

CHAPTER III.

SOME OTHER MATTERS CONCERNING THE TOWN.

"And read their History in a Nation's eyes."—Grey's Elegy.

According as the British merchants went out of the fishing business, and the English youngsters ceased to come, and those who had previously arrived, elected to remain; when the business of the Colony became almost centralized in the city of St. John's; and the prices of commodities kept up in the local markets of the outports; and the fish was kept down to a minimum value; then other days and other fortunes came. Only a favoured few among the planters handled any cash. They gave their fish and received for it as much as the business man said it was worth. There was generally a fisherman's balance on the wrong side of the merchant's ledger. The writer, thirty-five years ago, gathered in his salary with a hoop and spring balance. Only a small percentage would tell him they intended to give cash. A number of circumstances militated against the rank and file of Bonavista for more than half of the nineteenth century, yea, and nearly to the end of it. Poor fisheries and an occasional semi-potato famine, brought the people into dire straits. Bonavista and Bird Island Cove were in those days synonyms for poverty. Two more independent places it would now be hard to find. The late Dr. R. E. Forbes has left some interesting clippings which are the best interpreters of the struggle for existence experienced by the people seventy years ago. Here is one.

The visit of Governor LaMarchand to Bonavista, August 4th, 1847. "On Wednesday, Aug. 4th, at 8 a.m. a steamer was despatched coming from the northward. In another hour H.M.S. Vesuvius anchored off the harbour rocks. The inhabitants were beginning to assemble to await the landing of the Sovereign's representative, when a boat appeared in the harbour, and in a few