

and the settlers all of a sudden found themselves face to face with starvation. Animated with a spirit of destruction keener than they had ever been known to exhibit in former inroads, these invaders when the cultivated fields were laid waste, swarmed down upon the grassy flats that lay along the estuaries, and after devouring there the food of cattle, as they had devoured the food of man, hurried onward, as was their wont, over the protecting dykes in search of further spoliation and so found a watery grave. So numerous were these destroyers, that vessels sailing along the Island shores, encountered, more especially off the mouths of large inlets, huge masses of drowned mice.

After this the prospect of misery on which the settlers looked drove many of them to the verge of despair. Old, superstitious dreads, that the land was accursed of heaven, came back in all its strength, and inclined many to abandon the devoted Island. The authorities of Louisbourg were, for once, prompt in their action, and came to the relief of a stricken people with something of a kindly air of generosity. Eighty seven quintals of flour from the stores of the fortress were at once forwarded to the distressed settlements, and guns, powder and shot, were distributed to those who could hunt, to procure game. From some settlements the terror-stricken inhabitants rushed to Louisbourg, to beg in person, for help against the starvation they saw awaiting them during the long winter. These, too, were supplied in a generous fashion, with flour, peas, pork, powder and shot, and returned somewhat contented to their homes. In this way excessive misery was warded off during the winter; but when the season came round when the fields were again to be tilled, and crops put in, the officials in Louisbourg had once more to come forward and supply the seed. Wheat, oats, and peas were purchased in Acadia, and distributed among the needy settlers, and by order of the home Government, six hundred livres were drawn from the treasury of Louisbourg to pay for these supplies. In this way the minds of the settlers were raised from gloomy forebodings, and encouraged to look forward to a brighter future. But for all this, the winter of 1738 was one of acute misery to many a settler, who, but for the disaster to his crops, would have enjoyed a self-won competence.