

NEWFOUNDLAND SEALS.

WHEREIN THEY DIFFER FROM THE BEHRING SEA PRODUCT.

The Value and Danger of the Industry—A picturesque occupation With Large Profits and Great Risks—Statistics of the Trade—The Various Species.

Rev. P. Toque lately gave the Canadian Institute, Toronto, an interesting account of the Newfoundland seal fishery. In the course of his paper he said that naturalists describe no less than 15 species of seals. The kind most plentiful and which pass along the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, are the phoca groenlandica, which is the technical or scientific name given to the harp or half-moon seal. A young seal is called a pup, and the adult a bull or cow. The seal fishery is one of the most important of the coast of Terra Nova or Newfoundland. About the last of the month of February these seals whelp, and in the northern seas they are covered with a coat of white fur, slightly tinged with yellow. I have seen these "white coats" lying six and eight on a piece of ice, resembling so many lambs enjoying the solar rays. They grow very rapidly, and in about three weeks after their birth begin to cast their white coat, and are then called "black coats." At this time they are in the greatest danger, for they are then without the protection of their white coat, and are liable to be killed by a stroke across the head with a bat, gaff or boat-hook. At this time they are in the greatest danger, for they are then without the protection of their white coat, and are liable to be killed by a stroke across the head with a bat, gaff or boat-hook.

At once buried in the ocean. Not unfrequently, when the sealers are at a distance from the vessel in search of their prey, a freezing snowdrift or a thick fog comes on, when no object around can be seen, and the distant ship is lost. The sealers are then in a perilous position, for they are then without the protection of their white coat, and are liable to be killed by a stroke across the head with a bat, gaff or boat-hook.

When measured or attacked the hood is drawn over the face and eyes as a defence. The female is not provided with a hood. An old dog-hood is a very formidable animal. The male and female are generally found together, and if the female happens to be killed first, the male becomes furious. Sometimes ten or a dozen men have been engaged upon one of these animals, and a dozen handspikes to be broken in endeavoring to kill one of these dog-headed creatures. They frequently attack their assailants, and may oftentimes attack the seals, and may oftentimes attack the seals, and may oftentimes attack the seals.

THE FLESH OF THE SEAL. It is frequently eaten; the heart and kidneys are like the pig's, and taste like them. The first thing that occurs in Newfoundland to break the winter's torpor is the bustle and activity attending the outfitting of vessels for the seal fishery. In its prosecution are combined a spirit of commercial enterprise, a daring hardihood and intrepidity almost without parallel. The interest of every individual, from the richest to the poorest, is interwoven with it—from the bustling and enterprising merchant, with his spy-glass in hand, peering his wharf, sweeping over and anon the distant horizon for the first view of his returning ship, to the little broom-girl that creeps along the street, hawking her humble commodity. The return of the seal hunter reminds one of Southey's poem, "Madoc," and "Roderic the last of the Goths."

The seal fishery of Newfoundland has assumed a degree of importance far surpassing the most sanguine expectations of those who first embarked in the enterprise, and has now become one of the greatest sources of wealth to the country. In the commencement the seal fishery was prosecuted in large boats, which sailed about the middle of April, and as its importance began to be developed, schooners of from 30 to 50 tons were employed, which sailed on the 15th of March. In 1845 the number of sailing vessels employed was 200, from 60 to 150 tons, manned by 12,000 men. The time spent on the voyage was from two to six weeks. The sailing vessels have now been mostly superseded by steamers from 300 to 400 tons, carrying from 150 to 250 men each. In 1891, 10 steamers were engaged in the seal fishery. One small steamer brought in 8,000 young harp seals the first trip, and 18,000 old seals the second trip. The total value of both trips estimated at \$125,000. Some of the steamer—

in from 20,000 to 40,000 seals. A number of seals are taken in seal nets in winter and spring. A few years ago 150,000 seals were taken to the shore by persons who had walked on the ice in some of the northern bays of the island. Some years ago the ice was

PACKED AND JAMMED SO THICK that the seals could find no opening to go down, and numbers of them crawled upon an island, when some people happened to land upon the island and discovered them; 1,500 seals were there slaughtered among the bushes. Seals have been known to crawl several miles over land. The number of seals taken yearly on the coast of Newfoundland is from 400,000 to 600,000, producing commercially, no less a sum than \$1,500,000. The seals are sold by weight. The young are sold at from \$4 to \$8 and the old at from \$4 to \$8 per cwt. The price, however, is regulated by the value of the oil in the British market. A young seal will weigh from 30 to 50 pounds, and an old seal from 80 to 200 pounds. It is calculated that the fat of 80 young harp seals will produce a ton of oil. The seal fishery is a constant scene of bloodshed and slaughter. Hear you behind a heap of seals writhing and crisscrossing the ice with their blood, rolling from side to side in dying agony. There you see another lot, while the last spark of life is not yet extinguished, being stripped of their skins and fat, their writhings and heavings making the unspeakable and grisly scene more loathsome to touch. The seal fishery being prosecuted during the vernal equinox is rendered particularly dangerous. It is a voyage of hopes and fears, trials and disappointments, and the prosecution of it causes more anxiety, excitement and solicitude than any other business in the island. Sometimes the seals are sought after at a distance of from two to four miles from the vessel, over high rugged masses of ice, and during this toilsome journey the men have to jump from one piece of ice to another, across horrid chasms, where yawns the dark blue water ready to engulf them. Sometimes "slab" or ice covered with snow, is mistaken for hard ice, and the poor sealers leaping upon it are

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FACTS

The Horse Power of a Whale. The horse power of a whale has been made a subject of study by the eminent anatomist, Sir William Turner, of the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, in connection with the equally eminent Glasgow shipbuilder, John Henderson. The size and dimensions of a great finner stranded several years ago on the shore at Longridge furnished the necessary data for a computation of the power necessary to propel it at a speed of twelve miles an hour. This whale measured eighty feet in length, twenty feet across at the flukes of the tail, and weighed seven-and-a-half tons. To attain a speed of twelve miles per hour it was calculated that 145 horse power was necessary.

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