

1822, we have the following expressions:—"It frequently happens that a ship bound from England to Quebec, strikes soundings on the Banks of Newfoundland, and shapes her course thence to pass between Cape North, on Breton Island, and Cape Ray, on Newfoundland, into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, without seeing the land, which is hid in fog; and, unable to make a proper allowance for a current that sometimes runs at the rate of *four miles an hour*, is swept away to the westward, and runs, with a leading wind, on our iron-bound shores, when her commander fancies he is steering directly into the gulf; a misfortune that is too often announced by the bodies of the unhappy mariners, and the fragments of their vessels with which our shores are strewed.

"It should be made known that there is a settlement on Ashpé Bay, to the southward of Cape North; as, from want of this information, many an unfortunate seaman has perished from cold and hunger, after escaping shipwreck; and that vessels of any draught of water may safely anchor all round the island, as wind and weather may require. The soundings, at half to three-quarters of a mile, are 7 and 8 fathoms."

But, to revert to the currents. The British frigate, *Tweced*, on her passage to St. John's, Newfoundland, struck upon the coast, near Cape Spear, and was wrecked in the night of the 5th of November, 1813. This event, most probably, was the effect of an unknown south-westerly current, or a current setting south-westward.

To different currents must be attributed the loss of the sloop *Comus*, the transport *Harpooner*, H. M. ship *Drake*, and the brig *Spence*, all of which were lost, at different times, upon *one spot*; the little bay, called *St. Shol's Bay*, on the South coast of Newfoundland, and lying between Cape Freels and St. Mary's Bay. The particulars of all these melancholy events are detailed in the following paragraphs.

"The Currents about Newfoundland are yet imperfectly understood, and among the first notices of them are some Remarks given by M. de Cassini, which ought, long since, to have been generally known. This voyage of M. de Cassini was undertaken for the purpose of making experiments on M. Le Roy's timekeepers, in 1768. The frigate *L'Enjouée* sailed from Havre de Grace, on the 14th of June, and the mist over the Great Bank was discovered on the 9th of July. On the 11th, soundings were found at 84 fathoms, and a cod was caught. The fish and the plummet came up almost at the same instant, and confirmed the ship's arrival at the Bank.

"The very next day after we had reached the Bank of Newfoundland, the fog and calm overtook us: this is the weather that commonly prevails there.† As the calm continued the whole day, we employed the time of this inaction in fishing.

"The fourteen days we spent from our arrival at the Bank to our landing, were one continued series of fogs, which made us very uneasy. The great number of ships that crowded about the Bank, kept us in continual apprehensions of running foul of some of them in the fog. Besides, having been for several days unable to observe the latitude, we durst not advance, from fear of striking against the bars of Cape Race.‡ Our charts placed us about the longitude of those rocks, and the computed latitude brought us pretty near them. These last days of our first run were the worst we had yet met with, and indeed the worst of the whole voyage. Transplanted into a horrid climate, constantly choked with fogs, we seemed to be, for ever, excluded from the sight of the sun; nor could we hope to land, whilst this fog intercepted the coast. It was dangerous to go in search of the shore, even when the mist seemed to be dispersing. It is no uncommon thing in this latitude to see the finest clearing succeeded by a prodigious thick fog, and this within half an hour. Then the pilot repents his having approached the land, misled by the appearance of a clear sky, especially if he has not had time to take a survey of it; how can he get clear, if the wind is not very favourable? What track shall he pursue to escape running aground? Such are the inconveniences and hazards

* It has been justly observed, that a light-house on the Isle of St. Paul, at the entrance of the Gulf, would be eminently useful. We hope that one, worthy of the name, will be established here.

† At and about the Great Bank, these horrid fogs infect the air most part of the year, and will last eight or ten days successively, sometimes longer. In winter they are not so frequent; but, from the middle part of spring till December, they are almost constant: they are so thick, that one cannot see at ten fathoms distance. An incessant rain drops from the sails and rigging. The sea is seldom rough about the Great Bank. The sailors commonly ask those who come from the open sea, "*How is the weather abroad?*"

‡ The Virgin Rocks, to the E. by S. from Cape Race, hereafter described.—(EDIT.)