

## A TRIP TO NEWFOUNDLAND.

BY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL R. H. NICHOLSON.

*Royal Army Medical Corps (R.)*

LEAVING Liverpool in the Allan liner s.s. "Laurentian," April 26th, 1905, for St. John's, Newfoundland, we met nothing of any interest on the voyage; being early in the season, very few icebergs had come down from the Arctic region, and those only very small ones. The temperature of the air off the Newfoundland coast was 32° F., and that of the water 31° F. The voyage takes seven to ten days, dependent on fogs and gales. We had a very fine voyage, and arrived at St. John's just under seven days.

The city of St. John's consists of a population of 30,000 inhabitants, a great many of Irish extraction. The houses are mostly of wood, those in Water Street, in the new part, being of stone; the original street having been partially destroyed by fire, the law made brick or stone compulsory in the rebuilding.

There is duty on most articles taken into the island, but it is refunded on all sporting articles on going out again. All food stuffs for camping out had better be bought in the island, but sporting kit had better be taken with one. Messrs. Blair, Water Street, and Mr. Bearn, the Haymarket Stores, St. John's, will supply stores; Martin, St. John's, flies.

The hotels are not up to the modern idea. I stayed at Balsam House, and was comfortable, the charge being 2 dols. to 2 dols. 50 cents a day.

On my arrival, or a few days later, there was a heavy snow-storm; and at Port Au Basque, on May 17th, the sea froze about a quarter of an inch in the night, H.M.S. "Latona" having had to return, attempting to go to the Bay of Islands off the west coast; the frosty nights continue into the middle of June.

To get to Port Au Basque I took one of the Bowering's steamers, so that I might see the coast and some of the settlements. The coast is very rugged and indented, with few trees; the people are a hardy race and gave one a welcome. From Port Au Basque I took the train to Little River and stayed at Afton Farm, and had good sport with salmon. The charge at the farm is 7 dols. per week. From there I went to the overfall on the Grand River early in June. The snow water was coming down. On June 8th I caught the first salmon on it, a fresh run fish of ten pounds; marking this spot, I gave it a rest, and on casting again,

caught a fish which turned out to be the cock, or male fish, of twelve pounds. Fish up to thirty-three pounds have been caught. At such a place as this it is necessary to camp, and one requires a man to cook, at 1 dol. 50 cents, with food such as one eats oneself. Some of the men have knowledge of where the fish lie, the flies required, &c. To a novice who cannot gaff his own fish or tie his own flies, either of the two Tompkins of Afton Farm, little Codroy River, would be very useful. Messrs. Carter and Company, Rosebery Avenue, Islington, N., and Messrs. Farlow, of the Strand, also have patterns and sizes of the flies required for salmon: the Dashwood, Jock Scott, Wilkinson, Silver Doctor, Black Dose, and Mystery are amongst the best. For trout the Montreal, Pamashenie Bell, and Very Large Black Gnat.

The trout (*Salmon fontinalis*) are a pest to the salmon fisher, taking his fly away from the salmon. My best trout was six pounds, and on one day I got seven, ranging from five and a half pounds to two pounds. My best salmon afternoon was four fish, twenty and a half pounds and three twelve-pounders, and I also lost a grilse. My total bag of salmon and trout came to nearly five hundred pounds weight, though I fished in a casual manner and many days did not go out at all.

The inhabitants were originally from Devonshire. They have left their mark in the names they gave, such as a pond for a lake, no matter how big; a brook for a large river; partridge for the ptarmigan; robin for a thrush, though labelled *Terdus migratorious* in the St. John's Museum; still in English, on the same label, appears the word "robin."

The scenery is very magnificent; high lakes with spruce-firs interspersed with birch trees all along their edges; this is the same along the rivers, some of which are very fine indeed, such as the river Humber.

The birds are nearly all migratory, *e.g.*, the northern-flicker, known in Newfoundland as the yellow-hammer, another misnomer; snipe breed there, but, of course, migrate in the winter, as do the geese and all birds except the ptarmigan.

The flowers are very beautiful, including ground orchids; it is a very fine country for the botanist.

I started cariboo or reindeer shooting September 15th, the season being, as far as I can remember, from that date to October 8th, when it is closed till the end of the month, as they are rutting. It opens again at the end of the month, but all details can be got from the agent to the Reid Newfoundland Railway,

St. John's, Newfoundland. The license to kill three cariboo is 50 dols. The head guide's fee is 2 dols. 50 cents a day, for which he provides tent, cooking utensils, &c.; the packer's charge is 1 dol. 50 cents a day, food in both cases being given, as well as a tot of rum now and again. For meat, cariboo is chiefly depended on. As the men have to carry the tents, &c., it is advisable to keep down the loads; the packer can always go back to the boat to fetch any article required. Allan Shears, Robinson's Head, is a very good guide.

The opening of the second season seems to be the best time for good heads, and it seems to be the time Mr. Selous and Mr. Millais select, though the late General Dashwood, who seems to have seen and known as much of Newfoundland as any man, gave it as his opinion that the stags, in consequence of having been hunted, have given up their migratory habits. The barrens on which the cariboo are found consist of a layer of peat on stone on which grow a small rhododendron, blue berries (or hurts), and partridge berries. There is no difficulty in shooting cariboo provided one keeps to leeward, but once they get one's wind it is useless to follow them, as they walk quietly though steadily away for miles.

Prohibition is the order, except in St. John's; but I did not notice any antipathy amongst the inhabitants to a peg.

Returning by the Reid Newfoundland Railway to St. John's, there were many splendid views, such as the Bay of Islands, Grand Lake, &c., and everywhere pines.

I must not forget to mention the insects. The mosquito and sand and black flies make one's life a burden, but at night they disappear to a considerable extent. A sand fly net for night, tar, and grease and oil of citronella to smear one's skin with, must not be forgotten.

Leaving St. John's in a gale, which made the passage a long one, I arrived at Glasgow on October 16th, 1905, making ten days, after a very happy, pleasant and enjoyable trip.