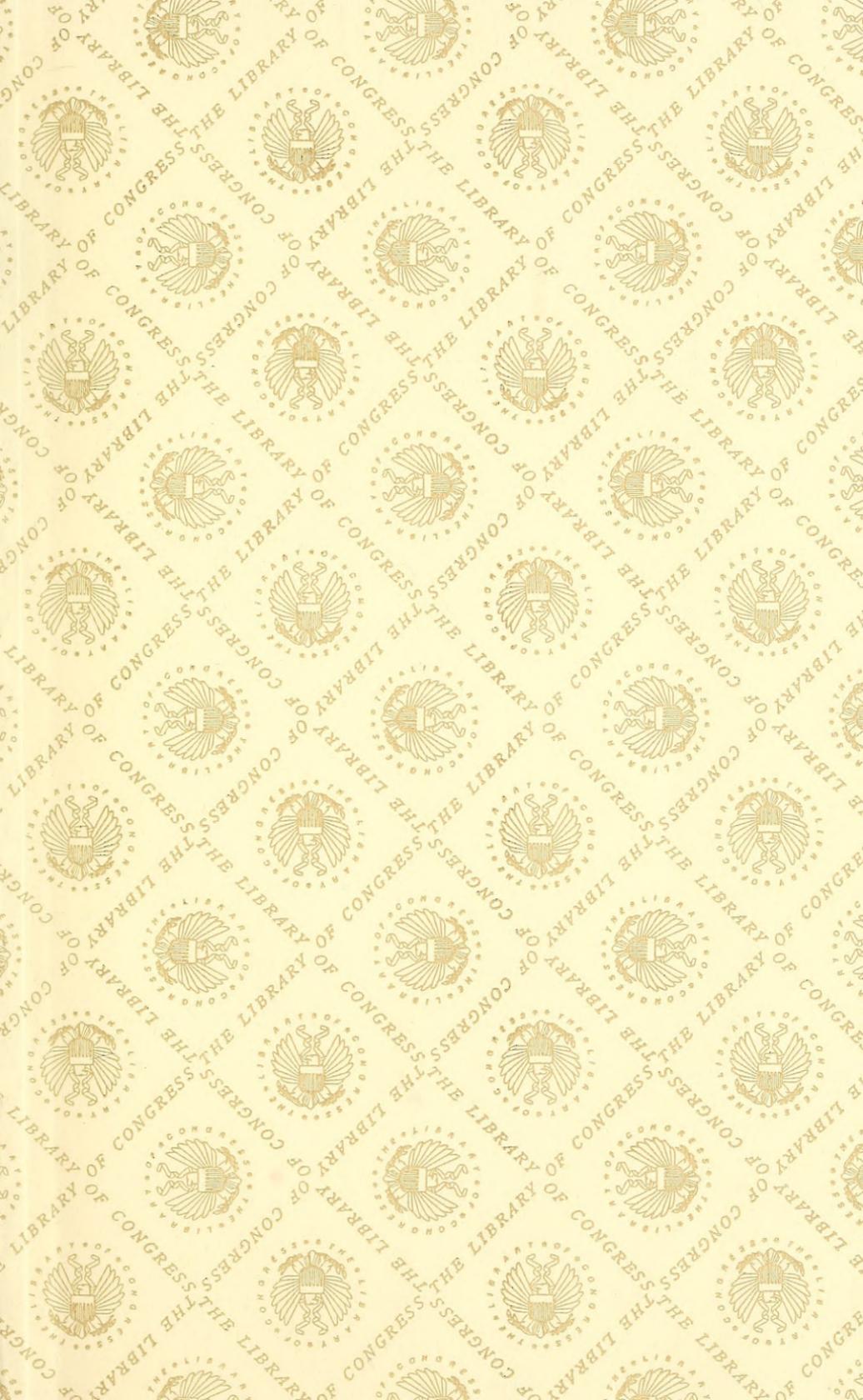


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THE
RELATION OF THE FISHERIES
TO THE
DISCOVERY AND SETTLEMENT
OF
NORTH AMERICA.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, AT CONCORD, JUNE, 1880,
AND THE MASSACHUSETTS FISH AND GAME PRO-
TECTION SOCIETY, AT BOSTON, 1880,

BY

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II

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THE RELATION OF THE FISHERIES

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DISCOVERY AND SETTLEMENT OF NORTH AMERICA.

DISCOVERY.

THE desire to find a short route to the Indies stimulated Columbus to the discovery of America. The success of Magellan in the south excited other explorers to seek a passage by the north or northwest to the Indies. A mental conviction, not born of knowledge, pushed them on from the time of Cabot, and has not yet spent its force. Thirty years after Columbus's discovery, the land here was supposed to be the back part of Cathay, and he had long been dead before geographers began to suggest these lands were a continent. In 1540 the French patent to Jacques Cartier describes Canada and Hochelaga as forming one end of Asia on the west side.

Whilst gold and the spices of India were exciting the cupidity and the enterprise of Europe, small was the attention given by the great to the humble occupation and daring energy of the craft of fishermen who ranged the most dangerous parts of the stormy ocean in pursuit of cod, herring, and mackerel. No literary idlers collected their lore and dressed it in popular form. No path to fame was supposed to lay across the gurry-covered deck, or to be enfolded in the well-tanned seine. Hakluyt and Purchas, Peter Martyr and Cortereal, deemed it hardly of moment to mention these men of the harpoon and the hook and line and seine; and when they sought them for information, which was not infrequent, what they obtained from the close-mouthed craft was regarded and used as their own original matter. Dimly among the printed records of early voyagers, and amid the

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mouldering papers in public archives, can we catch a trace of what this craft were about at the time when modern literature claims that America was discovered by royal expeditions and lord high admirals under flags of Spain or England, France or Portugal. Yet there are some grounds for believing that "the skippers" and "the sharesmen" were on these shores before the admirals. In the European settlement of those parts of North America which are contiguous to the fisheries, it is curious to compare the potential influences of the royal charters and their grantees with those the fisheries exercised in bringing about the settlements and occupation of the shores by the European race. I shall present some crude views on this subject, which, in connection with latest investigations into the protection and restoration of the cod-fishery to its former prosperity, have formed the subject of an address lately given before a society in a sister State organized for the protection of fish and game.

THE GRAND BANKS.

When were they discovered?

The great Admiral Columbus came no farther north than the latitude of Florida. The Cabots make no mention of the Grand Banks. These, then, did not discover them. The younger Cabot describes the "Isles of Baccalaos," which may be the Magdalen Isles or Cape Breton or some other and unimportant islands on the coast of Labrador or Newfoundland; but there are no islands on the Grand Banks. How came this Bristol-born Englishman in a royal ship to use this Basque word "baccalaos" in place of the word "cod," which all Somerset and Englishmen use, unless he found it so applied already to these islands? As a discoverer, in emulation of Spanish and Portuguese world-famed explorations, for his owner and master, Henry VII. of England, he would *scarcely* have been giving a Basque name to islands he discovered. It is, then, improbable that Cabot gave this name, and it is prob-

able that he took the name of Baccalaos from those who had preceded him there. Cabot, his reporters say, stated this was the native name for this land ; but we know the philology of the word better than he did ; and admitting that he reported the Indian correctly, the proof is more convincing that the Basques had been there before him.

The next voyagers whose narratives have come down to us are Cortereal, Verazzano, Gomez, and John Rut ; but neither of these professes to have discovered the Grand Banks. Rut states that at Newfoundland he met at the harbor of St. John's eleven sail Normand, one Breton, and two Portuguese fishing vessels. An English play, an "Interlude," cited by Nichols in his life of Cabot, with the attributed date of 1510, states that, —

" Now, Frenchmen and others have found the trade,
That yearly of fish there they lade,
Above a hundred sayle."

There are still earlier notices of the fishermen. Among these, the most active were the Basques, who, their traditions say, were drawn there in the pursuit of whales.

The name of Cape Breton, as well as that of Baccalaos, is taken from the Basque language.

These Basques were an old race, living partly under the French and a part under the Spanish government, plain fishermen, far from the influence of the royal expeditions for discovery of routes to the Indies, and indifferent to the question about the Indies, living in a poor country, not influential at court nor distinguished in letters. They were the originators of the whale fishery, and had been known long before Columbus's time as hardy fishermen and enterprising whalers, seeking their game in its favorite feeding grounds. It is to be remarked that the names of places, islands, harbors about the coast of Labrador, Newfoundland, and Cape Breton are mostly *Basque* or French. It is claimed by those who ought to know that the natives used Basque names for the

implements of these fisheries, and even on Cabot's authority, that they had at his discovery adopted the Basque "baccalaos" (rather than the French "morue") to designate the codfish and the country.

It is claimed, then, that they were pursuing the whale and the baccalaos on these banks and shores for an indefinite time prior to Cabot's voyage, and were, excluding the Norwegians' and Icelanders' voyages, the first Europeans to visit this part of North America. I think these propositions may be affirmed on the records. Neither Columbus, Cabot, nor Cortereal drew the French and Basque fishermen to that coast. But Cartier and Gomez found a lively cod-fishery going on, and Cartier run over their whaling grounds. The fishermen discovered for themselves these coasts, how early none can tell; but the fairest analysis of Cabot's remarks leaves the logical inference they were here before he came.

Authors writing prior to 1550 admit the Basques were whaling and fishing on this coast as early as 1504; but as they assign no proof that these people began then to fish here, the admission that they were here then is no denial that their enterprise began a generation sooner. No argument can be drawn from the silence of the Basques, except that the enterprise was good enough to keep for their own use. They knew the court favorites would rob them of its profits if they published the news, and the *discoverers par le roi* would hardly wish to mention that fleets of European fishermen hovered near the harbors of "Prima Vistu" or "Baccalaos." The royal explorers were searching for the Indies, but the fishermen cared for no more spicy breezes than those that dried their fish and fanned the fires of their try-kettles on the shores of Norumbega.

Until it can be shown that the chartered explorers discovered the Banks of Newfoundland prior to the Basques, the silence on both sides remains very natural, but it does not weaken the Basque argument for priority. The Count de

Premio Real, Consul-General of Spain for the Dominion of Canada, has lately revived attention to this subject, and pressed the claims of the Basques with an array of facts and ingenious arguments, in which he has the support of several eminent historical investigators of Quebec and some in this country and Europe.

VERAZZANO IN NEW HAMPSHIRE.

Verazzano, an Italian captain in the employ of the French government, sailed from Europe in 1523, and struck the American coast in latitude 34° N. He ran to the northward, describing the coast with great clearness. It would seem that after leaving Narraganset Bay he landed on our New Hampshire coast. His descriptions apply to points in the limited region between Cape Ann and Cape Neddock; and, aided by a life-long familiarity with the appearance of that coast from the sea, I cannot resist the inferences that the places where he describes trading with the natives, his boat pulling to the edge of the breakers, and throwing to the natives on the rocks things they had to barter, by means of a line, and hauling in the return "truck," and that where he made an inland excursion, must either have been at the east end of Cape Ann or near the mouth of the Piscataqua River. The weight of the whole description, the northeast course he sailed on leaving, and the islands he saw, are alone consistent with the hypothesis that the Piscataqua was his point of departure. This, too, is confirmed by "the lofty hills" which he saw distant in the interior, "diminishing towards the shore of the sea," a description fitting the appearance of the first ranges of the New Hampshire mountains,—not the White Hills, but those of Northwood, Strafford, Alton, and Brookfield, Gunstock in Gilford, Teneriffe in Milton, "diminuendo" to the coast hills like the

“butter pots,” Bonnebeag in Berwick, Stratham Hill, Frosts, and Agamenticus in York.

Any visitor at the Isles of Shoals may notice the correspondence of the description with the view. From here alone on the coast he describes could he, by the dead reckoning and course he gives, have sailed along the coast for “fifty” leagues north-east, either actually or approximately, and have found on such a course the thirty islands he refers to on his port side. It will be observed, that after sailing this over-estimated fifty leagues, he hauls his course to east and then north for one hundred and fifty leagues. As Portland is a few miles north of the latitude of Seal Island and Cape Sable, this east course, to have carried him on his voyage, must have begun as far south as Portland or Seguin, and have been, as he states, first east (till he rounded Cape Sable) and then north.

The White Mountains are rarely visible in summer from the sea at the Isles of Shoals, from which they are ninety-six and two thirds statute miles distant, true bearing north, $20^{\circ} 31' 40''$ west. Their utmost range of visibility for the sea horizon is one hundred and five statute miles. The first range I have indicated, which is only some thirty miles inland, forms an imposing background to the view of the land till you have passed Cape Neddock; whilst Agamenticus and other hills near the shore break the monotony of the foreground, and together with the first range serve as landmarks for the fishermen, helping them to find their various fishing-grounds in the perilous winter fishery. For these many landmark hills they have for centuries had a complete set of names among themselves, which are unknown to geographers or to the people living about the foot of the mountains.

I know of no point east of Agamenticus where Verazzano's description of the hills in the interior diminishing towards the coast can be faithfully applied. At Camden there are hills near to the shore which close the view inland.

At Portland there are no coast ranges of hills visible. Cape Ann, also, lacks the mountain landscape.

Another reason for my view is, that if you throw his position too far into the Gulf of Maine, Verazzano must have sailed southeast to get into the open ocean, and would have noticed the fact in his account.

My conclusion is, that Verazzano landed at or near the mouth of the Piscataqua in 1524, and traded with the rude natives, whose fear of them and desire for knives and fish-hooks yield a strong inference they had met the white man before and feared his kidnapping propensities, although they wanted his fish hooks and cutlery. I do not see how Verazzano, from his own account, could have got farther north than latitude 45° or 46°, but he very distinctly states that the Portuguese had been before him on the shores north of that latitude.

ENGLISH.

So far as Cabot or the English were concerned, his discoveries excited little or no enterprise in that direction. Cabot personally went into the service of Spain at the La Platte; and when, after many years, he returned to England, he became governor of the Muscovy Trading Company. No account of his voyages was published by him. A few reported conversations are all we have. During the half-century he survived, the fisheries on this coast were carried on by the French, Basque, and Portuguese, without competition from England.

True it is, Cabot's mind continued harassed with visions of a northwestern and of a northeastern passage to the East Indies; but neither founding settlements in North America nor the development of its fisheries ever disturbed its sensuous visions of reaching the Spice Islands and the Indies.

England was lethargic until the great Devonshire sailors woke her to a sense of her own power, in the latter half of the

sixteenth century. Even then, reluctantly, her government turned its attention to the fisheries. On her east coasts the Dutch gathered the golden fruit, on the coast of Ireland the Spanish and Portuguese drew the wealth of the herring and the cod; and so decrepit was her own smaller industry, that statutes forbidding the English fishermen to buy fares of foreigners on the seas, and others (5 Elizabeth) making Wednesday a fish-day in addition to Fridays and Saturdays, and literally penalizing the use of flesh meat on these days, avowedly for the promotion of her fisheries, "and not for any superstition to be maintained in the choice of meats," were enacted.

Hardly, prior to Sir Humphrey Gilbert's day, do we find any record that the English had become participants in the fisheries of North America; yet, evidently, the western men had begun upon this enterprise, for Capt. Whitbourne, in his narrative, tells us that when this distinguished sailor took possession in the name of Queen Elizabeth of the island of Newfoundland and of the Banks (1582), it was in the harbor of St. John's, Newfoundland, and that he was present, "being in command of a worthy ship of 220 tons, set forth by one Master Crook, of Southampton."

The very fame which has surrounded Sir Humphrey Gilbert, in connection with the fishing shores of North America, is a strong proof that the developing of that business to the English is due mainly to his sagacity.

Hakluyt, the chronicler of his brother Raleigh's expeditions, urged the Queen to attempt something in behalf of the then growing and vigorous English enterprise. The patent by James I., in 1610, to the Earl of Northampton, authorizing a settlement to be made in Newfoundland, says that coast has been used for more than fifty years for the fishery by the English, which does not even pretend that it began until twenty years after Jacques Cartier was commissioned by Francis I. of France (1640), as the admiral and governor of Canada and Hochelaga, "making one end of Asia on the western side,"

Common fame is right in this, that England owes to the half-brothers Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh the inception of its career as a colonist, and to the stimulus of their efforts at home even more than to their pioneer efforts, that rousing of the English mind to grasp the national wealth and glory of colonial enterprises. They both paid for their patriotism with their fortunes and their lives: one foundered at sea, returning from his voyage; the other, beheaded by a suspicious and timid king to propitiate Spain, who feared his energy would in the end endanger its possessions in America. All England, but the court, mourned for Raleigh whilst his blue blood was clotting on the block; and for England's shame, history, true for once to a righteous instinct, has clung lovingly to their memories, and with a truthful pen placed the odium of the treason to England on the king who killed, and not on the victim whom he condemned.

The English colonial fever continued to increase, the renewed movements of France to settle in Acadia, in 1603, under De Monts and the prior Robeval expedition, stirred them to action, and it was determined to take possession of and occupy Newfoundland. The right of her claim to this land was based on Cabot's alleged discovery a century or so previously.

The accounts of Cabot's expedition are vague and conflicting. Neither journal nor report was made by him that we are aware of. The conversations with him reported by analysts took place at least thirty years after the events they purported to describe. Long before Cabot's death the fame of America was great enough to justify any man to make and publish a concise and distinct account of a voyage whose pretensions to be the first to the continent were so bold. Cabot had wealth and position, but he contented himself with loose, general statements, and a concealment or secrecy as to those details which ordinary navigators produce to corroborate their general statements. He is, as its record now appears,

by no means a satisfactory authority as to his own voyage. His annalists state that the first land he saw he named Premier Vista, and the isle opposite, St. John. These would appear, if we follow the courses he gives, not to be Labrador and Newfoundland; and the other hypothesis, that he discovered Cape Breton and *saw from there* Prince Edward's Island, is an absurdity. The day of discovery is stated to be St. John the Baptist's day, June 24, 1797. To the Legate of the Pope he stated, in Spain, "That he sailed in the commencement of the summer of 1796! and sailed northwest. [He sailed from Bristol, latitude 50°.] That coming up with the land he pushed north to the 56° north latitude, and finding the land trended eastward he despaired of finding the passage to the Indies, and turned, ran down the coast towards the equator, looking for a passage, and arrived at that part of the continent that is called, actually, Florida. His provisions running short, he returned to England." He could not have made Newfoundland on this course. To Peter Martyr he said, "He first steered so far towards the north pole that even in July he found mountains of ice"; these obstructions caused him to steer westward, coasting along a land which "he called *Baccalaos*, a name given by the inhabitants to a large kind of fish, which appeared in such shoals that they sometimes interrupted the progress of his ships."

A pretty good *fish story* for the great Sebastian to get off. Baccalao is the Portuguese, and baccalaos is the Basque and Spanish name for the *cod*-fish, which is a *bottom fish*, and is never found swimming near the surface after it has attained an inch or so of length.

Sir Humphrey Gilbert, in a treatise on a discovery of a new passage to Cathay, written (1583) within a generation after Cabot's death, says Cabot sailed west with a quarter north, and entered a "fret" (strait) in the north side of the Terra Labrador, the 11th June, until he came to the north latitude $67\frac{3}{4}^{\circ}$, when his crew prevented his pushing farther westward.

Mr. Kidder, in an essay published in the *Historical and Genealogical Register*, offers strong evidence that Cabot could not have sailed the voyage he describes in the time he was absent from England.

THE BANKS.

Putting aside these criticisms, it is evident from the accounts that Cabot did not discover or describe the Banks of Newfoundland.

Before the English had begun to take an interest in the fishery, the Baccalaos seems to have been well frequented by discoverers. Cortereal, Verazzano, the Baron Levy, Robert Thorne, John Rut, and Hore require but little comment, because their objects were not connected with the fisheries. The Basques were on the coast fishing on the Grand Banks in 1504. They, too, gave the name to Cape Breton. In 1506, Denys, of Harfleur, made a map of the Baccalaos country. In 1527, John Rut, sent by Henry VIII. to explore, reported he had found in the harbor of St. Johns eleven sail of Normands, one Breton, and two Portuguese barks, all a-fishing. Master Hore, the lawyer, brought no news except that they had taken the black bears "for no bad food,"—a fact we of this generation are ready to corroborate. A French fisherman rescued his party from starvation. Jacques Cartier, in 1534-5, explored the gulf and river of St. Lawrence, and wintered on the continent, but his mind was on the fur trade, and his effort at colonization, though strongly pressed, fell through. He says he met many ships of France and Brittany. Roberval, who also was engaged in that enterprise, arriving at St. John's in 1542, found there "seventeen ships of fishers."

These scattered data show that our patronized "explorers" found on their voyages fleets of fishermen already practical pilots of the coasts and harbors; and however much merit we attribute to the former, that of piloting the fishermen to the new grounds of America has no place in the catalogue.

In the last half of this century the English slowly began to participate in the fisheries.

Parkhurst, near the close of the century, says that generally there were found there more than one hundred sail of Spaniards, fifty sail of Portuguese, one hundred and fifty sail of French and Bretons, and fifty sail of English taking cod, and twenty or thirty sail of whalers.

Whitbourne says, in 1615, there were four hundred sail of French, Biscayans, and Portuguese frequented Newfoundland, and two hundred sail of English.

There are several authorities on the manners and customs of these fishermen of all nations, and the usages which they had adopted. The first comer in a harbor had the right to pick and choose the locality for its stages, and even to take possession of those unoccupied which had been left from the preceding season. Complaints of their wilfulness are frequent. The first comer was the admiral of that port, and presided at the meetings of the masters in port, who were a government in themselves. Frequently, the early comers shut the harbor against new comers. When Sir Humphrey Gilbert arrived off St. John's he found his consort, the "Squirrel," anchored outside the harbor, "the English merchants" having forbade her entrance. With the aid of Sir Humphrey's vessel, they prepared to force an entrance, despite the thirty-six sail in port; but learning of his commission, the "insiders" raised the "bar-out," admitted them, feasted the officers, and the glorious old chief took possession, in her Majesty's name, of the island of Newfoundland and the Banks, as his fleet reported home, and as Capt. Whitbourne, who was in the harbor in a two hundred and twenty ton ship, "set forth by one Master Crook, of South Hampton," verifies, forty years afterward, in his narrative.

The English increased in the fishery rapidly after Sir Humphrey Gilbert's time, and their rough ways became more prevalent as their power increased. It was said that no

people but they were so free to burn and destroy the stages and flakes others had left the year before, to unroof their fish-houses, stave their boats, and steal their salt. Hakluyt, in 1584, wrote of them: "Whereas, we and the French are most infamous for our outrageous, common, and daily piracies." Indeed, in 1615, when Capt. Whitbourne, under his commission, held a court of admiralty there, aided by the fishing skippers, he presented these grievances, and throwing ballast over in the harbor, stealing bait, cutting nets, and fishing on every day of the week, and burning the forests, as evil doings requiring abatement. The colony, then on the coast, was too weak to control the 6,000 British fishermen, and he recommended a fleet of four men-of-war to protect against these evils and prevent the frequent piracies the fishermen suffered from, and that arrangements should be made that one fifth of the fishermen should winter on the island, and become the nucleus of an extensive settlement of its large bays.

FUR TRADERS.

Whilst the summer fishermen were thriving, a lively fur trade with the natives also was being carried on. Cartier, after his discovery of the St. Lawrence, spent several years in this pursuit. It was the main incentive of Roberval's efforts to form a settlement. These traders rarely spent the winter on the coast, but arriving early, well fitted with a proper assortment, they sought communications with the natives, and they kept silence regarding the favorable places which they found. There can be no doubt that every river mouth and harbor, from Labrador to Florida, was explored in their pursuit of trade during the sixteenth century. Not unfrequently did it happen that when the trade was about over for the season, "the honest trader," desiring to increase his gains, would

manage to seize from one to three dozen of the natives and carry them off as part of his freight, and sell them as slaves. Indeed, the name "Labrador" was given to the coast north-west of Newfoundland by Cortereal or the Spaniards, from the peculiar fitness for labor its captured people were found to possess. This special idiosyncrasy lasted long into the next century. The pious Puritans even found thrift in sending King Philip's captured family as slaves to the Barbadoes and selling them. Candor requires it to be said, that the "admirals," who preceded the Pilgrims, like Hunt, Weymouth, etc., were equally forward in a like trade.

It is remarkable that the early voyagers for discovery appear to have thought it necessary to bring home some of the natives captives, probably sometimes from a feeling that this would be the strongest evidence of their actually having found a new, strange country, and more often from a sense of the profit which might result from the sale of these people in the West Indies, or the exhibition of these curiosities.

In 1500, Cortereal seized fifty in Labrador. In 1502, some "salvages" were exhibited in London before the king. In 1508, Aubert brought two of them to Dieppe, in France. In 1524, Gomez seized and brought home twenty-four; Verazzano brought one from about North Carolina, and found the coast in the Gulf of Maine alive with terror from the doings of some previous voyagers.

It is difficult to estimate the extent of fur trade on this coast during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. John Smith, in 1614, says he procured 5,000 skins of beaver in a few weeks, and that 20,000 were shipped from Canada. He was not the only trader. Beaver was the Indian medium of exchange for European goods. South from the Kennebec, before the settlements of the whites, the Indians cultivated corn, beans, and what Mr. Choate soothingly called "that delicious esculent, the pompion"; anticipating our modern fertilizers, they manured their cornfields with two herrings to the hill. Their

great festival was when "roasting ears" came in ; then, says Champlain, in 1605, their fires glistened along the coast ; they danced, welcomed the exploring Europeans with generous hospitality, and danced again, stacking their arms in the centre of the circle. The saturnine character of the Puritan settlers obliterated this festival from the eastern coast, but the kindly influences of Roger Williams and John Gorton preserved it embodied with the clam bake in Rhode Island, until in the present generation it bids fair to resume its ancient vogue "all along shore." Whether the "husking" was also an Indian festival does not appear, — probably it was.

As the Indians here did not raise any potatoes, nor did the early settlers, the other famous coast dish, "the chowder," has no claim to Indian descent.

The Indians, though skilled in the river fisheries, do not seem to have taken to the cod-fishery, probably because they were aware that the European fishermen, whose ships were to be filled, knew of good markets for live Indians, and might easily fall before the temptation to finish off their cargo with a catch of Indian *fishermen*.

PIRATES.

The fishermen had great trouble from *pirates*, and indeed a predatory disposition often showed itself in the fishermen themselves. When the combined force in a harbor was outnumbered or overmatched in armament by some new arrival, little more attention was paid to rights of property than Sir Francis Drake and other bold seamen paid to such rights when protected by the flag of Spain. True, the more adventurous and better armed were drawn by the gold loadstone to plan the capture of Spanish galleons ; the humble spoil of a fisherman was too insignificant to divert them from the gold

and silver ingots of the well-guarded treasure-ships of Spain ; yet, when one came in their way, he was unhesitatingly robbed if not captured as prize. Rapacity grew apace, the fishing vessels were of good size, the crews were large, and armaments were necessary. Many quaint stories of robberies and attempts at compelling restitution have come down to us, but the names of the well-bred Sir Barnard Drake and Hudson must mingle with the vulgar fame of Peter Easton and Tibolo and Dixy Bull to serve merely as specimens of the buccaneering habits of the era. An instinct of better self-protection seems to have led many of the fishermen of different flags to rendezvous at different harbors, although at many berths fishermen of all nations could be found ; thus, where, afterwards, Louisburg was built, was called English Harbor.

SETTLEMENT.

The numerous efforts in the sixteenth century had all failed to effect a permanent settlement because of inherent evils in their plans. The despotic rule and monopoly of the chartered companies killed individuality in enterprise. In the absence of the competition of free markets, the local farmer, fisherman, or lumberman would have been so burdened with the difficulty and expense of exchange, that he was forced to rely on the fixed rates or wages of the company for his support, rather than on the profits of individualized energy and industry. There can be no growth without liberty. The system of settlement provided no field for profitable employment during the greater part of the year, and gave no inducement for the settler to spend the winter on this side of the Atlantic.

There was a hankering among the "lords proprietors" to establish the English system of rents and tenures, not encouraging to those on whose labor the development of the resources of the soil depended.

The selection of material was ill-judged ; too many soldiers, too many of the sweepings of great cities,—too few men of skilled industries and farmers and fishermen,—too much fur trade. The priest showed more knowledge of the human heart than the traders and soldiers he accompanied. The self-reliance necessary for pioneer success was not sought for; though zeal was not wanting, yet it was wasted on methods and material impossible of success. Their labor was not fruitful; but as the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, so with these unfortunate pioneers,—founded on their bones rests the present glory of the French and British races in North America.

The West of Europe waxed earnest to match the power of Spain in North America, and to protect and build up their fisheries.

Within a few years after the beginning of the seventeenth century, De Monts and Champlain, under French grants, began at Nova Scotia and Acadia, and others in Canada. The fishermen of England began of themselves to settle in the bays of Newfoundland. King James I. gave charters for North and South Virginia, the latter being an agricultural settlement exclusively, and the former, from 40° north latitude to Acadia, being placed in the hands of a separate company. This northern country was not very fertile, its winters were cold and long, and no amount of representations proved attractive to the agriculturalists of the British Islands.

De Monts and Poutrincourt had hard luck, but so also had Popham and Gorges on the agricultural side of their enterprise. There was something else that saved the ventures from shipwreck. Their charter gave admiralty powers to the companies. You will recall, in your readings of early history, that Gorges sent admiral after admiral to the coast of New England; and that in 1605, in his first year, De Monts arrested French traders hovering on his coast. You will recall that Whitbourne came to Newfoundland in 1615 with an admiralty

commission, and held what he terms the first court of admiralty ever held on the coast of North America. The object of all this admiralty jurisdiction was to make fishermen pay license, and to hold the monopoly of the rich fur trade. Great sources of profit these were to the companies, whilst the permanent settlements on shore were a heavy bill of expense.

It is instructive to follow, through the scattered chronicles of the doings of these three great companies, the misty traces of the operating causes on their progress. The monopolies carved out to each were alike odious to the free fishermen who were brought under impositions for which they received no benefit in return; consequently a steady opposition at home, to the patentees, alike in England and in France, was maintained by them and their outfitters. In this, the old fur traders joined. The chartered companies sent out their exploring expeditions, fitted to trade and fish in their respective limits, and to drive off, capture, or license all others as intruders. The intruders were the most numerous and the best posted in the course of trade, the habits of the fish, and the weather, harbors, and landfalls of the coast.

Capt. John Smith states that prior to his voyage in 1614 he had procured seven or eight charts from the fishermen and traders who had been in the habit of frequenting the coast of New England, and probably all the exploring voyages of the century conducted for the companies were similarly supplied from the old skippers who had long frequented the coast. Poutrincourt, in 1606, describes his interviews at Canseau with *Savelotte*, an old fisherman, who had made *forty-two* voyages to the coast! Smith, again, after describing the Isles of Shoals, speaks of the Merrimack River, but states he did not enter it because two French ships were lying there who had traded there *for several years*. Mourt, in his "Relation," speaks of an abandoned French fort, and a plank-built house the Pilgrims found on Cape Cod at their first landing.

The languor of the colonial efforts of the French at St. Croix, Port Royal, Mt. Desert, etc., and of the English at New Somerset, Monhegan, and Saco, was suddenly changed into energy by a discovery that offered prosperity to individual energy, and made a residence on the coast pecuniarily desirable.

WINTER FISHERY.

The Newfoundland men of enterprise had founded a settlement very early. Capt. Mason, afterwards a grantee of New Hampshire, was there as governor for some time. John Guy, the worshipful, late mayor of Bristol, and others, in 1608, had tried the winter climate. Whitbourne asserted the interest of the fishermen in a permanent settlement was to preserve their stages and boats, and begin earlier the spring and carry on the autumn fishery later. His arguments were in the interest of the summer fishery. The experiment, casually tried, developed the fact that the winter fishery was better than the summer along the coast of Acadia and to the eastward of Cape Ann; that the cod come in from off shore to the coast at this, their spawning season, and that a positive profit would result from fishing in the winter season near the shore. This renewed the zeal and enterprise of the Acadian and North Virginia proprietors to establish stations along the coast for the fishery, and the hope that their land might consequently derive an agricultural value again sprung up in their minds. None more earnest than Gorges in obtaining a reorganization of his company under a broader charter, and in circulating the fact that the coast of Maine was the Eldorado of winter fishing, and the fishermen came. Gorges, in his narrative, states that in October, 1615, Sir Richard Hakings, in his employ, sailed for this coast, and in the following season sent home his ship laden with fish for the market. This is the first winter-caught

cargo that I have traced. Gorges complains that for several years he "had to hire men to stay there the winter quarter at extreme rates." We know that in 1619 they wintered at their favorite station, Monhegan, the year before the Pilgrims came over; how often prior, we do not know. There is every reason to believe they continued to winter there as well as summer, for years afterwards. The Piscataqua and the Plymouth men bought, in 1626, on the breaking up of a trading house there, a lot of goats, for the relief of the Plymouth colony. It and Damrell's Cove were the resort for goods and trade of the whole coast. Phineas Pratt, who arrived in the spring of 1622, describes the fishermen gathering around their Maypole at Damrell's Cove, and making merry in a style that would have gladdened Old Herrick's heart and woke his song could he have been there. In 1617-18, Vines and a party wintered at Saco, and for several other seasons, I infer from Gorges's account.

In 1623 the Isles of Shoals was a berth for six ships, according to Levett. The English fishermen drew around this coast in shoals that increased every year. Their stages were set up in every favorable harbor. Strong in their numbers and united on the question of a free fishery, the lords proprietors found their "admirals" were unable to extract the coveted license money, and were compelled to take their chance on even footing in throwing the cod-line and hook, and in chumming the glittering mackerel to the surface. The winter-fishery profits were the nucleus for the settlements that began along the eastern coast. This Piscataqua was based upon it. At Cape Ann, the Dorchester people began, in 1623, a permanent settlement connected therewith, which, in 1627, they removed to Naumkeag, now Salem, the root and stem on which the Bay colony was grafted. Subsequently Mason had another settlement on the Cape, probably at Ipswich. Levett tried to plant one at Quack, now Portland, Gorges at York, Winter and Vines and others at various points eastward. Monhegan and the

Isles of Shoals remained the main places where the incomers endeavored to make their landfalls, and whence the homeward bound took their departure from our coast. Trade was lively east of Cape Ann. The Plymouth Pilgrims were not fishermen, and they located in a very poor place for fishing, out of the line of cruising of the fishermen, and on very poor land; hence, they almost starved, lacking fish as well as corn. And while the fishermen were catching fish by the scores of thousands, the unskilled but undaunted Pilgrims would strive all day to get enough for their own consumption, and very often fail at that. In the process of time their descendants learned the art among our Eastern folk, and then Cape Cod men took equal rank among the hardy skippers and sharesmen who have made the whale and cod fisheries famous. When the Pilgrims grew short of food, they sent down to the Piscataqua or to Monhegan or to Damrell's Cove for supplies, and never asked in vain, the generous fishermen even raising for them their stove boat, and helping to make her again seaworthy.

It was the winter fishery that placed on our coasts a class of permanent consumers, and gave to agriculture the possibility of flourishing. The lumber trade marched beside it. In these pursuits, they who tilled the land during the short summer could find profitable employment in the winter on the ocean or in the forest near their homes. The elements for supporting a family were thus united together. It was the winter fishery, prosecuted in boats from the shore, as it usually was, that furnished, not merely a supply of food to the fisherman's family, but an article which was a medium of exchange that was in demand with the traders on land, or the fishing smacks which came in fleets to fill up a cargo, and sure to command goods or money, as his necessities demanded. It secured employment all the year round to the industrious, and made a residence profitable. It thus also gave to the industrious the great boon of independence, the foundation of

character in the individual, and in the State. Agriculture followed with halting steps where it led the way. There was no crop that the land produced for export, like the tobacco of Virginia or the indigo and sugar of the West Indies; no great prairie range for pasturage of either cattle or sheep.

The early agriculture of the country was not carried on according to English plans. The settlers adopted the habits of the country and the crop, planted Indian corn in the Indian way, and hoed and manured it, two herrings to a hill, as the Indians did. Mourt's "Relation" states that Squanto taught the Pilgrims how to plant corn. Their English grain failed.

The first cattle were brought over to the Dorchester settlement, at Cape Ann, in 1623-4, and the same or the next year a few also came to Plymouth. The Dorchester people, "the old planters" of Massachusetts, who proved the country and the fisheries before Endicott or Winthrop came over, testified that they and the Indians at Naumkeag cultivated a cornfield together and in common.

The rush to these coasts preceded the progress of its agriculture. Our crops did not supply the needs for food, much less furnish an export trade. The winter and summer fisheries, and the lumber, were the exports that furnished the means to buy the necessaries of life, only to be had from Europe. Capital found employment in regular trade, and the arts connected with navigation flourished and grew apace.

The early history of New England shows that those who having procured grants of land came here with an eye to trading with the Indians, were in constant quarrels from their rivalry, and, in their efforts to break up each other's "beaver trade," rarely spared their settlements. Thus the poor attorney of Merry Mount, Morton, Mr. Weston, Mr. Oldham, and others suffered at various times from stronger rivals among their countrymen. Sometimes, indeed, the unco-righteous would slander the gentle craft, the fishermen, accusing them of some of the infirmities of humanity. Thus they fined a man

at the Isles of Shoals for bringing his wife out there to live with him ; and a Bay State clergyman, speaking of another fishing place, said a woman there was divided into as many shares as one of their fishing smacks. Every one smiled at the malice, but none credited the defamation. The fishermen plied their profitable trade and sang, as Jenness says, —

“ Oh, the herring he loves the merry moonlight,
 The mackerel loves the wind ;
 But the grampus loves the fisherman’s song,
 For he comes of a gentle kind.”

Indifferent that the temperature was near zero, the wind a half gale, and the sea rising fast as he filled his open boat with the twelve-pound cod, the hardy fisherman toiled on, rejoicing that his home was but a few miles off.

The discovery that the cod approach these shores to spawn in the winter, whilst late in the spring and summer they are found at greater distances from the coast, and notably on Georges, the Grand Banks, Jeffries, etc., completed a fisherman’s round, giving him a home fishery for the months when the dangers on the Banks are greatest, and perfecting an economical employment of his time.

Incident to the fisheries were those of the mackerel and herring, together with the salmon and shad that frequented the rivers of the coast, and the abundance of lobsters and clams of savory flavor, which delighted and often sustained the early settlers on the coast ; but although exercising some influence in the location of settlements, they cannot be said to have induced the emigration to these shores.

The whale fishery followed, rather than led, the settlement of the coast.

In the natural order, the continuous employment a residence on these coasts afforded to the fishermen, gave him great advantages over the European and those who had no winter fishery at their doors, and the fishing population rapidly in-

creased in numbers and prosperity, bringing with it commerce and an agricultural population. Let me be clear, neither Pilgrims nor Puritans were its pioneers; neither the axe, the plough, nor the hoe led it to these shores; neither the devices of the chartered companies nor the commands of royalty. It was the discovery of the winter fishery on its shores that led New England to civilization, and fed alike the churchmen and the strange emigrants who came with the romance of their faith in their hearts, and the *lex talionis* in their souls to persecute because they had been persecuted. May I be pardoned for the imperfect manner in which I have presented the claim of the fishermen, that gentle, practical, and self-reliant craft, to the discovery of America north of 40°, to the exploration of its coasts, and finally to its successful settlement and civilization.

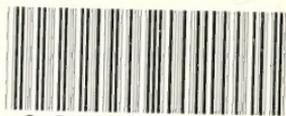


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