the ice, and supposed to be making some headway towards land, though with little prospect, in our benumbed state, of ever reaching it alive.

It was a terrible night—black as ink—with the wind howling and shrieking like a thousand demons, and the water, when it dashed over us, freezing to our clothes. How any of us survived is a mystery to me. When daylight dawned, four out of ten had ceased from their earthly troubles—one washed overboard, and three frozen, whose bodies we committed to the deep, with sad hearts and little ceremony. Six of us remained, but in a condition to afford us little hope. Captain Wright, naturally a positive, determined, energetic man, exerted all his faculties to keep us alive. He made us stand up when we could, stamp our feet, swing our arms, shake each other, and shout with all our might, he himself doing the same. In this way we got warmth enough into our bodies to keep death out.

And so we continued, driving before the storm till about mid-day, when, to our great joy, we saw land in the distance, which proved to be an island. As we were almost in a helpless condition, and the storm driving us straight upon the shore, we resolved to beach our boat and take our chances. In doing this, three of the crew were lost in the surf—Captain Wright, one other, and myself, being saved almost miraculously.

By the utmost exertion of every faculty and power we possessed, mental and physical, we managed to get to the top of a high, slippery cliff, hoping, though scarcely expecting, to see some signs of the island