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NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR.

COPY of a REPORT, dated the 2d day of October 1848, addressed to Vice-Admiral the Earl of Dundonald, by Captain *Granville G. Loch, R.N.*, upon the Fisheries of NEWFOUNDLAND and LABRADOR.

(*Mr. Robinson.*)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,  
1 June 1849.

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*Under 3 02.*

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NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR.

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RETURN to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons,  
dated 17 May 1849;—for,

“ COPY of EXTRACT of a REPORT, dated the 2d day of October 1848, addressed to Vice-Admiral the Earl of *Dundonald*, by Captain *G. G. Loch*, R. N., upon the FISHERIES of NEWFOUNDLAND and LABRADOR.”

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*Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 1 June 1849.*

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COPY of a REPORT, dated the 2d day of October 1848, addressed to Vice-Admiral the Earl of *Dundonald*, by Captain *Granville G. Loch*, R. N., upon the FISHERIES of NEWFOUNDLAND and LABRADOR.

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My Lord,

Her Majesty's Ship "Alarm,"  
St. John's, Newfoundland, 2 October 1848.

I SAILED from Halifax in Her Majesty's ship, under my command, on the 14th June, and anchored in the harbour of St. Pierre's the afternoon of the 17th. I found the outer roads and inner harbour filled with shipping; there were 133 French vessels, averaging from 100 to 350 and 400 tons; 100 of these were bankers, chiefly brigs, lately returned with cargoes. They had taken in their sail, and were waiting for bait (caplin), which they told me would strike into the bays of St. Peter's and Miquelon in a day or two. This prophecy (whether likely to prove true or not) was merely mentioned to deceive me, as it is well known the supply afforded round their own islands is insufficient to meet the great demand. The next morning I observed boats discharging caplin into the bankers, which I ascertained had been brought over from our own shores during the night in English boats. The bait is sold in the harbour of St. Pierre's, either by barter for piece goods, provisions, or for money.

In every way this transaction is illegal; first, by vessels trading to foreign ports without a Custom-house clearance, in violation of Act 3 & 4 Will. 4, c. 59; secondly, by sailing without registers; and, thirdly, by defrauding the colony of a branch of its revenue.

Their only excuse is, that if they were not in self-defence to sell the caplin, the French would take it, as they formerly used to do, in defiance of all remonstrances and opposition; for it is, they say, impossible to guard every particular point where the caplin may strike along so extensive a coast so as to prevent the robbery, or, in most cases, even to see the French fishermen, in consequence of the frequent and dense fogs. This traffic has now become so systemised and general, and so productive to all the parties engaged in it along the coast, that it will be a matter of great difficulty to put it down.

I waited on the Commandant, Monsieur Delecluse (Capitaine de Corvette), and, after mentioning the object of my visit, I strongly urged him to aid me in the support of the existing treaty.

He said he would, and always endeavoured to do so, in conjunction with my predecessor, but that it was an up-hill task, owing to the proximity of the island with the main, and the frequent fogs, which often enveloped all surrounding objects sometimes for many days together.

As a means of checking this great evil, I would propose establishing one or two magistrates at central positions, say Fortune, Lamalin and Burin, and supplying four swift row-boats, attached to a colonial tender, during the fishing season, and swearing in their coxswains as special constables.

Some of the local authorities entertain an idea that they cannot exercise jurisdiction over men embarked in boats; but in this I have ventured to assure them they are mistaken, and that when boats are fishing in creeks, harbours or along the coasts within three miles' distance of the land, the same law extends to the persons of the individuals in them as to a settler on the shore, and that they would be fully borne out in exercising any legitimate authority they may possess for an infringement of a local or imperial law by parties so situated.

The fishing season commenced the beginning of June, and will close the first week of October; they do not consider it will be a favourable one, however; fishermen are as hard to satisfy as farmers; their catch will probably average 1,000,000 quintals.

The Government bounty is 11 francs per quintal, a sum equal to the value of the article itself. Owing to the embarrassed state of the French finances at home, and the failure of all their commercial establishments in the West Indies, there is comparatively no sale for the Bank fish this year. No accurate calculation can be formed of the value of the whole quantity of fish caught by the French, as many vessels carry their cargoes to France green; the fish are dried and salted there, and exported thence to the West Indies, and some to the Mediterranean.

I am assured that 360 vessels, from 100 to 300 tons burthen, are engaged in the Bank fisheries, employing from 16,000 to 17,000 men (exclusive of the coast fishermen). All these vessels return to France every winter; their crews spend the money they make there, buy the fitments they require there, sell their cargoes for the use of their countrymen at cheaper rates than the Newfoundlanders can to the colonists, and are knit together in a body by the regularity and system of their duties, and man their country's navy if required.

The French annual Great Bank fishery averages a catch of 1,200,000 quintals, and nearly the entire quantity is sent to the West Indies; Guadeloupe and Martinique consume two-thirds, and the remainder is exported to other islands.

The islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon are admirably adapted for the purposes to which they are applied; no expense to Government, they offer the best possible centre for all commercial operations, a depôt for their stores, secure harbours for their shipping, and at the same time, owing to their proximity to the shores of Newfoundland, their inhabitants are equally well supplied with bait and fish as the British settlers themselves in their vicinity.

The French authorities, however, do not deny that the sole object of their Government in supporting these fisheries at so great a cost is to form seamen for their navy.

Monsieur Filleau, the intelligent commissary at St. Pierre's, candidly told me this, and added, that no private companies could of themselves support this commerce, unless the market price of the article rose to double its present amount.

Monsieur Delecluse, the governor, had also the honesty to affirm that the supply of caplin by the English from their bays and coast alone enabled the bankers to prosecute their fishings; and he believed that to this traffic with his islands our poor settlers were alone enabled to support their existence!!!

#### REMARKS.

It is obvious that by withholding from the French the supply of bait from our own shores, their success upon the Great Bank would sensibly diminish, and the advantages the fish merchants at present derive from the bounty granted by their Government over other competitors could not increase the trade beyond the limits controlled by the comparatively very scanty supply of caplin afforded by their own coasts and islands.

If, on the other hand, it is the large payment of bounty by the Government that alone upholds the fisheries, and which has advanced them to their flourishing condition, the present is surely the period for our merchants to exert themselves to regain their lost ascendancy; while the French are paralysed by the failure of the French West India markets, and general loss of credit consequent upon the emancipation of the blacks by the revolution of February.

It is wonderful to observe the inhabitants of a nation, certainly not addicted to maritime pursuits, surpass a seafaring people in the prosecution of an avocation natural to them, and in which it is necessary to display more science and perseverance to be successful than in any other branch of a sailor's trade.

In consequence of this anomaly, I cannot but believe there must be some flagrant want either of industry or skill, on the part of the people of Newfoundland, admitting even that the existence of the French banker is entirely dependent upon the bounty money.

However this may be answered, the fact is very apparent that the French have established and systemised a large fleet of vessels, which now no unaided individual enterprise can successfully compete with.

The capital advanced by the French Government (at the commencement of the competition with the English bank fishermen) at once lowered the market price of fish to almost the cost attendant upon the sailing of the English vessel, which the French bounty alone was, and is still, equal to defray.

A French vessel of 300 tons has a crew of at least 40 men (worse fed and paid than Englishmen), and is found with from seven to nine heavy anchors, and upwards of 800 fathoms of hemp cables. She would also have from four to five large boats capable of standing heavy weather, and numerous nets and fishing-tackle made in France, one-third the expense our colonists can procure theirs.

The boats above mentioned are capable of laying out from 5,000 to 6,000 fathoms of line, to which hooks and weights are attached at certain distances, and secured by anchors.

These are termed *buttows*, and are generally shot on each bow and quarter. They are enabled, with the number of hands belonging to each vessel, to lift these lines and take the fish off frequently, both during the day and night; while the smaller English vessels manned by a weaker crew (consequent upon the greater expense), and only possessing common anchors and cables, are under the necessity of using the ordinary hot line.

Not only are the fish attracted away from them by the miles of bait spread over the bottom by their rivals, but when heavy weather occurs they are obliged to weigh; while the French remain securely at anchor with 200 fathoms of cable on end, and ready to resume their employment immediately the weather will permit them.

While we yield to the French the advantages of independent ports and unmolested fisheries, we are, on the other hand, hampered by circumstances unfelt by them; for example, their fishermen arrive from the parent state, ours belong to a thinly-peopled and dependent colony; they have their drying grounds close to the fisheries, as we have on the shores of this very colony, deriving every advantage from it, and untrammelled by any expenses or local taxes to which our people have to contribute, in addition to the aforesaid disadvantages.

The distance from France is of no moment; instead of adding to, it is the means of diminishing the expense attendant on the conveyance of the fish to Europe, for a great portion of the season's catch not sent to the West Indies is carried away by the large fleets of vessels upon their return home for the winter; while our fish merchants have to collect the produce of the season from numerous stations distributed over a great range of coast, and then again to tranship it into large vessels to cross the Atlantic.

It may also be said that our people are working for existence; the French are sent forth by capitalists, and supported by large bounties paid by their Government; hence (as I have endeavoured to show) the great reason of their success over our colonists in their more expensive mode of fishing on the Banks.

It is not surprising, then, that they have been thrown back upon the coast of the island, and have abandoned their vessels for small boats only adapted to fish close to the shore, and in the creeks and harbours.

Fortunately, the cod, the staple wealth of these seas, seems inexhaustible, so that a large revenue is still made; but the nursery for seamen has ceased to exist; while our rivals number 16,000 well-trained men belonging to the bankers, exclusive of 12,000 others attached to their fishing stations on the coasts granted to them by treaty.

#### *Burgeo Islands.*

June 24th.—The fishing is carried on throughout the year. It was good during the past winter, but indifferent in the spring; on the whole, they have had a fair catch, 6,000 quintals since October.

The fish are not so plentiful as they were five years ago. There are about 700 inhabitants residing on three islands; they are increasing in numbers; 14 years since there were only two families.

The French do not interfere with their fishing, or appear on their coasts. The caplin had not been at all plentiful, but were beginning to strike into the harbours in great abundance, and would, they expected, remain on the coast for several weeks.

They trade principally with Spain and Portugal, sending their largest fish to Cadiz, and generally commanding the early markets of both those countries,

in consequence of their ability to prosecute their employment throughout the year.

These inquiries were principally answered by Mr. Stephens, agent to Messrs. Newman, Hunt & Co. There was, besides this establishment, a Jersey room, belonging to Mr. Nicholl, who has another fishing station, 30 leagues east, and one at La Poile.

During my visit there were two vessels in the port; one was receiving cargo for the Levant, and the other collecting fish from the different stations along the coast.

Most of the fishermen belonging to the settlement are hired by one or other of the above-mentioned houses, and they receive 4s. 6d. for every hundred fish delivered; but, unfortunately, they are dependent upon their employers for the supply, not only of their boats, nets, clothes and other articles, but also for their food, so that by what I could ascertain, I fear that a very pernicious system of usury is prosecuted. If this should continue, the merchants may be enriched, but the settlers will certainly never improve in civilization or prosperity.

The inhabitants, with but few exceptions, are all Protestants. There are two churches, but at the time of my visit no clergyman, the Reverend Mr. Blackmore having been removed to a better living, and Mr. Cunningham, his successor, had not arrived. The magistrate is a Mr. Cox, at present in England. There is also a small school-house, to which the fishermen contribute a small annual sum for the education of their children.

The appearance of the settlement itself is without exception (considering the reputed value of the fisheries) the most disreputable and wretched I have hitherto seen. True, the ground is a bog, with granite boulders, and rocks rising from its centre, upon which the huts and cabins can alone be planted, but yet no attempt seems to be made to drain the filth and bog water away from their doors, or even to make pathways, by which to pass from house to house, without having to wade through black mire. The only causeway in the settlement is one formed of deal boards, from the church to Mr. Stephens' residence. Nevertheless, to my surprise, I must own that the people seem happy in their state of filth, and I heard no complaints of disturbance or of crime having been recently committed.

#### *Lamalin.*

June 30th.—The fish struck in early and in great quantities, but there was not a catch in proportion to the abundance at the commencement of the season, in consequence of bad weather preventing the boats going out, until the caplin struck in, when they were fully employed, catching and taking them to St. Pierre, to sell to the French bankers. There has been but little bait at St. Pierre this year, so that caplin fetch a high price. As much as £. 15 a day is made by each boat employed in this manner.

I was informed by Mr. Winter, the Custom-house officer at Lamalin, that a duty of 6s. per quintal was imposed by the colony on bait exported; but in consequence of the law officers of the Crown having given their opinion that bait caught and shipped (without being landed) could not be considered as exported, the boats adopt this method of taking away the caplin to evade the duty. At the time of my first visit the French boats had not been troublesome; none, indeed, had been seen; but on my second visit (August 26th), after their caplin had been sold, they began to complain of their encroachments. This was the latter end of August, about the time when the fish leave their coasts and small islands for our shores. After the fish have been cured, they are taken by coasters, to St. John's and Burin. There are also two schooners that trade regularly from Harbour Breton, in the employ of Newman & Co., and Nicholl & Co.

The house and boat that are kept for the use of the officer and crew, generally left at Lamalin during the fishing season, have not been put in a state of repair this summer. The boat has no oars, and looks very old, and the house has several panes of glass broken, and was not in a fit state to inhabit.

The settlement of Lamalin is not increasing. Much apathy exists among the inhabitants. No road is yet made, and only one small house has been built since last year. The population is not quite 400.

Mr. Butler, the late magistrate, died in the fall of the year, and Mr. Pack, from St. John's, is his successor. Mr. Pack is building a large house, about a quarter of a mile from the settlement, and expresses his intention of carrying agriculture to a large extent. The soil is good, and well adapted for potatoes, of which

which they have lately begun to export a considerable quantity. The potato disease, however, visited them last year, in consequence of which their seed is neither good nor abundant.

June 30th.—To have left an officer and boat's crew at Lamalin, at the late season of my first visit, I ascertained would have been of no service, as the French bankers had received their supply of caplin from the English themselves, and which Mr. Pack told me were chiefly the fish, about which disputes arose.

It may be undoubtedly true that the French occasionally encroach upon the banks in the vicinity of Lamalin, and thereby excite the jealousy of the fishermen of that station, and that in consequence a man-of-war's boat would be useful to foster the indolence of those individuals who, thus protected, might choose their own time to fish, and take it easy; yet I have no hesitation in saying, they do not deserve this protection; for the comparatively few fish the French abstract cannot be one tithe so injurious to their own individual interests as their wholesale and illegal traffic in caplin is to the entire fishing community inhabiting the south and eastern shores of the colony, not only by supplying the French bankers with the means of prosecuting their successful competition on the Grand Bank, but also thereby preventing the strike of the fish towards the shore, by the spread of bait, which intercepts their passage.

I nevertheless think that a small cruiser, possessing three fine whale-boats permanently stationed on the south coast for the season, making Lamalin as the port nearest the French possessions her head quarters, and with power not only to protect our fishermen, but to act as a coast-guard vessel, to prevent smuggling, and check the illegal trade in caplin, would be most beneficial to the fishing interests of the colony at large.

#### *St. John's*

Has enjoyed a more productive season than for many years past, which, with the cheering prospect of abundant crops in grass, grain and potatoes, has given new vigour and life to the capital, after the fire and famine of the last and preceding years.

July 23d.—I sailed from St. John's for the coast of Labrador, July 23d, with clear weather, and a moderate breeze from W. S. W., which lasted until we were abreast of Trinity Bay, where we met a fog from the southern coast, which generally fills that bay with winds between S. and W. S. W., passing over the narrow isthmus which joins the district of Terryland to the great body of the island.

The wind shifted to the N. N. E., and threw up, as it increased, a chopping sea; but, as the fog was light, I stood towards Cape Freels, to see whether the valuable fishing grounds extending round its extremity were occupied by our own people.

This Cape is to be avoided in thick or heavy weather, on account of the innumerable rocks and shoals that surround it, both north and south. It, nevertheless, is a good fishing station, and affords shelter for boats and small vessels; 17 were in sight.

At noon we passed Funk Island within a mile, leaving it on the port hand. It is a flat-browed island; I should say not more than 60 feet high, and cannot be seen at more than 12 miles' distance.

Parties repair thither in spring and autumn to collect eggs and feathers. At one time a very considerable profit could be gained by this trade, but lately, owing to the war of extermination that has been waged against the flights of puffins, gannet, divers, gulls, eider-ducks, cormorants, &c. &c., it has greatly diminished. One vessel of 25 tons is said once to have cleared £. 200 currency in a single trip to Halifax.

July 26th.—We passed between Groais and Belle Island (South) shortly after daylight, counted ten icebergs, some drifting about with the wind and tide, others aground, and two at the entrance of Croc.

#### *Croc.*

This harbour is a long narrow indenture, slightly curving towards its head, where vessels may lay perfectly land-locked.

It is the head-quarter station for the French men-of-war, employed for the protection of their fisheries.

I found at anchor the French brig-of-war "Meleager," and two empty merchant vessels, lying with their topgallant masts down, and hatches locked. Their crews to a man were fishing.

Besides these, there was a small English schooner, the "Mariner," bound, and belonging to St. John's, with a cargo of salmon.

The French have two rooms in Croc, on opposite sides of the harbour. When they return home for the winter, they leave them in charge of two Irishmen, named Hope and Kearney, only removing the canvas coverings of the stages.

They also leave some of their boats behind them, turning them over on the beach, and thatching them with spruce boughs, in the same manner that our own migratory fishermen do theirs on the coasts of Labrador, to protect them from the weather. Their establishments are conducted upon the same principle as our own; and, although their arrangements evince a better system of discipline, I do not think that the same energy is displayed by their fishermen in the prosecution of their employment, nor does it appear to me to be so thoroughly performed; I mean that, to my inexperienced eye, the fish neither seem to be so well cleaned, split, boned or cured.

The two rooms in Croc employ between them 30 seven-quintal boats and 130 men, 100 afloat and 30 shore men (as they are termed) in the establishments; six of these boats were exclusively occupied in catching caplin and herrings for bait, and were manned by crews of eight men.

Their fishing this year commenced the 5th June, and is considered good in point of quantity, although the fish are unusually small. The catch has been, to the present date (July 27), 7,000 quintals, and they anticipate 6,000 more before they close. They use seines principally, but they also fish with lines.

Caplin had struck in very early, and in great abundance; they were now beginning to disappear; replaced by herrings.

Croc is by no means a first-class fishing station. Rouge, St. Julian's, Goose Cove, Creminillere, Braha, Oruirpon, besides others in the vicinity of Cape St. John's, all harbour more vessels, and send forth a greater number of boats.

The French coast fishermen do not receive so large a bounty as their countrymen engaged exclusively on the Banks. The risk and expense attending their occupation is much less, and, consequently, the insurance lower. The coast fishermen sail from France in vessels of 150 to 200 tons, laden with salt, and containing their entire fishing equipments, comprising men, boats, nets and provisions. When they arrive at the destined harbours, they moor their vessels, re-roof their last year's establishments, land their goods, lock up their vessels' hatches, and commence fishing. If the season prove prolific, traders connected with the planters will, perhaps, once or twice during the season, carry away the produce of their good fortune and industry, preserving a sufficiency to freight their own vessels back to France.

The French north-east coast fisheries are prosecuted, perhaps, with greater vigour, and have increased more rapidly than those to the southward.

This year there were upwards of 11,000 fishermen employed between Cape Ray and Cape St. John's, showing an increase of 1,500 men within two years.

I had great difficulty in collecting information, not only from the superintendents of the rooms, but also from the naval officers; they evinced, I thought, great jealousy in their answers to my questions.

The northern and southern fisheries are opposing interests; the former are conducted by houses at Granville, St. Malo, Pampot, Bennick, Havre, Nantes and St. Brieux, the latter by merchants of Dieppe, Bayonne, and, in one instance, in connexion with a St. Malo house, of the name of L'Huiller.

I met at the table of the Captain of the French brig-of-war two superintendents of rooms; they had originally been masters of bankers; they appeared to be men of energy and substance, and possessed very considerable general information. They spoke with pride of the sailors their bankers produced, and of the hardships and dangers they were exposed to while fishing on the banks, and that to deprive their country of these fisheries would be to lop off the right arm of her maritime strength.

I found, during my stay, the climate dry, the winds light, and in the harbour, notwithstanding the proximity of eight or ten icebergs, the temperature mild and agreeable, but outside the air was damp and chilly, even with a clear sky overhead.

Sailed for Belle Isle (North), and observed, on my way there, one brig in Fishshot Cove;



Cove ; one barque and one brig in Goose Cove ; one barque, one brig and one schooner in Creminillere Cove ; two barques and two brigs in Braha ; one English brig in Griguel Harbour ; one French brig in De Grat Harbour.

### *Belle Isle (North).*

The fisheries round this island are most valuable, and I grieve to say are principally gathered by the French. During the afternoon, night and next morning I was off this island, I only saw two vessels, and those were English jacks ; but, nevertheless, I ascertained that the French had been fishing round its shores the entire season, and had only departed upon the visit of the man-of-war being reported by their look-outs.

I do not see how these fisheries can effectually be protected while the French possess the facilities of numerous and convenient ports in its vicinity, with only the opposing influence of two Jersey establishments in Chateau Bay to contend against them. The most effectual protection would be the constant presence of a small cruiser during the entire season, to act in conjunction with the small Government schooners the French themselves employ for this service. If it were practicable to form establishments on the island itself, this expense, perhaps, might be saved, but, owing to the total absence of safe beach or boat harbours, this would be almost impossible.

These fisheries are capable of yielding 40,000 quintals in the season, and, I am told, the French take upon the average 30,000.

I could not visit the establishments in Chateau, owing to the bay being blocked up by icebergs ; 83 were counted between Belle Isle and the coast of Labrador.

### *Red Bay*

Is a beautiful little harbour, perfectly sheltered from every wind, and is capable of admitting ships of the largest class. It is formed of Saddle Island, lying off the entrance of a round basin with a narrow neck. There is good anchorage behind the island, which forms what may be called the outer harbour. The hills of the main are nearly 500 feet in height, somewhat higher than those directly to the North-east and South-west of the port.

The hills are close to the shore, formed of reddish granite, and covered with moss, some stunted spruce, birch and juniper bushes.

Three small rivulets enter the basin, but water cannot easily be procured for ships, owing to sand-bars extending across their mouths.

The port is not very easy to make, as the features and indentations of this portion of the coast are very similar ; one of the best marks is a small flat island, a little to the eastward of Saddle Island, named "Oil" Island in the book of sailing directions, and "White" Island by the fishermen.

There are 13 rooms at this station, all belonging to separate planters, small proprietors employing altogether 50 fisherman (exclusive of the shore-men) ; the principal person among them is a Mr. William Penny, of Conception Bay. He comes to this port in his schooner every spring, and arrived this year, on the 17th June, with 95 people on board—40 men, the rest women and children. During the season there are about 100 inhabitants ; 40 reside for the purpose of seal fishing during the winter. They commenced cod fishing this year the 5th June. They use both seines and lines, and have 25 boats of different sizes, employing from two to three hands each, and capable of containing from 5 to 10 quintals. They send their fish to St. John's, Carbonear and Halifax. They despatch it twice in the season, if the fishing is moderately good. Their catch to the present date, 30th July, has been 3,500 quintals, which is the greatest amount of fish they have taken so early for the last three years. They expect to average before the close 100 quintals a man. They would not be contented with less than 70 (the French consider 50 quintals per man a paying season). The fishing generally ends about the 5th September, when the ice begins again to form, and the bait strikes off into deep water. The bait they use is caplin, herring

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"In 1839 or 1840, when employed on this service, I represented that the French had taken possession of Belle Isle, and an order was sent from England for their removal in the following year."—A. Milne.

herring and lance, in rotation. Although the latter may be procured throughout the season, they use the caplin while it can be procured, which is frequently from June until the end of August. They can place no reliance upon the strike of the herrings. They consider the climate during the summer and autumn months drier and of more equal temperature than upon the North-east coast of Newfoundland.

They say that they are much disturbed by the French and Americans: the former coming over from the other side in squadrons of batteaux, sweeping all their best fishing grounds; while the latter enter their harbours in schooners of 60 tons, catching their fish, and drying them close to their own stages, which they boldly assert they have a right to do by treaty.

I examined several of the planters separately, and all agreed that there are about 600 Frenchmen employed in fishing vessels of different sizes between Forteau and Red Bays alone. There is no agriculture, if we except a few cabbages and turnips planted round the doors of their huts, which they use with their common diet of fish and salt pork. The fishermen are paid principally in bills of exchange given by the merchants, and receive from £. 18 to £. 25 currency a year. Those employed for the summer season only generally receive half their catch.

The planters of the harbour expressed so much dissatisfaction at the encroachments of the French, who, they assert, were encouraged in their depredations by some of the principal English inhabitants residing in the bays to the westward, that I have thought it advisable to give the evidence of the three principal parties I examined at length:—

“What are your names?—Robert Ach, of Carbonear, and Francis Witts. We have been fishing 11 years out of this harbour. Witts has resided on the coast of Labrador for the last two years, and would continue to do so, if not so much interfered with by the French. Benjamin Coomes came straight from England; has been residing between Black and Red Bays and on the coast of Labrador for 25 years, cod fishing and sealing on his own account. They all asserted that their fishing is very much injured by the encroachment of the French fishing on the coast to the westward in Black Bay and Forteau Bay, &c., which prevented the fish from passing down the coast; but more particularly are they injured by the French sweeping all the caplin off the ground, which otherwise would remain a month longer, if they were not so disturbed and cleared by them. To give an idea how much we suffer by these encroachments, and how much the French benefit by them, there are parties employed purposely to catch and cure caplin to supply the Great Bank fishing vessels.

“Who are the principal people in Black Bay?—One family, Mr. Odell's.

“Do they agree to the French going there?—Yes, they encourage them, and lend and build stages for their accommodation, and receive the livers of the fish as payment.

“What may this be worth to them?—A quintal of fish produces a gallon of oil, which sells for 2s.

“Have you ever remonstrated with the English residents at the Bays to the westward, and stated to them how prejudicial their encouragement to the French was to your interests?—Yes, and they are well acquainted that the French fishing must injure ours.

“What do you suppose is the reason why the French are enabled to surpass our fishermen in cheap fishing on our own coast?—Their fit out is, in the first place, much cheaper—not one-fourth the prime cost of ours; secondly, they receive a large bounty from Government; thirdly, the wages are not one-half those we pay our fishermen.

“How many Frenchmen would you suppose are fishing between Red Bay and Forteau?—From 1,000 to 1,500 men.

“In how many boats or vessels?—About 200, large and small.

“Do you think the Government of Newfoundland could make any arrangement that would effectually prevent the encroachment of the French on the coast of Labrador?—Yes, a cruiser stationed in the Straits from the 1st July to the last of August, or resident magistrates, say at Black Bay and Forteau, and perhaps Chateau.

“Would the planters on the coast of Labrador think it worth their while to pay £. 300 a year in support of the salaries of magistrates to clear the coast of the French!

French?—We think we pay taxes enough, and we imagine that the Government of Newfoundland ought to defray such a charge for the benefit of its subjects and its own commerce.

“Are you aware if there are any individuals residing between Red Bay and Forteau Bay who have made sums of money by their encouragement of French fishing?—Yes; Samuel Toms, formerly residing at Great St. Modest. Last year we went to Quebec, having cleared 1,000*l.* in the last few years by the sale of oil from the cod livers.

“Who among the principal people at Forteau encourage the French?—Mr. Ellis, for one, who has a room at Great St. Modest expressly for the use of the French; he is the same person who has applied to be made a magistrate.

“Do the residents of Labrador receive any assistance from the Government of Newfoundland during the winter?—No, none. Last year, for the eight months, which is the usual length of the winter, we were hard put to it in consequence of the French having deprived us of our means of living by plundering our coasts; many of the poorer inhabitants were alone supported by the charitable assistance of those in better circumstances.

“You say that certain parties have had to give up trade in vessels in consequence of the French encroachments; state who these were?—Francis and Cladius Witts, William Udell and Mr. Pikes; these parties had to give up their vessels, finding that the catch of fish was so much reduced from what it used to be before the French came in such numbers, that none of the parties could procure even half cargoes by the close of the season.

“How do you know that the French fishing interferes with yours?—Because on the Monday our catch is double it is any other day of the week, owing to the French not fishing on the Sunday, thereby permitting the fish to pass up the coast.”

#### *Carrol Cove.*

This is a small fishing station, five miles west of Red Bay, where there are only two rooms, belonging to a Mr. Landragon. He employs 30 men; six of these reside throughout the winter to trap seal. They catch them in frame nets, which are laid down the 20th November, and taken up the last of December; then again put down the 1st June, and taken up the middle of July; 300 seals a year is the average catch. They send their cod to a Jersey house in Blanc Sablon. There are three seal fisheries between Chateau Bay and Carrol Cove, fished by men from Red Bay, who abandon them in summer for the cod fishing; their average catch is 350 seals.

#### *Black Bay or Pimware*

Is a wild open roadstead, but a good fishing station, and caplin are always to be found in great abundance during the season inside the bar, formed by the river at its head, and which the French are said entirely to appropriate by dropping nets across the channels, and placing watch-boats to guard them. This intelligence caused me to despatch an officer in the barge from Red Bay, who might be enabled to take any intruders by surprise, and give me accurate information. He counted 20 fishing-boats at anchor under Ledge Island, and boarded 16 vessels at anchor inside Little St. Modest, belonging to Nova Scotia; one American and three French from St. Pierre's.

These latter had been fishing on the Labrador shores, and, according to my directions, he took away their registers.

At Shiphead, on the western side of Black Bay, he boarded the French brig “*Novelle*,” St. Pierre, of St. Malo, wind-bound from Oruirpon, bound to Port-au-Choix, laden with salt and a small quantity of fish, which apparently had not been taken on this coast. He also boarded two French boats fishing for vessels at Port-au-Choix, which he ordered away.

He observed 12 or 13 French boats off Cape Diable to windward of him, but these he could not reach, as it blew too strong.

*Forteau Bay*

Is almost an open roadstead, exposed to the south and south-east, but safe even with winds from those quarters, owing to its depth, and the protection it receives from the opposite coast of Newfoundland.

It is surrounded by table-lands of sandstone, covered with the usual moss, the dwarf spruce, birch bush, and some mountain ash. A salmon river of some size enters the sea at the head of the bay; seals, salmon, cod and remarkably fine herrings are very plentiful. The fishings are carried on with considerable profit by five establishments; four connected with Jersey, Poole and St. John's are in the bay, and the fifth is planted upon the eastern point; it belongs to a Mr. Grange, a wealthy colonist from Anchor Point, Newfoundland. Upwards of 400 people are employed by these various planters, but their catch this year has not been in proportion so good as that of their rivals of Red Bay. The resident agents and partners are Messrs. Ellis, employed by Mr. Bird, of Poole, and Laroux, a Jersey merchant, and agent for Mr. Outville, the most extensive planter on the coast of Labrador; he has, besides this, other establishments, one at Blanc Sablon, and supplies most of the minor rooms and resident fishermen with goods, clothes and stores, much to his own profit; Messrs. Young and Janveaux, and George de Heaune and David Janvers are the remainder.

There are nine fishing stations between Red Bay and Forteau, namely, Carrol Cove, East St. Modest, Black Bay, West St. Modest, Capstan Island, Lanc Diable, River Head of Lanc-a-Loup, and Lanc Amour; except at Lanc-a-Loup, where a Mr. Crockwell, of Tor Ouay, has a room: all these stations are fished by colonial fishermen, who send their produce to St. John's by vessels from that port, and to the Jersey houses in Forteau Bay and Blanc Sablon. These small stations employ about 220 men, and average a catch of 25,000 quintals throughout the year.

Cabbages and turnips are grown at every station for the summer consumption of the inhabitants.

Those who reside upon the coast during the winter shoot deer, partridges, ducks, geese, curlew and other wild fowl, amply sufficient for their support. They have, nevertheless, stores of pork, flour, tea and molasses, supplied by traders from Quebec, Halifax and St. John's.

Much of my time was occupied, during the ship's stay at Forteau, in settling innumerable disputes between the rival firms and fishermen, and in trying an action brought by Philip Landragan, of Carrol Cove, against Messrs. George de Heume and David Janvers, for having taken a schooner belonging to the former, under pretence of purchasing her, and having used her for nine months, and, in consequence of the Collector of Customs of St. John's declaring the register to be incorrect, returning her to the plaintiff, who accepted a bill for £.30 as an equivalent for her use, and for having boarded her after delivering her over, and taking out gear belonging to the vessel.

The above was a sample of many of their grievances; but there were two of a much greater description: the one against Mr. Ellis, of Forteau, as shown in the enclosed letter to his Excellency the Governor; the other case was brought before me by a man named Charles Dicker, a planter, resident on Grand Point, three miles west of Blanc Sablon, and a settler of 24 years, who, upon hearing a man-of-war was at Forteau, walked across the country to lay a charge against a stronger party for having torn up his seal and salmon nets, as, he asserted, they prevented his own catch being so great as it otherwise would be. The poor man was thus deprived of his season's profit, and probably his winter's subsistence. I was enabled, fortunately, to restore his rights to him.

*Blanc Sablon*

Is seven miles west of the western point of Forteau Bay. It is open to the eastward; nevertheless, the westerly winds are those most feared, as they throw in heavy cross swells between Wood and Greenly Islands, and vessels are not unfrequently driven on shore by them.

It is the principal fishing station on the Labrador Coast. There are four Jersey establishments; two belonging to Messrs. Philip de Ouitville (under the charge of Thomas le Roux), Philip Bray and Lebrock. There are upwards of 300 inhabitants during the season, and only four families reside during the winter.

winter. They all arrived this year in June, and commenced fishing the 13th, and found both cod and caplin very abundant. They had never seen fish so early before, and greatly regretted not having arrived sooner. Besides the cod, they fish seal and herring; the latter they use for bait when caplin is scarce. They commonly find the caplin on the coast by the middle of June, and it generally remains until the end of July.

De Quiterville's establishment, both in Forteau and this bay, cure and export caplin; they also extract oil from the herring as well as from the cod liver. Twelve Jersey vessels and 80 boats were in use, employing altogether 300 hands. They trade to 12 different ports in the Mediterranean, and occasionally to their own island, Jersey.

The fish is sent away as fast as they can load the vessels; the first sailed this year, the 7th July; and another will sail to-day (9th August); and four will sail in September. There were 16 vessels at anchor in Blanc Sablon harbour, namely, one barque, three brigantines and 12 schooners; they were all waiting for cargoes.

Notwithstanding the abundance of fish at the commencement, they consider they have only had a fair catch, 13,000 quintals, owing to their late arrival, and the fish leaving early; they consider from 15,000 to 16,000 quintals a good season.

Last year their fishing did not terminate until the end of August; this year it closed the 25th July.

The fogs lie longer against this portion of the coast than further to the eastward, owing to its being at the entrance of the Straits, and more exposed to the southerly winds, which drive them out of the estuary of the St. Lawrence.

Blanc Sablon is sometimes enveloped for a week at a time, while a few miles beyond the sky is clear and dry. This is much against the planters' interests. Americans occasionally spread their nets and fish early in the season, on their way through the Straits towards Cape Charles; but they do not disturb the settlers.

There were about 10 this year; they used to appear in greater numbers. Four French brigs had been fishing off Green Island for three weeks or a month; they left the day before yesterday, when they heard we were on the coast. They fish along the Labrador coast throughout the season, and only retire upon the appearance of the man-of-war. All the small planters complain grievously of this intrusion, while the more wealthy encourage it, for (as I have already stated) the sake of the liver oil, which they receive for stage-room. The Americans carry the fish away green.

The people are supported, as at the other stations, by supplies from Jersey, Halifax and Quebec, and all the large establishments pay the men 2/ sterling a month, instead of giving them half the catch.

There are no resident fishermen in this particular harbour, but a few along the coast to the westward, at Grand Point, Bradore and Esquimaux harbours, but no regular rooms are maintained.

The river running into this port separates the dependency of Newfoundland from Lower Canada. The harbour is always completely blocked up by ice from November until June, occasionally to the end of the latter month.

At this station all the fishermen are Protestants, and from Jersey.

This fishing is much what it has been for the last 15 years, but people are commencing to pass up the coast, and they anticipate a gradual supply of permanent settlers from the south of Newfoundland and Canada.

When on the point of sailing, the son of Mr. Grange, of Anchor Point, Newfoundland, came on board to complain that the French had stopped his father fishing a salmon river that had been in his family for upwards of a century; that, after much opposition on his father's part, he had to yield to the French one-half, and afterwards two-thirds, of the produce of the river; this year they have taken it from him altogether.

As I could find no definite instructions relative to the assumed right of the French over the river as well as sea fishings, and as the question bears so gravely on the interests of so many settlers and dignity of Her Majesty's colony, and feeling that any inquiry on my part, after ascertaining the statement to be true, without forcibly expelling the French from property which has been in the possession of English colonists for so long a period, would be ineffectual, I advised Mr. Grange to draw up a Memorial for the consideration of the Colonial Govern-

ment, and promised to lay the facts of the case before his Excellency the Governor.

#### REMARKS.

The inhabitants of any particular bay or station along the coast of Labrador have not the right or power, in my opinion, to permit the French to lay out their nets along the coasts or in their harbours, for, by so doing, the rights of other fishings are naturally interfered with, by stopping the passage of the fish along the coast, and, after fair warning, I think they should be subject to the same punishment for "aiding and abetting" as the intruders are themselves.

In my opinion it would be most advisable, nay, absolutely necessary for the prosperity of the British subjects, that magistrates should be appointed from St. John's to administer justice, and control the society resident at the various fishing stations in the Straits of Belleisle during the season.

This extensive coast, commencing from the estuary of the St. Lawrence, and stretching far north to the regions of perpetual snow, is one of the most barren and desolate in the world; and it seems that nature has removed the means of supporting human life from its surface to the waters which surround it, the abundant productions of which offer the inducement, and reward the industry and perseverance of the thousands of adventurers who resort to it from both Europe and America. The portion forming the northern boundary of the Straits of Belleisle is not so well marked or grand in feature as when it recedes from the island of Newfoundland, either to the north or south. From the sea, the country has a green and alluvial appearance, and it is not until close to it that this is lost, and nothing is seen but bare granite rocks, partially covered with moss and stunted shrubs; juniper, birch and poplar trees grow in the valleys, where the soil is of sandy clay, the temperature much higher, and the fogs less frequent than upon the coast. Here deer, bears, wolves, foxes, martins, otters, beavers, and a great variety of wild fowl take up their abode, until driven to the coast by the snowdrifts of approaching winter. The ice does not usually leave the bays free for vessels to enter before June, and it begins to form again in the shallow bays and pools in the beginning of September.

The entrance of the Strait of Belleisle between York Point and Cape Bauld is 26 miles wide, the latter point bearing from the former S. by E. At Cape Norman, 18 miles to the westward of Cape Bauld, the opposite coast of Labrador is distant only 14 miles, but the narrowest part of the Strait is at Point Amour in Forteau Bay, where it is only nine and a quarter miles wide; the western entrance of the Strait, between Greenly Island and Point Ferroll, is nearly 21 miles wide, the point bearing from the island S.S.W. The course and distance through the Strait is S. 54° W. true, or, according to the mean variation, W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  S. 65 miles.

The navigation of this Strait is attended with very considerable danger, from sudden fogs, wandering icebergs, and strong irregular currents. In spring, the entrance of the Strait to the northward is frequently almost blocked up by large ice islands, which are set to the S. W., even against strong winds from that quarter; these are broken up into smaller pieces as the summer advances, and are met with throughout the entire season. It is thus apparent that the dangers of the coast are greatly increased in dark or foggy nights, during which no vessel should attempt to run, for it is impossible, under these circumstances, even with the most careful watching, to guard against unknown dangers, or to be sure of the vessel's position within 10 miles, owing to the frequent irregularity in the set of the currents. The prevailing current runs directly through the Strait to the S. W., and its rate is at times two knots, diminishing gradually in force as it spreads out in the wider parts of the Gulf; but yet its course and velocity is greatly influenced by the prevailing winds; for example, with the wind from S. W., the stream sets along the west coast of Newfoundland, from Point Ferroll past Point Rich. In short, there is no constancy either in the rate or set of these streams, for the winds and the irregular tides modify the set and rate of the equally irregular current, in a manner which it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to calculate upon with any degree of certainty. It would be prudent, therefore, on the approach of a dark or foggy night, to secure a safe anchorage, if possible; and even if a vessel bound to the Gulf, and running with an easterly wind, should find no port fit for that purpose, I would advise her standing over to the Newfoundland side of the Strait, where the sound-

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ings are not so deep, and the icebergs not so prevalent, and their either lying-to until daylight, or anchoring with the stream.

*St. George's Bay.*

There are 200 resident planters in this bay who receive assistance in hands, during the fishing season, from Cape Breton and its adjacent shores. Their fishing usually commences a month or six weeks earlier than that on the coast of Labrador. This year they began the 27th April. They fish herring, salmon, trout and eels, besides the cod. Up to the present date (17th August), their catch has been 10,000 barrels of herrings, 200 barrels of salmon, and but a small quantity of cod. They employ about 200 boats and 800 hands, and send their fish to the Halifax and Quebec markets during the summer and fall. The fishings end about the 1st of October, with the exception of the eels, which are caught in great quantities, and afford subsistence during the winter. They have bait without intermission during the entire fishing, and use herring, caplin, squid and clams. The climate is usually dry and mild; and if their society was under proper control, St. George's Bay would offer many inducements to the industrious settler. The harbour is occasionally blocked up by ice, but for no length of time, and is always open by the middle of April. The inhabitants consist of English, a few Irish, and a number of lawless adventurers, the very outcasts of society from Cape Breton and Canada, and it is very distressing to perceive a community, comprising nearly 1,000 inhabitants, settled in an English colony, under no law or restraint, and having no one to control them, if we except what may be exercised through the influence shown by the single clergyman of the Established Church, who is the only person of authority in the settlement. I am told, the reason why magistrates are not appointed is in obedience to direct orders from the Home Government, it being believed against the spirit of the treaty with France. Under these circumstances, I would recommend, either that a vessel of war should be appointed to remain stationary in the harbour, or that the society should be forcibly broken up and removed, for violent and lawless characters are rapidly increasing, and neither the lives nor property of any substantial or well-disposed settlers are safe. Four cases of violent assault were brought to my notice as having recently been committed upon parties, some of whom were injured for life, and others nearly murdered; and I was sorry to understand the culprits had succeeded in escaping into the woods upon the appearance of Her Majesty's ship.

The cultivation of grain has been commenced with considerable success. Wheat, oats and barley ripen well, and turnips grow exceedingly fine. Potatoes and garden-stuff is cultivated also to a considerable extent. A great quantity of fur is collected; but the trappers suffer great losses by the frequent robbery of both traps and their contents.

REMARKS.

I have thus stated to your Lordship all the information I could gain relative to the fisheries of the south coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, gleaned from the statement of the parties residing at the ports visited by Her Majesty's ship under my command; but before closing this Report, I consider it my duty to lay before your Lordship how I conceive Her Majesty's ships may be beneficially employed in the protection to be afforded to British interests upon the coast of Labrador, and round the island of Newfoundland; and in doing so, I must presume to call your attention to the Report of Captain Milne, of Her Majesty's ship "Crocodile," whose observations made in 1840 agree entirely with the facts I was enabled to collect during my cruise this season; and, notwithstanding seven years have elapsed between the periods of our inspections, the evils therein pointed out exist, and in a more magnified form, with perhaps the single exception of the French encroachments upon our grounds round the Burgeo Islands, early in the spring, for the purpose of digging bait. These have discontinued, simply because they have so systemised their arrangement with the settlers in the Bays of Placentia and Fortune, including those living on the coast between, as to render them independent of any supply from the more distant Burgeo Islands.

In a former part of this Report, I have stated my opinion as to the best means to be adopted to prevent the smuggling of bait from Lanvalin and its vicinity to the island of St. Pierre's ; and I simply add, that if the small cruiser I propose to be provided by the Colonial Government were stationed principally in the harbour of St. Pierre's during the time the French bankers arrived for their supplies of bait, she might the more effectually check the illegal trade of being there, at the point of concentration, to board all English vessels and boats outside the harbour upon their approach and departure, instead of fruitlessly endeavouring to watch an extensive line of coast abounding in ports.

I most emphatically assert that the traffic in caplin to the French Islands, and the introduction of French merchandize into our colony by the return boats, so injurious to British commerce and colonial revenue, can never be checked without the constant presence of one or more revenue vessels, possessing several swift row-boats to act in conjunction with vigilant and independent local authorities appointed for the sole purpose of performing this coast-guard duty.

The French, although comparatively unmolested by our fishermen, and possessing fisheries about equal in extent to our own, conceive it necessary to employ six cruisers for their protection, comprising a corvette (or brig), a steamer, three schooners and an armed store ship. Each of these have a range of coast to guard, namely, one schooner in charge at St. Pierre's, under the immediate order of the Commandant of the island ; a second from Cod Roy, along the coast to Point Ferroll ; a third from thence to Croc, where the senior officer generally is himself, to receive all reports and adjust disturbances. The steamer is usually employed between Croc and Cape St. John's.

It is obvious that the single English man-of-war employed to protect the Newfoundland fisheries is not sufficient to counteract the advantages of so preponderating an influence.

The coast of Labrador is, in my opinion, the one that requires the most vigilant watching for the protection of the rights of the colonial and home subjects who flock there during the season, and to do so effectually, the constant presence of a cruiser would be required.

The knowledge that a man-of-war will visit the coast during the season may exercise sufficient influence to prevent any very outrageous behaviour on the part of foreigners towards detached British settlers, yet it can exercise no effective control to prevent their fishing encroachments ; and now, after repeatedly and vainly demanding permanent protection against these inroads, the settlers find it more to their advantage to enter upon a reciprocity of barter (as injurious to British commerce and colonial revenue, and the fishing interests at large, as it is profitable to a few of the leading planters upon the coast who supply the poorer settlers with commodities) than to run the risk attending a forcible ejection of the intruders.

In conversations I have held with his Excellency the Governor, it appears that the Colonial Legislature has hitherto been disinclined to re-establish the Surrogate Courts that formerly exercised annual authority upon the coast, alleging that the expense was greater than the benefit the colony derived from their existence. Under these circumstances, I deem it my duty to represent to your Lordship, that if the Captains of Her Majesty's ships should still be ordered to interfere in the control of the frequently very turbulent fishing society distributed over that distant coast, it would be more consistent with their position, and their duty more effectually performed, if they did so under the Acts of Parliament regulating their power over Her Majesty's subjects committing offences on the high seas, or that conferred upon Consuls residing in foreign ports, until such time as the Colonial Government may deem it expedient to re-establish a legal control over a dependency producing so considerable a portion of the actual revenue of Newfoundland.

In the 18th Article of your Lordship's Instructions, you direct my attention to the prevention of all illicit trade ; and although I have endeavoured, to the best of my ability, to carry out these instructions, I found the evil too general, and encouraged by those parties in many instances who complained of the evil, to be able to report any success. The injurious extent to which trade in caplin and contraband articles is carried on, cannot be better shown than by stating that upwards of £. 20,000 were realized last year by the sale of that bait to the French. So it is very apparent that unless either the Home or Colonial Governments take

steps



steps to establish a legal transfer of this commodity for the benefit of the revenue, or show more decision and method in the employment of means for its suppression, that it is in vain to rely upon any consistent aid being received from the Captain of the single ship appointed to protect the entire fishings of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I trust that I need not assure your Lordship that it is from no other wish on my part, that I point to these various difficulties in the way of a successful guardianship of our fishing interests, than to show in how many instances the people are themselves to blame for the evils they complain of, and how little the Colonial Government has been enabled to perform for the protection of its best interests, owing, I firmly believe, to the opposition it has met with from parties interested in carrying on a contraband trade.

I have, &c.

(signed) *Granville G. Loch,*

Captain.

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