

George Garland,  
Esq.

able to prevail upon some other persons to join them, who were always resident here, but who are discarded from their usual dealings on account of their bad voyages last year, or for other reasons, and who of course were also in want. Of the existence of a great number of the former class in this neighbourhood we had no knowledge, and the scheme was concerted so privately, that we were unable to take any precautions against it. They left the provisions on our wharf, under a very slight guard, and while they were at Gosse and Co's. the peaceable and orderly part of the inhabitants in our neighbourhood (stimulated perhaps a good deal by a dread that all the provisions would be taken away, and themselves be in want, before the winter closed) rallied about us, and thus assisted, we ventured not only to turn into the stores again our own goods from the wharf, but actually began to stop that which was coming up the harbour from Gosse. & Co's, and secured a good deal of it for them in our stores. In our scuffle, however, we lost of our own a few casks flour and 15 firkins butter. When things were in this state, we were again threatened, and in consequence proceeded to put our wharf in a posture of defence, by planting cannon, &c. I applied to the magistrates of Harbour Grace, in the midst of business as well as before, who appeared to be panic struck, and did nothing for our assistance; but the Catholic priest came over from thence, and was of considerable service in calming the tumult and recovering some of the stolen goods; but we were obliged to mount a strong guard on the stores from that time until the 28th, when the surrogate at length came, and appointed a committee of the respectable inhabitants to seek into and relieve the wants of those in distress, by whom it has since been ascertained that a considerable degree of distress exists; but that there is a sufficiency of bread and flour (and but a bare one) in the harbour, for the purposes of its inhabitants, if allowed out properly, until the time when a fresh arrival of supplies may reasonably be expected, and of all other provisions a plenty. At the first meeting of this committee it was ordered, at the recommendation of the magistrates, that the outrageous conduct of the rioters should for the present be overlooked; that each merchant should supply every man who had dealt with him the past year, with the necessaries of life at the fall prices; that a subscription should be entered into for the relief of those who had no merchants to apply to; and that the distribution of the bread and flour, in allowances of a sufficiency at a time to each individual for a month's consumption, should be in the hands of the committee. Every thing has, in consequence of these regulations, been since tranquil, but it is surprising to observe what a number are coming to claim assistance. There is no scarcity here of pork and butter, and I hope there is enough of bread and flour, if managed with prudence; but the worst now is, that we are threatened with visits from our neighbours up the bay and down the North shore, many of whom are reported to be in great need. In Harbour Grace, also, it appears they are much pressed, and obliged to be on constant guard to prevent mischief; but the stores have not yet been robbed there. Amongst other evils to be dreaded, I am seriously afraid that the seal fishing may be stopped, and this will certainly happen, if, by the time preparations are making for the ice, there appears a probability of supplies from home being kept out, and that the stock in hand is small, which it must then be. There are many, as I have before informed you, who have laid in their supplies for that fishery: and the fear is, that they will be called upon for it by those who are themselves incapable or unfit to go to the ice, and who will not be willing the provisions should leave the place.

"It appears to me that the chief cause of these distressing circumstances is the great (though almost imperceptible at the time) influx of strangers, and that in future winters we shall be exposed to the like distress, unless protected by a strong military force. An application has now been made to St. John's for protection of this kind, but the intercourse is not open by water, and it takes a long time to send round the bay, and after all we have reason to expect but little help from them just now. At all events, it is incumbent upon those who are interested in the business of this country, to represent in the strongest terms the state of things to the Government at home, in order that precautions may be taken against the recurrence of such calamities, otherwise neither the persons nor property of those engaged in trade here will be safe in future.

"I hope you will be enabled to send us some supplies of bread and flour early, and also of oatmeal, potatoes and peas. Though it will be for you to consider of the propriety of the vessels coming here direct, or touching at St. John's; at all events, the captains of any vessels coming early with provisions should be cautioned to avoid, if possible, the Southern ports, where there is no doubt they would be detained. It would appear there is a general scarcity throughout the island.