

CHAPTER XIV

A SCHOOL of porpoises is playing in the bay—long pearly-white monsters diving in and out and throwing up jets of water and emitting from time to time that curious sighing sound that has won for them the sobriquet of "Sea Canary." These enormous creatures (a species of white whale) are sometimes twenty feet long, but they average about fourteen feet, and are a valuable "catch," as each yields about a hundred dollars' worth of oil. The blubber is boiled and eaten by the natives, being rich in fat, and the skin is tanned into a very durable and waterproof leather.

The principal porpoise fishery of the St. Lawrence is at Rivière Ouelle, just opposite Murray Bay, where, according to report, there was a tremendous catch of one hundred and one of these giant beasts by four men armed with spears and harpoons, one summer night in 1870. One can picture that awful slaughter, when the moon looked down and saw the fishery running red with blood, and the huge