

WITH THE NEWFOUNDLAND SEALERS



The return of a Newfoundland Sealer. The valuable cargo has been unloaded at the docks at St. John's and is absorbing the attention of the wharf crowds.



Surveying the results of a season's sealing



Preparations for unloading the skins

DURING March and April, the Newfoundland sealers make a stern fight with ice and fortune for a year's profits. It is a short season, shorter even than the summer-hotel season in Muskoka. It is also dangerous and doubtful. There is no certainty in any feature of it. A boat may never come back; it may come back empty; or it may return with a profitable catch. A despatch from St. John's says: "The *Walrus* is supposed to have been lost April 3rd, during the heavy south-west storm." On March 23rd the *Aurora* was caught when the ice "rafted"; her rails, sides and bridge

were carried away, and the crew were forced to abandon her temporarily. And so it goes in the precarious calling of collecting sealskins from the ice-fields.

The excitement of the occupation must be its allurements. We read that on March 28th, the crew of the *Virginia Lake* killed and "panned" 17,000 seals. What a day's slaughter! On a previous day they had killed 2,000 and on a subsequent day 5,000. Then they went back to pick up and when all the pans were exhausted the tally was 5,000 skins short. Perhaps some of the rival boats could tell where

those skins went. The uncertainties of human nature mingle with the uncertainties of that Nature which is not human yet which affects all people.

What a sight it must be, to see 200,000 seals at one time, as occurred this year on March 28th. Unfortunately for the sealers, they discovered the patch and reached it a few hours late; the seals had begun to "dip," otherwise all might have been secured. A few hours made all the difference between a good season and a poor one. The total catch for the eighteen boats will be less than 200,000, which is not up to the average.