

The fishing season commenced the beginning of June, and will close the first week of October; they do not consider it will be a favourable one, however; fishermen are as hard to satisfy as farmers; their catch will probably average 1,000,000 quintals.

The Government bounty is 11 francs per quintal, a sum equal to the value of the article itself. Owing to the embarrassed state of the French finances at home, and the failure of all their commercial establishments in the West Indies, there is comparatively no sale for the Bank fish this year. No accurate calculation can be formed of the value of the whole quantity of fish caught by the French, as many vessels carry their cargoes to France green; the fish are dried and salted there, and exported thence to the West Indies, and some to the Mediterranean.

I am assured that 360 vessels, from 100 to 300 tons burthen, are engaged in the Bank fisheries, employing from 16,000 to 17,000 men (exclusive of the coast fishermen). All these vessels return to France every winter; their crews spend the money they make there, buy the fitments they require there, sell their cargoes for the use of their countrymen at cheaper rates than the Newfoundlanders can to the colonists, and are knit together in a body by the regularity and system of their duties, and man their country's navy if required.

The French annual Great Bank fishery averages a catch of 1,200,000 quintals, and nearly the entire quantity is sent to the West Indies; Guadeloupe and Martinique consume two-thirds, and the remainder is exported to other islands.

The islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon are admirably adapted for the purposes to which they are applied; no expense to Government, they offer the best possible centre for all commercial operations, a depôt for their stores, secure harbours for their shipping, and at the same time, owing to their proximity to the shores of Newfoundland, their inhabitants are equally well supplied with bait and fish as the British settlers themselves in their vicinity.

The French authorities, however, do not deny that the sole object of their Government in supporting these fisheries at so great a cost is to form seamen for their navy.

Monsieur Filleau, the intelligent commissary at St. Pierre's, candidly told me this, and added, that no private companies could of themselves support this commerce, unless the market price of the article rose to double its present amount.

Monsieur Delecluse, the governor, had also the honesty to affirm that the supply of caplin by the English from their bays and coast alone enabled the bankers to prosecute their fishings; and he believed that to this traffic with his islands our poor settlers were alone enabled to support their existence!!!

REMARKS.

It is obvious that by withholding from the French the supply of bait from our own shores, their success upon the Great Bank would sensibly diminish, and the advantages the fish merchants at present derive from the bounty granted by their Government over other competitors could not increase the trade beyond the limits controlled by the comparatively very scanty supply of caplin afforded by their own coasts and islands.

If, on the other hand, it is the large payment of bounty by the Government that alone upholds the fisheries, and which has advanced them to their flourishing condition, the present is surely the period for our merchants to exert themselves to regain their lost ascendancy; while the French are paralysed by the failure of the French West India markets, and general loss of credit consequent upon the emancipation of the blacks by the revolution of February.

It is wonderful to observe the inhabitants of a nation, certainly not addicted to maritime pursuits, surpass a seafaring people in the prosecution of an avocation natural to them, and in which it is necessary to display more science and perseverance to be successful than in any other branch of a sailor's trade.

In consequence of this anomaly, I cannot but believe there must be some flagrant want either of industry or skill, on the part of the people of Newfoundland, admitting even that the existence of the French banker is entirely dependent upon the bounty money.

However this may be answered, the fact is very apparent that the French have established and systemised a large fleet of vessels, which now no unaided individual enterprise can successfully compete with.