

corner of creation? Who were the Basques and how came they to Newfoundland? Thereby hangs a tale.

Seven years after Cabot's discovery of Newfoundland, or in 1504, the fishermen of Brittany and Normandy, attracted by the news of the abundance of cod in the surrounding waters, were engaged in capturing these valuable fish. They were in fact, the first to profit by this new discovery of Englishmen. In their little cockle shells of vessels, such as no one would now dream of using in crossing the Atlantic, these bold mariners ventured out into these storm swept seas. They got as far as the island of Cape Breton and gave it the name it now bears, after their home in Bretagne or Brittany. They were soon followed by the no less daring fishermen of the Basque provinces in the Northwest of Spain. That they frequented the shores of this island is shown by the relic of their presence in the name Port-au-Basques, a fine harbor near Cape Ray, on the southern coast.

Not long after the Portuguese fishermen followed; and of them we have a memorial in the name of Portugal Cove, Conception Bay, and another of the same name in Trepassey Bay. It is on record that in 1517 there were forty sail of Portuguese, French and Spanish fishing around these shores. John Rut, an English captain, was in St. John's harbor in 1527, and from there he wrote a letter to Henry VIII, of England, in which he said that he found in that harbor eleven sail of Normans, one Breton and two Portuguese barques, but no English fishing vessel. In 1578, there were 400 fishing vessels employed on the banks and around the shores, and of these 150 were French and only fifty English—so slow were English fishermen in discovering the value of these fisheries, and following the lead of the others. Gradually, however, they increased, and when on the 5th of August 1583, Sir Humphrey Gilbert entered the harbor of St. John's, he found thirty-six fishing vessels lying there of which half were English—the rest Portuguese, Spanish and French.