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Newfoundland Studies

THE NEWFOUNDLAND FISHERIES.

[We have for some time purposed drawing up a series of articles on the condition of our Fisheries in different quarters, but have been prevented by circumstances hitherto from carrying our intention into effect. We were, therefore, very much pleased at receiving the following valuable document, being the Report of the Committee appointed by the General Assembly of Newfoundland to inquire into the state of the Fisheries of that Colony, of which the Hon. Mr. Morris (the Colonial Treasurer) was Chairman.]

The Bank and Shore Fisheries have engaged the deep attention of your Committee. These important subjects have not hitherto been investigated by the Legislature; they have therefore considered it their duty to take a general review of them from the earliest period.

These Fisheries are coeval with the Colonial dominion and maritime superiority of England. Newfoundland was her earliest Colonial Possession; the Fisheries, the first nursery of those seamen that gained for her the dominion of the ocean, and with it her vast, unbounded Colonial Empire, and the trade of the world.

Soon after the discovery of the island by Cabot, in the reign of Henry VII., the Fisheries gave employment to a considerable number of ships and seamen. As far back as the year 1549, an Act of the British Parliament (Edward VI.) was passed for the better encouragement of the Fisheries of Newfoundland. During the reigns of Elizabeth, James I., Charles I. & II., the trade and Fisheries engaged much of the attention of the Crown and Parliament. There were two hundred and sixty ships employed in the Newfoundland Fisheries in the reign of Elizabeth. The seamen nursed in these Fisheries mainly assisted in manning her fleets, which defeated the powerful *Armada* of Spain.

Charles I., in a commission for well-governing his subjects of Newfoundland, observes, that "the navigation and mariners of the realm have been much increased by the Newfoundland Fisheries." Various Acts were passed in the reign of Charles II., and measures were adopted to revive the Fisheries of Newfoundland, which had greatly declined. The preamble of the Act 10th and 11th William and Mary declares, that "the trade and Fisheries of Newfoundland is a beneficial trade to the kingdom, in the employing of a great number of seamen and ships, to the increase of Her Majesty's revenue, and the encouragement of trade and navigation."

The Act 15th George III. declares the Fisheries to be "the best nurseries for able and experienced seamen, always ready to man the Royal Navy when occasion may require; and it is of the greatest national importance to give all due encouragement to the said Fisheries."

In 1763, Lord Chatham, then Mr. Pitt, negotiated in the first instance the Treaty of Paris, which upon his resignation of office was concluded by Lord Bute. Lord Chatham, who had contended on the part of England for the whole exclusive Fishery of Newfoundland, and affirmed it to be of itself an object worthy to be contested by the extremity of war, censured severely his successor in office, for having returned to France some of the privileges which she had before enjoyed upon the coast, and for having ceded, in addition, St. Pierre and Miquelon.

By the Treaty of 1783, additional concessions were made to France in the Fisheries of Newfoundland. No part of the treaty was more uniformly censured than that which related to Newfoundland. The preliminary articles were censured by a vote in the House of Commons, and the ministry of the day had to retire: however, the advantages ceded to the French were confirmed. Lord Viscount Townshend said, "The admission of that nation (the French) to a participation of the Newfoundland Fisheries, was a piece of the most dreadful policy and concession that ever disgraced a nation."

Mr. Fox said, "It was evident that our Fisheries in Newfoundland, so much boasted of, were in a manner annihilated, not to mention the impolicy of ceding St. Pierre and Miquelon."

Sir Peter Burrell said, "Will any gentleman say that leaving the Americans liberty to dry their fish on the unsettled coast of Newfoundland was the way to prevent disputes? For his part, he saw, in the wording of the treaty, an eternal source of quarrels and disputes; and when he considered the footing on which the Americans are with the French, he was not without his apprehensions, that the right which the Treaty granted to the latter to dry their fish on a coast near 190 miles in length, would occasion various attempts to bring in the Americans to this privilege."

Lord Mulgrave, on the same occasion, said, "he considered the Greenland Fisheries much inferior to the Newfoundland Fisheries."

Mr. Pitt expressed similar opinions.

The great advantages, in a national point of view, of the Newfoundland Fisheries, have been fully admitted by the most eminent statesmen of a later period. On a motion proposed by Sir John Newport, in 1815, in which he expressed his views of the vast importance of the Fisheries of Newfoundland, Lord Castlereagh said, "he concurred with much of what had been said by the Right Hon. Baronet as to the value of the Fisheries; he most completely coincided with him, that they were not only valuable as a great source of wealth to the country, but they were still more so as a source of maritime strength."

The greatest of trade ministers, the late lamented Mr. Huskisson, in his celebrated speeches upon the shipping interest, Colonial trade and navigation, never lost sight of the great importance of the Fisheries. To the support of them, as a great source of the maritime power of England, he assented to a deviation from the great leading principles of his own commercial system. In that eminent statesman's speech on the Navigation Laws of the United Kingdom, he says—

“The ocean is a common field, alike open to all the people of the earth; its productions belong to no particular nation. It was therefore our interest to take care that so much of those productions as might be wanted for the consumption of Great Britain, should be exclusively procured by British industry, and imported in British ships. This is so simple and so reasonable a rule, that in this part of our navigation system no alteration whatever has been made, nor do I believe that any ever will be contemplated.”

Sir Howard Douglas said that “the Fisheries in the British quarters of America were the most productive in the world; if they were not ours, whose would they be? What would be the effect of the total abandonment and transfer to another power of this branch of industry, upon our commercial marine, and consequently upon our naval ascendancy?”

Your Committee could, without end, produce authorities, both British and Foreign, to prove the inestimable value of the Fisheries on the Great Bank and shores of Newfoundland. The French Government have at all periods duly estimated its importance. The Americans, even before they were separated from the Government of the Parent Country, but more particularly since, have lost no opportunity to extend the Fisheries in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and on the banks and shores of Newfoundland. Your Committee would conclude upon this head by referring to the opinion of a celebrated French authority (L'Abbé Raynal) on the great value, in a commercial and national point of view, of the Newfoundland Fisheries.

“The Colonies,” he says, “have exhibited a series of injustice, oppression and carnage, which will for ever be holden in detestation. Newfoundland alone hath not offended against humanity, nor injured the rights of any other people. The other settlements have yielded productions only by receiving an equal value in exchange. Newfoundland alone hath drawn from the depths of the waters riches formed by nature alone, and which furnish subsistence to several countries of both hemispheres.

“How much time hath elapsed before this parallel hath been made,—of what importance did fish appear when compared with the money which men went in search of in the New World? It was long before it was understood if even it be yet understood, that the representation of the thing is not of greater value than the thing itself, and that a ship filled with cod and a galleon are vessels equally laden with gold;—there is even this remarkable difference, that mines can be exhausted, and the Fisheries never are. Gold is not reproductive, but the fish are so incessantly.”

Your Committee consider it necessary to explain the grounds on which they refer to so many authorities to prove the value of the Newfoundland Fisheries. The proposition, as far as they could learn, has never yet been questioned. They were induced to make these references in consequence of the utter neglect with which these Fisheries have been regarded by the British Government since the peace of 1814, on the one hand, and the avidity with which they were prosecuted by the French and American Governments, on the other. “Great Britain, who owns, supports, and defends these Colonies and Fisheries, and has derived from them the principal means of defending herself,

gave up at the conclusion of the war, to her vanquished opponents, the most valuable portions of her coasts and waters. To the French, in 1814, she conceded the north coast and western coast of Newfoundland, from Cape St. John to Cape Ray: to the Americans, in 1818, she gave up the right of taking fish on the southern and western coast of the same island, from the Rameau Islands to Cape Ray, and from Cape Ray to the Quirpon Islands, to the Magdalen Islands, and on the whole coast of Labrador, from Mount Jolly northwards, to the limits of Hudson's Bay, together with the liberty of using the unsettled parts of Labrador and Newfoundland for drying and curing fish." It cannot be questioned that Great Britain, by these concessions, ceded to the French and the Americans the best fishing-grounds; and these Governments, to make the most of the advantages, grant large bounties for the encouragement of these Fisheries, with the avowed purpose of increasing their maritime strength. Your Committee may therefore state that the Newfoundland Fisheries, instead of being, in the words of the British Act of Parliament, a nursery for seamen to man the British Navy when occasion should require, have become converted into the best nurseries both for the French and American Navies.

The Deep Sea Fishery on the Grand Bank and other Banks can only be prosecuted in crafts and vessels of a large size, and with an expensive outfit. The French and Americans, by their bounties, are enabled to prosecute them to advantage; while every attempt of the British has proved a failure, arising, not from want of skill or enterprise on their parts, but altogether from the advantage enjoyed in the form of bounties by their foreign rivals.

The unequal competition has swept the British ships from that Fishery; it is now monopolised by French and Americans, and without a rival.

As the Newfoundland Fisheries are now comprised of that portion carried on by the British, that by the French, and that by the Americans, your Committee will give an abstract of each Fishery, founded on such information, official and otherwise, as they could obtain.

1st.—THE BRITISH FISHERIES.

In 1615, Captain R. Whitbourne represents the British Fisheries as employing 250 ships, averaging about 60 tons, and twenty mariners to each ship—in all, 15,000 tons of shipping, 5,000 seamen, and 1,250 fishing-boats.

In 1644, in a representation made, the Fishery was represented to consist of 270 sail of ships, computed at 80 tons each, and for every 80 tons, 50 men—in all, 21,600 tons, and 10,800 seamen.

In the reign of Charles II. the British Fishery greatly declined, and the French Fishery advanced in proportion.

In 1677, the British Fishery is represented to consist of 109 ships, 4,475 seamen, and 892 boats, with 337 belonging to bye boat-keepers.

In 1684, owing to the same cause (the French competition), the British Fishery was reduced to 43 fishing-ships, 1,409 seamen, and 294 boats, with 304 boats belonging to resident boat-keepers.—The

extraordinary falling off of the Fishery at this period is thus explained by the Lords of the Privy Council of Trade in 1718 :—

“ But this decay of the Fishery trade was not the only loss the kingdom sustained on this occasion ; for, as Captain Jones, one of the Commodores of the Convoy in 1682, hath affirmed of his own knowledge, the traders from New England to Newfoundland yearly *made voyages for the sake of spiriting away* the fishermen, so that the Newfoundland Fishery, which was formerly the great nursery for breeding up stout and able mariners, was now become a mere drain that carried off very many of the best and most useful of all the British sailors ; and it is too notorious that this practice has prevailed ever since.”

The state of the British Fishery from 1699 to 1726 exhibits the same rise and fall, as will appear by the following recapitulation :—

RECAPITULATION.

AVERAGE OF YEARS.	Number of Ships.	Burthen of Ships.	Number of Men belonging to Ships.	No. of Passengers.	Number of Boats.
1699, 1700, 1701.....	192	7991	4026	....	1314
1714, 1715, 1716.....	161	9193	2119	....	982
1749, 1750, 1751.....	283	33512	4103	3149	1370
1764-5-6-7-8-9, 1770-1-2-3-4 .	516	40691	5435	6441	2163
1784-5-6-7-8-9, 1790-1-2	480	48950	4422	4617	2258

AVERAGE OF YEARS.	Quintals of Fish made.	Qnls. of Fish carried to Market.	Tierces of Salmon carried to Market.	Tuns of Train Oil made.	No. of Inhabitants remaining in the Country in winter.
1699, 1700, 1701.....	216320	154370	....	1049	3506
1714, 1715, 1716.....	97730	102363	....	891	3501
1749, 1750, 1751.....	432318	422116	1308	2532	5855
1764-5-6-7-8-9, 1770-1-2-3-4 .	626276	524296	5146	2882	12340
1784-5-6-7-8-9, 1790-1-2	637955	622108	2974	2364	15253

Office of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade,
Whitehall, 19th March, 1845.

The occasional decline of the British Fisheries appears to be accounted for by a variety of causes. The true causes—French and American competition, and large bounties—are scarcely noticed. It was confi-

dently stated that it was owing to the resident population not exceeding in those days from five to ten thousand. A Report of the Lords of the Privy Council of Trade states, in 1718, that the indulgence shown to the planters in 1677, by permitting them to remain in the country, rendered the charter ineffectual, reduced the Fishery to the lowest ebb, and favoured both the French and New Englanders in carrying on the fishing-trade. The same report, in further accounting for the decline of the British Fisheries, attributed it mainly to the neglect in enforcing the 10th article of the Charter of Charles I., which ordains—

“That no person shall set up any tavern for selling of wine, beer, &c. to entertain the fishermen, &c.; and it is as certain that the flourishing state of the Fishery trade during the aforesaid period, was, in a great measure, owing to this wholesome prohibition; for as long as it was maintained, so long the trade prospered, and it was not sooner dispensed with than the trade sensibly declined; and although the planters were afterwards kept in awe for some time by the charters that were granted by King Charles II., which confirmed the same prohibition, nevertheless, when that difficulty was surmounted, and they were at liberty to pursue their own measures, the Fishery immediately languished.”

The true causes of the falling off of the British Fishery may be attributed to the unequal competition with which it had to contend from foreigners, their Fisheries on the Newfoundland coast having been invariably supported by large bounties and other encouragements. It can be much more satisfactorily accounted for in that way than to attribute it to the settlement of the island, a resident population, or *even to the establishment of taverns and public-houses*. A subsequent Report of the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council of Trade, on the subject of the Newfoundland Fishery, dated 17th March, 1786, accounts for it in a much more satisfactory manner when they state—

“The French give a bounty upon fish, the produce of their Fishery, imported into their West India Islands, of ten *livres* per quintal, and at the same time lay a duty of five *livres* per quintal upon all fish imported into those islands by foreign nations. This bounty and duty taken together is equal to a prohibition of foreign fish; and it is a clear proof that, even in the opinion of their own Government, nothing less than an encouragement more than equal to the first cost of their fish can enable their Fishery to have a share of their own markets in the West Indies.

“The French also give a bounty of five *livres* per quintal upon all fish, the produce of their Fishery, carried into Spain, Portugal, and Italy. This bounty is also so extravagant as clearly to evince the opinion of the French Government of the low state of their Fishery. If the Legislature here was to give a like bounty upon the fish of your Majesty's subjects carried to those markets, it would amount to £120,000 per annum. Such a measure can therefore be calculated merely to introduce their fish into those markets, but can never be intended as a permanent encouragement.”

Your Committee wish particularly to draw attention to those opinions of the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council of Trade, to show how mistaken they were in supposing that the French intended their bounties merely as a temporary expedient. It will further appear that they have not only continued them down to the present time, but have extended the Fishery thereby to an extent greater than at any former period.

Your Committee having shown that it was large bounties alone enabled the French to carry on the Fishery on the coast of Newfoundland down to the period of 1793, have now briefly to remark, that from the war which broke out in that year until the year 1814, with the slight interruption of the peace of Amiens of 1802, the British had full possession of the Fisheries, undisturbed by the competition of the French. During that period the Fisheries greatly increased and prospered, and the quantity of fish caught ranged from eight hundred thousand to one million quintals per annum. It realised high prices in all the foreign markets; the price at Newfoundland advanced to the enormous sum of 45s. sterling per quintal. The estimated value of the exports—the produce of the Fisheries of one or two of the last years of the war—were stated to exceed two millions and a half sterling.

Your Committee have now to draw your attention to the violent and sudden revolution, the rapid and unparalleled decline, in the trade and Fisheries, consequent upon the peace, first with France, and then with America. To the French were ceded the Islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, and the shores from Cape Ray to Cape John. To the Americans were soon after granted equally valuable fishing-grounds; and in addition, their respective Governments granted enormous bounties to uphold their Fisheries, equal almost to the intrinsic value of the fish. It leaves no ground to doubt the cause which brought such universal ruin, at that period, upon the British trade and Fisheries. Your Committee cannot better point out the cause of the great depression of the Fisheries of that period, than by giving an extract from the evidence before the House of Commons in 1817.

George Garland, Esq., states to the Committee, (Michael Angelo Taylor, Esq., in the Chair,)—that

“ Another cause of the distress of trade may be found in the surrender by our Government, to France, by the late treaty, of a large part of the coast of Newfoundland, which is by far the most favourable part of the whole island for the prosecution of the Fishery, and to which, in consequence of the general scarcity of fish about St. John's and in Conception Bay, the inhabitants of those districts, the most populous in the island, were wont annually to resort during the whole of the fishing season, though at the distance of 200 or 300 miles. Since the cession of the French shore, the British fishermen of the said districts, confined to their own coast, have not caught above half the quantity of fish which they formerly did with the same outfit. The merchants urgently requested the Government, previous to the peace, to retain this valuable part of the island; and though we do not presume to question the expediency of the sacrifice which has been made of their individual interest for the promotion of national objects, yet I would submit that it strengthens their claims to reasonable relief. And lastly, but by no means least, another cause is to be found in the growing competition of the French and Newfoundland trade, which is fostered by its Government with the most anxious solicitude, freed from duties either on its ships or produce, and enormous bounties on its produce, and on the men engaged in the trade, as will appear by a document which I beg to produce.

“ FRENCH BOUNTIES ON THEIR NEWFOUNDLAND FISHERIES.

“ On fish exported from Newfoundland, or from France to the French Colonies, 24 francs per pelletrical quintal, which is equal to 12 francs or 10s. per English quintal of 112 lbs.

“ On fish exported from Newfoundland to France, and from thence to Spain,

Portugal, Italy, and the Levant ports, 12 francs per metrical quintal, which is equal to 6 francs or 5s. per English quintal of 112lbs.

“ On fish exported from Newfoundland to Italy, Spain, and Portugal, direct, 10 francs per metrical quintal, which is equal to 5 francs or 4s. 2d. per English quintal of 112 lbs.

“ On every kilogramme of oil exported from Newfoundland to France, 10 centimes, which is equal to 75s. per tun, of 256 gallons English.

“ On every kilogramme of cods' roes and eggs, from Newfoundland to France, 20 centimes, which is equal to 8s. 4d. per English quintal or cwt. Besides the above, a bounty of 50 francs or 41s. 8d. per man is allowed to the French merchants for every man and boy employed in the French shore Fishery, and 15 francs or 12s. 6d. for every man and boy employed in the French Bank Fishery sailing annually from French ports.

“ This competition has already excluded us from the French markets, where in the year 1815 we disposed of 100,000 quintals fish; it has met us in the markets of Spain and Italy, although in a limited degree, owing to the recent re-establishment of the French Fisheries; and it is evident that nothing but the support and assistance of our Government in some way or other can enable us to maintain the competition much longer with rivals who receive a bounty equal to one-third of the value of the article. I have now completed the exposition of the causes of distress.”

Mr. Attwood said—

“ Because it appears that the French are actually prosecuting their fishery with all the enterprise and activity that might be expected from such unlimited encouragement, notwithstanding the French Fishery was so very unfortunate last year that they were only able to supply little more than France and their own Colonies with fish. I am told, on the authority of the French Consul, that they have despatched more than four times the number of vessels on the Fishery this year than they sent out last year. These are the grounds of my opinion, that without support from our Government, or the intervention of some great political event, three-fourths of the present Newfoundland trade will go from this country into the hands of France in the space of three years.”

The result of the representation and evidence adduced before the Committee was the following report:—

“ It appears also to your Committee that the trade itself has experienced a serious and alarming depression. The causes from which this has arisen will require, in the opinion of your Committee, in the ensuing session of Parliament, a much more detailed and accurate investigation; but enough has been shown by the testimony of respectable witnesses, to prove, before the House separates, that the Fisheries will be most materially injured, the capitals embarked in them by degrees withdrawn, and the nursery for seamen, hitherto so justly valued, almost entirely lost.”

Notwithstanding this strong representation on the part of a Committee of the British House of Commons, the subject has not since been taken up by the Government. No relief or support has been afforded from that period to the present; the British Fisheries have been left to languish and contend with the unequal competition; and as it was clearly proved, by the evidence of Mr. Garland and Mr. Attwood, the great and most important portions of the most valuable of the Newfoundland Fisheries have fallen into the hands of the French and Americans, and without any rivalry on the part of the British. The British Fishery is now confined to an in-shore Fishery, prosecuted in punts and small craft, leaving the deep-sea Fishery on the Great Bank, and the other valuable banks and fishing-grounds, altogether in the hands of the French and Americans.

Your Committee have no hesitation in stating, that if the framers of the Treaties of 1814 and 1818 had agreed to exclude the British from these great Fisheries, they could not more effectually have deprived them of all participation in them.

Your Committee will now briefly remark upon the state of the Fisheries from the peace of 1814 down to the present period, having to contend with difficulties already noticed. Thrown altogether upon their own resources, unaided by the Parent Government, it must appear difficult to account for the preservation, by the British, of even a remnant of the Fisheries. According to all mercantile calculation, they should have fallen into the hands of the French and Americans: however, the necessities of the large population which grew up during the period of a prosperous Fishery worked for itself auxiliary means of employment. The cultivation of the soil—combining fishing and farming—has enabled them to exist in the country, and thereby to preserve the in-shore Fishery, the only portion that now remains to them. They have extended that Fishery, and the aggregate quantity of fish caught is equal to that of the amount of the most prosperous years.

Your Committee, in making this admission, contend that it only proves that a trade capable of holding up against difficulties that would have overwhelmed any other in her Majesty's wide-extended dominions, is worthy of more attention and consideration from the Parent Government than has hitherto been extended towards it.

BRITISH BANK FISHERY.

The Great Bank Fishery suddenly declined after the Treaties of 1814 and 1818. In the year 1775 it gave employment to about four hundred sail of registered vessels, averaging from eighty to one hundred and forty tons burthen, employing from eight to ten thousand fishermen and shoremen. As many as one hundred and forty sail was fitted out from the district of St. John's, and the remainder from the various harbours of the island. This important branch of the British Fishery was extensively prosecuted during the whole of the French war. No sooner did the French regain the privilege of prosecuting the Fishery, than their extensive bounties undermined the British Bank Fishery. Various attempts have been made to participate in it, but every attempt only brought ruin and disappointment on the British merchants or fishermen: the consequence is, at this time, that the great Newfoundland Bank Fishery, so valuable in a commercial, but more particularly in a national point of view, is surrendered without a struggle to the rivals of England, the French and Americans; these powers employing at least one thousand vessels of considerable burthen, manned with not less than thirty thousand seamen; the British not having more than five vessels and fifty men employed in the great deep-sea Fishery on the banks of Newfoundland.

Your Committee have to draw your attention to the mode of fishing lately adopted by the French. They have adopted what is called the Bultow system, by which means they extend lines and hooks miles round the ship. For a particular and accurate description of this mode

of fishing, your Committee have to refer to the statements of Messrs. Mudge & Co. appended to this report.*

Your Committee, in reference to this subject, have reason to believe that the Bultow system of fishing is most destructive:—it is a novel mode of fishing not sanctioned by any previous practice or custom. A question may arise, whether it is not a violation of the spirit of the Treaty with France. It is a subject that should, without delay, be brought under the consideration of Her Majesty's Government.

Your Committee have not sufficient data to give a particular and authentic account of the French and American Fisheries prosecuted in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and on the banks and shores of Newfoundland.

FRENCH FISHERIES.

It is universally admitted by all those who are acquainted with the subject, that the French occupy by far the best fishing stations. Having possession of the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, they can prosecute the Fishery to the Grand Bank with the greatest facility. They have also what has been called the Garden of Newfoundland, the line of coast from Cape Ray to Cape John: that portion between Cape John and Straits Belle Isle secures to them the most prolific fishing-grounds; they not only have the advantage of catching a larger quantity of fish, but the climate is found, by the absence of fog, much more suitable for making and curing it, and preparing it for the foreign markets.

The principal British Fishery was carried on in that quarter during the war. To use the words of an intelligent writer on the subject—“British fishers are consequently driven to the shores of Labrador, a longer voyage, where the quality of the fish, and the means of drying and curing them, are far inferior. The north-eastern coast of Newfoundland happens to be precisely that which is most exempted from fog; the same winds which envelope other parts of the island in damp and mist, leave this portion clear and dry—a circumstance unknown, or apparently unregarded, by those who, in addition to other concessions of land and water, seem to have given away the light and heat of the sun;—the consequence is, that in the curing of our fish a great part is destroyed by fog and damp, while the French fishermen, in addition to the abundance and quality of their fish, possess and monopolise the still greater advantage of the clearest and sunniest coast.”

Your Committee have reason to believe that this exclusive Fishery is a usurpation on the part of the French—that all they are entitled to

* We copy the following account of the operations of the French fishermen on the coast of Newfoundland:—

“The vessels, it appears, mostly anchor in lat. 50° N. and long. 59° 20' W. in about 45 fathoms water, veer 90 or 100 fathoms of cable, and prepare to catch cod-fish with two quarter-inch lines of 3,000 fathoms long each. On these a small cork is placed at every 12 feet, and while metal hooks baited with parts of small fish (by us called kiblins) are alternately fastened by snoods of 3 feet long, 6 feet apart, and the whole neatly coiled in half-bushel baskets clear for running out. Half the number of baskets are then placed in a strong-built lugsail boat on each side; at three o'clock in the afternoon both make sail together at right angles from the vessel, and when the lines are all run out straight, sink them to within 5 feet of the bottom. *The crew having rested all night*, they proceed again the next morning at daybreak to trip the sinker, and while hauling in lines, unhooking fish, etc., the men left on board heave in the other end with a winch. When in that manner 400 cod-fish are caught in a night, some are then employed line-clearing, fish-beheading, splitting, salting and stowing them away in layers across each other below: livers and refuse boiled to oil put in large casks on deck. Three months seems to be the average time employed,—arriving early in June, and departing again in October.”

by treaty is a concurrent right; at the same time it must be admitted that their exclusive claim has, in some degree, been sanctioned by the forbearance and policy of the British Government.

The extent of the French Fishery of St. Pierre and Miquelon, and on the other coasts of the islands, may be estimated by a catch of a million quintals of fish, employing upwards of seven hundred sail of large ships, and from twenty to five-and-twenty thousand fishermen and seamen. The French, both at St. Pierre and Miquelon, on the northern part of the island, carry on an illicit trade with the British settlers, particularly in bait, for the supply of their bankers, which is greatly injurious to British interests, and calculated to destroy the British Fisheries on the coast by depriving them of their regular supply of bait. Your Committee have to draw particular attention to this point, and have to refer to the evidence appended to this report.

In making this brief reference to the French Fisheries, your Committee must observe, that if the British and French Fisheries were prosecuted without encouragement in the form of bounties, British industry, notwithstanding the other advantages possessed by the French, would assume its usual superiority; but it is impossible for them to compete with the French, upheld as they are by immense bounties. The object of France is not to create a trade, but to create a navy. It is forcibly said by Mr. M'Gregor, in his History—"In ceding to France the right of fishing on the shores of Newfoundland, from Cape John to Cape Ray, with the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, we gave that ambitious nation all the means that her Government desires of manning a navy; and if we were determined to lay a train of circumstances which, by their operation, should sap the very vitals of our native strength, we could not more effectually have done so than by granting a full participation of those Fisheries to France and America."

AMERICAN FISHERIES.

Your Committee, in referring to the American Fisheries, have also to say that they have no data to ground a correct estimate of them; but they can state that they are very extensive, employing from one thousand five hundred to two thousand sail of decked vessels, averaging from forty to one hundred tons burthen. The catch of fish in the British waters has been estimated at one million one hundred thousand quintals, which must give employment to twenty-five thousand fisherman and seamen. The American fishers are observed in great numbers on the Grand Bank, and on the fishing-grounds in the Gulf of St. Lawrence—all along the shores of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward's Island, Newfoundland, and the shores of Labrador. They commence their fishery early in the spring, and follow it up with the greatest assiduity to the latest period of the fall. The American Fishery is encouraged by a bounty of twenty shillings per ton, and the supply of their own markets protected by a duty of five shillings per quintal on foreign fish.

Your Committee have to observe, that the great catch of fish by the Americans, supported as it is by bounties and other encouragements, operates, concurrently with the French catch and bounties, to sap the foundation of the British Fishery.