

bears the name of Cape Norman, is the northern extremity of Newfoundland and figures conspicuously in the diplomacy of France and England. *Via* New York you cross the French fishery on the Banks of Newfoundland. Whether you take the northern or southern route to Europe, the surviving claims of France in North America press for consideration and urge the question, why do her citizens come so far from home? Why does she bounty this fishery so heavily? She surrendered with ease "the few acres of snow" that constitute this flourishing Dominion; she sold Louisiana for a small sum to the United States; why, then, through all changes of her government—monarchy, republic, empire, kingdom, empire, republic—and through all changes of her policy, a kaleidoscopic phantasmagoria, has she kept her hand so constantly and so firmly on the fisheries of Newfoundland?

The question has two branches, but the answer, in form two-fold, is really one—for the development of her commerce, as a training school for her navy. The English colonies trade mainly with England; the French settlements, almost exclusively with France. There is a tendency in commerce to follow the flag. With the produce of these fisheries she supplies her home demand and the demand of her colonies, Martinique, Gaudeloupe. From St. Malo and other ports she fits out yearly for Newfoundland about 600 ships and mans them with 28,000 sailors, one in every ten of whom must be a new hand. Take this away, what becomes of the French marine? Her Breton and Basque fisheries are, by herself, ranked among the Lilliputians of the world.

The Banks of Newfoundland lie thirty-five to eighty fathoms below the surface of the sea. In French estimation this fishery surpasses that pursued along shore, not only because of its productiveness, but because, being carried on at open sea and in large vessels, it necessitates the development of seamanship. A shore fisher may take refuge under a headland, but a banker must bide the brunt of wind and wave.

The question has been asked why do not the British engage in this industry? Time and again they tried it, but the success which attended their efforts was small. For two reasons they cannot contend with their rivals. First, by long use and legislative regulation the French work together methodically, on a combined system; the English do not. Second, the Government of France grants the banker a bounty of eleven francs for every quintal, that is, hundredweight of fish taken, almost the value of the catch, and double the bounty it gives to those who fish from shore. A St. Malo skipper, then, occupies a very advantageous position [in comparison with a British merchant. In the worst of seasons he is moderately sure of his outlay; on an average of years he must make money. Does the bounty system pay the nation; is it a good policy for all? asks an eager Cobdenite. A large question, concerning which we can here only say that the French are a frugal, an enlightened, and, in the best sense of that word, an economic people; that they have pursued the bounty system in respect of the fisheries for many generations, still cling to it, and, for the purpose of this paper, will be taken to understand their own advantage.

The Americans are eager for fishing grounds, not averse to bounties; why, then, do they not frequent the Banks of Newfoundland? They do, and yearly in increasing numbers; but their system is not so well established, their catch is not so large, their methods do not call for so much comment as those of the French.

What are these methods? Chiefly two; first, the bultow. From stem, amidships, quarter, and on either side of his vessel, the Frenchman runs out lines 500, 1,500, may be, 5,000 fathoms long, sufficiently buoyed and anchored to prevent drifting. From these at short intervals depend other lines of required depth with hooks attached, well baited. At fixed times, day and night, the ship's crew in their dorees—flat-bottomed boats, high fore and aft, built to outride storms and carry heavy loads—go to the length of the bultow, take off the fish and rebait. Second, an extensive net or seine, 400, 500, or 600 fathoms long, that taxes forty men to handle, and captures, at a lucky cast, forty, it may be fifty, tons of live freight. By one means or the other, the French are said to take yearly on the Banks 1,200,000 quintals of codfish. Now, what objection is made to these modes? One acquainted with deep-sea fishing will at once have suggested to him the fact that in a school of cod netted, no matter what size the mesh be, you will have the large and the small, the merchantable and the less, and that no slight quantity of both kinds will be smothered and destroyed. Again, in the spawning season, Bank-fishing, however carried on, stops the fish on its way to the spawning grounds which lie in shallow waters along shore. Were it not that the fisheries of Newfoundland are so extensive, they would have been exhausted years ago, not so much, it may be, by wanton slaughter direct, as by prevention of natural increase.

What remedy is there? The Banks lie two hundred miles to the south and east of Newfoundland, and are, therefore, far outside the three mile

limit, the meaning of which so puzzled the Washington treaty negotiators. Right and wrong, proper and improper, expedient and inexpedient, so far as they are matter of municipal regulation or enforcement, have their vanishing point, according to the British holding, along a line drawn three miles outside the headlands. By the American contention, they follow the indentation of bays, gulfs, and harbours and end three miles from shore. Vattel lays it down clearly that the high seas are no nation's back yard. What then? Outside the limit you may hack and destroy as you please, irrespective of consequences; for by "law of nations" and such snatches of learning, the local authorities cannot interfere. Until it shall appear that the world's fish-diet is of more serious moment than the advantage of France; until it shall be seen that this very advantage, no matter how backed up by gun-boats and torpedos, must end in loss to France herself through depletion of the fisheries: until that day comes, I suppose, no friendly arm, to prevent wasteful fish-slaughter, can be stretched forth by any power or any combination of powers. How admirably important interests are managed!

But if civilized nations, France among the number, are no check unto themselves, can no check be put upon them? There is a check with which the Newfoundland Assembly has for some years tampered, trying its efficacy, as it were. Fishery, whether by bultow or hook and line, cannot be pursued without bait; bait for the Banks cannot be got except from shore, and from part of it under the sole control of Britain. There is a lever that may be used to good purpose. If gentler methods fail of effect upon so intelligent a people enforce prohibition of the sale of bait to the French, an undertaking within the jurisdiction and quite practicable to-day; prohibit, also, its catch by them within the three mile limit, whatever the term means, and you put a clamp on France that will either render her Bank fishery unprofitable, or, what is more to be desired, bring her to reasonable terms in its prosecution.

T. B. BROWNING.

OPEN LETTERS.

To the Editor of The Week:

SIR,—In remarks on the congress of working men at Toronto, "A Bystander" refers to a proposition of a delegate to limit all grants and holdings of lands under the Dominion to 320 acres, and goes on to say: "As was pointed out in previous papers, the summers being short and the full power of labour and machinery being needed to save the harvest, farming on a large scale with abundant capital may be the most productive."

Granting this, could not the experiment be made on large tracts held on lease, the same as for grazing, and when it becomes evident, as in a few years I think it will, that moderate-sized farms and a mixed system with the surplus of produce of a more valuable kind than grain, must be adopted, then these large experimental tracts would be available for moderate-sized holdings.

A Bystander closes his remarks by saying the land will yield bread plentiful and cheap if it is freely owned, freely transferred, and freely tilled.

It is scarcely consistent with free ownership to grant thousands of acres to rich individual holders to make an experiment which, however profitable it might be at first, would certainly result in serious deterioration of the soil. There are many things to be said in favour of the proposition to limit the grants to 320 acres. It is entitled, I think, to careful consideration.

Yours truly,

WM. OSBORNE.

HAMILTON, 15th January, 1884.

"A BYSTANDER" ON THE TRADES CONGRESS.

To the Editor of "The Week":

SIR,—In your issue of the 10th of January, among the "Current Events and Opinions" appeared a criticism on the late Trade Union Congress which, I think, in justice to the delegates that took part in it, calls for a reply, especially as the writer claims to be a candid friend of Trades Unions. "A Bystander" says that "in the International Congress of Europe, the English workmen have been generally distinguished from those of France and other countries by their wise resolution to confine themselves to industrial questions, and refrain from tampering with social or political chimeras." At the Toronto Congress one delegate propounded the political axiom that "everyone who was called upon to obey the law must have a right to vote." The first sentence is misleading, and the second is a mistake. The first misleading, because it conveys the idea that the Toronto Congress favoured views that the English workingmen who attended the Paris Congress would not entertain, but such is not the fact, as there was not a single question discussed at the Toronto Congress of a social or political nature that has not been discussed at English Trade Union Congresses, and similar resolutions passed; in fact our fellow workingmen in England have gone further in the direction of state interference with the hours of labour than the Toronto Congress would go. The last English Trades Congress held at Nottingham passed a resolution calling upon the Government to bring in a bill to regulate the hours of all the workers in the employ of the State and of all the public bodies and companies requiring Act or concession of Par-