

THE NEWFOUNDLAND OF TO-DAY.

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It is curious and instructive to note the contrast between the condition of Newfoundland at the opening and close of the nineteenth century. When the last sands of the eighteenth century were running out the colony was still under the repressive system which had obstructed its growth from the outset. It was regarded by the Imperial Government as a fishing station and a training post for seamen for the Royal Navy, not as a home for a civilized community. It was governed by naval commanders who enforced the laws with the sternest quarter-deck discipline. These laws prohibited settlement in the island, refused all grants of land for cultivation or building sites, and reserved the shores for the use of migratory fishermen who came from England in the spring and were compelled to return at the close of each fishing season. No right of private property in land was permitted, unless actually employed in the fisheries. The governors of those days were in the habit of returning to England each winter and re-appearing at the opening of summer. If they found on their return that any one had erected a fence round a piece of ground during their absence, or built a house with a chimney, they issued orders for their immediate removal. Such repressive measures were actually enforced by Governor Waldegrave in 1799; and the nineteenth century was eleven years old before restrictions against the cultivation of land and the building of dwelling-houses were finally abolished.

At the date referred to, the total population of the island was under 20,000 people, who were scattered in small hamlets around the shores. St. John's, the capital, contained about 3,000 people who were sheltered in wooden huts, huddled together in such a way as to be in continual danger of fire. The principal thoroughfare was in one place not more than six feet wide. All the streets were narrow, unpaved and unlighted. The condition of the people in the smaller and more remote fishing settlements was deplorable. Successive generations lived and died without education and almost without any religious teaching. The lives of the people under these cruel and senseless laws were rendered hard and often miserable for the express purpose