

V.—THE MAGDALENE ISLANDS—BY THE REV. GEORGE PATTERSON, D. D., F. R. S. C.

(Read January 19th, 1891.)

The Magdalene Islands are situated nearly in the centre of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. They stretch irregularly in a north-east and southwest direction between lat. $47^{\circ} 12'$ and $47^{\circ} 51' N.$, and between long. $61^{\circ} 11'$ and $62^{\circ} 15' W.$, thus extending a distance of about 57 miles at their greatest length, and about 14 at their greatest breadth. The most southern point lies about 50 miles from the east point of P. E. Island, about 60 from Cape North in Cape Breton, and 150 from Gaspe, while the most northeastwardly is only 70 miles from Cape Anguille in Newfoundland, and 85 from the east cape of Anticosti. They thus lie in the very track of the commerce of the gulf and river St. Lawrence.

It will thus be seen that they are in the same latitude as the southern parts of Newfoundland, the northern counties of New Brunswick, or those counties of the Province of Quebec below the city. But their climate is cooler in summer, and milder and more variable in winter, than that of the two last, and on the other hand, more severe in winter, and drier and milder in summer, than that of the first. It is comparatively free from the fogs so prevalent on our Atlantic coast. My experience of the summer is that the climate at that season is delightful, the fiercest heat of a July sun being tempered by an air from the surrounding waters. A medical gentleman whom I met on the islands, who had spent part of two summers there, spoke in the highest terms of their summer climate, and recommended them as just the place for those who wished to rest and recuperate. In winter the thermometer does not fall as low as in the Province of Quebec, but from the dampness, the cold will be felt as keenly. Then all the harbors and bays are frozen over, and the islanders with their hardy ponies can easily pass from one island to another, the whole length of the group (except it may be to

the outlying islets), while from the shore the ice extends for miles, sometimes in level fields, at other times piled in irregular masses. This presents one of the principal inconveniences of the inhabitants. For nearly five months of the year they are shut out from all intercourse with the world except by telegraph.

On approaching the islands from any direction the first appearance they present is that of a range of rounded hills. As we draw nearer the outline becomes more distinct. They are generally hummocky in shape, sometimes forming sharp cones, at others being rounded or flattened on top, or somewhat of a beehive shape. Approaching still closer, we see steep cliffs of red, grey, or brown freestone, and pleased with their variety of hue and shape, we may be impressed almost to awe by their grandeur as we realize their height of one, two, three, or in one instance, four hundred feet, while at their feet the waves beat with ceaseless roar and untiring energy. Then, first as a dim haze on the horizon, but afterward more distinctly, the voyager may trace some sand beach (one is twenty-two miles long), with its dunes of blown sand, forty, sixty, and sometimes, I thought, a hundred feet high. Finally, as one draws near the land, there are seen on the slopes of the hills, toward the shore, clusters of small white cottages, with other buildings, forming the centre of a fishing industry. These buildings are not placed so close together as to form a village, as that term is understood among us, but they are nearer than is usual in our farming settlements.

Wherever a voyager lands, his attention will be arrested by the various appliances for conducting the fishery—stages for drying fish, and a vat for trying out seal blubber, perhaps nets spread out to dry, lobster traps, with many sights, and, we must add, smells, which we must pass over for the present.

But leave the shore, and almost anywhere the beauty of the scenery will arrest attention. If the day is fine, ascend to higher ground, and at almost any point you can scarcely fail to behold a scene, in the contemplation of which, if you are a lover of nature, you will for the time fairly revel, and of which you will carry away delighted remembrances. Before you, and from some positions on either side, stretches the mighty ocean, its surface

unbroken, except by some passing sail, looking in the distance "like wing of wild bird," as we saw it, calm and resplendent under a July sun, even then, however, giving you the idea of a quiet consciousness of reserved power—but soon it may be roused by the tempest to display its awful majesty and irresistible might. In the nearer view the land stretches out in cliffs of varied hue, which are said to resemble those of the Channel Islands, or in long ranges of sand dunes, while often the tints on sea and sky are so beautiful, that travellers have pronounced them such as they have only seen among the islands of the Egean or in the fairest spots of the sunny south. Below you lies some cove or bay, on whose surface may be seen small vessels and boats, in which the hardy fishermen pursue their avocations; around you are many sunny slopes or verdant valleys, thickly dotted with the homes of the inhabitants, suggestive of all the scenes of rural life, while in the rear the view is bounded by a higher range of hills of a rich dark green from the stunted spruce and fir, which are now almost the only trees upon the islands. And all so quiet, perhaps no sound being heard, unless you are near enough to catch the low melancholy murmur of the waves in their ceaseless beat upon the shore. Such is the scene which in the long summer day may be seen at any point in the Magdalene Islands, as is so often seen in God's works, the same in general features, endlessly diversified in details.

If, however, you are of a more practical turn and have come with the idea commonly entertained regarding these islands, you will be delighted and surprised to find them possessing a soil unsurpassed in fertility in these Eastern Provinces. It is a deep, sandy loam, free from stones, easily worked, and under any proper system of agriculture it would yield abundantly all the cereals, grasses and vegetables of the temperate zone.

But any observer of the works of God in nature cannot pass among these islands, without being struck by the exhibition here seen of the working of those agencies, by which the land is covered by the sea, and again the sea turned into dry land. Westward the rocks are a dark red sandstone, as I judge the continuation of the new red sandstone of P. E. Island. These

are very soft. So easily are they disintegrated by the influence of air and water that I have scraped two inches in thickness off the seaward side of them. The sea is thus rapidly wearing them away, but not them only. On the western side of Grindstone Island they are succeeded by harder rocks of the carboniferous formation, which extend eastward and northward the whole length of the group. These, which are mostly sandstones, varying in hue from a light grey to a dark umbery brown, present little more resistance to the power of the disintegrating agencies at work. One cannot walk along the shore without seeing how the cliffs are falling down, and how the fragments are being rolled and rubbed together and ground by the waves. On the land one observes how it has become necessary that the road along the bank should be removed farther inland, or how fields are being gradually diminished. Of the same process a sadder evidence is to be found in the reefs and shoals, which extend from the shore in various directions, once the foundation of the land, but now having the soil and so much of the rock removed by the power of the waves that they form shallows dangerous to navigation. On the other hand from material thus removed from the shore or brought down by the rain, bogs and saline marshes are being formed, and lagoons and bays filled up, slowly if we reckon by human life, rapidly if we reckon by geological eras. Men not very old will show where they saw brigs built and loaded, where now you could easily wade across. And your own eye can see how the sea is forming and broadening beaches of gravel or sand, or the wind blowing it into hills. As you walk along these beaches you see how soil is being gradually formed upon them, and how they are becoming occupied by various kinds of vegetation.

In this way in the inner reaches among the islands are formed along their shores extensive tracts of marsh and swamp, intersected by lagoons or shallow lakes, the larger of which it is said once admitted vessels by channels which have since closed up.

Much of these marshes could, with a little effort, be converted into valuable meadow. They, as well as the sand beaches, are covered with coarse grass which the inhabitants cut for feeding

their cattle, or on which they pasture them in summer. Other portions at present cannot be reclaimed or rendered tillable, but yield large quantities of berries, particularly cranberries, which are quite an article of export.

From the situation of these islands, as described, it will be seen that they are right in the track of the trade of the Gulf and the River St. Lawrence, and from their structure as now indicated, but in addition from currents unexpectedly encountered, and of which the causes are scarcely understood, they have been noted as the scene of shipwrecks. Even vessels going by the Straits of Belle Isle have been driven upon them, while those on board imagined themselves at quite a safe distance. If Sable Island has been known as the Graveyard of the Atlantic, with equal, if not greater propriety, may the Magdalenes be called the Graveyard of the St. Lawrence. Not only have such sad events been more numerous; they have, as a general rule, been more destructive of human life. On Sable Island, as I am informed by one who resided on it for seven years, vessels when they strike usually become embedded in the sand, and generally do not break up for two or three days, so that if those on board would remain they might escape, when by attempting to leave they are lost. But at the Magdalenes, vessels may strike upon the rocks and rapidly go to pieces, or may strike on a reef at some distance from the shore, and after being battered upon it, be carried over it to be engulfed in deep water, while in either cases, a few fragments driven to land may be all that remains to tell the tale. Often have vessels left Quebec in the fall and some wreckage found on these shores give the only hint ever received of their fate.

They also often prove fatal to the small vessels of the inhabitants or that are engaged in fishing or trading among them. In rough weather the sea rises very quickly and the waves are very dangerous, not because they are so high, but because they are short and steep. As they approach the shore in huge combers, owing to the shallowness of the water and the undertow, they break on the reefs which in so many places encircle it, or beat upon the sand dunes or cliffs with irresistible force.

Then, there is no good harbor in the whole group, and vessels dodge round for shelter under the land. But a sudden change of wind may convert a safe lee into the means of their destruction. Thus, in the great gale of August, 1873, a number of American fishing vessels had taken refuge in Pleasant Bay, when the wind veered round to the eastward, and in an hour thirty-three of them were ashore, it might be said on top of one another, and all were totally wrecked.

Of such events one sees memorials wherever he goes among these islands. Walk along the beaches, and you will see here pieces of ship plank or timber, or it may be part of a gallant mast, there the remains of some old hull, or again, what seems more wierd and ghastly, a row of the ends of ship timbers, like ribs of a skeleton, projecting above the sand, which has closed round the lower parts of the hull; or, enter the dwellings of the inhabitants, and perhaps you will find pieces of furniture which had belonged to a ship's cabin, or articles that on enquiry you will be told came from some wreck; and in the construction of their buildings you may see old ship's timbers or deals of their cargo. More touching is it still to see the monuments erected by friends in far away lands to mark the resting place of loved ones who had been cast lifeless upon these shores, or the untended graves of the unknown strangers, each somebody's son, and leaving we know not what friends to mourn the loss of those whose fate they will never learn in this world.

Provision is made against the occurrence of such disasters, by lighthouses at the most prominent points, and by a telegraph line the whole length of the islands. But still shipwrecks are occurring. The autumn after my visit an Italian barque went ashore in Pleasant Bay, when those on board supposed they were twenty miles distant from the islands; and the summer following, a vessel from Rio Janeiro, bound for Bay Chaleur, struck on Bryon island and became a total wreck. It must be observed, however, that there is no lifeboat system here, such as is established on the exposed places of the coasts of Britain and the United States. Whether such, if introduced here, could be

made available to avert such disasters, I cannot undertake to determine.

These islands were first discovered by Jacque Cartier on his first voyage in 1534. On the 24th June, leaving a cape in Newfoundland, which he had named Cape St. John, but now known as Cape Anguille, he sailed north-westwardly, and the next day came to two small islands, from the description the Bird Rocks of to-day. Five leagues farther to the west he found another island five leagues in length, by half as much in breadth, which he named Bryon Island, a name which it still retains, though sometimes written Byron Island. He continued his course south-westwardly among the islands, and was much pleased with their fertility. He describes them as full of beautiful trees, woods, pleasant meadows covered with spring flowers, and having large fertile tracts of lands interspersed with great swamps. This description would almost seem to indicate that there had been already cultivation. He says that along the shores were many sea monsters, with two large tusks in the mouth, like elephants. This would seem to show that up to this time he was unacquainted with the walrus.

No mention is made of inhabitants, and none of the Indian tribes seemed to have permanently occupied them, though the Micmacs had a name for them, showing their acquaintance with them, and that they probably sometimes visited them in summer. Probably, however, even before this, and certainly from that time forward, they were visited by the hardy Breton and Basque fishermen in the prosecution of their industry. But we find no particular mention of them in the narratives of the time, and there seems to have been no attempt at settlement upon them till the year 1663, when the company of New France granted the islands to Sieur Francois Doublet, a ship captain of Honfleur. In the following years he associated with him, for the purpose of carrying on a fishing and trading speculation, Francois Gon de Quimee and Claude de Landemare, to whom he transferred one-fourth of his rights. But still there does not seem to have been any attempt at settlement. Fishermen came from France in spring, and after spending the summer in the prosecution of their

industry, returned home with the produce of their labor. And the islands seem to have reverted to the French government, for Charlevoix states that in 1719 the king, at the instance of the Duchess of Orleans, ceded them to the *Compte de St. Pierre*.

The first settlement is said to have been made in the year 1757 by four families named Boudreault, Chaisson, LaPierre and Cormier, who came from St. Peter's Bay in Prince Edward Island.

In the year 1763 the islands passed with the rest of New France under the British government. At that time they were said to have had but ten families resident upon them, who were engaged in walrus and seal hunting, and to a small extent in the herring and cod fishery. About this time Mr. Gridley, described in one place as an English retired officer, in another as an American skipper, formed an establishment at Amherst Island for the purposes of trading, and especially of carrying on upon a large scale the hunting of the walrus and the seal. He encouraged others of the Acadians to remove hither, so that the population received a number of accessions from this source, and their descendants now form the large majority of the inhabitants, and retain the language, habits and religion of the parent country. But it may be observed that, though they have always been under the government of the Province of Canada or Quebec, their associations are all with their brethren in the maritime provinces.

At this time the hunting of the walrus was considered as second in importance only to that of the whale. The oil brought a good price, the skin was valued as forming an exceedingly tough leather, and the tusks were of the very best ivory. McGregor in his history of British America says: "These animals are fond of being in herds, and their affection for each other is very apparent. The form of the body and of the head, with the exception of the nose being broader, and having two tusks from fifteen inches to two feet long in the lower jaw, is not very unlike that of a seal. A full grown walrus will weigh at least 4,000 pounds. The skins are valuable, being about an inch in thickness, astonishingly tough, and the Acadian French used to cut

them into strips for traces and other purposes. The flesh is tough, hard and greasy, and not much relished even by the Eskimos. They will attack a small boat merely through wantonness; and as they generally attempt to stove it are extremely dangerous. Their blazing eyes and their tusks give them a formidable appearance, but unless wounded or one of their number be killed, they do not seem ever to intend hurting the men. About forty years ago,* a crew of Acadian Frenchmen, in a schooner from Prince Edward Island, caught and killed a young walrus in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. A little time after, as one of the men was skinning it in the boat along side the vessel, an old walrus rose, and got hold of the man between the tusks and forefins, or flippers, and plunged down under water with him, and afterward showed itself three or four times with the unfortunate man in the same position before it disappeared altogether."

Mr. McGregor says that the last incident was well known, and was several times related to him by a brother of the unfortunate man, who was on board the schooner at the time. I had more than once read the story, and when I mentioned it at my boarding-house on the Magdalene Islands, mine host at once replied, "O yes, it's quite true; the man was my grandfather's brother. He had killed the calf, and she singled him out from the rest of the crew."

There was thus some danger in pursuing them in the open sea. But they were in the habit of coming in herds upon the beach or of passing over into the shallow lagoons inside. Their order of march was in single file, and they were said at times to enter some distance into the woods. Even yet a place is known as the Sea-cow's (*vache de marine*) Path. The first effort of the hunters was to get them on shore, and then to urge them forward till they got them a sufficient distance from the water. It is said that for this purpose they would get behind them on a dark night and give the hindmost a prod with a sharp pole. This urged him forward, but, it is said, led him to give his immediate predecessor a similar stimulus, who passed the compliment to the

* Written about 1834.

next, till it reached the end of the line. Away from the water they were comparatively helpless, and fell an easy prey.

From the number of tusks that have been found, I am inclined to believe that for some time they were not valued as an article of trade. Some time ago a trader on the islands offered to purchase from the people all that they could bring to him. The result was that he collected quantities, it is said some tons, which he exported. They are still occasionally found, as the beaches are moved by sea and storm, and are used by the inhabitants as marlingspikes, or cut up for various purposes about their houses or their vessels.

During the American revolutionary war, the property of Mr. Gridley and his associates was destroyed by American privateers. From the slaughter of the walrus it was almost driven from the vicinity, though a few continued to be taken till sometime in the present century. The seals, too, did not come in such large numbers, nor were they so easily captured, though the taking of them has continued to be one of the resources of the people to the present day. These pursuits having decreased in importance, the people were led to give more attention to the taking of cod and herring, which then came in enormous quantities, and also to attend to the cultivation of the soil, which, as I have said, is of excellent quality.

In the year 1798 the whole islands, with the exception of one-seventh reserved for the support of the clergy, were granted to Admiral Sir Isaac Coffin, in free and common soccage, as a reward for his services in the American war. The story is that on his voyage homeward, when passing these islands, he requested of Lord Dorchester, who was a fellow passenger, a grant of these islands, some say indeed all the islands in the gulf. At all events he obtained a grant not only of these, but of our own Pictou Island. On the latter his rights were sold out to the settlers, but the Magdalene Islands are still held in the family; having descended to his nephew, Admiral John Townshend Coffin, whose son, Isaac Tristram Coffin, is now the proprietor. They have refused to sell, but grant leases, of two kinds, long leases on fixed terms not exceeding 99 years, and leases without

any fixed term, at a perpetual and unredeemable ground rent. The rents vary from 5s. to 30s. per annum a lot, which may be a few feet of beach overflowed by the sea. Before Coffin's grant was issued much of the land was occupied without title, and the parties claimed their lots by possession. It was only after 1839 that a considerable number accepted leases. These leases were loosely drawn and rents were irregularly paid. So that much contention arose between the settlers and the agents of the proprietors. The result was a large amount of discontent in consequence of which, a few years ago, two or three colonies left owing largely to dissatisfaction with the system. It is said that as many as 600 souls removed, most of them to the northern shore of the St. Lawrence, where the land was much inferior and fisheries no better, but they were attracted by the idea of having their land in full ownership. This is the only part of the Dominion where the system lingers, and it is desirable that it should be swept away. Attempts have been made to buy out the rights of the proprietor. It is admitted that with the expense of agency and the various expenditures upon the islands, the property has never really been of any profit to him. But it would seem that such is the grandeur associated with being lord of so many broad acres, that he has always refused to sell, at least on any reasonable terms. I humbly think that, as the Government has compelled the landlords in P. E. Island to sell and has extinguished the seigniorial rights in Quebec without asking the consent of the seigneurs, they should close this question by taking the rights of the proprietor on just and reasonable terms. The whole area, we may observe, is estimated at 100,000 acres, of which one-seventh was reserved for the clergy. This has fallen into the hands of the Government, and is being sold by it.

At the time of the granting these islands, it was estimated that there were 100 families upon them, but this is probably an exaggeration. In 1821 Bouchette estimated the number at 138. In 1831 they were estimated at 153, numbering 1,000 souls, though Coffin, in 1839, states that there were only 600 on the whole seven islands. By the census of 1850 they numbered

2,202, and in 1860 had increased to 2,651. By the last census they numbered 4,316 and may now be estimated at 5,000. During the present century a number of English-speaking and Protestant settlers have taken up their abode here. These were principally from P. E. Island and the counties of Pictou and Shelburne in Nova Scotia. From time to time persons wrecked here have chosen to make it the place of their permanent abode. Of such I found English, Scotch, Welsh and Jerseymen. In these ways there has been formed an English-speaking population of over 500 souls.

Before, however, referring more particularly to the people and their industries, we must give a particular account of the islands. The first which meets the eye of the voyager approaching either from the south or east is Entry, so named because it stands as a sentinel at the entrance of Pleasant Bay. Its appearance as you draw near is somewhat striking. On the north-eastern side conical hills rise high above the surrounding waters, one being 580 feet high, and the highest point on the group, while another known as Pig Hill is only 50 feet lower. On this side the sea has so cut in upon it that the cliffs are of a height of 300 and 350 and in one place 400 feet in height. Curiously enough they actually overhang the sea, which has undermined them, and will continue to do so, till the weight of the overhanging mass brings it down with a crash. Toward the south-west, however, the land slopes to the shore. This island is about two miles long, being pentagonal or somewhat circular in shape, but seldom can as much variety of scenery be found in the same space. These hills, and they are but hills, rising abruptly from so small an area, and from their steepness looking higher than they are, give the impression of a rugged and mountainous region. From these radiate miniature gorges and dells, thickly overgrown with bushes, mostly of scrubby spruce, and terminating except on the land-ward side in the magnificent cliffs mentioned, which we now see to be scarped and sculptured into various fantastic shapes. In one place the rocks stand in the form of huge rugged columns, to which have been given the name of the Old Man and Old Woman. At another a portion of about an acre in ex-

tent has been nearly severed from the rest of the island, and is known as Devil's Island.

Ascend to the top of the highest hill and the prospect is one of rare beauty. Southward you gaze upon the ocean, and in the distance you can in suitable weather discern St. Paul's Island and Cape North, in Cape Breton, fifty miles away. To your right and left are the red and grey cliffs of the neighbouring islands, while at your feet to the south-west the island slopes away to the sea, forming beautiful meadows or fertile fields, yielding rich crops of potatoes, grass or grain, rendered still more picturesque by bits of woodland intermixed.

There are ten families on the island. With its rich soil they enjoy to the full the ordinary comforts of life, and without excessive toil. One sees in proportion to its size abundance of live stock, troops of their ponies, droves of pigs wandering at their sweet will, flocks of sheep sometimes grazing on the tops of the highest hills, and plentiful herds of cattle. But beside farming, fishing and lobster canning are carried on. There is no harbor on the island, and it is only at certain places that boats can land, and in stormy weather all intercourse with it is cut off.

There is a passage on either side. That to the north-east is seven miles wide and separates it from Alright Island, that on the south-west is three miles wide and separates it from a sand beach four miles along, known as Sandy Hook, which makes out from the south-east point of Amherst Island. Inside you are in a beautiful bay nine miles wide, known as Pleasant Bay. In summer it does not belie its name. Its water appeared to me of a lighter greenish hue, and more pellucid than we see in the waters around our Nova Scotia shores. This bay forms a safe and commodious roadstead, except in easterly winds, and there are many pleasant sights around. But it, too, has its tales of sorrow. A gentleman told me that he has seen a fine ship leave in full sail one morning, and before the next day had passed, she was lost with all on board on the back of Sandy Hook beach.

The steamer weekly visiting these islands, first calls at Amherst, which is the largest island of the group. It was so called after

the British General of that name. It lies about east and west and is eleven miles long by about four at its greatest breadth, and on the average not more than two. It is compared in shape to the human foot. On the instep are two conical hills known as the *Demoiselles*, which I am informed show evidence of volcanic origin, the highest of which has a sea-cliff 280 feet high. At the foot, along a crescent-shaped cove, and straggling up its slopes, are some fifty or sixty houses, forming a sort of village, which is the capital of the island. Here is the jail, for the people are not without that engine of civilization, though among such a quiet people it must be only as a measure of precaution, or for the use of foreign visitants, among whom before the abrogation of the fishery treaty, American fishermen specially claimed its hospitality. Here reside the collector of customs and other officials. At this cove the landing is effected. There is no wharf here or at any other place on the island, so that landing is often inconvenient and sometimes dangerous. The reason given by the inhabitants for not having some wharf or pier is that no construction of the kind will stand the pressure of the ice. The Dominion Government, at the time of my visit, were building a breakwater on one of the other islands, but the first structure was carried away, and many doubt the permanence of this. Farther along we see stores and stages for drying fish, and the entrance to a harbor known as Harbor Aubert, a small and perfectly safe port, the best on the islands, but its entrance channel is narrow and shifting, and it is accessible only to vessels drawing under 12 feet of water.

To the west the island is hilly, rising to an elevation of 550 feet, and falling in gentle slopes to the north. It is partly wooded, but is generally arable and much of it under cultivation.

In connection with this island must be noticed the remarkable rock, known as Deadman's Isle, which lies nine miles to the west of it. It is a bare solitary rock about a mile long, having neither bush nor herb, nor even a blade of grass upon it. It rises with a razor-like ridge at the height of 170 feet.

At a distance, approaching it from some directions, it has the appearance of a gigantic corpse, lying upon the surface of the water, three protuberances representing the feet, the abdomen and the head. But doubtless it deserves the name for a sadder reason. Who can tell how many gallant men have gone down to death in the pitiless waves which beat on its sides? The fisherman lands upon it to cure his fish, but still regards it with somewhat of the superstitious awe, which has prompted the lines of the poet Moore:

“ There lieth a wreck on the dismal shore,
 Of cold and pitiless Labrador,
 Where under the moon upon mountains of frost,
 Full many a mariner’s bones are tossed.
 Yon shadowy bark hath been to that wreck,
 And the dim blue fire that lights her deck,
 Doth play on as pale and livid a crew
 As ever yet drank the church-yard dew.
 To Deadman’s Isle in the eye of the blast,
 To Deadman’s Isle she speeds her fast,
 By skeleton shapes her sails are furled,
 And the hand that steers is not of this world.”

From Amherst Island two ridges of sand extend northwardly a distance of nearly eight miles, till they reach Grindstone Island. The western starts from the extreme west of Amherst Island, the other from a point about three miles to the eastward, but they converge as they approach Grindstone to less than a mile and a half. Each of them is broken through by the sea, but still these openings are fordable by vehicle in moderate weather, though it requires the guidance of some person acquainted with the shoals, otherwise one might be carried into deep water or sink in quick sands. The waters enclosed by these is known as Basque Harbor, but it is of little value from its shallow, narrow opening, though it used to be a favorite spawning ground of the herring.

Grindstone Island derives its name from a rounded hill of grey freestone, forming a cape some three hundred feet high, to which the French used to resort for grindstones. Looking at it from the east, it has a remarkable resemblance to a human face with

a tear dropping from the left eye. This island is somewhat oval or tortoise-shaped, its greatest diameter from north to south being about five miles, and its least about four. Its surface exhibits a beautiful variety, hills covered with wood rising to the height of 550 feet, slopes rich in agricultural produce, shores descending to beach or marsh or rising in cliffs steep and inaccessible. It has no harbor of its own, but to the north-east sends out a gravel beach, opposite to which the island of Alright sends out another, leaving a very narrow passage between them. Inside of these is formed a harbor known as House Harbor. But the entrance is narrow and tortuous, and it is only suited for boats or small vessels.

Alright Island, exclusive of its beaches, is about four miles in length by about two in width. Its surface is uneven, consisting of rounded hills with intervening hollows, and in beauty and fertility it is not the least interesting of the group.

From the north-west of Grindstone, in a north-eastwardly direction for twenty-two miles, or till it reaches the north cape of the Grosseisle, extends the most remarkable sand beach on the group, with the usual sand dunes.

Near the centre of it is a small elevation covered with wood and less than half a mile in diameter known as Wolf Island. From the north-east corner of Alright a similar ridge from 500 to 2000 yards wide extends in the same direction for nineteen miles, where there is a passage known as the Grand Entry. Between these two ridges is a quiet bay at least twenty miles long, once navigable for small vessels, but now having a narrow winding channel fit only for boats, except at high tides. The tops of these sand ridges are scantily covered with sharp speared salt grass, but on the southern ridge soil has been partially formed, and we observed it to be covered in many places by shrubbery and dwarf spruce.

Grosseisle in its wider sense embraces four islands, commonly but improperly so-called, as they are united by marsh or sand beach. These are known as Coffin's Island, East Island, Grosseisle, and North Cape. The first of these lies to the east of Grand Entry, and contains the largest extent of upland, being

four miles long and about one broad. The surface is generally high and uneven, steep hills and deep hollows, with sometimes small lakes, succeeding one another. To the north it is connected by a sand beach with the East Island, which is about four miles in length by about two in breadth. Though this has one cliff 240 feet high, it is generally low-lying and marshy, and much of it is occupied by shallow lakes. Grosseisle, which is again joined to it at its north end by a sand-ridge, is smaller, being less than two miles in length by less than a mile in breadth. It forms, however, the most prominent object in the landscape, being quite elevated and being distinguished by three or four conical peaks, which form cliffs over 300 feet high. These have suggested the name. From the summit of any one of them the view on a summer day is one of surpassing grandeur. North Cape is a small circular island about half a mile in diameter, joined to Grosseisle by marsh and sandy beach.

The shores of this group, if I may call it so, present a varied and often very striking appearance. Besides the high cliffs of Grosseisle, there are others as at North Cape, Old Harry Head, and East Island, between two and three hundred feet high, and sometimes worn into rugged or even fantastic shapes. Then there are miles of sand ridges, inside of which are peaceful lagoons, while again the low-lying sea-board, with reefs extending for miles seaward, and sometimes spurs of sand, covered with shallow water, is sometimes more dangerous to navigators than even the loftiest cliffs.

In that part of this island which I saw, the soil did not seem as good as on the others. In some places I saw sub-soil of white sand, on which the growth and decay of vegetation had formed a peaty mould. But still the crops were generally fair. The inhabitants subsist mainly by the fisheries, but the most of them cultivate small plots of land, from which they receive a good return according to the labor bestowed upon them. Much of it is still covered by wood, stunted in dimensions.

All these islands from Amherst to Grosseisle were formerly, and perhaps sometimes are yet, spoken of as one, the Magdalene

Island, they being with the exception of Alright all connected by marsh or sand-beach.

Ten miles to the northward lies Bryon, four miles long, lying nearly east and west. As we approach from the south, the appearance of the island from the water, with its dark brown cliffs, its sloping hills rising to the height of 200 feet, with occasional farm steadings, but the greater part dark green with spruce and fir woods, is quite picturesque. One thing that struck me, however, was the peculiarly stunted appearance of the trees. On all the islands the wood is stunted, owing, no doubt, to the ocean winds. But this island is very narrow, not more than three-quarters of a mile at its greatest breadth, and it appeared to me in some places not more than one, and having no other land near it, is particularly exposed. So that the trees appear along the shore often as dead or dying, or as thick bunches, so close that no bird could penetrate them, and in the interior as if the tops were cut off, about twenty or twenty-five feet from the ground, and the branches extending horizontally, as we have seen the cedars of Lebanon represented.

There is no harbor on the island and few convenient landing places. The best are at two coves on the south side,—one near the east end and the other near the west. At other points there may be narrow margins of beach at the foot of cliffs perhaps a hundred feet high, where one may land, but in such cases one can ascend or descend, and goods can be hoisted or lowered only by ropes. But in rough weather there is no landing upon any part of it.

This island, however, is perhaps the finest for agriculture of the whole group. It presents beautiful slopes, with a fine deep soil. Here farming is conducted on a larger scale than on any of the other islands, mine host keeping eighteen cows, and his brother alongside of him twelve, all of which were in excellent condition, and improved by crossing with imported cattle of superior breeds, besides other stock of good quality, contrasting strongly with the stock on the other islands, which is commonly of the poorest. These men, who were originally from P. E. Island, represent the soil as superior to that of the latter. Yet,

still they give their attention to fishing to the neglect of their farms.

Northeast, about eighteen miles from Grosseisle, and twelve from Bryon, lie the Bird Rocks, distinguished as the Great Bird and the North Bird. They of course derive their name from the immense multitude of birds that frequent them. Though I was not nearer than twelve miles and evening was approaching, and there was besides a slight haze towards the horizon, I could distinctly see the greyish-white color (by visitors they are described as white as snow) from the large number of the birds which make their nests upon them, particularly the gannet. This bird is about three feet long, white in color, except the top of the head and the back of the neck, which are tinged with yellow, and the quill feathers, which are black. They possess great power of flight. They are round us now miles from their home, and it is interesting to watch them as they soar aloft, and then, folding their wings close to their sides, dart down with unerring aim and seize their finny prey beneath the waters, and then with a few flaps of their wings on the water, quickly rise again. When a shoal of herring approach the shore, the scene is said to be very animated, thousands of these birds gathering like a white cloud over the spot, and seeming like a stream of shot pouring into the sea as they plunge into the waters and rise with their prey glistening in their beaks. On these islands their nests are so thick, that in appearance the surface is compared to a field of potato hills. In consequence, the visitor has his ears dinned by the horrible clamour, while his olfactories are offended by other results of their presence. I may add that all the islands afford a fine field for the pursuit or study of birds. On Grindstone Island, a visitor in one day killed ninety-five of eighteen different species.

These islands rise abruptly to the height of 140 feet, their sides having a shelving or terraced form. It is only in a calm state of wind and sea that a landing can be effected. On the Great Bird, in connection with the light-house there established, there is an arrangement by which visitors as well as all supplies are hoisted to the summit by a crane. In size they are too small

to be of any importance, the smaller consisting of rocks protruding from the sea, and the largest containing an area of only four acres. They are about a mile apart and the water between them is shallow, while from the North Bird a rocky shoal extends about a mile farther. So that this too has been the scene of shipwrecks, of which often neither person nor thing has been left to tell the tale.

About 25 years ago a magnificent iron ship of the Allan line was cast away here and soon went to pieces. There is now a lighthouse, however, upon the Great Bird, with fog gun, and also connection by telegraph with the other islands and the main land. The keeper, his wife, and two assistants, all Magdalene Island French, are the only inhabitants of the islands, and a lonely position they must have.

After 1763 the British Government ordered a survey of these and other islands in the Gulf, under the direction of Major Holland, appointed Surveyor-General of the northern district of the B. N. A. Provinces. The service was entrusted to Lieutenant F. Haviland, and as the result of his work, Mr. H. sent a description of the islands to the British Government in 1798, at the time of the granting of them to Coffin. In this report they are estimated as containing 60,000 acres. One-seventh being reserved for the support of the clergy, Coffin's Island as containing about that proportion of the whole was set apart for that object.

The area, as thus stated, however, was less than the reality, for, by the survey of Mr. Desbarres in 1778, and the later of Lieutenant Collins in 1833, it was reckoned at 78,000. But the resident agent of the proprietors informed me that it was really 100,000.

Returning to notice the natural history of these islands, I may say that the only mineral known to be in sufficient quantities to be of economic importance is the gypsum, which lies along the base of the Trappean hills which serve as the nucleus of the principal islands, and forms a considerable extent of the sea cliffs. On land it may be traced by the number of funnel or cup-like depressions formed by the solvent action of the water penetrating the fissures. Some of these are dry, others contain water, in

some instances, so deep that the people declare that they are bottomless. Some curious things are told in regard to these deposits. A man digging a well, when he got into the rock bored a hole, charged it with powder and fired it off. To his surprise, instead of blowing up it blew down, and smoke was seen issuing from the foot of the cliff near by, exciting some superstitious fears in the minds of the actors. Formerly it was mined in considerable quantities and exported to Quebec. Limestone is also found, but I believe in quantities too small to be of economic value.

Of quadrupeds, the indigenous animals are the fox, the rabbit or American hare, and the field mouse.

Of reptiles, we might write the chapter which a writer did on snakes in Ireland, which merely contained the statement: "There are no snakes in Ireland." There are said to be no snakes, lizards, toads or frogs on the Magdalene Islands.

When these islands were discovered, they were well covered with wood, and formerly vessels of some size were built upon them; but the most of it has been cut away or destroyed by fire, and what remains, being in narrow strips and exposed to the sea breezes, is stunted. Formerly, there was good birch and other valuable hard wood. Now there are scarcely any trees to be seen but spruce and fir of second growth, very stunted. This for some time has been the only resource of the inhabitants for fuel, and it scarcely serves any other purpose. But on Entry and Alright even that is nearly exhausted, so that the inhabitants are beginning to use coal, and on all the larger islands they will soon require to do so.

We have already mentioned that the soil is of the best quality, but there is scarcely any proper farming. Each family generally has a piece of land from which they take some crops, but the cultivation is neglected or left to the women. Hay will be taken off the same ground for a generation without its being ploughed. Their animals are of the poorest quality. Sheep look like lambs of from four to six months, though to do them justice, they show a skill in climbing cliffs such as we have hitherto supposed the gift of goats. Then, their pigs, which run

about everywhere! If we want to see extinct animals, still in the flesh, look at those slab-sided, long-legged creatures with subsoil snouts, who seem almost lords of the soil. One reason given for not attending better to their farming is that they have no mills to grind their grain, or even to card their wool, there being no streams on the island continuous enough to maintain one. But this need not hinder, but should rather encourage attention to their stock. And it has been suggested, that the want of water power might be easily supplied by windmills, of which the motive power is at hand in abundance.

But fishing is really the great business of the inhabitants. The time is not long past when their fishing grounds were the most productive perhaps in the world. Men scarcely past middle life tell of seeing three hundred vessels off their shore at one time, and getting full cargoes in a few days, or of Pleasant Bay being so packed with herring that men had only to dip them up till their vessel was full. These days are past, but still fishing is the principal employment of the people.

The first in March and April is the seal hunting. As the time approaches men ascend the highest hills, and eagerly scan the ice round the shores for a sight of the black forms, which are easily discerned at a long distance. When the word is given that they have appeared the news spreads like wild fire. It is celebrated by the ringing of bells and firing of guns, and the whole inhabitants are roused to feverish excitement. From every quarter men make for the ice, armed with knives and clubs. Even the women gather at the shore where they prepare warm meals for the men, and perhaps help in skinning the seals after they are landed. The men go out on the ice, taking with them small flat-bottomed boats usually called flats, in case of the ice parting. Then goes on the slaughter and afterwards the dragging the dead bodies to the shore, the latter, very laborious work. The work is also not without danger. The ice may break away from the shore ice with the wind and carry the unfortunate fishermen to sea. Seal fishing is also conducted with nets made for the purpose of strong cord with large meshes. If the ice moves, so that the hunting cannot be prosecuted from the

shore, it is followed to sea in schooners fitted out for the purpose.

The sealing is, or was, followed by the spring herring fishing. In former years these used to come in immense numbers. In Pleasant Bay alone 50,000 barrels have been caught in fifteen days. But for some cause unknown they have for some time almost forsaken their old places of resort, so that the people now catch hardly more than enough to serve them as bait for their lobster traps.

In the beginning of June come the Spring mackerel. Like the herring, they come to spawn, and are then poor. In a fortnight they return to deep water, but they return again about the last of July or first of August. They are now large and fat, and for the next two months move capriciously round the islands and neighboring coasts. In past years great quantities have been taken both by American and Colonial fishermen. In the year 1875, a year not very profitable, 200 American vessels took 30,000 barrels, worth at a low estimate \$350,000, while the islanders cured 9,000, valued at \$100,000. But for the last few years these fish have almost forsaken their former haunts.

The codfish has been a more steady and stable resource. From the time when the islands were discovered, they have been caught in large numbers, and though they will be more plentiful in one year than another, yet they have never entirely failed. The fishing is prosecuted from the beginning of May till the end of October. In 1880, the year of the last census, the catch amounted to about 18,000 quintals.

Within the last few years the canning of lobsters has become one of the staple industries of the islands. Establishments for the purpose have risen on every part of the group, which for a time did a flourishing business. But it is evidently overdone. Not only has the number taken fallen off, but, with perhaps the exception of one place on Bryon Island, where an establishment has just begun, those taken are very small, and the meat thin, so that I was informed that it would take about eight lobsters to fill a pound can. Indeed, I believe that the greater part of those taken were below the size allowed by law.

Other fish abound, though the taking of them is not of great economic importance. Halibut are caught in deep water; occasionally porpoises are seen spouting; sea eels are speared in the lagoons; smelts come up the streams in great abundance, and splendid sea trout are caught at the head of them.

But no person once visiting a fishing station at the Magdalene Islands, can forget the sights and smells which there regale his senses. Take as a typical example Etang du Nord (in English North Pond) corrupted in Tandanore, a small haven for boats on the west side of Grindstone Island. The view is picturesque as you approach, or view it from higher ground, as is generally the case with all the fishing stations. But nearer approach dissipates sentiment. Here is the lobster canning establishment. Shall we enter it? Inside it is rough, and things don't look inviting, but it is said that every thing about the work is quite clean, and you can convince yourself of the fact. But outside, if not within, you will see what will have a tendency to diminish your relish for lobster salad next winter. Only the meat in the claws and tail of the lobster are used. The bodies are thrown out and pigs are enjoying high festival. But go a little farther and you meet a semi-circular row of little huts set on pillars in the sand and used for storing fish, and huts scarcely any better, in which the fishermen with their families come to live during the fishing season. Here is a group of women chattering as only French women can, sitting on the sand shelling clams for bait, while others in carts are bringing them in the shell from where they have been dug, others may be engaged in the operations necessary for the curing of codfish, disembowelling, splitting, salting, drying and piling them. Boats are landing their catch either of codfish or lobsters. But upon all this offal pigs are feeding in dozens. But I am afraid the effect of the whole scene on another of your sense will be likely to cause you to lose the benefits to be derived according to some sanitarians to your brain and bodily health, by a diet of salt cod. Perhaps you may even be tempted to become a Jew as far as prejudice against pork fed on these islands are concerned.

How this state of matters does not breed a pestilence we can-

not imagine. Perhaps it is that the constant breeze from and to the sea purifies the air. Certain it is that men, women and children live among these scenes and presume to be healthy.

Having referred to the women, I may here say that of all the industrious creatures I have seen, the French women bear the palm. Besides their help in the fishing, the cultivation of the land is largely their work. Besides their household duties they spin the wool on the old fashioned wheel, weave it into cloth for themselves and their families. And as for knitting it would seem an unpardonable waste of time, to go along the road even a short distance without the knitting needles being in operation. See two girls driving along the road in one of their little carts; while one drives the other is adding some rounds to the stocking. And as might be supposed they are not extravagant as to dress.

As a people, we may say they are generally temperate. There are no places where liquor is retailed. Some of the large traders do not supply it at all, and others only import small quantities to be used for special purposes. Doubtless it is imported otherwise, but still its use is comparatively limited. But on the other hand, tobacco is regarded almost as the staff of life, and in the use of tea they excel even the people of Nova Scotia.

Notwithstanding the resources of the island, the majority of the inhabitants have been kept in a state of comparative poverty. While this probably was owing in some measure to want of thrift, yet the system of dealing, combined with their want of education, tended to the same result. Every person in spring went in debt to the merchant for supplies, and at the end of summer gave him the proceeds of his fishing. The latter gave him no account, as he could neither read nor write, but told him that he was clear, or that he was still in debt so much, and they commenced the same process again.

In the year 1882 they almost suffered from famine. The year before the potato crop failed. A vessel sent to Quebec with their fish and to bring back supplies, foundered, and by spring they were reduced to the verge of starvation. Flour was not to be had at any price. The rich could not help the poor. The first relief was by a vessel bound for Newfoundland, which was wrecked on Grosseisle.

With their want of education they are extremely superstitious. They believe firmly in the power of the Devil, and tell seriously of men bargaining with him, or of his fishing with them a whole season in the disguise of a man, and perhaps relate with some satisfaction some clever trick by which they outwitted him.

While many of the old can neither read or write, the young generally possess the first and perhaps both of these accomplishments. I am informed, too, that there is a desire among them to learn English, as they feel the disadvantages of being unacquainted with it. I may add that they and their English neighbors have always lived on terms of peace and kindness—and that there is no spirit of violence among them. I may say also that there is much of French courtesy among them. You never meet a boy on the road without a bow that a Parisian would not need to be ashamed of, a touch or lifting of the hat if he has one, and a polite *Bon jour*.

The English are superior in intelligence and as a class in wealth. And though they do not amalgamate with the French they have become very much assimilated to them. They occupy almost entirely Entry, Grosseisle and Bryon Islands. The French occupy Amherst, Alright and Grindstone, though there are about 30 English families mixed up with them, principally on the last mentioned. They number over 4000. They have three chapels, with as many priests, and, besides their churches have to maintain convent schools. With the failure of the fisheries of late years, the maintenance of all these has been felt a burden.

There are three Protestant churches, all small, on the islands, one at Amherst, one at Grindstone and one on Grosseisle. They have been for some years supplied by a Church of England missionary. Under the Quetec school law, they have separate schools on the two last mentioned islands.

And now a word in conclusion, as to political or civil affairs. They are divided into three parishes—Amherst, which includes Entry, Grindstone, and Alright, which includes Grosseisle and Bryon. The civil affairs of each are administered by a council of seven. The three mayors form a county council, though other-

wise they form part of the County of Gaspé, in the Province of Quebec.

In conclusion, I need not say that by my short visit to these islands I have been much interested in the place and people. Their physical appearance attracted the eye of the lover of nature; naturalists are attracted by the opportunities they afford for studying the creatures which people the land, the air and the waters; the seeker after rest and health may find here a quiet retreat from the world, and a climate conducive to vigor; the political economist may find here resources which rightly improved would yet add materially to our national wealth, while the students of man will find much to enjoy in intercourse with a simple minded and hospitable people.