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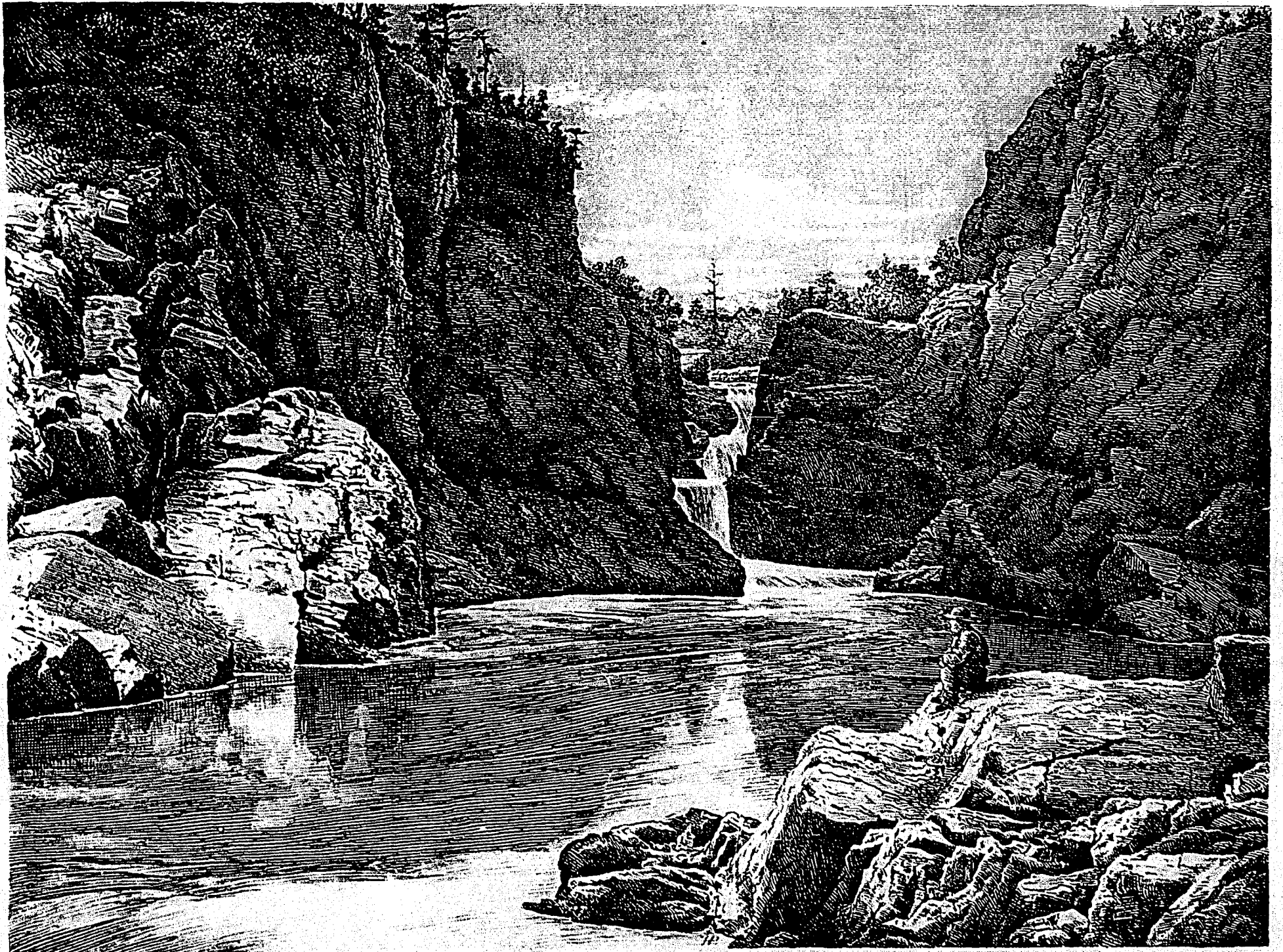
St. John's, Nfld., July 10th, 1871.

SEALS AND SEAL-HUNTING

Our Seal Fishery terminates about the 10th of May. At that date all the sealing vessels have returned to port, with the exception of a few buggards that have been unsuccessful, and keep beating about, in the hope of capturing a few old seals. The young "white coats" take to the water soon after the first of April, when they are six weeks old, and after that time few of them are captured. During April and the first or second week of May, the hunters are in pursuit of the old "Harps" and "Hoods," amid the floes and hummocks of these stormy, ice-laden seas. The seal, being a warm-blooded, mammiferous, marine quadruped, rises to the surface at intervals of fifteen or twenty minutes to breathe. The young are brought forth on the ice, where they are suckled for the first

four or five weeks, the mothers fishing about in the neighbourhood for their subsistence, and returning, at intervals, to meet their offspring. The young seals are despatched by a slight blow with a club on the nose, the skin, with the adhering fat, is brought away, and the carcass abandoned on the ice. The old seals are generally shot. It frequently happens, however, that when a herd of old seals are on the ice, basking in the sun, or attending to their young, the ice is forced together by the pressure of the wind, the ice-holes, by which the seals take to the water, are closed, and then they have no means of escape. In extended line the seal-hunters rush upon them: it is a regular *battue*, and in a couple of hours the crew of a steamer will despatch 3,000 or 4,000 old seals, each worth from seven to nine dollars. In this way a full cargo has frequently been obtained in a single day. These are the lucky hits, however, the great bulk of the old seals being pursued among floating pans of ice, in punts, or over the rugged hummocks, for miles, and despatched by shooting. The perils and hard-

ships of the hunt are often very great: and only stout-hearted, stalwart men could endure them. On the ice, the seals have but a limited power of locomotion, their feet being short and enveloped in skin. Indeed progression, on ice or land, is effected by means of a sort of shuffling jumping motion, in which the spine and the muscles of the body are principally employed, though the extremities are used in getting, or rather climbing out of the water, upon the ice. The webbed intervals of the toes, which last are completely enveloped in membranes that leave a considerable power of expansion to the extremity, serve as excellent oars. The greatest part of their life is passed in the sea, and they only come on the ice to bask or sleep in the sun, or to suckle their young. Their elongated body, their very movable spine, provided with muscles which put in action with powerful flexibility, their narrow pelvis, their close thick fur, all unite to make them excellent swimmers. Thus what the seal loses of facility of motion on land, in consequence of the shortness of its limbs,



GRAND FALLS, NIPISIGUIT RIVER, N. B.—FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY E. J. RUSSELL.—SEE PAGE 35.