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THE BEAVER.

The Oldest Steamship Afloat on the Pacific Coast

From the Resources of British Columbia, we take the following description of an ancient mariner:

"Whilst strolling along the city front, and gazing upon the many objects of interest that cluster in and about the beautiful harbor of Victoria, our attention was directed to a staunch old craft, moored at Spratt's wharf, whose quaint style of architecture and weather worn prow proclaimed 'a life on the ocean wave' at once long and eventful. Desiring to learn more of the venerable steamer, her very name a synonym of industry, we determined to search for facts, and to the courtesy of one of our most prominent citizens and business men, Henry Sanders, Esq., we are indebted for the leading features of this article.

Nearly half a century ago, when the great problem of steam marine navigation was yet only in the experimental stages of solution, when the telephone and electric light were not dreamed of, a vast concourse of people gathered on the banks of the Thames to witness the launch of a brave little steamship that was destined soon to traverse the waters of two oceans, one of which was known to many only as being somewhere in the region of the sunset, on the far west shores of the western world. The then ruling sovereign William IV., and 160,000 of his subjects, including titled men and women were present, watchful observers of the novel and interesting event. One of England's fairest daughters, bearing a coronet on her noble brow, broke the traditional bottle of sparkling champagne, and like a priestess of Juno invoking the smiles of "Old Ocean," baptized this fair child of the crested wave by the name of *Beaver*.

She was built for the Hudson Bay company in 1835 and was destined to ply between their several fur trading stations on the Pacific coast. The two engines of 75 horse power and the boilers were constructed by the firm of Bolton & Watt, the latter being a son of the renowned inventor and the excellent condition of her engines to-day bear convincing testimony to the great mechanical skill of the builders. As it was not considered safe to use steam on the passage out, she was rigged as a brig, and furnished with six nine pound guns. Thus equipped, accompanied by a bark in case of accident and commanded by Capt. Home, she sailed down the Thames greeted by encouraging cheers from the thousands who watched her progress from either shore, and which were heartily acknowledged by booming salvos from the brazen throats of her own guns. Crossing the Atlantic and being the first steamer that ever doubled Cape Horn she sailed up the broad Pacific, and leaving her companion far behind arrived at the Columbia twenty-two days ahead. After calling at Astoria, then the chief town on the Pacific coast, and so called in compliment to John Jacob Astor, the New York millionaire, who was also extensively engaged in the fur trade, she got up steam and sailed for Nequally, the principal station of the H. B. Co. on the Pacific and for years was employed in collecting furs and carrying goods to and from the company's various trading posts on this coast. She next passed into the hands of the imperial hydrographers and a few years since was purchased by the British Columbia Towing and Transportation company of this city, and having been refitted for that service, it is to this day regarded as a most seaworthy and powerful tug steamer. In conjunction with another tugboat this historic vessel had the ill fated *Thrasher* in tow at the time of the accident which gave rise to the very protracted litigation known in legal circles as 'The

Thrasher Case,' the merits of which have been submitted for final adjudication to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Doubtless few are living to-day who looked on in admiring wonder when the gallant *Beaver* took her first plunge in the yielding element. The ruby lips that opened to utter her name in hap-tism are forever closed, and the gallant captain who proudly commanded on her first voyage, has long since walked the rounds of his last watch and sleeps the sleep that knows no waking. Still with that tireless industry characteristic of its prototype the *Beaver* works and works.

Another Chance.

Something in the way of a bonanza is now being developed in the post-office department. Claim agents are greatly excited thereat, and they have a right to be, for there is probably over \$1,000,000 wrapped up in this speculation. It seems that in 1864, says an exchange, a claim agent in Washington, who knows the ins and outs of the postal department, concluded that the fourth-class post offices throughout the country, viz., those paying \$1,000 and under, were not paid enough for cancelling stamps, and log rolled a bill through congress to give the postmasters of that grade 10 per cent. more. No appropriation, however, was made and nothing came of it. In 1866 the bill passed again, but for some reason it was not carried into effect. The thing slept until 1876, when attention was once more called to the matter and the appropriation made available for the settlement of these claims; but, as before, the matter died out. Last session it was once more passed and made retroactive from 1864 to 1876, and now the salary and allowance division of the post office department is literally overwhelmed with claims arising out of this act. Every man who was postmaster in those years has a just and valid claim against the government of 10 per cent. in addition to what he received if he was of the fourth-class. Many of these people are now out of office, and probably never gave themselves any further concern touching the little grab. But it is now made lawful, and the claim was just enough, for the postmasters of that grade were not paid enough for the stamps they cancelled. Agents all over the country are writing the department about the method of filing claims, and lots of them have already filed piles of claims of parties asking extra allowance.—One agent in Washington has over 700 of these claims filed, and is receiving piles of letters every day, while others have been for some time flooding the country with circulars, hunting up everybody who was a postmaster between those years, and getting in shape for business. This arrangement, which was overlooked and forgotten when the present estimates were made up for the postal service, will put the department in something of a fix, for such an amount of money would swamp the funds now in hand and leave a big deficiency besides. It is going to be a big thing for the postmasters, and a fat thing for the claim agents as well.

A Navy for Sale.

The United States Navy is for sale—or rather, more ships than remain for effective service. These ships are a part of the history of the country. Some of them have never been put afloat. A few, like the *Monadnock*, have the marks of shot and shell. These vessels represent the transition of the navy, or rather, they represent a great deal of money which has been spent for no good purpose. To-day the United States does not possess a first-class war ship, nor even a second-class one according to the standards of European navies. These old ships have very little value. They are hardly worth more than the cost of breaking up. When the civil war

broke out there were no ships which could make any headway against ironclads. A few of the latter were improvised. When the war ended they were of little further account. The ironclad turret ship made a good record. As soon as peace was declared most of the ironclads were laid up. There was not a single ironclad in the navy fitted for a long cruise, and there is not one to this day.

The federal government appointed a commission to look into the condition of these old ships. That commission recommends that 30 of the 44 vessels named should be sold and the rest should be broken up. Proposals will be accepted until September 15th. An "Old Salt" says that no one ever yet made any money by buying a government vessel—that when it has been refitted the cost is greater than would be involved in the construction of a far better vessel. Some of the old ships have engines, but they are not of modern construction. They have also many sound timbers. But when these are taken out and put into other vessels, it has been found that the cost left no margin for profits. The United States Navy is for sale. It will be sold in "job lots." Old tubs, sailing vessels, vessels in frame, old hulks, old steamers which cost a great deal of money, can be bought, perhaps, for a song. Whoever wants to buy a navy can now have an opportunity. But among this entire lot is not a single ship which could be refitted for much less than the cost of a new vessel. Most of them are wooden vessels, in every stage of decay. The old navy is disappearing, and the new one has not yet made its appearance.



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