

Newfoundland in International Context

Revised and Expanded Edition, Summer 2022



Transcribed, annotated and curated by Chris Willmore

With thanks to

David Scoones
who asked a rhetorical question

and

Alby BerticevićNicols
who made an important suggestion

Transcribed, annotated and curated by Chris Willmore

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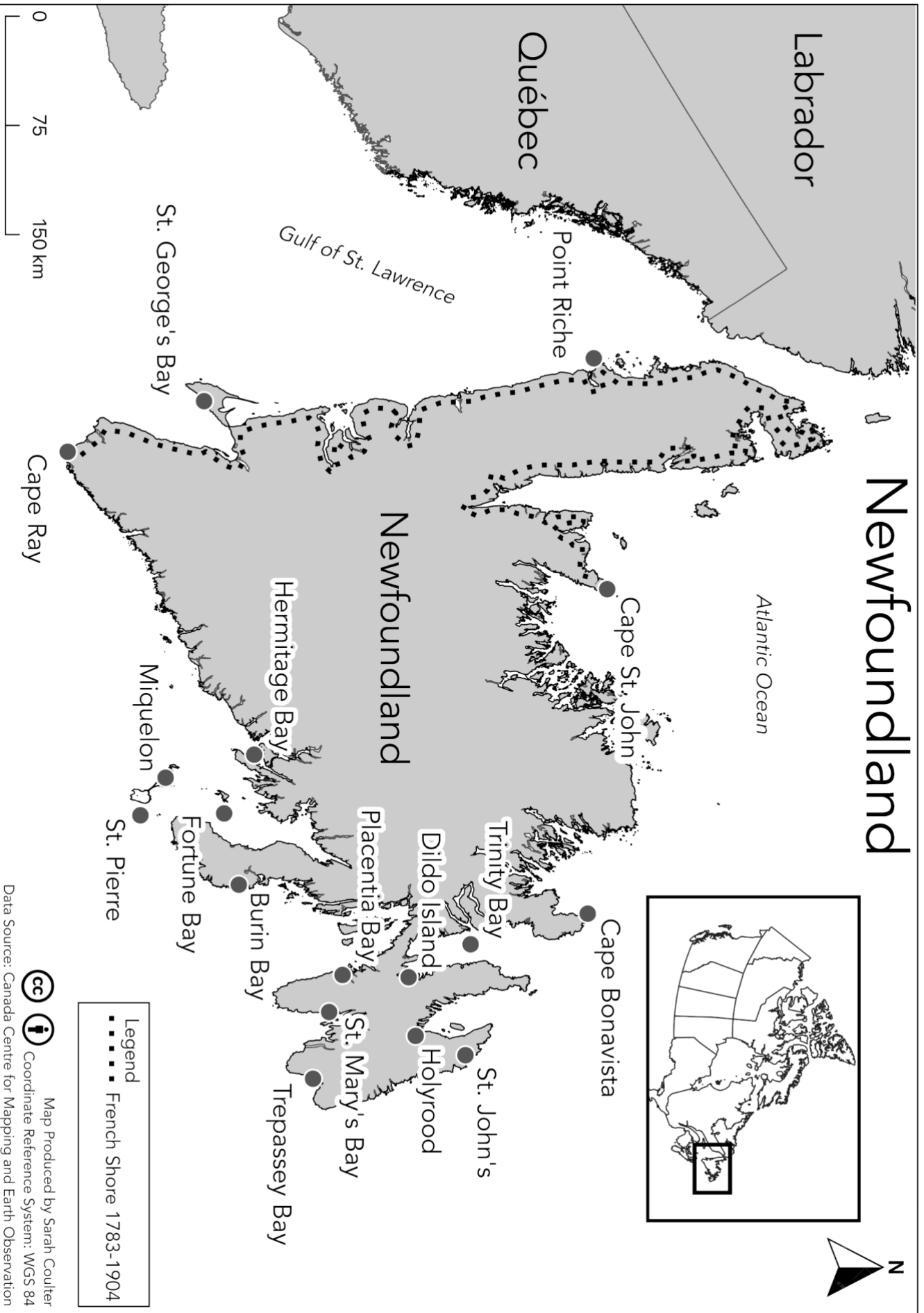
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Newfoundland



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Legend

- French Shore 1783-1904

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OVERVIEWS

A Natural History of Newfoundland's Fisheries¹ (1859)

William Epps Cormack was a naturalist and early European explorer of the interior of Newfoundland. In the following account he gives a useful summary of the state of Newfoundland's fisheries in the mid-nineteenth century.

Of the fishes of the British North American seas, the most abundant is, at the same time, the most important to man. The cod (*Gadus Morhua*) here holds dominion over all the habitable parts of the ocean, – from the outer edges of the great banks of Newfoundland, which are more than 300 miles from land, and more than 100 fathoms² deep, to the verge of every creek and cove of the bounding coasts: it even ascends into the fresh water.

To support such a mass of living things, the ocean sends her periodical masses of other living beings; and these in the economy of nature, are next in importance, and, of necessity, in abundance in these seas. Nature furnishes two successive tribes of animals as food for one tribe; and for the three together, this busiest of the oceans seems to exist.

THE COD

The cod is accompanied at one season by shoals of myriads of the capelin (*Salmo arcticus*³) and at another by equal hosts of that molluscous animal the cuttlefish (*Sepia Loligo*⁴), called in Newfoundland the Squid⁵. The three animals are

¹ Originally published in five parts, in the *British Colonist* (Victoria, B.C.) for July 20, 22, 25, 27 and 29, 1859. Written by William Epps Cormack (1796 – 1868).

² About 183 metres, or 600 feet.

³ This appears to be an error. The capelin's Latin name is *Mallotus villosus*, while *Salmo arcticus* refers to the Arctic Grayling. The capelin and arctic grayling are very different fish.

⁴ An obsolete term, though the one originally adopted by Carolus Linnaeus in the 1750s. Today, the *Sepia* (cuttlefish) and *Loligo* (squid) are separate branches of the ten arm cephalopod (*Decabrachia*) family.

⁵ "The squid itself is one of the most curious inhabitants of the waters. It is a cephalopod, or that class of molluscs whose heads are the organs of locomotion. The length of the soft cartilaginous body is seven or eight inches. It has ten arms radiating from the central mass of the head, two of them being longer than the other eight, and with discs or suckers. The mouth consists of a strong horny beak like that of a parrot. The eyes are large, bright and staring. The arms serve for the capture of its prey, to which it attaches itself by suckers. Another remarkable peculiarity of the squid is the ink bag for secreting a fluid of intense blackness, which it can spout at will. This substance, frequently called "ink," from the use to which it was anciently applied, mixes freely with the water, diffusing an impenetrable obscurity for some distance around, by which the animal often escapes from danger; thus, as Ray wittily observed, "hiding itself like an obscure or prolix author, under its own ink." It possesses the power of swimming either backward or forward by means of a hydraulic apparatus by which it can eject the water from a tube with considerable force and thus by the action of the surrounding medium, it can dart back with amazing velocity. The tube can be turned in any direction so as to drive it either way, and the fin-like expansion of its tail aids as rudder and propeller. A shoal of these squids is perceived at a distance by the number of little drops of water, like rain drops, which each shoots into the air as

migratory; and man, who stations himself on the shores for their combined destruction, conducts his movements according to their migrations. By art he captures annually more than two hundred millions of the cod with the capelin, and one hundred millions with the cuttle-fish. On the coast of Labrador, and in the north part of Newfoundland, the cod is so abundant, that it is hauled on shore with seines⁶ in vast quantities. Thus, by these three means, and the use of herrings and shell-fish for bait, along the southern shores of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, there are caught in the British North American seas, upwards of *four hundred millions of cod annually*. There appear to be four varieties or kinds of the cod in these seas; but their history has not been sufficiently attended, to determine their relations to each other as species or variety. The first is the bank-cod, found on the great bank⁷, many miles from land; the second is the shore-cod, caught in the bays around the shores, and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence; the third is the red-cod (*Gadus callarias*⁸), resembling the rock-cod or red-ware codling of Scotland, caught near the shores; the fourth and most remarkable, is what may be called the seal-headed cod⁹, from its head resembling that of a seal or dog. The haddock (*Gadus Aeglefinus*¹⁰), of a large size, is also met with among the proper cod. All the kinds approach towards one size, and are caught and dried promiscuously by the fishermen. The bank-cod differs from the other varieties in his place of resort, which is almost always on the banks, at a distance from land; he is also larger and stronger, with large scales and spots; his body is of a lighter color throughout, with the spots more generally diffused, and more distinctly marked; his flesh, too, is firmer. The shore-cod resembles most the cod in a healthy state on the coasts of Britain, and is that of which the greatest quantity is caught, owing to its being most conveniently taken: the back is of a dusky-brown color; the belly, silvery or yellowish, and the spots in general not remarkably distinct. The red-cod is probably larger than our rock-cod, and is not numerous. The seal-headed cod is of the same color and size as the shore-cod, and its head is, in like manner covered with skin; and it is comparatively rare. The young cod, tom-cod, or podley, swarms in summer in all harbors and shallow waters.

There are some other differences in the cod, which may partly arise from difference of latitude and of coasts or grounds, where they are found. Thus, the farther

it darts backward, near the surface of the sea." OUR NEWFOUNDLAND LETTER. (1882, October 4). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 2.

⁶ A *seine* is a fishing net placed in the water vertically. For stability, weights are attached to its bottom edge and buoys to its top edge.

⁷ The grand banks of Newfoundland are underwater plateaus. On these plateaus, the water is shallow and rich in nutrients, making them very suitable for fishing.

⁸ This is the original name given to Baltic cod by Linnaeus. Today, it is called *G. morhua callarias*. This appears to be another error by Cormack, since Baltic cod is a very specific, low-salinity type of cod found only in Europe and the Baltic sea. The red cod is not a true cod, and bears the Latin name *Pseudophycis bachus*.

⁹ Harvard University lists 'seal headed cod' as an alternate name for Atlantic cod, *gadus morhua*. The distinct head shape appears to have been due to a rare mutation or deformity.

¹⁰ This is the haddock's original designation. It is now no longer a *Gadus*, having been reclassified as *Melanogrammus aeglefinus*.

north, the less oil is obtained from them, their livers being smaller; and the bank-cod yields the least oil of any.

The cod is sometimes caught six feet in length, but there are accounts of its having been larger. All the kinds of cod obey the same general laws of migration. They shift according to the changes of temperature in their element, arising from the seasons, and with the supplies of food which invariably accompany these changes. The bank-cod seems to be the most stationary.

As we advance northward from the gulf of St. Lawrence, the migrations of the cod assume a more decided character, and it strikes in greater abundance. This holds as far north as fishing-posts have yet been established on the coast of Labrador. The same applies to the migrations and abundance of the other fishes inhabiting these seas, more especially of those connected with the cod, and they arise together from the same general causes. In the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Lat, 45°48', particularly along the shores of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Canada, and the adjacent Islands, where shell-fish are more abundant than farther to the north, and where perhaps, in consequence, more other fishes remain in the winter, the herring arrives in Spring about the same time that it arrives on the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador, in April and May, when the cod, in consequence becomes equally abundant at all places; but afterwards, worlds of food arrive on the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador; at first the capelin, over the shores of both these countries, and then again the cuttle-fish¹¹, around the shores of Newfoundland; they never failing to bring in with them their hosts of cod, and to retain them at these shores during the summer. Neither the capelin nor any equivalent, appears at the countries farther south, although the cuttle-fish visits, and sometimes in considerable quantities, the coasts of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton: Hence the pre-eminence of Newfoundland and Labrador as a fishing station, over every other part of the northern hemisphere.

At Labrador, and in the north part of Newfoundland, where the length of the summer is not more than six weeks or two months, the hook and line are often laid aside for the seine; for it is necessary that enough of cod should be taken within the first two or three weeks otherwise the remainder of the warm weather would not be sufficient to dry it. Hence the cod-fishery, according to the present mode of curing, which is, with the exception of a very trifling proportion, by drying the fish in the sun, cannot be carried on further north than a certain latitude.

The fishery of Newfoundland commences in June, as soon as the capelin appears on the coast, and ends about the beginning of September, when the cuttle-fish begins to move off the shores. The capelin is the bait used during the first month or six weeks and after that the cuttle-fish.

When bait is scarce, considerable numbers of cod are caught by *jigging*; the *jiggers* being an artificial bait¹², with hooks affixed.

¹¹ At the time, cuttle-fish and squid were often lumped together. Here and below, Cormack probably refers to the northern shortfin squid (*Illex illecebrosus*, or as it would have been called at the time, *Loligo illecebrosus*), which is abundant in the waters around Newfoundland. Cod find them delicious, and according to the FAO, northern shortfin squid are still in high demand as bait in the cod fishery.

¹² A *jig* typically consists of a lead sinker attached to one or more hooks.

The process of curing the cod requires about a month in favorable weather. Of the four–hundred millions and upwards of cod that are taken annually out of the British North American Seas, about one hundred millions, or sixty thousand tons, are exported in a dried state by the British, to the warm countries of Europe and America: Of the remainder, a part equal to double that of the British is taken away by the Americans, – a part by the French, – and a part is consumed in the countries themselves.

It is from the livers of the cod–fish, that the cod–oil of commerce is made. These are exposed in casks, and sometimes in vats, to the sun, and the heat in all these countries is sufficient to render them into oil. There is a falling off, some years, in the average quantity of oil obtained from the cod throughout the British fisheries; but the French having the exclusive right of fishing at those parts of the island where the different kinds of fish abound most¹³, it is probable that the quantity of oil in proportion to the quantity of fish caught, including all the fisheries, in any one year may not vary very much.

As the sun withdraws from the north, the temperature of the surface water decreases; its vivifying principle vanishes, and it is no longer inviting to the free inhabitants of the deep. The cuttle–fish begins to retire, and with it man ends his warfare with the cod. All feel the warning, and begin to retire to the strongholds in their respective elements, leaving the field of their industry and summer rejoicing, where air, earth, and water had met in harmony together, soon to become the conflicting scene of an arctic winter.

THE CAPELIN

The value of this delicate and interesting little fish may be estimated, when it is known to constitute the bait with which more than half the cod caught in these seas are taken. The capelin arrives on the coasts of these countries to spawn about the end of June, and departs about the end of July and the beginning of August. It arrives at Labrador about a month later, and remains from two to four weeks. Its numbers are often truly wonderful. Immediately on its arrival, it pushes its dense shoals into the small bays and creeks, as if to shun the jaws of millions of its devouring enemies, the cod, and many other fishes which had followed it from the deep, and which remain arrayed at a distance, impatient for its destruction. These massive clouds of capelin are sometimes more than fifty miles long, and many miles broad. Their spawn is sometimes thrown up along the beaches, forming masses of considerable thickness, most of which is carried back into the sea by a succeeding tide or two.

The capelin is six or seven inches in length; although the males sometimes occur nearly twice the ordinary size. It is caught for bait, in nets constructed of different forms for the purpose. It possesses some peculiar quality, which unfits it to be cured for domestic use like the herring, and is, therefore, merely dried in the sun. Whether the migration of the capelin is to and from the north sea, or limited to the adjacent deep waters, does not appear to be as yet well ascertained, notwithstanding

¹³ It's worth remembering that the French also fished Newfoundland's waters, as this would later lead to the passing of the Bait Act.

that its appearance and disappearance at all parts of these coasts are watched, as important events, by every fisherman. On the great scale, it is as regular and certain in its appearance and disappearance, as the herring is on the coasts of Europe. It generally appears some days earlier at the south-east parts of Newfoundland, than at the neighboring parts of the island farther to the north; and from its leading in the bank-cod to these places, as in 1825, it would seem to have come in from the Great Bank. There is little doubt that it is on the banks at certain seasons, as is shown not merely by the circumstance of its appearing to have led in the cod from thence towards the shores, but by the fact that, very early in the spring, and some weeks before it appears every where at the shores, the cod on the banks take it very readily as a bait salted, when, at the same time, the cod on the shore will not take in that state. It is well known that the cod will take readily, as a bait, on the great scale, that only which is its common food at the time; and, in the present case, when the capelin arrives at the shores, the bank-cod, which we infer to have followed it from the banks, not only continue to take it salted, but the shore cod, which refused it before, now take it fresh and salted promiscuously.

The capelin are salted the preceding year purposely, to fish for the cod on the banks earlier in the ensuing spring than the cod nearer the shore can be caught; that is before the capelin has struck in.

The capelin is also sometimes taken in the month of April, by the sailing vessels, among the ice on the banks, more than 200 miles from the land; and then it is also found in the stomachs of the seals; – no doubt on its migration at that time from the deeps over the banks towards the coast.

THE CUTTLE FISH

About the beginning of August¹⁴, the throngs of capelin which had enlivened the shores, give way to the throngs of cuttle-fish. This animal seems to succeed the other, as if to supply immediately provision to the cod. It is of equal importance in Newfoundland as the capelin, as it is the bait with which the other half of the cod here is caught.

The cuttle-fish does not appear at Labrador in quantities the same as at Newfoundland; – from which it might be inferred that it migrates only to and from the deep waters.

The common size of this animal is from 6 to 10 inches in length; but it has been met with of colossal size¹⁵. During violent gales of wind, hundreds of tons of them are

¹⁴ “Our fishermen are just now in the “squid school” – the little fish called squids being at this time the bait on which they are taking cod. The squids are the successors of the capelin, and appear about the 12th of August, and remain for six or eight weeks. They arrive in immense shoals in the bays, harbours and coves, and are captured by the fishermen mostly by their “jiggers,” but also by seines, at times.” OUR NEWFOUNDLAND LETTER. (1882, October 4). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 2.

¹⁵ “It is curious that the huge “Devil-fish” is simply a gigantic species of squid and resembles in every particular of its structure the little squid, seven or eight inches in length. The Devil-fish, which I have frequently described, has a body from ten to fifteen feet in length, its long arms being over thirty feet long and its shorter nine or ten. It is only occasionally that a specimen of it has been flung ashore here, as the big squids keep out in deep water. It is remarkable that no perfect specimen has been taken except on the shores of this island.” *Ibid.*

often thrown up together in beds on the flat beaches, the decay of which spreads an intolerable effluvium around. It begins to retire from the coast in September. It is made no use of except for bait; and as it maintains itself in deeper water than the capelin, instead of nets being used to take it, it is jigged; a jigger being a number of hooks radiating from a fixed centre, made for the purpose¹⁶. The cod is in best condition after having fed on it.

When shoals of the cuttle-fish and of the capelin come in contact, the latter always retreat, and from the wounds they carry with them, are sufferers in the attack: These animals dart backwards and forwards, with a quickness which the capelin cannot escape.

The cuttle-fish is supposed to impart the crimson color, which the sea exhibits in various parts here, during the latter part of the summer. The water of the harbor of St. John's, two miles in extent, sometimes exhibits the phenomenon. It may be unnecessary to say that the migrations of the cod, of the capelin, and of the cuttle-fish, are only once a year.

THE SEAL

Newfoundland, owing to its projecting into the Atlantic eastward from Labrador, intercepts many of the immense fields and islands of ice, which, in the spring, move south from the arctic sea. These fields of ice in their original formation, present, at their edges, a sufficient barrier against the inroads of the ocean; and they are so extensive, that their interior parts, with the openings or lakes interspersed, notwithstanding the rage of elements around, remain serene and unbroken. Here are the chosen transitory abodes of millions of seals, – here these animals enjoy months of peace and security, to bring forth and nurture their young. Such fields collect on the coast of Newfoundland, and, as it were, offer to the inhabitants the treasure they bring. The island is periodically surrounded by them for many leagues in all direction, – the inhabitants within the dazzling bulwark being as impotent towards the rest of the world, as the rest of the world is towards them.

The all-efficient sun, gradually returning, liberates the fields of ice from the shores to which they had for a time become attached, and enables man to expose himself with impunity in his own element.

In the month of March, upwards of 300 vessels, fitted out for the seal fishery, are extricated from the icy harbors on the east coast of Newfoundland; – the fields are now all in motion, and the vessels plunge directly into the edges of such as appear to have seals on them; – the crews armed with heavy fire-lock and bludgeons, they *land*, and, in the course of a few weeks, destroy more than 300,000 of these animals

¹⁶ “The “jigger” is simply a plummet of lead armed with hooks, and drawn quickly, by means of a line, up and down in the water, attracting the squids by its motion, and sticking them as they swim around it. The squid grasps the jigger with its arms, and attaches itself, by means of its sucking discs, and is then quickly drawn out of the water into the fisherman's boat. In detaching it from the jigger, the fisherman often receives a discharge of the inky substance in his face or chest – a most unpleasant salutation and one that he has carefully to guard against. In a calm evening it is an interesting sight now to watch in one of the coves a number of boats, locked together in a semi-circle, “jigging for squids.” A stranger is puzzled to make out what they are doing, the boats being united together to intercept the shoal of squids, and the men standing up and plying their jiggers with all their might.” *Ibid*.

for their fat and skins. The skins, with the fat, which surrounds the body, are taken off together, and the scalped carcasses left on the ice. When the vessels are loaded with those carcasses, or otherwise, when the ice is scattered and dissolved by the advancing spring, which it always is, except the islands, before the middle of May, they return to their respective ports; the fat is then separated from the skins, and exposed in vats to the heat of the sun, where, in from three to five weeks, it is rendered into the seal-oil¹⁷ of commerce. The field-ice extends, with interruptions, more than 200 miles off the land, but the vessels in general have not to go so far to look for the seals: the fields are even met with at sea continuous in a northerly and southerly direction for that extent, at that distance from land.

As these fields of ice are not formed at Newfoundland, and only partially at Labrador, the herds of seals which are found on them, when they appear at those places, must have come from the sea farther north were the main body of the ice is formed. viz., from the Greenland sea, and that in the vicinity of Davis' straits¹⁸. The Greenland winter, it would appear, is too severe for these animals, and when it sets in, they accompany the field-ice, which winds and currents carry southward and remain on it until it is scattered and dissolved in the ensuing spring, in about Lat. 43°N., or about 200 miles south of Newfoundland. Old and young of these animals being then deserted in the ocean by their birth-place, nature points out to them the course to their favorite icy haunts, and thither their herds hurry over the deep to pass an arctic summer. Winter returns, and with it commences again their annual migration from latitude to latitude.

There are five different kinds of seals found on the field-ice at Newfoundland, all known in the Greenland seas. The three best known of which are, 1st, the Harp (*Phoca Groenlandica*), the one and two year old of which is called the Bedlimmer; 2^d, the Hood or Hooded Seal (*Phoca leonina*¹⁹) and, 3^d, the Squareflipper²⁰. The other two kinds are the Blue Seal²¹, so called from its color, which is as large as the Hooded Seal; and the Jar Seal²², so named from its resembling that of a jar, thick at the shoulders and tapering off suddenly towards the tail; head small, body 4 or 5 feet long, the fur spotted, and it keeps more in the water than the other ice-seals. These all differ from the shore or harbor-seal (*Phoca vitulina*) of these coasts. The ice-seals are alike migratory, and promiscuously gregarious; they differ much in size, and the flesh of them all is very unpalatable, unless to an acquired taste, more particularly that of the old ones, differing in this respect from the flesh of the shore-seal, some parts of which are very good. It remains to be proved, that some of the alleged differences in the ice-seals, do not arise from age. Although the ice-seals which are sometimes met with in herds of many leagues in extent on the ice, seem to have no ordinary means of subsistence, yet the hand of unerring Providence maintains both

¹⁷ Seal oil was used as cooking oil, a component in soap, lighting oil for use in lamps, and to treat leather.

¹⁸ The Davis Strait is between Greenland and Nunavut.

¹⁹ Another error. *Phoca leonine* refers to the elephant seal. The hooded seal is *Cystophora cristata*.

²⁰ The Bearded or square flipper seal (*Erignathus barbatus*).

²¹ Perhaps the Grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*).

²² The Ringed seal (*Phoca hispida*).

old and young excessively fat. The seal-*hunters* often find fresh capelin and other animal substances in their stomachs.

Notwithstanding the apparently immense annual destruction by man among the cod in these seas for more than two centuries, it does not appear that their numbers are at all diminished, or that their migrations are in any way affected: Nor is it likely that they ever will be, if we may judge from the migratory fishes of Europe that have been persecuted for many more centuries, between the North Cape and the South of England.

It is not so, however, with those animals which man can pursue in his own element; – thus the walrus and the penguin, once abundant, may be said now to have entirely disappeared from the gulf of St. Laurence.

As the persecution of the seals in the field-ice increases, which it has, every year since it commenced, it will be interesting to observe, at some future day not far distant, the effect on their numbers. It is not much more than thirty years since any vessels ventured out among the ice at sea, purposely equipped and manned for their destruction.

The cod, the capelin, and the cuttle-fish, in their natural connection, and the seal, constitute the commercial value of Newfoundland and Labrador, and render these otherwise desolate and inhospitable regions the scene of rivalry of British, French, and American national enterprise and industry.²³ The day is not far distant when vessels will be fitted out direct from Britain for the seal-fishery at Newfoundland.



Dried wild Atlantic capelin²⁴

²³ The herring, mackerel, and whale, are in abundance at Newfoundland, and comparatively allowed to pass unmolested. The herring varies in size from small to several pounds weight. The whale is of three or four kinds, and the fishery of it is persecuted only by one enterprising English mercantile house at the south part of the island; the whales have been taken upwards of 70 feet in length, yielding from six to eight tons of oil. The salmon abounds in all the rivers, and is taken in large quantities. The dog-fish sometimes occurs with the cod in great numbers. [Note in the original.]

²⁴ In the 21st century, the Canadian Chubby Crab Company of Ontario sells capelin as high-quality food for hermit crabs. Photograph of a C.C.C.C. capelin packet by Chris Willmore, June 2022.

John McGregor on Newfoundland²⁵ (1828)

John McGregor (1797 – 1857) served as High Sheriff of Newfoundland in 1822, and as a Member of the Assembly in 1824 to 1825. He moved to England in 1827, and served as Member of Parliament from 1847 to 1857. He is perhaps best known today for his role in the promotion and management of the Royal British Bank, which failed in 1856. When was forced out of Parliament in 1857, *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* rejoiced that a “domestic robber and swindler” had “been flung from Parliament with no more remorse than the housemaid feels when she casts the body of a dead rat, trapped in the night, into a highway.”²⁶

DISCOVERY AND HISTORY

Newfoundland, though it occupies no celebrated part in the history of the New World, has, notwithstanding, at least for two centuries and a half after its discovery in 1497 by Sebastian Cabot, been more of mighty importance to Great Britain than any other Colony. And it is doubtful if the British Empire could have risen to its great and superior rank among the nations of the earth, if any other power had held the possession of Newfoundland; the fishery of which, having ever since its commencement, furnished our navy with a great proportion of hardy and brave sailors.

France made a claim to Newfoundland, under pretense of priority of discovery; alleging that the fishermen of Biscay frequented the Banks even before the first voyage of Columbus, and that Veranzi afterwards discovered it sooner than England. Theses pretensions, however, could constitute no right to France, as Cabot, by the most undoubted authority, discovered and landed on the Coast several years before, and took possession of this island, and the island of St. John (now Prince Edward Island), and from the latter carried away three natives to England. He also discovered the Continent of *Norembegua*, the ancient name of all that part of America situate between the Gulf of the St. Lawrence and Virginia²⁷.

The first attempt made by the English to make a settlement of Newfoundland, was in the latter part of the reign of Henry VIII, at the recommendation of Messrs. Elliot and Thom, who traded there with leave from the Crown, and to such advantage, that an expedition was made at the expense of a Mr. Hare, a merchant of eminence, and his friends, for the purpose of planting Newfoundland. From their ignorance of the nature of the country, they failed in their attempt, and were reduced to great wretchedness through famine and fatigue. From this period until 1579 all thoughts of prosecuting the discovery and settlement of Newfoundland were relinquished, although we had then fifteen ships engaged in its fisheries. About this time Captain Whitburn, who was employed by a merchant of Southampton, in a ship of three

²⁵ From McGregor, J. (1828). *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America*. London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green. Written by John McGregor (1797 – 1857).

²⁶ From JOHN MACGREGOR AT “THE FIRST BLUSH”. (1857, February 22). *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, p. 6.

²⁷ Vide Hakluyt's *Vogates – De Thon – Herrera*. Hist. Gen. Amer. Raynal. [Footnote in the original.]

hundred tons, put into Trinity Bay, where he was so successful, that with a full cargo of fish, &c. he cleared the expenses of the voyage. He afterwards repeated the voyage, formed an acquaintance with the natives, and during his residence Sir Humphrey Gilbert arrived in Newfoundland with three ships, with a commission from Queen Elizabeth to take possession of the island for the Crown. After this we find no mention of Newfoundland until 1585, when a voyage was made there by Sir Bernard Drake, who claimed its sovereignty and fishery in the name of Queen Elizabeth; and seized upon several Portuguese ships laden with fish, oil and furs.

The most active spirit of discovery and commercial enterprise was at this period beginning to rouse the people of England; but the war with Spain, and the terror of the *Grand Armada*, checked, although it did not subdue, the ardour of the most sanguine of those who were bent at planting newly discovered countries; and fifteen years passed away before another voyage was made to Newfoundland. The spirit of trade and discovery was again revived in England by Mr. Guy, an intelligent merchant of Bristol, who wrote several judicious treatises upon colonization and commerce; and by the arguments of this gentleman several persons of distinction applied to James I. for that part of Newfoundland lying between the capes of St. Mary and Bonavista, which they obtained in 1610, under the designation of "The Treasurer and Company of Adventurers and Planters of the Cities of London and Bristol, for the Colony of Newfoundland." This patent was granted to the Earl of Northampton, the Lord Chief Baron Tanfield, Sir John Doddridge, Lord Chancellor Bacon, Lord Verulam, &c. and was in substance, "That, whereas, divers of His Majesty's subjects were desirous to plant in the southern and eastern parts of Newfoundland, whither the subjects of this realm have for upwards of fifty years past been used annually, in no small numbers, to resort to fish – intending thereby to secure the trade of fishing to our subjects for ever; as also to make some advantage of the lands thereof, which hitherto have remained unprofitable; wherefore His Majesty now grants to Henry Earl of Northampton, (and forty-four others herein named,) their heirs and assigns, to be a Corporation with perpetual succession, &c. by the name of the Treasurer and Company of Adventurers and Planters of the Cities of London and Bristol, for the Colony and Plantation in Newfoundland, from north latitude 46° to 52 °; together with the Seas and Islands lying within ten leagues of the Coast; and all mines, &c. saving to all His Majesty's subjects the liberty of fishing there, &c."

Mr. Guy went to Newfoundland as conductor of the first colony, which he settled in Conception Bay, and remained there two years; during which time he contracted, by his courteous and humane conduct, a friendship with the natives. He left behind him some of his people, to form the foundation of a colony; but, as the fishery was the main object of the English, the planting of Newfoundland was not attended to.

In 1614 Captain Whitburn, who had made several fishing voyages, carried with him this year a commission from the Admiralty to impanel juries, and investigate upon oath divers abuses and disorders committed amongst the fishermen on the coast. By this commission he held, immediately on his arrival, a Court of Admiralty,

where complaints were received from an hundred and seventy masters of vessels, of injuries committed, variously affecting their trade and navigation.

In 1616 Doctor William Vaughan, who purchased from the patenter a part of the country included in the patent, settled a small colony of his countrymen, from Wales, in the southernmost part of the island, (which he named Cambriol), now called Little Britain. He appointed Whitburn governor, and his scheme was for the fishery of Newfoundland to go hand in hand with his plantation²⁸.

In 1621 Sir George Calvert, afterwards Lord Baltimore, obtained a grant from King James, of that part of Newfoundland situated between the Bay of Bulls and Cape Saint Mary's, in order that he might enjoy that free exercise of his religion (being a Catholic) which was denied him in his own country. The same spirit drove at this time crowds of Puritans to New England. How it was managed to grant this property to Sir George Calvert, without invading the right of the company, of which it certainly formed a part, is not accounted for.

Sir George sent Captain Edward Wynne, who held the commission of governor before him, with a small colony, and in the meanwhile embarked his fortune and talents, and engaged all the interest of his friends in securing the success of his plan.

Ferryland, the place where Wynne settled, was judiciously chosen. He built the largest house ever erected on the island, with granaries, storehouses, &c. and was, in the following year, reinforced by a number of settlers, with necessary implements, stores, &c. He erected a salt-work also, which was brought to considerable perfection; and the colony was soon after described, and with truth too, to be in a very flourishing condition: and so delighted was the proprietor, now created Lord Baltimore, with the prosperity of the colony, that he emigrated there with his family, built a handsome and commodious house and a strong fort at Ferryland, and resided many years on the island.

About the same time Lord Falkland, then Lord Lieutenant, sent a colony from Ireland to Newfoundland; but Lord Baltimore's departure soon after for England, to obtain a grant of that part of the country called Maryland, prevented the growing prosperity of his colony, which he called Avalon, but which, however, he still retained and governed by his deputies.

In the course of about twenty years, after Lord Baltimore planted Ferryland, about three hundred and fifty families were settled in fifteen or sixteen parts of the island; and a more decided interest in its affairs was taken than at any former period. This led on a part of the inhabitants to apply for some civil magistrates, to decide matters of dispute or disorder among them; but the measure was strenuously opposed by the merchants and ship-owners in England concerned in the trade, who petitioned the Privy Council against the appointment of any governor to manage the affairs of Newfoundland, and the prayer of this petition was absurdly enough granted.

In 1674, however, further application by petition to the King, was made for a governor; and the petition being referred to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, their Lordships proposed, that all plantations in Newfoundland should be discouraged; and that the commander of the convoys should compel the inhabitants to depart from the

²⁸ Anderson on Commerce, Vol. I 495. [Footnote in the original.]

island, by putting in execution one of the conditions of the Western Charter. His Majesty was induced to approve of this report; and under its sanction the most cruel and wanton acts were committed on the inhabitants: their houses were burnt, and a variety of severe and arbitrary measures resorted to for the purpose of driving them from the country.

The extent to which the cruelties committed on the inhabitants had been carried, induced Sir John Berry, the commander of the convoy about this time, to represent to Government the policy of colonizing Newfoundland. His advice, however, was not attended to.

In 1676, on the representation of one John Downing, a resident inhabitant, His Majesty directed that none of the settlers should be disturbed: but in the following year, in pursuance of an order in Council, that had been made on the petition of the Western Adventurers, the Committee of Trade, &c. reported, that notwithstanding a clause in the Western Charter, prohibiting the transport to Newfoundland of any person, but such as were of the ship's company, the magistrates of the western ports did permit passengers and private boat-keepers to transport themselves thither, to the injury of the fishery; and they were of [the] opinion, that the abuse might hereafter be prevented by those magistrates, the vice-admirals, and also by the officers of the customs.

A petition, on the part of the inhabitants of Newfoundland, soon followed this representation, and in order to investigate the matter fully, it was ordered that the adventurers and planters should each be heard by their counsel. The question was thus seriously argued, and afterwards referred, as formerly, to the Committee for Trade; but no report seems to have been made on this occasion, and no steps for regulating the settlement or fishery of Newfoundland were adopted until the Board of Trade, instituted in January 1697, took up the subject among others that come under their province. They made a report, which, however, applied more to the defense of the island than to its civil regulations; and went no further than to express and opinion, that a moderate number of planters, not exceeding one thousand, were useful in the construction of boats, stages, and other necessaries, for the fisheries.

The obstacles to the settling of Newfoundland arose out of the contending interests of the resident inhabitants and those of the merchants residing in England, and the adventurers sent by them to Newfoundland.

In 1698 the Statute 10 and 11, William and Mary, cap. 25, entitled "An Act to encourage the trade of Newfoundland" passed; but, as the substance of this Act appears to embody the policy of former times, it tended to no purpose other than to legalize misrule, and the capricious will of ignorant men invested accidentally by it with authority.

These persons were distinguished by the dignified titles, or rather nicknames, of *admirals*, *vice-admirals*, and *rear-admirals*. The master of the first fishing vessel that arrived was the admiral – the next, vice-admiral – and the third, rear-admiral, in the harbors they frequented. Few of these men could write their own names, and from this circumstance alone the absurdity of investing them with power must be apparent.

The report made in 1701 by Mr. George Larkin, who went to the American settlements to make observations, for the information of Government, contains many observations that deserve attention. He found Newfoundland in a very disorderly and confused condition. The woods were wantonly destroyed, by rinding the trees. The New England men, (as is their custom now in 1828 in many of our harbors), sold their commodities cheap, in general; but constrained the purchasers to take certain quantities of rum, which the inhabitants sold to the fishermen, and which tempted them to remain on the island, and leave their families in England a burden upon the parish. The inhabitants, also, sold rum to their servants, who got into debt, and were forced to hire themselves in payment; so that one month's profuse living often left them in bondage for a year²⁹.

The fishermen from New England were accustomed to inveigle away many of the seamen and servants, with promises of high wages; but these men were generally disappointed, and in the end became pirates. The inhabitants he represents as a profuse sort of people, who cared not at what rate they got in debt; and that as the Act of King William gave the Planters a title, it was much to be regretted that proper regulations were not made for their government, more particularly, as the island, from its having no civil power, was then become a sanctuary for people who failed in England.

Upon complaints being made to the commander on the station, it had been customary for him to send his lieutenants to the different harbors, to decide disputes between masters of fishing vessels and the planters, and between them again and their servants; but upon such occasions, Mr. Larkins alleges that those matters were conducted in the most corrupt manner. He that made a present of most quintals of fish was certain to have a judgment in his favor. Even the commanders themselves were said to be in this respect faulty. After the fishing season was over, masters beat their servants, and servants their masters.

The war with France, in 1702, as the French at that period were masters of Canada, Cape Breton, &c. and were also established in Newfoundland at Placentia, disturbed the fisheries and other affairs of Newfoundland until the Peace of Utrecht.

In 1708 the House of Commons addressed Queen Anne on the subject of the better execution of laws in Newfoundland, when it was, as usual, referred to the Board of Trade, which only went so far as to get the opinion of the Attorney General on the statute of King William.

Two years after, fifteen very useful regulations were agreed upon at St. John's, for the better discipline and good order of the people, and for correcting irregularities contrary to good laws and Acts of Parliament.

These regulations, or by-laws, were debated and resolved at courts, or meetings, held at St. John's; where were present, and had all a voice, a mixed assemblage of merchants, masters of merchant ships, and planters. This anomalous assembly formed at the time a kind of public body, exercising executive, judicial, and legislative power.

²⁹ This has been common in all the British American Colonies, and prevails to this day. [Footnote in the original.]

By the treaty of Utrecht in 1713, Placentia, and all other parts of Newfoundland occupied by the French, were, in full sovereignty, ceded to Great Britain: the French, however, retaining a license to come and go during the fishing season.

The Guipuscoans were also, in an ambiguous manner, acknowledged to have a claim, as a matter of right, to a participation in the fishery; which the Board of Trade declared afterwards, in 1718, to be inadmissible.

Government, about this time, as well as the merchants, began to direct their attention to the trade of the island with more spirit than they had hitherto shown. A captain Taverner was commissioned to survey its coasts. A lieutenant-governor was appointed to command the fort at Placentia; and a ship of war kept cruising round the island to keep the French at their limits.

In 1729 it was concluded, principally through the representation of Lord Vere Beauclerk, the commander on the station, to establish some permanent government, which ended, as Mr. Reeves observes, in the appointment, “not of a person skilled in the law,” as had been proposed, but a captain Henry Osborne, commander of His Majesty’s ship the Squirrel. Lord Vere Beauclerk, who set sail for Newfoundland with the governor in the summer of this year, received a box containing eleven sets of Shaw’s Practical Justice of the Peace; being one each for the following places, which were respectively impressed on the covers in gold letters:— *Placentia, St. John’s, Carboneer, Bay of Bulls, Ferryland, Trepassey, Bay de Verd, Trinity Bay, Bonavista, and Old Parlekin*, in Newfoundland;” together with thirteen copies of the statute of King William, and Acts relating to the navigation and trade of the kingdom.

The commission delivered to captain Osborne, revoked so much of the commission to the governor of Nova Scotia as related to Newfoundland. It then goes on to appoint captain Osborne governor of the island of Newfoundland, and gives him authority to administer oaths to justices of the peace, and other officers whom he may appoint under him, for the better administration of justice, and keeping the peace of the island. He was empowered, also, to erect a courthouse and prison, and all officers, civil and military, were directed to aid and assist him in executing his commission.

The petty jealousies and interest of the fishing admirals, merchants, and planters, prevented Osborne and his successors, for a period of twenty years, from carrying into execution the objects and regulations contained in their commissions and instructions. Indeed the most disgraceful opposition to civil government was made, particularly by the *fishing admirals*. Complaints were frequently produced on both sides, and it is probable, as usual in such cases, that each of the contending parties were in fault. The aggressors, however, were assuredly those who opposed the civil authority, and whose conduct clearly showed that their object was to deprive the resident inhabitants of all protection from government. This contest continued until it was found that his Majesty’s ministers were resolved not to withdraw the civil government from the Island.

In the commission of the peace, for the island, the justices were restrained from proceeding in cases of doubt or difficulty – such as robberies, murders, felonies, and all capital offences. From this restriction a subject of considerable difficulty and

inconvenience arose, as persons who had committed capital felonies could only be tried in England; and in 1751 a commission was issued to captain William Frances Drake, empowering him to appoint commissioners of *oyer* and *terminer* for the trial of felons at Newfoundland.

A claim was presented in 1754, by Lord Baltimore, to that part of the island originally granted to his ancestor, and named by him “the province of Avalon.” This claim was declared inadmissible by the Board of Trade, agreeable to the opinion of the law officers; and it has since then been relinquished.

The peace of 1763, by which we acquired all the French possessions in North America, opened a most favorable opportunity for extending the fishery, to the decided advantage of these kingdoms; and the Board of Trade, in bringing the subject under their consideration, applied for information to the towns in the west of England, as well as to Glasgow, Belfast, Cork, and Waterford, which had for some time been engaged in the trade. In the year following a collector and comptroller of the customs were established at St. John’s. This measure and the consequent introduction of the navigation laws, was complained of by the merchants in the same way as the appointing [of] commissioners of the peace, and of *oyer* and *terminer*.

The French, always, but now more than ever, anxious about their fishery, insisted on their having a right to the western coast, for the purpose of fishing, as far south as Cape Ray; maintaining that it properly was “*Point Riche*,” mentioned in the treaty of Utrecht. This claim embraced near two hundred miles of the west coast of Newfoundland more than what they had a right to by treaty; and their authority being founded only on an old map of Herman Moll, was shown, with great accuracy, by the Board of Trade, to be altogether inadmissible. The coast of Labrador was, in 1763, separated from Canada and annexed to the government of Newfoundland. This was a very judicious measure; but as the chief object of those who at that time frequented Labrador was the seal fishery, the Board of Trade, at the recommendation principally of Sir Hugh Palliser, considered it unwise policy to separate Labrador from the jurisdiction of Canada; and, accordingly, recommended his Majesty to reannex it. This was effected in 1774³⁰; and in the following year an act was passed, the spirit of which was to defend and support the system of ship fishing carried on from England. Its principal regulations were, that the privilege of drying fish on the shores, should be limited to his Majesty’s subjects arriving at Newfoundland from Great Britain and Ireland, or any of the British dominions in Europe. This law set at rest all that had been agitated in favour of the colonists.

The American revolutionary war, during its continuance, affected in a very injurious degree, the affairs of Newfoundland. A bill passed in parliament prohibiting the people of New England from fishing at Newfoundland. This measure was loudly and strongly opposed by the merchants of London. The reasons alleged by ministers were, that as the colonists had entered into agreement not to trade with Britain, we were entitled to prevent them from trading with any other country. Their charter restricted them to the Act of Navigation; the relaxations from it were favors, to which, by their disobedience, they had no further interest. The Newfoundland fisheries were

³⁰ 14 Geo. III. cap. 83, commonly called the Quebec Act. [Footnote in the original.]

the ancient property of Great Britain, and disposable therefore at her will and discretion: it was no more than just to deprive rebels of them. To this it was contended, that it was beneath the character of a civilized people to molest poor fishermen, or to deprive the wretched inhabitants of a sea coast of their food; and that the fisheries being also the medium through which they settled their accounts with Britain, the cutting them off from this resource would only tend to put a stop to their remittances to England.

The fishermen, also, would, by this measure, be driven into the immediate service of rebellion. They would man privateers, and would accelerate the levies of troops the colonies were making; and being hardy and robust men, would prove the best recruits that could be found³¹. All this unfortunately happened.

From the evidence brought in support of their petition, by the London merchants, it appears that the four New England provinces employed in the fisheries of Newfoundland and the banks alone, about 48,000 tons of shipping, and from 6000 to 7000 seamen; and, that ten years before, since which time the fisheries had greatly increased, the produce of the fisheries in foreign markets amounted to £35,000. What rendered them particularly valuable was, that all the materials used in them (the salt for curing, and the timber for building the vessels, excepted,) were purchased in Britain; and that the net proceeds were remitted in payment.

But the merchants of Poole and other places, engaged in the Newfoundland fishery, presented a second petition, in direct opposition to that of London. It represented, that the bill against the New England fishermen would not prove detrimental to the trade of Britain; which was fully able, with proper exertions, to supply the demands of foreign markets; that the British Newfoundland fishery bred a great number of hardy seamen, peculiarly fit for the service of the navy; whereas, the New England seamen were, by Act of Parliament, exempt from being pressed: that the fishing from Britain to Newfoundland employed about four hundred ships, amounting to 360,000 tons, and two thousand shallops of 20,000 tons; navigated by 20,000 seamen. 600,000 quintals of fish were taken every season, the returns of which were annually worth, on a moderate computation, £500,000.

The New England colonies, in return, adverted to all the means, in their power, of distressing Britain, effectually, in her American concerns; and, to effect this measures, strictly prohibited the suppling of the British fishery on the banks of Newfoundland with any provisions whatsoever.

This was a proceeding wholly unexpected in England. The ships fitted out for that fishery, on arriving at Newfoundland, found their operations arrested, for want of provisions; and not only the crews of the ships, but those who were settled in the harbors, were in eminent danger of perishing by famine. Instead of prosecuting the fishing business they came upon, the ships were constrained to make the best of their way to England and other places, for provisions.

From the earliest period of the settlement of Newfoundland down to the present time, objections have been made and obstacles have been raised in order to

³¹ Andrew's History of the American War, Vol. I, p. 33. [Footnote in the original.]

discourage its cultivation³². That the fisheries of this colony constitute its political and commercial value and importance, no one acquainted with it can deny; but, at the same time, when we consider the depressed state of its fishery ever since the French and Americans, with the eminent advantages they possess, (particularly the French), obtained a participation of this great branch of our commerce, I have no hesitation in asserting that were it not from the auxiliary support which the inhabitants derived for the cultivation of the soil, they could not have existed by the production of the fisheries alone; and as they otherwise would have had to remove to the neighboring colonies or to the United States, the probable consequence would be, that the Americans and French would before this have enjoyed the benefit of expelling us altogether from supplying foreign markets with fish.

In addition to this obstruction to the fisheries, natural causes co-operated. During the fishing season a storm, more terrible than ever known in these latitudes, arose, attended with circumstances unusually dreadful and destructive. The sea, according to various accounts, rose from twenty to thirty feet above its ordinary level; and so suddenly, that no time was given to prepare against its effects. Some ships foundered, with their whole crews; and more than seven hundred fishing crafts perished, with a great majority of the people in them. The sea broke in upon the lands where fish-houses, flakes, &c. were erected, and occasioned vast loss and destruction.

By the third Article of the Treaty of Peace, signed at Paris in 1783, it was agreed that the people of the United States should enjoy, unmolested, the right to take fish on the banks of Newfoundland, and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence; and also, at all other places in the sea where they previously used to fish, and on the coast of Newfoundland; but, not to cure their fish on that island. It was also agreed, that provisions might be imported to the British Colonies in British bottoms. This was strongly opposed by the western merchants, but unsuccessfully; and in 1788, upon the representations of the merchants connected with Canada it was proposed to bring a bill into Parliament for preventing entirely, the supply of bread, flour, and live stock, from the United States; but this intention was abandoned, and the mode of occasional supply continued.

The Board of Trade was abolished in 1782, and for the last years of its existence, scarcely any [thing] appears on its records relative to Newfoundland. Matters of trade and plantations were, for some years afterwards, managed by a committee of council, appointed in 1784.

By this time the practice of hearing and determining civil causes became a cause of frequent complaint. Hitherto, no court of civil jurisdiction had been provided for the colony; and while the island remained merely a fishery, carried on by vessels from England, the causes of actions were not of great magnitude; but now that the population had increased to considerable numbers, and heavy mercantile dealings were frequent among them, discontent arose, from time to time, that led to the establishment of a new court, by a commission to Admiral Milbanke, who was sent out as governor in 1789. But, as heavy complaints were preferred by the merchants,

³² I've inserted this paragraph from an earlier chapter in the book, one dealing predominantly with the geography of Newfoundland.

as well as the planters, against the proceedings of this court, an Act passed in 1792, empowering the governor, with the advice of the chief justice, to institute *surrogate courts* of civil jurisdiction in different parts of the island. The first chief-justice was Mr. Reeves, who published an interesting account of Newfoundland, with Acts of Parliament relative to its government. He was succeeded (with the exception of the present judge, and his predecessor,) by weak men, who were usually influenced by their interests or their passions.

The surrogate courts became, at once, grievous and exceedingly objectionable, as the judges were no other than the commanders, or lieutenants of His Majesty's ships on the station; the pursuits and education of whom could not qualify them, however just their intentions were, for competent expounders of the intricate labyrinth of commercial laws. At the same time, it is but justice to remark, that the task was by no means agreeable to many of those officers; and, with few exceptions, if they erred, it was not from the influence of fear or interest, but from an ignorance of matters that no one should expect them to understand. But in this way, the jurisdiction of Newfoundland was conducted until 1824, when a bill was passed, entitled "an Act for the better administration of justice in Newfoundland, and other purposes." This Act, like all others passed, relative to Newfoundland, is experimental, and limited to continue in force only five years. By the provisions of this Act, a chief-judge and two assistant judges are appointed, and the island divided into three districts, in each of which a court is held annually. The regulations of this law are considered, by many residing both in the island and in connection with the colony, in England, as not adapted to Newfoundland. One of the objections is, the salary of the judges, and the expense connected with their traveling, or going and returning by water to and from different parts of the island.

Some of the old laws, which were probably necessary at the time they were passed, are still in force, and considered at the present time highly objectionable. One, in particular, the tendency of which was very clearly explained to me by an intelligent gentleman³³, residing many years at St. John's, and lately returned from that place. By this law, which is of many years' standing, and which I consider to have been necessary at the time it was enacted, the merchant who furnishes the planters or fishermen with supplies in the early part of the season, has a lien on their property, of whatever kind; but only for the whole of the season; and the consequence is, that if the planter or fisherman be so unfortunate, which very frequently happens, not to take a sufficient quantity of fish to pay for the supplies, the merchant, as he must lose his claim altogether if he allow it to remain over till the following season, is under the necessity of seizing on all his debtor has, as it would otherwise fall into the hands of the merchants who supplied the same person the ensuing year. If this law were modified, so as to give the merchant a lien only on the fish, oil, fishing-tackle, and whatever else he supplied, and on the property that the planter possessed at the commencement of the season, to be, in case of need, equally divided among his other creditors, many an honest man would be saved from ruin. Another evil, of serious consequence to the merchants themselves, arises out of this law:— When the planter

³³ Charles Fox Bennett, Esq. [Footnote in the original.]

or fisherman finds, after the middle of the season is passed, that he will not be able to pay for all the supplies he has received, his energy becomes checked, from the conviction that extra industry will be of no benefit to him so long as he cannot pay the whole.

It is certain, that none of the British plantations have been worse governed than Newfoundland, or in which more confusion has prevailed. By the constitutions granted to all other colonies, a clearly defined system of jurisdiction was laid down; but the administration of Newfoundland was in a great measure, an exclusively mercantile or trading government; which, as Adam Smith very justly observes, "is perhaps the very worst of all governments for any country whatever," and a powerless planter or fisherman never expected, or seldom received, justice from the adventurers, or the fishing admirals, who were their servants. Mr. Reeves, in his history of Newfoundland, states, "that they had been in the habit of seeing that species of wickedness and anarchy ever since Newfoundland was frequented, from father to son; it was favorable to their old impressions, that Newfoundland was theirs, and that all the plantations were to be spoiled and devoured at their pleasure."

There is no doubt but that so arbitrary an assumption, and practice, of misrule produced the consequences that severity always generates; and that the planters soon reconciled themselves to the principles of deceit and falsehood, or to the schemes that would most effectually enable them to elude their engagements with the adventurers: the resident fishermen, also, who were driven, from time to time, out of Newfoundland, by the statute of William and Mary, generally turned out the most hardened and depraved characters wherever they went to.

The measures adopted for the administration of the affairs of Newfoundland, during the government of vice-admiral Sir Charles Hamilton, the first resident governor, and since the appointment of his successor, Sir Thomas Cochrane, the first civil, and present, governor, will likely lead to whatever is necessary for the better distribution of justice.

The peculiar circumstances of Newfoundland, as a great fishing colony, the greater part of the proceeds of which are remitted to England, in payment for British manufactures, and the depressed state of the fisheries, imperatively demands that no burden whatever shall be laid upon those fisheries, either for the support of the executive or judicial power, or for any other purpose whatsoever. Should His Majesty's ministers decide on laying an *ad valorem* duty on imports to Newfoundland, it will most assuredly, with the advantages that the Americans and French possess, annihilate the British fisheries at Newfoundland. This is not my opinion alone, but the opinion of the oldest and best acquainted with that colony. If public buildings are necessary, or a more expensive form of government expedient, neither can be supported at the expense of the fisheries.

DESCRIPTION OF ST. JOHN'S

The harbor of St. John's is on the east coast of Newfoundland. Its entrance is narrow, with twelve fathoms [of] water in the middle of the channel. The only dangers, are, the chain rock, which lies a little more than half way from the entrance to the basin that forms the harbor; and the rocks close under the lighthouse point. On

the north side, the precipices rise perpendicularly, to an immense height; and on the opposite shore the altitude of the rocky cliffs, although less, is also great: on this side there is a light shown at night, near which there is a battery and a signal fort.

Fort Townshend, the usual residence of the governor, stands immediately over the town. Forts Amherst and William, on the north, are also in commanding situations. Another battery, called the Crow's Nest, is pitched on the summit of a conical hill. The chain rock received its name from a chain placed there for the purpose of stretching across the strait, to prevent the entrance of an enemy's fleet; and the harbor is, besides, so well commanded, by the different fortifications, that it may be considered perfectly secure against any ordinary attack.

The town is built chiefly of wood, it extends nearly along the whole of the north side of the port; and there can scarcely be said to be more than one street: the others are no more than lanes. A few of the houses are built of stone, or brick, and some of the buildings are handsome; but the appearance of the town, altogether, indicates at once what it has been – a mere lodging place for a convenient time – a collection of stores, for depositing fish, with wharves along the whole shore, for the convenience of shipping. The streets and lanes are irregular, and in wet weather extremely dirty. St. John's, like Halifax, and other towns built of wood, has suffered severely by fire. In the winter of 1815 great loss of property, and individual distress, was occasioned by a conflagration that took place; and on the 7th November, 1817, one hundred and forty houses, and £500,000 in value of property were destroyed by a like calamity. Another fire, which occurred on the 21st of the same month, destroyed a great part of the town that had escaped the conflagration of the 7th; and on the 21st of August following, the town experienced serious loss by a fourth calamity of the same kind. The houses, since erected, are built in a much more comfortable style than formerly. There are a greater number of shops, and a still greater number of public-houses, in proportion to its size, in St. John's, than in most towns. Commodities were formerly very dear; at present, shop-goods are as low as in any town in America; and fresh meat, poultry, and vegetables, although not so low as on the continent, are not unreasonably dear.

The population of St. John's fluctuates so frequently, that it is very difficult to state its numbers, even at any one period. Sometimes, during the fishing season, the town appears full of inhabitants; at others, it seems half deserted. At one time they depart for the seal fishery; at another, to different fishing stations. In the fall of the year the fishermen arrive from all quarters, to settle with the merchants, and procure supplies for winter. At this period St. John's is crowded with people, swarms of whom depart for Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Cape Breton, to procure a livelihood in those places among the farmers during winter. Many of them never return again to the fisheries, but remain in those colonies; or often, if they have relations in the United States, and sometimes when they have not, find their way thither.

Society in St. John's, particularly when we consider its great want of permanency, is in a much more respectable condition than might be expected; and, the moral and social habits of the inhabitants are very different from the description

of lieutenant Chappell, (whom I very strongly suspect of arrogating more respect for himself than the best class of society would willingly acknowledge) when he represents the principal inhabitants as having risen from the lowest fishermen, and the rest composed of turbulent Irishmen – both alike destitute of literature. The fishermen, who are principally Irishmen, are by no means altogether destitute of education: there are few of them but who can read and write; and they are, in general, neither turbulent nor immoral. That they soon become, in Newfoundland as well as in all the other colonies, very different people to what they were before they left Ireland, is very certain. The cause is obvious – they are more comfortable, and they work cheerfully. When, after a fishing season of almost incredible fatigue and hardship, they return to St. John's, and meet their friends and acquaintances, they indulge, it is true, in drinking and idleness for a short time; and, when the life they follow is considered, we need scarce be surprised that they do so, especially in a place where rum is as cheap as beer is in England³⁴.

For many years, the officers of government, and the merchants, returned before winter to England; but, since the appointment of a resident governor, there has been also a more permanent state of society. It must be acknowledged, that some of the inhabitants who have made fortunes in the country, were, and it is much to their credit, formerly fishermen, and these men are as polished in their manners, and are equally intelligent as many of the principal merchants in London, or in any of the other great trading towns in the United Kingdom, who did not in early life receive a liberal education. A great majority of the merchants at St. John's, as well as the agents who represent the principal houses, are men who received a fair education, in the mother country, for all the purposes of utility and the general business of life; and, are certainly as intelligent as any merchants in the world. This observation will be found perfectly just, if applied to the merchants and principal inhabitants in all the British colonies. The amusements of St. John's are much the same as in the colonies already described.

There are three weekly newspapers published at St. John's; and there is also a book society. A seminary of education was established in 1802, for educating the poor, where about three hundred children, protestants and Roman Catholics, are educated. It was established, I believe, principally through Lord Gambier, then the admiral on the station.

The benevolent Irish society, established in 1806, by the present secretary of state for the colonies, then colonel Murray, and James M'Braire, Esq. then a merchant of eminence at St. John's, but since retired to the banks of the Tweed, has extended the most beneficial relief to the aged and inform; and has also diffused the benefits of education among the children of the poorer classes, by supporting a school in which from two hundred to three hundred of both sexes are instructed. A respectable school-house is now erecting by the society, to contain 700 to 800 children.

³⁴ Mr. Morris, of St. John's, has, with great correctness, in a letter to Lord Bexley, on the State of Society, Religion, Morals, and Education, at Newfoundland, described the character of the Inhabitants. p. 76. London, 1827. [Footnote in the original.]

The leading features of the character of the inhabitants of Newfoundland, both at St. John's and all the out harbors, are, honesty, persevering industry, hardy contempt of fatigue, and a laudable sense of propriety in moral and religious duties.

There are places of public worship at St. John's, and in each of the out harbors, in which there is an adequate population. The religious professions are members of the Church of England, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, and Methodists, each of whom have clergymen among them. In the principal out harbors, also, there are schools, where the rudiments of education may be acquired³⁵.

The inhabitants are employed, the majority wholly, and the rest occasionally, in the fisheries. Feeding cattle and a few sheep, and cultivating small spots of land, are, also, partial sources of occupation. The women, besides affording great assistance to the men, during the process of curing fish, make themselves useful in planting gardens and gathering the productions of the soil. In all domestic duties they are correct and attentive; and they manufacture the full quantity of wool they have among them into strong worsted stockings, mittens, and socks.

Capital offences are exceedingly rare, and petty thefts are scarcely known, while property is seldom secured by locked doors, as in the United Kingdom.

In the winter season much of the time of the inhabitants is occupied in bringing home fuel. Boats for the fishery are also constructed at this time; and poles, &c., for fish flakes, are, or should be provided.

There are, except in the immediate vicinity of St. John's, no roads in Newfoundland. Whether the condition and circumstance of the colony warrant the opening of roads to all the settlements, is questionable; but, I certainly think that a few roads are necessary, to open a communication between Conception and Trinity Bay, and between Conception, Placentia, St. Mary's, and Fortune Bays. It would be sufficient, for some years, to make these, what are called on the continent of America, bridle-roads; which would in winter answer for sledge-roads. Carriage road in summer would, at least, for the present, be unnecessary. There is now a tolerable road from St. John's to Portugal Cove in Conception Bay.

The propriety of granting a legislative government to Newfoundland, has been agitated for some time³⁶. The resident inhabitants are, with few exceptions, in favor of the measure; while the principal persons in connection with Newfoundland, residing in England, consider that a legislative assembly would be injurious to the fisheries and to the best interests of the colony; that it would be inconvenient for members from the out harbors to come to, and remain at, St. John's during the sitting of an assembly; that efficient members, who were permanent residents, could not be

³⁵ I have often been amused at the descriptions drawn, by, I dare say, very well meaning persons, of the lamentable state of ignorance in which the inhabitants of Newfoundland, and all of the other colonies, are buried. Nothing can be more untrue. The people are better informed than the same class in the United Kingdoms; and often have I seen settlers in America laughing at the ignorance of the "*new comers*" as they generally term emigrants. [Footnote in the original.]

³⁶ Mr. Morris, in his several pamphlets on Newfoundland, insists, with enthusiastic zeal, and, I am confident, with great honesty, on granting a local government to Newfoundland. [Footnote in the original.]

found in the island; and, consequently, that giving it a representative constitution, would be premature and unnecessary.

There is no doubt, but, that the internal improvement of the colony would be promoted, and that matters of local utility would be better directed than at present by the Acts of a legislative government. The question is, whether the great business of the colony, that which makes it important to Great Britain – the fisheries, would also, at the same time, prosper; and, whether directing the attention of the inhabitants to the cultivation of the soil, would not be injurious to the fisheries. Here arises a doubt, the experiment of solving which, might be attended with dangerous consequences; and for a few years longer, it will, perhaps, be the safer way to administer the government in its present form; making such alterations in the present laws, or such new ones, as may appear necessary by an Act of the Imperial Parliament.

As respects the town of St. John's, I consider it an object of, not only great importance, but, almost imperative necessity, to have a municipal corporate government invested with the power of making by-laws for the management of all matters connected with the town³⁷.

The situation of St. John's; its excellent harbor, combining safety of access, and the natural means of being easily defended; its fortifications, and its most convenient position for the chief-town of a great fishing colony, are sufficient considerations to grant the town a charter for its government and improvement. In this opinion most of those whom I know, either residing in the island or in connection with it, concur.

FISHERIES OF BRITISH AMERICA

The cod fishery on the banks of Newfoundland, and along the coasts of North America, commenced a few years after its discovery. In 1517 mention is made of the first English ship which had been at Newfoundland; where, at the same time, fifty Spanish, French, and Portuguese ships were fishing. The French in 1536 were extensively engaged in this fishery; and we find, that in 1578 there were employed in it, by Spain 100 ships, by France 150 ships, by Portugal 50 ships, and by England only 15 ships³⁸. The cause of the English having, at this period, so few ships in this branch of trade, was the fishery carried on by them at Iceland. The English ships, however, from this period, were considered the largest and best vessels; and soon became and continued to be the *admirals*. The Biscayans had, about the same time, 20 to 30 vessels in the whale fishery at Newfoundland; and some English ships, in 1593, made a voyage in quest of whales and morses (walrus) to Cape Breton, where they found the wreck of a Biscay ship, and 800 whale fins. England had in 1615, at

³⁷ It is almost impossible, in Acts of Parliament, to provide for the local improvements necessary in a town situated in a distant colony. In the provisions of an Act passed in 1820, for regulating the rebuilding of St. John's after the fires, there is a clause which directs, that where wooden buildings are erected, the street must be fifty feet wide, and forty feet where stone houses are built. The consequence is, that one house is pitched ten feet farther into the street than another. [Footnote in the original.]

³⁸ Hakluyt – Herrera. [Footnote in the original.]

Newfoundland, 250 ships, amounting to 1500 tons; and the French, Biscayans, and Portuguese, 400 ships³⁹.

From this period the fisheries carried on by England became of great national consideration. De Witt observes, “that our navy became formidable, by the discovery of the inexpressibly rich fishing bank of Newfoundland.” In 1626 the French possessed themselves of and settled at Placentia; and that nation always viewed the English in those parts with the greatest jealousy: but, still the value of these fisheries to England was fully appreciated, as appears by the various Acts of Parliament passed, as well as different regulations adopted for their protection⁴⁰. Ships of war were sent out to convoy the fishing vessels, and to protect them on the coast; and the ships engaged in the fisheries as far back as 1676, carried about 20 guns, 18 small boats, and 90 to 100 men.

By the Treaty of Utrecht, the valuable importance of our fisheries at Newfoundland and New England is particularly regarded. The French, however, continued afterwards, and until they were deprived of all their possessions in North America, to annoy the English engaged in fishing; and in 1734 heavy complaints were made by the English, who had established a very extensive and profitable fishery at Canso in Nova Scotia, against the French, who annoyed them by instigating the Indians to commit outrages, by every means in the power of those who commanded the fortresses at Louisburg, and other places in the neighborhood.

About this period, the inhabitants of New England had about 1200 tons of shipping employed in the whale fishery; and with their vessels engaged in the cod fishery, they caught upwards of 23,000 quintals of fish, valued at twelve shillings per quintal; which they exported to Spain and different ports within the Mediterranean, and remitted in payment for English manufacture £172,000⁴¹. Notwithstanding the value of the fishery carried on by the people of New England, and the important ship fishery carried on by the English at Newfoundland, both together were of far less magnitude than the fisheries followed by the French before the conquest of Cape Breton. By these fisheries alone, the navy of France became formidable to all Europe. In 1745, when Louisburg was taken by the forces sent from New England, under Sir William Pepperell and the British squadron, the value of one year’s fishing in the North American seas, and which depended on France possessing Cape Breton, was stated at £982,000⁴². In 1748, however, at the Treaty of Peace, England was obliged to restore Cape Breton to the French, in return for Madras, which the forces of France had conquered two years before. By which means that nation enjoyed the full advantages of the fisheries until 1759, when the surrender of Cape Breton, St. John’s, and Canada, destroyed the French power in North America.

By the third and fourth Articles of the Treaty of Fontainebleau, signed in 1762, it was agreed, “that the French shall have the liberty of fishing and drying on a part

³⁹ Lex Mercatoria. [Footnote in the original.]

⁴⁰ 2nd and 3d Edward VI. – Acts passed during the reign of Eliz.; James I, cap. 1 and 2; 10 and 11 William and Mary. [Footnote in the original.]

⁴¹ Anderson on Commerce, vol. 2, 159 – *ibid*, 332. [Footnote in the original.]

⁴² Sir William Pepperell’s Journal. [Footnote in the original.]

of the coasts of the island of Newfoundland, as specified in the 13th Article of the Treaty of Utrecht; and the French may also fish in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, so as they do not exercise the same but at a distance of three leagues from all the coasts belonging to Great Britain, as well those of the continent as those of the islands in the Gulf. And, as to what relates to the fishery out of the said Gulf, the French shall exercise the same, but at the distance of fifteen leagues from the coasts of Cape Breton." "Great Britain cedes to France, to serve as a shelter for the French fishermen, the islands of St. Pierre, and of Miquelon; and His most Christian Majesty obliges himself, on his royal word, not to fortify the said islands, nor to erect any other buildings thereon, but merely for the convenience of the fishery; and to keep no more than fifty men for the police."

In the history of the fishery, little of importance appears from this period, until the commencement of the war with America, France, and Spain, which molested and checked the enterprise of the fishing adventurers. The peace of 1783 gave the French the same advantages as they enjoyed by the Treaty of Fontainebleau; and the right of fishing on all the British coasts of America was allowed to the subjects of the United States in common with those of Great Britain, while these were denied the same privileges on the coasts of the former. In restoring to France the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, it was contended that they were incapable of being fortified; while it is well known that both these islands are, in an eminent degree, not only susceptible of being rendered impregnable, but that their situation alone would command the entrance to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, if put into such a state of strength as it was in the power of France to give them.

After the American revolutionary war, the fisheries of British America were prosecuted in Newfoundland with energy and perseverance.

In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick the herring, mackerel, and Gaspereau fisheries were followed; but only upon a limited scale. At Percè and Paspapiac, in the district of Gaspé, the cod fishery was carried on with spirit by two or three houses; and the salmon fishery followed at Restigouche, and at Miramichi. The cod fishery at Arichat, on the island of Madame, was pursued by the Acadian French, settled there, who were supplied by hardy and economical adventurers from Jersey. The valuable fisheries on the coasts of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, were, however, in a great measure overlooked or disregarded.

The last war with France drove the French again from the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, and from the fisheries. At the peace of Amiens they returned again to these islands; but were scarcely established before the war was renewed, and their vessels and property seized by some of our ships on the Halifax station. This was loudly remonstrated against by the French government.

A combination of events occurred during the late war, which raised the fisheries, particularly those of Newfoundland, to an extraordinary height of prosperity.

In 1814 the exports were

1,200,000	Quintals fish, @ 40s	£2,400,000	0 <i>s.</i>
20,000	Ditto Core Fish, @ 12s	12,000	0
6,000	Tons Cod Oil, @32	192,000	0
156,000	Seal Skins, @5s	39,000	0
4,666	Tons Seal Oil, @ £36	167,976	0
2,000	Tierces Salmon, @ £5	10,000	0
1,685	Barrels Mackerel, @ 30s	2,527	10
44,000	Casks Caplin Sounds and Tongues	44,000	0
2,100	Barrels Herrings, @ 25s	2,625	0
	Beavers and other Furs	600	0
	Pine Timber and Plank	800	0
400	Puncheons Berries	2,000	0

Great Britain possessed, almost exclusively, the fisheries on the banks and shores of Newfoundland, Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Gulf of St. Lawrence; we enjoyed a monopoly of supplying Spain, Portugal, Madeira, different ports of the Mediterranean coasts, the West Indies, and South America, with fish; and our ships not only engrossed the profits of carrying the article of commerce to market, but secured the freights of the commodities which the different countries, they went to, exported. It was by such eminent advantages as these that the fishery flourished, and that great gains were realized both by the merchants and ship-owners.

The conclusion of the war was, however, followed by a depression more ruinous to our fisheries than had ever before been experienced. The causes that arrested their prosperity did not, by any means, arise merely from the changes necessarily produced by a sudden transition from war to peace; but, from those stipulations in favor of France and America in our last treaties with these powers.

It is very reasonable, that, in all our treaties with France, the fisheries of North America [were] made a stipulation of extraordinary importance. The ministers of that power, at all times able negotiators, well knew the value of fisheries, not merely in a commercial view, but in respect to their being necessarily essential in providing their navy with that physical strength which would enable them to cope with other nations. The policy of the French, from their first planting colonies in America, insists particularly on raising seamen for their navy, by means of the fisheries. The nature of the French fishery was always such, that one-third, or at least, one-fourth of the men employed in it were green men, or men who were never before at sea; and they, by this trade, breed up from 4000 to 6000 seamen annually.

In ceding to France the right of fishing on the shores of Newfoundland, from Cape John to Cape Ray, with the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, we gave that ambitious nation all the means that her government desired for manning a navy; and if we were determined to lay a train of circumstances, which, by their operations would sap the very vitals of our naval strength, we could not more effectually have done so than by granting a full participation of those fisheries to France and America. The former power immediately pursued the advantages acquired, agreeably to the

policy that was followed at all times by the French. Bounties were, and are, given; which, if the fish be exported to meet us in foreign markets, is about equal to the expense of catching and curing; and which, if imported to France, is sufficient to protect against loss. No encouragement, however, is given, but with the proviso of creating seamen.

The French have other advantages besides bounties, which the British fishermen do not possess. They obtain all their articles of outfit cheaper; the wages of labor [are], with them, lower; and, they have also, as well as having the markets of the world open to them, a great home market.

St. Pierre Island, where the governor resides, is also made a depot for French manufactures, which are smuggled into our colonies. The ships of war which are sent from France to protect their fisheries, and all the other vessels engaged in the trade, make the harbor of this island their rendezvous. The extent to which the French are carrying on their fisheries, and the number of men they have employed, are extraordinary. The great number of ships of war now in progress of building in France, and the vast number of seamen, which have been rearing since 1815, to man them, show how determined that kingdom is on being once more a great naval power.

By the Convention of 1818 the Americans of the United States are allowed to fish along all our coasts and harbors within three marine miles off the shore (an indefinite distance,) and of curing fish in such harbors and bays as are uninhabited, or if inhabited, with the consent of the inhabitants. The expert and industrious Americans, ever fertile in expedients, know well how to take the advantage of so profitable a concession.

From the sea-coast of Newfoundland ceded to France, which comprehends half the shores of the island, and the best fishing grounds, our fishermen have been expelled; and have been under the necessity of resorting from two to four hundred miles further north, to the coast of Labrador, where they are again met by swarms of Americans.

By particular circumstances, and the better to accomplish their object, the Americans are known to act more in union, guided by one feeling, on arriving on the fishing coasts. They frequently occupy the whole of the best fishing banks to the exclusion of our fishermen; and their daring aggressions have gone so far as to drive by force our vessels and boats from their stations, and to tear down the British flag in the harbors and hoist in its place that of the United States. They are easily enabled, from their vastly superior numbers, to take all manner of advantage of our people. They frequently fish by means of seines, which they spread across the best places along the shores; and thus prevent the industry and success of the British fishermen. The crew of an American vessel, last year, which arrived on the coast of Labrador, anchored opposite a British settlement, cut the salmon net of the inhabitants, set their own in its stead, and threatened to shoot any one who approached it.

In order to take every advantage of the latitude granted them, the American vessels, during the day, when they apprehend the appearance of any of His Majesty's cruisers anchor three miles from the shore; but as soon as night conceals their movements, they run under the lee of the land and set their nets for herring and

mackerel. Another consequence, as our fishermen contend, of the Americans being permitted to fish so near the shore, is that the offal which they throw overboard, has the effect of driving the fish from the nearest banks, which renders the catch more difficult and distant.

The net fishing, which, by the limits of three miles, was intended to be secured to our people, the Americans are ingenious and daring enough to persevere in prosecuting; and thus interfere with the very boat fishery of the poor men settled along the shores.

A contraband trade, also, is carried on by the American fishing vessels along different parts of the coasts. The right of entering the harbors of our colonies for wood and water affords an opportunity for smuggling; at which there is not in the world a more expert class than the Americans. At the Magdalene Islands, and in many parts within the Gulf of St. Lawrence; at Fox Island, and other parts of Nova Scotia; and along the coasts of New Brunswick, an illicit trade is extensively persevered in. Rum, molasses, French, and East India goods, and American manufacturers are bartered generally for the best fish, and often sold for specie. The French also sell brandy, wine, and French manufactures for the best fish, to our fishermen. The consequence of this smuggling trade is not merely the defrauding of his Majesty's revenue, but the very fish, thus sold the Americans and French, was legally and honestly due, and should be paid to the British merchant, who in the first instance supplied the fishermen with clothes, provisions, salt, and all kinds of fishing tackle. There are, indeed, such a multiplicity of courses pursued in these fisheries, by the Americans, ever apt in finding out all the methods which serve the purpose of gain, that it would be quite superfluous to recapitulate more than I have stated.

In the shape of bounties, they are encouraged by their government; and as they conduct their fisheries in the shape of expense and outfits cheaper than we do, and on a different principle, they are enabled to bring their fish to market at half the price of ours.

There are two modes of fitting out for the fishery followed by them. The first is accomplished by six or seven farmers, or their sons, building a schooner during winter, which they man themselves (as all the Americans on the sea-coast are more or less seamen as well as farmers,) and proceed, after fitting the vessel with necessary stores, to the banks, Gulf of St. Lawrence, or Labrador; and loading their vessel with fish, make this voyage between spring and harvest. The proceeds they divide, after paying any balance they may owe for outfits. They remain at home, to assist in gathering their crops, and proceed again for another cargo, which is settled down, and not afterwards dried; this is termed need-fish, and kept for home consumption. The other plan is, a merchant, or any other, owning a vessel, lets her to ten or fifteen men on shares. He finds the vessel and nets. The men pay for all the provisions, hooks and lines, and for the salt necessary to cure their proportion of the fish. One of the number is acknowledged master; but he has to catch fish as well as the others, and receives only about twenty shillings per month for navigating the vessel: the crew have five-eighths of the fish caught, and the owners three-eighths of the whole.

In these fisheries the Americans have annually engaged from 1800 to 2000 schooners, of 60 to 120 tons, manned with 3000. These vessels are employed again during winter in the coasting trade, or in carrying fish and other produce to South America and the West Indies.

To the depreciation of the value of fish in foreign markets, caused by the privileges thus granted the French and Americans, and in a particular degree to the limited demand for fish oils in the home market, may be attributed, nearly altogether, the depressed and still declining condition of the British American fisheries. The heavy duties exacted in Spain, Portugal, and Italy, occasion, no doubt, less demand for fish in those countries than formerly: but, notwithstanding this circumstance, had we but retained our fishing grounds, we should not meet with such powerful competitors in the markets of the world.

Nothing could be more unwise than to allow either the French or Americans to enter the Gulf of St. Lawrence; it is a *Mediterranean*, bounded by our colonies, and those powers had neither right nor pretense to its shores or its fisheries.

The provincial governments of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland have extended, it is true, every possible encouragement in support of the fisheries, in the shape of bounties; but, as these are drawn from the colonial revenues, it is giving a direction to a portion of those funds to enable their fishermen to compete with their rivals, which would otherwise be judiciously expended on internal improvements. Yet, it is found absolutely necessary to grant these bounties to protect the fishing adventurers from ruin. The Newfoundland fishermen receive no encouragement of this kind, nor can the condition and circumstances of the colony afford any. The best protection that can now be extended to these fisheries is, not to lay even the smallest duty on any article that is either directly or indirectly required for the fisheries. As respects Newfoundland, in particular, there is not an individual living on the island but who is either immediately or distantly connected with the fisheries.

“The Beothiks or Red Indians of Newfoundland”⁴³ (1891)

I. INTRODUCTORY

The history of the early intercourse of Europeans with the rude aborigines of America presents one of the darkest pictures on the pages of time. Occasionally its blackness may be, in some measure, relieved by such events as the friendly dealings of Penn with the tribes inhabiting Pennsylvania, or the self-denying labors of Christian missionaries; yet these only serve to throw into deeper shade the oppression and cruelty, the robbery and murder, and the destructive consequences of European vices, which, to a greater or less extent, have characterized the early attempts of every nation in Europe to colonize this continent.

Perhaps no part of this history is sadder than that which concerns the doom of the Red Indians of Newfoundland. Here was a people described by all who met them as of good, if not superior, physique, and in the arts of uncivilized life showing much intelligence, numerous as compared with tribes on the neighboring continent, in the midst of lavish abundance supplied to their hands by a bountiful Creator, a people too at their first intercourse with Europeans disposed to be friendly, yet goaded into a spirit of relentless hostility, and finally exterminated as noxious wild beasts, leaving neither name nor inheritance on the earth. Such a fact may well excite serious consideration and awaken deep emotions.

From the entire separation or bitter hostility between them and the whites, maintained during almost the whole time that the two were brought into contact, our knowledge of them is imperfect, and so it must remain, for they have no buried records for any future explorer to decipher, and it cannot be expected that any future collecting of their relics will add much to our information covering them. In these circumstances I have thought it advisable to collect what is known of them, that it may be placed on record in the ‘Transactions’ of the society. In prosecuting this work I must acknowledge my obligations to the various histories and other works on Newfoundland which refer more or less fully to the aborigines⁴⁴. Besides these I have availed myself of special articles by different writers in serial publications, and have gathered information from various other sources, published and unpublished, which will be more particularly referred to in the sequel.

I may remark that Beothiks, sometimes spelled Bœothicks, was their own tribal name. Attempts have been made to determine the meaning and origin of the word; but as we have no real information on the subject, and the conclusions adopted

⁴³ From Patterson, G. (1891). The Beothiks or Red Indians of Newfoundland. *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, IX(II), 123-171. Written by Rev. George Patterson (1846 – 1905).

⁴⁴ The principal are McGregor’s “British America,” Edinburgh and London, 1832; Anspach’s “History of Newfoundland,” 1827, p. 457, etc.; Chappell’s “Voyage to Newfoundland,” London, 1818, pp 169-187; Bonnycastle’s “Newfoundland in 1842,” Vol. II, pp. 251-278; Jukes’ “Excursions in Newfoundland,” London; Pedley’s “Newfoundland,” London, 1863; Tocques’ “Noewfoundland as it was,” London, 1878; also his “Wandering Thoughts,” and especially Harvey’s “Newfoundland,” London and Boston, 1883. [Footnote in the original. McGregor and Anspach are second or later editions. The first edition of McGregor, published in 1828, lacked information on the Beothuk. The original footnote had the wrong volume listed for Bonnycastle (‘i’, as opposed to the correct ‘II’).]

are only inferences from its etymology, we think that none of them are reliable. Some of them, indeed, we regard as demonstrably false. Mr. J. P. Howley mentions an Eskimo word, *bethuc*, meaning forefoot of deer. We presume to think he might as well have mentioned the English word, boathook. Latham supposed that it meant good-night in their language. This was founded on a copy of Mary March's vocabulary, hereafter to be referred to, in which the word *betheok* appears for good-night. But on examination of the original, it is found that the word is *betheoate*, a form of the verb *baetha*, to go home, and meaning, I am going home. Gatschett, justly rejecting these interpretations, supposes that "it means not only Red Indian of Newfoundland, but is also the generic expression for Indian, and composes the word haddabothie, *body* (and belly), just as many other people call themselves by the term men." This appears to me far-fetched, and I believe that, like the name of other Indian tribes, such as Micmac, etc., though it must once have had meaning, which was the occasion of its application to them, this has long since been lost, and that it had become merely their tribal designation.

The name Red Indians is supposed to have been given to them by Europeans from their practice of coloring their faces and utensils with red ochre. The name, however, I believe originated before the arrival of white men. It is the translation of the Micmac name for them, *Maquajik*, which means red men or red people.

II. EARLY NOTICES

Going back to the earliest notices of them, it is probably to them that Cabot refers when, according to Hakluyt, he says: "The inhabitants are painted with red ochre. They use the skins and furs of wild beasts for garments, which they hold in as high estimation as we do our finest clothes. In war they use bows and arrows, spears, darts, clubs and slings."

The first undoubted reference to them is in "Fabian's Chronicle" as follows: "In the fourteenth year of Henry VII, there were brought unto him three men taken in New Found Island by Cabot. They were clothed in the skins of beasts, and spoke such speech as no man could understand them, and in their demeanor were like brute beasts, whom the King kept for a time after, of the which, about two years ago, I saw two appareled after the manner of Englishmen in Westminster Palace, which I could not discern from Englishmen, till I was learned what they were."

What became of these men we are not informed. It is not quite certain that they were from Newfoundland. They might have been from Cape Breton or Nova Scotia.

It is almost certain, however, that it is the Beothiks that are brought under our notice in the voyage of Gaspard Cortereal in 1501. In that year he sailed with three vessels on a voyage of exploration, prosecuting the work which he had begun the year before. I have shown in another place⁴⁵ that the principal scene of his explorations was the east coast of Newfoundland, and probably part of Labrador. On this expedition he captured fifty of the natives, men, women and children, intending them for slaves. Two of his vessels in which they were embarked reached Lisbon

⁴⁵ "The Portuguese on the N. E. Coast of America," in "Transactions of Royal Society of Canada," 1890. [Footnote in the original.]

safely, but the one in which he sailed himself was never heard of. We have said in that place that it is quite possible that he and his crew fell a victim to the vengeance of the remaining members of the tribe. The unfortunates carried away were seen by Pasqualigo, the Venetian ambassador at Lisbon, who describes them as “of like color, stature and aspect, and bearing the greatest resemblance to g—s⁴⁶.” By those on board they were described in their own land as numerous, and in person well built, as living in wooden houses, clothing themselves in skins and furs, and using swords made out of a kind of stone, and pointing their arrows with the same material. Farther Pasqualigo tells us that “His Serene Highness contemplates deriving great advantage from the country, not only on account of the timber of which he has occasion, but of the inhabitants, who are admirably calculated for labor and the best slaves I have ever seen.” Such was the treatment that these people received almost at their first meeting with Christian civilization, and we believe that it was the beginning of that bitter hostility between the two which, continued through subsequent generations, ended in the entire extermination of the weaker race.

For about three-quarters of a century we have no notices of them, except that of Jacques Cartier, who met them on his voyage in 1534, and thus describes them: “They are of good stature, but wild and unruly. They wear their hair tied on the top like a wreath of hay, and put a wooden pin in it, or any other such thing instead of a nail, and with them they bind certain birds’ feathers. They are well clothed with beasts’ skins, as well the men as the women, but the women go somewhat straighter and closer in their garments than the men do, with their waists girded.”

According to Hakluyt, in the year 1536, an expedition, under Mr. Hore, with 120 souls, sailed for Newfoundland. That worthy author traveled 200 miles to see the last survivor of the expedition, who informed him that “after their arrival in Newfoundland, and having been there certain days at anchor, he saw a boat with savages rowing towards them to gaze upon the ship and our people. They manned their ship’s boat in order to have taken them, but they fled to an island in the bay and escaped our men. They found a fire and a side of a bear on a wooden spit, also a boot garnished on the calf as it were with raw silk, also a great warm mitten.”

During the remainder of the 16th century we have only two brief notices of this people. The first is by Martin Frobisher, in 1574. Having been driven by the ice on the coasts of Newfoundland, some of the natives came on board, and with one of them he sent five sailors on shore, whom he never saw again. On this account he seized one of the Indians and carried him to England, where he died shortly after his arrival.

The second is by Ed. Hayes, who wrote the narrative of Sir Humphrey Gilbert’s expedition in 1583. He says: “In the southern parts we found no inhabitants, which by all likelihood have abandoned these coasts, the same being frequented by Christians. But in the north are savages, altogether harmless.”

In the year 1610 was made the first attempt at colonization on the island; a company was formed under royal sanction, headed by several distinguished men, among whom the most noted was the great Bacon. To them a patent was issued granting a large part of the country, and they sent out a colony, under the charge of

⁴⁶ The original had here an offensive term for the Roma people.

Mr. Guy, a merchant, and afterwards mayor, of Bristol, as governor. These landed at Mosquito Harbour on the north side of Conception Bay, and proceeded to erect huts. Mr. Guy explored the coast and had friendly intercourse with the natives, and during the short time that the colony lasted he treated them with such kindness as entirely to win their confidence, and to begin with them what promised to be a prosperous trade.

But the best early account of them is that given by Richard Whitbourne, who, besides making a number of voyages to this quarter, in 1615 received a commission from the British Admiralty to proceed to Newfoundland, to establish order among the fishing population, and to remedy abuses which had become prevalent among them. After his return, in 1622, he published a work entitled "A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland," in which he describes the Indians as follows:-

"The natural inhabitants of the country, as they are but few in number, so are they something rude and savage people, having neither knowledge of God, nor living under any kind of civil government. In their habits, customs and manners they resemble the Indians on the continent, from whence I suppose they came. They live altogether in the north and west part of the country, which is seldom frequented by the English. But the French and Biscaines (who resort thither yearly for the whale fishing and also for the codfish) report them to be an ingenious and tractable people (being well used). They are ready to assist them with great labor and patience in the killing, cutting and boiling of whales, and making the train oil, without expectation of other reward than a little bread or some such small hire."

A conclusion is added to the discourse in which he says: "It is well known that they are an ingenious and subtil⁴⁷ kind of people (as it hath often appeared in divers things), so likewise are they tractable, as hath been well approved, when they have been gently and politicly dealt withal: also they are a people that will seek to revenge any wrongs done to them, or their wolves, as hath often appeared. For they mark their wolves in the ears with several marks, as is used here in England on sheep and other beasts, which hath been likewise well-approved; for the wolves in those parts are not so violent and devouring as wolves in other countries.

"The natives of these parts have great store of red ochre, wherewith they use to color their bodies, bows, arrows, and canoes, in a painting manner, which canoes are their boats, that they use to go to sea in, which are built in shape like the wherries on the river Thames, with small timbers no thicker nor broader than hoops; and instead of boards they use the barks of birch trees, which they sew very artificially and close together, and then overlay the seams with turpentine (probably fir-balsam), as pitch is used on the seams of ships and boats. And in like manner they use to sew the barks of spruce and fir trees, round and deep in proportion, like a brass kettle, to boil their meat in, as it hath been well approved by diverse men; but most especially to my certain knowledge, by three mariners of a ship of Tapson, in the county of Devon, which ship riding there at anchor near by me, at the harbor called Heart's Ease, on the north side of Trinity Bay, and being robbed in the night by the savages

⁴⁷ This word seems to be used not in its present sense, but in its original [meaning] of skillful, clever or ingenious. [Footnote in the original.]

of their apparel and divers other provisions, did the next day seek after them, and happened to come suddenly where they had set up their tents and were feasting, having three such canoes by them and three pots of such rinds of trees, standing each of them on three stones, boiling with twelve fowls in each of them, every fowl as big as a widgeon and some so big as a duck. They had many such pots so sewed and fashioned like leather buckets that are used for quenching fire, and those were full of the yolks of eggs that they had taken and boiled hard, and so dried small as if it had been powder-sugar, which the savages used in their broth as sugar is often used in some meats.

“They had great stores of the skins of deer, beavers, bears, seals, otters and divers other fine skins, which were excellent and well dressed, as also great store of several sorts of flesh dried; and by shooting off a musket towards them they all ran away naked without any apparel, but only some of them had their hats on their heads, which were made of sealskins, in fashion like our hats, sewed handsomely, with narrow bands about them, set round with fine white shells. All their three canoes, their flesh, skins, yolks of eggs, targets, bows and arrows, and much fine ochre and divers other things they (*i.e.*, the vessel’s crew) took and brought away and shared among those that took it. They brought to me the best canoe, bows and arrows and divers of their skins, and many other artificial things worth the noting.”

The statement regarding the wolves is a very curious one, and will engage attention hereafter. The forming of dishes of bark or even of rushes, tight enough to hold water, in which they boiled their food, as here described, was common among the Micmacs and other American Indians. But the boiling was done by putting red-hot stones into the vessel. And it is said that it could be done more quickly in that way than in the ordinary manner.

He also asserts that Trinity Bay was avoided by vessels, partly from certain rocks, but partly because the natives resided in the neighborhood and “secretly came unto the bay and harbor in the night time, purposely to steal sails, lines, hatchets, hooks, knives and such like.” He also says that at that time they never came to the south of Trinity Bay.

We may just add the description given by De Laet in his “Novus Orbis”: “They are of medium stature, with black hair, broad face, [and] large eyes. All the males are without beards. Both sexes stain not only their skin but their clothing with a certain red color. They dwell in humble lodges formed of poles arranged in a circle and joined at the top. They very often change their dwelling places.”

Omitting for the present any discussion of their origin, migrations and ethnological relations, we may observe that at that time Newfoundland must have been a paradise for a race of hunters. Countless herds of caribou roamed through the interior, passing from north to south in autumn and returning in spring. Vast flocks of ptarmigan, as well as smaller game birds, were everywhere to be met with; wild geese bred on its lakes, sea-fowl in equal abundance thronged its coasts, while its rivers and countless lakes, as well as the sea washing its shores, swarmed with fish of every variety. Even now there are few better hunting-grounds than Newfoundland. What must it have been before the white man occupied its harbors, and when the

sound of their firearms had not disturbed the vast solitude of the interior[!] With the skill of the red man in capturing the denizens of the stream and forest, this people must have lived in a rude abundance. The great want must have been of vegetable food. This would, however, be partly supplied in summer by the abundance of berries found everywhere.

What their numbers may have been we have scarcely any means of judging. The territory they occupied was as large as that occupied by the Micmac in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. As compared with the extent of the island, they must have been few. But from the notices of their presence by early voyagers, and the number of places where tokens of their occupancy have been found, I believe that they could not have been less numerous than that tribe, whose number was never great, probably not much exceeding four thousand.

These are all the early notices of the Beothiks we possess, and they give us little specific information regarding them. The descriptions would apply nearly as well to any of the tribes at that time inhabiting Northern America. It seems clear, however, that they were a people moderately tall and well formed physically, and that they appeared to the visitors as of quick intelligence. It is specially, however, to be noted that all these writers agree in describing them as mild and tractable. They at first received their visitors in a friendly manner, and were desirous of being on good terms with them. Certainly there does not appear anything more fierce in their disposition, than was to be found among any of the tribes on the mainland with which the English or French came in contact. On the contrary, these accounts rather seem to show that they were distinguished among the American aborigines for mildness and gentleness of disposition. On the other hand, Cortereal's carrying away more than fifty of them, men, women and children, into slavery; Cabot's capturing and carrying some to England; Mr. Hore's attempt, as described by himself, to do the same; Whitbourne's coolly appropriating their property, not to speak of the unrecorded deeds of the rude men who, under no restraints of law, came to trade and fish on the coast, indicate that from the first white men regarded them and theirs as their natural prey.

III. HOSTILITIES

Even at the time that Whitbourne wrote all friendly relations had not ceased. But when we next hear of them the two parties are on a footing of unrelenting hostility. The white men accused the natives of stealing their goods. Among all the American tribes at that time there was a sort of communism. To a certain extent the whole village shared in the produce of the chase, and the supplies of one were readily given to meet the wants of any in need. When they met white men they were ready to give them freely of what they possessed, but they expected the same liberality in return. Their views being misunderstood led to collision. Though we know that in general the Indian tribes were not given to thieving, yet cases of the crime would occur: and when we consider the value to them of articles of European manufacture, as nails, knives, hatchets, etc., we need not wonder that the temptation should sometimes prove too strong for them. By the rude hunters, trappers and fishermen the missing of some trifling article came to be regarded as sufficient excuse for

shooting the first Indian they might meet. These were the reckless of many nations; they were here beyond the control of law, there being no administration of justice on the island, except what they set up themselves, and the rude aborigines they regarded as having no rights which white men were bound to respect. Their avarice, too, was excited by the skin dresses or the rich fur robes in which these poor creatures wrapped themselves at night, or even in which they laid their dead to rest, and they did not hesitate to take possession of them, even if this involved the shooting of the owners. And when such wrongs led to retaliation on the part of the injured red men, it only excited their enemies to a more determined effort to exterminate them as they would so many wolves. In this warfare, what chance had the poor natives, with their bows and arrows, against the deadly firearms of the whites?

But another circumstance must be mentioned. In the year 1660 the French had established themselves at Placentia, and in subsequent years extended their authority along the southern coast. On the mainland they had secured the attachment to their interests of the various Algonquin tribes with whom they came in contact, but in this respect they were as unsuccessful with the Beothiks as they were with the Iroquois. Some misunderstanding having arisen between the French authorities and them, the former offered a reward for the heads or persons of certain of their chiefs⁴⁸. A number of Micmacs had been brought over from Cape Breton to Nova Scotia. They are said to have been friendly to the Beothiks up to this time, but this offer excited their cupidity, and, according to tradition, there occurred a scene, thus described by Hon. A. W. Des Barres, formerly one of the judges of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland:

“Some of the Micmacs were tempted by the reward, and took off the heads of two of them. Before the heads were delivered to obtain the reward, they were by accident discovered concealed in the canoe which was to convey them, and recognized by some of the Red Indians as those of their friends. The Red Indians gave no intimation of the discovery to the perpetrators of the outrage, but consulted among themselves and determined on having revenge. They invited the Micmacs to a feast, and arranged their guests in such order that every Beothik had a Micmac by his side. At a preconcerted signal every Beothik slew his guest. They then retired quickly from those places bordering on the Micmac country. War of course ensued. Firearms were little known to the Indians at this time, but they soon came into more general use among such tribes as continued to hold intercourse with Europeans. This circumstance gave the Micmacs an undisputed ascendancy over the Beothiks, who were forced to betake themselves to the recesses of the interior and other parts of the island, alarmed, as well they might be, at every report of the firelock.”⁴⁹

I am inclined to believe, for reasons to be given hereafter, that the Micmacs and they were hereditary foes. If, however, they were on the first arrival of the latter in Newfoundland friendly, this state of things was soon superseded by one of mutual

⁴⁸ This is told by M. Tocque, as well as by Judge Desbarres, in the speech to be quoted immediately. But they do not give their authority for the statement. [Footnote in the original.]

⁴⁹ Speech delivered at the meeting of the Bœothic Society in the year 1827. The story, without the first incident of the Micmacs' treachery, was told by an old Micmac to Mr. Peyton.

and relentless hostility. Jukes ("Excursions in Newfoundland") says that in 1770 a battle took place between the two tribes at the north end of Grand Pond. There must be a mistake about the date. It is more likely to be in 1670. He also says that the Beothiks called them Shonaks or Shawnaks, *i.e.*, "bad Indians." At all events, in the historic period the Micmacs were their most implacable foes, and members of the two tribes seldom met without bloodshed. It is also said that their relations with the Eskimos on the north were characterized by similar hostility. Till English settlement checked the advance of this people, they used to frequent the east coast. It is understood that when they met the Red Indians it was always as enemies. But Cartwright says that "they kept to their favorite element, the water, where their superior canoes and missile weapons for killing whales rendered them terrible enemies to encounter." The Red Indians hated them, speaking of them as dirty. With the Indians on the Labrador coast, whom they called Shawnomuncs, they are said to have been on friendly terms, sometimes visiting and carrying on some trade with them.

Originally the Beothiks had established themselves on the coast. This is evident from the fact that the first voyagers met them there, but more especially from their kitchen middens which have been found at various places, and also from the graves sometimes found on islands off the coast. But now they were driven into the interior, and only visited the coast by stealth and at the risk of their lives. So much was this the case that Charlevoix, writing about the middle of the 18th century, says that there were no inhabitants in Newfoundland except for the Eskimo, who, he says, came down along the coast in summer. The Beothiks had by that time been so driven into the interior or to the northern parts of the island, that the learned author was not aware of their existence.

So the Baron de La Hontan, who in his younger years had been governor of the French colony of Placentia Bay, does not mention the Beothiks in his "Voyages." About 1690 he wrote: "The Eskimo cross over to the island of Newfoundland every day at the straits of Belle Isle, but they never come so far as Placentia for fear of meeting with other savages there. (*J.* 210, *Eng. Translation* of 1735.) There are no settled savages on the island." From this it is evident that the Beothiks even at that time confined themselves to places at a distance from those resorted to by the whites.

But they were still in considerable numbers, as their works to be noticed presently show. Their principal resort was the region of the Exploits River, the largest on the island, having a course of 200 miles and emptying into the Bay of Exploits, a branch of Notre Dame Bay. An expansion of it known as Red Indian Lake, about 36 miles long, by from half a mile to three miles wide, situated from 70 to over 100 miles from the mouth, was their headquarters.

But the work of destruction continued. Northern furriers and fishermen continued to shoot down the Beothiks, sometimes in wantonness, sometimes in professed fear of them, sometimes in the spirit in which they would shoot a wolf, and sometimes in the spirit of the sportsman hunting beaver.

Mr. John Cartwright⁵⁰ says: “On the part of the English fishers their conduct is an inhumanity that sinks them far below the level of savages. The wantonness of their cruelties towards these poor wretches has frequently been almost incredible.” And then he gives the following examples:—

“One day a small family of Beothiks was surprised in their wigwams by a party of fishermen. On the appearance of their foes the Indians fled in consternation, all except one woman, who, being unable to follow her companions, gave herself up as a prisoner, endeavoring by signs, especially appealing to the indications of approaching motherhood, to implore mercy from her captors. Her gesticulations and entreaties were in vain. One of the wretches, by a well directed blow with his knife, ripped open the body of the unhappy woman, and in a few minutes she expired in agony at his feet. Not content with murder, the monsters proceeded to mutilate the body in a barbarous manner, and on their return boasted of what they had done, exhibiting in triumph the hands of their victim, which they had cut off and retained as a trophy.”

Again, “some fishermen, as they doubled in their boat a point of land, discovered a single, defenseless woman, with an infant on her shoulders. One of them instantly discharged at her a very heavy load of swan shot, which lodged in her loins. Unable now to sustain her burden, she unwillingly put it down, and with difficulty crawled into the woods, holding her hand upon the mortal wound she had received, and without once taking her eyes off the helpless object she had left behind her. In this dreadful situation she beheld her child ravished from her by her murderers, who, seeing two Indians on a height at some distance, beat a hasty retreat to their boat.”

This was in August, 1768, the very month in which Mr. Cartwright set out on his journey to the Red Indian Lake. The man brought the child to him, and telling what he had done, with as much insensibility as he would the killing of a beast of pretty and the capture of its young, asked a reward, as if his conduct would be pleasing to the governor. This child was carried to England, and the next winter was exhibited in the western towns of that country for two pence a view⁵¹.

Mr. George Cartwright says that “formerly a very beneficial barter was carried on in the neighborhood of Bonavista by some of the inhabitants of that bay; that the whites used to carry out goods and leave them at a spot within reach of the Indians, who came and took them, leaving furs instead. But this was broken up by a white wretch lying in ambush, and, when a woman was seen helping herself, shooting her

⁵⁰ John Cartwright was at this time a lieutenant in the British navy, commanding H. M. Guernsey on this station. He visited that part of the country in 1768, and, as we shall see, made a trip to Red Indian Lake. He has left a small work still in MS. At the Legislative library at St. John's, entitled “Remarks on the situation of the Red Indians, natives of Newfoundland, with some account of their manner of living, together with such descriptions as are necessary to the explanation of the sketch of the country they inhabit taken on the spot in the year 1768.” He was accompanied by his brother George, who has given similar information in his work, “Explorations in Labrador.” [Footnote in the original.]

⁵¹ I have been unable to find any reference of such an exhibition in British newspapers. I did find a roughly contemporary notice suggesting that in the late 1770s, Britain was at least occasionally willing to listen to complaints from ‘Indians’ in Newfoundland: “On Saturday, his Majesty's Sloop Merlin, from St. John's, Newfoundland, arrived at Spithead: She has brought home some of the Indians in our Interest, in order to exhibit some Complaints to our Government against their encroaching Neighbors.” *Extract of a Letter from Porstmouth, Nov. 8. (1767, November 10). London Public Advertiser, p. 2.*

dead.” Such was the state of feeling at this time that both brothers say they met men who told them that they met men who told them that they would sooner kill an Indian than a deer. “For a period,” says Rev. Mr. Pilot, “of nearly two hundred years, this same kind of barbarity continued, and it was considered meritorious to shoot a Red Indian. To go to ‘look for Indians’ came to be as much a phrase as to ‘look for partridges.’ They were harassed from post to post, [and] from island to island, [as] their hunting and fishing stations were unscrupulously seized by the invading English. They were shot down without the least provocation, or captured to be exposed as curiosities to the rabble at the fairs of the western towns of Christian England at twopence a-piece.”

This state of things continued well into the present century. Not many years ago there were still living on the north-west coast men who had been in the habit of boasting of the number of “head of Indians” they had killed, the record of such being scored on their gunstocks. Tradition, seemingly well founded, has even preserved the name of one woman famed for her skill with the gun, which she employed on a seal in the harbor or a Red Indian lurking on the shore without about equal compunction. George Cartwright also mentions that when the whites came upon any collection of their provisions, canoes and implements, in consequence of the Indians being obliged to make a precipitate retreat, they were in the habit of destroying the whole, and that in consequence whole families had perished from famine. Need we wonder that there was excited in them the spirit of relentless retaliation; that, driven from their fishing-grounds on the shores, their kinsmen shot down like wild beasts, and urged by hunger to visit the neighborhood of the whites, they not only stole but stealthily let fly their arrows at their inhuman foes? Still, it must be noted that there is no such record of cruelties practiced by them on the white settlers, as is found in almost all the cases of the settlement of white men among the Indians in America. Nor can we be surprised that when at length honest attempts were made for the restoration of friendship, they had acquired an utter distrust and abhorrence of the signs of civilization, and were animated by a spirit of inexorable revenge against all white men.

IV. ATTEMPTS TO OPEN INTERCOURSE

We come now to notice the well meant efforts on the part of the authorities and humane individuals to open intercourse with them and to promote their welfare. The British Government, upon representations made of the state of things described, was led to take the matter up. Doubtless under its instructions, proclamations were issued by successive governments for the protection of the natives. The first of these, issued by Capt. Palliser in the year 1760, is the first official document in which the natives are recognized, and seems to have been the model of subsequent ones. It sets forth that His Majesty has been informed that his subjects in Newfoundland “do treat the savages with the greatest inhumanity, and frequently destroy them without the least provocation or remorse. In order therefore to put a stop to such inhuman barbarity, and that the perpetrators of such atrocious crimes might be brought to due punishment, His Majesty enjoined and required all his subjects to live in amity and brotherly kindness with the native savages,” and farther enjoined all magistrates to

“apprehend persons guilty of murdering the native Indians and send them to England for trial.”

In the same year in which the first proclamation was issued, one Capt. Scott and some others went from St. John’s to [the] Bay of Exploits, with the view of opening communication with them, whether by appointment of government or as a private adventure we are not informed. At all events, on arrival they built a residence much in the manner of a fort. Some days after a party of Indians appeared and halted near the place. Scott proceeded unarmed to them, contrary to the advice of his people, shook hands with them and mixed among them. An old man, who pretended friendship, put his arms round Scott’s neck, when another treacherously stabbed him in the back. The war-whoop immediately sounded, a shower of arrows fell upon the English, which killed five of them, and the rest fled to their vessel, carrying off one of those who had been killed, with several arrows sticking in his body.

The next attempt to open intercourse with them was by Mr. John Cartwright. He was the first European, so far as known, who succeeded in reaching the Red Indian Lake. From his work we learn that the journey was undertaken “with a design to explore the unknown interior parts of Newfoundland, to examine into the practicability of traveling from shore to shore across the body of the island, and to acquire a more certain knowledge of the settlements of the Red Indians, as well as to surprise, if possible, one or more of these savages for the purpose of effecting in time a friendly intercourse with them” – a tribe, as he observes, with whom, though the original native inhabitants of a country so long in our possession, we hold no intercourse whatever, “except, indeed, the unfriendly one of reciprocal injuries and murders.” The expedition, though not a government one, seems to have been undertaken with the countenance of the governor. At Indian Point, on Notre Dame Bay, he met a young Beothik who had been captured when a boy, and was named William June from the month in which he was taken. He was the first of the tribe ever known to have lived among the whites. He is spoken of as “John Cousins’ Indian boy.” He gave the party information regarding the situation of the Red Indian Lake, which was the principal seat of the tribe, and also in part its configuration, describing a cove in which his father’s camp was situated⁵².

Cartwright’s company consisted of himself and brother, Rev. Neville Stow, chaplain, and nine seamen of H. M. S. Guernsey, Mr. John Cousins and a servant. They started from Indian Point on Notre Dame Bay on the 24th August, 1768, and pulled a short distance up the River Exploits to a place named Start Rattle⁵³. Here they left their boats and began their search along the banks of the river. Before long they came upon wigwams recently erected “and other apparatus.” These were so numerous as to indicate that the Indians could not be very far off, and to excite high

⁵² We know little more about this boy. A Mr. John Bland of Bonavista, in answer to some enquiries made by Admiral Waldegrave on his becoming governor in 1796, says that he became expert in all the branches of the Newfoundland business; that he was then dead long ago, that an old man informed him that he frequently made visits to his friends in the interior of the country. (Pedley, 184.) [Footnote in the original.]

⁵³ Rattle is used in Newfoundland to denote a rapid. [Footnote in the original.]

hopes of soon meeting them. As they advanced their attention was particularly struck by the extent of their fences for taking deer. We have already alluded to the vast herds of these animals, which then ranged the interior. The River Exploits lay right across their course, and in their spring and autumn migrations they crossed it in thousands. In order to capture them the Beothiks had made fences along its bank so high and strong that the largest deer could neither jump over nor force a way through them. These fences were made by felling the trees near the river's bank, without chopping the trunks quite asunder, taking care that they fell parallel with the stream, each being guided so as to fall on the last. Gaps were filled in by stakes or by branches interwoven. These fences were then raised to the height of six, eight or even ten feet, according to the ground. In places where the trees grew too stunted, or were too scattered to be available for fences, they placed "sewels."⁵⁴ These were made by attaching tassels of birch bark to thin sticks about six feet long, which were stuck into the ground ten or twelve yards apart, and so slanting that the rind might hang clear of its support, and thus fluttering with every breath of wind [to] frighten and turn back these timid animals. The most favorable situation for taking them was where there was a beach of about twenty feet wide with a steep bank alongside. At such or other favorable points were placed half-moon breast works, from which to shoot the animals, or probably in other instances they speared them in the water from their canoes.

These seem to me the most remarkable of the works of the Beothiks. This mode of capturing deer was practiced among several tribes of the aborigines of this continent. But I have never known of its being practiced on so large a scale. The fences described by John Cartwright extended for thirty miles along the river, and in addition George mentions that on the north side of the river they had erected lines of fences running back from the river, sometimes parallel with each other, or slightly diverging, and forming a narrow lane of some length, and then forming wing fences to the northeast and the northwest. Mr. Cormack, sixty years later, observed the same and remarked [on] the skill with which they were laid out to guide the creatures to certain passes, such as the extreme ends of lakes which form branches of the river, or along the bottoms of valleys between high and rugged mountains, or to fords in the river. Mr. N. R. Neilson, a gentleman employed in lumbering on the Exploits River, mentioned the same to me, and says that some of the old fences have been repaired by the Micmacs. Farther Mr. Lloyd, who visited the district in 1874, observed the remains of an extensive structure of the same kind on the north side of Red Indian Lake. Mr. W. G. Bradshaw, employed about the same time on the geological survey of the island in that quarter, informs me that he observed the same; that wherever there were bogs the stakes remained standing. They were both informed by the

⁵⁴ This word in Old English is defined to mean a "scarecrow," made of feathers tied to a string, hung up to prevent deer from breaking into a place. Virgil refers to the same practice (Georg. iii., 371) "Puniceæve agitant pavidos formidine pennae." [Footnote in the original. An English translation of the relevant segment of Virgil reads, "[T]he Deer crowding all together lie benumbed under the unusual Load, and scarce appear with the Tips of their Horns. These they pursue not with Hounds let loose, nor with any Toils, nor scared with the Terror of the Crimson Plume". Davidson, J. [Assignant]. (1790). *The Works of Virgil translated into English prose*. London: J.F. and C. Rivington et al.]

Micmacs that this extended northeasterly all the way to Grand Pond⁵⁵, a distance of thirty-five miles. The construction of such works in the circumstances of this people, even with the aid of all the iron axes we may suppose them to have stolen from the whites, must have required the labors of a large number of men, Mr. Cormack says some hundreds, and shows that they must have been a numerous tribe, as well as possessed of a spirit of perseverance and a capacity for harmonious and combined effort.

After six day's travel Cartwright and some of the party reached the lake. They found here a number of the native dwellings, but saw none of their occupants, and their supplies being reduced they returned to the coast. He, however, carefully examined their houses, canoes, etc., and has given us a very carefully written account of them, which, as not only the oldest but the best that we possess, we shall draw upon largely⁵⁶. Their houses were of two kinds. The one called *meolick* was like the ordinary wigwams of the Micmacs and other neighboring tribes, being a conical hut, formed by a row of poles stuck in the ground in a circle and meeting in a point at the top, and covered by birch bark laid sheet upon sheet like tiles. But one remarkable peculiarity he observed was that in a circle round the center where the fire was placed were dug oblong hollows, which were lined with the tender branches of fir and pine, and which he supposed were their sleeping places. This kind of nest in the wigwam was almost peculiar to the *Beothiks*. But Lady Blake mentions that among a tribe at the foot of the Rocky Mountains named the Atuaks, whose lands are contiguous to the Thompson River, the women dig out holes on the ground, which they inlay with grass or branches, and which it is supposed are used as places of repose.

The other form of dwelling was the square-framed habitation, the *mammaleek*, as it was called. "It was about ten or twelve feet square, and substantially built of timber, nearly in the fashion of the English fishing houses, only that the studs were something apart, from which it was evident that they alone could not in that state form the shell as in the English buildings, where they are closely joined together. But within this and parallel to it, there was another frame of slighter workmanship, a sort of lattice work, rising to the roof. From the hair which adhered to the studs, the interval appeared to have been filled with deer skins, than which there could have been nothing better calculated for keeping out the cold. This was the construction of only three sides, the fourth being raised by trees well enough squared and placed horizontally one upon another, having their seams caulked with moss. The difference was probably owing to a deficiency of skins, and the rather so as this inferior side of the dwelling bore a southeast aspect, which required less shelter than any other. The lodgments of the rafters on the beams and the necessary joints were as neatly executed as in the houses commonly inhabited by our fishers. The roof was a low pyramid, encompassed at the distance of three feet from its vertex by a hoop tied to the rafters with thongs. Here the covering had terminated, and the space above the

⁵⁵ In Newfoundland, lakes of whatever size are called ponds. [Footnote in the original.]

⁵⁶ Mr. George Cartwright, in his "Journal of Transactions and Events on the Coast of Labrador," has given an account of the same journey and similar particulars about the Red Indians. We have added some items from his work. [Footnote in the original.]

hoop had been left open as in the wigwams for a passage to the smoke, the fire place having been in the center.”

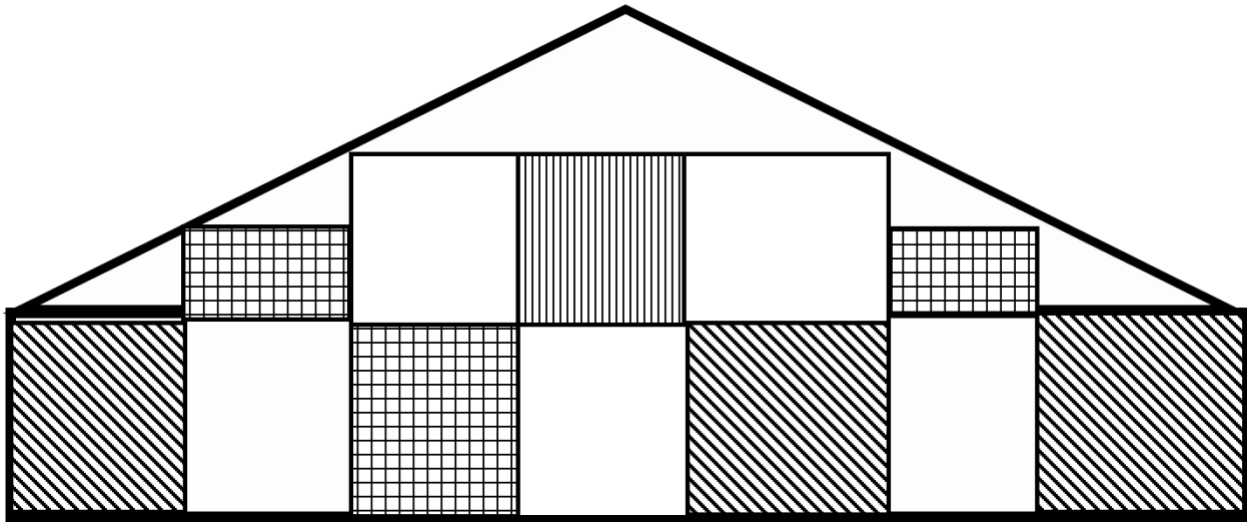


Fig. 1. Red Indian store house, as drawn by Shanandithit⁵⁷.

Such a form of residence is very unusual among the wandering Indian tribes of Northern America. The birch or skin-covered tent, so easily erected and so easily removed, is so admirably adapted for a nomad people that it is rare to find them adopting this more permanent form of dwelling. Whether the Beothiks had it originally or imitated the whites in its construction, it indicates progress toward a more settled condition of life. Besides these they had large store-houses said to have been from thirty to fifty feet long and nearly as wide. (Fig. 1.) In these they laid up their supplies for the winter. Besides the venison which we have mentioned, Mr. George Cartwright says that they found in them seal's flesh, birds and fish, and a kind of sausage, "consisting of the flesh and fat of seals, eggs and a variety of other rich matter stuffed into the entrails of seals. For want of salt and spices the composition had the *haut gout* to perfection." Shanandithit, a native woman to be noticed hereafter, made a sketch of the inside of one of these, representing it as hung round with "different kinds of animal food," dried salmon, dried meat, lobsters' tails dried, pieces of seal's fat on the skin, bladders filled with oil, etc. It is also said "that they had an ingenious way of keeping venison fresh." They first cut it into thin strips, and after having taken out the veins and sinews and washed away the blood, they packed it in alternate layers of meat and melted tallow in a casing of birch bark, which they bound up tightly, thus forming an hermetically sealed mass⁵⁸.

Of their canoes he gives an exact account.

"The principle on which the Red Indian canoe is constructed is, perhaps, nowhere else to be met with. It has in a manner no bottom at all, the sides being at the very keel, and from thence running up in a straight line to the edge or gunwale.

⁵⁷ Red-drawn by C. Willmore in 2022.

⁵⁸ This seems to be simply the pemmican of the West. [Footnote in the original.]

A transverse section of it at any part whatever makes an acute angle, only that it is not sharpened to a perfect angular point, but is somewhat rounded to take in the slight rod that serves by way of keel. This rod is the thickest in the middle (being in that part about the size of the handle of a common hatchet), tapering each way and terminating with the slender curved extremities of the canoe. The form of this keel will then, it is evident, be the same as the outline of the long section, which, when represented on paper, is nearly, if not exactly, the half of an ellipse longitudinally divided. Having thus drawn the keel, whose two ends become also similar stems to the canoe, the side may be easily completed after this manner. Perpendicular to the middle of the keel, and at two-thirds the height of its extremities, make a point. Between this central and the extreme points describe a catenarian arch with a free curve, and you will have the form of the side, as well as a section of the canoe.

“The coat or shell of the canoe is made of the largest and fairest sheets of birch rind that can be procured. Its form being nothing more than two sides joined together where the keel is to be introduced, it is very easily sewed together entire. The sewing is perfectly neat and performed with spruce roots split to the proper size. That along the gunwale is like our neatest basket work. The seams are paved over with a sort of gum, appearing to be a preparation of turpentine, oil and ochre, and which effectually resists the water.

“The sides are kept apart, and their proper distance preserved, by means of a thwart of about two fingers’ substance, whose ends are lodged on the rising points above mentioned in the middle of the gunwale. The extension used when this thwart is introduced lessens in some degree the strength of the canoe by drawing in still more its curling ends. It also fixes the extreme breadth in the middle, which is requisite in a vessel having similar stems, and intended for advancing with either of them foremost, and by bulging out its sides gives them a perceptible convexity much more beautiful than their first form.

“The gunwales are made with tapering sticks, two on each side, the thick ends of which meet on the rising points with the ends of the main thwart, and being molded in the shape of the canoe, their small ends terminate with those of the keel rod on the extremities of each stem. On the outside of the proper gunwales, with which they exactly correspond, and connected with them by a few thongs, are also false gunwales fixed there for the same purpose as we use fenders. The inside is lined entirely with sticks two or three inches broad, cut flat and thin and placed length-ways, over which others again are crossed, that being bent in the middle extend up each side to the gunwale, where they are secured, serving as timbers. A short thwart near each end to preserve the canoe from twisting, or being bulged more open than proper, makes it complete.

“It may be readily conceived from its form and light fabric that being put into the water it would lie flat on one side, with the keel and gunwale both at the surface. But being ballasted with stones it settles to a proper depth in the water and then swims upright, when a covering of sods and moss being laid on the stones the Indians kneel on them and manage the canoe with paddles. In fine weather they sometimes set a sail on a very slight mast fastened to the middle thwart. But this is a practice

for which these delicate and unsteady barks are by no means calculated. A canoe of fourteen feet long is about four feet wide in the middle⁵⁹.”

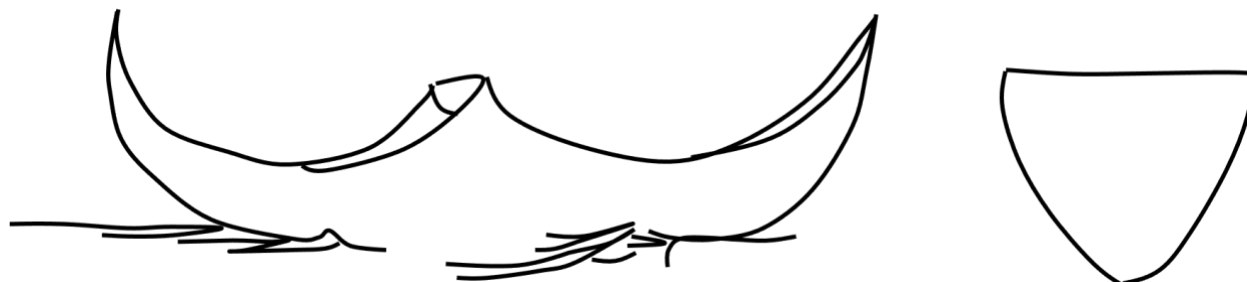


Fig. 2. Red Indian Canoe, with a section midships, from a sketch by John Cartwright⁶⁰

Mr. Cartwright has given us a small drawing of one of these canoes, which we reproduce. (Fig. 2.) Each tribe of Indians has its own pattern of canoe, as well as of snowshoes and other articles. The difference is generally a matter of fancy, but where it is important we will generally find that it has been adopted to suit the difference of circumstances. Thus among the Cree in the West, where their navigation is largely of rivers in which there are many rapids, their canoes are constructed with a high prow, serving to prevent the taking in of water to which they would be liable in such cases. But among the Micmacs and other eastern tribes, where their navigation is principally on the even surface of rivers and harbors, their canoes have their gunwales continued straight or with a gentle sweep from end to end. The Beothik canoe resembled the Cree in having the prow rising upward, but it rose much higher and narrowed to a point, instead of curving backward, as with the latter. I have no doubt that this form would render it less liable to ship a sea [sic.], while the construction of the hull, when properly ballasted, would increase its capacity as a sailing craft among the rough waters of the Newfoundland coast. But the V shaped hull is something singular. So far as I am aware, nothing is to be found like it among the tribes in northern America. With them I believe the universal practice is to have their canoes with bottoms either flat or slightly convex. But from its greater depth this would take a greater hold of the water.

As to sails archeologists are disposed to regard the aborigines of America as ignorant of their use. I have seen it stated that the Peruvians were the only people of America who used them. To me it seems impossible to believe that tribes in whom the powers of observation were so carefully cultivated, who were so acquainted with the powers of nature around them, and who felt the force of the wind every day, should never have thought of employing this mode of propulsion. There is evidence

⁵⁹ Mr. Cormack measured one and found it twenty-two feet long. A family in Notre Dame Bay who had a good deal to do with the Red Indians informed Mr. Lloyd that the thwarts could be taken out and the two sides brought together like a cocked hat. This would be for convenience in carrying them. Even according to Cartwright's description this is possible, but we think it very doubtful. [Footnote in the original.]

⁶⁰ Re-drawn by C. Willmore in 2022.

that the Micmacs used a bush in their canoes for the purpose⁶¹, and Cartwright was not likely to be misinformed in his statement regarding the Beothiks using a mast and sail. At all events George Cartwright describes them as most expert in the management of their canoes. Their seamanship was evinced by their visiting Funk Island, a small and low-lying island forty miles from the nearest point of land. This island was long distinguished for the number of birds that frequented it. According to Mr. C. the Beothiks visited it once or twice a year, and returned with their canoes laden with their flesh and eggs. This is confirmed by the fact of their implements having been found there in recent times⁶².

“Their bows,” he says, “are of sycamore, which being scarce in this country, and the only wood it produces that is fit for this use, it thence becomes valuable. The sticks are not selected with any nicety, some of them being knotty and of a very rude appearance, but under this simple rustic guise they carry very great perfection, and to those who examine them with due attention, admirable skill is shown in their construction. Except in the grasp the inside of them is cut flat, but so obliquely and with so much art, that the string will vibrate in a direction coinciding with the thicker edge of the bow. They are full five and a half feet long. The arrow is made of well seasoned pine, slender, light and perfectly straight, and about three feet long.”

Its head was made at this time of nails or other pieces of iron filched from the whites. It was let into a cleft on the top of the shaft and secured there by a thread of deer sinew. The stock was about three feet long. It was feathered with the pinions of the goose or the eagle. It is uncertain what wood he refers to as the sycamore, as that tree does not grow on the island, nor does the maple, except a dwarf species. Though he speaks of the roughness of their bows, one in the public museum is extremely well made. The string is a very fine piece of twisted deer skin. Mr. George Cartwright says: “They are excellent archers, as many of our fishermen have too fatally experienced.”

Mr. C. gives an interesting account of their mode of life at that time. With the first frost and snow the deer commenced to travel southward, collecting together in large droves. If the frost continued they traveled on night and day without stopping to eat, more than snatching some browse or moss as they passed. In this event the Indians at their deer fences would in a very few days kill enough to supply themselves with venison the whole winter. If there came a thaw the deer lingered to feed, resuming progress when the frost returned. In this case the supply was longer in being collected, but was not less certain and abundant. Thus supplied they spent their winter on the banks of the [River] Exploits or the Red Indian Lake, which is an expansion of that river, and Cartwright supposed that they made at least the first part of it a season of merriment.

In spring the deer begin their migration northward, but they are then in miserable condition, and travel slowly in small bands and staying to feed to recover flesh and strength. In spring therefore food became scarce, and the Beothiks moved

⁶¹ Hence the proverb common in Nova Scotia, particularly among the young, “too much bush for a small canoe.” [Footnote in the original.]

⁶² Here the Great Auk was found in abundance. Recent examination has shown that the natives in visiting the island had used its flesh for fuel. [Footnote in the original.]

down to the sea coast, and spent the summer among the islands and bays near the mouth of the River Exploits, extending from Cape Freels to Cape John. They had formerly gone much further, but with their reduced numbers they were now confined to that region. Between these bounds there were hundreds of islands, abounding in sea-fowl, ptarmigan⁶³, hares and other game, besides their waters containing seals in great abundance. On the largest of these isles were deer, foxes, bears and otters. Besides hunting all these, they used to kill considerable quantities of salmon in the river. But the English, he says, have only left them possession of Charles's and another brook. During the egg season they were supposed to feed luxuriously, and by no means to want after the young have taken wing, for in archery they have an unerring hand. Besides providing for the present, they laid up supplies for the winter.

Their life here, however, as he describes it, was that of a hunted wild beast. "From the time of their coming down to the coast," he says, "they are obliged to observe all the vigilance of war. Few in numbers, and in dread of the firearms of the whites, their life is one of constant alarm. It being necessary to separate into small families to obtain subsistence, renders them an easy conquest to a single boat's crew. There is no cod fishery, and consequently there are no inhabitants within the very exterior verge of these islands, but they are often visited by boats that carry the salmon-fishers, shipbuilders, sawyers, woodmen and furriers, as well as by such as row from isle to isle in quest of game. The Indians, from their secret haunts, let not a notion of all these people escape them. They are careful to post themselves where they can command a view of all approaches and secure an easy retreat. Their wigwams are frequently erected on a narrow isthmus, so that their canoes may be launched into the water on the safe side, wherever an enemy's boat appears⁶⁴. Both day and night they keep an unintermittent lookout, so that to surprise them requires uncommon address and subtlety. Even to gain a sight of them is no small difficulty, as they seldom fail to discover the advances of the fishermen early enough to make their retreat without being perceived. This is known to everyone who has traversed these islands to any extent, as the traces of Indians are found wherever they land, and sometimes such fresh signs of them as show that they have quitted the spot many minutes, and though these appearances may be observed every day, yet whole seasons sometimes elapse without any Indians being seen by them⁶⁵. They cannot be too watchful, for surprises in their wigwams generally prove fatal, and upon sudden accidental meetings it has been the usual practice of the fishermen to destroy them unprovoked, while, terrified, they have attempted nothing but to make their escape."

As to their numbers at that time, [some of] the people in that quarter estimated them at two hundred and others at three hundred⁶⁶. But Mr. Cartwright thought that they might amount to two hundred more. The reason why the residents estimated

⁶³ We have used the name generally employed, but the bird referred to is properly the willow grouse. (*Lagopus albus*). [Footnote in the original.]

⁶⁴ This is confirmed by their remains having been found on such positions. [Footnote in the original.]

⁶⁵ George Cartwright says: "I met with wigwams upon several of these islands in which the fires were burning, yet I never saw an Indian." [Footnote in the original.]

⁶⁶ The original reads "estimated them some at two hundred and others" etc.

them so low was that they were so seldom seen, and that only between Cape Freels and Cape John. But he justly remarks that between these two boundaries is a distance of thirty leagues, in which there would be an island for every man, and nearly twenty capacious bays and inlets deeply indenting the land. It was no wonder therefore that they could conceal themselves. His principal reason, however, for his estimate was the number of dwellings he found on the Exploits River and at the lake, and he believed also that they were to be found on some of the neighboring streams. But in the number of decaying wigwams he had painful evidence of the decrease of their numbers. And what he calls June's Cove, from its having been described by June, the Indian lad, as the site of his father's lodge, "there was a level space reaching within a quarter of a mile within the beach that was cleared of timber and covered with old marks of an Indian settlement now gone entirely to decay."

It may be mentioned that the child whose mother was killed, as mentioned [earlier]⁶⁷, was supposed to have been about four years of age at the time of his capture. He received the name of John August from the month in which he was taken. Till his death he lived among the whites. Mr. Bland, in the letter already quoted, says: "He was taken when an infant. He fell from his mother's back, who was running off with her child when she was shot, and I have been told by those who were intimate with him that he has frequently expressed a wish to meet the murderer of his mother, that he might avenge her death." Mr. Tocque mentions that in 1842 he met an old man who had seen both him and June, when he was a boy at Catalina, and said that August went master of a fishing boat out of that place for several years. All that we know farther of him is contained in the following entry in the parish register of Trinity: "1799 October 29 / Interred John August, a native Indian of this island, a servant to Jeffrey G. Street."

Mr. Cartwright brought under the notice of the governor, Sir Hugh Palliser, the cruelties practiced by the whites in the northeast part of the island upon this unfortunate people, but for a time no active measures were adopted to suppress them. And what cared the lawless trappers and fishermen of that region for proclamations, which were followed up by no practical measures? The relation between the two therefore continued as before till the arrival of Admiral Lord Gambier as governor in 1802. He interested himself in the matter, and among his first acts was the issuing of a proclamation offering a reward for the capture of a Red Indian. As a result a woman was brought to St. John's by a fisherman, of which we have the following record under date 17th September, 1803:

"William Cull having brought an Indian woman from Gander Bay to this harbor, I have for his trouble, loss of time, etc., paid him the sum of fifty pounds. The said William Cull has also promised to convey the woman back to the spot from whence she was brought, and to use his endeavors to return her to her friends among the Indians, together with the few articles of clothing which have been given her."

She is said to have been taken by Cull as she was paddling in a canoe towards a small island for birds' eggs. She was treated kindly in St. John's, and her appearance and conduct while there are thus described:

⁶⁷ The original reads "on page 131".

“She appeared to be about fifty years of age, very docile, and evidently different from all the tribes of Indians or savages of which we have any knowledge. She was of a copper color, with black eyes and hair like the hair of a European. She showed a passionate fondness for children. Being introduced into a large assembly by Governor Gambier, never were astonishment and pleasure more strongly depicted in a human countenance than hers exhibited. After having walked through the room between the governor and the general, whose gold ornaments and feathers seemed to attract her attention in a particular manner, she squatted on the floor, holding fast a bundle in which were her fur clothes, which she would not suffer to be taken away from her. She was then placed in a situation from which she had a full view of the room, and on the instant lost her serious or melancholy deportment. She looked at the musicians as if she wished to be near them. A gentleman took her by the hand, pointing to them at the same time. She perfectly understood his meaning, went through the crowd, sat with them for a short time, and then expressed in her way a wish to retire. She was everywhere treated with the greatest kindness, and appeared to be sensible of it. Being allowed to take in the shops whatever took her fancy, she showed a decided preference for bright colors, accepted what she was given, but she would not for a moment leave hold of her bundle, keenly resenting any attempt to take it from her.”⁶⁸

Cull, as appears from the above record, was to return her to her friends. As a conciliatory present to them, there were entrusted to him a quantity of goods, to the value of seventy-five dollars, consisting of fishing lines, handsaws, hatchets, nails, clasp-knives, blankets, women’s shoes, etc. There is reason to believe that the entrusting a Beothik with such an amount of goods to the care of one of the north Newfoundland fishermen, one, too, reported to have shot several of the tribe, was simply entrusting the sheep to the care of the wolf. At all events the arrangements for her return to her people were not immediately carried out, and she remained with her captor all winter. All that is recorded of her afterward is contained in the following letter, dated Fogo, September 27, 1804:-

“Sir, – This is to inform you that I could get no men until the 28th day of August, when we proceeded with the Indian to the Bay of Exploits, and then went with her up the river as far as we possibly could, for want of more strength, and there let her remain ten days, and when I returned the rest of the Indians had carried her off in the country. I would not wish to have any more hand with the Indians unless you will send round and insure payment for a number of men to go into the country in winter. The people do not hold with civilizing the Indians, as they think that they will kill more than they did before. Wm. Cull.”

The tone of this letter is rather suspicious, and many believed that instead of returning her to her friends he had murdered her for the sake of the goods sent with her.

In the year 1807 Admiral Holloway arrived as governor. Before leaving England he had formed a plan for holding intercourse with the natives, which he propounded to Lord Castlereagh in the following terms:-

⁶⁸ Anspach’s “History of Newfoundland,” p. 245. [Footnote in the original.]

“To have paintings representing the Indians and Europeans in a group, each in the usual dress of their country. The Indians bringing furs, etc., to traffic with the Europeans, who should be offering blankets, hatchets, etc. in exchange. The pictures to be taken by an officer commanding one of the schooners, to the place usually resorted to by the Indians, and left with a small quantity of European goods and trinkets, and when taken away by the Indians to be replaced by another supply.”

The idea was not a bad one. It was exactly what was done, we believe successfully, with the natives of Australia. The plan was approved by the colonial minister; a picture was prepared and sent out with the admiral. In the following year (1808) it was entrusted with a quantity of other articles, to Lieut. Spratt, who proceeded in an armed schooner to the Bay of Exploits. The picture is described as representing officers of the Royal Navy shaking hands with an Indian chief, a party of sailors laying parcels of goods at his feet, Indians, men and women, presenting furs to the officers, a European and Indian mother looking at their respective children of the same age, and a sailor courting an Indian girl. The expedition was entirely unsuccessful, and Lieut. Spratt, after searching for some time, was compelled by the advancing season to return to St. John's without having seen a single Red Indian, and bringing back the picture and the other goods.

In the following year (1809) the same officer was ordered to renew the search. Whether he did so, or if he did with what result, does not appear. In the following winter the governor engaged Wm. Cull and six others to go into the interior in search of the Indians. Accompanied by two Micmacs, they started on the 1st January, and proceeded up the river on the ice. On the fourth day, having traveled sixty miles, they discovered a building on the bank of the river, about forty or fifty feet long and nearly as wide. It was constructed of wood and covered with bark and skins of deer. In this building they found a quantity of about one hundred deer, some parts of which, from their extreme fatness, must have been obtained early in the fall. The fat venison was in junks entirely divested of bone, and stowed in boxes made of birch and spruce-rind, each box containing about two hundred weight. The tongues and hearts of the deer were stowed in the middle of the package. The bear venison, or that more recently killed, was in quarters and stored in bulk, some part of it with the skin on. In this storehouse they saw three lids of tin teakettles, which Cull believed to be the same which had been sent back by him six years before with the Indian woman he had captured. They also found several marten, beaver and deer skins, dressed after the fashion of our own furriers. On the opposite bank of the river stood a second storehouse, considerably larger than the former, but they did not examine it, the ice being broken and the crossing in consequence dangerous. In exchange for some furs they left a variety of European goods. On their way to this storehouse they saw two of the natives, but unfortunately the latter discovered the party and retired. They also saw their fences for capturing deer, to which we have referred. They believed that the residences of the Indians could not be very distant from these magazines.

But want of bread and some difference of opinion among the party prevented them from exploring farther⁶⁹.

The following winter (1810-11) offered one of the most interesting, but one of the most melancholy, narratives connected with this unfortunate people. In summer, the new governor, Sir John T. Duckworth, desirous of carrying out the benevolent intentions of the British Government, issued a proclamation in which, besides enjoining all who might meet the Indians to treat them with kindness, he offered to any person who would establish intercourse with them on a firm and settled basis, the sum of £200 as a reward for the great service he would thereby have rendered to His Majesty and the cause of humanity. It was farther promised to such person that he should be honorably mentioned to His Majesty, and receive from the governor such countenance and further encouragement as it was in His Excellency's power to give. He also made arrangements for an expedition to endeavor to open communication with them. This was placed in charge of Lieut. Buchan, commander of His Majesty's schooner Adonis, who was commissioned to obtain the assistance of Cull and the others who had been employed the previous winter in exploring the country.

Mr. Buchan accordingly went in autumn to the entrance of the River Exploits and there anchored his vessel, which soon became fixed in the ice. On the 13th January (1811) he started for the interior with twenty-three men and a boy of his crew, and with Cull and two others as guides. They met with serious difficulties from the weather and the state of traveling, but pushed on, and on the 18th they saw signs, though not very fresh, of Indians, Indian paths, sites of wigwams and deer fences. On the 22nd, when they had traveled some sixty miles, they found a storehouse seemingly newly erected. It was of circular form and covered round with deer skins. Some carcasses were left a little way from it. A few miles further they reached the spot where Cull had found the two storehouses, but which were now removed.

The following day, having advanced a few miles farther, Lieut. Buchan came to the conclusion that it was impossible to proceed farther with sledges. He therefore divided his party, leaving one-half with the stores, and taking four days' provisions with the rest renewed his journey. As they advanced the signs of the recent presence of those whom they were seeking became more apparent, and early on the morning of the 24th they came upon three wigwams, and having surrounded them the inhabitants were at once secured.

“On calling to them and receiving no answer, the skins which covered the entrance being removed, we beheld a group of men, women and children lying in the utmost consternation. They were some minutes without motion or utterance. My grand object was now to remove their fears, which was soon accomplished by our shaking hands and showing every friendly disposition. The women embraced me for my attention to their children. From alarm they became curious, and examined our dress with great attention and surprise. They kindled a fire and presented us with venison steaks, and fat run into a solid cake, which they used with lean meat. Everything promised the utmost cordiality. Knives, handkerchiefs and other little

⁶⁹ The report of the expedition will be found in the appendix to Pedley's work, page 480. [Footnote in the original.]

articles were given to them and they offered skins. I had to regret their language not being known, and the presents at the distance of at least twelve miles caused me much embarrassment. I used my utmost means to make them sensible of my wish for some of them to accompany us to bring up things such as we wore. This they seemed perfectly to comprehend. Three hours and a half having been employed in conciliating endeavors, and every appearance of the greatest amity existing between us, and considering a longer tarry useless without the means of convincing them further of our friendship, giving them to understand that we were going and indicating our intention to return, four of them signified that they would accompany us. Two of the marines observing this requested to be left behind in order to repair their snowshoes. Most of the party wished to be the individuals to remain. I was induced to comply with the first request, from a motive of showing the natives a mutual confidence. Cautioning the men to observe the utmost regularity of conduct, at 10.30 a.m., having again myself shook hands with all the natives, and expressed in the best way I could my intention to be with them in the morning, they expressed a satisfaction on seeing that two of us were going to remain, and we left them accompanied by four of them."

They traveled on together for about six miles till they reached the place where Mr. Buchan's party had made their fire the night before, when one of the natives, whom he regarded as a chief, with one of his men, refused to go further, and took his leave, directing the other two to go with Mr. Buchan. They did so till they came near the place where the goods had been left, when one of them, seemingly panic-stricken, started to go back, beckoning to his companion to follow him. The latter, however, disregarded his efforts, and, though Mr. Buchan allowed him the opportunity to return, he refused to take advantage of it. About 3 p.m. they arrived at the depot. The Indian started at seeing so many more men, but this was only for a moment, and he soon became pleased with all he saw. Mr. Buchan made him a few presents and showed him the articles that were to be taken up.

The next morning they set out on their return. The conduct of the Indian continued the same. But on reaching the site of the Indian encampment, to their astonishment they found it deserted. It was evident that the Indians had become alarmed by the return of their three countrymen, who probably told of some treachery. As there was no sign of violence, they still hoped for the safety of the marines. The Indian who had accompanied them seemed perplexed at the state of matters. Lieut. Buchan, giving him some presents, desired him to go after his people, trusting that his appearance and recital of the treatment he had received would not only be the means of liberating the men, but also of inducing the natives to return. He, however, refused to leave, and showed every disposition to conciliate his new friends.

Having left presents for the owners of the different wigwams, and attaching some to a red staff about six feet long, which the Indian had given them to understand belonged to the chief, they set out early the next morning to follow the party. The Indian accompanied them, sometimes running on before in a zig-zag direction, keeping his eyes to the ice as having a trace to guide him. When they had gone about two-thirds of a mile from the wigwams, he edged in suddenly, for an instant halted,

then took to flight with a rapidity which baffled pursuit. The cause was too soon apparent. The bodies of the two unfortunate marines lay about a hundred yards apart, pierced with arrows in the back, and the heads carried away and no vestige of garments left.

Mr. Buchan thought it his first duty, instead of following them, to return to secure the safety of the men whom he had left where the goods had been placed. Arriving there, and considering the whole situation, that any attempt to secure the persons of any would only result in bloodshed, which would frustrate all future efforts at reconciliation, and also that the weather predicted a rapid thaw, which would render traveling by the river impracticable, he resolved to return to the coast. Setting out immediately, the party arrived safely at their vessel on the 30th.

After the party had recovered from the effects of their first journey, and due preparations having been made, Lieut. Buchan, on the 5th March, set out on a second, with thirty men and provisions for twenty-two days. After starting the weather proved stormy, but on the 13th they reached the circular store house previously mentioned. They found that the natives had been there since their former journey, they had taken all the prime venison away, and there were indications of their having removed deposits of other articles. What struck him most was that the skin covering of the store on the side fronting the river and the inland side were perforated with many arrows. From this he concluded that some of them had taken a station on the bank and had shot their arrows at the store to ascertain whether the white men might not be concealed within it. From the spirit thus manifested and the state of the weather, Lieut. Buchan concluded to abandon any further pursuit. He accordingly returned to his vessel, and so ended this well-meant attempt to enter into friendly relations with the unfortunate Beothiks⁷⁰.

It was afterward ascertained that they had suspected that Capt. Buchan had gone to bring up a body of men to make them all prisoners. They had therefore resolved to break up their encampment and to alarm and join the rest of the tribe encamped around the lake. They went first to a point on the north side, where was a small encampment of sixteen souls – five men, four women, three boys and four girls. With these they proceeded across the lake to the south side, where now all that remained of the tribe were encamped. Probably the whole number would not exceed seventy souls, such was the destruction that had been going on. Here they raised the head of one of the marines which they had brought with them on a pole and danced round it for two hours. They remained here till spring, when they returned to their

⁷⁰ Full particulars are given in a letter to Lord Liverpool in 1811, most of which appear in the appendix to Mr. Pedley's work, p. 482. Lieut. Buchan may in his circumstances be excused for his course in leaving his men unprotected among them. But in any case it was not to be expected that a people who knew the whites only through a century of murder and treachery, should at once have all their suspicions removed. In this case they saw in his party the very men that they knew to be the most active in shooting them, and is it any wonder that they distrusted a party led by such guides? [Footnote in the original.]

former residence and did the same with the head of the other marine which they had left behind them⁷¹.

We hear no more of efforts on the part of the government to enter into communication with them. Of the relation between them and the settlers we are safe in assuming that it continued of the same hostile character. We next hear of this people in the beginning of the year 1819, when a person of the name of Peyton, carrying on considerable salmon fisheries in the north of the island, having been greatly annoyed and having suffered considerable losses by the depredations of the natives, determined to go into the interior with the view of recovering his lost property and of establishing a system of trade by barter with them. In this journey he was accompanied by his father and eight men, all armed. On the 5th March, on Red Indian Lake, which was then frozen, they surprised three Indians at a little distance from their wigwams. One, who proved to be a woman, was captured, or induced to stop, when a man, described as six feet high and of a noble and commanding figure, and who it was ascertained afterward was her husband, turned back and attempted to rescue her single-handed, when he was shot, and it is believed also the third of the party⁷².

The woman was taken to Twillingate, where she was placed under the care of the Church of England clergyman of that place. She received the name of Mary March from the month in which she was taken, though her native name was Demasduit. A full account of her was prepared by Capt. Hercules Robinson, of H.M.S. *Favourite*, from recollection of conversations with the Rev. Mr. Leigh⁷³, which we give nearly in full. On the death of her husband he says:- "She did not fly, shed no tears (a savage never weeps), but after a few minutes' violent struggle of emotions, which were visible on her intelligent countenance, anguish and horror appeared to give place to fear, and she went to the murderer of her husband, clung to his arm, as if for protection, and strange to say a most devoted attachment appeared from that moment to have been produced toward him, which only ended with her life⁷⁴. To him alone she [showed] gentleness, affection and obedience, and the last act of her life was to take a ring from her finger and beg that it might be sent to John Peyton." It may be stated here that

⁷¹ This information regarding the movements of the Indians, with some to be given presently, was obtained from Shanandithit, a Red Indian woman whose capture and life among the whites we shall have occasion to refer to at length. The man who accompanied Lieut. Buchan's party back to their supplies was her uncle. [Footnote in the original.]

⁷² In a vocabulary drawn up by Mr. King, mostly from Mr. Cormack's papers, his name is given as Monosebasset, and he is said to have been 6 ft. 7½ in. high. When or by whom he was measured we are not informed. But there are traditions round the coast of such gigantic men among them. Allowing for exaggerations, there is reason to believe that they were generally a tall race of men. [Footnote in the original.]

⁷³ The MS. Of this is in the British Museum, but a copy is in the Legislative Library of Nova Scotia. [Footnote in the original.]

⁷⁴ Chappell says that in like manner the woman captured by Cull was contented in the presence of females, but became outrageous if a man approached her except Cull, with whom she was gentle and affectionate. I believe the cause of this was the reaction of feeling from expecting to be killed, but instead [being] treated with kindness. [Footnote in the original.]

it was afterward ascertained that she left two children behind her, one of them an infant, which is said to have died a few days after her capture.

“The tribe was in the neighborhood of this disastrous meeting, and it was necessary that the Peytons should secure their retreat. They had a sleigh drawn by dogs in which she placed herself, when she understood that she was to accompany the party, and directed them by signs to cover her over, holding her legs out to have her moccasins laced, and here and subsequently by her helplessness, by the attention she appeared habitually to expect at the hands of others, and by her (un)acquaintance with any laborious employment, she seemed to have been accustomed to a treatment of female savages very different from that of all other tribes.” We doubt Capt. R.’s interpretation of her conduct in this respect, but it was remarked by others that her dignified mien suggested the idea of her being a chief’s wife, if not a chief in her own right.

“She was quite unlike an Eskimo in face and figure, tall and rather stout body, limbs very small and delicate, particularly her arms. Her hands and feet [were] very small and beautifully formed, and of these she was very proud. Her complexion, a light copper color, became nearly as fair as a European’s after a course of washing and absence from smoke. Her hair was black,” and others say very much like that of a European, “her eyes” black and “larger and more intelligent than those of an Eskimo, her teeth small, white and regular, her cheek bones rather high, but her countenance had a mild and pleasing expression. Her voice was sweet, low and musical.

“When brought to Fogo she was taken into the house of Mr. Leigh, the church missionary, where for some time she was ill at ease, and twice during the night attempted to escape to the woods, where she must have immediately perished in the snow. She was, however, carefully watched, and in a few weeks was tolerably reconciled to her situation, and appeared to enjoy the comforts of civilization, particularly the clothing. Her own were of dressed skins, tastefully trimmed with marten, but she would not put them on or part with them. She ate sparingly, disliked wine or spirits, [and] was very fond of sleep, never getting up to breakfast before 9 o’clock. She lay rolled up in a ball in the middle of her bed. Her extreme personal delicacy and propriety were quite remarkable and appeared more an innate feeling than any exhibition of tact or conventional trick. Her power of mimicry was very remarkable and enabled her quickly to speak the language she heard, and before this she could express herself by signs and dumb motions that were curiously significant. She described the servants, blacksmiths, tailor, shoemaker, a man who wore spectacles, and other persons whom she could not name with a most happy minuteness of imitation.”

“She would sometimes, though rarely, speak freely to Mr. Leigh, and talk of her tribe. They believe in a Great Spirit, but seem to have no religious ceremonies. Polygamy does not appear to be practiced. Mr. Leigh is of the opinion that they are about three hundred in number. I forget the data from which he calculates. They live in separate wigwams. Mary’s consisted of sixteen. The number was discovered in a rather curious manner. She went frequently to her bedroom during the day, and when

Mr. Leigh's housekeeper went up she always found her rolled up in a ball apparently asleep. At last a quantity of blue cloth was missed, and from the great jealousy that Mary showed about her trunk suspicion fell upon her. Her trunk was searched and the cloth found nicely converted into sixteen pairs of moccasins, which she had made in her bed. Two pairs of children's stockings were also found, made of a cotton nightcap. Mr. Leigh had lost one. But Mary answered angrily to all questions about her merchandise, 'John Peyton,' 'John Peyton,' meaning that he had given it to her. At last in the bottom of her trunk the tassel of the cap and the bit marked 'J.L.' were found. When looking steadfastly at Mr. Leigh, she pointed to her manufacture, said 'yours,' and ran into the woods. When brought back she was very sulky and remained so for several weeks.

"The poor captive had two children, and this was probably the tie that held her to her wigwam, for, though she appeared to enjoy St. John's when she was taken there, and her improved habits of life, she only "dragged a lengthened chain," and all her hopes and acts appeared to have a reference to her return. She hoarded clothes, trinkets and everything that was given her, and was fond of dividing them into sixteen.

"She was very obstinate, but was glad to be of any service in her power if not asked to assist. She was playful and was pleased with startling Mr. Leigh by stealing behind him softly. Her perception of anything ridiculous, with her general knowledge of character, showed much archness and sagacity. She particularly despised bachelors. When she was taken to St. John's, on entering the harbor she said to Messrs. Leigh and Peyton: "You go shore, Mr. Leigh. Mr. Peyton when go shore no *enamoose* (woman) ha ha, ha ha." She was indifferent to music, did not seem to perceive its force, liked exhibiting herself to strangers, and was very fond of putting on and taking off all the dresses, ribbands and ornaments which were given her.

"Mr. Leigh once drew on a bit of paper a boat and crew with a female figure in it going up a river, and stopping a moment at a wigwam, then described the boat freighted as before returning. Mary immediately applied the hieroglyphic and cried out: 'No no; no, no.' He then altered the drawing, taking the woman out and leaving her behind at the wigwam, when she cried very joyfully: 'Yes, yes, good for Mary.' A variety of representations more obscure than this she perceived with great quickness, and had much satisfaction in this mode of communication."

To the above Capt. R. appends the following note: "I have written these notes from the recollection of conversations with Mr. Leigh at Harbour Grace during several weeks, and I regret that I neglected to note them before many interesting particulars had escaped my memory."

As it is, the above is the fullest description of a Beothik that we possess. Its truthfulness and consequent value are apparent on its face.

Demasduit, as here delineated, is a specimen, but a very favorable one, of a savage, or one brought up apart from civilization. In her self-will, her occasional pettishness and aversion to steady labor we have the faults of such, so like those of children. Her quickness of observation, her reading of character and her power of imitation are the gifts which, being most cultivated among them, become best

developed. Her acquisitiveness, which was a feature also of the other females who lived with the whites, can scarcely be regarded as characteristic of the uncivilized, but I scarcely know whether it should be held as evidence of a capacity for civilization. But her modesty and propriety of behavior, her kindness and gentleness, her gratitude for favors and her affection for her kindred present her in a very favorable light. Indeed, in such respects, she and others of the tribe that have lived among the whites were very different from the idea we have of savages.

If the interpretation given of her use of the number sixteen be correct, which we see no reason to doubt, then it shows that they had to some extent the communal system of family life. We may add here that, according to all the information that has come down to us, the Beothiks were monogamists and their wives chaste. All the women of the tribe who lived among the whites have been marked by their modesty of demeanor. This has been a distinguishing feature of the Algonquin tribes, and it may indicate some ethnological affinity between them.

Demasduit was taken to St. John's, where she was treated with great kindness, and by her modest and gentle demeanor, as well as her intelligence, she drew much interest towards herself. A miniature of her was drawn by Lady Hamilton, said to be strikingly like her, of which a copy appears in Tocque's "Wandering Thoughts," [facing] p. 373⁷⁵, which we reproduce. (Fig. 3). She acquired considerable facility in the use of English, and sanguine hopes were entertained that through her means communication might be opened with her tribe. Her heart, too, was with them in her wigwam on the banks of the Red Indian Lake, where she had left brothers, sisters and children. When therefore the governor appointed Capt. Buchan to the charge of an expedition to take her back and to establish friendly relations with them, it seemed as if a brighter day for this people was dawning, and that they were at last to be introduced to the blessings of Christianity and civilization. It was not to be. She left St. John's with a bad cough, which developed into consumption, and at the mouth of the River Exploits she died on the 8th January, 1829.

⁷⁵ The original incorrectly refers to p. 273.



Fig. 3. Portrait of Mary March⁷⁶.

This was too likely to increase the obstacles in the way of establishing peaceful intercourse with a race naturally become so suspicious. All that could be done in the way of conciliation was done. Capt. B. had the body wrapped in linen and placed in a coffin. This he left on the margin of a lake in the interior, where it was likely to be found by her people.

It was afterwards ascertained that all that remained of the tribe were that winter encamped on the banks of the River Exploits. Their numbers had decreased during the few years preceding. Shanandithit drew a pencil sketch of a gun and a puff of smoke to indicate that the shooting was still going on. At this time, according to her statement, they were then reduced to four families – her father's, numbering five, her uncle's, seven, a third nine, and the fourth six, making twenty-seven in all, occupying three camps. They saw Capt. Buchan and his party pass up the river on the ice, but made no sign. They then went down to the seacoast near the mouth of the river, where they remained a month. After that they returned up the river, and saw the tracks of Capt. B.'s party returning. They then went by a circuitous route to the lake, and to the spot where Mary March's body had been left. They opened the coffin with hatchets and took out the clothes, etc., that had been left with her. It was allowed to remain suspended as they found it for one month. It was then placed on the ground,

⁷⁶ The image shown is a lightly edited composite, by C. Willmore, of the images in Patterson and Tocque.

where it remained two months, when in spring they removed it to the house-tomb which they had built for her husband, and laid her by his side.

We hear of no farther contact with the Beothiks till the winter of 1823, when two men named C— and A—, near Badger Bay, fell in with an Indian man and woman, who approached apparently soliciting food. The man was first killed, and the woman, who was afterward found to be his daughter, in despair remained calmly to be fired at, when she was also shot through the chest and immediately expired. This was told Mr. Cormack by the man who did the deed.

About a month after, and in the same neighborhood, a Red Indian family was fallen in with by a band of furriers, at the head of whom was Cull, already mentioned. They first saw an Indian man and woman. According to one account the former fled, but the latter approached Cull and his party, and afterward led them to a clump of bushes where her two daughters were, the one aged about twenty, whose native name was Shanandithit, to whom we have already referred. But according to another account as given in the journal of the Rev. W. Wilson, the party had gone two and two in different directions, when one of these bands saw an Indian on a distant hill, and supposing him to be one of their party, they fired a gun loaded only with powder to let their friends know of their whereabouts. A Red Indian generally fled at the report of a musket, but this man only quickened his pace, and came toward them in a threatening attitude and with a large club in his hand. They summoned him to surrender, but he came on with redoubled fury, and when nearly at the muzzle of their guns one of the men fired and he fell dead at their feet. He adds that the men were brought to trial, but there being no evidence against them they were acquitted. From this statement we cannot doubt that the Indian was shot, but it is very unlikely that one man armed only with a club should advance to attack two men armed with muskets. If he did, it could only have been from his being in a state of desperation. Mr. Wilson has given the statement of those engaged in the affair, but circumstances now known leave little doubt that they came to solicit food. At all events the three women were captured, and were found to be all seemingly in a starving condition.

From Shanandithit it was afterward ascertained that famine and disease had been doing their deadly work among the feeble remnants of the Beothiks. Of the twenty-seven, three years before, three of the second family, one of the third and two of the fourth had died. They had long been too feeble to keep up their deer-fences, and at their old resorts food had failed. Driven by hunger, some, perhaps the whole remnant, resolved to risk death at the hands of the whites by going down to the coast, if haply they might prolong life by gathering mussels or other food to be found there. Shanandithit's uncle and his family were among the first to go. But he and his daughter were the parties shot, as we have mentioned⁷⁷, and the two remaining members of the family "afterwards died." Shanandithit's family followed, with the result, as we have seen, that one was killed and three captured. What became of the fifth we are not informed. This would leave only twelve remaining besides him. They are stated to have consisted of five men, four women, one lad and two children, and

⁷⁷ It is presumed that he was the same who accompanied Lieut. Buchan back to his supplies. [Footnote in the original.]

to have taken their course toward the lake. At all events none of them were ever seen or heard of more, and there cannot be a doubt that they all perished. Indeed, from the state approaching starvation at which they were at this time, it is not likely that any of them survived that spring.

Mr. Peyton brought the three women to St. John's, to receive the reward offered by the government for bringing in a Red Indian. The Rev. W. Wilson, who met them and tried to converse with them, says in his journal of them:-

"They were first taken to Government House, and by order of His Excellency the Governor a comfortable room in the court-house was assigned to them as a place of residence, where they were treated with every possible kindness. The mother is far advanced in life, but seems in good health. Beds were provided for them, but they did not understand their use, and they slept on their deer-skins in the corner of the room. One of the daughters was ill, yet she would take no medicine. The doctor recommended phlebotomy⁷⁸, and a gentleman allowed a vein to be opened in his arm to show her that there was no intention to kill her, but this was to no purpose; for when she saw the lancet brought near her own arm both she and her companions got into a state of fury, so that the doctor had to desist. Her sister was in good health. If she had ever used red ochre about her person, there was no sign of it on her face. Her complexion was swarthy, not unlike the Micmacs. Her features were handsome. She was a tall, fine figure, and stood nearly six feet high, and such a beautiful set of teeth I do not know that I ever saw in a human head.

"In her manner she was bland, affable and affectionate. I showed her my watch. She put it to her ear and was amused with its tick. A gentleman put a looking-glass before her and her grimaces were most extraordinary. But when a black lead-pencil was put into her hand and a piece of white paper laid upon the table she was in raptures. She made a few marks on the paper, apparently to try the pencil. Then in one flourish she drew a deer perfectly, and, what is more surprising, she began at the tip of the tail. This person, whose Indian name is Shanandithit, is thought to be the wife of the man who was shot⁷⁹. The old woman was morose, and had the look and action of a savage. She would sit all day on the floor, with a deer-skin shawl on, and looked with dread or hatred upon everyone that entered the court-house." It may be added that she continued to show much the same spirit.

Under date June 24th, the same journal has the following references to them:-

"Saw the three Indian women in the street. The ladies had dressed them in English garb, but over their dress they had on their, to them indispensable, deer-skin shawls. And Shanandithit, thinking the long front of her bonnet an unnecessary appendage, had torn it off, and in its place had decorated her forehead and her arms with tinsel and colored paper. They took a few trinkets and a quantity of the fancy paper that is usually wrapped round pieces of linen. But their great selection was

⁷⁸ Blood-letting. One a common part of Western medicine, now it is used very rarely for the treatment of specific conditions.

⁷⁹ It has since been said that he was her uncle. But from her statements it appears that her uncle was the man shot just shortly before. We judge this man to have been her father. He was plainly the head of the family. [Footnote in the original.]

pots, kettles, hatchets, hammers, nails and other articles of ironmongery, with which they were loaded so that they could scarcely walk. It was painful to see the sick woman, who, notwithstanding her debility, was determined to have her share of these valuable treasures.”

It was found that the youngest daughter was in consumption. The mother also was unwell. It was therefore deemed prudent to hasten their return to their people. This work was entrusted to Mr. Peyton, who was furnished with a large number of presents, consisting of such articles as would be most likely to please them. These he was instructed to use as circumstances and his own discretion might render most suitable as “an incitement to these poor creatures to repose confidence in our people in that part of the coast they frequent.”

A vessel was sent to take the women to the place whence they came. The ship’s boat took all their things ashore. Then the women went with great reluctance. But when they were landed and the boat was about to leave them, they cried, they screamed, and rushed into the water after the boat. The captain’s orders were to put them ashore and leave them. But in the circumstances he felt that this would be cruel. He therefore determined to leave them with the people who had captured them. The sick daughter soon died and the mother did not long survive. Shanandithit stated that the reason they were all unwilling to go back to their own people was that they would be killed as traitors, having been among the whites, but probably they did not wish to go back to the state of misery in which they had left the remnant of the tribe.

In the year 1827 a “Bœothick Society” was formed in St. John’s for the special purpose of holding communication with the remnant of the tribe, if still existent, and to do what was possible for their improvement. For this purpose an expedition was organized to traverse that portion of the island, which they had been known to occupy, and was placed under the charge of Mr. Cormack, who had crossed the island in 1822. He accordingly proceeded to the Bay of Exploits, and from his report laid before the Bœothick Society we shall transcribe those portions which bear upon the special object of his journey:-

[FROM THE REPORT OF MR. CORMACK]

“My party consisted of three Indians, an intelligent and able man of the Abenaki tribe from Canada, an elderly Mountaineer from Labrador, and an adventurous young Micmac, a native of this island, together with myself.

“On the 31st October, 1827, we entered the country at the mouth of the River Exploits, on the north side, at the branch called the Northern Arm. We took a northwesterly direction, which led us to Hall’s Bay, through an almost uninterrupted forest, and over a hilly country in eight days. This tract includes the interior country, extending from New Bay, Badger Bay, Seal Bay, etc., being minor bays branching from Notre Dame Bay, and well known to have been heretofore the summer residences of the Red Indians.

“On the fourth day after our departure, at the east end of Badger Bay, Great Lake, at a portage known by the name of the Indian path, we found traces made by the Red Indians evidently in the spring or summer of the preceding year. Their party had had two canoes, and here was a canoe rest, on which the daubs of red ochre and

the roots of trees used to fasten or to tie it appeared fresh. A canoe rest is simply a few beams supported horizontally about five feet from the ground by perpendicular posts. A party with two canoes when descending from the interior to the sea coast, through such a part of the country as this, where there are troublesome portages, leave one canoe resting bottom up on this kind of frame, to protect it from injury by the weather until their return. Among other things which lay strewed about here were a spear shaft eight feet in length, recently made and ochred, parts of old canoes, fragments of their skin dresses, etc. For some distance around the trunks many of the birch and fir had been rinded, these people using the inner bark of the latter for food⁸⁰. Some of the cuts in the trees with the axe were evidently made the preceding year. Besides these we were elated by other encouraging signs. The traces left by the Red Indians are so peculiar that we were confident those we saw here were made by them.

“This spot has been a favourable place of settlement with these people. It is situated at the commencement of a portage, which forms a communication by a path between the sea coast at Badger Bay, about eight miles to the northeast, and a chain of lakes extending westerly and southerly from hence and discharging their surplus waters into the River Exploits, about thirty miles from its mouth. A path also leads from this place to the lakes near New Bay to the seaward. Here are the remains of one of their villages, where the vestiges of eight or ten mammateeks or wigwams, each intended to contain from six to eighteen or twenty people, are distinctly seen close together. Besides these there are the remains of a number of summer wigwams. Every winter wigwam has close by it a small, square-mouthed or oblong pit dug in the earth about four feet deep, in which to preserve their stores, etc. Some of these pits were lined with birch rind. We discovered also in this village the remains of a vapor bath. The method used by the Beothiks to raise the steam was by pouring water on large stones made very hot for the purpose by burning a quantity of wood around them. After this process the ashes were removed, and a hemispherical frame work, closely covered with skins to exclude the external air, was fixed over these stones. The patient then crept in under the skins, taking with him a birth-rind bucket of water and a small bark dish with which to pour it on the stones, and to enable him to raise the steam at pleasure⁸¹.

“At Hall’s Bay we got no useful information from the three (and three only) English families settled; indeed we could hardly have expected any. For these and such people have been the unchecked and ruthless destroyers of the tribe, the remnants of which we were in search of. After sleeping one night in a house we again struck into the country to the westward.

⁸⁰ Doubtful. [Note in the original. The present curator recalls accounts of similar bark-eating taking place in Finland during times of starvation, and does not find it as far-fetched as the original annotator.]

⁸¹ Lescarbot describes the Micmacs as having the same process, and it is common among many tribes of America. Shanandithit explained that they used it principally with old people for the cure of rheumatism. [Note in the original.]

“In five days we were in the high lands south of White Bay and in sight of the high lands east of the Bay of Islands, on the west coast of Newfoundland. The country south and west of us was low and flat, consisting of marshes southerly more than thirty miles. We looked out for two days from the summits of the hills trying to discover the smoke from the camps of the Red Indians, but in vain, though these hills command a very extensive view of the country in every direction.

“We now determined to proceed toward the Red Indian Lake, sanguine that at that known rendezvous we should find the objects of our search.

“In about two days we got a glimpse of this beautifully majestic and splendid sheet of water. The ravages of fire, which we saw in the woods for the last two days, indicated that man had been near. We looked down upon the lake, from the hills at the northern extremity, with feelings of anxiety and admiration. No canoe could be seen moving on its placid surface. We were the first Europeans⁸² who had seen it in its unfrozen state. We approached the lake with hope and caution, but found, to our mortification, that the Red Indians had deserted it for some years past. My party had been so excited, so sanguine and so determined to obtain an interview of some kind with these people, that on discovering, from appearances everywhere around us, that the Red Indians, the terror of the Europeans as well as of the other Indian inhabitants of Newfoundland, no longer existed, the spirits of one and all of us were very deeply affected. The old Mountaineer was particularly overcome. There were everywhere indications that this had long been the central and undisturbed rendezvous of the tribe.

“We spent several melancholy days wandering on the borders of the east end of the lake, surveying the various remains of what we now contemplated to be a cruelly extirpated people. At several places by the margin of the lake are small clusters of summer and winter wigwams in ruins. There was one wooden building, constructed for drying and smoking venison in, still perfect, also a small log-house in a dilapidated condition, which we took to have been a storehouse. The wreck of a large, handsome birch-rind canoe, about twenty-two feet in length, comparatively new, and certainly very little used, lay thrown up among the bushes at the beach. The iron nails, of which there was no want, all remained in it. Had there been any survivors, nails being much prized by these people, such an article would likely have been taken out again. All the birch trees in the vicinity of the lake had been rinded, and likewise many of the spruce fir.

“Their wooden repositories of the dead are in the most perfect state of preservation. These are of different construction, it would appear, according to the rank of the person entombed. In one of them, which resembled a hut ten feet by eight or nine and four or five feet high in the centre, floored with square poles, the roof covered with the rind of trees, and in every way well secured against the weather and the intrusion of wild beasts, the bodies of two full-grown persons were laid at length on the floor and wrapped round with deer-skins. One of these bodies appeared to be entombed not longer than five or six years. We thought there were children laid in here also. On first opening this building, by removing the posts which formed the

⁸² The visit of Cartwright was at this time forgotten. [Note in the original.]

ends, our curiosity was raised to the highest pitch; but what added to our surprise, was the discovery of a white deal coffin containing a skeleton neatly shrouded in white muslin. After a long pause of conjecture how such a thing existed here, the idea of Mary March occurred to one of the party, and the whole mystery was at once explained. [...]⁸³

“Our only and frail hope now left of seeing the Red Indians lay on the banks of the River Exploits on our return to the sea coast.

“Down this noble lake the steady perseverance and intrepidity of my [sic.] Indians carried me on rafts in four days. We arrived at various places on both banks of the river on our way down, but found no traces of the Red Indians, so recent as those seen at the portage at Badger Bay, Grand Lake, toward the beginning of our excursion.

“What arrests the attention most in gliding down the stream is the extent of the Indian fences to entrap deer. It was melancholy to contemplate the gigantic yet rude efforts of a whole primitive nation, in their anxiety to provide subsistence, forsaken and going to decay. There must have been hundreds of Red Indians, and that not many years ago, to have kept up these fences and pounds. As their numbers were lessened, so was their ability to keep them up for the purposes intended, and now the deer pass the whole line unmolested.”

Though scarce a hope remained of finding a Red Indian, yet the Bœothick Institute placed the Indians who had accompanied Mr. Cormack on their establishment to be employed in farther efforts for that purpose, and in the following summer sent them on an exploratory journey to the northern part of the island. They were to proceed in a schooner to Croke Harbor, and there putting themselves in communication with the French commandant, endeavor to obtain information as to the existence of Red Indians in that quarter. If they heard of such they were to proceed to and examine the spot.

If they received no intelligence of them to the north of that point they were to “proceed westwardly into the interior for about twenty miles, thence to take a southerly direction to White bay; thence passing round the head of White Bay, and thence easterly and southerly in such directions as may appear the best for the object in view through the country toward the mouth of the River Exploits, being careful to examine particularly the whole of the lakes, rivers and country along the route now described, so that the party may be able to give the most unequivocal information that no part of the country has been left unsearched.”

They proceeded on their mission, but we have no particulars of their journey. The result, however, was, though there were rumors about the same time of some natives having been seen, to confirm the impression that they had entirely disappeared.

In 1829 Shanandithit died in St. John’s. She lived in Mr. Cormack’s house till he left the island in that year, when she was taken into the house of the Attorney-General, Mr. Simms, where every attention was paid to her wants. But consumption,

⁸³ I have here omitted a discussion of what was found inside the graves, out of a perhaps misguided concern for the privacy of a then-recently extinct (or nearly so) people.

which had proved so fatal to others of her people, brought within the restraints of civilization, claimed her for its prey, and though she had the best medical attendance her strength declined. She was therefore removed to the hospital, where she died on the 6th June. Two days after, she was buried in the Church of England graveyard⁸⁴, and so closed⁸⁵ one of the dark pages of the progress of man in the new world.

⁸⁴ The following is the record in the parish register: "June 8, 1829, Nancy Shanandithit, æt. 23, South Side (very probably the last of the aborigines), F. Carrington, rector." It is remarkable that all the females of the Beothiks who have lived among the whites have died in consumption. A tendency of this kind has been manifested in other instances of savages changing their old modes of life for those of civilization. Dr. Hind mentions that the Montagnais and other tribes in Labrador, while in the cold, dry air of the interior are healthy enough, but when they come down to the coast with its damp, chilly atmosphere, they immediately become subject to influenza, which very commonly ends in consumption. In the Northwest, I was informed that before the cession of that territory the traders were in the habit of taking Indian women as servants, but that pulmonary disorders were apt to appear among them, which was attributed to the change from a life so much of which was spent in the open air to one in the confined air of the close dwellings of the whites. That this was the real cause appeared from the fact that on the same parties going to their own lodges, through which one would think all the winds of heaven would pass freely, they generally soon recovered. [Note in the original.]

⁸⁵ I find this paragraph a fitting ending for the extract in this collection. The original contains two more sections, on Remains and Ethnology, which for the obvious reasons contain a great amount of speculation and guesswork.

THE END OF THE BEOTHUK WORLD⁸⁶

The Beothuk are believed to be the original human inhabitants of Newfoundland. Conflict with European settlers drove them to extinction. They were called “Red Indians” from their practice of tinting their skin with red ochre, starting the association, in settler minds, between Indigenous people and red skin.

“Trades with the natives of the country”⁸⁷ (1622)

Gentle reader, seeing my former discourse received such good approbation and allowance before it was printed, it puts me in some hope, it will also receive good acceptance from all his Majesty’s well-affected subjects, now that it is published: the which when I shall understand by their thankful acceptance, I shall be encouraged the more willingly, to set forth what I have observed touching the altitude of some head-lands of that coast, on the east side of the Newfoundland, and also the deeps, and several soundings, that I have taken notice of in my travels to that country; which I conceive to be necessary to those that trade thither; which as yet no man, to my knowledge, has undertaken; and also be ready with my life and means whatsoever I have, or may have in this world, to discover other bays and harbors round about that land, which are yet undiscovered, whereby to find out some other new trades with the natives of the country; for they have great stores of red ochre, which they use to color their bodies, bows and arrows, and canoes withal, which canoes are built in shape, like the wherries on the River Thames; but that they are much longer, made with the rinds of birch trees; which they sew very artificially and close together, and overlay ever seam with turpentine; and in like manner they sew the rinds of spruce trees, round and deep, in proportion like a brass kettle, to boil their meat in, which has been well proved by three mariners of a ship, riding at anchor by me, who being robbed in the night by the savages, of their apparel and diverse provisions, did the next day seek after them, and came suddenly where they had set up three tents and were feasting, having three canoes by them, and had three pots made of such rinds of trees, standing each of them on three stones boiling with twelve fowls in each of them; every fowl as big as a widgeon, and some so big as a duck: they had also many such pots so sewn, and fashioned like the leather buckets that are used for [the] quenching of fire, and those were full of the yolks of eggs, that they had taken and boiled hard, and so dried small, which the savages used in their broth, as sugar is used in some meats: they had great store of the skins of deer, beavers, bears, seals, otters, and diverse other fine skins which were well dressed; as also great store of several sorts of flesh dried; and by shooting off a musket towards them, they all ran away naked without any apparel, but only their hats on their heads, which were made of seal skins, in

⁸⁶ This section’s title is inspired by the title of a classic article on the Beothuk: Pastore, R. (1989). The Collapse of the Beothuk World. *Acadiensis*, 19(1), 52-71.

⁸⁷ From Whitbourne, R. & Whitburn, T. [Ed.] (1870). *Westward Hoe for Avalon in the New-found-land as described by Captain Richard Whitbourne, of Exmouth, Devon, 1622*. London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston.

fashion like our hats, sewn handsomely with narrow bands about them, set round with fine white shells, such as are carried from Portugal to Brazil; where they pass to the Indians as ready money. All their three canoes, their flesh, skins, yolks of eggs, targets, bows and arrows, and much fine ochre and diverse other things, they took and brought away, and shared it amongst those three that took it, and brought to me the best canoe, bows and arrows, and diverse of their skins, and many other things worth the noting; which may seem to invite us to find out some other trades with them.

“The irascible Red Indians of Newfoundland”⁸⁸ (1818)

The Red Indians study the art of concealment so effectually, that, although often heard, they are seldom seen. An old fisherman of St. George’s Bay informed us, that himself and a few others had once approached a party of this people, near enough to distinguish their voices; but upon hastening to the spot whence the sounds proceeded, the Natives were gone, their fire extinguished, the embers scattered in the woods, and dry leaves strewed over the ashes! The Red Indians are not a numerous race of people; and they are rarely to be observed, excepting in the north, northeastern, and northwestern parts of Newfoundland. They inhabit chiefly the interior of the country, in the vicinity of Fogo, Twillingate, and White Bay. Sometimes, however, they make excursions towards the maritime parts, for purposes of murder and pillage; and upon such occasions they are wonderfully expert in concealing their tracks from pursuit. Fortunately for the European sealers, they have not acquired the use of fire-arms and will never approach near to any person who is armed with a musket.

Many attempts have been recently made to open a friendly intercourse with the irascible Red Indians of Newfoundland; and the Government lately offered a reward of fifty pounds to any person who should bring one of them alive to St. John’s. At length, a fisherman contrived to seize a young female, who was paddling her canoe to procure birds’ eggs from an islet at a short distance from the main land. This woman was immediately conveyed to the capital, the fisherman received his reward, and the captive was treated with great humanity, kindness, and attention. The principal merchants and ladies of St. John’s vied with each other in cultivating her good graces; and presents poured in upon her from all quarters. She seemed to be tolerably contented with her situation, when surrounded by a company of female visitors; but became outrageous if any man approached, excepting the person who deprived her of her liberty: to him she was ever gentle and affectionate. Her body and hair were stained of a red color; as it is supposed, by juice extracted from the alder tree: and from the custom of dyeing the skin and hair, the nation has acquired the appellation of Red Indians.

⁸⁸ From Chappell, E. (1818). *Voyage of His Majesty’s Ship Rosamond to Newfoundland and the Southern Coast of Labrador*. London: J. Mawman. Written by Edward Chappell (1792 – 1861).

When this singular female had remained long enough at St. John's to be made perfectly sensible of the kindness and good intentions of the Europeans, the fisherman who brought her thither was desired to re-conduct her to the spot whence he had formerly dragged her away. The sequel of the story is so horrid, that it would scarcely have been credited, had not the author received it upon the testimony of many respectable persons in different parts of Newfoundland; so that he was finally induced, however unwillingly, to give it his full and entire belief. The villain who had deprived this poor savage of her relations, her friends, and her liberty, conceived, and actually carried into execution, the diabolical scheme of murdering her on her voyage back, in order to possess himself of the baubles which had been presented to her by the inhabitants of St. John's. By this barbarous act, the assassin obtained articles to the value of nearly a hundred pounds; and it is said, that he has since retired to England, to enjoy the plunder of his unfortunate victim. The sufferings of the damned are hardly less envious than such enjoyment!

Some time after this event took place, Lieutenant Buchan, commanding his Majesty's schooner Adonis, was ordered to pass a winter at the river of Exploits, in the northeast part of Newfoundland; for the express purpose of opening a friendly intercourse with the Red Indians. This officer succeeded in obtaining an interview with one of their tribes; and from their peaceable deportment, he was induced to leave two of his marines in their company; at the same time taking two of the Indians on board with him, as hostages for their countrymen's good faith. A trivial circumstance delayed the return of the Lieutenant beyond the time he had promised, and the natives were so much incensed at his supposed treachery, that they chopped off the heads of the two Englishmen in their possession, and retired into the woods whence they came. The Indian hostages were re-accompanied to the shore by Lieutenant Buchan; but they had sufficient cunning to guess how matters must have gone on during their absence; immediately, therefore, upon being landed, they made their escape into the forest, to join in the general exultation of their tribe at this massacre of two detested Whites. On searching near the place, where the unfortunate marines had been left, their ghastly heads were found lying on the moss; but the Indians had carried off the bodies.

Thus ended fatally the only intercourse that Lieutenant Buchan, with much fatigue and trouble, had been able to obtain; and every prospect of a reconciliation with the Red Indians appears now to be entirely at an end. Such an event is, however, much hoped for, by many; because, although the Natives are not numerous, yet they are sufficiently formidable to keep the northern settlers in continual apprehension and fear.

“The arrival of a female native Indian of Newfoundland”⁸⁹ (1819)

Another remarkable occurrence assisted likewise in giving employment to the public curiosity and attention. It was the arrival of a female native Indian of Newfoundland, brought tin by the master of a vessel, who had seized her by surprise in the neighborhood of the Bay of Exploits. She appeared to be about fifty years of age, very docile, and evidently different from all the tribes of Indians or savages of which we have any knowledge. She was of a copper color, with black eyes, and hair much like the hair of a European. She showed a passionate fondness for children. Being introduced into a large assembly by Governor Gambier, never were astonishment and pleasure more strongly depicted in a human countenance than hers exhibited. After having walked through the room between the Governor and the General, whose gold ornaments and feathers seemed to attract her attention in a particular manner, she squatted on the floor, holding fast a bundle, in which were her fur clothes, which she would not suffer to be taken away from her. She was then placed in a situation from which she had a full view of the whole room, and in the instant lost her usual serious or melancholy deportment. She looked at the musicians as if she wished to be near them. A gentleman took her by the hand, pointing to them at the same time; she perfectly understood his meaning, went through the crowd, sat with them for a short time, and then expressed, in her way, a wish for retiring. She could not be prevailed upon to dance, although she seemed inclined to do so. She was every where treated with the greatest kindness, and appeared to be sensible of it. Being allowed to take in the shops whatever struck her fancy, she showed a decided preference for bright colors, accepted what was given her, but still would not for a moment leave hold of her bundle, keenly resenting any attempt to take it from her. She was afterwards sent back to the spot from whence she had been taken, with several presents; and a handsome remuneration was given to the master of the vessel who had brought her, with a strict charge to take every possible care for her safety

“The interesting stranger”⁹⁰ (1819)

On Sunday last, the curiosity of the good people of this town [St. John’s] was gratified by an unexpected visit from one of the Red Indians, a native tribe, so called from the pigment of red earth with which they color their bodies. The interesting stranger is a young woman, apparently about twenty; and she is only the second of her tribe which has been seen among the Anglo-American people of the island for the last half century. It is well known that the Red Indians are an aboriginal race of men, who were found along the coasts of the island, at the time of its discovery by Europeans; but, from the ill usage they received on all sides, they have long been compelled to retire into the interior, and to fly from the face of every animal in human

⁸⁹ From Anspach, L. A. (1819). *A history of the island of Newfoundland*. London: T. and J. Allman. Written by Lewis Amadeus Anspach (1770 – 1823).

⁹⁰ From THE RED INDIANS. (1819, August 2). *The Caledonian Mercury*, p. 4., quoting the *Newfoundland Mercantile Journal* of May 27, 1819.

form, as their certain and most deadly enemy. In the north of the island, they are frequently visited by predatory parties of Esquimaux from the Labrador, and murdered wherever they are met; in the south, they are literally hunted like wild deer by the Micmacs, from the neighboring provinces, and slain for the skins in which they are clothed⁹¹; and we may form a probable estimate of the treatment they have been led to experience from our own people upon the seashores, from the fact that they fly their approach with the utmost precipitation and horror, and the knowledge that, until very lately, it was not generally understood in this island to be a punishable offence to shoot an Indian.

In consequence of this habitual persecution and cruelty, which every well-informed person in this island knows are not exaggerated in the relation, we could not but believe that the Red Indians were the most ferocious and intractable of the savage tribes, impelled by no motives but those of hunger and hostility. And it is with no less astonishment than pleasure, that we find, in the young woman who has been brought amongst us, a gentle being, sensibly alive to every mild impression and delicate propriety of her sex. Indeed, her appearance and manners are so different from any thing which we could be led to anticipate, that many persons were induced to believe the whole story to be an imposture, and that the woman was in reality one of the friendly tribes of Indians, who had volunteered a visit to St. John's. The following facts will, however, place the truth of the matter out of the reach of doubt.

In the summer of last year, a party of Indians descended the River of Exploits, in the night, and finding a boat there belonging to a Mr. John Payton⁹², who carries on a fishery on that part of the island, they possessed themselves of every thing they could remove from the boat, and then cut it adrift. We learn that among other things which Mr. Payton lost was a chest containing his clothes, his watch, and various other articles of value. His son, the younger Payton⁹³, soon after came to St. John's, where he deposed as to the above facts, and communicated his intention of seeking the settlement of the Indians in the winter, in the hope of recovering his lost property, and of coming to an amicable understanding with the depredators in future. Accordingly, the two Paytons, with a party of eight men, set forward in March last, and, after travelling about eighty miles into the interior, they surprised a company of the natives, who were living in wigwams erected on a large frozen lake. The Indians at first fled with alarm, but Payton's party having overtaken and detained one woman, three men took courage and came up to them; at first they seemed friendly, but finding the woman was not released, one of the Indians boldly took hold of the elder Payton, who is a very old man, and endeavored to drag him into the woods. Payton several times disengaged himself from the Indian, and was as often seized again, and in endeavoring to wrest his gun from him, the other⁹⁴ was unfortunately shot dead.

⁹¹ Possibly a tall tale. I've been unable to find a specific, documented instance of this.

⁹² John Peyton Sr. (1749 – 1829).

⁹³ John Peyton Jr. (c. 1791 – 1849) would be appointed the first stipendiary magistrate for Fogo and Twillingate, Newfoundland, in 1836. He held that post until his death.

⁹⁴ Nonosbawsut, husband of Demasduit.

After this unfortunate catastrophe, the two other Indians, who had been holding an intercourse with the tribe in the woods, and apparently with a view of collecting a force, ran off, and Payton's party proceeded with their captive to the wigwams, where they found the chief part of the articles which had been lost, and, among the rest, the case of the watch. It was resolved, upon deliberation, that the young woman⁹⁵ should accompany them to their establishment, in order to acquire sufficient knowledge to act as a future interpreter and mediator; and with this view, partly, she has been brought to St. John's, but principally to obtain the means of finishing the laudable work which has been thus auspiciously commenced, of opening a friendly intercourse with our unfortunate countrymen in the woods.

By judicious management we have now the means, which have been long desired by the more humane inhabitants of this island, of communicating to the native Indians the friendly dispositions of our people towards them, and their desire to punish all those people who shall violate their rights. If the present opportunity be lost, it may never occur again, under circumstances equally favorable. The young woman is tractable to a degree, and seems to acquire English words with great facility, and thus promises to furnish the first means of intercourse, as interpreter, and one who can testify, from her own experience, the kind treatment she has experienced among us.

We cannot but conclude with a fervent hope that Government and the people will take a decided part in this really national affair; and endeavor to extend the blessings of peace and protection to a class of his Majesty's subjects in this island who, we are willing to believe, have been hitherto neglected, only because they have been forgotten.

A British Sailor's Impression of Demasduit⁹⁶ (1819)

The following extract from a letter of an Officer of his Majesty's ship *Drake*, gives an account of an unsuccessful but meritorious effort, to establish a communication with the original inhabitants of the Island of Newfoundland:

Early in June we sailed to Tullingate⁹⁷, for the purpose of taking on board one of the Aborigines (commonly called Red Indians) of Newfoundland. – She was taken last winter, in the Bay of Exploits, by Mr. Payton, and a party of nine or ten men, who had a kind of skirmish with two or three of her tribe, in which one of the Indians was unfortunately killed. – From Tullingate we proceeded with our new female acquaintance to Fortune Harbour, situated in the Bay of Exploit. The object of the expedition was to endeavor to open a friendly intercourse between the unfortunate natives and his Majesty's subjects. Strong hopes were entertained that the female, from the great attention and kind treatment she received, would have been of considerable service in opening the desired communication; she, however, proved of

⁹⁵ Demasduit, called Mary March by her captors.

⁹⁶ From GUILDHALL, LONDON. (1819, November 22). *The Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle and General Advertiser*, p. 4.

⁹⁷ Twillingate, Newfoundland.

no use; but, whether from stupidity, or from entertaining some suspicion that our intentions were not friendly, it is difficult to determine.

This much I can say, that to me and some others, she appeared remarkably dull and stupid, her face being utterly devoid of expression. – It is said, in some of the English papers, that she acquired the English language with facility; but this I beg to deny. She could, indeed, apply *yes* and *no* pretty correctly, but no other words did she fully comprehend. ‘Tis true she could pronounce almost any word, and say “pretty, very pretty,” just as a parrot would say “poll, pretty poll.” She was five weeks on board the *Drake*, and was never once observed to endeavor to make herself understood, either in her own, or in any other language. She has a strong resemblance to the Malays; and [is], I believe, possessed of a considerable share of their cunning, but destitute of their vindictive spirit.

When taken, she was dressed in a large cassock that reached to her ankles, made from the skins of deer and martins; but afterwards she assumed the English garb. – The boats of the *Drake* fell in with several Wigwams, pitched close to the beach; however, the Indians, on discovering them approach to the land, scampered into the woods and were no more seen. – They are represented to be as cautious and watchful as beasts of prey. The few articles necessary for their mode of living are uncouthly rude – their clothing is entirely made from the skins of deers, bears, foxes, &c. They are supposed to have no settled place of abode; but roam where they are most likely to fall in with fish and game; the latter they are said to kill very dexterously with a clumsy bow and arrow.

The death of Demasduit⁹⁸ (1820)

We learn by letters just received here from Newfoundland, dated June the 5th, that the expedition which left St. John’s in the autumn of last year, under the direction of Captain Buchan⁹⁹, of his Majesty’s ship *Grasshopper*, having for its object to open a communication with the Aborigines of the island, by way of the Bay of Exploits, had failed. [...] It appears that the *Grasshopper* having reached the river, from St. John’s, in December last, was housed over and made secure, to enable the persons left on board to encounter the inclemency of a Newfoundland winter. Mary March¹⁰⁰, the female native Indian prisoner, who was to have been the medium of

⁹⁸ From LONDON. (1820, July 17). *The Glasgow Herald*, p. 4.

⁹⁹ David Buchan (1780 – c.1838). This was not his first encounter with the Beothuk. “Captain David Buchan, who was employed under the direction of Sir John Duckworth, governor of Newfoundland, in 1810 and 1811, to endeavor to open a communication with the Aborigines of that colony, stated, that at that time there could not be fewer than 400 or 500 then in existence. In January 1811, he fell in with a party of fifteen on the Great Lake, which is directly in the center of Newfoundland, and four of them volunteered to go with him, on which two of his own party were desirous to remain with the natives. They did so, and were murdered by arrows. He believed this tribe was now wholly extirpated by the Micmac Indians, who came over from the coast of Nova Scotia, and had now got fixed establishments in Newfoundland.” ABORIGINES OF BRITISH AND OTHER SETTLEMENTS. (1836, December 28). *The London Guardian*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Demasduit.

communication with her native friends, died on board¹⁰¹ the Grasshopper before the expedition could set out from the Bay of Exploits.

About the middle of January, Capt. Buchan, Mr. C. C. Walker, Midshipman, the Boatswain, and about 60 men, proceeded with sleights on the ice, containing their provisions, &c., as also the body of the female Indian; and the spot having been pointed out by Mr. Peyton (a merchant who accompanied the expedition), where the rencontre took place between his party and the Indians, when the husband of Mary March was killed, her body, ornamented with trinkets, &c., was deposited alongside that of her husband.

Capt. Buchan continued a research of 40 days, but was not able to discover the slightest trace of the native Indians. Whether they had fled to some other part of the island, or had been exterminated by the Esquimaux Indians, who, to obtain the furs with which they are covered, are known invariably to murder them at every opportunity, could not be ascertained; but it appears useless to proceed any farther in the search.

The Death of Shawnawdithit, last of the Beothuk¹⁰² (1829)

Died, at St. John's, Newfoundland, on the 6th of June last, in the 29th year of her age, Shawnawdithit, supposed to be the last of the Red Indians or Boethicks. This interesting female lived six years a captive among the English¹⁰³, and when taken notice of latterly, exhibited extraordinary strong natural talents. She was niece to Mary March's husband, a chief of the tribe, who was accidentally killed in 1819, at the Red Indian's Lake, in the interior, while endeavouring to rescue his wife from the party of English who took her, the view being to open a friendly intercourse with the tribe.

This tribe, the aborigines of Newfoundland, represents an anomaly in the history of man. Excepting a few families of them soon after the discovery of America, they never held intercourse with Europeans, by whom they have been ever since surrounded, nor with the other tribes of Indians since the introduction of fire-arms among them. [...]In Newfoundland [...] there has been a primitive nation, once claiming rank as a portion of the human race, who have lived, flourished, and become extinct in their own orbit. They have been dislodged, and disappeared from the earth in their native independence, in 1829, in as primitive a condition as they were before the discovery of the new world; and that too on the nearest point of America to England, in one of our oldest and most important colonies.

¹⁰¹ Demasduit's death is attributed to tuberculosis.

¹⁰² From Died. (1829, September 14). *The London Standard*, p. 1.

¹⁰³ Five of those years were spent as a servant in the Peyton residence.

In Search of the Beothuk¹⁰⁴ (1829)

I will now only lay before you a brief outline of my expedition to search of the Boeothicks or Red Indians. [...] My party consisted of three Indians, whom I procured from among the different tribes, viz. an intelligent and able man from the Abenakie¹⁰⁵ tribe, from Canada; an elderly Mountaineer¹⁰⁶ from Labrador; and an adventurous young Micmack¹⁰⁷, a native of this island, together with myself. [...] On the 31st of October, 1828, we entered the country at the mouth of the river Exploits, on the north side, at what is called the Northern Arm. [...]

On the fourth day after our departure, at the east end of Badger Bay Great Lake, at a portage known by the name of the Indian Path, we found traces made by the Red Indians, evidently in the spring or summer of the preceding year. Their party had had two canoes; and here was a *canoe-rest*, on which the daubs of red-ochre, and the roots of trees used to fasten or tie it together appeared fresh.

A canoe-rest is simply a few beams supported horizontally, about five feet from the ground, by perpendicular posts. A party with two canoes, when descending from the interior to the sea coast, through such a part of the country as this, where there are troublesome portages, leave one canoe resting, bottom up, on this kind of frame, to protect it from injury by the weather, until their return. Among other things which lay strewed about here, were a spear-shaft, eight feet in length, recently made and ochred; parts of old canoes; fragments of their skin dresses, &c.

For some distance around, the trunks of many of the birch, and of that species of spruce pine called here the Var (*Pinus Balsamifera*¹⁰⁸) had been rinded; these people using the inner part of the bark of that kind of tree for food. Some of the cuts in the trees with the axe, were evidently made the preceding year. Besides these, we were elated by other encouraging signs. The traces left by the Red Indians are so peculiar, that we were confident those we saw here were made by them.

This spot has been a favourite place of settlement with these people. [...] Here are the remains of one of their villages, where the vestiges of eight or ten winter *nanateeks* or wigwams, each intended to contain from six to eighteen or twenty people, are distinctly seen close together. Besides these, there are the remains of a number of summer wigwams. Every winter wigwam has close by it a small square-mouthed or oblong pit, dug into the earth, about four feet deep, to preserve their stores, &c. in. Some of these pits were lined with birch rind.

We discovered also in this village, the remains of a vapour bath. The method used by the Boeothicks to raise the steam, was by pouring water on large stones made

¹⁰⁴ From Cormack, W. E. (1829, June 1). Report of W. E. Cormack's Journey in search of the Red Indians in Newfoundland. *The National Gazette*, p. 1. Written by William Epps Cormack (1796 – 1868).

¹⁰⁵ The Abenaki First Nation, part of the Wabanaki Confederacy. Their traditional territory includes part of Quebec.

¹⁰⁶ Probably a member of the Innu First Nation, also called the Montagnais First Nation. Their traditional territory includes parts of Quebec and Labrador.

¹⁰⁷ The Mi'kmaq First Nation.

¹⁰⁸ Probably the balsam fir, now called *Abies balsamea* var. *balsamea*.

very hot for the purpose, in the open air, by burning a quantity of wood around them; after this process, the ashes were removed, and a hemispherical frame work closely covered with skins, to exclude the external air, was fixed over the stones. The patient then crept in under the skins, taking with him a birth-rind bucket of water, and a small bark dish to dip it out, which, by pouring on the stones, enabled him to raise the steam at pleasure¹⁰⁹.

At Hall's Bay we got no useful information, from the three (and the only) English families settled there. Indeed, we could hardly have expected any; for these, and such people, have been the unchecked and ruthless destroyers of the tribe, the remnant of which we were in search of. After sleeping one night in a *house*, we again struck into the country to the westward.

In five days we were on the high lands south of White Bay. [...] It was now near the middle of November, and the winter had commenced pretty severely in the interior. [...] We inferred, that if any of the Red Indians had been at White Bay during the past summer, they might be at that time stationed about the borders of the low tract of country before us, at the *deer passes*, or were employed somewhere else in the interior, killing deer for winter provisions. At these passes, which are particular places in the migration lines, [...] the Indians kill great numbers of deer with very little trouble, during their migrations. [...]

We now determined to proceed towards the Red Indians' Lake. [...] In about ten days we got a glimpse of this beautifully majestic and splendid sheet of water. [...] We approached the lake with hope and caution; but found to our mortification that the Red Indians had deserted it for some years past. [...] There were every where indications, that this had long been the central and undisturbed rendezvous of the tribe, when they had enjoyed peace and security. But these primitive people had abandoned it, after having been tormented by parties of Europeans during the last 18 years. Fatal encounters had on these occasions unfortunately taken place.

We spent several melancholy days wandering on the borders of the east end of the lake. [...] At several places, by the margin of the lake, are small clusters of winter and summer wigwams in ruins. One difference, among others, between the Boeothick wigwams, and those of the other Indians, is, that in most of the former there are small hollows, like nests, dug into the earth around the fire-place, one for each person to sit in. These hollows are generally so close together, and also so close to the fire place, and to the sides of the wigwam, that I think it probable these people have been accustomed to sleep in a sitting position. There was one wooden building, constructed for drying and smoking venison in, still perfect, also a small log house, in a dilapidated condition, which we took to have been once a storehouse. The wreck of a

¹⁰⁹ Since my return, I learn from the captive Red Indian woman *Shawnawdithit*, that the vapour bath is chiefly used by old people, and for rheumatic affections. *Shawnawdithit* is the survivor of three Red Indian females, who were taken by, or rather who gave themselves up, exhausted with hunger, to some English furriers, about five years ago, in Notre Dame Bay. She is the only one of that tribe in the hands of the English, and the only one that has ever lived so long among them. It appears extraordinary, and it is to be regretted, that this woman has not been taken care of, nor noticed before, in a manner which the peculiar and interesting circumstances connected with her tribe and herself would have led us to expect. -W.E.C.

large, handsome birch-rind canoe, about twenty-two feet in length, comparatively new, and certainly very little used, lay thrown up among the bushes at the beach. We supposed that the violence of a storm had rent it in the way it was found, and that the people who were in it had perished; for the iron nails, of which there was no want, all remained in it. Had there been any survivors, nails being much prized by these people, they never having held intercourse with the Europeans, such an article would most likely have been taken out for use again. All the birch trees in the vicinity had been rinded, and many of them of the spruce fir or var (*Pinus Balsamifera*, Canadian balsam tree) had the bark taken off, to use the inner part for food, as noticed before.

Their wooden repositories for the dead are what are in the most perfect state of preservation. These are of different constructions, it would appear, according to the rank of the persons entombed. In one of them, which resembled a hut ten feet by eight or nine, and four or five feet high in the centre, floored with square poles, the roof covered with rinds of trees, and in every way well secured against the weather inside, and the intrusion of wild beasts, there were two grown persons laid out at full length on the floor, the bodies wrapped round with bear-skins. One of these bodies appeared to have been placed here no longer than five or six years. [...] What added to our surprise was the discovery of a white deal coffin, containing a skeleton neatly shrouded in white muslin. After a long pause of conjecture how such a thing existed here, the idea of *Mary March* occurred to one of the party, and the whole mystery was at once explained.

It should be remarked here, that *Mary March*, so called from the name of the month in which she was taken, was the Red Indian female who was captured and taken away by force from this place by an armed party of English people, nine or ten in number, who came up here in the month of March 1819. The local government authorities at that time did not foresee the result of offering a reward to *bring a Red Indian to them*. Her husband was cruelly shot after nobly making several attempts, single-handed, to rescue her from the captors, in defiance of their fire arms and fixed bayonets. His tribe built this cemetery for him, on the foundation of his own wigwam, and his body is one of those now in it. The following winter, Captain Buchan was sent to the River Exploits, by order of the local government of Newfoundland, to take back this woman to the lake, where she was captured, and if possible, at the same time, to open a friendly intercourse with her tribe. But she died on board Captain B.'s vessel, at the mouth of the river. Captain B., however, took up her body to the lake; and not meeting with any of her people, left it where they were afterwards likely to meet with it. It appears the Indians were this winter encamped on the banks of the River Exploits, and observed Captain B.'s party passing up the river on the ice. They retired from their encampments in consequence; and, some weeks afterwards, went by a circuitous route to the lake, to ascertain what the party had been doing there. They found *Mary March's* body, and removed it from where Captain B. had left it to where it now lies, by the side of her husband

With the exception of Captain Buchan's first expedition, by order of the local government of Newfoundland in the winter of 1810, to endeavor to open a friendly intercourse with the Red Indians, the two parties just mentioned are the only two we

know of that had ever before been up to the Red Indian Lake. Captain B. at that time succeeded in forcing an interview with the principal encampment of these people. All of the tribe that remained at that period were then at the Great Lake, divided into parties, and in their winter encampments, at different places in the woods on the margin of the lake. Hostages were exchanged; but Captain B. had not been absent from the Indians two hours, in his return to a depot left by him at a short distance down the river, to take up additional presents for them, when the want of confidence of these people in the whites evinced itself. A suspicion spread among them that he had gone down to bring up a reinforcement of men, to take them all prisoners to the sea coasts; and they resolved immediately to break up their encampment and retire farther into the country, and alarm and join the rest of their tribe, who were all at the western parts of the lake. To prevent their proceedings being known, they killed and then cut off the heads of the two English hostages; and, on the same afternoon on which Captain B. had left them, they were in full retreat across the lake, with baggage, children, &c. The whole of them afterwards spent the remainder of the winter together, at a place twenty to thirty miles to the south-west, on the south-east side of the lake. On Captain B.'s return to the lake the next day or the day after; the cause of the scene was inexplicable; and it remained a mystery until now, when we can gather some facts relating to these people from the Red Indian woman *Shawnawdithit*.

[Returning now to our exploration,] in this cemetery were deposited a variety of articles, in some instances the property, in others the representations of the property and utensils, and of the achievements, of the deceased. There were two small wooden images of a man and woman, no doubt meant to represent husband and wife; a small doll, which we supposed to represent a child (for *Mary March* had to leave her only child here, which died two days after she was taken); several small models of their canoes; two small models of boats; an iron axe; a bow and quiver of arrows were placed by the side of *Mary March's* husband; and two fire stones (radiated iron pyrites, from which they produce fire, by striking them together) lay at his head; there were also various kinds of culinary utensils, neatly made, of birch rind, and ornamented; and many other things, of some of which we did not know the use or meaning.

Another mode of sepulture which we saw here was, when the body of the deceased had been wrapped in birch rind, and with his property, placed on a sort of scaffold about four feet and a half from the ground. The scaffold was formed of four posts, about seven feet high, fixed perpendicularly in the ground, to sustain a kind of crib, five feet and a half in length by four in breadth, with a floor made of small squared beams, laid close together horizontally, and on which the body and property rested.

A third mode was, when the body, bent together, and wrapped in birch rind, was enclosed in a kind of box on the ground. The box was made of small squared posts, laid on each other horizontally, and notched at the corners, to make them meet close; it was about four feet by three, and two and a half feet deep, and well lined with birch rind, to exclude the weather from the inside. The body lay on its right side.

A fourth, and the most common mode of burying among these people, has been to wrap the body in birch rind, and cover it over with a heap of stones, on the surface of the earth, in some retired spot; sometimes the body, thus wrapped up, is put a foot or two under the surface, and the spot covered with stones; in one place, where the ground was sandy and soft, they appeared to have been buried deeper, and no stones placed over the graves.

These people appear to have always shewn great respect for their dead; and the most remarkable remains of them commonly observed by Europeans at the sea coast, are their burying places. These are at particular chosen spots; and it is well known that they have been in the habit of bringing their dead from a distance to them. With their women they bury only their clothes.

On the north side of the Lake, opposite the River Exploits, are the extremities of two deer fences, about half a mile apart, where they lead to the water. It is understood that they diverge many miles in north westerly directions. The Red Indian makes these fences to lead and scare the deer to the lake during the periodical migration of these animals; the Indians being stationed looking out, when the deer get in the water to swim across, the lake being narrow at this end, they attack and kill the animals with spears out of their canoes. In this way they secure their winter provisions before the severity of that season sets in. There were other old remains of different kinds peculiar to these people, met with about the lake. [...]

Our only and frail hope now left of seeing the Red Indians, lay on the banks of the River Exploits, on our return to the sea coast. [...] What arrests the attention most, while gliding down the stream, is the extent of the Indian fences to entrap the deer. They extend from the lake downwards, continuous, on the banks of the river, at least thirty miles. There are openings left here and there, for the animals to go through and swim across the river, and at these places the Indians are stationed, and kill them in the water with spears, out of their canoes, as at the lake. Here, then, connecting these fences with those on the north-west side of the lake, is at least forty miles of country, easterly and westerly, prepared to intercept all the deer that pass that way in their periodical migrations. It was melancholy to contemplate the gigantic, yet feeble, efforts of a whole primitive nation, in their anxiety to provide subsistence, forsaken and going to decay.

There must have been hundreds of the Red Indians, and that not many years ago, to have kept up these fences and pounds. As their numbers were lessened, so was their ability to keep them up for the purposes intended; and now the deer pass the whole time unmolested.

“The aborigines of Newfoundland”¹¹⁰ (1836)

The Bœothics, or Red Indians, who inhabited the Island of Newfoundland, when discovered by the whites, were a well-formed, muscular, brave and ingenious people. They subsisted by hunting and fishing – and at one time, it is thought, that their numbers were very considerable. Their history is the history of many of the tribes of this unfortunate race, and records a tale of treachery, woe, and extermination, which is mournful to hear – and which is enough to make a white man, who cherishes a spark of feeling, blush for the honor of the race to which he belongs. The following account of the last traces of the Bœothics, is extracted from McGregor’s “British America.”¹¹¹ It is of painful interest and cannot be perused without sentiments of mingled pity and indignation:

Until the beginning of the present century, there appears to have been no further intercourse with the Bœothics; but that they continued to be hunted and shot like foxes, by the northern furriers and fishermen, is well known – the only reason for such unjustifiable barbarity being, that the Bœothics came from their lurking places, and robbed the fishing nets. We need not, therefore, be surprised at the unbending spirit of the Bœothics; and as to their plundering the fishing nets, they were undoubtedly compelled by hunger to do so, at the risk of being shot. Captain Duff, Montague, and other governors, issued proclamations, which were intended to protect the Bœothics; but little attention seems to have been paid by the settlers in the northern harbors, or by the furriers, to any legal authority, and the destruction of the Red Indians appeared to afford them as much sport as hunting beavers. In 1803, a female Red Indian, in consequence of a reward offered by the Governor, Admiral Lord Gambier, was taken by a fisherman, who surprised her while paddling her canoe towards a small island in quest of birds’ eggs. He carried her to St. John’s, where she was taken to the governor’s, and kindly treated. She admired the epaulets of the officers more than anything she saw; and although presents, and indeed whatever she asked for, were given her, she would never let her fur dress go out of her hands. She was soon afterwards sent back by the man who took her. It is not likely she ever joined her tribe. It was hoped that the treatment she experienced would have induced some of her tribe to open an intercourse with the English; but this was doubtful, as they might have looked upon it as a plan to ensnare them.

In 1809, government sent a vessel to Exploits Bay, in order, if possible, to meet the Indians, and to open a friendly communication with them. Lieutenant Spratt, who commanded the vessel, had with him a painting, representing the officers of the royal navy shaking hands with the Indian chief, a party of sailors laying parcels of good at his feet, Indians, men and women, presenting furs to the officers, a European

¹¹⁰ From McGregor, J. (1836). *The Aborigines of New Foundland*. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Presumably McGregor, J. (1828). *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America*. London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, written by John McGregor (1797 – 1857), but I could find no sign of this alleged extract in the work cited. It is possible that it was added to a later edition.

and Indian mother looking to their respective children of the same age, and a sailor courting an Indian girl. This expedition did not, however, meet with any of the tribe.

In 1815-16, Lieutenant Buchan, in his majesty's schooner, was despatched to the river Exploits, with orders to winter there, and, if possible, to open an intercourse with the Bœothics. He had the fortune to meet them, and finally succeeded in communicating with them. He left two of his marines with them, as hostages for the safe return of two of the tribe, whom he intended to accompany him to a depot of baggage, among which were presents for the Indians. Something prevented the return of Lieutenant Buchan at the appointed time; and the Bœothics, considering the delay as treachery on the parts of the whites, tore the heads of the marines from off their bodies. Upon Lieutenant Buchan returning, the hostages took to the woods, and he soon after found the bodies of the unlucky marines, the Indians having run off with their heads. This was a most unfortunate affair; and it is much to be lamented that Lieutenant Buchan, under the circumstances, did not return in due time.

Nothing further was known of this extraordinary tribe, until the winter of 1819, when a party of furriers proceeded up the Red Indian Lake, where they met two men and a woman on the ice. They made a prisoner of the woman; but her husband, who became desperate, and determined to rescue her single handed, was most unjustly and cruelly shot by the brutal party, who also shot the other man. They carried off the woman, whom they called March, being the name of the month in which they made her a captive. Her husband, whom they murdered, was a noble looking man, about six feet high. This woman was carried to St. John's, and in the following winter was sent back to the river Exploits, in charge of Capt. Buchan. She died on board his vessel, at the mouth of the river; but he carried her body up to the lake, where he left it in a coffin, in a place where he knew the tribe would likely find it. It appears that a party of them was encamped at this time near the banks of the river, who observed Capt. Buchan on the ice, and afterwards carried away the body of Mary March, which they deposited alongside that of her husband. The last time any of the Bœothics were seen, was during the winter of 1823, on the ice, at New Bay, an arm of Notre Dame Bay. Three of the women gave themselves up, in a starving condition, to a party of furriers; one of them, Shanandithit, was afterwards brought to St. John's, through the humanity of the members of the Bœothic Institution. A few days before these women surrendered themselves, not far distant, two English furriers shot a man and woman of the tribe, who appeared to approach soliciting food. The man was first killed; and the woman, in despair, remained calmly to be fired at, when she was also shot through the back and chest, and immediately expired. Mr. Cormack was told this by the very white barbarian who shot her. Such was the fate of this tribe; and to the enterprise and philanthropy of Mr. Cormack, we owe all that remains to be told of them.

Mr. Cormack, with a party of three Indians of other tribes, explored the interior of the country in 1827 – hoping to find a remnant of the Bœothics. He passed up the river Exploits, and visited several places which were the once favorite residences of these Indians, without meeting any of this persecuted people – after undergoing

many hardships, and suffering much from the cold, it being in November, he finally reached Red Indian Lake.

“We approached,” says Mr. Cormack, “the Lake with hope and caution, but found, to our mortification, that the Red Indians had deserted it for some years past. My party had been so excited, so sanguine, and so determined to obtain an interview of some kind with these people, that on discovering, from appearances every where around us, that the Red Indians, the terror of the Europeans, as well as the other Indian inhabitants of Newfoundland, no longer existed, the spirits of one and all of us were very deeply affected. The old mountaineer was particularly overcome. There were every where indications that this had long been the central and undisturbed rendezvous of the tribe, when they had enjoyed peace and security. But these primitive people had abandoned it, after having been tormented by parties of Europeans during the last eighteen years. Fatal *rencontres* had, on these occasions, unfortunately taken place.”

The Beothuk of Newfoundland¹¹² (1888)

The following account is written by Lady Edith Blake, whose husband was governor of Newfoundland from 1887 to 1888.

The first description we have of the Indians of Newfoundland is from Jacques Cartier, who, in 1534, states that the natives were “of indifferent good stature and bigness, but wild and unruly. They wear their hair tied on the top like a wreath of hay, and put a wooden pin in it, or any other such thing instead of a nail, and with them they bind certain birds’ feathers. They are clothed with beast’s skins, as well the men as the women; but the women go somewhat straighter and closer than the men do, with their waists girded.”

In 1536 a disastrous expedition to Newfoundland was undertaken by Master [Richard] Hore and a party of 120 persons, “whereof were thirty gentlemen.” [...] The details we have of this expedition are from Master Richard Hakluyt of Oxford, who, as he tells us, rode two hundred miles to ascertain the circumstances connected with the voyage, from the only man then alive who had participated in it. This man was Master Oliver Dawbeney, who informed Hakluyt that after they had been at anchor some days, he (Dawbeney) “saw a boat with savages, rowing towards them, to gaze upon the ship and our people. They manned their ship’s boat in order to have taken them, but they fled to an island in the bay and escaped our men. They found a fire and a side of a bear on a wooden spit, also a boot, garnished on the calf as it were with raw silk, also a great warm mitten.” [...]

¹¹² From Blake, E. (1888). The Beothuks of Newfoundland. *The Nineteenth Century*, XXIV(142), 899-918. Written by Lady Edith Blake (1846 – 1926), an Irish writer and illustrator. I have silently corrected some dates which were wrong in the original (e.g. the year of Richard Hore’s journey).

The next notice, with any details, that we find of the natives of Newfoundland is in the time of Sir Humphrey Gilbert¹¹³, who, on the 5th of August, 1583, landed in the harbor of St. John's, where lay several fishing vessels of other nations, and took possession of Newfoundland in the name of Queen Elizabeth. The royal arms cut in lead were affixed to a wooden pillar near the water's edge, and the flag of England was hoisted and unfurled, Sir Humphrey afterwards explaining to all foreigners not conversant with the English language the meaning of the proclamation. Two eye-witnesses of the ceremony, Captain Hayes of the 'Golden Hind' and Captain Richard Whitbourne¹¹⁴ of Exmouth, have left descriptions of the aborigines as they found them. The latter had during a period of forty years made numerous voyages to Newfoundland, and from his "chamber at the sign of the gilded cocke in Paternoster Row in London" in 1620 wrote a discourse to prove how "worthy and beneficiall a plantation may there be made."

He says:-

"The natural inhabitants of the country, as they are but few in number, so are they something rude and savage people, having neither knowledge of God nor living under any kind of civil government. In their habits, customs, and manners they resemble the Indians of the continent, from whence (I suppose) they come. They live altogether in the north and west part of the country, which is seldom frequented by the English. But the French and Biscaines (who resort thither yearly for the whale-fishing, and also for the cod-fish) report them to be an ingenious and tractable people (being well used): they are ready to assist them with great labour and patience in the killing, cutting, and boiling of whales, and making of train oil, without expectation of other reward than a little bread or some such small hire."

Further on, the same writer says:-

"It (Trinity Harbour) is near unto a great bay lying on the north side of it, called the Bay of Flowers, to which place no ships repair to fish, partly in regard of sundry rocks and ledges lying even with the water and full of danger, but chiefly (as I conjecture) because the savage people of that country do there inhabit; many of them secretly every year come into Trinity Bay and harbor in the night-time purposely to steal sails, lines, hatchets, hooks, knives, and such-like. And this bay is not three English miles over land from Trinity Bay in many places, which people, if they might be reduced to the knowledge of the true Trinity indeed, no doubt but it would be a most sweet and acceptable sacrifice to God, an everlasting honour to your Majesty, and the heavenliest blessing to those poor creatures, who are buried in their own superstitious ignorance. The task thereof would prove easy, if it were but well begun and constantly seconded by industrious spirits, and no doubt but God Himself would set his hand to rear up and advance so noble, so pious, and so Christian a building.

¹¹³ Sir Humphrey Gilbert (1539 – 1583) died at sea during what was to be his return voyage from Newfoundland. His claiming of the island for Queen Elizabeth is considered by some to have been the first step in the founding of the British Empire.

¹¹⁴ Sir Richard Whitbourne (1561 – 1635) published one of the earliest books on Newfoundland: Whitbourne, R. (1620). *A discourse and discovery of New-Found-Land, with many reasons to prove how worthy and beneficiall a Plantation may there be made, after a far better manner than now it is.* London: Felix Kyngston, for William Barrett.

[...] If therefore near the harbor of Trinity it were inhabited by some of your Majesty's subjects, I see no reason to the contrary but that a speedy and more certain knowledge might be had of the country, by reason those savage people are so near, who, being politely¹¹⁵ and gently handled, much good might be wrought upon them, for I have had apparent proofs of their ingenuous and subtile dispositions, and that they are a people full of quick and lively apprehensions."¹¹⁶

I have quoted at length from Whitbourne, as his testimony is valuable as showing the apparently tractable and docile disposition of the native Indians previous to intercourse with the British! Later on we shall see how the "pious work" of redeeming them from barbarism was effected.

Captain Hayes bears similar evidence as to the natives; he says, "The savages are altogether harmless."

John Guy¹¹⁷, afterwards Mayor of Bristol in 1618, established a plantation or colony at Cupid's Cove in Conception Bay. One of the patentees of Guy's grant was the famous Sir Francis Bacon¹¹⁸. Guy met with the natives, whom he found friendly and with whom he established a trade in furs. For two years he persevered in the attempt to colonise, when scurvy – the scourge of many of the early attempts at colonizing – broke out, and several of his company died, which induced Guy to abandon his purpose¹¹⁹ and return to England, only a few individuals, who thought they might make some profit by continuing there, remaining in the country.

Well would it have been for the unhappy natives if men like John Guy and Whitbourne had established permanent hold on the country, but before long the short-sighted policy that too often rules in England induced the British Government to discourage and even to forbid colonization in Newfoundland. Prompted by a handful of interested merchants, England endeavoured to keep the island as a mere fishing station, which she believed would prove a nursery for her navy.

In spite, however, of stringent rules to that effect, it proved impossible altogether to prevent settlers from establishing themselves on so large an island, but instead of the advent of respectable and energetic colonists, it became "a sanctuary for men that broke in England." Deserters from the navy, refugees from Ireland, reckless and unruly characters of all kinds who dare not return to their own country, sought an asylum in Newfoundland.

There was no government; every man could do what seemed good in his own eyes, provided it did not interfere with the fishery regulations laid down by the 'fishing admiral,' as the master of the first fishing vessel from England, Wales or Berwick that entered a harbor on the opening of the fishing season was termed. The English statute-book was then disgraced by the sanguinary code which decreed that

¹¹⁵ Blake's term. The original reads "politikely".

¹¹⁶ I've compared Blake's transcription of this passage to the 1620 original and silently restored omissions and corrected minor errors, while trying to keep to Blake's transcription style (among other things, she modernized spellings, omitted capitals and italics and replaced semicolons with commas).

¹¹⁷ John Guy (1568 – 1629) was "proprietary governor" of Newfoundland from 1610 to 1614.

¹¹⁸ Sir Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626), 1st Viscount St. Alban, was an early advocate of the scientific method.

¹¹⁹ Frequent harassment of the colony by pirates, especially Peter Easton, also played a role.

a man's life paid the penalty of the theft of a sheep, or the stealing of a cow; and no doubt to rough and ignorant men, as were for the most part these skippers of fishing vessels, it appeared simple justice, while invested with the brief authority of a fishing season, to punish petty larceny on the part of the natives with death.

We know that the Red Indians, hitherto only acquainted with implements of stone or bone, did not resist the temptation of occasionally purloining such inestimable treasures as a steel knife, or iron hatchet and fishhooks. Probably if any trifling article were missed, the first Indian seen was shot in revenge. After a time it became the habit on the part of the fishermen to shoot an Indian whenever they got the chance. Cupidity added to the zest for shooting Indians, as they often wore rich furs, and the French and English furriers deliberately shot the natives to obtain possession of their deer and fox skin robes. Not many years ago persons were still living on the north-western coast who had been in the habit of boasting of the number of 'head' of Indians they killed, the record of such murders being scored on their gun-stocks.

The Newfoundland Indians were distinguished as Red Indians from their habit of daubing their garments, weapons and all their possessions with red ochre mixed with grease. [...] 'Beothuk' is believed to be the name by which these Indians distinguished their nation; it is said to be the generic expression for Indian, equivalent to our 'men.' [...]

Whence, then, came the Beothuks to Newfoundland? [...] Sir William Dawson¹²⁰, F.R.S.¹²¹, informs us, in his interesting work on 'Fossil Men,'¹²² that the Mic-macs of Nova Scotia have traditions of a primitive people whom their ancestors had driven from Nova Scotia into Cape Breton, and pursued into Newfoundland across the comparatively narrow sea separating the two islands. In 1768 Mr. John Cartwright¹²³ made an expedition into the interior of Newfoundland. He had been told by a Red Indian boy, named 'June,' that a people called by the boy 'Canadians' possessed the western shores of the Great Lake, over sixty miles long, which is now known as Red Indian Lake. On the eastern shores of this lake a great part of the Beothuk tribe had their headquarters. 'June' also said that his people held no intercourse with the Canadians, and that they saw no signs of each other during whole winters. Cartwright did not explore the western shores of the lake, so that we know nothing of the tribe to which these 'Canadians' belonged. [...]

Sir Richard Bonnycastle¹²⁴ mentions being, in 1831, in the Bay of the Seven Islands in Labrador, when the inhabitants were greatly alarmed by "the sudden appearance amongst them of a fierce-looking people of whom they had neither knowledge nor tradition," and who were different from the Montagnais with whom they sometimes traded. [...]

¹²⁰ Sir John William Dawson (1820 – 1899) was born in Nova Scotia.

¹²¹ Fellow of the Royal Society.

¹²² Dawson, J. W. (1880). *Fossil men and their modern representatives*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

¹²³ John Cartwright (1740 – 1824). Cartwright Sound, in British Columbia, is named after him.

¹²⁴ Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Richard Henry Bonnycastle (1791 – 1847) was knighted for his actions as a royal engineer in the Canadian rebellion of 1837-1839.

The Beothuks, it is said, were on friendly terms with a tribe of Indians from Labrador, whom they named 'Shaunamuncs.' [...] The Shaunamuncs, like the Beothuks, dressed in deerskins, but did not redden them with ochre. Most probably they were Nasquapee or Montagnais Indians, both of which tribes still inhabit Labrador. With this friendly tribe some kind of trade was carried on, and they are said to have mutually visited each other's countries in former days. The stone hatches and celts used by the Beothuks are supposed to have been supplied by the Shaunamuncs. The art of making stone implements was generally known and practiced amongst Indian tribes, though some were much more skillful than others in the manufacture. To shape and polish a celt or arrow out of stone, to people unacquainted with metals, was a tedious and lengthy process; to perfect a fine hatchet or tomahawk was sometimes the work of a lifetime. The art was not universal, some tribes being specially famous for the skill of their arrow and hatchet makers. The productions of these skilled artificers were eagerly sought by warriors and hunters of other nations, and traders of stone weapons seem to have been privileged persons, often permitted to journey from tribe to tribe unmolested. This fact accounts for green stone and flint celts, &c., being found in far distant countries, where no such stone as that of which they are made is to be found. Such was not the case with the Beothuks; they had plenty of material, but their skill may not have been so great as that of the Shaunamuncs. That they manufactured steatite or soapstone utensils for themselves is certain, as the quarry may still be seen whence they obtained it, some half-cut vessels being *in statu quo*. The soapstone pots, however, were a rough manufacture, and the material soft and easily worked.

After Europeans began to settle in Newfoundland the intercourse between the Shaunamuncs and the Red Indians must have become more and more difficult to maintain, and as the latter were now able to purloin the metal axes and knives of the invaders, it would be of less importance to them to maintain a trade for stone ones. As their white enemies gained a greater extent of the coast, the Beothuks were hemmed more and more into the interior, till at length their position became one of complete isolation.

We are wont to shudder over the barbarities inflicted on the Indians by their Spanish conquerors, and to deplore the cruelty with which the native races are still too frequently treated by our American cousins; but no Spanish freebooter or Yankee could show more utter disregard for the life of an Indian than did Britishers in Newfoundland.

Cartwright says:-

"The Red Indians have no intercourse with Europeans, except a hostile one, which there is great reason to think is founded on their part upon a just, and to an uncivilized people, a noble resentment of wrongs. On the part of the English fishers, it is an inhumanity that sinks them far below the level of savages. The wantonness of their cruelties toward these poor wretches has frequently been almost incredible."

In illustration of his assertion he relates the following incident.

One day a small family of Beothuks was surprised in their wigwam by a party of fishermen. On the appearance of their foes, the Indians fled in consternation, all

except one woman on the eve of becoming a mother, who, being unable to follow her companions, gave herself up as a prisoner, endeavouring by signs to implore mercy from her captors. Her gesticulations and entreaties were in vain; one of the wretches with a well-directed blow ripped open the body of the unhappy woman, and in a few minutes she expired in agony at their feet. Not content with murder, the monsters proceeded to mutilate the body in a barbarous manner, and on their return boasted of what they had done, exhibiting in triumph the hands of their victim, which they had cut off and retained as a trophy.

Such shocking barbarities were not confined to the last century, as the following anecdote, related to me by a gentleman who heard it from one of the party present, will show. Some fifty years ago a small party set out from one of the settlements to “look for Indians,” as it was termed. Before long some tracks were discovered, and on rounding a point of rock, three or four Indians came in view, all of whom they forthwith shot, save one who was taken alive and brought up to the leader of the band. The Indian made gestures beseeching for mercy, then tore open the breast of her robe to show them she was a woman, whereupon the leader (whose name it is unnecessary to give) fired and shot her dead.

There is no object in quoting further stories all of the same terrible nature; these two will sufficiently prove the sort of treatment the Beothuks experienced from the settlers. It cannot be wondered at if, when opportunity offered, they avenged their wrongs, though, as they possessed no weapons except arrows and spears, the odds were all against them.

When at length a government was established, which was not till 1728, when the first governor was appointed by the Crown, it must not be supposed that such proceedings were approved; probably the Government was altogether ignorant of what was going on, for when Mr. Cartwright, in 1768, brought the cruel treatment of the Red Indians under the notice of governor Sir Hugh Palliser¹²⁵, he issued a proclamation to the effect that, it having come to the knowledge of the King that his subjects in Newfoundland “do treat the said savages with the greatest inhumanity, and frequently destroy them without the least provocation or remorse: in order, therefore, to put a stop to such inhuman barbarity, and that the perpetrators of such atrocious crimes may be brought to due punishment, it is his Majesty’s royal will and pleasure that I do express his abhorrence of such inhuman barbarity, and I do strictly enjoin and require all his Majesty’s subjects to live in amity and brotherly kindness with the native savages in the said island of Newfoundland. I do also require and command all officers and magistrates to use their utmost diligence to discover and apprehend all persons who may be guilty of murdering any of the said native Indians, in order that such offenders may be sent over to England to be tried for such capital crimes as by the statute of 10 & 11 William III. for encouraging the trade to Newfoundland is directed.”

After Sir Hugh Palliser’s time a similar proclamation was issued by succeeding governors for many years, but to no effect. There were no means of enforcing in the

¹²⁵ Admiral Sir Hugh Palliser (1723 – 1796), 1st Baronet, was governor and commander-in-chief of Newfoundland from 1764 to 1768.

interior, or at any considerable distance along the coasts, the provisions of a proclamation issued at St. John's. So persecution and slaughter of the Red Indians continued, till at the present day the race is generally regarded as extinct.

According to Whitbourne, the French were first on friendly terms with the Beothuks, who assisted them in fishing and preparing oil. What led to a rupture of friendly relations is not very clear, but about the middle of the last century the French offered a reward for the heads of Red Indians.

After the English had made themselves masters of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, the governor of Newfoundland was alarmed at receiving information that parties of Mic-mac Indians were coming over from Cape Breton and establishing themselves in Newfoundland. All through the war these Indians had been efficient and faithful allies of the French, and it was supposed that the latter were now using them to further their designs upon Newfoundland. Accordingly, the governor issued orders to the Mic-macs to withdraw from the island, which seems to have met with little attention, for the Mic-macs, instead of retiring, effected a permanent settlement in the colony, maintained their friendly relations with the French, and before long availed themselves of every opportunity of obtaining the offered reward for the heads of Beothuks.

At first the Mic-macs and the native Indians are said to have been on friendly terms. [...] Unhappily some of the Mic-macs, tempted by the hope of reward from the French, privately shot two of the Red Indians, and were descending a river near St. George's Bay with the heads hidden in their canoe, when they chanced to fall in with a party of Beothuks. The latter, with the usual hospitality of Indians, ignorant of the treachery of which the Mic-macs had been guilty, invited them to a feast. The Mic-macs accepted the invitation. Whilst preparations were in progress for the entertainment, some of the children of the tribe examined the canoe of the visitors, discovered the concealed heads, and confided the secret to their people. No notice was taken of the discovery till each Mic-mac had taken his place at the feast, seated between two of the Beothuks, who at a given signal turned on their guests and slew them. After this the two tribes fought whenever opportunity offered; the Mic-macs, being supplied by the French with firearms, of course had the advantage. [...]

John Cartwright is the first European with whom we are acquainted who succeeded in reaching Red Indian Lake by way of the Exploits river. [...] Mr. Cartwright undertook [...] "to explore the unknown interior parts of Newfoundland, [...] and to acquire a more certain knowledge of the settlements of the Red Indians, as well as to surprise, if possible, one or more of the savages, for the purpose of effecting in time a friendly intercourse with them" – a tribe, as he observes, with whom, though the original native inhabitants of a country so long in our possession, we held no intercourse whatever, "except indeed the unfriendly one of reciprocal injuries and murders." [...] He and his brother, [...] with a party of thirteen others, started on the 24th of August, 1768. [...] Before long they came upon wigwams recently erected and "other apparatus," which, indeed, were so numerous that the party were in high spirits, as they expected soon to "find parties of the savages."

Their attention was particularly struck by the great scale of the preparations made by the Beothuks for taking deer. Vast herds of cariboo deer range throughout the interior of Newfoundland. On the approach of winter they migrate southwards, crossing the river Exploits in thousands; and in order to capture the deer on these migrations the Indians made fences so high and strong that the deer could neither jump over, nor force a way through them, but were obliged to avail themselves of purposely left openings, at which the hunters stationed themselves and slaughtered abundance of deer with comparative ease.

These fences were made by partially cutting through the trunk of a tree and causing it to fall in the desired direction, parallel with the river, each tree being guided so as to fall on the one next to it. The fences were from six to ten feet high; the weak parts were filled up and strengthened with branches. In places where the trees grew too stunted, or were too scattered to be available for fences, the Indians placed 'sewels.' These were thin sticks about six feet long, which were stuck into the ground, tassels of birch bark being fastened to the end so as to wave to and fro with the least breath of air. The sewels were pricked into the ground at a distance of ten or a dozen yards apart, and were effectual in frightening and turning back the deer.

Deer fences skirted the banks of the river for thirty or forty miles. At certain places there were half-moon breastworks erected, behind which the hunters crowded and shot the passing deer with arrows, though sometimes they killed their game with spears, and would follow in their canoes when deer took to the water. [...]

At that time the number of Beothuks was estimated at from two to three hundred souls, but from the numerous wigwams he saw on his journey, Cartwright was inclined to believe the tribe must amount to at least 500 individuals. As it is probable that they had residences in other localities, the computation does not appear excessive.

Although numerous dwellings and traces of Red Indians were found, none of the natives were met with on this journey. The adroitness of the Beothuks in hiding themselves, learnt no doubt from sad necessity, was extreme. Any of the people occupying the country through which Cartwright passed could probably easily have concealed themselves, but as it was summer, the greater number would then have left the lake and their wigwams by the river. It was the habit of the Beothuks to go inland during the winter and to return to the coasts and adjacent islands during the summer months. It was when resorting to the seashore that they were so cruelly exposed to the attacks of the fishermen, but the reason for their running the risk was obvious.

During autumn they were able to supply themselves abundantly with venison, which was kept in large storehouses forty or fifty feet long, for use during winter, the frost preserving the meat. In January [1808 or 1809]¹²⁶ a party who, at the instance

¹²⁶ Blake has '1810' here, but this cannot be the case if Admiral Holloway was governor. Holloway was appointed governor in April of 1807, issued a proclamation against mistreatment of the Beothuk in July of 1807, and left Newfoundland in October of 1809. If the expedition was in January, the only two options are 1808 or 1809.

of Governor Holloway¹²⁷, set out up the Exploits river, then frozen over, in quest of Red Indians, came upon one of these storehouses, in which they found about a hundred carcasses of venison. The Beothuk cuisine must have been a good one, for in these storehouses they also preserved dried salmon, dried eggs, lobster-tails, seal-oil, and deer's paunches filled with fat. A kind of sausage made of seal's fat, livers, and eggs was one of the dainties.

The wigwams were conical in shape, formed of long poles with deer-skins or sheets of birch-rind laid sheet upon sheet in the manner of tiles. In these wigwams they made oblong hollows in the earth, and lined them with young branches of fir and pine, for sleeping places. [...]

The Beothuk canoe is said to be different in shape to that of all other Indians. It was about seventeen feet long and seven wide, and made of birch-bark, and was shaped something like an elongated crescent coming to a point at the centre of each side of the vessel. A slight rod served as a keel, and the seams were sewn with fine spruce-root, and caulked with a preparation of turpentine, oil, and ochre. A thwart was introduced in the centre and at each end of the canoe, to keep the sides apart, and the inside of the frail structure was lined throughout with thin, flat sticks. These canoes were ballasted with stones, over which was laid a covering of sods and moss, on which the Indians knelt while paddling. In fine weather they occasionally fixed a very slight mast to the middle thwart, and sailed these rickety craft, in which they must have ventured considerable distances, as Beothuk remains have been found on Funk Island, which is thirty miles from the main island. Funk Island was formerly covered with multitudes of the now extinct great auk, whose presence doubtless induced the Beothuks to visit an island on which landing is impossible unless the weather be exceptionally calm.

Until recent times the walrus frequented Newfoundland seas, and the Beothuks must have been in the habit of securing these huge visitors from arctic regions, as some of the Red Indian ornaments and counters for games, are carved out of walrus-tusk. Cartwright supposed some which he found to have been worn as armlets or charms, from the fact of a slender thong being attached to them. The recent discovery of a grave containing the body of a child enveloped in a deer-skin robe, has shown that the supposed armlets were worn as ornaments attached to a fringe into which the edges of the deer-skin were sliced. Some are triangular in shape, but many of the ornaments resemble two- or three-pronged forks with a wide handle. They vary from an inch to five inches or so in length, and are made of deer-bone. Usually on both faces are scratched or engraved notches and lines, forming designs, some of which are intricate and show considerable ingenuity and fertility of invention.

The common Indian vapour bath was in frequent use amongst the Beothuks. It was made by heating stones red hot, which were then introduced under a small birch-bark hut somewhat resembling a large beehive, the patient or bather – as the case might be – pouring water on the stones, by which a dense steam was produced. [...]

¹²⁷ Admiral John Holloway (1744 – 1826) was governor of Newfoundland from 1807 to 1809.

The recent discovery, in Notre Dame Bay, on a small island, of the child's grave already alluded to, throws some light on the hopes and beliefs of the Red Indians regarding a future state. The body lay on the left side as if in sleep, the legs drawn up, and the arms lying along the sides, as if the child slept. [...] The 'happy hunting grounds' to which nearly all Indian people looked forward after death, lay to the westward, far beyond the setting sun. The Beothuk parents believed that their child's journey to that distant country would be a toilsome and tedious one, so with the little corpse they had buried all things needful by the way: packets of dried meat and fish, drinking cups of birch-bark, tiny canoes lest there should be rivers or lakes over which the soil must cross, and bows and arrows to bring down game when the supply of food which was provided should be exhausted. Several pairs of moccasins were ready, so that the youthful feet might not be bruised on the long, long journey. Beside the body was a curious little wooden figure. [...] The boy had been buried in his finest clothes, the deer-skin robe being fringed, and many carved ornaments decorated the border. [...]

The chief obstacle in deciding to what branch of the great Indian family the Beothuks belonged, is the difficulty of tracing their language to a common root. The vocabularies extant are principally derived from one taken in 1820 by the Rev. J. Leigh¹²⁸ from a Red Indian woman called 'Demasduit,' by the whites named Mary March; and another obtained by Mr. Cormack¹²⁹, who traversed the country in 1828. Cormack seems to have taken a lively interest in everything concerning the native Indians, and had a good opportunity for studying them, as while he resided in Newfoundland, an Indian girl called Shannandithit was captured and lived for some time in St. John's, a year of which she spent in Cormack's house. She learned a little English, but [...] we must allow for grave errors in a vocabulary acquired from an Indian whose language probably had no term to convey the word she was called upon to translate. [...]

No Red Indian appears to have been seen in St. John's till the time of Governor Gambier¹³⁰, when, in 1803, a woman was captured as she was paddling in a canoe to one of the small islands to take birds' eggs. Her captor, in hopes of obtaining a reward, took her to the capital city. The following account is given by the Rev. Mr. Anspach.

"She appeared to be about fifty years of age, very docile, and evidently different from all the tribes of Indians or savages of which we have any knowledge. She was of a copper colour, with black eyes and hair like the hair of a European. She showed a passionate fondness for children. Being introduced into a large assembly by Governor Gambier, never was astonishment and pleasure more strongly depicted in a human countenance than hers exhibited. After having walked through the room between the Governor and the General, whose gold ornaments and feathers seemed to attract her attention in a particular manner, she squatted on the floor, holding fast a bundle, in which were her fur clothes, which she would not suffer to be taken away from her. She was then placed in a situation from which she had a full view of the whole room,

¹²⁸ According to the Christian Observer, as of 1819 he was a missionary at Twillingate, Newfoundland.

¹²⁹ William Epps Cormack (1796 – 1868). A detailed account of his expedition is found below.

¹³⁰ James Gambier (1756 – 1833) was governor of Newfoundland from 1802 to 1804.

and on the instant lost her usual serious or melancholy deportment. She looked at the musicians as if she wished to be near them. A gentleman took her to the band, pointing to them at the same time; she perfectly understood his meaning, went through the crowd, sat with them for a short time, and then expressed, in her way, a wish for retiring. She was everywhere treated with the greatest kindness, and appeared to be sensible of it. Being allowed to take in the shops whatever took her fancy, she showed a decided preference for bright colours, accepted what she was given, but she would not for a moment leave hold of her bundle, keenly resenting any attempt to take it from her.”

The authorities decided to send the woman back to her people, provided with presents which it was hoped might conciliate them. The presents consisted of nails, fishing-lines, hand-saws, blankets, clasp knives and such articles. It is melancholy to know that the man who captured and brought the woman to St. John’s – who for his trouble in the matter had already received fifty pounds – is supposed to have murdered his captive on the return journey to the interior, the crime being inspired by the desire of possessing himself of the trifling articles given by the Governor to the unfortunate woman. [...]

Demasduit, or Mary March, was taken by some men from Twillingate in 1819. These men surprised a party of Indians on the ice, and succeeded in capturing one of them, the rest taking to flight. The captive was Demasduit; her husband – a tall, fine-looking Indian, seeing his wife a prisoner, turned back to come to her rescue, and was forthwith shot dead, and the men returned homewards with their prisoner. The poor woman, it afterwards appeared, left behind her an infant, which died a couple of days after the capture of its mother, who only survived her husband and child one year.

The last Beothuks seen alive were taken prisoners in 1823. The account of their capture and arrival in St. John’s, I extract from the journal of the Rev. W. Wilson¹³¹, a Wesleyan missionary.

“June 23, 1823. – Last week there were brought to this town three Red Indians, so-called, who are the original inhabitants of this island. They are all females, and their capture was accomplished in the following manner.

“In the month of March last, a party of men from the neighbourhood of Twillingate were in the country hunting for fur. The party went, two and two, in different directions. After a while one of these small parties, saw, on a distant hill, a man coming towards them. Supposing him, while at a distance, to be one of their own party, they fired a powder gun to let their friends know their whereabouts. The Red Indian generally runs at the report of a musket; not so in the present instance. This man quickened his pace towards them. They now, from his gait and dress, discovered that he was an Indian, but thought he was a Mic-mac, and therefore felt no anxiety.

¹³¹ “The Reverend William Wilson was [...] unorthodox to the verge of eccentricity. After all, how many of Newfoundland’s clergy [...] were ever formally accused of practicing astrology, fortune telling, black magic or witchcraft? That happened to Wilson in 1833 and nearly got him expelled from the church.” Smith, P. E. L. (1997). The Greatest Fishing Station in the World [Review]. *Newfoundland Studies*, 13(1), 110-113.

“Soon they found their mistake, and ascertained that the stranger was one of the Red Indians. He was approaching in a threatening attitude, with a large club in his hand. They now put themselves in a posture of defence, and beckoned the Indian to surrender. This was of no use; he came on with double fury, and when nearly at the muzzle of their guns, one of the men fired, and the Indian fell dead at their feet.

“As they had killed a man without any design or intention, they felt deeply concerned, and resolved at once to leave the hunting-ground and return home. In passing through a droke¹³² of woods, they came up with a wigwam, which they entered, and took three Indian females, which have since been found to be a mother and her two daughters. These women they brought to their own house, where they kept them until they could carry them to St. John’s, and receive the Government reward for bringing a Red captive Indian. The parties were brought to trial for shooting a man, but as there was no evidence against them they were acquitted.

“The women were first taken to Government House, and by order of his Excellency the Governor, a comfortable room in the court-house was assigned to them as a place of residence, where they were treated with every possible kindness. The mother is far advanced in life, but seems in good health. Beds were provided for them, but they did not understand their use, and slept on their deer-skins in the corner of the room. One of the daughters was ill, yet she would take no medicine. The doctor recommended phlebotomy, and a gentleman allowed a vein to be opened in his arm, to show her that there was no intention to kill her; but this was to no purpose, for when she saw the lancet brought near her own arm, both she and her companions got into a state of fury, so that the doctor had to desist.

“Her sister was in good health. She seemed about twenty-two years of age. If she had ever used red ochre about her person, there was no sign of it in her face. Her complexion was swarthy, not unlike the Mic-macs; her features were handsome; she had a tall, fine figure, and stood nearly six feet high; and such a beautiful set of teeth I do not know that I ever saw in a human head.

“In her manner she was bland, affable, and affectionate. I showed her my watch; she put it to her ear, and was amused with its tick. A gentleman put a looking-glass before her, and her grimaces were most extraordinary; but when a black-lead pencil was put into her hand, and a piece of paper laid upon the table, she was in raptures. She made a few marks on the paper, apparently to try the pencil; then in one flourish she drew a deer perfectly, and, what is most surprising, she began at the tip of the tail. One person pointed to his fingers and counted ten, which she repeated in good English; but when she had numbered all her fingers, her English was exhausted, and her numeration, if numeration it were, was in the Boethic tongue.

“This person, whose Indian name is Shanandithit, is thought to be the wife of the man who was shot. The old woman was morose, and had the look and action of a savage. She would sit all day with a deer-skin shawl on, and looked with dread or hatred upon everyone that entered the court-house. When we came away Shanandithit kissed all the company, shook hands with us, and distinctly repeated ‘good-bye.’”

¹³² A thicket.

After a few weeks the women were sent back to where they had been taken, but when the boat landed them on the beach and was about to leave them, they screamed, and rushed into the water after the boat, so they were taken to Twillingate till the pleasure of the Government concerning them could be known. Before long the sick girl died, and the mother did not live long after her, but Shannandithit survived some years, and died in the hospital at St. John's. From her it was understood that the reason she and her mother and sister had been so unwilling to return to their own people was that, having been some time amongst the white men regarded by their tribe as deadly enemies, they would be put to death as traitors.

The man supposed to have been Shannandithit's husband was in reality her uncle. The family had been driven by want of food to the sea-coast to look for shell-fish. At that time the tribe had dwindled down to a very few individuals, and the fate of the remnant of the race is wrapped in mystery.

No doubt the Red Indians retaliated on the fishermen and settlers in many instances. Driven from his fishing grounds, robbed of his lands, his kinsmen shot down like wild beasts, what wonder that the despairing Beothuk, lurking amid the surrounding bushes, when he got the chance stealthily let fly his arrows at the encroaching white man, who possibly, in cold blood, had murdered the Indian's wife or child?

A settler tale of the Beothuk¹³³ (1894)

This tale, perhaps apocryphal, is presented as an example of the type of story told by Newfoundland settlers about the Beothuk after their extermination. It was originally published as "The 'noble red man'".

A TRUE STORY OF LOCAL INTEREST

Many thrilling tales could be told of our pretty Island Home which have not been recorded in history and the which would make our "hair stand on end," as the saying runs. One of the most interesting I am now about to relate.

About one hundred years ago [c. 1795] two men named Turpin and Murray were trenching potatoes in a small cove named Sandy Cove, about a half mile from the fishing village of Tilton Harbor, on Fogo Island. Around this cove was a sandy beach – one of the finest in Newfoundland. It was about 1,000 yards in extent, and in shape was curved something similar to a small part of a circle. Inside of this beach was a high bank which sloped inwards, and on this sloping ground were several small potato plots. It was usual at that time to carry guns when people would go any distance from their homes, but strange to say, and unfortunately too, it proved these two men had none.

As they were busy at their work they were annoyed by some urchins, as they thought, throwing stones at them, and they scolded them several times but without

¹³³ From THE "NOBLE RED MAN". (1894, December 12). *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

avail. At last one of them looked in over this bank, and to the great consternation of his companion shouted “Injuns” (Indians). They both dropped their spades and fled.

Murray, who was a slightly lame man, but very robust and powerful, ran for the harbor. Some of the Indians followed and “forelaid” him before he reached the path, in such a manner that he had to pass between two. Gathering his utmost strength he dashed between them with such force as to bring both of them to the ground. They discharged their arrows at him. In all, three took effect.

There is a hill two-thirds of the way from the cove to the harbor, upon which there were more gardens. A woman named Mrs. Foley was also trenching potatoes in one of them. Seeing the Indians following one man, and hearing the noise, she presented her spade as a gun with admirable presence of mind (as she was not a “girl of today”). With the characteristic fear which the Indians always bear towards a gun, as soon as they saw her, they turned and fled.

In the meantime Turpin ran into the water. The remainder of the Indians followed and caught him. Dragging him ashore to the nearest rock, they beheaded him. When Murray arrived at the harbor and told his story, a band of hardy fishermen was organized. They proceeded towards the cove, and, on a rock, which is now called Turpin’s Rock, they found Turpin’s body, but the head was missing and no Indians were to be seen. The head was afterwards found elevated on a pole at High Point, on the Exploits River, about sixty miles or more from the spot where he was killed.

Murray’s wounds proved fatal. He lived a short time, but was never the same.

Children still look with awe on the rock and point it out to strangers as where Turpin was killed.

“Has Labrador a giant race?”¹³⁴ (1904)

Stories of a race of aboriginal giants unknown to white men and dwelling in the interior of Labrador have come from Indian sources at frequent intervals during the last few years. The late Adirondack Murray had planned an expedition to the far north for the purpose of testing the truth of the oft-repeated rumors, but died before carrying his purpose into execution; and Leonidas Hubbard, Jr., was starved to death in the inhospitable interior of the Labrador islands less than a year ago while endeavoring to make his way to the abode of this strange people.

Ethnologists declare that if any such Indian tribe is now in existence, its numbers must be exceedingly small, and its members represent the only survivors of the once famous Beothics or Red Indians of Newfoundland. The last living representative of the Beothics seen by white men died in captivity at St. John’s, Newfoundland, in 1829, and it is a much mooted point with the historians whether the race became altogether extinct immediately after that, or whether as some

¹³⁴ From HAS LABRADOR A GIANT RACE? (1904, October 22). *The Ogden Standard*, p. 16. Anonymous, but possibly by Edward Thomas Davies Chambers (1852 – 1931), who was credited with an almost identical article published in Sunday magazines in 1905. See Chambers, E.T.D. (1905, August 27). LURE OF THE LABRADOR WILDS. *Washington Evening Star*, p. 18.

suppose, a small remnant escaped from the island and crossed by the straits of Belle Isle to Labrador.

At all events the story of the ruthless extermination of the Red Indians from Britain's oldest colony forms a dark chapter in its history. These poor people were treated with the most brutal cruelty and for a long period were regarded as vermin to be hunted down and destroyed. They were driven to deeds of fierce retaliation, and war to the knife became the rule between the two races.

The Beothics were a much finer and handsomer race of men than the other North American Indians, and hence, perhaps the stories of a race of giants in the interior of Labrador. They were large in stature, being some 5 feet 10 inches in average height, and of very active build.

They had aquiline noses and very regular features. Their eyes, which did not possess any marked peculiarity of form, like those of the Esquimaux, were black and piercing, and their hair was coarse and allowed to fall over their faces.

The Beothics were the aboriginal inhabitants of Newfoundland when it was discovered by Cabot in the closing decade of the fifteenth century. Their affinity with the Malayo-Polynesian race is at least probable.

It is supposed that their remote ancestors formed a part of a great emigration from the Indian archipelago, consequent upon the Buddhist invasions of these islands prior to the Christian era. Passing from island to island, they finally landed on the Pacific coast of North America, when they were forced northward by the stronger races of the south, and formed the first wave of an emigration across the continent between the Esquimaux on the extreme north and the powerful races of the south, and probably in hostility to both.

About the seventh century of the present era, the entire Algonquin race was driven into the far east by tribes of Siberian origin, who became Aztec-Sonora, Paduca, Choctaw, Iroquois and Dakota Indians. The Micmacs were the most northerly of the hostile Algonquin bands and came into violent collision with the Beothics, probably the oldest and weakest of the colonists, and at last compelled them to cross the sea and to take up their abode in Newfoundland as a refuge from their enemies.

Bad as was the treatment which they received at the hands of their Micmac foes, it was as nothing compared with that meted out to them by the white settlers of Newfoundland. At their first intercourse with the Europeans they were disposed to be friendly, yet they were goaded into relentless hostility, and finally exterminated like wild beasts.

Not only did Cabot, the discoverer of the island, carry away captive with him to England three of the natives of Newfoundland, who were presented to Henry VII, "clothed in the skins of beasts," but two years later Gaspard Cortereal captured fifty of the natives and carried them away with him, intending them all, men, women and children, for slaves. Pasqualigo, the Venetian ambassador at Lisbon, who saw the captives, described them as admirably adapted for labor and the best slaves he had ever seen, and declared that the king of Portugal contemplated deriving great

advantage from the country in consequence. Such was the treatment that these people received almost at their first meeting with Christian civilization.

From his next voyage to Newfoundland Cortereal never returned, and to this day it is not known whether he suffered shipwreck and subsequent death by the elements, or whether he fell a victim to the surviving members of the race.

In 1636 one Hore made an unsuccessful attempt to kidnap a number of natives of the islands, and in 1574 another collision occurred between the white men and the Indians. In that year some of the natives came on board of Martin Frobisher's ship, which had been driven on the coast of Newfoundland by the ice. With one of them he sent ashore five of his sailors, whom he never saw again. On this account he seized one of the Indians and carried him off to England, where he died shortly after his arrival.

In 1622 Richard Whitbourne, who was sent by the British admiralty on a mission to Newfoundland, published an interesting account of the Beothics, who seem not only to have been of a very high order of intelligence, but to have enjoyed magnificent hunting and fishing in a country which is still a paradise of hunters and fishermen. Whitbourne himself speaks without any apparent sense of shame of having appropriated some of the effects of the natives, though even in his time all friendly relations had not ceased. Unrelenting hostility, however, was soon the order of the day.

The white men accused the Indians of stealing their goods. The missing of some trifling article came to be regarded as sufficient excuse for shooting the first Indian they might meet, and the aborigines were regarded as having no rights which white men were bound to respect.

The avarice of the whites, according to the Rev. Dr. Patterson, who has made an exhaustive study of these Indians¹³⁵, was excited by the skin dresses or the rich fur robes in which the poor creatures wrapped themselves at night, or even in which they laid their dead to rest, and they did not hesitate to take possession of them, even if this involved shooting the owners. And when such wrongs led to retaliation on the part of the injured red men, it only excited their enemies to a more determined effort to exterminate them as they would so many wolves. With only their bows and arrows the natives had little chance in this warfare against the firearms of the whites.

The French authorities, who claimed jurisdiction over a part of the island, offered a reward for the heads or persons of some of the Beothic chiefs with whom they had had a misunderstanding. Some of the Micmacs, who had followed the Beothics to Newfoundland, but who had thus far pretended friendship for the original settlers, had their cupidity aroused by the offer, and secured the heads of a couple of the chiefs in question.

Before the heads were delivered to obtain the reward, they were by accident discovered concealed in the canoe which was to convey them and recognized by some of the Red Indians as those of their friends. The Red Indians gave no intimation of the discovery to the perpetrators of the outrage, but consulted among themselves and determined upon being revenged.

¹³⁵ *The Beothics or Red Indians of Newfoundland* (1891).

They invited the Micmacs to a feast and arranged the guests in such order that every Beothic had a Micmac by his side. At a preordered signal, every Beothic slew his guest. War of course ensued, and a particularly sanguinary battle was fought between the two tribes at the north end of Grand Pond.

White furriers and fishermen continued to shoot down the Beothics, sometimes in wantonness, sometimes in professed fear of them, sometimes in the spirit in which they would shoot a wolf and sometimes in the spirit of the sportsman hunting beaver. Lieut. Cartwright of the British Navy, writing in 1786, says:

“On the part of the English fishers there, conduct is an inhumanity that sinks them far below the level of savages.”

Illustrating this statement, he tells of the murder of a woman whose companions fled at the sight of the white men, while she gave herself up as a prisoner, only to be ripped open with a knife in response to her piteous appeals for mercy on the score of approaching motherhood. Again, in 1768, a number of fishermen shot down another woman in cold blood, carrying away with them her infant, which was sent to England and there exhibited during the following winter for twopence a view.

In the neighborhood of Bonavista, some traffic was carried on toward the end of the eighteenth century between the red men and the whites. The latter carried out goods and left them at a spot within reach of the Indians, who came and took them, leaving furs instead. But this barter was put an end to by a white man who lay in ambush and shot a woman dead while she was removing some of the goods.

Writers of the period agree that there were white men on the island who admitted they would rather kill an Indian than a deer. Well into the nineteenth century the poor Beothics were shot down without the least provocation. It is not so many years ago that there were men living on the northwest coast of Newfoundland who were in the habit of boasting of the number of Indians whom they had slain.

Little wonder was it then, that when at last the British authorities woke up to the reality of these brutal murders and endeavored to reopen intercourse with the natives of the island and to promote their welfare, the poor Beothics had acquired such a distrust and abhorrence of the signs of civilization that they were animated by an inexorable desire of revenge against all white men.

In 1760 Capt. Scott and some others went from St. John's to the Bay of Exploits with the view of opening communication with the aborigines. Scott proceeded, unarmed, among them, and contrary to the advice of his people shook hands with them and mixed among them.

An old man who pretended friendship put his arms around Scott's neck, when another treacherously stabbed him in the back. The war-whoop immediately sounded and a shower of arrows fell upon the English, which killed five of them, the rest fleeing to their vessel.

Eight years later another expedition explored the interior of the island as far as Red Indian Lake, the headquarters of the Beothics, without succeeding in establishing any communication with them. Admiral Lord Gambier, when governor of the island in 1802, offered a reward for the capture of a Red Indian, to be employed in a new attempt to reopen intercourse with the remainder of the tribe. As a result a

Red Indian woman from Gander Bay was captured and brought to St. John's by a fisherman named William Cull in 1803, and a reward of 50 pounds was paid over to the captor.

She was treated with considerable kindness in St. John's and appeared to be sensible of it, and the following year was handed over to Cull to return her to her people, together with some \$755 worth of trinkets, etc. There is reason to fear that the poor woman, instead of having been returned to her friends, had been murdered for the sake of the goods sent with her.

One of the most melancholy narratives connected with this unfortunate people dates from the winter of 1810-11. Lieutenant Buchan of H. M. schooner Adonis undertook another attempt to resume intercourse with the natives. He succeeded in finding a party of them, and, taking two of their number as hostages, left two of his marines with them as a pledge of good faith, and returned to his depot for presents.

During his absence the fear of the red men were aroused, and they suspected that he might be bringing up reinforcements with a view to capturing them. They murdered the hostages and fled to the interior.

In 1819 another woman was taken by a party of trappers on Red Indian Lake. She was accompanied by her husband and another Indian, who, having offered resistance, were both relentlessly shot. The woman was taken to St. Johns, and was named Mary March from the month in which she was taken.

She was treated with great kindness and went back to her friends with presents, but died on the voyage, having suffered for some time from consumption. Her body was placed in a coffin and left on the margin of a lake so that it might be found by her people. They conveyed it to their burying place on Red Indian Lake, where it was found several years afterward by the adventurous traveler, Cormack, lying beside the body of her murdered husband.

Three Indian women were taken in a wigwam in 1823, near Badger Bay, by a party of men from Twillingate. They proved to be a mother and her two daughters. The mother and one of the daughters soon died, but the third, whose name was Shanandithet, survived for about two years and became useful as a house servant.

She is described as six feet high and having a fine figure, her complexion swarthy and her features handsome. In her manners she was bland, affable and affectionate. When a pencil and piece of paper were given to her she drew a deer perfectly at a few strokes, and what was most surprising, she began at the tip of the tail.

She and the others were unwilling to be sent back to their tribe, and Shanandithet declared that if they returned they would be killed by their own people as traitors, for having lived among the whites, whom they considered their deadly enemies. These were the last of the Red Indians seen alive by white men. Shanandithet died in the hospital at St. John's of consumption, in 1829, after six years of civilized life.

A final effort was made in 1828 to discover and open communication with the surviving Beothics. In that year the Beothic Society formed at St. John's for the civilization of the aborigines, but formed too late, organized an expedition under Mr.

Cormack to that part of the island supposed to be still occupied by a remnant of the tribe. Many interesting relics of the Red Indians were found, including their burial places and some of their dead, their weapons and their canoes.

With the failure of this expedition the last hope of finding any living Beothics was abandoned. Either, says Dr. Harvey, they were gradually thinned in numbers by wars, disease and want till at length, perhaps on the banks of the Red Indian lake, the last Beothic looked despairingly on the ruins of his race and the grave of his fathers, and then, folding his deerskin robes about him, followed his ancestors to the happy hunting grounds of the hereafter; or it may be that a little forlorn band, relics of a once numerous nation, took a last mournful look at the desolate scene, and then departed for some unknown retreat, where the murderous arm of the white man could not reach them, but where, with the fatality which follows their doomed race, extinction gradually overtook them.

Certain it is that unless a small remnant of the race is now to be found in Labrador, "there runs not the blood of a Beothic in the veins of a single living creature." Such a total destruction of a people is almost unparalleled.

"Other races," says Dr. Patterson, "have had to see themselves dispossessed of their territory, but the names remain, testifying on the face of the country to the language of its former occupants, but not a storm swept headland on the coast of Newfoundland, not a stream or mountain in the interior recalls the speech of those who once possessed the whole. The gentle race has passed away for ever, 'Gone like the cloud rack of the tempest, / Like the withered leaves of autumn,' gone without hearing of the Christian's God or knowing the Christian's hope; while humanity weeps over a history without a solitary incident on which its eye can rest with pleasure, and righteousness wonders if in the ear of infinite justice the blood of these unfortunates does not yet cry for vengeance from the ground."

"The adolescent races"¹³⁶ (1907)

The majority of Canadians cannot, if they would, shut out the Indian from their thoughts altogether, or quite escape the conviction that the white man, as his supplanter over the broad stretches of our far land, is in some degree responsible for him. They realize that the Indian is a problem, a problem that it would be much more comfortable to be rid of, but they have never been able either to shift him or to solve the problem that his presence makes. And we believe there are thousands of Canadians to-day who can never think of the Indian of to-day without a keen sense of regret.

But the problem of the Indian is only a part of that larger problem of the adolescent races in general. These make up, it is estimated, nearly one-third of the human race and occupy nearly two-fifths of the land surface of the globe. They are not inferior races in every particular. In fact, in many ways they may be naturally superior to those who have conquered and hold sway over them. But there is a

¹³⁶ From THE ADOLESCENT RACES. (1907, April 4). *Windsor Evening Record*, p. 6.

something lacking that makes their subserviency, in the struggle for life and life's good, a foregone conclusion. They are the child races, attractive and interesting from many points of view, but to a large degree unequal to the full burdens and responsibilities of life. They ought to be treated in some measure as children, but unfortunately the dominating races have not always understood their responsibility and the history of many of these so-called adolescent races has been marked by some of the most pitiable tragedies ever shown upon the world's stage.

WANTON CRUELTY

These tragedies have been due in some instances to wanton cruelty and inhumanity. The well-known case of the aborigines of Newfoundland affords an illustration. Here we have the utter extinction of an ethnic stock of unknown origin and affinities, but showing in many ways high qualities, the extinction being due altogether to the barbarities of so-called Christian traders. The Government considered that loyalty to England made it imperative to depopulate Newfoundland, and a war of extermination was kept up until in 1819 the one [remaining] single individual of a race that numbered thousands was captured and kept until her death in 1829¹³⁷. These settlers were first disposed to be friendly, and if they had been met in a similar spirit there is little doubt but they would have accepted all the factors of civilization which they could have understood or assimilated. And the pathos of it is heightened by the fact that the entire race passed away without having heard of Christianity, perished, too, at the hands of a Christian nation, and that not a drop of Beothuk blood flows in any one's veins to-day, but all cries to us from the ground.

DUE TO NEW CONDITIONS

But these tragedies seen in the history of the adolescent races have not always been due to wanton cruelty. Sometimes they have been the largely unavoidable results of new conditions and associations. And of this class our own North American Indians are an example. We have not wished to do badly by the Indian; in fact, we have done much in an effort to help him. But the conditions, both from the moral and the physical point of view, that our civilization has brought to him have, in many ways not intended, hampered and hurt him. The barbarities of trappers, the villainies of fur-traders, and the views of borderers are mainly responsible for the present bad moral character ascribed to the Indian. Some of these might have been prevented, but it was not possible, as the white man sees it, to prevent the conditions and surroundings in which our civilization has placed the Indian, and for which he was not suited, and through which he has suffered much, both from the physical and the moral point of view. The question of the dominant race's responsibility to the subject race is a serious one, demanding careful thought and consideration. The question of Canada's obligation to her adolescent race, the Indian, is one that must be continually and honestly faced. Some people grow impatient over the smallness of returns from all the effort made on his behalf, but this must be borne in mind, he is in many ways a child still, and our child, too, and nothing so becomes us in dealing with him as an infinite patience.

¹³⁷ The original reads 1828.

“The last of the famous Indian tribe of Beothuks”¹³⁸ (1911)

The last of the famous Indian tribe of Beothuks, a race thought to have been extinct since 1829, have just been discovered by Professor Frank G. Speck of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, according to a report which the professor has submitted to his associates in the museum.

For centuries the Beothuks kept out of the range of civilization, and it was only through accident that [this] trace of the supposedly extinct tribe was discovered. The three, said Professor Speck, the only living members of the Beothuks, were located along the Penobscot river almost in the center of New England civilization, where they had drifted in search of medical aid. One of the three, an old Indian woman, said to be nearly 100 years old, told to Professor Speck the history of the lost tribe, and thus was added, in the opinion of the instructor, an important link which has been missing in anthropological history for nearly a century.

The last of the tribe have promised Professor Speck that they will come to this city [Philadelphia] this winter, when they will submit to a cross-examination by anthropologists, in an effort to trace more accurately the doings of the lost race in the years since they supposedly became extinct.

CABOTS DISCOVERED TRIBE

The Beothuks were first discovered in 1497 by the Cabots of Newfoundland [sic]. Three of them were captured and taken to London, where, through the fact that their bodies were dyed red, according to an ancient custom of their race, they caused the American Indian to be known as the “red man.” For this reason anthropologists have always regarded the Beothuks as exceedingly important to their science.

The last of the Beothuks to be seen alive was Shanandithet. She died in St. John’s, Newfoundland, in 1829. About this time, according to Dr. Speck, a number of expeditions were made into the interior by men of science, with the hope of discovering some of the fast-dwindling tribe, who were noted for their intense hatred and fear of the white man and his civilizations. They found some vacated camps, tepees, canoes, implements of warfare, cooking utensils and clothing, but no Beothuks.

The skull of Shanandithet in the museum of St. John’s was the only evidence of the former existence of the tribe.

HOME IN WILDERNESS

The member of the tribe who was discovered by Dr. Speck is a [woman] named Santu, who is believed to be the last full-blooded Beothuk alive. She was married to a Micmac in Nova Scotia, and has a son and little granddaughter, who now live with her.

They were found in a camp on the Penobscot river, where Dr. Speck was doing research work during the summer. He came upon them quite by accident, although

¹³⁸ From FIND SURVIVORS OF OLD TRIBE OF INDIANS. (December 3, 1911). *San Francisco Examiner*, p. 35.

the other Indians, Dr. Speck says, regarded them with great interest and curiosity because of their peculiar life history and race traditions.

It seems that Santu and her offspring had inherited the intense antagonism of the Beothuks to civilization, and they had lived by themselves in the wilderness of Northeast Canada, far away from the whites or other Indians, getting their living from fishing and hunting.

It was only last spring, after the winter's hunting was over, that Santu, who appears to be anywhere between 70 and 100 years old, broke down in health and showed that the strain of the wild nomadic life was getting to be too much for her advanced years. Accordingly she, the last of her race, compromised her opposition to civilization and moved down into New England, where she took up the peaceful life of the Penobscots.

Santu and her son and daughter-in-law now make their living by telling fortunes, making baskets and beadwork.

GETS RACE'S HISTORY

Dr. Speck was able to get much information from Santu about the customs of her people and their strange history.

"The disappearance of the Beothuks," said Dr. Speck, "is one of the most remarkable and interesting mysteries in the history of the Indians. After the expeditions in 1829 into Newfoundland, many of the Micmacs moved into Newfoundland, and it is possible that a few of the Beothuks, who had become separated from the body of their tribesmen, intermarried with the Micmacs and lost their identity. It was my remarkable luck to run into this woman, but at first I never dreamed that she was a Beothuk. After being acquainted with her for several months, she accidentally dropped the statement that she was not a Penobscot, but was a Beothuk, and supposedly the last of her race."

SETTLER WAYS OF LIFE AND WORK

King Charles's Commission¹³⁹ (1634)

Charles, by the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, and so forth, to all of whom these presents shall come, greeting.

Whereas the region or country, called Newfoundland, hath been acquired to the dominion of our progenitors, which we hold, and our people have many years resorted to those parts, where, and on the coasts adjoining, they employed themselves in fishing; whereby a great number of our people have been set on work, and the navigation and mariners of our realm have been much increased; and our subjects resorting thither one by the other, and the natives of those parts were orderly and gently entreated, until of late some of our subjects of the realm of England planting themselves in that country and there residing and inhabiting have imagined that for wrongs or injuries done there, either on the shore, or in the sea adjoining, they cannot be here impeached; and the rather for that we, or our progenitors, have not hitherto given laws to the inhabitants there; and by that example, our subjects resorting thither injure one another and use all manner of excess, to the great hindrance of the voyage and common damage of this realm; for preventing such inconveniences hereafter, we do hereby declare in what manner our people in Newfoundland and upon the seas adjoining, and the bogs, creeks, and fresh rivers there, shall be guided and governed; and do make and ordain the laws following in the things after specified, commanding that the same be obeyed and put in execution.

1st. If any man on the land there shall kill another, or if any shall secretly or forcibly steal the goods of any other in the value of forty shillings, he shall be forthwith apprehended and arrested, detained, and brought prisoner to England, and the crime committed by him shall be made known to the Earl Marshall of England for the time being, to whom the delinquent shall take cognizance of the cause; and if he shall find by the testimony of two witnesses or more that the party had there killed a man (not being at that time first assaulted by the party slain, or that the killing were by misadventure) or that he had stolen such goods, the delinquent shall suffer death, and all the company shall endeavor to apprehend such malefactor.

2nd. That no ballast, prestones, or anything else hurtful to the harbors, be thrown out to the prejudice of the said harbors; but that it be carried on shore and laid where it may not do annoyance.

3rd. That no person whatever, either fisherman or inhabitant, do destroy, deface or any way work any spoil or detriment to any stage, cook-room, flakes, spikes, nails or anything else that belongs to the stages whatsoever, either at the end of the

¹³⁹ From Pedley, C. (1863). *The History of Newfoundland from the earliest times to the year 1860*. London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green. Written by Rev. Charles Pedley (1820 – 1872).

voyage, when he hath done and is to depart the country, or to any such stages as he shall fall withal at his coming into the country; but that he or they content themselves with such stage or stages only as shall be needful for them; and that, for the repairing of such stages as he or they take, they shall fetch timber out of the woods, and not do it with the ruining or tearing of other stages.

4th. That, *according to the ancient custom*, every ship or fisher that first enters a harbor in behalf of the ship, be *Admiral* of the said harbor, wherein, for the time being, he shall receive only so much beach and flakes, or both, as is needful for the number of boats that he shall use, with an overplus only for one boat more than he needs, as a privilege for his first coming; and that every ship coming after content himself with what he shall have necessary use for, without keeping or detaining any more to the prejudice of others next coming; and that any that are possessed of several places in several harbors shall be bound to resolve upon which of them they choose, and to send advice to such after-comers in those places, as expect their resolution, and that within eight and forty hours, if the weather so serve, in order that the said after-comers may likewise choose their places, and so none receive prejudice by others' delay.

5th. That no person cut out, deface, or any way alter or change the marks of any boats or train-fats, whereby to defraud the right owners; and that no person convert to his own use the said boats or train-fats so belonging to others, without their consents; nor remove, nor take them from the places where they be left by the owners, except *in case of necessity*, and then to give notice thereof to the Admiral and others, whereby the right owners may know what is become of them.

6th. That no person do diminish, take away, purloin, or steal any fish, or train, or salt which is put in casks, train-fats, or cook-room or other house, in any of the harbors or fishing-places of the country, or any other provision belonging to the fishing trade, or to the ships.

7th. That no person set fire in any of the woods of the country, or work any detriment or destruction to the same, by *ricing of the trees*, either for the sealing of ships' holds or for rooms on shore, or for any other uses, except for the covering of the roofs for cook-rooms to dress their meat in, and these rooms not to extend above sixteen feet in length at the most.

8th. That no man cast anchor or aught else hurtful, which may breed annoyance, or hinder the haling [sic.] of seines for bait in places accustomed thereunto.

9th. That no person rob the nets of others out of any drift, boat, or drover for bait, by night; nor take away any bait out of their fishing-boats by their ships' sides, nor rob or steal any of their trade or any part thereof.

10th. That no person do set up any tavern for selling of wine, beer, or strong waters, cider, or tobacco, to entertain the fishermen; because it is found that by such means they are debauched, neglecting their labor, and poor ill-governed men not only spend most part of their *shares* before they come home upon which the life and maintenance of their wives and children depend, but are likewise hurtful in divers other ways, as, by neglecting and making themselves unfit for their labor, by

purloining and stealing from their owners, and making unlawful shifts to supply their disorders, which disorders they frequently follow since these occasions have presented themselves.

Lastly. That upon the *Sundays* the company assemble in meet places, and have divine service to be said by some of the masters of the ships, or some others; which prayers shall be such as are in the Book of Common Prayer.

And because that speedy punishment may be inflicted upon the offenders against these laws and constitutions, we do ordain that every of the mayors of Southampton, Weymouth, and Melcombe-Regis, Lynn, Plymouth, Dartmouth, East Low, Foye, and Barnstable, for the time being may take cognizance of all complaints made against any offender against any of these ordinances *upon the land*, and, by oath of witnesses, examine the truth thereof, award amends to the parties grieved, and punish the delinquents by fine and imprisonment, or either of them, or of their goods found in the parts of Newfoundland, or on the sea, cause satisfaction thereof to be made, by warrants under their hands and seals. And the Vice-Admirals in our counties of Southampton, Dorset, Devon, and Cornwall, upon complaint made of any of the premises committed upon the *sea*, shall speedily and effectually proceed against the offenders.

Also, we will and ordain, that these laws and ordinances shall stand in force, and be put in due execution until we shall otherwise provide and ordain; and we do require the Admirals in every harbor in this next season ensuing calling together such as shall be in that harbor publicly to proclaim these presents, and that they also proclaim the same on shore.

In witness thereof, we have caused these our letters to be made patent.

Witness ourself at Westminster, the 10th day of February, in the ninth year of our reign.

God save the King.

WILLYS.

Fog and Foundering¹⁴⁰ (1754)

The waters around Newfoundland were notoriously difficult to navigate. Shipwrecks like the one described here were common.

We learn by Captain French, of the Sloop Mary, of this Port, in 29 Days from St. Peter's¹⁴¹, in Newfoundland, that some Time before he sailed from thence, Captain Laws, in a Schooner belonging to the Island of Jersey, put in there to refit, having

¹⁴⁰ From NEW YORK. (1754, July 5). *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ Possibly St. Peter's Roman Catholic parish in what is now Mount Pearl, Newfoundland. Mount Pearl was incorporated as a town in 1955, and is now Newfoundland and Labrador's second-largest city.

lost her Head, Cutwater¹⁴² and Bowsprit¹⁴³, by running foul of a Biddeford¹⁴⁴ Ship, in a thick Fog, on the Banks of Newfoundland; and that a Marblehead¹⁴⁵ Schooner lying in the Harbor of St. Peter's, without any Body on board, was drove ashore in a Gale of Wind, and entirely lost, with the greatest Part of her Cargo, which she had taken in, but the Day before.

Hostile waters¹⁴⁶ (1761)

In the 1700s, ships traveling between Europe and Newfoundland risked running into privateers. These were, essentially, pirates licensed by a government to plunder the merchant fleets of its enemies.

Two of the crew of the ship Alexandria of Glasgow [...] were taken by the Duke de Peron, a privateer of Dunkirk, mounting 16 nine-pounders. [...] When on board the privateer, they saw the mate of a Bristol ship, who told them, that upon the 1st, the ship he was mate of, bound from Bristol to Newfoundland, had fallen in with the said privateer, and engaged her three hours, when, by a hand grenade thrown in at the cabin window of the Bristolman, she was set on fire, and blew up, and all the crew, with a great number of passengers, perished, except five: That, before this accident, he reckoned they lost near sixty men killed and wounded: That [...] a few hours before the Alexandria was taken, the privateer had taken a brig from Ireland for Newfoundland, and ransomed her for 300 guineas. They report the privateer to be a fine sailor, and were told by her crew, they had been chased sometime before by an English frigate, who could not come near them.

From the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations¹⁴⁷ (1765)

EXTRACT from a REPRESENTATION of the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations to His MAJESTY, relating to the Newfoundland Trade and Fishery; dated 27th March 1766: And, Copy of Governor Pallisser's REMARKS on the present State and Management of the Newfoundland Fishery; dated 18th December 1765.

To the KING's Most Excellent MAJESTY

May it please Your Majesty,

It appearing from the reports of the state of Newfoundland, made last year to this Board by Your Majesty's Governor of that island, that the military establishments were neglected, and the principal fortifications in ruins; that an illicit and destructive commerce had been carried on between Your Majesty's subjects there

¹⁴² The wedged front part of a ship.

¹⁴³ The 'spear' extending from the front of a sailing ship.

¹⁴⁴ A city in Maine.

¹⁴⁵ A town in Massachusetts.

¹⁴⁶ From Extract of a Letter from London. (1761, May 25). *The Caledonian Mercury*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ From a document published in 1793 and entitled as below in italics.

and the French at Miquelon and St. Peter's; that great difficulties and embarrassments had occurred in the execution of the instructions given by Your Majesty for the well ordering of the Fishery in those parts, where the subjects of France are allowed by Treaty a concurrent Fishery; and that a state of inhabitancy, unrestrained by any form or constitution of civil government, had operated to the total subversion of that policy upon which the Fisheries dependent on that island were established: And to defeat those great national advantages which were the objects of the regulations of the Statute of 10th and 11th of William the Third, our predecessors in office thought it their duty humbly to lay before Your Majesty, in their representations of the 11th of December 1765, and the 29th of April 1765, a full state of these several matters, to the end that Your Majesty might, with the advice of your Council, take such measures, and establish such regulations, as should be found necessary and expedient in a case of so great importance to the interest of this nation, and which appeared to require attention.

In consequence of this proceeding, it becomes a necessary and indispensable duty in us most humbly to lay before Your Majesty such further reports as have been made to us by Your Majesty's Governor of Newfoundland, of the present state of that island, and of the several occurrences during the last fishing season, so far as they relate to those parts of his duty on which he was directed to correspond with this Board.

From these reports, as contained in the papers hereunto annexed, it will appear to Your Majesty, that the fortifications still continue in a state of ruin and decay; that the illicit commerce between Your Majesty's subjects and the French has been greatly enlarged and extended; that from claims of exclusive property set up by Your Majesty's subjects, the difficulties attending the execution of those instructions of Your Majesty, relative to that part of the coast where the French are allowed a concurrent Fishery, have become more and more urgent; and that the same disordered state of inhabitancy still operates to subvert that plan of Fishery adopted by the Statute of King William, and to render its provisions and regulations nugatory and useless; insomuch that it is the sense and opinion of Your Majesty's Governor, that it would be better for the national interest, in respect to the encouraging the increase of seamen, which is one main object of the Act of King William, not to have any Fishery at all, than that it should continue to be carried on under the disadvantages that at present attend it, in this view of the spirit and intention of that Act.

How far Your Majesty's Governor is well-founded in this opinion, we do not take upon us to determine; but certain it is, that the present state of this island, and of the territories dependent thereupon, does require the fullest consideration; and that a revision of the several regulations which have been heretofore made in respect thereto is now become essentially necessary.

Every information which this office can furnish, relative to the ancient policy and present state of this important part of the national interests, is already before Your Majesty, in a paper of observations upon the state of the Newfoundland Fisheries, communicated to us by Your Majesty's Governor since his return to this

kingdom; in which paper are contained several propositions for the regulation of this important branch of commerce, tending to re-establish it upon the ancient policy of a ship Fishery; the propriety of which policy Your Majesty's Governor appears, in all his plans and measures, to have zealously adopted.

COPY of Governor Pallisser's Remarks

Governor Pallisser's remarks on the present state and management of the Newfoundland Fishery; dated 18th December, 1765.

The first and most important national object from the Fishery, as set forth in the Preamble to the said Act, is the raising and maintaining a number of seamen for speedy manning [of] our fleets in times of danger; it therefore in the first place provides for preserving, extending, and improving the ship Fishery in preference to all others, that being the ancient and by far the most if not the only advantageous method to the nation, therefore it grants to the Ship Fishers, and from Britain only, many and great exclusive privileges; and in every part of the Act relating to Inhabitants and Bye Boat Keepers, is a clause for preserving inviolable to the Ship Fishers those rights and privileges; notwithstanding which the Ship Fishery is now wholly dropped and excluded by encroachers and monopolizers, the Inhabitants under Merchant Suppliers, by which every Rule and Order ordained by that excellent Act, for the prosperity of the Fishery, is rendered ineffectual for the purposes intended by it; one consequence of which is, the French employ more ships, raise ten times the number of seamen, catch more fish, and the yearly return of men directly to England, from our exclusive and extensive Fishery, without bounds, is scarce one eighth part of the number that return directly to France from their Fishery, though limited to the worst parts. This appears by the compared state of this year's accounts of ships and men employed by both, hereto annexed.

We have, according to the accounts I have collected, 16,000 people remaining in that country during the Winter, but I am satisfied they are 20,000, of which 10,000 are men who are all totally lost, for they (a very few excepted) have no employment during the Winter, but live a most savage, detestable, wicked life, spending their time in idleness, debaucheries, and excesses, and running in debt on their next year's wages.

As the value of the labor of seamen is undoubtedly the greatest of all laboring men, for defense of the state or for bringing in wealth from abroad, so ten thousand of them being lost to this nation for either of those purposes, during six or seven months every year, is alone a matter deserving serious consideration.

These inhabitants never become either good fishermen or good seamen; or if they were so, they are always out of reach to be of use for manning our fleets on any occasion, as effectually so as if they were taken and carried to a French prison before a declaration of war.

Inhabitants such as above described are no security to the country, but the contrary; for they always have and always will join an invading enemy, as well from necessity as inclination, on such occasions, and three fourths of them are Roman Catholics.

Those Inhabitants, besides being a loss to this country, are a nuisance to that, particularly by their great consumption of wood for fuel, causing a scarcity thereof at hand for the use of the Fishery; and this lays the country more and more open to an invading enemy.

By an Inhabitant Fishery, the Regulations in the Act for employing Green Men for the increase of fishermen and seamen, is totally defeated; nor have we such increase, though the public supposes it is our best nursery; nor can there be any Fishing Admirals of Harbors, consequently the law, and all the Rules and Regulations, together with the power for executing them, are in effect superseded, and every national good intended by that law is defeated; they are the unfittest people to be employed in the Fishery, being habituated to idleness, debaucheries, and wickedness; they are strangers to the Mother Country, to government, religion, and good order, which is the mother of labor and industry, therefore they are neither laborious nor industrious; they have no motive to be so, for they are no better than the property or slaves of the Merchant Suppliers, to whom, by exorbitant prices of their goods, they are all largely in debt, more than they can ever work out during life; they have hitherto had no means of freeing themselves from that state of perpetual servitude, therefore the Fishery still went on, though universally allowed to be yearly declining. People doomed to perpetual servitude are ever wishing for change of masters, so when men find an opportunity of becoming free and independent, they will certainly embrace it; therefore, now that the French have a territory in the midst of the Fishery, there is no doubt but these people will fly there, as many have already done, with their boats, tackle, fish, and all, or become fishers for them, beginning a fresh score for supplies with them, which great numbers have already done; thus the Fishery and men also are on the point of being lost, who will hereafter be wholly employed for the French both in fishing and clandestine trade, to the utter ruin of our trade and Fishery.

The next most important national object from the Fishery, as set forth in the Preamble to the Act, is to increase the consumption of the produce and manufactories of this kingdom, and for promoting trade and navigation. How an Inhabitant Fishery operates in this respect may be judged from the following facts:

These 16 or 20 thousand inhabitants, as well as others employed in the Fishery, are subsisted and supplied as follows:

From England – With a very small quantity of provisions of any kind, scarce sufficient to victual the men that navigate the ships for their passage out.

From Ireland – With almost all their beef, pork, butter, linen, and some manufactories clandestinely brought in.

From the plantations – With all their bread, flour, rum, sugar, molasses, some beef, pork, peas, and sundry other articles, amounting the last year to £103,304 3s., full nine tenths of which is immediately paid for in Bills of Exchange upon England.

From foreign countries – A considerable quantity of every kind of goods and manufactories used in the Fisheries, as well from the French as from other countries, brought in by the salt ships; besides many foreigners are concerned with our people in the shipping so employed.

The present managers of the Fishery pay wages, &c. with these provisions, necessaries, and clothes, at most exorbitant rates; thus the wages, though nominally high, [are] reduced very low, the men become their property, and cannot get out of the country, nor afford to wear but little clothes, especially as they are idle, and drink such immense quantities of rum, and thus they become averse to and unfit for labor; but were they to return to England yearly, they would get all necessaries and clothes from 1 to 500 per cent. cheaper, as they would not be idle or running in debt during six or seven months; but on the contrary, earning more money, they would certainly become good industrious people, and expend more of the produce and manufactures of this country; besides 30,000 such men passing and re-passing every year, that alone would employ above 200 ships more, which would also create an increase of the consumption of our manufactures, and be an immense encouragement to shipping, trade, and navigation.

The other great national object from the Fishery, as set forth in the Preamble of the said Act, is by returns for the fish from foreign countries, of great quantities of sundry useful commodities to the increase of His Majesty's revenues; this object is equally injured by an Inhabitant Fishery, they, for afore-mentioned reasons, being neither laborious, industrious, nor able fishermen, there is not half the quantity of fish taken as would be, it is not so careful and so well cured as it ought to be, which is the cause of such great quantities of bad fish going to market, which spoils the credit of English fish, keeps the prices low – [and] consequently the return, and the King's revenue, is thereby proportionably lessened.

Upon the whole, if no Inhabitants were allowed, but the Fishery to be laid open and free to all the King's subjects, and carried on by Ship Fishers, or even if the Ship Fishery was only restored to the original footing, as directed by the Act of the 10th and 11th of William the Third, it most certainly would occasion double the quantity of fish to be taken, a yearly return of more men to England than now returns to France; instead of two or three thousand men, as at present, we should have, in time of danger, a yearly return of 30,000 always ready for our fleets; this addition of wealth and strength to the state would always be increasing.

The Fishery would certainly thereby be effectually secured, and so extended and improved, as would provide employment for all our men, and none need be seeking employment in foreign countries: By this method only all illicit trade and dealings of our people with the French and other foreigners can be effectually prevented.

The consumption of the produce and manufactures of this country, also shipping trade, and navigation, would be greatly increased.

More than double the quantity of fish would be taken, be better cured, carried to market at a cheaper rate, in better condition, and fetch a better price, to the great increase of the importation of useful commodities, and of the King's revenue.

By encouraging our Ship Fishery to the northward, the French Fishery there would be greatly lessened, as our people would share with them the exceeding fine conveniences ready made (which they will not do, whilst they have expectations of getting property); and a Ship Fishery there, in common with the French, is agreeable

to our own laws, most for the benefit of the nation, and strictly agreeable to Treaty; but to allow only an Inhabitant Fishery there, and our people to hold and possess as property the fishing conveniences (which they are contending for, to the exclusion of all Ship Fishers, as they have done in all other parts of Newfoundland) will be contrary to our own Laws, contrary to the National Interest, and directly contrary to the Privileges granted by Treaty to the French; for Inhabitants will, in the absence of the ships, destroy all their works, both English and French, then build new ones, and call them their own property, and claim a right to be protected therein.

A few monopolizers, whose particular interests are incompatible with the true interest and security of the state, endeavor to have it believed, that to restore the Fishery to the state it ought to be, and as is provided by the Act of the 10th and 11th William III is impracticable; but the following proposals being duly considered, and improved by abler heads, will provide effectual cures for some, if not all the present evils, without the least injustice to any one.

For confirming and securing all lawful claims to property in fishing conveniences

As the ancient and constant custom by which any person gained an exclusive right of possessing any fishing convenience ever was by a certificate from the Governor or Commodore of the convoy, that such person had performed the conditions required by the proviso in the Act of the 10th and 11th of William III to entitle him to such exclusive possessions, and those certificates described the situation and dimensions of the places for which they were granted, and set forth that due proof had been laid before him by the fishing admirals of the port (who by law are the guardians of their own rights and privileges), that the place had never been a Ship's Room since the year 1685, let it be ordered that all persons holding possession of any place by virtue of such certificates, shall, on or before the — day of —, produce such certificates to the Governor, to be by him examined, and he, being satisfied of the [authenticity] thereof, to enter them in a Book of Record, to be carefully kept for that purpose in the Fort at St. John's, and a copy with the Board of Trade; and all persons now possessing places by virtue of such certificates so produced and registered, to be confirmed in their possessions, with all works and buildings thereon, according to the true intent and meaning of the Act.

For encouraging and supporting the Ship Fishers

1st, All places whatever, that are not held by certificates of a right to possess them as above mentioned, should remain public and free for all British fishing ships, and be deemed Ships' Rooms, according to the true intent and meaning of the Act, after the death of the present possessors, the present pretended owners.

2nd, Whereas all the land is in the Crown, and no Governor has ever been vested with power to give or grant it away, it is necessary that the proviso in the Act that says, "Provided always, that all such persons as since the 21st of March 1685 has built, cut out, or made," &c. should be farther explained as to the nature of the tenure by which possession of a fishing convenience is to be held under that proviso of the Act; (that is to say) whether such exclusive possessions are to be only for [the] life of the original proprietors, or whether they are to be considered as Real or Personal Estates, different Governors having determined causes various ways, which

produces infinite numbers of disputes, to the great obstruction of the Fishery; causing great expense and loss of time to those concerned, and to the public, by a vast number of good places lying waste because of such disputed and obsolete claims.

3d, That nothing but a Ship Fishery be permitted in that part of Newfoundland lying between Cape Bonavista and Point Riche, or on any other part of the coast of Newfoundland that was not actually in the possession of the English when the said Act was made, nor on the coast of all the conquered lands and islands now annexed to the Government of Newfoundland; but that the whole of the Act of the 10th and 11th of William III be hereafter in full force in those lands and islands, except what relates to exclusive possessions under the afore-mentioned proviso in the Act.

4th, For preventing any fishing conveniences being lost (as great numbers now are) whether from obsolete claims, long suits depending about the rights and titles, or from idleness of some, or inability or obstinacy in others, let it be ordered, that notwithstanding any right or title that have or may be acquired to such places under the above-mentioned proviso in the said Act, if any of those places hereafter lie unoccupied or unused for the Fishery during one or two fishing seasons, the same [is] to become public and free for the use of all British fishing ships, and be deemed Ships' Rooms.

5th, Conformable to the aforesaid Act, and according to ancient custom, no ship shall be deemed a Ship Fisher, or enjoy the privileges thereto belonging, nor the master exercise the authority of an Admiral of the Harbor, except such as arrive from Britain, cleared out at the Custom House as such that same year, and employs at least twenty-one men and boys actually brought with her that season, and who are engaged to return after the Fishery is over; and that occupies and uses a public Ship's Room, and not a hired one, or that is held and possessed as private property.

6th, Whereas by sundry unlawful practices of inhabitants destroying the stages, flakes, and other conveniences belonging to the Ship Fishers, during the absence of the ships in the Winter, the Ship Fishers have been ruined, and excluded from the Fishery, and those Inhabitants become unlawful possessors of all the old and best fishing conveniences, which by law ought to be preserved for the use of Ship Fishers only – let it be ordered, that in all harbors where there are, or hereafter may be, any Ships' Rooms, the same shall be inviolably preserved for the use of Ship Fishers only; and if any damage is done to any such stages, or other conveniences thereto belonging, in the Winter during the absence of the ships, all the Inhabitants of that place shall be obliged to make good such damages of the respective harbors to be authorized by law to compel such Inhabitants to restore such Ships' Rooms, and the fishing conveniences thereto belonging, into the same state and condition in which they were left the preceding season; and till such damages are so repaired, the masters of such fishing ships [are] to be authorized to occupy and use any stage or room possessed by any Inhabitant in that harbor, that he pleases to make a choice of; for the Ship Fishers, according to the above-mentioned Act, must never be disappointed of their voyage, where there is or ever was any lawful Ships' Rooms.

7th, All Admirals transmitting to the Governor or Commodore a Report of the State of their Fisheries in their respective harbors, as directed by the Act of the 10th

and 11th of William III on producing from the Governor or the Captain of any of the King's ships a certificate of the receipt thereof, such Admirals' ships should be entitled to some privilege or reward; printed forms for such reports to be delivered gratis to every fishing ship when she clears out at the Custom House in Britain.

No laws, rules, or regulations that ever have or can be made for such people as the present Inhabitant Fishers of Newfoundland are, [or] will ever be of any use, without pains and penalties being annexed to offences against those laws.

The encouraging and obliging the men to return yearly to England

1st, the greatest part of the fishermen now residing in the country, called Planters or Master Boat Keepers, are a kind of prisoners or slaves to their suppliers, who, to prevent their return, threaten them with a gaol for debt; which debts have been contracted by shameful impositions and oppressions, for the purpose of keeping them there. Those creditors know it is not possible ever to be paid those debts in Newfoundland; nor are those debts, if they were to be strictly examined into, either lawful or just. Suppose it should be enacted, that all fishermen so in debt at this time, contracted there, who may hereafter return from Newfoundland to Britain, should be exempt from arrest for such debts so long as they continue to go to and return from Newfoundland yearly to Britain.

2nd, No debt whatever contracted in that country by any fisherman, or servant serving for wages, should be recoverable.

3d, It is the practice of Inhabitants to engage men to serve two Summers and a Winter: it should not be lawful for any men to bind themselves to serve in that country for more than six months, or for one fishing season.

4th, It is the general practice of masters to credit their fishermen servants to the amount of their whole wages, above half of which is most commonly rum: Thus, when their time is out, they are distressed, and necessitated to stay, having nothing to pay their passage; they must steal for their subsistence, or sell themselves to the plantations, which thousands do from this cause.

5th, For remedy of these evils, no deductions from any servant's wages for liquor should be lawful, nor for supplies of any other kind in Newfoundland exceeding — shillings.

6th, Every master should by law be obliged to pay, out of the wages of each man he employs, the passage money for the man's passage home to the master of a passage ship, in the same manner as by custom they now pay for the passage out of any man they hire on his arrival. This encouragement to ships will make a certain provision of a sufficient number of ships to carry all the men home; but now from the uncertainty of getting such freights very few ships put up for passengers home.

7th, No Dietors, [sic.] or people who entertain fishermen or servants in that country in the Winter, on the credit of their wages, should be allowed in Newfoundland; all such men, as well as their entertainers, being idlers, and a public loss.

8th, As a farther encouragement for shipping to bring home men from the Fisheries, suppose that every ship bringing home at the least — men passengers from the Fisheries was to be entitled to some privileges; such as, in times of Press,

such ships to be allowed a certain number of men free from Press, in the same manner, and for the same good purposes, as the Greenland Ships have now by Act of Parliament, for the encouragement of that trade, a protection for a certain number of men. Masters of ships to be entitled to such protections, on producing what may be judged a proper certificate of the exact number of men he has actually landed in Britain, or in His Majesty's Dominions in Europe: Thus the exact number returning will be nearly known.

9th, As a farther security for the return of the men, let it be unlawful to pay any servant's wages in Newfoundland otherwise than by Bills of Exchange for the balance due, such bills to be drawn payable to the man only; but to make such Bills negotiable, they may be payable to the man's order, provided he endorses it after landing in the King's dominions in Europe, in the presence of a Justice of the Peace, such Justice attesting such endorsement: A form of the bills to be used for this purpose to be annexed to the Act.

Of the Government or Superintendency of the Fisheries

The prosperity of the Fishery requires, in all disputes and differences, short, speedy, and unexpensive issues; and the Act of the 10th and 11th of William III directs, that certain disputes and differences shall be determined on the spot, in a summary way, by the Admirals, appealable to the Captains of the King's ships. But under the present management of the Fisheries there are no Admirals for hearing and determining such matters; which is the occasion of many endless disputes, to the great obstruction of the Fishery, and loss to the public. It is therefore absolutely necessary to restore the Ship Fishery, to renew, support, and extend the Admirals' powers; but no Admirals, no Captains of King's ships, no Commodore or Governor, should meddle in any matters but what are purely relative to the Fishery, for preventing obstructions thereto, for preserving the peace, keeping good order amongst the fishermen, and for immediate trial of capital offences; but all matters of disputes amongst merchants concerning their accounts, or matter relative to trade, should be heard and determined only in Britain. This will prevent people staying in the country; also remedy such incredible practices of knavery and unfair dealings as no trade whatever can prosper under, and which cannot otherwise be remedied.

When the Fishing Admiral's lawful authority is restored and supported, and the country cleared of a number of idle men in the Winter, there will be no want of Justices of the Peace. It is they that have put an end to the Ship Fishery, by not suffering the Fishing Admirals to act in the respective harbors; and such Justices being all people concerned in the trade, they use their authority for no other purpose but to favor monopoly, and are guilty of the most shameful partialities and injustices, to the very great prejudice of the Fishery.

To prevent the great loss of the Fishery and to the public by so many men running from that country to the plantations every year, let it be ordered that no vessels belonging to, or bound to or arriving from any of the plantations, shall be allowed to stay in any part of the Government of Newfoundland after the 10th day of October, on which day the fishermen are usually discharged; nor any such vessel be permitted at any time to take on board any men passengers without a permit in

writing from the Governor only, on forfeiture of such vessel, the Captains of the King's ships to be authorized to seize such vessels having on board more men than for their navigation, at the rate of — men per hundred tons. This will also prevent any people from the Colonies coming to Newfoundland to carry on the Fisheries, to the prejudice of the British merchants and shipping, contrary to the meaning of the Fishing Act.

N ^o of Ships	ENGLISH	Men
151	Ships arrived this year, from England and Ireland, called British fishing ships, carrying	2,211
	Passengers in D ^o ¹⁴⁸ from England	1,933
	[Passengers in] D ^o from Ireland	2,753
16	From Jersey, called British fishing ships, carrying	310
	Passengers in D ^o	633
46	Ships called sack ships, the greatest part of which arrive from foreign ports with salt, or in ballast, carrying	1,252
293 ¹⁴⁹	Total employed this year, exclusive of the Inhabitants	9,152
	Of the above number are lost, that go to the plantations yearly, at least	1,000
	Remains —	8,152
	Of the remainder, 3,492 are employed to navigate 253 ships, at 14 men each, to foreign markets; two thirds of which it is supposed return to England, Ireland, and Jersey, a short time before the season for going again; the other one third do not return, but go directly to Newfoundland from abroad the next year	3,492
	The rest of the remainder return to England, Ireland, and Jersey, immediately after the Fishery is over, being 4,660 in 40 ships, who also carry home oil, fur, and skins	4,660
	From Europe in shipping, passengers and all included	9,152
Total	Men Inhabitants	9,976
	Total, including the Sack Ships' men.	19,128

Particulars of the inhabitants, above three quarters of which are Irish Roman Catholics

Men	9,976
Women	1,645
Children	3,863

¹⁴⁸ Ditto, or "as above".

¹⁴⁹ The math for the totals, here and elsewhere, appears to be off. Numbers are transcribed as in the original, without correction.

Of these people full nine tenths of them are of no use in that country, and are lost to this, during six months of the year; for during that time they are perfectly idle, abandoned to every sort of debauchery and wickedness; become perfect savages; are strangers to all good order, government and religion; by habitual idleness and debaucheries they are averse to and unfit for labor, never becoming either industrious fishermen or useful seamen; or if they were either, they are never of use for manning our fleets or for defense of the mother country, have no attachment to it, and are always out of reach of it; they are subsisted with the produce of the plantations, and use a great deal of foreign manufactories; they (as all Inhabitants of Newfoundland ever did) always will carry on a trade prejudicial to the Mother Country; they claim and hold as property all the old and best fishing conveniences, which by law belong to ship fishers; by such claims a great deal lies waste, and on such as are occupied they do not employ half so many or so good men as ship fishers would. In my humble opinion, such inhabitants, instead of being of benefit or security to the country and the fisheries, are dangerous to both, for they always did, and always will, join an invading enemy.

From the [below] account it appears that 269 French ships and 13,362 men returned directly to France at the end of the fishing season, all which ships and men are wholly fitted and maintained with the produce and manufactories of Old France only. The men are in constant readiness for manning their fleets either for offence or defense, and if they are not wanted for that service during the Winter, they are not idle and lost, as our men in Newfoundland are, but are always employed to their own and the public benefit in some other branches of trade till the next fishing season; besides, of this 13,362 men every fifth being a new or green man, they have a yearly increase of 2,670 seafaring men every year from their Fisheries.

In consequence of their views towards an extensive clandestine trade for introducing their goods and manufactories to our own colonies, a great number of New England Bank Fishers, also many of the Inhabitant Fishers of Newfoundland, were become Fishers for the French at St. Pierre's and Miquelon, and at the beginning of the season had delivered fish there; but the King's ships put a stop thereto, by seizing several New England vessels, and by removing some of those Newfoundland Inhabitant fishers from that coast, and restoring to the Ship Fishers the fishing conveniences withheld from them by those Inhabitants: A stop has also been put to our Inhabitants selling fish to the French in the north part of Newfoundland for French goods and manufactories, by driving off from that coast such French vessels as either offered to traffic with our people, or as had on board any goods or effects other than provisions and utensils necessary for the fishing voyage.

FRENCH							
No of Ships	At what place	Tons	No of men	Boats	Guns	Quintals of Fish	Hhds of Oil
117	Between the Cape Bonavista and Point Riche ¹⁵⁰	18,495	7,862	1,405	567	292,790	2,927
130	On the Banks of Moririe Vert ¹⁵¹	16,000	3,900	-	Not known.	130,000	2,600
20	At St. Pierre's ¹⁵²	2,600	1,200	240	Not known.	24,000	480
2	St. Pierre's ¹⁵³	-	400	-	50	-	-
269	Total ships and men returned directly to France	37,095	13,362				
50	On the Banks and in the Gulph S'Lawrence ¹⁵⁴	2,500	750	-	-	30,000	600
	Inhabitants ¹⁵⁵	-	600	120	-	12,000	240
20	From the West India islands ¹⁵⁶	1,200	240				
339	Grand Total	40,795	14,952	1,765	617	488,790	6,840

¹⁵⁰ This account is very exact, being taken from a strict examination of each ship. [Note in the original.]

¹⁵¹ The several accounts I have had of their ships employed on the Banks of Moririe Vert are very uncertain, being from one to 200; I set them down at 130, of 130 tons and 30 men each; and allow each man to take 2,000 fishes, 60 of which make a Quintal, dried. This allowance of 1,000 [sic.] fish to each man, or 2,000 Quintals wet fish to each ship, is a low allowance. [Note in the original.]

¹⁵² Fishing ships at St. Pierre's, at 130 tons and 60 men each. The boats belonging to the ships being drove off the coast of Newfoundland, they have not taken above 100 Quintals per boat; and some of them were taken for fishing out of their limits. [Note in the original.]

¹⁵³ French frigates came to St. Pierre's in June [and] intended to cruise there, and had on board a great quantity of goods to purchase fish from the English fishers and clandestine traders. These ships were immediately ordered to quit St. Pierre's, those seas and coasts. [Note in the original.]

¹⁵⁴ Small vessels belonging to St. Pierre's and Miquelon employed on the Banks and in the Gulph S'Lawrence, allowing each 50 tons, 15 men, and 600 Quintals fish this season. It is said these vessels have had a successful season. [Note in the original.]

¹⁵⁵ 120 boats employed by the Inhabitants of the islands, at 5 men each. These boats being drove off the coast of Newfoundland, allow them only 100 Quintals per boat; some were taken for fishing out of their limits. [Note in the original.]

¹⁵⁶ Allow 20 trading vessels from the West India islands, at 60 tons, 12 men [each]. [Note in the original.]

STATE of both FISHERIES ¹⁵⁷		
	English	French
N ^o of Ships	293	319
Burthen in Tons	31,621	39,552
N ^o of Men	17,876	1,823
N ^o of Guns	—	615
Stages	1,005	199
Trainsatts. [sic.]	806	194
Quintals Fish.	532,512	488,790
Tons of Oil.	2,384¾	1,760

From the above state, and what is said in the foregoing pages, it appears:-

That the French employed this year 26 ships, and 7,931 tons more than the English.

That the English employed only 17,876 men, including 9,976 Inhabitants.

That 13,362 Frenchmen returned directly to France, and only 1,633 to England, 2,394 to Ireland, [and] 633 to Jersey.

Notwithstanding [that by] far the greatest and best parts of the fishing coast belongs exclusively to the English, and the French are limited, and to the worst parts, whilst ours is without bounds.

That France has a certain yearly increase of 2,670 seafaring men from their Fishery, while we lose one or two thousand that run every year to America, and no rule observed for increasing our seamen, or preventing the fishermen and seamen running to America.

That the French fishermen kill as much fish *per man* as our Inhabitants, notwithstanding our boasted advantage of carrying it on by Inhabitants. It must also be noted, that in the limits to which the French are confined between Cape Bonavista and Point Riche, they have scarce half the time for catching fish that our people have to the southward, where the fish is equally abundant during that double time for catching and curing.

That the great part of the fishing conveniences on the prime part of the coast for fishing is lost, by the Inhabitants possessing them, as property; few or none of them employing half the number of boats and men as Ship Fishers would on the same places, besides the many conveniences that lie waste, because of the infinite number of disputed claims to places which none of them can make out a right to, being originally Ships' Rooms; yet they exclude ships.

¹⁵⁷ Omitted from this table but included in the original are the following entries, for the English only: "Value of Furs. £980". "Value of Seal Oil taken last Winter. £5,109." For the "Madelaine Islands." "Sea Cows taken. 1,990", and "Tons of Oil. 125".

That in those harbors to the northward, where we have this year had a few fishing ships, those ships who brought out their own men killed two thirds as much fish as our Inhabitant fishers in the same harbors: This gain in the quantity of fish is, I apprehend, greater and more certain profit to those concerned, and to the public, than what is got by peddling monopolizing trade of supplying a few slothful miserable wretches for the Winter's subsistence, and in idleness; besides, the employers of the men in ships would always likewise have the benefit of supplying them at home, by which the men will get their necessaries cheaper, consequently wages then will fall, and they will expend no [money on] foreign manufactories.

Thus it appears the public would be a very great gainer, though no more men than at present should be employed; but if the Fishery was to be laid open and free to all His Majesty's subjects, as by law it ought to be, the Ship Fishers encouraged, supported, and restored to their privileges, there would be so many more places, so much more time, and so many more and better men employed, as would, without the least doubt, cause double the quantity of fish to be taken; consequently the public gain, and the King's revenue, would be doubled, besides the far more important acquisition of 30,000 men, in constant readiness to man our fleets for security of the state; and give us such a noble superiority over our enemies or rivals, as would be a certain means of preventing war: But whilst the French manage their Fishery so well, and we ours so ill, they will always be able to harass us with fresh wars every four or five years.

On the Fishery on the coast of Labrador, within the Gulph of St. Lawrence only, was employed 117 Sloops and Schooners, with 1,563 men, who killed 104 whales, which yielded on an average 140 barrels of oil, and 2,000 weight of good bone, all killed within a space of 30 leagues, and between 14th May and 10th July. The Winter seal Fishery on the same coast, carried on by 107 men, yielded 500 tons of oil, besides fur; and the furs from the Indians was [sic.] very considerable; so that the value of the whale, seal, cod, salmon, and furs, upon that part of the coast only, was at a moderate computation £100,000, and not one Old England ship or seaman employed therein, nor a seaman raised thereby for the service of the Fleet. Such is the effect of letting the Newfoundland Fishery run into monopoly, that the rest of our merchants, if they cannot have a monopoly likewise, will let the New England men, or Frenchmen, or any body run away with it.

The New England men sell the fish, oil, and bone to the French at Petit Nord: The settlers from Canada all deal with the French at Newfoundland, St. Pierre's, and directly with France.

(Signed) HUGH PALLISER,
18th Decem' 1765.

“Well provided”¹⁵⁸ (1785)

Extract of a letter from Newfoundland, Oct. 2 [1785]

I take this opportunity of the Salisbury’s (Admiral Campbell’s ship) return to England, to write you, as it will be the last for this season. We have every appearance of a hard winter, but thank God are well provided for its approach in fuel, clothing, provisions, &c. of all which there have been great importations from England and Ireland during the summer, which sold exceedingly well; and the French at Miquelon and St. Pierre were allowed by their governors, on account of the scarcity, to purchase also, which request was not denied.

There has been no dispute respecting limits this year. Our [fishing] season has been one of the finest ever known; no fewer than 220 sail of British vessels at one time upon the Banks, and the fish in the highest perfection and numerous. The new method of curing adopted last year has been found to answer beyond expectation; less salt is required, and the flesh of the fish keeps in higher perfection without exhausting the joices so much as in the former method: a proof, this, that it may be sometimes useful to step out of the old beaten track. The stages were more numerous also this season than the last, and about forty of the ships made two voyages to the Italian and Spanish and Portuguese markets. The winter settlers at St. John’s are more numerous this year, as living is now made more comfortable in these inclement regions, by regarding our wants in due time.

“Preservation of the Newfoundland trade and fishery”¹⁵⁹ (1786)

The independence of the United States led Britain to reconsider its approach to Newfoundland’s fisheries. At least one Member of Parliament argued a purely migratory fishery was preferable to a “stationary settlement,” in order to keep the Newfoundland fishery under British control.

The house having yesterday resolved itself into a Committee of the whole house, Mr. *Jenkinson* rose to make a proposition relative to the Newfoundland trade and fishery, respecting which a bill¹⁶⁰ had been brought in last session, and had proceeded so far as the second reading, but if the committee were disposed to hear him he said he would explain to them the principles on which his opinion on the subject was founded, and state the general system of regulations that appeared to him necessary to be laid down and established for the preservation of the Newfoundland trade and fishery.

¹⁵⁸ From Extract of a letter from Newfoundland. (1785, November 25). *Chelmsford Chronicle*, p. 1.

¹⁵⁹ From LONDON, *March 28*. (1786, July 26). *Pennsylvania Gazette*, p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ “A bill for confining, for a time to be limited, the trade between the ports of the United States of America, and his Majesty’s subjects in the island of Newfoundland, to bread, flour, and live stock, to be imported in none but British-built ships, actually belonging to British subjects, and navigated according to the law, clearing out from the ports of his Majesty’s European dominions, and furnished with a license”. Further Advices. (1785, April 9). *Pennsylvania Packet*, p. 2.

There being a general cry of hear! Hear! Mr. Jenkinson proceeded to state in the first place, the importance of the trade to this country [Britain], next the means most likely to encourage and support it, and lastly the situation of it, compared with that of those foreign powers with whom we had to contest in regard to the fisheries.

He began by declaring, that the measures pursued last year in respect to the West Indies had proved, that under due regulations our commerce with that quarter of the world had grown and increased considerably, since the separation between Great Britain and the United States of America, and there was every reason to believe our Newfoundland trade and fishery, when properly conducted, would prove equally successful. The accounts of last year evinced that the gain upon that trade to this country amounted at least to 500,000 l. annually, and that we sent our British commodities, and brought home specie or bills, for the fish we sold to the Mediterranean, Portuguese, and other foreign markets. The number of ships and vessels employed in carrying on the trade, he stated to be upwards of 450, in the manning of which 10,000 seamen were engaged. This therefore proved that the Newfoundland trade was not only a most valuable branch of our commerce, but a considerable source of naval strength, since it kept 10,000 seamen always ready, whenever the exigency of public affairs should require their service. Ireland also was, he was persuaded, a considerable gainer, as she supplied Newfoundland with all her salted provisions, the intercourse with the United States having been entirely cut off.

Having stated these facts, in order to manifest the great importance of the object, he said he would just state the principles on which he thought most advisable to regulate the Newfoundland fishery in future, the most essential of which was to preserve it entirely a British fishery, and this could only be done by confining it to British ships, navigated from Great Britain, and by no means to suffer any stationary settlement to be made on the island of Newfoundland.

If a colony were to be settled there, Mr. Jenkinson observed, courts of judicature must be instituted, and a civil government established, the obvious consequences of which would be the loss of the fisheries to this country, as had been the case in respect to the New England fisheries. No sooner was New England colonized, than the colony took the fisheries on their own coasts into their own hands, and we lost the fisheries.

The old policy of this country in respect to Newfoundland, had always been to put the fishery on such a footing as should avert this evil, and in order to do so the more effectually, it had been the practice to contract with the seamen that they should be paid one part of the wages due to them for their service, on the voyage outward and home again, in Great Britain, after their return home. To this he should propose rigidly to adhere, and to such other regulations respecting the fisheries as were most likely to preserve them British fisheries, which end it would materially conduce to the attainment of, to make all stands, stages, flakes, and curing houses, that were on the island, no longer the property of those that erected them, than while they employed them in the business of the fisheries, but if left, they should be liable to be occupied by the first comers the next fishing season.

As emulation and the spirit of adventure was the source and vital spring, as it were, of this trade, he should propose to hold out as many temptations for more to join in it as possible, and as it was a trade perfectly free and open, and in which, of course, any person who chose it might embark, he should be various ways encourage men even of small fortunes and slender property to undertake it. This might be done by means of giving small bounties to every new adventurer, and by letting it be carried on by ships and vessels in which different people had shares.

“The regulation of particular bounties”¹⁶¹ (1786)

A second account gives more details of Mr. Jenkinson’s bounties.

Mr. Jenkinson, making a few remarks on the bill for regulating the Newfoundland fisheries, recalled the attention of the House to the subject. [...] He expatiated on the Newfoundland fisheries, as an object of national utility. They not only served as a source of wealth, but as an excellent nursery for our seamen. The bill to which he now alluded was fraught with many salutary regulations, which, he imagined, it would at present be unnecessary to explain minutely; he would therefore content himself with mentioning its principal features.

The first of these was, to preclude those concerned in the fisheries from becoming stationary residents in the island; because, should an extensive colonization take place, it would deprive the nation of those advantages derived from a circuitous navigation. In the year 1709, that astute politician, Sir Joseph Child, predicted the consequence of a colonization being permitted to the Newfoundland fishermen. Experience had confirmed the hypothesis, for the Newfoundland fisheries, according to the advancement of colonization, had gradually decreased in utility to this country. In order to obviate this circumstance, he intended to insert a clause in this bill, to enjoin, that a part at least of the seamen’s wages should be paid in this kingdom. In another clause of the bill, he would enforce the limitation of a year for the tenure of those temporary buildings, which were found expedient for the curing of fish, and for the residence of those employed in the business.

The second part of the bill affected the regulation of particular bounties, which our neighbors imitated from objects of policy. The French had, for a series of years, granted to their fishermen a bounty of five livres per quintal, and had also laid a prohibitory duty of ten livres per quintal, on all fish imported in any other than French bottoms. With regard to this particular step, it was intended to follow them, but with this necessary economical precaution, that the expenditure should not amount to more than 700l. per annum. [...]

[Following Mr. Jenkinson’s speech,] the House of Commons yesterday, in a committee on the Newfoundland fishery, came to the following resolutions:

“That there be allowed to the first 100 vessels, that shall arrive in each year in the ports of Newfoundland, with a cargo of not less than 10,000 fish caught on the

¹⁶¹ SATURDAY’S POST. (1786, April 4). *Edinburgh Advertiser*, p. 1.

Banks, and shall, after landing the same, proceed for and return with another cargo, if carrying not less than 12 men, 40l. each; but if such men are carried upon shares, 50l. each. If carrying less than 12 men, and not less than 7 men, 25l. each; and if carried upon shares, 35l. each. And to the 100 vessels which next arrive, if carrying 12 men, 25l. each; but if carrying upon shares, 35l. each. If carrying less than 12 men, and not less than 7 men, 18l. each; but if carried upon shares, 25l. each. To be reported this day.”

“Observations on the bill”¹⁶² (1786)

Not everyone was happy with Mr. Jenkinson’s proposals, even among representatives of the migratory fishery strongly opposed to a resident fishery.

Observations on the Bill brought into Parliament by the Hon. Charles Jenkinson, entitled, “An Act for the Regulations of the Fisheries at Newfoundland.”

Dartmouth, March 31st [1786]

THE RESOLUTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

At a meeting held this day of the merchants, traders, and fisheries, carrying on the Newfoundland fishery from the port of Dartmouth, and its environs, to take into consideration such clauses of the Bill as appear in the public papers, brought into the Honorable the House of Commons, by the Right Honorable Charles Jenkinson, entitled, “An Act for the better regulating the Fisheries at Newfoundland.”

It was unanimously resolved, that the clause in the said Bill which takes away the property of houses, stages, flakes, &c. from the present proprietors – property to the amount of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds; established by an Act of Parliament passed in the 10th and 11th of William and Mary, and ever since occupied in the Fishery, and descended from father to son, or conveyed by deed of gift or bill of sale, is cruel and unjust, as it takes away the property without giving a valuable compensation.

Resolved, that a petition to Parliament be immediately prepared and to be delivered, if necessary, praying to be heard, by council, against the passing the said Bill into a Law.

Ordered, that the thanks of the trade be given to the Hon. George Berkley, for his just observations on that clause of the Bill which takes away the present established property. [...]

[FROM] A COPY OF A LETTER TO THE HONOURABLE GEORGE BERKLEY

Dartmouth, March 30, 1786

Sir – We have the honor, by order of the merchants, traders, and fishermen, carrying on the Newfoundland Fishery from this port, and the parts adjacent, to return their thanks for your observations on the clause respecting property in the Bill entitled “A Bill for the better regulating of the Newfoundland Fishery,” brought into the Honorable House of Commons by Charles Jenkins, a clause which, if passed into

¹⁶² OBSERVATIONS on the BILL [Advertisement]. (1786, April 10). *The Times* (London), p. 1.

law, will rob the present proprietors of a property established by the Act of the Tenth and Eleventh of King William and Queen Mary (entitled, “An Act to encourage the Trade to Newfoundland) to the amount of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, and will, instead of increasing the Fishery from this kingdom to the island of Newfoundland, entirely destroy it, and make the resident fishery the only one that will be carried on in that island. For there is no bounty which Government can give to the fishermen from this kingdom, that will enable them to continue in the fishery, if they are not secure in the buildings which they erect for the management of the different branches of the trade, as the expense of the necessary buildings are so considerable, that a successful fishery for two or three years will not repay it. The resident fishermen, who remain with their families, and by that means keep possession of their premises, will increase as the others drop off, and in a few years the trade will be entirely with them. Their number at present are very near thirty thousand, including women and children. [...]

If Mr. Jenkinson thinks, by taking away the property of the present adventurers in the Newfoundland trade, he will increase the Fishery by the number of new ones who may be enticed to adventure in it by the allurements of going into immediate possession of every necessary erection for the management of the business, he will find the event to be quite the reverse, for the buildings in Newfoundland require an annual expense to support them, or they must in four or five years fall to the ground, except the houses and stores built for the reception of fishermen and goods, and for lodging the fish after it is cured until it is exported, and that expense will be too considerable for any adventurer, the possession being unsecure to them; and this is proved by the ships’ room in every harbor in Newfoundland, which though in the very best situation for bringing on shore and curing the fish, and in common, by the Act of Tenth and Eleventh of King William and Queen Mary, to all adventurers coming from Great Britain properly qualified, yet these spots remain unoccupied, it being more for the interest of the new adventurers to have a fishing room and all its buildings, than to be at the expense of erecting them on the ship’s public room, though situated much more conveniently.

In the late unfortunate war [with the United States], had it not been for the influence of the traders going from Great Britain, and who had property in the island of Newfoundland, there is not doubt but that the resident inhabitants would have courted the protection of America – no description of men ever suffered more – many were starved. [...] The injustice of taking away the property is obvious. The bad policy of it will appear on examining the traders carrying on the fishery from this kingdom, if the intention of the Act is to increase the marine.

"Our prospects are gloomy"¹⁶³ (1812)

Extract of a letter from Newfoundland, dated 1st June 1812

Our prospects are gloomy – an immense quantity of ice in our harbor, and on the coast, the navigation completely obstructed, the fishing craft all laying up – servants' wages 20 per cent. advanced since last year – no provision, except pork and butter, to be expected from home, no intercourse with America; Quebec is the only place we can expect a supply from, as we are not allowed to cultivate the soil of the island.

A very remarkable circumstance, [is that] there is not a cargo of fish for sale in the whole island; 25s. has been given for merchantable¹⁶⁴, 24s. for *tal qual* ¹⁶⁵ per quintal. Early new fish will be uncommonly high, perhaps 27s. per quintal, more than any market in the universe can by 20 per cent. pay. It was supposed last year there were 55,000 quintals shipped for the European markets, by which there was an actual loss of L. 130,000. The merchants have to dread the consequences of this year. In addition to the numerous melancholy circumstances attending trade and fishing at this time, we have the smallpox here, a disorder dreaded by the natives as bad as a plague; it has been known to carry off whole families.

Imports of Salt¹⁶⁶ (1819)

Salt was crucial for preparing Newfoundland's cod for export. Since there was no source on the island itself, it had to be imported – sometimes from France, since the United Kingdom lacked an adequate domestic supply.

French Salt¹⁶⁷ for the Newfoundland Fishery. Now in BOND, at this Port, and free for Exportation to Newfoundland, *About 500 Tons of BOLD FRENCH SALT*, And which will be Sold on Reasonable Terms. Apply to F. S. SYMONS¹⁶⁸. Who has for Sale, some excellent HOLLAND, GENEVA, CAPE WINES and [is] daily expecting several Puncheons of very fine-flavored Jamaica RUMS.

Falmouth, January 28, 1819.

¹⁶³ From Extract of a letter from Newfoundland. (1812, August 6). *Caledonian Mercury*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁴ High quality fish.

¹⁶⁵ From the Spanish for "as is". Under the *tal qual* system, a flat rate is paid for a "bulk" of fish, usually of mixed quality.

¹⁶⁶ From Symons, F. S. (1819, February 6). French Salt for the Newfoundland Fishery [Advertisement]. *The Royal Cornwall Gazette*, p. 1.

¹⁶⁷ Salt was a tempting target for privateers. "The *Intrepid* and *Filibuster* privateers, have taken the English ship the *Pomona*, laden with salt, and bound for Newfoundland." FRENCH PAPERS. (1803, October 4). *The London Times*, p. 1.

¹⁶⁸ F. S. Symons died at Falmouth on January 31, 1822, "after a long and painful illness". He was 46. DIED. (1822, February 9). *Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet and General Advertiser*, p. 3.

“I never knew so discouraging a season”¹⁶⁹ (1821)

Extract of a letter from Newfoundland, dated St. John's, May 26 [1821]

Since my knowledge of the country, I assure you I never knew so discouraging a season as the present; hardly any appearance or movement at this advanced period of preparation for fishery. All the merchants here and in the outports, have contracted their business at least one half, and will not themselves ship a man on wages, nor allow their planters to do so. The town is at present crowded with men unemployed. I am positive that one half of the population must quit the country; and from the appearance of things, the other half, I am afraid, will be in a state of starvation during the winter.

The Newfoundland School Society¹⁷⁰ (1825)

Newfoundland is the most ancient colony in the possession of the British Crown, and its trade and fisheries have largely contributed to our national wealth and maritime greatness. The population, consisting of 90,000 souls, descended from British parents, are for the most part in the deepest ignorance, but anxious to obtain instruction for their children. There is but one free daily school on the island; the object, therefore, of the Newfoundland School Society is to provide schools throughout the colony, to be conducted as nearly as circumstances will admit on Dr. Bell's system, not insisting on the general introduction of any particular catechism, but taking care that all the children of the schools receive instruction in the Holy Scriptures, and that only the children of members of the Church of England learn the church catechism.

A central school has been commenced at St. John's, which has received much encouragement, and as a demand for teachers is general from all parts of the island, three or four additional masters and mistresses will be sent out by the first convenient opportunity. His Majesty's Government has rendered the society most valuable assistance, by affording its masters and mistresses going to Newfoundland a passage on board His Majesty's ships of war or transports, and also by directing a grant to be made of any land in the colony that may be required for building schools, together with a pecuniary gift of 500l. toward the expense of the buildings, and 100l. per annum for the salary of the masters.

Mr. Codner on the Newfoundland School Society¹⁷¹ (1826)

Mr. Samuel Codner, a Newfoundland merchant, and Honorary Secretary to the parent society, described the origin of this Institution, and stated that he had been connected with the colony of Newfoundland for 38 years, and had made 19 voyages

¹⁶⁹ From Extract of a letter from Newfoundland. (1821, September 17). *Vermont Journal*, p. 3.

¹⁷⁰ From NEWFOUNDLAND SCHOOL SOCIETY [Advertisement]. (1825, January 7). *The Times* (London), p. 6.

¹⁷¹ From NEWFOUNDLAND SCHOOL SOCIETY. (1826, August 19). *Birmingham Journal*, p. 3.

thither: that the Newfoundland School Society was established in London in June 1823, under the patronage of His Majesty's Government, at which period there was but one *free daily* school in the island, for a population of 90,000, scattered along a sinuous shore 600 miles in extent: that the exertions of the society had been so much supported both at home and in the colony, that since that period they had sent out from this country thirteen masters and mistresses, and a superintendent; and at their six stations they had about 1,000 children and adults under their care.

He said, that notwithstanding the Governor, Chief Justice, Magistrates, and many of the merchants and inhabitants had subscribed, and though the lower classes had gone into the woods to bring out timber for the school rooms, the aged, on their part, hewing it for the buildings; though the Government at home had given 500l. and 100l. per annum; yet the funds were wholly inadequate to meet the necessary expenses, and there were now bills under acceptance to the amount of 600l. and not above 300l. in the treasurer's hands to meet them.

Thus, to use a sailor's expression, "the ship was run aground," and they must call on all their friends, not only to help them to set it afloat¹⁷² again, but to enable them to gratify the cry from the numerous bays and harbors to send them teachers.

Selling Newfoundland fish in Bilbao¹⁷³ (1833)

ESCHALEZ AND ANOHTER V. FRYER AND OTHERS

This was an action to recover back a sum of 952l., paid by the plaintiffs for dried cod-fish shipped by the defendants to Bilbao, in March, 1828.

The Solicitor-General, Sir J. Scarlett, and Mr. Martin appeared for the plaintiffs. Mr. Pollock, Mr. Richards, and Mr. Whately were for the defendants.

It appeared that in January, 1828, the defendants, who are ship-owners at Poole, had a vessel in that port laden with cod-fish from Newfoundland, and they wrote to a Mr. Chesman, an agent of theirs in London, to sell the whole, or part, of the cargo. In answer to the application, Mr. Chesman informed them that some friends of his (who turned out to be the plaintiffs) would take two-thirds of the cargo, to consist of 2,100 quintals, at 13s. 6d. per quintal, warranted dry, and of merchantable quality, if they (the defendants) would ship the other third at their own risk, the whole to be consigned to Messrs. Bayeux and Co., at Bilbao.

After some negotiation this was agreed to, and the cod fish having been transshipped from the Triumvirate to the Elizabeth, at Poole, the latter vessel sailed

¹⁷² The Society would survive, and merge with another institution in the 1850s. As Samuel Codner later put it: "Since that period – a period of 30 years – 21,000 of the population of Newfoundland have grown up under the fostering care of its *Christian Teachers*, and the Colony itself has been largely benefited by the labors of that Society. The Newfoundland School Society is now [as of 1854] amalgamated with the Colonial Church Society, bearing the new designation of 'The Colonial Church and School Society', and thus my anxieties and labors in support of it, as a separate institution, have ceased." Codner, S. (1854, September 12). Newfoundland School Society [Advertisement]. *Cheltenham Chronicle*, p. 2.

¹⁷³ From COURT OF KING'S BENCH. (1833, February 23). *The Times* (London), p. 6.

for Bilbao towards the end of March, and arrived there on the 7th of April. On the 13th of that month, Messrs. Bayeux and Co., to whom the plaintiffs had consigned their two-thirds of the cargo, informed them that the fish was found to be so bad on its arrival that it was unsaleable, and they therefore repudiated all shares in the adventure. The plaintiffs had previously accepted a bill for 932l., which had been drawn upon them by the defendants for their two-thirds, which had been paid. In consequence of the loss which was sustained by the bad quality of the fish, the plaintiffs had been considerable losers by the transaction, and they filed a bill in Chancery against the defendants, treating it as a partnership adventure. The present action was brought by the direction of the Court of Chancery, to ascertain whether there had been, in fact, a breach of contract, and the question of law as to its being a joint or partnership adventure was to be considered, but not to be made a ground of nonsuit.

The evidence for the plaintiffs consisted principally of the depositions of the various persons at Bilbao, through whose hands the fish passed on its arrival there, and who stated that it was of the worst quality, soft, wet, and discolored, so as to make it unsalable. The consignees having refused to accept the cargo, application was made to the Board of Trade at Bilbao, who directed part of it to be sent to Lisbon and St. Sebastian, where it was sold for 17 reals a quintal, instead of 70 reals, which was the market price of fish of good quality. There was also the evidence of some custom-house officers at Poole, who stated that they inspected the fish on its arrival, and also at the time it was transshipped, and they found it in a bad and unmerchantable state when on board the *Triumvirate*, from its having been improperly cured; and it had become much worse when put on board the *Elizabeth*, by being kept under hatches for four months. It was admitted that the ship was seaworthy, and that no accident had happened on the voyage, by means of which the fish could have received any sea damage.

On the part of the defendants several persons were called who had assisted in transshipping the fish on board the *Elizabeth*, and they all stated that it was perfectly good, dry, and merchantable. They selected, or "culled" the outside or damaged fish, which amounted to about 50 out of a cargo of 4,500 quintals, and these were sold to a person at Poole at 11s. per quintal. A Mr. Harrison, a merchant at Poole, also saw the fish when it was put on board the *Elizabeth*, and he thought it so good that he should not have hesitated to purchase it at the price for which it was sold to the plaintiffs. Various letters and depositions were also put in, and upon the whole evidence it was contended that there had been no breach of contract on the part of the defendants, for they had informed the plaintiffs that the fish was of small size, and that it being shown to be dry and merchantable at the time it was shipped, the bad stated in which it arrived at Bilbao must have been owing to exposure to damp weather, or some injury to the fish in its landing.

The Lord Chief Justice, in summing up, said, in his opinion, a very strong case had been made out on each side, and it was extremely difficult to reconcile the contradictory statements as to the condition of fish on its shipment. It did, however, clearly appear that it was unsalable when it arrived at its destination, and that the

plaintiffs had therefore suffered great loss, and as the defendants had not produced any evidence to show in what state it had been originally sent from Newfoundland, it was for the jury to look at the statements of the different people who spoke to its quality at Poole, and to say upon the balance of the evidence, whether the defendants had been guilty of any breach of contract; which would be an answer to any action they might have brought for the price of the fish, supposing it had not been paid.

After some deliberation, the Jury found for the defendants; and, in answer to a question by the Chief Justice, they said they thought the fish was dry, and of merchantable quality.

The learned judge said, that as to the question of partnership, that although the parties were jointly interested in the adventure in question, in his opinion it did not constitute such a partnership as to prevent their maintaining an action for breach of contract.

“Worse than piratical conduct”¹⁷⁴ (1835)

Extract of a letter from Newfoundland, dated Port aux Basques, July 10, 1835

I addressed a few lines to you about ten days since, informing you of the loss of the ships James, and brig Nathaniel Graham; since then the bark Orion, Card, Master, from St. John’s N.F. bound to Quebec, went ashore on the night of 29th June, on the S. W. Island, near this place, during a dense fog and gale of wind, from S. E. The captain, mate, and six hands were saved, five having perished; they were unable to save scarcely an article of clothing, owing to the worse than piratical conduct of many of the inhabitants of the vicinity of this place; and it is high time that more rigorous methods were adopted by the Government for the protection of the crews and property of the numerous vessels that are yearly cast ashore in the neighborhood of Cape Ray.

¹⁷⁴ From Extract of a letter. (1835, August 22). *National Gazette* (Philadelphia), p. 2.

Indians and the credit system¹⁷⁵ (1839)

The inhabitants of the interior [of Newfoundland] are [...] the remnants and descendants of two tribes, called Micmacs and Mountaineers – the Micmacs residing in their groups of cabins on plats of table land in rear of the European settlements, and the Mountaineers, as their name indicates, living farther north among the mountains. [...]

These Indians of Newfoundland carry on a traffic with the shore inhabitants in furs and peltries, for which they take in exchange articles of food and clothing necessary for their families. They are very punctual to their engagements. In he spring and fall they bring in their furs, and take a new supply for the ensuing season. The trader extends to them a credit, which they are careful not to lose, as a failure to obtain the accustomed supply, would expose them to suffering, if not starvation.

The “credit system” is therefore in full vogue between the English factors and savages of the island, and if the advantage happen there, as elsewhere, to be principally on the side of the creditor, it also serves to save the poor debtor from extreme want and deprivation. There are instances of great wealth accumulated in a few years, by this kind of traffic with the Indians of Newfoundland. There, as every where else, it seems to be the lot of the red man to fall a pretty to the cupidity and avarice of the whites.

The Great Fire of St. John's¹⁷⁶ (1846)

Newfoundland's largest city was destroyed by fire in 1819, 1846 and 1892. This letter, dated June 11, 1846 represents an eye-witness account written by a Roman Catholic in St. John's to the Bishop of Newfoundland, temporarily on leave in Ireland.

MY BELOVED LORD¹⁷⁷ – With a heart bleeding for the desolation and misery around me the melancholy duty devolves upon me of acquainting you of the total destruction of our beautiful town, for the Rev. Mr. Forrestal¹⁷⁸ has not even the means of procuring even one sheet of paper to write to you, and from utter prostration is unable to do so, had he the means.

On Tuesday morning Hamblin, the cabinet-maker, was boiling a pot of varnish in a house to the rear of the houses opposite Winton's¹⁷⁹ in Queen-street, and leaving

¹⁷⁵ From Tucker, E. W. (1839). Five months in Labrador and Newfoundland. Concord: Israel S. Boyd and William White. Written by Ephraim W. Tucker (1817 – 1889).

¹⁷⁶ From Nugent, W. (1846, July 2). UTTER DESTRUCTION OF THE TOWN OF ST. JOHN'S. *The Freeman's Journal*, p. 3. Written by William J. Nugent (d. 1891), who is buried in the Belvedere Roman Catholic cemetery at St. John's.

¹⁷⁷ Michael Anthony Fleming (1792 – 1850), bishop of Newfoundland.

¹⁷⁸ Rev. John Forrestal (d. 1850).

¹⁷⁹ Henry David Winton (1793 – 1855) was the co-founder and editor of the Newfoundland *Public Ledger*, a newspaper. His reputation of being anti-Catholic (despite having campaigned for Catholic emancipation in the 1820s) led to attacks on him and his employees on several occasions. From 1835:

the pot on the fire, retired to breakfast with his men at about eight o'clock, a.m. The pot boiled over, and the house took fire, a strong south-westerly wind blowing. In twenty minutes M'Carthy's house was blazing, and that side of the street was literally a mass of fire. In the meantime the fire had been wafted across the street, and Winton's house and all those at the east side of the street, to Water-street and on the west to Duckworth-street were burning. At half-past nine Mr. Dillon's house was one blaze, the greater part of the property having been removed to Warren's Wharf. Now Rogerson's house, fronting Queen-st., caught the flame and immediately, notwithstanding every effort to arrest it, spread eastward and westward at once. Stewart¹⁸⁰ and Rennie's stone buildings were consumed, the fire running *against the wind* to Newman's, sweeping away both sides of the street and all Duckworth-street as far as Brazel's, together with all the intermediate streets, and at the same hour all M'Bride's-row, including, of course, John Kent's and O'Dwyer's, were a heap of smoking ruins.

What need I particularize further? By nine o'clock in the evening every building of every description from Newman's to Bowden's room in Magotty-cove, in Water-street, in Duckworth-street, and all the cross-streets, and on the King's Road, as far as O'Mara's houses, which were saved, was utterly destroyed, leaving nothing but a vast and threatening forest of tall frowning chimneys – all, save only the chapel and palace!

But here comes, if possible, a more painful cause of mourning. About 3 P.M. a spark, by some extraordinary means, was wafted to your new school-house which in a moment became a mass of flame, and as all were engaged in town and no fears were

“[W]e find the following particulars of a diabolical attack on Mr. Winton, editor of the *Public Ledger*, originating probably in the hostility of the lower orders of the Catholic population, to whom the politics of his paper had long been a source of irritation, and caused repeated outrages on his property:– [...] Mr. Henry Winton, [...] accompanied by Captain Churchward, [...] were waylaid on Saddle Hill by five men, with painted faces, who in the first instance, struck Mr. Winton off his horse with a large stone, and while he lay on the ground, insensible, cut off both his ears, part of one of his cheeks, and inflicted other severe wounds on his person, in a most brutal manner.” NEWFOUNDLAND. (1835, June 15). *The Caledonian Mercury*, p. 4. In 1840, Herman Lott, one of Winton's employees, was kidnapped and interrogated by Irish Catholics who were upset at perceived libel of a pro-Catholic Judge Bourne. He was let go with a warning: “I was again addressed by being [...] not to fear my master, he could not hurt me – he (my master) had asserted that Irish emigrants were ‘refugee Ribbonmen’ and Irishmen who had ‘left their country for their country’s good,’ but that he and others like him would perhaps find out that there was a Ribbon Society in this country equally as terrible as ever it was in Ireland, and that he (Mr. Winton) would soon find his house too hot for him.” RIBBONISM IN NEWFOUNDLAND – ATROCIOUS VILLAINY. (1840, November 25). *The Sydney Morning Herald*, p. 2. Ribbonmen were predominantly poor Irish Catholics who supported an independent Ireland and tenants' rights against their landlords' demands.

¹⁸⁰ “The stone premises of Messrs. J. and W. Stewart, being well built and protected with iron shutters, it was thought they might have stayed its progress for a time; but being surrounded on three sides by wooden buildings, viz., J. Rogerson and Son, Victoria Hotel, and Messrs. C. F. Bennetts and Co., as well as their own wooden stores in the rear, they were in a very short time surrounded by fire; and the inmates, cut off from other retreat, had to escape from the wharfs in boats and vessels, after having rolled into the water about one hundred tuns of seal oil, from the wharfs and stores.” DESTRUCTION OF ST. JOHN'S NEWFOUNDLAND, BY FIRE. (1846, July 2). *The Freeman's Journal*, p. 3.

entertained for that quarter by any, in a few minutes the Presentation Convent caught fire. It is incredible to think how rapidly the flames extended. Scarcely did more time elapse than I take to tell the mournful tale when that beautiful, the glorious edifice, was a body of living fire.

The nuns, God help them, made efforts beyond human strength to save your things, for the entire contents of the palace¹⁸¹ had been removed there *for security*. Miss Waters¹⁸², particularly, remained until the room in which she was became enveloped in flames, all the stairs too being on fire. Her retreat thus cut off she fled to the window, which she burst open and was about to precipitate herself to the ground to meet certain death; but called too by the hundreds who now surrounded, and particularly by the reverend mother, she remained calmly awaiting the rapid approach of the fire, until at length all the walls of the room, together with the floor beneath her feet, were burning. At length the people got a long beam up against the window, and with the utmost coolness this astonishing lady got out on it, and quietly slid down into the yard. Thus is everything of value you possessed destroyed, as well as all Mr. Kent's property, which also had been removed there, and Dr. Rochford's.

I should have told you that the fire took a direction up the hill, and consumed all the houses up behind Carter's, as well as in front, but it stopped there. Colonel Law¹⁸³ was extremely attentive to the unhappy nuns. He implored them to occupy his apartments in the garrison, which Mrs. L. and his family would vacate on the instant, and when they expressed their determination of taking present shelter in the Convent of Mercy, the Sisters having fled over to them at the first alarm to take them over, he requested they would pass through the garrison, and on their compliance he rode rapidly on, and ordered every man, woman, and child in the garrison to withdraw into the house until they passed. These delicate attentions, under such circumstances, ought not to be forgotten. The nuns went to the Convent of Mercy, where they arrived at about four, P.M., where they remain at present.

Here, then, is the rich, the great commercial city of St. John's, at the present moment without *one single* store¹⁸⁴, and without one single shop!!! What shall become

¹⁸¹ The bishop's residence.

¹⁸² Probably the "Miss Catherine Waters" who, with other "religious ladies," "sailed in the St. Walter Scott, from Kingstown Harbour, [Dublin,] for their mission in Newfoundland" on May 4, 1842. "This ship [carried] out nearly one thousand tons of finely cut stone for the splendid new Cathedral of St. John, Newfoundland." CATHOLIC CHURCH. (1842, May 5). *The Freeman's Journal*, p. 2.

¹⁸³ In February of 1844, "Lieut. Colonel R. Law" of the Royal Newfoundland companies was promoted "from half-pay Unattached to be Lieutenant Colonel, without purchase." FROM THE LONDON GAZETTE OF FRIDAY. (1844, February 5). *The Glasgow Herald*, p. 2.

¹⁸⁴ "PRINCIPAL MERCANTILE HOUSES DESTROYED. Hounsell, Schink and Co, Stabb Rin and Co, William Grieve and Co, Wilson and Macneill, Robert Alsop and Co, Rennie, Stuart and Co, William Warren, jun, Boyd and M'Dougall, Peter Rogerson and Co, James William Stewart, C F Bennett and Co, J H Warren, Langley and Tissier, P and W Carter, W E Taylor, Shea and Murphy, Thomas Glen, John M'William, E and N Stabb, Pierce Grace, John and James Kent, R O'Dwyer and Co, Neill M'Dougall, Begg, Ker and Co, Bowring Brothers, R and J S Rutherford, Mathew Stewart and Co, M'Bride and Kerr, Richard Howley, Samuel Mudge, Warren Brothers, Baine, Johnston and Co, Wilson and Co, James Clift, S G Archibald, R F Trimmingham and Co, James Fox and Co, Robert Prowse, W and H Thomas and Co, J M Rendell and Co, Gilbert Clapp, J B Baines and Co, Job Brothers and Co,

of us? It is apprehended there are not provisions for a fortnight in the town, and all the building materials have been consumed. We had a meeting of the inhabitants yesterday, and came to resolutions praying the Governor to call the legislature together – to cause all vessels and boats with provisions to be stopped – every house to be searched, and a survey of the provisions and building materials available to be made, and all to be brought to a common depository, and to be dispensed equally by the commissariat – to establish a night patrol by land and on the water – and in the afternoon he convened a meeting of about fifty at the Government-house, and assured us of his compliance with our wishes.

We also appointed a committee to solicit from the clergymen of the different congregations the use of their churches, and from the Irish and Natives¹⁸⁵, giving their buildings for the accommodation of upwards of 5,000, perhaps fully 7,000 houseless creatures. The Rev. John Forrestal has kindly met them; he agrees to give the chapel, but the Cathedral could hardly be made available, but he permits the Governor to use the timber on the ground to make extensive sheds to cover them, and I solicited the Governor to order tents to be erected, with which he instantly complied, and to-day, there is a vast number raised on the Cathedral ground and neighbourhood. We have also determined to ask the Imperial government for a loan of 500,000l., to be lent on mortgages to enable parties to build promptly on their ground, and we propose to pass a bill in the assembly to restrict the breadth of Water-street to 100 feet.

I have thus given your lordship a full and unvarnished account of this deplorable catastrophe. I judged it far better to enable you to see the very worst of the picture at once, and therefore have allowed no false delicacy to induce me to palliate the relation. But how could I describe to you the misery of the people? M'Lea has lost 50,000l. without insurance; Bennett¹⁸⁶ has lost 30,000l., O'Dwyer, John Kent, Kitchin and H. Worth and Grace, &c. &c. have lost everything, even their books have been lost to Mr. Kent and O'Dwyer. Not a single stone house in town resisted the flames, Prowse's and even the Custom-house falling amongst the rest, with Baine's, Johnson's, Tobin's, Hunter's, Nicol's – in fact all.

We are hourly beset by those who, the day before, were regarded as independent, praying for food, and even those who have wealth still are unable to procure it, while robbery in every form stalks abroad, in a community proverbially honest. We are hiring vessels to take off emigrants. There are rumors abroad of efforts

Hunter and Co, Tobin and Co, John O'Donnell, John Omars, Laurence O'Brien and Co, James Douglas and Co, Michael Foley, Parker and Gleison, James Morris, Nicholas Gill, G F Bonn, John Cussack and Sons, Walter Dillon, Dunscomb and Harvey, Robinson, Brooking and Co, John Brocklebank, William Boden, Michael Nowlan." DESTRUCTION OF ST. JOHN'S NEWFOUNDLAND, BY FIRE. (1846, July 2). *The Freeman's Journal*, p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ In this context, presumably native European Newfoundlanders, as opposed to migrants.

¹⁸⁶ "The oil vats of Messrs. C. F. Bennett and Co. and Messrs. Stewart, with their contents, together with many other combustible materials, and about 150 puncheons of molasses, being all on fire at once, the effect may be conceived, but cannot be described." DESTRUCTION OF ST. JOHN'S NEWFOUNDLAND, BY FIRE. (1846, July 2). *The Freeman's Journal*, p. 3.

being used to fire the orphan house, and terror appears to pervade the whole community.

In mentioning that the fire reached Magotty-cove, I omitted to mention its extent eastward in Duckworth-street. The efforts made at Paddy M'Carthy's house stopped it and thus saved us, although John Stickley's place within a few yards of us was consumed with old Homan's house, but God's providence was pleased to cause a change in the wind, which towards evening blew a gale from W. N. W.¹⁸⁷, a spark also contrived to bring the fire to the magazine on the hill, which exploded at about nine o'clock, just at the termination of the ravages of the fire. We had removed every thing, even our children, into the fields, where they remained perishing in the gale, for about two hours, but eventually, about ten o'clock, I induced them to come in, and towards five o'clock a few took an hour's repose on the ground, but we were in shelter. [...]

Farewell, my lord, and believe me with affectionate sympathy for your personal sufferings, as well as for those of your people, whom you love more than yourself, your sincere, though humble friend,

W. NUGENT.

Visiting Newfoundland's Fisheries in 1849¹⁸⁸ (1849)

Throughout the 19th century, Britain shared Newfoundland's cod fishery with the French. France had access to part of the Newfoundland shore, and control over the nearby islands of St. Pierre and Michelon. In this account we get our first look at a peculiar form of international cooperation, where British fishermen would sell bait fish (capelin) to the French for use in fishing for cod. This happened frequently, despite France and Britain being rivals in the international cod market, and often without paying the duties (taxes) imposed on bait by the British government.

The following is an extract of a report dated the 2nd of Oct. 1848, addressed to Vice-Admiral the Earl of Dundonald¹⁸⁹, by Capt. G. G. Lock¹⁹⁰, R.N.¹⁹¹, upon the fisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador, as ordered by the House of Commons to be printed, 1st June, 1849.

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

My Lord – I sailed from Halifax in her Majesty's ship under my command, on the 14th June, and anchored in the harbor of St. Pierre's in the afternoon of the 17th. I found the outer roads and inner harbor 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 salt, and were waiting

¹⁸⁷ West North West

¹⁸⁸ From Lock, G. G. (1849, September 18). FISHERIES OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR. *The London Daily News*, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ Thomas Cochrane (1775 – 1860), 10th Earl of Dundonald, nicknamed the "Sea Wolf" for his naval prowess during the Napoleonic wars.

¹⁹⁰ Granville G. Lock. He is listed as a Lieutenant aboard the *Ocean*, out of Sheerness, Kent, England, in the Navy List of 1834.

¹⁹¹ Royal Navy

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 bankers¹⁹², which I ascertained had been brought over from our own shores during the night in English boats. The bait is sold in the harbor 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. IV., c. 59¹⁹³; 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-defense 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 systemized 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. [...]

The fishing season commenced the beginning of June, and will close the first week of October; they do not consider it will be a favorable one, however; fishermen are as hard to satisfy as farmers; their catch will probably average 1,000,000 quintals¹⁹⁴.

The [French] government bounty¹⁹⁵ 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.

¹⁹² In this context, ships fishing for cod on the Grand Banks surrounding Newfoundland.

¹⁹³ The Customs, etc. Act 1833.

¹⁹⁴ A quintal was either 100 lbs. (a short quintal) or 112 lbs (8 stone, a long quintal).

¹⁹⁵ Subsidy.

The islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon are admirably adapted for the purposes to which they are applied; no expense to the government, they offer the best possible centre for all commercial operations, a depot 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 Filleau¹⁹⁶, 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 [due] to this traffic with his islands our poor settlers were alone enabled to support their existence. [...]

The present is surely the period for our merchants to exert themselves to regain their lost ascendancy; while the French are paralyzed by the failure of the French West India markets, and general loss of credit consequent upon the emancipation of the blacks¹⁹⁷ by the revolution of February¹⁹⁸. [...]

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, [at] one-third the expense [at which] 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),

¹⁹⁶ Jacques-Auguste Filleau (1821 – 1903). In 1850, he published an 80-page memoir of his time in St. Pierre and Miquelon, titled *Mémoire sur la colonie de Saint-Pierre et Miquelon, et sur les vrais moyens de consolider cet établissement*.

¹⁹⁷ France abolished slavery in its colonies in 1792, only to see Napoleon re-established it in 1802. A decree of 1815 abolished the slave trade, but did not come into force until 1826. Slavery was re-abolished in 1848, but not before France lost Haiti (Saint-Domingue) to a slave rebellion that lasted from 1791 to 1804.

¹⁹⁸ The February revolution led to the Second French Republic. Its leader, Louis-Napoleon, would declare himself emperor of France in 1852.

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 one 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 populated 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 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 transship 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 endeavored 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 harbors.

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 Cadiz¹⁹⁹, and generally commanding the early

¹⁹⁹ Cádiz is an important port city in southern Spain.

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, and Co.²⁰⁰ 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, 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 Rev. Mr. Blackmore having been removed to a better living, and Mr. Cunningham, his successor, had not yet 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. Stephen's 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 truck 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 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*l.* 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

²⁰⁰ As late as 1913, L. Newman, of this merchant company, was on the board of the Bank of England. BANKERS ON THE DIRECTORATE OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND. (1913, October 23). *The Wall Street Journal*, p. 1.

(without being landed) could not be considered as exported, the boats adopt this method of taking away the caplin to evade the duty. [...] 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 and Co., and Nicholl and 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 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. [...]

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 fire²⁰¹ and famine of the last and preceding year. [...]

CROC

This harbor is a long narrow indenture, slightly curving toward 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. [...] The French have two rooms in Croc, on opposite sides of the harbor. 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 coast of Labrador, to protect them from the weather. Their establishments are conducted upon the same principle as our own; [but] 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.

²⁰¹ The great fire of 1846 nearly destroyed the city of St. John's. "The whole town of St. John's, Newfoundland, is a ruin. Scarcely a shed is standing, and what was late the wealthy, populous, and flourishing capital of the island, is now a blackened ruin, crowded by a pauperized, shivering, and disorganized community." UTTER DESTRUCTION OF THE TOWN OF ST. JOHN'S. (1846, July 2). *The Freeman's Journal*, p. 3.

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. [...]

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. [...] 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.

The Newfoundland Seal Hunt²⁰² (1871)

In addition to the cod fishery, Newfoundland-based expeditions also hunted for whales and seals. This article provides details of the seal hunt as conducted in the early 1870s.

[CONTENT WARNING – GRAPHIC DEPICTIONS OF SEAL SLAUGHTER]

The ice comes down from the Arctic Ocean at the beginning of March, and with it the seals, who satiate their voracity in the schools of cod and other finny tribes. This agreeable business proceeds until the “whelps,” or young seals, put in an appearance in the centre of a circle of admiring acquaintances, who range themselves in dignified state upon various adjacent cakes of ice surrounding the frigid domicile of the happy family. Considerable interest is manifested in the new comer until the mature age of ten days is attained, when the veteran is left to flop for himself and become the ultimate prey of his born enemy, man.

Until about three years ago only sailing vessels were sent to the ice, an idea prevailing that the steamers, being of greater speed, would get on the field too soon and kill the cubs before they were sufficiently grown. That idea, however, has been exploded, and now there are a dozen applicants for a berth on one of the steamers to every one for passage in a sailing vessel. The shrewd fishermen realize the possibility of making two cargoes with the aid of steam, and also comprehend that every trip adds to their exchequer.

²⁰² From SWILERS AND THE SWILE. (1871, April 25). *The New York Daily Herald*, p. 7.

WHEN THE FLEET SAILS

The sailing vessels leave the harbors of St. John's, Harbor Grace and Bay Roberts in fleets, generally upon the 1st of March, not sooner. The reason for choosing that date is that if they sail previous and get wrecked in the floes or gales, the merchant cannot recover insurance. The sailing vessels devoted to the pursuit of the seal are maintopsail brigantines²⁰³, with powerful mainsails to assist in forcing the vessel through the ice. These vessels are here euphoniously denominated in the language of the guileless and hilarious islanders as "jackass brigantines." Whence this designation is evolved, I will not hazard. The prows and forward sides of the brigantines are sheathed with iron plating to prevent the grinding of the timber in contact with the ice. On getting out of the harbors the squadrons simultaneously head up northwardly toward the Straits until the ice is fallen in with, generally in four days. The brigantine then cruises about or hangs on to a berg with her "ice anchors."

THE SEAL HUNT PICTURED

On sighting the seals from the masthead the ship's head is turned in the direction of the prey. If the ice is jammed too thick to permit the vessel's passage, the boats are lowered away and an exhilarating pursuit begins. Ofttimes the seals are five to ten miles beyond the ship, and a lively pull is necessary. Nothing in the way of food is carried, the men contenting themselves with a couple of hardtacks²⁰⁴ and a glass of rum before leaving the ship. The crew is divided into "gunners" and batsmen," and these again apportioned into four gangs. The first gang performs the work of slaughter; the second gang haul the "pelts" on board the boats; the third gang transfer them and stow them away in the hold of the ship, while the fourth gang recuperate to relieve their brethren by indulging in a nap. The pursuit of the seals is exciting. Each is provided with a long staff, similar in shape to the American baseball bat, with the difference of greater length. These batsmen are extremely agile and level-headed. They leap upon the floating ice and make direct for the young seals. The latter are summarily disposed of by a blow on the nose from the bat or a kick from the foot, *en passant*. The foot blow is termed a "boot," and being dealt powerfully, settles the juvenile seal.

With amazing rapidity the batsman continues his work of destruction. He seems to be everywhere and his track is marked by havoc. He is generally provided with an alpenstock, with which he springs from "ice-pan" to "ice-pan," often alighting on cakes tilted at an angle of thirty degrees. A slip here would lead to death: but your genuine seal hunter rarely trips up, for he is educated from the cradle to endurance and agility, and endowed with fearlessness and a clear head. Should the animal prove a veteran and show fight, the gunner comes to the batsman's succor, and the sea monarch topples over with a charge of shot through his head. The rifle is not used, as it discharges the bullet with too much velocity, and a *ricochet* shot rebounding from an iceberg might injure or kill the wrong party, where so many men are scattered about. Therefore a long smooth-bore gun, loaded with shot slightly larger than buckshot, performs the service. When the young seal is hit it gives a cry startlingly

²⁰³ A type of ship with two masts.

²⁰⁴ A dry biscuit, popular as food on sailing voyages due to its long shelf life.

similar to that of a babe, and it requires two or more trips to the ice before any save the most hardened can overcome a certain feeling of repugnance at their slaughter.

With the ancient parties, however, it is different. They are terribly ferocious, and incautiousness of precipitation will leave its consequences upon the unlucky wight who rashly ventures to close quarters.

The old seal's incisors will cut slices from a limb as clean as by the scalpel. Indeed, the enraged animal often vanquishes both gunner and batsman, and puts them to ignominious flight, as their only salvation.

The great point is to save the laceration of the sealskin, and this can only be done by a shot in the head. The seal's frontispiece is protected by a thick "hood" of skin, which is bullet-proof. From this protection they obtain the designation of "old hoods." The only time when they are vulnerable is when they throw back this hood to fly at the attacking parties; and then the gunner lets drive a charge square into the distended mouth of the seal, finishing his career.

A LAUGHABLE PREDICAMENT

An amusing incident here occurs to me. One of the men had set his heart upon a "cub," and was chasing it, the seal making amazing time, and distancing the pursuer, who, in his eagerness to secure the coveted prize, rushed past an "old hood," when he was suddenly seized by the seat of his trousers by the seal. The man pulled and swore; the seal growled and tore. Everybody was convulsed with laughter, and could not move a peg to the man's assistance. At last teeth gained the day, the raiment parted, and the man, whose courage had long since oozed away, fled. He reproached one of the scoffers subsequently by the remark, when the incident was referred to, "Be jabbers, Moony, you're no man."

LOADING THE SEALS IN THE VESSELS

The work of slaughter finished, the disposition of the dead commences. The bodies of the seals are cut across the throat, around the flippers and down the belly. The carcass is drawn, and the pelt, with adhering fat or blubber, is laced up with sinews, shoe fashion. Two or three skins are used together in a bundle, and the third gang raise to the deck and stow them away in compact masses in the hold. The flippers are eaten by the sealers with great gusto in lieu of fresh provisions. I have heard many sealers declare that, when exhausted, they have resorted to the revolting act of taking the heart of a young seal and eating it raw. They declare that it reanimates them.

PROFITS OF THE TRIP

The cargo being stowed, the exultant mariners steer for home and begin to calculate the returns of the voyage. Presuming that the catch has averaged 20,000, the captain's share will be about one shilling for every seal; that will be about \$10,000 in American money – a very fair month's work. The men will receive about \$600 to \$700 for their share. [...]

THE VESSEL'S ARRIVAL IN PORT

The port reached, presumably St. John's, the vessel is hauled up alongside the wharf for the purpose of discharging her cargo. The men appoint a person to represent them, to see that fair weight is taken, for the fat and skin are weighed together. The

cargo is removed from the hold, three bundles at a time, by means of blunt hooks, which do not tear the skin.

After the pelt has been weighed it is passed over to the skinner, here known as the "butcher," who dexterously separates the fat from the skin.

The fat is so tough as to necessitate sharpening the knife at every slice. The skinner makes no careless cuts, as every skin injured loses him a shilling. At St. John's the skinning is done on the Southside Hills. The method of separating the pelt and fat is peculiar.

WHAT A SEAL YIELDS

The skinner sits on a pile of pelts, with his implements, and conducts his labors. As the fat is cut off in great cakes it falls into a large trough. As the trough becomes filled, a gang of men come around and empty the contents into their barrows and wheel off the fat to the "chopping house."

The chopping knife is something like a straight hoe, with a very sharp edge. It cuts the fat into pieces of about ten pounds weight. It is then hoisted up into the vat and left to decompose, which is effected in about a fortnight. The vicinity of the butchers and oil-tryers abounds in an atmosphere decidedly anything but salubrious or agreeable to the olfactories; and yet, strange to say, every one connected with the fishing or preparation of the oil becomes exceedingly stout, and seems incapable of existence away from his bouquet of odors of seal.

A new system has been introduced into some of the manufactories here and at St. John's by which the fat, after it has been chopped up, is passed between two iron rollers with teeth, which rend and reduce it to a pulp. It is then turned into a vat, steam is turned upon the mass and the fat commences to run in a few hours. This plan is decidedly the more expeditious one. The vat is about two stories high in ordinary trying houses, is lined inside with tin or iron, and upon the exterior looks much like a log cabin. The oil, after being tried, is put into casks and shipped to the United Kingdom, where it is used for lubricating machinery and for the manufacture of an imitation sperm [whale] oil.

The skins go to France, the United States and England, being transformed into gloves, caps and boots. The French use them for patent leather. There is very little residuum, as almost every part of the seal is utilized.

The butcher gets the scraps, the flesh, flippers, &c., in addition to his regular pay of three cents per pelt for skinning, by which alone he realizes twenty to thirty shillings daily.

The children turn an humble penny by peddling the flippers and hearts at two pence, as food for the dogs. The entire juvenile and canine population are in ecstasies for weeks. The curs cease their howling, become models of civility, and placid contentment beams from their eyes.

PROFIT TO ALL HANDS

The catch for a sailing vessel with a crew of sixty men, if reaching 10,000 head, will distribute to each man of the sixty \$480 in gold, and allow the captain as his percentage the sum of \$1,000. This is what enables the captain to transfer his flag, after two good seasons of two cargoes each, from the sailing vessel to a steamer.

The sealer, where he is paid in store goods, generally selects as the first articles his summer's supply of provisions, and to supplement this by the purchase of a crinoline for his daughters and a new gown for his dame; and then the profits of the voyage are exhausted. Should they not be, he dissipates his ready cash in a glorious spree. If he is anywise shiftless he hangs around corners and patronizes lamp-posts, until the cycle of time revolves and brings on the cod fishery, which begins in the month of May. Those who are compelled to stay home also improve their time by catching seals in the harbors.

The Inuit Seal Hunt²⁰⁵ (1889)

The Inuit also engaged in seal hunts, but in a fashion far different to those of their European counterparts. The following report is by Lady Edith Blake. Her husband, Henry Arthur Blake (1840 – 1918) was governor of Newfoundland from 1887 to 1888.

The seal is the main support of the Esquimaux²⁰⁶, to whom every atom of the creature is of value. The blood, which they drink smoking hot, is their champagne; its flesh either raw or cooked is meat of which they never tire; even the entrails are eaten by them, and the membrane lining the stomach serves instead of glass for the solitary little window in their 'igloos' or snow huts. The skins form an important part of their clothing, and are the chief material for boots, tents, and kayacks; for the latter, indeed, no skins but those of the seal are used, as no others would stand equally well constant immersion in salt water, the walrus being too heavy for such light craft, though used for the 'oomiak,' or women's boats.

The seal-hunting by the Esquimaux is very different from the wholesale slaughter we have described. When a seal-hole (*i.e.* the opening in the ice where the creature rises to breathe) is found, which in winter is generally done by a dog specially trained for the purpose, the hunter feels with his spear through the superincumbent snow, till he finds the opening; then he takes up his station and patiently waits, sometimes for two days and nights, till he is rewarded by hearing a seal blow. At the second or third puff the hunter thrusts his spear through the hole, usually penetrating the skull of the unseen animal, which instantly dives, running out several fathoms of the line attached to the spear. Gradually the man drags the struggling seal upwards, and, enlarging the breathing-hole, hauls it out on the snow.

When the seals are basking on the ice in the sunshine, the Esquimaux approach within striking distance, lying flat on the ice and advancing by a sort of wriggling motion, which no doubt the seal mistakes for the movement of one of his own kind. At the same time the hunter chants his 'seal song,' which is described as a

²⁰⁵ From Blake, E. (1889). On Seals and Savages. *The Nineteenth Century*, XXV, 513-526. Written by Lady Edith Blake (1846 – 1926), an Irish writer and illustrator.

²⁰⁶ "The Eskimo call themselves 'Innuits,' which [means 'the people'], 'Eskimo' being derived from 'Ashkimai,' *i.e.* 'eaters of raw flesh,' a term applied to them in contempt by the Cree and Sauteaux Indians." Blake, E. (1888). The Beothuks of Newfoundland. *The Nineteenth Century*, XXIV(142), 899-918.

“loud peculiar noise, a mixture of Innuït, singing and bellowing, which seems to work a charm upon the seal.”

When the seal is killed, a feast takes place, to which all the neighbours are bidden. The first ceremony is to consecrate the animal by sprinkling water on its head. Frequently the feast is simply a gorge on the raw flesh; when the meat is cooked it is boiled in salt water and blood, the broth being eagerly drunk by the guests when the flesh is taken from the pot. The chief or igloo wife then hands portions of the meat to those present, having first politely sucked each morsel to prevent the fluid dripping from it, and at the same time the hostess considerately licks off any hairs or so forth that may have adhered to the meat.

The Truck, or Credit, System²⁰⁷ (1871)

Newfoundland’s fishermen were seldom paid for their work in cash. The ‘truck’, or credit, system was infamous for keeping this portion of the population in perpetual debt to local merchants.

The fishermen may, or within a short time could be, practically be said to be under the control of the merchant princes, who rule the country, discourage the development of its fertile mineral resources and seem to doom the people to the precarious struggle with the deep for their livelihood, they lying back in ease and drawing the substance of the poor fishermen.

The method by which these merchants assert their sway is complex, but always redounds ultimately to their own advantage.

These observations apply to the merchants dealing with the seal fishers, although the rule is pertinent to the traders with the toilers of the sea who engage in other fisheries.

HOW THE FISHERMAN IS IMPOSED UPON

It is thus:- Each merchant supplies a certain number of fishermen (or “planters,” as they are denominated in these regions) with provisions. The latter in turn retail them to the fishermen in their employ, or, perhaps, as in many cases, the merchants retain the profit all to themselves by ignoring middlemen and selling direct to the sealers.

In these transactions, it must be understood that rarely does money pass. The merchant is too wily to allow the men to assume that position of independence which always attaches to the possession of a few dollars.

No, he overcomes the fisherman with guile. He realizes the necessities of the son of the sea and inveigles him into the meshes of the network of the disgraceful credit system, which dooms every humble Newfoundlander to a life of battle with the deep for sustenance.

These merchants or planters may be likened to cormorants in their rapacity.

²⁰⁷ From SWILERS AND THE SWILE. (1871, April 25). *The New York Daily Herald*, p. 7.

This glaring imposition has been practiced for a century nearly; but a better state of things is at hand.

The winters here are awfully severe, and it is at this period that the merchant steps in and plays his “points” on the fisherman presumably in his employ.

The merchant, with astonishing benevolence, waives the question of cash payment and allows his employé provisions sufficient to carry him through the winter’s siege, said store generally consisting of the wholesome and durable commodities of salt beef, pork, tea, flour, hard biscuit and molasses. Payment just then is immaterial, so the merchant blandly says, and an account is made out, wherein all the articles are set down at enormously extortionate figures.

Times are hard, of course, and cash is beyond the question, and invariably the poor fellow is dragged into a bargain whereby he is bound to retrieve his debt by a share of his catch in the following spring. The existence of the fisherman’s family depends upon his bargain with the merchant, and should the catch prove poor and inadequate to satisfy the rapacity of the merchant, the sealer or fisherman finds himself burdened with a debt which seems irremovable.

EVILS OF THE CREDIT SYSTEM

The merchant to the fisherman becomes the veritable Old Man of the Sea, and the mariner enacts the Sinbad portion of the business and assumes the burthen perforce.

However, the contract system has been greatly improved since 1864, the most disastrous year probably experienced here, the catch being only 26,000 seals.

The merchants, who had trusted to bounteous percentages upon the catch, were sadly disappointed, and have since grown cautious of trusting to luck in this premature chicken business.

The Preparation of Salt Cod²⁰⁸ (1871)

[CONTENT WARNING – GRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS OF COD PROCESSING]

The preparation for the cod fishery makes fishermen, merchants and planters bestir themselves. A stranger, on entering the harbor of St. John’s through the Narrows, is somewhat puzzled at the sight that presents itself to the eye on either side. There, jutting out from the rocks on the hillsides, he beholds a number of hanging gardens, propped up by long poles. He naturally inquires what those artificial green fields are used for, and is told they are the flakes upon which the cod fish is cured. Their construction is simple, consisting of green spruce boughs laid down, one after the other, and interlaced with poles. [...]

As soon as the boats that fish near the harbors are loaded they return to the stage head, a large store²⁰⁹, made of the same material as that which composes the flake, with which it is connected. The boat here is unloaded, and the fish is taken charge of by a man called a tend table, whose duty it is to put it on the splitting board,

²⁰⁸ From SWILERS AND THE SWILE. (1871, April 25). *The New York Daily Herald*, p. 7.

²⁰⁹ In this context, a storehouse, or place where things are stored.

where it first goes into the hands of the cutthroat. He, armed with a dagger-shaped knife, slits the throat of the fish and cuts it down the belly, then passes it to the header, who stands, like a Jack-in-a-box, in a round hole. As soon as he has gleaned the precious liver away from the entrails, he presses the neck of the fish against the edge of the board and breaks off the head, that drops into a pound, pushing the body to the splitter, who sits in front of him. The trade of the splitter needs much practice and skill, so that he may cut out the soundbone²¹⁰ and split the fish down to the tail without driving the knife through or slicing on any portion of the body. When it leaves the hands of the splitter it is drawn away to the salter, whose position is one of much responsibility, as upon his skillful treatment depends, in a great measure, the good quality of the voyage. The fish is salted, tier above tier, until the bulk stands three or four feet high and ten or twelve feet long. It is kept in this condition for the space of two or three weeks, when it is taken to the ram's horn – a large square box – lowered down into the salt water and thoroughly cleansed. After this cleansing process it is placed in a bulk, which the fishermen term a water horse. In a few days this aquatic equine animal is carried to the flake and spread out to dry. Under the rays of the sun it presents a beautiful sight, as in this early portion of the process it is spread face up, and has a golden tinge. It takes about a month or six weeks' care to render the fish fit for market. It is classified into four qualities; the first and most valuable, is called merchantable; the second, Madeira; the third, West India, and the fourth, *tal qual*, or 'such as it is'²¹¹. This last name, as well as the second²¹², was taken from the Spaniards, who trade a good deal with the island. The West India quality also suggests why the name was given it. Almost all the fish coming under that head are shipped to the islands bearing that name.

And now for a few words relative to the manufacture of cod liver oil. It is now about eighteen years ago since a lucky individual named Fox invented the simple process by which a pure refined oil can be extracted from the liver of the codfish. Before that time they were simply thrown into puncheons exposed to the sun, and as they slowly melted into oil it was drawn off and filtered into casks. The oil then was of a dull red color, was most repulsive to the smell, and in its very taste the strongest of emetics. Now it has a clear, bright hue, and is as transparent as the most crystal spring. The disgusting taste and smell are gone, and it is looked upon as a health-giving medicine.

The cause of this great change is to be found in the mode of manufacture originated by Mr. Fox²¹³. It consists of the following simple details:- The livers, after

²¹⁰ A part of the fish's backbone.

²¹¹ In Spanish, 'tal qual' means 'such as it is'.

²¹² Madeira is a Portuguese island located west of Morocco. The word means 'Wood' in Portuguese.

²¹³ "Fox, George Wakefield, of Manchester, in the county of Lancaster, colliery furnisher. – 'Improvements in the treatment of cod liver, castor, and other medicinal oils, in order to render the same more palatable.' [...] Letters Patent were granted to the said George Wakefield Fox, on June 16th, A.D. 1869, in which preparations the said oils were mixed with a sweet syrup, acid, and essential oil, or aromatic flavouring matter. According to the present invention wholesome tonic bitters are substituted for the above mentioned acid, and in a preparation of palatable cod liver oil with quinine a mixture is made of cod liver oil, sweet syrup, quinine, or sulphate of cinchonia, aromatic flavouring

being well washed, are placed into a large boiler that fits into another boiler, a distance of about three inches being preserved between the two all over, with the exception of the rims, which are hermetically welded together. Into this space water is pumped, and from the force of the steam made, the livers yield their last drop of pure oil, which is skimmed off as soon as it is formed by a man employed for that purpose, as well as to keep stirring the contents of the pot, so that they may not be burned. When skimmed off it is filtered through a double set of thick moleskin bags to free it from any dregs that it may yet retain. It takes about two and one half gallons of livers to produce one gallon of refined oil.

Women at Work²¹⁴ (1879)

While it was unusual for women to join fishing expeditions, women did much of the on-shore work, including the movement of cargo.

Women do the work of longshoremen on the wharves of St. John's, Newfoundland. When the time arrives for vessels from Southern Europe, Brazil, [the] West Indies, and elsewhere, to take aboard their cargoes of salt cod, herring, etc., files of females with tucked-up gowns, bared arms, and coarse brogans, may be seen along the wharves, carrying flat barrows of fish to and fro. Each barrow has four handles and is borne by two women. They perform the same labor as men in this business, but their pay is inferior. Women also go on the "Summer voyage" to Labrador, and act severally in the capacity of "splitters," "salters" and "headers."

"A sadder tale"²¹⁵ (1883)

This articles provides fresh and interesting details on how the inhabitants of Newfoundland conducted the cod fishery in the 1880s. Of special note is its description of how bait capelin were caught – or rather, gathered.

The recent disaster to the Newfoundland Fishing Fleet seems to have been more serious than even the first telegrams led us to believe. During the past twelve days wild gales swept the entire North Atlantic, everywhere bringing wreck and ruin in their wake. Our own coasts have been scoured by the fierce blasts, and in some places the shores were littered with stranded ships. But, so far as we can at present learn, comparatively little damage has been done to the fishing vessels off the northern part of the island, or to those engaged in trawling operations on the Dogger Bank.

matter, and spirits of wine. In a preparation of palatable castor oil the quinine or other bitter is dispensed with." Woodcroft, B. (1871). *Chronological and descriptive index of patents applied for and patents granted, containing the abridgments of provisional and complete specifications for the Year 1870*. London: George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode.

²¹⁴ From GENERAL SUMMARY. (1879, July 26). *The Burlington Free Press*, p. 2.

²¹⁵ From The recent disaster. (1883, September 13). *The Standard* (London), p. 5.

A sadder tale, is, however, being told in Newfoundland. There every man, woman, and child is directly or indirectly interested in fishing operations, and it may be affirmed that there is no person in the island who is not either dependent for his livelihood on the produce of the surrounding sea, or is not nearly related to those who derive their subsistence from it. The entire circuit of the oldest English Colony is intersected with fjords, and gulfs, and bays, all swarming with fish, and dotted with the "rooms" of fishermen, or with their scarcely less odorous cottages. At all seasons of the year St. John's and Grace Harbour, Bay of Bulls and Placentia, Burin and Betts Cove, talk of little else save fishing. Now it is herring, now seals, anon cod; but fish it is always, from Monday to Sunday, from January to December. A plentiful catch diffuses prosperity throughout the community; a failure is just as certain to entail poverty and commercial misfortune among the storekeepers who have given the sea-faring folks a few months' credit.

For a brief period during the height of the season the men labor severely and incessantly, and ashore the women and girls are almost as hard at work cutting up and drying the produce of the fisheries. But, when the cod and herring have sought deeper water, and before the seals have migrated from the North, there is a lull to the toilers of the sea. Boats, nets, and other gearing are to be repaired, "stages" and "flakes" are to be seen to, and fuel for the long winter must be cut in the forest and hauled over the early snows. Garden "truck" has to be taken up and stowed in the cellars, and a stock of provisions laid in against the time when the stormy weather will not admit of the settler going far afield. Should, however, the fisheries prove a failure, then the "banksman" has little to hand over in payment for his advances, and must subsist as best he can on the liberality of the merchants until the Spring arrives, bringing another chance.

Such a prospect, though from a different cause, awaits the Newfoundlanders this year. The year's fishing so far had been a fair one; but the loss of eighty lives, two hundred boats, and a number of larger vessels in the course of a few minutes cannot be easily retrieved; while the individual misery caused is so great as to be fully comprehended only by those who are aware of what the fisheries are to Newfoundland. It may, no doubt, turn out that some of the boats swamped belong to Massachusetts, for Cape Cod is scarcely less interested in "the Banks" than the Avalon Peninsula. However, so intermixed are all the fisher folk from Buz'ard's Bay to Belle Isle Straits, that the castaways of the Autumn gales might be regarded as our own [British] countrymen, as unquestionably most of them are of our own kith and kin.

Of all the Newfoundland Fisheries, that of the cod is the most important. Commencing in June, it ends in October, and on its success the islanders, to a great extent, depend for their year's income. No fewer than forty thousand men and boys are directly engaged in this business, and though many hundreds of boats fish close along the shores of Newfoundland, where the cod are taken by lines, the larger boats proceed to the coast of Labrador, or to "the Banks," where the present disasters have, for the most part, occurred.

These "Banks," which supply the finest and fullest-grown fish, and in the greatest quantity, are not, as was at one time believed, mere shoals of sand, borne thither by the Gulf Stream and the river St. Lawrence, but a submarine rocky plateau, descending from its eastern and southern borders into a vast depth of water. It is, in fact, an extensive "cod meadow," to use the name so aptly applied to it by the chief historian of Newfoundland, though the fishing grounds do not extend over the whole Bank, but only over an area of about two hundred miles in length and sixty-seven in breadth.

For nearly four centuries this locality has been frequented by the fishing fleets of various nations without showing any decrease in productiveness. Nor do the Newfoundland, French, and New England fishermen, who at present almost monopolize the industry, display much inclination to improve on the methods in use by their predecessors. The hook and line is still their main reliance, though the seine, the gill net, the cod trap, and the "bultow" are also in favor with the more progressive spirits. But the simplest and least expensive mode of fishing is the hand-line and hooks baited with the capelin.

The coming and continuance of this bait are among the most remarkable phenomena of the fishing season. Early in June these little fish appear in millions. They roll in upon the sands, as Mr. Shea, the Newfoundland Commissioner to the Fisheries Exhibition has described them, like "waves of molten silver;" every billow tosses bushels high and dry on the shore; children gather them up, boys standing up to their knees in the water raise basketful after basketful out of the sea, and fishermen who are afloat waiting for the capelin dip hand nets into the water and obtain a plentiful supply of bait. Then, just as suddenly, about the end of July, they disappear.

Still, the fishery which proceeds so briskly between the time of their coming and departure does not stop; for no sooner has the capelin vanished than the squid, or young cuttle fish, appears on the scene, often accompanied by the herring, which is caught not only for bait, but furnishes an important element in the resources of the island waters. Hand-line fishing, though the cheapest, is also least remunerative, for when the cod is very fat it does not bite readily, and, accordingly, the hand-line succeeds best towards the close of the season, when the fish are poorer, a circumstance which accounts for the large number of boats afloat when the wild blast, so likely to be long remembered on "the Banks," brought such sudden death to the unsuspecting occupants of the foundered dories.

The accounts received describe the principal disasters to the fishing fleet to have occurred on "the Banks." From the context, however, those familiar with the methods of cod catching pursued off Newfoundland might infer that the dories, or punts, lost were not far from shore. When the cod is spawning it does not take the bait well, and hence at that period seines, gill-nets, and traps are chiefly employed. Later in the year, and where line fishing is had recourse to, "bultows" are extensively used on the Great Banks, as well as round the shores and at the entrances to the bays. The "bultow" is simply a set line, called in some places a "trawl line," and consists of a stout cord of hemp or cotton, from which are hung several hundred baited

hooks attached to shorter lines. The “bultows” intended to be left all night are then dropped from the boats and secured by buoys. In the morning, miles of the Banks are seen to be covered by these “bultows,” when they are overhauled and the product of the night’s venture removed. It was most probably during this operation that the boats were caught in the gale, or while they were engaged at a distance from their respective schooners in hand-line fishing.

When the “white bank” was first seen to northward, the men hauled in their lines, and many of them succeeded in gaining the vessels before the squall of wind and rain rendered this impossible. Then, in a few minutes, the storm burst, the schooners were driven from their moorings, and sent scudding seaward before the blast. Everywhere the surface of the boiling water was dotted with buoys, water casks, and other deck gear, and with dories, some overturned, others filled with men who knew that rescue was impossible, or clinging in despair to spars and broken boats, while their more fortunate comrades rushed back in the drifting vessels, unable to aid them in any way. For fully thirty miles the sea was covered with wreck; several smacks were driven ashore, and though two hundred dories are believed to have been lost, as over two thousand were afloat when the hurricane began to blow, it will be some time before an accurate estimate of the casualties can be made.

Apart from the wretchedness caused by the loss of so many breadwinners, the number of boats destroyed and the amount of fish sent to the bottom will have an appreciable effect in heightening the misery of the disaster. The season has not, indeed, been on the whole a propitious one. Many of the sealing vessels were frozen in for several weeks at a stretch, and now the present misfortune will throw an additional gloom over an island where the conditions of life are none of the most agreeable, though the gallantry, loyalty, and unwearied perseverance of the people ought to ensure for them our warmest sympathies, and, if need be, assistance more substantial.

“Among the fishermen of Newfoundland”²¹⁶ (1884)

The following article provides an in-depth look at the situation of the Newfoundland cod fishery in the mid-1880s, and ranges from the method by which the fish are caught and cured, to how they are paid for.

There is something very philosophic in the countenance of a full-grown codfish, as he lies before you, having ceased to struggle against the tide of ill fortune that has swept him out of his native element to supply the boundless commodity that a good cook can make palatable with white sauce. As he lies before you with his mouth drawn down and his eyes turned up, he seems to say, “Well, do your worst, I am ready!” there is an injured expression that touches your sympathies until you begin to think how well he would bake or boil, as, poking his ribs, you find him plump and solid, and judging by his bright red gills, fresh as a daisy, so without any

²¹⁶ From THE LAND OF THE CODFISH. (1884, September 8). *Montreal Daily Witness*.

commiseration you sentence him to the oven or pot. It is, however, one thing for a stranger to see fresh cod fish and another to eat it.

Reader, would you believe it, but if not it is nevertheless true, you will get more fresh fish in Montreal than you will in St. John's, Newfoundland, or the scores of country villages into whose bosom the finny treasures of its bays are emptied. This arises from two causes: 1st Fish is a commercial article that the Newfoundlander regards as salable, it is his scaly cash with which he buys his flour, pork and potatoes, and very little of the latter in many places.

On the shores of the Bay, one thing is evident that it is so arranged that the people live to fish and fish to live. The credit system is the great commercial blight, the merchant has great risks to run, and when he gives his pork and flour out, it is for fish that are as yet uncaught, and if they fail to respond to the wiles of the fisherman, the merchantman has to look for his pay. It is a bad way of doing business this, taking pay in truck²¹⁷, but it seems unavoidable.

The country people are a very bright, contented peasantry, but there is underneath it all a volcanic spirit that will upset the calculations and schemes of many. They are beginning to realize the advantages of education, and the leaders of various sections are already writhing under the frauds and injustice heaped upon their children who have no chance to learn in many instances, but in all

A CHANCE TO FISH.

Just how they fish may be of interest, the more as it is now done by traps and seines. The "cod fish trap²¹⁸" is just like a large box house with walls of net instead of board, the roof, as it were, is trimmed with blocks of cork which float it. A line from the shore holds the net in place and prevents it drifting out to sea. From the centre of the front of the net runs a long strip of net called the leader, and thus a fence runs up, as it were, between the double house and divides an open doorway in two. From the outer sides of the doorway runs two long strips of net, that with the leader make up the sides of what is called the pound.

After the net has been submerged for a certain time, it is raised and drawn in when the fishy prisoners are found and transferred to the boat. There are besides this the long codfish seines that stretching out for one thousand feet have the upper edge sustained by floats, while the lower rests upon the bottom of the sea, and when all are ready, rowers in boats, having anchored one end to the shore, drag the other end round to meet it, thus capturing all within, as they cannot get away owing to the net being weighted at the bottom.

It will doubtless be asked, why cannot the codfish escape from the trap by the doors they came in on? So they could, but like many foolish people that get led into bad places, they get flurried and do not know enough to get out before they are caught.

²¹⁷ Under the truck system, workers are paid in goods, or credit that can only be used at 'company stores'. In Newfoundland, the merchant advanced supplies at the start of the season, to be paid with the sale of the catch at the end of the season. This gave a lot of power to the merchant, who could set both the price paid for the fish and the price charged for the merchandise.

²¹⁸ Invented in 1871 by William Henry Whitely (1834 – 1903), a Newfoundland merchant and politician.

Did the codfish swim right round the sides of the trap net and keep his weather eye open he would come to the door and could turn out to sea, but he swims at an angle from side to side, avoiding corners, and thus fails to escape – the silly cod.

Once captured he is hurried on shore, when, flung out on a board, the body is ripped open by one, the intestines taken out by another, the liver separated by a third, the head cut off by a fourth, and then the fish washed free from blood and gurry²¹⁹, is ready for the salting process, which performed, the poor flattened out cod is spread out to dry on a great stage called a flake, covered over with branches of the fir tree. After a certain period of exposure the fish are piled up one on top of another, which pile is called a Fagot, in which condition the curing process goes rapidly forward. Carefully guarded from rain, it is soon ready for the stomachs of those who like it, but it is nothing like the fresh fish just out of the briny deep. Where it all goes to when packed is a mystery. The Spaniards and Italians get the most of the small fish.

It is hard to get customers for them elsewhere although Brazil gets its share. We in Canada are taken by size but the sweetest fish are the “mediums.”

This fishery business is of course the great industry on the Island everywhere. In Newfoundland there are thousands of miles of shore line on which the sea surf breaks, and all along its innumerable bays the fishermen have built their little homes, here in dull monotony they spend their days if engaged in what is called “shore fishing.” Tuesday like Monday, and so on, until weather beaten like a stranded hulk, they rest until the spring tide of death lifts them off life’s beach and takes them out upon the ocean of eternity.

For the young active fisherman that goes out upon the coast of Labrador, there is excitement enough. For two months labor he comes back with often £40 and while it lasts he is king. When working cheerily upon the northern shore, he dreams of the return to home, and maybe as he whistles merrily at his work the visions of bright eyes are haunting him and like his foolish father before him he falls in love, and, doomed to everlasting poverty, settles down, and is soon surrounded by a lot of little fishermen, and after a life of this character he goes the way of all flesh, and his foolish widow moves heaven and earth to get her mourning, and has the haunting debt to add to her real sorrow.

Never, until the Government take hold of the matter of education with a firm, statesmanlike grip, will the crying evils that have cursed the country for two hundred years be swept away, and the tide of emigration turned to its fertile spots to raise the crops that are needed, and are now imported.

I predict for Newfoundland a bright future. It is not a mere barren fishing rock in the midst of the sea, but has well defined sources of future wealth, plenty of rich farming country, and only needs to be rid of the European vampires that suck the life blood from the people with steady remorseless diligence, but to return to their home in the old land, to disgorge, and send out their sons to fatten in the same financial way.

²¹⁹ An old-fashioned term for ‘fish guts’.

More Details of the Truck System²²⁰ (1880)

So long as our fisheries continue to be prosperous, and matters go on smoothly, we are not inclined to introspection; but when “bad times” come, when fisheries fail and prices decline, and from the fisherman comes the cry of hunger, and disappointment clouds the brow of the merchant, then we set to work to “consider our ways,” and to repent of the evil of our doings. We are keen then to discover the flaws and imperfections of our system of conducting business, and we weep over the vicious principles which underly the “credit system” with broken and contrite hearts. But no sooner do the codfish become plentiful and a rise in the foreign markets takes place, than we dry our penitential tears and resume our old courses, for which many plausible excuses are readily found.

Just now we are passing through a penitential phase. The price of codfish is low; the quality of much that is brought to the merchants’ stores is inferior, owing to injury in the cure caused by a hot summer. Prospects are gloomy. Fishermen have but small balances to spend in the stores; many of them are in debt and unable to procure the necessaries of life to sustain them during the long winter. Merchants and planters look apprehensively at their lengthening lists of bad debts; and Government becomes nervous at the prospect of heavy demands on the public funds to keep many hundreds from starvation during the dreary winter. [...]

There can be no doubt that the “credit system” lies at the root of the evil; but its ramifications are deep; it has continued for generations; it pervades our whole system of conducting business, and it will not be uprooted in a day. Those who carry it on now are not accountable for it, as it is an inheritance from their ancestors; and it has gone on so long that we have grown insensible to its evils. [...]

As it operates here, “the credit system” is a modification of the old “truck system” which was abolished by law in England many years ago. The merchant makes advances in the necessaries of life, and gear at the fisheries, to the fisherman, at the commencement of each season, and at the close receives the fish in payment. Or, in some cases, the merchant makes advances to the “planter” or middleman, who deals directly with the fisherman, gives him his supplies on credit, partially superintends his operations, and receives the produce of his labors.

It is easy to see the unsound principles which underlie such a system, and the evils it must inevitably work among all concerned with it. First of all it establishes a false and vicious relation between capital and labor, between employer and employed; it makes the one, to a certain extent, the serf of the other. Its tendency is to create abjectness and servility on the part of those who mortgage their future industry for advances in the necessaries of life, and a proneness to tyranny and hardness on the part of those who thus acquire undue power over their humbler fellow-creatures. Further, as a matter of course, the borrower has to pay a very heavy interest on his loan, so as to cover the risks which the lender has to run. When payment turns on the uncertain return of the season’s labors, high charges must protect the supplier.

²²⁰ From OUR NEWFOUNDLAND LETTER. (1880, November 13). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 2.

Subject to the laws of competition, which among a small body of capitalists do not act very stringently, the supplier fixes the price for his goods and also the price at which he will receive fish in payment. Of course, in practice, this result is modified by the demand for fish in foreign markets, and by the number of suppliers who may be competing with one another; but it still gives the capitalist an undue power over the working fisherman. The latter has to pay often an exorbitant price for his goods, while the capitalist is compelled to make such charges as his conscience cannot approve of, otherwise he would speedily be a ruined man. Ignorant and thoughtless men, having obtained supplies in advance, payment of which depends on the success of their labours, are strongly tempted to indolence, extravagance and dishonesty.

The direct tendency of the system is to undermine and destroy manly independence, forethought, industrious habits, and even common honesty. With a debt hanging on his neck, and perhaps increasing year after year, till he becomes utterly hopeless and without spirit or energy to better himself, how can the poor fisherman thrive? If, through all, he becomes honest and industrious, he finds himself taxed to make up for the defalcations of the indolent and dishonest. A premium is thus held out for roguery; activity and thrift are punished.

Whether the fish are carefully cured or otherwise, the merchant is compelled to take them, as he has no other way of getting payment for his advances. He can only pay less for the badly handled article; but the character of the fish suffers, all the same, in the foreign market, and a vast injury by the production of an inferior article, is inflicted upon the whole business of the country.

Reckless, ignorant borrowers cannot be expected to make good payments, and so the capitalist finds himself often without returns. Those whom he has supplied have not put forth anything like the industrious efforts they would have discovered if they had been working untrammelled by debt, and with the hope of improving. Thus the system works evil to all concerned – to him that gives and to him that takes.

Of course, these remarks apply to the system as a whole. I am happy to say there are many noble exceptions in its working – many instances in which right and justice rule in the transactions between man and man. But the native tendency and the general results of the system are, as I have described, calculated to undermine industry and demoralize to a greater or lesser extent.

A Visit to St. John's²²¹ (1887)

The oldest British colony is so difficult to get at that after trying in vain to reach it from half a dozen points in succession, the traveller may be excused if he jumps to the conclusion that it moves up and down the coast of the North American continent. [...] At Montreal, Boston and New York, I tried in vain to catch steamers, until at last, a lucky thirty-six hours in, the cars brought me on board of the

²²¹ From Norman, H. (1887, December 9). IMPERIAL INTERVIEWS. – IV. *The Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 1. Written by Sir Henry Norman, 1st Baronet (1858 - 1939).

*Caspian*²²² at Halifax. St. John's is two days' steaming from there, but at the expiration of forty-eight hours, a thick white fog hid the bowsprit from the sight of the officer on the bridge, and as the coast is very dangerous, and the captain reckoned that he had run about the proper distance, we lay to and waited for half a day. The fog lifted at last suddenly, and sure enough, there, half a mile straight ahead of us was the entrance to the harbor. The contrast between the forbidding cliffs of the coast line and the cosy shelter of boats and town within, makes one's first glimpse of Newfoundland curiously striking and pleasant.

The town itself must be one of the oddest places on the face of the earth. Half the streets run up and down at an angle of forty-five degrees, more or less, - at any rate, they are so steep that I have known a young lady stop to rest three times on her way up to mass; there is not an inch of paving in the whole town, and consequently after a shower or snowfall, the electric lights with which the town is lighted, almost ironically, reveal depths of mud appalling to anybody but a Newfoundlander, and puddles, each one of which the unwary stranger learns too late is a veritable pitfall. Water-street, the Broadway of St. John's, is several miles long, and the houses on it vary from a few shanties in one place to a double row of substantial stone buildings and shops in another. For a good part of its length, it runs parallel with a series of wharves, bustling with boats of all kinds; and one end loses itself among the "fish flakes," as the flimsy scaffoldings are called upon which acres of salt cod-fish are spread out every day to dry.

The Governor's house is an uncomfortable-looking flat building of white stone, inadequate and ill-drained; the Parliament building is also of white stone, but newer and much more substantial, while perhaps the most satisfactory building in the town, except the places of worship, is the Atlantic Hotel²²³, the size and character of which are a surprise to every stranger. It is so large that it was evidently built with a view to the Newfoundland that is to be, and I have seldom stayed at a more comfortable hostelry. Its proprietor, Mr. Foran, receives the compliments of his guests with the deprecating remark that he "fears it will be some time before Newfoundland grows up to this hotel." [...]

There is probably no part of the British Empire about which such erroneous impressions prevail as about this, its oldest colonial portion. In England all that most people know about it may be summed up in three words, - fogs, fishes and French. The former, because they constitute at once the familiar landmark and the alarm of ocean travelers; the second because Newfoundland has for nearly four hundred years

²²² This steamer continued to operate into the early 1900s, despite traveling in dangerous waters. "HALIFAX, N.S., June 6. - The steamer *Caspian*, at this port from Liverpool, via St. John's, N. F., had splendid weather and made a fine trip. On Monday afternoon [...] she passed a small iceberg, but the next day from 4 o'clock in the morning until the same hour in the afternoon, she passed hundreds of icebergs. They were on both sides of the ship and of all shapes and sizes, forming a regular forest of ice. The largest 'berg was about half a mile long, but was flat, being only about 60 feet in height. Some of the others were much taller, but the vessel steamed down the centre of the line and only twice was obliged to change her course to escape them." FOREST OF ICE. (1890, January 7). *The Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

²²³ This Hotel was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1892.

been the most famous fishing ground of the world; and the third because along with the New Hebrides, Newfoundland has constituted for some time past one of the standing menaces to European peace. Of these three prejudices, the second one alone is now accurate. The fogs do exist off the Banks, where the Gulf Stream and the Arctic current meet, but they reach only the south-eastern corner of the island, and even from that westerly breezes blow them over the Atlantic during three-fourths of the year; while the French make no claims, or if they make them, do not insist upon them, which point even remotely to possible hostilities. [...]

Unfortunately for Newfoundland, however, [...] the general belief that it is a howling and almost uninhabitable Arctic wilderness is a mere fly-speck besides the centuries of ill-treatment through which it has passed. [...] As long ago as 1583, the leaden arms of England were nailed to a post at its water's edge. Yet for nearly a century it was a penal offence to build a house upon its soil, and the series of edicts issued by ignorant monarchs to protect the monopolies of unscrupulous merchants, forbidding any one to go to Newfoundland as a settler, putting masters of vessels under heavy bonds to bring back every year as many persons as they took out, at last dispatching a naval officer with orders to drive out the fishermen and burn their dwellings, and even going so far as to recommend that no women should be allowed to land in the island, and that those who are there should be removed, are a disgrace to the age which produced them.

All this, of course, has long since passed away, but Newfoundland is to-day practically as much under the rule of merchant monopolists as ever it was. To this fact its backwardness and the poverty of most of its population are due; and so long as this *régime* lasts, there is no hope for the development of its resources or the happiness and progress of its people. The truth is that the whole community is an embodiment of the truck system: a score or so of merchants – the lineal descendants of the “merchant adventurers” who persuaded Charles I that “Newfoundland should always be considered as a great English ship, moored near the Banks during the fishing season, for the convenience of English fishermen” – control the island, socially, commercially, and politically, and the fishermen belong to them – themselves, their boats, their nets, their houses, their families and all. A mediaeval serf or a Southern [slave] in 1860 was about as much master of his own destinies as the average Newfoundland fisherman of to-day. Socially, their wealth, and in several cases titles ill-bestowed by British Ministers, give these merchants pre-eminence; their political influence may be judged from the fact that out of twenty members of the Government side of the House, as returned in 1886, no fewer than sixteen are merchants; and when they meet in their upper room and decide among themselves what price they will pay to the fishermen for fish on the one hand, and at what price, on the other, they will sell to them common necessaries for themselves and their families, they are simply controlling the issues of life and death for a majority of the community. For these merchants have two kinds of commercial establishments: first, the wharf and warehouse to which the vessels return with their catches of fish, and where the split cod is sorted out according to its value, spread out day by day on the “flakes” till its cure is completed, then packed away in huge square stacks until its time comes to be

shipped to the West Indies or the Mediterranean or (the best qualities) to other markets; and second, the stores at which they supply the fishermen (on credit) with every single thing they, their wives and their children may need.

One of these stores is an extraordinary sight – an *omnium gatherum* of the most comprehensive kind. Wall-paper and oil-skins, rainbow-tinted bonnets and the thickest of brogues; crinolines and crockery; furniture, groceries, chimney-piece ornaments, carpets, clothing – every possible want for the individual or the household, from a lead-pencil to a chest of drawers, from a pin to a petticoat is supplied there to the fisherman at the beginning of the fishing-season, both for his own needs and the clothing and feeding of his family during his absence.

The nets and lines he uses, and the boat which carries him safe or goes with him to the bottom – it is about an equal chance in those dangerous seas – belong equally to his merchant-employer, and when he returns and hands over his catch, the appraised value of it is placed to his credit against the debit of his purchases months before, and the difference is his earnings or his debt, as the case may be.

Needless to add that under such a system, especially when the waters have been grudging their harvest for a season or two, debt is as natural to most of the Newfoundland fishermen as the air they breathe. The visitor is told how many thousand dollars stand to the credit of fishermen in the Savings Bank, but however true that may be, poverty is the normal condition of the great majority of them, and regular winter starvation is familiar enough to a good many.

Exactly as in the old iniquitous days, the merchants discourage immigration, discourage agricultural and mineral development, discourage the opening up of the island by roads and railways, and discourage everything else that would tend to raise the price of labour on their wharves and in their warehouses, and by raising up an independent and non-fishing class put an end to their control of the community and their profitable ownership of “lives o’ men.”

“Unlicensed shebeens and brothels in all directions”²²⁴ (1887)

Dear Sir – Not even the most rabid advocate of temperance will deny that where a publican possesses a legal license he is entitled to protection from shebeens²²⁵ and brothels. Many temperance men of undoubted integrity and sound judgment support the licensing system because it seems to ensure the assistance of licensed liquor dealers in suppressing unlicensed saloons, and this, too, is the principle upon which “high license” is advocated. The matter may be put in a nutshell:-

Licensed publicans have paid for their licenses, and complied with many restrictions imposed as conditions of the license, in order that they may be entitled to the protection of the police and police magistrates, and thereby be given the equivalent of their license fee.

²²⁴ From LICENSED PUBLICAN. (1887, October 7). A LICENSED PUBLICAN SPEAKS. *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

²²⁵ Essentially, unlicensed saloons.

Have we, licensed publicans of St. John's, this protection? No sir! The police watch us to convict, but not to protect, and while we are kept to the very letter of the law in all respects, *unlicensed shebeens and brothels in all directions* are uncontrolled by the minions of the law. I, sir, am a licensed publican, and I make this statement advisedly when I say that for every licensed saloon in this city *there are two shebeens and houses of ill-fame!*

How is it, sir, that sharp to the minute each night our shops must be closed or we [will] be complained of by a policeman, while the same officer will pass and repass, and perhaps enter, a shebeen or a brothel which goes at full blast till morning's light? Such houses exist on almost every street, such officers patrol almost every beat, and such scenes are witnessed on almost every street by almost every officer on almost every night in the week. Men leave our saloons sober, but get drunk in shebeens, and end their nights in brothels or upon the streets, and we alone are blamed. Boys who will not enter our public saloons do enter these unlicensed dens, and we alone are blamed for their ruin.

Beer is the mark behind which most of this iniquity masks, and in the name of which the vilest concoctions are sold; and beer, sir – I say it as the experience of years – beer has done more harm to your young men than all the other liquor.

It seems to me, Mr. Editor, that licensed publicans, temperance men and women, and all law abiding citizens have a common interest in this matter. Unlicensed shebeens and brothels damage us, damage them, and damage the colony; and a well-paid police force calmly neglects its duty while this goes on. Let us combine to enforce the law. Let us combine to coerce the police force into activity. Let us exert ourselves to destroy a business destructive to those employed in it as well as to all others.

Yours truly,
LICENSED PUBLICAN.

“Departure of an old friend”²²⁶ (1887)

This article (prematurely) explores the decline of the credit system.

The passing away of an old order of things is always associated with more or less of melancholy features, especially in cases where a multitude of interests are affected and many classes. Forgetful of the fact that this process of transition is constantly going on around us, we sit down within the familiar arrangements of our lives and say, “This is my rest: I shall never be moved.”

What we are thinking of more particularly just now in this connection is the gradual passing away of the old supplying system of this country, the application of which to the fisheries is almost as old as Newfoundland herself. Most of our readers must be aware, and some of them painfully aware, that this process of disintegration has been now going on for some time, silently and slowly, but none the less with the

²²⁶ DEPARTURE OF AN OLD FRIEND. (1887, October 21). *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

certainty of fate. We propose here (1st) briefly to enquire into the causes of this declension and change, (2nd) to specify its effects, and (lastly) to make some observations as to our common-sense conduct in relation thereto.

As regards the causes of this important change in our commercial system, we have to remark that it has been brought about within our observation by means of certain outward changes that have recently taken place within the range of Newfoundland commerce and which we briefly specify as follows:

First – The introduction of the regular freight line of steamers here, between New York and Montreal and this port, struck the first vital blow at the credit or supplying system of this colony.

It is not difficult to see the *modus operandi* of this link in the chain of providential circumstances which broke up our supplying system. The running of regular steamships between this island and the chief maritime centers of our food supply, brought these markets of the United States and Canada to our very doors, and destroyed all the intermediary classes who stood between the bread and the eater. The great wheat granaries of Minnesota and the Far West were placed within reach of every purchaser in Newfoundland who could raise the price of a carload of flour. In connection with these steamers the proprietors of the flour mills in Minnesota undertook to land the “carload” on the wharf at St. John’s before the purchaser here was required to assume any liability or produce any funds. It is easy to see how by this means the old style of capitalist, who imported his flour by the cargo at a time, was relieved of his occupation, of his monopoly and of his profits, and how the smaller dealers were placed in a position to furnish flour to the consumer at its cost and charges.

We might pause here for a moment to say that, once adjusted, this change did not really or permanently benefit the class of salesmen referred to, for the obvious reason that when they all adapted themselves to the new condition of things, they were relatively no better off than before.

But, secondly – The next change that helped to break up the old credit or supplying system here was the introduction of the railway.

The distributing agency did for the outport dealer, as far as its operation extended, what the regular lines of freight steamers had done for the corresponding class in St. John’s, namely, it brought the great producing markets home to every man’s door. Thenceforth every small dealer within reach of the railway could get his bag or his barrel with the same precision, and at the same ratio of cost, as the resident in St. John’s. Hence the steamer system, plus the railway, meant the wholesale provision markets of the Great West distributed in Harbor Grace and Brigus, Holyrood and Placentia, Topsail and Carbonear.

Third – The revival of the Bank Fishery in and around St. John’s struck a sounding blow at the old mode of prosecuting our staple industry.

Up to that time the intending fisherman had mostly confined his operations to the radius of the three-mile limit, varied by an occasional visit to the Labrador or the French Shore. Having spent the first five months of the year in securing the usual fit-out from his merchant, and another month at home in taking stock of his supplies, he

would “get to rights” to commence the fishing “on or about” the 1st of June. By that time the Arctic chill was well out of the water, and the wild berries of the country were beginning to show indications of what sort of crop might be expected in the fall.

But the Bank Fishery changed all that pious deliberation about engaging in the great national industry of the year. It was then, “Jump on board, my lad, and look sharp about it, or you’ll lose the number of your mess.” No time, any longer, for a three-weeks’ trip to St. John in the spring, followed by a five-weeks’ picnic at home with the family over the new clothes and provisions then procured, with a month or two more to “try the quality of the new tobacco” while its connoisseurs were discussing the “signs” of fish in the offing, and comparing the “probabilities” of a successful voyage with those of this time last year, or waiting till the capelin school would open its annual session, and publish its syllabus in the adjacent Bays.

These expensive “deliberations” are all at an end now, or rapidly on the road of being so, and no wonder. The only wonder is that they existed so long or existed at all, and that their so-long continued existence had not converted the inhabitants of this fine old British colony into a race as degenerate as the lazzarone of “Sunny Italy,” or the leisurely mendicants of “Lombardy the brave!”

“It makes me very sad”²²⁷ (1887)

In the late 19th century, Newfoundland cod was sold on consignment in foreign markets.

Many years ago, when the writer was a boy, an immense fleet of Spanish vessels resorted to this port for cargoes of fish, as many as SIXTY SAIL of fine Spanish brigs and brigantines being in St. John’s harbor waiting for cargoes of fish at the one time. These foreign customers have all disappeared from our waters, to our great loss, not only because we lose the sale of so much codfish, but principally because we lose the *manner* of its sale.

What do I mean by that? I mean that these Spaniards came to our doors and bought the fish here. There was a local delivery, and a termination of the contract. The sale was a final one, it was for cash and not on credit, and there were no after-claps. Contrast this with the present condition of affairs.

At the present moment we find an active competition among our exporting merchants to buy fish, and I like to see it. Nothing more healthy and animating could be experienced than this brisk competition for the country’s only staple, the market hungry for fish and the merchants easy to get it. It puts a mighty stimulus and energy throughout the whole body of the people when such a state of things exists, and nerves the fisherman to greater exertion and to prize his calling as such.

But when I think of this fish, so dearly bought, afterward sent to foreign markets *for sale on consignment*, instead of being sold and marketed on the spot – sent abroad in our own ships, at our own expense, and then lying sweating and

²²⁷ From OUR OWN FISHERY COMMISSIONER. (1887, November 1). THE FISHERIES. *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

sweltering in thousands of quintals in warm latitudes, until it gets spoiled enough for the foreign dealer to take it *at his own price* – when I think of this, I say, it makes me very sad.

“Sending fish to Gloucester”²²⁸ (1887)

From James E. Croucher, Esq., the well-known pioneer of Great Placentia and present keeper of Point Verde lighthouse at the entrance to that harbor, we learn the cheering intelligence that the Grand Banking dealers of his harbor are supplying the Gloucester fish firms with the deficit of cod in salt bulk which the latter’s own fishermen failed to catch the past season. Two cargoes of codfish in salt bulk are being loaded by the Sinnotts of Placentia for Gloucester, U.S.

“The case of Keels”²²⁹ (1887)

An example of what happens when an important merchant firm closes.

The case of Keels [Newfoundland] this Fall is somewhat exceptional. Most of the people there are dealers of Messrs. W. Grieve & Co. and have been in the habit of going into the Bay during the winter to make hoops for winter supplies. Others carried hoop-poles out of the Bay, and made their hoops in Keels. So that most of them depended on the cod-fishery and hoop-making for a livelihood.

One of the partners in the firm of Messrs. W. Grieve & Co. died this year, and in consequence the business is being wound up. When the Keels men went to St. John’s this fall, those of them who could settled their summer’s account. They then trusted that they would get a little credit for the winter, some of them having been regular dealers, and regular payers, between twenty and thirty years. But, owing to the circumstance mentioned above, this could not be done, and in no case, I believe, was any advance made on winter credit.

The result is that scarcely any one in Keels can help another. And many had to draw their hard-earned savings out of the bank to get provisions for the winter. Besides this, the people were told there was no market for their hoops, so that there is no way by which they can earn a penny. Mr. Penny tells me he, last year, sold 7,000 bundles hoops, and this year he cannot supply for any. There are several families in Keels who could get no credit anywhere, and had no fish and no cash, and the condition is truly deplorable. Unless the Government do something for them, I fear they must starve; because their neighbors, who used to help them very largely, are this year only a shade better off than themselves.

They are as badly off for clothing as for food. One of them came to me this week begging for boots and stockings. He was in a wretched state, his feet almost on the

²²⁸ From SENDING FISH TO GLOUCESTER. (1887, November 23). *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

²²⁹ From Kirby, W. (1887, December 12). DESTITUTION IN BONAVIDA. *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4. Written by Rev. William Kirby (1833 – 1908), priest of King’s Bay for half a century.

ground, tied up in old rags; his family are almost naked and his neighbors do not know how he manages to keep them alive. I did what I could for him, but that was not much, for in those times the clergyman suffers too; many who in good times are able to contribute something toward his support, in bad times can give nothing.

An unusual Currency reform²³⁰ (1888)

Newfoundland had its own currency, but the coins of many nations were in common use. This was a problem because some of these denominations worked on a decimal system, such as the U.S. dollar, and others worked on the basis of pounds, shillings and pence of Britain. Imperfect rates of exchange between the two systems created possibilities for arbitrage and led to some coins leaving the colony, to the detriment of commerce. In 1888, the Newfoundland Legislature passed an act lowering the value of foreign coins to discourage their use and encourage the standardization of Newfoundland's own currency.

An act was passed last session of the Legislature, making it imperative that all accounts should be kept in dollars and cents. This act came into operation on the 1st January of this year, and once the transition is made will be attended with beneficial results.

Hitherto our currency was of the most confused and miscellaneous description – the despair of foreign visitors, who found it impossible to master it. American, Canadian, Mexican and British silver were in circulation, and also a local silver and copper coinage. Accounts were kept in colonial pounds, shillings and pence. The British sovereign passed for 24 of our shillings.

The copper currency, however, was the most amusing anomaly. Our silver shilling was marked 20 cents, and we had ten and five-cent silver pieces. But in copper they were valued at 24, 12 and 6 cents. The consequence was that cents were collected and exported largely to Canada, a profit of four cents per “shilling” being realized. The scarcity of coppers was a great inconvenience.

All these absurdities are being swept away by the new act. The silver 20-cent piece now passes for its true value – 20 cents in copper, and so with its fractions. In order to get rid of the foreign silver coins and to secure uniformity in our circulation, the banks have issued the following notice of the rates at which foreign silver coins will be received by them:-

On and after January 3, foreign silver coins will be taken at the banks as follows: Mexican and Spanish dollars, five franc pieces, etc. – 50 cents. Mexican and Spanish half dollars – 30 cents. American and Canadian notes, 3 per cent. discount.

²³⁰ From BURYING THE WREN. (1888, January 19). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 7.

English Silver	Canadian	American
2s 6d – 60 cts.	50 cts. – 45 cts.	\$1.00 – 80 cts.
2s – 48 “	25 “ – 23 “	50 – 40 “
1s – 24 “	20 “ – 18 “	25 – 20 “
6d – 12 “	10 “ – 8 “	20 – 16 “
		Dime – 40 “
3d – 6 “	5 “ – 4 “	½ “ – 40 “

The effect will be that these foreign coins, being receivable only at these heavy discounts, will disappear and find their way back to their own homes; and we shall have a uniform coinage of our own, which will be a great convenience to the trade.

Improvements come slowly, but they do come at last. Once our people acquire the method of reckoning in dollars and cents they will realize the benefits, but time will be required to effect the transition from the old to the new.

What does a *tal qual* bulk consist of?²³¹ (1888)

Under the *tal qual* system, cod was sold in bulk at a fixed price. A bulk contain cod of very different qualities. This was sometimes brought up as a weakness of Newfoundland’s fish marketing, compared to (for example) selling fish divided into strict grades of known and consistent quality. This letter argues that far from the *tal qual* bulk being a quality free-for-all, the lower grades of fish were excluded from that system.

Sir – The Hon. Moses Monroe, in his speech of the 24th of February, made some remarks on the Chamber of Commerce or Board of Trade which, I think, he had better left alone. [...] [One] cause of complaint is the cod fishery, in which he says that the Chamber assented to a cull on the staple of the country to improve the character of our fish, and that the Lower House put it forth in an unworkable form; that several members of the Council took the trouble to lick it into practicable shape, but so despondent were they of their bantling that they did not hope for success, as they had such grave doubts of the result of their licking their pet measure into shape.

Can they wonder at its failure? Why should spring fish be different, or differently treated, from summer cure? Is not fish Merchantable or Madeira²³² in the spring as well as in the summer? From the remarks of the hon. gentleman, it is supposed, or we are led to infer, that fish sold *tal qual* means all sorts of codfish. *Tal qual* fish means only Merchantable and Madeira, which in many cases so much resemble each other that if a dispute arises between buyer and seller, it requires an

²³¹ From INVESTIGATOR. (1888, April 18). OUR STAPLE PRODUCTS. *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

²³² “Merchantable” and “Madeira” were two different qualities of salt cod-fish. They were at or near the top of the list in terms of desirability and price.

expert to decide which is which. The other qualities of [salt cod], such as West India, dun, slimy, broken, inferior and damp, are made a special agreement of, and do not enter into the *tal qual* basis.

Every man has a right to buy and sell as he likes. If he can't get one price he must only take another. The cull²³³ in many cases differs, either through the wants of the trade or the stupidity of the cullers, for many of the latter are not responsible persons. Can the honorable gentleman give us a definition of what fish is Madeira and what fish is Merchantable? I think his ideas of buying and his ideas when selling would leave a large margin. [...] I don't agree with the hon. gentleman that the purchase of fish as *tal qual* is going to ruin or depreciate the value of fish; but if the hon. gentleman would, when buying fish from others, or culling it in from his dependent dealers, be a little more liberal in his cull, he might find it to his benefit.

The result of the Bank fishery the past season has been satisfactory. The early-caught and cured fish resulted very favorable to the curers, and as the hon. gentleman states, compared favorably with any shore-caught fish. Later on, from a continuance of very bad weather, the cure was much inferior, and a large percentage of slimy fish was placed upon the market. The poor fishermen were the losers, as the purchasers bought the fish at a very low rate and got a good profit in the West India market for the same. [...]

In buying codfish, *tal qual*, it may be argued: I bought such fish by sample, and it has not turned out as I expected. I would suggest in such cases: Let a sample be deposited with the purchaser. In case of dispute tie it and seal the same. If a dispute arises such as that the cargo is not turning out according to sample, then open the sample; any two men of common senses can easily settle this amongst themselves.

Yours, &c.,

INVESTIGATOR

St. John's, April 17, 1888.

“I agree entirely”²³⁴ (1888)

A corroboration of the above letter's discussion of the codfish cull.

Dear Sir – In looking over your issue of April 18th, I noticed a letter by “Investigator” relating to [...] codfish and fish in general, and the several ways in which they are cured and culled. I will speak here of the codfish only.

I agree entirely with “Investigator” in his remarks on the cull of fish. He says if a dispute arose between buyer and seller, as to which was Merchantable and which Madeira, it would require an expert to tell which was which. The fact is, all the fish that's culled out for Madeira is really Merchantable, and what is culled out for West India²³⁵ is three-parts Madeira. A man goes to St. John's, and is offered by the

²³³ The merchants buying salt cod from the fishers had the right to “cull” the catch and reject cod they considered to be unsatisfactory. It was occasionally suggested that this privilege was open to abuse.

²³⁴ From EXPERIENCE. (1888, May 26). Our Staple Industry. *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

²³⁵ A lower quality of fish than Merchantable or Madeira.

merchants a fair price for his fish. *Tal qual*, and then Madeira and West India are culled out and called by the latter name, thus reducing the price to a low figure for the whole.

Pretty well all the fish that is taken in St. John's for Madeira, is put with them Merchantable in the stores and sold *as* Merchantable. Great care is taken to keep the price of West India so low that, whatever you are offered for the better qualities, it's bound to bring a low average price on the whole lot.

Some merchants are not so hard as others, but *all* are making a rod for their own backs, as people in outharbors are beginning to export their own fish to Europe, Halifax, Boston, etc., anywhere, where they can make a good-looking dollar more a quintal for their fish than they can get at St. John's, and where the cull is not nearly so severe. We know how the markets are in foreign ports. That knowledge is not confined to the St. John's merchants alone. Of course they will go on in the same groove to the bitter end, which will soon be for them, if they don't alter their hands.

I understand we are to have sworn cullers. Law compels us. Now, if so, Mr. Editor: If a sworn culler culls fish here, will that fish be accepted in St. John's without being culled again by another *sworn* culler? The whole thing is rotten – like our Government.

Our "Channel fleet" are all arrived. They averaged about nine quintals per man. Not much doing here, as weather has been too rough to try much.

Thanking you for space, I am, dear sir, yours, etc.

EXPERIENCE.

Burgeo, May 10, 1888.

"The people's wish to have a homestead"²³⁶ (1888)

In 1886, Newfoundland passed a Homestead Act that made it easier to own and settle on land. This article celebrates two of the pioneer settlers who made use of this Act.

An enterprising start to acquire a homestead and a section of good agricultural land on the line of the Dildo Road, in accordance with the terms of the Homestead Act of 1886, has just been made by Mr. John Webber, of this city, and Mr. Reuben Giles, of Carbonear. Both are acting together, and their respective claims lie side by side. They applied for a whole section of one square mile (six hundred and forty acres), but, as there was some difficulty in procuring that quantity, they eventually acquired the right to one-quarter section.

As our readers know, the Government bonus to township pioneers for clearing the first five acres is twenty dollars per acre, and for the next five, ten dollars per acre; in all, an assistance of a hundred and fifty dollars (£37 10s.) for the first ten acres cleared. To men who are engaged in some other employment in summer time

²³⁶ From Well Done, Messrs. Webber and Giles. (1888, May 4). *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

and are not dependent for support upon the yield of their land the first season, this bounty is a substantial stimulus to settle on a homestead grant.

The young men in question mean to clear a portion of their claims this spring before engaging in their usual summer's pursuits. They will then leave a man in charge to continue the work of reclaiming the soil, whose wages will be largely met by the bonus, and will themselves resume the same labor on returning from their occupation next Fall.

One difficulty confronts these pioneers – the difficulty of procuring house-building timber and board, arising from their cost. Were there facilities by which a man could put up a home for his little family, and be enabled to move them out to the future scene of their lives, half the anxiety and hardship of the pioneer's life would be charmed away. In fact, all troubles would then vanish. However, it is to be hoped that our legislators will devise some means to remove this impediment and so meet the people's wish to have a homestead which they can proudly call their own forever.

Meantime we wish Messrs. Webber's and Giles' courageous "new departure" every success. At first there will be a few obstacles, but a few years hence, in the midst of bright meadows and cultivated fields, among the glorious sights and scenes of nature, their lot will be an enviable one of prosperity and independence.

Mr. Mackinson, seed potatoes and the Dildo settlers²³⁷ (1888)

Despite the incentives provided by the Homestead Act of 1886, not everything went smoothly for the pioneer settlers on the Dildo road.

Sir – On Thursday last His Excellency Governor Blake arrived here by a special train *en route* to the Dildo Agricultural Settlements. The day previous the settlers there had forwarded His Excellency a box containing a sample of the seed potatoes supplied to them by Mr. Mackinson of Harbor Grace. The letter that accompanied the box was signed by all the settlers, and set forth that the potatoes received were rotten, and that out of all that had been planted not one had come to ground. The poor unfortunate creatures begged His Excellency to inquire into their complaint and to afford redress for the grievous wrong inflicted upon them. His Excellency did not trust the investigation to subordinates, but went himself and inquired into the case. He found matters exactly as the settlers had reported. There were the plots of land cleared of stumps and stones and exhibiting the care and toil of the husband and wife whose labor has been in vain, but no sign of vegetation was to be seen.

The settlers had complained on receipt of the potatoes; they knew that the frost had destroyed their vitality and that it was useless to plant them, but they were told that they would not get any more, and they planted them, hoping that perchance some would grow.

²³⁷ From REPORTER. (1888, July 18). INJUSTICE OF THE WORST KIND. *Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

His Excellency expressed his sympathy for the people, not only in words, but by supplying them with garden seeds. What further action he has taken in the premises I am not prepared to say, but it is only reasonable to believe that Mr. Superintendent Mackinson will be compelled to refund the Government the \$2 per barrel that he received for his rotten potatoes, and will no longer be retained in the responsible position of Superintendent of the Dildo Agricultural Settlement.

This is either a case of fraud, or criminal negligence. If Mr. Mackinson knew that his potatoes were rotten when he sold them to the Government for the use of these settlers, he has been guilty of fraud and should be punished accordingly; if, on the other hand, he did not know that the potatoes were in this condition, then he has been guilty of such criminal negligence that he is unfit to retain the position he is so well paid to occupy. The public should know what the Government intend doing relative to this matter.

It is desirable that some light should be thrown upon other matters in connection with this scheme over which Mr. Mackinson so ably presides. The settlement was established under the Thorburn Act of 1886, which provides that settlers within a proclaimed district shall be entitled to a bonus of \$20 per acre. A large sum of money was expended last autumn in blocking off and clearing patches of land on the Dildo road, and as high as \$40 per acre was offered by the Government to induce settlers to occupy the same. This did not prove sufficiently attractive, so the Government undertook to pay the expenses of all who would remove to the settlement, and a promise was given by Mr. Mackinson that each man would receive seed potatoes in the spring and \$10 cash, to enable him to purchase the necessary implements with which to cultivate his land.

This spring every man, married and single, with the exception of one John Anthony, received \$10 cash and from two to five barrels of potatoes, such as they were. This man Anthony was induced to break up his home in Spaniard's Bay and to settle at Dildo Pond; the cost of his removal was paid by the Government, and he was directed to a piece of land whereon to settle. He immediately proceeded to build a home for himself and family and to clear the land around it; but no sooner was he comfortably established, when he was notified by Mr. Mackinson that he required the piece of land, and that he (Anthony) must move elsewhere. The man protested and refused to leave, with the result that he did not receive either money or potatoes, as did the other settlers, and Mr. Mackinson has endeavored to prevent him from obtaining labor and to thus starve him out of the place. It is said that Anthony's piece of land is desired by a friend of Mr. Mackinson's in Harbor Grace, who wants to build a provision store there, and hence the trouble.

This piece of tyranny should form a subject for investigation, and I hope that you will endeavor to sift the matter to the bottom. Anthony has applied to the Attorney General and Surveyor General for redress, but has not received any satisfaction.

I send you herewith a sample of the seed potatoes supplied by Mr. Mackinson to the Dildo settlers. We look with scorn and contempt upon the miserable huckster who, for a few paltry dollars, forces his useless goods upon those whom necessity

places in his power, but when a well-paid Government official is guilty of this conduct, it calls for something more than our contempt.

Yours truly,

REPORTER.

Harbor Grace Junction, July 16, 1888.

“The failure of Sir Robert’s Bait Act”²³⁸ (1888)

A Bait Act passed in 1887 (and discussed elsewhere in this collection) was intended to ban the sale, by Newfoundlanders, of fresh bait to their competitors in the cod fishery, particularly the French. By some accounts, enforcing the Act was challenging.

We continue to receive information regarding the failure of Sir Robert’s Bait Act in Fortune Bay, and the wretched muddle his Government has made in trying to carry out the provisions of that ill-advised measure. Not only from our own special correspondent at St. Pierre, but also from reliable *outside* parties, telegrams and letters keep pouring in, all tending to verify our prediction at the time the said Act was passed, namely: that it would never accomplish the object in view.

On Wednesday we published a dispatch to the effect that Captain Nickerson of this port had sold two hundred barrels of fresh herrings at St. Pierre on the previous day, that the French were then amply supplied with bait, and that there were twenty craft at the piers in that harbor with cargoes of herring begging for purchasers. When we opened that message and read its contents, it occurred to us that our correspondent must have been mistaken, and so we did not think it prudent to make any comment on his statements. Since then, however, all the corroborative evidence necessary has been taken, and to-day we feel safe in saying that there has been no exaggeration whatever. It is not necessary to quote all our correspondence in this connection, as the following will suffice:-

“St. Pierre, May 22, 1888. Editor EVENING TELEGRAM – Please publish in your paper my telegram to Robert Bond of to-day. – E. POULAIN.”

Immediately on receipt of this message we telegraphed to Mr. Bond, who was then at the Harbor Grace Junction, for a copy of Mr. Poulain’s dispatch. Mr. Bond replied with his usual promptitude and sent us the annexed:-

“St. Pierre, May 22, 1888. ROBERT BOND, M.H.A., – Captain George Nickerson, Commander of a St. John’s banker, sold here yesterday two hundred barrels of fresh herring, at two dollars a barrel, to bait French bankers. – E. POULAIN.”

Other correspondents tell us that “the French authorities at St. Pierre regard the action of the Newfoundland Government in sending bait-protecting cruisers to the West Coast more in the light of a huge joke than anything else.” [...] The truth is “our cruisers on the West Coast” – as Premier Thorburn terms them – have

²³⁸ From THE BAIT QUESTION. (1888, May 25). *Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

accomplished no good one way or the other. On the contrary, they have done incalculable injury to the people on that long stretch of coast, whose very existence depended upon unrestricted trade relations with St. Pierre and the sale of bait to French fishermen.

We are assured on trustworthy authority that the fishing interests of France have sustained no injury by the “operation” of the Thorburn Bait Act. St. Pierre banking vessels sailed on their first trip this season fairly well supplied with bait, and even those who had to depend upon salted herrings and clams did as well, on average, as our own bankers who had all the fresh bait they wanted. Since the first trip it has not been very difficult to obtain bait at St. Pierre, and consequently fish can now be bought there for the low price of fourteen francs a quintal.

“Our bait protectors”²³⁹ (1888)

Many humorous stories are told regarding the “exploits” of Judge Prowse and Sub-Inspector Sullivan in connection with their “bait-protecting service” on the West Coast. [...] Let it suffice to-day [...] to quote one peculiarly interesting incident of “that naval demonstration,” as related to use by the first officer of one of our Placentia Bay schooners which arrived the other day. He says:-

We were sailing out the Bay with a fair wind and everything looking well, when suddenly the fog lifted and we noticed a steamer making towards us. On she came, and in a little while up went a flag and we felt convinced that her commander, whoever he was, meant to overhaul us. Our captain gave orders to spread every yard of canvas and not to alter the schooner’s course an inch.

By Jupiter, it was an exciting time. Some of us thought the steamer was a piratical craft, and visions of “walking the plank” and terrible tortures flitted before the mind’s eye until we felt shockingly uncomfortable. We were running at the time on a bee line for St. Pierre, and determined to escape if we possibly could. The chase, however, didn’t continue long. In half an hour or less the wind began to drop away and the steamer gradually approached us. At last she crossed our bows and fired a warning shot. Our captain called all hands around him on the quarter-deck, and, after a brief consultation, it was decided to surrender without fighting, as we had only two old muskets on board, and one of these looked a good deal like the Frenchman’s gun that wanted a new lock, stock and barrel.

Soon another puff of smoke went up from the steamer, followed by a heavy report, and at this juncture we thought it prudent to heave to and “see it out.” The steamer came up alongside, a boat was lowered, [then] Sub-Inspector Sullivan and a number of policemen, armed to the teeth, got into it and immediately came on board.

The Sub-Inspector strutted up to our captain with drawn sword in his hand. He looked “terribly fierce” at us all round, and then, in an imperious manner, demanded:

“Are you the captain of this vessel?”

²³⁹ From OUR BAIT PROTECTORS. (1888, May 29). *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

“Yes,” replied the skipper in trembling accents, fearful lest he should offend “the great man.”

“Now, then, tell me truthfully, what does your cargo consist of?”

That question was very significant. Our skipper took the situation in at once and, in a bold and defiant tone of voice, answered:

“We have herring.”

“Don’t you know the law?”

“Of course we know it; but a bad law is better broken than kept some times.”

“Where are those herrings and how many have you?”

“Begor, if we must tell you, we *must*, I ‘spose. Paddy, (to the cook) go down in the fore run and hand up that bucket of herring.”

“Come, now, this won’t do; we are not to be trifled with.”

“Well, if you don’t believe me, search her yourself.”

Sub-Inspector Sullivan then glanced about the deck, peeped into the hold, looked wise as well as fierce, wrote a page or two in his pocket-book and then prepared to leave us. As he got out over the rail, our skipper inquired:

“Will you stop us coming back?”

“Yes, if you have any rum on board.”

“All right. We’ll take precious good care not to be seen by you.”

Then we let go the main sheet, the sails began to draw and the schooner resumed her course. On arriving at St. Pierre we landed our cargo of wood, and we might have had a hundred barrels of herring underneath for aught they knew to the contrary. Coming back we kept a sharp lookout for the “bait protectors,” and, just as we expected, when crossing the bay at early morn, we ‘spied the cruiser snug enough at anchor, with, as we supposed, all her officers and crew sound asleep. Any way, we arrived all right and drank their health in overflowing bowls of the very best pale brandy. I had half a mind to send a bottle or two on board as a little present to the Sub-Inspector, but the skipper thought it wouldn’t be well to do it, and I took his advice.

Song of the Fisherman (1889)²⁴⁰

I'm one of the thousands who're yearly fleeced
By bloated tyrannical knaves;
No more we'll be goaded and used as the beast,
And crushed into premature graves.
We're up in our manhood, resolved and alert,
The ballot to use for the true—
The Workingman's Party its right to assert
And get the poor fisher his due.
Yes, get the poor fisher his due;
No more upon knees he will sue
At th'altar of greed,
For his children's feed;
For, get will the fishers their due.

“The two-fold dispute”²⁴¹ (1890)

Newfoundland would not join Canada until the 20th century, but the issue was much discussed before then.

Commissioned to investigate on the spot the feeling aroused in Canada in general, and in Newfoundland in particular, by the two-fold dispute arising out of the fishery rights claimed by France on the Newfoundland coast, and by the United States in Behring's Sea, I arrived here from England this morning. In passing through Halifax I had the opportunity of conversing with several residents whose opinions I will briefly indicate.

In the first place, it is impossible not to note that there is, on the whole, little but what may be termed latent interest in the question. It was pointed out to me that the important trading connection existing between Halifax and Newfoundland made the citizens of the former place keenly alert to all the varying phases of the dispute; but nevertheless, they have not yet been led away by any marked manifestation of sentiment. Their regard, indeed, appears to me to be essentially platonic. Whilst recognizing that further troubles are bound to arise out of the questions in dispute, they are undoubtedly of one mind on the point that Newfoundland should find its own way out of the difficulty, and it would take a great deal to shake their convictions in this respect, whilst anything like a helping hand on their part is scarcely to be looked for under any circumstances.

In this connection a remark made by myself, touching the possible admission, at some future date, of Newfoundland into the Canadian Dominion, elicited a striking

²⁴⁰ From SONG OF THE FISHERMAN. (1889, October 18). *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

²⁴¹ From Walker, B. W. (1890, July 12). THE NEWFOUNDLAND FISHERIES QUESTION. *Newcastle Courant*, p. 5. Written by Baldwin Wake Walker (1802 – 1876).

reply from a gentleman holding an important municipal position in Halifax. "It would certainly round off British North America," said he, "but we do not want another Ireland off our shores." He proceeded to point out that in both material prosperity and intellectual status, the bulk of the inhabitants of Newfoundland were far below the standard prevailing throughout the remainder of the Dominion. Brought up from father to son to depend wholly for subsistence on their fisheries, they seemed incapable of turning a hand to anything else, and an unfavorable season meant for them a whole year passed in a condition of helpless, semi-starvation, whilst their ignorance made them the ready prey of those demagogues who have been preaching to them the unheard-of benefits likely to fall to their lot in the event of their transferring their allegiance to the United States. Moreover, the local government, with the well-meaning object of developing the resources of the island, stands committed to the construction of railways, which, however beneficial they may prove in the future, have for present result the creation of public debt out of all proportion to the revenue of the colony. Under these circumstances, the Dominion of Canada feels considerable hesitation at the prospect of admitting such an ailing member to its confederation. "But," – and here my informant spoke most emphatically – "we will not have large French settlements springing up close to us and threatening our shores."

The last remark bears on a fact mentioned to me by another gentleman in connection with the lobster canning industry. Many of the factories devoted to this industry on the Newfoundland shore have been started by Halifax firms. These are now profiting by the *modus vivendi* which prohibits the establishment of fresh factories. But there are always the chances that the French may at some future period succeed in either absolutely insisting on their removal or in swamping them by locating in their vicinity factories of their own, fostered by the bounty system that has proved so eminently successful as regards the cod fishery. The shoe, too, has begun, moreover, to pinch in another quarter. Since the Newfoundland Legislature has prohibited the sale of bait, the Canadian fishermen have had to seek it off the coast of New Brunswick and elsewhere, and according to information published on the day of my leaving Halifax, with marked ill-success, so far as regarded an important section of the Nova Scotian fishing fleet.

Shortly after my arrival I was able to obtain a brief interview with Sir William Whiteway, the present Premier of Newfoundland, who purposed proceeding to England by the steamer which had carried me from Halifax. I may premise that Sir William, who is the representative of what is here styled the working man's party, came back into office last year on the occasion of the first election held under the ballot, when he and his supporters succeeded in winning twenty-four seats out of a total of thirty-six. He is proceeding to England to confer with the Colonial Office on the vexed question of the fisheries, and is the bearer of an address to Her Majesty from the Legislative Council and House of Assembly, protesting against the *modus vivendi* concluded without the assent of the colony, submitting that there is no law under which the French are permitted to erect lobster factories on any part of the coast of Newfoundland, and praying for the Royal assent to the Act lately passed, and

wholly repealing the enactment prohibiting the use of cod-traps both on the French shore and elsewhere, an enactment which the Imperial Government has expressed its desire should continue in force in the former locality. The address states most emphatically that the colony will be satisfied with nothing less than the immediate removal of every French lobster factory from the shores of Newfoundland, points out that the French bounties on fish caught on the Newfoundland shores cannot be excluded from the consideration of the question, and emphatically protests against the fashion in which the French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon are made centres from which supplying is carried on to an extent ruinous to the interests of the colony, despite the express declaration of the King of France, in the original treaties, that these islands should not become an object of jealousy between the two nations.

Questioned by me as to the state of public feeling in Newfoundland, and though statements sent forth that the people were so disgusted with the policy pursued by the British Government as to be desirous of transferring their allegiance to the United States, Sir William spoke very pertinently. He held that the persistent way in which the aspirations and desires of the islanders had been snubbed by the home Government had produced intense irritation, and a determination to have matters set right; but, as he put it, "they no more mean to go under the stars and stripes than they do to cut their throat." He thought, and it would seem rightly, that the home Government had always sought to discourage colonization in Newfoundland, with a view of reserving it essentially as a fishing station, whence the navy could be recruited; but he was of opinion that the time for this was gone by, and that the enormous mineral and agricultural resources of the interior should be developed by immigration. By the construction of a railway from St. John's to St. George's Bay, and by the establishment of agricultural settlements along the line, to say nothing of the opening up of the many mines and quarries of coal, iron, copper, lead, marble and gypsum existing in the vicinity of the French shore, a population would grow up strong enough to bid defiance to any such claims as the French thought they had a right to enforce. He further maintained that the French had no right to erect lobster factories, the right of fishing being only granted to them as an easement, and being wholly subject to the local legislation, a proposition borne out by the opinion expressed by the law officers of the United States on a recent occasion as regards the State of Maine. He opined that the sensational telegrams respecting the state of things in Newfoundland sent to England were either, in a great measure, dictated by local political animosities, which would appear to be intensely accentuated here, or were due to the fertile imaginations or credulous ears of the correspondents of American journals, sent out to investigate matters. Feeling in local politics, it seems, runs very high here, the struggle being between the wealthy merchant class, upon whom, by the working of the truck system, a large proportion of the fishing population is all but wholly dependent, and a middle class, which has been gradually growing up between these two, and which is seeking to induce these dependents to throw off their trammels, through the agency of the ballot.

Respecting confederation with Canada, Sir William frankly gave his opinion that the Newfoundlanders would really prefer the United States. Canada, they think,

would prove a harsher step-mother than England is a mother, and would pursue the same policy of neglect alleged as their chief grievance. He spoke of the marked diminution of the number of French ships fishing off the French shore, this having fallen from some three hundred to eight or ten at most, but pointed out that whilst this shore is thus neglected for the banks, and is really only claimed on a dog-in-the-manger policy, the bounty system of the French Government has led to the equipment of ships from 50 to 100 tons, working from Miquelon to St. Pierre, and profits by the bonus of 10 to 12 francs a quintal to undersell the Newfoundlanders, and exclude their fish from the markets they have hitherto frequented. The Labrador fishery is fast decaying in consequence, and there is all the more necessity for the Newfoundlanders to devote their attention to agriculture and mining. He further touched upon the question of smuggling, which would appear to be most openly encouraged in the French settlements. Fish sold in St. John's on French account was paid for by supplies by St. Pierre, to the great detriment of the island revenue.

One of Sir William's schemes is to endeavor to obtain a Colonial Office guarantee for the sum of eight million dollars, five million to be devoted to the construction of a railway across the island, and the rest to establishing settlements along it. By such guarantee the money might be obtained at, say, three per cent. French opposition has extended even to the establishment of a terminus on the shore they claim, but this can scarcely be persisted in. Once this railway is made, the whole question as already noted would, in all probability, find its natural solution.

Cod and Lobster Hatcheries²⁴² (1891)

By the late 1880s, over-fishing had led to a decline in the cod populations around Newfoundland. Norway had responded to a similar situation by creating fish hatcheries, and in 1887 the Newfoundland government established a commission to investigate the possibility of adopting Norwegian techniques. In 1888 Adolph Nielsen, a Norwegian, was offered the position of superintendent of Newfoundland's fisheries, with a mandate to establish a cod hatchery. He quickly got to work, and would continue at his task until his death at St. John's in 1903.

The annual report of the Fisheries Commission for 1890 was recently presented in the Legislature. It shews that the commission are making good progress in the work of placing the various fisheries under judicious regulations, so as to secure their preservation and protection, and also in adopting measures to restored depleted waters. The report is a record of very valuable work accomplished by Mr. Nielsen²⁴³, the superintendent of fisheries, during the year, which if maintained and extended will be of incalculable benefit to the colony. As his work progresses, we discover how much our fisheries have suffered from having been left to take care of themselves in

²⁴² From PROPAGATION OF SEA FISH. (1891, April 21). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 7.

²⁴³ Adolph Nielsen (1852 – 1903)

the past, and also how much may be done to remedy errors, and restore what has been injured, by the application of practical and scientific methods. [...]

The commission aim at ascertaining the causes which have brought about such an alarming decline in our shore cod fishery, and also in our salmon and other fisheries, with a view to their removal. Destructive methods of fishing, the result of ignorance and recklessness, causing an enormous destruction of immature fish, have been the main cause of the decline in the fisheries. The commission aim at the application of judicious enactments regarding the various gear employed in the fisheries, and the regulation of close seasons so as to protect young fish life. Then for the restoration of depleted waters, artificial propagation is resorted to as the most effectual remedy.

So far, artificial propagation has been confined to codfish and lobsters; and in these a remarkable success has been achieved during the year, especially in the propagation of lobsters.

At Dildo island, Placentia bay, the commission have erected the largest and finest hatchery for marine fishes in the world. For the hatching of cod, last year was peculiarly unfavorable owing mainly to the presence of large bodies of ice around the shore to a late period of the season, and the consequent difficulty of obtaining spawning fish. Notwithstanding these difficulties, Mr. Nielsen succeeded in collecting 33,820,000 of fertilized cod ova. Of these, 17,000,000 were hatched and planted in the waters of the bay in a good, healthy condition. Thus, of the whole collection of ova, 50½ per cent. were successfully hatched, which is reckoned a satisfactory average.

The total number of spawning codfish collected was 700. Of these 28 per cent. died from various causes, such as the effect of injuries from the hooks when they were taken, and diseases of various kinds. Thirty-five per cent. yielded when "stripped" the number of ova referred to. Mr. Nielsen has found, in his experience, that all female spawning codfish contain a large quantity of dead ova, and that this affects the fishery unfavorably year after year, and greatly reduces the actual fecundity of the codfish.

"This fact," says the report, "shows the necessity of husbanding carefully the bounties of the sea, and of assisting nature, by artificial propagation, when the balance is destroyed. The margin on which human operations can be exercised without injury to the fisheries is not so great as is generally supposed. The same reason suggests how necessary is the protection of immature fish, on which the continuation of the species depends. However prolific cod and other fish may be, the natural destructive agencies at work continually are proportionately great, and when man's destructive activities are added to these fisheries, may be readily exhausted."

It is satisfactory to find that these seventeen millions of young codfish, planted in the waters of Trinity bay, even in the first season, showed their presence and growth. "The fishermen around Dildo reported that during the month of September they repeatedly saw large shoals of very small codfish, such as they had never seen before, from one to two inches in length." Mr. Nielsen has no doubt that these are the growth from the fry he planted in June and July, and which in September, would be grown from the length of one to two inches. Many of the fishermen are of the same opinion, as they say these shoals are totally unlike in size to any small cod they had

seen previously. Their prejudices against cod hatching are now giving way, and many of them are warm supporters of the enterprise, and believe that it will have a most beneficial effect on the cod fishery.

When it is remembered that this is the first year in which cod ova could be obtained, and that the work commenced under many difficulties, such a degree of success must be regarded as highly satisfactory, and as affording abundant warrant for perseverance in an enterprise which, if ultimately successful, will secure great and lasting benefits to the colony. [...]

The report contains an account of a brilliant success in lobster hatching. At the Dildo hatchery, Mr. Nielsen carried on the hatching of lobster ova simultaneously with that of codfish. He collected during the season, at various lobster factories, 20,927,200 lobster ova, of which 15,070,800 were hatched and planted, against 7,995,400 ova collected and 4,039,000 planted in 1889. The percentage of loss in the apparatus last year was 28, against 49½ the previous year.

Mr. Nielsen's success, however, has been most marked in connection with the floating incubators which he invented, and on which he bestowed much thought and labor. Four hundred and thirty two of these incubators were distributed at fourteen different stations, from Fortune Bay in the south to Green Bay in the north. Twenty-four men, instructed by Mr. Nielsen, were placed in the neighborhood of lobster factories, and the men regularly visited these lobster factories, stripped the ova from the lobsters and conveyed them to the incubators. The returns when summed up at the end of the fishing season showed that at the fourteen stations 390,934,500 lobsters were hatched and planted in the waters. Adding to these the number hatched at Dildo, the result of the season's operations was 406,005,300 young lobsters planted in good condition.

The report contains the following comment on these operations:- "It must be noticed that the ova obtained at the factories would all have been destroyed had they not been thus brought to life. The result, therefore, exhibits a clear gain to the extent named, in hatching the germs of lobster life which otherwise would have perished. There can be no doubt that the destruction of such great quantities of ova at factories has been the great cause of the decline of the lobster fishery everywhere. In the method now employed, it seems to the commission we have obtained an invaluable means of arresting the decline in our lobster fisheries which, in many places, threatens entire extinction, and of sustaining the stock of this valuable crustacean."

An Epidemic of Diphtheria²⁴⁴ (1889)

St. John's suffered from recurring epidemics of diphtheria. Authorities typically responded by isolating sufferers and limiting public gatherings.

It is now over twelve months since the first cases of diphtheria²⁴⁵ occurred in St. John's. At first the cases were sporadic, and occurred only at intervals. During the fall the increased, and before Christmas the disease took the epidemic form and spread over the whole city. Many of the poorer classes were so unwise as to conceal the fact that there were cases in their houses, and in this way the infection was spread.

The Board of Health spared no efforts to check and remove the disease. They were clothed with full powers, and the Government placed sufficient funds at their disposal. The sanitary department of the city were also active. All day schools and Sunday schools were closed, and children under 14 were forbidden to attend church or other meetings. These efforts have been at length successful, and the epidemic is abating rapidly. Last week there were only 23 cases under treatment and 4 deaths.

The Health Inspector reports that up to this date there have been in St. John's and the vicinity two thousand cases of diphtheria, and three hundred and sixty deaths, or an average of 18 per cent of the cases. [...] We have got a terrible lesson which will not be soon forgotten. The most stringent measures must be taken to improve the sanitary condition of the city, and to stamp out other contagious diseases when they appear. A thorough system of drainage is now in progress.

The Ravages of Diphtheria, 1888-1891²⁴⁶ (1892)

St. John's, Nfld., April 22, 1892. – We are now almost entirely free from diphtheria, only a few sporadic cases having occurred during the last six months. Few places, in proportion to population, have suffered more severely from this terrible scourge than this city. Its virulence cannot be accounted for by bad sewerage. St. John's is built on the slope of a hill; the soil is dry and porous; the drainage is into the harbor, and, though far from being perfect yet, has been greatly improved during the last few years and is fairly good. A new system of sewerage is being carried out which when completed will render it one of the best sewered cities on this side of the Atlantic. There is nothing here to show that dirt or foul sewers had anything to do with producing or inveterating this fell disease. It was noted all through, though, that the dirtiest and closest parts of the city, as a rule, suffered least. Diphtheria often found its victims in the best houses where cleanliness and comfort reigned supreme;

²⁴⁴ From SIR WILLIAM WHITEWAY. (1889, July 11). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 2.

²⁴⁵ A contagious respiratory illness caused by a club-shaped bacterium. Its name comes from the Greek word for 'leather', because of the leathery covering the bacteria form at the back of the victim's throat. In addition to breathing difficulties, diphtheria can lead to fatal heart failure.

²⁴⁶ From NEWS OF NEWFOUNDLAND. (1892, May 7). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 11.

and families living in the country around, in open and dry situations, were often attacked. [...]

Our experience here seems to suggest that the efforts of boards of health have but slight controlling power, once the disease has become epidemic. [...] The grand aim should be to isolate quickly individual cases, at first appearance of the disease, and so stamp out the destroyer at the first.

The visitation of this terrible disease in St. John's has been of the most serious character. To say nothing of the pecuniary loss, the expenses incurred by the operations of the Board of Health, which were enormous, but unavoidable; the cost of medical attendance etc; the loss of employment in the case of working people; the injury to trade; what can be said of the sad bereavements in families; the misery and anxiety; the tortures of the sufferers; the bitter tears and broken hearts; the whole sad aggregate of suffering caused by this modern pestilence.

The disease first showed itself in epidemic form about May, 1888, it culminated in the following year, and declined slowly in 1890 and 1891 – in all continuing its ravages for three and a half years. The following returns which I obtained from the records of the Board of Health will show the extent of its ravages:

City of St. John's	Families	Cases	Deaths
1888	99	273	67
1889	878	1,881	350
1890	329	803	157
1891	217	511	132
	1,523	3,468	706
Orphanages		99	8
		3,567	714
Outports ²⁴⁷	126	403	95
Total	1,649	3,970	809

The proportion of deaths was almost exactly one in five of all who were attacked by the disease. [...] The foregoing returns do not represent the ravages of the disease throughout the island. In a large number of fishing villages it has made its appearance and carried off numerous victims; but no reliable returns from these are available. In a majority of instances these cases in the outposts were sporadic and the disease was speedily brought under control, but the aggregate of deaths has been considerable.

²⁴⁷ In electoral districts of St. John's East and St. John's West

The Great Fire of 1892²⁴⁸ (1892)

Yesterday afternoon a fire broke out in St. John's that threatened to far exceed in extent of money damage and loss of life that of the disastrous conflagration of 1846. About 4 o'clock a house on Long's Hill was discovered to be on fire. The firemen responded promptly to the alarm, but when they arrived the southwest wind that was prevailing had caused the fire to spread to an adjoining building, which was then burning furiously. Desperate efforts were made to stay the progress of the fire, but it was soon seen that these would prove fruitless. Most of the houses on Long's Hill were very old wooden ones, and they caught fire and burned with great rapidity. The large burning brands were caught up by the wind and carried to the roofs of other structures, which were soon burning furiously. It was seen that the Fire Department was helpless, and people living in the path that the fire was destined to take began to remove their portable household effects. It is feared that some people lost their lives by their foolhardiness in returning to their homes when the flames were close upon them. While these dwellings were burning it was found that the new Methodist college was on fire. Efforts were made to save this building, but they were fruitless. The college was the education headquarters of the Methodists in Newfoundland, and its loss will be severely felt by the denomination.

By this time the wind was blowing a gale, and the fire spreading with terrible rapidity. Buildings situated some distance from the burning structures caught fire from the burning embers and were destroyed without a hand being raised to save them. The firemen and the people were completely paralyzed, and the fire did its work of destruction without stay. It was now growing dark and the scene was a magnificently beautiful, though appalling, one. Building after building caught fire and the whole city was as light as day. The roar of the flames was terrible, and the heat was so intense that it was impossible to get anywhere near the burning buildings. Now and then high and heavy walls would fall and then immense masses of burning embers would soar upwards to be caught by the gale and carried elsewhere to add other buildings to the conflagration. Men, women and children ran about in terror, and thieves, taking advantage of the confusion, entered houses that had been deserted by their occupants and stole whatever they could lay their hands on and carry off.

The Masonic Temple, Orange Hall, the Roman Catholic cathedral and Bishop's palace, St. Patrick's Hall, the English cathedral, the Athenaeum, the Kirk, the Commercial Bank, the Union Bank, the Atlantic Brewery, the Atlantic Hotel, and Limberg's Brewery, all fell prey to the devouring fire²⁴⁹.

²⁴⁸ From DEVASTATED BY FIRE. (1892, July 10). *The St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, p. 5.

²⁴⁹ "The principal buildings, houses and hotels burned are as follows: Brydens, Bowering Bros., J & W. Pitts, Goodfellow & Co., Ayre & Sons, G. K. Nowling, Baine, Johnsons & Co., Bairds, Thornburnet, Terrier, Cliftwood & Co., Hearn & Co., the City Club, Harvey & Co., Stotts grocery, McMurdo & Co., Atlantic Hotel, the American Consulate, the Gordon House, H. P. Walsh, Ryan & Co., the Bearn & Co., the Market House, Aldridge Hotel, the Royal Hotel, the Court House, Customs, March & Sons, Shea & Co., Booking premises, Pitts steamer wharf, soap and tobacco factory, St. John's Tannery, Coastal steam wharf, Lindberg's brewery, Union and Commercial Banks, Commercial Exchange, all

The English cathedral was a magnificent structure, and was considered to be the finest piece of Gothic architecture on this continent. It was yet incomplete, though it had been fifty years in building. Nearly all these buildings were in the center of the city, and before long they were nothing but masses of smoking ruins. In addition to these the Court House, police headquarters and the Government Savings Bank were destroyed, as were also the Presbyterian Church and the office of the *Telegram*²⁵⁰.

The flames were now raging with increasing vigor in the direction of the water front, and in a very short time were eating every house along the wharves. The shipping lying at the wharves had been warned of its danger, and the crews of the various vessels hastily cast off their lines and took their craft outside the harbor. On one side of the bay are the steam seal-oil factories and the warehouses in which their product is stored. It was thought that these buildings would catch fire. It was also feared that the Dry Dock and Marine Railway would be destroyed. The fire burned out the telegraph office and for a time all communication with St. John's was cut off.

This morning, however, the telegraph officials established temporary offices in what they considered a safe part of the city and further details were received. These later dispatches stated that the fire had raged all night and threatened to destroy the whole city. It is known positively that one man and six children have perished, but it is thought that when the terrible excitement that now prevails subsides it will be found that the loss of life will be much greater.

Later dispatches state that the parliamentary buildings have been destroyed, and that at the time the dispatch was sent fully 600 buildings had been burned up. Many of these were dwelling houses, and their occupants have been compelled to seek refuge in the fields. The military authorities have furnished them with as many tents as possible, and the authorities are doing everything in their power to alleviate the distress²⁵¹. Many of these unfortunate people have lost everything they had in the world, and imperative calls will be made upon charity in behalf of them.

This morning the fire communicated to the seal oil factory and stores, and the whole south side of the city was burning. A large fire was coming down the fresh water valley, and the whole population of St. John's was in an agony of despair, seeing before them the complete extinction of the city.

A private dispatch received here states that the fire has swept Water, Gower and Duckworth streets, and from Bandy Rankin's to Signal Hill the only buildings standing are the Union Bank, the Roman Catholic Cathedral and College and the Devon Row Railway depot. About 600 houses are burned.

Another dispatch says that fire has broken out in Monkton, in which are situated the residences of the most wealthy inhabitants of the town.

the law offices and doctors' residences, the School of Art, the principal home mission and merchants' offices and insurance agents' offices." A Ruined City. (1892, July 10). *The St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, p. 5.

²⁵⁰ A newspaper.

²⁵¹ "The drill shed parade rink, Browning bakery and Clouston's factory are being made ready to accommodate the homeless as rapidly as the work can be carried on. Sheds are being erected in Bannerman Park to shelter the burned out." A Ruined City. (1892, July 10). *The St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, p. 5.

The principal street of St. John's is more than a mile in length, and every building was of stone or brick. After the fire in 1846 the authorities refused to permit wooden buildings to be erected on the street. This street has been practically destroyed.

It is known that everything has been destroyed from Birch Cove east of the wharves of the Alliance Steamship Company. Over this distance the flames made a clean sweep. From what can be judged from the reports received here, it is estimated that at least 15,000 persons are homeless. Upon learning of the terrible conflagration the Mayor called a meeting of citizens for the purpose of taking steps to provide relief. In consequence of his call a large number of citizens assembled at the Mayor's office to-day. A committee was appointed and its members immediately purchased \$4000 worth of provisions and lumber. The steamer Ulunda has sailed for St. John's with the committee's purchases on board. Her cargo consists of 20 chests of tea, 250 barrels of flour, 100 pounds of cornmeal, 150 pounds of biscuits, 50 barrels of pork, 5 puncheons of molasses, 35,000 spruce boards, 150 tents and 4 marquees to be used to shelter the people homeless. The military and naval authorities have also sent a lot of tents and canvas. A public meeting will be held on Monday next to establish more general relief. [...] The loss by fire [...] is said to be \$20,000,000²⁵².

“Hungry and dying”²⁵³ (1893)

There is great suffering in Newfoundland among the poor people, and this includes the majority of the population. They would get away from the scenes of poverty if they could, and come to the States, but they are too poor to do even that.

The people who live in crowded tenements are not as pitiable as those who dwell in the miserable little “tilts” which are the homes of the Newfoundland miners and fishermen. In squalor they are about equal; but the poor of the great cities need never be without food – there are charitable societies ready to step in between them and starvation – nor need they waste away under disease for sheer lack of medical aid.

But the toilers of the sea and the toilers underground on these rugged northern shores are in winter completely isolated from the centers of supply, and the little they can lay by in the Fall must last them during the Winter, while on the diphtheria-scourged eastern and northern shores of Newfoundland – some two hundred and fifty miles in length, and over a thousand miles, if the indentations of the coast are followed – there are only four physicians, while in the whole of Labrador there is none at all.

The standard of living among these people is very low. “To live” means with them little more than to be able to clothe themselves and obtain food enough to keep from starving. Of the luxuries of life they are absolutely ignorant. Their “tilts” are

²⁵² “It is estimated that the insurance on the buildings destroyed and on stock will amount to \$4,000,000, which sum will cover about half the loss.” A Ruined City. (1892, July 10). *The St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, p. 5.

²⁵³ From HUNGRY AND DYING. (1893, November 27). *Boston Post*, p. 2.

mere shelters. The sides are of logs stuck upright into the ground, the chinks filled in with moss; the roof of branches covered with birch rind, and in Labrador with sod. What little earth there is “down on the Labrador” seems to be on top of the “tilts.”

SUBSTITUTES FOR DWELLINGS

Many of these shelters have nothing but the bare ground for a floor. They usually consist of one room, about 10x14, which is kitchen, bedroom and living room all in one for a large family. In the corner of this wretched substitute for a dwelling is a rough deal bed for the parents. The children will perhaps sleep under the bed. The older members of the family, and not infrequently strangers, sleep promiscuously on the floor. Such a condition of affairs is evidently equally at variance with the laws of sanitation and morality.

In the middle of the “tilt” there is usually a large cooking stove, in which a fierce fire is maintained all winter. This produces in the crowded room a hot, fetid, disease-breeding atmosphere. Consumption almost vies with diphtheria in its ravages along the coast.

A spoon, a broken cup and a tin plate constitute all the utensils in many tilts. A few herring, a little molasses and the hard biscuit they call bread are the only provisions. These, with tea, are the staple articles of food of the Newfoundland fishermen. Anything beyond these is a luxury which he rarely enjoys. If he can in the fall lay in enough “long sweetenin” (this Southern term for molasses has traveled to these northern regions), herring, bread and tea to last him for the winter, with rigid economy, he is better than most of his neighbors.

CAN'T AFFORD CODFISH

It might be supposed that, as the Newfoundland and Labrador waters are a veritable codfish “garden,” the fishermen could obtain plenty of fresh fish in the summer and salt enough of them to last the winter.

They can no more afford to eat codfish than we can afford to eat greenbacks. Codfish in Newfoundland is money. Of real money the Newfoundland fisherman sees little or nothing. Persons of unquestioned authority say that in some of the outports one can find people who would not know what a coin or bill was if you put it into their hands.

The “truck” system results in the virtual enslavement of the fishermen, yet it seems quite impossible to abolish it. The fishermen in the Spring draw their supplies from the merchants on the credit of their catch for the coming season. These supplies are furnished at the merchant’s figures, and if the voyage is a good one, the rate per quintal is unusually low, or the price of winter supplies unusually high. At all events, things seem to work so that the fisherman is eternally in debt to the merchant.

There is, however, something to be said on the merchant’s side. Fishermen will, if the voyage be poor and insufficient to cover their debt for supplies, take their fish to another merchant and exchange them for their winter’s supplies, so that the merchant who fitted them out receives nothing in return for his goods.

Three kinds of fishery engage the attention of the Newfoundlanders – the shore fishery, the floating fishery on the banks or far northward, and the fishery “down on the Labrador.” Each has characteristic features, but all aim at the same prey –

codfish. All other fish, except it be salmon, the Newfoundland fisherman despises. Cod is money! All other fish is simply fish.

“A Newfoundlander objects”²⁵⁴ (1893)

Sir – In reference to the article which appeared in yesterday’s Post anent the starving condition of the people of Newfoundland, I beg leave to say a few words that may enlighten your readers, who would otherwise believe all the writer of the article in question evidently wishes them to. He says there is great suffering among the poor people of Newfoundland. Where, I ask, is there not suffering among the poor? But there is not, and never was, the suffering, want and abject poverty he would have people believe among the poor of Newfoundland.

I am inclined to think the writer himself was never in Newfoundland, or he would know better than to style the comfortable houses of the fishermen, with their clean, sanded floors and well arranged furniture and crockery, “the miserable ‘tilts,’ the homes of the fishermen at Newfoundland.”

Does he think the people of Terra Nova are savages to be satisfied with a tilt of upright logs and birch bark roof, when the majority of them are in enforced idleness five months out of the twelve, and are constantly adding to and repairing their homes? These men, though unlettered, can design and build a vessel or house, cut timber from the primeval forest, shape it and put it in place.

The toilers of the sea in Newfoundland are not completely isolated during the Winter, one of the steamers of the Newfoundland Steamship Company plying at regular intervals during the Winter, making communication with nearly every place of any size on the northern route. These vessels are specially fortified to contend with ice.

Newfoundland is not so destitute of medical aid as the writer asserts. St. John’s, the capital, has fourteen or fifteen physicians, Harbor Grace is well supplied, there are others in Conception Bay, Bonavista Bay has two resident physicians, Trinity, Twillingate, Little Bay and other towns have doctors. Although not so well supplied as they might be either with physicians or education, Newfoundland is better off than the writer of the article makes her out to be. I should very much like the writer to come out under his full name and mention one instance where he knew the family of a Newfoundland fisherman occupying a tilt in winter, much as he describes and in the manner he describes.

The food of the fishermen, if not luxurious, is at least wholesome. Molasses is his sweetening, and hard bread often constitutes that article in place of soft while fishing, but it is seldom that he cannot get enough flour and meal to pull through the Winter with, even if he is in debt to his supplying merchant. This, with potatoes, turnips, an occasional caribou, and trout to be had for the catching, make up the food

²⁵⁴ From Oliver, T. (1893, November 28). A NEWFOUNDLANDER OBJECTS. *Boston Post*, p. 4. “Thomas Oliver” is probably a pseudonym. I could not find a Thomas Oliver in an 1893 Boston directory, and it is the name of the last Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts, making it an appropriate alias for a British Newfoundlander in Boston.

list of even the poorest. Codfish he can and does have, no matter how much he owes. A fisherman is not such a fool as to let himself go without that staple article of diet, either Summer or Winter. Not only do they have codfish, but salmon.

Newfoundland is not only a fish country, but a land teeming with animal and bird life. Caribou are numerous, as are bears, foxes, otters, etc. Trout are found in every stream and lake, while ptarmigan are found in plenty all over the island. Then we have the wild berries, which literally change the color of the barrens in their season. The women and youngsters make sure to gather enough for winter jams and jellies.

Before I close this rather long epistle, I must ask the writer of the article to try for himself with a few greenbacks and gold and silver coin of the United States, in the remotest corners of Newfoundland, and see, if by distributing them among the poor, they would know what to do with them. Just try if they would light their pipes with them or throw them away. It is but fair to say that his remarks about the truck system are in the main only too true. It is the curse of the fishermen and merchants alike.

THOMAS OLIVER
South Boston, Nov. 27.

An Abandoned Newfoundland Whaler²⁵⁵ (1893)

Newfoundland whaling ships regularly ventured into dangerous Arctic waters. Some never came back. One such abandoned whaler was discovered years after its final voyage, as chronicled here by Charles Bertrand Lewis.

In the spring of 1850 a whaler named the Emily Benson left St. John's, N. F., for a trip to the polar sea. She was a new craft and carried a crew numbering fifty-two men. She was spoken and reported a month after sailing, but from that time on, no news of her reached the public. After three years had gone by she was posted as lost and the insurance paid over, and no one took any further interest in her fate. It was believed that she had been nipped in the ice and had gone down with all hands.²⁵⁶

The last trace ever had of the Scotch whaler Jean McLaren, which was cruising in Baffin's bay in the year 1869, came from an American whaler which encountered her off Cobourg island, at the entrance of Jones' sound, just as the first ice was beginning to make. The American was on her way out of polar waters, knowing that winter was close at hand, while the Scotchman, having been told by natives that there was every sign of an open season, was hanging on to fill her casks.

²⁵⁵ From Lewis, C. B. (1893, October 10). ABANDONED. *The Akron Daily Democrat*, p. 3. Written by Charles "M. Quad" Bertrand Lewis (1842 – 1924).

²⁵⁶ This paragraph is taken from a later version of the article, in which the author replaces the Jean McLaren with the more famous arctic exploration ship, the *Discovery*. It continues, "Seventeen years after the sailing of the Benson the Discovery set out from the port of London for a polar cruise. She was sent out under the auspices of the Royal Geographical Society, and when not heard from for almost two years a vessel called the Rescue was dispatched to look for her, and I was one of the crew of the latter." Benson, C. B. (1902, August 24). Twenty Years After. *The Democrat and Chronicle*, p. 14.

Two days after the American spoke [to] her there was a heavy gale, accompanied by snow and followed by cold weather, and it has always been believed that the McLaren went down with all hands. She was a large, new ship, and on her first cruise and among her crew were two sons of the owner. At the end of two years, when it could no longer be doubted that the ship was lost and that if any of her crew were still living they were cast away on some of the bleak shores of the north, the bark Relief was fitted out to make a search. She did not carry a full crew as a whaler, but was to hunt for whales and seals while she prosecuted her search.

Our starting point was Cobourg island, and we arrived there with the opening of the season. From some fishermen we learned that a ship supposed to be the McLaren had been driven off to the north by the gale spoken of, and they had heard that she had been lost, but we could get no reliable news. We worked to the north, however, instead of going through Jones' sound, and did not give up the quest until we anchored off John Ross mountain. We intercepted dozens of kayaks and landed at least 20 times on capes and islands, but we found no relics and got no information from the natives.

During the summer the McLaren was in the bay there were half a dozen other craft of her rig there as well, and the natives did not know one from the other. Before we started on our return to the south we had made a fair catch, and though the summer was waning, the captain determined to run through Jones' sound and beat up the island off the east coast of Grinnell Land. While we were provisioned and equipped for a winter in the polar regions, he had no intention of being caught. We had squally weather and flurries of snow before we got back to Cobourg island, and by the time we reached New Kent island the cold nights were making ice. At New Kent we got our first reliable information of the missing ship. She had not put in there, but a vessel answering her description, which had been considerably damaged aloft, had been sighted at sea, driving to the north under pressure of a gale which lasted several days. [...]

At Graham's island we learned from the natives that a ship had been cast ashore on North Lincoln island, across the great bay to the east. The trouble in securing anything like accurate information arose from our want of an interpreter. Conversation had to be carried on by signs entirely, and no doubt we misunderstood the people in many instances.

We crossed the bay in a gale which brought winter down upon us, and on reaching Lincoln island we worked the bark into a little bay and found her frozen fast within 10 hours. [...] In three days the ice was 15 inches thick around the ship, and the weather grew so cold that the decks were roofed over, stoves set up and everything made tight and snug.

We had been in our berth three weeks before the weather settled down so that it was deemed to send out exploring parties. [...] The captain's idea was to search the coast north and south of our harbor as far and as thoroughly as possible, and I happened to be one of the party of seven men headed by Mr. Williams, the first mate. [...] The mate was determined to push ahead for five days as determined by the captain, but toward the close of the fourth day, [...] three or four men simultaneously

caught sight of a ship in a bay a mile away, but which seemed at our feet. [...] This craft was a full rigged brig, and the bay was a strange one to us. We cheered and waved our caps, and every man of us was highly elated as we hurried along down the slope to board the stranger.

The thought that she might be a derelict did not occur to any one until we were close upon her. The bay was but a cove, not more than an acre in extent. The brig was not lying in the waters of the cove at all, but among the rocks on the shore 50 feet from water. She lay with her head to the north and had only a slight list to port. Her looks aloft told us the story as we came to a halt. Her sails had been furled and stowed as if the work had been done in a gale. None had blown away, but all were rotting on the yards.

As we stood looking up a gust of wind brought a cloud of black dust down in our faces. Here and there a loose rope was swinging about like a serpent suspended by the tail to a limb, but the rigging as a whole was in fair shape – that is, it seemed to be. But later on we found every rope ready to part at the lightest pull. Masts and yards had been weather beaten until they were gray white in color, and here and there a species of fungus had attached itself to all woodwork.

“She’s an abandoned whaler,” whispered the mate as we stood grouped about him. “From the looks of her she’s been here for years, and there’s no danger of finding any sights aboard. She looks to me like a Russian. One of you go astern and see if you can make her out.”

We had come upon her broadside. One of the men walked down to her stern and stared and blinked for five minutes before he could trace the faded letters and make out “Emily Benson, St. John’s, N. F.” She wasn’t a Russian, then, but a Newfoundland whaler and sealer. Not a boat was in sight on her davits, while her rudder had been carried away and several planks above it crushed in. [...]

The brig stood so high that we had to board her by clambering up the fore chains. We had pictured her deck a scene of desolation, but were agreeably disappointed. There was some little disarray, but no such disorder as might have been expected. The cabin doors were shut, the hatches on and the slides drawn over the fo’castle. Her try works were still standing, and the big kettle in which blubber was melted was half full of a substance which had once been oil. The scuttle butt or cask holding drinking water was simply a heap of rotten staves, and the same was true of the beef barrel. Here and there were rotten spots in the deck planks, and the fo’castle deck was almost hidden from sight by the growth of fungus.

Had the eight of us grouped together in any one spot our united weight would have broken the deck beams, and had we swayed on the rigging we could have loosened all the chain plates and perhaps brought down all the yards and top-gallant masks on deck. Our first move was to enter the cabin. The doors were readily opened, but we had to stand aside for 10 minutes on account of the unpleasant odor of what is known as dry rot, and a breath of it choked the lungs like smoke.

The skylight and all the windows had been closed and sealed, and the cabin was as dark as a prison solitary. We got a couple of candles from our stock to light the way, and in the course of half an hour we had seen everything there was to see.

The brig's log told us everything. It was lying open on the table in the cabin, and beside it were a pen and paper.

Just seven years²⁵⁷ and 20 days before we found her, the whaler had been driven into the bay during a gale. She rode out the storm safely enough, but winter caught her there and held her fast. Very early in the season a storm from the west drove a great mass of ice into the bay, and such was the pressure that the brig was lifted up and carried ashore. The 40 odd men of her crew wintered aboard her, and when spring came they divided into two parties and set out in search of help. One party went to the south and the other across the island to the east. The mate remembered the story as published. Death from sickness and accident reduced the crew to 28 men before they were taken off by whalers.

The log was written up to the date of leaving the ship. We wondered why no craft had been sent to dismantle her and remove her cargo, but a brief investigation explained that. She had only a few barrels of oil in her hold, and the storm which carried her ashore was doubtless the one which so filled up the mouth of the bay that no craft could enter it. The trouble of getting at her would have more than offset the salvage. Deserted by her crew long years before, she lay there on the rocks doomed to slow decay. She stood too high for the bears and foxes to get aboard, and if any wandering native had set foot on her decks he had taken nothing away.

There were plenty of provisions left aboard by the crew, but we found very little which we dared eat. The pemmican was all right, but the canned meats and fruits had frozen and thawed until they were tasteless. There were 10 or 12 barrels of flour, about 20 of meat and 100 boxes of biscuit, but all were musty and unfit to eat. Such clothing and bedding as had been left behind were little better than dust. We spent the day aboard the derelict, giving her a thorough overhauling, but we took away only a few small articles as souvenirs of our discovery. The mate would have set fire to her but for our vigorous protests. We went away casting many a backward glance, and she may rest there today as she did then, though the chances are that lapse of time has reduced her to a heap of rubbish.

As for the McLaren, we found no further trace of her, though parties were sent out almost every week during the winter. Had she gone ashore as did the brig, it is hardly probable that every soul would have been lost, and very likely that her battered hull would have been discovered sooner or later. That no word has ever come from her may be taken as proof conclusive that she went down with all hands to a grave in the city waters of the dreaded seas.

²⁵⁷ This does not match the timeline given by the 1902 version of the article, which claims the Emily Benson's final voyage was in 1850, and states that: "Twenty years previously [to the events recorded] the whaler had been driven into the bay during a gale." Benson, C. B. (1902. August 24). Twenty Years After. *The Democrat and Chronicle*, p. 14.

“Newfoundland’s Predicament” ²⁵⁸(1894)

Newfoundland had numerous political troubles in the late 19th century.

St. John’s, Newfoundland, Aug. 8 – This colony is much disturbed. It can boast of an experience without precedent in the history of parliamentary government, and no one yet knows what the end is going to be.

In November last a general election came off in which Sir William Whiteway, the Premier, was sustained by a majority of two to one. Sir William in reality had his opponents beaten before the contest, for he had got their two leaders out of the way by appointing one, Sir James Winter, to the bench, and getting the other, Sir Robert Thorburn, to rat. To make success more certain he had obtained from the former Legislature large appropriations for road building. There is no municipal system to speak of in Newfoundland, and local services like road building are performed by the Government, and paid for out of the revenues. The inhabitants are mostly fishermen, and in the winter season the road work keeps them from starving.

It happened that before appealing to the electors Sir William had passed an act for the prevention of corrupt practices. For bribery by agents a member-elect was to be unseated, and for personal bribery disqualified during the life of the new Legislature. The trial of election petitions was taken from legislative committees and vested in the courts. Petitions against the return of successful candidates had to be lodged within a certain period after the official gazetting of their return. The Whiteway party swept the country, and the new Legislature was being summoned when it was discovered that the opposition had played a remarkable trick. It had laid petitions against Whiteway himself and sixteen of his twenty-four followers almost at the last hour allowed by the law, while the Whitewayites had not laid a single one against their opponents, and the time for doing so had gone by. To make matters worse the first of the petitions was booked for hearing by Sir James Winter, and his decisions would probably guide the other Judges.

The Legislature met. So did the courts, and the Judges, led by Winter, began to decapitate Whiteway men right and left. It was shown that the road appropriations had been used to corrupt the votes; in some places there had been a wholesale distribution of money and whiskey, in others of pork and corn meal. Whiteway asked the Governor, Sir Terence O’Brien, to dissolve the Legislature and order new elections, but the Governor consulted the Colonial Secretary in London and was advised to refuse. According to parliamentary usage in England, the Chiltern Hundreds²⁵⁹ is not granted to a member petitioned against on the ground of corruption, and so the Colonial Secretary told the Governor not to allow a dissolution;

²⁵⁸ From NEWFOUNDLAND’S PREDICAMENT. (1894, August 12). *New York Sun*, p. 20.

²⁵⁹ British Member of Parliament aren’t allowed to resign, but they can be forced to resign if they take another paying Crown job. Appointment to the position of Crown Steward and Bailiff of the Chiltern Hundreds, which counts as an “office of profit” although the Hundreds last needed a steward in the 1500s, has long been used as a legal fiction to allow Members of Parliament to resign despite the rules against it.

that would put an end to all the petitions remaining untried and remove the disqualification from the members already found guilty. By this time the Budget bill had passed the Legislature, but Whiteway, who still had a majority, threatened to rescind it and leave the country without funds if the Governor did not grant a dissolution. The Governor stood firm and the threat was carried out. The Whiteway Cabinet had resigned in the mean while, and succeeded by its majority in blocking the path of the new Cabinet, formed from the Opposition, with Mr. Goodridge as Premier. To get Premier Goodridge out of the mess, the Governor prorogued the Legislature till July 5; it was afterward prorogued to a later date.

In the interval the courts have been busy disqualifying more Whitewayites. Whiteway himself has fallen under the axe along with Mr. Bond, his right-hand man, and the Speaker, Mr. Emerson; in fact, the party is as good as annihilated for the present. The new Government has a majority now. The rescinding of the revenue bill caused some trouble, but customs duties and other taxes are now being paid as usual. The leading spirit of the Goodridge faction is not Goodridge, but Mr. Morine, a Nova Scotian and a follower of Sir Charles Tupper, the agent of Canada in London. Morine is a strenuous advocate of the annexation of Newfoundland to the Dominion, and it is believed that Tupper is booming the movement in England. It is put on the cards that the question may yet be submitted to the Newfoundland people next year and be made an issue in Canada at the general elections in 1895 or 1896. Sir William Whiteway calls himself a "confederate" in the abstract, but is sure to oppose Goodridge and Morine on the Newfoundland annexation issue.

Union with Canada is popular with those who assume that Canada would spend an enormous sum in developing the country, and that they would profit individually as contractors or officeholders. It is not popular among the fishermen. Their fish already enter Canada free of duty, so that confederation would not enhance the price. What they want is free access to the markets of the United States. They even welcomed the abortive Blaine-Bond Reciprocity Convention of 1890. Although it did not promise to let fresh fish in free, and was a "merchants' treaty" in the sense that it provided that dry cod, to be admitted free, must be sent to St. John's and entered with the United States Consul, so that the fishermen would have been obliged to sell to the St. John's ring [cartel], it was felt to be a step in the right direction and the forerunner of better things to come. Canada was not included in the treaty, and at her instance Lord Salisbury rejected it. A Newfoundland schooner fishing on the Banks alongside American and French schooners is handicapped. The American, of course, gets the catch free into the United States. The Frenchman gets a bounty from the French Treasury of 20 francs per metric quintal upon all dry cod sold on this side of the Atlantic, the West India islands included, or \$3.86 for 220 pounds, besides bounties on sales in Europe. The Newfoundlander gets nothing; his catch has to pay the United States duty if sent to Gloucester or Boston, and is undersold by the Frenchmen elsewhere. This is why the fishing population is so eager for closer relations with the United States. Besides, if the free American market were open, American capital would come in and develop the mines of copper, coal, nickel, lead, and gypsum. Annexation to Canada would be of no particular benefit. Canada pays

small tonnage bounties to her fishermen, but not equal to the equipment and sale bounties of France, and her fish and other products are taxed the same as those of Newfoundland on entering the United States.

Then Canada has a heavy debt, \$50 per head of her population. The debt of Newfoundland is \$30 per head. American manufactures are cheaper, as a rule, than Canadian. The fishing provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, are no better off than Newfoundland. All four are suffering from dry rot caused by the flight of their inhabitants to the United States. The truck system, under which the fishermen is little better than a serf, with the merchant as the grinding lord, prevails in Nova Scotia as universally as in Newfoundland. In the United States it has passed away, and the fisherman is free. Lastly, it is felt that Canada must sooner or later be annexed to the United States, and why should Newfoundland lodge in a half-way house when she can just as easily find a welcome at her ultimate destination?

Such are the arguments of those who prefer annexation to the United States to annexation to Canada. On the other hand, Mr. Goodridge and Mr. Morine will appeal to British sentiment, which is strong among the merchants, who literally own the colony. In a population of 200,000, about 75,000 are Roman Catholics of Irish descent. The great majority of the Catholics would rather join the United States, notwithstanding that by joining Canada they could preserve their State-aided denominational schools. The Anglicans, who number 65,000, are for the most part imperialists, hostile to the United States. The other sects are divided on the question. Money is a potent force in elections, and the Canadian party counts upon having lots of it to use among the fishermen.

It is believed that the Tory Government at Ottawa will have some difficulty in getting its supporters to vote for the admission of Newfoundland. Canada is in no position to take over the debt of the colony and spend twice as much more in building railroads and harbors. There can never be a large population here, for the interior is a wilderness of rock, lakes, and scrub timber; the area of the island is 40,000 square miles, but only 6,000,000 acres are fit for agriculture. Moreover, the claim of France to exclusive fishing rights upon 800 miles of coast line out of a total of 9,000 cannot be got rid of by annexation to Canada. The controversy turns on the meaning of the treaties of 1713 and 1783 between France and England, and France would gain rather than lose by a transfer to Canada, since she would have the active sympathy of a million and a half French Canadians.

No one can tell for certain what the outcome will be, but in Newfoundland annexation to Canada will probably carry if the Imperial Government presses it with sufficient vigor, for the powerful merchant class is British to the core, and the opponents of the measure, being out of office, would be without resources. If it should be beaten in Canada by the combined forces of the Liberals, Patrons of Industry, and Protestant Protective Association, all of whom will be arrayed against Sir John Thompson, annexation to the United States would become an exceedingly live question.

Fishermen, Prepare for War! (1894)²⁶⁰

In April of 1893, the Liberal government of William V. Whiteway stepped down due to accusations of corruption. Fifteen Liberal Members of the House were put on trial – including Whiteway, who was found guilty. The Governor of Newfoundland requested that Augustus F. Goodridge, leader of the Tories (Conservatives), form a minority government. This would not last long. In December of 1894, a financial panic and subsequent bank run led to the permanent closure of two of Newfoundland's three banks. Goodridge's government resigned on December 12th, 1894, as a result of the bank failures of December 10th. The following article is notable for listing the different varieties of cod, and their cost.

LIES and sophistries will not win. We put hard, plain facts before you. You know the truth of what we write. Rise men, or be forever slaves. We give you the prices paid for fish in 1893 and in 1894. The prices paid under the Whiteway Government and the prices paid under the Goodridge or mercantile Tory Government. This is no *Herald* lie. This is no *Daily News* lie. Those are September prices in 1893 and 1894 :—

Whiteway – 1893:	
Labrador ²⁶¹	\$ 2.80
Large Merchantable ²⁶²	4.50
Large Madeira ²⁶³	4.00
Large West Indies ²⁶⁴	3.50
Small Merchantable	3.60
Small Madeira	3.20
Small West Indies	2.80
Cod Oil (the tun ²⁶⁵)	76.00

Goodridge – 1894:	
Labrador	\$ 2.50
Large Merchantable	4.00

²⁶⁰ From FISHERMEN, PREPARE FOR WAR! (1894, September 26). *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

²⁶¹ Cod caught off the coast of Labrador (as opposed to Newfoundland) was considered of low quality.

²⁶² 'Merchantable' cod, also known as 'Bacalao Marcante', was high-quality dried cod suitable for sale in Spain or France.

²⁶³ Madeira cod was meant for the Portuguese market. Its name is a possible reference to the wine that it was traded for in the Britain→Newfoundland→Portugal→Britain triangular trade.

²⁶⁴ Newfoundland cod was used to feed slaves and indentured servants on plantations in the West Indies. This cod was often damaged, or in pieces. Even today, West Indian and Brazilian cod recipes are mostly for croquettes (such as Brazil's *bolinhas de bacalao*), which hide the poor state of the cod. By contrast, European dry cod recipes such as *bacalao a la Vizcaina* showcase the appearance of the reconstituted cod.

²⁶⁵ A *tun* is equal to about 980 litres, or six standard barrels.

Large Madeira	3.60
Large West Indies	3.20
Small Merchantable	3.40
Small Madeira	2.50
Small West Indies	2.60
Cod Oil (the tun)	68.00

We have given you the figures paid by the shippers to you for your local produce in 1893 and 1894. Can any fisherman deny those figures? Are they not the prices paid you last fall, and the prices paid you this year? [...]

Fishermen are you aware that a “solid ring” has been entered into by the twelve merchants who ship off every quintal caught in the colony? Are you aware that the smaller fry of merchants, such as Monroe²⁶⁶ and Ayre²⁶⁷, who never ship a quintal themselves, are into this “ring”? Are you aware that Monroe and Ayre and all the smaller fry of the “ring” can get on an average, fifty cents or two shillings and sixpence a qtl. More from the twelve shipping merchants, for the fish that you sell them, than you can? We have indubitable testimony of two planters, who have been credited on their accounts, with 20 cents a quintal more than the current price. The “ring” by its own cupidity has been broken. They undertook too much and they failed. In secret among their own planters, they are outbidding each other, and the shrewd planter laughs in his sleeve at them and gets his “advance price or rise.”

Fishermen! there was never a time in the colony when fish stood as high in foreign markets. We know of a cargo of fish shipped from Labrador at \$2.50 a quintal, sold for 22s. 6d. stg.²⁶⁸ In England, or, in other figures, \$3.40. This happened quite recently, too. Do you notice how eager they are this year to buy your fish? They say: “It is only worth \$3.40 talqual²⁶⁹; if you can get a better price, why, get it; but if not, come back, and I’ll buy.” Monroe may say this to you. Take the fish off your cart or out of your boat, walk down the street, sell it to Walter B. Grieve, the shipper, for \$4. This is what it is to be in the “ring.”

Fishermen! have we not placed facts before you in the above statements? You will unhesitatingly answer, yes.

²⁶⁶ Probably Moses Monroe (1842 – 1895). Starting in 1873, Monroe ran a dry goods and fishery supply business. He had shares in many other Newfoundland companies, including lobster factories, and would occasionally hire ships and their crews for the cod fishery. His Ropewalk twine and net factory was a major employer.

²⁶⁷ Possibly John B. Ayre (1850 – 1915), merchant and politician. Ayre & Sons, the business founded by his father, was mostly a chain of department stores.

²⁶⁸ That is, 22 shillings, 6 pence. (The ‘d.’ is for ‘denarius’, the Roman penny.) There were 20 shillings in a pound sterling, and 12 pence in a shilling. Today, we would write 22s. 6d. as £1.125, or approximately £1.13.

²⁶⁹ From the Spanish ‘*tal qual*’ or ‘such as it is’. This means a price independent of quality. Part of the reason Labrador fish was of poor quality was that it was priced tal qual, so there was no incentive for an individual fisher to cure the fish properly.

Do not the merchants control the Savings' Bank, the Commercial Bank, the Union Bank²⁷⁰, the produce and shipping of the colony, the price for fish, and the price for labor? You answer, they do. Then will you, as freemen, place the making of the laws of the land in their hands? Will you bow down in abject and complete slavery before them; or will you, as freemen, through the secret ballot box, tell them that tyrants shall not remain? We have given you facts plainly and bluntly. We cannot do everything; you must take a hand in the fight yourselves. Each man must feel, in this fight, that Newfoundland expects him to do his duty.

A cod cartel²⁷¹ (1894)

Perhaps no greater evidence of the selfishness and greed of the few Tory merchants who are trying to govern this country with the lash can be given than the manner in which they have combined in this and former years to keep down the price of fish on those who toil to catch the staple produce. It is now a notorious fact that every season about the month of July these Tory taskmasters meet

IN THE COMMERCIAL ROOMS

and agree amongst themselves what price they will pay the fisherman for his fish. This agreement is usually reduced to writing, each merchant agreeing with the others not to pay more than the price agreed upon. This is what is known in commercial circles as a "combine." No matter what the price of fish is in foreign markets – no matter what the Halifax or other Canadian merchants pay for fish, our "local Shylocks²⁷²"

COMBINE WITH EACH OTHER

not to pay their planters and fishermen anything more than the Commercial Room Combine²⁷³ allows. This year the cruelty and oppression of this "combine" have been felt more than usual. The demand for codfish in the foreign markets was never brisker than at present. In the report of

THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

just issued, signed by Mr. Edgar Bowring²⁷⁴, as President of the Society, we find the following:—"It is worthy of note, that whilst most articles of food, the exports of other countries and the colonies, are abnormally low in price, the staple article of Newfoundland has not appreciably declined in value."

²⁷⁰ On the Savings Bank would survive the bank panics of December 10. As it was run by the government, the Savings Bank had priority on all funds. Minutes after the bank runs started, the Savings bank cashed a very large cheque at the Union bank. This allowed it to meet its obligations, but put the Union Bank in a difficult position. The Commercial Bank and Union Bank closed within hours of each other, never to re-open.

²⁷¹ From "COMBINE" AMONGST MERCHANTS. (1894, October 15). *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

²⁷² An anti-Semitic reference to Shylock, the merchant in Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice'.

²⁷³ An old-fashioned term for a cartel.

²⁷⁴ Sir Edgar Rennie Bowring (1858 – 1943) founded the Bowring Brothers chain of retail stores, which exist to this day. He had a successful career in politics and was knighted in 1915.

THE PRICE OF LABRADOR FISH

This is the language of those very gentlemen who met in July last, and settled the price of Labrador and Shore fish in the Commercial Rooms. It must be remembered, too, that the Labrador catch has never been so small for the past twenty–five years as this year, and that in Bonavista Bay, Green Bay and Trinity Bay the catch of shore fish is much below that of former years. Now, it is a notorious fact that when an article of food is scarce the value of that article

INCREASES IN PRICE.

How, then, is it that, in the face of the short catch of both Labrador and shore and the face that “*the staple article of Newfoundland has not appreciably declined in value,*” the price of Labrador fish is this year

ONLY \$2.50 A QUINTAL,

And large shore only *\$4.00 a quinta!* The answer is plain. The merchants of Newfoundland have “combined” amongst themselves not to pay the full value for “staple article of Newfoundland.” Why is it that a better price for fish can be had in Halifax than in St. John’s? The answer is, the “Mercantile Combine.” Who are those men who have so ruthlessly and cruelly “combined” to

WRING FROM THE HARDY TOILERS

of the sea – the only tilers in this colony who produce the “staple article of Newfoundland” – the result of their toil and sweat. Who compose this dishonest “combine?” Listen, men, fishermen of Newfoundland, while we write with shame the names of your Tory merchants who thus filch from you

YOUR HARD–EARNED WAGES

–who send you back to your loved ones in your northern or southern homes with nothing for your summer’s hard work! Listen! Their names are:–

GOODRIDGE, JOB, MUNN, GRIEVE, MONROE, BOWRING, AYRE, DUDER,
GOODFELLOW, BAIRD²⁷⁵.

These are the men who ask the electors of Burin, Placentia, Green Bay and Trinity Bay to forget all this, to bare their back to the lash, and to lick the hand that

SO CRUELLY SMITES THEM.

These are the men who impudently ask the fishermen to forget the wrongs of themselves and their fathers – to forget that even they are human beings with feelings and sensations – and vote for the Merchants of Newfoundland. Oh, God! “That bread should be so dear, and flesh and blood so cheap.” How long, oh Lord, how long will this species of serfdom remain! How long will the Grieves and the Goodridges²⁷⁶ and the Jobs and the Monroes pile up riches on the

ILL–PAID EARNINGS OF THE HONEST TOILING MEN!

How long will men work and women weep and children go hungry, that the Goodridges, the Jobs, the Grieves, the Bowrings, the Monroes, and others of the

²⁷⁵ Probably Augustus F. Goodridge, Walter B. Grieve, Moses Monroe, Edward Rennie Bowring, Charles R. Ayre, Edwin Duder, James Goodfellow, James Baird. I’ve been unable to identify ‘Job’.

²⁷⁶ In addition to his political duties, Goodridge was a prominent fish merchant.

“combine” may live in mansions, drive fashionable horses and carriages, fare sumptuously, be clothed in purple and fine linen, and send

THEIR ILL-GOTTEN FORTUNES

to their relatives and partners in Liverpool, Glasgow, Belfast or Grenock; and in the letters containing their remittances, no doubt, they write these same partners and relatives:—“Although we grind those fishermen until they have hardly enough to live upon, and wring from them, by means of the “Combine” which Goodridge, Grieve, Monroe and the rest of us make to keep down the price of fish, half the fruits of their earnings, yet these poor devils, like the far-famed Newfoundland dog, lick our hands, AND ACTUALLY VOTE TO PUT US IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, *so that we may use the little savings which a few of them have, by sleepless nights and weary days on the ever-tossing wave, laid up in the Savings’ Bank against the future years when they shall become too old to slave nay more for the Newfoundland Supplying Merchant.*” FISHERMEN OF NEWFOUNDLAND! WILL YOU VOTE FOR GOODRIDGE, GRIEVE AND MONROE? WILL YOU VOTE FOR THE ST. JOHN’S FISH “COMBINE?”

The Codfish Cull²⁷⁷ (1894)

Cartels, like monopolists, raise prices by restricting output. It is possible the merchant ‘Combine’ described in the previous article tried to use the traditional cull for this purpose. When salt cod is ‘culled’, some of it is thrown away and will not be bought by any fish merchant. This is understandable if the cod is of unacceptable quality, but the author of this article argues that high-quality cod was also culled.

Year after year the complaint about the monstrously unjust manner in which fish is culled on the merchants’ wharves in St. John’s has so increased that it is now recognized as one of the greatest disgraces that a free British colony

HAS EVER PERMITTED TO EXIST.

In no other country in the world could such a system remain in existence for a year, and the time has arrived when the matter should and will receive the attention of the Legislature. In olden times this culling of fish used to be carried on with something like fair play to the fishermen; but the greed and

SELFISHNESS OF THE TORY MERCHANT.

In St. John’s has “grown with his growth,” and to-day the system of culling in St. John’s is nothing short of WHOLESALÉ ROBBERY. From every craft that arrives the complaint comes that they are ruined and robbed by the disgraceful way in which the merchant compels the culler to cull the fish. Men from Trinity and Placentia Bay this year have brought on cargoes of

²⁷⁷ From THE CULLING OF CODFISH IN ST. JOHN’S. (1894, October 15). *Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

WELL–CURED MERCHANTABLE²⁷⁸ FISH,

And out of 300 quintals, not fifteen quintals of merchantable fish has been left. The evil has grown to such dimensions that it must be regulated, and we authoritatively pronounce that Sir William Whiteway must make this question of the

FAIR AND REASONABLE CULL

of fish one of the principal planks in his platform of reform. No longer can the fishermen of this country submit to the iniquitous manner in which they are daily robbed at the merchants' wharves by the system of culling, and the only remedy lies in the enactment of such a wise law as will

COMPEL THE MERCHANT TO ACT FAIRLY

with those who risk their lives and by the sweat of their bodies reap the harvest of the seas. The only hope of the fishermen in this direction is the return of Sir William Whiteway to power, and we have no doubt that he and his patriotic lieutenant, Robert Bond²⁷⁹, will see to the enacting of a measure that will meet

THE WISHES OF THE FISHERMEN

on this subject. The merchants now control the Banks – they dictate the price of goods, they combine to make the price of fish, but some law must be found that will control the present

DISHONEST CULLING OF THE FISHERMAN'S "STAPLE."

Vote for Monroe, Grieve, Job, Bowring and the others of the combine and good-bye to any hope in this direction. VOTE FOR THE PEOPLE'S LEADER, AND HE IS THE ONLY MAN IN THE COLONY WHO CAN AND WILL REMEDY THE EVILS OF THE PRESENT CULLING SYSTEM.

Abuses of the Truck System²⁸⁰ (1894)

DEAR SIR, – Having copper-fastened the fact that the fishermen of this country are defrauded to the extent of 66 cents on every quintal of Labrador fish they sell in this market, and having driven the editor of the *Herald* to abandon the discussion and descend to low, vulgar abuse, I now propose to show how the fishermen, especially the Labrador fishermen, are

DEFRAUDED IN THE MATTER OF CHARGES.

I have obtained from a good, respectable planter, an account of goods taken up from one of the Tory supplying merchants, St. John's, for the past summer's voyage on the Labrador. Not to make this article too lengthy, I will only select a few of the items on the account and compare the prices charged there with the ruling cash prices in St. John's in May last, the time

THE SUPPLIES WERE ISSUED.

²⁷⁸ Of high enough quality to be sold. This may or may not refer specifically to the high-quality '*bacalao marcanté*', which would make its way to tables in France and Spain.

²⁷⁹ Robert Bond (1857 – 1927) was the last Premier of Newfoundland before the colony achieved Dominion status in 1907.

²⁸⁰ From Truth. (1894, October 30). Tory Cupidity and Fraud. *The Daily Telegram*, p. 4.

	Cash Price.	Price Charged.
Flour, per barrel	\$ 3.50	\$ 5.25
Oleo ²⁸¹ per lb	0.12	0.16
Molasses per gallon	0.38	0.50
Pork per barrel	16.00	24.00
Salt per hhd ²⁸²	1.30	2.20
Codseine ²⁸³ Twine per lb	0.21	0.35
Cod Netting per fathom ²⁸⁴	0.42	0.70
Thread per lb	0.45	0.80
Calico ²⁸⁵ , per yard	0.06	0.14
3/4 Boots per pair	1.80	3.00
Beef per barrel	11.00	15.00
Tobacco per lb	0.35	0.50
Brown Sugar per lb	0.07	0.10
	\$ 35.66	\$ 52.70

THE REAL CASH VALUE OF THESE GOODS

The cash value of the above lot of goods is \$35.66 and are charged \$52.70 or nearly 50 per cent above the price these articles could be obtained for cash in the month of May last. Now then, take the 20 per cent. difference between the price given for fish in Halifax and the price given in St. John's and add it to the overcharge of 50 per cent. on the supplies, and it makes 70 per cent. of a loss to the fishermen, or in other words, the fisherman gets only 30 cts. for every dollar he earned this summer, the balance of 70 cents going into

THE POCKETS OF THE SUPPLYING MERCHANT.

Men! open your eyes!! Was Mr. M. Fenelon far out when he valued a man's day's work at 30 cents? Is it not the commercial valuation as well as the government valuation? DID NOT WHITEWAY GIVE THE WORKINGMEN ONE DOLLAR PER DAY CASH? Does not the merchant, by cutting the price of fish 20 per cent and charging the fishermen 40 per cent. over the ordinary cash price of the goods, *cut down the fisherman's hard earned dollar to 30 cents?* Mind you, the merchant *makes a profit of from 20 to 40 per cent on the cash prices of his goods*, in addition to the

OVERCHARGE OF 50 PER CENT.

In other countries there exists a usury law which prevents money lenders and others from taking advantage of the necessities of the people and charging exorbitant prices

²⁸¹ Oil.

²⁸² 'Hogshead'. A measure of volume equal to about 240 litres.

²⁸³ 'Cod seine twine', that is, 'rope to make cod fishing nets with'.

²⁸⁴ A fathom is a measure of length equal to six feet, or about 1.8 metres. It's mostly used to measure the depth of water. Here, it is used for netting since cod nets go vertically into the water.

²⁸⁵ A cheap cotton cloth, often printed with patterns. England was a famous manufacturer of calico.

for their advances²⁸⁶. Some such law will have to be made for this Island, to prevent our supplying merchants from taking advantage of the

NECESSITIES OF THE PEOPLE,

and charging exorbitant prices for their advances. And who is to get that law made? Is it the merchants, think you? Are you foolish enough to believe the merchants will make no laws in their own interests? Not much! Sir W. V. Whiteway and his party are

THE MEN WHO WILL DO THIS

for us. They are the only men who will stand between the working classes and this unholy combination, and wring from them a fair and honest valuation of a man's labour and a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. And this selfsame

UNHOLY MERCANTILE COMBINATION

is before us to-day asking us to give them a further lease of power, and, with canting, sniveling hypocrisy, they tell us: "We won't reduce the price of labour; we won't stop the railway." They tell us all they won't do, and then we are told if we return them they will give us "clean government," or some such rot. Clean government, indeed! In the first portion of this letter you have

A SAMPLE OF THEIR POWERS

of administration: 70 cents taken from every dollar earned by the fishermen this summer and pocketed by the men who will give us "clean government!" A *clean sweep* of the funds, would be more like what we would get if they are returned to power. If the present Government get a firmer grip on the funds of this colony, good-bye to the dollar-a-day. Fenelon's 30-cent valuation of a man's day's work will be nearer the mark.

"One huge entailed state"²⁸⁷ (1895)

Following is an extract from a work on Newfoundland, now in progress, by Mr. Jas. G. Pennyquick²⁸⁸, C.S.E., who was for many years a resident of that colony and was a very strong advocate of Confederation with Canada.

[EXTRACT FROM J.G. PENNYCUICK'S WORK]

The system of business carried on in the concern of which I was a member will illustrate the general rule adopted by all the mercantile houses throughout the colony, and created without question the biggest kind of monopoly I ever read or encountered. The whole country, to put it mildly, had been from its inception as a business colony one huge entailed estate, administered by about twenty-five strictly conservative mercantile firms who controlled all the shipping, all the product of the

²⁸⁶ Under the 'truck' system, fish merchants would advance the supplies that fisherfolk needed at the start of the fishing season, to be paid from the sale of their catch. This gave a lot of power to the merchant, who could set both the price paid for the fish, and the price charged for the goods. Many fishing families were perpetually in debt.

²⁸⁷ From AFFAIRS IN NEWFOUNDLAND. (1895, January 25). *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

²⁸⁸ James Gray Pennyquick (1832 – 1901), founder of the still-extant (as of 2022) Luxfer gas cylinder company.

immediate sea and land; owned all the importations; and to cap all, few of the inhabitants, beyond the Government officials, dared call their bodies or their souls their own without permission of the merchants.

This may seem a sweeping statement, but 'tis none the less true, and has never been denied, that the aristocracy of the Commercial Rooms strangled in infancy every attempt towards the emancipation of the people from their serfdom by opening up other avenues of commerce as auxiliaries to the fisheries.

Employees were engaged for a term of three years, with the usual proviso of a free passage back at the end of their term to the port from which they came. No encouragement was offered towards a re-engagement, and any of such possessing a sharper intellect than usual, and ambitious of securing for himself and his descendants but a trifling share of this vast estate by opening up a modest business of their own, was quickly but quietly frowned upon by these aristocrats, and none dare say them nay; the only business permitted outside of their own premises was what they could not, or would not, conduct themselves, as, for instance, the retailing of rum, the baking of fresh bread, the making of custom clothing, boots, shoes, &c., and all who were engaged in these businesses were only a higher grade of serf to the fishermen, as all the materials used by these tradesmen were supplied by the big merchant.

Another iniquitous rule was owing to this species of serfdom which afforded them little or no ready money. Before any one of them, from the highest to the lowest, could enter on the season's industry, they had to procure their supplies of food and other necessaries from the merchant, and while this credit was always given grudgingly, an additional one hundred per cent. was always added to the already large retail price to pay for the accorded favor, while I know several, not satisfied with these enormous profits, had their employees return after hours and spend their evenings in mixing sand with brown sugar in the proportion of shovelful to shovelful. So debased had the minds of these serfs become that, when, by the sale in the outports to strangers of a portion of their product, they were enabled to lay up a bag of dollars beyond what they were required to turn over to the merchant, they actually used to go into the large retail stores and reverse every rule of commerce by paying over their money into these flowing coffers before they bought the goods they wanted or even learned the price they were to pay for them. Not satisfied with their wholesale plunder of the people and the land and the waters surrounding, these merchants begrudged the population their petty savings and arranged the scheme of paying from 10 to 15 per cent. bank dividends, so as to draw into their teeming nets the only remaining thing they did not possess.

All such doings can have but one ending, ruin [both] to the people, and [to] this most wonderful land, loaded with pauperism, yet brimful of wealth from which all could be rich and prosperous, a veritable land flowing with milk and honey, [a] land so rich in mineral and agricultural wealth that, as Douglas Jerrold said, "if you tickle it with a hoe 'twill laugh with a harvest". For, if the statistics were known, there is no land on the face of the globe that produces per capita the amount of wealth annually, imperfect as have been their rules of commerce. God send soon the day,

even though temporary ruin follows, that will break up this outrageous state of things. I feel that it will surely come, and when it does the crash of the exposure will come on the world with no uncertain sound.

[PARAPHRASING MR. PENNYCUICK'S VIEWS]

Mr. Pennycuick does not for one moment believe that the financial storm that is raging in Newfoundland²⁸⁹ is at all the result of legitimate trading in that country's products, but is rather the result of reckless monkeying with foreign stocks and products in Glasgow, Liverpool and London by members of the Newfoundland merchants who have been using that land to pull their chestnuts from the fire. Within the period of his knowledge it was no uncommon thing each year for several members of the Commercial Room to retire from the country with fortunes varying from £100,000 to £400,000 acquired after an intermittent residence of from 10 to 15 years, and these sums were pounds, not dollars. They never spent a penny more than they could help in the country, but went abroad, with their easily earned wealth, and as a witty Irish member of the Legislature once said, "and built palaces and villas on the banks of the Clyde, the banks of the Thames, or the banks of the Seine, but devil a man of them ever thought of building a villa on the banks of Newfoundland."

"Without banks, without currency, without credit"²⁹⁰ (1895)

The bank crash of December, 1894 had a severe impact on the economic life of Newfoundlanders.

Newfoundland to-day is a country without banks, without currency, without credit. Its commerce and trade are shattered. Its population is reduced to hopeless misery.

The country was devastated by a financial cyclone in December, and the mischief then done cannot be repaired for the next ten years. Words fail to do justice to the appalling conditions of stagnation and destitution that exist, and every day the colony settles deeper in the quagmire of commercial and national disaster.

Not often does one man's death bring about such fearful consequences as the pauperization – for that is what it virtually means – of a whole country. Yet the immediate visible cause of Newfoundland's disaster was the death of a London merchant, Mr. Hall, who acted as financial agent for most of the fish exporting houses in Newfoundland. They shipped cargoes of fish and drew exchanges on the firm – Prowse, Hall & Morris – to cover the proceeds of the sales. When he died, the trustees of the estate decided to accept no more exchange until they familiarized themselves with the Newfoundland branch of the business, which Mr. Hall had control of.

When, therefore, they refused the exchanges, the holders demanded payment of the banks here which indorsed the paper, and these and their customers not having the funds to meet the demand had to close their doors, which, in many cases, will

²⁸⁹ The bank crash of December, 1894, covered in detail in its own chapter in this collection.

²⁹⁰ From ITS HOPE IN CANADA. (1895, February 9). *The Windsor Star*, p. 2.

never reopen. But the real operating causes were far more serious, complex and far reaching.

Newfoundland is England's oldest colony. The extensive and valuable fisheries of the island attracted the hardy, daring mariners of Western Europe in the sixteenth century and down to recent years. When England annexed Newfoundland in 1684, she found her mastery disputed by rivals. France and England struggled for control for many years, for both recognized in the cod-fishery an unequalled nursery for their seamen. England succeeded, but "lost by diplomacy what she gained by the sword."

The Treaty of Utrecht²⁹¹ in 1713 gave French fishermen a concurrent right to catch and dry fish along 1,500 miles of the west and northeast coasts of this island, and this is the keystone of Newfoundland's present decadence. France was also given possession of the small islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, south of St. John's, and made them the base of a commercial war on England and her unfortunate colony.

The phrase "concurrent right" in the treaty is the kernel of the whole difficulty. The French contend it gives them a prior right and obliges the British to refrain from interfering with them.

This contention is repudiated by England; but the French contention nevertheless works to the disadvantage of the Newfoundland fisherman. Should the latter be meeting with a success in the fishery in a certain harbor and a Frenchman enters and desires the place, he simply takes it.

Newfoundland being small and having only 200,000 inhabitants, is powerless to resist such outrages and, though frequent attempts have been made to settle the question, they have been invariably frustrated. [...]

The cod-fishery in this country is controlled by a dozen or fifteen merchants, who practically own and manipulate it.

The system under which it is pursued is a relic of ancient times, as in this and other respects Newfoundland is a hundred years behind the age. It is known as the supply or "truck" system. The merchant feeds and clothes the fisherman and his family, and takes the fruit of his labor in return.

This pernicious system is ingrained into the business of the whole country, and its overthrow now has paralyzed every branch of trade.

It had its origin a couple of centuries ago, when vessels sailed out here from England every spring, fished all summer and returned in the fall. It was a penal offence for a shipmaster to leave a man behind on the island when returning.

In those days the first admiral entering a harbor was admiral for the season, the second vice-admiral, and the third rear-admiral. They administered justice in summary fashion – always to their own advantage. A favorite pastime was to burn down the house of an unfortunate settler who had evaded the above-mentioned infamous enactment.

²⁹¹ Signed near the end of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714). In the treaty, France agreed to leave the drainage basin of Hudson's Bay to Britain (and therefore to the Hudson's Bay Company, which had a royal monopoly on trading in the region) and to relinquish most of its claims to Newfoundland and its fisheries.

The merchant provided the fishermen with everything essential to the prosecution of the fishery, and when the season ended the fisherman placed his catch in the hands of the merchant, who, after recouping himself for his advances, with a very liberal allowance for the risk, paid the fisherman the remainder, or more frequently carried it on his books for "safekeeping" for the fisherman, and traded on it without allowing the owner a cent of interest.

This practice, with but slight changes, obtains all over Newfoundland to this day. The fisherman, a hardy, brave, industrious fellow, resolves on acquiring a competence for himself and family. He comes to St. John's, arranges with a merchant, and obtains an outfit in the spring. Not unfrequently he builds his own fishing vessel, for he can cut the wood, build the craft, launch and rig her, then sail her himself with a sufficient crew and use her in his enterprise.

His outfit obtained, he endeavors to secure a full cargo of fish, which is "put off" at the merchant's wharf in St. John's, and, the prices having been previously settled by the mercantile body here, he is paid at the ruling rate and his account squared. But he is usually in the merchant's debt, and that 'cute person generally contrives to keep him there.

The condition of the fisherman is little better than one of servitude. He is under the merchant's control, and is compelled to obey his merest whim.

French bounty-fed competition forced down the price of fish abroad, and rendered the industry unproductive. This necessitated reduced prices for the product here, but when the merchants came to reduce they found it not so easy.

Politicians, to gain popular favor, declaimed against a reduction, declaring the merchants were robbing the fishermen of their just due and amassing fortunes for themselves. Merchants were painted as robbers, extortioners; glowing speeches were made of their conspiracies against the people, and soon "Down with the Merchants" became a powerful political battle cry. But the merchants controlled the banks, and used their opportunities to carry on their own business, obtaining astonishing overdrafts. [...]

Had the crash of Dec. 10 been delayed two months later, two million dollars' worth of fish products, now stored in St. John's, would have been marketed.

Politics also helped to bring about the downfall and accentuate the bitterness of the present situation. The merchants formed a political party, and were at times successful in obtaining control.

Of work there is none, and no prospects of any. It is the hopelessness of future employment that makes the situation so distressing. Fully a third of the population of St. John's must be pinched with hunger.

In the outposts, or fishing settlements, the conditions are similar.

“Something of the kind was anticipated”²⁹² (1895)

GLOUCESTER, [Massachusetts,] March 21 – The dispatch in last evening’s Globe from St. John’s, N. F. stating that a mass meeting of the citizens of that country had arisen in protest against the consummation of the proposed annexation of Newfoundland to the Dominion of Canada, was received with great satisfaction.

Something of the kind was anticipated; indeed, if some such action were not taken, it would be received as an indication that the heart of the people had been thoroughly broken by their misfortunes, and that, for the time at least, they were disposed to accept their fate with resignation.

But the fire of freedom in the breasts of the people is not extinct, as is proved by their patriotic action at their mass meeting. In the past they have sturdily resisted all efforts at confederation, and it is hoped that they may prove as steadfast for local self-government in the future.

This protest against annexation will grow stronger as the outports are heard from, where the *entente cordiale* between the American fishing interest and the native fisherman is of the best.

Each side has worked out a perfectly satisfactory agreement regarding the conduct of the winter herring fishery, regardless of treaties, but regardful of the best interests of all involved.

Therefore it may be safely predicted that strong protests against annexation will come from Placentia, Fortune and St. Mary’s bays and others of more prosperous outports.

The Americans bring cash or provisions in barter, etc., as may be preferred, settle promptly for fish delivered and at the highest rates.

Under control of Dominion merchants they know what to expect. What has happened in their cod fishery will undoubtedly come to pass in the herring business should it go into Dominion hands. The iniquitous truck system would be instituted, with goods at the highest rates at an exorbitant interest, low prices for fish and slow settlements, a system which has reduced the fishermen of the maritime provinces and Newfoundland to a condition of vassalage.

Therefore it may be certain that the Newfoundland people will not pass under the yoke of confederation, a conquered and subjugated people, without an emphatic resistance.

The position originally taken in this correspondence that the annexation of Newfoundland would be the playing of the trump card in the North American fishery game, is concurred in by many of the British papers, and the London Post is quoted as expressing these sentiments editorially.

What encourages the hope here that annexation will be successfully resisted is the fact that opposition began at St. Johns, the capital city, where the government influence is usually dominant and public sentiment is molded, to a considerable extent, by the crown faction.

²⁹² From NOT ALARMED. (1895, March 21). *Boston Globe*, p. 12.

Of course this topic has been uppermost in the thoughts of the fishing interest, and the Globe articles covering the subject have been closely perused. Some of the leading men in the business were interviewed today, and their views as to the ultimate result on the Gloucester fisheries should Newfoundland become annexed to Canada are appended.

[COLLECTOR PEW ON NEWFOUNDLAND AND CANADA]

Collector Pew, who gained somewhat of a national reputation in his controversy with T. Audrey Byrne on the herring question, views the situation with an optimistic eye.

“The union of Newfoundland with Canada,” he began, “is by no means assured, and perhaps we are borrowing a little trouble in advance over this matter. It is never best to cross a bridge until you come to it, although I admit that it is feasible at times to consider the question of reaching the farther bank.

“In the first place, I do not believe that the people of Newfoundland want annexation, and if this comes it will be forced upon them. As regards the winter frozen herring fishery, American owners have worked out a thoroughly acceptable mode of dealing with the Newfoundland fishermen, leaving any treaty matter out of the question, and when the inhabitants of a country are satisfied with its foreign trade relations it is the highest statesmanship to leave these undisturbed if the end of government comes to the highest interests of the governed.

“Should Canada take Newfoundland into its jurisdiction the native²⁹³ fishermen would as readily supply the American fishermen with herring as before, and nothing but a strict cruiser surveillance could prevent this. Such drastic action on the part of Canada, however, would create the greatest discontent on the part of the native fishermen, and perhaps lead to open insurrection, as in the case of the troubles on the French shore of Newfoundland.

“I am in favor, however, in the matter of the bank cod fishery, the keystone of the city’s interest, of entire non-intercourse with Newfoundland. It has been proven that these vessels which catch their bait on the banks in this fishery are those which have not touched into Newfoundland for bait. As a rule, the fishermen go into their ports for reasons, not commercial, but social, for a good time, in fact.

“As a boy I remember that the Georges fishermen caught their bait on the banks in nets. For a time this failed, and led to the journey of Capt. Henry O. Smith to Newfoundland, and the beginning of the frozen herring business. By the erection of ‘freezers’ along the coast, the New England catch of herring in the early fall may be preserved and dealt out during the winter till the spring and summer catch of alewives and herring commences along the New England coast, so it will be seen that the New England fisheries are not entirely helpless.

“The permanent solution of this whole matter, however, consists in the annexation of all Canada to the United States, its destiny being one country and one flag. This would set all fishery disturbances permanently at rest. The American fisheries will survive, depend upon it, any contingency that may arise.

²⁹³ Newfoundland settlers, not Indigenous fishers.

[JOHN K. DUSTIN ON ANNEXATION]

John K. Dustin, a leading member of John Pew & Sons, largely interested in Newfoundland, said:

“The aim of Canada is, and always has been, reciprocity with the United States, and for free markets she is willing to concede free fishing, but Americans have never been able to see the justice of this. If Newfoundland is annexed of course the position of the Dominion is greatly strengthened. They may allow us frozen herring, but no doubt will put an export duty or devise some other method that will give their merchants an equality or an advantage in the markets of the United States.

“There is one thing to which attention should be called, and that is the one bright spot, the happiest place in Newfoundland today, is the herring districts where the native fishermen employed in assisting the Americans in securing their catch of herring. For this service they have received good honest American gold, or as they have preferred excellent provisions in barter, of a quality and at a price which Dominion merchants do not supply.”

[OTHER VIEW OF THE ISSUE]

Hugh Parkhurst, whose firm is largely interested in the Newfoundland herring business, had no doubt but what in the event of the proposed annexation Canada would harass the Americans all she could, that is, if the history of the future was to be judged from the past. Canada, of course, wanted the markets of the United States, and was straining every nerve to obtain them, and the inclusion of Newfoundland into the Dominion confederacy would be a powerful lever to this end.

Capt. A. F. Cunningham thought that the importance of the Newfoundland herring business was exaggerated. Cold storage of the New England catch of herring was the factor that would neutralize any attempted adverse action on the part of Canada, and if the Canadians did not want any commercial intercourse with the United States, well and good.

Capt. Peter McAuley, a leading fisherman, said that, if so disposed, Canadian officials could make trouble for the American fishermen much easier than in any other branch of the business, as the custom house officers near the shore could exercise a constant watch on the movements of the fishermen.

“The parting of the ways”²⁹⁴ (1895)

St. John’s, N.F., April 9 – The great question of confederation now occupies all minds. The dispatch of the delegates to Ottawa has brought the matter fully before the country; and the question on every lip is, “to be or not to be?” It is a momentous question on which the destinies of the colony hang. Newfoundland is at “the parting of the ways.” Has she intelligence, insight, virtue, [and] decision sufficient to enable her to put aside petty, selfish considerations, and, at a great crisis, to fling away the miserable party spites and squabbings on which her strength has been wasted, and which have largely helped to bring her into discredit and almost to the brink of ruin;

²⁹⁴ From THE PARTING OF THE WAYS. (1895, April 16). *Montreal Gazette*, p. 8.

and to grapple fairly with the facts which now confront her? Here, on the one hand, is a great and prosperous country prepared to welcome her into union, to take a crushing burden off her shoulders, to aid her in the development of her unquestionably great natural resources, and to bring her out of isolation into the "comity of nations". On the other hand stand a band of advisers, eager to maintain the old isolation, to reject the proposed union, and to prolong the worn out system which has brought the colony to the brink of bankruptcy. Which of these forces will prevail, a very short time will now determine.

The publication of the parliamentary paper containing the correspondence between the local and Imperial Governments has been most opportune. We learn from it what our Governments (the late and the present) have been aiming at in their communications with the Colonial Secretary, and the principles by which Lord Ripon has been guided in dealing with their applications for assistance. The Goodridge Government, when the financial crisis occurred, requested the Governor to telegraph Lord Ripon stating that the interest on the colonial debt due in London on the first of January could not be paid, and asking for an immediate sum of £200,000 so as to avoid "the worst possible results." At the same time they added that a Royal commission to enquire into the whole political and commercial composition of the colony was absolutely essential, and could not be withheld without "serious and far-reaching results." To this Lord Ripon replied that as a preliminary to intervention on the part of the Imperial Government, a full local enquiry by a Royal commission was indispensable, but the colonial Legislature must first request such a commission.

Sir William Whiteway's party meantime returned to power, but it is evident the Premier did not relish the idea of a Royal commission without certain conditions and restrictions, and he therefore asked whether, in the event of the Legislature agreeing to a Royal commission, the Imperial Government would be prepared to give immediate assistance, and on what terms; also, what would be the scope of the proposed enquiry. Lord Ripon, however, was not to be caught napping, and declined to pledge himself beforehand in any way, as to the course which they might take when they received the report of the commission.

Then the Premier and his colleagues took a new departure, and telegraphed Lord Ripon that that there was considerable alarm at certain statements in the British press, to the effect that assistance meant that the colony should accept the status of a Crown colony as a condition. They admitted that immediate financial assistance was absolutely necessary, but they abandoned the position taken by their predecessors, and asked for a Royal commission only as "preliminary to the guarantee of a loan," but at the same time they wanted Lord Ripon to give his assurance that there would be no interference with the constitution as a consequence of the enquiry. His Lordship's reply was in effect that a Royal commission must be absolutely unfettered, both in its methods and results. After a pause, Sir William, through the Governor, again telegraphed on February 11th that a guarantee of Newfoundland bonds would enable them to meet liabilities till the revenue began to improve again, and requesting to know on what terms such guarantee would be given. It must be

admitted, after all that passed, that this was rather a cool proposal, seeing that a Royal commission had been virtually declined.

LORD RIPON SPOKE PLAINLY

This seems to have been "the last straw," and now Lord Ripon spoke plainly and told them that self-governing colonies, possessed of responsible government, cannot look to the Imperial Government for financial aid; that such assistance, if given, would require constant supervision which would be inconsistent with self-government. Moreover, he added that to guarantee the Newfoundland bonds would create a precedent that would lead to such wide-spreading possibilities that, in justice to the taxpayers of the United Kingdom, it must be refused.

It was a plain inference from this doctrine that to Newfoundland, as a self-governing colony, no financial aid could be given, and that to obtain such aid it would be necessary that the colony should accept the status of a Crown colony, and, of course, part with its constitution.

After such a plain intimation it is remarkable to find Sir William still persisting in asking for a guarantee of a loan. Sir Francis Evans, a well known member of the House of Commons, who is receiver of the Newfoundland line of railway, from St. John's to Harbor Grace, now in liquidation, was appointed by the local Government as their special commissioner. In their name Sir Francis made application for an Imperial guarantee of £20,000 stg. Per annum for 25 years as interest on bonds which the local Government desired to issue. Lord Ripon could make no other reply than that already given.

Then Sir William and his colleagues appear to have abandoned all hope of getting a loan guaranteed by England, and did at last what they should have done at first. They opened communications with the Canadian Government and dispatched delegates to Ottawa to negotiate terms of union. At this date these negotiations are in progress, with what result is yet "on the knees of the gods." Canada has behaved nobly, and without taking any notice of the capricious conduct of the wayward sister, who had scornfully rejected all offers of marriage with Canada till now; she received her delegates with open arms, which we hope is a prelude to the consummation of a happy union.

The situation is now clearly defined, so that "he who runs may read." Newfoundland has now to choose between confederation and the status of a Crown colony. There is no middle course. The policy of retrenchment and retaining self-government is now impossible. If attempted some years ago it might have prolonged the agony for a while; now it is too late. The revenue is entirely inadequate to meet the existing liabilities, and in all the money markets of the world no loan could be obtained. The moment the interest on the public debt fails to be met, the colony is posted as a defaulter. Great Britain cannot allow one of her colonies to repudiate its debt, and in the event of becoming a defaulter, she takes the colony into custody, converts it into a Crown colony and appoints administrators of its affairs, as in the case of Egypt.

Newfoundland will never accept this degraded position, which would be a proclamation that she is incapable of self-government, and after a trial of 40 years

had miserably failed. It would be a retrograde step from which, for many long years, she would never recover. To step into the condition of a Crown colony is to go into hospital with the prospect of undergoing a painful operation, from the effects of which recovery will be slow. In both kindness and wisdom England refuses to guarantee loans which would only be a kind of outdoor relief, temporary in its nature and injurious in its results. A far better remedy is at hand. Union with Canada at once transfers the load of debt to broader and stronger shoulders, and opens up the prospect of having the natural capabilities of the country turned to profitable account. It will be the interest of Canada to promote, in every possible way, the prosperity of this colony.

COMMISSIONER MURRAY

But though England will not furnish loans, she is not hard-hearted. Lord Ripon has sent out a commissioner in the person of Sir Herbert Murray – a gentleman of ability and high standing – “to consider in concert with the Governor and his ministers, and to report immediately to her Majesty as to the extent to which assistance is absolutely necessary to supplement local and private charity, and as to the channels through which it should be distributed.” According to the need which he discovers to exist, he will be able to draw on Imperial funds. This gentleman has arrived and makes a very favorable impression. From an interview I had with him I gather that he is not disposed to go far in distributing charity, as he finds that the various charitable funds are adequate to meet cases of destitution. His object is to help those who need it to help themselves.

In particular, he is turning his attention to the Labrador fishery. Two of the largest firms in the island, whose business was mainly on Labrador, have failed and will be wound up. This fishery cannot be carried on without capital. Vessels are required to convey the people there, and food, fishing gear, salt, etc., must be provided. Some three or four hundred of these small fishing schooners used on Labrador will now be sold at a low figure. Sir Herbert is endeavoring to arrange matters so that he could make advances, on certain conditions, to fishermen and others, to help them to purchase these vessels, and in due time to become sole owners of them. Instead of hiring them from mercantile firms, and taking supplies from them, the better class of fishermen would own their own craft, and with industry and thrift would soon be able to purchase supplies and become independent.

The idea is a good one. It seems to me there is a fine opening besides for the formation of joint stock companies to take up and carry on the Labrador and also the shore fishery. There is plenty of money lying idle here, which might find profitable employment in this way. Such companies could buy the fish as caught, paying cash, and then have it cured by a different set of men, trained under experts. In this way a good cure would be secured, and the fishermen, when paid in cash, instead of truck, would catch twice the quantity of fish taken under the truck system.

Silver Linings²⁹⁵ (1895)

The crash of 1894 saw a temporary easing of the credit or truck system, and as of mid-1895 cod liver oil manufactured in Newfoundland using Norwegian methods seemed a promising export product.

Not for many years has there been such an excellent prospect for our fisheries. The season has opened nearly a month earlier than formerly, and from nearly all our great fishing centres the accounts are favorable. One way and another the fishermen are getting something to start with. Sir Herbert Murray has assisted hundreds by small advances. The credit system is greatly curtailed, and already the benefits are apparent. The fishermen are in many places selling their fish “green,” as it is caught, and the purchasers have a set of hands for curing it. No time is lost by the fishermen; and they work better and catch far more fish. [...]

Another circumstances in our favor this year is that the common cod oil and the refined cod liver oil, which is used medicinally, are likely to be considerably enhanced in value this season. Norway largely supplies the markets with these articles, especially the latter; and this year there will be a serious deficiency in both. The Norwegian catch of cod at Lofloden this year has, in numbers, exceeded the highest previous record by 25 per cent. But the fish are small and the livers do not yield nearly the usual amount of oil. In consequence, the catch on the whole will not, in weight, exceed an average, and the export of cod oil will be comparatively small. Newfoundland will profit by this. The Norwegian refined oil has hitherto commanded the highest price in the market, nearly fifty per cent. over all others. But Mr. Nielsen, superintendent of our fisheries, has introduced here the Norwegian method of manufacturing the oil, by what is known as “the freezing process.” The firm of John Munn & Co., Harbor Grace, took it in hand and produced an article which took the market as well, or even better, than the Norwegian oil.

A Hopeless Country²⁹⁶ (1895)

WITHOUT A RAY OF HOPE

One of the interesting visitors to Alberta just now is Mr. G. Makinson²⁹⁷, for upwards of 30 years a prominent farmer, contractor and businessman of Newfoundland. Mr. Makinson is here in a private capacity, not as the representative of any government or railway, to look over the country with a view of improving the condition of his unfortunate neighbours. From facts mentioned by Mr. Makinson during a chat with THE HERALD we gathered an even gloomier estimate of the condition of Newfoundland than we had before. According to Mr. Makinson, the future of the colony is almost without a ray of hope.

²⁹⁵ From THE MISSED OPPORTUNITY. (1895, June 5). The Montreal Gazette, p. 6.

²⁹⁶ From A HOPELESS COUNTRY. (1895, September 18). *The Calgary Herald*, p. 1.

²⁹⁷ Possibly the same G. Makinson who is listed as vice-president of the Harbor Grace Agricultural and Horticultural Society in the Newfoundland Almanac of 1869.

It is over-governed, its money exhausted, its credit gone, it is cursed by politicians, and there is certain to be a general collapse in the spring, when the island must either enter Confederation or become a Crown colony. The fisheries being practically controlled by the large men, the season has been a disastrous one. The small fishermen have averaged only \$60 a head per season for the last 20 years. The majority are unable to get employment out of the fishing season. The public treasury has been almost depleted by relief works. This year a third of the educational grant has been stopped, and many schools have had to be closed. In Mr. Makinson's district the people have had a school only three years out of 25. The politicians are opposed to emigration, knowing that a decrease of the population will make the credit of the government even worse than it is. The railway is being extended this year by money raised on debentures. This gives employment to about 2,000 people, but when work stops, as it soon must, the people will be as badly off as before. The wages paid on the railway are \$1 a day, and 20 days is an average month's work.

IN HIS VEST POCKET

The railway contractor practically has the island in his vest pocket. He is paid \$15,500 a mile for building the railway, which runs mainly through a rocky country, not more than 3 per cent of which is fit for agriculture. The railway is used mainly for political purposes. The politicians get control of mineral lands and then divert the railway so as to run near them. When finished, the railway cannot support itself and it will cost the colony tens of thousands of dollars yearly to keep it running. Crowds are walking the streets and the only thing that has kept starvation from thousands is the relief money spent by the imperial and local governments, and this is almost at an end and will not be repeated.

OUTRAGEOUSLY HIGH

Freight rates are outrageously high, not a single mine in the colony is paying expenses, all the mercantile houses with two exceptions have become bankrupt, it is almost impossible to obtain credit, and if ever the case of a people was hopeless, Newfoundland's is.

The people of Newfoundland would make good settlers for Alberta, thinks Mr. Makinson. After being accustomed to working for low wages and being pinched in Newfoundland, they could certainly make a good living here. The ordinary food of a fisherman there the year round is flour, tea and molasses.

"We can spare 50,000 people," said Mr. Makinson, "and it seems to me they are just the people who would make good settlers for the North West. Why, when I want to hire a man, I have always over 50 applicants. My mission is altogether on behalf of my unfortunate neighbors, and if I can succeed in bettering their condition I shall be more than repaid."

“Success of the cod and lobster hatchery”²⁹⁸ (1895)

All the news that came from Newfoundland not long ago was of a discouraging sort, dealing as it did with financial reverses of the Government banks and private individuals and the prostration of the province’s trade. Now there is to be chronicled another item of a very different nature, the unbounded success of the cod and lobster hatchery in Trinity Bay, and with it a catch that promises to be a remarkably good one.

Four years ago this hatchery was started at the instance of a merchant of St. John’s, and carried on for a while at his own expense. Then the Government took it up and made it a province affair, placing it on a most liberal basis and sparing no expense in stocking the sea with fish.

Trinity Bay was chosen as the location of the hatchery on account of its sheltered position and its many little inlets and shallow bays. As the fry are sent out to shift for themselves a few weeks after they are hatched, shallow waters and sheltered shores are by far the best places for them to thrive in (so the hatchery managers argued), for there they run little risk of being devoured by larger fish, or of being swept out into very deep water, and there also they have much less difficulty in obtaining their daily supply of food.

ON DILDO ISLAND

the hatchery was placed and was put under the management of a Norwegian named Nelson. The Government provided a yearly appropriation of some \$16,000, and this proved ample for every purpose. So well did Nelson manage the affairs of the hatchery that when the scientists and men of affairs interested in fisheries met at the World’s Fair in a sort of small convention, the hatchery at Newfoundland, it was greed by all, had proved itself one of the best in the world. In lobsters actually hatched and sent out the records showed that the most remarkable achievements in artificial hatching anywhere in the world’s history had been performed; while in cod hardly less had been accomplished.

In the four years since the establishment of the hatchery 2,500,000,000 young lobsters have been hatched out and 65,000,000 young cod. The main result accomplished has been to more than entirely nullify the reckless slaughter of cod with spawn during recent years. This destruction was not wanton, but the fishermen were driven to it through competition.

Last year just about this time, several months before the disclosure of financial weakness, the Newfoundland Legislative Assembly then sitting had a hot debate over the hatchery question, the point disputed being the annual appropriation. It had resolved itself into a strictly political matter, the parties of the island being divided upon the question strictly on party lines.

²⁹⁸ From LOBSTERS AND COD GALORE. (1895, November 29). *Moose Jaw Herald Times*, p. 6.

THE APPROPRIATION

was in doubt, when reports began to come in from Trinity Bay. It should be premised that cod must be three years old to be worth the catching, and it was then just three years from the time of the establishment of the hatchery.

The Trinity Bay reports were most favorable. In their detail they astounded every member of the then sitting house, for they showed that the catch, in proportion to that of former years in this bay, was of unprecedented size. The hatchery had proved itself an unqualified success. Party lines were at once broken, and in a burst of enthusiasm the appropriation bill for the further continuance of the hatchery was carried.

This year there seems no doubt that the catch will be fully up to last year's. The lobster catch is particularly good, too, though the hatchery people have experienced much difficulty in increasing the supply of them in the waters of Newfoundland as fast as the number they have hatched would seem to warrant. For the young lobsters are not only subject to all the dangers of the deep, but for a few weeks after they are hatched fight villainously and kill each other by the hundreds and devour one another cannibalistically at a great rate.

The fishermen are a very prosperous set of men. The fishing season for cod begins in June and ends in October. All sorts of methods are practiced in catching the fish. Traps, nets and seines are used and there is also more or less hand-line fishing. The fashion varies, and the fishermen constantly change their ways of securing their game. Several years ago traps – set and baited very much as are lobster traps, and similar in construction – were used. Now traps in most districts are considered a trifle out of date and

NETS AND SEINES

are more in favor. Many of the nets are “set.” There is comparatively little fishing nowadays by hand-line, except in the small boats manned by three or four men that go out only a little distance from the shore.

Enormous are the catches made in a single day and by a single boat. Some of the larger craft have no trouble at all in securing 200 quintals of fish for a single day's work. That is 20,000 pounds or 5,000 to 6,000 cod. One man often finds it possible to pull in 400 to 500 cod a day.

Few fish are as prolific as the cod. A single female is said to contain 9,000,000 eggs. Comparatively few of these are ever hatched, of course, and the fry that actually do appear are still further reduced in numbers by all sorts of contingencies. Very few of them in proportion actually live to be three-year-old fish. Like the young lobsters, the fry frequently eat each other, and besides they are, even in shallow waters, constantly at the mercy of larger fish. Trinity Bay should be within a few years the finest cod-fishing point on the northern coast.

The real idea of the hatchery, as it has been well put, is “to conserve rather than to preserve.” That is, the project is to secure definitely for the Newfoundland fisheries now and for all time a constantly increasing supply of cod and lobsters, for it is almost solely upon these two things that the propensity of the island rests.

“A monstrous petition”²⁹⁹ (1897)

The suggestion that soldiers be fed on salt cod was not taken kindly by some inhabitants of Newfoundland.

Dear sir – With your permission, I wish to contradict a statement made in a recent issue of the *Daily News* in which it is stated that the Rev. J. Roe presided over a meeting held at this place not long since by Mr. Levi March, to discuss the ticklish question of trying to compel Her Majesty’s soldiers to *march* to the tune of two meals of codfish a week.

The true facts of the case are: - the Rev. gentleman referred to kindly gave the lecturer the use of the school, and about twenty assembled to feast on the *eloquence* of this Cicero from Perlican, but, notwithstanding all his *eloquence*, he must be held in very bad repute when a near relative of his would not act as Chairman of the meeting. Another person was then proposed but he, too, declined, then the proposer, Mr. Wm. Howell, seeing the dilemma in which the lecturer was placed had pity on him and consented to take the chair.

This matter being settled, Cicero began, in his usual eloquent style, by telling his audience that he had no political axe to grind, and that the meeting was not a political one, but after some time, he lost sight of the main question, and began to tread on dangerous ground, by trying to prove that it was wrong to call the merchants monopolists.

He made a few valuable suggestions, one of which is worth recording: “gentlemen, the more you know about the *h*implements of your *havocations* the better you will be able to pursue these *havocations*,” (the *h* is the lecturer’s own). He, also, stated that it was the duty of every fisherman to sign a *monstrous* petition, which would be presented to the Home Government, to ask them to pass a law including salt cod in the rations of soldiers. After a few more remarks, he finished his lecture, by hoping that he would have the pleasure of addressing a larger number (of voters) at some future time, (he must have meant next fall).

A vote of thanks was then given him as a matter of course, and Cicero and his eloquence were forgotten, until he, with the aid of his crony the ex-pedagogue editor of the *Daily News*, perpetrated another piece of journalism, by publishing the Rev. gentleman’s name as Chairman of the meeting.

Now, Mr. *Daily News*, have you ever in your editorial career heard of a clergyman of any denomination acting in the above capacity at a meeting held by men of Mr. March’s ilk, or any other Tory for that matter?

No, and if you live to be as old as Methuselah you’ll never hear of such as thing, because the Tories, by such contemptible actions as the above, have forfeited the esteem of every respectable person in the country, and he, who would identify himself with a party that has such an unreliable and disreputable paper for its organ, must be nearly gone in the upper story.

Thanking you for space, Mr. Editor, I remain, yours etc.,

²⁹⁹ From TRUTH. (1897, March 31). Letter from Northern Bay. *Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

Northern Bay, March 24th, 1897.

“Would buy fish for cash in this market”³⁰⁰ (1897)

James Murray was a Newfoundland merchant who lost his business in the aftermath of the Crisis of 1894. Three years later he would write a series of letters to the *Evening Telegram* that shed light into the nature of the cod fishery in the aftermath of the bank failures.

Dear Sir, – I attended a public meeting last evening convened for the laudable purpose of endeavoring to “relieve the present congested condition of the local fish market,”³⁰¹ and the worthy promoter of this movement, Mr. John Anderson³⁰², told us this was to be done by means of a Joint Stock Company which would buy fish for cash in this market³⁰³. Such a movement and such a proposed mode of accomplishing it are worthy of all praise and of every encouragement from the public at large. There was one statement made by Mr. Anderson that needs some explanation, and my object in writing this is to obtain the same. Mr. A. (if I heard him rightly) said it was not the intention of the proposed company to raise the price of fish, or words to that effect. Now, if it is not the intention of this company to raise the price of fish, in what way can it help or benefit the producer or seller of fish in the local market? At present the price of dry codfish is down to the ruinously low point of from \$2.00 to \$2.60 in this market, and that, too, *for new winter and spring-caught fish* – a price never before heard of in this country within the memory of man. I should imagine that the first, prime and PRINCIPAL object of this company would be to try and raise that price, anyhow; for, if such cannot be done, it will be a black lookout for the fishermen this fall, and the simple result will be that *thousands of our people will be cast upon*

³⁰⁰ From Murray, J (1897, July 3). Relieving the Fish Market. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4. Written by James Murray (1843 – 1900).

³⁰¹ “To relieve the present congested condition of the export trade, particularly to the staple article, *dry codfish*, the trade which has been for the most part, since the crash in December, 1894, conducted by four or five firms in St. John’s, whose operations have frequently been confined to their own immediate dealers or connections; thus leaving no *local market* for the disposal of a large portion of the staple product of the country in the hands of independent fishermen and others who are unable or unwilling to export it themselves, and are thus placed at a serious disadvantage in Disposing of Their Produce.” Fish Exporting Company. (1897, July 3). *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

³⁰² A Newfoundland dry goods merchant and politician best known today for helping pass the Daylight Savings Act in 1917.

³⁰³ “With *John Munn & Co. out of business*, and a large portion of the *mercantile premises of St. John’s unoccupied*, it is evident the increased volume of trade diverted to St. John’s cannot be conducted in a satisfactory manner Under Present Conditions, and the consequence is that *fishermen, shopkeepers, tradesmen, and, indeed, the whole community, are suffering more or less by the condition of affairs above referred to*. The presence of a *well-conducted export company* would tend to relieve the congested state of trade, without any detriment to those already in the business, and more likely to their advantage, and undoubtedly to the manifest advantage of all who depend on a healthy circulation of money, at the present time so badly wanted.” *Ibid*.

the care of the Government for their support during the coming winter. I have no doubt Mr. Anderson is prepared to rectify or amend his statement to the above effect, and as my ardent wish is for the prosperity and success of the proposed company, or any movement that will help the great natural business of this country (for which at no time in its history was there a greater need than at present) I write these few lines for the purpose of assisting him to do so.

Yours, &c., JAMES MURRAY.

St. John's, July 3rd, 1897.

P.S. – Let me add for general information that the present price of fish for the local market means a loss of ONE MILLION DOLLARS on this year's catch, as compared with last year. This is equal to a deduction of FIFTEEN PER CENT from the earnings of every man, woman and child in Newfoundland. J. M.

Mr. Anderson Replies³⁰⁴ (1897)

Dear Sir, – A letter from Mr. James Murray in reference to the proposed Fish Exporting Company in your issue of Saturday, calls for a reply and a word of explanation. I am glad of this opportunity of referring to a matter which has been somewhat overlooked in the press notices regarding this proposed company, and that is, the great advantages the fishermen themselves will gain by it. The “first, prime and *principal*” object would be to *compel* the fishermen and curers to produce a perfectly-cured, clean and marketable fish, and for that, and that *alone*, the company would pay the highest market price *in cash* here in St. John's. The company will have no object to gain in keeping the price of fish down, but rather in raising it. And it would be the best possible thing if every fisherman could hold, at least, one share in the concern. Mr. Murray misunderstands my meaning if he inferred that the proposed company was to be a money-making concern at the expense of the fishermen or labor-producing classes, other than in expecting a fair return for invested capital.

In our opinion, a great factor in the difficulty of selling our fish in foreign markets for a good price has been the careless and insufficient way in which the fish has been cured. This has largely been the cause of bringing the fish down to the ruinously low price of which Mr. Murray speaks. Our exporting merchants cannot sell *bad* fish at a *good* price, and sometimes cannot sell it at any price. To put the matter concisely (and I hope that all fishermen and those interested in any way in this our staple article of exportation and that is nearly the whole of our population, will read this), matters have come to such a pass now, that some effort must be made to save the country from financial ruin. By working unitedly, fishermen and merchant together, we may set the wheels of commerce in motion once more, and so secure the welfare of the whole colony. By starting a Fish Exporting Company, in which the fishermen as well as the merchant would have an interest, by being themselves shareholders, the fisherman to do his part by perfectly curing the fish, the Company

³⁰⁴ From Anderson, J. (1897, July 6). Letter from Mr. Anderson. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4. Written by John Anderson (1855 – 1930).

theirs by paying a good price in cash for a well-cured article, and that only; by securing good markets abroad through their own travelers instead of by agents, and by uniting together for the welfare of the country at large, and not for personal interests alone, the colony may regain its lost prestige in the commercial world; and much of the old, pernicious credit system may be done away with. All classes of the community will be benefited directly or indirectly, and the fisherman's best friend is the one who helps him to do his work conscientiously and well; so that in the end he may reap the benefit. "United we stand, divided we fall," and the crisis in our colonial history, as far as commerce is concerned (and with that almost every other interest) calls for *immediate*, unselfish, and united effort. The importance of the subject must be my excuse, Mr. Editor, for trespassing so largely on your valuable space. We would invite more able men than ourselves to give us the benefit of their wisdom and experience through the public press, as this matter cannot be too widely ventilated.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN ANDERSON.

St. John's, July 5th, 1897.

"Price or prices for dry codfish"³⁰⁵ (1897)

Dear Sir, – I have to thank Mr. Anderson for his prompt and copious reply to my enquiry respecting the intention of the proposed Fish Exporting Company with regard to the price of fish. From it I gather that the Company will buy good fish at the current market rates, but will not *originate* a price for fish – this being the conclusion I arrived at from hearing Mr. Anderson's remarks before the meeting on last Friday evening. Mr. Anderson's letter is mainly occupied with observations about the *cure* of fish, a subject I may have a word or two to say about later on. At present the point of enquiry with me is the current price or prices for dry codfish, which I maintain are inordinately low. Last year our fish exporting merchants were paying \$4 to \$4.20 per quintal *tal qual* at this time for new fish, and so eager were they to get it that they actually sent *special agents and messengers* all round the coast to buy up the fish at those prices. This year the prices *for the same fish* range from \$2 to \$2 80 per quintal, and nobody wants to buy it, even when it is exposed to the strict and unmerciful "cull" for which St. John's enjoys such an unenviable notoriety – a "cull" which divides the fish into ten or twelve different qualities, and that is made under the *ex parte*³⁰⁶ authority, *without appeal*, of the purchaser. Moreover, I am told, on what appears to be good authority, that even at these low prices, and under these hard and unjust conditions, the unfortunate seller, contrary to the statute made and provided, is actually *compelled to take up* half the payment of the fish in goods or "truck." Now, Mr. Editor, why I asked Mr. Anderson whether it was the intention of the new company to undertake an initiative of this matter of the price (and "cull," for the latter is part of the former) was and is because I was and am aware of this unjust

³⁰⁵ From Murray, J (1897, July 8). The Price of Fish, &c. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4. Written by James Murray (1843 – 1900).

³⁰⁶ A legal term meaning 'on behalf of'. Its use here implies a one-sided offer.

“Combine” on the part of a few fish–exporting merchants to depreciate the whole fishery product of this country, and I wished (and still wish) Mr. Anderson and *his new friends*, to repudiate all connection with it, if they can truthfully do so, as I assume they can. Never before in the history of this colony, so far as I know, was such a NEFARIOUS attempt made to confiscate – yes, I repeat the word, CONFISCATE – the industries of a whole people – to cause them to relinquish their labors for a mere song! I call upon all your readers to witness that in writing this letter and the former one I have indulged in no claptrap language, and I wish here to add that I have no political or class motive whatever for discussing this matter. I assume that we are all animated *now* by a harmonious and *bona fide* desire to grapple with this fish question, to try and find a solution of it. Many sharp corners we have been called upon to turn, and heavy difficulties have all had to face, during the last few years. But I deliberately say that not one of them singly, or all of them combined, is comparable for a single moment with the gravity of the present situation. What! Dry codfish TWO DOLLARS per quintal, payable half in truck!!! Heaven help us, that we should have sunk to so low a depth of degradation as *that!*

Yours truly,

JAMES MURRAY.

St. John’s, July 8th, 1897.

P.S. – I am still in hopes of hearing from Mr. Anderson on the subject of my text. Come, Mr. A., let us hear you speak out in trumpet tones along these lines. What is life without liberty?

“The present state of the local fish market”³⁰⁷ (1897)

Dear Sir, – In the absence of any further reply from Mr. Anderson I am reduced to the necessity of continuing my observations on the present state of the local fish market without that advantage. In my last two letters I stated that the price of new dried codfish had been reduced to the low average valuation of TWO DOLLARS per quintal in the local market; that a “combine” exists to maintain this low valuation; and that this combine has gone to the extreme limit of compelling the seller, wherever he can do so, to take payment for his fish in whole or in part, in goods or “truck.” None of these statements have been denied or confirmed for the simple reason that they are facts, and cannot be disputed, and any attempt to dispute them would only throw up the facts into greater prominence.

As a positive illustration of the truth of these statements I am able to cite a case which came under my observation since this correspondence began. A planter named Mr. Thomas Garland, of Pushthrough, Hermitage Bay, brought on part of his collection of winter and spring caught fish for sale in the Saint John’s market last week, the cargo consisting of about 650 quintals. To prove that the fish was *good* fish it need only be said that after having been subjected to the severe “cull” already

³⁰⁷ From Murray, J (1897, July 15). OUR STAPLE PRODUCT. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4. Written by James Murray (1843 – 1900).

referred to by me as the unenviably notorious St. John's "cull," there were less than thirty qtls. thrown out of the parcel as West India. After going around town seeking for a purchaser for his fish at reasonable prices, during which time Mr. Garland was quoted *the same prices* by each fish exporting firm, he was obliged to sell his fish on the terms offered to him, and when the account was made up, as interpreted by the cull, he found that his fish realized exactly TWO DOLLARS and two cents per quintal. This same class of fish is now being delivered on the Western Shore at \$3.15 per quintal, tal qual; so that Garland loses one dollar and thirteen cents by bringing it on to St. John's for sale, and of course, under the terms of this ruinous loss he will take the rest of his fish to Halifax, thus depriving this port of all it might otherwise gain by having that amount of trade brought here. No doubt the purchaser of this fish acted within his strict legal rights – to get it as cheaply as he could – but, without reflecting upon anyone in particular, I cannot help thinking that, in the sight of God and man, it was and is a SHAMEFUL SACRIFICE. If such a policy continues may we not reasonably expect to find that St. John's will soon be what it is rapidly becoming already – a waste howling wilderness?

In my last letter I stated that this time last year the price of new winter and spring fish on the West Coast was \$4.20 to 4.30, tal qual. Some people maintain that this price was inordinately high, though I remember several years ago when 29s. 6d. was given for Merchantable fish, 27s. for Madeira, and 23s. for West India; and merchants whose solvency could not be questioned were fighting to get it. But suppose last year's prices *were* too high, who made these prices? I should like to know. Was it not these same present fish-exporting merchants, in the exercise of "their sole discretion," and without either outside or inside pressure from anyone? If their argument is good that \$4 per quintal was too high for fish, *why did they make that price?* What was the consequence of their having made it? This – that every local outport planter and collector of fish throughout Newfoundland had to give that price and base his operations upon it. Then, when these poor angashores³⁰⁸ subsequently came on to St. John's to market their fish, they had to face a ruinous loss of over a dollar per quintal on their entire collection! This year, on the other hand, we rush to the opposite extreme, and with equally fatal results to all the interests concerned, not even excepting those of the would-be monopolists themselves. That is to say, if FOUR DOLLAR fish was too high (a theorem that has yet to be proved), then "Two Dollar" Fish is, and must be, as much too low. Why? *Because, if it were not, what necessity is there of a combine to keep it down to that rate?*

Now, what is the consequence of this last stupid proceeding? Just this, that our foreign purchasers and fish-dealers, being apprised by their local agents here, as they always promptly are, of the prices being paid in this market, *base their prices and offers on this local valuation.* In other words, they say, We will take your Newfoundland dry codfish at your own valuation. *You say two dollar fish :- We say two dollar fish.* If two dollars is good enough for your fishermen, two dollars is good enough for you. If Newfoundland were a country of multiplied industries, the wide-spread effects of this wholesale depreciation of the colony's main resource might be

³⁰⁸ People who like to complain. From the Gaelic *ainniseoir*.

looked upon by the political economist with comparative equanimity. Men – even fish merchants – might be allowed to play “ducks and drakes” with their own interests, or even with those of the special classes which might be, unfortunately, dependent upon them. But a man or class of men might as well debase the currency of a country as unduly depress and depreciate the value of its natural industry, for that *is*, to all intents and purposes, the currency of a country, and every man, however humble his position in life, has some share in it. Here we have a class of men, according to their own showing, with the whole control of a strictly–preserved monopoly in their own hands (also according to their own showing) because they gave a dollar per quintal too much for fish in 1896, much to the loss and grief of many people, therefore – I say, *therefore* – they must now reduce the price of the same article to \$1 per quintal below its market value, to make up for their losses! It is said that the Newfoundland trade lost \$300,000 on their fish realizations last year, and if this be so I am very sorry for it. No honest man likes to hear of another’s losses; and if the Newfoundland merchant loses money in the first instance, the Newfoundland fisherman and all others may be weakened by his losses later on. At the same time, it is possible that these losses may be due to the maintenance of unjust and unwholesome MONOPOLIES, which, *in working out their baneful effects*, stop not to ask what individuals they injure or how widely their devastations extend. Yes, it may be so, commercially as well as socially, that a community may become such a congenital conglomeration *as to die of blood–poisoning!*

Yours, etc.,

JAMES MURRAY.

St. John’s, July 12, 1897.

“The subject of dry codfish”³⁰⁹ (1897)

Dear Sir, – The subject of dry codfish is not an imposing one, and it is only as it touches deeper and broader issues that it can be made of interest to the general public. It is said that Charles Lamb could pleasingly discourse about “roast pig.”³¹⁰ But I am not a Lamb, nor am I gifted with that seductive smile which “*Plays round the head, but comes not to the heart*”³¹¹ of my friend, Mr. George Hayward, when *he* talks so captivately about the beauties of Mess Pork. One of the speakers at the meeting on Thursday week hit the right nail on the head when he said that most of our disasters in the

³⁰⁹ Murray, J (1897, July 19). Subject of Dry Codfish. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4. Written by James Murray (1843 – 1900).

³¹⁰ Charles Lamb (1775 – 1833), an English writer, famously wrote ‘A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig’. The essay is filled with intentionally purple prose such as “I speak not of your grown porkers—things between pig and pork—those hobbydehoys—but a young and tender suckling—under a moon old—guiltless as yet of the sty—with no original speck of the *amor immunditiæ*, the hereditary failing of the first parent, yet manifest—his voice as yet not broken, but something between a childish treble and a grumble—the mild forerunner, or *præludium*, of a grunt.”

³¹¹ A quotation from Chapter 5, Epistle IV of Alexander Pope’s ‘An Essay on Man’.

NEWFOUNDLAND FISH TRADE

Proceeded from ourselves, from our own internal divisions, from our want of cohesion and unity of purpose. Like a house divided against itself, we fail because we are all pulling in opposite directions. The 'dealer' believes that the supplying merchant is taking an unfair advantage of him and the merchant mistrusts the 'dealer.' The large merchant pulls against the trader and planter and the middle-class or intermediaries protect themselves against the wholesale merchant the best they can. Instead of there being co-operation and a unified interest, there is discord and division.

"DIVIDED WE FALL."

The same fact holds good when we come to the work of distributing the fish in the foreign markets. Every shipper wants to supplant his neighbor – to participate, to over-reach him. If a new exporter appears there is a temporary unity of purpose, but as it is directed entirely to 'wolf' *him*, its effect is necessarily not to improve the foreign markets or the general interest. Everything of common value or general interest is sacrificed to feed our internal disputes and jealousies, and it is hard even to expect that any more prosperous result crown our efforts. Year after year we see that the number of fish exporting houses becomes less: the trade falls into fewer hands, and the more contracted it becomes the lower

FALLS THE PRICE OF FISH.

There is not one atom of consolation in this declining state of affairs for anyone. Usually in the case where a fall in the value of merchandise involves *loss* to one party it means a proportionate *gain* to some other party. But such is not the fact in regard to the losses of our Newfoundland fish trade. The latter do not benefit anyone, while they tend to impoverish this colony and every man, woman and child in it. Let us see

HOW THIS OPERATES.

A foreign fish dealer or middleman, say in Oporto, contemplates buying a cargo of Newfoundland codfish, or a part of it, for the supply of his retail or consuming customers: he does so. We will say that this man is animated by a fair desire to give a reasonable price for the fish. Before he has time to distribute his purchase, along comes another large cargo of codfish, or perhaps two or three which are tumbled into the market all at once and sold at whatever price they may fetch to the highest bidder. The 'middleman' in Oporto who has already bought to supply the legitimate wants of his trade is 'wolfed' and

SUFFERS A HEAVY LOSS.

Next time he looks askance at Newfoundland codfish, and *so does every other body on whom we have to depend in Oporto to keep up the price of our fish*. The warfare proceeds from this end of the line, and we have nothing to blame it on except our narrow, petty, local rivalries, in connection with an uneven and unsystematic mode of foreign distribution. It is either a feast or a famine. The famine feeds upon the feast, and then the feast

FEEDS UPON THE FAMINE.

Now it is to be sadly observed that with all the fluctuations that have affected the fish trade here at home in Newfoundland we have not improved one iota as regards this matter of foreign distribution. The same fatal policy that would sooner

cut the throat of a rival than share in common profit, and the same ‘happy go lucky’ mode collectively, of trusting to chance for a bare market or a ‘glutted’ one, afflicts us still. How can we hope to prosper while

THIS STATE OF THING CONTINUES.

So far in its history this country is not like an ordinary country in this particular, that it has an ordinary or well-assorted population. The great mass of the population are dependent upon a few, and these few undertake (as their mercantile rulers) to manage their foreign affairs for them as regards the handling of their fish. The time has no most obviously come, however, when some other authority must intervene, and come to our help, or else the whole industrial structure on which this colony depends must cease to be. With fish down to \$2 per quintal and constantly tending downwards, it is obvious that ruin stares us in the face. Our merchants say

THEY CANNOT HELP US,

that they are losing money and cannot give more for the fish. Very well, then, let it be so. Is it because of this unfortunate fact that a whole industry must perish, and a whole population – once thriving, happy and prosperous – must die? Must we not try, by wise counsels and mutual assistance, to rescue the perishing, ere it be too late? and WHAT TIME WAS URGENCY MORE CLEARLY INDICATED IN THE MOST SOLEMN TONES THAN IT IS AT PRESENT? Yours truly,

JAMES MURRAY.

St. John’s, July 15th, 1897.

“Conducted in the same way, and no other”³¹² (1897)

Dear Sir, – I am of the opinion that the fisheries of Newfoundland will always be conducted by means of the supplying or limited credit system, as they are at present. Some persons are under the impression that that mode of conducting the fisheries has been altered since the Bank crash of 1894, but such is not the case. The supplying system conducts the fisheries of Newfoundland to-day as it always did, and it is safe to say that, whilever these fisheries exist, they will be conducted in the same way, and no other. Our fisheries and our supply system are interchangeable terms – when the one goes the other will not long survive.

The proof of this is found in the very nature of the case. No man remains an operative fisherman after he becomes independent, or can gain a living by any other avocation. Were we to emancipate the entire body of fishermen to-morrow, the fish would cease to be caught. Suppose we take any operative fisherman, and place him in possession of \$500, what will he do? He may supply some *other* man to go fishing for him – in which case he becomes a “supplier” – but I am certain he will not continue to catch fish himself. How necessary it is, therefore, that the condition of the fishermen should be made as tenable and comfortable as possible! If this country depends upon its fishermen and their industrial products – if the merchants, the

³¹² From Murray, J. (1897, July 23). THE STAPLE INDUSTRY. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4. Written by James Murray (1843 – 1900).

mechanic, the parson, the doctor, the politician and the lawyer, – all subsist upon the fisherman, how necessary it is that we should all study his comfort, as a class, and make the foundation on which his existence rests the subject of our most anxious solicitude.

Now, what do we find in this Diamond Jubilee³¹³ year of Her Majesty's long and glorious reign (God bless her!) that we have all been just so loyally celebrating? Why, if my statements are correct, we find this, that in the evolution of Newfoundland dry codfish, the staple, and beyond all comparison, the most important natural production of this colony, we have developed from a \$4 per quintal to a \$2 per quintal article, *payable in truck*, as the local commercial valuation of that article, and we have consequently developed the average Newfoundland fisherman from a FOUR dollar fisherman (which he *was*) to a TWO dollar fisherman, which he *is at present*. Whether the rest of us in this colony who are *not* fishermen – whether the 150,000 of us who are at present trying to live upon the fifty thousand fishermen who farm the seas – whether we, as a colony, can continue to subsist as well upon a TWO DOLLAR fisherman as upon a FOUR DOLLAR fisherman, I leave it for wiser heads than mine to determine; but if, in the light of our past experience, we can do so, then certainly, *the four dollar fisherman must have lived in vain*. With regard to the valuation of Newfoundland dried codfish as compared with, or as affected by, other articles of human food, I am also of the opinion that its valuation is not materially affected by the value, or by the fluctuations in value, of any article of human food except itself. *In that fact resides the incomparable value of the fisheries of this country, as contrasted with all other fisheries and all other industries. Nature has placed in our hands the exclusive possession* of an article of human food, the value of which we have tried in vain, for at least fifty years, to destroy, with greater ingenuity than if we had directed our BRAINS to that special object, and with *almost* as much success as if we had any brains to direct.

The one thing we seem to have been unchallengeably proficient in (as was aptly observed by a certain speaker at the public meeting of Thursday week) is in ruining the fishermen, ruining the fish markets, and ruining one another. And the practical product is incontestably seen to-day in the evolution of a two dollar fisherman, *payable in truck*. Then take the matter of cure – the patent panacea for all fishery ills whenever we are at a loss to account for them otherwise. I haven't one word to say in extenuation of badly-cured fish when such is deliberately brought about by the action of the fishermen themselves. But have we not the remedy for that evil in our own hands? Does any one really believe that operative fishermen deliberately set to work to "cure" their fish badly? And if they do, in any instance, bring bad fish to market, *has not every fish exporting merchant the power to refuse taking it?* Could not badly-cured fish be legislated out of existence within two fishery seasons, at the outside, if the exporting merchants refused to buy it? Some *do* refuse to buy it, and these men can consistently warn their fishermen and dealers against "making" – that is, bringing to market – bad or insufficiently cured codfish, and they have done so, and I have nothing to say against such an act. But it is almost enough to make a horse

³¹³ 60th anniversary.

laugh (and some horses *do* laugh at it) to hear people who send down their vessels to the Labrador, and *lift their fish on board them in baskets*, because it is too limp and wet to be handled in any other way, pull long faces on themselves, and account for Labrador fish being down to \$1.50 per quintal, *because it has been badly cured in the past!*

Yours, &c.,

JAMES MURRAY.

St. John's, July 17th, 1897.

“The Chief consumers of dried codfish”³¹⁴ (1897)

Dear Sir, – The chief consumers of our dried codfish at present are the countries of South America, of Southern Europe and of the West Indies. It is rather a singular circumstance that a fish that is the exclusive product of cold and northern waters should be so extensively used as an article of diet in tropical countries. This is not entirely due to the fact that these countries are Catholic countries, where the habits of the people and the religious usages require them to consume a fish-diet on certain days, although this is responsible for a very large consumption. Besides that, there is a natural craving for some sort of salt or salted food in warm climates, and normal food does not fulfil that craving. Animal food, in warm climates, is heating and nauseating. Salt fish, on the other hand, supplies a condiment as well as a nutriment, excites appetite, and, in combination with other articles of food, provides just such an alternative, in the matter of diet, as the system in a sub-tropical climate instinctively desires. Moreover it is a fact that our Newfoundland codfish enjoys a position, as compared with other products of that kind, that puts all rivals at defiance. It has a distinctive *flavor* that neither Norway codfish nor French-cured Newfoundland codfish can supply; and hence, although in certain cases the latter may be accepted as *substitutes* for the Newfoundland article, they can never supersede or take its place. I anticipate that the time will come when this feature of our staple production, namely, its superior flavor, will assume a position of much more marked prominence than it occupies at the present time, and when not only the flavor of Newfoundland codfish, but even that of codfish cured in different parts or bays of this island, will be sought after in a distinctive way. I believe that the time will come when we shall look back upon the crude and brutal modes of putting our fish upon the foreign markets now universally present as the characteristics of a rude and barbarous age – when men were ignorant and knew nothing – not even the fact that they knew nothing. In the matter of the treatment of our fish, in preparing it for the consuming markets, as well as in the matter of depreciating its value in our own local markets, we are, and have proved ourselves to be a community of conspicuous donkeys.

³¹⁴ From Murray, J. (1897, July 31). ANOTHER LETTER. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 3. Written by James Murray (1843 – 1900).

It is to be sadly noted that nearly all the foreign countries that consume our fish are, at the present time, in a state of commercial depression. Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Brazil and the West Indies, are almost without an exception crippled and impoverished. Their people are broken down, either by bad government, by internal dissensions, by exhausted treasuries or by excessive taxation. Consequence is they can no longer afford themselves those luxuries of diet they could indulge in in happier days. And when I say “luxury” it must be remembered that when our dried codfish gets into the heat of Italy or Greece and the heavy import duty in addition to freight and other charges is paid upon it, the price of that article to the retail consumer is something like TEN CENTS a pound! So that, although the poor Newfoundland fisherman who produces is paid, perhaps, only TWO CENTS per lb. or less for his fish here, the equally poor foreign laborer or artisan in Greece or Italy, who eats his fish, has to pay about \$10 per quintal for it! Now, while we hear a good deal of “highfalutin” rubbish in these days about Imperial Federation and such like gammon, would it not be better for us Newfoundlanders – living as we do in a practically FREE TRADE country – would it not be better for us, I say, to keep our hands free so that we could make an advantageous or reciprocal agreement with any or all of these foreign countries, should we at any time have an opportunity to do so. Fortunately, we have not now to do with a narrow-minded TUPPER³¹⁵, at the head of Canadian affairs; but with a large-hearted and statesmanlike LAURIER³¹⁶ – a *man*, God bless him! And one who won’t “cut off his nose to spite his face,” or keep down into the dirt a poor little struggling colony like Newfoundland. At present the poor countries I have named buy from us nearly all our codfish, and pay us in cash, we taking from them little or nothing in return. Why not we trade with them, and help them to live as well as ourselves? Why not we buy their sugar, their fruit, and even many of their articles of food and manufacture, if it suits us to do so, bringing back the same as return cargo in the lines of steamers referred to in my last letter? That will be one of the NEW METHODS of getting our dried codfish – our bread and butter – into increased consumption, and God will bless us if we try to help our assisting neighbors. As for such rose-colored chimeras as Imperial Federation; but those peoples dream such dreams as are wealthy and able to “bestow estates.” WE ARE FIGHTING FOR OUR LIFE NOW, and have *no pocket money*.

Yours, etc.,

JAMES MURRAY.

St. John’s, July 29th, 1897.

³¹⁵ Sir Charles Tupper (1821 – 1915), Prime Minister of Canada from May to July of 1896.

³¹⁶ Sir Henri Charles Wilfrid Laurier (1841 – 1919), Prime Minister of Canada from July 1896 to October 1911.

John Murray's final letter on dry codfish³¹⁷ (1897)

Dear Sir, – Some persons affect to believe that my object in writing these letters is that they may be used for political purposes, or to set class against class, or for some other sinister and hidden motive of that description. I beg to assure such persons that they are entirely mistaken. I shall never use the facts and arguments hereinbefore set forth for any purpose of personal, or party, or political advancement. This discussion relates to the domain of political economy, and has to do with our common inheritance, which must and will remain, no matter how political parties may fluctuate or fade. I am opposed, and have always been opposed, to making political capital out of such subjects, believing as I do that such a practice is the evidence of a narrow mind and an unprincipled disposition. As for setting class against class, my sincere desire is to break down all causes of difference between merchant and fisherman from a conviction that such differences and discord lie at the root of three-fourths of all our losses in the fish trade. But this is not to be accomplished by keeping our mouths shut like dumb dogs and letting things drift along from bad to worse until we find ourselves within the inner whirl of a maelstrom. If any man has a word to say in the present crisis it is his duty to speak out *like* a man, for we are just on the verge of another crisis, that, if not averted, will be far more wide-reaching in its calamitous effects than any we have yet passed through.

There are men in our leading outports at the present moment who look forward *with dread* to the possibilities of the coming winter, knowing, as they do, from bitter experience, what it means to have shore fish down to \$2 per quintal and Labrador fish down to \$1.50 per qtl. According to present indications we shall have an overflowing fishery this year, larger than that of either of the last two years, 1895–6. What is to be done with this fish? We made our brags in the years named, that this trade (the Newfoundland trade) could take care of all the fish that came into this market. We are now within three months of the time when the great bulk of the annual crop will be thrown upon this market by an automatic movement that cannot be averted. What prospects can the local trade hold out for dealing with this demand upon it? *Our merchants cannot even guarantee the miserably low prices they now offer for dried codfish!* They cannot undertake to buy any specified quantity of the article after it comes to hand. The only satisfaction they can give to anxious enquiries on this most vital of all subjects is that “the price of fish must be according to the markets.” This being the reason given for their having reduced the price to its present basis, what assurance have we that the price will not go still lower – in fact, go out of sight altogether? The dealers in the foreign article *know* that they cannot compete with Newfoundland codfish at even prices in the European markets, and hence they undersell us all the time.

Hearing the other day that we had cut our local prices down as near to the vanishing point as possible, what did they? Why, they got alarmed – they got so alarmed that they or their agents rushed into the ordinary markets in Southern

³¹⁷ From Murray, J. (1897, August 7). ANOTHER LETTER. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 3. Written by James Murray (1843 – 1900)

Europe and offered to contract for the supply of their wretched foreign fish at very low prices *right up to the end of December*, a thing they had never done before within the memory of man. And why did they do this? To my mind they were impelled to do this wholly and solely by our stupid, suicidal policy of *putting down our prices into the dirt*. Now WHERE IS THIS THING GOING TO END? If the inexorable law of supply and demand – that is the law of telegraphic up-to-date competition – is going to be untemperedly applied to our local fish trade, it must be evident to every man who has an eye in his head or a sane brain behind it, that it is going to end in nothing more nor less than UNIVERSAL BANKRUPTCY. And why? Because no man has or will have any security or protection for his property, or for his labor, when these consist of, or are applied to, the national industry of the country. All sorts and conditions of men are protected here except the fisherman and his industry. In other words, that base on which the whole superstructure of our industrial existence is not only *not strengthened* but is ‘wolfed’ and weakened all the time. Every man has a pick at it. Every class of us shrives and shears it. And yet when the man who toils for all, and comes in with his crop in the autumn, hoping to receive a fair price for it, what do we say to him? “Go sell it where you can, or *give it to us on our own price and terms*, and with the dead certainty that, if you don’t, *it will be worthless to-morrow!!!*” Now, in all earnestness and good faith, I would humbly suggest, whether, in the common interest – in the interest of our fish merchants themselves – it would not be better to *keep up the tone of the local market* by giving such *reasonable prices* for the fish, and by holding out to the fishermen such reasonable expectations as to future prices, as will give them a *motive for honest and persevering exertion*. We have to look at this thing in the light of more than one year’s trade. Some of us have made a profitable living out of in the past – to put it on no higher level than that. Hundreds of us must expect to deal with these fishermen and profit by their trials in future years. Let us be a little sympathetic and considerate with them now, in *their* time of trouble and straits. Let us *show* that sympathy; and when Peter says, as, poor fellow! He cannot help saying, “I go a-fishing,” let us say, in spirit and truth, “We also go with thee.”

Yours etc.,

JAMES MURRAY.

St. John’s, August 2nd, 1897.

“Gloucester furnished everything”³¹⁸ (1897)

Under the truck system, Newfoundland fishers were frequently starved for money, and welcomed the opportunity to trade with Americans (or the French) for income in cash or kind.

Gloucester [Massachusetts] supplies all the vessels in the precarious Newfoundland herring fisheries. [...] Herring swarm in great numbers along the Newfoundland shores. On this fishery the great mass of the inhabitants depend for a livelihood.

When Gloucester originated this business in the early [18]50's their appearance was looked upon as a godsend by the native³¹⁹ fishermen. They were employed in the catch and an outlet secured for their product. This went on until 1877, when under the provisions of the Washington Treaty the Gloucester men had the right to seine herring in shore and dispense with the assistance of the natives.

This in 1877 they proceeded to do, the result being the celebrated Fortune Bay riot during which the native fishermen cut the American seines, prevented fish catching and effectually broke up the winter's work.

Great Britain afterwards paid \$60,000 to Gloucester fishermen for the demonstration and damages. Not a Gloucester fisherman but whose sympathy was with the Newfoundlanders. The latter were fighting for bread and butter for their wives and children.

Unwilling to follow up the treaty rights, the Gloucester fishing owners then hit upon the plan of hiring the natives to assist in the catch.

Gloucester furnished everything, all paraphernalia, nets, boats, etc., and hired the natives to assist in the catch.

This works like a charm, and the relation between all hands is of the most cordial nature. In hiring these fishermen, as circumstances compel them to do, it is alleged by the enemies of Gloucester that these fish are the products of the foreign fishermen, notwithstanding that all the capital is American. [...]

By Gloucester almost alone a great number of the Newfoundland people have been prevented from starving. In exchange for their labor, provisions, clothing, etc., are taken from here. These they prefer to gold, for the goods are sold at wholesale prices. [...] The Gloucester policy is to make these people self-sustaining and self-respecting by furnishing them employment.

The idea of the free traders and commission merchants is to capture this trade as they have the cod fisheries and make the fishermen vassals.

Scattered along the coast of northern Nova Scotia and Newfoundland are large fish establishments owned by Jersey men. To these the native cod fishermen are literally enslaved. They hardly ever see a cent. Their catch is sold ahead to these great factors, the fishermen taking goods at exorbitant prices on credit, nearly always being brought in in debt at the end of the season. It is the truck system in its worst

³¹⁸ From FIGHTING MAD. (1897, December 9). *Boston Globe*, p. 4.

³¹⁹ Newfoundland settlers, not Indigenous fishers.

form. The Gloucester policy has enabled the natives to break away from them as far as herring is concerned.

“The good new time”³²⁰ (1897)

St. John’s, Nfld., March 9 – There is much sentimental nonsense heard continually about “the good old times.” “Distance lends enchantment to the view,” and old people are in most cases thoroughly imbued with the belief that in days gone by – some half a century ago – the people were in a better condition, led easier and happier lives, were better fed and clothed, and had altogether a better lot than in these times of fierce competition and low wages. That we are “going to the dogs” is a cry raised regularly at short intervals. As far as this country is concerned, there is but little foundation in the belief, especially as regards the working classes. In all that concerns their material well-being – their ability to procure the necessaries and comforts of life – they are incomparably in a better position than they were forty or fifty years ago. The necessaries, comforts and luxuries of life are much lower in price and within the reach of a far greater number than a generation or two back. This, of course, has arisen from the cheapening of the ordinary articles of consumption by the introduction of machinery – the construction of railways and steamboats, which have enormously reduced the cost of transport, and the increased supply of raw materials for manufacture. The area for the growth of cereals has been immensely extended, and the same is true of the production of the various kinds of meat.

From a list lately published of retail prices from 1863 till 1867 I take the following examples:-

[PRICE OF BASIC GOODS,] 1863 TILL 1867

Flour, \$8 to \$9 per barrel.
Pork, \$15 to \$20 per barrel.
Butter, very poor quality, 20c to 25c per lb.
Sugar, brown, 9c to 10c per lb.
Sugar, white, 10c to 12c per lb.
Tea, 60c per lb., inferior quality.
Currants, 13c to 15c per lb.
Raisins, 15c to 16c per lb.

[PRICE OF BASIC GOODS, 1897]

Contrast the foregoing with the present prices current 1897:-

Flour, \$4.75 to \$5.50 per barrel.
Pork, about \$10.50 per barrel.
Butter, sound oleomarg., 11c to 12c.
Sugar, brown, 6c per lb.
Sugar, white, 7c per lb.
Tea, 25c to 40c per lb.
Currants, 7c per lb.

³²⁰ From THE GOOD NEW TIMES. (1897, April 8). *Montreal Gazette*, p. 8.

Raisins, 7c to 8c per lb.

[PRICE OF DRY GOODS, 1863 TILL 1867]

Turning to dry goods, 1863 to 1867:-

Gray calico, 15c to 20c pe yard.

White calico, 15c to 20c per yard.

White flannel, 30c per yard.

Cheap flannel, 20c to 25c per yard.

Moleskin, 45c per yard.

Tweed, 50c per yard.

Pair of woman's common leather boots, \$1.30.

[PRICE OF DRY GOODS, 1897]

1897, current prices:-

Gray calico, 6c to 7c per yard.

White calico, 8c to 10c per yard.

White flannel, 18c to 20c per yard.

Flannelettes, 8c to 11c per yard.

Moleskin, 28c to 30c per yard.

Tweed, 30c to 35c per yard.

Woman's shoes, leather, 80c.

In dress goods a reduction of at least 30 per cent. has taken place. Take the single article of oranges. In the years named, 1863 – 1867, they cost 5c to 6c each; now they can be had for 12c per dozen. Apples, too, are reduced 25 per cent.

Add to the foregoing the fact that the price of fish in thirty or thirty-five years has gone up 50 per cent. It is true, however, that while the population has increased the catch of fish has been stationary. But other sources of employment, such as mining, lumbering, [and] farming, have also increased greatly; and the lobster fishery is a new and valuable industry.

The prices quoted above are, of course, cash retail prices. Taxation has, of course, considerably increased within thirty years; but this is compensated by the improvement in the various public services, such as postal communication, roads, railways, education, telegraphs, [and] sanitary arrangements. "The good old times" will not therefore compare with the days that have dawned upon us. The comforts and luxuries available now by the bulk of the people were quite out of the reach of those who lived 30 or 40 years ago. This winter venison was retailed at 5 cents per pound for hindquarters and 2 and 3 cents for forequarters. Excellent beef and mutton imported from Canada in a frozen condition could be bought for 8 cents a pound, and Canadian Townships butter at 19 cents per pound. In point of fact, for an industrious working man there are few countries more desirable than Newfoundland.

Even more striking is the contrast between the prices of fish in former years and at present, as the following figures show:

[PRICE OF COD IN] 1845

Large merchantable cod fish - \$2.80 per quintal.

Small [merchantable cod fish] - \$2.40 per quintal.

Cullage, [merchantable cod fish] - \$2.00 per quintal.

[PRICE OF COD IN] 1845

Large merchantable cod fish - \$2.30 per quintal.
Small [merchantable cod fish] - \$2.00 per quintal.
Cullage, [merchantable cod fish] - \$1.80 per quintal.

PRICES, MARCH, 1897

Large merchantable cod fish - \$3.80 per quintal.
Small [merchantable cod fish] - \$3.20 per quintal.
Large Madeira - \$3.20 per quintal.
Small [Madeira] - \$2.80 per quintal.
Large West India - \$2.40 per quintal.
Small [West India] - \$2.20 per quintal.
Labrador bulk - \$2.60 per quintal.

“Say not that the former times were better than these for thou dost not consider wisely concerning them.”

“Sound codfish”³²¹ (1897)

ALWAYS MARKETABLE, AND NEVER THROWN AWAY

It is to be much regretted that some enterprising local company could not be permitted to handle properly and cure the abnormal catch of fish along the St. John’s shore. At the present time fish has been thrown away in two or three cases, owing to the fact that the hot sun shining on it for a few hours made it soft and rotten. Most of the little boats fishing out of St. John’s are not provided with “gang boards” to keep the sun off the fish when caught, and the heat of the weather

HAS BEEN SO EXCESSIVE

the past few days that fish have been irretrievably spoiled while coming from the fishing grounds. After a careful inquiry we have not heard of any instance where good, sound fish have been thrown away, and no fisherman would be so foolish as to do so. The time lost in trying to get a purchaser for the fish helps to bring about the understandable condition of affairs referred to above, and oftentimes good fish becomes bad before the vendor can dispose of it at a paying price.

“What codfish eat”³²² (1898)

QUEER THINGS FOUND SOMETIMES IN THEIR STOMACHS

Codfish feed upon all marine animals smaller than themselves which are found in the same waters with them and are digestible,” says the writer. “It would seem useless to give a catalogue of the species which have been discovered in their stomachs. For a long period years, before our naturalists learned to use the hand dredge, a favorite place in which to search for the rare invertebrates of the deep water was the fish dealer’s store, and from the stomachs of codfish scores of shells new to

³²¹ From Sound Codfish. (1897, July 17). *Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

³²² From What Codfish Eat. (1898, April 26). *Eugene Register-Guard*.

science have been taken. Since the introduction of improved methods of deep sea research this mode of collecting has been somewhat less prosperous, but even at the present time many important additions to zoology are yearly made by the aid of this omnivorous animal.

VORACIOUS APPETITES THAT CRAVE SHELLS AND ROCKS

Codfish swallow bivalve shells of the largest size, like the great sea clams, which are a favorite article of food on certain portions of the coast. For instance, in Ipswich bay great beds of empty shells of the sea clam, *Maetra ovalis*, may be found upon the bottom. These shells are 'nested,' the smaller inside of the larger, sometimes six or seven in a set, having been packed together in this compact manner in the stomachs of the codfish after the soft parts have been digested out. Some of them had shreds of the mussels remaining in them and were quite fresh, having evidently been but recently ejected by the fish. In Dana's 'Geology' are mentioned great banks of dead shells off the island of Grand Manan, which doubtless originated in the same manner. Mr. W. H. Dall found some similar beds on the coast of Alaska which he attributed to the walrus, but which are more probably the remains of mollusks eaten by the codfish.

"They feed also upon crabs of all kinds, lobsters and starfish, and have been seen at the surface catching the potato beetles and June bugs which have drifted out from the shore. It is said that they succeed occasionally in capturing a duck. The Gloucester Telegraph of May 6, 1857, reports the Vineyard Gazette as chronicling the fact that one James Osborne took a codfish at the south side, which weighed over 60 pounds. On dressing it two full grown ducks (old squaws) were found in its entrails. They were quite fresh, having most of their feathers on. Codfish vary their diet by browsing upon carrageen, or Irish moss, which grows on the ledges near the shore. In searching at the bottom for shells and worms, codfish often pick up objects which can hardly be regarded as nutritious. A very amusing catalogue of such objects might be included in this chapter in which would be enumerated articles such as scissors, brass oil cans, potato parings, corncobs and the head of a rubber doll. The finding of finger rings and fragments of oil clothing and the heel of a boot inside of a large codfish has suggested the idea that sometimes they swallow the fishermen.

A LUCKY FISHERMAN FINDS A LADY'S WEDDING RING

A wedding ring which belonged to Pauline Burnam, an English Lady who was lost in the steamship Anglo-Saxon, wrecked off Chance cove, Newfoundland, in 1861, was recently restored to her relatives by a St. John's fisherman, who found the ring in the entrails of a codfish. The lucky fisherman received a present of £50 for restoring the highly prized memento to the lady's son.³²³

³²³ Boston Journal, July 6, 1871. [Note in the original.] "A few months ago, a story was current in the New York journals to the effect that a signet ring, bearing the monogram 'P.B.,' had been discovered by a fisherman in the entrails of a codfish in Trinity Bay, N.F. The fisherman, John Porter, kept the prize in his possession until the 12th inst., when he was requested in a letter from the colonial secretary to send or bring the [ring] to St. John's, as he had received letters from a family named Burnam, in Poole, England, saying that they had reason to feel certain that the ring once belonged to Pauline Burnam, who was one of the several hundred passengers of the Allan steamship Anglo-Saxon,

TAKING IN STONES FOR BALLAST

“Stones of considerable size are often found in their stomachs, and fishermen have a theory that this is a sign of an approaching storm and that the fish thus take in ballast to enable them to remain at the bottom when the waters are troubled. It is more likely that these stones are swallowed on account of sea anemones or other edible substances which may be attached to them, in just the same manner that the shells of mollusks are taken in for the sake of the nutritious parts which they contain.

“It is believed that certain shoals of codfish feed almost entirely at the bottom, while others prey upon fish. The fishermen claim to be able to distinguish these two classes by their general appearance, the first being heavier, with shorter heads, blunter noses and smaller fins, and frequently known as grubbers or ground keepers, while fish belonging to what are known as the squid school, the herring school and the lant school, which are probably the same fish at different seasons of the year, are brighter eyed, slenderer in form, with sharper head and in every way better adapted for swift locomotion. On the coast of Labrador, as well as in Scandinavia, codfish follow the schools of spawning capelin in to the shore and prey greedily upon them, and elsewhere at other seasons they feed with no less voracity upon other species of fish which may be schooling, and of which they destroy vast numbers, such as mackerel, menhaden, herring, alewife, salmon sculpin, flounders, cunners and haddock.

“On the Grand banks, especially in shallow water among the Virgin rocks, I have been told that they follow the lant to the surface, pursuing them with great fierceness. Among our northern coasts they replace to some extent the voracious bluefish and bonito of the south. Captain Atwood remarks that the amount of food which they consume is enormous, when the size of the fish is taken into account. He has seen them on the coast of Labrador, where the capelin were in great numbers, with their stomachs filled to the greatest possible extent and capelin in their mouths which they were unable to swallow for want of room, and in this condition they were still biting at the hook. They even feed upon the young of their own kind. They are said to feed largely upon herring spawn, though they are not seen in great numbers about the spawning grounds until the schools of parent fish have departed. The herring, also, is a favorite article of food, and when these fish approach the shores or are seen on the banks it is a very good sign that cod will soon be abundant. Mr. Earl remarks:

“I am told that in the spring of 1879 an immense school of herring moved closely across George’s bank, and that with them came the largest shoal of cod that

which was wrecked off Chance Cove (N.F.) in 1861, the said Pauline Burnam being a relative of theirs. The fisherman in whose possession the ring was, brought it to St. John’s and presented it at the colonial secretary’s office. He was requested to take a seat and wait a while. After about half an hour’s delay the man of fish was introduced to an elegantly dressed gentleman, a Mr. Burnam, whom the colonial secretary had sent for on the fisherman’s arrival. The ring was immediately identified by Mr. Burnam, who called it his mother’s wedding-ring, which she had always worn since her marriage in Huddersfield, England, in the year 1846. The ring was accordingly given up to Mr. Burnam, who rewarded the fisherman with bank notes amounting to £50 sterling.” *The Tale of a Fish*. (1871, July 25). *Clinton Register*, p. 3.

has been seen in that locality for a long time. The cod remained constantly among the herring, so that when the latter had passed the fishing fleet the vessels were obliged to weigh anchor and follow them in order to secure the cod.”

The Diet of a Newfoundland Fisher³²⁴ (1899)

During the season the industrious coast fisherman is afloat in his boat almost before it is daylight, and sails or rows, according as the wind is, to his fishing ground. Unless the cod are uncommonly plentiful, the shore sees him no more until nightfall. On his small craft he possesses the means of making a fire, and there he cooks himself one of the fish he has caught, brews a cup of tea, and eats his doughboy. His consumption of tea is enormous, and that, with the leaden qualities of the doughboy, which is nothing but a round lump of cooked dough, no doubt tends to produce the dyspepsia which is so common among the population.

Even during the season there are a great many days when gales prevent him from going to sea. It is fortunate if these are fair days, for then he can busy himself helping the women to “make” the fish. If wet, however, there is nothing usually to be done but sit around in ignoble inaction.

His fare is of the simplest kind. I have more than once seen the preparation of the evening meal of a man who had been away since dawn, and who might be expected to have a rare appetite against his return. The good wife half filled a small pan with flour, among which she poured sufficient molasses to knead it into a dough. After rolling this into two cakes she placed one on a plate and strewed a little of the preserves of wild raspberry on it. The other “bannock” was placed on top, and, after a judicious firing in the oven, behold, a pie³²⁵. And oh, such a pie! Guiltless of yeast or rising of any sort, it was truly unleavened bread. I had the opportunity of indulging in this satisfying fare subsequently, and my respect for the Newfoundland man rose as I considered how many generations he has endured this and yet refrained from homicide. This, however, was but a confection – the solid food consisted of a generous share of turnips and potatoes mashed together. Pots and pots of tea, sweetened with molasses and milk-less, and bread, without butter, completed the repast. It cannot be said that the Newfoundland fisherman keeps himself poor with riotous living.

When he is in a situation to earn wages and board himself, his expenditures on housekeeping are of a most parsimonious description. On Belle Island the wage is 10 cents an hour, and as in the long summer days the hours are many, the earnings of the men are considered handsome. Their families are not on the island, and the workmen erect little hovels in the neighboring woods where as many of them sleep as can be packed under its roof. The great concern is to send as much money back to the good wife and little one as possible, so that there may be a full larder all winter when the work closes down. For this purpose these poor fellows live on about \$4 a month. Indeed, \$4 is considered the maximum. There is no baker on the island, and they

³²⁴ From NEWFOUNDLAND'S FISHERS. (1899, November 26). *The New York Sun*, p. 28.

³²⁵ This may be an ancestor of the now-traditional Newfoundland “jam jam”, a molasses cookie with a raspberry jam filling.

have, accordingly, to enlist the services of the resident fisherwomen to bake bread for them, the charge for this service being 10 cents a stone. On week days no flesh passes the lips of the great majority of them, but on Sunday, it is usual to have a feast – namely, pork and cabbage. This is considered a banquet that even an American millionaire might think himself lucky in sharing.

Fishing is notoriously an uncertain calling. The motions of fish are past all understanding. One season they will visit every part of these shores, and those of Labrador, in their countless shoals. The next season bays or even a whole shore will be almost deserted. The herring are especially fickle, and there are places that were once good herring grounds that have scarcely seen a herring for years. All sorts of theories are advanced to account for this, some of them ridiculous enough. But the fact remains, and when the fish fail to turn up in numbers at the accustomed place, destitution follows. From a very early period the Government has granted relief in such cases. It is far easier to start doling out public funds than to stop, and it has now become a regular affair.

The man who owned half of Newfoundland³²⁶ (1898)

Standing sheer at the mouth of the River St. Lawrence, is an island which in other respects, besides its bulk, is one of the most remarkable in the world. Though for centuries neglected, ignored and uninhabited, it yet enclosed within its territory countless lakes swarming with finny tribes, upon whose banks grazed innumerable deer, its hills and valleys beneath their forests teemed with mineral wealth, and yet in all this expanse one single human being – a hermit farmer – subsisted.

Newfoundland only yesterday was a coast line. Its interior was deserted: it was invested with fable, men fled at the mention of its name. He would not be too bold who should prophesy that in a few years' time the fate of this strange island will be preferred by children to the tales of Aladdin and his Arabian compeers; how from a mighty wilderness were resolved, like magic, busy towns and cities, how factories and schools and mansions sprang up, how children who had never in their lives seen a railway, a brick house or a lamp-post, suddenly found themselves, without moving a mile, in the midst of theatres, of libraries, of churches and street railways.

And the curiously fascinating part of all would be that one man had done it all.

This man began, a poor Scotch boy, without money or influence; to-day he is the greatest private land-owner on earth; and yet not one reader in ten thousand has ever heard the name of Robert Gillespie Reid³²⁷.

Mr. Reid was a Montreal railway contractor. In his office in the Canadian metropolis he had been seated one day with a map of North America hung before him on the wall. Already he had amassed a large fortune and could look back upon a protracted and adventurous career. A penniless lad, he had departed from his native heath and gone to better himself in Australia. There his native ability and shrewdness pushed him along, and prosperity came to him wherever he went. After

³²⁶ From B.W. (1898, November 19). The Largest Land-Owner on Earth. *The Metropolitan*, p. 3.

³²⁷ Sir Robert Gillespie Reid (1842 – 1908).

a time he migrated to Canada, and in the capacity of contractor built large portions of the Canadian Pacific Railway, whose ever-moving shuttle of trains weaves the commercial fabric which binds the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Although wealthy, and by no means young, he was not content to rest, and already sought for new fields of endeavor. As he contemplated the map on this occasion, he was suddenly struck by the geographical situation of Newfoundland. It was a thousand miles nearer Europe than New York; why had it been so long neglected? Was it barren? Was it useless? Was it empty? He recalled vague reports he had heard of the presence of minerals in the island, and he ended a brown study by rising and marking an X in blue pencil on the map.

“That,” he remarked quietly to his son, “will be a great country some day.”

The X on that map still remains to mark the birth of one of the most splendid conceptions of modern times. Newfoundland is a sixth bigger than Ireland – Robert Gillespie Reid owns half of it in fee simple; and yet that is only the beginning and basis of his power and influence. Two hundred thousand souls regard him with the same feelings as the commonality regarded a feudal baron – they call him “Czar” Reid – they look to him to exploit their country before the world.

The successive governments of Newfoundland had long been agitating for a railway, and at last, in 1893, they advertised for tenders. In the tender he despatched to the government Mr. Reid offered to build a road for them at a charge of \$15,000 a mile. The offer was accepted and before the honest fisherman quite realized the situation, the enterprising contractor got to work. He decided that it would be quite practicable for the fishermen to build their own railway. Whereupon several hundreds of the rough, uncouth, but honest and kind-hearted Newfoundlanders, who had never done anything in their lives but catch codfish, were marshalled together to work, digging, cutting timber for sleepers, laying rails, erecting telegraph poles and in fact performing all the various labors incidental to the railway construction.

Thus was the great Newfoundland railway built. But a railway is a useless concern if it be unoperated, if no cars run over it, if there are no engines or rolling-stock, no station buildings or equipment. And as the government was just then in financial difficulty, it could not easily operate the new road. Mr. Reid offered, then, to operate the new railway. The cost he estimated at \$100,000 a year, so the government of Newfoundland agreed to grant “in fee simple to the contractor 5,000 acres of land for each one mile of main line or branch railway throughout the entire length of line to be operated,” for a period of ten years. In addition, there was to be a payment of \$60,000 annually as mail subsidy.

Most Newfoundlanders doubted very much if the contractor would accept these terms. Land seemed to them so useless and valueless a commodity that they could not understand any man in his senses wanting to possess it. Land was going for 30 cents an acre in Newfoundland. Mr. Reid soon had two and a half million acres³²⁸ of it.

³²⁸ “Under the 1898 arrangement Mr. Reid became entitled to 3,135,000 acres of land, and he had not then completed his selections under the 1893 contract. On March 5, 1900, just before they went out of power, the late Winter Government issued to Mr. Reid grants in fee simple for 3,317,241 acres of land.

Some of the better class believed that the contractor had been swindled, and he was for a short time the recipient of numerous condolences. To these Mr. Reid responded by an inscrutable smile; he is still smiling. Broken in health, a confirmed invalid, and advancing in years, that inscrutable smile still steals over his features whenever a visitor speculates on the ultimate results of his speculation.

From the moment the first sod was cut, the Reids, father and sons, became Newfoundlanders. They did not delegate their work to others, but went at it, with their own hands, toiling with the men, sharing their hardships and even their risks. A disfigured eye stands testimony to the intrepidity of Mr. William Reid³²⁹, the eldest son. A blasting charge had failed to explode; a sufficient time was allowed to elapse; it became necessary for someone to enter the mine to discover the cause. Young Reid went himself, although there were a dozen men at hand. A moment later a detonation rent the air and Reid staggered out with his face terribly torn and bleeding. What he had then done his father had done before him. They came of sturdy, rugged stock – the Reids.

But Mr. Reid was not content – he sought new concessions. He offered to operate the road free, at the expiration of the ten years, if at the end of forty additional years the road should be his³³⁰. He also stipulated for further grants of land, for the railway and telegraph monopolies of the island. The government agreed to the terms – and then a great outcry arose. The people said the island was being handed over to Reid. The Legislature was petitioned! The Governor refused his assent to the new contract; for a time the whole colony was in a ferment of excitement over what was known as the Reid contract. But wiser counsels prevailed; it was seen that the opposition had been sedulously fostered by politicians out of office. Mr. Chamberlain, the Secretary for the Colonies, brought his influence to bear upon the Governor. The eyes of the people became opened to the advantages of having a millionaire so vitally interested in the fortunes of the island, and the contract became law³³¹.

These grants included whole settlements in some instances, and confiscated the holdings of settlers or squatters without legal titles. Some 50,756 acres of homestead lands were thus deeded away, and the settlers subject to eviction at Mr. Reid's pleasure. [...] These grants gave Mr. Reid 494 miles of coast-line, while he had applications in for 635 more." THE END. (1901, September 11). *The Evening Telegram*, p. 3.

³²⁹ William Duff Reid (1867 – 1924).

³³⁰ This right was later rescinded. In 1901, Reid signed "a new contract to work the railway for 50 years from August 1, 1901, the colony entering into possession on the expiry of that period. [...] The recovery of the right of ownership in the railway was the issue upon which the people most vigorously insisted, and it has been recovered by repaying the contractor his purchase money with interest." THE END. (1901, September 11). *The Evening Telegram*, p. 3.

³³¹ Not without controversy. "As to the Legislative Council: [...] The chief work of the session was THE SALE OF THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE TO R. G. REID, for which he regaled them at the close on Wednesday night with champagne to such an extent that The Orgies Were Prolonged until after midnight. THE COUNTRY IS GONE. *The people are degraded*, and there *was no discussion*. No man thought it worth his while to analyze one of the most INFAMOUS CONTRACTS THAT EVER DISGRACED THE RECORDS OF A COUNTRY. Loose in all its details – not one safeguard. The whole handed over to a man and his sons of whom we know nothing, but that he possesses wealth; that he is always ready to Throw a Sprat to Catch a Whale. He has [...] succeeded in grasping Newfoundland and its people." DESPAIR. (1898, April 1). DEGRADATION. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 1.

Perhaps a hard-headed Scotsman like Mr. Reid does not dream of the possibility of his unique position. When the late Mr. Harden Hickey became owner of the small island of Trinidad he immediately announced himself in public and on his cards as Roi de Trinidad. Afterwards he toned it down to baron. Probably the idea of erecting a baronial castle on his estate and inviting over heatherland potentates to a house-party has never entered the head of the largest private land-owner on earth.

While his surveyors are at present laying off the iron, coal, oil and copper territory, his prospectors and mining experts are busily employed developing it. Several mines are in operation – together with two pulp mills, each of which is producing two hundred tons of wood pulp weekly.

Before long towns and villages will spring up in the wilderness, built by the Reids and owned by them as absolutely as Mr. Pullman owned his town of Pullman, Illinois.

No man – no Czar even – ever held the destiny of a country more closely in his fingers than Mr. Reid does with his island. Seven thousand square miles are his. Over this vast territory the once penniless Scotch boy is absolute lord and master. What will he do with it?³³²

“An argument against work”³³³ (1905)

I'm glad I went to Newfoundland, because the people up there provided me with an argument against work. They don't do it, yet look at them: so ruddy in the gills they're nearly purple, deep breathers, clear-eyed, sane, empty of rheumatism, non-criminal, courteous and not degenerate, by a blamed sight. They are sons of the storm, strong and free and shiftless. These folks work four months a year. They get into debt the rest of the time.

When I went to the inn at St. John's and repaired to my room I discovered that there was no key in the door. Inquiry led to the discovery that there hadn't been for weeks. I became apprehensive as to my trunks, which consisted of one gripsack half full of shirts and a bottle of Vaseline to be mixed with tar and pennyroyal to keep off the flies. But the hotel clerk was tranquil. She glanced up from her books in the little tank where the British keep hotel clerks, and said: “Why, we never lock rooms here.” I didn't lock mine for convincing reasons, and in rambling about the house I found that other folks did not lock theirs either, nor even bother to shut the doors. I could have picked up no end of handkerchiefs and combs, if I had wanted to, but I thought that while I was in Newfoundland it would be safer to do as Newfoundlanders do. As for the thirty-six people who didn't, I visited them in the penitentiary, and found that if it had not been for their clothes they could have passed as members of more or less

³³² Reid sold much of his land back to the government as a condition of the renegotiated contract of 1901. “The Government felt that, no matter what the cost, they could not permit this coast-line to be in the possession of a private individual. They, therefore, undertook to buy back at a cost of \$850,000, or 27 ¼ c. an acre, the total of 3,135,000 acres which passed to Mr. Reid under the 1858 contract.” *Ibid.*

³³³ From C.M.S. (1905, August 12). NEWFOUNDLAND PROVIDES ARGUMENT AGAINST WORK. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, p. 3.

polite society. They have a large building for so small a club, and their cells are three times the size of those allotted to unfortunates in our country. The warden is a good soul who does not allow any bullying, and the inmates work tranquilly at broom-making. When you consider that these thirty men and six women were all the criminals they could scare up on the island, and represented the bad element in a population of 221,000, and when you remember that education is sadly defective there, you wonder again if we are not overestimating literature and arithmetic. And the prisoners are not such a desperate lot, either. Most of them have been sent up for petty thefts, or for drunkenness, or for fighting in the streets, which is an honorable employment when your cause is good, but makes a noise and wakes the police. The police, by the by, look like solemn infantrymen in fatigue uniform, but they are more polite and flexible than ours. Nearly everybody in St. John's seems to behave better than we do, because we put our worst side outside, and any one watching us as we shoulder other men's wives and daughters at the Manhattan end of the bridge, when we find them trying to get seats in the cars, mistakes us for a different kind from what we are.

In fact I didn't quite like the New Yorker in Newfoundland, when I found he had strayed there. In comparison with the simple, trusting, pleasant natives he seemed to me cheerfully arrogant and largely condescending; he talked loud and large and confidently, and always about business; he laughed at his own jokes more than the listeners did; he had a nervy, pushing, "stand-out-of-my-way" manner that grated on one, and he measured everything by the New York standard – the inn, the street car, and the money. Ah, I'm afraid it's the money he's spending up there in the wilderness that is going to be the undoing of the colony. Once let the people believe that every man from the States has \$100 in his clothes, and that he is not going home till he spends it, and a rivalry will set in. A couple of years ago you could hire guides cheaply. Now they are beginning to consider wages narrowly, and to refuse to go into the woods except for along jaunt. I suppose one man has done more to spoil the natives than all the courts and newspapers and schools. He comes up every year, goes into the middle wilderness, clean out of reach of writs, letters, telegrams and signs, lets his whiskers grow – a wildly variegated assortment you find up here frolicking on the winds – and doesn't wash much. He hunts and fishes and smokes, then cleans himself, changes his clothes, goes back to the States with a grunt of disgust and makes money till the next summer. Last year he paid his guide the sum agreed upon, and then handed over \$50 extra. The guide flung his brawny arms about him and danced on his feet in the ecstasy of a new experience. And this year guides are looking for \$50 tips.

I think Newfoundland is virtuous principally because it has no cities, unless you count St. John's as one. When people assemble in multitudes they teach bad tricks to one another, as you may see if you will take a walk through Hunter's Point. Still, it may be the imminence of sudden death that keeps the Newfoundlanders good, for most of them follow the sea, and you never know what is coming to you out of the fog and the ice. Though health seems to be good, the death rate is high. In St. John's your nose tells you one reason the moment you arrive, for there is no adequate system

of sewerage; but the violent winds and the sudden and sharp colds, which young Britons affect to disregard in their first winter, induce throat and lung troubles, and consumption has come in with the introduction of coal. For the people close their doors and windows all winter, as country folks do everywhere, and breathing the foul air over and over, and smoking bad pipes, and spitting as do no other people on earth – it's awful! – they wither and expire. So long as they burned wood and burned it in fireplaces there was ventilation and they were healthy.

The exceedingly low rate of insanity is attributed to the neglect of the populace to work. Sufficient unto the day are the comforts thereof. Maybe you can borrow another dollar when the comforts give out. A merchant in St. John's who discharged a workman the other day overheard him saying to another, "What the hell do I care! I've \$14.75 in cash and a barrel of flour on end in the house." And he with a wife and six children! And no union to close his employer's shop! Speaking of shops, the bosses don't work hard, either. The principal stores are not open till 9, and they shut with exceeding swiftness at 6, if not before. But they think and speak promptly, no matter how much of leisure they insist on, for there is a directness, a frankness even about the children that is pleasant. These are "Shore Acres" people, kindly even to the derelicts. And I remember the village idiot at King's Cove, a fellow with glassy eyes, a cane and one shoe, who hobbled close at my elbow wherever I moved, and stood beside me staring with all his might when I stopped to look at the columbines and phlox and budding lilacs in a garden as large as a quilt. Nobody jeered him or rebuked him, but several spoke kindly to him. In New York the poor creature would probably have been mobbed and would have died with laughter ringing in his ears.

Yet, I regret that the Newfoundlanders have one hard or thoughtless side to them. It is exhibited in the wanton destruction of their game. The killing of 2,000 elk in a single day and the leaving of their bodies to rot in the mosses, after the skins, worth \$1 apiece, had been removed, is not to be defended. The West has moved East. Advocates of slaughter claim that there are 250,000 of these caribou – the verist guess – and that they increase 10,000 a year in spite of the shooting, at which rate they will consume all the vegetation in Newfoundland and will starve to death in consequence. All of which is arrant nonsense. The Newfoundland caribou are doomed. Nearly 800 were shot by one hunter. They will go the way of our antelope and buffalo. And it is the same with the fish. About 750 trout were put aboard the train at one station. Were they eaten, think you? It is announced that you can catch trout till you are tired and leave them on the banks for the flies to eat – not artificial flies. An English army officer came over here and pulled 300 salmon out of the Humber. Did he eat them all, do you suppose? There are laws calling for moderation, but there is nobody to enforce them.

The mistreatment of other creatures is not intentional cruelty. Certainly not. It is unconscious, the result of tradition and example. I have seen men at their fishing who conversed courteously and chaffed one another affably, who would take a culpin by the tail when they had pulled him out of the water, and when they were expecting a cod, and bang the poor creature's head against a stone or belaying pin till his eyes gushed out, and his mouth was ripped from side to side, then, after he had gasped a

few times, throw him back to the sea. Why not throw him back without all that ado? A noble sport!

The blood thirst was not always satisfied with the destruction of animals. The hunting down of the original inhabitants of Newfoundland is a black page in Newfoundland's history. The Beothuk, the aborigines, are described as a trustful, friendly people, but the whites treated them like dogs, and when they retaliated chased them into the woods and shot them on sight. At the last the poor creatures spent all of their time in running. When all were dead but one, an old woman, the people repented and took her – against her will – to St. John's, where she became a public charge and somewhat of a show. Examples of her penwomanship and map drawing are to be seen in the little museum over the post office. The most pathetic object in the collections is the mummified figure of a little Beothuk, who lies as if asleep, with his rude doll at his side.

It is hinted that one cause for the hatred that the whites seemed to feel for the reds was the impossibility of speaking the red men's language. That is one reason for the disappearance of most of the Indian names in the island. A man would rather walk clear around the Wenjejugumjeesh than to say he had been there, and if he is going to Koskaecodde, or Ahwachanjeesh, or Elnuchibeeshgospen, he gets around it by saying that he's going out with a friend. Even the Annieopsquich doesn't rouse him much. Yet, I submit that these names are no harder to bear than Aboljoknegeesis, Chimquassabumtook, Meddybemps, Pattagumpus, Moostocmeguntic and South Molunkus, which are in Maine, and which have still escaped the man who wants to call places Jonesburg and Smithville, and who should be pursued shrieking over the mountains, as the Beothuk were pursued by the Newfoundlanders.

Dogs are usually well treated on the island, save that in the towns they are required to be muzzled or "logged" and big, good-natured smiling animals crawl about the country with ten-pound logs hanging to their necks. But for these burdens, it is claimed that they would jump the fences and catch the sheep, where there are any, as usually there aren't. I had come to associate the name of Newfoundland with a certain desirable type of dog, but had never associated the dog with Newfoundland. It is, then, a pleasant surprise to discover that the dog is plentiful in St. John's, at least, although they tell me that those of pure blood are rare, and the present canine population is largely a blend of every manner of dog there is – terriers, setters, bulls, poodles, hounds and all the rest. It is forbidden to land "huskies," or Eskimo dogs, from Labrador. They are trouble enough where they are and would be far more a trouble in Newfoundland if they got among the cattle and sheep, for they are not dogs; they are just wolves, and behave according to their nature. The original dog that we call Newfoundland did not originate in that island, according to some of his historians, but was crossed there with the native species, so he is a descendant of a husky and a St. Bernard. I met none but friendly members of the family, yet so easy is it to give a dog a bad name that I found a dread of the husky to have influenced the imaginations of many people who had never seen him, and they held all dogs as dangerous. Newfoundland hasn't anything dangerous except fog and temperature and lynxes (they call 'em "links") and politicians and rum and Alfred Harmsworth,

who expects a concession that will enable him to strip the timber off from hundreds of miles of the island, drying the soil and spoiling the water supply. They haven't got as far as microbes yet. Still, there are some native cigars. But why dwell on the dark side of things? Take it by and large, Newfoundland is unspoiled and somewhat of a paradise.

“Truly a tempting quotation”³³⁴ (1911)

A planter upon the coast had about 700 quintals of fish which was cured in the finest manner, and upwards of 400 quintals of that was spring fish, every one of them “pictures”. An agent for a U.S. Company, after inspecting the bulks in the man's store, offered the man \$6.00 per quintal. *tal qual*³³⁵, truly a tempting quotation, but the owner, being inclined to do the square thing, wired his dealer here telling of the offer he had, and asking what was the best the St. John's house could do. He was told to send on his catch, and that he would receive as good a price as the foreign agent could give, and accordingly he shipped the goods here.

The fish arrived in due course in the owner's vessel, [and] was weighed out with a staff of cullers employed on it. The man received the receipts for it with the startling outcome that it averaged, after the cull³³⁶, \$3.91 per quintal, and the owner stands to lose in round figures something like \$1,500. Report, our informant³³⁷ says, has it that the owner of the fish will bring the matter into the courts.

“The blame for bad fish”³³⁸ (1925)

Dear Sir – I have been keenly interested in your efforts to raise healthy interest in the cure of our staple product. [...] Coming to shore fish, I am at last convinced that no amount of threats, encouragements or promises can ever bring us to one particular season where we can ship above half the catch as absolutely prime No. 1, because in every conceivable way obstacles present themselves for which quite a number of fishermen are totally unfitted and unprepared. We are not at all slow at every angle of discussion along fishery lines to draw comparisons with other fish-producing countries, but just how far have we studied into differences of climactic conditions relative to curing fish? Is it at all like that of Newfoundland?

Who, for instance, will guarantee a fog-free atmosphere along the south east and south westerly parts of this country, particularly while shore fish is in process of curing? Or in general terms, who will guarantee that shore fish salted in for August sun will not meet the proverbial “forty days of rain and fog”? Next season a change in

³³⁴ From A Planter and His Fish. (1911, September 14). *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

³³⁵ Spanish for “as is”. It refers to a system where a buyer paid a flat rate for a “bulk” of fish, rather than paying different prices for each quality of fish within the bulk.

³³⁶ Newfoundland's fish-buying merchants reserved the right to “cull,” or reject, cod they found to be of sub-standard quality.

³³⁷ A fisherman who came here by the Portia is responsible for the [...] story. [From the original.]

³³⁸ From OBSERVER. (1925, August 14). Cure of our staple product. *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 11.

salting on account of last year's experience may mean a very inferior quality of salty sunburnt fish through excessive heat. I have, but a few months ago, used the expression that the curing of shore fish was a science in itself. This of course is true, but I would now add that the making of a good cargo is a chance harmonious blending of experience, guess work, endless care, and uncertain elements.

Other references to the apparent ruinous *tal qual* by various writers have extended the necessity for further reference here, but first of all let us be honest with ourselves over this question³³⁹. Are not a large majority of fishermen desirous of curing good fish? We will assume that they really are, but since the thousands of individual catchers become thousands of individual curers, it is obvious that qualities are legion, making specification almost impossible.

If you will just take the trouble to visit the different fish wharves from mid-August until the last of October and watch with some show of interest the landing of the different cargoes and in many cases the different lots which make up a cargo, you will get a fair understanding of the fact that if this lot is this quality, that lot must be the other quality. Now, this is only taking two bulks in entirety; there are thousands of bulks, and when you discover that each bulk has at least five other samples different from all the rest, you will be ready to admit that the buyer is just as powerless to assort and brand all those qualities as any of us are to raise armies for military service, the features of each individual recruit an exact reproduction of that of the generals in charge.

As in every case, each of us in our comments tries impartially or otherwise to fasten the blame for bad fish to someone or something. As far as I can see, both buyers and producers have a share in its production. The fisherman in some cases excuses himself and blames the exporter for ruining the markets by persistent blind consignment of cargo after cargo, knowing that of itself is all that it is necessary to do so. [sic.] On the other hand, buyers blame producers because of the cure. He (the exporter) sees the need for severely specific grading, but feels that the qualities are so numerous and perplexing that scarcely any package can contain proof that the branding is genuine. He sees the imperative need for regulating shipments, on the one hand, but on the other sees accelerated privileges to our competitors. He knows that even on short catches it is only by speedy and continued consignments that we can sell all the old catch before the new product from foreign competitors – or probably ourselves – is again on the market and opening up grave dangers of left-over cargoes to be booked as [an] almost total loss.

Even as a layman it is quite plain to me that the whole venture, from outfitting for to the final disposal of the whole catch, is a gamble of the most uncertain kind. The catch may be, first of all, a poor one. It may be good, but at one stroke half of it may be spoiled by excessive heat or otherwise abnormally bad weather. Add to this

³³⁹ Under the “*tal qual*” system (from the Spanish for “as is”), salted fish is bought in batches at a flat rate, sometimes sight unseen, without a detailed consideration of the quality. A single batch could therefore have fish of widely differing qualities, and average quality could be inconsistent from one year to the next. An often-expressed concern was that this system reduced the incentive for any individual fisher to spend time and effort curing their fish to a high standard.

the ever certain amount of inferior fish through indifferent or carelessness in handling and you will, I think, understand the buyer's dilemma and consequent hesitancy (which now puzzles the producer) in doing anything precipitately, and thus the *tal qual* system is retained as a mixed curse or blessing, however you care to put it.

“Standardization of salt codfish”³⁴⁰ (1931)

One of the most important acts passed by the Newfoundland Legislature during the last session is that relating to the Standardization of Salt Codfish. The object of this act is to improve and standardize the quality of fish exported, and to attain this end no exporters will be allowed to export without a license granted by the Government.

The act does not attempt to fix prices, but will, by means of a system of inspection, regulate as far as possible the grading of fish into the Nos. 1, 2 and 3 grades. It will ensure a No. 1 price for No. 1 grade for any and every curing station. This action of the Government is expected to create a greater confidence among buyers, it being claimed that the quality of the fish exported had been going downhill under the former *tal qual*³⁴¹ system where no standard of quality was required.

The bill was introduced in the House as a non-party measure and sponsored by Sir William Coaker, the originator of the Fishermen's Protective Union of Newfoundland twenty-one years ago, and the organizer of an extensive trading company under the auspices of that union, and principal champion of the fishermen.

SEES NEW ERA

Sir William declares that the act will inaugurate a new era in Newfoundland fishing, which will rebound to the great benefit of the fishermen and exporters alike by regaining our former dominance in the Mediterranean markets, increasing and stabilizing the price in the home markets by improvement in quality which will create a wider demand for the product abroad.

This is Sir William Coaker's second attempt to regulate the export of salt codfish. In 1920, during Sir Richard Squires' first administration, he fathered a measure for the regulation of export of salt codfish which was enforced for several months and then abandoned because of popular disapproval of the act. Sir William maintained then, and still adheres to his opinion, that its strict enforcement, with slight amendments, would have redounded to the great and lasting benefit of the fishermen and country generally.

While the present act is dissimilar in many respects, its primary purpose is the same, and its promoters and backers predict it will give relief for the fishermen's ills.

CHIEF CLAUSES SUMMARIZED

Summarized, the principal clauses of the act are:

³⁴⁰ From CODFISH BILL THOUGH CURE FOR INDUSTRY. (1931, May 28). *Financial Post*, p. 24.

³⁴¹ From the Spanish for “as is”.

1. – No person or firm shall export any salt codfish from Newfoundland until licensed as a fish exporter, and no export entry for export of salt codfish shall be valid unless such entry is made by a person duly licensed as a fish exporter.

2. – All fish for export must be inspected and graded by the official inspectors of the board.

3. – The board constituted under this act may make such rules; regulations, by-laws, and penalties from time to time as they may think proper or necessary.

4. – Any person, firm or body corporate shall be eligible for a membership who operates a mercantile premises suitable for the storing, handling, and packing of salt codfish, or who not having such premises gives assurance to the satisfaction of the board that he will export not less than 2,500 quintals of salt codfish during the season immediately following the application for license to export.

5. – The board shall have power to make recommendations relating to culling, selecting, assorting, standardization and determination of different types of varieties of fish for foreign markets, and to the ensuring of suitability for the several markets; also the regulation or prohibition of the importation of salt used in the curing of codfish.

Two years ago the Government appointed a Salt Fish Commission to enquire into the curing and exporting of salt codfish, and submit their findings to the Government. During the session of Assembly 1930 a bill was ready for introducing, but owing to difference of opinion thereon in the Government party it was not submitted to parliament. The same opposition to the new measure continued this year, hence the necessity of having it brought in as a non-party measure.

“To suit the requirements of the market”³⁴² (1933)

Newfoundland has been rapidly losing good markets for her salt codfish in Spain, Italy and Greece largely because of lack of reliable grading and good curing of fish to suit the requirements of the markets. This was the gist of a report to the Newfoundland Minister of Marine and Fisheries by Capt. A. Oldford and D. J. Davies, who recently visited these markets to investigate the loss of sales by Newfoundland. They recommend that compulsory grading of Newfoundland fish under government supervision be started at once, lest more markets be lost, and so that lost sales may be regained.

Icelandic, Russian and Norwegian fish have been displacing the Newfoundland cod in most southern European markets because they are well cured and graded. The flavor of the Newfoundland and Labrador fish appears to be preferred, but misrepresentation of qualities by Newfoundland shippers, and lack of grading and standardization have lost them business. The preference for the flavor of Newfoundland fish is the one optimistic feature of the report, and may indicate that

³⁴² From FORCED GRADING SALT COD MOOTED IN NEWFOUNDLAND. (1933, April 29). *Financial Post*, p. 3.

Newfoundland can regain her markets, if her curing and market methods are improved.

CONTRASTING METHODS

The contrast between Icelandic and Newfoundland methods of shipping fish is shown in the following extract from the report:

“Our fish arrives in the market – good grade and poor grade mixed together, whereas the Icelandic fish arrives in bales marked No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3. Sunburnt, Dun &c., so that buyers know exactly what they are buying and they have absolute faith in the Icelandic description of the Icelandic bales. Our fish arrives in bulk cargoes and it has to be culled and baled in Oporto.

“In one particular case we found a cargo consisting of shore fish and wet salted. This cargo arrived in a very poor condition and we came to the conclusion that on no account should these two types be sent to the markets in the same shipment.

“In our opinion steps must be taken immediately, to guard against our loss of market here and to help us in regaining our lost ground. Shipments must be graded and our certificates must accurately describe the parcels, whether in bulk or bales. According to the consensus of opinion in this market, fish shipped in steamers, (about 9,000 cwts.) should be baled in brine, but bulk cargoes in sailing ships (about 3,500 cwts.) would be most acceptable in bulk. If a cargo is shipped in bulk the following would be an ideal description – 50 per cent No. 1, 35 per cent No. 2 and 10 per cent No. 3, and not more than 5 per cent cullage.”

SATISFY SOUTHERN SPAIN

Newfoundland is apparently sending the correct type of Spanish shore fish to the Southern Spanish market, except for Barcelona. But the report states that this market can probably be considerably increased by good grading. Barcelona takes no Newfoundland fish, but buys exclusively from Iceland.

The advantages of Icelandic and Russian or Norwegian fish are that it is cured so that a clear white color is obtained. Then it is graded according to both size and quality. Newfoundland fish, on the other hand, is frequently black and dirty in appearance, and may be dried too long, making it too yellow or too dark. Importers think that the salt used in Newfoundland may not be of good quality, and may cause this discoloration. It was recommended by Greek importers that Newfoundland fish be prepared for their market in wet salted and washed and pressed condition, as is done for cod from Iceland and Russia.

The report suggests that it might be advisable to buy advance supplies of Spanish salt, so that it can be matured in Newfoundland, or that English mineral salt be tried.

RECOMMENDED GRADES

In addition to suggesting strict grading of fish as No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 and culls, the report suggests the following sizes:

SIZES RECOMMENDED FOR OPORTO MARKET

- Large, 24 in. and up.
- Medium, 19 to 22 in.
- Small Medium, 18 in.

Small, 12 to 16 in.

SIZES RECOMMENDED FOR SPANISH SHORE FISH FOR SOUTHERN SPAIN

Large fish should be 24 in. and up.

Medium fish should be 20 in. to 24 in.

Large small should be 17 in. to 20 in.

Small must measure from 12 in. to 17 in. with no more than 25 per cent less than 14 in.

SUGGEST OPORTO AGENT

It also suggested that fish packed in 2 cwt. casks would be best suited for the Malaga market. A Government representative should be appointed at Oporto to advise of special markets which are available at such times as Christmas.

The following markets were visited: Oporto, Lisbon, Alicante, Genoa, Naples, Patras, and Pyraeus.

The report states that if grading is not put into force immediately, Newfoundland will continue to lose ground in 1933. The more the loss in 1933, that harder it will be to regain business in 1934.

“We are of the opinion,” the investigators state, “that next season the Oporto market will be expecting grading accompanied by certificates from competent government officials.”

They feel that voluntary grading may serve to stem the adverse tide this year.

“New hope for old colony”³⁴³ (1933)

The coves resound to the blow of the hammer and the buzz of the saw as the fishermen boatbuilders hasten to finish the new craft. Everywhere land owners are fencing and preparing their ground for the spring planting. Even the sheep seem to have decided that the lean years have passed and that it is incumbent upon everyone to recover the leeway and to bring back prosperity.

Such are the propitious signs of a return to better times, as a long and dreary winter is forgotten in Newfoundland with the coming of glorious spring weather. Depending mainly upon the harvest of the sea, the soil, and the forests, Newfoundland gauges its prosperity in a large measure by the yield of its industries, for while the prices of its products are affected by the prevailing world conditions, it has one great advantage – that markets for its exports are available and the demand is equal to the supply.

During the past year, while newsprint concerns in other countries have been so severely hit by falling prices, the Newfoundland mills, owing largely to the low cost of production, have not materially curtailed operations, and in recent months have been working full time.

DESTITUTION

The serious setbacks in the last two years in industries upon which many people have relied for their living – the salt cod fishery and iron mining in Bell Island

³⁴³ From New Hope for Old Colony. (1933, May 23). *Border Cities Star*, p. 19.

– have resulted in considerable destitution. The export value of the fishery in 1932 was approximately \$2,000,000 less than that of the previous year and less than half that of a normal season. This affected seriously, directly, one-tenth of the population; indirectly, its effect was felt by various trades associated with the fisheries, by business and, since the bulk of the general revenue is obtained in the form of customs duties, by the Government.

Faced with the situation that the revenue was inadequate to meet the interest in the public debt and at the same time to take care of the administrative costs of the country, and confounded by the fact that the Dominion could no longer raise loans in the money markets of the world, Newfoundland – for a time – appeared to have reached the end of the road. The position was disconcerting and humiliating.

The effect, however, was nothing more than would have been expected by anyone familiar with the country's history. Again and again, its people had experienced setbacks and disasters which at the time threatened to prove overwhelming. As in the past, the extra effort and the sacrifices required to overcome the difficulties were forthcoming, so today.

Expenditures were reduced; civil servants' salaries and pensions, war veterans' allowances and those of their dependents, education grants, public health and welfare grants, grants for road building and repairs – all were cut. Public facilities were curtailed. Taxation was increased. The overwhelming sentiment of the country as a whole to “save Newfoundland” was demonstrated by the fact that the party which took this as its slogan in the general election 12 months ago had all but two of its candidates returned.

LONG ROAD YET

It would be idle to suggest that Newfoundland is yet out of the woods. With many out of employment through virtual cessation of public works, curtailment of public facilities, reduction of operations in the iron mines owing to conditions in the foreign markets and with many impoverished owing to the unremunerative prices obtainable for salt fish, the Government is confronted with a serious problem in providing relief for those in need, in maintaining essential services, and in meeting its other financial obligations.

Temporarily, joint assistance in the form of a loan has been forthcoming from the United Kingdom and the Dominion of Canada, and at present a Royal Commission is studying the situation with the object of determining the most effective way in which Newfoundland's affairs may be rehabilitated, and its course set for the future.

WORK – NOT DOLE

But the most assuring indication of the eventual recovery of Newfoundland is afforded – not by assistance from outside; not by the suggestion made in certain quarters that for “a mess of pottage” it should dispose of its dependency, Labrador; not by the assistance derived from the investigations of the Royal Commission, valuable as its work is certain to be – but by the will and determination of the people themselves to restore the ship of state to an even keel by their own efforts. The urge

is for productive work that will turn to account the natural resources with which the country is richly endowed.

It may come as a surprise to outside countries to learn that the value of the agricultural produce of the Dominion last year closely approximated the returns received from the salt-cod fishery, namely, \$5,000,000. In view of the fact that farm imports, all of which could be raised locally, total over \$3,000,000 per year, Newfoundland turns to the land with reasoned hope that a considerable section of its population will find in its cultivation not only a steady livelihood, but in the fruits of the soil, the means by which the diet may be improved and living standards raised.

MINING CENTER

Buchans, a mining center turning out zinc, lead, silver, and gold concentrates, even with low prices for its products, is working at full capacity, and with the turn of the tide promises to become notable among mining centers of its kind in the world.

The fresh salmon industry, which last year marketed nearly 3,000,000 pounds, is as yet in its early stages. There is no sign whatever of any depletion in the supply, and the splendid quality of the product is the best assurance that the demand will be maintained. Discovery of immense beds of scallops and clams in Port au Port Bay has just led to the establishment of a new canning industry in that locality.

“BIG BROTHERS” HELP OUT

The fisheries research bureau, maintained jointly by the government of the United Kingdom and Newfoundland, is rendering valuable assistance in every branch of the fishing industry, and as a result of its work, together with that of a fisheries board, appointed to improve the methods of curing and marketing salt fish, there is reason to believe that the harvest of the sea will prove far more remunerative than it ever has been.

“Spain’s war hurts Newfoundland”³⁴⁴ (1933)

Canadians in general may regard the civil warfare in Spain with considerable equanimity, the scene of [the] fray being a long way off and there being a probability that the conflict will be isolated, but in Newfoundland the people are hoping that the Spaniards will soon settle their domestic differences. There is a reason for this desire, for the Spanish war is hurting the Newfoundland fish trade seriously. Spain buys huge quantities of cured cod, and as Newfoundland is the great center of the cod-fishing industry, it largely supplies the Spanish requirements. The St. John’s Daily News, in discussing the events over there, states that the civil war has beclouded a situation that, a little while ago, could be viewed with optimism. “How far we shall be affected by Spain’s domestic troubles is problematical,” says the newspaper, which proceeds to state that better weather conditions for curing fish are resulting in an increase in the quantities available for export to the Spanish market. But as the Spaniards are wrapped up in their warfare, they are not giving the customary orders for the Newfoundland cod.

³⁴⁴ From SPAIN’S WAR HURTS NEWFOUNDLAND. (1933, August 8). *Montreal Gazette*, p. 12.

It is an awkward situation for both the buyers and suppliers in the island colony, both being at sea, as it were. Just now they are finding a little encouragement in the fact that sales to Portugal, Spain's neighbor, are picking up. Big consignments of fish have recently been forwarded to Oporto and Lisbon, the exports for Portuguese account having, in a few weeks, equaled about one-third of the total shipments to Portugal in the whole of 1935. Lower production in Iceland and Norway is held to be partly responsible for the better buying from Newfoundland, but it may be possible that some of the cod going to Portugal is finding its way into Spain.

Fighting or not, the people there must eat, and it is unlikely that they will forego their salt cod, which has been a favorite dish with them for generations, just because they are engaged in civil warfare. However that may be, Newfoundland's fishermen and exporters will breathe a sigh of relief when peace is restored in war-ridden Spain. This cod-fishery development is another example of the far-reaching effects of war, whether the struggle be national or international.

“Earning power of the fishermen”³⁴⁵ (1938)

The conditions of work in the Newfoundland cod fishery as of 1938 are reminiscent of those in place about a century earlier.

The Commission of Enquiry into the sea fisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador, in its final report last year, recommended that the primary effort of the Commission Government be directed to the rehabilitation of the fishing industry.

Although they form the largest and most important section of the population, the earning power of fishermen is lower than that of any other class. Thus, as the Commission of Enquiry points out, any attempt to improve the economic welfare of the country must begin with determined efforts to increase earning power of the fishermen.

CASH INCOME IS LOW

The fisherman usually pays for his supplies in kind. He builds and owns his own house, cultivates a plot of land which yields vegetables and is able to obtain food, such as rabbits and birds, and firewood at little cost. Thus he has been able to live on a very small cash income. His earning power depends primarily on two factors: first, the quantity of fish caught, and second, the price at which the catch is sold. These are highly variable factors over which the fisherman has no control. If the catch is average, the earning power may be good, provided price is on a reasonable basis.

EARNINGS OF FISHERMEN

In recent years the price has been low and in many cases the catch has also been small. Evidence submitted to the Commission of Enquiry indicates that the catch of a man engaged in hook-and-line fishing is from 25 to 30 quintals per man, while a shareman's earnings are from \$70 to \$150. Men engaged as sharemen with a trap crew appear to average from \$100 to \$200. Share-men with floaters secure from

³⁴⁵ From Newfoundland Moves to Rehabilitate Fisheries. (1938, July 8). *Financial Post*, p. 16.

\$50 to \$280. Members of the crew of a banking [i.e. fishing on the banks] vessel earn about \$180 for a reasonably good voyage.

These earnings are small compared with those of people in most occupations. However, evidence shows most fishermen think an average income of \$250 per annum from fishing, coupled with their other resources, is reasonably satisfactory earning power for a man with a wife and two children. [...]

WOULD LIQUIDATE DEBT

Many fishermen are heavily in debt to outfitters and merchants; the Commission suggested something be done to lighten this burden. It recommended the insolvency laws be simplified and a fund of \$250,000 established for loans to fishermen to enable them to effect a compromise arrangement with their creditors. [...] A contributory scheme of insurance against failure to catch, accident, loss of life, boats and gear, based upon Government contribution of 10 cents per quintal, was also proposed. [...]

MANY TYPES OF CURE

The effect of the individualistic character of the Newfoundland salt codfish industry is that there are a great many types of salt codfish produced, some intentionally and others through lack of control of the curing elements. Some of the poorer types are the result of neglect.

There are four main classes of quality or cure which the fishermen endeavor to secure. One of these classes, the pickled fish prepared especially for Spain, is not produced in any other of the salt codfish countries. Another class, the light salted hard dry, is produced only in one other country, namely Canada. The other two classes are the heavy salted hard dry and the heavy salted, partially dry, known as "Labrador," and these are similar to the types produced in those countries which are the chief competitors of Newfoundland. In these countries curing is done at central stations and in accordance with government regulations. [...]

PRICES OF SUPPLIES HIGH

Although prices of supplies in some localities are undoubtedly high, the Commission was unable to suggest an alternative method. It did, however, suggest improvements regarding the price of supplies and credit might be made by the following:

- (1) The exercise of more wisdom by merchants in the issue of credit.
- (2) The purchase of goods by fishermen for cash, wherever possible.
- (3) Posting in all stores a list of the cash sale prices of goods.
- (4) Posting in all stores a list of prices paid for produce.
- (5) Posting once a week in all telegraph offices throughout the country a list of the retail prices in St. John's, for the major items of a fisherman's outfit and diet.
- (6) Payment to fishermen, in cash, of balance due, whenever demanded.

ASKS COMPULSORY ACCOUNTS

The Commission found that in some cases suppliers do not give a fisherman an account for his supplies until the end of the season. Many fishermen do not know the prices they will be charged, nor do they know at what price their produce will be credited. Some of them do not care as long as they get supplies. It is only at the end

of the season they are told whether or how much they are in debt, sometimes by account, and sometimes verbally.

The Commission recommended that it be made compulsory for suppliers to issue detailed accounts with every batch of goods supplied and a proper receipt for all fish taken in.

The report states that the absence of community effort prevents the people from taking full advantage of the resources that nature has placed at their disposal. The opinion is expressed that the people could derive more benefit from the by-products of the fishery if the work of preparation and treatment was undertaken by a community instead of individuals. It suggests conversion of fish offal into cattle and poultry feed may be feasible in many fishing settlements by community effort. Community canning plants should also be possible.

“Newfoundland discards quintal”³⁴⁶ (1956)

OTTAWA (CP) – Modern times have caught up with the historic 112-pound quintal weight measurement in the Newfoundland salt cod industry.

“It had to come,” one federal fisheries official said in commenting on the recent move of Newfoundland fishermen to discard the quintal in favor of the straight 100-pound measurement used in other Canadian fishing provinces.

The move came at the annual convention of the Newfoundland Federation of Fishermen at St. John’s. It endorsed a resolution calling on the Newfoundland government and the fishing trade to forget the quintal, and get down to the 100-pound hundredweight measurement

TRADITIONAL UNIT

The federal department official here explained that for centuries Newfoundland salt cod, and the cod catch of some of the other countries fishing the Great Banks, was weighed by the quintal unit of 112 pounds. There were 224-pound barrels, two quintals, and 448-pound casks, or four quintals.

But in recent years, he said, there has been a bigger call for packing salt cod in boxes of 100 pounds. This complicated things for a trade accustomed to handling cod in 112-pound units.

Discard of the quintal will affect only the province’s \$12,000,000-a-year salt cod industry. Most of the salt cod is exported to countries like the West Indies, Italy and Spain.

Quintal is an old French word of Arabic origin. It was used to designate the British 112-pound hundredweight in pre-Confederation days in the New England settlements as well as in Newfoundland. After Confederation, it was discarded in the Maritime provinces in favor of the Canadian-accepted 100-pound hundredweight.

But Newfoundland, where it had become almost a tradition, returned the measurement even after it became Canada’s 10th province in 1949.

³⁴⁶ From Newfoundland Discards Quintal. (1956, November 28). *Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph*.

MIGRATION

Pressing Irish Sailors³⁴⁷ (1777)

In the 18th century, Britain often found herself at war and in need of experienced sailors for her navy. These were often *pressed* into military service from the ranks of commercial sailors, including Irish fishers who would otherwise sail to Newfoundland for the cod-fishing season. Being pressed was somewhat like being drafted for military service in modern times, with the *press gang* taking the part of the recruiter.

The press for seamen still continues here, to the great injury of the trade of this city and the fishery of Newfoundland; several have been picked up lately.

Last Wednesday evening the press gang was very roughly treated on the Quay, in consequence of their endeavouring to press a man who frequents the fishery of Newfoundland; he (assisted by some female auxiliaries) defended himself with a stick against the attack of the gang, armed with swords, and notwithstanding their utmost efforts he got off. By this time a party of resolute fellows assembled, and by pelting of stones soon made the gang disappear. But their resentment did not stop there, for they [have] done considerable damage to the house of Mr. Shannaghan, publican, on the Quay, where the press gang rendezvous; and had not a party of the army been ordered out to disperse them and prevent further mischief, it is probable some fatal consequences would have happened.

Irish Sailors and the Newfoundland Cod Fishery³⁴⁸ (1786)

In 1779, the British government amended the Navigation Acts to allow for free trade between England and Ireland. One result of this amendment was to make it easier for Irish sailors to participate in the Newfoundland cod fishery. Prior to 1779, the Navigation Acts required that Newfoundland cod be transported only on British ships, and placed restrictions on what materials Irish sailors could take with them to the colony.

Laudable as is the active attention now given to the cultivation of the Irish fisheries, yet are there no adventurers in Ireland, (save the merchants of Derry) who have sufficient spirit to engage either in the Greenland, or Newfoundland fishery? Do the merchants at our respective sea ports throughout the Kingdom, properly consider, what an inexhaustible fund of wealth those fisheries produce, and what fortunes are yearly made in England, France, &c. by an assiduous pursuit of them? As to the Newfoundland fishery, it abounds with such plenty of cod, and is so profitable, from their being scarce a port in the universe where a ship's cargo of that provision meets

³⁴⁷ From The press. (1777, April 1). *The Waterford Chronicle* (Ireland), p. 2.

³⁴⁸ From DUBLIN. (1786, December 21). *The Belfast Evening Post*, p. 2

not a welcome reception, that every success and encouragement is held out to adventurers to engage in it. Of what use is it to adventurers to have the full freedom of the above fisheries, if we make no efforts to profit from the possession?

A correspondent speaking on the foregoing subject, says, that for several years previous to our extension of trade in 1779, the reasons assigned for Ireland's not engaging in the Newfoundland and Greenland fisheries, were, because the act of 15 Geo. III. c. 31. Ordained, that "we should trade in those fisheries in *British built ships only* – that we should transport to Newfoundland only hooks, lines, netting, and other tools necessary for the fishing – and that, in respect to the Greenland fishery, we should be obliged, on our return, to enter British ports, and land on her quays, though duty free, our oil and cargoes." – These were restrictions, at that time insisted on, and not without reason, as incompatible with freedom, as they would prove injurious and obstacles to the advantages that might otherwise be made by Ireland of those fisheries. But all these objections being now done away with, Ireland participating at present [in] every privilege with England of the Newfoundland and Greenland fishery, no solid argument can surely be now adduced why we should not spiritedly engage in them³⁴⁹. Even the hackneyed argument – of England being able to undersell us in the above business, will not avail on this occasion.

From Ireland to the United States, via Newfoundland³⁵⁰ (1817)

The English author of this piece complains that the Newfoundland fishery is siphoning experienced sailors from the British navy. Irish sailors, he writes, emigrate to Newfoundland with an eye to permanently settling in the United States.

I bear no personal enmity to the Newfoundland Fisheries; and am, at the same time, persuaded that one Domestic Fishery, a fishery upon our own coasts, employing our own people, not half so large as the Newfoundland fisheries, would do this country more real service than they ever can do. They never can provide employment for our own poor; and they are not, exclusively, nurseries for British seamen. So far, indeed, from their being exclusively so, it is more than doubtful whether their effects are not inimical and injurious to the interests of this country, whilst they are very favorable to those of the American States, especially if it should appear that a considerable portion of the persons employed in those fisheries are emigrants from our sister island; men in the prime and most valuable part of life, who, instead of supplying our army and navy with sailors and soldiers, fly to a distant quarter of the globe, leaving the helpless and the aged to be provided for at the cost and by the labor of those who

³⁴⁹ By 1792 Ireland participated in the Newfoundland fishery not only by supplying sailors, but also by provisioning the fishing vessels on their outward journeys: "Very considerable orders have arrived in this city, in the course of the last week, for supplying the ships employed in the Newfoundland fishery with provisions. It is determined to victual the Newfoundland vessels with pork in preference to beef." DUBLIN. (1792, October 23). *The Waterford Herald*, p. 3.

³⁵⁰ From Bernard, T. (1817, June 16). AGRICULTURE. *The Freeman's Journal* (Dublin), p. 4. Written by Sir Thomas Bernard, 3rd Baronet (1750 – 1818).

continue at home: young men, who, at the expiration of three years' service, generally settle for life in America; and in the event of war, are much more likely to assist in manning the fleets of America and France, than to enter into the British navy.

Migrant Sailors, Settlement and Religious Conflict³⁵¹ (1838)

The state of Newfoundland is peculiar; the mass of the population are not in any sense colonists; they neither owe their birth to the country, till the soil, nor calculate upon making the island their permanent residence; they are adventurers who proceed from the United Kingdom, chiefly from the south of Ireland (in many instances fugitives for crimes committed in that fertile garden of lawless outrage, the O'Connell province); they take their passage to Newfoundland in order to find a year or two's employment in the fishery, and its concomitant labors of salting, drying, coopering³⁵², &c.: and as soon as they have in this way earned a few pounds, they push forward to the United States. The country of Newfoundland is wild, and almost wholly uncultivated, and, as such, suits well enough with the half, or more than half, savage habits which the emigrants in question carry.

So long as the settlement enjoyed the advantages of a rational and strong government, composed of a governor and a council selected from the respectable permanent inhabitants – men whose station gave a hostage of respect for the law, zeal for the good of the colony, and attachment to England – its affairs proceeded well. The emigrants found employment, earned money, disappeared – were replaced by other emigrants, and allowed the settlement to accumulate capital and to extend commerce; but five or six years ago “some demon whispered” to the Whigs, “give Newfoundland a parliament,” and a parliament was given – a parliament to be elected by the transition semi-savages of whom we have spoken – men who had prospectively renounced the British dominion while earning the means of withdrawing from it, and already considered themselves in the light of American citizens.

Instantly the priests assumed the sovereignty of the colony; the permanent settlers were marked for persecution, not only as rivals of the priestly power, but as general Protestants, or as Roman Catholics³⁵³ humanized and rendered liberal by a long intercourse with Protestants; murders, assaults, and mutilations became frequent; in short, the depraving process of concession, and its correlative, arrogant pretension, which has occupied Ireland for 45 years, was, in Newfoundland, completed in less than the same number of months, and Newfoundland is already a transatlantic Tipperary³⁵⁴.

³⁵¹ From NEWS FROM NEWFOUNDLAND. (1838, September 24). *The London Standard*, p. 3, quoting the *Newfoundland Public Ledger* of August 31, 1838.

³⁵² Barrel-making.

³⁵³ The Irish were predominantly Roman Catholic, while the English were Protestant. During this time period, Catholics were discriminated against by the English and the British government. It was not uncommon for disagreements between the two factions to turn violent.

³⁵⁴ The name of a town and county in the Irish province of Munster.

Such are the consequences of prodigal liberalism and promiscuous reform. Already the more wealthy and respectable permanent settlers are withdrawing from the place; and nothing can save it from becoming a desert but a recurrence to some more reasonable and less liberal system.

An Island of Women³⁵⁵ (1884)

In the mid-1880s, so many men left the Isle of Jersey for the Newfoundland fishery, that during the fishing season women had to perform most of the work on the island – including traditionally male jobs. This exodus was in part a result of successful anti-smuggling measures on the part of the British government.

The Channel Islands, and particularly Jersey, possess much of interest for the stranger, but the crowning glory of Jersey is the beauty of her women. [...] The toil that brings with it the active, healthy body is due to causes which will enlist on the side of these women the sympathies of true manhood. It is because of the woeful dearth of men in Jersey that the women do all the work. Where you meet one man in the tortuous streets of St. Helier's³⁵⁶, you meet ten women. Out among the green farms this disproportion of the sexes is even more painfully apparent. The heavy, ungainly carts on the country roads are almost without exception driven by women, and handsome women, too. Groups of cherry-cheeked girls may be seen in the way-side orchards, some picking apples from the trees, others straining at the rude cider-presses. The little fields, with their luxuriant growth of turnips, cabbages and rutabagas, are all tended by women, while the blooming flowers in the home-yards show in their rich variety the evidence of woman's care and attention. None but women are to be seen in the big public market of St. Helier's – women buying and women selling. What men you see are either too young or too old and decrepit – boys who have not started out in life, or old sea captains who have come home to end their days, smelling of salt cod and full of reminiscences of stormy voyages to Buenos Ayres, to Australia, or through the China Seas.

ABSENT BROTHERS

If you ask where all the men are, the reply, with a shake of the head, is that Jersey was too small for them; that there was not room enough on the island, hardly thirty miles around, for the ambition of its youth, so they left it and went to seek their fortunes in foreign lands, leaving their sisters at home to till the soil and look after the Jersey cows. Some of them man the fishing smacks that go to Newfoundland. Every year they go to the Great Banks in March, and return in October. When they come back, with their little vessels laden with bales of salt cod, barrels of codfish-roe, and boxes of codfish tongues and codfish heads, there is great rejoicing among the women that they have escaped the perils of the sea.

³⁵⁵ AN ISLAND OF PRETTY WOMEN. (1884, January 6). *The New York Tribune*, p. 4.

³⁵⁶ The capital of the Island of Jersey.

When the first of these smacks appear in St. Helen's harbor, the entire female population leave off their work, desert their fields, and go down to the quays to hear the news from Newfoundland. Should the ships, after dropping anchors, slant their spars, the excitement among the watchers on the quays is intense. It means that a man is dead; or perhaps more than one. A volley of questions will greet the fishermen when they land. Mothers will inquire for absent sons, and sisters for their brothers. There is wailing and extravagant expressions of grief should the tidings be had. All through October and November these groups of women waiting on the quays of St. Helier's are a common sight, and rarely does it happen that the joy over the good news from absent ones does not mingle with sobs for those that have been lost. Three years ago the season was frightfully stormy along the Banks, and widows were thick in Jersey. So general was the grief that a song commemorative of the lost fishermen was forbidden from the pulpit to be sung on the island, as its touching refrain kept the memory of the dead too fresh in the public mind.

OLD SMUGGLING TIMES

But the time was not always thus that Jersey was peopled only with pretty women and with decrepit old men and children. She had a population of stalwart men who plied a vigorous and profitable business, which brought not alone prosperity to St. Helier's, but made matters lively for the Governments of France and England as well. Twenty years ago a prodigious amount of smuggling was carried on along the English, Irish, French and Holland coats, in small, fast craft, that were fitted out in St. Helier's, and made the Channel Islands their base of operations. [...] The small size of these smuggling ships enabled them to glide in and out among the dangerous reefs and rocks that beset these coats, and thus escape easily when pursued by the heavy ships which England and France at first set out to look after them.

For years this illegal traffic went on, despite the strenuous efforts made to break it up. It was then that Jersey flourished, and St. Helier's grew from a moderate-sized town to a city with 35,000 inhabitants, more than one-half the number of people on the island. Jersey's maidens were given a chance, and marriages were many, while there was nothing for them to do but cultivate their flower-gardens and knit socks and jackets for their husbands and brothers and lovers.

Finally, the two Governments built each a small, swift steamer, and detailed them to cruise among the islands day and night, and so break up the wholesale smuggling. [...] The law-breakers found they could escape no longer among the rocks, and in a short time smuggling, as it flourished twenty years ago, was a thing of the past.

The hardy islanders who had been engaged in it found their business broken up and themselves serving out sentences in British prison ships. When set at freedom they nearly all found lawful and honest occupations in distant countries, and Jersey was left literally in charge of the women.

From Newfoundland to the United States³⁵⁷ (1893)

Poor living conditions in the 1890s made emigration to the United States tempting to Newfoundlanders.

The Newfoundlander makes such a use of his limited opportunities as stamps him at once as a man to succeed beyond exception [...] whenever the means of success are placed within his reach. [...] He builds his own schooner or fishing boat from keelson to topmast. He builds his own house, makes his trap, his barrels, and makes his own tools in many cases. He goes in the winter often ten or fifteen miles to the hills to cut his scanty stock of firewood, and is found by the sun on rising busy at work. He and his noble dog haul the wood over cliffs and through ravines that would affright a denizen of the plains to approach; and his sole sustenance is often a few slices of bread and the indispensable tea, on which, by the way, he is taxed 100 per cent.

To show how largely the Newfoundlander draws on his barren soil for a livelihood we have only to know that the average earnings of a fisherman for the season from his boat and traps is less than \$80 per annum, and this is a country where all the necessities of life are from 25 to 100 per cent dearer than in Canada. [...] The rates of wages are distressingly low for both sexes. The laborer gets from 60 to 80 cents per day. The skilled blacksmith, wheelwright, carpenter and cooper can earn from \$1 to \$1.25 per day, but in a country where now flour retails at \$6 per barrel, beef at 15 to 20 cents per lb., sugar of the same grade as is sold in Canada at 4 to 5 cents per lb., [...] and family tea at 60 to 70 cents per lb. It will be seen how little of life's comforts can be secured for \$1. Good capable girls are glad to get from \$2 to \$3 per month, and get much more generally the former than the latter figure, while sewing and shop girls get 20 to 30 cents per day and board themselves. [...]

Now, it is a fact patent to all knowing anything about the island that fifty thousand of the two hundred and thirty thousand people who live in Newfoundland are here because they cannot get away. What chance has a man earning 60 cents a day to gather means to pay for a passage for his family to the far west; and how can a girl earning \$2 a month get together enough to take her to a place where she can better her condition without help?

Hence it comes that while these people are intensely British in their sympathies and prefer Canada to any country in the world as a place to live in, they yet are drifting by thousands every year into the States. Their friends who possess some means go first, they write and send assistance to the others, these again soon are able to send for others, and there it goes on. Americans who know what admirable

³⁵⁷ From Carlyle, C. C. (1893, October 19). Newfoundland as A Field for Immigration. *The Regina Leader*, p. 4. Written by Charles C. Carlyle (1867-1950). "The Canadian government actively recruited Newfoundlanders, although the emphasis was on recruitment to the Canadian west, and in 1894 the federal government hired an agent, Charles Carlyle, to carry out its promotional work from St. John's." Crawley, C. (1988). *Off to Sydney: Newfoundlanders Emigrate to Industrial Cape Breton, 1890-1914. Acadiensis*, 17(2), 27-51.

domestics the young women of Newfoundland make send the ticket for Boston, and the girl goes, and soon her whole family follow.

“Downright cruelty to send emigrants to Newfoundland”³⁵⁸ (1899)

Sir – It appears that a colony of Finlanders is to be planted in Newfoundland next year. Now, considering that with small exceptions the soil of the island is very poor, that cereals can rarely be grown to advantage (wheat quite out of the question), that there is no cash market except at St. John’s for agricultural products, that few people – and those in very favorable circumstances, which are few and far between – can make a living by farming alone, that the fisheries, both cod and salmon, are declining owing to the destructive engines used, that in consequence most of the able-bodied young men are leaving the Colony for Canada or the United States, and that in the Far West there are thousands of acres of rich soil, and a climate where wheat ripens to perfection, and where there are cash payments, it is downright cruelty to send emigrants to Newfoundland. There they drag out a miserable existence, and before long will have to be removed to Canada or the States to save them from starvation.

RICHARD DASHWOOD, Major-General.

³⁵⁸ From Dashwood, R. EMIGRATION TO NEWFOUNDLAND. (1899, August 11). *Morning Post* (London), p. 2. Written by Richard Dashwood (1870 – 1938).

CONFLICT WITH THE FRENCH

The Early Cod Fishery³⁵⁹ (1791)

Within twenty years after the supposed discovery of Newfoundland, by the Cabots, we find that the abundance of fish on its banks, had already drawn the attention of the people of Europe. For, as early as 1517, or 1519, we are told of fifty ships being seen there at one time. The first adventurers in that fishery, were the Biscayans of Spain, the Basques and Bas-Bretons of France, all united anciently in one language, and still in habits and in extreme poverty. The last circumstance enabled them long to retain a considerable share of the fishery. In 1577, the French had one hundred and fifty vessels there; the Spaniards had still one hundred; and the Portuguese fifty, when the English had only fifteen. The Spaniards and Portuguese seem, at length, to have retired silently, the French and English claiming the fishery exclusively, as an appurtenance to their adjacent colonies, and the profits being too small for nations surcharged with the precious metals proceeding from their mines.

“Our most dangerous rivals”³⁶⁰ (1759)

From the time that Queen Anne’s³⁶¹ ministry reached out a compassionate hand to France, bade her rise from her forlorn, abject state, and be once more a mighty nation, the French set themselves to improve their fisheries: In this capital article of commerce the French increased very fast after the treaty of Utrecht, and became our most dangerous rivals herein. They had a considerable whale fishery, and their fishermen of St. John de Luze, Bayonne, and other ports in that part of the bay of Biscay, became the most expert harpooners in the world, not excepting the Dutch, and the Hamburgers.

Besides the whale fishery, the French took another step, of far more consequence to Great-Britain: They exceedingly increased their fishery to Newfoundland, as well on the coast as on the Great Bank. This increase of their fishery we too sensibly felt many years. Nor did they fish only on the Great Bank of Newfoundland for that kind of fish which is cured without drying, but they had the address to wheedle us out of the Island of Cape Breton; with liberty to fortify and do what they pleased there, by which means they erected, in America, a second *Dunkirk*, which obliged us to keep large garrisons at Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, to guard against a surprise from Louisbourg. Before the breaking out of the present war³⁶², they were become so much our rivals in this trade and had increased it so

³⁵⁹ From United States Secretary of State. (1791, May 4). Report of the Secretary of State on the subject of the Cod and Whale Fisheries. *Gazette of the United States*, p. 1.

³⁶⁰ From PROBUS. (1759, January 11). To the PRINTER, &c. *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, p. 2.

³⁶¹ Anne (1665 – 1714), Queen of England, Scotland and Ireland. She reigned from 1704 to 1714 and signed the Treaty of Utrecht, which saw the French withdraw from the drainage basin of the Hudson’s Bay, and relinquish many of their claims to Newfoundland and its fisheries.

³⁶² The Seven Years’ War of 1756-1763.

prodigiously, that they employed yearly above five hundred sail of shipping from St. Malo, Granville, Rochelle, St. Martin's, Isle of Rea; Bayonne, St. John de Luze, Sibour, &c. to carry on their North American fisheries; whereby they not only supplied themselves with the fish they formerly had from us, but furnished many parts of Spain and Italy therewith, to our exceeding great loss.

Some have computed that the French usually employ at least a thousand sail in this fishery, from 200 to 400 tons, and 20,000 men. In the year 1730, a computation was made of 220,000 quintals of fish at Marseilles only, for a market; and, *communibus annis*³⁶³, they cured above five millions of quintals. [...]

The history of both France and England show us, that since the former procured leave to fish at Newfoundland, and had Cape Breton ceded to her³⁶⁴, she revived her power at sea, and her royal navy augmented in proportion to the number of ships employed in those fisheries; but as we have at length happily dispossessed them, it will be absolutely incumbent on us not to let them creep in there any more, that we may not have the same trouble and expense to run through again.

“The manner in which we cure our cod”³⁶⁵ (1762)

The following are observations made by a judicious Frenchman, relative to the islands of Cape Breton and St. John's, with the Newfoundland fishery; written since the commencement of the present war. [...]

I must inform you of the manner in which we cure our cod, which we catch in shallops during the summer; and you will soon perceive that it is preferable to that of our neighbors.

The shallops come ashore every day, and the fishermen throw the cod upon a stage prepared for that purpose. One of them, who is called the beheader, opens the fish with a two-edged knife, sharp pointed; then he breaks the head, and parts it from the body. Another pushes the fish on to the carver, who stands opposite to him at a table erected upon the stage. The latter with a single-edged knife, six inches long, eighteen lines in breadth, and very thick towards the back, in order to increase its weight, draws the skin off two thirds of the body near the head, and lets the cod tumble into a barrel. The salter immediately draws it aside, and places it with the skin undermost. Then he covers it with salt, but very slightly, and lays the fish regularly one upon another.

After leaving the cod in salt three or four days, and sometimes eight, or longer, according to the season, they put it into a tub, and wash it well. Afterwards they heap it up in piles, which they call *pate* or *arime*. In fine weather they stretch it out with the skin undermost, on a kind of wattles called *vignaux*, raised about two feet from the ground, or upon stones called graves. Before night they turn the skin uppermost, which they also do whenever it rains. When the fish has been dried a little, it is laid

³⁶³ Latin for “in common years,” the phrase can be taken to mean “in an average year”.

³⁶⁴ By the Treaty of Utrecht. Cape Breton would be returned to the British at the conclusion of the Seven Years' War in 1763.

³⁶⁵ From The following. (1762, September 25). *Caledonian Mercury*, p. 1.

in bundles of five or six, always with the skin uppermost in the night time and in bad weather. Thus it continues to lie for a shorter or longer time, according as the weather permits, till it is half dry. Then it is raised into orbicular piles, or in the form of pigeon houses. In this position it continues for some days, after which it is exposed to the open air and turned according as there is occasion, before they raise it into large piles in the same form, in which manner it sometimes remains fifteen days without being either turned or stretched out. Once more they expose it to the open air, and when it is almost dry, they gather it together, in order to sweat. Then they remove it again to another place, an operation which the French call, *recapiler*.

In short, the cod cured in this manner, is generally fair to the eye and good to the taste, more or less, however, according to the time that has been bestowed, and to the ability and diligence of the person employed in the preparation.

The fish cured in spring, and before the great heats, is commonly the fairest to the eye, and best tasting, especially when it has been properly salted. Too much salt makes it white, but subject withal to break, and to appear humid in bad weather. The *Lingard*, which is said to be the male of the cod, is by far the best and the most delicate of the whole species.

The cod caught in autumn, that is in October, November, and December, and sometimes in January, continues in salt to the end of March or the beginning of April. Then it is washed, and undergoes the process above described. Yet it is not saltier than the other, though it be not so much esteemed; for there is no doubt but the right method of curing this fish depends on the proper utensils, as well as on the season of the year, and the dexterity of the persons concerned in the operation.

The boats employed at sea from twenty to forty days, in this fishery, take off the head of the cod, and slice it on board; and as soon as the fishermen go on shore, they follow the above mentioned receipt. I have given you the particulars, because I think it is very essential for those who have any intention of trading in these parts, to be thoroughly acquainted with this principal branch of commerce.

The English manner of curing the codfish is very different from ours; but the cod is not of so good quality; first, because the salt the English use is of a mineral nature, and consequently more corrosive, and gives it an acrimonious taste; in the next place, because they do not take so much pains. It is likewise true that they are at less expense, and they catch a greater quantity. Hence it is that they supply all Spain, Italy, and even the West Indies. To those countries they transport a vast deal of fish, and sell it much cheaper than the French do theirs, who indeed send but very little to those markets. The English carry on this trade even to Louisburg, and notwithstanding it being an article expressly prohibited, yet whether it be that those in power connive at it, or that they do not take sufficient precaution, the contraband trade continues. On the other hand, it is certain that the French fish, being more esteemed by the English, the latter buy up a great quantity of the former, in order to gratify the most delicate palates. Would it not be therefore a much better way, for both nations to use equal care and skill, to the end that they might reap equal advantages?

[COMMENTARY BY A SCOTTISH EDITOR]

If by the ensuing treaty the French are to have liberty to fish on the banks of Newfoundland, they should not be allowed any island, or any land whatever, to make bacalao³⁶⁶ upon, for the following reasons. In the first place, they don't eat that sort of fish themselves; mud fish, as they call it, is their chief food; they make bacalao only for merchandise, and thereby undersell us. Secondly, if they have any settlement allowed them in that part of the world, it will, in time, become a second Louisburg, and in the end, be the cause of future quarrels: the island of St. Peters, that has been mentioned for them, when fortified, would command the east side of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, full as well as Louisburg did on the west. The island of Sable lies very near Halifax, and may in time, if the French have liberty to possess it, endanger that favorite settlement.

The settling [of] the fishery of Newfoundland in this manner, would much help our navigation, and be a nursery for our seamen, and a discouragement to theirs, which, in good policy, it is our business to so: but as to the fish trade itself, we have lost by it for many years; and had it not been for the exports to Newfoundland, and the imports home by the fish ships from Lisbon and the Mediterranean, our people who carry this trade on, chiefly from the West of England, would have left it off long since; therefore it concerns us now, more than ever, to keep it out of the French hands; for it is by their making of bacalao that [they have] reduced our fish trade to the low state it is now in.

France and the Treaties of Paris and Utrecht³⁶⁷ (1763)

The Treaty of Paris marked the end of the Seven Years' War. As part of the peace settlement, France gave up most of its North American possessions, but retained the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, and certain fishing rights on the coast of Newfoundland. The following article was published about a month before the final version of the Treaty of Paris was signed on February 19, 1763.

The current reports are, that on Saturday an extraordinary [British] cabinet council was held to consider of important dispatches, relative to some unadjusted articles of the definitive Treaty, which were brought that day from Paris by Mr. Walker, one of the King's messengers. The points contested are said to be five in number, the chief of which is, that France (having learned that our Court proposed to establish and fortify a fishery in that part of Newfoundland where the French are permitted by the preliminaries to catch fish, and dry them on land) insists on an *exclusive* right to the fishery on that part of the coast. [...]

As this new dispute renders the sense in which that article of the treaty of Utrecht³⁶⁸ is to be understood, under which the French claim by virtue of the preliminaries, a matter of high concern, that article is here copied.

³⁶⁶ The word for "salt cod" in several Romance languages.

³⁶⁷ From LONDON. (1763, January 25).

³⁶⁸ Signed by France and Britain in 1713, as a peace treaty for the War of Spanish Succession.

XIII. “The island called Newfoundland, with the adjacent islands, shall from this time forward belong of right wholly to Britain; and to that end the town and fortress of Placentia, and whatever other places in the said island are in possession of the French, shall be yielded and given up, within seven months from the exchange of the ratifications of this treaty, or sooner if possible, by the Most Christian King, to those who have a commission from the Queen of Great Britain for that purpose. Nor shall the Most Christian King, his heirs and successors, or any of his subjects, at any time hereafter, lay claim to any right to the said island or islands, or to any part of it, or them. Moreover, it shall not be lawful for the subjects of France to fortify any place in the said island of Newfoundland, or to erect any buildings there, besides stages made of boards, and huts necessary and usual for the drying for fish; or to resort to the said island, beyond the time necessary and usual for the drying of fish. But it shall be allowed to the subjects of France to catch fish, and dry them on land, in that part only, and in no other besides that, of the said island of Newfoundland, which stretches from the place called Cape Bonavista to the northern part of the said island; and from thence, running down by the western side, reaches as far as the place called Point Riche.”

A clarification in the Treaty of Versailles³⁶⁹ (1783)

The Treaty of Versailles marked the end of the U.S. Revolutionary War. It also contained clauses which were binding on France.

[The Treaty of Versailles included] a *declaration* on the part of his Britannic Majesty, signed MANCHESTER, and a *counter declaration* on the part of the most Christian King, signed GRAVIER DE VERGENNES, which mutually set forth:

That the [...] cession of St. Pierre and Miquelon to France, is only to be considered as an intention to afford a shelter to the French fishermen; and the fishery between those islands and that of Newfoundland is to be limited to the middle of the channel. The French fishermen are to build scaffolds, and to repair their vessels, but not to winter at the fishing places; and as a line of conduct between the two nations, the 13th article of the treaty of Utrecht is to prescribe the method of carrying on the fishery.

The start of the French bounties³⁷⁰ (1786)

By letters from Guernsey, dated June 8, we are assured that the Policy of France has just adopted an expedient which will, in all probability, rival the British fisheries. A bounty of five livres per quintal is allowed on the exportation of fish to any part of Europe, and ten to the West Indies. This will give the French a decided

³⁶⁹ From SUBSTANCE of the DEFINITIVE TREATY OF PEACE and FRIENDSHIP between their BRITANNIC and MOST CHRISTIAN MAJESTIES, signed at Versailles, the 3d of September, 1783. (1783, October 18). *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, p. 2.

³⁷⁰ By Letters. (1786, June 15). *Derby Mercury*, p. 2.

superiority in foreign markets. One merchant alone, of St. Maloes, has lately, in consequence of this advantage, added the sum of 600,000 livres to his former capital employed in the Newfoundland fisheries.

France and Newfoundland, after Napoleon³⁷¹ (1814)

By the 13th and 14th articles of the treaty of peace concluded at Paris³⁷² on the 30th of May last, it is stipulated that the right of fishing on the banks of Newfoundland shall be placed in the state in which it was in 1792; and that the forts and factories then belonging to the French shall be restored by us within the space of three months from the signing of the treaty, that is, by the 30th of the present month; but it appears that the British merchants engaged in the Newfoundland fishery have found this time too short in duration, or at least terminating at a crisis, when the fish already taken are in the midst of the process of curing, the interruption of which would spoil the fish, and of course be attended with incalculable loss to the owners.

A committee of merchants, interested in the Newfoundland fishery, have in consequence addressed a memorial to the Commissioners of the Board of Trade, requiring a longer time for the removal of their property and the restitution of the forts than that allowed by the treaty.

It is said to be recommended to the attention of this government, to urge that the British and French subjects be permitted as heretofore to fish jointly on the banks of Newfoundland, and to cure their fish together. We see no reason at present for either approving or condemning this proposal, which must of course depend upon the consent of the other party, and the policy of their respective governments. But the French, it is urged, ought to be withheld from cutting down timber in the neighborhood of the fisheries.

The American commissioners, it is supposed, will endeavor strongly at the meeting in Ghent, to obtain the *right* of fishing at Newfoundland. We think it will be difficult for them to show why any new right of any kind should be conceded to them. The Americans before possessed the liberty of fishing on the coast of Newfoundland, and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but the liberty to dry or cure their fish in any of his majesty's American dominions was not allowed them; and what has America done, either to wrest from us by force, or allure by kindness, greater rights or privileges than those which she before enjoyed?

³⁷¹ From London Papers. (1814, October 12). *The United States Gazette*, p. 6.

³⁷² Not to be confused with the 1763 Treaty of Paris, the Treaty of Paris of 1814 ended the War of the Sixth Coalition, between Napoleon's France and an alliance of various nations including Austria, Portugal, Russia, Spain and the United Kingdom, among others.

The Evolution of the Cod Fishery to 1831³⁷³ (1839)

The cod fishery on the coast of Labrador and banks of Newfoundland is a great business, and upwards of 50,000 persons are employed in it. Before the discovery of Newfoundland in the year 1497, by the brothers Cabot, cod were caught in large quantities by the English and Danish in the seas of Iceland, but since the discovery of North America they have been abandoned for the better fishing grounds of Newfoundland and Labrador. Anterior to the revolution, the Anglo-Americans, English and French mixed indiscriminately, and fished any where and every where, the former assisting the English. On the breaking out of the revolutionary war they of course divided, and a treaty was made respecting the conduction of the business. [...]

After the revolution, the British swarmed the coast of Labrador with their fishing smacks, they having secured the greatest share by the treaty of 1783. At an average of three years, ending in 1789, they had 402 vessels, 1,911 boats and 16,856 men engaged in the business.

In the last war, the French were excluded from the “grounds,” and the English increased rapidly – so much so, that in 1814, the value of the “catch” reached £2,800,000. Since the year 1815, however, the British fishery has sensibly declined, and the value of the “catch” in 1831 was only £857,210. During the fishing season, from two to three hundred schooners sail from Newfoundland for the different stations on the coast, and 20,000 British subjects are employed in the business, two-thirds of whom are engaged in the vessels.

“An illicit traffic” in Bait³⁷⁴ (1844)

The issue of bait and bait smuggling would long be an important issue for Newfoundland and France.

An illicit traffic has of late years been opened between some of your Majesty’s subjects in this island [of Newfoundland] and the French settlers at St. Pierre and Miquelon, which we have no power to prevent, and by means of which the vessels of the latter are abundantly supplied with bait to the prejudice of the fishermen on our shores, who for want of it are unable to prosecute their fisheries, or even to procure a sufficiency of food for their daily consumption. Payment for this bait is made partly in cash, but chiefly in spirits, and other articles of French manufacture, which the large bounties given by the French government to encourage their fisheries enable the settlers to give liberally in return for so essential an accommodation. These articles are smuggled into our ports, to the serious damage of our revenues, and to the demoralization of your Majesty’s subjects.

A few years ago the French fisheries at St. Pierre were seriously diminished by the exhaustion of bait within their boundaries, and the French authorities were

³⁷³ From *The Cod Fishery*. (1839, June 26). *The New York Daily Herald*, p. 2.

³⁷⁴ From House of Assembly of Newfoundland. (1844, July 16). NEWFOUNDLAND FISHERY. *The London Morning Chronicle*, p. 5, quoting the *Quebec Gazette* of June 14, 1844.

constrained to forbid the taking of any caplin or herrings around their islands, except for the use of small open boats. The necessity stimulated the illicit traffic with the British, whereby their wants have become supplied at our expense, and in consequence of the preservation of their bait, codfish now swarm in their waters, whilst they desert the opposite shores of Newfoundland.

We beg to remark that the French fishery is limited only by the supply of bait, and since the supply from our shores has been obtained it has greatly increased; already nearly 300 square-rigged vessels, varying from 100 to 400 tons burthen, besides a multitude of open boats, carry on the cod fishery from St. Pierre and Miquelon. These obtained last year from the shores of Newfoundland upwards of 70,000 barrels of fresh caplin, and about 28,000 barrels of fresh herring; and so intent are the French upon this fishery, and so anxious are they to extend it, that owing to the facilities above referred to, fifty additional square-rigged vessels were last summer sent to St. Pierre from France.

The consequence is, that while the British fisheries in the Bays of Placentia and Fortune, and on the banks, are annually diminishing, those of the French are progressively increasing; in proof whereof, we state that last year the French caught nearly one million four hundred thousand quintals of codfish, whilst your Majesty's subjects all over this island have not taken more than one million quintals. The number of French fishermen annually employed in these fisheries already amounts to nearly 20,000.

A Brief Legal History of France's Newfoundland Fisheries³⁷⁵ (1857)

The Fisheries of Newfoundland have been from the first discovery of the island mainly in the hands of the French. Before an English colony had settled in the place, a French establishment at Placentia was already working the Newfoundland coast, and, on the principle of the right of the first comer, was already in rightful possession of the Fisheries of Newfoundland.

The two great wars between this country and France which terminated in the Peace of Utrecht deprived the French of all right to the territory of the island, but they still clung to their Fisheries, and that peace guaranteed them the exclusive privilege over the larger part of the coast. The Peace of 1763 continued the same privilege. By the Peace of 1783 the French exclusive right of fishing on the coast of Newfoundland was to commence on the east coast at Cape St. John, and thence to extend round the Strait of Belle Isle, including all the western shore as far as Cape Ray. That is to say, the exclusive fishing over more than one-half of the Newfoundland coast was secured to them. The revolutionary war, of course, deprived them for the time of the privilege, but it was regained at the Peace of 1814.

The sovereignty, however, over the Newfoundland waters had not been enjoyed all this time by the English colonist without producing some feelings of proprietorship. [...] It was thought best a short time ago to review the whole question,

³⁷⁵ From The Newfoundland Legislature. (1857, April 16). *The London Times*, p. 8.

and the result of this discussion between the French and English Governments was the Convention which is exciting, just now, so much indignation in Newfoundland.

This Convention confirms the French privilege of exclusive fishing secured by the Peace of 1814, and to the extent laid down in the Treaty of 1783, which the Peace of 1814 recognized, [but] a modification is made, by which the French give up a certain part of the west coast, *i.e.* the part between the Humber and Cape Ray, about 150 miles, to English fishing exclusively, in exchange for 80 miles' fishing on the coast of Labrador, to be enjoyed by them in common with the English. [...] From the line of coast given up to exclusive English fishing, five fishing ports, with a neighborhood of three miles, coast attaching to each, is excepted, and retained exclusively by the French.

A longer legal history of the French at Newfoundland³⁷⁶ (1890)

The anomalous state of things, unfortunately, created by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, and therefore now 176 years in existence, whereby a foreign nation enjoys territorial and inshore rights in a portion of the British dominions, and the ships of war of that nation exercise jurisdiction over British subjects within the limits referred to, could hardly fail to cause constant bitterness of contention when the industrial interests of the French and the colonists clashed with each other. [...] The gist of the Treaties is that the French have a right of fishing on that portion of the Newfoundland coast from Cape St. John to Cape Ray, during the fishing season only, and that in the enjoyment of this right they are not to be interrupted in any manner by the competition of the inhabitants of the colony. [...]

Article 13 of the Treaty of Utrecht, 1713, ceded Newfoundland and the adjacent islands to Britain, but stipulated that French subjects should be allowed "to catch fish, and to dry them on land," in a specified part of the island, and in that part only. Article 5 of the Treaty of Paris, 1763, renewed and confirmed the foregoing right, and Article 6 ceded to the French, "to serve as a shelter to French fishermen," the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. The Treaty of Versailles, 1783, changed the treaty limits assigned to the French for fishery purposes, and defined them to extend from Cape St. John, passing to the north, and descending, by the western coast, to Cape Ray. With reference to the coasts comprised in this limitation, it is expressly declared that the French are given exactly the same rights as they had under the Treaty of Utrecht, namely, "to catch fish and to dry them on land," and to erect on the shores, during the season, such huts as were "necessary and usual for drying of fish;" and they were not to resort to the island "beyond the time necessary for fishing and drying of fish." [...] The declaration of the King of England which accompanied the Treaty of Versailles, afterwards raised questions of respective rights which continued to cause trouble. [...] The important portions of it are as follow:-

"In order that the fishermen of the two nations will not give cause for daily quarrels, his Britannic Majesty will take the most positive measures for preventing

³⁷⁶ From THE FRENCH AT NEWFOUNDLAND. (1890, January 22). *The London Morning Post*, p. 8.

his subjects from interrupting in any manner, by their competition, the fishery of the French during the temporary exercise of it which is granted to them upon the coasts of the island of Newfoundland; and he will, for this purpose, cause the fixed settlements which shall be formed there to be removed. His Britannic Majesty will give orders that the French fishermen be not incommoded in cutting the wood necessary for the repair of their scaffolds, huts, and fishing vessels.”

“The 13th Article of the Treaty of Utrecht [...] shall not be deviated from by either party; the French fishermen building only their scaffolds, confining themselves to the repair of their fishing vessels, and not wintering there; the subjects of his Britannic Majesty, on their part, not molesting in any manner the French fishermen during their fishing nor injuring their scaffolds during their absence.” [...]

The “fixed settlements” mentioned in the Royal Declaration were fishing settlements, and [...] the undertaking to remove them was in accordance exclusively with the guarantee that the fishing operations of the French should in no way be interrupted by the competition of the British fishermen. The Treaty of Paris of 1814 restored the French right of fishing to the footing upon which it stood in 1792.

On these Treaties the French have maintained (1) that they enjoyed an “exclusive” right of fishery on the coast between Cape St. John, round the island by the north to Cape Ray; and (2) that all British “fixed settlements” of every nature on that part of the coast were contrary to treaty. In regard to these claims the British Government have held that British subjects have the right to fish concurrently with the French on the coasts in question, and that fixed settlements, except fishery settlements, are not contrary to the Declaration of 1783.

French fishermen extended their operations from the sea into the rivers, barring them with nets and weirs, and interrupting the free circulation of salmon [sic.], and doing great injury to the salmon fishery. As the French Government have employed ships of war every season to superintend the fisheries, it was inevitable that serious questions of jurisdiction should frequently arise. No less than nine Commissions have, since the year of 1846, endeavored to negotiate a settlement of the disputes which have arisen from the divergent interpretations of the Treaties. The points to which the attention of those Commissions were chiefly directed were, firstly, whether the fishery rights were exclusive or concurrent; secondly, the question of fixed settlements on the treaty coasts; thirdly, the right to take and purchase bait, and the right of the French to fish in the rivers. [...]

In regard to “fixed establishments,” the Convention of 1857 stipulated that no British buildings or enclosures should be erected or maintained on the strand reserved for French exclusive use. The French naval officers were also granted jurisdiction against British subjects in respect of their fishery rights. Owing to the objections raised by the Government of Newfoundland, this Convention did not come into force.

From time to time the negotiations were continued, until, in 1884, an arrangement was concluded between the two Governments, the main provisions of which were:-

1. That British fixed settlements of every kind, except fishery settlements, were to be allowed on the greater part of the treaty coast between Cape St. John and Cape Ray. The excluded parts of the coast were those assigned for the use of the French.

2. The “exclusive” right of the French to fishing was withdrawn all over the coast, and the “concurrent” right of British subjects admitted, provided the latter did not interfere with French fishermen while engaged in fishing.

3. The claim of the French to fish in rivers, except so far as the water remains salt, was withdrawn.

4. That existing settlements on the treaty coast, whether fishery or otherwise, should not be disturbed.

French cruisers were, in the absence of British vessels, given the right to exercise supervision necessary to ensure French fishery rights; French fishermen were given the right to purchase herring and capelin (bait) during the fishing season; and the employment of French subjects “in the proportion of one family to each establishment” was authorized for the guardianship of the French establishments out of the fishing season. [...]

The contention of the French was that the establishment of a fixed British population on any part of the coast where they enjoyed treaty rights would eventually result in their exclusion from such parts, owing to the interference with their fishery rights. But the exclusion claimed by them in those places deprived the inhabitants of Newfoundland of the mineral and agricultural resources of the land. The Newfoundland Government, therefore, insisted that, as valuable mineral deposits existed in the vicinity of some of the harbors thus exclusively reserved for the French, the right of erecting wharves and buildings necessary for working and shipping purposes should be secured to British subjects. [...]

In 1885 Lord Salisbury’s Government secured substantially the points desired by the Newfoundland Government, and, with these modifications, the arrangement of the preceding year was signed. The Convention, however, had to be assented to by the Legislature of Newfoundland, [which] refused to ratify it on account of the provision for the sale of bait. This refusal was followed by the passing of the Bait Act, forbidding the sale of bait fishes by British subjects. The Imperial Government at first, on grounds of policy, declined to assent to the Act, but it eventually went into operation, and has since been enforced by an expensive protective service.

The French fishermen, who require the bait for the deep-sea fishery on the banks, now resort to their treaty limits on the coast to catch bait, and take it away to use or sell on the high seas. They also fit out vessels from St. Pierre for the special business of taking bait for purposes of sale. [...] “To catch fish, and to dry them on land,” are the words of the Treaty of Utrecht, on which all subsequent treaties have been based. The French have, therefore, no right to take bait in coast waters except for use in coastal fishery, and their taking it for the purpose of selling it on the banks is an act of trade, and as such is not within the rights allowed to them by treaty.

The reason of the Newfoundlanders’ strenuous resistance to the exercise of this right by the French, as also of their refusal to sell bait (a refusal which presses

severely on large numbers of the poor people who had gained their living by the sale of bait) is to be found in the bounties given by the French Government to the Cherbourg and St. Malo fishermen who go yearly to the Banks to prosecute the cod-fishery. Without this bounty (which amounts to about three-fourths of the cost of their outfit) they could not afford to go such a distance; and by means of it they are enabled to deprive the Newfoundland fishermen of the custom of the foreign markets, on which they depend for the sale of their catch. The Bait Act is an attempt to retaliate on the bounty by starving the French fisheries on the banks. [...]

Besides the bait question, another question that has arisen of late years [...] is in connection with the lobster fishery, and the right to establish lobster factories on the coast. The industry is a remunerative one, and the points in contention are, whether the French have (as they claim) a right [...] to fish for lobsters and establish tinning factories on the coast, and also to object to the fishermen of Newfoundland carrying on that industry on the portions of the coast occupied by French fishermen. The lobster culture is new, and has been resorted to because of the failure of the cod fishery on the coast.

As to the objection of the French to the erection by British subjects of lobster factories on the coast, the language of the Royal Declaration of 1783 which bears upon this point is very clear, and its meaning undoubted. The French fishermen, in pursuit of their business of catching cod on the coast, are not to be interrupted or molested in any manner by the competition of the British. If, then, British subjects erect lobster factories in such places and in such manner as not to interfere with the cod fishery of the French, the latter have no right to object.

Again, the Treaties were framed in exclusive reference to the coastal cod fishery, and declare it unlawful for the French to erect any buildings on the shore except those “necessary and usual for drying of fish.” Lobster factories are certainly not such erections.

The French Shore Question as of 1890, in verse³⁷⁷ (1890)

It's no use to say I'm tired –
And sick of the fuss they make,
Of “Treaties” and “Rights and humbug,”
When they have only a right to a flake –
And a shed and a stage, for the workers,
Till their codfish are dry and white;
But sustained by a Royal bounty,
They outstrip our fishermen quite.

³⁷⁷ From Uncle George. (1890, March 11). A FISHERMAN'S VIEW. *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 7.

Yes, I say it – and feel it sorely –
The French look after their own;
They are bounty-fed and well cared for,
While we have to run alone.
They reinforce their big navy,
From their hardy Bankers here
And won't yield without a struggle
What they've held for many a year.

And now they mean to defy us!
And have all their bait at their ease;
And salmon and lobsters and herring,
And turbot and cod if they please.
Our people must leave them the shoreway,
No longer "concurrent" the right;
I say we can stand it no longer,
Whether able or not, we must fight.

I suppose we belong to Old England –
Leastways our fathers said so –
And since we must appeal to our mother,
To Old England, I say, let us go!
We are neither paupers nor weaklings
But brave, strong, fearless men;
At home amid storm and tempest –
In icefield, or forest or fen.

With hook or net, hatchet or rifle,
Expert upon sea or on shore,
We beg for no bounty, but give us
Our "Rights" and we ask for no more.
We have not enough of the Indian
To be bought by a "ribbon" or "star,"
We don't care a "cod's-tail" for titles
"Uncle George," "Uncle Bill" that we are.

We look out pretty well for the loved ones,
Count life light, in case of distress,
And THOSE who would slight us or scorn us,
Esteem THEM than savages less.
But we're trammelled to death with your "Treaties"
That a ship or a fleet can sail thro',
And you will not deny, Mother England,
We owe all these "Treaties" to you.

You made them when we were but minors,
And we look to you now for redress,
Please remember that we are your children,
And you owe us some care, more or less.
If Frenchmen will bully and bluster,
And threaten and say what they choose,
I suppose you, at least, can stand firmly,
And firmly protest and refuse.

And if you believe that you owe them –
‘Tis nothing but right that you pay,
And if they won’t take that – ‘tis certain,
You only have one other way.
And the French know too much to provoke you,
If you fully exhibit your power,
With your heroes, like Raleigh and Nelson,
Who await but the place and the hour.

Your brave jack-tars are tired of grumbling,
And wait but the order to go,
Then settle this vexatious question,
With gold, or a brave open foe.

“A line of steamers between France and Canada”³⁷⁸ (1881)

Addressed to the French Minister for Foreign Affairs on the establishment of a line of steamers between Quebec and Montreal (Halifax in winter) and Granville (France), calling at the Islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, and presented to the Honorable J. A. Chapleau, Prime Minister of the Province of Quebec, by M. Foursin-Escande.

By stimulating and extending its foreign trade, France, through the instrumentality of its merchant navy, strives to increase her prosperity, and extend her influence. The new Merchant Navy bill passed by the Chamber of Deputies, at its last session, shows that the Government of the Republic means to carry out such a policy in the future. The establishment of a line of steamers between France and Canada will be one of its first results. In undertaking it, M. Foursin-Escande has two chief objects in view:-

I. The introduction of Canada to the French trade, and the importation into France of the products of that country, more especially its phosphates and live cattle.

³⁷⁸ From Foursin-Escande. (1881, March 8). MEMORANDUM. *Montreal Gazette*, p. 2. Written by Pierre Foursin (1852 – 1916), under the pen name of Foursin-Escande.

II. The reorganization of the codfish trade on the banks of Newfoundland, by placing the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon in direct steam communication with France, thus doing away with the present service that is the principal cause of the decline of that trade. [...] ³⁷⁹

Newfoundland fishermen, [...] competitors living on the spot, are in a position to sell cod at such prices that the French cannot keep up with them in foreign markets. [Furthermore,] the numerous lines of railway in France enable the towns of the interior to supply themselves easily with fresh fish taken on the coast, and the sale of dry or salt cod has sensibly decreased and become very difficult.

The situation is not new; it has attracted the attention of the Government on several occasions in the past forty years. The cod fishery, being a training-school and nursery for excellent sailors, is not an ordinary industry; it forms part and parcel of the national forces, and has, consequently, become in different shapes the recipient of large subsidies.

Government grants, indispensable in the case of new or declining industries, or such as may be going through a difficult phase, lose much of their effect when they become a permanency. The Government's money being depended upon, no other activity is displayed than that which is required to fill the official conditions and win the proposed gratuity. No industry is worthy of encouragement unless it can find within itself the means of self-support. These means are to be found in improved materials and modes of transportation, rather than in subsidies, and thus alone is it deserving of public assistance. No industry is worthy of encouragement unless it can find within itself the means of self-support. These means are to be found in improved materials and modes of transportation, rather than in subsidies, and thus alone is it deserving of public assistance. No amount of Government help has sufficed to secure the prosperity of our fisheries. They have continued to decline, and are at present in a low condition. It has been found impossible to compete with foreign fishermen, and a further reason for this is the distance of their fisheries from the market. As France has only the right of taking and drying fish on the Newfoundland banks, she could not form establishments thereon. The islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, being small and barren, did not offer any field for colonization, and French fishermen could not settle on them as English fishermen from Jersey, for instance, settled on the coasts of Canada and the Gulf of the St. Lawrence. They are, therefore, obliged to come from France and thus cross the Atlantic twice. Furthermore, and what is a very grave drawback, they are obliged to employ large vessels, unfit for fishing purposes, but indispensable for their passage and the transportation of their provisions.

By the new line of steamers, which will call at the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, we believe—

1. That our fishermen will be able to use the same boats and the same improved machinery as the Canadians, the Americans and the Newfoundlanders, and will be placed on a footing of equality with them in the way of material;

2. That the transportation by the steamers will be cheaper, because more rapid and more regular;

³⁷⁹ Damage to my source means that this article has unfortunately been severely abridged.

3. That a new demand will be created on the French markets by weekly consignments of cod kept fresh in refrigerators.

I. The schooners used exclusively by foreign fishermen, and especially by the men of Gloucester, Massachusetts, are admitted to be the type of a fishing boat. They are light, of low tonnage, but easily managed, and can thus be readily directed to all points where the catch is the most advantageous. These schooners carry a number of boats, fitting one into another, which being taken out and distributed over a large surface, enable a number of men to secure an abundant harvest of fish. French fishermen have not seen their way to employ these schooners, being encumbered, as we have said, by the heavy vessels which convey them from home, but when these vessels will be replaced by the steamers of this line, our fishermen will not hesitate to adopt the model schooner.

When the new Customs tariff will be promulgated and the duty on Canadian built vessels will be reduced to two francs in French ports, these schooners can be constructed at Quebec one-half cheaper than in France, owing to the cheapness of labor in that city.

II. The annual importations from France to St. Pierre and Miquelon reach actually about 7,000 tons. The cost of freight is from 30 to 35 francs per ton, which is a high price and could be reduced. Besides, the goods carried by steamer will pay less insurance, and the shipper, being able to export as the consumption requires, will not need any great stock, and will not lose interest on capital employed for the purpose. Out of 15,183 tons of salt imported in 1879, 13,000 tons came from Cadix. The Cadix salt being less strong than our Western salt, is preferred for salting fish. The Newfoundland, French, American and Canadian fisheries, put together, import 40,000 tons of it yearly.

The management of the new line will have to meet the question of the transportation of this important article and find out the means of securing to itself the transportation of these 40,000 tons of freight. The ordinary freight destined for St. Pierre, Miquelon and Canada will always be insufficient for a weekly service. [...] The transportation from Canada and the United States to St. Pierre and Miquelon Islands reach yearly about 14,000 tons, the freight being about 16 francs per ton, and are composed of dry goods, cattle, flour, butter, pork, dried vegetables, sea biscuits, lumber, &c. Nova Scotia, moreover, exports from the Port of Sydney 4,650 tons of coal. The mail steamer between Halifax and St. Pierre carried 281 passengers in 1879. The exportations from St. Pierre and Miquelon are about *nil*. It is evident that the new direct steam service would perform these various transportations, or at least a good part of them, under advantageous conditions for the merchants and shippers of St. Pierre and Miquelon.

It is the opinion of notable merchants, and also of the Board of Trade of St. Pierre and Miquelon, that from the day a line of steamers is established between Quebec and those Islands, the greater part of the freight which at present comes from the United States, and which reaches about 10,000 tons, will be imported directly from Canada. But the most salient advantage will consist in the rapid transportation of French fishermen. By the sailing vessels employed at present, which are slow and

badly arranged generally, the voyage between France and St. Pierre is not done in less than a month-and-a-half at the minimum. The return voyage, more favored by the wind, can be accomplished in one month; total, 75 days. Packets, with an ordinary speed will not take more than 15 days for the two trips, making a saving of 60 days. If we consider that the passengers (of which the number at this moment has fallen to 3,000, [when it] formerly reached 25,000) are nearly all farmers in Normandy and Brittany, and who could have gained at least 2 francs 50 centimes a day during these two months, it will be found that on this point alone an economy of 450,000 francs will be realized annually in favor of these 3,000 fishermen.

The perusal of the message of the Minister of Marine (3rd Div., 1st office) dated 11th December, 1879, and relating to the "transportation of passengers who fish cod at Newfoundland," suffices to show the deplorable condition in which this transportation is actually made. In answer to inquiries which have been made on the subject, the Minister acknowledges that "certain exigencies perfectly legitimate for ordinary emigrants, would be here excessive and even impossible, for the strict economy which imposes itself on this kind of operations and which is not less indispensable to mariners than to shippers." What [a] lamentable spectacle [is] that of these unfortunate fishermen, exposed during two months and a half to the dangers of the sea, in boats which give no security, packed one over another, in the obscure and infected hold. All those who have traveled on packets carrying emigrants, know the miserable condition in which they are on board; it seems as if it was intended on all the lines to treat like cattle, these unfortunates exiled by misery, orphans of the mother country, who lose the protection of their country, before finding the protection of the country which adopts them. Everybody agrees in saying that this is a shame for humanity and that the governments of civilized countries ought to take international measures to that effect.

Reasons of economy render these exigencies legitimate for the ordinary emigrants, excessive or even impossible, for our fishermen, who, attached to this service of the military marine, are soldiers in barracks, prepared to defend the country in executing their rough trade. Is it tolerable? The Minister could not, in the present state, but give the following decision:-

"I have decided, in consequence, that these ships shall not in the future take more than one passenger for each two tons of tonnage, crew not comprised, either in France or at St. Pierre-Miquelon; the application of this rule in preventing the crowding of the hold, will allow of passengers placing their luggage there, which in future, in any case whatever, is not to be tolerated on deck, where it is exposed to be carried away by the waves with all the savings of the unfortunate owners, as has already occurred. Further, for indispensable hygienic precautions, the visiting commissioners will require at the moment of their examinations, that the ships destined to carry passengers be provided with the required number of ventilation stacks necessary for the ventilation of the hold during bad weather when the passengers are compelled to remain below."

What the good wishes of the Ministry have been unable to perform, the establishment of the new line will.

III. We have stated among other causes which have brought on the ruin of the fishing industry, that one of them has been the difficulty of selling codfish in France, from the fact that fresh fish was carried over the railways to all the towns of the interior in a few hours. During the season the codfish remains in salt and is thus sent *green* in the fall to Bordeaux, Granville, &c., where it is worked and dried. It often occurs that it is given to consumers only in the year following. Fresh cod is an excellent fish of a fine delicate flavor, but being burned by salt it loses its qualities when in its dry state. The Minister of War, lately requested by the shippers to ordain one meal a week of codfish for the troops, refused at once. There is only its very low price which makes it an object of consumption for the poor working classes.

The draft of this memorandum is not supposed to give a summary of the different scientific processes employed to-day for its preservation in its fresh state of fish and [meat]. We must limit ourselves to saying that [...] a small steamer, which is supposed to be chartered by a St. Malo firm two years ago, comes and takes a cargo of fresh salmon on the coasts of Labrador and the Gulf of St. Lawrence which it takes to France in refrigerators. It appears that its captain has contracted for several years with Canadian fishermen. This seems to indicate that his enterprise has been crowned with success. [...]

There is a final consideration, although political, which we desire to make known; it is not strange to the creation of the line, but it is attached to it closely. When France was placed in possession by the treaty of Utrecht and other treaties more recent, of the exclusive right of the fisheries on one-half of the coast of Newfoundland, that island did not possess any inhabitants. Since then a considerable population has established itself and that exclusive right has become very vexatious to them. In 1857, under the pressure of a riot, it was attempted to abolish this right, but the text of the treaty was formal, and England was compelled, on the request of France, to recognize it. If the Frenchmen had not this exclusive right, fishing would become impossible for them, owing to the inferior numbers in which they are actually placed; but after the transformation of their gear which the new service will entail, they will be placed on an equal footing with their competitors.

Under this new condition we believe that a solution advantageous to all will be attained and given to this question by arbitration. France would relinquish her exclusive right, and her subjects would in time be allowed to fish on all the fishing points, as are the Americans to-day. Canada would make it the condition on the entry of Newfoundland into the Confederation, and England would evidently be happy to settle this question, always exasperating, and which can be revived at any moment and become grave.

FOURSIN-ESCANDE.

Baie St. Paul, P.Q., November 15, 1880.

No More Bait³⁸⁰ (1887)

By the late 1880s, Newfoundland's cod fishery found itself in competition with the French, who fished nearby waters. France paid a 'bounty', or subsidy, on cod brought back to Europe. Many in Newfoundland saw this as unfair. Controlling France's access to fresh bait (capelin and squid) was seen as a way to even the scales. The Bait Act of 1887 prohibited the sale of bait to the French. Enforcing it proved costly and difficult, impoverished former bait fishers and encouraged smuggling. It was finally suspended in 1893. This article, written just before the Bait Act went into effect, explains the reasoning behind the act and what it was hoped it would accomplish.

The British Government have given notice to the French ambassador that the Bait act, passed by our Legislature last session, will be enforced next season; so that after the beginning of 1888 the supply of bait to the French fishermen at St. Pierre³⁸¹ will be cut off. Information received from that quarter represents that the French feel very sore on the subject and that much uneasiness is felt in regard to the results on the early part of their fishing operations, from the want of their customary supplies of fresh bait from Fortune and Placentia bays. Their only resource will be to use salted bait which is not nearly so good as the fresh, as they cannot obtain what they require from St. George's bay in time for the early spring fishery, as that bay is usually closed with ice at that time; and besides is at a great distance from St. Pierre. The result will be a considerable curtailment of their catch, so that they will not have such a surplus, as during the last few years, to send to foreign markets and drive down the price of our fish below the cost of production, to the ruin of our fisheries. Our Bait act is founded on the principle of self preservation. Hitherto we have been aiding them, by supplies of fresh bait, to supplant us in foreign markets, which they were enabled to do, because sustained by enormous bounties. We have now withdrawn that assistance to their unfair competition, and if ever there was a justifiable act this was such. In fact, to us it was

A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH.

We have no desire to injure the French, but we decline any longer to aid them in ruining ourselves. We have this year a proof of what will be the result to us when the French bank fishery is curtailed. Their catch this year was less by a third or half than that of the previous year, so that they have no surplus, after supplying French markets, to send to other countries to compete with our fishery products. The consequence is that the price of our fish has risen from thirty to fifty per cent. over that of last year. Labrador fish was last year a drag in the markets at 10s and 12s; it is now in brisk demand at 20s, or four dollars per quintal³⁸², and shore and bank fish sell at four dollars and eighty cents per quintal. At the same time, French fishermen

³⁸⁰ From NO MORE BAIT. (1887, November 25). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 2.

³⁸¹ St. Pierre is a small island to the southwest of Newfoundland. It remains under French control to the present day.

³⁸² One quintal is 112 pounds, or about 50.8 kilograms. Newfoundland used the quintal until 1956.

will not be seriously injured, as all their catch will be sold in France at a good price, and all will be required there. We have no objection to their success in Bank fishery provided their fishery products go to France and do not, by means of their bounties, unfairly compete with us in European markets, and unduly lower the price of fish to our undoing. The instance referred to is a proof of the wisdom of those who pressed for the Imperial sanction of our Bait act. It will curtail French operations; French capital will not be so freely invested in the Bank fishery as formerly, and there will be a greatly lessened surplus in future for exportation after French markets are supplied. The French have no right whatever to feel sore over our Bait act or to regard it as unfriendly.

ENFORCEMENT OF THE ACT

Our Government are preparing to enforce the act vigorously next year. Not to do so would be an act of imbecility. Steamers will be placed on the coast to prevent smuggling of bait, and there will be strict regulations in the Customs. It is not anticipated that there will be any difficulty in enforcing it. There will be, of course, no interference with the exportation of frozen herring to the United States in February, as these are not for bait, but for commercial purposes. There is a large traffic in these frozen herring, but their exportation does not infringe the bait act, which simply forbids the exportation or sale of fishes intended to be used as bait. Hitherto the bait has been mainly supplied from Fortune bay. Vessels carried it to St. Pierre, where it was sold. It frequently happened that the market was over-stocked, prices fell, and there being no sale vast quantities of such a perishable article as fresh bait were thrown overboard. This wasteful draft on our valuable bait fishes will now be ended. The intelligent and respectable portion of the inhabitants of Fortune bay are heartily glad that the catching and carrying of bait to the French is to be stopped. While a number of persons earned a precarious and insufficient livelihood by it, and a few vessel owners made money by it, the trade was injurious and demoralizing, leading to an extensive system of smuggling spirits, wines, tobacco, sugar, tea, etc., from St. Pierre, injuring the morals of the people and interfering with the honest trader, while the revenue suffered. Further, there is no bay so advantageously situated as Fortune bay for the prosecution of the Bank fishery, but, owing to the employment of the bulk of the people in bait exporting to the French, little was done in Bank fishing. When the bait traffic is ended a great expression of the honest and far more profitable occupation of Bank fishing will follow, and what will be an immediate loss to some will be ultimately a great gain to the whole people of the bay. Of course those who are engaged in bait exporting are indignant at this interference with their gains.

The Bait Act Disallowed³⁸³ (1887)

Newfoundland's colonial government would occasionally try to control the trade in bait (and its impact on French competition) by passing laws restricting the practice. These were sometimes overruled by the British government, as in 1887.

The British government have disallowed the bait act passed by the Newfoundland Legislature a year ago. The object of the bait act was to empower the colonial government to forbid the export or sale of bait to French or other foreign fishermen. The disallowance is supposed to be in deference to French interests. Much disappointment and indignation are felt here [in St. John's,] especially as the Canadian act, having similar objects directed against American fishermen, received the imperial assent. The colony is powerless to prevent the export of French bait to supply French Bankers.

Reaction to the Disallowance³⁸⁴ (1887)

Our Bait act [...] empowered the Government to prohibit the export of bait, should they consider it desirable, and also to regulate the taking of bait fishes. This has long been felt to be an indispensable enactment in order to enable us to protect our fisheries. Our cod fisheries are dependent on the proper preservation of our bait fishes, not merely because the latter supply our fishermen with the necessary bait, but because if the bait fishes were seriously reduced in numbers, the cod, which are drawn shorewards in pursuit of them, would go elsewhere in search of food, and our great staple industry would soon become a thing of the past. Now the enormous drafts on our bait fishes, for the supply of the French bank fishery, and also of American bankers, in addition to what is required by our own fishermen, awaken serious apprehensions in regard to the future, and render the extermination of the caplin and squids a strong possibility in the near future. [...]

The French are dependent on the supply of bait from our shores in prosecuting the Bank fishery. A number of our fishermen are in the habit of carrying bait to St. Pierre, where it is purchased by the French at very low prices generally. The supply is carried on in the most wasteful and destructive fashion – most injurious to our bait fishes, and demoralizing to those of our fishermen who are engaged in this traffic. As a measure of self preservation, we want the control, so that we can forbid the export of bait, if we see fit.

But there is another and more urgent consideration. Of late years, the French, encouraged by the enormous bounties given by their Government, have immensely extended their bank fishery and are now cutting us out and underselling us in European markets. Were their compensation a fair one, we would not complain; but their bounties enable them to deluge the markets of Europe with French fish, which

³⁸³ NEWFOUNDLAND BAIT ACT. (1887, February 7). *The Boston Globe*, p. 2.

³⁸⁴ From NEWFOUNDLAND'S BAIT ACT. (1887, February 21). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 2.

have been selling wholesale by the cargo, at 12s 6d sterling per quintal – equal to three dollars per cwt., or something less than a penny halfpenny per pound sterling. This price is far below the legitimate cost of production.

Of course, this artificial state of affairs is caused by the application of the French bounty system, which enables their fishermen to draw from the French Imperial treasury a bounty of two dollars per quintal for codfish exported to countries outside of France and her colonies, which are besides separately protected from foreign competition. Thus the French fisherman realizes for his hundred weight of fish \$3 in the open market, and a further \$2 in bounty – altogether a handsome sum of \$5 per quintal. On the other hand, the Newfoundland fisherman has to subsist on what price can be obtained for his unprotected article in a market thus demoralized by unfair competition. [...]

Now, as long as France continues these heavy bounties, of course we cannot presume to interfere with her internal policy. [...] Are we to be prevented from using such a self protective measure as refusing to allow supplies of bait to those who are unfairly undoing us in foreign markets? We simply claim the right of saying to the French, “Since you deal thus unfairly with us, we decline any longer to permit you to make our coasts a base of operations for your bountified fishing industries.”

This is all we claim by passing our Bait act. The British Government, influenced by considerations for French interests, and the capital invested in their fisheries, have refused to sanction this act. [...] There is but one course open to us. [...] Our Legislature will unanimously re-enact the rejected act and send it again for Imperial assent, backed by the united voice of the colony.

Enforcing the Bait Act³⁸⁵ (1888)

The Bait Act was finally allowed by the British government in late 1887, after amendments that made it clear that its restrictions on bait did not apply to Canadian fishers. Newfoundland lost no time in enforcing its hard-won law.

Predictions were freely indulged in, when our Bait act became law, that its provisions would never be enforced, and that the French at St. Pierre would obtain their bait as abundantly as before. It was asserted that the bait-catchers of Fortune bay could not be prevented from running cargoes of bait to St. Pierre, in spite of the utmost vigilance, and that they would defy the law and engage in bait smuggling on an extensive scale. The law, it was declared, would be practically a dead letter.

Our Government wisely determined to spare no efforts or expense in enforcing the provisions of an act which had cost us so much labor to have placed on our statute book. Accordingly, two steamers were chartered in good time; energetic captains and crews were put on board; a stipendiary magistrate, Judge Prowse, a man of great decision of character, was placed in charge of the preventive service. A number of police were also put on board, and at a later date a third steamer (a small one) was

³⁸⁵ From THE BAIT ACT. (1888, May 5). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 7.

added to the fleet. These steamers were placed at different points around the shores of Fortune bay; and proclamations were everywhere posted, warning the people of the consequences of enforcing the law which prohibited the exportation of bait.

These measures have been completely successful. So far as known, only two small cargoes of herrings have escaped the vigilance of the cruisers. Those who may have cherished designs of carrying on the smuggling trade, soon became convinced that it was impracticable and abandoned the attempt. What effect the cutting off of supplies of bait to the French may have had on their fishery, time will tell.

The latest accounts represent that bait at St. Pierre was very scarce, and that high prices failed to secure it. They had been boasting³⁸⁶ beforehand that the act would make no difference to them; that they could secure abundant supplies of herring from Bay St. George, or, failing that, could get along with salted herrings. They are convinced of their mistake by this time. St. George's bay was not accessible, owing to ice. Nothing can compensate them for the loss of supplies of fresh herrings, in the early part of the season, from Fortune bay. When the caplin appear in the latter part of May, they can get fair supplies of these in the seas around St. Pierre or on the Banks, but the expense of procuring them will be much greater than when the market was glutted with cargoes of them from Fortune and Placentia bays. [...]

The enforcement of the Bait act will secure for us indirectly another great benefit. Carrying bait to the French at St. Pierre proved to be a most demoralizing business. It trained numbers of our people in smuggling dutiable goods from St. Pierre, thus defrauding the revenue and injuring honest traders, and at the same time debauching the public conscience, so that smuggling was not regarded as either wrong or disreputable. Bait catchers were invariably the poorest and least industrious of our fishermen. They will now have to cease smuggling and take to other ways of fishing which, in the long run, will greatly improve their condition, though some immediate suffering during the transition will be the result.

GOOD EFFECTS ON THE HERRING FISHERY

This is not all. Bait catching for the French was a most wasteful and injurious mode of carrying on the herring fishery, and if persevered in would probably have led to the extermination of the herring in those splendid bays. It is admitted on all hands that for every ten barrels of herring sold, one hundred barrels were wantonly destroyed. The large seines used by the bait catchers enclose thousands upon thousands of immature herring, some only three or four inches long. All are killed, and out of five hundred barrels hauled, four hundred and fifty are thrown overboard. Besides the destruction of fish, the dead herrings spoil the ground, and they often abandon the locality for years or for ever. Some thirty years ago it is on record that a tremendous haul of herring was made at Bay de Nord by two hundred schooners. At least ten thousand barrels of herring were thrown overboard, and for ten years after

³⁸⁶ "We can get all the bait we want – squid in July on the Banks themselves; capelin in June off our own islands, and herring in Bay St. George for the spring fishing from April 18. We shall be a little delayed by the ice in the latter place, it is true, but 'first fish' is merely a matter of pride and a few days make no difference." The French Consul, M. Riballier des Isles, as quoted in Norman, H. (1887, December 15). IMPERIAL INTERVIEWS V. *The Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 1.

not a herring would enter Bay de Nord. Numerous instances of a similar character might be cited. [...]

The Bait act will have the effect of putting an end to one of the most ruinous and destructive methods of taking these valuable fish that was ever witnessed in a civilized country. The Fortune bay people are now getting their eyes opened to these evils, and are convinced that to prolong such wanton waste of the gifts of Providence would, in the end, bring ruin on themselves, and inflict great injury on the whole colony. For the prosecution of our staple industry bait is indispensable, and its protection and preservation should be our first care. [...] When we consider our rapidly growing bank fishery, and the consequent demand for bait, and the great number of foreigners engaged in the business, the importance of protecting our bait becomes apparent.

Concerns About the Bait Act³⁸⁷ (1889)

Since the Newfoundland fishery competed not only with France, but also Norway, Canada and the United States, it soon became clear the Bait Act would not be able to achieve its goal of substantially reducing competition. The incentive for smuggling and large expanse of water to cover also meant enforcing the Act would be challenging and costly.

No consideration at all appears to have been given by the authors of the Bait Act to the fact that the price of other articles of food is principally liable for the price of fish. People will not buy fish, except to a limited extent, if it is beyond its value. The avowed object of the Bait Act is to raise the price of fish; even if this were accomplished to the full extent claimed by its advocates, it would not prove an unalloyed benefit. Every advance, be it ever so small, tends to diminish consumption and restrict trade. Merchants on Water Street admit that fish at 18s.³⁸⁸ to 20s. means good times for Newfoundland. The country is never better off than when reasonable prices prevail. Fish over 20s. means diminished consumption in proportion to the advance in price. This year a merchant on Water Street is reported to have carried over 20,000 quintals of old fish into the new season, all of which might have gone into consumption with more moderate prices. The advanced prices turn a popular article of food into a luxury; hence the loss to our merchants.

It is well to frankly recognize the fact that, while the Norwegians and Nova Scotians are such large catchers of fish, it is absurd to try to regulate the price or supply by any such nonsense as the Bait Act directed against the French.

The *Mercury*³⁸⁹ now proclaims that the Bait Act will be enforced against *all outsiders*. Can its advocates thus prevent the competition of Norway? No. Can they

³⁸⁷ From Baccalieu. (1889, October 7). THE BAIT ACT. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

³⁸⁸ 's.' is the abbreviation for 'shillings'. There were twenty shillings in an English pound.

³⁸⁹ Newspapers in Newfoundland were at this time strongly partisan. The Evening Mercury, published from 1882 to 1890, was a Conservative newspaper. The Evening Telegram, from which this and other

appreciably decrease the catch of Nova Scotia? No. Can they prevent Frenchmen, Canadians or Yankees³⁹⁰ from bringing salt bait? They cannot. But this they can do, namely: create a spirit of retaliation and animosity in the United States and Canada, and thus be at a variance not only with the French, but every one else. More than that, the French, Canadians and Yankees will form a brotherhood of sympathy, and each one's successful efforts to overcome the shortage of bait, will speedily become the property of all three. I do not say that either of these objections is, of itself, necessarily fatal to the proposed amended Bait Act of the Thorburn³⁹¹ Government; but I do say that they are worthy of our careful and anxious consideration, before committing ourselves to steps which we may never be able to revoke. *Such a Bait Act can never be enforced.* A dozen vessels like the *Fiona*³⁹² could not prevent the half-starved fishermen of the bait districts from getting away with loads of bait. *Men with starving families and empty stomachs know no law but that of necessity.* All efforts to enforce the law against the French alone, have thus far failed to prevent them getting a supply of bait, a fair evidence of the utter uselessness of trying to force a prohibitive act against the wishes of the people, and which will be rendered thrice more difficult by including the Canadians and Yankees with the French. Half a million dollars a year would not cover the cost of carrying out such an act, if indeed it were possible to do so at all.

When we consider the large sums spent on this service, the deprivation resulting to our fishermen, the loss of trade with the Canadians, French and Yankees, and the ill-feeling and friction engendered, it seems doubtful if even the full amount claimed by the advocates of the Bait Bill is nearly sufficient to counter-balance the loss under these heads.

“French bonded fish”³⁹³ (1889)

The major part of the time of the House was occupied yesterday by the Lower Province members, [...] led by General Laurie. He wanted copies of all correspondence with the Customs Department, instructions to and reports received from inspectors and collectors of Customs, in reference to the importation of fish in bond, for the purpose of subsequent exportation, and also for regulations on the subject. He produced a petition from 5000 fishermen against the present system of allowing French fish to come into Canada in bond and be freely handled there, instead of being put in bonded warehouses. There is a bounty of \$1,80 per quintal paid by the French

articles are reproduced, was Liberal-leaning (and widely considered an ‘organ’ of the Whiteway government).

³⁹⁰ A slang term for citizens of the United States.

³⁹¹ Sir Robert Thorburn was Premier of Newfoundland from 1885 to 1889. His Reform party was anti-railroad and pro-fishery, leading to its derisive nickname, the ‘fish-flake party’. (Cod were dried on large wooden platforms called ‘flakes’.) This party’s concern for the fishery as an *industry* sometimes seemed at odds with its disregard for fishery workers as individuals.

³⁹² The *Fiona* was an expensive steamship bought by the Newfoundland government for the purpose of enforcing the Act..

³⁹³ From COMBINES DISCUSSED. (1889, April 9). *Montreal Daily Star*, p. 7.

Government on such fish, and the fishermen claim that with this assistance French fishermen are beating them in their own export markets. They attribute the low price of codfish to the French fishermen. Newfoundland has deemed it necessary to legislate against the French fishermen, and the United States has a regulation whereby bonded articles must not be opened, but exported in the same packages as received. General Laurie thought the National Policy should be made to cover fishermen.

Mr. Jones, of Halifax, said that the French fishermen had been bonding fish in the manner referred to for over twenty-five years without complaint, and he denied that to them was attributable the decrease in the value of codfish. The price of fish in 1884 was low, although no French fish came in, while in 1888, when 18,000 quintals came into the Lower Provinces, the price was high, and grew higher towards the end of the season. It was because our fishermen held over their fish until this year and then flooded the market, that prices were low.

Mr. Burns replied, saying that it is customary to ship French fish to Italy, as Canadian fish, in order to avoid the duty imposed upon French fish. This harmed Canadian trade.

Mr. Kenny, of course, opposed Mr. Jones. They have been of one mind this session only, on the short line. He said that French bonded fish did lower the price of the Canadian article, and quoted statistics. He called upon the Minister of Customs to remedy the evil.

Messrs. Eisenhauer and Flynn preceded Hon. Mr. Bowell, who when he got to the floor, said his officers had not discovered any abuse in the bonded system, as now in vogue. Were he to do as requested by those who wanted the change, he would be imposing on the bonding of fish more severe regulations than were imposed upon iron or coal. He could not see how the bonding of fish for transshipment could harm Canadian fishermen to any greater extent than that of American whiskey could injure our distillers.

Mr. Davies made the discovery that if the Government made more favorable rates over the Intercolonial for fresh fish, the trouble would disappear, but Mr. Freeman could not see how rates for fresh fish *via* [the Intercolonial Railway], could have any effect upon salt cod from St. Pierre. As it was six o'clock the House rose for recess.

Realities of competition with the French³⁹⁴ (1890)

The competition of the French fishermen, and the injury which their system of bounties inflicts upon us, are indubitable facts. On this point we are all agreed. But there is much difference among the people as to the means by which that competition may be neutralized. The merchants appear to attach little or no importance to the

³⁹⁴ From THE BAIT QUESTION. (1890, May 20). *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

cure of fish; and according to the Hon. M. Monroe³⁹⁵, it is the merchants who are to blame for the imperfect cure of our fish at the present day.

Another means proposed is to exclude the French altogether from our supply of bait fishes. This would, no doubt, be an excellent method, (1) if it were practicable, and (2) if it were accompanied by some measure making compensation for those who were deprived of means of living, or perhaps better still, fostering some new industry for them.

However, it really seems that exclusion of the French from our bait fishes is almost impossible, and could not be accomplished by any means in our power.

(1) The French are not altogether dependent upon *our* bait fishes. They may obtain bait from the Magdalen Islands, from the “French” Shore³⁹⁶, on the coasts of St. Pierre and Miquelon, and on the Grand Banks.

(2) It must be remembered that bait has been exported to St. Pierre, not only from Fortune Bay, Burin and Placentia Bays, but from St. Mary’s and Trepassey Bays, from the “Southern Shore,” from Holyrood, and perhaps even from places farther north. It is clear, therefore, that our *whole* coast, all around the island, would need to be guarded; and could we possibly do that? When the Thorburn Party held power, they, and their organ³⁹⁷, scouted the idea that bait could be exported to St. Pierre. We have now a more efficient service than ever; the coast is more carefully watched; justice has been strictly enforced, and yet the Thorburn Party fill their organ daily with tales of vast quantities of bait smuggled into St. Pierre. If these tales are true, what do they prove, but that which the TELEGRAM³⁹⁸ always asserted, that it was impossible to prevent the smuggling of bait to St. Pierre?

(3) Much bait used to be exported to St. Pierre by American vessels, who purchased it ostensibly for their own use. How can we shut the Americans out? The country would lose much which *they* expend for bait and ice; but apart from that, *could* we do it? We found three years ago, when negotiating a Treaty at Washington, that the attempt to exclude them from all fishing privileges in British North American waters brought us within measurable distance of war. [...]

(4) The present Government have endeavored to select a path where all paths are encumbered with difficulties. There is no doubt a small section of the population wishes to export bait to St. Pierre and smuggle goods in return. Smuggling, of course, could not be tolerated by any Government, because the *people* who have to pay taxes will not tolerate that a few individuals in one quarter of the country should escape without paying any taxes. Of course it is only fair to say that smuggling is carried on, not only in Fortune Bay, but in St. John’s; and not only by poor fishermen, but by wealthy and titled merchants. But, in all cases, it must be put down. However, apart

³⁹⁵ Moses Munroe (1842 – 1895) was municipal councilor of St. John’s from 1888 to 1892.

³⁹⁶ The Treaty of Versailles (1783) that formally ended the US revolutionary war also gave the French the right to fish on the northwest shore of Newfoundland, from Cape St. John to Cape Ray. This privilege was given up in 1904 as part of the ‘Entente Cordiale’, a formal attempt to improve relations between Britain and France. (An earlier French Shore was established as part of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), and ran along the northeast coast of Newfoundland, from Cape Bonavista to Point Riche.)

³⁹⁷ *The Evening Mercury*, which changed its name to *The Evening Herald* in 1890.

³⁹⁸ *The Evening Telegram*, the Liberal newspaper, as opposed to an actual telegram.

from those who wish to export bait to St. Pierre and to smuggle back spirits, sugar &c., there is a large section of the population who wish that the French should come into our harbors to buy bait and ice, as the Americans do. This section consists of the people who have not large vessels or boats; who live partly by farming, and who find that they can manage to live comfortably by attending to their farms or their punt-fishery, when their little resources are eked out by money earned in supplying American bankers with bait. If the French came into our harbors like the Americans, these people would earn much more money. It is, therefore, *their* interest to force the French to come in, and for this reason to watch all those who would export bait to St. Pierre. Indeed, the man who carries bait to St. Pierre *is taking the bread out of the mouth* of the poor man who can only sell bait to those who come into our harbors, and deserves no consideration.

If we hold out sternly, we shall ultimately force the French to come in and buy bait. For this purpose three things are necessary; (1) our people who sternly refuse to export the bait to St. Pierre, should insist on the French coming into our ports to purchase it; (2) those poor people who can only sell bait in the harbors where they dwell should regard rich men, who export bait to St. Pierre, as their enemies, who are *taking the bread out of their mouth*. Next, all American or Canadian vessels that bring bait to St. Pierre, must be ruthlessly punished. Under the Thorburn Government these got off scot-free.

What is really wanted to carry out the protection of the bait, the coast-guard, and Custom House system is a number of vessels cruising around St. Pierre, and watching *both entrances*. It would be well if these were armed with electric light, such as men-of-war now carry; such streams of light, flashed out wherever a smuggler was suspected, would deprive them of the cover of darkness and fog, which is their chief opportunity.

Details of the French cod subsidy³⁹⁹ (1890)

Some particulars of the working of the bounty⁴⁰⁰ system in the Newfoundland fishery may not, writes our Paris correspondent, be uninteresting just now. The bounties are said to be of two kinds – those given to the ship-owners, and those granted as a premium on the fish caught. The first-mentioned are calculated at the rate of 50f. to each member of the crew for the fish caught and dried off the coast of Newfoundland on the Great Bank, and at St. Pierre and Miquelon; and 30f. per man for fish caught, but not dried, on the Great Bank.

The bounties on the produce of the fishery are as follows:- (1) 20f. per metric quintal (about 200lb.) for dried cod caught by French fishermen, and sent direct from the fishing-ground or from dépôts in France to the French colonies in America and India, as well as that sent to the establishments on the West Coast of Africa and other Transatlantic countries, provided there is a French Consul at the port of destination:

³⁹⁹ From POLITICS AND SOCIETY. (1890, June 16). *The Leeds Mercury*, p. 4.

⁴⁰⁰ Subsidy.

(2) [18f.]⁴⁰¹ per metric quintal for dried cod caught by French fishermen, send either direct from the fishing-ground or from depots in France to European countries (Sardinia excepted); (3) 16f. per metric quintal for importation to the French colonies in America and India and other Transatlantic countries of dried cod taken by French fishermen, provided they are exported from French ports, but not previously stored there; (4) 12f. per metric quintal for dried cod caught by French fishermen, and sent either direct from the fishing-ground or from French ports to Algeria and Sardinia. French fishing vessels returning to France are also entitled to a bounty of 20f. per metric quintal for salt cod roe, provided it is certified as fit for human consumption.

“Bounty versus Bait”⁴⁰² (1890)

The commercial and social welfare of Newfoundland is so indissolubly bound up with the result of her fishing industries, that any injury sustained by these is felt, and that most keenly, by every class in the community. Up to a recent date those great firms in whose hands the bulk of the commercial capital of the country is centered, and who are summed up in local parlance as “the south side of Water street,” were able to hold their own even in the teeth of the gradual depreciation in the market value of such staple products as seal and cod oils. The cod fish caught by the French, though representing a large proportion of the produce of the banks, was transported to France and consumed there. But now the French, profiting by their bounty system, have entered into competition with the Newfoundlanders in the all-important markets of Southern Europe, and notably those of Spain and Italy. Their system of treatment has facilitated this.

Newfoundland fish, after undergoing a lengthy process of curing on the stages, or “flakes” as they are locally termed, erected round the shores of almost every bay of the island, is delivered to the merchant, and by him consigned in bulk to Spanish and Italian ports, as is the product of the Labrador fishery. The French send their fish home simply in salt to Bordeaux or other ports, and there cure it as required for consumption. Hence, not only can the Spanish or Italian dealer be supplied by them with a succession of small parcels that he can readily work off amongst his customers without having any need of locking up capital in a large purchase, but he can, thanks to the bounty, obtain these at a far cheaper rate than he would have to pay for Newfoundland fish. Figures given me show that with a bounty of from ten to twelve francs per quintal, or hundredweight, fish can be sold at 2 dols. 40c. – or 12s. per quintal, Newfoundland fish being quoted at from 4 dols. 50c. to 6 dols. Moreover, the consumer is beginning strongly to appreciate the fish thus treated in France. It will not keep like that sent direct from Newfoundland, but it appears to be hailed as more palatable. It is the familiar case of the slightly-cured and tasty bloater as against the red herring.

⁴⁰¹ This figure may be incorrect, as my source text is damaged at this point.

⁴⁰² From BOUNTY VERSUS BAIT. (1890, July 23). *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, p. 5.

“The value of the Bait act”⁴⁰³ (1891)

The value of the Bait act as a lever in connection with defensive measures against the French has been strikingly illustrated this year. The act was strictly enforced. Supplies of bait were cut off from the French, and over one hundred of their vessels were lying in St. Pierre without bait. Five and six dollars were offered for herring. Our Fortune bay fishermen soon learned this. It is said that French emissaries were at work stirring them up. The result was that meetings of fishermen were held, and a combination formed to “burst the cursed Bait act.”

Herring were plentiful at Bay d’Este and Bay L’Argent – arms of Fortune bay. About 100 craft collected here, and the men openly declared they intended to defy the law, break the blockade and load up with herring for St. Pierre. There were three government cruisers on the spot – the Fiona, Lady Glover and Hercules. The fishing vessels filled up with herring and prepared to sail.

In vain did the commander of the protective steamers warn and threaten. Armed police in considerable numbers were on board, but, in spite of all, the fleet of fishing vessels, it is said over seventy in number, sailed in a body, keeping close together, ready to defend themselves if assailed. If one fell behind, the others shortened sail till it came up. Thus defiantly they sailed, and with a fair wind reached St. Pierre in a few hours, the distance being only 45 miles, and no doubt reaped a rich harvest.

The occurrence is greatly to be deplored. It is a serious blow to the best interests of the country, and gives a temporary triumph to the French. But the Government are determined to enforce the law. Reinforcements of police and another steamer have been sent. Many of the bold smugglers are known and will be heavily punished. A little wholesome severity and firmness in upholding the law will prevent such outbreaks in the future. Meantime, however, the French have got abundance of bait and will be off to the banks.

The end of the Bait act⁴⁰⁴ (1893)

In March of 1893, the Bait Act was suspended. It would stay on the books, but it would no longer be enforced. The idea behind keeping the Act was that the thread of un-suspending it would prove a valuable bargaining chip when Newfoundland negotiated with its competitors. Notably, the same legislative session that suspended the Bait Act also re-introduced a tax on foreign fishing ships.

The much discussed and long fought for Bait act has been practically repealed by the Newfoundland Legislature at the instance of the Government. Any foreign fishing vessel can now obtain supplies of the main essential to the prosecution of its business off the Newfoundland coasts by paying a license fee of \$1.50 a ton.

⁴⁰³ From NEWFOUNDLAND’S FINANCES. (1891, May 8). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 7.

⁴⁰⁴ NEWFOUNDLAND’S BAIT ACT. (1893, March 24). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 4.

The reversal of policy implied by this step is complete. The Bait act was the main weapon relied on by the colony to defend its fishermen against the encroachments on their markets by their French rivals. The large bounty paid by France to its fishermen enabled them to compete at an advantage with those of Newfoundland, notwithstanding the greater distance they had to cover in their voyages to the fishing grounds. This competition was felt not only in France, but in Spain, Italy and other countries of Europe where Newfoundland's dried fish found a large market.

By all accounts the enforcement of the Bait act greatly inconvenienced the French fishermen, and, so far, tended to benefit those of Newfoundland. The act might also have been used with some advantage in the French shore negotiations, as exemption from its provisions would be a consideration for which France should be willing to give something in return.

The enforcement of the act, however, was not popular among the island fishermen themselves. The sale of bait was a source of ready revenue, which they appreciated more than the greater ultimate advantages to be secured by retaining it and crippling their rivals. These facts, no doubt, are behind the Government's new policy. The elections are coming on in the colony, and fishermen's votes count.

Wording of the Suspension of the Bait Act⁴⁰⁵ (1893)

Whereas, – The International and Intercolonial fishery questions, still pending and unsettled between this colony and France and the United States, and between this colony and the neighbouring colony of the Dominion of Canada, respectively, render it expedient that the Bait Act (52 Vic. Cap. 6) should be retained on the Statute Book, for effectual aid, that the powers of the said Act may give this colony in negotiation for the settlement of the said out-standing fishery questions, between this colony and the said foreign countries, and between the colony and the neighbouring Dominion;

And Whereas, It is not desirable in the interests of this colony that the provisions of the said Bait Act should now be enforced;

Resolved, – That an Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor *respectfully requesting that he will be pleased to suspend, by Proclamation, the operation of the said Act in relation to all the Districts of this colony, and the coasts thereof.*

Resolved – That the Act 55 Vic., Cap X, entitled “An Act respecting foreign fishing vessels,” be forthwith re enacted by this House, imposing a tonnage duty, not exceeding \$1 50 per ton, on all foreign fishing vessels coming into this colony and its waters for the fishery purposes indicated in the said Act (not including the winter herring fishery of Fortune, Placentia and St. Mary's Bays, or any other Bays or

⁴⁰⁵ From Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia, quoted in ABOLITION OF THE BAIT ACT. (1893, March 23). *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

Harbors in the colony to which such vessels may resort during the winter season for the purpose of purchasing winter herring).

“The Miquelon Islands”⁴⁰⁶ (1893)

The fishing vessels from the United States, France, and Canada, which gather every spring at the banks of Newfoundland to catch cod, have been delayed this spring by unreasonable weather. The herring is the first bait fish to arrive, and usually strikes the Newfoundland coast in April, by which time the ice has moved out, but it has only just made its appearance. The winter lingered long, and even now its breath is keen in the winds blowing from the northern seas. When they have loaded up with herring bait the vessels will start for the banks of what is called the first fishery, which lasts until the middle of June. By that time the caplin, another bait fish, will have come, and with it the second fishery, lasting until July, is carried on. Then comes the squid, which, with smelts, herring, and clams, forms the staple bait to the end of the season. In ordinary years the cost of bait is equal to one-fourth of the value of the catch of cod; but the shore fishermen report that herring are plentiful this spring and that the signs foretell an immense rush of caplin. They consider it a big rush when a man can stand on shore and with a casting net fill a cart in an hour.

At a low estimate the North Atlantic, from Labrador to Boston, yields an annual harvest of fish of all kinds worth \$100,000,000, counting local consumption, and, above all, local waste. The Arctic current is the source of this wealth. That vast stream of cold water brings down the slime teeming with marine life on which the fish subsist. Fifty thousand square miles of it may be said to belong to the United States, and 200,000 miles to Labrador, Newfoundland, and Canada. The cod fishery was pursued by the Basques and Bretons centuries ago. Hakluyt says 400 vessels were engaged on the banks in 1587. Steam has been introduced, together with other modern appliances, and bounties given to encourage the fishermen. Nevertheless there is apparently no falling off in the countless myriads of fish found in these hyperborean waters. Nor has there been any diminution in the size of the fish; thirty bank cods when dried still make a quintal of 112 pounds. The offal of the cod, which used to be thrown overboard, is now turned to account. Cod-liver oil is extracted from the liver, the heads, tongues, and sounds are prepared as an article of food, the roes are sent to France, where they serve as bait in the sardine fishery; isinglass is manufactured from the swimming bladder, [and] the bones and entrails are dried and converted into a manure that holds its own with guano.

One way and another the bank cod fishery and that of the coasts adjacent yields fully \$20,000,000 a year. Worked for all it was worth it would yield three or four times as much. The American fishermen, with their well-equipped vessels and modern gear, are hampered by the inhumane policy of the Canadian Government in refusing them the privilege of landing to buy bait, transship cargoes, &c., unless they pay a tonnage tax to the Dominion treasury. The methods of catching cod employed

⁴⁰⁶ From LANGLADE. (1893, May 28). THE MIQUELON ISLANDS. *New York Sun*, p. 17.

by the Canadians and Newfoundlanders are essentially behind the age. In Quebec and Prince Edward Island, for instance, the cod fishermen still use open boats, and have, therefore, to hug the shore the season round. In Newfoundland the fishermen are little better than serfs of the vessel owner, who always owns a store and keeps them in debt by the truck system.

Their Proximity to Newfoundland and Their Importance Commercially

Fishing for cod at the Banks has been described by a hundred writers, but very few have taken the trouble to visit the Miquelon Islands, which are the headquarters of the fleet that comes every year from France. St. Pierre is the largest of the group. It is five miles long and four broad, covering an area of 2,600 hectares, say 6,500 acres. The others are the Great Miquelon and the Little Miquelon (commonly called Langlade), the Isle of Dogs, the big and little Colombier, Pigeon Island, Massacre Island, and Vainqueurs Island. St. Pierre and the Miquelons are the only islands of importance, the rest being mere rocks upheaved from the bed of the ocean. Some think that the archipelago, as it was rather pompously styled in the orders of the first Napoleon, must have formed part of the south coast of Newfoundland, eighteen miles distant, and that the fishing banks – Bank St. Pierre, Green Bank, and Grand Bank – which are within a few hours' sail, were also joined to that shore. However that may be, these islands are all that remains to France of her once magnificent empire in North America. She asserts exclusive fishing rights along the Newfoundland coast from Cape St. John on the east side round by the Strait of Belle Isle to Cape Ray, the extreme southerly point on the west shore. French war vessels patrol that seaboard of 800 miles, warn off Newfoundland fishermen, and control things for a mile inland. The claim of France has been a burning question in Newfoundland for a long time. But outside the Miquelon Islands, which have a population of only 6,000, France does not now own a foot of soil in all North America.

The islands have a history of their own, but only two notable occurrences need be mentioned. A number of Acadians fled from the Basin of Minas to Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island in the last year of the deportation, and on being driven from those places after the second siege of Louisburg found shelter here, only to be captured by the British in 1778 and sent as prisoners of war, first to Halifax and then to France. A few years afterward, during the French revolution, the young fellows of St. Pierre (there were not many of them) were bitten by the spirit of the times and gave the commandant a lot of trouble until the ringleaders were expelled. It was not till 1816, when Napoleon was safe in St. Helena, that the islands began to recover from the perturbations and losses caused by the wars. Since then they have enjoyed as much prosperity as they have a right to expect. [...]

France has given bounties for a long time to the bank fishermen who come every year from St. Malo, Dieppe, Fécamp, La Rochelle, St. Briec, &c., and of late the inshore fishermen of the islands, who are mostly residents, have received a bounty. The bounties, like everything else connected with the fishery, are regulated by elaborate orders and decrees. So much is paid to the owner or outfitter of the vessel for each man employed on it, but the owner of a vessel which dries the cod it catches gets more per head of crew than the owner whose vessel merely catches them and

brings them back “green.” The bounties on the catch are divided into classes, so much for dry cod shipped to Europe, so much for cod sold on this side of the Atlantic, so much for cod sent to Italy and Algiers, and so forth. The bounty on the fish sold in this hemisphere is about a cent and a half per pound. The theory is that the bounties are paid in order to encourage the fishery, not as a fishery, but as a nursery or training school for the French navy. Other countries used to give bounties on the same ground. But as a matter of fact the veriest landlubber can soon be made as serviceable on a modern ironclad as the smartest of fishermen. The fisherman was at home on a wooden man-of-war which had to trust to her sails and the good seamanship of her crew, but on board a huge vessel of steel propelled by steam he feels like the American Admiral in the story, as if he were going to Hades in a tea kettle.

The French bank fleet averages 200 sail, from 100 to 400 tons each. These are the fishing vessels proper. Then there are a number of freight vessels known as *longs-coureurs*, which bring supplies and carry back the green and dry cod. Green cod are those which have been cleaned, salted, and stowed away for early consumption. The dry cod are “made” on the islands by being placed on stones and exposed to the sun and wind, after having been cleaned and spit on board. This work is done by the *graviers*, boys and women, who get 50 cents a day. Most of the fishermen on the bank vessels work on shares, and average perhaps \$200 for the season for first-class hands, but the American practice of hiring for so much a month is coming into vogue. Three out of five bank and four out of five inshore fishermen are always in debt to the outfitter, or to the storekeeper who supplies their families on credit. The *livrets*, or agreements, between the outfitter, or owner, and the crew, between the storekeeper and the crew, and between the skipper, on one hand and the crew on the other, are intricate enough to puzzle a Philadelphia lawyer. In old days the rule was that the first skipper from Europe, whether Frenchman, Englishman, Spaniard, or mongrel, to reach the Newfoundland coast at the opening of the season should be recognized as the admiral of the fishery, that the second to arrive should be vice-admiral, and the third rear admiral, and that these three functionaries elected by the chance winds that blew them in ahead of the rest should decide all disputes and lay down the law not only with respect to agreements, indentures, and covenants affecting the fishermen, but also as to the rights of the coast population with whom they were brought in contact. It may be imagined that this was a rough-and-ready tribunal, but it was the best that could be established under the circumstances. Nowadays the magistrates of St. Pierre have jurisdiction in cases of dispute between the resident fishermen and the storekeepers. The bank fishermen look to their local courts in France, though the courts here sometimes intercede on their behalf.

The Town of St. Pierre

The islands are governed by a Governor, formerly called the Commandant, and a Council. The Governor is, of course, appointed from France, as are also the subordinate officials; the Council is elected by the people. At the last election there were 1,300 voters on the roll. The town of St. Pierre contains some good buildings. There is the stone town and the wooden town, both under the shadow of a gigantic cross, erected on an eminence known as Calvary. The place is dreadfully slow, except

when the crews of the French war vessels come ashore. A steamer runs to Halifax two or three times a month and another to St. John's, N. F. The Newfoundland coast at Fortune and Placentia bays can be seen almost any day. The fishermen say it is best seen just before rain. The Anglo-American and the French cable companies have offices there: their cables touch at l'anse à Pierre and l'anse à Ravenel, and there are several agencies of French commercial houses, besides a fair coasting business with Newfoundland and Cape Breton.

Fishing and Smuggling the Chief Occupations of Their Population

But the principal industry next to the fishery is smuggling. Last year the imports were valued at \$275 per head of the resident population. A considerable proportion was consumed by the fishermen from France, but by far the greater part was "reshipped." "Reshipped" is the local euphemism for putting the stuff aboard *galopeurs*, or small, fast-sailing craft that run to the Newfoundland coast between Fortune Bay and the east side of the Avalon peninsula, or up the Gulf of St. Lawrence as far as Orleans Island, just below the city of Quebec, and land it without going through the formality of paying customs duties to the Newfoundland and Dominion Governments. The Dominion Government has built a couple of gunboats to check the smuggling of alcohol into eastern Quebec, but there are very few seizures. The habitants and fishermen have no fault to find with the traffic, which tempers the despotism of the Toronto and Montreal distillers. The alcohol is said to be manufactured at or near Boston, and is stored here in bond. It is sold to the French Canadians at 60 cents per gallon and retailed, after being watered until it is below proof, at 5 cents a glass – not a small glass all sides and bottom, but a beer glass. Port wine, velvet, lace, brandy, and other articles direct from France are "re-shipped" from here, but as far as I can learn the United States revenue does not suffer to any great extent.

Waste of Herring Prior to the Bait Act⁴⁰⁷ (1896)

DEAR SIR, – I cannot agree with your remarks in Saturday's issue of your paper on the herring fishery in Fortune Bay. You attribute the present scarcity of herring to the Bait Act⁴⁰⁸. Nothing can be more unreasonable. Whatever may have been the hardships on the fishermen under the act – and I know there were many – it did not increase the wanton destruction of herrings, but, on the contrary, helped to lessen such. Referring to the evidence taken on the operation of

⁴⁰⁷ From Observer. (1896, February 11). THE HERRING FISHERY. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

⁴⁰⁸ "A THIRD correspondent thinks both fish and herring have been scared out of the Bay by "the frolicsome conduct of the *Fiona*." What with chasing the bait carriers about while the said Act was in force, and hunting for smugglers more recently, she has terrorized the finny tribes and frightened them away from their natural habitats." EDITORIAL NOTES. (1896, February 8). *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

THE WASHINGTON TREATY⁴⁰⁹,

it was given in sworn evidence of respectable planters⁴¹⁰ and fishermen that one thousand barrels were sometimes kept enclosed in large seines for from three to six weeks, waiting purchasers and for an opportunity to sell at St. Pierre, the result being that large proportions of the herrings perished. It was also stated that heaps of these dried herrings had been measured by sinking a pole and were ascertained to

MEASURE FIFTEEN FEET.

The experienced men in Fortune Bay, at the same time referred to, gave it as their opinion that such practices could not fail to drive the herrings from the bay. The system complained about had not been pursued to anything like the same extent in Placentia Bay, but no doubt will be adopted there and with the same results, if not prevented by prompt action of the Legislature. You also state that previous to the passing of the Bait Act French Fishermen went to Fortune Bay and purchased their bait there. They did not need to do so, for our people stocked the market with a triple supply of bait, every year

THROWING OVERBOARD MANY CARGOES

they could not sell. The average returns to the fishermen of Fortune Bay from the St. Pierre bait-trade did not yield 10 cents a day per man; but it was attractive in its speculative character, there being a few prizes to be drawn, and thus it enticed the many away from their legitimate avocation – codfishing. Eventually, all the appliances for the prosecution of this latter fishery were neglected, so that when the Bait Act came into force comparatively few were equipped for the codfishery – the very method of which many of them had forgotten, and thus the herring fishery was ruined, which if properly worked, would assume a value closely approaching, if not fully equal, to the cod fishery.

The Aftermath of the Bait Act⁴¹¹ (1896)

By early 1896, French cod was already threatening to compete with Newfoundland's product in Europe. Of special concern was that the Portuguese (Oporto) market was threatened. For over a century, Newfoundland engaged in a profitable triangular trade brining goods from Britain to Newfoundland, dried cod from Newfoundland to Portugal, and wine and dried cod from Portugal to Britain.

DEAR SIR, – I am pleased to note your correspondent's ("Observer") letter on the Fortune Bay question, and your moderate editorial notes thereon. It certainly looks as though the destructive method pursued in that bay had brought its inevitable

⁴⁰⁹ The Treaty of Washington was signed in 1871. In exchange for a one-time payment of \$5.5 million and free access to the US market for Canadian fish, the US was allowed to make use of Canada's inshore fishery for 12 years.

⁴¹⁰ A year-long resident of Newfoundland, as opposed to a migratory fisher. Planters often owned small boats and hired fishing crews, if they did not fish themselves.

⁴¹¹ From H. (1896, February 13). OUR GREAT STAPLE. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

and, I had almost said, deserved result. Another matter is, however, touched on which suggests these few observations. The French of Saint Pierre had

A GREAT BLOW DEALT THEM

by the Bait Act. There can hardly be a question about that. We have heard little of their competition since that Act was put in force until very recently. They had a good year in Saint Pierre in 1895. They have very largely added to their banking fleet, and next Spring will show

A GREATLY INCREASED OUTFIT.

Their experience has shown that the bait preserved over the winter is of little value. They believe that the Bait Act will not be enforced in 1896. They are relying absolutely on Newfoundlanders for their first baiting. There is no preserved bait at all now in St. Pierre. We have in our power the means of dealing them a great blow; and forbearance on our part will but

WORK OUR OWN DESTRUCTION.

Letters from fish agents in Europe and London again begin ominously to mention French fish. We hear that next Spring, with the aid of the drying process recently put in operation in Saint Pierre, they are going to make an attempt to wrest the Oporto market from us – a market in which we have never before had much competition from them. We shall unquestionably meet their fish once more in Spain and Italy

WITH RUINOUS RESULTS.

What effect this sort of thing is likely to have on the value of Newfoundland produce is not difficult to foresee. Nor is it difficult to judge of the effect that another small cut in values is going to have on this colony. What a year would 1895 have been for Newfoundland had fish been worth only another shilling. The colony cannot complain of it, as it was, but one can only sigh when one thinks what it might have been. The above are hard facts. The question is: What are we going to do about it?

“Anglo-French relations”⁴¹² (1899)

I am now able to lay before the readers of the *Morning Post* the views of another leading authority on the Newfoundland Question. My informant on this occasion is M. Emile Riotteau, Deputy for La Manche, and himself, as senior partner in the firm of Messrs. Riotteau et fils, one of the largest ship-owners in the Newfoundland fishing industry. Mr. Riotteau’s qualification to speak on the subject of the French Shore has a solid basis. The firm of Riotteau was founded at St. Pierre in 1826, and the present M. Riotteau counts 15 years of active service at the Fisheries. The honorable Deputy began by assuring me that he meant to speak in a spirit of conciliation, an intention fully borne out, I think, in his explanation of the case. This fact is all the more noteworthy from the probability that anything like ill-feeling on the French side among the fishermen, if it existed, would certainly have found expression in the statement of a directly interested party. [...]

⁴¹² From ANGLO-FRENCH RELATIONS. (1899, January 19). *Morning Post* (London), p. 5.

THE FRENCH FISHING FLEET

“Four or five centuries ago,” said M. Riotteau, “long before Newfoundland was officially discovered, vessels used to leave the French coast to fish on its banks and shores. The industry is a historical one as regards our coast. Beginning in the North, we find that Fécamp sends many vessels yearly to Newfoundland, and following the coast line we come successively to St. Valérie en Caux, Granville, St. Malo, St. Servan, and all the Brittany ports as far as Paimpol. Nantes has recently entered the lists, but thereafter there is a blank until Bordeaux and Bayonne are reached.”

“At Newfoundland,” M. Riotteau continued, “the Fishing Fleet has always followed the fish, which sometimes resort to one place, sometimes to another. To-day they are on the Bank, to-morrow they may be elsewhere. The present period of absence from the French Shore is the longest on record, but intervals of variation in the migration have already occurred. The fact that one is never sure of where one may have to fish is exemplified by the French ship-owners having formed a search and observation Syndicate to support a vessel whose mission is to survey the fishing grounds and report on the movements of the fish.”

THE MIGRATORY CODFISH

“Is there no scientific explanation for the movements of the cod?” I asked. “Where do they come from, and where do they go to?”

“If you will tell me that,” replied M. Riotteau, laughing, “we will go into partnership at once, and make large fortunes. Certain facts are known, however. In the Spring the cod follow and feed on the herring. Now the herring is an uncertain fish. Either the shoals come or they do not. One is never sure what route they will follow. With the capelin it is different. They start from the West Indies and arrive on the South Coast of Newfoundland. The cod follow and proceed along the coast Northwards depositing their eggs. If the shoals keep to the Newfoundland side, so much the better for the Newfoundlanders. If they keep to the other side, so much the better for the French fishermen.”

BAIT A NECESSITY

“Bait,” went on M. Riotteau, “is naturally one of the necessities of a fisherman’s trade. I should like, incidentally, to point out that there are never any disputes between the fishermen themselves. All the agitation is caused by a few traders who would like to pull all the bedclothes to their side of the bed. I have said that bait was a necessity. Well, to show the St. John’s methods of competition, four hundred vessels starting from St. Pierre used to purchase their bait from the inhabitants of the South Coast of Newfoundland. The value, 1,000,000 fr., was paid in cash or in goods as the bait sellers wished. This point is important for the following reason: some thirty or forty merchants of St. John’s formed a kind of fish ring [cartel], and only gave goods in exchange for the cod. They held all the Newfoundland fishermen in the hollow of their hand. I will not speak unkindly of them;” said M. Riotteau, “we have been competitors, and I do not know if the same truck system still pertains. But anyhow, the St. John’s merchants did not like the French fishermen paying in cash for what they wanted. This jealousy of their commercial rivals was further supplemented by a desire to be free to exploit the country as they chose – in a word, to be masters in their

own home – and the result was the Bait Bill, forbidding the sale of bait. It was hoped this measure would destroy the French industry.”

RESULTS OF THE BAIT BILL

“The Bait Bill caused us heavy losses, but we took no action of any kind, as we considered the Newfoundlanders had the right to do as they pleased. Besides injuring us, the Bill caused the population of Newfoundland to lose the 1,000,000 fr. Hitherto received for bait, and, moreover, it cost the Colony 700,000 fr. A year for steamers to see that no contraband trade was carried on along the coast. Another result was to stimulate the ingenuity of the French fishermen. Necessity, as you know, is the mother of invention. We looked for bait elsewhere, and we found that the cod would take the large whelks found at the bottom of the sea on the Banks themselves. Moreover, it was soon obvious that the fish actually preferred this fresh bait to the salted varieties brought from Newfoundland. The bad action turned, therefore, against its authors, for when they realized the situation and wished to draw back it was too late. During this period we also, of course, took bait on the French shore. To-day we may buy bait once again in the South Coast ports, but we must go to fetch it, as the Newfoundlanders are not allowed to bring it to the fishing fleet. This is a disadvantage, since the ships are obliged to leave the fishing grounds or else to detail men to take the large whelks. The last-named course is expensive, but has the merit of independence. The whole effect of the Bait Bill has been to sacrifice the population of Newfoundland to the interested miscalculation of a few would-be monopolists.”

ABANDONMENT OF RIGHTS IMPOSSIBLE

“It is not possible that we should give up our French shore rights. We might then at any time be practically at the mercy of our competitors, as the whelks cannot be depended on exclusively. Moreover, the fish may return to the Shore any season, and besides there is the lobster industry, which is likely to become very important.”

“What harm,” I inquired, “would result from the Newfoundlanders being allowed to exploit the mines and timber on the French shore?”

Mr. Riotteau replied that the cod lays its eggs close to the Shore, and that a movement of steamers back and forth would disturb the fish. Moreover, the nets would be interfered with. The method of fishing on the French Shore differs from that of the Grand Banks. On the Banks, lines are used. Along the French Shore the fish are netted in the Bays. M. Riotteau himself once saw sixty thousand shrimp herrings taken in a single cast.

“I have not heard,” he said, “that the forest could be profitably worked, and, of course, you know that cereals cannot be grown among the Newfoundland fogs. Even on the South Coast there are no industries worth speaking of. Everybody lives on the Fisheries. The men catch the cod. The women dry them.”

ROOM FOR ALL

“But there is room for everybody. If they have found copper mines, as I hear, at one or two places, some kind of arrangements can surely be come to. The French Shore is long enough. I fear, however, that that is not the object. The St. John’s merchants simply wish to drive us away altogether, and any excuse is good enough. Our departure would do no good to the general population of Newfoundland, and,

after all, our yearly catch represents only one million quintals, and our principal market is France. We are only small competitors if the matter be looked at from that point of view. But the interests we have at stake are large and cannot be displaced. The fishing is carried on one thousand eight hundred miles from home by a Fleet worth 50,000,000 fr. At the lowest estimate. The ships are totally useless for anything else except, if you like, firewood. Then there is the fitting out, in home ports, stores, and so forth causing a movement of 100,000,000 fr. I consider the Newfoundland Industry represents a commercial value to France of a *milliard* francs.”

NO RACIAL HOSTILITY

“Something has been said of the Military value of St. Pierre and Michelon, and in Great Britain a disposition has been shown to exaggerate the range of a contradiction⁴¹³ issued by Admiral Reveillère. Certainly neither of the Islands – I had almost said rocks – possesses any. There are four thousand inhabitants on St. Pierre, and they depend for their provisions, &c., on the neighboring British Colonies like St. Edward’s Island. We are their tributaries to the extent of 5,000,000 fr. A year. I would insist,” added M. Riotteau, “on the harmony between our populations. They intermarry, help each other reciprocally out of difficulties, and live like the best of friends. There are fights, of course, between man and man, just as there might be between two Frenchmen, but there is no International hostility. Two men from St. Pierre who called on me this week were named Fitzgerald and M’Laughlin. But to come back to Admiral Reveillère. He is an idolater of Great Britain. Have you ever read his book entitled ‘The French in Indo-China’? If you like flattery, get it. Admiral Reveillère may think sailor-men have no value until they have passed through his hands, but surely a fisherman ought to make a better man-o’-warman than a ploughman.”

MODUS VIVENDI, BUT NOT CESSION

M. Riotteau remarked that hitherto the largest toleration had existed in Newfoundland, and concluded as follows:-

“Although we are not making a great outcry over the present desire to interfere with our rights in Newfoundland, it must not be imagined that we are indifferent. Like the British, we Normans are not demonstrative; but we have lodged the most energetic protests on the subject with our Government. I do not see why Nations like France and Great Britain should be driven into a dispute by private interests. The matter is not at all a grave one, but attempts are being made to make it so, notably by stirring up opinion in the newspapers. The two peoples, as I have said, live very quietly and very comfortably together. No, I cannot regard the cession of French rights as possible. That is mere talk. If the Newfoundlanders have serious claims to put forward I am confident a *modus vivendi* will be found. The New Hebrides? What on earth use would the New Hebrides be to our cod fishermen?”

⁴¹³ “Rear-Admiral Réveillère has addressed the following letter to the *Matin* from Brest: ‘[...]In reply to assertions far too widely spread, I declare positively – with the certainty of not being contradicted by any of the officers knowing the Newfoundland Station – that the French Shore has no kind of interest whatsoever for our Navy.’” THE NEWFOUNDLAND QUESTION. (1899, January 4). *Morning Post* (London), p. 5.



Whelk shells gathered off the coast of Newfoundland – In response to the Bait Act, French fishers at St. Pierre & Michelon briefly used whelks as a substitute for fresh bait. *From the collection of, and photographed by, Chris Willmore.*

CONFLICT WITH THE UNITED STATES

“The prohibition of the Yankees”⁴¹⁴ (1776)

Before I leave the Banks, it is my duty to inform you, that since I have been engaged in this fishery I never before experienced such a season. The prohibition of the Yankees seems rather to have increased than diminished the numbers of vessels. As we spend most of our time in fogs, I cannot say their exact amount, but Admiral Montagu, our Governor, has been very solicitous to ascertain the quantity of fish brought on shore at St. John’s, and upon an average they appear to have been daily 600,000 cod. These are all dried on stages, and called *baccalo*; besides an equal number, I suppose, are daily caught and pickled on board, called mud fish. Multiply these by the number of days our fishery continues, and you would imagine the ocean (immense as it is) would be exhausted.

We have not been without apprehensions of a visit from the Yankees, especially as Adm. Montagu left himself bare of force for the relief of Quebec, having on his arrival here dispatched the Surprise and Martin, two of his squadron, whose passage was attended with the utmost peril, but happily contributed to the preservation of the place: However, we have had no occasion to lament their absence, as the Admiral has kept a special good look-out. By his prudent attention to the adventurers we have been free from impositions, and furnished with all necessaries at a very reasonable rate. I am bound up the Straits in a few days, and hope to find a good market; my ship being chuck full.

“In case of necessity”⁴¹⁵ (1789)

Newfoundland was prohibited to import provisions from the United States, except in case of approved necessity⁴¹⁶, as shown below. This importation had to take place in British ships navigated by British subjects.

The KING’s Most Excellent Majesty in Council.

WHEREAS by an act passed in the twenty-eighth year of the reign of his present Majesty, entitled, “An act for regulating the trade between the subjects of his Majesty’s colonies and plantations in North America, and in the West India islands and the countries belonging to the United States of America; and between his

⁴¹⁴ From Captain Brown. (1776, September 21). Extract of a letter from Captain Brown, of the *Fælix*, to Mr. Finch, his owner, at Dartmouth. Newfoundland, Aug. 16th. *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, p. 3.

⁴¹⁵ From the LONDON GAZETTE. (1789, May 23). *Independent Gazetteer*, p. 2.

⁴¹⁶ Quebec was the British Parliament’s preferred North American source of provisions for Newfoundland, but it sometimes lacked the capacity to do so: “Mr. Cruger [...] was last year in Philadelphia, when he saw two ships laden with flour for Quebec, which was purchased at the former places for 13s. 2d. per cwt. and sold at the latter for 1l. 2s. This, in his opinion, was a proof that Quebec was not so fully adequate to the [task of] supplying Newfoundland with that commodity”. House of Commons. (1785, February 18). *Chelmsford Chronicle*, p. 2.

Majesty's said subjects and the foreign islands in the West Indies," it is, amongst other things, enacted, that it shall and may be lawful for his Majesty in Council, by order or orders, to be issued and published from time to time, to authorize, or by warrant or warrants under his sign manual, to empower the governor of Newfoundland for the time being to authorize, in case of necessity, the importation into Newfoundland of bread, flour, Indian corn, and live stock, from any of the territories belonging to the said United States, for the supply of the inhabitants and fishermen of the island of Newfoundland, for the then ensuing season only; provided always, that such bread, flour, Indian corn, and live stock, so authorized to be imported into the island of Newfoundland, shall not be imported, except in conformity to such rules, regulations and restrictions as shall be specified in such order or orders, warrant or warrants respectively, and except by British subjects, and in British ships owned by his Majesty's subjects, and navigated according to the law:

And whereas it is expedient and necessary that provision be made for fully supplying the inhabitants and fishermen of the island of Newfoundland for the ensuing season with bread, flour, and Indian corn; his Majesty does thereupon, by and with the advice of his Privy Council, hereby order and declare, that for the supply of the inhabitants and fishermen of the island of Newfoundland, for the ensuing season only, bread, flour, and Indian corn, be imported into the said island from any of the territories belonging to the United States, by British subjects, and in British built ships owned by his Majesty's subjects, and navigated according to law, and which shall, within the space of seven months previous to the time of such importation, have cleared out from some port in Great Britain, or some other port of his Majesty's dominions in Europe, for which purpose a license shall have been granted by the Commissioners of his Majesty's Customs in England or Scotland, or the Commissioners of his Majesty's Revenue in Ireland, or any other person or persons who may be duly authorized in that kingdom respectively, in the manner and form herein after mentioned; which licenses shall continue and be in force for seven calendar months from the day of the date upon which they are respectively granted, and no longer; provided that no such license, as aforesaid, granted after the 30th day of June, 1789, shall be of any force or effect:

And his Majesty is hereby further pleased to order, that the master or person having the charge or command of any ship or vessel to whom such license shall be granted, shall, upon the arrival of the said ship or vessel at the port, harbor, or place in the island of Newfoundland, where he shall discharge such bread, flour, or Indian corn, deliver up the said license to the Collector or other proper Officer of the Customs there, having first endorsed on the back of such license the marks, numbers, and contents of each package of bread, flour, or Indian corn, under the penalty of the forfeiture in the said act mentioned.

And the Collector or other proper Officer of the Customs at Newfoundland is hereby enjoined and required to give a certificate to the master or person having the charge or command of such ship or vessel of his, having received the said license, so endorsed as before directed, and to transmit the same to the Commissioners of his

Majesty's Customs in England or Scotland, or to the Commissioners of his Majesty's Revenue in Ireland respectively, by whom such license we granted.

The Nabby and American independence⁴¹⁷ (1818)

An American fishing vessel, called the Nabby, has been formally condemned by the judge of the court of vice admiralty [at Halifax], and delivered over to the principal officers of the customs for sale and distribution, according to law; the ground of the condemnation was an infraction of the British laws of navigation and trade, in taking fish on the coast of the Newfoundland. [...] The decree of the judge [allegedly] abstains from denying the right of the United States to take fish on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and all other places in the sea. Does it indeed? Truly we [Americans] are under particular obligation that the maritime courts of Great Britain do not interdict us from the use of the great highway of nations; that they do not decree that the open sea is appropriated to her own exclusive benefit.

As to the ground Great Britain has now assumed for the justification of her late seizures and condemnation of our fishing vessels, we venture to say that what appears a sufficient justification in her own eyes, will be regarded in a very different light by the American government. The following is the opinion of Mr. King, on a late occasion, as expressed in his own language:-

“As regards the fisheries, those of the ocean, not within the territorial limits of any nation, are free to all men who have not renounced their rights; those on the coast, and bays of the provinces, conquered in America, from France, were acquired by the common sword, and mingled blood, of Americans and Englishmen: members of the same empire, we, with them, had a common right to these fisheries; and, in the division of the empire, England confirmed our title without condition or limitation – a title, equally irrevocable with those of our boundaries, or of independence itself.”

*Littusque rogamus innocuum, et cunctis, undanque, auramque patentem.*⁴¹⁸

What American, I ask, hesitates whether he shall adopt this language?

The Nabby, a Treaty, and the War of 1812⁴¹⁹ (1818)

Halifax, Aug. 22.

On Monday Judge Uniakre gave judgment, in the Court of Vice-Admiralty, against the schooner Nabby, an American fishing vessel, condemning her, with her cargo, tackle, &c. for an infraction of the British laws of Navigation, and ordered her to be delivered over to the officers of his Majesty's customs for sale and distribution, according to law. It appeared in evidence, that the Nabby had not only taken fish on

⁴¹⁷ From The Fisheries. (1818, September 11). *New York Evening Post*, p. 2.

⁴¹⁸ Latin for (very roughly) “We ask the shore and breeze remain harmless and open to all.”

⁴¹⁹ From AMERICAN FISHERMEN. (1818, September 21). *Vermont Intelligencer*, p. 2.

the coast, but that she had been found at anchor in one of the harbors, into which she had not been driven by stress of weather, or any other fortuitous circumstance.

The learned Judge took a very extensive view of the subject in all its bearings – from which it clearly appeared, that the *permission* granted by the treaty of 1783, to Americans, to take fish on the coasts of the British Colonies, and to make the fish so taken in the *uninhabited* harbors of Nova Scotia, &c., could not be construed into a *permanent right*, but expired with the Treaty, which was broken and destroyed by the American declaration of war in 1812. The Washington and Rover schooners, similarly situated, have also been condemned and ordered to be sold and distributed.

Sept. 1

The decree of condemnation of the American fishing vessels, it will be seen, does not affect the *pretensions* of the Americans to fish on the Grand Bank of Newfoundland, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and all other places in the sea. They were condemned for fishing in British waters, in violation of British laws. On this subject Judge Uniacke [sic.] said, “It would seem that the intention of the British government, in 1783, was to acknowledge *an absolute right* to fish on the Banks, the Gulf,” &c. but the Court was not now called upon to determine that point. As far as relates to that part of the treaty of 1783, which gave the Americans liberty to fish on the coasts, bays, and creeks of his Majesty’s dominions, and to cure fish on their shores, most undoubtedly, he repeated, that privilege ceased when the American government violated the treaty by its subsequent declaration of war; and he added, “that he felt himself bound to declare, that the treaty of 1783, and all the privileges depending thereon, had ceased.”

The following is the article of the Treaty of Peace of 1783, alluded to in the above case: “Art. III. It is agreed, that the people of the United States shall continue to enjoy, unmolested, the *right* to take fish of every kind on the Grand Bank, and on the other *banks* of Newfoundland; also in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and all other places in the sea, where the inhabitants of both countries used at any time heretofore to fish. And *also*, that the inhabitants of the United States shall have *liberty* to take fish of every kind on such part of the *coast* of Newfoundland, as British fishermen shall use (but not to dry or cure the same on that island), and also on the coasts, bays, and creeks, of all other of his Britannic Majesty’s dominions in America: and that the American fishermen shall have liberty to dry and cure fish in any of the unsettled bays, harbors, and creeks, of Nova Scotia, [the] Magdalene Islands, and Labrador, *so long as the same shall remain unsettled*; but so soon as the same, or either of them, shall be settled, it shall now be lawful for the said fishermen to dry or cure fish at such settlement, without a previous agreement for that purpose, with the inhabitants, proprietors, or possessors of the ground.”

REMARK

This is the first adjudication of the kind in the British Courts, and is an event of no small importance. The fisheries thus interdicted to us [Americans], are considered by many interested in them as more convenient, and, at times, much more valuable, than those of the Grand Bank, &c. – The subject, therefore, is brought home to the citizens of the Northern States, and the whole Union cannot be indifferent to

any thing which affects the great nursery of hardy American seamen. Besides, while things remain in their present situation, the fishermen may be subject to much perplexity and loss, while they suppose themselves engaged in the prosecution of a lawful business. Their *right* to fish in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, it seems, is not contested; but who is to decide where the Gulf ends, and where the bays which make a part of it begin? A bay may be considered a gulf on a limited scale; and we are confident there are fishing grounds which will be used, which will puzzle Judge Uniacke or any other Judge, to say, if they are in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the bays of Chaleur, or Miramichi, or the strait of Belleisle.

Is it not to be hoped, then, that these condemnations of American fishermen will bring the subject of fishing privileges into serious discussion between the governments of Great Britain and the United States; and that the latter will attempt, by a liberal negotiation, to regain, if lost, a privilege so essential and convenient to a large, industrious and enterprising class of citizens; or at least, to obtain such explanations on the subject, as will prevent them from unwittingly exposing themselves to capture, and their vessels to condemnation? We trust it will. Mr. Monroe and the Secretary of State, know the importance of protecting the fishing interest, and we are satisfied, will not negotiate any thing which can seriously affect it. They will prefer a manly negotiation of the subject, to scolding or name-calling in the papers.

But is the doctrine a sound one, that a rupture between two nations necessarily annihilates all engagements and contracts existing between them, of the nature of the privilege in question? By the same treaty of 1783, the British king acknowledged the *Independence* of the United States, and “all claims to the government, proprietary and territorial rights of the same, and every part thereof” – Did the late recognition of war annul this recognition? And are these “free, sovereign and independent States,” thus recognized, now to be considered as colonies? The idea must be spurned at; and yet upon the principle assumed by Judge Uniacke “the pretension” might easily be set up. We know there are those who will see these cursory remarks and queries, who can give very satisfactory answers on the subject.

The Halifax papers speak of “*pretensions*” of the Americans to fish on the Grand Bank, &c. This is very silly. The *Banks* are in the open sea – the highway of nations – and are the common property of all mankind – and the right of the U.S. to use them, never has, *and never can* with impunity, be called in question, by England or any other nation. The Halifax Editor may be excused for endeavoring to blend this *established right* with the *treaty privilege* which is interdicted; for we have found that Duane, the Editor of the *Aurora* – who, because he has a *knack* at spinning out an infinite deal of slang words and cant phrases, “signifying nothing,” on many topics, makes pretensions to great penetration and “perspicacity” – has more than once committed the *stupid blunder* of denominating the interdiction of the *in-shore fishery* the infringement of our *right to fish on the Grand Banks*.

It will be recollected, that numerous fishing vessels have been sent into Halifax on the plea of having violated the law, but prior to the above condemnation, have all been dismissed, with a caution not to trespass again.

“Irritated the people of the United States”⁴²⁰ (1818)

It appears that the recent condemnation in the Vice-Admiralty Court at Halifax, of three American vessels, the Nabby, Washington, and Raven, for fishing on the coasts, bays, and creeks of the British dominions, has a good deal irritated the people of the United States; and the accounts from Washington state that the matter will undoubtedly give occasion to a discussion between the two countries.

Mr. J. Q. Adams, the Secretary of State, with many legal advisers, it is said, have given it as their opinion, that the decision of Judge Uniac [sic.], of the Admiralty Court at Halifax, which was grounded on the Article of the Treaty of Peace of 1783, giving liberty to the Americans to fish on the British Coasts, &c. was highly improper. The letters from Washington assert that it is supposed the American Government will contend for the continuance of the right to fish on the Coasts within the jurisdiction of Great Britain, because in the Treaty of Peace of 1783, there was a division of sovereignty between the two nations. The right of fishing, they say, within the dominion of Great Britain was a sovereign right, which the Treaty of Peace invested in the United States of America with, at their contest as a nation, which no subsequent declaration of war can impair, and which must be taken away by conquest or relinquished, but can never be extinguished as a matter of course.

United States fishing rights in Newfoundland⁴²¹ (1814)

Like the French, the Americans had been granted limited rights to the Newfoundland fisheries as early as the Second Treaty of Paris of 1783, which marked the end of the American Revolution. These rights made them important competitors to British fishers and merchants.

To the Right Hon. the Lords of his Majesty’s most Hon. Privy Council for Trade, the Memorial of the Committee of Merchants interested in the Trade, Navigation, and Fisheries, of the Island of Newfoundland, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and on the Coast of Labrador, humbly shows, that your Lordship’s Memorialists presented to the Right Hon. the Earls of Liverpool and Bathurst, early in the present year, [...] a Statement in regard to those Fisheries, and most earnestly entreating them, in the event of any Treaty of Peace⁴²² being made, to preserve to British subjects, on their own coasts and shores, the valuable *exclusive* Fishery which they then enjoyed.

⁴²⁰ From FOREIGN. (1818, October 17). *The Huntingdon, Bedford, Cambridge and Peterborough Gazette*, p. 4.

⁴²¹ From Hunt, H. et al. (1819, April 7). Memorial presented by the committee of merchants interested in the trade, navigation, and fisheries of Newfoundland, in 1814, before the peace with America. *The London Morning Post*, p. 2.

⁴²² The Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812, would be signed by Britain and the United States on December 24, 1814. It made no mention of the Newfoundland fishery, but the Commercial Treaty of 1815 would ease restrictions on trade between the United States and Britain.

Anxious once more to draw the attention of his Majesty's Government to the Fisheries in question, particularly since those carried on by the French are replaced on the advantageous footing of 1792⁴²³, your Lordship's Memorialists humbly submit the following observations, to shew the injustice and impolicy of re-admitting the Citizens of the United States to any participation in the Fisheries of Newfoundland, of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and along the Labrador Shore.

Your Memorialists feel that the re-admission of the French must materially affect the British Fisheries; but if the Americans are permitted to regain the advantages they have heretofore enjoyed, your Memorialists have no hesitation in asserting to your Lordships, that the British Trade and Fisheries of those places mentioned must, in no remote period, be inevitably lost to this country.

The Inhabitants of the United States possessed great advantages over the British. The third article of the Treaty of Peace of 1783⁴²⁴ gave them the right of fishing not only on the Grand Bank, on all other Banks of Newfoundland, and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but at *all other places in the Sea, where the Inhabitants of both Countries used, at any time heretofore, to fish*, and even the liberty to take Fish on the Coasts, Bays, and Creeks, of his Britannic Majesty's Dominions in America, including *Newfoundland and the Coast of Labrador, wherever British Fishermen shall use*; and to dry and cure Fish in any of the unsettled bays, harbors, and creeks of Labrador, Nova Scotia, and the Magdalen Islands. The advantages possessed by the French were enjoyed in a tenfold degree by the Americans; for it may be safely affirmed that the outfit of their vessels, and their whole equipment, did not amount to one half of the expense incurred in British shipping, more particularly in the article of provisions: they have not only open to them, equally with British subjects, the Ports of Spain, Portugal, and Italy, but they have been even afforded markets for nearly two hundred thousand quintals of fish in the British Islands and Settlements in the West Indies; added to which, they possess the still more important advantage, that of proximity to their fisheries, which, in 1791, Mr. Jefferson⁴²⁵ brought forward measures to render more extensively useful, and to which, in 1812, the State of

⁴²³ As mentioned elsewhere in this text, the Treaty of Paris of 1814 restored France's Newfoundland fishery to the status it had enjoyed in 1792.

⁴²⁴ "It is agreed that the people of the United States shall continue to enjoy unmolested the right to take fish of every kind on the Grand Bank and on all the other Banks of Newfoundland, also in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and at all other places in the sea, where the inhabitants of both countries used at any time heretofore to fish. And also that the inhabitants of the United States shall have liberty to take fish of every kind on such part of the coast of Newfoundland as British fishermen shall use (but not to dry or cure the same on that island) and also on the coasts, bays & creeks of all other of his Britannic Majesty's dominions in America; and that the American fishermen shall have liberty to dry and cure fish in any of the unsettled bays, harbors and creeks of Nova Scotia, the Magdalen Islands, and Labrador, so long as the same shall remain unsettled, but so soon as the same or either of them shall be settled, it shall not be lawful for the said fishermen to dry or cure fish at such settlement without a previous agreement for the purpose with the inhabitants, proprietors, or possessors of the ground." From the Treaty of Paris, 1783; International Treaties and Related Records, 1778-1974; General Records of the United States Government, Record Group 11; National Archives.

⁴²⁵ Thomas Jefferson (1743 – 1826), president of the United States from 1801 to 1809.

Massachusetts, in their Address to Congress, ascribe the principal source of wealth to the United States.

To enter somewhat more into detail of the American Fisheries, your Memorialists beg to state, that from the causes above mentioned, they have increased with a rapidity beyond example.

That in 1791, according to the official statement, the American export of dry and green fish amounted to about 390,000 quintals, and its value, including oil, to One Million Six Hundred and Fifty-Six Thousand Four Hundred and Eighty dollars.

That in 1803 the same official document gives the export of 490,000 quintals, and the value to have exceeded Two Million Six Hundred Thousand dollars.

That in 1807 the export was stated to have reached 520,000 quintals, and the value above three million four hundred thousand dollars; and, from the best information your Memorialists have been able to obtain of the state of the American Fishery since that year, they believe they are fully warranted in stating, that above 2000 sail of schooners were of late put into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, 1400 of which caught and cured their fish on the coast of Labrador, employing above 15,000 seamen and fishermen therein, and returning to the United States about six millions of dollars.

That the increase of shipping in seven of the principal ports of the New England States would seem to confirm the above, the official documents stating the increase at above one hundred thousand tons in ten years, from 1794 to 1804 – from 158,964 tons to 259,180 tons: and that it has continued to increase in an equal proportion, on a comparison with the whole of the shipping of the United States.

That the American Government has ever been particularly jealous of their own waters, from which British shipping were always excluded; and as the present war has annulled the Treaty of Peace of 1783, that it will neither be just nor politic to grant to the subjects of the United States, in any future Treaty, a renewal of the right to catch or cure fish on or near the coasts of any of the possessions of his Britannic Majesty in North America; that they ought not, on any account, hereafter be permitted to enter or pass through the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and be excluded altogether from the British Islands and Colonies in the West Indies.

Your Memorialists have no need to mention the vexatious conduct which has too often characterized the Americans in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and along the Labradore Shore, as they believe such has already been ably exposed to your Lordships; but they beg to state, that they must expect a continuance thereof, unless the Americans are entirely precluded from all interference in the Fisheries bordering on the British possession, and are confined to their own extensive and valuable shores.

When your Memorialists addressed themselves to Lord Liverpool, in January last, submitting to his Lordship, from the information they had been able to collect, their ideas of the value of the British fisheries, they had had no opportunity of seeing the official statement of last year's trade; they now find they had considerably underrated the same, and beg to state their opinion, that the actual value of the exports exceeded two millions seven hundred thousand pounds, all taken from the sea; that

the quantity of shipping employed amounted to nearly eighty thousand tons, and the number of seamen and fishermen above sixteen thousand, being an increase beyond all expectation, and arising entirely from the exclusion of the Americans from any participation therein.

That in 1809 the number of British vessels was 438, amounting to [missing] tons; that the quantity of fish exported was 540,050 quintals, and about 2400 tons of oil. That in 1813 the number of ships had increased to 566, equal to 77,768 tons. The export of fish amounted to 863,097 quintals, and that the shipment of oil was above 5900 tons, exclusive of nearly eighty thousand quintals of fish, an adequate proportion of oil, and a requisite quantity of tonnage for the export thereof from the district of Fortune Bay and the coast of Labradore, from which no returns for last year appear to have been received: increasing the total export of fish to near one million of quintals, and employing above eighty thousand tons of shipping.

That from the increased exertions made during the present season, there is every reason to believe that the fishery will be very considerably extended, above three thousand youngsters, or fresh men, having been sent from Waterford alone to Newfoundland, and a great increase from this country.

That your Memorialists have every right to expect this rapid improvement will continue, and that a favourable turn will also be given to the settlers in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, provided the Americans are confined in their fisheries, *to their own coasts and shores*; while, on the contrary, if the subjects of the United States are permitted to resume their fishery, by virtue of any Treaty containing an Article as disgraceful as the third Article of the Treaty of 1783, your Memorialists have no hesitation in assuring your Lordships, that the decrease of the British fisheries, and the ruin of those persons engaged therein, will be more rapid than has been the increase and the benefits this country has derived from them.

Your Memorialists therefore humbly pray your Lordships will be pleased to take their case into your early consideration; and they hope that your Lordships, sensible of the great advantages which are derived from British fisheries, will strenuously recommend to his Majesty's Government the entire exclusion of the Americans from fishing on or near the British coasts and shores of his Majesty's possessions in North America and Labradore, as being absolutely necessary for preserving the trade and fisheries thereof to this Country.

And your Memorialists, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Signed by HENRY HUNT, Chairman,

London, 29th July, 1814.

And the others of the Committee.

Competition and the Convention of 1818⁴²⁶ (1819)

The treaty that established the 49th parallel as the boundary between the United States and Canada also granted fishing rights in Newfoundland to the United States⁴²⁷.

The Memorial of the Committee of Merchants trading from London and the different Ports of the Kingdom with the Island of Newfoundland and its Dependencies, humbly shows, that your Lordship's Memorialists, in consequence of a prevalent idea that a negotiation for a peace is now pending, beg leave to submit to your Lordship their views of the vast importance of the Fisheries carried on at Newfoundland, the Islands adjacent, along the Coast of Labrador, and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence – Fisheries which have very considerably increased since the exclusions by war, of other nations from a participation therein, and which, it is fair to believe, are only now in a state of comparative infancy, if such exclusion be continued.

In the first instance, your Memorialists beg to point out the immense extent of the American Fisheries, when the existing dispute with the United States commenced a trade, as Lord Sheffield very justly observes, which has been computed at one-third, or nearly one-half of the amount of value of the remittances from the New England States, and which they will continue to enjoy, in proportion to the neglect or encouragement of our own Fisheries. To this part of their commerce the Government of the United States has given the greatest encouragement, by bounties on the tonnage of vessels employed therein, and by a heavy duty on all fish not of their own catch, imported even for exportation. They have to state, that in the year 1811, the Americans employed 1500 sail of vessels, from 50 to 100 tons burthen each, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and along the Coast of Labrador only, navigated on an average by ten men – a nursery, in that part of their Fisheries alone, equal to the increase of

⁴²⁶ From Committee of Merchants trading from London and the different Ports of the Kingdom with the Island of Newfoundland and its Dependencies. (1819, April 7). Memorial Presented by the Merchants Trading to Newfoundland, before the conclusion of peace with France and America. *The London Morning Post*, p. 2.

⁴²⁷ Article I reads in part: “[T]he inhabitants of the said United States shall have, forever, in common with the Subjects of His Britannic Majesty, the Liberty to take Fish of every kind on that part of the Southern coast of Newfoundland which extends from Cape Ray to the Rameau Islands, on the Western and Northern coast of Newfoundland, from the said Cape Ray to the Quirpon Islands[,] on the Shores of the Magdalen Islands, and also on the Coasts, Bays, Harbours and Creeks from Mount Joly on the Southern Coast of Labrador, to and through the Streights [sic.] of Belleisle and thence Northwardly indefinitely along the Coast, without prejudice however, to any of the exclusive Rights of the Hudson [sic.] Bay Company: and that the American Fishermen shall also have liberty forever, to dry and cure Fish in any of the unsettled Bays, Harbours and Creeks of the Southern part of the Coast of Newfoundland hereabove described, and of the Coast of Labrador: but so soon as the same, or any Portion thereof, shall be settled, it shall not be lawful for the said Fishermen to dry or cure Fish at such Portion so settled, without previous agreement for such purpose with the Inhabitants, Proprietors or Possessors of the Ground.” *Convention of Commerce Between Great Britain and the United States of America*, signed at London, 20 October 1818.

three thousand new seamen annually⁴²⁸, the whole number of men so employed, being estimated at the least at fifteen thousand. That the quantity of fish exported from the American States exceeded the British export during the preceding years of 1810 and 1811, full one-third each year, the American export being above 900,000 quintals; the principal part of which was transshipped for the European markets and West-India islands, on board of vessels of a much larger class than those employed in the catch thereof, thereby adding to the number of seamen employed in that trade. That the Fishery of America, fostered and encouraged as it has been by the Government, has increased since the Commercial Treaty with that country from an export of about 800,000 quintals, to nearly 1,000,000, with fish oil, and other produce of the sea, in proportion.

In fine, your Memorialists are firmly convinced, that the Fishery of the Americans carried on along the coast and shores of the British dominions in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and at Labrador, is of more importance to the United States than any other trade or fishery they possess, or even than the annexation to America of Canada would prove to them – a fishery which, if renewed and carried on as it was before the existing hostilities commenced, must and will gradually destroy the British Fisheries, now in a state of rapid and certain improvement. That in addition to the advantages above stated to be enjoyed by the Americans, your Memorialists beg to represent the serious injury this country has sustained by the facility afforded to the emigration of persons employed in the British Fisheries, and of which the Americans too successfully availed themselves whenever they had an opportunity, and also by their interference, contrary to the express terms of the Commercial Treaty, with the Planters settled and carrying on the fishery along the coasts hereinbefore-mentioned.

Your Memorialists, in the next place, beg to solicit your Lordship's attention to the Fisheries carried on by the French. [...] That the catch by the French was generally estimated at the least at 300,000 quintals; but from the exertions making in France, subsequent to the peace of Amiens, it clearly appeared, that the French Fisheries would soon be superior to those carried on by his Majesty's subjects.

Your Memorialists having thus submitted to your Lordship's consideration the foregoing observations, relative to the French and American Fisheries, are naturally led to a statement of their own, which (in consequence of the war this country has been and still continues engaged in with France and the United States of America), have increased equal to the most sanguine expectations which had been formed. The export of dried cod fish alone, for the year ending the 5th day of November last, amounted to 946,102 quintals, exceeding the shipment of the preceding year by 300,000 quintals, or one-third of the catch of the whole Fishery; with a proportionate increase in cod oil, seal skins, seal oil, salmon, &c. &c. amounting in value to above one million five hundred thousand pounds sterling, employing in its transport to different markets, at least 75,000 tons of British shipping and five thousand seamen, independent of the persons actually employed in catching and curing the fish, and

⁴²⁸ A common argument made for the importance of the cod fishery was that it was a training ground, or nursery, for sailors that could be used by the navy in the event of war.

returning to England upwards of two millions sterling, contributing thereby very considerably to promote the balance of trade in favor of this country.

Your Memorialists have stated to your Lordship, that the catch of fish by the Americans amounted to 900,000 quintals, of the French to 300,000 quintals, and the Fishery of his Majesty's subjects to 600,000 quintals, making a total of 1,800,000 quintals, exclusive of oil and other produce, for the whole of which it is evident there are foreign markets open to the British merchant; they feel themselves, therefore, fully justified in representing to your Lordship, that if the French are excluded from Newfoundland, and the French and Americans from catching fish on the shores of that island, the islands adjacent, from the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and thence northward from the coast of Labrador, the Newfoundland trade must continue rapidly to increase, as that portion of the fishery which has hitherto been carried on by foreigners will become the exclusive privilege of British subjects, and consequently the advantages which this country at present derives from the above trade will be doubled, without the aid of any bounty, requiring only a sufficient number of ships of war on the station, to prevent the Americans or French from disturbing, in any way, the persons employed in carrying it on. The quantity of British shipping, which at present amounts to 75,000 tons, would be increased to 200,000 tons, and augment, at the same time, the valuable nursery this Fishery has always proved for British seamen: and the consumption of British manufactures, of Irish provisions, and the produce from the West India islands, would be increased in equal proportion.

Your Memorialists therefore most earnestly entreat your Lordship's attention to this statement; and in the event of any negotiation for peace, they hope that the fishery carried on along the coast of Newfoundland, on the shores of the adjacent islands, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and at Labrador, may be exclusively secured to British subjects, as the only means of securing to them a continuation of those fisheries, an increased vent for British manufactures, a valuable nursery for seamen, and prove the only means of putting an end to those disagreements which have constantly occurred, by the unjust interference of those persons employed in the French and American fisheries.

And your Memorialists, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c., to the Right Hon. the Earl of Liverpool, &c., Fife House.

London, Jan. 11, 1819.

A Subsidy for Newfoundland Fish⁴²⁹ (1819)

For a considerable length of time, persons interested in the Newfoundland fishery have sent memorials to the government, complaining of the unfavorable state of their trade, and pointing out the impolicy of allowing the citizens of the U. States any further privileges on this subject, which, it is stated, would totally ruin the Newfoundland Fishery. To these representations, Ministers, it is said, replied, that if in the Commercial Treaty which was then about to be arranged with America such

⁴²⁹ From Latest from Europe. (1819, May 14). *The Lancaster Intelligencer*, p. 2.

privilege should be granted, Government, by way of bounty, would allow 3s. per quintal on all fish cured at Newfoundland, which would produce about 250,000l. a year. The Treaty having been concluded, a deputation waited on the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who, in conformity with what was before promised, agreed to allow the sum above mentioned.

The “Newfoundland Outrage”⁴³⁰ (1878)

I, Charles Dagle, master of the American schooner Lizzie and Namari, of Rockport, do on oath depose and say that I sailed from Gloucester on the 6th day of December, 1877, for Fortune Bay, Newfoundland, for a load of herring. In the last year (1877) I had sold a seine and a boat to parties in Newfoundland, and they were to supply me with herring in payment for the seine and boat. I arrived at Fortune Bay about the 18th of December. I was at Long Harbor, N. F., with my vessel on the 6th of January. [There I] saw the seines of the American schooners New England and Ontario destroyed by the fishermen of Newfoundland.

There is a decided objection to using netted or gill net herring for freezing purposes, as these herring die in a short time after being taken in gill nets. When they are seined, they can be kept alive on the radius of the seine and taken out alive when the weather is suitable for freezing, while the netted herring, being dead, must be salted or spoil; consequently the seined herring are the best for our purposes and are what the American vessels want for our market.

Knowing this fact, the Newfoundland fishermen had endeavored to obstruct in every way the taking of herring with seines, as they use principally gill nets; they placed their nets, which are set permanently, so as to hinder the using of seines.

On the 6th of January, 1878, the herring had come inshore, so that they were inside the gill nets, thus giving our people an opportunity to seine them without interfering with the gill nets.

On the Americans attempting to put their seines in the water, the Newfoundland fishermen threatened to destroy them, and when our fishermen had taken their seines full of herring, the Newfoundlanders came down to the number of two hundred, seized and destroyed the seines, letting out the fish, and afterward stole and carried off the remnants of the seines.

Another Account of the Attack⁴³¹ (1878)

I, James McDonald, [am] master of the American schooner F. A. Smith, [...] chartered by George W. Plumer and others, of Gloucester, for a voyage to Newfoundland for herring. I sailed from Gloucester on the 29th of November, 1877,

⁴³⁰ From Dagle, C. (1878, February 26). THE NEWFOUNDLAND OUTRAGE. *The New York Daily Herald*, p. 4. Written by Charles Dagle (1832 – 1883).

⁴³¹ From McDonald, J. (1878, February 26). THE NEWFOUNDLAND OUTRAGE. *The New York Daily Herald*, p. 4. Written by James McDonald (d. 1886).

and arrived at Long Harbor, N. F., on or about the 15th of December, 1877. I carried a large purse seine, such as is used to take mackerel. The seine will take 4,000 barrels of fish. I employed Newfoundland fishermen to operate the seine. I set my seine twice, but without catching anything, as my seine was torn by rocks that had been left off the beach.

On the 6th of January the herring made their appearance in great numbers, and the opportunity to take a large haul was improved [sic.] by my men, and we took at least one thousand barrels – enough to load my vessel and one other.

The Newfoundland fishermen came off in their boats and told me to take my seine up or they would take it up for me, and that they would cut it up. There were about two hundred men engaged in this violence, and my own crew consisting of six men I could not resist, but was obliged to take up my seine. I saw the seines of the schooners New England and Ontario destroyed and knew that mine would also be destroyed if I did not take it up.

My seine was not attached to the shore when they came off, and the attack on me was made in boats. After destroying the other seines they all made for me, and my only safety was to gather up my seine. I lost all my fish, and the Newfoundland fishermen put all the obstructions they could in the way to prevent the use of our seines after that.

American Ships and the Bait Act⁴³² (1888)

Authorities at St. John's, N. F., have seized the American schooner Ambrose H. Knight, of Boothbay, Me., a Grand Banks Fisherman, on a charge of violating the terms of the license under which she was allowed to buy bait. [...] The act under which the Knight has been seized is known as the Bait act, and was passed by the [Newfoundland] Legislature of 1887. [...] The act was intended to drive away from Newfoundland fisheries the French fishermen, who, given a bounty of nearly fifty per cent by the French Government on all the fish they catch in Newfoundland, are enabled to sell the Newfoundland fish at less than cost of catching, relying upon the bounty for profit, which is a very handsome one.

All the fish sold in the Spanish, Portuguese and Italian markets have been caught by the Frenchmen and disposed of far under the prices asked by the Newfoundlanders and Nova Scotians, and the former, thinking that if the Frenchmen were prohibited from buying bait they would be driven from the fisheries, had the act passed.

The Home Government withheld its approval of the Bait act in 1887, but the act was passed again during the present spring, and despite the frantic protests of the French fishermen and the French Government, the Home Government approved it. No foreigners can buy bait in Newfoundland except Americans, who [...] are allowed to do so after paying the license fee of \$1.50 per ton. Thus the Americans,

⁴³² From THE BAIT ACT VIOLATED. (1888, June 8). *The Camden Daily Telegram*, p. 1.

who can buy bait by paying a license, are better off than the French, who cannot buy bait under any circumstance. [...]

The captain of the *Ambrose H. Knight*, a Nova Scotian, bought twice as much bait as any fisherman of his size ordinarily needs, cleared at the Custom House, and went directly to St. Pierre, where, amid the rejoicings of the Frenchmen and accompanied by two Nova Scotian fishing vessels, which had also bought twice as much as they needed, he sold more than half of his cargo of bait for more than he paid for the whole of it. The Nova Scotia men did likewise.

While they were at work transferring the bait from one vessel to another a Government vessel sailed into the harbor. The American and Nova Scotia men immediately weighed anchor and left. The case was reported to Newfoundland, and a week later, when the *Knight*, under command of Captain Diggins, came into port for a harbor, she was seized. An examination of her hold showed that she had on board only half the amount of bait she had bought at Fortune Bay, and no fish. She had gone alongside a wharf, and it was here that Captain Diggins was notified that he could consider himself and crew under arrest.

“A question of bait”⁴³³ (1890)

The question of procuring a supply of bait for the Gloucester fishing fleet is one of importance, and it is more or less threatened by the complications in Newfoundland. The bait consists chiefly of fresh herring, and is procured all along the coast from Cape Cod to and beyond the coast of Newfoundland. The action of the Newfoundland Government in adopting the present stringent bait act, and its determination to enforce it, as seen in the seizures of the Gloucester fishing schooners *Rapid Transit* and *Howard Holbrook*, has been brought about by various causes. Ever since the American fisheries attained to considerable importance, the American fishing schooners have secured supplies of herring in Newfoundland, where these fish are to be had in abundance. The business of running cargoes of Newfoundland frozen herring to the markets of the large cities in the United States during the winter has assumed large proportions. Later in the season the great Bank fleet, that fishes off the Grand and other banks, starts. As Nova Scotia and Newfoundland are the nearest and best sources of supply, these points are made the headquarters for this fleet. The appearance of the American fleet, both in winter and summer, has been a godsend to the Newfoundland fishermen, who have no other way of disposing of their catch of fresh herring.

THE FRENCH FISHERMEN

The French fishermen, still protected by a bounty, have gradually dispossessed the Newfoundland merchants of their markets. This competition could be overcome only in one way – by dispossessing the French of bait. Measures were taken by the Newfoundland Government to do this, but some of the American and Nova Scotia schooners began to run bait to the French fishermen, thereby enabling them to secure

⁴³³ From A QUESTION OF BAIT. (1890, June 11). *The Nashville Banner*, p. 1.

a fare of codfish. Last year, under the provision of the *modus vivendi*, American fishermen, by paying \$1 a ton, could secure all the bait they wanted for the season. This season, by the stringent bait act of Newfoundland, an outside vessel is limited to one barrel of bait for every ton of her measurement, and the license, costing \$1 per ton, is good only for twenty-one days. Frew fishing schooner bait less than four or five times a trip, the costs making this bait act prohibitive.

WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS

There are two points, however, where the American fishermen are allowed by existing treaties to secure a supply of bait without restrictions. These are in the Magdalen Islands and on the west coast of Newfoundland. The bank codfishing fleet have availed themselves of the privilege of baiting in the Magdalen Islands, and some very large fares of codfish have been secured off the coast this season. Others have secured bait on the west coast of Newfoundland, but in Placentia Bay, which is much more convenient to the fleet, they are debarred by the present bait act. The feeling among the fishing owners there is that the cupidity of a few captains in smuggling bait to the French has resulted in a serious set-back to the American fisheries, and it is likely that an effort will be made to restore the old order of things. The Newfoundland people are perfectly willing to supply Americans with bait, but they object to the latter selling it to the French.

The Bait Act Weakened⁴³⁴ (1890)

GLOUCESTER, June 20. – The following despatch was received here by President George Steele of the Fishing Insurance Company: “St. John’s, N. F., June 20, 1890. To George Steele: Licenses reduced \$1 per barrel for quantity as required, limit for 40 barrels, \$40 per baiting. (Signed) U. S. Consul.”

This is quite an important reduction and concession from the rigid requirements of the Newfoundland bait act, which has been enforced this season under its provisions. If an outside vessel wanted to purchase bait, a fee of \$1 a ton besides local dues was exacted. This license was good for only three weeks from date of issuance, and only one barrel of bait for every ton of the vessel could be purchased.

As a fishing schooner will average between 80 and 90 tons, and as fresh bait is required four or five times during a trip, this act was practically prohibitive in operation.

As a result, the Newfoundland fishermen, who relied almost entirely on the American fleet for a subsistence, found their means of gaining a livelihood shut off. They have therefore run by their own revenue cutters and smuggled bait into the French stations at St. Pierre [and] Michelon, where they have disposed of their cargoes to the French and American fishermen. Thus the needs of the native fishermen have defeated the objects of the bait act.

⁴³⁴ From THEY ARE WEAKENING. (1890, June 21). *The Boston Globe*, p. 4.

The action of the Newfoundland authorities is regarded as of much importance among the fishing interest here, and an evidence of weakening on the part of the officials as regards the enforcement of the bait act.

The despatch as construed here means that the fees may be reduced to as low a figure as the necessity of the case requires. If a vessel requires only one barrel of bait, the fees would be only \$1 and local dues. As regards the restriction to 40 barrels, it may be said that the sellers of bait always give liberal measure.

“Fishery fraud exposed”⁴³⁵ (1894)

THE YANKEE NEWFOUNDLAND FROZEN HERRING

The announcement that T. Aubrey Byrne, special treasury employee, had filed with the treasury department his report on the investigation into the methods employed by the Gloucester [Massachusetts] herring fleet, in regard to the transportation and manner of entry of their catches from Newfoundland, caused much speculation here, as well as at other fishing ports in New England, as to the nature of its contents and the bearing it will have upon the nature of the herring industry.

This investigation is said to have been brought about by the collectors of New York and Philadelphia, who drew the secretary of the treasury’s attention to the enormous quantity of herring annually imported from the British provinces and entered at Gloucester free of duty, as the products of American fisheries, and then cleared coastwise for other ports, where they were disposed of for food consumption. Herring for bait, under the present law, when landed from either American or foreign vessels, is admitted free. But since the abrogation of the Washington Treaty in 1885, herring purchased in a foreign country has been dutiable when used for other purposes than bait.

In the winter of 1857 frozen herring from Newfoundland was first introduced into American markets by Gloucester men, who purchased them with money and merchandise from the native fishermen, whom they found nearly starving through being shut out in the winter months from civilization. The herring that swarmed Fortune Bay were of no financial value to the natives, as they had no market of their own for them, until the advent of the Gloucester fishermen. Harbors, where the people lived in small fishing huts, have since grown to thriving villages through commercial intercourse with American fishermen.

In the early stages of the herring fishery reciprocity prevailed; hence the admission of fish free of duty. About 15 years ago, American fishermen commenced to carry seines and other paraphernalia, with which to catch their own cargoes, in accordance with treaty rights, in operation at that time. In the winter of 1879, when Gloucester fishermen at Fortune Bay set their seines, believing they had a legal right to do so, they were attacked by a mob of Newfoundland fishermen, who cut their seines to pieces and threatened them violence if another attempt was made to catch

⁴³⁵ From FISHERY FRAUD EXPOSED. (1894, December 14). *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

herring within the enclosed waters of that ancient British colony. Great Britain was called upon by the United States to pay \$100,000 to the outraged Americans.

From that time until the abrogation of the Washington Treaty, the Imperial government took precaution to see that the rights of American fishermen were respected in Newfoundland waters. It is now claimed by Newfoundland that the Treaty of 1818 is the only compact existing between that country and the United States, and this gives American fishermen the privilege only of visiting the harbors there for shelter and repairs, obtaining water and purchasing wood.

The Gloucester men in the Newfoundland herring traffic claim to catch their own cargoes, with boats and seines carried for that purpose, with the aid of native fishermen, whom they hire and to whom they pay good wages. On their arrival home the fish are entered as products of American fisheries, sworn to by the crew as not purchased in a foreign country, but taken from the water directly on board, and frozen or salted for American markets. Collector Pew has placed a liberal interpretation upon the law in relation to the importation of Newfoundland herring, and claims to have been sustained by the secretary of the treasury.

Mr. Byrne's report is a voluminous document, and while its contents are strictly concealed, a few things have been learned of its contents. He gives, in tabulated form, the name and number of American vessels engaged in the Newfoundland frozen herring fishery during the winter and spring of 1894[.] [...] It is shown that nearly all of the vessels first entered at Gloucester, and the total number is given as about 85, some of which brought two cargoes. The number of vessels discharged at Boston was 30, while 12 went to New York, seven to Philadelphia, one to Lubec [Maine] and the remainder discharged at Gloucester.

ALL THE SALT HERRING WAS USED FOR FOOD

All the salt herring was used for food. Seventy-five per cent of the frozen [herring] landed at Boston was used for the same purpose, and those landed at New York and Philadelphia all entered into food consumption, while at Gloucester, about 80 per cent. of the frozen herring was used for bait, and about 20 per cent. for food. The number of vessels sailing under fishing license was found to be seven, and those under register 78. [...]

Inspector W. H. Warren, who was delegated by Mr. Byrne to visit Newfoundland last winter and witness the mode of catching herring and loading them on the vessels, furnishes the government with the information that these herring were caught by [Newfoundland] natives in seines and nets owned by them, frozen in many cases on shore, and then sold to masters of American vessels, who often paid for them with merchandise. Accompanying this are the names of men at Fortune and Placentia Bays, Newfoundland, who owned the fishing gear, and caught and sold these herring to the Americans.

The special agent says the law specifically declares that fish bought in a foreign country is dutiable, and the vessels engaged in the bringing of herring from Newfoundland, sailing under a register, are not recognized as fishing vessels, but vessels engaged in the foreign trade. They carry only the requisite number of sailors to man them, and those are hired by the month for about \$25, and do not work on the

co-operative plan, as fishing owners say their men usually do. The rights of Americans to prosecute the fisheries, so that the products would be that of American fisheries, Mr. Byrne says, have been ruled upon by the government, so far as concerns vessels under fishing licenses, but not those under register.

The report says that vessels in the Newfoundland herring traffic last winter carried down several thousand dollars' worth of merchandise and more than \$30,000 in cash, with which to purchase cargoes, and a prominent Gloucester vessel owner stated to the agent that \$75,000 is annually left for herring during the winter months among the people at Fortune and Placentia Bays. If, as alleged, the cargoes were caught by the Americans, there would be no need to spend the large amount for the purchase of herring, and yet the purchased herring are admitted free.

The report says that several thousand hogsheads of salt are taken on these vessels, which, when used for curing American fish, is free, but when used on foreign bought fish is dutiable, yet no duty has ever been collected upon it. According to the report, salt withdrawn from bond to be used in curing taken fish is used in the curing of foreign purchased fish, and for salting seines and nets contrary to law.

Several captains have admitted to the treasury official that old, played-out seines and boats, which they carried to Newfoundland, were disposed of to the native fishermen for herring, and Mr. Byrne further says the humbug in the allegation that these Newfoundland fish are American is too palpable, and has long been known inside, as well as outside, of official quarters, and free entry is continued.

The law of Newfoundland forbids the taking of fish inside of three miles of the shore by foreign fishermen, and Inspector Warren found last winter that American vessels in land-locked harbors made fast to the wharves and moored in coves 50 miles inside of the limit, which shows that they were recognized by the government as merchant vessels in the foreign trade, and not fishermen.

The report also asserts that the decision of the treasury department relating to taking fish by licensed vessels outside the three-mile limit when natives were hired to assist has been construed for several years to allow free entry of all Newfoundland frozen and salted herring brought in by vessels sailing under register, resulting in a loss of duty to the government not far from \$330,000 on herring and salt used in curing. [...]

The government of Newfoundland is watching with much interest the outcome of this investigation. The people down there claim they are being discriminated against by the United States government, which admits salted and frozen herring free when brought here [the U.S.] by American vessels, but compels foreign vessels to pay a duty, although they procure the herring in the same way that Americans do.

CONFLICT WITH CANADA

“Right to collect duties there”⁴³⁶ (1888)

The schooner *Trial*, O'Long, master, belonging to Halifax, cleared from that port with salt and empty barrels for Labrador, with the intention of prosecuting the herring fishery on that coast. The also had [a] part cargo of merchandise. On arriving at Bay St. George, [Newfoundland,] the master, complying with certain rules, entered and unloaded the Bay St. George goods. The collector, not satisfied with this, demanded duty on the Labrador salt and barrels, which the master objected to, as he was bound for the Dominion [of Canada's territory of] Labrador.

Acting under instruction from the Receiver General or the Executive, the collector seized the vessel and landed a large quantity of salt, much more than the value of all the duties claimed, and immediately sold it at “a sacrificing price”. Thus deprived of her salt, the *Trial's* herring voyage was completely upset, and the captain found himself compelled to return to Halifax.

Now, the question is, will the Dominion Government submit to this and allow their vessels to be thus treated on the French Shore by Newfoundland collectors of revenue? The opinion prevails that they have no more right to collect duties there than on the Island of Anticosti. I understand it is the intention of those interested in the *Trial* to bring their case before the Canadian authorities.

A zealous customs official⁴³⁷ (1890)

A serious complaint is made by Capt. Edgar Corriveau, of the schooner St. Marie, against the Newfoundland customs officials. He left Quebec on April 19th for a trading voyage along the coast of Labrador, and on 19th June crossed to Newfoundland to buy furs and collect some monies due him. The schooner was brought to anchor in Brick Bay and on the 22nd proceeded to French Island, where there is a custom house. The captain went ashore to enter and clear, but could find no resident collector.

In the afternoon a schooner arrived alongside, with one Kelly on board. This man said he was collector of customs, and gave Corriveau one hour to make his entry and clearance. Corriveau did this at once and said he had brought nothing for sale in Newfoundland with the exception of a herring net for one of the natives. He showed Kelly the clearance from Quebec, and the latter demanded to see the log. Then Kelly said the schooner would have to pay \$70 duty or he would seize her.

Corriveau paid the money under protest, adding that Kelly was doing more than his duty, for no duty should be charged when no goods are brought for sale. Kelly said he knew his business better than Corriveau. He gave the clearance, but

⁴³⁶ From A Sandy Point correspondent. (1888, August 17). “PIRACY ON THE FRENCH SHORE.” *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

⁴³⁷ From FROM THE ANCIENT CAPITAL. (1890, September 25). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 1.

immediately afterwards came on board with his men and ransacked the ship from stem to stern, measuring the goods yard by yard. He came across some old stovepipe, writing paper, oil, etc., for the use of the ship, and these not being duly entered, as Kelly pretended to think should have been done, he put a water cask under seizure, accusing the captain of attempting to defraud the customs. The captain protested, with the result that Kelly seized the whole ship and put her in charge of a guardian. Then he told Corriveau that he would have to go to Bonne Bay or St. John's to arrange the matter. Corriveau offered security, but Kelly refused.

On June 24th Kelly came back and asked to see the clearance he had given, as there was a mistake in it. Corriveau handed it over, whereupon Kelly put it in his pocket without looking at it and went away. After waiting some days, the inhabitants of the place, seeing the trouble that Corriveau was being put to unjustifiably, took charge of the schooner and brought her back to Canadian waters. By this delay Capt. Corriveau claims that he was prevented from collecting codfish and furs for debts due him, and was otherwise put to serious loss.

Canadians caught in the Bait Act⁴³⁸ (1891)

Law officers of the imperial government have declared the Newfoundland bait act to be unconstitutional. [...] The obnoxious bait act was passed by the Newfoundland legislature in 1889. It prohibits the sale of fresh fish, which includes bait to foreign fishermen. The act was allowed by the imperial government, on the condition that its provisions would not apply to Canadians. Subsequently, however, the Newfoundland authorities rescinded this concession, and only gave the privilege to American fishermen.

Canada's influence in securing the prohibition of the reciprocity treaty, negotiated between the United States and the colony, is given as the reason for this hostile act. At present the extensive carrying trade in frozen herring, which under the bait act comes under the category of bait, is monopolized by American bottoms.

"Grievously in the wrong"⁴³⁹ (1891)

Sir William Whiteway's⁴⁴⁰ defence of these stringent measures is founded on the circumstance that the Canadian Government interfered last year to prevent the ratification of a treaty of commerce between Newfoundland and the United States. [...] The only other reason advanced for the prohibitive measures [...] is that Canadian and American vessels sell bait to the French. If this allegation were well-founded, the prohibition ought to be applied indiscriminately to American, as well as to Canadian, vessels. [...]

⁴³⁸ From NEWFOUNDLAND BAIT ACT. (1891, November 27). *The Evening Bulletin* (Maysville, Kentucky), p. 4.

⁴³⁹ From It cannot be doubted. (1891, December 14). *The London Times*, p. 9.

⁴⁴⁰ Sir William Vallance Whiteway (1828 – 1908), Premier of Newfoundland from 1878 to 1885, 1889 to 1894 and 1895 to 1897.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Government of Newfoundland is grievously in the wrong. Canada is the nearest neighbor of Newfoundland, and has so far proved itself a very friendly, and even benevolent, neighbor. The lights on the coast of Newfoundland are maintained by the Canadian Government. The fishermen of Newfoundland have hitherto been allowed to fish without restriction on the coasts of Canada and Labrador, and to ship their fish into Canada free of all duty. In addition to all this, the only regular steam communication between Newfoundland and the mainland of North America is maintained by Canadian subsidies. [...]

The exemption of Newfoundland fish from duty in Canada is an exceptional privilege, accorded from time to time by proclamation of the Governor-General. In default of the issue of such proclamation, Newfoundland produce becomes subject to the general Canadian tariff. The Government of the Dominion [...] has now resolved to withhold the proclamation of immunity and to enforce its general tariff by the levy of the statutable duties on all Newfoundland produce. Newfoundland has retaliated by largely raising⁴⁴¹ the duties leviable on certain Canadian commodities, including flour, pork, butter, tobacco, kerosene oil, and farm produce.

The Canada-Newfoundland Tariff War⁴⁴² (1891)

The tariff war [...] was begun by Canada more than seven years ago. I have not papers for reference as to the exact year, but it was certainly before 1886. A Bill was passed that year introduced into the Canadian Parliament to levy a tax on Newfoundland herrings coming into the Dominion in Newfoundland barrels equivalent to 75 cents per barrel, while Canadians had, as they now, in common with all other British subjects, have, the right to catch or buy those same herrings in Newfoundland waters and take them into the Dominion. [...] At that time great quantities of Newfoundland herring were consumed in Canada, and this proposed duty meant transferring the whole of this business to Canadians.

I made a suggestion then, as our Legislature was in session, which was unanimously adopted by both branches, that an addendum should be made to our tariff to this effect:-

“In addition to the duties hereinbefore provided to be levied on goods imported into this colony and its dependencies from countries the fishermen of which have the privilege of taking fish on all parts of the coast of Newfoundland, and in which duties are or shall hereafter be levied upon fish and the produce of the fisheries exported

⁴⁴¹ “Additional duties on certain articles imported from Canada – [...] Flour, the barrel, 75c; pork, the barrel, 75c; butter, the 100 lbs, 75c; tobacco, the 100 lbs, \$5; kerosene oil, the gallon, 5c; corn meal, the barrel, 25c; hay, the ton, \$5; oats, the bushel, 10c; potatoes, the bushel, 25c; turnips, the bushel, 25c; cabbages the dozen heads, 40c; unenumerated vegetables, 30 per cent.” THE STRAINED RELATIONS. (1891, December 26). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 2.

⁴⁴² From Harvey, A. W. (1891, December 25). CANADA AND NEWFOUNDLAND. *The London Times*, p. 10. Written by Augustus William Harvey (1839 – 1903), a member of Newfoundland’s legislative council from 1870 to 1895.

from this colony to such countries, the following duties – viz., flour, 75 cents per barrel,” &c.

Canadian millers and exporters immediately then as they are now doing, petitioned and agitated against the Canadian legislation, and it was dropped. [...]

This clause has been in every Newfoundland Tariff Act since 1886. [...] Canada was fully aware of this fact, and, knowing it, passed a tariff in the spring of the present year imposing a duty on almost all the products of the Newfoundland fisheries, “unless Newfoundland reduced the duty on Canadian exports to Newfoundland.” [...]

No member of the [Newfoundland] Government ever heard of the alteration in the tariff of Canada until November last, [...] some little time before the new duties were levied, and in a friendly way acquainted the Canadian Government with the fact that their taxing our fishery produce would be automatically to practically exclude Canadian flour, pork, and many other articles from Newfoundland.

Canada was the original aggressor, and now has, by her one act, imposed a prohibitive tariff on both herself and Newfoundland. [...]

Now as to the Bait Act. [...] The Bait Act was not intended to exclude Canadians, but only the French; but [Canada has] become purveyor in general of bait to the French – and continues so to the present time – thus to a considerable extent, just as far as she is able, frustrating the object of the Bait Act. When supplying the Canadians with bait became synonymous with supplying the French, it became a question of suspending the Act and letting our own poor fishermen get the benefit of the bait traffic, or suspending the Canadians. [...]

The Canadian Government have long understood that a preliminary to their getting free access to Newfoundland bait supplies is the passing of a Bait Act similar to ours against the French, and there should not be the slightest hesitancy on their part in doing it; but instead of this, they go on supplying the French so far as they are able, cutting their own as well as our throats. [...]

The Canadians are at present excluded from taking fish on all the coasts of Newfoundland, inasmuch as they are not given licenses for bait fishes. [...] The Act was intended to give the Government just as much power to grant or refuse persons applying for a license as is the power of a magistrate for licensing, say, houses for dancing or the acting of plays. The magistrates have to take into account whether the person for whom the license is asked is a fit and proper person to be entrusted with such a license, and if not to refuse it. In the same way it was intended that the Government might grant licenses to one, two, three or a dozen men in a harbor and refuse one, two, three or a dozen others if they thought they were likely to violate the Act. If a Newfoundlander once transgresses the Act, no other license is again issued to him.

Will the Canadians have the same rights and no more than our own people? In practice it was found that if one of our vessels ran the blockade at St. Pierre – his vessel being registered in Newfoundland – the Government could confiscate her, and the master, returning to his family, could be arrested and imprisoned; but there being no such law in the Dominion, a Canadian vessel running the blockade with bait could

not be prosecuted in Canada, and, as it was perfectly certain neither vessel nor master would return to Newfoundland during the same season, they went scot free. And the sorest complaint of our poor blockade-runners was, "Here we are, ruined, our vessels confiscated, ourselves in prison, our families starving, and a Nova Scotian committing the same offence against the law suffers no punishment and reaps a most handsome profit at our expense."

The licensing authority then said, "If these people will not make themselves amenable to our municipal law, by either registering their vessels in Newfoundland or passing an Act enabling us to follow any law-breakers into the Dominion, we will give them no licenses." The Canadians are thus placed in exactly the same position as our fishermen, and in this, as in the case of the tariff, the remedy is in their own hands.

Impact of the duties⁴⁴³ (1891)

The absolute topic of the hour is "the strained relations" between this Colony and the Dominion of Canada. Practically, we have a war of tariffs, which is injurious to both parties as it deranges trade. [...] On the one hand, we have Canada imposing an almost prohibitory duty on our fish; and on the other, Newfoundland placing an import duty which is almost prohibitory on a large number of articles of consumption which we have been in the habit of receiving from Canada – such as flour, pork, butter, hay, oats and all kinds of vegetables. Whether Canada will suffer to any appreciable extent, in consequence, I am unable to say, but we must suffer heavily. A large number of our people, especially on the southern and western shores, found a profitable market for their fish in Canada; and they have now to find markets elsewhere, and will sustain very serious losses. This holds good especially in our herring trade.

EFFECT OF THE DUTIES

The greatest part of the vegetables we use – such as potatoes, turnips, etc., are brought from Canada; and the increased duties will proportionately increase the price, which will be felt heavily by our working classes. We can not obtain these articles elsewhere. Potatoes, for example, have risen in price one dollar per barrel since the new tariff took effect, and are two and a half dollars per barrel. Oats are 25 cents per bushel higher; butter has also increased in price. If the present increased rates were to continue, the entire flour, pork and butter trade would be monopolized by the United States, and the want of competition would of course tend to advance prices.

To adopt a policy which seriously increases the cost of living, especially to the working classes, may be very "spirited," but can hardly meet general approval, when there are no compensating advantages. It is the policy known as "cutting off your nose to spite your face." We may injure a number of our fellow-subjects in Canada, but to do so we must first injure ourselves to a far greater extent. [...]

⁴⁴³ From THE STRAINED RELATIONS. (1891, December 26). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 2.

Mr. Nielsen, our superintendent of fisheries, having shown practically that our herring, properly cured and packed, will command remunerative prices in foreign markets, a number of our leading firms have taken up the matter and embarked largely in the cure and export of herring. At the present time quite a fleet of vessels are awaiting the striking in of the herring at Sound Island, Placentia Bay, one of the best fishing grounds. There are also about forty American vessels waiting for cargoes of fresh herring, to be shipped in a frozen condition. The prices they give to our fishermen are from 50 to 70 cents per barrel, and they insist on using their own measures, which, it is reported, give one and a half instead of the true measure to the purchasers.

The frozen herring business is said to be enormously profitable to the Americans, but affords wretched remuneration to our poor fishermen. The new industry of curing will in due time alter this state of things. The exclusion of Canadian vessels from the trade gives a monopoly to the Americans, and, of course, tends to depress prices.

Grievances and retaliation⁴⁴⁴ (1892)

The list of grievances which Canada has against Newfoundland is a long one. The Newfoundland Bait Act was allowed by the Imperial Government only on the distinct written pledge of the Newfoundland Government that no license fee would be exacted from Canadian fishermen, yet in 1889 this pledge was broken, and license fees were exacted from Canadian vessels.

While Canada maintains no less than nine lights on the Newfoundland coast, the Newfoundland Government charges Canadian fishing vessels 24 cents – twice the rate imposed on Newfoundland vessels – for looking at Canadian lights, and then orders them to leave the ports, under threat that the cruisers will be sent for and used. Moreover, while Newfoundland fishing vessels are allowed to visit and fish on the Canadian Labrador each season without any charge whatever, Canadian fishermen are not allowed to catch a single bait fish on that part of the coast of Labrador over which the Newfoundland Government exercises control. Though the Canadian Government charges trap fees to Canadian fishermen who prosecute this industry on the Canadian Labrador, yet at least 100 sail of Newfoundland vessels are allowed to take fish freely in these Canadian waters without the payment of a single dollar for license, or trap fees of any sort whatever, and so on.

Early in 1891, while allowing United States vessels their bait licenses free of charge, the Newfoundland Government issued regulations under the Bait Act, one of which was “No Canadian, whether he be a fisherman, trader, merchant, or other, can catch, take, purchase, sell, export, or in any way whatever trade or deal with any herring, caplin, squid, or other kind of fish coming under the description of ‘bait fishes’ for any purpose whatever, whether for bait, for consumption, or for any purpose.” This regulation seriously interferes with, or rather, as far as Canadians are

⁴⁴⁴ From CANADIAN AFFAIRS. (1892, January 29). *The Glasgow Herald*, p. 9.

concerned, stops the frozen herring trade altogether, for in no other country in the world, as far as I know, can herring be caught and prepared in the manner which I am about to describe.

Frozen herring are herring caught in the winter season off the south coast of Newfoundland. The fishermen catch them by cutting a trench in the ice and sinking nets, in which nets the fish mesh. When caught, they are placed on an elevated platform, which is built of rough boards, carried with them for the purpose by the schooners engaged in the trade, over the deck of the vessel, or constructed on shore in an exposed place. The wind freezes the fish perfectly hard, when they are packed in bulk. The vessels, which range from 60 to 120 tons, remain until they obtain a load.

These herring supply the winter fresh-fish demand of the United States, and, until this present year, also of Canada. The men on board the schooners do not catch the fish themselves; they are caught by regular fishermen, who sell them to the schooners. The prices paid in Newfoundland vary from 50c. to \$1.00 per barrel, according to supply and demand. Fortune Bay has long been noted for the enormous fields of herring found in its waters. Until lately the herring fishery has been comparatively neglected, nor has it yet been so conducted as to yield proper commercial results.

In view of the conduct of the Newfoundland Government, and also that large quantities of Newfoundland fish were coming into Canada duty free, [...] to the detriment of Canadian fishermen, [...] on December 7 an order was issued that the duty should be collected on Newfoundland fish. To this the Newfoundland Government very promptly responded by imposing discriminating duties on Canadian goods. [...] Mr. A. B. Merine, leader of the Newfoundland Opposition, [...] says that the effect of retaliation upon the people of the colony will be twofold. First, it decreases the price of their fish in the local Canadian market; secondly, it greatly increases the price of the necessaries of life. Canada is the great outlet for two-thirds of the Newfoundland trade.

“The end is now in sight”⁴⁴⁵ (1892)

The end is now in sight for the long standing dispute between Canada and Newfoundland. It is understood that the Government has received from the Newfoundland authorities an intimation that [...] for this season at least the prohibitive duty upon Canadian flour and other products enforced by the Newfoundland Government early in the year, will be reduced to the previous rates under which Canada was able to compete successfully upon even terms with American products in the markets of Newfoundland. Besides, the onerous conditions laid upon our fishermen, amounting practically to complete restriction in the matter of the purchase of bait and supplies, are to be rescinded, and the fishermen of this country will be as free to fit out in Newfoundland for the bank fisheries, as the

⁴⁴⁵ From NEWFOUNDLAND COMES TO TERMS. (1892, May 23). *The Ottawa Daily Citizen*, p. 5.

Newfoundland fishermen are, and always have been, to pursue their calling on the Canadian coasts. [...]

EFFECT ON OUR TRADE

Canadian exporters were already beginning to view with some alarm the protraction of the difficulty, since a much longer delay in the conclusion of a modus vivendi would have rendered the renewal of a better arrangement to affect this season's trade with the sister colony. As it is, the agreement fortunately comes just in time. [The secretary of the Dominion Millers' Association had the following to say upon the matter:] "If within a reasonable time such arrangement is come to, the flour trade of Newfoundland will not be lost to the Montreal exporters. It so happens that we are able to sell flour in Newfoundland about 30 cents a barrel cheaper than it can be exported thither from the United States; mainly on account of considerable difference in freight rates in our favor. And, expecting some arrangement for the reduction of the 75 cents a barrel duty on our flour, Newfoundland merchants have withheld their orders for the season, in order to profit by this difference as they would if Canadian and American flour are admitted upon equal terms as to tariff duties."

The importance of this arrangement as regards our flour trade alone will be seen from the fact that last year we exported to Newfoundland 99,438 barrels of flour valued at about half a million dollars. Had the duty remained at 75 cents a barrel, the whole of this trade would have gone to the United States this year.

"He acts like a madman"⁴⁴⁶ (1895)

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld., September 5. – There is great indignation here at the news received by the Labrador mail steamer of the conduct of Captain Howard⁴⁴⁷ in having seized three Newfoundland fishing vessels on the plea that they have no Canadian coasting licenses. He acts like a madman, threatening people with revolvers. The matter is inexplicable, and such seizures unprecedented.

⁴⁴⁶ From SOMEWHAT EXCITED. (1895, September 6). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 1.

⁴⁴⁷ Arthur L. "Gat." Howard (1846 – 1901), best known for his role in bringing Gatling guns into use in the North-West rebellion of 1885. He fought at the Battle of Batoche in May of 1885, and died in South Africa while fighting in the second Boer war as a machine gunner for the Canadian Mounted Rifles. He "was in the United States cavalry for five years prior to his being placed in command of the machine gun platoon of the Connecticut National Guard in 1884. When the Gatling guns were ordered for service in the Northwest, Dr. R. J. Gatling looked for a man acquainted with machine guns who could handle them in a way to add to their reputation. He pitched upon Lieut. Howard." NOTES IN GENERAL. (1885, May 20). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 1. Regarding his actions at Batoche: "There appears to be some difference of opinion as to the amount of damage done by Capt. or Lieutenant Howard and his Gatling gun at Batoche. Some of the soldiers and correspondents assert that only one Indian was killed by Gatling bullets during the entire engagement. Howard, relating his exploits, [...] represents that he just mowed the Indians and half-breeds down. As the execution by the united artillery and small arms under Gen. Middleton was exceedingly limited, the Gatling must be credited more with the function of an intimidator than an executioner. In that respect the gun was a large factor in the results at Batoche." There appears. (1885, August 17). *The Victoria Daily Times*, p. 2.

Complaints and Collector Howard⁴⁴⁸ (1895)

The complaints regarding Collector Howard are loud and angry; and unless a sufficient explanation can be offered, a great deal of bitter feeling will be awakened throughout the whole community. The intelligence comes from thoroughly reliable sources to the heads of some of our mercantile establishments. It is to the effect that Collector A. L. Howard, who alleges he is a Canadian Customs official, on the 24th August entered Bradore harbor in an armed schooner with 25 armed men aboard and demanded the papers of the schooner Canford. Howard declared her clearances to be wrong, seized the vessel and sent for the Canadian cruiser Constance to tow her to Quebec. Meantime, he seized another vessel called the Telegram, Captain Udell, and a craft belonging to Capt. Soper.

The captains of these vessels declare their papers were the same as those of previous years, to which no objection was ever taken, and that they were unconscious of any wrong-doing and had paid their license fees and complied with all demands. Howard alleges he is authorized to seize all vessels that have not coasting clearances – and that he will seize all that are without such papers.

The captains say their papers are the same as during the last fifteen years, and that they were not informed of any others being required. He refuses to accept duties, bonds or merchandise, and threatens to seize all the fishing premises on Canadian Labrador, and even our mail steamer, the Virginia Lake. He is accused of terrorizing the whole coast and even threatening several persons with a revolver, using very violent language, so that the general impression is that he is crazy. He has done much mischief and seriously injured the summer fishery of those seized. [...]

The St. John's *Daily News*, in reporting the case, says:- [...]

“The Canford has been seized, her register taken, work done at Penney's fishing room at Bradore stopped, and the balance of the voyage tied up there. From 34 to 35 years ago, the Penneys fished at a place called Middle bay, Canadian Labrador. [...] Mr. W. F. Penney, the junior partner in the firm of E. Penney & Son, affirms that so far as the firm are aware, the Canadian laws have been complied with in every respect. [...] Up to the recent troubles, the Canadian officials did not interfere, but protected the Penneys in fishing their cod traps in accordance with Canadian laws. Recently a preventive officer, calling himself Captain Howard, pounced upon the Bradore rooms, demanding the papers. When he got them, he declared that the clearance would not permit them to be where they were. “You are not on Labrador, but in the province of Quebec.” He seized the register of the Canford, and tied up all the property, forbidding Mr. Penney to move the fish. There are at the present time about 400 quintals of fish, and from three to four tuns of cod oil. Besides the gear, Howard has sent for a steam cruiser, upon the arrival of which he will take the Canford to Quebec and have her sold. The clearance taken by E. Penney & Son is exactly the same as the one upon which the 100 to 200 Newfoundland schooners have fished during the season, and all who have property on the coast are in the same box.

⁴⁴⁸ From HOWARD'S SEIZURES. (1895, September 12). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 2.

Capt. Howard informed Mr. Penney that he should have reported at a Canadian Custom house and got a license to coast. Until then, Mr. Penney was unaware that there was a port of entry upon the coast. It appears there is one at Esquimaux Point, 300 miles west of Bradore.”

“Captain” Howard’s Business⁴⁴⁹ (1895)

How Capt. Howard, until so very recently a citizen of the United States, came to be vested with the authority of an officer of Her Majesty’s customs of Canada, was this: A month or two after he took out his naturalization papers in [Ottawa] last winter, [...] Capt. Howard made application for exclusive fishing rights on the Canadian Labrador. He didn’t want all the earth thereabouts, but he did ask for a monopoly of the lobster business on a considerable stretch of the coast line some seventy miles; and he wanted it all to himself for ten years.

BUSINESS PROSPECTS

He had reports to show that lobsters were not so very plentiful there that anybody else would likely want that particular strip of Her Majesty’s domains. And he had a most excellent scheme besides for leaving the fishery as good as he got it. He proposed to divide his coast into ten mile sections and fish or trap over only one section each year. This would give the crustacean supply time to recuperate. Thus there was also an element of humanity in the scheme to commend it to the Minister of Marine and Fisheries.

But Mr. Costigan didn’t quite see it that way. He was willing that Capt. Howard should be given every opportunity to develop a canning business on the Labrador coast and make all the money he could out of it. In fact, there was no privilege to which a Canadian citizen could reasonably lay claim that he was not willing to accord to Capt. Howard. But he evidently thought there should be something left for other enterprising citizens, too, for when the Captain left Ottawa he took with him only a five years’ lease to thirty miles of the coast.

Something else which Capt. Howard carried away from Ottawa was a commission from the controller to act as a sub-collector of customs along the bleak north shore in the region of his domain. The customs department had for years been bothered by smuggling up the Gulf of St. Lawrence from St. Pierre, a French possession off the south shore of Newfoundland, which has always been a source of supply for cheap brandy and other contraband. It was thought that while he was looking after his own business, Capt. Howard might very conveniently keep an eye also to the business of the Customs Department, so far as the schooners running back and forth in the Gulf are concerned.

He was accordingly authorized, his appointment dating from the 4th of April last, to seize any vessel found guilty of violating the Customs law, but was enjoined to be exceedingly cautious in making seizure, and only to proceed after a careful collection of the facts. He was not to be paid any salary, but to receive a share of the

⁴⁴⁹ From TOLD TO LET THEM GO. (1895, September 7). *The Ottawa Daily Citizen*, p. 5.

proceeds of any fines that might be imposed as a result of his seizures. Moreover, he was instructed to report from time to time to the Collector of Customs at Quebec.

THE PRESENT SEIZURES

In whatsoever manner the seizures at present under consideration were effected, the incident has certainly caused a good deal of irritation in Newfoundland, and official correspondence on the subject was exchanged yesterday between Ottawa and St. John's. On behalf of the seized schooners, Messrs. Morrison & Morine, of St. John's, wired to the Acting Premier guaranteeing the payment of any penalty that the vessels might have incurred by infraction of the Canadian Customs laws. The request was referred to the Controller of Customs, who at once telegraphed the firm that the release of the vessels had been ordered. Capt. Howard, besides being directed to release the vessels, was ordered to make a full report of the particulars.

“Gat.” Howard tells his story⁴⁵⁰ (1895)

Capt. “Gat.” Howard has arrived in Ottawa from the North Shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where he has carried on a lobster canning business during the summer, and where, according to the Newfoundland papers, he has been making it unnecessarily warm for the Labrador fishermen. That, at least, is the side of the story which has been put rather persistently before the public for the past month or so. Capt. Howard's version of the trouble down there, he gave to a Citizen reporter last night. Hitherto he has maintained a determined silence on the subject, as he has not made his official report to the Customs department.

“I suppose you have seen or heard the stories they tell about your so-called high-handed treatment of fishing vessels on the Canadian Labrador coast,” the reporter remarked, by way of a starter.

Capt. Howard produced a bundle of clippings from his pocket, remarking that he guessed he was well supplied, “and,” he said, “I may tell you that these reports in the Newfoundland papers are absolutely false. Nor do they even touch upon the charges on which the seizures were really made, one of which was the serious charge of smuggling, or to put it more politely, ‘landing goods on the Canadian coast illegally.’”

LOCATION OF THE SEIZURES

“In the first place, if you please, we will call the Canadian coast of Labrador, as you term it, by its proper name – the Province of Quebec. Labrador is Newfoundland's territory. Now, then, about these stories of my having acted in a high-handed manner. To begin at the beginning, they had their origin in this fact: On my way down to Gaspé in the spring, on board the steamer “Admiral,” I was approached by a man who evidently knew all about my business, and who made the remark that I would not and could not do my duty as a customs officer on their coast, as they'd be too many for me. He as much as hinted that if I tried it, I would not come back alive. Now that annoyed me, and I just answered back that I would do my duty fearlessly and that the first man who attempted to interfere would be dealt with in

⁴⁵⁰ From “Gat.” Howard tells his Story⁴⁵⁰ (1895)

summary fashion. I put it pretty strong. Well, that expression was conveyed to the people of the North Shore before I got there, and was the sole foundation for all the stories about my threatening to shoot people and all the rest of it.

“This same fellow afterwards chartered a schooner at Gaspé and sent her to Blanc Sablon, Labrador, to a firm who had imported a large consignment of goods from Jersey and traded them off for fish along the Quebec shore; and that, mind you, without entering it at the Customs.

“Now on my arrival at the North Shore I found upwards of 140 sail of Newfoundland fishing vessels, as many as fifty of them in a harbor; several of them without so much as a register, with no clearance papers or any shipping certificate whatever. I simply ordered them off the Canadian coast, although they were liable to seizure even upon the high seas, and by the cruisers of any nation. The remainder, without exception, had only fishing certificates granted by the Newfoundland government.”

FISHING LICENSES ONLY

Here Capt. Howard handed one of these certificates to the interviewer. It merely permits the vessel to engage in fishing on the coast of Newfoundland and its dependencies; the vessel to carry nothing but her fishing outfit, and at the end of the season and before engaging in any other business to surrender the license and get out a regular marine clearance. A heavy penalty, \$500, is imposed for handing any of the ship's stores without permission of the customs.

“Now,” continued Capt. Howard, “all these schooners had provisions on board, upon which the Newfoundland Customs had collected duty, but which were being used on the Canadian coast when the vessels were fishing, and which should have been taken out of bond and the duties paid in Canada. I explained to them their position and ordered them off the coast to the Newfoundland port for which they had been cleared and at which, according to their license, they were bound to report first thing. They departed, but I suppose many of them came back. However, there was not the least incivility passed on either side. Indeed, many of them thanked me for explaining how they should have their papers made out.”

JUST SMUGGLING

Then Capt. Howard explained about the seizures. The schooner “Telegram,” of St. John's, Nfld., Soper master, had an illegal clearance. It read “from Carbonneau to Bradore, Labrador.” Bradore is in the Province of Quebec, and besides is not a port of entry, so that no clearance should have been given to that place. Capt. Howard found her landing provisions illegally there for one Udell, who had squatted on a fishing berth at Bradore, and this for the third time during the season. Capt. Howard was pretty out-spoken in his censure of Skipper Soper. He described him as a sort of sea person who kept his smuggling accounts on the blank pages of the book in which he wrote his sermons.

“Isn't this the person who complained in the St. John's papers about your profanity, Capt. Howard?”

“The same; and talking about profanity, he’s the same precious preacher fellow who, as we passed in our steam launch, sang out that he hoped the boiler would blow up and send us all to ----.”

Capt. Howard used plainly a term that at least denoted the preaching sailor’s orthodoxy. He said he had at the outset offered to treat the skipper “as a gentleman,” provided he behaved decently. But instead, it seems he laid for Howard with a loaded gun, and even refused at first to give any orders to his crew while that officer was on board. “I admit,” added Capt. Howard, “that I did talk to that skipper as I thought he deserved upon the morning I released his vessel on the Government’s order. You see, he began by insulting me by twitting me about my lost authority. However, I fixed him for that by insisting upon getting his bond. And he gave it.”

TOOK HIS BOND

“Now, as for the seizure of the ‘Cranford,’ W. F. Penney master,” continued Capt. Howard, “there she was at the pier at Bradore, getting out for the West India trade, clearly against the law.” He went on to tell how for years Penney had been carrying on a fishing business, furnishing the fishermen with prohibited goods; while in the store he found smuggled goods. Capt. Howard got on smoothly enough with Penney, and was surprised to hear that the latter had accused him of unofficial behavior. He, however, had proof of all the proceedings and held Penney’s bond, as well.

Capt. Howard next showed the papers of the seized schooner “Annie,” of Hants Harbor, Nfld. They showed the loose manner in which such things are done in the Ancient Colony. It purports to be a domestic fishing license, but is made out on a foreign clearance form. Moreover, then she was landing Newfoundland goods at her owner’s, Capt. Phil. Smith’s, fishing stand at Snuff-box, P. Q.⁴⁵¹, as had been the practice for years. Howard had a good word to say for Skipper Smith. “I consider him,” he said, “an honest man who erred through ignorance of the law. He admitted I was only doing my duty in seizing his vessel. Penney and Udell upbraided him for not having thrown me overboard, but you should have heard his plain language to them. He gave his opinion of their smuggling schemes, and said it was all their fault he was in his present position.”

In the course of his explanation of the circumstances under which he seized the Halifax schooner “Foaming Billow,” Capt. Howard clearly demonstrated that tobacco had been sold from her which had been taken out of bond in Halifax destined for Esquimaux Point, P. Q., but never entered there, and the tin caddy in which it had been, was found with the bonded revenue stamp still upon it. This was a clear case of smuggling and may give the department a clue to extensive operations in that line. Capt. Howard had no trouble with Capt. Smith.

A FISHERMAN’S YARN

“But what of the reports from Newfoundland sources about your big armed crew and cutter?” [he] was asked.

⁴⁵¹ Province of Quebec.

Capt. Howard chuckled. "Why," said he, "I simply followed the Foaming Billow into Bradore Harbor in a small sail boat with only one man besides myself on board, a fisherman who sailed the boat. There I found the 'Billow,' the 'Cranford' and the 'Telegram' and placed the three of them under seizure, although they had a combined force of 40 men. So the public can judge how many gatling guns I could have had on that boat or on my person during the three days and nights I had possession of them. Indeed, when the 'Annie' arrived, that I had placed under seizure previously, we had a colony of over 60 men. No; all the arms on the sail boat were my sporting rifle and shot-gun, and the revolver I sometimes carry."

In regard to the story of Capt. Eastman, of the "Amazon," as published in the *Citizen*⁴⁵², to the effect that Howard refused to let him buy provisions for his starving crew, and caused him to lose a cargo of fish, for which he claimed \$500 damages, Capt. Howard has quite a different account of the affair. It appears Eastman made the same statement on the coast, but afterwards admitted before witnesses that he only wanted to buy some onions. Besides, the Amazon was loaded to the hatches with salt and barrels, so that without discharging them she could not have taken a cargo of fish on board. Howard took the precaution to make a list of the ship's stores, which shows she had lots of provisions on board.

Capt. Howard has any amount of documentary evidence in support of his statement, all of which he will probably include in his report to the Controller of Customs.

⁴⁵² "Capt. Eastman was preparing to proceed to Harrington Harbor, Nfld., where he had accepted a charter to convey a cargo of fish to Halifax. Howard, learning of this, wanted the Amazon to proceed to Blanc Sablon and to enter and clear at the Customs there, necessitating a special trip of several hundred miles. Rather than do this, Eastman says he decided to abandon his charter, by which he suffered a net loss of \$500. [...] He says that Officer Howard was unnecessarily abusive and offensive, and even refused to allow him to buy food necessary for his crew. Capt. Eastman is a Newfoundlander, but his vessel is of Canadian register." MR. MARTIN IS RECKLESS. (1895, October 1). *The Ottawa Daily Citizen*, p. 5.

THE CRASH OF 1894 AND ITS AFTERMATH

No Calm Before the Storm⁴⁵³ (1894)

Newfoundland's economy was in rough shape even before the banking crisis.

Newfoundland has always been a curious study, writes a correspondent. It occupies, so to speak, a little eddy in the world's commercial trade. There has been much enterprise in its one or two important trading centres, and a good deal of wealth accumulated. Once it bade fair to wrest the whaling trade away from the sailors of the southern fishing ports. At another time the seals "came down," as the expression is, and fortune again seemed promising. Both these hopes ultimately vanished, and the single codfishing industry was left.

The island is believed to abound in mineral wealth. [...] Towards the west – the unlucky "French coast," which figures as an afterthought in half a dozen European treaties – there are some fine fields of asbestos and strata of marble. But the asbestos and marble cannot be mined, because the French treaty gives no harbor privilege to the English and no interior privileges to the French. Newfoundland has no manufactures, and could not mine and export its coal at a profit.

AS A LAST RESORT,

some years ago, homestead laws were passed, a railroad built, and every effort made to attract agricultural settlers to the interior, where there is a really fertile soil. But the settlers accepted their opportunity very charily – the season is too short for the majority of grains – and there are not enough even of vegetable market-gardens in the neighborhood of St. John's to make possible the supplying of the city's food without heavy importations. In short, the whole community seems doomed to depend upon a single industry. The coal, the marble, the asbestos – even the disputed lobster fisheries of the French coast – are the good things of Tantalus. They are in full sight, but Newfoundland cannot see them.

Two years ago last June St. John's was almost destroyed by fire⁴⁵⁴. It was the end of an exceptionally dry month, a violent south-west gale was blowing, half the city's buildings were wooden, and the fire having started in the western section, fully three-fourths of the business part of the city was by morning reduced to ashes. This disaster came after two seasons of poor luck at the fisheries, and at a time too when emigration to Canada⁴⁵⁵ and the United States had become considerable; it seemed,

⁴⁵³ From NEWFOUNDLAND AS IT IS. (1894, December 14). *Moose Jaw Herald Times*, p. 6.

⁴⁵⁴ The Great Fire of 1892, as it is now known, began on July 8th of that year.

⁴⁵⁵ "Mr. C. C. Carlyle, an immigration agent of this department [Canada's Department of the Interior], working in Newfoundland for the past six months, has furnished this department with a list of about 500 persons, some of whom will accompany him to the Canadian Northwest at an early date, and the remainder intend emigrating to Canada as soon as possible. On this list appear the names of about 400 married men, who wish to obtain employment as farm laborers. These men, in every instance, furnish trustworthy references of their good character, and they have all subscribed to the following statement: "We, the undersigned, being desirous of emigrating to the Canadian Northwest, and being

therefore, almost a finishing stroke. But the event was quite otherwise. Newfoundland recovered quickly from the business destruction. The people are used to poverty; what they have to sell is not dependent on buildings, machinery, or store-houses; and as a matter of fact the first year or two after the fire was marked by a seeming return of prosperity. A thousand persons, perhaps, out of St. John's 25,000 inhabitants lived through an autumn and a winter in temporary huts in a public park, and suffered much from the storms and cold. But when spring came, building operations began performe again; as the people say, "the insurance money was being spent." Employment for the poor was plentiful, and the season's catch of cod was once more abundant.

THIS FALLACIOUS PROSPERITY

has not even yet wholly vanished. It is fallacious, because the real losses to investments in Newfoundland were heavy, and the blow to the permanent employing class more severe than people here seem to imagine. How little the situation is understood may be judged from the action of the landlords. The water front – the really valuable St. John's property – is largely owned by absentee proprietors, and the leases were generally voided by the fire. No sooner had this happened than the land-holders, on the first application for rent renewals, raised their demands by all sorts of gradations; adding in some cases, it is said, as much as 50 per cent. These older leaseholders dated back, it is true, twenty-five years or more. But twenty-five years ago was a time of far greater prosperity in Newfoundland than to-day. The result of this unreasonable movement was curious, but quite logical. Some business houses were forced to accept their landlords' terms and rebuild. Many others were not. As a result sites as to rent no agreement could be reached were left untouched. Not even the ruined walls of the old buildings were removed. It is now two years and two months since the fire; yet I counted the other day, within five blocks on the main business street of St. John, no less than twenty-two ruined buildings, the ragged and blackened walls of which were still left standing – often thirty or forty feet in height – exactly as though the disaster were but of a week ago.

unwilling to take the risk of looking for employment on our arrival, and being desirous of obtaining work for at least the space of three years to enable us to obtain each a farm of our own, are desirous of making a contract with some responsible farmer or tradesman for the said three years on the terms hereunto appended in the form attached, and I will sign such contract on presentation." The proposed contract is in the following words: "This agreement [...] witnesseth that the said ____ of Newfoundland, agrees to go with all possible speed to the residence of ____ of Canada, and here serve three years with him as a farmer's apprentice, and faithfully discharge all duties incumbent on him. Ten hours will be a day's work, except in seed time and harvest, when 12 hours will be a day's work. And the said ____ of Canada, agrees to furnish the said ____ of Ne[w]foundland, a ticket to his nearest railway station, and pay him, if between the ages of 16 and 20 years, the sum of \$10 a month, and if between the ages of 20 and 25 years, the sum of \$12 dollars a month, with board and lodging. One third of the same to be paid to the Canadian Railway on account of the said ____ of Newfoundland, and the balance to be paid to him each month." MIGRATION FROM NEWFOUNDLAND. (1894, May 18). *The Prince Albert Times*, p. 1.

“More and more scarce”⁴⁵⁶ (1894)

This article was published two days after the start of the banking crisis.

It was a matter of comment yesterday why it was gold and silver – silver especially – had become so scarce as a circulating medium compared with Bank notes. In the early days of the Union Bank, in 1864 and succeeding years, before the Commercial Bank was instituted, the sovereign and half-sovereign, the Mexican dollar, the British crown and the

UNITED STATES HALF DOLLAR,

formed much the highest value in a deposit of cash in which the Bank’s one pound and five pound notes were commingled. It was subsequent to that year that the Colony’s own gold and silver currency took the place of the foreign coinage, the British excepted. But, the last twenty years, hard money has been growing more and more scarce, and the bulk of silver currency was

STILL FURTHER ENCROACHED UPON

five or six years ago by the issue of the two-dollar denomination of bank notes. This initiative was taken by the Commercial Bank. Now, sire, there is no safer or more convenient circulating medium for the working classes than the silver currency. Take two representatives of that class: the outport fisherman who has made a good voyage, and the St. John’s laborer – both, men of family. The former having paid for

ALL HIS WINTER SUPPLIES

of provisions, raiment, &c., and deposited his surplus in the Savings’ Bank, retains a little reserve of cash, say ten pounds or forty dollars, to meet emergencies at home during the winter. What more convenient all-round medium for the purpose than the Newfoundland half-dollar? It does not make a bulky package, and if it does, can be reduced with a few gold pieces and a few bank notes – the latter to maintenance of that faith and trust in banking institutions, which is a characteristic of enterprising business people everywhere, because faith and credit

ARE AT THE ROOTS OF ALL TRADE,

the development of countries and the advancement of their populations. The other representative of the working classes – the St. John’s laborer – can have every requirement of his life supplied most advantageously from the beginning of that life to its close, through a silver currency; for his earnings yield him, as a rule, from three to eight dollars, weekly, and a welcome wage to him

EVERY SATURDAY NIGHT

would be six dollars in silver coins. These two men form a class which may fairly be said to comprise three-fourths of the colony’s population; and if their interests were safeguarded by a silver currency their business transactions would be conducted on a safe and fixed basis of value, with buoyant confidence and hope, year in and year out. As to the liability of silver to depreciate by reason of the increased output of some

⁴⁵⁶ BI-METALLIST. (1894, December 12). SCARCITY OF GOLD AND SILVER. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 4.

SILVER–MINING REGIONS,

we must remember the demand of the modern world, for articles of refinement, tends to keep the value of silver up; that a decrease in the output enhances its value; and that, at the worst, the possession of a silver dollar is more substantial fact to the holder than a paper dollar when its inscription of a “promise to pay” assumes the shape of a legend. Why, sir, how did our grandfathers and grandmothers manage to conduct their business affairs

WHEN THERE WERE NO BANKS?

It does look indeed as if much of the Spartan virtue of those times were lost to the “Boy of To–day,” as well as to the “Girl of To–day.” How often have we not heard them recall their business experiences of the dim past, when the old trunks or flour–barrel held its store of Mexican dollars, by means of which they conducted their barter and sale! Then, if a business–house failed, though it produced loss to its dealers, mechanics and laborers, by the termination of their industrial relations to each other, and loss to those who left balances in its keep, yet it involved in its fall

NO MONETARY INSTITUTION

with widespread certificates of indebtedness, and involved no correspondingly widespread loss. The reserve of silver which they held at home was ample to meet the passing stringency, if any such arose; and the suspension of payments by a mercantile firm was delimited in its disastrous consequences to those having direct dealings with it – to the few not the many.

The Crash⁴⁵⁷ (December 10, 1894)

The Commercial bank suspended payment, liabilities unknown. A run on the Union bank is now in progress. There is a financial panic here [St. John’s, Newfoundland]. The Commercial bank has suspended payment temporarily and the Union bank is paying out gold to satisfy the run. The calamity was caused by a change in the firm of Browse, Hall & Morris, of England, who transact business for many Newfoundland merchants. The change involved an immediate call on local men at a season when assets are not realizable.

“Some of the causes”⁴⁵⁸ (1894)

Various reasons might be assigned for the present financial crisis.

(1) The defaulting fish merchants did not keep abreast of the times in catering to the markets; they cured, packed and shipped their fish, as their grandfathers did a century ago.

(2) They thus allowed the Norwegian and other more enterprising and astute fish-dealers to outwit and undersell them.

⁴⁵⁷ From FINANCIAL PANIC. (1894, December 11). *The Daily Colonist*, p. 1.

⁴⁵⁸ From SOME OF THE CAUSES. (1894, December 24). *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

(3) They became ambitious as well as incapable, rushed recklessly into politics, and employed their time and money in election contests, when both should have been devoted to the interests of their business.

Having, through these and other causes, lost the money their ancestors left them, and finding their liabilities increasing every year, they managed to manipulate things so as to get control of the banks, as directors. They did this by deceiving the shareholders and representing themselves as “men of substance” when, in reality, they were only “men of straw”.

Then they began to gamble with the moneys of those institutions. By carefully concealing their proceedings from the shareholders and depositors, they were enabled to accommodate each other with unlimited credit; and, being in collusion with the manager and his subordinates, they had little or no dread of detection.

Thus they went on – three of them overdrawing to the extent of more than A MILLION AND A HALF DOLLARS, and all the other members of the ring helping themselves to sums ranging from \$2,000 to \$200,000 – until the death of Mr. Hall, of the firm of Hall, Prowse & Morris, with whom some of them were heavily involved, put a sudden and unexpected stop to their wild and iniquitous career.

In the whole history of bank defalcations we find nothing to compare with the moral turpitude of those men.

Financial Crisis in Newfoundland⁴⁵⁹ (1894)

The financial crisis, so long expected in Newfoundland affairs, has come at last, and its very suddenness prevents the full realization of its calamitous effect. One bank, five of the largest fish-dealing houses, and a shoal of smaller concerns have failed. [...] The causes that led to this disaster [...] are many and difficult to explain, but the chief is the rotten banking conditions which prevail in this country, and which have been the cause of incessant anxiety during the past seven years.

The Newfoundland fish trade is run on what is termed the supplying system. The merchant, or dealer in fish, supplies the fisherman with provisions for the winter, and a schooner and fishing requisites in the spring, all on credit. The fisherman turns him over his catch of cod and herring in the autumn; and the merchant, to cover incidental losses and bad debts, charges him for his credit supplies from 25 per cent. above the cash figures. In bad years this does not nearly meet his losses. And the depletion of the fisheries, increase in taxes, diversion of hundreds of men from fishing to railway building through the island at higher wages, and, lastly, the destruction of St. John's by fire two years ago, have combined to financially embarrass every firm dealing in the fisheries.

The necessarily small volume of money in circulation here, and the contracted scope of banking business, compelled the merchants to resort to pernicious practices of overdrawing accounts and endorsing and floating paper, which they were the more easily able to accomplish as they were, nearly every one of them, directors of the two

⁴⁵⁹ From THE CRISIS IN NEWFOUNDLAND. (1894, December 22). *The London Times*, p. 8.

banking concerns doing business here. The necessary consequences resulted. In the endeavor to rescue what they had sunk they plunged further into the financial morass till their whole system of business became a gigantic fabric of promissory notes.

The crash might have been postponed another year, but some two weeks ago Mr. Hall, of the firm of Prose, Hall, and Morris, London, England, died suddenly. This firm is the financial agent of nearly all the merchants here who export fish to Europe, and Mr. Hall had charge of this branch of the business. When he died, his family and trustees demurred at continuing so hazardous a business, and certain exchanges becoming due on Friday were protested in London. The Commercial Bank drew these exchanges and, not having funds in London to honor them, fell back upon its mercantile clients. These were similarly circumstanced, and on Saturday the firm of Edwin Duder made an assignment. This precipitated the crash. The rumor of this spread through the city, and on Sunday it was known that several other concerns would follow suit.

Yesterday morning, however, a worse blow struck the community when the Commercial Bank posted a notice on its door that it would suspend payment for the present owing to the failure of several of its mercantile customers to respond to their liabilities. The effect of this on the community is impossible to describe. The bank was besieged in a few moments by hundreds of men anxious to exchange notes for gold. Foiled there, those who had notes of the Union Bank rushed to its banking house, and for about an hour it paid out gold in a steady stream. Then, as its stock was clearly inadequate to the demand, it suspended temporarily until it could replenish its gold reserves from the United States. The suspension of the firms of Alan Goodridge and Sons, Baine Johnston and Co., Job Brothers and Co., and John Steer followed in quick succession. [...]

There are two chartered banks only doing business in Newfoundland, the Union and Commercial Banks. There was also the Savings Bank, a Government provident institution, the deposits and interest guaranteed by the colony. The deposits in the Savings Bank amount to \$3,000,000. Half of this was in Government bonds, stocks, &c.; the other half was lent at interest to the Union and Commercial Banks to be used in their ordinary business. Of this amount the Union Bank had about a million, but the Government owed it on overdrawn current colonial accounts \$650,000, leaving the Union Bank's indebtedness about \$350,000. The Commercial Bank had a million from the Savings Bank, also without any commensurate offset, and this was the heaviest blow; the charter of both banks provides that the Savings Bank shall be a preferential creditor in the event of their failure. Yesterday morning the Government enforced this proviso, and the Commercial placed its specie at its service. The Commercial was also severely hampered by its unwieldy note circulation.

At this juncture it is impossible to give any accurate figures of the liabilities of the Commercial Bank and the houses which have suspended payment. In the case of Duder, and presumably some of the others, the bank is partly secured by mortgages on his property. The one bright prospect in the situation is that there are about two million dollars' worth of fish oil, besides other products, in this city, and if this can be shipped to market and realized it will bring in at least 75 per cent. of its value. If the

estimate of 75 per cent. of the products is realized, then it is very probable the depositors in the Commercial Bank may get their money paid ultimately by the sacrifice of the capital stock and the property of the shareholders. These latter will probably lose everything, and as there are among them widows, orphans, and charitable institutions it would man absolute beggary to hundreds least able to cope with their troubles. Commercial Bank notes⁴⁶⁰ are selling for one-tenth their value to-night, and will not be taken at all by business people.

The condition of the Union Bank is similar, but not so hopeless. There is a feeling of genuine confidence in its solvency, superinduced by its successes in the past and the knowledge that it has substantial resources at home and abroad. Its future is, however, threatened by the fact that two, at least, of the largest firms doing business with it must suspend within 48 hours. They are merely keeping open now in the hope that some settlement may be speedily effected which will save the bank, and if this fails then everything will come down with a smash. The result will depend largely on the realization of the fishery products. About 90 per cent. of the catch is in the merchants' hands, so there can be little or no loss from traders making away with their fish. [...]

Thousands of people have Commercial notes of greater or lesser value which are absolutely valueless at present, and the whole circulating medium consists of about \$200,000 in gold, silver, and copper. This amount has got not only to do for St. John's, but the whole island as well. Outside this city there are no banks or exchanges, the people do their whole business in bank notes, and these will really be the worst sufferers, as they cannot get their notes to St. John's or effect any arrangement. [...]

The following abstract from the last statement of the Union Bank will illustrate the prevailing financial methods here. Its liabilities were \$4,455,745, including an amount of \$3,015,305 due by its deposits, bills, notes, &c., its capital reserve, bank-note circulation, and dividends making up the remainder. In May, when this statement appeared, it had as assets a gold reserve of \$196,974; bills discounted by other banks and funds available in 15 days, something over four millions. It is, therefore, apparent that, in the event of any large embarrassment during which it could not realize its assets, its position would be jeopardized.

“Paralyzed business of all kinds”⁴⁶¹ (1894)

The financial crash which has so unexpectedly befallen Newfoundland is in extent and severity of the most serious character. The closing on the same day of the only two banks in the colony has literally paralyzed business of all kinds. Without any warning we were deprived of our currency with the exception of the small amount of gold and silver which happened to be in the hands of a few. For a long time payments have been made mainly in bank notes and cheques, and the amount of gold

⁴⁶⁰ Newfoundland's banks were able to issue their own bank-notes.

⁴⁶¹ From THE NEWFOUNDLAND CRASH. (1894, December 26). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 7.

and silver in circulation was very small. Hence when the startling news spread on Monday morning that both banks had suspended payment, the majority of people found that they had only a few dollars or gold pieces in their possession. Numbers of well-to-do householders found that their stock of coin ranged from five to twenty dollars. Notes of both banks speedily became valueless. Shops ceased to do business, except to a limited extent on credit. People had nothing wherewith to meet current expenditure. In an isolated place like this no help could be found. We were at once reduced to a primitive condition, being without any medium of exchange.

As the situation was realized the outlook became darker and darker. Employers of labor soon found that they must discharge their hands, having no means of paying their wages. Contractors who had large buildings on hand had to discontinue operations. Several factories dismissed their employés. Servants were informed that they must wait for their wages – how long no one could tell. Shopkeepers found that they had no customers. Trade was at a standstill.

But the terrible character of the crisis was not realized till it was announced that one after another, six of our largest firms had suspended payments, being unable to meet their drafts. The large number of persons who had deposits in the banks, or held their notes, found that the latter were useless and the former beyond their reach for the present. The panic speedily spread. Consternation or anxiety was written on every face. The ruinous character of the calamity became apparent, and despair seized many a heart. Many who on Sunday considered themselves comfortably provided for, found, on the following Monday, that their all had been swallowed up, and that they were left more or less destitute.

SHAREHOLDERS' BAD PLIGHT

The shareholders, especially in the Commercial bank, it is feared, will suffer severely. A good opinion of the Union bank prevails; and had it not been that the suspension of the Commercial bank caused a run on the other, which soon compelled it to close its doors, it is generally believed it would have weathered the storm. The Commercial bank did not open at all on Monday, December 10th, and exhibited a notice to the effect that it had been compelled to suspend payments for the present. At once a run on the Union commenced and an excited crowd thronged it, demanding gold for notes and cheques. The struggle to get near the counter was severe. When the directors realized the situation and considered that the gold in their vaults did not exceed \$200,000, which would not nearly meet the demands likely to be made, they at once suspended business. The gold held by both banks was handed over to the Savings' bank, to which both were indebted and which had a preferential claim. The run on the Savings' bank commenced, but it was not considered wise to meet the claims of applicants, as the gold in was entirely insufficient. Thus their gold was locked up and our circulating medium was gone. The amount of misery and suffering of all kinds that has followed no one can at present estimate. It is by far the severest blow the colony has ever received. It is tenfold worse than the fire of 1892; and coming so soon after that calamity it is more severely felt.

As yet no help has come. Our immediate want is a currency. It would greatly lighten the gloom if the Bank of Montreal should see its way, either to come to the

aid of the Union bank or establish a branch here speedily. In the store of the merchants are fish to the value of two millions of dollars; but of course it cannot be realized. It is announced that the Peoples' Bank of Halifax has dispatched an agent to open a branch here. This, no doubt, will give temporary relief to a small extent. Application has been made to the Imperial Government for assistance, but their reply has not yet been made public. They would only give aid on condition of sending out a commission and ascertaining the financial condition of the colony and controlling the expenditure of any sums advanced. The next step might be to bring us to the status of a Crown colony.

The revenue will be deficient this year by a quarter of a million of dollars, as compared with that of last year. The inflation which followed the fire swelled the revenue to an abnormal condition, and reaction follows. [...]

From all this it is evident that our condition is of the gravest description. The immediate cause of the collapse of the banks was the failure of a London firm – Prowse, Hall & Morris – through which the sale of seven-eighths of our exports was conducted. Their drafts were due here and could not be honored.

“A heart-broken creditor”⁴⁶² (1895)

STATEMENT OF ALAN GOODRIDGE & SONS,
ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND, DECEMBER 31, 1894.

Liabilities:		
1.	Bills payable, as per statement	\$65,709.36
	COMMERCIAL BANK:	
	Balance	\$225,000.00
	Bill of Exchange returned for non-acceptance, £5,000	24,000.00
	Liabiity on 15 shares	3,000.00
		252,000.00
	Liabilities on Exchange, purchased from Commercial Bank and remitted C.T. Bennett, £19,000 stg	91,200.00
	C. T. Bennett, Bristol, £63,090 18s. 8d. Stg	302,836.48
	Less shipment	38,080.76
		264,755.72
	J. J. Langley, Liverpool, £944 7s. 6d. Stg	4,533.00
	Less shipment	4,300.89
		232.11
2.	Creditors partly secured	33,476.57
	Less securities, as per statement	27,800.00

⁴⁶² From A HEART-BROKEN CREDITOR. (1895, January 23). Statement of Alan Goodridge & Sons. *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

		5,676.57
3.	Creditors not secured, as per statement	28,612.81
	Liabilities on Bills discounted, \$13,152.25 on which probable	
4.	claim	6,042.71
	Stewart Munn & Co.	1,533.63
	Shipment expected to cover	1,533.63
		\$714,229.28 ⁴⁶³
	Assets:	
	Stock, store	28,871.40
	Stock, shop	9,956.81
		38,828.21
5.	Bills receivable: notes on hand, \$4,614.77	1,000.00
6.	Shares in public companies	2,530.00
7.	Cod-fish, 40,419 7-8ths. Qtls.	128,980.00
	Cod oil, 112 1-2 tuns	7,875.60
	Seal oil, 21 tuns	1,050.00
	Cod-liver oil, 2,486 gallons	994.40
	Pickled fish: 162 1-3rd tos. salmon, \$15	2,435.00
	Pickled fish: 405 brls. herring, \$2	810
		3,245.00
	Lobsters, 287 cases	1,937.25
8.	Shipments outstanding	7,173.71
	Shipments acct. assignee	62,429.26
	Renews trade	5,000.00
	Ferryland trade	2,000.00
	St. Mary's trade	2,000.00
	Nipper's Harbor trade	15,000.00
	Witless Bay trade	3,000.00
	Toad's Cove trade	1,000.00
		28,000.00
9.	Shares in foreign vessels	15,800.00
	Local schooners	14,010.00
	Labrador trade account	130
10.	Sundry debtors, town - \$24,058.11	15,000.00
11.	Sundry debtors, planters - \$54,441.48	9,500.00
	Sundry debtors, winter's issues - \$14,411.67	5,000.00
12.	Sundry debtors, fishery - \$285,625.79	20,000.00
		49,500.00

⁴⁶³ The original reads \$694,250.31, a sum not supported by the figures as written.

Cash on hand		1,116.58
13. Private estate H. C. Goodridge, surplus	2,562.52	
14. Private estate A. F. Goodridge, surplus	204.05	
15. Private estate J. R. Goodridge, surplus	1,700.11	
		<u>4,466.68</u>
		\$369,066.69
Less preferential C. H. bonds	2,840.89	
Salaries and wages	4,475.57	
		<u>7,316.46</u>
		<u>\$361,750.23</u>

Sir – I presume that the foregoing, having been submitted to a meeting of creditors, I, as a creditor, am justified in criticizing it. The items 10, 11 and 12 amount in all to \$378,537 and 5 cts. If we deduct from this the valuation of the whole \$49,500, [this] leaves \$329,037.05, which latter amount, if we add to the total assets \$361,749.63, gives \$690,787.28 assets against [\$714,229.28] liabilities, or a deficiency of [~~\$23,442.00~~]. We hear a great deal about money being sunk in the fisheries, and the supplying merchants complain of not being paid, and so forth, but here we see that in Goodridge & Sons' Statement, if they were paid every cent of their supplies at supplying prices, they would be [\$23,442.00] in debt, and we see that creditors have been decreased to the extent of \$33,476.57.

This being the condition of affairs, this gentleman, Mr. A. F. Goodridge, late Premier, as director of the Commercial Bank, obtains \$252,000.00, about three-fourths of the capital stock of the bank, and is liable on Exchange \$91,200.00, and to C. T. Bennett & Co. \$244,755.72. Can there be a condition of affairs more sad for a creditor to look upon, as a creditor of the Commercial Bank?

I must, I suppose, mourn my loss, for lawyers won't work without being paid, and I have no money to pay them; and, Mr. Editor, if I go to court perhaps I'll be told that Mr. Goodridge is very much hurt, although he has got hold of my money, which I left in the Commercial Bank for safe keeping, and verily he has kept it safely; but I want to know what it the meaning of the above, for if the statement be correct then Goodridge & Sons never had any money and they have been trading and living on my money and that of others. I am an unfortunate creditor of the Commercial Bank who sees these black-coated men walking about the streets quite unconcerned. Mr. Editor, is there no remedy for such as me, A HEART-BROKEN CREDITOR?

St. John's, Jan. 21, 1895.

The crash and the credit system⁴⁶⁴ (1894)

The entire coin circulation in the Colony – gold, silver and copper together – does not exceed about \$200,000, or say £40,000. For the purpose of trade the notes of the two suspended Banks have been the current medium, but when the Commercial failed, and the Union had to close its doors until it could replenish its store of specie, these notes became unexchangeable. Those who possessed only Commercial notes suddenly found them literally worth no more than the paper on which they were printed, because there was no one in the Colony who could give coin for them at whatever discount. Naturally the shopkeepers and others refused to take them at all, and the distrust extending to the notes of the other Bank, business was brought to a dead-lock, wages could not be paid in a current medium, and thousands of heretofore well-to-do people suddenly found themselves unable to procure the bare means of subsistence. [...]

For years past – how long it is now difficult to say – our oldest Colony has been living and trading on credit. [...] Newfoundland, as most people know, depends practically on the fish trade, [...] and the fish trade has come to be a sort of combination of the “truck” and the “supply” systems. The fisherman obtained on credit his vessel, appliances, and provisions for the whole season’s operations from the St. John’s merchant. In a country where the circulating medium is so scarce, the merchant in turn could only secure the supplies by buying on credit from the store-dealers and importers, and by over-drafts from the banks. When the fishing fleet came in, the catch was handed over to the merchant to repay the advances, and in a good season it would do so even though the fisherman had to pay for the accommodation a premium of 20 per cent. or more on cash prices. But in a bad season the catch would not clear the debt of the fisherman, who would have to be assisted again to resume operations in the next season. Meanwhile the fish brought had to be marketed, and this process involved another round of credit operations. The merchant might ship off at once to Europe and draw against bills of lading enough to clear his account at the banks. But as a general rule he had to store until sales and shipments could be effected. The storing necessitated further advances from the banks, to be repaid when shipments were made, or from some other firm of merchants who would give their acceptances against store-receipts.

The system of cross accommodation had become so extensive that the principal operations of the Banks seem to have been in connection with cross bills with merchants in the fishing trade. And only by thus helping their customers and backing each other’s bills could the Banks keep things going until the product of the season’s fishing could be turned into cash. For about ten months of every year, therefore, the colony has subsisted on paper credit alone. And year by year the position got worse as the fisheries were gradually depleted, colonial taxation increased, rival industries attracted men from the fishing, and metallic currency grew smaller and smaller. It

⁴⁶⁴ From A NEWFOUNDLAND telegram. (1894, December 28). *The Glasgow Herald*, p. 4.

has been said for some years past the entire business system of Newfoundland has been a gigantic fabric of promissory notes.

With inflammable materials, any trifle may cause a blaze. In the case of Newfoundland the only cause for wonder is that the conflagration did not occur long ago. The immediate cause of the panic was the death of the London financial agent for most of the Newfoundland fish exporters. This caused a winding-up of the business, in the course of which some of the drafts of the Newfoundland firms were refused acceptance. These drafts went back to the Commercial Bank, who, finding the drawers unable to refund, had to put on pressure which resulted in a rapid succession of mercantile failures in St. John's, and a general panic in the colony. When this bank collapsed there was a run upon the Union Bank by all who held its notes, and then that bank closed its doors until it could get a supply of gold from the United States. This step may have averted disaster, but it increased the general distress, as bank notes were unexchangeable and coin was unprocurable.

“Reduced to a deplorable condition”⁴⁶⁵ (1895)

The Governor of Newfoundland gave his assent yesterday to the two Bills, hurriedly passed by the Legislature, guaranteeing a portion of the note issue of the Union and the Commercial Banks. The whole Colony has been reduced to a deplorable condition, by a financial crash occurring at a time of year when it is least able to bear the strain. To enable them to get along, the Government have obtained a loan of eighty thousand pounds from one of the Canadian Banks which has opened business in St. John's. Meantime, the interest on the various public Debentures has been duly met, with a promise that before long the official salaries and other Civil Service claims will be paid.

Everything in Newfoundland depends on the fisheries. A good season brings moderate prosperity to everybody; a bad one reduces the community almost to the point of insolvency. Everything is based on credit, and what the English Parliament has so frequently legislated against under the form of the “truck system.” The merchant supplies the fisherman with the requisites for carrying on his craft, receiving in return one-half of his catch, and with provisions for the Winter at a cost twenty-five per cent. over the cash price. The result is that half of the Islanders are never out of debt, while a bad season reduces the majority of the other moiety to much the same condition. This has been always the case, and for several years past has been combined with an increase in taxation, a decrease of coin in circulation, and the embarrassment, from which the citizens have not recovered, caused by the burning of their capital some two years ago.

There has naturally been an unhealthy inflation of “banking facilities” in the shape of overdrawn accounts, “endorsing,” and “kite flying” generally, until the Banks' safes were choked with promissory notes, which in most cases could only be “met” by Sheridan's plan of renewing them. The calamity, however, might have been

⁴⁶⁵ From The Governor of NEWFOUNDLAND. (1895, January 4). *London Standard*, p. 5.

postponed a little longer, had not the death of a merchant who acted as financial agent for most of the Island firms exporting fish to Europe necessitated the settlement of his affairs. The result was the protest of a large number of exchanges, and the consequent bankruptcy of house after house. Then the Commercial Bank closed its doors, and a run upon the Union Bank compelled it to declare a temporary suspension of payments.

None but the most substantial concerns have been able to weather the storm. The two Banks mentioned are the only chartered ones doing business in Newfoundland, and a large portion of the Savings Bank's deposits had been lent to them by Government, though, as the Colony is a preferential creditor, and is itself a debtor, little fear need be entertained that the public will lose anything in this direction. But it is as yet impossible to say what the liabilities are.

Panic just now prevents anything like a calm consideration of the situation, and all manner of wild schemes are being mooted. The Directors of one of the involved Banks have been arrested on a charge of issuing a fraudulent balance-sheet. Scapegoats are sought on every side. A Royal Commission to inquire into the condition of the Colony is one day advocated, although nothing could be elicited which is not well known already. Next day, the reduction of the Island to the condition of a Crown Colony is, in despair, offered as the best solution of the problem to be faced. Finally, a less drastic proposal is put forward, for Newfoundland to join, as it ought to have done twenty-seven years ago, the Canadian Confederation. In time, no doubt, something useful may come out of the crucible into which these heterogeneous suggestions are being flung. But, for the moment, the more urgent question is how the people will struggle through the Winter, many of them without any employment, and most of them without any currency more negotiable than the bills of insolvent firms, or the promissory notes of Banks the value of which has, provisionally, been supported by the State.

“The Bank Note Bill”⁴⁶⁶ (1895)

By the commercial and financial catastrophe of December 10th, the colony was placed in probably an unparalleled position. For half a century the principal currency off the colony had been bank notes, first those of the Bank of British North America, some of whose notes remained among the people a quarter of a century after its Newfoundland Branch had been closed, and then those of the Union and Commercial Banks. These bank notes possessed the unlimited confidence of the people, and were preferred as a circulating medium to silver and gold. At the time of the crash, notes of the Union Bank to the value of \$722,000, and of the value of \$659,000 issued by the Commercial, were, according to the bank books, in the hands of the people. Possibly \$50,000 may be deducted from the total number for notes lost at sea in craft and by fire, leaving about \$1,380,000 in the hands of 180,000 people – or say about \$36 for each family in the island. On December 8th, the possessors of these notes had

⁴⁶⁶ From The Bank Note Bill. (1895, January 5). *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

the wherewithal to make purchases, exchanges, and to pay their debts. On Dec. 11th these notes ceased to have any value as a circulating medium, and the colony was without a currency of any sort. No debts could be paid, and exchanges for the necessaries of life were reduced to simple barter.

At the time of the suspension no one knew the value of the bank assets nor of the notes; and shortly afterwards the leading business houses and shops refused to take the notes at all; and as all labor had ceased to find employment, and there was no value attaching to the small savings possessed by the working classes in the form of these notes, starvation by wholesale and the ruin of the community was imminent. Add to this that the Government was itself confronted with such immediate financial difficulties as rendered it powerless to assume any heavy obligations in addition to those with which it was already burdened. The problem could only be solved in the first place by avoiding any addition of any sort to the public financial obligations of the colony, and, at all hazards, by preventing the Government from sharing in the general bankruptcy through loss of credit or otherwise.

The subject immediately pressing on the attention of the Government was to provide a circulating medium to enable the ordinary transactions of every day life to be performed. To obtain gold and silver and place it in the hands of the people was an impossibility. Treasury notes were suggested; but, while the Government might have printed hundreds of thousands of them and put them in the Treasury, how could they be got into the hands of the people? The Government could not have given them away without equivalent value, and how could the people furnish such value to get possession of the notes?

There remained the alternative of the Government guaranteeing a minimum value to the notes of the banks in the hands of the people, but to avoid this plan entailing bankruptcy on the Treasury, it was necessary to see to what extent each bank was likely to be able to meet its notes. A committee was appointed of both branches of the Legislature, as was provided in the banks' charters, who, as quickly as possible, went through the affairs of the banks and pronounced the Union Bank, in their opinion, solvent and the Commercial Bank utterly insolvent. From information thus furnished the Government by members of the committee, it was considered that it could stand any loss that might accrue from a guarantee of the Union Bank at 80 cents in the dollar, and of the Commercial at 20 cents in the dollar.

The Bank Note Bill was then prepared, by which the Government undertook to guarantee the payment of every note of either bank that might be presented to its registrar before a certain time, at the above rates, within two years. The object sought for was to make a minimum below which no Union Bank notes would fall, though it is hoped that they will continue to pass at their face value, and that there may be no need of registering any of the Union notes. Should they, within the limit of time above indicated, go out of favor and become impossible to pass at their face, the registering them will give them an absolute value of 80 per cent, below which they will not fall.

The rate of guarantee for Commercial Bank notes was fixed at 20 cents in the dollar, and although a higher present value may apparently be indicated by the figures, the question is so complicated by preferential claims, disputed securities and

a variety of other questions from which the Union Bank appears free, that the Government did not feel themselves justified in naming a higher figure. Possibly an examination by experts may show that something better may be expected, and then the Government may advance their guarantee. It is to be hoped that these notes may circulate at 30 or 40 cents in the dollar and that the holders may have no need to register them, but if such should not prove to be the case and they are not taken as a medium of exchange, without registering and obtaining the guarantee, that guarantee should at once make them good for the amount of the Government stamp.

The fact of registering and stamping the notes will prevent the value of such notes going above the guarantee, because any dividend which may be paid in excess of such guarantee will go to the person who originally presented the note for register and not to the final holder at the time of redemption, who will only receive the amount of the Government guarantee.

It may here be pointed out that by the action of this act the circulating medium will be maintained at almost the same amount as it was before the crisis. The currency then in circulation was shown above to be about \$36 for each family. It will now be as follows: \$722,000 Union Bank notes at eighty per cent, \$577,600; \$659,000 Commercial Bank notes at twenty per cent, \$131,800. Add to this \$120,000 drawn from the Savings Bank in gold and \$300,000 to be paid by the Government in salaries before the 10th of January inst., besides a considerable number of Canadian bank notes now in circulation, and the total currency will be \$1,129,400, as against \$1,380,000, or a falling off of 11 per cent only. Thus, instead of \$36 there will still be \$32 currency in circulation for each family in the island.

Another object which will be attained by the appointment of a Government registrar is that as soon as a dividend becomes possible, it may be paid to all classes of creditors, noteholders, current accounts and deposit receipts. The dividend on the notes would be paid as declared to the registrar, who would hold it until the notes came in for payment; whereas, without such an officer to act as a treasurer for the noteholders, it would be well nigh impossible to pay a dividend on the notes until the bank could pay all creditors in full, or a final division of the assets was possible.

The Act has been strangely misunderstood. It was not intended as an assistance to the banks in any way, nor as a means of relief to the unfortunate losers by the insolvency of the banks. Such relief, when indispensable, must be provided in some other way. It was not intended to enable noteholders or purchasers to make a profit or to provide funds to outfit craft for the fishery. It was solely intended to make the ordinary transactions of buying and selling in every day life possible by fixing a minimum value to notes in the hands of the whole population, which, without the machinery of this bill, they could not have had. The principle of the bill may not be entirely sound under ordinary circumstances, and the machinery to carry it out may be a little cumbersome, but the circumstances of the time are extraordinary, and "faute de mieux" it is hoped that it may have the effect of giving a fairly steady value to the only circulating medium at hand.

The Act will prevent speculation in the notes, and no holder need receive less than its full value for any note, while the taxing of one section of the community to

make good to another as loss incurred through the failure of a private corporation in which the former have no interest, is avoided. Such arbitrary transfer, as well as the risk of ruining the entire Colony, must have been incurred had the whole issue of bank notes been guaranteed at par.

“Newfoundland’s woe”⁴⁶⁷ (1895)

In July, 1892, the name of the island [of Newfoundland] was on all lips, as the scene of a terrible conflagration which destroyed more than half the city of St. John’s and left 11,000 people houseless. Help came from all quarters. The people bore the calamity bravely and set to work courageously to rebuild their capital. In two years the burned portion was restored and greatly improved, and the sun of prosperity was shining brightly.

It would seem, however, that the colony is destined to be now, as formerly, “the sport of historic misfortunes,” as Lord Salisbury pithily described it. It is now prostrate under a calamity tenfold more disastrous than the fire of 1892. The 10th of December of the present year will long be memorable as “the Black Monday” of Newfoundland. This time it was a financial tornado that suddenly burst upon the unhappy country, the effects of which are likely to be far more ruinous than any previous “historic misfortune.” On the morning of that day the only two banks in the country – the Commercial and Union – closed their doors, creating universal panic and distress. The next day six of the largest mercantile firms suspended payment, increasing the dismay. Business was at once paralyzed. Almost the sole currency of the country consisted of the notes of the two banks. These were now valueless; no one would receive them. Few persons had more than a few gold pieces and a small supply of silver in their possession; many had but two or three dollars in their pockets. Gold was hardly ever seen in buying and selling – the notes answering all purposes. Those who had money in their houses found that it was in the discredited notes, and that their money on current account and deposits were locked up in the closed banks. Without any warning, the community was deprived of its circulating medium, and nearly all buying and selling came to a standstill, except on a limited credit. The shops were open, but the customers few and far between. A splendid assortment of Christmas goods was in stock or stood temptingly in the windows, but few could touch them. The people found themselves as in an enchanted castle – bewildered, powerless, unable to comprehend the situation.

ASTOUNDING REVELATIONS

Speedily employers of labor of all kinds, finding themselves without the means of paying wages, and that demand for their articles of production had ceased, were compelled to discharge their hands. Day laborers were no longer required. Dismay was pictured on every face, and the question was on every tongue, “What is going to be the end of this?” The condition of affairs was entirely unprecedented here, or elsewhere.

⁴⁶⁷ From NEWFOUNDLAND’S WOE. (1895, January 7). *Indianapolis Journal*, p. 6.

But when a meeting of the shareholders of the Commercial Bank was held, frightful revelations were speedily made, and the condition of the bank was found to be worse than any one had deemed to be possible. Mismanagement of the grossest and most culpable kind came to light. Overdrawn accounts to the extent of a million and a quarter of dollars were found in the books. One merchant, who was also a director of the bank, had overdrawn his account to the extent of \$600,000. Three other directors had obtained each one-third or half that amount. Many traders and private individuals had obtained smaller overdrafts. The notes in circulation amounted to \$750,000. These were held by persons all over the country, and it was soon seen that they were almost worthless. The deposits in the bank were large, and there were amounts lying on current account. The shareholders who were liable, by the charter, for double the amount of their shares, were struck with dismay. The great bulk of them were persons of moderate or small means, who had invested in shares to make a provision for declining years or for their families. Many were widows and orphans whose little all was in these shares. The tales of utter ruin and almost beggary among this class are heart-rending. Noteholders, of whom many are poor men, are no less to be pitied. These may recover 10 cents out of the dollar – hardly more. Depositors will also lose heavily. The liabilities of the bank amount to nearly two millions of dollars. Assets are not yet known. The mercantile firms indebted to the banks will have to go into liquidation. The bank is a complete wreck, and entails widespread ruin on thousands.

The condition of the Union Bank is considered to be fairly good. It is believed, at present, that it will pay its debts, but shareholders will lose the value of their shares. Noteholders will probably obtain 80 cents on the dollar. The same system of permitting overdrawn accounts was in operation in this establishment, but under more careful restrictions. Still, some directors were found to be heavily overdrawn. The affairs of the bank are only partially investigated as yet, so that much depends on what may yet come to light.

In the stores of the merchants there are at this moment fish and oil to the value of \$2,000,000 which, of course, cannot be realized on at present. Most of the suspended firms are believed to be solvent, if time to realize without making large sacrifices can be secured.

The condition of the mechanics, factory workers and laborers in St. John's is alarming. They are without work and many ere long will be without food. The hand of charity cannot come to the rescue because there is no money in circulation, and we all know what hungry men may be driven to do. Our people under ordinary circumstances are quiet and orderly, and only if driven to desperation would any of them violate the law.

THE THINGS MOST NEEDED

The great pressing necessity is to obtain as speedily as possible a medium of exchange. No civilized community ever before found themselves, in a moment, deprived of their currency. No bills can be collected, no debts paid, no purchases made except with the small amount of coin now in the hands of a few, and no remittances made by bills of exchange. The government has no money to pay salaries at the end

of the quarter, and what officials – those in the civil service, teachers of schools and academies, etc. – will do remains to be seen. The government apparently is bewildered. It has decided to bring a bill before the Legislature to guarantee a percentage on the value of the bank notes now in circulation, after investigating the condition of the banks. This would give a certain amount of temporary relief and cause the wheels of commerce to move. For this reason the measure would be welcomed, but our financiers have no great faith in it. Could the Union Bank be resuscitated and placed on a solid basis, so as to inspire confidence, this would be an immense boon. The agents of several Canadian banks are here with the view of opening branches, but as yet nothing definite has been attempted. We are waiting to hear from the government first. The Bank of Montreal, one of the strongest monetary institutions of the day, has an agent here. Many advise that he should be applied to and asked to take over the Union Bank on fair terms, after a careful investigation. The notes of the Montreal Bank would thus replace those of the suspended bank. We should thus obtain a currency on a solid basis and a means of exchange. If “in a multitude of counselors there is safety,” we ought to be safe. The newspapers teem with the wildest and crudest schemes. The bank experts who are here will help us to discover a way out of the financial muddle in which we find ourselves.

What are the causes which led up to this terrible financial crash, involving us in such misery? The immediate cause was the failure of a large firm in London – Prowse, Hall & Morris – who acted as agents for a large number of our fish exporting firms. Our local firms were largely involved with the London house and fell with it. The suspension of one firm told heavily on others and helped to bring them down. After some time, another firm in Bristol with which a business was done also suspended, greatly increasing the panic, though happily this firm has been resuscitated and has resumed business under another name.

The remote causes, however, which led to the catastrophe have been long maturing, and it was but a question of time when the day of reckoning should arrive. The great staple industry of the country, as has been evident to discerning minds, was conducted on unsound principles. The fisheries for generations were carried on upon what was known as “the credit system”. The large mercantile firms at the beginning of each fishing season made advances in provisions and goods of various kinds to the fishermen, in many instances directly, but often through middle-men, called “planters”. The products of the year’s labors were at the close of the fishing season handed over to the merchant suppliers and the fisherman’s account was adjusted. If a surplus to his credit remained, he obtained his winter supplies and returned home happy. In bad seasons he found himself in debt to the merchants and had to make up his winter provisions on credit. Many became, in this way, hopelessly sunk in debt. The evils of such a system are not difficult to discover. It was calculated to undermine the honesty and industry of the fisherman, and in many instances to deprive him of all hope and energy. It was hardly less injurious to the supplier. At the close of each fishing season he found a pile of bad debts accumulated by those who had been unsuccessful in the fisheries. To cover these he must make high charges, which the toiling fisherman resented. Thus the “truck system” was a curse to him

that gave and to him that received. Once thoroughly established, it was almost impossible to get out of the vicious round. The crash has come at last which will end it, but at an enormous cost of suffering. The "credit system" has got its death-blow.

WIDESPREAD RUIN

Another efficient cause of the present crisis was the competition of the bounty-supported French fisheries from Le Pierre. Ten years ago our mercantile firms were prosperous and held a high and honored place. At that date, by increased bounties, the French bank fisheries were largely expanded. Large catches drove down the price of codfish. Newfoundland houses lost heavily on their exports, and a considerable portion of their capital was swept away. Many lost from \$160,000 to \$200,000 in one year. They were unable afterward to recoup themselves, and to keep afloat had recourse to advances made by our local banks. The directors of the banks were almost entirely merchants. An unsound system of banking commenced. The directors had at the banks largely overdrawn accounts, and others were allowed a similar license. This could only last for a time. This year short fishery and the failure of two English firms interested in the trade precipitated the crisis, and the whole banking and mercantile system was reduced to a state of chaos, from which, after sore sufferings and much misery, it will emerge, let us hope, in a stronger and healthier condition.

But if any one supposes that the present financial crash is but a temporary disarrangement from which the country will speedily recover, he is widely mistaken. The "ancient colony" is "on its beam ends," and will not right itself except by slow degrees and many sacrifices. By these ruinous bank and mercantile failures all the industries of the island are disorganized. Multitudes are impoverished. Large amounts of capital employed in the business of the country have been swallowed up, and the question arises, where will the fresh capital be found to carry on the seal fishery in March, and the great cod fisheries in summer? The property of the suspended firms will go largely to pay their indebtedness to the banks. Of late years the seal fishery has not been remunerative, owing to the decline in the price of sealskins and seal oil. All this, it is to be feared, means that next year large numbers will be unemployed. Already the cry of want comes from many quarters. It is calculated that next year the importations will be one-half below the average. The revenue is mainly derived from duties on imports. Should the revenue be reduced by one-half, the public services cannot be maintained, and the interest on the public debt will not be paid. Should a remedy not be found, bankruptcy must follow.

The state of matters at the present moment is hardly conceivable by outsiders. Christmas has come, and the festive season was shorn of all enjoyments to a large extent. The bills of the year are sent round, but few can pay. Many respectable families are not able to pay their servants' wages. Tradespeople, shopkeepers, professional men, such as doctors and lawyers, cannot collect their accounts. The revenues of churches and the salaries of ministers have fallen and are likely to go lower. To crown all, the government has no money to pay the salaries at the end of the quarter. The poor relief grant is paid by orders on shopkeepers. Where teachers are to get their salaries is a mystery. The total amount of coin in circulation is very small. Charitable institutions, orphanages and many churches have suffered by the

failure of the banks in which their funds were kept. Suppos[ing] this state of matters to continue for some time, thousands will be without bread.

“What is to be done?” is the question on every lip. Most intelligent men admit that there are but two alternatives before us. One is to seek admission to the Dominion of Canada, which would assume our public liabilities and save us from bankruptcy. The other is to ask the British government to send out a royal commission to investigate our financial condition, with a view to guaranteeing a loan. This would involve a suspension of the Constitution at least for a few years, and the reversion of the island to the condition of a crown colony, administered by a Governor and a select council. The former could hardly be arranged [in] under twelve months and would bring us no present relief. The latter would bring help quickly, and to it most eyes are turning. No doubt should Newfoundland become a crown colony, the issue would be union with Canada.

Newfoundland is the twelfth largest island in the world. The value of its total exports exceeds \$6,000,000 annually, and its imports \$7,500,000. Its principal exports are codfish, value \$3,600,000; cod and seal oil, value \$417,000; sealskins, value \$166,000; canned lobsters, \$265,000; herring, salmon, etc., value \$295,000, and copper, copper ore and iron pyrites, value \$639,000. It has a population of over 200,000, and over 350 miles of railway. It has a public debt of \$8,255,546, its total revenues in 1893 (including loans) were \$1,853,844, and its total expenditures in that year \$2,110,012.

“Depressed and despondent”⁴⁶⁸ (1895)

The vicious system of banking which has been followed here for years had much to do with the present calamity. There were two banks whose subscribed capital was supplied almost entirely by persons resident in the island. Largely the stock represented the savings of hard working people belonging to the middle classes. The depositors were persons in business or those who had retired from business on a moderate competency. The charters of those banks are now discovered to have been loose and faulty, affording no protection to note holders, such as American and Canadian charters provide, and no supervision to guard against mismanagement or fraud. [...]

Managers were invariably selected from the mercantile class. Years of bad fisheries or low prices for foreign markets came, and the capital of large fish-exporting firms was in part swept away. Then came the temptation to obtain advances from the banks to carry on their business, and a fatal system of permitting largely overdrawn accounts without due security was entered on. Managers, being also merchants, were led to accommodate each other, and thus money entrusted to the banks came to be used to an unjustifiable extent in carrying on the precarious business of the country, advances being unsecured. To such an extent were over-drafts permitted, that in one instance twice the amount of the whole bank capital was thus borrowed. Not only

⁴⁶⁸ From THE CRISIS IN NEWFOUNDLAND. (1895, January 16). *The Leeds Mercury*, p. 8.

large exporting firms were thus accommodated, but trading firms with small, or almost no, capital were dealt with.

The revelations connected with the Commercial Bank since its failure are appalling, and the losses and misery inflicted on note-holders, depositors, and stockholders are deplorable. The Union Bank is in a very different condition so far as yet appears, but there, too, large overdrafts were permitted and undue credit given, and the shareholders will lose everything. [...] An Act has been passed guaranteeing the Union Bank notes at 80 cents the dollar, but the Commercial Bank notes only at 20 cents the dollar. [...] Holders of Commercial Bank notes resent deeply the discrimination against them, and will not part with their notes at such a low estimate. [...] These notes were colonial currencies, and were employed by the Government in all their payments. [...]

People are in a very depressed and despondent condition; labor, buying and selling, and manufacturing, are suspended. All hands in the boot and shoe factories, foundries, biscuit, and wood factories, have been discharged. [...] All the large establishments in St. John's, shops and offices, have discharged half their employés, and reduced the wages of the remainder by 33 per cent. Private householders are retrenching, and reducing the number of their servants.

“A waste paper”⁴⁶⁹ (1895)

One notable result of the crisis was a loss of faith in paper money.

A letter received [...] from St. John's, the very center of the present sore trouble, shows a very woeful state of affairs indeed.

“I got paid on Saturday evening, and the Commercial Bank never opened after that, and so my money (bills) was a waste paper, and the bill that was worth five dollars, is now only worth \$1, or 20 cents on the dollar.”

When a man takes a V⁴⁷⁰ into a store he has to be content with trading the depreciated value of it out, as the storekeeper will not give change, for the government will not guarantee the 20 cent rate beyond two years. Indeed some storekeepers refuse to take them at that rate. He says the streets are traversed by poor hungry emaciated beings, who have no means and no prospects of supplying sustenance to the physical man.

Silver has been brought in very rapidly; one man was actually seen to pay a \$10 bill for a fifty cent piece of silver.

⁴⁶⁹ From A Cry from Newfoundland. (1895, February 21). *The Brandon Mail*, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁰ This appears to be slang for a \$5 note (‘V’ is ‘5’ in Roman numerals).

“An interesting Commercial Bank note case”⁴⁷¹ (1894)

There was an interesting Commercial Bank note case heard: Patrick Flynn *vs.* S. March & Sons. Mrs. Louisa Flynn, wife of Mr. Patrick Flynn, appeared, and swore to the effect that on last Monday morning [Dec. 10], between 8 and 9 o'clock, she went to S. March & Sons, ordered one ton of coal, paid the man in the little office on the wharf in a \$5 Commercial Bank Note and received 20 cents change.

In the afternoon, the coal not being sent to her, she proceeded to the place of purchase, and learned it would not be sent on the payment given, and, offering the note to her, she refused it; she would only receive gold or silver. Mr. Nathaniel March testified, on oath, almost identically, but held that payments for coal were made in the office and orders given in the wharf.

The Judge held that the man who received the money was a servant, and that it is a general principle of law that “the servant’s act is the master’s act.” He recognized the position of [the] defendants regarding the mode of payment as a good one, and if they could prove that their servant did not accept payment, then their case would be greatly strengthened.

A call was made for the servant, but he, not being in court, Mr. March offered to go for him. The keen-witted judge, however, demurred; he preferred a telephonic call. The servant, Thomas Kean, responded and deposed that he was the weight-master, and that he had taken money when people were down early rather than keep them waiting. Judgment for the plaintiff for the full amount paid, \$4.80.

A Run on Three Banks⁴⁷² (May, 1895)

By spring of 1895, Canadian banks had set up shop in Newfoundland. The possibility of joining Canada in Confederation was fiercely debated topic. Anti-Confederation activists tried to bolster their argument by sabotaging the Dominion’s financial institutions.

Some malicious person or persons started the report in St. John’s, Nfld., the other evening that the Bank of Montreal, the Merchants Bank of Halifax and the Bank of Nova Scotia were in a shaky condition. The origin of the report cannot be traced. The following morning there was considerable run on the banks, but it was not panicky. The bank managers are considerable annoyed, but smile at the absurdity of the report and are paying out gold to all who ask for it. Many believe that some over zealous anti confederates have started it in order to damage Canadian institutions and raise a feeling against confederation.

Another banking scare occurred at the same place on the same day. A story was circulated that the Bank of Montreal had suspended. The rumor was traced to a number of anti-confederate fanatics, who are constantly starting damaging reports.

⁴⁷¹ From IN THE POLICE COURT. (1894, December 12). *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

⁴⁷² From A RUN ON THREE BANKS. (1895, May 16). *Qu’Appelle Progress*, p. 3.

But the public were so badly bitten in the late banking disasters that the rumor was easily swallowed, and there was a run on every bank in the city, causing great excitement. Crowds of people surrounded each banking institution, where the officials were paying out large reserves of gold, as owing to the unsettled condition of affairs during the past three months most of the people refuse to handle notes, but convert them into gold immediately they are obtained. There is no apprehension of danger to any of the banks. The managers all say that they have an abundance of gold to meet any possible call, and it is expected that the panic will have soon subsided.

The run was heaviest on the Government Savings Bank, which is supported by the Bank of Montreal, though there was also a run on the Bank of Nova Scotia and Merchants' Bank. Each bank stood by the others, not hesitating to redeem the others' notes, and by their air of confidence and liberal displays of heaps of gold coin, the panic was allayed, so there was no crush about the teller's windows when the banks closed for the day. Business people took no part in the run; it was confined to the poorer classes, who were most credulous.

The run on the Bank of Montreal⁴⁷³ (1895)

Canadian banks, including the Bank of Montreal had established branches in Newfoundland by early 1895. Unlike the failed banks, they had sufficient reserves to weather a temporary loss in confidence.

I am afraid the recent absurd panic and run on the Canadian banks, which have branches here, have not tended to elevate the community in the opinion of outsiders. It was a sheepish scare, it must be confessed, without anything to justify or excuse it in reason or fact. [...] How the fright originated is an inscrutable mystery; but I fear it was not accidental. There is pretty strong evidence to show that some designing villains were at work the night before, spreading evil reports regarding the banks and representing that they were "going to burst." [...] In some inexplicable way such senseless rumors went round on the evening before the panic showed itself; and on the morning after, as soon as the shops opened, numbers of excited individuals rushed about making purchases of various kinds to get rid of their notes. Later, crowds began to gather in front of the banks; and it was evident that a run would take place. The news spread and the panic-stricken crowd rapidly increased in numbers. It was largest in front of the Bank of Montreal, which, of course, does the largest amount of business, the next being the Bank of Nova Scotia. It was pitiable to see the terror-stricken people awaiting the opening of the bank, many of them fully believing we were going to have a repetition of "Black Monday" when the two local banks closed their doors.

Great was the astonishment of the crowd when the Bank of Montreal threw open its doors an hour before the usual time and admitted the surging crowd, a large

⁴⁷³ From THE SCARE AT ST. JOHN'S. (1895, May 21). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 6.

proportion of them being women. The manager, Mr. Gaeta, had foreseen what was coming and met it skillfully and courageously, as also did the managers of the two other banks. On getting inside, the crowd, shouldering one another to reach the wicket, found double the usual number of tellers ready to receive them with cheerful faces, while a huge pile of bags full of gold coins was at the elbow of each. Nearly everyone wanted gold for the notes they brought; and soon a perfect torrent of gold began to flow out in exchange for the paper presented. It was a curious sight. The half frantic women, with pale faces and disheveled hair; the burly men, with fierce determination in their eyes, but terror in their hearts lest they should not reach the counter before the gold had all vanished, were all struggling together. But the golden piles never seemed to diminish. No sooner was one bag emptied than another took its place. Clerks were seen bringing up fresh bags from the vaults. The tellers rolled up their sleeves and counted out the yellow coin with amazing rapidity, apparently quite anxious to redeem the notes. As the first applicants, with happy faces and many sighs of relief, began to stream out with their gold-laden pockets, and told of the piles inside, the panic began to abate; and it dawned on the others that they had been fooled and that possibly, after all, the Bank of Montreal, the third largest monetary establishment in the world, might survive this terrible run; and the other staunch institutions might stand this "tempest in a teapot." The pressure after a couple of hours, began to slacken, and by 12 o'clock the squall was over, and before 1 o'clock the offices were nearly empty, and only ordinary customers were dropping in. Many of the poor frightened sheep were thoroughly ashamed of themselves, but could give no account how their fears were excited. Nothing is more infectious than fear.

"On the highway to recovery"⁴⁷⁴ (1895)

St. John's, Nfld., August 22 – The question is often asked, will Newfoundland recover from the heavy blow inflicted upon her by the failure of her banks and the general overturning of her commercial system, during the late financial crisis? The old colony has shown wonderful elasticity in the past in rallying under severe depression, and recovering quickly when seemingly past recovery. The severity of the financial hurricane which struck her in December last was unprecedented; and yet many entertain serious doubts whether she will fully recover from its effects. They consider her incurably sick, and believe that her prosperity will continue to decline. Mere opinions on such a subject are of little consequence. The question is, what are the facts? Do they indicate a well marked tendency towards recovery? Or do they show that the vital energy is exhausted and that restoration is hopeless?

I am strongly of the opinion that the symptoms are of the most hopeful character, and that there can hardly be a doubt that the colony is on the highway to recovery. Time will be required for convalescence, but the tide of health is swelling.

The summer trade is now pretty near a close, and it is universally admitted that it has been highly satisfactory and has exceeded the most sanguine expectations.

⁴⁷⁴ From ISLAND RECOVERING. (1895, August 27). *Montreal Gazette*, p. 2.

In fact, business men confess that the cash trade in St. John's during the spring and summer has been the best for many years. This is very surprising; considering the deep depression which existed six months ago; but it is not difficult to explain how it has come about. The seal fishery of last spring was the best for many years. Not only so, but the price of its products advanced in the foreign market. A very large sum of money was thus distributed both among the mercantile and working classes. Confidence was restored to some extent; and the outfit for the summer cod fishery was larger than any one had ventured to hope for. The workshops and factories began to resume business, at first on a small scale; but employment was more abundant.

Money that had been hoarded up was used in the purchase of the various necessaries of life. Credit was curtailed, and cash purchases created a wholesomer condition of trade. The establishment of three branches of Canadian banks had an excellent effect. All legitimate assistance was by them extended to the trade; but no overdrafts were permitted as in former times, without security. No less than 2,500 men found employment on the new railway, the minimum wages being a dollar a day. All this put money in circulation, and shops and stores began to present their usual appearance.

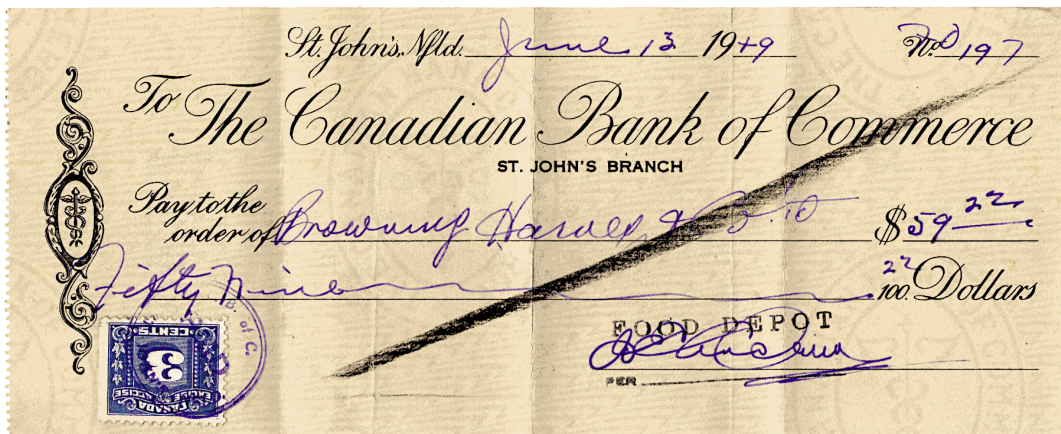
The cod fishery opened remarkably well. Large catches were reported from various fishing centers, and the first news from Labrador was good. It seemed at one time that the fishing was going to be the best for many years and the people were flushed with hope. Though later intelligence has considerably modified the first accounts, and though the weather has been very unfavorable for the last month, still there is every reason to believe that there will be a fair average fishery.

All these circumstances have breathed new courage and hope into the hearts of the people, who begin to forget their misfortunes and to strike out hopefully for the future. Business is assuming its normal appearance; and no one seeing our streets and shops and busy wharves would imagine that we are the same people who six months ago were almost in the depths of despair. Never were excursions by train and steamers more liberally patronized; never were scenes of popular amusement more crowded. Some enterprising genius has arrived bringing with him a "merry-go-round," and he is making a small fortune out of it. He declares he never was in a place where money was so plentiful. All this indicates a return to the normal condition of things. Mining and lumbering are prosperous, and certainly the crops are the best for very many years. A large importation of goods is anticipated in the fall, which will benefit the revenue. The curtailment of credit has had the best results. Fishermen who formerly were clamorous for large supplies are now content with a very small allowance and are much more economical and inclined to work. The lesson of calamity has been laid to heart, at least for the time being. The improvement all round is marked and warrants the hope that as formerly the indomitable spirit and energy of the people will surmount their misfortunes and that a new and better order of things has begun.

The credit system which lay at the root of all the mischief has been reduced to much smaller dimensions; and the introduction of the Canadian banking system will be an incalculable blessing. There will be no more trading at the risk of bank

shareholders and depositors, as under the old regime; while noteholders will feel that they are absolutely secured against loss. Sufficient accommodation will be given by the banks for all legitimate trade, but no facilities for wild speculation, so that business will be of a more stable character. As the cash system gradually displaces the truck system, a healthier moral tone will permeate commercial and industrial life. At present there is a great distrust of all banks prevalent in the minds of the less informed part of the community, the result of sad experience in the past. Hence there is a strong disposition to hoard; but this will gradually disappear, and deposits in the savings and the other banks will increase as confidence strengthens. There are at present large sums hoarded in gold which in due time will find its way to the banks. Besides, the advantages of buying for cash will be felt more and more. In point of fact, this is a richer country than is generally supposed. Events which have occurred since the bank failures have shown that incredible sums were stowed away in quarters where it was least suspected.

All this gives hope for the future. Then as to the public finances, there is also good ground for taking a hopeful view. The late loan of two millions and a half dollars has greatly strengthened the credit of the colony abroad. It shows that the most eminent financiers have confidence in the recuperative powers of the colony; and it has provided for a floating debt, which was a source of much uneasiness. It only remains, then, for the retrenchment policy now entered on to be honestly carried out, and this is now a matter of absolute necessity. That retrenchment is of a very stringent character, and even if it should be found impossible to enforce to the letter, the former system of extravagant expenditure will be no longer possible.



Shortly before joining Confederation in 1949, a number of Canadian banks had a presence in Newfoundland, as evidenced by this cheque drawn on the account of a local soft drink manufacturer. *Collection of and scanned by Chris Willmore.*

THE EATING OF SALT COD

Why import fish when you can catch your own?⁴⁷⁵ (1821)

The following poem was part of an advertisement by J. & E. Wilkinson, English suppliers of angling equipment.

Respected Anglers, young and old
As Spring advances, we make bold
Our Fishing Wares to recommend,
If you to buy will condescend.

The public, too, at large we wish,
To patronize *fresh-water* fish;
Regretting that such sums are spent
In purchasing *salt fish* for Lent;
And asking if it be not strange
That ships should o'er th'Atlantic range
Merely from Newfoundland to bring
Salt codfish, bad as salted ling,
Distinguish'd both by fibre tough,
For which few teeth are strong enough?
Salt salmon too, and herrings red,
In hundreds have the scurvy bred;
And without scandal we may think,
Folks eat them, *with a view to drink*.

Salt Cod as Slave Food⁴⁷⁶ (1824)

The *food* of the slaves [in British Guinea] consists of vegetables and salt fish. [...] The fish used by them is the salt cod brought from the British settlements in North America. It is given on the Sunday, in allowances at the rate of a pound per week for every working [slave]. The children and the superannuated have a smaller quantity. [...] Now, it is evident that two ounces of salt fish per day (and, deducting the bone, it is no more, even when they have their share) is not sufficient for a hard-working man. The [slaves], therefore, of both sexes, are obliged to spend much of the Sunday and of the nights in fishing.

⁴⁷⁵ From J. & E. Wilkinson. (1821, April 14). Address to the Public [Advertisement]. *The Lancaster Gazette*, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁶ From Slavery in British Guinea. (1824, January 31). *The Ipswich Journal*, p. 4.

Salt Cod as a Lenten Food⁴⁷⁷ (1886)

Many devout Christians abstain from meat during Lent, the forty days before Easter. Salt cod did not count as meat, so it was a popular source of protein during this time.

Salt cod on Good Friday is, it appears to me, a sort of tradition with many people. Of course, those who observe Lent scrupulously – in black clothes and with fasting Wednesdays and Saturdays – naturally make a rigorous observance of Good Friday' but salt cod appears on that day only in many households not particular about fasts as a rule.

To make salt cod as nice as the natural toughness and insipidity of the stuff allows, it should not be too much boiled, but should be soaked for a very long time. I know of a good French cook who let this fish lie in water for three full days. She then scraped the black skin off, and put the fish in the colander and let the water-tap run on it for several minutes.

Salt cod must be put on the fire in cold water. When at the point of boiling, skim the pot; as soon as it boils, take it to the side of the fire, cover with a tight-fitting lid, and let simmer for twenty minutes, then remove from the water and drain the fish quite dry.

In England we almost always see boiled salt cod served with the traditional egg-sauce poured over the fish. But another way of finishing is this: Put a lump of butter in a saucepan, and let it melt, dredge in flour till it is pretty thick, then add pepper and unmade mustard. Stir this till it is well mixed and a little cooked, then dilute with milk. Lay the cod-fish in this sauce in the pan, and leave it there for five minutes; serve with the sauce over.

Cold salt fish is best used up by being made into a pie. The fish, broken up into flakes, is put in a dish, with a very little chopped onion and parsley, and a liberal quantity of bits of butter mixed amongst the fish, and covered with a crust of cold boiled potatoes mashed with milk. Bake brown in the oven.

More on Cod and Lent⁴⁷⁸ (1894)

Mention must be made of the seasonable salt cod. This fish is deservedly held in reverence as a fast⁴⁷⁹ dish, for it would be hard to find anything more suitable as a mortification of the flesh, prepared as it usually is, stiff with salt and drying, and innocent of any garnish beyond plain boiled parsnips, and perhaps, as a concession to the weakness of the flesh, a garnish of parsley and a spoonful of egg sauce. Granted that a hermit, trained to look on the pangs of dyspepsia as only a form of diabolic possession, might consider this fare almost too good for times of abstinence, much

⁴⁷⁷ FILOMENA. (1886, April 17). A LADY'S LETTER ON CURRENT TOPICS. *Supplement to the Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, p. 11.

⁴⁷⁸ SOME LENTEN DISHES. (1894, February 17). *The Chicago Tribune*, p. 16.

⁴⁷⁹ In this context, a dish for when one is trying to fast – to abstain from food.

more for a period of serious fasting, modern digestions are not of such heroic kind. Moreover, we are apt to consider indigestion more deserving of medical attendance than spiritual glorification, so we are obliged to seek some modification of the grim and undisguised plainness of this comestible. Therefore, soak it considerably more than was aforesaid considered necessary, and, after the initial bath, add to the soaking liquid a third, if not a half, of its volume of milk to soften and sweeten the dish. Finally, when it is cooked, careful housewives will boil it in half water, half milk, allowing but a very small proportion, if any, of salt, by which means the flesh is kept beautifully white, and nearly as digestible and palatable as fresh fish. It is then served with either poulette, bechamel, egg, or Indienne sauce, and garnished with delicately boiled parsnip, salsify, or potatoes.

“A nuisance to every one concerned”⁴⁸⁰ (1882)

Salt cod under the usual treatment is second only to cabbage in its capacity for penetrating every nook and corner of the house, the rank, aggressive smell being a strong argument against its use with many who would like it were not its preparation a nuisance to every one concerned. Yet the oldest and driest cod can be brought to terms and nobody in the house the wiser if only the proper method be followed, though in these days of both boneless and desiccated cod there is no occasion for buying the whole fish. It is true that the latter is cheaper, but when the loss of skin and bone is considered, the boneless, from which both have been removed, and which is put up now in neat five-pound boxes, is not only the most economical for a small family but decidedly more pleasant to handle. The desiccated cod, while a convenient form, is often prepared from inferior fish and is so intensely salt as to have parted with most of its real nourishment.

The method of preparation is the same for the whole or the boneless fish, the latter, however, requiring less cooking. Cover both with cold water and soak overnight. In the morning pour off this water and put over the fire with fresh, bringing the fish to boiling point and then removing it to the back of the stove, where it can simply simmer but never boil. That simmering means as actual boiling as when the pot lid dances and a cloud of steam fills the room, is something no average Bidy will admit, and no matter how often proved, “Convinced against her will / She’s of the same opinion still.” Yet it is this method of boiling that sends that rank, offensive steam through the whole house and has given salt cod the bad name that has banished it almost altogether from many tables.

Simmering is the essential point. Codfish dry from age will require no less than three and often five or six hours. The boneless will cook in from half an hour to an hour. If to be served as a dinner dish, bones and skin should be removed from the former kind as much as possible without breaking it too much; the platter should be hot, and the appearance of the dish is greatly improved by garnishing with slices of red beet and sprigs of parsley, while the fish itself is covered with egg sauce. It is

⁴⁸⁰ From Mrs. Blossom’s Fish-Balls. (1882, May 27). *Democratic Messenger*, p. 1.

better, however, as a breakfast dish, and whether as hash, fish-balls, scallop or in any of its many forms, is both savory and nutritious. It requires chopping finely and thoroughly, two pounds of the boneless fish, making a little over a pint of the chopped.

MRS. BLOSSOM'S FISH BALLS

One pint of fish chopped as finely as possible, six large or eight medium-sized potatoes, boiled and mashed fine while hot. Add to them one teaspoonful of butter, half a cup of milk and half a teaspoonful of white pepper and one well-beaten egg. Fish varies so much in saltness that after it has been added to the potato it is best to taste the mixture and judge if more is required.

When thoroughly mixed make into small flat balls, and after flouring them well, fry [them] a bright brown in sweet dripping. A still more delicate ball is made by dipping them first into beaten egg, then in crumbs, and frying like croquettes, but when eggs are high [in price] the first method will answer.

Fat, if cooled and strained after using it into a small jar, can be used many times, and a thing is never perfectly free from fat unless it is immersed in it when at actual boiling point. A perfectly fried croquette, rissole, fish-ball or potato should be so dry and free from grease as not to soil the napkin it may be served on, and while many [cooks] have objected strenuously on the score of extravagance, it is really less extravagant and far more healthful than where a smaller quantity is used and absorbed.

“Creamed cod in a potato case”⁴⁸¹ (1888)

Boil and mash six good potatoes, add one egg, a gill of milk, salt and pepper to taste; then beat the potatoes until very light. Pick and scald one pound of boneless salt cod; drain and scald again. Now press and shred the flesh until it is dry. Put one large tablespoonful of butter in a frying pan, add two tablespoonfuls of flour, mix, and add one pint of milk and stir until it boils and thickens; add pepper to taste. Grease a small pudding mold, and line the bottom and sides with the potatoes. Add the cod to the cream sauce and fill in the center. Cover the top with a thick layer of the mashed potatoes, and bake until a nice brown. When done turn it out and serve.

Ten ways to cook Cod⁴⁸² (1891)

I. – BRANDADE OF COD

Take two pounds of salt cod and soak for some hours, then cook by placing it in a fish kettle with cold water, and allowing it to boil; then draw the kettle to the side of the fire, and leave it for twenty minutes without boiling. Take out the fish and strain it, then remove the skin and bones; while it is still warm pound it in a mortar, with two or three spoonfuls of cream sauce, or dissolved butter. It should form a thick

⁴⁸¹ From HOUSEHOLD HINTS. (1888, June 29). *Huron Signal*, p. 6.

⁴⁸² From THE HOUSEKEEPER. (1891, April 11). Ten ways of Cooking Cod. *Supplement to the Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, p. 12.

paste; put it into a saucepan, and add gradually, beating all the time, a teacupful of best salad oil, or dissolved butter, and a few drops of lemon juice. The mixture is now like a very thick cream. Still keeping it hot, but not allowing it to boil, add a pinch of pepper, a little more cream, a soupcon of garlic, and a little chopped parsley. Serve with fried bread sippets⁴⁸³.

II. – BOILED SALT COD

Let the fish soak for twenty-four hours, changing the water frequently, and at the last mixing an equal quantity of milk with the water. To cook it put it into a fish kettle with plenty of water and a spoonful of vinegar. As soon as the water boils, skim it, and draw the kettle to the side, and let the fish simmer until done. Serve it with egg sauce, and a garnishing of mashed potatoes.

III. – SALT COD WITH TOMATOES

Cut into small pieces two pounds of cod, previously soaked. Chop an onion and fry it in plenty of butter, add the fish, a little garlic, then five or six tomatoes, cut in slices with the seed removed, then cook very slowly for half-an-hour. Tinned tomatoes may be used instead of fresh, and in that case a thickening of flour and water must be added.

IV. – FRIED SALT COD

Cut the fish into slices, put into a saucepan with water, and simmer until cooked; strain it and let it get cold. Take away the bones and season with pepper, a little lemon juice, and a few drops of oil. An hour after, flour the slices, dip them in beaten egg, and then bread-crumbs, and fry a delicate brown in butter. Serve with slices of lemon.

V. – SALT COD IN THE DUTCH FASHION

Cut two pounds of fish into slices, and cook in water as in the preceding recipe. Take it out of the saucepan, strain it, and dry it in a cloth, and place it in a very hot dish, surround it with boiled potatoes cut in two, and mask the whole with dissolved butter mixed with chopped parsley.

VI. – SALT COD IN THE SPANISH FASHION

Take two pounds of cod, cut in slices, and cook in water as before; strain it and remove the bones and skin. Take two or three capsicum, grill them, cut them into strips, and sprinkle with salt. Chop two onions, and fry them a yellow color in butter; add to them four large tomatoes in slices, without seeds, a little garlic, a bouquet of herbs, salt and pepper; cook until the tomatoes break. Boil twelve potatoes in water, peel them while hot, and cut in slices. Then take a deep dish, and arrange first a layer of potatoes with pepper and salt, then a layer of fish, and afterwards half the capsicum; over this pour half the sauce that you have made with the onions and tomatoes, again another layer of potatoes, of fish, and of capsicum. Pour over the remainder of the sauce, powder the top with flour, and bake in a slow oven for three-quarters of an hour. Serve in the same dish in which the fish is cooked.

⁴⁸³ A British term for a small piece of bread used as a garnish, or for dipping into a sauce.

VII. – COD IN THE ITALIAN FASHION

Use fresh cod. Cut it into small slices, and fry in butter or oil, strain and arrange the slices in a shallow saucepan, and pour over enough tomato sauce to just cover them; bring to boiling point over the fire, and then simmer for twenty minutes. Add a little pepper, and serve.

VIII. – SALT COD WITH CREAM

Take the remnants of boiled cod, remove bones and skin, and break it into flakes. Put it into a saucepan with two ounces of butter and a teacupful of cream, a teaspoonful of mustard, and a little pepper. Let the fish become quite hot, but not boil, and it is ready to serve.

IX. – BAKED FRESH COD

Have a nice sized piece from the middle of the fish, cut it open, and take out the bone, and stuff with a mixture of bread-crumbs, chopped parsley, two anchovies, salt and pepper, mixed together with an egg, a little butter, and a squeeze of lemon juice. Put the fish in a dish with some pieces of butter on it, and some fish stock round it, and bake. Serve with caper sauce, having carefully poured away the stock in which the fish was cooked.

X. – FRIED COD WITH ONIONS

Fry the fish as in recipe IV., strain it, and place on a dish with a covering of finely minced onion fried in butter, and flavored with one or two drops of vinegar.

Salt cod as torture⁴⁸⁴ (1896)

La Barrera has five men under arrest [in Cuba] on suspicion of putting a dynamite bomb under a gas main. They are kept at the police station and tortured to make them confess.

The torture consists of feeding them with dry codfish, and not allowing them any water. No other food is allowed, and they die of starvation if they refuse to eat the salt cod. This is said to be the means employed by Weyler in Barcelona, and it is said it never failed to produce the desired effect.

Smelly and hard to prepare⁴⁸⁵ (1903)

Salt cod was smelly and required careful preparation. This limited its appeal outside of Catholic regions with no access to fresh fish during Lent.

DEAR SIR, – Those who work conscientiously and strenuously for the public welfare are sure sometimes to make mistakes, but the good they will do will eventually more than ten-fold compensate the public for what it may have to pay for

⁴⁸⁴ CRUEL WORK IN CUBA. (1896, October 6). *Oakland Tribune*, p. 7.

⁴⁸⁵ From Smith, W. R (1903, February 28). AN INTERESTING LETTER. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 3. Reverend Walter Redfern Smith (1845 – 1921) is buried in Portugal Cove.

their mistakes. The effort made by Sir Robert Bond⁴⁸⁶ and the Hon. E. P. Morris for a number of years to obtain a larger and more profitable market for our staple industry is worthy of all praise. The Mackinson method of preparing salt cod for cooking is not altogether unknown to quite a number of outport housekeepers; they have on occasions for years past used a method

SOMEWHAT SIMILAR THERETO.

Mr. Henry LeMessurier Sr.⁴⁸⁷, has pointed to the real difficulty which lies in the way of people in Great Britain ever becoming much greater consumers of our salt cod than they are at present, when he alludes to the offensive smell that comes from the raw article itself while in store or *before* watering, and says truly it ought to be kept in an outhouse. Only the tolerably well to do and the wealthy people in Britain can provide such a storeroom. Salt cod is by its strong smell shut out from the ordinary storeroom, cellar, or pantry in private dwellings. Where there is no salt cod where does the Mackinson process come in. Expedition in preparation is the principal and most valuable feature in the Mackinson process. The expedition will recommend it to our Yankee cousins who are fish eaters, while Englishmen, Irishmen and Scotchmen are not. Indeed except at or near a few of the principal seaports, but

VERY LITTLE SALTED MEAT,

except what is canned, ever finds an entrance into three-fourths of British households. Therefore they don't understand the first thing about watering salt beef or pork, not to speak of salt cod. No expeditious method of preparing cod for cooking can in the result produced compare for excellence with the old plan properly carried out. The old plan properly carried out, with of course well cured fish, produces no more ill savor than that which comes while cod is undergoing the Mackinson treatment. Carelessness on the part of the cook in not changing the water on the fish often enough is responsible for the ill smell. To water fish properly it should be placed in a covered vessel and well *under* water. The water should be strained off and fresh supplied every eight hours and oftener in hot weather – you can't change the water too often. Under no circumstances should the fish, even in cold weather, remain longer than twelve hours *in water*. Say what you like about it, hot water tends to harden the fibre of salt cod while cold softens it. The best watered salt cod I ever ate was when a boy I ate in the houses of

THE OLD PLANTERS

who had watered it by placing it well secured at the mouth of a brook. The next best I ever ate had been placed in netting and towed in the wake of a schooner under sail. Perfectly sound, well cured and properly watered salt cod, boiled in skim milk, then toasted and buttered, is a dish fit to set before the gods. The skimmed milk should be fresh and sweet. Our naval reserve men must have both fresh and salt cod, if they are to preserve their present character for intelligence. Even salted cod contains more

⁴⁸⁶ The same Robert Bond mentioned earlier in association with Sir William V. Whiteway. At this time (1903) he was Premier of Newfoundland.

⁴⁸⁷ Henry William LeMessurier, his son, was a Newfoundland politician who is most famous in the present day for having composed the folk song 'The Ryans and the Pittmans' (a.k.a. 'We'll Rant and We'll Roar').

brain food by far than beef. Purveyors of provisions for our large lumber camps and mining centers ought to pay more attention than they appear to do towards providing our fishermen who have turned miners and lumbermen with, in season, both fresh and salted cod, or the next generation will be mental and physical weaklings.

“Ready for food within an hour”⁴⁸⁸ (1903)

A French consul, C. R. des Isles, speaks up on the subject of salt cod.

Dear Sir – With reference to our conversation regarding Mr. Makinson’s method of treating “salt cod-fish to make it ready for food within an hour,” I have much pleasure in informing you that I have made the experiment. The result has been very satisfactory – no disagreeable odor; perfect freedom of too strong a taste; good appearance; soft eating. Of course, I took care of using a good article; no process will ever make good food out of a badly cured fish. I may tell you, *en passant*, that I have often deplored the frequent carelessness noticeable here respecting the cure. I do not only attribute the fact to a general tendency in this country to neglect details, but mainly to the absolute absence of encouragement and reward for a better cure. I have noticed that more protection is granted to every industry, promising or otherwise, than to the most important one (the fish), which is very much left to take care of itself.

In my opinion, fresh killed, well-salted (not brine), cured cod, of Newfoundland, has no rival for resisting climactic influence, and, therefore, could have no serious competitors in hot or tropical countries, if properly attended to. But the fishermen must be educated to it. Here, in Newfoundland, the cure is made in a hurry, by those who catch the fish or their family; not as elsewhere by specialists, with plenty of time and improved appliances.

The remedy to the ruinous hurry and consequent neglect is, I think, only to be found in the possibility of earning more money, by using the necessary time and salt, than otherwise. No amount of preaching will certainly do it. Suppose a premium of, say, \$200 be yearly offered in each district, or even smaller sections of the Island, for the best hundred quintals of salt codfish cured in such a section – the arbitrators being strangers to the district or section – and the fish so rewarded being marked and remaining the property of the marker or markers – competition would arise. What would it cost? Let us say, 36 half districts at \$200 or \$7,200 a year; a trifle, indeed, considering the aim. Do you not think it would be worth trying for a few seasons, and watch the effect? I am, dear sir, your obedient servant,

C. R. DES ISLES.

⁴⁸⁸ From Des Isles, C.R. (1903, February 21). THE FRENCH CONSUL TALKS. *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

“Makinson’s method of watering salt codfish”⁴⁸⁹ (1903)

Dear Sir – Kindly grant me space in your columns to say that the new method of cooking brain-food without the tedious and obnoxious *modus operandi* employed by all our wives, mothers and best girls in the past, has been given a fair trial in our household, and I am pleased to say that it does all the inventor and the energetic member for our district claims for it. As to whether there will be any increased demand in foreign markets, consequent on this up-to-date boon conferred on all housekeepers, whether white, brown, black or yellow, I am not qualified to say, but common sense should dictate to any unprejudiced individual the advantage of doing in an hour in future what in the past has been the cause of giving a charnel house odor to residences to which there are no outhouses attached.

Certainly, Mr. Editor, the man that knew all about it years ago is in living evidence, but unfortunately, his grandmother has been gathered home, but weren’t they very selfish to keep it a family secret up to now? Anyway, I’ll be charitable enough to believe that they were only waiting for the Hay-Bond Treaty to be ratified to make known to the fish-eating world, free gratis, the method that will make the name of Makinson a household word in every country to which the corpse of a codfish is hurried. All praise should and will be accorded the inventor for, notwithstanding any assertions to the effect that the method is old, they can be refuted by questioning old people. Most of them don’t believe in it, and say that it cannot be done.

Surely if it is as ancient as some people would try to make believe, some of those old folks would have heard of it long ago and it would have been in common use long ere this. Mr. Editor, the people of this land of fogs, fish and fine weather have a lot to learn yet about fish. The stick-to-the-old-methods policy is played out, and we are getting behind in the race; what did very well thirty years ago won’t suit at all today. We have Swedes, Norwegians and Frenchmen coming amongst us to teach us our business, and, what is more, they know how. This country has nothing to fear from competition in any of the markets of the world using our staple, if more care be taken in the cure of fish, and by continuing to ship and brand in its quality?

The suggestions thrown out free by the little Frenchman last Saturday are another wrinkle which, if taken hold of and given practical test, might bring back one hundred-fold the comparatively small expenditure involved in comparison with the unforeseen benefits which might accrue to us as a people. Anything that can reasonably be expected to enhance the value and increase the demand of our staple, which must be the mainstay of this colony for many long years yet, should be taken up by the powers that be. Let no opportunity pass which, in the slightest degree, would help us to preserve our autonomy as an independent colony, peopled by an independent and a hardy race, determined, as were our forefathers, to go it alone, and if necessary beach the ship before the Canadian grappling irons are thrown overboard; for when that time arrives, if ever it will, you can write down on the tombstone erected to the memory of the oldest jewel in the British Crown *Requiescat*

⁴⁸⁹ From PHIL. POOR’S HILL. (1903, February 24). Makinson’s Method of watering salt codfish. *Evening Telegram* (NF), p. 4.

in Pace. Words of praise, Mr. Editor, are almost superfluous when bestowed on the able and energetic senior member for the West End. But it goes without saying that his valuable time, talent and undoubted ability have at all times been freely given to any movement which has for its motive the benefit or uplifting of his fellow countrymen. Appreciation of his efforts in this direction is freely expressed by his numerous friends and supporters, and long may he live to pursue the commendable course in which he has been engaged since entering public life, viz.: the betterment of the people's condition, first, last and always.

I am, sir, your truly,
PHIL. POOR'S HILL.

“Codfish Bacalao”⁴⁹⁰ (1912)

Makinson's method of desalinating salt cod in an hour does not appear to have caught on. Years later, recipes such as this one were still recommending the cod be soaked overnight.

Take a pound of salt cod and soak over night, skin side up. In the morning boil it for about three-quarters of an hour, until it is very tender. Put it on to boil in cold water. When it has boiled scald again thoroughly, pick out all the bones and set away to cool.

Make a tomato sauce as follows: Take six large tomatoes or half a can of tomatoes; add a heaping tablespoonful of butter, four sprigs of parsley, two bay leaves, two or three sprigs of thyme, all chopped very fine. Add two onions and a clove of garlic chopped fine and fried slightly in a little butter. Put the sauce in the upper part of a double boiler, add pepper, salt and a dash of cayenne and let it cook two hours or longer, if necessary; then strain through a sieve and thicken with a tablespoon of butter and two of flour, browned slightly. Add to the sauce and cook a little longer until rich and thick. Then fry another large onion and clove of garlic, chopped fine, in half a cup of olive oil, or two tablespoonfuls of butter, and when brown add to the sauce with a sweet red pepper chopped fine.

Cut out a dozen croutons, in square or diamond shapes, trimming off the crusts. Fry these in deep fat.

Heat a platter, pour the codfish in the center, with the sauce over it and arrange the croutons around the edge of the dish. Place in the oven for ten or fifteen minutes and then serve.

⁴⁹⁰ Fish the Lenten Food. (1912, March 5). *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, p. 24.

Appendix: On the Truck System and wage bargaining⁴⁹¹ (1898)

The Truck System was not unique to Newfoundland. The following Canadian analysis, written by a New Brunswick economist, uses the mining industry at Cape Breton as its leading example.

The truck system is the outstanding form of the payment of wages in kind and is still prevalent in many districts. It has disappeared, indeed, at all the industrial centers and the practice is confined to backward districts, where banking facilities are poor, and labor unorganized and ignorant, and to those industries which, depending on the season, involve irregular employment and proportionally large capital. The effect of this method of industrialized remuneration was characterized in the report of the Canadian Labor Commission as always amounting to a sweated wage; and in its worst form, as it has existed in many places, it has resulted, as was epigrammatically said of it in Newfoundland, in the laborer being not paid in “part goods, part cash,” but in “part goods, part trash.”

Frequently the laborer, where this system is in force, has received no part of his wages in cash. By means of deferred payments and irregular employment, the worker gets involved in debt at the company store, and then he has practically ceased to be his own master. Those who are once in the toils of the system are seldom able to work their way out again; and the more deeply they are involved, the more subject are they to petty tyrannies at the hands of the subordinate officials of their employers.

The salesmen in these stores frequently carry side lines of goods which they practically force⁴⁹² upon unwilling but helpless customers, because they control the avenues of employment. The object of those who practice this system in its most objectionable form is to control the expenditure of their laborers for the sake of the profits, legitimate or not, of the retail business; and the laborer is seldom allowed to carry away any part of his earnings in cash. In many cases, the only way in which ready money can be obtained is by reselling the goods obtained at the stores; and there is a profitable business, mainly in the hands of the saloon-keepers, of buying from the laborers the articles they have obtained at the stores.

A valued correspondent, Mr. C. Ochiltree McDonald, of Port Morien, Cape Breton, who has given me much information regarding the working of the truck system in Cape Breton, informs me that there were lately auctioned off by a drink-seller at Glace Bay, C. B., 1038 tobacco pipes, which had been taken from the miners in exchange for drinks – the auction being the method of realizing cash on the

⁴⁹¹ From Davidson, J. (1898). *The Bargain Theory of Wages*. New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons. Written by John Davidson (1869 – 1905).

⁴⁹² “But there is another evil which we learn in connection with this system. At some company stores in this county the managers, or clerks, carry side lines of goods, usually jewelry, which they sell to men who have employment around the works; and in one instance, it has been told us that a workman who had purchased a \$15 filled-case watch for the moderate sum of \$35 . . . went and asked for an order to get \$5 in cash at the office of the mine. ‘Yes,’ was the reply, ‘if you give me \$4 on that watch you bought from me last month.’” – *The Island Reporter* (Cape Breton), Nov. 11, 1896. [Note in the original.]

transaction. Frequently, in the same district, there are auctions – sometimes several in the course of a week – of goods such as clothing and groceries, which have been obtained at the stores and exchanged for drink. The profits of his business are so large that many saloon-keepers have been attracted to the district.

This is not infrequently the only method in which the goods required can be obtained, for when the goods asked for are not in stock, the intending buyer has to do without, having neither the cash nor the courage to seek elsewhere⁴⁹³. It is by no means always the case that the company stores are inferior to outside stores, and many of them are said to carry as large a line of goods, and at as reasonable a price. The Hon. Robt. Drummond, for eighteen years head of the miners' organization in Nova Scotia, informs me that the renewed outcry against the truck system in that province during the last two years has come from the storekeepers rather than from the miners. The coal fields of Nova Scotia are now controlled by the Dominion Coal Co.; and under new management the old objectionable features of the system have disappeared, the company stores now keeping a larger variety and selling superior goods at lower prices than the retail shopkeepers can afford to do; and the result has been an agitation on the part of the storekeepers against the system.

Mr. Drummond's contention is in part borne out by the fact that the most emphatic denunciation of the system is contained in the following resolutions, adopted Dec. 21, 1896, by the Sydney, C. B., Board of Trade, *i.e.*, in a small town, retail shopkeepers:

“Whereas the Truck System of paying wages in goods is alarmingly on the increase in this country, and whereas the system is buying up the main avenues of wealth among the masses of the people, paralyzing internal trade and investing the wealth produced through mining in the mining companies to the exclusion of the general public, and whereas, in addition, precedent in Great Britain and the United States of North America instructs us of the pernicious influences of the Truck System upon the social progress of a nation; and upon the steady system of productive industry of all kinds, and, whereas we must have national forethought and refuse to sanction the monopoly of wealth produced by any individual, or company of individuals, by the supplanting of Canadian currency by goods for workmen,

“Be it therefore resolved, that the Board of Trade draws the attention of the Government of Nova Scotia to the grievous conditions existing and threatening to exist in the County of Cape Breton, owing to the disappearance of money from circulation by the Truck System, and urge the Governor, Council, and Assembly of Nova Scotia to enact legislation forbidding the payment of wages in goods.”

However, the protests of the miners, individually, and through their associations, are too emphatic to permit us unreservedly to adopt Mr. Drummond's view. He claims that the evils of the system, which were exposed in the evidence of the Canadian Labor Commission, are things of the past; and in the mainland of Nova Scotia the Truck System has disappeared. Mr. Ochiltree Macdonald, writing from Cape Breton, insists that the evidence taken ten years since is perfectly true for the

⁴⁹³ *Canadian Labor Com., New Brunswick Evidence, p. 407.* [Note in the original.]

conditions of to-day; that, if there has been any change, it has been a change for the worse, not for the better. Even regarding Cape Breton, the truth probably lies in the middle between these conflicting statements.

The problem [of] how far the payment of wages in goods obtained at these stores curtails the utility of the reward depends, largely, though not altogether, on the scale of prices. There is a certain exaltation in the sense of freedom and independence which comes from the consciousness of possessing money in the pocket which that man does not experience the payment of, whose wages [are] simply a matter of bookkeeping, no matter how reasonable the prices in these company stores may be. *A priori* it might almost be argued that the existence of a practical monopoly will sooner or later lead to a higher scale of prices; and the facts seem to bear out this contention. I have accumulated a good deal of evidence on this point, but the following table is more comprehensive than the statements of any of my correspondents, and is, moreover, taken from the public records of the evidence of the Canadian Labor Commission:

ARTICLE	PRICE AT COMPANY'S STORE	PRICE AT OUTSIDE STORE
Flour per barrel	\$6.25	\$5.50
Tea per pound	0.35	.22 to .30
Sugar per pound	0.09	0.08
Soap per pound	.07 and .08	0.05
Butter per pound	.22 to .26	0.20
Molasses per gallon	0.50	0.40
Potatoes per bbl.	0.80	.40 to .45

The witness, on oath, asserted that the articles at the outside store were of the same brand and of as good quality as those sold at the company's store⁴⁹⁴.

The principal argument urged in defense of the practice is that, under the actual conditions of winter industry in Canada, the stores are a necessity. The mines in Cape Breton cannot be worked steadily the year⁴⁹⁵ through because the ports are closed by the ice. Were it not for the willingness and the ability of the company to carry their employees through the slack winter season there would be great hardship. The outside shopkeepers have neither the security nor the capital to permit them to give six or nine months' credit. During four months of the year there is practically no employment in the mining districts and during that period a debt will be incurred which cannot be paid off before the summer is nearly over. However long the credit the storekeeper can obtain from the wholesale merchant, it is not long enough for him to wait six or nine months for payment.

⁴⁹⁴ Labor Com. *Nova Scotia Evidence*, p. 465, and see *Nova Scotia Evidence, passim*. [Note in the original.]

⁴⁹⁵ I've omitted a detailed table in the original titled "TABLE SHOWING IRREGULARITY OF EMPLOYMENT IN MINING DISTRICT," detailing the days worked in each month of the year for 10 individual miners, labeled A through J.

It should be remembered, moreover, that many of the objections to the truck system are valid also as against the credit system which, in one form or other, is an absolute necessity when employment is irregular. For the laborer it is quite as hard to work his way out of debt to a private storekeeper, and probably more worrying because the storekeeper has not the same security for his debt. The private storekeeper has no means of coercion and must, therefore, charge higher prices to cover bad debts. The company stores, as a matter of fact, stop wages till the debt is reduced to manageable proportions. The Nova Scotia Act against Truck is practically a dead letter because it permits contracting out. Frequently the employer does not even go to the trouble of requiring the formal order from his men which permits him to deduct the store bill from the wages as they are earned.

The effect of the truck system of wages payment on the utility of the reward under these circumstances will be measured by the difference between credit prices and company store prices, and the greater or less degree of personal freedom which the victims of the two systems retain. The worker's wage, when thus paid, is not sweated by the amount of the profits of the store; for a large part of these profits [are] due to superior trading advantages. The profits of the store are without doubt very large; and one of my correspondents affirms that the mine in his district is run for the store profits. The Dominion Coal Company was offered, it was said, one hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the right to run their stores; and however philanthropic the company might be, men do not go into the market to purchase charitable organizations. The defenders of the system generally protest too much about the purity of their motives. There is nothing disgraceful in a company trying to add to its ordinary profits the profits of retail shopkeeping; the disgrace lies in the abuse of the position which the employer occupies.

Of the two important elements which form the lower limit of wages the methods of industrial remuneration has the greatest influence on the utility of the reward. Less directly, the disutility of labor may be increased or diminished by the method of payment because the disutility is more than the physical energy expended. With cash payments the moral elements which enter into the sum of disutilities are likely to be reduced to a minimum, for the laborer in this way obtains the maximum of personal freedom. With truck payments the disutility is increased and the utility of the reward is decreased; but the fighting strength of the laborer is so reduced by the system that he is able to offer little effective resistance to the lowering of the lower limit of wages. Practically the methods of remuneration exercise little influence in raising, but may exercise considerable influence in reducing, the lower limit, thus rendering an actual lower wage possible.

The chief elements of the upper limit [on wages] – the employer's estimate [of the worker's productivity] – may be affected by the method of industrial remuneration. The efficiency of the laborer may be increased or diminished, mainly by the effect on the moral conditions of efficiency; and the wages fund⁴⁹⁶ may be augmented.

⁴⁹⁶ The amount of money (or goods) available to pay workers' wages. This is a reference to the now-archaic Wage Fund theory of wages. Very roughly, the theory fell out of favor due to its reliance on the

The output of labor is not a mere question of strength and knowledge. Willingness and hopefulness and the disposition to do one's best are almost as important as physical and mental qualities; and these moral qualities are peculiarly liable to be influenced by the manner in which the wages are paid. If the laborer is paid promptly, in full and in cash, he is much more likely to do his best than when his wages are curtailed by all sorts of petty exactions and his use of them restricted by all sorts of conditions.

Profit sharing and piece work tend, directly and indirectly, to raise the efficiency of the individual and, generally also, of all in the establishment, and thus tend to permit a higher wage to be paid. Not only are the expenses of management and supervision decreased, while there is less waste of material, but the hope of greater gains acts as a powerful incentive to greater exertion. Workers paid by these methods realize, more or less, that they are being treated with justice and consideration, and they are less likely than those on time wages to be eye [sic.] servants merely.

When wages are paid in cash, any feeling of resentment which the conditions of labor may have caused, generally disappears when the wages are paid, unless the wages are very inadequate; but when the control of the employer continues till the last penny earned has been expended the laborer continues to feel his economic dependence and to feel that there is no part of his life which he can call his own. This naturally leads to inefficiency, because it tempts the laborer to try to get "even" in some way. Payment of wages in truck or store orders, or at long intervals, and then not up to date, is apt to create a sense of irritation which materially reduces efficiency.

Under the extreme forms of the truck system, where the laborer is convinced of the inevitableness of the tyranny and the injustice, a premium is, in effect, placed upon idleness and thriftlessness. The laborer who owes the company a large sum knows that work is assured to him whenever work is going, not because he is a good workman, but because the company naturally desires to collect part of what he owes them. It is their interest to find him work. He believes that he has been cheated by higher prices and thinks that his real is not half his nominal indebtedness; and the result is that he tries to get even with his employer by cheating them with dishonest and scamped work. Even should he remain honest, the incentive of hope has disappeared. The most efficient workmen are discouraged by the system, for they quickly learn that not efficiency, but indebtedness at the store, is the best claim for work when employment is scarce. Payment of wages in kind, tends not only to reduce efficiency, but also to destroy those qualities which promote efficiency and to encourage habits which promote inefficiency.

The wages fund, the resources of the employer for the payment of wages, is directly affected by the methods of remuneration. The payment of wages in cash at the end of each week requires a large amount of capital, a larger amount than is

assumption of fixed capital. For the classic exposition of the Wage Fund theory, see John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848). Davidson, in the present extract, makes a case for this concept – already considered outdated in his time – being useful in the analysis of the labor economics of the truck system.

required by any other method of remuneration to pay the same wages. Payment in kind means a large economy of capital and allows a larger business to be done on a given capital. It reduces payment almost entirely to a matter of bookkeeping, and by analogy might be called the clearing-house⁴⁹⁷ system applied to wage payments. Theoretically, it might be said that the truck system would lead to larger wages because the employer commands a larger capital. The employer is able to augment his resources by all the long credit he can command from the wholesale supply houses; and may be able to market a large part of his output before these obligations have to be met; and not only is the capital thus augmented, but additional profits are earned on the whole of it. This holds also of deferred payments and of payments by the month or season instead of by the week.

In many instances the reasons which are offered in defense of this practice, against which the laborer protests, when stripped of their philanthropic and paternalistic pretense, amount simply to this, that a great saving in capital is thus secured. There is not only the saving in office expenses when the pay sheets are made up at leisure once a month instead of once a week; there is also, and in the case of large concerns this becomes a very important item, the saving of the interest on the sum paid out in wages⁴⁹⁸. When part of the payment is withheld for some weeks, as in the case of employers who pay on the 20th of the month up to the end of the preceding month, or when part is retained in the employer's hands to the end of the year, as, for instance, the dividends in a profit-sharing scheme, or indefinitely – *e.g.* contributions to a provident fund – the employer simply retains part of the wages as an unsecured investment, and practically compels his employees to subscribe to the capital required for his business.

Wages, however, do not necessarily rise because the resources of the employer are augmented. The wages fund is only one factor in the determination of the upper limit [of wages]; and the employer is under no obligation, physical or moral, to pay out the whole of his funds. An increased wages fund simply means that higher wages are possible without necessitating a readjustment of the reward of the different economic factors in production. Moreover, this possibility may be at the actual expense of the workers themselves. They are made to contribute to the wages fund by exactions levied from the wages of their past labor. They are denied the right to spend the contract price of their labor, when and where they choose; and the probability of increased compensation in the future depends on the strength of their economic position. Those methods, however, which increase the wages fund, tend to reduce the laborer's efficiency and to weaken his position as a bargainer; and the possible good is generally converted into an actual evil. The effect of the truck system is, when the other wage factors are taken into consideration, to depress rather than to raise wages.

In a new country, where money is scarce and banking facilities rare, deferred payments or payments in kind may be a practical necessity. Were wages paid in cash they would necessarily be low; and under these conditions even the truck system may

⁴⁹⁷ Clearing houses settle accounts between banks at the end of the business day.

⁴⁹⁸ Ontario Bureau of Statistics, *Report*, 1886, iv., p. 18. [Note in the original.]

be a practical benefit to the working classes. But as the country develops, there is less necessity for making use of this primitive credit instrument and the system is banished from the industrial centers to the districts where banking facilities are still unprovided, and to industries dependent on the seasons, where a long period must elapse before the product is marketed. There is something so mean in the practice of throwing the burden on the laborer, so soon as another means of distributing liabilities over a longer period is devised, every firm which has any sort of credit and some measure of self-respect, abandons of its own accord the attempt to mulct the wages of its employees.

Except in the seasonal industries, it is practiced now by the “non-profit” employers only – those whose credit is bad and who have a hard struggle to maintain their position. One of few surviving company stores in the province of New Brunswick, outside of the lumber industry, is conducted by a firm which has already failed several times; and this instance may be taken as typical of the condition of those firms which retain the system when banking facilities are provided. The assistance which such firms are able to obtain by this method enables them longer to continue the struggles against their more fortunate or more competent rivals.

The destruction of the system by legislative interference would be a death blow to such employers; though it is not possible to agree altogether with a correspondent of the Ontario Bureau of Statistics in asserting that the abolition of the truck system and of deferred payments would place a premium on large industry. It would give a certain advantage to those who had capital enough for the business they had undertaken.

The truck system, however, is both effect and cause of the scarcity of money. During the recent agitation in Cape Breton against the truck system it was repeatedly asserted that money is being taken out of circulation (see the petition of the Sydney Board of Trade already quoted); and Mr. Ochiltree Macdonald stigmatizes the acquiescence of the individual in the system as a crime against honest currency. In many districts trade is reduced almost to the primitive form of barter to the great disadvantage of those, farmers for instance, who have anything to sell. If these contentions are true, a situation exists in that district which can be cured by legislation only, enforcing the payment of wages in cash without any possibility of contracting out.

A primitive and vicious credit system seems to have obtained such a hold on the community that there is no room for the more refined credit instruments provided by the banks. It required an economic cataclysm to overthrow the truck system in Newfoundland which had been encouraged by an unsound banking system; and the intervention of the Canadian banks after the crisis of 1894 has rendered it easier to make the necessary departure from a system which had involved the whole community in ruin.

The close connection between an inadequate banking system and the prevalence of the truck system finds its best illustration in the southern states of the American Union. There the truck system has attained its fullest sway, and there

currency is scarcer and banking facilities less frequent than in any other section of the country.

It remains now to discuss the influence of the methods of remuneration on comparative strength of employer and employed in the wages bargain which determines where between the limits actual wages are fixed. The method of remuneration may affect the capacity for combination and collective bargaining, and may strengthen or weaken the general character of the laborer.

The mobility of labor depends partly on the knowledge the laborer has of the relative conditions of labor in his own district and elsewhere. Causes which prevent him from acquiring, or even render it more difficult for him to acquire, this knowledge interfere with the mobility of labor. Money wages are the calculation form of the reward; and when the reward is not paid in money, it is less easy for him to make the comparison. He may not have the knowledge or the skill to calculate what the wages are even in his own district. Mobility depends also on freedom from restrictions; and weekly cash payments alone give the laborer full command of his resources and leave him free to make what use he pleases of them.

A system of deferred payments ties the laborer to the employment he has. To change he must sacrifice the deferred pay. The fact that the participant in a profit-sharing scheme has no legal right to claim a share in the profits, till the financial year is complete, restricts his movements; and the benefits of a provident fund can be obtained by those only who remain permanently in their present employment.

When wages are paid at infrequent intervals and part of the pay is retained in the hands of the employer, the intention frequently is to restrict the laborer's freedom of movement. One firm posted a notice in its factory that "persons leaving the service of the company without serving the notice required shall forfeit the arrears of pay due to them"⁴⁹⁹; and though the action would be illegal, and the employees might know it to be so, the notice would doubtless have the desired effect, owing to the fact that it would require a costly suit at law to force the employer to pay.

The laborer who has arrears of pay in the hands of his employer has given hostages to the extent of the arrears. Frequently, even when the employer is honest and law-abiding, he will pay a workman who desires to leave before the monthly pay day comes round by means of a due-bill which is cashed at a discount. In some cases, even, a deduction is made from his wages to pay the expenses of securing a new workman⁵⁰⁰.

The truck system involves a still greater restriction of mobility. When a workman has got into debt at the company store, his mobility is practically *nil* till he has worked his way out; and it is said – and it is antecedently probable – that the

⁴⁹⁹ Canadian Labor Commission, *Quebec Evidence* p. 1301. [Note in the original.]

⁵⁰⁰ Canadian Labor Com., *Ontario Evidence*, p. 1190:– "They will charge him for the passage fee of another to bring up (to the woods) in his place and let him go; and I have seen some concerns not pay him at all. If he wants to go he goes without any payment." It was argued before the English Labor Commission that the payment of wages to sailors at frequent intervals would increase the danger of desertion. The present practice therefore involves, reasonably enough perhaps, a restriction of the mobility of that class of workers. *Labor Question*, p. 200. [Note in the original.]

company officials endeavor to keep him in debt in order to retain their control over him.

Trade-unionists are constantly discussing the methods of remuneration from their point of view. They naturally find the ideal method in weekly cash payments. They contend that any other system leads to the isolation and consequent weakness of the individual worker. They criticize, and if necessary agitate against, any method which encourages the laborer to deal with his employer directly and in his own strength. Piece work and profit sharing both, they consider objectionable because in this way the laborer is tempted to be disloyal to his class by the prospect of extra rewards for himself. Profit sharing has indeed been explicitly advocated as a method of weakening the power of the unions. They do not, as has been so often asserted, object to the higher reward of superior efficiency; but they dread the effect of the stimulus to individual exertion on the solidarity of the working classes; and they are rightly of the opinion that the interests of all are best secured by union and combination. To deferred payments and the truck system they offer the most strenuous opposition, because by these methods the individual worker is made to feel his dependence on his employer. Weakness and dependence even more than the desire for exceptional wages are isolating forces; and the objections of the unions to these methods is very strong.

In spite of all that has been said by Carlyle and others against the cash *nexus*, there is no reason to doubt that it is the system which promotes the best interests of the working classes. Paternalism and sentimentalism have been discredited by the experience of generations. It is better that the relations between employer and employed should be on a pure basis of contract and that no margin of indefiniteness should remain. What is left to be understood is generally left to be misunderstood and interpreted against the interests of the weaker.

Weekly cash payments are best for the working classes in almost every way. The employee remains his own master when the contract period is over and the employer has no right to interfere. Under the truck system the laborer is under continuous supervision in his home as well as in the workshop; and one can understand why indignant opponents of the system have denounced it as scarcely disguised slavery.

What is true of the truck system is true, also, to a less degree, of every method of remuneration which keeps the laborer dependent on his employer after the contract period has expired. This continuous supervision and subjection is not conducive to the building up of strong characters; and the most disastrous effect of these methods is to weaken the general character of the laborer as a wages bargainer. Trade-unionism is but a substitute for character, and the mobility of labor is a result; the character of the laborer is what tells in the wages bargain – the determination of where between the limits actual wages shall be fixed.

Weekly payments, according to some who practice other methods of remuneration, promote thriftlessness and dissipation and prevent the accumulation

of property; and one witness before the Canadian Labor Commission⁵⁰¹ claimed the only difference between weekly and fortnightly payments was that the men go drunk once a week instead of once a fortnight. On the other hand the laborers strongly favor weekly payments, preferring, it may be, freedom to compulsory sobriety every alternate Saturday. They indignantly resent the insinuation that they are not able to manage their own domestic affairs, and the miners of Cape Breton insist that they are as able to spend their wages as wisely as the workmen in Great Britain who must be paid in cash⁵⁰².

The assumption that the workman cannot manage his own affairs weakens his character; and the effect of the truck system, which is sometimes justified on that ground, is to destroy all self-reliance and self-respect and remove all motive to honesty and efficiency of work. The truck system, by its injustice, makes the worker practice, and justify, all sorts of underhand evasions of his contract. Above all it promotes thriftlessness and idleness.

The Hon. Robert Drummond said from his place in the Legislative Council of Nova Scotia that the system was an abomination and a premium on beggary; and elsewhere he declared that it had a “tendency to foster thoughtlessness and beggary.” This is the natural effect of the truck system everywhere. Those who run the bills at the store are the favorites in the factory and the mine. To encourage the others, they receive the best places in the mine, and during the slack season they are given what work there is to be given, that they may have an opportunity of reducing their debt to the store. The industrious and thrifty find that constantly the idle and the dissipated have preference. Those who take no responsibility for themselves, but run up bills, knowing that it is the company’s interest to provide them with work, are the fortunate ones of the community; and the whole community is demoralized through their influence.

The economic crisis in Newfoundland in 1894 was a striking instance of the complete demoralization of a whole community under the truck system. The system was of old standing. Nearly a hundred years ago the governor of the island tried by an edict to suppress it. It was not destroyed, but, on the contrary, tightened its grasp on the business of the country. Everyone deplored it, but no one could give it up. It promoted dishonesty and crime and universal distrust; but it required an economic disaster to overthrow it. Everyone suffered by it, the workmen most of all. He was granted between the upper and the nether millstones – the fickle sea and the burden of his long-standing debts. He could hardly call himself his own, and many a Newfoundland fisherman passed from the cradle to the grave without ever having seen a piece of money. No one really profited by the system, and Black Monday, the 10th of December, 1894, was the day of salvation for the “planter” as well as the fisherman.

The effect of the truck system on the character of the laborer depends altogether on the degree of coercion employed. Where no compulsion is used, company

⁵⁰¹ *Nova Scotia Evidence*, p. 405; see also *ibid.*, p. 427, and *New Brunswick Evidence*, p. 471. [Note in the original.]

⁵⁰² Newspaper report of a meeting at Glace Bay, Nov. 13, 1896. [Note in the original.]

stores with their superior trading facilities might prove almost as great a benefit as the cooperative stores. It is generally claimed that the workman is left free, and some employers prefer to run the stores for the benefit of the workmen. But it is difficult to say what is and is not compulsion. Many witnesses before the Canadian Labor Commission began by denying that there was any sort of compulsion to deal in a company store; and ended by admitting that there was a discrimination in favor of those who dealt there. The prospect of an extra profit is a sufficient incentive for the exercise of some kind of coercion. The companies, as one man said to me, who had experience in running these stores, are not in it for their health, and a member of the legislature of New Brunswick, whose firm used to run several such stores, assured me that where compulsion in some form is not exercised the stores are seldom profitable.

Compulsion in its most brutal form is rarely exercised anywhere now in Canada but in the shape of discrimination it still flourishes in Cape Breton. Freedom may be absolute in name, but it may be little more than freedom to starve. When a storekeeper is able to pace those who are not his customers at a disadvantage in the competition for work compared with those who deal with him, he can bring a good deal of pressure to bear. The evidence taken by the Canadian Labor Commission affords many instances of this indirect compulsion. Employers confessed that they did discriminate in their favor, [and] that unmarried men were not so likely to find employment as married men with families who dealt at the store⁵⁰³. Pressure exercised in this form is practically compulsion; and few are strong enough to resist it. Circumstances naturally determine what amount of compulsion can be used. An obstinate man with great social or political influence may resist successfully and receive his wages in cash; but the greater the necessity of the individual the more likely he is to succumb.

The truck system destroys the freedom of the laborer; and with his freedom goes his power of resistance. He is no longer master of himself and therefore there is less hope that in the trial of strength which precedes the determination of the wages bargain the victory will lean to his side.

⁵⁰³ *Nova Scotia Evidence*, p. 317; *New Brunswick Evidence*, p. 407, *et passim*. [Note in the original.]