

SKETCH OF NEWFOUNDLAND HISTORY.

When there is a probability of a new member being introduced into a family by a matrimonial alliance there arises a natural curiosity to know his antecedents and ancestral history. Such a situation now exists as regards Canada and Newfoundland. Although so near a neighbour little is generally known about the Island and its people, so far as its and their historic record are concerned. As they are likely to become a portion of this Dominion it is highly interesting to read their annals, which are as fascinating as a romance, being full of incidents and adventures which bring before us most attractive and instructive pictures of the life of a very peculiar people, and of an Island which has played a very prominent role in the stirring drama of Great Britain's struggle for naval supremacy. Newfoundland has done a large share of the work by which Britons can now sing: "Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves." Sir Walter Raleigh said: "If any harm came to Newfoundland fleet it would be the greatest calamity that could befall England." When then the day comes for the Island to enter Confederation, Canada will add to her family a member, who, if not so rich as some of her sons, has a record of which she may well be proud as one of the old-time builders of the British Empire. Though long known to Icelanders it was not until 1497 that the Island became known to English navigators by its being reached by Cabot of Bristol. In 1501 some of the natives, Indians, were taken to England as curiosities and evidences of the new discovery, which won the prize of £10 offered to the finder of this new island. After 1504 there were fishing vessels, French, Breton, Norman and English, reaping the "harvests of the sea" off Newfoundland coasts. This trade led to colonisation. When the Puritans asked permission of King James to go to America, a very vague phrase in those days, he asked, "what profit might arise?" They replied, "fishing," to which the king responded, "So God have my soul 'tis an honest trade, 'twas the apostles own calling." Queen Elizabeth passed an Act "purposely intended to increase fishermen," by ordering a fish diet to be adopted two days a week. In 1522 there were 40 to 50 huts occupied on the Island, which no one then claimed. Queen Bess, however, assumed the sovereignty, and settlements became encouraged by an authority being established and grants of land being made. In 1588 the English Newfoundland fleet stayed at home to fight the Spanish Armada, reprisals for which were attempted in 1601 by Spanish vessels attempting to stop the British fishing fleet. Another Act of Queen Elizabeth was passed to prevent foreign vessels bringing Newfoundland fish into English ports, an early phase of protection to native industries.

There is evidence that, as early as 1604, the vessels in this trade were insured at the rate of 7 per cent. The story of this era shows that constant struggles went on between the fishing vessels of England and those of other nations, and serious damages also were suffered from pirates.

Gradually settlements spread, and Newfoundland came slowly to be more and more recognized as an English Colony, needing the establishment of law and order by the Mother country and the provision of necessities for the extension of its local facilities for attracting settlers. In 1612 a number of workmen and farmers, with horses, cattle, implements, etc., were sent over, accompanied by a Church of England clergyman. As the bays and inlets were visited by many thousands of rough fishermen, and no civil or military force existed, we can understand what scenes of bloodshed and disorder attended the fisheries. In 1628 a Newfoundland official intimated in a letter that he had "hopes of iron and silver in Newfoundland," but it took 270 years to realize these hopes. With characteristic folly, Charles I. and II. tried to stop the settlement of the Island, each captain of a vessel being bound by a penalty of £100 to bring back every man he took out! There can hardly be a doubt that both those Kings were traitors to England. English settlers being prohibited, and those there being threatened with extermination, and no woman allowed to land, a number of French entered and became aggressive. In 1696 St. John's was captured by the French who had been allowed to land soldiers and build forts in defiance of the Island being an English Colony. But, as the English inhabitants by Order in Council had been administered to return to England or betake themselves to some other Colony, the French cannot be blamed for seizing the opening to establish themselves in the Island. About this period a number of "youngsters" from Ireland were landed in Newfoundland, and from their descendants, and other emigrants who went later, we are getting now in Canada a large number of domestic servants whose picturesque names tell of their ancestors being drawn from the Green Isle. In 1697 a fleet with 2,000 soldiers was sent by England to recover the Island taken by the French a year before. A year later William III. put matters in order by establishing a garrison at St. John's, and by his vigorous defence of English interests won to his side the seamen who had been such staunch defenders of the Stuarts. In 1705 the Island had 1,130 inhabitants widely scattered along the coast, who for many years were harried by the French. There is a record of 78,000 quintals of fish being caught in 1705. In 1703 the Treaty of Utrecht was signed between England and France, which has been the cause of so much controversy and ill-feeling between those powers. The Treaty, however, declares that Newfoundland "belongs of right wholly to Great Britain," but the French are allowed to fish between Bonavista and Pointe Riche, about half way round the Island. The exact words read: "It shall not be lawful for the subjects of France to fortify any place in the said Island of Newfoundland, or to erect buildings there, besides stages made of boards and huts, necessary and useful for drying fish, or to resort to said Island beyond time necessary for fishing and drying fish. But it shall be allowed to subjects of France