

THE

NEWFOUNDLAND FISHERMEN.

A TRUE STORY.

BY CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.



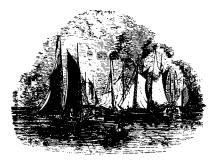
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It is pleasant to look back upon past scenes of danger and anxiety; to remark how the hand of our God has led us, and to acknowledge the loving-kindness which warded off many perils, which brought us through many difficulties, and refreshed us with a long season of peaceful repose, that we may muse on his ways, and meditate on all his wondrous doings, and lay to heart a sweet lesson of confiding love.

I am going, dear children, to tell you something

that I witnessed with my own eyes. Several years ago, I made a very long voyage in a large ship; it is not necessary to tell you what places I visited, but one of them, which I shall not easily forget, was the town of St. John's, in Newfoundland.

There are two things that I dare say you have often seen, which generally come from this place, the great Newfoundland dogs, and dried codfish which is usually called "salt fish." I am not now going to write about the dogs, though I could tell you many things respecting them—such proofs of their faithful attachment to their masters, their patience, industry, and obedience, as would make many children ashamed to hear how much a poor dog might teach them in the way of example; and would also, I hope, convince them how very wicked it is to treat with cruelty an animal so valuable as the dog, or indeed any animal that God has seen good to create. What a shocking character is a cruel child !

I am not going, either, to write about the codfish now, except to tell you that they are caught in immense numbers at the place which I have mentioned, on what are called the banks of Newfoundland. Those banks are great heaps of sand, deep under the sea; some of them a good way off from the shore, others quite close to it.

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During the fishing season, numbers of boats go out from the harbor of St. John's, on every fine day, to take the cod. Each of these boats has a little mast, a sail of reddish-brown canvas, and usually two fishermen in it. They are very bold, hardy men, who get their living entirely by this employment; for Newfoundland is such an extremely barren place that there is not pasture even for a flock of sheep, in any part of it that I saw. A short, coarse moss covers the hard rocks; and if a person manages to raise a few herbs, after being at great trouble and expense in making a small garden, it is quite a wonder.

Of course, the inhabitants must get all their fresh meat, butter, and chief supply of vegetables, from other places. There is an island very near, called Prince Edward's Island, which is beautifully fertile, producing these things in plenty; so the pcople of Newfoundland get what they want from it, and give themselves principally to the business of catching, salting, and drying the fine codfish, which they send to Europe, and to all parts of the world almost, in abundance.

It was a very interesting and beautiful sight, as the ship approached St. John's. The narbor of St. John's, in Newfoundland, is a very noble one, but the opening is so extremely narrow, that the greatest caution is necessary in entering it; for there are steep rocks on both sides, and if a ship missed the middle of the passage, it would strike upon the rocks, which would break the wooden botom or keel of the ship, and let the water in to destroy the vessel, and drown the passengers. You may be sure there is good care taken to have a steady man to steer the ship; and when it is a large one, there is very great anxiety indeed in getting into the harbor of St. John's.

I must remind you, too, that a ship at sea is not like a carriage on land, which may be stopped at pleasure. When the sails are spread, and the wind is blowing fresh, the ship will go on in spite of all that man can do. I have told you all this, that you may the better understand what follows. Our ship was going into that harbor, for which we had been looking a good while, and when we saw it, like a narrow slit in the high dark rocks, at a distance, the man who steered us began to direct the vessel that way, by means of the rudder. I looked about me with a great deal of pleasure, for I could see hundreds of the boats that I have before described upon the broad sea, rolling on the tops of the waves, while the fishermen were busily casting their nets out, and drawing them in with great fishes enclosed. They picked out the good ones, and threw the bad back into the water.

I observed then, that an immense number of large white sea-birds were flying about among the boats, perched on the little masts, and diving into the water every moment. These birds lived on fish; they were watching when the men threw a worthless fish out of their boats, and by suddenly darting after it, they would eatch and devour it before it could sink into the depths of the sea.

Oh, my dear children, here was something to remind me very powerfully of our Lord's parable, where he likens the kingdom of heaven to this very thing, the gathering of fishes, good and bad. in a net, and throwing the bad away. It was very striking to see how the birds of prey instantly seized every fish that was thrown out of the boats. And will you be like these fishes; will you, when the great Judge comes, be found evil and unbelieving, so that he will say to you, "Depart from me?" Alas, if it be so, if Christ rejects you, there will be no hiding-place for your guilty heads; the wicked spirits will be watching like those birds, and so soon as the Lord casts you from him, Satan will snatch you up, and bear you away to everlasting torments. Be wise, and give yourselves now to the Lord Jesus; for now is the accepted time, now is the day of sulvation.

I have told you that our ship was approaching the entrance of St. John's harbor: it became necessary to set all the sails, that we might be carried forward very fast, because the wind was fair; as if it changed before we could reach the port, we must have gone out to sea again, which would have been a loss of time, and dangerous. So we got up our sails, and scudded along, looking very grand, no doubt, to the people in the little boats, which seemed so pretty to us.

It was a lovely day; the sea was rolling its beautiful waters in small regular waves, the breeze blew most refreshingly, and a glorious summer sun was shining brightly, so as to show every little boat that danced upon the waves, and every white bird that fluttered about. I have scen many interesting sights, but one more lively and engaging than this I think that I never saw; and while leaning over the side of our tall ship, I felt such enjoyment as I should not have supposed could have been turned in a moment to the greatest terror and dismay.

One of the fishing-boats was a little to the left, in front of us; at that moment the steersman, who had his eye fixed steadily on the harbor's entrance, still half mile from us, found it necessary that the ship should be slightly turned in that direction. He knew nothing of the boat; and the men in it, seeing the ship's head not pointed towards them, never doubted that we should pass them by at a safe distance; so they went on hauling in their nets, quite at their ease.

Only think how great must have been my horror, when, being on the side of the ship nearest to them, I found the steersman had altered its course, and we were going on, at a fearful rate, directly in a line towards the boat, which was not bigger, in proportion to the ship, than one of the full stops on this page is to a large capital letter. There was no help for it, the ship went forward, and for the little boat to get away was impossible; you could not have counted ten from the time when the ship was turned till it reached the boat. I shall never forget the looks of the poor terrified

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fishermen as they lifted their eyes up to us. 1 would gladly have turned my head another way, but could not. I felt quite stiff with terror, and fully expecting to see them in a moment swallowed up by the waves, the dreadful anxiety kept my eye fixed on them.



Another instant, and the ship had struck the boat—the water rose, and the boat rose upon it the water fell, and the boat seemed buried—it grated along the side of the ship, and some strong hooks that were upon our vessel caught hold of the little sail of the boat—the ship rolled forward—the fishermen gave a loud cry, as they . felt their boat caught and dragged back—in one moment more they would have been lost, but the Lord's arm was not shortened that he should not save, even in such tremendous peril as that; and a sudden plunge which our great ship made, instead of sinking the boat, tore the sail quite off, kept it hanging on our hooks, and left the little boat safe, though much damaged, in the open sea.

All this happened in less time than it would take you to walk across a room, for, as I told you, we were making all speed to reach the harbor; and those who have not seen the movement of a large ship through the billows, can have no idea how rapid and how powerful it is. The strength and thickness of a ship are very great indeed, yet, if in its passage it strikes against a rock, or is fixed on a bank of sand, it goes to pieces. You know that the rock and the bank are quite still, therefore you may judge what is the force of the ship's motion when it breaks itself by a touch on them. The waters of the sea roll high, and sweep along in mighty grandeur, bearing the vessel on their surface; and when the wind adds its strength, by filling the sails, nothing can resist the progress of a large ship, unless it be strong enough, as I have said, to break the keel to pieces.

I cannot give you a description of the size of our vessel, but I can tell you that there were five hundred people living in it, quite comfortably and not crowded. Now fancy such a huge thing as this, standing as high out of the water as the ceiling of a common-sized room is from the floor, and then having masts and sails higher than a very tail tree—fancy it, I say, with five hundred people looking down upon a very little boat, just big enough for two men to manage their nets in, hardly a foot above the level of the water, and the top of its mast not nearly reaching to the place where I stood: fancy all this, and you may partly imagine the terrible danger of those two men, and the agony of fear with which we saw what appeared to us the certain and immediate destruction of two fellow-creatures by our means.

So rapid was our course, that before I could look steadily back upon the boat, it was a great way off, its mast broken, a fragment of the sail hanging to it, and the poor men, seemingly unable to recover themselves from the terror into which they had been thrown, were gazing after us, I hope with thankful adoration to HIM whose mighty arm had interposed to save them from so sudden a death, which would have left their children fatherless, and widowed their poor wives, and perhaps have taken them, quite unprepared, into the presence of the Judge of all the earth. I never saw those men again: I do not know their names, nor should I recollect their faces if I were to meet them; but I am quite sure of seeing them one day—the day of judgment—when I shall also see you, my little readers.

"Who are those on the right hand of the Judge ?" They were poor sinners, like you and me; they were born in sin, as we were; and in many ways they offended God, leaving undone what he has commanded, doing what he has forbidden, and going astray like lost sheep. At last they were brought to consider what an evil and a bitter thing it is to forsake the living God; and remembering that his wrath is revealed from heaven against the rebellious, and that he will cast the impenitent offender into hell, they looked about in dismay, inquiring, "What shall I do to be saved ?" The word of God came to them as you see it in the blessed Bible; they learned to look to Jesus Christ as a Saviour from the wrath to come; "They looked unto him," as the psalm beautifully says, "and were lightened, and their, faces were not ashamed." Psalm 34:5. They learned to put their trust in what Jesus Christ had done for them, who shed his own precious blood upon the cross to redeem their souls; they praved to God. and the Holy Spirit taught them, as he is willing to teach you and me, to forsake sin, to love holiness, to keep holy the Sabbath, to be tender, and kind, and forgiving, to every one; to hate

every false way, and to love above all things the holy law of God. But still, putting no trust in any but the Lord Jesus Christ, and knowing that of themselves they could do nothing, they gave him all the glory, committed their souls to him, and trusted him in life and in death. Those are they who on that day of judgment shall stand upon the right hand of the King, and hear that precious word, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

"But who are those upon the left?" Alas, they were sinners too, just like the rest; but when God called them to consider their ways, and to turn to him, they refused to hear. Some said. "It is time enough yet; I'll think about it when I am older. I cannot leave my pleasure and my business to fill my head with religion ; at least, I will put it off a little longer." Others persuaded themselves that God was too merciful to send them into everlasting flames; so they disbelieved his word, and went on sinning. Others refused to believe in Jesus Christ, but put their trust in their own works, which never could save them in the day when God shall search the heart. Others were so wretchedly foolish, that they actually chose to believe Satan rather than God. "They loved darkness rather than light, because their eeds were evil." John 3:20. Such were some of the things that placed those wretched souls on the left hand of the Judge; and O, the dreadful words that will sound in their ears! "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Dear children, you are like the poor fishermen in that little boat. Great and terrible danger approaches you, and if you do not get out of the way, you will be destroyed. You cannot get out of the way by any strength of your own : you are too weak ; your enemy is too powerful, and comes on too fast. Well, then, lift up your eves and your hearts, and pray to Him who is mighty to save. The Lord will hear and help you from his holy place. He will deliver you from going down into a far deeper pit than the ocean which was about to swallow up the fishermen; he will put into your mouths a new song of thanksgiving, teaching your hearts to praise him, when you see the great deliverance that Jesus Christ has wrought for you; and though you may be called on to give up some pleasure, some profit, some worldly comfort, as the little boat had her sail rent from her ; vet what is this to the loss of all, the loss of your immortal souls? Come to Jesus Christ: sav. "Lord, I am a sinful child, but for such thou didst shed thy precious blood. I am defiled with iniquity, but wash thou me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me. Teach me to go in the way of thy commandments."

If the fishermen forgot their danger, and went on in sin, after seeing the hand of God so stretched out to deliver them from a dreadful death, will they not be covered with shame, and dumb with conscious wickedness, at the great day? And if you neglect the meaning contained in this little book, will it not be the same with you? I have told you of your danger as sinners, and I have pointed out to you the way of escape through the wonderful love of God, in giving his own Son to die, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Farewell, dear readers; may we meet in joy at the great day of separation, placed together at the right hand of Him who died to redeem our souls, and who lives that we may have life and glory in the world to come.



