

J.P. Howley and the Geological Survey of Newfoundland: REMINISCENCES of 1868

W. J. Kirwin and G. M. Story

Volume 7, Number 2, Fall 1991

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds7_2dc01

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

1198-8614 (print)

1715-1430 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Kirwin, W. J. & Story, G. M. (1991). J.P. Howley and the Geological Survey of Newfoundland: REMINISCENCES of 1868. *Newfoundland Studies*, 7(2), 173–201.

DOCUMENT

J.P. Howley and the Geological Survey of Newfoundland: *REMINISCENCES* of 1868

Edited by W.J. KIRWIN and G.M. STORY

FOR READERS OF *Newfoundland Studies* the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the Geological Survey of Canada can be marked most appropriately by a document written by the Newfoundlander who in due course was to succeed Alexander Murray as Director of the extension of that Survey to the Colony: J.P. Howley. That extension of the continental geological investigation, begun for Canada in 1842 by Sir William Logan with Murray as his principal colleague, was projected by Logan and the Government of Newfoundland and from the beginning, though quickly established as the Geological Survey of Newfoundland and responsible to the Governor-in-Council of the Colony, it was able to rely upon the technical resources and expertise of the Canadian enterprise. In rapid surveys in 1864 and 1865 Murray undertook examinations of the west coast areas of the Island, their geological structures and relationship to those of eastern Canada, also noting economically promising mineral resources. A serious injury in his field surveys in 1866 inhibited the Newfoundland work for a period and perhaps this was one of the reasons which led the veteran geologist to seek a Newfoundland assistant as the complexity of the task became apparent, for, as Murray had written in his *Report* for 1865

The difficulties to be encountered in attempting to work out the geology of this Island are of no ordinary kind, and will require time and much hard labour to do so even in the most superficial manner. What with the too general inaccessibility of the seaboard, where the best sections of the rocks are to be found; the difficulty of travelling in the interior; the absence

174 *Kirwin and Story*

of topographical maps or surveys of any kind, except of the coast, on which to place the smallest reliance; and in addition to all, the highly disturbed and altered state of the older formations, together with a very general absence of organic remains to act as guides,—the explorer, it may be admitted, has a sufficiently arduous undertaking before him (Alexander Murray and James P. Howley, *Geological Survey of Newfoundland*, London, 1881, 70).

In James Patrick Howley (1847-1918) Murray was to find an indomitable recruit, assistant and eventual successor in the most ambitious surveying enterprise of the Colony in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

The document which follows is extracted from the unpublished manuscript of Howley's *Reminiscences*, a complete, annotated edition of which is in the course of completion by the present editors, who wish to express their indebtedness to Mr David Howley of St John's for entrusting them with the work. The complete manuscript covers the years between 1868 and 1911 and it seems to have been composed just prior to the Great War of 1914-1918. The *Reminiscences* draw heavily on Howley's notebooks, itineraries, the successive annual *Reports* of the Newfoundland Geological Survey, and his capacious and retentive memory. The *Reminiscences* of the year 1868 are those of the young Howley's first season in the field, aged twenty-one. While the printed *Report* for that year presents the systematic aims and results of the season's fieldwork, Howley's parallel personal record gives us an assured and crisp depiction of the countryside, the topography, and complex enterprises (for example the lead mining at La Manche, Placentia Bay), with a skill developed by the author during decades of precise observation and the writing of official scientific reports.

1868 was clearly a pivotal year for Howley, and decisive in shaping his future career. In it he meets for the first time some of the Micmac guides who were to become his companions on many later explorations, and significant also perhaps in the development of his interest in the Beothucks; he is introduced to the practices of wilderness travel, of subsistence and survival which the traveller through the interior had perforce to master more than a century ago. Well-tested by the irritable but engaging Murray, Howley emerged from the experience as the old veteran's assistant in the following year.

We present the document with minimal annotation and in an only slightly modified transcript (indicated in square brackets), and with occasional normalization of spelling in the original manuscript. A more detailed apparatus, including introductions, maps, appendices and indexes, will be presented in the forthcoming edition of the complete *Reminiscences*.

1868.

by J.P. Howley

Beginning with the season of 1868 when I first joined the Geological Survey under the late Alexander Murray, C.M.G., F.G.S. On Saturday July 11th of that year I left St. John's to meet Mr. Murray at Placentia, travelling overland by the old Placentia road I believe via Holyrood,

Salmonier, Colinet and the S.E. mountain route. The late William Coughlan, Jr who at that date carried the overland mail to Placentia was commissioned by Mr. Murray before he left St. John's to bring along his surveying outfit, instruments, provisions etc. including a birch bark canoe. Two horses and wagons were employed, one of which I took charge of. The canoe was mounted on the other driven by Mr. Coughlan himself, who of course took the lead, I being utterly unacquainted with the road, never having travelled it previously. As we were to make a very early start in the morning, I slept at Coughlan's house on the beach¹ the night before. We were up at daylight on the morning of our departure and after disposing of breakfast commenced our journey. As we passed up the street we became the objects of much curiosity to the few early risers who were about at that time of the morning. The two loaded wagons filled with all sorts of gear, but especially the long canoe turned bottom up on which Mr. C. was mounted created quite a sensation. I was in my element. The great novelty of my new departure, the joy of the prospective exploration of the interior what I always yearned for, the freedom from trammels of city life, and the intense desire to learn something of the great unknown interior of our island, a thing I often longed for completely took possession of me. I was carried away with the prospect, and now after the lapse of so many years I still look back to that period as perhaps the happiest one of my life. I was young and strong, just entering upon my twenty first year, full of life and energy. I had the good fortune to hit upon just the career nature seemed to have designed me for. I knew that it would be a life of hardship and strenuous exertion, but what cared I, that was just the thing I coveted most. The lure of the wild took full possession of me. As we journeyed along the country roads every mile we travelled and every scene opened to our vista seemed to add zest to the charm of the situation. But to quote from my itinerary of that year which fortunately I still possess. We arrived at Topsail about 10 A.M. took a short rest to feed the horses and were soon off again, reached Holyrood at 2 P.M. and stopped for dinner. We were off again immediately after stopping only to give the horses a feed at Murphy's Half-way House, we reached Cary's Inn at Salmonier before night fall, where we remained till morning.

As we journeyed along the Salmonier road the mosquitoes were dreadful, but more especially in the wooded and more sheltered portion of the road between Murphy's and Cary's. They did lay on to us heavy as my forehead and neck gave abundant evidence. My eyes were nearly closed, and I was covered with blood. Anyone who may be burdened with a superfluity of that life giving material need never resort to Phlebotomy to get rid of the superfluous blood while there are plenty of mosquitoes around. Fortunately for me the swelling from their poisonous bites is only temporary and very soon goes down again. Next morning I was all right and ready to afford them a fresh feast.

I had a good night's sleep and rose early to continue the journey. I noticed Cary had a large iron pot in his yard filled with combustibles, turf, sods etc. which produced a constant volume of smoke and around which the cattle gathered and stood for hours together to try and get rid of the pests.

The country all along the road from Holyrood is pretty much of the same character, a succession of woods, marshes, and ponds, with some high hills in the distance to the southward, known as the Chisel Hills. Parts of the road approaching Salmonier are very beautiful, forming a perfect avenue bounded by tall fir trees.

Sunday 12th. As Coughlan was carrying the mail for Placentia Bay he could not delay a day but must keep on. Accordingly after a substantial breakfast of ham, eggs, bread and tea, we continued our journey and arrived at Colinet about noon, but finding the tide in the mouth of the river high, we had to unload and boat all our gear across to the opposite side. The empty wagons were then driven up the shore till a point was reached where it was shoal enough to ford the river. By this time, and so soon as all was loaded up again, dinner was ready at the house of old Billy Davis, of which we partook. We were off again immediately after, and when Rocky River which was low above the fall was successfully crossed without unloading we made good way along to Crokes' at the Mountain Tilt which we reached by 3 P.M. From thence it was all down hill to the

176 *Kirwin and Story*

head of the S.E. Arm, and almost level from that to Placentia, where we arrived at 6 P.M. This had been a desperately hot day, especially coming through the thick woods and needless to say we received another dreadful mauling from the mosquitoes.

At Placentia we found Mr. & Mrs. Murray anxiously looking out for our arrival. They were staying at Father Condon's. After some delay we got all our gear safely stowed away in the Telegraph store. I had tea at Father Condon's and then took up my lodgings at Miss Morris's, designated the "Virgin Hotel." They had some trouble to find room for me as every bed in the house was occupied. Mr. A.M. McKay, Weeden, & Waddel, of the Telegraph Staff and Mr. Bellairs, an Engineer sent down here by Sandford Fleming to traverse the country from east to west, with a view to ascertain the feasibility of constructing a railroad across the island in connection with Mr. Fleming's pet scheme of a short line route to the Atlantic. After a while a bed was improvised for me in a little cupboard off one of the rooms where I had scarcely room to turn round. I was glad, however, to get any place to rest my weary bones after the long drive and the exposure to heat and mosquitoes. I slept like a top.

Monday 13th. I was up pretty early and took a walk to see the city. It is a quaint old place, and possesses, perhaps, more evidences of its antiquity than any settlement in Newfoundland. The large open roadstead outside the beach is very much exposed to westerly and southwesterly winds, and is a poor place for vessels to ride, but from thence a narrow gut deep enough for schooners and small steamers to enter leads in through the beach to two long and beautiful arms of the sea, termed respectively the N.E. and S.E. Arms. Only the first is utilized as a harbour being fine and deep, while the approach to the other is through a shoal channel where the tide sweeps in and out with tremendous force.

These two Arms reach inland several miles. The great shingle beach which fronts the sea is about 2 1/2 miles long and quite wide in the central part. It is perfectly level and it is upon this beach the houses are built. Near the central part of the beach, just behind the town, a high hill arises, known as Dickson's Hill. It is surrounded at its base by the beach and was undoubtedly at one time an island.

The hills on the north side of the harbour and gut are very high and rugged. One conspicuous peak, Castle rock Hill, which overlooks the town and harbour was once strongly fortified during the French occupation of Placentia. At the southern end of the great beach called the Block House there once existed another gut leading into the South East Arm but this has long since been filled up by the force of the sea outside heaving in the loose shingle or beach stones. The roads across this beach are very narrow but level and dry. Many of the houses have quite an ancient appearance, but there are several fine ones of modern date.

Since the Anglo-American Cable Company have established an office here in the large old house formerly owned and occupied by Mr. Sweetman, merchant of the place, Placentia is looking up a bit. As everybody knows it was the Old French Capital of the island, established about 1660 and possesses an unique and most interesting history, but this has so often formed the theme of lectures, Newspaper articles, poems etc. I shall not enter into that subject here. Suffice it to say it was never conquered from the French, though several unsuccessful attempts to do so were made. Finally it was [ceded] by the Treaty of Utrecht with all the other French possessions in America to the English.

After breakfast we got Mr. Albert Bradshaw with his boat and took a trip around the S.E. Arm examining the rocks. The day was beautifully fine and the mosquitoes busy as usual. We visited several places where attempts to mine lead ores had been made by Mr. Chas. Fox Bennett, our veteran and enterprising mining magnate. Although good samples of ore were obtained at these places, the veins were not well defined or sufficiently prolific and the enterprise failed. Copper had also been worked here to some extent. The ores were very rich and very beautiful bornite or erubescite, contained in quartz veins, but not in sufficient quantity to prove remunerative. We obtained many good specimens of each place. Mr. Murray took observations and bearings to fix the position of those localities on the map. It was late in the evening when we returned. I dined with Mr.

and Mrs. Murray at Father Condons, and spent the remainder of the evening labelling and packing the specimens and preparing for a start in the morning for Branch in St. Mary's Bay.

Tuesday 14th. Started on foot about 7 A.M. taking with us two Placentia men, Wm. Phipard and Wm. Kelly to carry packs, instruments etc.

The day was very warm and fine, but when we reached the high land of the Cape Shore overlooking Placentia Bay, we had a nice cool breeze off the water, which kept the mosquitoes at bay.

The path, for it was merely a foot path which led along shore, was pretty rough in places but the country was fairly level and free from woods. This afforded us a fine view both seaward and inland. Merasheen, Long, and Red Islands and several others were plainly visible, and nearer the shore the ugly looking Virgin rocks, over which the waves broke furiously. These rocks situated as they are right in the track of boats and vessels going in and out the bay are very dangerous to navigation especially in thick weather.

On the land side the country was generally level, no prominent hills worth mentioning anywhere visible. This part of the shore is very nice, the soil is good and supports an abundant crop of wild grass. It would form an admirable run for cattle and sheep in summertime.

We reached Ship Cove early in the afternoon and remained here for the night. The distance travelled from Placentia was about fifteen miles. On the way we passed Great and Little Barachois where there are only one or two families residing and all appeared to be quite comfortable. At Ship Cove there are three families. We were given comfortable quarters at Brennans. These people were well off, had a nice clearing, and all possessed from 10 to 12 head of cattle. They had plenty of rich milk and delicious fresh butter. I heard Mr. Murray say he never tasted better. The Brennans were also doing well with fish. Old man Brennan told us many interesting tales of the sea etc. but that which took my fancy was a story of buried treasure down at Gull Cove near Cape St. Mary's. Many years ago it was said a pirate ship put in there and hid some treasure in the bank but never returned for it. After several years had elapsed, two men supposed to have been of the crew, one an Italian, the other a Swede, did return. They hired a guide to go with them and travelled by land along shore to the place. They had maps or charts on which the location of the hidden treasure was marked. They brought along picks and shovels, and when arrived at Gull Cove, they despatched their guide across to Branch ostensibly to procure a jar of rum. When he returned they had finished their work and covered up the hole again. He never found out whether they got anything or not. As to the rum they scarcely touched it but gave it nearly all to their guide. As to their actually being there there can be very little doubt for they stopped a night at Brennans house and I have had the story confirmed by several other reliable persons. Old Mr. O'Rielly, in charge of the Cape [St. Mary's] lighthouse, was one who also told me they stayed a night with him.

The geology of this part of the shore is similar to that of Placentia, the rocks met with being all hard flinty slates and quartzites of the old Huronian Series. The highest land passed over according to Mr. Murray's aneroid was about 456 ft.

Wednesday 15th. Another beautiful fine day. We got the Brennan's to take us in boat along shore starting about 7 A.M., but only reached as far as Patrick's Cove, some 5 miles when the wind sprung up and blew strong from the s.w. which was dead against us, so we had to put in here and tramp the remaining 10 miles to Distress (now St. Brides). On our way from Ship Cove to Patrick's Cove by water we passed Gooseberry, where a few liviers reside. The cliffs were very rugged and broken. Innumerable sea birds were seen perched on the rocks² or wheeling about overhead emitting all sorts of discordant cries.

We stopped at place called Cuslot River to try for some trout. There are here some nice pools below the bridge and we secured quite a few fish. Some of these were roasted before the fire on flatstones, but as we had no salt they were not very palatable. In passing over a ridge not far from Distress we saw some very red slate which by its cleavage Mr. Murray judged would make good roofing material. We stopped to examine it. All at once Mr. M. turned to me and asked if I brought along his big iron maul. I said I did not see it and told him I took everything they gave me at

178 *Kirwin and Story*

Bennett's store. At this he took to swearing and such a volume of oaths as he poured out I never heard before. He swore at everybody and everything. The two poor fishermen actually slunk away appalled, they never heard anything to equal it and all about so trivial a matter. This was perhaps Mr. Murray's greatest failing. He certainly could swear on all occasions, not like a trooper, Oh, no! but like an old time man-of-war's man of which he was a genuine specimen. In course of time I got so used to him I did not mind it in the least. It simply was second nature with him, he could not help it. We actually had to laugh at him sometimes, particularly when swearing at the mosquitoes. He would even laugh himself when he realized the ridiculous nature of his performance. I once heard him say he wished he had never learned to swear or smoke.

Near Distress we came across a dark red limestone holding obscure fossils. It strikes along shore for a considerable distance, and from what we could learn comes up again near Cape St. Mary. It underlays the settlement of Distress and the soil there produced from its disintegration is exceedingly rich.

The people of this place are very well to do, have lots of fine cattle and sheep, and grow excellent crops of all kinds. They have done exceptionally well with the fish, in fact better than for the past twenty years or more. They use nothing but bultows and cod-nets here. Some of them have already 300 qtls. ashore. One man brought me through his stage to see the fish and I must confess I never saw so much green fish together before. Every place was full, and all the puncheons and barrels he could muster were full of codslivers to overflowing. He showed me a piece of a large Halibut he had in salt. I asked him if he caught many of them. He said, "yes, quite a few." I asked what he did with them. He said, "threw them away or salted them down for the dogs." What a pity to have this fine fish wasted when we never see one in the St. John's market.

It is true they don't receive or require any poor relief here, but they might be much better off than they are. There is no trouble clearing the land, which is very fertile, and there is grazing in abundance for any number of cattle and sheep. The fishery here is always good no matter how it goes elsewhere. It is so near the famous fishing ground around Cape St. Mary's, and all the people are able to purchase their own supplies. Still they barely keep from poverty. Any shrewd industrious person or family, with a knowledge of farming as well as fishing, could not fail to do well here. The inhabitants have another great advantage in that they obtain plenty of wreck timber now and then. In fact all their houses are constructed of such material. They never dreamt of having an abundant supply of limestone though their houses rest on it, and they use slabs of it for their hearthstones and door steps. It goes without saying that the lime used in building their chimneys etc. is all imported. These limestones belong to a more recent and newer series to the rocks seen at Placentia and along shore. They are of Lower Cambrian age. Its colour is usually brick red and anyone would easily detect it by the peculiar pitted surface caused by weathering. We stayed at a Mrs Conway's for the night and were made very comfortable. All the people here are of Irish descent and speak with a broad brogue. Indeed one would imagine himself in the heart of Tipperary or Waterford, so little have they changed since their forefathers settled here. They are kind and hospitable and generous to a fault.

Thursday 16th. We left Distress early in the morning to cross overland to Branch, and had a hard tramp over barrens and marshes. The country is nearly level with scarcely any woods except occasional patches of tucking bushes (Tuckamores). There are tons and tons of wild hay going to waste. Of course nearer the shores the people from both Distress and Branch cut a quantity of this for the use of their cattle.

The country inland looks very nice, as though it were all cultivated land. I believe it is capable of supporting any number of cattle and could be made to supply all our markets with fresh beef and mutton.

We arrived at Branch about 1.30 P.M. and put up at the house of Mr. John English, a former member of parliament for the District of Placentia and St. Mary's. The family, which was pretty considerable, were all very kind and made our stay very comfortable indeed.

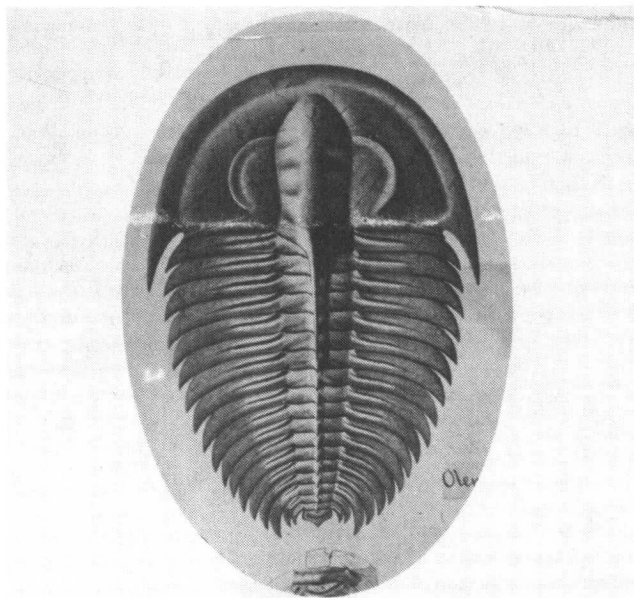
The Cove or Harbour of Branch is an open roadstead very much exposed to south and east

winds. At the head of the Cove is a fine sand beach through which a narrow gut leads into a basin formed at the mouth of Branch River. It is here the fishing boats find shelter. The River is a considerable stream though shallow. It runs through a wide beautiful valley and has many extensive flats of interval land. These alluvial lands are very fertile and mostly cleared and cultivated by the inhabitants. They yield excellent hay and root crops, some of the people had from 12 to 15 lbs. of potatoes set. A few of the farms are quite extensive. All the people have more or less cattle and sheep, several averaging from 10 to 14 head of the former. They also have pigs and poultry and are extremely comfortable. Of course, milk, butter and eggs were in abundance and we fared well while here. They have done well here with the fish as at Distress. In fact, they always do well being so near the best fishing ground in Newfoundland. The houses are substantial, neat and well-kept, being also chiefly constructed from driftwood, the product of the numerous wrecks so plentiful around this ocean graveyard. An air of comfort and abundance was evident on all sides.

In the afternoon we walked out along shore to examine the cliffs, which are here chiefly composed of light greenish and reddish shales forming high cliffs. These shales are characterized by the presence of numerous large well preserved fossil fishes or rather crustaceans, called trilobites. They have been given the distinctive name of *Paradoxides Bennetii* by Palaeontologists, from the circumstance that it was Mr. C.F. Bennett of St. John's who first brought specimens to the notice of scientists abroad.

We saw several and succeeded in getting out a few good ones, but the rocks are so badly cleaved and shattered that it is next to impossible to obtain a perfect specimen. Good heads and tails and segments of the body can be had in abundance.

The fossil is peculiar. It is a jointed lobed shell fish somewhat resembling a lobster in parts of its construction, but still more like a king crab. The head is wide and flat with prominent cheeks. The central part of the body is divided longitudinally into three lobes, hence its name Tri-lobite. Each lobe consists of a jointed shell which enabled the animal when living to curl itself up like a ball. A fringe of pointed spines extends all around the body and tail, but not around the head. I give here a figure of the animal for the better illustration of the foregoing description.



A photograph from J.P. Howley's collection.

180 *Kirwin and Story*

Friday 17th. Foggy and raining nearly all day. We procured some more fossils, but did not succeed in getting many good ones. It would require the use of blasting materials and much time to get out large blocks of the rock and then carefully break them up. However, our friend and entertainer, Mr. English, had several good ones which he was but too happy to give us.

None of the boats could get out to the fishing grounds to-day owing to the rough sea heaving in. I went about a good deal amongst the people, visiting several of their houses and found them all very friendly. I found many of them were old dealers³ of my fathers and were pleased to see me.

Saturday 18th. Still foggy and wet. One of the English's sons came with me out on the north side of the cove to a place called Beckford, near the eastern point of the entrance, about two miles out from the beach. We found several more fossils on this side, also the red limestone of Distress. After tea I again visited some of the houses and made myself quite at home. When they found I played a little on the flute and violin they were charmed. I had with me a small B flat flute which I used to play when a member of the St. Bonaventure's College band. Of course the music was the signal for a dance, and I was kept going all the rest of my spare time here at one house one night and another the next. Didn't they enjoy the fun! They were all "au fait" in the terpsichorean art, as most Irish and people of Irish descent are. Happy souls, theirs was a life of peace and plenty and innocent enjoyment to be sure. I took a great fancy to them all especially as some of the gentler sex were very comely maidens indeed, and I was just at that age when young men became most susceptible to feminine charms.

I noticed a very peculiar accent among these people. At first, hearing the English family, I thought it might belong only to them, but I soon found it was general throughout all the inhabitants of the place. It is impossible to describe it. It is unlike anything else I have heard elsewhere and is certainly a distinctive feature of the settlement of *Bwanch*.

Sunday 19th. Fine warm day. We intended to hire a boat and run up the Bay to Colinet but as it was still foggy and blowing outside with a heavy sea running, we had to give up the idea. Mr. Murray was no Sabbatarian, Sunday and Monday were alike to him, so after packing up our fossils and leaving them with Mr. English to be forwarded to St. John's we commenced our return journey overland, so after bidding all our kind friends good-bye we were off. It was very warm till we got on the higher levels where the breeze from the sea greatly tempered the atmosphere and kept us comfortably cool.

We stopped at one pond to try for trout and boil our kettle. Saw a couple of old partridge and some young ones. We arrived back at Distress about 3.30 P.M. and put up at Mrs. Conways. Here we heard that a large timber ship had gone in the bay leaking badly and was ashore at Point Verde. She was already gutted and boats loaded with lumber and towing large balks were continually passing out the Bay. We also heard a man named Doyle of Gooseberry found a large whale dead in his cod trap and succeeded in getting it ashore at Ship Cove, and expected to make quite a nice penny from the oil and bone.

We hired a boat to take us up to Placentia in the morning. The people caught very little fish since we were here last. After dinner I went out with one of the Conway boys to Cross Point to see a vein of peculiar rock at Cross Point Cove, north side. From the description given I took it to be a quartz vein, but it turned out to be sulphate of Barytes of a pale pinkish colour. This mineral when pure and free from iron is of economic importance, being used for many purposes in the arts. When ground fine it is often mixed with white lead for paint. It is an exceedingly heavy mineral and on that account is sometimes called heavy spar. The vein was about three feet thick and runs across the point. The cliffs here are some 300 or 400 feet high and the mineral runs up to the top, so that the quantity here is considerable. I also discovered the Branch shales here again, but they did not seem to contain fossils.

Monday 20th. Wind strong from the N.E. We left in a skiff but could not get along owing to the head wind, and when only about a mile from Distress had to put into La Perch, take to the land again and foot it back. We got as far as Patrick's Cove all right, but had to halt here and take a rest. Mr. Murray's lame leg gave out and became very stiff and painful all at once. After a good rest we

Howley's Reminiscences 181

pushed on for Ship Cove and though Mr. Murray was suffering much pain all the time he held on bravely and we reached our destination just before Sunset, here we stopped for the night again at Brennans.

After getting something to eat I went out to see the dead whale on the beach. It was a huge monster measuring 61 feet in length. They had it cut up in large pieces which were strewn upon the beach as they could not get casks enough to hold half the fat, consequently they were losing much of the oil. In their haste to cut the fat off they left a good deal adhering to the carcass, this was given to the women and boys about who recovered most of it and made considerable money therefrom. It was expected the yield of oil would be at least 4 tuns.

We saw several boats passing down the bay coming from the wreck, loaded with lumber and each one towing a few barks behind. Some who came in here gave us all the particulars about the wreck and the way the fishermen stripped her. They averred that the Little Placentia men were the worst wreckers, carrying off everything they could lay hands upon. When the vessel came up the bay on Thursday last all the fishing boats on the ground hauled up their anchors and followed her in, just like a flock of vultures after a wounded horse. In ten hours after she struck there was not a rope or a piece of timber left on her.

Tuesday 21st. Favourable wind at last. Got Brennan's skiff to run us up to Placentia. It was a beautiful day and we had a fine time along. I was seated in the bow all the way playing the flute which the crew greatly appreciated. It sounded very well on the water and I knew just what tunes would appeal to their tastes.

As we passed close to the stranded vessel at Point Verde, we witnessed a great sight. There were a couple of hundred men on her deck cutting and ripping her up to get at the cargo. Her masts and rigging were all gone and nothing now left but the hulk. She was surrounded by boats from all parts of the bay. As we approached they set up a cheer and stopped a few moments to scrutinize us. Billy Kelly, who was a comical genius, called out to them that there was another vessel ashore down near Distress and that we had the Capt. and mate aboard. At this they all stopped and stared at us uncertain whether to believe the story or not.

We arrived safely at Placentia all well after just a week's absence. Apropos of the wreck we afterwards heard many amusing stories about it. Such was the state of excitement aboard that it was a miracle some of the looters were not killed. Men would climb aloft cut off the rigging and heavy blocks and let them fall amongst the crowd on deck. One fellow had crawled out to the extremity of the main yard arm and was in the act of cutting away a block when someone cut the stays from the other end of the yard, which immediately cockbilled, with the result that the first fellow became suspended in the air, head down and had all he could do to get back to a safe position. There were many such ludicrous scenes witnessed and it is extraordinary how they managed to escape injury.

While on the subject of wrecks I might relate a few other instances told me by my uncle, Alex. Burke, in Little Placentia. A few years previous a large vessel became embayed and in the dense fog ran ashore at a place called Marquise just on the outside part of the beach at Little Placentia. The Capt. and crew succeeded in getting ashore and immediately the work of salvage commenced. Amongst the cargo were some pianos, one of which Mr. Burke purchased at a ridiculously low figure. The people about had little use for such luxuries, so when the salvaged cargo was sold for the benefit of the underwriters, there were few bids for the pianos. When the cargo was nearly all out, to the astonishment of the people engaged in unloading one fine morning on visiting the place, lo and behold! the wreck had mysteriously disappeared. There was no sign of her anywhere, and as the sea had been comparatively smooth it was scarcely possible she could have broken up, in any case, some of the wreckage would be visible in the neighbourhood, but no, there was nothing to indicate that this could have taken place.

The mystery was not solved for several days. Then it transpired that a boat coming in from the Cape grounds found the vessel drifting out the bay. She had floated off the sands at a high spring tide during the night. The fishermen got aboard and attached lines to her and succeeded in towing her away up the bay amongst the islands, I think to Haystack on Long Isd. Here they ran her ashore

182 *Kirwin and Story*

and soon finished the work of looting the remainder of the cargo.

Still another story of Mr. Burke's was that a vessel called the *Reine de Provence* became caught in the Artic ice one spring and was driven well up Placentia Bay. It is of course an unusual occurrence for this bay to become ice-blocked but such has occurred occasionally, especially when a large body of Gulf ice has been driven along the southern coast, and a gale of s. wind has forced it inland, filling the bays on that side. The vessel became so wedged in and in such danger of being crushed that the crew abandoned her and made their way to the nearest land. As soon as the people ashore heard of the fact a number of them went off on the ice and boarded her. In overhauling the cargo they found a case filled with bottles of some kind of liquor. They did not know what it was but upon breaking a bottle and tasting it, the liquor tasted good. As the weather was very rough and cold, they concluded it would go better hot, so filling a kettle they boiled it on the galley stove and had a great booze. It was champagne. It quickly got to their heads setting them nearly crazy. They next came across a large wooden case containing a piano, which they opened. Finding the instrument emitted sweet music, one fellow took a marlinspike and began to hammer on the keyboard while the rest indulged in a dance. Then one chap took a fancy to the beautiful carved rosewood front of the instrument and said he should have that to make a cupboard door, but a dispute arose between him and another as to who should have it. After a fisticuff encounter over it, they finally agreed to divide it and take a part each. Procuring a saw somewhere, they cut the piano in two. But the weather now having become worse and their position critical they had to leave in a hurry and make the best of their way back to land. I did not hear what the sequel was but presumably the vessel was crushed and sank.

Placentia and St. Mary's Bays are full of tales of wrecks and mysterious happenings, which would fill a large volume to relate.

Mr. W. Tarahan and I went off trouting out to Freshwater and caught about two dozen beauties, but we got an awful scurging from the mosquitoes. I met Mr. D.J. Henderson at the Virgin Hotel. He came from St. John's to buy the wreck. Mr. Garrett Dooley had been here on the same quest but returned before we arrived.

Wednesday 22nd. Fine warm day, wrote home. After dinner I walked out on the south side of the harbour about two miles to the cove where the cables are landed⁴ and took notes of the rocks in that locality. Mr. Murray remained at home to rest his leg.

Thursday 23rd. A beautiful fine day, preparing for a start to-morrow, by the Little Placentia Packet boat to proceed up the bay. After dinner I crossed the gut and climbed Castle Hill where I saw the remains of the old French Fort on the top. The ground had been levelled off. The old stone wall of the fort, now overgrown with grass and weeds, is still quite visible. Here and there the embrasures where formerly the cannon were placed can be seen by the hollows or depressions in the wall. The fort was square and mounted several large guns. These had all disappeared having been thrown down the steep hill where some of them are still observed half buried in the debris, a few also, are down amongst the houses on the beach. The base of the square stone tower with an archway through it, presumably the magazine, still remains standing. It was well built, the walls being about 3 feet thick and the [masonry] in excellent preservation. This battery was splendidly situated, commanding, as it did, not only the town but the whole roadstead outside. It must have been, and indeed as history tells us, quite impregnable. This with old Fort Louis at the Gut rendered Placentia Harbour a great strong hold which defied repeated attacks from the English fleets. As I have already stated Placentia was never captured.

Friday 24th. Left Placentia at 6 A.M. in the Packet boat, but had it very calm for a time. We got into Little Placentia about 11 A.M. Here we went ashore for an hour. I with the Packet man Murphy walked down to Mr. Burke's who was postmaster here. Had my dinner with my uncle and his family. Meanwhile a nice breeze having sprung up we hurried back and got underweigh for La Manche. We did not get there till midnight however, and had to stay on board all night.

Saturday 25th. At daylight I went on deck and had a look around the mine. There was no one stirring at so early an hour. After about an hours walking around I returned to the boat and took

a stretch on one of the benches in the Forecastle and as I had very little rest during the night I now slept for a couple of hours hard as my bed was. About 7 A.M. Mr. and Mrs. Cohu, the manager and his wife came down on the wharf and invited us all up to breakfast. They have a large house well built, but it is nearly all taken up with the shop and stores. Their living apartments were quite small and cramped. Most of the rest of the day was spent getting our things ashore and assorting them. We then had a further look around the mine and watching the men dressing and cleaning the lead ore. It was all very interesting.

Mr. Murray's two Indians who were to meet us here as soon as they heard we had arrived soon put in an appearance. They had been camped about a mile inside. They were beginning to think we were not coming and were just thinking of going back to Conne, from whence they came.

Joe Bernard, the older man, was about 35 years of age, a thick set swarthy individual possessing a heavy beard and moustache which is unusual with Indians. John Barrington the other was a much younger man about 24 years of age. He was tall and slight, nearly 6 feet, clean face with no hair whatever about it except a great crop on his head which like Joe's was jet black. John being but a half breed was not nearly so dark as Joe. His features were rather handsome with most beautiful dark brown eyes. He was a lithe active fellow with loose limbs and I noticed his hands were as delicate as a lady's. I took to John from the first but never cared so much for Joe. They were however, both very friendly and otherwise like ordinary white men. Mr. Murray supplied them with a camp and provisions for a few days.

Sunday 26th. Rain and foggy nearly all day. Got our things ready for the woods. We were bound up to Piper's Hole at the extreme head of the bay intending to ascend and survey the large river flowing into that inlet. As it cleared off somewhat in the afternoon we all, that is, Mr. and Mrs. Cohu, Mr. and Mrs. Murray, young Harry, Cohu's brother, and myself took a walk around the hills. The country about the mine is very rugged and extremely barren.

Monday 27th. Fine warm day I had a good look around again. Watched the men washing and dressing the ore for shipment and learnt a good deal about the mine from the men. In the afternoon Mr. M. and I went out measuring and making a plan of the location. He also took observations of the sun to ascertain the correct time and establish a true meridian.

Tuesday 28th. I spent nearly all day surveying. The day was fine and the mosquitos were of course in evidence. So far I had no opportunity of seeing the mine underground but was determined to do so before we left. Of course I dare not attempt it without a guide and I was not there any time when Harry Cohu or the men were going down.

Wednesday 29th. Fine warm day again. We spent all the forenoon surveying around the mine. At 1 O'clock Harry and I went down in the mine and all through it. We had to dress in miners suits of canvas, as the underground works were wet and dirty. On our heads we wore felt hats very hard and heavy so that should any loose fragments of rock fall upon us the hard hat would prevent them from hurting our heads. We were each provided with two tallow candles, one of which was stuck on the front of our hats with soft clay and lit as we commenced to descend. It was no easy matter for one unaccustomed to going underground, more especially for the first time. Of course Harry went ahead and warned me of the dangerous spots or broken rounds in the ladders. These were almost perpendicular and lay so close to the rock wall that one could barely find room for the tips of the toes and fingers of the hands to grasp. At one point we came to the end of the ladders and landed on a very narrow ledge of rock, still some 60 or 70 feet from the bottom. Along this we crept leaning against the solid wall for support. At length we reached the bottom about 125 feet below the surface. We then walked along very cautiously as there were still some danger spots, especially when we had to cross an open shaft on a single narrow plank 14 or 15 feet long with a hole of 50 or 60 feet beneath. It was enough to try anybody's nerves not used to it.

One shaft is down to a depth of 180 feet below the surface and being also below sea level is now filled with water and had to be abandoned. Harry goes down every day at 1 O'clock to see how things are getting along and measure the work done by the miners. We saw them at work blasting out the lode at the end of the main drift which was an interesting sight.

184 *Kirwin and Story*

Having now seen the mine both above and below ground, I shall endeavour to give a full description of it. The country around about La Manche is very rugged and hilly. From the small Cove of that name is a narrow inlet between the hills which is rather an open harbour except with off shore winds. From the head of the cove a deep narrow ravine runs inland in a northwest direction which slopes gradually upwards for a distance of over a mile. It is in this ravine the lode or vein is situated. It runs straight inland from the cove and a small stream follows its course issuing from some ponds inside emptying into the latter.

The hills on both sides of the ravine are quite steep till the high ground is reached when they die down to the general level of the country. The miners houses are all built on the slope on the eastside of the ravine, except that of the Manager which is in the hollow near the shore of the cove, where a fine wharf is built. A tramway runs from the mine down to this wharf, worked by water power derived from the stream. Six different shafts have been sunk at intervals along the course of the vein to depths of from 125 to 180 feet. Over each of these, sheds are erected and on one side another larger shed contains the hoisting winch worked by horses. Just in front of the managers house is the washing floor which is a long gently sloping planked platform with several troughs at the upper side sunk below the level of the floor. The higher side of this platform where the men work has a shed roof over it. Under this shed are several jigs, which are oblong box like troughs filled with water. Into these fits another box with a wire sieve bottom. These jigs are provided with handles like pump handles by which the boxes when filled with crushed ore are raised and dropped, or "jigged," as it is termed, so as to allow the water to surge up through and wash the ore clean. The ore is then crushed fine in a hopper shaped iron trough, with a large iron wedge in the centre. This is moved rapidly back and forth crushing the vein material against the sides of the trough. The fine material then drops down upon a round sieve which is continuously revolved. When all the finer material passes through, and the coarse hops off to one side. This then goes to the jigs to be washed, while the finer material is spread along the washing floor near the top where it is turned over and over with shovels while a constant stream of water passes through it, washing away down the slope all the finer or lighter material, leaving the heavy lead behind clean and sparkling. It is passed from one trough to another undergoing the same process till quite clean and free from rock material. It is then shovelled into casks, usually old kerosene casks, and headed up for export. These hold about 15 cwt. each. The coarser material after being jigged is hand-picked and all the lumps of ore termed "prill" taken out. The whole process of crushing and washing is done by water-power obtained from the ponds inside. The water is carried in an overhead wooden flume to the crusher and tables, and has sufficient head to operate all the machinery.

Close by the crusher are situated the forge and carpenters shop where drills are sharpened and all repairs attended to. Of the six vertical shafts along the course of the vein they are only working No. 5 at present. The ore is hoisted from the mine by the winch in large iron buckets, attached to a long steel cable. This latter is passed around a large wooden drum. While one bucket is being hoisted the other goes down to be refilled and so on. The winch is worked by horse power, a long beam stretches across the bottom of the winch to one end of which the horse is tackled and is driven around in a circle so that by means of cog-wheels the rope over the drum is wound up, and the bucket full of ore brought to the surface. The horse is then turned and made to travel in the opposite direction. Then the bucket which has just been emptied descends and the full one comes up. The poor horse looks stupid from constantly travelling thus in a circle. There is another small washer at the mouth of the shaft where the larger stuff just as it comes to the surface is washed and the bigger lumps of prill are picked out, while the rest goes to the crusher. At No. 3 shaft there is a bell to call the miners to work and dinner etc.

The vein or lode carrying the galena is almost entirely composed of calcspar, with here and there some pinkish barytes and lumps of quartz. It averages about 3 1/2 feet in width and runs very straight as far as it has been traced, about two miles from its outcrop at the cove. Work was commenced at the water's edge and a level carried along the lode. It has now been worked out to a distance of about one quarter of a mile. The vein goes down nearly vertically with but a slight

incline westward. It has only as yet been worked down to sea level, but with the aid of steam pumps to keep down the water might be continued to almost any depth. The galena can be distinctly seen running all along through the spar on the floor of the mine. It is in a continuous string varying in thickness from a few inches to over half a foot. The vein material is quite soft and very easily drilled and blasted out. Occasionally large cavities occur in it generally lined with beautiful quartz and amethystine crystals. Usually these vughs, as they are called, contain large masses of pure prill ore. Very rich yellow copper ore, Chalcocite, are sometimes met with and some beautiful green malachite, but neither are in appreciable quantity. The origin of the vein is quite clear. A break or fault having occurred in the strata caused by some great disturbance, by which the rocks were parted and then violently rubbed against each other, as the smooth even polished foot wall indicates, the intervening space became filled in with broken debris, and the spar with its contained metallic contents was subsequently filled in by water, percolating through it. Heat and various chemical processes precipitated the galena while the process of filling was taking place. It is a well-known axiom that the various metallic substances which may be in a state of solution have an affinity or attraction for each other and will come together when not hindered by foreign substances. Thus the solutions containing the metallic salts in filtering through the porous rock sought each other as it were, and lodged in cavities and open spaces. A trap or igneous dyke crosses the lode at right angles just above No. 4 shaft, but the vein cuts through this also indicating that the break and formation of the lode was of subsequent date to the igneous intrusion.

There are at present only about twenty men and boys at work here. The surface men are paid by the day but the underground miners work by contract receiving £8. [unc] per fathom for the work of excavating the vein. Each fathom must be 4 feet wide, 6 feet high, and 10 feet along the lode. It takes 10 days to work out a fathom. Only 6 men are at present at this work, taking 8 hour shifts, and as they must pay for their own candles and the sharpening of their drills, they earn but small wages.

The geology of the country about La Manche is still Huronian. The hard greenish feldsite slates of the series occupy all the country hereabout.

Thursday 30th. Spent nearly all day continuing the survey of the mine. Carried our measurements halfway across to Trinity Bay. The country all the way is very hilly and broken, and perfectly barren and studded with small ponds in every direction. We crossed the place where the proposed railway is to run. It appeared to me no easy matter to find a feasible line here. The hills are so steep and close together with deep narrow valleys between. I feel sure it will cost a deal of money to cut and fill in constructing any line here.

The crusher was at work to-day for the first time since we came here. I had a good look at it and witnessed the whole process of crushing and washing the ore.

Friday 31st. Rather dull to-day with strong breeze from the s.w. Mr. Murray not feeling well, staid in doors all day plotting his work. Joe and I went out measuring distances and taking heights of surrounding hills, one of which was over 700 feet above sea level. We had not gone far when it came to rain hard so we were obliged to turn back. It cleared off again in the afternoon when we went on with our work.

Capt. Bradshaw came in with a load of coal from Sydney about 1 O'clock. The Capt. told us that Reciprocity had been renewed between the United States and Prince Edward Island,⁵ and that the Nova Scotians were furious about it.

Saturday, Aug. 1st. Blowing and raining hard all the forenoon. Measured the distances apart of the various shafts. At dusk Mr. Blackadder's boat, which is to convey us up to Black River, came in. She is a nice little craft and had been one of the boats of the ship "Summer" wrecked at Placentia last fall. Mr. B. had her decked and the top sides raised. She was schooner rigged and has a snug little cabin, though very small. She is only 21 feet long by 7 wide. Mr. Chas. Chambers of Buffet, Long Island, fitted her up, and rigged her, and he was now in charge. Chambers is engaged at present building a Telegraph station at Black River, of which Mr. Blackadder, now at Come-by-Chance is to take charge.

186 *Kirwin and Story*

Sunday 2nd. Dull, foggy and raining nearly all day. Did not go out. Went to bed early to be ready for a start in the morning.

Monday 3rd. Still dull and foggy but wind fair for Piper's Hole. Got all on board Mr. Blackadder's boat and started about noon. Had a fine time and nice fair wind for about 3 hours, but it died away gradually and became calm before we reached Sound Island, three miles from Black River, and we did not get in till nearly dark. Sent the two Indians on in the canoe to Black River to put up camps and have all ready by the time we reached there.

While becalmed to-day in the bay we witnessed a strange sight. Away ahead of us we saw a great commotion in the water, which when we drew near proved to be caused by an immense school of porpoises, gamboling in the water. Every now and then one would jump straight up several feet in the air, turn a summerset and plunge headlong downward again. One after another performed the same feat. The whole line came towards us in this fashion making the water fly so as to resemble a line of breakers.

The fishermen said this was a sure presage of a storm usually coming from the direction in which they were heading, which in this case was about S.E. We got to Black River about dark. There are no houses here at present, but a crew of men are engaged erecting the new Telegraph Station. There was also a gang of line repairers encamped here. Chambers and his men had also a large tent. As Mr. and Mrs. Murray occupied one of ours, and the Indians the other, I took up my quarters in Mr. Chambers's large tent. Our bed consisted of fir boughs spread in the inner part. There were only three occupants, Chambers, the cook and myself. This was my very first experience of camp life and a bough bed.

Tuesday 4th. I got up at daylight after a poor night's rest. I suppose the novelty of my first night in camp and the hardness of the bed prevented my sleeping.

After breakfast, which I cooked myself, and which consisted of fried ham, bread and tea, the two Indians and I went over to Brown's, Sound Island, in the canoe and got a punt with a sail and proceeded across to a place called North Harbour, where lived a man named Emberly. His was the only family here. He had a nice clearing, good house, and quite a lot of cattle. We got some beautiful fresh butter from him, and plenty of milk to drink. We then returned to Brown's and back in to Black River in the punt, as it blew too hard for our canoe.

Sound Island is a barren, rocky place, some 3 or 4 miles long. It lies close over near the western shore of the bay separated from the mainland by a narrow channel, called the Sound. There are but two small settlements on the island, both on the northern [end] and close to one another.

Old man Brown is well off and has a fine house, does a considerable business supplying the fishermen around here. He has a large shop and store and has a good deal of fish collected. He also owns two fine schooners, one of which he built himself. The land here is very poor and rocky and there are but a few small clearings anywhere. The people go away up Piper's Hole where there is some good land to make their gardens, grow their vegetables and hay etc. Here they cut large quantities of wild hay and bring it down in their boats after the fishing season is over. But most of them are poorly off depending almost entirely on the fishery, which up to this time has not been very good. What little they did catch had to go for food whilst engaged at it. Their prospects for the coming winter are poor indeed.

Hollett, who lives in the second cove, is also a supplying merchant and has two beautiful schooners built by himself and lives in a fine house. The rocks forming Sound Island are rather peculiar. They consist chiefly of a pearly gray slate, possessing a silky lustre, are somewhat greasy to the feel and weather blueish gray. Some of them make excellent hone-stones.

Wednesday 5th. Mr. and Mrs. Murray and the Indians went over to Sound Island in Brown's skiff, where the former remained all night. The Indians returned at dusk in the canoe. I spent my day looking around the place, caught some small trout and shot one twillick. I had Mr. Murray's tent all to myself to night.

The arm, or bay, into which Black River flows is a round basin shut in from the sea and is an admirable harbour. Sound Island outside and a small peninsula at the mouth renders it completely

Howley's Reminiscences 187

landlocked. It is on the little peninsula we are encamped and where the office is being built. It is thickly wooded all round with fair sized fir and spruce trees. Our camp is on an old clearing and very nicely situated. The soil here is rich and deep. Black River at its mouth is a wide boulder-bestrewn stream which carries a considerable flow of water. When the tide is up it is quite deep near the mouth and there are many nice salmon and trout pools further up. It is crossed by the Telegraph line not far from the salt water from whence the line continues to follow the north side of Piper's Hole Arm up to its head.

Thursday 6th. Fine warm day. Mr. and Mrs. Murray returned about 11 A.M. they then started in the canoe with the Indians for the mouth of Piper's Hole river. There was not room in the canoe for me so I had to stay behind. They did not return till late in the evening. Mr. M. had his rod and gun, but did not get any fish or game. I slept in Chambers's tent again tonight. The mosquitoes are very active here all this time, but we are beginning to get used to them now.

Chambers and his men are getting on fast with the house. The line men are hard at work everyday cutting poles and constructing a branch from the main line to the new office.

Friday 7th. Fine and warm again to-day. Mr. M. sent the Indians off to look for a deer. He himself went over to the river to try for a fish but only caught one small one. I went up the river looking for Twillicks, saw a nice hole, and having one old hook, I cut a pole and began to trout. Presently a large one took the hook and before I knew anything, snapped my line and went off hook and all. I came back and got two hooks from Mr. M. and went up again to the pool. This time, being more cautious, I succeeded in landing 10 beauties averaging over a pound each. One indeed was over 3 lbs. weight. It was only by pulling a steady strain and allowing no slack that I hauled them ashore on the beach. Some of them gave me quite enough to land them.

Mr. Blackadder came up from Come-by-Chance in his boat and had tea with us. We cooked some of the trout and all agreed they were fine eating. It was late when the Indians returned. They saw no sign of deer but shot a fine goose. Mr. Blackadder left again at dark.

Saturday 8th. Another fine, warm day. Mr. M., the two Indians, and myself went up to the mouth of Piper's Hole River in the canoe. The distance is about seven miles. We surveyed a portion of the head of the inlet, but suffered awfully from the mosquitoes and deer flies, great brutes nearly as large as a bee. They give a fierce bite nearly taking a piece out of the flesh. Mr. M. shot one Twillick. We got back about 5 P.M. Heard Father Brown was at Sound Island so the Indians and I intend going over in the morning to attend mass.

Sunday 9th. We were up at daylight and taking one of Chambers's men with us we started in the canoe and got over in good time. I had breakfast at Brown's with the priest. We then left and got back about 3 P.M. Chambers and one of the Telegraph men cooked the goose for dinner. I was not back time enough to partake of the luxury, but I believe I did not miss much. The bird was old and tough and much overdone. Mr. Joe Bernard had managed to get some rum while on the island. He became very drunk and kicked up a great shindy. He had a row with Mr. Murray about diet and other matters, threatened to leave forthwith, and brought back everything he had belonging to Mr. M. being determined to start for Conne in the morning. He tried to induce John also to go with him, but John would not. Poor Mrs. Murray was frightened out of her wits, could eat no tea.

Monday 10th. Very warm day. Joe having sobered up, Mr. Murray called him into Chambers's tent and with Mr. Chambers and myself present settled all grievances. He told Joe he could go if he liked but that he would not pay him a cent. So Mr. Joe thought better of it and concluded to stay. Before the day was out all were on friendly terms again. When everything was settled satisfactorily, we went about preparing for a start into the interior. Mr. Blackadder's boat was to call in the afternoon and take Mrs. Murray back to La Manche. Mr. M. and I went up the River to the place where I caught the trout yesterday but he did not get a single rise. In the meantime the fish had all gone further up. John came to tell us Mr. Blackadder's boat was coming in with his wife and family aboard. They stayed for the night in a spare tent, the men's store tent. Mr. Chambers and his crowd are getting on fast with the house and will have it nearly finished when we get back from the woods. Mr. Blackadder and family will then move up here to take up their

188 Kirwin and Story

residences. Mr. B. says he will make a nice place here before long. The house is situated on a beautiful spot just on the neck of the little peninsula. It will have a fine view out the Bay as far as Sound Island and up the beautiful Piper's Hole Arm. The soil here is excellent, and the little peninsula would just make a nice sized farm.

Tuesday 11th. Fine warm day again. Mrs. M. left in Blackadder's boat about 7 A.M. We immediately got ready to start up the Arm. Having struck camp and packed everything[,] we intended to take with us as much as the canoe could carry. She being heavily laden only Mr. Murray and Joe could go in her. John and I had to walk around the arm, following the telegraph line a distance of some 8 miles. It was a rough heavy tramp and was exceedingly warm, however, we reached the mouth of the river shortly after Mr. M. and Joe. We found an abundance of raspberries along the line and took our fill of them. Joe had a fire going and the kettle boiled and we made a good meal on salt fish.

We pitched our tents on a nice grassy level near the river bank. There is here a wide, deep, salmon hole into which the high tide flows. When it is up, good sized punts and skiffs can enter, but when it is low tide they cannot come within a couple of miles of the mouth of the river.

The hills along the north side of the Arm are very high and both sides are well wooded. Here near the mouth of the river the land rises to a great elevation. One mountain in particular on the south side, overlooking the Salmon pool, called Big Bear's Folly, towers up to a great height, but close to the river there are flats of fully half a mile wide of very good land. About half-way down the Arm one extensive level known as Birchy Islands is where the people of Sound Island have their gardens. The soil here is splendid and what is not cleared is covered with a fine forest of birch, spruce and fir. Brown has an extensive clearing here which would make a fine farm. There are several other similar flat[s] all along the south side of the Arm but not so extensive.

Where we are camped there is a long level tract running up and down the side of the river. It contains fully 30 or more acres, is as level as a bowling green covered with wild hay and is sheltered from all winds by the highland around.

Bears Folly rises almost perpendicularly a short distance back, and is over 1,000 feet high. The flats would make splendid farms, were they cleared. The people come up here to cut the hay, and there were some women so engaged when we arrived.

When our camps were all prepared, we had a shoot each from Mr. Murray's rifle at a rock out in the water about 3 or 400 yards away. None of us hit it. Joe made the best shot. Mr. M. and I went very near it, but John's shot fell short a good bit.

About half a mile above our camp the first falls are situated which will give us some trouble with our canoe. The Telegraph line to Fortune Bay crosses the river quite near our camp.

Wednesday 12th. Raining hard nearly all day. Mr. Murray and I went up to the falls to try for a trout or salmon but did not rise one. When it cleared off in the evening we took a sight with the Micrometer Telescope up to the falls.

Thursday 13th. Raining hard again all the forenoon. Cleared up later. The mosquitoes were dreadful all night in our camp. They crowd in when it rains. We had to smoke them out several times during the night.

After breakfast we went down the Arm and surveyed up to the camp from our previous measurement. We then loaded up the canoe to go up the river, leaving only the tents and clothing behind us as we intended returning for the night.

There are two long smooth reaches on the river above, called "Steadies." The first of these is about 3 miles from our camp, but between the latter and the steady the river is very rugged and broken by falls, chutes and rapids. It was very tough work trying to get the canoe over this section. We had to wade most of the distance to our waists in water, lifting and dragging the canoe along. At times the strong current would take us clean off our feet. Of course we were wet from head to foot all the time, but as the day was fine and warm we did not mind that. In fact it only tended to keep us pleasantly cool. In several places we were obliged to unload the canoe, lift her up over the falls and then bring up the things and reload again. However, after a hard day's work we succeeded in

reaching the beginning of the first steady. Here we piled all our stuff and turned the canoe bottom up over it, to form a covering from the rain, and then tramped back to camp.

Friday 14th. Fine warm day again. Immediately after breakfast we struck camp made up our packs and prepared for our tramp up to the steady. Mr. Murray went on ahead and left us to follow as soon as we were ready. Having had no experience in tying up a pack the Indians did this for me. Apparently the lads wanted to test my ability to carry a load on my back and made one for me of such weight and formidable dimensions that I was almost appalled at it. I got the straps, or tump lines, across my shoulders and head while in a sitting position and then tried to get up, but found it no easy task to do so. The lads enjoyed my efforts to rise and laughed heartily, finally they walked off and left me behind. This nettled me, and I determined I would not be beaten. With a desperate effort I got upon my knees and then up on my feet, and followed after them. This, my first attempt at packing a heavy load on my back was to me a great trial. But I stuck manfully to the task and would not give it to them to say I could not do it. I staggered along somehow, received many hard knocks against sticks and stones, and several tumbles, but in the end I reached the canoe not far behind them. It certainly was desperate work in the heat and flies, travelling along the rocks, or through the water. Our progress was necessarily very slow, but I won my spurs, and thereafter they had a better opinion of me as a woodsman.

We now put all aboard the canoe and started up the steady. John and I had again to take to shanks mare, owing to the canoe being so loaded, and tramp through the woods along the margin of the river.

This steady is wide and deep for some 3 or 4 miles with a barely perceptible current flowing easily along. It is a very beautiful stretch of water, and the dense dark woods lining its banks added to its charms. We observed several deer['s] and bear[s'] tracks in the mud here and there, some of them very fresh. We camped for the night at the upper end of the steady, after which the Indians went off to look for a deer. They returned at dusk saw no game, but plenty of fresh signs of deer. The forest about here is very dense, and the timber of fine size. There was a fair sprinkling of birch and pine amongst it. This is where the people of the bay procure their material for house and boat building. Many of the sticks are large enough for schooners spars. They come up in winter cut all they want, drag it out to the river deposit it on the ice, and await the spring thaws to float it out to the salt water. Each man cuts his initials, or some other distinctive mark upon his log, so that when it goes down the river he can recognize his own logs. We saw many fine sticks hung up on the rocks at intervals as we came up.

Saturday 15th. Fine again got up another mile or two when we came to a part so bad that we could get our canoe no further, so we had to camp for the night and prepare to tramp the rest of the way.

Here we hauled up our canoe in the woods and stowed away all the things unnecessary to carry and prepared to tramp through the woods for the Upper Steady each taking a full load, including one of the tents and provisions for about a week. The Indians went off again in search of deer returning at dusk unsuccessful. They were up to the second steady saw lots of fresh footing of deer and geese there. They shot a fish hawk or Osprey, which they intended cooking in the morning. I spent most of the time they were away boiling bacon and ham, and baking bread in the ashes for to-morrow's journey.

Sunday 16th. Fine and warm again. When the fish hawk was cooked the Indians invited me to try it. Joe cooked it in grand style by stewing it in a kettle with plenty of onions, pepper and salt. It was first rate the flesh being as white as a turkey's and very well tasted. Mr. Murray however, would not eat any of it believing it to be fishy.

After breakfast we made a start. Joe took the lead and with hatchet in one hand lopped off any branches or other obstructions in the way. At times the woods were so thick and trees so close together that we could barely squeeze ourselves between them with our packs. It was very arduous travelling, the forest was so encumbered with old stumps and windfalls, and there were many holes between the moss covered rocks underneath the surface. The sun was dreadfully hot and black flies

190 *Kirwin and Story*

in swarms around us all the time. It was indeed "a hard road to travel." We were obliged to take several rests and travel very slowly. It was nearly sunset when we reached the Upper Steady; as we approached the river through the woods, Joe suddenly halted and turning round said geese. His quick ear had detected the sound of their cronking though none of the rest of us heard anything. After listening awhile we all heard the hoarse sound of an old gander's voice. Packs were immediately laid aside and we all stole cautiously towards the water side. Here we saw quite a number of old and young geese close to the shore. Mr. Murray fired several bullets from his rifle at them but only wounded two. John who went further down the river was soon heard to fire. He killed two birds first shot and another shortly after. The young birds were not able to fly and the old ones would not leave them, but after hearing John's guns they took to wing all except one of those Mr. Murray wounded. As they were flying past Joe made a splendid shot to wing and knocked down one, but missed a second one. We might have easily killed all the young ones but as they were still small we let them go.

We now had four fine old birds, but the wounded one escaped down the river and it was too late to go after it. As it was now dark we had not time to put up our tent, but as the night promised to be fine that did not matter. We lit a big fire in the woods gathering some boughs and made a bed to lie upon. One of the geese was plucked and cooked right off though scarcely an hour dead. It was pretty tough eating.

Here we slept under the canopy of heaven with the stars shining down on us through the trees. I had for my pillow an old dead log and my boots, but as we were all pretty tired from our hard day's journey we slept like stones. For my part I don't think I ever slept sounder or more comfortably in my life. Of course the Indians took care to keep a good fire going all the time, towards which we all stretched our feet in the regular Indian fashion.

Monday 17th. Another beautiful day. More goose for breakfast. We then set to work to construct a raft. Half a dozen dry pine logs were cut and lashed together with our tump lines. This made a fine floating stage on which all our things were packed and the Indians with long poles soon ferried us up the steady quite a distance and then across to the north side where we found a nice place to camp. This was on a little projecting point which commanded a good view up and down the river. We made a fine stew out of the goose bones with plenty of onions, pepper and salt. It was a very tasty dish and we all enjoyed a good dinner from it. After dinner and fixing up our camp snug Mr. Murray and the Indians went up the steady on the raft to look for a deer but did not succeed in seeing one though there were lots of fresh footing about. The firing at the geese last evening must have started them. It came to blow and rain hard in the evening.

This steady is much longer and prettier than the first one. The forest down to the waters edge is thick, but here and there little grassy openings appear. There is a nice sandy beach along the margin of the river and altogether it is an ideal spot for camping. Many of the trees are of fine size especially the birches and pines, the latter being quite abundant. Our camp stands on a little sandy level clear of the trees and so situated that we have the benefit of every little cooling draught of wind off the water. The place was so selected to be as free as possible from the torment of the flies but is so hidden by the low bushes, and a projecting rock in front as to be scarcely visible from the river. It is a fine airy situation and comparatively free from mosquitoes.

The whole scene is very beautiful, the smooth even flowing river, the magnificent and variegated forest all around lends an air of enchantment to it not easily surpassed. In the far distance some high hills or tofts are visible rising like gigantic hay pooks above the tree tops. It is all so primitive, so quiet, so unlike anything to be seen in cultivated inhabited districts. No sound but that of our own making disturbs the absolute calm and stillness of this charming spot, except the rustling of the leaves overhead or the distant faint murmur of the falls and rapids away below. From some of the knaps or tofts nearest our camp we obtained magnificent views of the country around. Away to the eastward near the salt water the Big Bears folly was plainly visible, while to the north and south the dense forest stretches away beyond our vision. To the west only, beyond the head of the steady we caught glimpses of a level prairie land of vast green tracts like cultivated fields. This is the

Howley's Reminiscences 191

Savanna country so enthusiastically described by W.E. Cormack in his itinerary of 1822.

The rock formation up here is chiefly mica schist apparently of Laurentian age. The tolts are chiefly composed of red porous trap rock, all of igneous origin. Mr. Murray thinks they may have been ancient volcanoes.

Tuesday 18th. Cold and blowing hard in the morning but turned out a nice day afterwards. Joe shot two young otters in a pond close by. After breakfast Joe and John went off again to look for deer and did not return till dark. They saw an old stag but could not get within shot of him. Having only the small shot gun they required to get very close to make sure of him, but he heard them and was off. I spent most of the day washing my clothes and other work about camp. We had not many flies all day till dusk when they were plentiful enough.

For a long while I had been suffering very much from indigestion and was feeling pretty miserable. Medicine, of which I took a lot, did not appear to do me much good. I was in fact worse after taking it. I began to grow pretty despondent and believed I was going to die away here in the wilds. This thought did not disturb me so much. In fact I seemed to derive a certain amount of pleasure at the idea of being buried in the great lone forest, under the shadow of the overhanging birches and pines. They certainly could not carry my body out if I had succumbed. But the Indians tried to cheer me up by saying "Wait till we kill deer, you soon be all right again." And so it transpired to be the case. Whether it be anything in the meat itself or the peculiar food of the animal certain it is that venison food exercises an aperient or laxative effect upon the bowels. In some cases it brings on violent diarrhoea, and I have known some persons who could not eat it without suffering awful pains in the stomach.

Wednesday 19th. Mr. M. and Indians were off at daylight up the steady after deer. They returned in a couple of hours with a fine young stag. They also caught a young goose alive. The venison just came in time as I had the last of our goose down stewing for breakfast. After which we all set to work skinning and cutting up the deer, when that was done John and I went into a pond about half a mile away to look for beaver. We walked all around it through the thick woods. We saw two beaver and their house but could not get a shot at them. Late in the evening just at sunset Joe and John went in again and killed one of them. This was a real sporting day with us. Joe's two otter, and beaver, Mr. Murray's stag and two willicks I killed made up our bag. The young goose escaped while John and I were after the beaver which I regretted.

Thursday 20th. Dull, cold, and threatening rain all day. It came to pour in the evening and made everything very miserable. It was too windy to light our fire on the beach in the usual place, so we removed into the woods where it was quite sheltered. We determined to leave the camp which was so cold and exposed and sleep near the fire to-night. Mr. M. and Joe went again to the Beaver pond late in the evening and killed the other beaver. We were now well supplied with fresh meat and feasted upon delicious venison [steaks] and venison roast. Whole joints would be stuck on sticks before the fire, and as soon as the outside was cooked we would cut off strips and replace the spit by the fire. Sick as I was I managed to eat my share. As for the Indians they could feast on it all day and night too, for that matter, several times during the night they would give me a nudge to get up and join them. I would find them sitting by the fire eating as though they had not tasted a mouthful all day. I soon got into the habit myself. It seemed as if one could eat any amount of it anytime. As the Indians prognosticated it certainly had a beneficial effect upon my digestive organs and in a few days I was quite myself again. It rained so hard at night that we had to abandon the idea of sleeping in the open and return to the camp again.

Friday 21st. The rain continued to pour down all night. Our camp was nearly flooded. The river rose so much that the water came within a yard of the camp door. We did not get wet however, as the tent was tight, but the bushes, grass, and everything around was soaking and made it very disagreeable as one could not get about anywhere. It continued showery all day. It became very difficult to get our fire to burn the wood was now so sodden. We left the camp again moved into the woods, cleared a nice place and built a birch bark wigwam or rather side camp. Got a good fire going and made ourselves as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. Thus we were able to

192 *Kirwin and Story*

keep dry and warm all day. It cleared up late in the evening, but the bushes were too wet to go anywhere. The mosquitoes were simply dreadful all last night and this morning, but in the wigwam the smoke from the fire kept them pretty well at bay.

Saturday 22nd. Still dull and cloudy but the rain held up. We slept very comfortably last night in the side camp with a fine fire at our feet. This camp was a decided improvement upon the canvas tent. Owing to the wet mild weather our venison was beginning to taint, so we have to eat as much and as often as we can *to save it*. We generally have two or three pieces roasting at a time, as well as a pot of soup down boiling. It is a regular feast with us all day and night also. Still we cannot consume it fast enough. Every day we have to cut away the tainted parts. It seems such a pity to waste such fine food but it cannot be helped. I often wish we had some of our friends here to help us eat it up. In the evening Mr. Murray and Joe walked to a knap about a mile from camp on the south side of the river to take bearings on the surrounding hills and fix the position of our camp. They returned in a few hours, did not see any game but numerous fresh footing of deer.

Sunday 23rd. Fine and warm again. Joe shot two more otters down the river, but lost one which was carried away by the flood. The river is now very high after the recent heavy rains. Becoming short of flour and tea and some other small things John was despatched to the lower camp to bring up a fresh supply. He took down two hind legs of the deer for our return journey. Did not leave camp all day. Mr. M. and Joe intended to go up the river again when John returned but he did not come till sunset. He found everything all right at the camp below, but the tent was very wet and getting mildew so he lit a fire and staid to dry it. We had a grand supper to-night.

Monday 24th. Another fine warm day. Mr. M. and Indians went up the steady after breakfast but returned in a short while not seeing anything to shoot. We now prepared for our return journey down the river. We spent sometime baking a supply of bread, mending clothes and packing up for the tramp. I might here describe our mode of baking bread. As we carried no barm and yeast cakes were not yet invented, all our bread was unleavened, simply flour mixed with water and a pinch of salt, made into a round flat cake. This is laid on the ashes beneath the fire, or rather in a hole scraped out beneath, and is then covered with hot sand and ashes. A good fire is maintained over this and so soon as one side is done the cake is taken out turned over with the under side uppermost and covered again. When fully baked it is taken out dusted and all the ashes or sand adhering to the outside as well as the burnt parts carefully scraped off. When well baked it is delicious bread, but in order to have it so the fire should be placed on sandy dry soil and be kept going for some days so as to thoroughly heat and dry the soil, then it is in good shape for baking.

Had a last hearty meal of venison, eating as much as we could in order to lighten our loads. We started about 2 O'clock P.M.

When everything was packed up we crossed to the southern side of the river and here cut our raft adrift, shouldered our packs and again took to the woods. Our packs were heavy and the travelling in the woods very bad, but I felt so much stronger now it did not seem half so hard as when coming up. About a mile from the lower camp where the woods were thickest, John and I took to the river, Joe and Mr. M. keeping on through the forest. Though we escaped the stumps and windfalls and tangled bushes, we had a hard time getting along over the slippery rocks, our wet moccasins rendering the travelling in such places so dangerous that it was with difficulty we could keep our feet. Only by great care and cautiously picking our steps did we make slow progress. When we arrived at the camp we found Mr. M. and Joe there before us, and a swarm of mosquitoes awaiting a feast. We immediately lit fires and made a great smoke to drive them off. Opened up our tent and put a good fire of birch logs in front to dry and air it. After partaking of supper we lay down to rest being all pretty tired after our hard day's tramp and were soon in the land of dreams.

Tuesday 25th. The mosquitoes were dreadful at daylight and soon put an end to our slumbers. We had to get up at dawn and light fires to drive them off. There was a little rain during the night and the weather was sultry, the very worst kind for flies. After breakfast we got everything on board the canoe and started for the mouth of the river. It was easy going enough to the end of the steady but then our troubles began, getting her down over the falls and rapids, which owing to the

late rains were now far worse than when we ascended. The river was very much swollen. By lifting and lowering the canoe with a long line tied to her we worked our way slowly along. Once in a strong rapid she nearly turned over half filled with water and we came within an ace of losing all her contents. About half way down we rested on a rocky islet where we cooked dinner. Going on again, after many adventures we reached the salmon hole just at sunset. In coming down stream we broke one of our paddles. Pitched camp on the old spot, and after a good supper of venison steak turned in.

Wednesday 26th. Fine day but dull and cloudy. The Indians spent most of the day making new paddles washing and mending clothes etc. It is marvellous how dexterous they are with their only tool a crooked knife, which they always carry in their kit. After roughly chopping out a birch stick in the form of a paddle they sit on the ground and with the knife plane it down and shape it perfectly, always drawing the knife towards them. They can make almost anything with this implement, which they manufacture themselves from an old file or razor blade. Some of them are expert coopers and can make first class herring barrels with only an axe and this crooked knife. It is

shaped thus



The thumb fits the bevelled end of the

handle while the fingers are clasped around the straight part. They hold it stiff and straight and can shave a piece of wood as smooth and clean as if done with a carpenter's plane. In the evening I took a gun and ascended the Big Bears folly. It was a desperate climb, as the mountain is very steep and rugged and the lower slopes are covered with a dense thick tangled forest. They all said I would not be able to accomplish it and that I would be overtaken by night before I got back. Several times I thought of abandoning the attempt as when I got into the thick woods I could not well tell which way I was going. Often I had to crawl on my hands and knees under the windfalls, but I was determined not to give it to them to say I was not able to do it. After a couple of hours of desperate climbing I succeeded in gaining the summit, and I was well repaid for all my toil. The view was superb. I could see for many miles in every direction. All the valley of the River far up into the interior covered by its dense dark forest could easily be traced. To the north lay the high hills towards the head of Trinity Bay, the Powder Horn and Centre Hill. On the south the view was shut out by still higher barren mountains that lay inside of me, but to the East lay spread out the beautiful waters of Piper's Hole Arm. Beautiful it certainly appeared to me then in the uncertain light of the fast setting sun. I could see the whole inlet from our camp down to Black River winding like a serpent, in and out, around the various projecting points and islands. It was a charming picture. The low wooded points and headlands clothed in their variegated verdure, now in full bloom relieved by the dark outline of the blue waters of the Bay and Arm formed a truly lovely picture. I made a short round over the hills, but did not see any game. It was not the right sort of ground for partridges being too much covered with Reindeer moss and destitute of berries. There were many ponds of all sizes surrounding the mountain, and the hills further inland were much higher than this one. I then came back to the crest of the mountain to see which was the best route to take going down. I did not care to take the same one by which I came. I selected a part of the hill which was almost perpendicular, rising over 700 feet above the level plain at the base. The camp looked very small so far down beneath me. Mr. M. and the Indians who were standing near it saw me on the top of the mountain, and I waved my hat to them in triumph. I was puzzled to find the shortest and best way down. I could just see a small stream which must come from the side of the mountain somewhere and issue out not far from the camp. [This] I concluded to make for. I believed if I could only strike it I would be all right, but it was not discernible, owing to the steep slope of the hill and the thick woods till it nearly reached the main river. The Telegraph line lay about a mile to the north of me, but to reach that seemed next to impossible, through the all but impenetrable woods.

The sun was now just about setting and I had no time to delay. I decided on making the attempt to reach the Telegraph line, noting certain trees and rocks to guide me.

I descended the northern slope of the mountain for some distance and got into an awful tangle of woods but there was no turning back now. I had to face it and force my way through. On I

194 Kirwin and Story

kept and found myself going down, into a very deep dark ravine. The sides were almost perpendicular, yet down, down, I still went, while the darkness increased all the time. At length I heard the pleasant sound of running water far below me which I knew to be the small torrent I had observed from the summit. Holding on to trees and shrubs and carefully letting myself down by degrees, I at length reached the bottom where sure enough I found the brook, but was still uncertain if it was the right one or not. I thought out the situation. If I were still to continue on for the Telegraph line it meant climbing up again on the opposite and equally steep side of the ravine. There was no time to delay so I took the brook and scrambled along as best I could. It was all loose rocks, holes and fallen trees and my moccasins were so slippery from wading in the water it was extremely dangerous and several times I fell and stumbled in my haste to get along and out of the woods before it was too dark to see. After a while however, the woods became more open and the bed of the stream less obstructed. So seeing I was all right I proceeded more leisurely. Squash berries were very abundant along this brook and I eat⁶ my fill of them. They were the finest I ever saw. I got out to the main river all right after a desperate tramp and was pretty well tired out and dreadfully marked by the mosquitoes which followed me in swarms all through. It goes without saying I eat a hearty supper of venison, and then turned in.

Thursday 27th. Dull and foggy. John and I were to go down to Black River in the canoe with all our spare traps. Mr. M. and Joe were going up on the hills to take bearings and were to meet us down the shore. On our return the Indians set to work to patch and repair the canoe and stop the numerous leaks etc. But it came to rain hard and upset all our arrangements. It cleared off in the afternoon when Joe and John went down to Black River taking everything except just what was required for the night and morning. It continued foggy all day. The Indians returned about 5 P.M. and brought Mr. Murray's letters. The mosquitoes were dreadful all day particularly at sunset. We had to keep a big fire and smoke to drive them off.

Friday 28th. Last night was quite cold in camp and we could not sleep in any comfort. I got up just at dawn and walked up and down to try and warm myself. Found the ground covered with a heavy hoar frost, could not get my blood in circulation, the cold seemed to have penetrated to the very bones. I turned in again but had soon to get up. By this time the Indians also got up. We lit a good fire and soon got some heat in our bodies.

After breakfast Mr. M. and Joe went up on the hills while John and I took the canoe with the camp and remainder of our outfit down to the salt water to await them. As we were leaving John took up one of the broken paddles cut four notches in it and stuck it in the ground with the top leaning downwards towards the Arm. I asked him what it was for, when he told me that it meant four men had gone in that direction, so that if other Indians came along they would know at once that some of their people had been here and had gone down the Arm. He then showed me another stick similarly marked which he had placed in the ground when we were going up the river, this time pointing up country. By splitting the top a little and bending down one part in a certain direction, it would indicate that a wigwam was nearby where the chips pointed. Any other Indians coming along would recognize this and would thus be able to find shelter. This is an invariable practice of the Micmacs when leaving a camp. I have since frequently seen them convey by this sign a knowledge of the number in the party and the direction in which they were travelling to any wayfarers of their tribe who might happen along.

We went down some considerable distance with the canoe and hauled her ashore on a beach. John went off to meet Mr. M. and Joe while I staid behind. As it was now fine and warm and I felt the want of sleep after our miserable night's unrest, I laid down on my back on the beach stones, rooted a hole for my head to rest in and was soon in the land of Nod. When at length the others arrived they found me still enjoying a comfortable snooze. Mr. Murray had shot a single partridge on the hills the only one they saw.

We now started for Black River when we got below Birchy Island there was a strong breeze and a heavy lop heaving in, but the Indians manipulated the canoe splendidly. They would dodge the lop so that none of it came aboard and the canoe rode over it like a bird. As we passed along

Howley's Reminiscences 195

close to the shore we heard a sharp squeak like a whistle. This was an otter amongst the rocks. Joe went ashore and soon rooted it out and shot it. It was a very fine salt water otter as large as two of the freshwater species.

At Black River we found Mr. Blackadder with his boat. Chambers had the Office nearly completed and Blackadder and family intend to move up here next week. The repairers have all left and gone on to Come-by-Chance. Mr. Blackadder left for there in the evening and is to send his boat up on Monday to take us back to La Manche.

We camped on the old site. We heard all the latest news from Mr. Blackadder. He told us of a great cricket match between St. John's team and one from Harbour Grace in which the latter were badly defeated.

Saturday 29th. A fine day Mr. M. and Indians went off before breakfast up the Arm to look for more otters, but did not find any. In the afternoon Chambers and his men with Joe went over to Sound Island. It came to blow hard and they did not get back till dark.

Sunday 30th. Fine but blowing hard. Mr. M. intended to measure to the Mouse Islands about a mile outside but it blew too hard for the canoe. A man named Emberly from Woody Island came up in his boat but owing to the wind could not get back and had to stay all night.

Monday 31st. Fine day again, wind greatly moderated. Mr. Murray took a lot of observations for time and Latitude. Blackadder arrived about noon. We immediately got everything aboard his boat and started for La Manche. We called at Sound Island on the way and left the canoe with Mr. Brown to be taken on to St. John's in one of his schooners. We then ran across to North Harbour where we landed Mr. Blackadder, who was to walk from thence to Come-by-Chance, some 4 or 5 miles. Had a fine breeze, and the wind being fair we had a good time along, arriving at La Manche about 5 P.M. Found all here well, except Mrs. Murray who had been confined to her bed for three days previous.

Cohu was expecting some visitors from Harbour Buffet, and as the house would be overcrowded I now took up my quarter at a Mrs. Hearns. It was very clean and comfortable place, and she kept a good table. Had new potatoes for dinner which were a great treat.

Tuesday September 1st. Fine warm day Mr. M. went off shooting but saw nothing. I went off in the evening but met with no better success. It looks fine ground for partridges, but without a dog it is not much use looking. The people here say birds are very scarce this season, though they were quite plentiful last winter. It rained again in evening.

Wednesday 2nd. Fine again and quite warm. Went on with our survey of the mine and took the heights of all the surrounding hills. I collected a lot of nice specimens. Mr. Murray now decided on sending me home by way of Placentia. I was to stop over at Colinet and go down St. Mary's Bay as far as Cape Dog, and up the Rocky River to look for the Distress limestone. He himself and Mrs. M. are going home by way of Hearts Content and Harbour Grace. They will walk across the neck to Chance Cove in Trinity Bay and then take boat down the bay.

Thursday 3rd. Finished the survey of the mine and vicinity. Mr. M. and the Indians intend going up to Come-by-Chance and North Harbour to-morrow. I am to go on the Placentia Packet boat expected also to-morrow. Joe and some of Cohu's men were sent out some two miles from the mine to costean⁷ a place where Mr. M. suspected the lode to run. They found it after a short time digging, but it was here but two feet wide. I made a long round of the hills in the afternoon with the gun but with the usual bad luck, did not see anything to shoot at. The whole country hereabout is very hilly and barren with here and there little patches of stunted trees, tuckamores. The day proved very fine and warm.

Friday 4th. Fine and warm again. Cohu's boat in which Mr. Murray was to go up the Bay was in such a leaky condition that the Indians were all day repairing her in consequence of which they could not start for Come-by-Chance. Neither did the packet arrive.

Saturday 5th. Beautiful fine day. The packet boat arrived about 9 A.M. I put my things aboard, also, a good many of Mr. Murray's traps I was to send on from Placentia. We started about noon, had one other passenger a girl from here going to Placentia. We had to make the round of the

196 Kirwin and Story

western side of the bay, calling at a number of places before returning.

I enjoyed the trip very much, or would have done so but that the accommodations were so miserable. We first called at Sound Island and stopped a short while. Here I saw the latest newspapers, which contained very good accounts of the Labrador fishery. We next proceeded to Brewly on the northern end of Merasheen Island but as the wind was ahead we were obliged to tack all the way and did not reach there till late at night, when we stayed till morning. We passed on our way here Woody Island, Barren Island, and Bread and Cheese. The berths in the Cabin were so uninviting I did not feel like turning into one of them, instead I went down in the fore-castle and stretched out on a board bench along one side. It was only about one foot wide and as might be expected proved a mighty hard bed. Of course I slept very little and had to give it up at daylight and come on deck for a walk up and down. Murphy, the Skipper and I went ashore early and visited Coady's house, the only one here. He has a fine house and nice clearing and is quite comfortable.

Sunday 6th. After collecting some specimens and taking a look round at the rocks, we started for Burgeo Island [Placentia B.]. Had a good time over and reached there about 11 A.M. This is a snug little harbour. There are only about 4 or 5 families living in it. Mr. Chambers's brother lives here and carries on the fishing business. He has a fine house and two schooners. Another brother who lives here is Captain of the largest. I was asked ashore to dine with them and found them very nice friendly people. Just as we arrived here it came to rain very hard. The island is very high and rugged and to all appearance is of volcanic origin. The Harbour is situated on the northern end of the island and faces the main western shore, which is about a mile distant. A few houses could be seen scattered here and there along the main shore in nooks and corners. This island is only about a mile long. There is a small island in the entrance to the harbour called Patricks Island, which completely shelters it. Father Walsh of St. Kyran's is erecting a Chapel on the island.

The mainland opposite here is also very broken rugged and high in place. It seems densely timbered with small sized trees. Just after noon a hurricane of wind and rain sprung up from the N.E. and lasted for an hour or more. It blew fiercely, so that one could scarcely stand upright. Chambers' schooners laying at the wharf had like to be pounded to pieces, before they could secure them. Murphy seeing the storm brewing took the precaution to haul his craft into the cove in lee of the high land and escaped without damage.

Chambers told me the people about here had done very little with the fish this summer, and that some of them were now in very destitute condition. About 2 P.M. the rain cleared off and wind moderated. We then started for Merasheen on the lower end of the island of the same name. Had a splendid time down passing Isle Vallen, the Ragged Islands and the Grannies, some ugly rocks just awash. We got into Merasheen just before dusk. Mr. Hennessey the principal inhabitant came down and invited me to his house to stay all night, which I gladly accepted, as my prospects for a comfortable night's sleep were so much better than last nights. I found Father Brown here who came across this morning from St. Kyran's to celebrate Mass and could not get back owing to the storm. Hennessey has a fine house and is very comfortable.

Monday 7th. Fine clear day but there is a heavy swell outside in the bay. I had a grand night's rest. After Mass in the morning and breakfast I had a look around at the rocks. Merasheen is a curious looking place, there are two harbours one facing the N.W. the other the S.E. A rugged headland separates them which forms a small peninsula joined to the main island by a narrow neck, not more than 200 or 300 yards across from harbour to harbour, but at least a mile to go around by water. The houses are all built on this little neck, the Chapel being in the centre where it is visible for a long distance from sea.

Merasheen Island is 21 miles long by about 4 wide very mountainous and barren looking, but Hennessey tells me there is some fine timber in some of the valleys of the interior. There are only two good harbours, Brewley and Merasheen one at either end of the island. Isle of Allan, or Isle Vallen, is about 3 miles distant to the N.W. very high and rugged in appearance but mostly covered with woods. St. Kyran's or Presque is immediately opposite on the mainland about 4 miles distant, and is a perfectly land locked harbour. After a good breakfast we were off again direct for

Great Placentia where we arrived about 2 P.M. There was a tremendous swell between the island and the main and our little craft rolled and pitched very much. Our female passenger was so dreadfully sick poor creature, that she begged of us to throw her overboard. At first the wind was ahead and we were quite a while beating around the headland, but when we changed our course and squared away for Placentia we had a fair wind and a good breeze to boot, so that we had a spanking time across the bay. It was a beautiful bright warm day and was very pleasant on the water. I was not the least seasick at anytime. Got all on shore and went to the Virgin Hotel, had a good clean up and a substantial dinner. Called to see Father Condon, and delivered some letters from Mr. and Mrs. Murray. I now went about to look for a wagon to take me to Colinet and bring Mr. Murray's things on to town. Kelly a cabman who lives up at the head of the south east Arm was to call in the evening but did not turn up. I then went down to the Telegraph Office to hear the latest news. Was informed that poor Mun Carter had been drowned in Rose Blanch river the day before while engaged in repairing the line.

Tuesday 8th. Fine and warm again. Spent the morning packing up for my journey. Determined if Kelly did not come in the evening to hire Sinnotts wagon, though his charges were steep. After dinner I went down again to the Telegraph Office and while there Kelly came along. He had Mr. Thos. Mitchell and an old miner with him. Mr. M[itchell] came here to look at some mining properties he was interested in, I engaged Kelly to take along all our traps and drop me off at Colinet. We all three drove up in the evening to Kelly's, South East Arm. Mitchell's mine turned out to be merely a fault filled with debris containing a little galena. I went up to see it with them. I told him I did not think it worth spending much money on. He was now bound home again. He had left his horse and wagon at Kelly's, at whose house we were to stay for the night. It was just sunset when we left. Had a good wagon load with all my things and four of us men, but the old nag was a strong brute and was not long in taking us there. Mr. Mitchell and I shared one bed for the night and slept quite comfortably. The Kellys are comfortable all live together and have a fine farm with plenty of cattle. Their house is beautifully situated just near the shore of the Arm and quite close to the river which flows in here. This is a celebrated River for sea trout and salmon of which they catch a good many.

Old man Kelly was a great old boy to spin yarns chiefly about his hunting and trapping experiences. One of these which he invariably got off on visitors was as follows: He set a trap on a beaver house but whenever he visited the place he found the trap snapped with a piece of wood in it. He claimed that the beaver took the sticks in his mouth, springing the trap by pressing down on the pan and got off scot free himself. At last Kelly concealed the trap in such a manner that he did not see it till he walked right into it. But when Kelly again visited the trap the beaver was gone leaving one of his hind legs in it. When he found himself pinned he deliberately gnawed off the leg and so got clear. For a long time after there was no sign of the beaver, but at length his footing was to be seen in the snow and mud. Instead however, [of] being the print of both feet there was but one, the place where the other should be being represented by a single small hole. Late in the spring Kelly at length got a chance to shoot him, when what did he find? The beaver had substituted for the missing leg a wooden one which he had firmly lashed on to the broken bone. How is that for a yarn? So frequently had the old man related this story that I really think he believed it to be true.

Wednesday 9th. We started about 6 A.M. The morning was dull and foggy and it came to rain hard before we reached Colinet. Kelly lent me a nice little double barrelled gun to take along but we did not see any game except a few black ducks in a pond. It was too wet to go after them. We met Wm. Coughlan, the mailman at the Mountain House, Croke's. He had one passenger a Mr. Earl. We got all the latest news from them. We also met two of the Davis boys on the road. I engaged them to come with me to Cape Dog, so they turned back. It was just noon when we reached Colinet where we had a good dinner. All the others then went on for Murphy's Half-way House. I stayed here. It continued to rain hard all the afternoon and I was glad to be sheltered from it. I was quite at home here played the flute for them to have a dance. Old Billy Davis and his stalworth⁸ sons never tired of

198 *Kirwin and Story*

talking of deer and beaver. They are all great hunters and know every inch of the country for miles around.

Thursday 10th. Two of the Davis boys, young Billy and Harry got their punt ready and we started off down the Arm for John's Pond. The wind was against us and by the time we reached there it was dinner time. After a look at the rocks, we had dinner at a Mrs. Bugdens, after which as the wind still continued against us we took to the land and travelled across the neck to North Harbour. Although it was very wet and up to our knees in bog and swamp, we got over early in the evening. Made very little delay here, just going into one house to get a drink of milk and then continued on for Cape Dog Cove which we reached before sunset. Here we put up at old Tom Ryan's the principal inhabitant. John's Pond is a nice little place, there are about 20 houses here. The soil is good, but they have not much of it cultivated. North Harbour is a long inlet something like Colinet Arm. There are only about 8 or 10 houses here some nice farms but very small. The soil is again very good. There was hay growing here as fine as I ever saw about St. John's. The distance from North Harbour to Cape Dog is about 5 miles, the path runs chiefly over barrens and marshes. It looked splendid ground for partridges but we only saw three. There are lots of Partridge berries over the barrens all ripe at this season.

Cape Dog Cove is a nice little place, the land is not so good as at John's pond or North Harbour. There are but 4 or 5 families living here all Ryans, sons of the old man. The Cape is on the eastern side of the Cove and is a high bold headland, formed of trap rock, mostly of the variety known as amygdaloid. All the people in this place did well with fish this season. Old man Tom Ryan is now over 80 years of age still hale and hearty. He is a native of Waterford and knew my fathers people well, not only my father and his brothers but also my grandfather. He talked a great deal about them.

Friday 11th. I went out after breakfast to examine the rocks on the east side of the cove, found the Branch shales here again containing distinct trilobites, also a thin bed of limestone similar to that at Distress with obscure fossils in it. The igneous rock forming the Cape is of later origin and has greatly disturbed the shales etc. in some places overlying them. The Amygdaloid is a porous rock full of small cavities most of which are filled up with pure white calc spar. After finishing my investigation of the rocks here, [taking] bearings and angles of dip etc. we started again on our return journey to Colinet. We took a higher and drier part of the barrens going back. Old man Ryan told us he saw a number of partridge here a few day's ago but we did not run across any of them, although the ground was as fine as I have ever seen for birds, but apparently it is very little use here or elsewhere without a dog, the birds lie so close. Only in foggy weather is there a chance of seeing them on the open ground.

It was late when we reached North Harbour so we stopped there for the night at Paddy [Bonia]'s.

Saturday 12th. Started early before breakfast and reached John's Pond early. Had breakfast at Mrs. Bugden's again. We then took the punt and set sail. Crossed to the other side of the Arm where Billy and I left to walk to Harry Cove sending Henry on with boat to Colinet.

We reached Harry Cove in half an hour. Here we saw a great number of wild geese in the lagoon inside the beach but it was impossible to get within shooting distance of them, these birds are so wild and extremely yarry. I shot one snipe only. It came to rain pretty hard, so we went to Quigley's house for shelter. Quigley's wife is a sister of Billy Davis's. They are the only family living here, are very comfortable, have a fine farm and some good cattle. Had our dinner here while waiting for the rain to hold up, but it did not do so, and we determined to push on for Colinet wet or dry. It was a long heavy tramp made more so by the constant downfall of rain. Fortunately it was warm and mild and we did not much mind the wetting. Saw no game of any kind on the way. We reached Davis's about 5 P.M. not very wet after all, considering the constant rain.

Sunday 13th. Fine and mild Billy was going in the country some 3 or 4 miles to look at his beaver traps so I thought I would accompany him. We started about 11 A.M. took our guns on the chance of seeing something to shoot, but did not come across any game till we reached the pond

where the traps were set. This was literally filled with Black ducks all out in the middle closely huddled together, in what Billy termed a bed of ducks, they appeared to be asleep. They were however out of reach of our guns. We walked carefully around through the woods to a place where Billy had a trap. His traps were set on an island in the middle of the pond, so he kept a raft to get out to them. The ducks soon saw us and were off at once in a body and no stragglers came within range. Of all the wild creatures in this country I think the black duck "caps the climax" for cuteness and alertness. It is only by the utmost caution on the part of the hunter they can be approached at all. There are seasons however, and times when they have not been disturbed one can call them within shot, but it takes an expert to do this, and it is only young birds will "toll," as it is termed, but not when many are together. Billy's raft was so small it would not support the two of us so I remained ashore while he went off to examine the traps. He soon returned but had no beaver. He told me they had snapped all his traps by throwing sticks into them. On our way back we touched at some small gullies expecting to see more ducks but were not successful, though we saw fresh signs of beaver. They were just beginning to construct a dam and house. Came across a fine lot of wild gooseberries fully ripe and had a great feast. We arrived back at the house just at dinner time and had a splendid black duck which Billy had killed when down at Cape Dog.

Kelly returned from St. John's in the evening having safely delivered all the things at C.F. Bennetts store.

Monday 14th. After breakfast I started off alone to go up Rocky River travelled up the western side mostly through the water which was very shallow for about 5 miles. I was looking for Distress limestone but did not find it here.

The river above the falls is very level and wide but quite shallow all the way. The banks on either side are thickly wooded with fine spruce and fir. The soil appears to be very rich loam, and quite deep. In some places where the banks were cut away by the freshets it was from 4 or 5 feet deep and is of a light cream colour. It appears quite free from stones. It should certainly prove good agricultural land. There is also much wild grass along the banks in many places. About a mile up I met one of the Crokes from the Mountain cutting this grass. It was fully 3 feet high is very thick and contains much sedge which Croke tells me the sheep are very fond of. He comes up here every fall cuts and makes the hay and then piles it in stacks till the river freezes over, when he hauls it down on catamaran. Many tons of this wild hay can be procured here. The river is very pretty and Billy Davis informs me it is just the same for a long distance up, at least as far as the junction of the Hodge water River and beyond. When it was time to turn back I did not care to tramp over the rough stones again, my moccasins being so slippery so I decided to cross the river and strike across the country for Davis's. I could find no path. The country around was all alike in appearance and it now began to get foggy. I travelled a good distance expecting to find a path somewhere and although I did see several deer tracks they led in the wrong direction. At length I found what appeared to be a beaten path, which I followed quite a distance. The wind was about s.e. and I knew the house lay in that direction. I determined to keep the wind in my face as well as to keep as much as possible to the open ground. Following the path I found it turned inland so that I now had the wind in my back. This would not do, I must keep head to wind. I left the path and kept on straight to windward, but I had frequently to make considerable detours to avoid the thick woods. The sun was just setting so I was obliged to hasten my pace if I was to avoid a night out without supper which was not an agreeable prospect. I determined however to keep going till dusk. Just in the nick of time I struck another path which I followed till it took me to the pond where Billy and I saw the beaver house. I had to go around the pond and again lost the path in the thick bushes. I got out on the clear barrens and after a while found the path again. I now followed it till it led me to the gullies where we were yesterday looking for ducks. I was all right now and soon made my way out to the house arriving just at dusk, pretty hungry and tired. The Davises were just about starting off to look for me. It is a very easy matter for a stranger to go astray in this country especially in foggy weather. Had I kept the first path it would have led me out all right.

200 Kirwin and Story

Tuesday 15th. Fine and warm. As there was no sign of a carriage coming along for St. John's I took the road for Salmonier. I walked along leisurely, often stopping to rest and pick blue berries which were very plentiful in some places. I arrived at Cary's about 4 P.M. had a good dinner. I then went down in the marsh and shot a couple of snipe.

I met here at Cary's two American parsons who were staying here recuperating their health. They were exceedingly nice friendly fellows. One of them had spent many years in India and spoke the Marahattan language⁹ fluently. He was a bit of a naturalist and was engaged collecting birds and beasts to stuff. He showed me some he had done which were well prepared especially one beaver. The other gent, a much younger man, had travelled a good deal on Labrador and Western Newfoundland. The elder man played both the flute and violin very well and both sung hymns for us. They intended staying here a month or more hunting and looking about the country. Both men were very desirous to kill a deer. They were delighted with the country and considered the scenery very fine. Cary's is now a telegraph station the wires and battery are all ready but so far there is no operator here.

Wednesday 16th. Fine day again, as there was no sign of a carriage coming along I was obliged to hire Cary's old horse and wagon to take me on to town. Such a nag I never met. He was strong and fat enough but so extremely lazy we could not get him out of a walk. Beating and coaxing were all alike of no avail, so we were obliged to accept the situation and take things easy, as the old nag was fully determined he should. He was not Cary's own horse but one he had hired. He had been brought up in such idleness as to be almost useless. Every now and again he would come to a halt for no earthly reason whatever, except to take a rest. With such a rate of travelling we did not reach Holyrood till sunset, where we stopped to get something to eat, having had nothing since leaving Cary's in the morning. Immediately after disposing of our meal we pushed on for Kelligrews which we did not reach till 10 P.M. It became quite cold after dark and was not at all pleasant sitting in an open wagon. We were glad indeed, when we arrived at Mrs Whittens to get into a comfortable fire and partake of a good hot supper. Here we slept for the night.

Thursday 17th. Started early before breakfast so as to reach town by noon. Jogged along at the same snail's pace, stopping only at Mrs Fitzpatrick's (Anns) to get a breakfast and at length arrived in the City about 1 O'clock.

Everything here seemed just as usual. It was just as if I had taken a drive to Topsail and back and did not seem like a three months absence to me. My only regret was having to come back so soon I much preferred being in the heart of the country amongst the woods and wild beasts, even the mosquitoes, all of which had far greater charms for me than city life.

Thus ended my first, and perhaps on that account, most memorable year in the wilds. When I look back upon it all, it seems but yesterday, yet how long ago it was? nearly half a century. Notwithstanding the heavy toil in heat and mosquitoes, I enjoyed it all immensely. Browned and weather beaten I was to be sure, and able to face any amount of hardship.

Notes

¹King's Beach.

²The current name of this area is the Cape St. Mary's Sea Bird Sanctuary.

³*Dictionary of Newfoundland English*: 'businessman operating as middleman between the fishermen of a locality and a fish-merchant in a central community.'

⁴The submarine segment of the telegraph line laid in 1867 between North Sydney and Placentia.

⁵A Canadian provincial agreement with the United States on trade.

⁶The past tense: *et*.

⁷*Oxford English Dictionary*: 'to sink pits down to the rock in order to ascertain the direction of a lode.'

⁸Cp. *OED*: *stalworth*.

⁹Marathi.