

## Bound for Newfoundland

*Voyage of His Majesty's ship Rosamond to Newfoundland and the southern coast of Labrador,*

Lieut. Edward Chappell, R. N.

1818

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*The Rosamond sails from Portsmouth—Cove of Cork—Country around Cork—River Lee—Country-Seats—City of Cork—Mardyke—Irish Hospitality—Departure from Cork— Spike Island—Hurricane—Ice-Berg—Cruelty to Hallibuts—Cape Race—Overturn of an Ice-Berg—Spout—Cape Broyle—Broyle Bay—Catholic Priest—Drift Ice—Anchor at St. John's.*

IT was early in the month of *February*, 1813, that His Majesty's ship, ROSAMOND, commanded by Captain *Donald Campbell*, lying at *Spithead*, received orders from the Admiralty to repair forthwith to the Cove of *Cork*, in order to collect the first spring convoy, bound for *Newfoundland*, *Halifax*, and the River *St. Lawrence*,

Accordingly, she left *Portsmouth* ; and having sailed quickly down the British Channel, with a strong gale at *east*, passed between the dangerous Rocks of *Scilly* and the *Land's End* of *England*, during a very stormy night, and reached *Cork* on the evening of the sixth of *February*.

Upon our arrival at this port, we were associated in the duty of collecting the convoy, and issuing the necessary instructions, with his Majesty's ship *Crescent*, Captain *Quilliam* : and although we had soon assembled a large fleet of merchantmen, yet we were detained at this place upwards of sixty days, by the prevalence of contrary winds.

The Cove of *Cork* is undoubtedly one of the safest and finest harbours known : but it is attended with one disadvantage, which will ever render it an inconvenient port for the assemblage of fleets destined for the *New World* ; because an *easterly* wind, which is favourable for their voyage across the *Atlantic*, renders it at the same time extremely difficult for a large convoy to beat out of the harbour. As a proof of this, it need only be mentioned, that we attempted three times to leave the place with the assistance of light *easterly* winds, and were as often compelled to relinquish the task as impracticable. The same difficulty does not retard the departure of single ships. It is well known to seamen, that, in large convoys, some few vessels will always lag in the rear, whatever exertion may be used to urge them forward : and in sailing with an *easterly* wind from the Cove of *Cork*, it is necessary to take advantage of the very first of the ebb ; therefore the loiterers of the fleet will inevitably be so late on the tide, that the Commodore of the convoy must either proceed upon his voyage without those vessels, or return again into the harbour to rejoin them.

It may perhaps be imagined, that enough has already been written respecting the second city of *Ireland*, and that any remarks respecting its present state would be entirely out of place here : yet it is impossible to avoid making a few observations upon the enchanting beauty of its surrounding scenery, the magnificent and stately mansions of the great, contrasted with the savage wildness which is so conspicuous amidst the mud-walled cabins of the peasantry ; and, above all, upon the hospitality and social humour characteristic of the genuine *Irish*.

Nothing can be more varied than the state of agriculture in the space that intervenes between *Cove* and the city of CORK. In one place, the country is highly cultivated ; in another, deplorably neglected : and the same may be said of all the country around *Middleton*, *Cloyne*, *Ballynacurra*, *Passage*, and *Ballybricken*.

The beauty of the river between CORK and the port of *Cove* has excited the admiration of every stranger, and has been the theme of many a laboured description. Nothing in Nature can be more strikingly picturesque ; consequently, no power of language can convey any adequate idea of its romantic loveliness. To be viewed in all its varied features, it should be seen from the water : both sides of the river are then visible, profusely decorated with the most superb mansions, castles, villas, cottages, shrubberies, plantations, gardens, fields, and meadows. Beyond these, on either side, rise those majestic hills, between which the *Lee* rolls its pellucid waters ; and at the upper end of this valley, apparently seated upon the stream itself, stands the magnificent city of CORK.

From a distant view of the country-seats which are so plentifully scattered along the banks of this enchanting river, a stranger will be led to anticipate much gratification upon a nearer and more minute inspection : but as he approaches them for this purpose, the illusion is speedily dispelled. Although the grounds be laid out with as much taste and elegance as those of the same description in *England*, yet there is such a want of neatness and order in most of the gentlemen's mansions around *Cork*, that the effect of their really beautiful designs is thereby considerably diminished, and in many instances totally destroyed. Grass grown high and yellow, walks covered with dead leaves, shrubberies strewed with broken branches, and gardens overrun with weeds, are the objects that particularly attract attention, and excite regret in viewing these otherwise princely residences.

In all general descriptions of this nature, there are, of course, many exceptions to be admitted. In no place, for example, can there be found a more exemplary display of regularity and order, than is visible in the beautiful domain of *Castle Martyr*, the magnificent residence of Lord Shannon.

There is nothing, perhaps, in the city of *Cork*, that will so soon be noticed by a traveller, as the irregularity of the buildings in the principal streets. A large and splendid jeweller's shop, three or four stories high, appears next door to the wretched tumble-down edifice of a soap and tallow-chandler. There are two good streets : the largest of which is broad, but crooked, the other is narrow, and straight. In the great market-place, or parade, there is an equestrian statue of one of our kings ; but it is a very disproportionate piece of sculpture.

The number of *Protestants* and *Catholics* here may be considered as nearly equal ; and there are seven places of worship set apart for the use of each respectively.

But the most noble object in the city of *Cork*, and that which most excites the admiration of a stranger, is the *Mardyke Walk*. The city itself stands upon an island, formed by two branches of the River *Lee* ; and from thence a long bank, or spit of land, extends above the city ; on each side of which the stream rolls its silver waters, among numberless little islands covered with the richest verdure. No place could have been better calculated for public promenade than the bank in question. Nature had done much towards it ; and Art has nobly completed the work. A beautiful double row of stately trees embellishes its sides, affording shade from the heat of the sun. At the town entrance, a fine pair of cast-iron gates have been erected. The other extremity is terminated by a romantic villa, belonging to a private gentleman. Entering this celebrated walk, the long vista of trees, arching over head, appears to have

no end ; and erroneous notions are frequently formed as to its probable length. The author walked from one extremity of it to the other, and counted *sixteen hundred paces*.

However well known the fact may be, that hospitality is a paramount virtue among the *Irish*, yet it would be unjust not to mention it in a particular manner, among the present remarks : as those only, who have experienced the kindness of this people, can form an adequate idea of their extraordinary munificence, liberality, and of that suavity of manners which has ever served to distinguish and characterize the sons of *Hibernia*. A mere introduction to an *Irish* gentleman is here thought equivalent to a letter of recommendation ; and an acquaintance with one family is the sure prelude to a familiar intercourse with the whole neighbourhood [1].

It was drawing towards the latter end of *April* before we quitted the Cove of *Cork* ; when, with a fleet of fifty sail in company, we took our departure.

As the ship sailed out of harbour, we could not avoid noticing the formidable appearance of *Spike* Island, the citadel of *Cove*. Immense sums have been expended in endeavours to render this fortress impregnable : but we were informed, that the works had been lately discontinued, owing to a discovery that the island itself is *overlooked*, or, to speak in a military phrase, *commanded* by the heights behind it.

Our voyage across the *Atlantic* presented little worthy of observation. We arrived on the *Great Bank of Newfoundland* about the eighteenth of *May* ; when the Commodore of the convoy made a signal for the whole fleet to pass within hail. In pursuance of this order, every vessel crowded around the *Crescent* ; and at the same instant, there arose such a violent blast of wind, that we were all thrown into a state of the most imminent danger and alarm : each ship dreading to be dashed against another ; and, of course, all made sail to escape from the throng : but this necessary precaution proved to be the source of all the mischief that ensued ; for the wind suddenly shifting, blew with terrible fury from an opposite quarter, demolishing masts, yards, and rigging. Happily for us, we had remained with every sail clewed up, since the beginning of the tempest, and by this means we escaped any material injury. Shortly afterwards, we passed one of the convoy that was lying in a dismasted state, with part of her side beaten in, and her crew was perceived to be labouring hard at the pumps.

It is remarkable that no lives were lost in our fleet upon this occasion ; although many of the ships were dismasted, and others lost their sails and yards in consequence of the sudden shifting of the hurricane. Mention has been made of this tempest merely as a caution to other vessels which may hereafter happen to pursue the same route ; since nothing can be a more common occurrence, or more dangerous, than such sudden gusts and shifts of wind upon the *Banks of Newfoundland*. Why they are peculiar to those immense heaps of sand, is perhaps a question not easily answered. Philosophical theories upon such abstruse subjects are often found to be both fallacious and absurd : and it is more incumbent upon a mariner to state facts, than to reason concerning matters in which he is full as likely to be *wrong* as to be *right*. [2]

Immediately after the hurricane had subsided, we descried the first beacon of a frozen coast, in a large mass of floating *ice*, which appeared like a vast rock of alabaster, upon our weather-beam. Few on board our ship had ever before seen an *ice-berg* : we gazed upon it, therefore, with mingled feelings of astonishment and awe. That which made it the more singular, was its perfect resemblance to the principal Pyramid of *Djiza*, near *Cairo* in *Egypt*, as we had seen that surprising monument of antiquity represented in some old books of travels. Shortly after this, however, we began to lose the pleasure that was at first experienced

in comparing these sublime works of Nature with corresponding specimens of Art ; such as, *pyramids, pillars, obelisks, temples,* and *tumuli* : for the certainty of their being extremely dangerous neighbours, during dark and stormy nights, entirely destroyed the gratification we might otherwise have felt, in viewing them.

Upon the 19th of *May*, we tried for soundings, and found bottom with thirty-six fathoms of line. Conceiving this to be a convenient depth of water for *fishing*, we threw over hooks ; and in about a quarter of an hour, every mess in the ship was well supplied with an abundance of the finest *cod-fish. Hallibuts*, also, of the most enormous size, were frequently drawn to the surface of the water : but it was exceedingly difficult to get them on board ; as they generally succeeded, by an apparently slight exertion of their ponderous strength, in breaking away from every means that could be devised for securing them.

The fishermen of *Newfoundland* are much exasperated whenever an unfortunate *Hallibut* happens to seize upon their baits : they are frequently known, in such cases, to wreak their vengeance on the poor fish, by thrusting a piece of wood through its gills, and in that condition turning it adrift upon the ocean. The efforts which are made by the tortured fish, to get its head beneath the water, afford a high source of amusement to the barbarous fishermen ; who have facetiously styled this operation, the “ *sprit-sail yarding of a hallibut.*”

About the 21st of *May*, we came in sight of *Cape Race*, the *south-eastern* extremity of NEWFOUNDLAND : and this first view of it led us to imagine that it would be impossible ever to approach within many leagues of our destined port. The whole line of coast, as far as the eye could reach, appeared encircled with an impenetrable zone of crystal. Indeed, this prodigious quantity of floating *ice* surrounded our convoy from the *west-south-west* to the *south-east* point of the compass ; thus leaving only ten points, out of the thirty-two, open for an escape. It was through this space that Commodore *Quilliam* sailed away in the *Crescent* ; taking with him that part of the fleet destined for *Nova Scotia*, and leaving under our protection those vessels that were bound for *St. John's* in *Newfoundland*.

Our little *Rosamond* being thus exalted into the situation of a Commodore's ship, we put her head towards the *north-north-east*, in hopes of finding some opening through which we might be able to penetrate the formidable barrier of ice that opposed our passage : nor were we disappointed ; for towards evening we perceived a place where the *ice* had loosened considerably, and through this channel the ships of our fleet butted their way.

In the voyages published by those who first visited this country, too little notice has been taken of the dangers attending its navigation. In their eagerness to recommend *Newfoundland* as an acquisition worthy of the *British Empire*, they have omitted, or slightly passed over, those dreadful tempests, thick fogs, rocky shores, and *icy* perils, to which a seaman is exposed upon the coasts of this island [3]. Later writers have run into the other extreme ; and represented those dangers as more intimidating than “ the most formidable rampart erected by military art, the dreadful cannonade of a besieged town, or the terrors of the most skilful and obstinate sea-fight [4].” It will hereafter be attempted to set these matters in a *true* point of view, by relating all occurrences simply as they presented themselves to the author, without embellishment or concealment of any kind.

On the twenty-third of *May*, a gale came on, attended by such a thick fog, that our fleet were entirely dispersed, and we were never afterwards able to collect them again together. The masters of those vessels were, for the most part, old traders, who were well acquainted with the coast of *Newfoundland* ; and the greater part of the convoy therefore succeeded in reaching the harbour of *St. John's* before the *Rosamond*.

It was during the dreadful gale and in the thick fog above mentioned that we passed one of those lofty *ice-bergs* which are so numerous on these coasts. It was ...of an enormous size. The waves broke their fury upon its sides, causing it to roll to and fro, with a noise that it would baffle any person to describe. Our horror and astonishment may be conceived, when, on a tremendous heave of the sea, it rolled completely over, with a crash that might have been heard at an immense distance. We trembled at the sight ; for the *Rosamond* was not above four cables' length distant at the moment; and it was a mass of *ice* that would, by its contact, have crushed a first-rate ship of war, as easily as the foot of *Goliath* would have demolished a spider.

The aspect of this ice-berg had now entirely changed...The surface of the ice exhibited a most beautiful shining green hue, occasioned either by its long continuance beneath the sea, or to that effect of contrast which is known to have such remarkable properties in the modification of colours.

The gale having at length subsided, and some days elapsed since we lost sight of the land, we again attempted to reach the coast : but here another thick fog threw us into a state of the greatest perplexity and uneasiness ; as we had reason to suppose, from our reckoning, that the shore could not be far distant. However, the wind being light, and the sea smooth, we ventured to continue our *westerly* course ; until, upon listening attentively. Captain *Campbell* imagined that he could distinguish a low murmuring, like the sound produced by surge, when dashing against a distant reef of rocks. We thereupon immediately let fall the anchor : and this proved to have been a very wise precaution. The fog dispersing, we found ourselves near a dangerous part of the coast, called *Shoal-bay*, situate a few miles to the southward of *St. John's*.

We had not before obtained so near a view of *Newfoundland* ; therefore the whole crew were extremely earnest in their contemplation of its naked rocks and frowning forests ; and as the mist slowly cleared away, every point of land became the subject of their scrutiny. Immediately opposite to the ship, appeared a remarkable natural curiosity, called the *Spout*, which is visible at a great distance from the shore. We had no opportunity of examining this phænomenon minutely ; but could easily perceive that the spout in question was occasioned by a column of water forcing itself through a fissure in the rock ; and being impelled to an amazing height, it assumed the appearance of volcanic smoke. In this state it admirably answers the purpose of a landmark, for those who are otherwise unacquainted with the coast.

When the fog was entirely dispersed, we discovered His Majesty's ships, *Dryad* and *Comus* [5], at anchor near the *Rosamond*. These ships had left *Broyle Bay* in the morning, with an intention of getting into *St. John's* : but the quantity of floating *ice* rendering that port quite inaccessible, it was proposed to return again to *Broyle Bay*. Accordingly, we joined their company; and towards evening the three ships came to anchor in that place.

*Cape Broyle*, standing at the entrance of the bay bearing the same name, is, perhaps, the most remarkable promontory on the whole *eastern* coast of *Newfoundland*. In appearance, it resembles an enormous *saddle* ; and as it stands about thirty miles to the *southward* of the Capital, it is extremely useful, to determine the position of any vessel, upon her first obtaining sight of the island. The knowledge of proper land-marks is of the utmost importance to mariners navigating the coast of *Newfoundland*. The dense fogs that continually hover around the shores frequently render it impossible to obtain a sight of the sun for many days : so that the difficulty of ascertaining the exact latitude and position of a ship is here productive of much inconvenience and mischief.

*Broyle Bay* is a deep inlet : its entrance lies at the foot of the Cape before mentioned. The depth of water is sufficient for vessels of almost any size, and the harbour is sheltered from all winds. On steering into this place, great care ought to be taken, to keep close in with the *southern* shore of the channel ; as there is a dangerous sunken rock lying upon the *north* side of it, near *Cape Brigus*.

There are not more than five or six families settled within this bay ; who, of course, obtain their livelihood by the curing of *cod* : and they afterwards carry the product of their labour to *St. John's*, where they dispose of it to the merchants, in exchange for provisions and necessaries ; but they very seldom receive specie in return for their *fish*. From this it will appear evident, that those merchants, who reside constantly at *St. John's*, receive a double profit : the first arising from their foreign exports of salted cod ; and the second, from the articles which they supply to the *out-harbour* [6] settlers, in return for this commodity. It follows, therefore, as a natural consequence, that the principal mercantile men of this country, by monopolizing almost the whole of the external and internal trade, are thereby enabled to amass the most splendid fortunes with an inconceivable rapidity ; whilst the middling and lower classes of fishermen may toil from year to year, with patient and unremitted industry, and yet find themselves, in their old age, many degrees worse off than when first they crossed the *Atlantic*, as wretched emigrants from their native country [7].

The lower order of fishermen in *Newfoundland*, being principally *Roman-Catholics* from *Ireland*, maintain a little jolly priest of that persuasion ; who gains a precarious livelihood, by trudging on foot along the coast from one harbour to another,

“ To shrive the dying, bless the dead.”

We saw this personage, during our stay at *Broyle* : he was a short rotund man, who certainly did not exhibit, in his own person, any outward appearance of having suffered either from severe penance or bodily mortification.

In addition to the recommendation of its being a very secure anchorage, the shores of *Broyle Bay* are covered with wood ; and a cataract of the clearest fresh water falls into the sea, from a precipice near the huts of the settlers. There is a small patch of cultivated land at the head of the bay.

The sudden changing of the drift or low *ice*, upon the coasts of *Newfoundland* and *Labrador*, is very remarkable. We had entered *Broyle Bay* in the evening, through an open sea, entirely clear of obstruction as far as the eye could extend : but on the morning of the next day, the harbour was completely choked with *ice*, so as almost to render it possible to walk from the ship to the shore : and upon ascending the mast, we could perceive that the wide ocean itself was also one vast plain of broken fragments. To account for this singular phænomenon, it ought to be observed, that there is a strong *southerly* current continually setting along the whole of the shores extending from *Davis' Straits* to *Nova Scotia* : therefore, upon the breaking up of the great *Northern* bays in the spring of the year, the low drift *ice* is carried towards the *south* with great velocity, where it eventually disappears, in consequence of being exposed to the heat of the sun.

It is thus, in its progress from *north* to *south*, that the ice occasionally enters and blocks up the different bays and harbours along the coasts of *Labrador* and *Newfoundland* : but the inconvenience thereby caused to mariners is of a temporary nature ; as the floating mass, being easily affected by the slightest change of wind, frequently disappears in the course of a few hours, leaving the sea open and navigable as before.

We were rather surprised to find that the fishermen at *Broyle Bay* demand almost as high a price for their salted *cod* as the same commodity generally obtains in *England*. This was quite a disappointment to us, who had imagined that *fish* in *Newfoundland* must be, comparatively, as cheap as coals at *Newcastle* : but we afterwards learned that the merchants of *St. John's* would gladly purchase salted *cod* at thirty-two shillings *per quintal* from the *out-harbour* fishermen, for which they could obtain forty or forty-six shillings, either in *Spain* or *Portugal*. But it must not be understood, from this, that the thirty-two shillings *per quintal* is *actually paid* by the merchants of *St. John's* to the *out-harbour* settlers : the *fish* is merely valued at that price, and provisions to the amount are given in exchange.

Having completed our stock of water and fuel, we sailed from *Broyle Bay* ; in order, if possible, to get into *St. John's* harbour. We made two or three ineffectual attempts, and experienced much thumping among the drift *ice* ; but at length succeeded, about the 10th of *June*, in entering the narrow mouth of this capacious port. With some labour and difficulty, our ship was warped up into a proper situation, nearly opposite to the town ; where we moored her in safety.

#### ST. JOHN'S, CAPITAL OF NEWFOUNDLAND.

*Discovery of Newfoundland—Taken possession of by the English—Province of Avalon settled—Entirely ceded to Great Britain—Entrance to St. John's Harbour—Fortifications—Naval Arsenal—Fish Stages—Town of St. John's—Government—Sir Richard Keats—Judicature—Population—State of Society—Climate.*

THE discovery of *Newfoundland* has, by some authors [8], been ascribed to *John Cabot*, a *Venetian* navigator ; and by others [8], to *Sebastian Cabot*, his son, who was born at *Bristol*. In a Work of this kind, it is not necessary to enter into a long discussion of their separate pretensions, particularly as the matter has already been handled by able writers [9], to whom the curious Reader may be referred for more particular information. It can, however, be stated with certainty, that this island was first seen in the year 1497, or 1498, by an *English* squadron, fitted out by *Henry the Seventh*. In the reign of his successor, *Henry the Eighth*, the *cod-fish* first became an article of commerce ; and some small vessels sent from *England*, returned with a cargo of salt and dried cod [10]. From this time forward, the Banks of *Newfoundland* were annually visited by numbers of ships, from *Spain*, *France*, *Italy*, *Portugal*, and *England*. The fine harbours along the coast became the property of those who first entered them in the spring of the year, which was the cause of much mischief and confusion. The emulation and rivalry of the original fishermen were so great, that they contrived every possible means to retard and to injure their competitors, by breaking down the stages, and scattering the materials of them upon the waves [11]. To replace the damage sustained upon these occasions, the waste of young trees, and the number destroyed by stripping off the rind, was almost incredible ; and it was thought necessary to put a stop to such ravages in future. Accordingly, in the year 1583, *Sir Humphrey Gilbert* sailed from *Plymouth* with a small squadron, and, after a tedious voyage, arrived at *St. John's* in *Newfoundland*. There, in the presence of all his captains and officers, and in the name of *Elizabeth*, Queen of *Great Britain*, he took possession of two hundred leagues of territory, extending in every direction from *St. John's*. A *turf* and a *rod* were presented to him, in token of his right, as the Governor appointed by her Majesty's patent [12], to rule over the newly-acquired country. Immediately after this event. *Sir Humphrey* framed three laws for the observance of the fishermen. By the *first*, the form of religion was established according to the Liturgy of the Church of *England* : *Secondly*, it was made high-treason to plot against her Majesty's Government : and, *Thirdly*, it was ordained, that if any person should utter words of dishonour against her Majesty, he should suffer the loss of his ears ; or if the offender were a master of any vessel, his goods

should become confiscate to the Crown. A pillar of wood was erected upon the shore, with the arms of *England* engraved thereon ; and the land by the seaside was parcelled out into separate lots by Sir Humphrey [13], the proprietors gladly consenting to pay an annual tribute to the Governor for the same ; by which means they hoped to secure their stages and fish-flakes against the periodical ravages of their countrymen.

This new regulation had a very beneficial effect on the *Newfoundland* trade : for we find in *Whithourne's* account [14], that in the year 1615 there were 250 *English* vessels employed upon the coasts of that island ; and that, according to the usual manner of manning ships in those days, not less than 5000 seamen were engaged therein. Still, the *English* fisheries were eclipsed by those of foreign nations, who annually sent 400 sail thither, to obtain *cod-fish* and oil [15] ; and this induced many people in *England* to undertake the colonization of the country. Sir *George Calvert*, Secretary to King *James the First*, settled the province of *Avalon* [16], which was the name given to a sort of peninsula in *Newfoundland* formed by the deep bays of *Trinity* and *Trepassy* ; and, from thence-forward, the whole *eastern* coast of the island became gradually occupied by the *English* fishermen. “ Those,” says *Raynal* [17] “ who were concerned in the fishery, being forced, both from the nature of their employment and that of the soil, to live at a distance from each other, opened paths of communication through the woods. Their general rendezvous was at *St. John's*, where, in an excellent harbour, formed between two mountains at a very small distance from each other, they met with privateers from the mother-country, who supplied them with every necessary article, in exchange for the produce of their fishery.”

Other nations were not insensible of the benefits which the *English* derived from their permanent settlements in *Newfoundland*. The *French* planted colonies on the *north* and *south* sides of the island, and built the town of *Placentia*. The share possessed by this people in the *fisheries* was a natural source of uneasiness to a nation that has always been extremely jealous of any encroachments on her maritime power or commerce. Accordingly, in the Treaty of *Utrecht*, the entire possession of *Newfoundland* was demanded by *Great Britain* : and France being glad to procure a peace upon almost any terms, consented to this sacrifice, and merely reserved to her subjects the privilege of drying their *fish* upon the shores of that island [18].

By subsequent treaties, the *French* have been restricted to the small islands of *St. Pierre* and *Miquelon* : and as they are not suffered to erect any fortifications on them, their *fishery* is immediately stopped, whenever a war is declared between the two nations. The *English*, *French*, and *Americans* are the only people who have at present the right of *fishing* on the *Banks* of *Newfoundland*.

Having thus given a concise sketch of the history of this country, we will now return to a description of its Capital.

The entrance to *St. John's* Harbour forms a long and extremely narrow strait, but not very difficult of access. There are about twelve fathoms' water in the middle of the channel, with tolerable good anchorage ground. The most lofty perpendicular precipices rise, to an amazing height, upon the *north side* ; and the *southern* shore only appears less striking in its attitude, from a comparison with the opposite rocks. There is a light shewn every night on the left side of the entrance ; where there are also a small battery and a signal-post. Other batteries of greater strength appear towering above the rocky eminences towards the *north*. At about two-thirds of the distance between the entrance, and what may properly be termed the harbour itself, there lies a dangerous shelf, called the *Chain Rock* ; so named from a chain which extends across the strait at that place, to prevent the admission of any hostile fleet. Mariners,



on entering this place, ought to beware of approaching too near the rocks beneath the lighthouse point. At the time we sailed by them, the masts of a large ship were still visible above the water, that had a short time before been forced by the swell upon those rocks, where she immediately foundered. We were afterwards concerned to hear, that the unfortunate vessel in question was one of the ships that had sailed from *Cork* in our convoy, about six weeks before.

In addition to the fortifications already noticed, there are several other strong fortresses upon the heights around the town, so as to render this place perfectly secure against any sudden attack. Fort *Townshend* is situate immediately over the town, and is the usual residence of the Governor. Forts *Amherst* and *William* are more towards the *north* ; and there is also a small battery perched on the top of a single pyramidal mount, which is called the *Crow's Nest*.

At the upper part of the harbour, and upon the eastern side of it, there is a small place styled the *King's Dock-yard*, although it can scarcely be said to deserve this title. At the time we were there, the Admiral was very intent upon enlarging and improving its condition. It may not be amiss to add one reflection on the obvious policy of rendering *St. John's* a considerable naval depot; for notwithstanding that we possess so fine an arsenal as *Halifax* upon the coast of *America*, yet *Newfoundland*, as an island, is not so open to the attacks of an enemy ; and it would be an excellent resort for our cruizers during the summer months, should we, by any mischance, be deprived of the former valuable acquisition. In considering this point, *Bermuda* has not been forgotten ; but the dangers manifest in the approach to that island will ever render its utility, as a naval depôt, of precarious advantage to our fleets.

The harbour of *St. John's* is most exposed to heavy gales from the *north-west* ; as the wind from that point rushes with extreme violence through a valley to the left of the town.

On first entering the bays and ports of *Newfoundland*, the attention of a stranger is mostly attracted by the remarkable appearance exhibited by the innumerable *stages* erected along the sea-side for the salting and drying of *cod*. The shores around the harbour of *St. John's* are entirely covered with them, and their construction is particularly simple. Numerous supporters, exactly resembling *Kentish* hop-poles, are first fixed in the ground : over these is placed a horizontal platform of similar poles ; and the whole is finally overspread with a covering of dry fern. This sort of structure is called, by the fishermen, a *Fish Flake* : but there are other stages, erected in a similar manner, although standing partly in the water, with a hut at their extremity, for the reception and salting of the *cod*, previous to its final removal to the *Flakes*, for the purpose of being dried in the sun.

The Capital of *Newfoundland* consists of one very narrow street, extending entirely along one side of the port. The houses are principally built of wood ; and there are very few handsome or even good-looking edifices in the place. This street stands upon very irregular ground, and is not paved ; therefore, in wet weather, it is rendered almost impassable, by mud and filth. There are a great number of small public-houses, but scarcely one tolerable inn : the *London Tavern*, however, has a good billiard-room attached to it. Shops of all descriptions are very numerous ; but most commodities are extravagantly dear, particularly meat, poultry, and vegetables, as the town receives all its supplies of those articles from *Nova Scotia*. The number of wharfs for lading ships is remarkable : almost every petty merchant, indeed, possesses one of his own : and there is, besides these, a fine broad quay, called the Government Wharf, which is open for the accommodation of the public.

The Island of *Newfoundland* is governed by a Vice-admiral of the *British Navy*, whose jurisdiction extends also over the coast of *Labrador*, from Cape *Charles* to *Mount Joli*, together with the small islands of *St. Pierre* and *Miquelon* on the south, and *Anticosti* in the mouth of the River *St. Lawrence*. The Governor holds his situation for three years ; and he is, during this time, Commander-in-chief of the naval force employed within the limits of his government. He usually resides in a fortress above the town of *St. John's*, and returns to *England* for the winter months. During his absence, the chief power of the island is vested in the hands of the Military Commandant, who is styled the *Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland*. In the event of the decease of this last personage, the government devolves on the *Chief Justice of St. John's*.

We were witnesses of the ceremony of installing and swearing in Vice-Admiral Sir *Richard Goodwin Keats*, G.C.B. as Governor : and never was the protection of this valuable colony confided, during a critical period, to more indefatigable or able hands. The bravery, abilities, and brilliant achievements of Sir Richard Keats are known throughout Europe ; but his patient assiduity, excellent precautions, and unremitting vigilance, can only be manifest to those who were witnesses of the able disposition of his naval force, whereby the shores of *Newfoundland* might be navigated in security during the most violent period of the late contest with America [19].

The judicature of this island is confided to a *Chief Justice*, residing in *St. John's* : and there are also Magistrates in the principal places on the coast of *Newfoundland* and *Labrador*, who are empowered to take cognizance of *murder*, *robberies*, and *frauds* ; but it has been judiciously ordained, that they should not interfere in any disputes relative to the *fisheries*. For the adjustment of the latter cases, an officer of the Navy is annually appointed to hold a Surrogate Court in the out-harbours.

It would be very difficult to form the least calculation respecting the population of *St. John's* ; as no computation, however accurate, can be considered as correct beyond the instant of time in which it is made. During the height of the fishery, it appears to be overflowing with inhabitants ; but most of the people employed therein return to *Europe* in the autumn. There is not a work of any kind that we can refer to respecting *Newfoundland*, if we except those imperfect sketches given of it in the various publications called *Gazetteers*. Upon such works there can be little dependence placed, particularly when they profess to describe countries not generally known. Of this fact, we have an instance before us ; when, in speaking of *Newfoundland*, we find it stated [20], “ that there are about 500 *English* families, who continue there all the year, besides the garrisons of *St. John's*, *Placentia*, and 'other forts. In the *fishing* season, it is resorted to by at least 10,000 people, on account of the *fishing banks*.” We may judge of the degree of accuracy with which this calculation was made, by reference to another passage in the same description : “ *It seems to have no inhabitants of its own ; but in the summer-time is visited by the Esquimaux Indians.*” It may appear strange, that such lamentable ignorance should exist respecting one of our most valuable possessions in *North America* : it will appear hereafter, that *Newfoundland* has always been inhabited by a nation peculiar to itself ; and that the *Esquimaux* are not less strangers upon the coasts than the *Chickasaws* or *Catabees* in the streets of *London* !

The state of society in *St. John's* is such as might be expected, in a place where the majority of the principal inhabitants have risen from the lowest fishermen. The vulgar arrogance of these upstarts is sometimes both ludicrous and offensive. Literature and polished manners are here unknown ; and a stranger must not be surprised to observe a constant violation of the most ordinary rules of speech.

The lower classes are generally composed of turbulent *Irishmen*, whose unwearied industry during the *fishing* season in summer is forcibly contrasted with their unbounded licentiousness in winter. Indeed, all ranks of society appear to consider debauchery as the only antidote to the *tædium vitæ* which prevails between the month of December and the recommencement of the *fishery* in the *May* following.

Having spoken of the industry and licentiousness of the *Irish* fishermen, it will be no more than justice to mention an instance of honesty in one of their class. The author had been making a purchase of some trifling article, upon one of the quays in *St. John's* ; when, in consequence of being much hurried, he was so negligent as to leave his purse and gloves upon a log of timber near the place. The town-crier was authorized to offer an adequate reward for the recovery of the property ; and in less than half an hour afterwards, the purse and gloves were restored to the owner, by a tattered wretch, as destitute in his appearance as the meanest pauper. The purse contained about ten pounds *sterling*, in the current notes of the island.

The trading commodities of *Newfoundland* are so well known, that it will only be requisite to say, the *exports* consist of *fish, oil*, and a very few *furs* : the *imports* are, *provisions, clothing, salt, fishing-gear*, and some *India* goods.

The scenery around the Capital, like all the other parts of the island, is wild and desolate : but in many places, the mountains, lakes, woods, and plains, present rather a pleasing landscape. The inhabitants of *St. John's* have extended their country-houses only a few miles into the interior.

The rigour of the winters in *Newfoundland*, and indeed throughout the whole continent of *North America*, has excited the curiosity and inquiries of many philosophical writers. Although lying on the same parallel of latitude with the most fertile parts of *France*, yet such is the severity of the climate, that it is not an unusual circumstance, in *St. John's*, to find, at the breakfast-table, the tea-cup frozen to the saucer, although filled with boiling water at the moment ! [21] Robertson says, that “ all the birds fly, during that season, from a climate where they could not live :” but, in this point at least, he is mistaken ; because most of the *northern* parts of *North America* abound with feathered tribes much more during the winter than in the summer, particularly with *partridges, wild ducks, geese, plovers*, and *moor-fowl* [22].

In attempting to account for the rigour so remarkably characteristic of the climate of *North America*, philosophers, in their inquiry, have evidently fallen short of the original cause. They all concur in the fact, that the extreme severity of winter is occasioned by the prevalence of the *north-west* wind during that season of the year : but to explain the true source of such an extraordinary diminution of temperature, it is incumbent upon them to point out the causes of this prevailing wind.

Although the climate of *North America* be undoubtedly rigorous, yet it is not either unhealthy or unpleasant. The *European* settlers in *Hudson's Bay* and in *Newfoundland* prefer the serene intense cold of their dry winters, to the damp and foggy atmosphere of *Great Britain* ; and maintain, that, with the thermometer of *Fahrenheit* at sixty degrees below the freezing point [23], they have invariably experienced an exhilarating and joyous sensation, unknown in other parts of the globe. Captain *Whitbourne*, speaking of *Newfoundland*, says [24], that “ in the year 1615, of the many thousands of *English, French, Portugals*, and others, that were then upon that coast (amongst whom I sailed to and fro more than 150 leagues), I neither saw nor heard, in all that trauell, of any man or boy, of either of these nations, that died there during the whole voyage ; neither was there so much as any one of them sicke.”

If any part of Whitbourne's account be entitled to implicit credit, perhaps we might bestow it upon the foregoing statement ; as no fact is more certain than that of the healthiness of a *North-American* climate.

- [1] The author has, perhaps, been urged to say more upon this subject than he would otherwise have done, owing to his gratitude for the polite and benevolent attentions he experienced, when he was almost a stranger in the country, in consequence of an accidental introduction to the Rev. *Robert Longfield*, of *Castle Mary*, near *Cloyne*, son of Colonel *Longfield*, M.P. for the City of *Cork*.
- [2] *Columbus*, the mighty genius who could first imagine and afterwards realize the existence of a New World was, notwithstanding, frequently mistaken in his notions respecting the most trivial phænomena. “ The violent swell and agitation of the waters on the coast of *Trinidad* led him to conclude this to be the highest part of the terraqueous globe.” *Robertsons Hist. of America*, Vol I. p. 334. Note xxi.
- [3] See the Voyages of Sir *Humphrey Gilbert*, and of Captain *Whitbourne* ; and the letters from the first settlers. Captains *Powell* and *Wynne*.
- [4] *Raynal's Hist. of the East and West Indies*, vol. VII. p. 204. Book XVII. *Lond.* 1783.
- [5] This ship was afterwards destined to meet her fate upon the coast of *Newfoundland*. The following intelligence of her wreck appeared in the Papers of *December* 14th, 1816. “ *Torbay*.—Arrived the schooner *Plymouth*, Captain *Davis*, of this port. By this vessel we learn the particulars of the loss of His Majesty's ship, *Comus*, in the Bay of *St. Mary's*, at midnight, on the 24th of *October* ; and the wonderful escape of the officers and men, in four small boats, *after rowing from four in the morning till six in the evening, in search of a spot to land* ; then obliged to march back eighteen miles, to the wreck, in search of provisions, where they remained several hours before they could procure any nor had they a change of clothes, or a bed to lie upon, before they reached *Renews*, eleven days after the accident.”
- [6] All the ports of *Newfoundland*, except that of the Capital, *St. John's*, are called *Out-harbours*.
- [7] The author is aware that he shall have occasion to resume this subject in a subsequent part of his Work : but he trusts that the Reader will make an allowance for any *seeming* repetition, which it is almost impossible to avoid, in the description of a people who depend entirely upon the *fisheries* for the means of their existence.
- [8] *Campbell's* “ *Naval History of Great Britain*,” vol. I. p. 244. *Raynal's* “ *History of the East and West Indies*,” vol. VIII. p. 191. *Lond.* 1783.
- [8] *Hume's* “ *History of England*,” vol. III. Chap. XXVI. p. 406.
- [9] *Ellis's* “ *Voyage to Hudson's Bay*,” pp 4 — 6, *Campbell's* “ *Naval History of Great Britain*,” vol. I. pp. 287—289.
- [10] *Raynal's* “ *History of the East and West Indies*, vol. VII. p. 192. Book XVII. *Lond.* 1783.
- [11] Captain *Whitbourne's* “ *Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*.” p. 23.
- [12] The form of the *Patent* granted by Queen *Elizabeth* to Sir *Humphrey Gilbert* may be seen in *Harris's* “ *Collection of Voyages and Travels*,” vol. I.—from whence, also, most of the observations respecting the Expedition of Sir *Humphrey* have been selected by the author.
- [13] In the *French* edition of *Raynal's* “ *Histoire Philosophique*,” this celebrated Navigator is styled the *Chevalier Humshrée* : and *Justamond*, in his translation of that Work, has rendered this word *Humshrée*, by *Hampshire*. Thus, the glory of having first secured the sovereignty of *Newfoundland* to the *British* nation is likely to be taken from a patriotic knight who expended his whole fortune in the undertaking ; and given to a personage whose name is unknown in the annals of *England*.
- [14] *Whithourne's* “ *Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*,” p. 12.
- [15] *Ibid.* p. 11.

- [16] Ibid. pp. 78, 79.
- [17] *Raynal's "History of the East and West Indies"* vol. VII. pp. 192, 193. Book XVII. Lond. 1783.
- [18] *Smollett's "Complete Hist, of England,"* vol. X. p. 121.
- [19] When Captain of the *Superb*, 74, under the command of Admiral Sir *James Saumarez*, in the Straits of *Gibraltar*, Sir *Richard Keats* ran his ship alongside two *Spanish* three-deckers, and engaged them both at the same time : then making sail, he passed out from between them, unnoticed ; and, overtaking another of their fleet, whose force was more proportionate to that of the *Superb*, he soon compelled her to a surrender. The two three-deckers, not perceiving his escape, continued, in the darkness of the night, to engage each other ; until they both caught fire, and were consumed together : thus giving to Captain *Keats* the honour of having, by a masterly manœuvre, occasioned the destruction of two first-rate line-of-battle ships belonging to the enemy ; and capturing another of equal force, with a comparatively trifling loss on his own part.
- [20] The "*General Gazetteer*," by *R. Brookes*, M.D. London, 1815.
- [21] To shew how little dependence can be placed upon the descriptions given of *Newfoundland* by those who first visited the country, it will only be necessary to mention, that, in their eagerness to recommend the *colonization* of the island, they have actually represented the climate as being equally mild and temperate with that of *Great Britain*.— See *Whitbourne's Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, p. 1.
- [22] As a proof of this, it is only necessary to quote the following passages, from the account of countries situate *eight degrees farther to the North than Newfoundland*. " They use, at the Factories, no other method of killing the *partridges*, than shooting them : and in this they are very successful, for they are there in very great plenty ; insomuch, that some men may be able to shoot sixty or eighty in a day's time, *which makes a good article in the magazine-list of winter provision*."—*Ellis's Voyage to Hudson's Bay*, p. 160. " There are great plenty of *partridges* in the winter time." *Letters from a Gentleman on board His Majesty's Ship Furnace, in Churchill River, North America*.
- [23] See the abstract of a Meteorological Journal published in the Author's "*Narrative of an Expedition to Hudson's Bay*." Appendix.
- [24] *Whitbourne's Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, p. 2.

Voyage of His Majesty's ship *Rosamond* to Newfoundland and the southern coast of Labrador, of which countries no account has been published by any British traveller since the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1818)

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