

A Northern Fishing Village, Typical of the Newfoundland Coast.

## The Land of Fishing Villages

By MARGARET I. DOUGLASS

AS two life-long comrades, seeking a better country than our own during the hot summer months, we arrived, after an exceedingly fine voyage of six days, at the entrance to the Harbour of St. John's. Our admiration has been excited by the scenery along the beautiful shores of the St. Lawrence, but now it has no bounds as we watch our vessel glide slowly in between the mighty rock portals that guard the entrance of a perfectly land-locked harbour.

We submit ourselves to the orders of the doctor, answer questions as to kodaks and other dutiable articles, and are then ready to make our way upwards to our hotel. I use the word upwards advisedly, for here the watchword may certainly be Excelsior. One seems to be always climbing hills, and is constantly reminded of old Quebec or newer Seattle.

Long enough time is spent in the capital city to become acquainted with Water Street and its fascinating shops, to visit the Dry Dock and watch the whalers and sealers being put in readiness for their next expeditions, and to become familiar with the sight of the women and children filling their pails at the corner hydrant, and with the small boy trudging homeward with his fingers thrust through the gills of a big cod which later on will constitute the main part of the family dinner.

We are fortunate enough to obtain cards for the opening of the King George the Fifth Seamen's Institute which Canada and the States have so generously given to the sailors and fishermen of St. John's. The platform holds many distinguished speakers. Sir William Horwood, deputy governor; Sir Edward Morris, premier; Dr. Henry Van Dyke, who has travelled a long way by "land and water and a sea-faring railway" in order to be present; Mr. Archibald, chairman of the Royal National Mission for Deep Sea Fishermen, and Dr. Wilfred Grenfell, through whose efforts this magnificent building was made possible.

A visit to the seal factory is an event which we greatly enjoy. Here we see the huge vats of seal-oil being exposed to the sun, and becoming as clear and transparent as water, and listen to the men as they graphically and enthusiastically tell of the wonderful time in March when, on a certain day, fixed by the government, the sealers all start north in search of their prey. Then the harbour becomes a veritable pandemonium of noise, whistles blowing, men shouting, bets being made, until finally the last ship disappears through the Narrows, and the race to the fisheries is begun. On board each ship there is great excitement, and should she become fast in

the ice the men at once clamber over the sides and with their long poles pry her loose. The captured seals are skinned, and the skins, together with the large quantity of adhering fat, are loaded on the ship. This seal-fishing is a very lucrative undertaking. The best report during the past few years was given by one ship which brought in a catch of



"Quidi Vidi," Nestling at the Foot of Towering Cliffs.

seals valued at forty-nine thousand dollars in the short space of three weeks.

We walk to the tiny fishing village of Quidi Vidi, nestling at the foot of towering cliffs, and for the first time recognize the peculiar and all-penetrating odour of the cod-fish drying. We drive to more distant fishing villages, such as Torbay, Petty Harbour, and Topsail. Here, in addition to the ubiquitous cod, we see tons of caplin, a fish resembling the smelt, lying in great piles on the shore. The men are busy loading their carts with this caplin, which is destined to be used as cod bait, or ignominiously thrown on the fields and become a fertilizing agent. Passing by these fields we become acquainted with this even more penetrating and disagreeable odour, here alluded to euphemistically as "Topsail scent." The fisher-people are very friendly, and as we pause to take a picture of their flakes the women become interested and suggest different points of vantage for our "snaps." In most cases it is the work of the women to "make"

the fish, spreading them out upon the flakes to dry or gathering them into piles at night or in rainy weather.

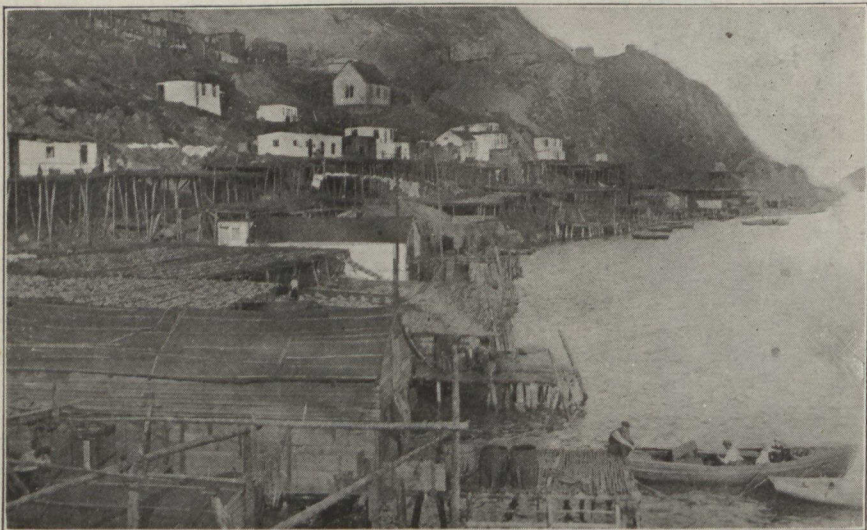
We are hearing so much of "down north," and "down the Labrador," that our curiosity is greatly aroused, and making arrangements for our passage we proceed to go "down north." Our boat is a coastal one, taking passengers and freight to the different small fishing settlements along the north coast of Newfoundland and ending her trip at Battle Harbour, in Labrador. A glance at the list of ports of call shows such picturesque nomenclature as Leading Tickle, Coachman's Cove, Old Perlican, Herring Neck and Seldom-come-by, which pronounced rapidly devolves into Selly-cum-bay.

The coast line is an almost unbroken chain of naked, frowning, up-tilted rocks which descend precipitously to the water's edge. A cruel coast, and one can well conjure up the delight which must spring up in the breast of the storm-tossed fisherman when at last he discovers a narrow opening between towering portals, and sailing through finds immediately a quiet and safe anchorage. As nearly all the names suggest, the little villages are tucked away in some quiet, sheltered spot.

One evening, toward sunset, we round a vast, craggy, grey headland, the entrance to another quiet, cosy harbour, whose placid and glassy surface reflects the white and grey cottages of the fisher-folk clustered round the water. All around tower the everlasting hills, and surround the quiet harbour almost like an amphitheatre, in the centre of which lies our ship as tranquil and still as "a painted ship upon a painted ocean." After the turmoil and tossing of the rougher waters outside this all seems very peaceful and calm. A boat softly rowed by six black-clad figures comes to our ship's side, and gently and reverently is lowered into her a long, rough, board case, that contains all that is mortal of some poor woman who has died far away from her home. The mourners receive this rough casket into their little boat, and glide off into the shadows. This poor unknown and obscure body has come home at last to be laid in the quiet village church yard. Life's stormy voyage over she has, like our ship, glided into a peaceful port. Night closes down, and the grey old hills are obliterated. The mail boat returns from its trip ashore, the anchor is weighed, and our ship once more resumes her journey northward.

At many of the ports of call we are able to dock at the tiny wharves, at others the anchor is cast, and the boats from the village cluster around the ship. The rowers climb aboard to exchange news of their catches for town topics, barter some delicious fresh cod or receive freight into their small boats. Here, at Tilt Cove, we can easily tie up, for it is at this spot that the famous Cape Copper mine has been successfully worked for the past fifty years. We all disembark ready for a tour of investigation and to watch three of our brave stewards attack a small iceberg with pick and axe. They fill their life-boat with the big fragments to transfer them later to the ship's refrigerator. This small berg is all that remains of a monster one which kept the company's ship, loaded with ore, in the harbour for three days.

On again northward and soon we come to St. Anthony, made famous by the hospital stationed here by Dr. Grenfell. We are lucky enough to have an introduction to one of the nurses, and though the evening is "fine and foggy," we make our way to the hospital. The fog is so dense that it is hard to catch a glimpse of anything but the dim outlines



The Mighty Rock Portals That Guard the Entrance to the Harbour of St. John's.



Where the Drying of Cod-fish is the Chief Business of the People.