

herring and lance, in rotation. Although the latter may be procured throughout the season, they use the caplin while it can be procured, which is frequently from June until the end of August. They can place no reliance upon the strike of the herrings. They consider the climate during the summer and autumn months drier and of more equal temperature than upon the North-east coast of Newfoundland.

They say that they are much disturbed by the French and Americans: the former coming over from the other side in squadrons of batteaux, sweeping all their best fishing grounds; while the latter enter their harbours in schooners of 60 tons, catching their fish, and drying them close to their own stages, which they boldly assert they have a right to do by treaty.

I examined several of the planters separately, and all agreed that there are about 600 Frenchmen employed in fishing vessels of different sizes between Forteau and Red Bays alone. There is no agriculture, if we except a few cabbages and turnips planted round the doors of their huts, which they use with their common diet of fish and salt pork. The fishermen are paid principally in bills of exchange given by the merchants, and receive from £. 18 to £. 25 currency a year. Those employed for the summer season only generally receive half their catch.

The planters of the harbour expressed so much dissatisfaction at the encroachments of the French, who, they assert, were encouraged in their depredations by some of the principal English inhabitants residing in the bays to the westward, that I have thought it advisable to give the evidence of the three principal parties I examined at length:—

“What are your names?—Robert Ach, of Carbonear, and Francis Witts. We have been fishing 11 years out of this harbour. Witts has resided on the coast of Labrador for the last two years, and would continue to do so, if not so much interfered with by the French. Benjamin Coomes came straight from England; has been residing between Black and Red Bays and on the coast of Labrador for 25 years, cod fishing and sealing on his own account. They all asserted that their fishing is very much injured by the encroachment of the French fishing on the coast to the westward in Black Bay and Forteau Bay, &c., which prevented the fish from passing down the coast; but more particularly are they injured by the French sweeping all the caplin off the ground, which otherwise would remain a month longer, if they were not so disturbed and cleared by them. To give an idea how much we suffer by these encroachments, and how much the French benefit by them, there are parties employed purposely to catch and cure caplin to supply the Great Bank fishing vessels.

“Who are the principal people in Black Bay?—One family, Mr. Odell's.

“Do they agree to the French going there?—Yes, they encourage them, and lend and build stages for their accommodation, and receive the livers of the fish as payment.

“What may this be worth to them?—A quintal of fish produces a gallon of oil, which sells for 2s.

“Have you ever remonstrated with the English residents at the Bays to the westward, and stated to them how prejudicial their encouragement to the French was to your interests?—Yes, and they are well acquainted that the French fishing must injure ours.

“What do you suppose is the reason why the French are enabled to surpass our fishermen in cheap fishing on our own coast?—Their fit out is, in the first place, much cheaper—not one-fourth the prime cost of ours; secondly, they receive a large bounty from Government; thirdly, the wages are not one-half those we pay our fishermen.

“How many Frenchmen would you suppose are fishing between Red Bay and Forteau?—From 1,000 to 1,500 men.

“In how many boats or vessels?—About 200, large and small.

“Do you think the Government of Newfoundland could make any arrangement that would effectually prevent the encroachment of the French on the coast of Labrador?—Yes, a cruiser stationed in the Straits from the 1st July to the last of August, or resident magistrates, say at Black Bay and Forteau, and perhaps Chateau.

“Would the planters on the coast of Labrador think it worth their while to pay £. 300 a year in support of the salaries of magistrates to clear the coast of the French?