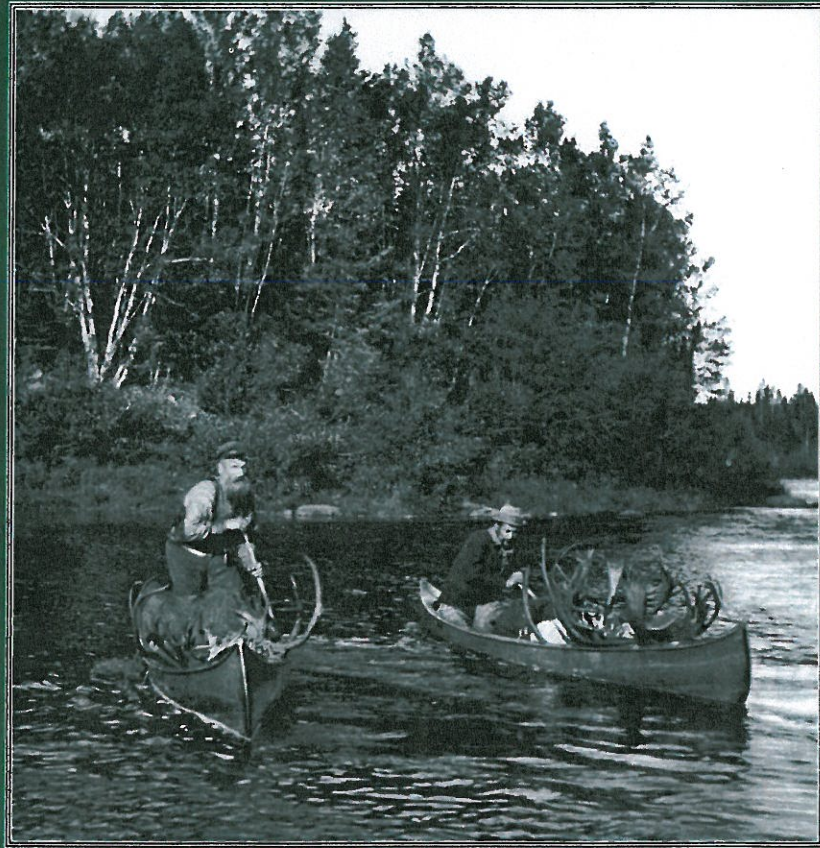


NEWFOUNDLAND

AND ITS UNTRODDEN WAYS



JOHN G. MILLAIS

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FOREWORD

Since the time of earliest discovery, Newfoundland has enthralled visitors with her wild beauty and abundance. From the first aboriginal adventurers, and through the dramas of European settlement, her riches have been chronicled, prized and fought for. For centuries, Newfoundland lay at the heart of illustrious mercantile ventures, whose wealth accumulated thousands of miles to the east. From her great schools of fish and flotillas of whales poured the makings of dynasties, and her value to the administrators of European industry was as indisputable as it was irreplaceable.

It was Newfoundland's fulsome sea that aroused and fed the passions of survival and commerce; but the great interior wilderness was to also play its part in creating her mystique, and in luring men of adventure and capacity to her shores. A vast landscape virtually unexplored by Europeans until the turn of the twentieth century, the interior of Newfoundland had for millennia been home to scattered bands of native North Americans, most recently the Beothuck and Mi'kmaq peoples. Their cultures were sustained by hunter-gatherer strategies, rhythmically entrained to the island's seasonal ebb and flow of abundance. They took advantage of both coastal and inland resources, forsaking and embracing each world in a pattern tied to natural cycles. Along the coast they sought a diversity of natural foods, but inland it was largely the great herds of Woodland Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus terrae-novae*) that they sought and depended upon.

However, Newfoundland's wild abundance was not only important to native peoples and men of commerce. Men of science and adventure came to observe and record, and to test themselves hunting the land and fishing the inland waters. Naturalists Joseph Banks and John James Audubon visited, as did geologists Alexander Murray and James Patrick Howley. While each of these men came with a specific purpose, a different company of men eventually made their appearance: hunter-naturalists, whose main goal was to pursue the game animals and sport fishes that teemed within the interior. Of these, few have left us with lasting testimonials to their impressions, and fewer

still provided such detailed observations as James Guille Millais.

Millais' work, *Newfoundland and Its Untrodden Ways*, here reprinted a full century after its first appearance, is both a classic work of its period and an irreplaceable commentary in our understanding of our island's recent past and our culture's unique signature.

Millais made several trips to Newfoundland between 1902 and 1906. The son of renowned painter Sir John Everett Millais, he was himself an artist, to which may also be added hunter, naturalist and author. He was a particularly keen observer of people, and his treatise on Newfoundland is in many ways as much a commentary on the native and European settler cultures as it is on the wildlife and hunting experiences he had while here. His obvious fondness and understanding of the rough and able rural Newfoundlander is palpable in the text, as is his desire to clear up the ignorance and misconceptions concerning Newfoundland that prevailed in Great Britain and elsewhere.

His admiration for the vitality and endurance of the men who went afield with him, and for those who made their living from the land and sea, is clear in his writing. Their quiet and unassuming dignity, and extraordinary capacity to live from nature, obviously impressed him. Still, his is no whitewash fantasy – no infatuated caricature. He identifies some of the idiosyncracies that, in his view, delayed progress in Newfoundland, and which stemmed from a collective personality and perspective of her citizenry. These observations are of value to all of us who wish for our little nation's greatness.

The fondness his Newfoundland companions developed for him, and their expressed desire to travel with him on future expeditions, attests to the favorable impression that Millais, in turn, had on them. Traveling together for weeks at a time in the interior country, or on whaling ships along the south coast, offered his companions the opportunity to judge him as a man, and Millais obviously passed the test.

Still, it is the chronicle of his glorious days hunting caribou and recording the drama of Newfoundland's interior wilderness that best reflects the heart of Millais' great work. Famed as a hunter-tourist destination, Newfoundland was known for her large herds of Woodland Caribou, and it was in pursuit of these animals that Millais directed his greatest energies. Traveling up the great waterways of eastern and

southern Newfoundland, Millais made his way deep into the interior and saw land that, despite four centuries of European settlement, had been viewed by no more than a handful of white men. Paddling and hauling canoes up great rivers, including the Terra Nova, Long Harbour, North-West Gander and Baie D'Est, Millais moved deep into the heart of Newfoundland's southern wilderness. He traversed the waters of Bay D'Espoir, Long Pond, Pipestone Lake and Newfoundland Dog Pond; and east into the Middle Ridge country, across Little Gull, Jubilee, Eastern Meelpaeg and Terra Nova lakes. Immersed in this wild beauty, Millais endured rain, mosquitoes, heat and snow, in pursuit of great caribou trophies and memorable hunting experiences.

Hundreds of arduous miles were covered on foot under the burden of heavy packs; but through it all one has the sense of a man in his element, reveling in the physical and emotional challenge of wilderness hunting. Fatigue was the measure of endurance, and endurance the measure of passionate pursuit.

But Millais was more than a hunter, and *Newfoundland and Its Untrodden Ways* is more than a hunting tale. The text offers valuable insight into the abundance and quality of Newfoundland caribou a century ago, and provides detailed descriptions of landscapes then undisturbed, but now increasingly altered by human intrusion and development. It offers the naturalist and scientist of today a rare study of a species' past. It inspires wonder for the animals themselves and for the land they inhabit, and it implores us to safeguard their existence. The images of caribou emerging ghost-like from the forest, wading through the clear shallows of meandering streams, or swimming the dark waters of great lakes must surely call to each of us. To see them as Millais did – the great stags raking their antlers to a polished bronze on junipers, or charging across the golden wetlands in pursuit of rivals or mates, their heads festooned with rags of bloodied velvet – this fires our imagination and makes us long to share the experience. Such visions inspire wonder for creatures other than ourselves, and from such inspiration comes an enhanced understanding of the connectedness of life itself.

No one could read Millais' work without wishing to visit

Newfoundland's wild places and to experience the wondrous stags that so symbolize the barren lands of this country. To see them rise from the crimson barrens, their black faces and white neck manes offsetting the great curved antlers – branching like tongues of fire and massive in their golden beams – is to behold wild beauty in its purest form. In their power and unspoken wildness they simply belong here and to this place.

On these barrens, Millais understood that man and beast are inseparable. In wild places everywhere the story is whispered, but in Newfoundland it seems to be proclaimed. Millais, like so many other visitors, felt this power and offered its voice in a unique and lasting tribute.

Shane Mahoney, 2005

Note: Reproductions of all colour plates, painted by Millais, are located after the appendix.