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... of Letters from Capt. Geo. Cartwright in Labrador to
... in England.

To Anthony Eyre Esq.

Ranger Lodge 2^d June 1771

Dear Sir

I am ashamed at not writing to you last year by Mr. Lucas; I'll tell you no lies about the matter, but frankly confess that the number of letters I had to write and short time for so doing, caused you to be forgotten amongst many others of my friends for I defer'd setting my hand to paper until my arrival at Fogo intending to go there with Lucas but I suddenly changed my resolution the day before he sailed. It was sometime before I could bring the Esquimaux Indians left with me by Lucas to tolerable behaviour, or get the better of the dread they had that I should murder them on some slight occasion; but I fancy now they have as great a regard for, and as little dread of me as their own country people, tho' at the same time they are in great awe and carefully avoid doing any thing which they think will offend me. They were very useful in the winter, for my poor dogs would have been starved but for the Seal they continually brought up from our post near the Cape which is ten good miles from hence. They brought it on a slide drawn by dogs; and 'tis amazing what they would draw. The old man who weighs full fourteen stone one day took down eight two-inch Larch plank about 20 feet long by 11 inches broad and rode on it himself with only three old dogs & four whelps of six months old. The dogs are about the size of your spaniels. They are a restless sort of people, as indeed those who live on what they kill must be; being obliged to shift their habitations with the seasons in order to be near their food. ~~But I fully they pitched their tent in a cove near the Cape, but the~~ weather soon made them think of quitting that; they then applied to me and I gave them nails and lent them a boat with a couple of men, to cut & carry wood down to build themselves an house; which they had no sooner compleated than the old fellow complained it was so cold 'twould kill his wives and children. One of the latter did die. I then gave them a house in the river, about half a mile below this, where they stayed till the beginning of Febr. when they went down to Lion Head and dug themselves out a house in the snow, which was the most curious thing I ever saw. 'Twas exactly of the shape of an oven with the mouth rather leaning outwards for the conveniency of entrance, which had a long porch before it. The latter was made of square pieces of snow cut with a hand saw & water poured over the seams, which instantly freezing made it perfectly wind and weather proof: the former was hewn off the snow with an adze and a square hole cut out over the door for a window on which was laid a flat, transparent piece of ice, shaved very thin with a knife & cemented with water. The roof also being not above a foot thick admitted so much light that it was by much the lightest apartment I ever was in, & had a particular brilliancy from the numberless small icicles formed by their breath; and without any fire 'twas warm enough for the tenderest person I know to live in. You ascended into it by steps which made the entrance easy without stooping altho' the door was not above two feet square. Somewhat about one half of the floor was left chair height above the rest & was covered with deer-skins on which they slept & sat and exactly fronting the door, which was stop'd at night with a piece of ice made to fit exactly to raise the degree of warmth. On either side the door was a lamp fixed on sticks. The curiosity & excellent

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judge will produce 14 Tons of Oil, besides about 30 foves. The people I had in the
River made but bad work of it. Two of them with Charles & myself attended the furring.
We had but about two dozen of traps and most of them bad ones (our new ones did not
come from England) besides the two furriers here were but ignorant ones. Every body
who had lived here before insisted upon it that there were no Beavers; but from what
I saw in the winter I was positive to the contrary and after an infinity of pains was
confirmed in my opinion, by finding two new & above fifty old houses: but that not
being till after the ponds were all fast & having no dog that would find them under
the banks when they lay out, we killed but five: three of which were White-tails, weighing
45 lb each, the other two 14. They are most delicious eating when fat; at other times
but indifferent. In the latter end of October I had the luck to kill a very large stag & a
fortnight after, standing at the door I saw fourteen coming down the river upon the ice.
I snatched up a rifle I should have had an exceeding fine shot at a good hind, but my
gun was not loaded & away they scampered into the woods. However clapping a couple
of giblets upon my shoulders I pursued them, and in about three hours came up with
& killed a brace of them. My larder was then most luxuriously furnished, that with veni-
son & some little helps from the beaver, grouse, hawks & ravens we did not finish
the last of the venison till the 17th of February. — The river was froze up from the
2^d Novem^r to the 13th May: the still ponds are not yet all broke up & there is now ice
before the door above three feet thick, although it lies in a warm cove full to the sun.
I had my health very well till about the middle of January, when I was very indispos-
ed for about a month, owing to a cold I got by lying in the woods four nights following in
very severe weather. During my indisposition a very melancholic accident happened.
Mr. Jones the Surgeon of the Garrison at Chatham coming over here imprudently
by himself, lost his way & was froze to death. I did not know he was missing till
four days after, when my people searched and found him upon Round Island. He had
got within an hour's walk of this house, when he unfortunately took my footing upon a
pond which lies on the Neck between this River and Nigger Sound & followed it. I hap-
pened to go that day over to the Sounds to look at a river which lies in the S. W. corner
of it; after which stepping down the south side, crossed it towards the bottom and went at
night to Seal Island. ~~His death was so great a surprise to me, & only because he was~~
a good man, & my being innocently the cause of it, as he was coming to this house:
but it was very ~~near~~ making me necessary to the death of two more, for he was coming
to deliver my maid, and his legs together with the want of better assistance obliged me to
take upon myself the office of ~~my~~ ^{Doctor} ~~my~~ wife. My trouble did not end there, for I was con-
-strained to officiate as nurse next, & take the child to bed with me, her husband having
enough to do to attend her. ~~She does me the credit to say that I performed my office with~~
~~more care to her than any of the professed midwives whose hands she had been under~~
~~before, which was the reason she recovered.~~ She would have done exceedingly well but
for her own imprudence in getting up too soon, which gave her cold & obliged me to trans-
-mogrify myself into a physician and an apothecary. Here I had like to have failed for
want of tools for not one grain of what was wanted did my shop contain. The poor woman
grew worse, was in imminent danger of her life & I found it was absolutely necessary some-
-thing should be done, kill or cure, therefore carefully pursuing my friend Dr. Brookes, &
considering the qualities of each simple concluded that a plant which grew in great
abundance hereabouts was of the same kind as some of those prescribed, gave her a
strong decoction ~~of the bark of the same~~ ~~again~~. I fear I've dwelt too long on this
subject, but hope the novelty of it will plead my excuse. My reputation as a phy-
-sician too is perfectly established on this coast; I have healed the wounds & shed the blood of
most of the people hereabouts & not one of them but declares I handle the lancet better
than any surgeon they ever felt: in short I have had a deal of practice both in phy-
-sick and surgery & every one of my patients have done well which is more than the
best physician or surgeon in London can say. But let us return to business. I have cut
down more trees on my estate this winter than many men of fortune in England have in
their lives. I kept two saws going most of the time, but the stuff being bad & the workmen
worse we have not a great deal of board to show for it: however we have built two vats & cut
stuff enough to build a salmon house, covered wharf, & a stage for the Cod fishery. Our
boats are repaired & one third of the salmon house is up. The quantity of fur but small,
it consists of Marten, Fox, Squirrel, Otter & Beaver. We have killed three beasts of a
kind we are not acquainted with — I am of opinion they are sables, and one Carcaas
It is of a very mischievous nature & in shape partakes with both the bear & wolf, but

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Furriers they betake themselves to the woods for the winter, where they kill Beaver,
Otter, Marten, Deer, Bear, Wolf & Fox. In April they return, but put out Otter &
Fox traps along shore. When the ice breaks up they set nets for young Seals, kill
Ducks & gather eggs, of which we got about a thousand last spring, & might have got
three times the number had we had time. In May they are getting Rinds for roofing the
Salmon houses & other buildings and put the cribs and every thing else in order for the
ensuing season, by which you see they do not want employment.

The Sealing is a profitable branch of business. In the beginning of October
the crews should repair to their Posts & get every thing in order. The Seals come from
the northward about the second week in Novem. & all gone by before the middle of
December. When the work is over the nets are hung in a house to thaw & dry; the seals
are covered with snow to prevent the frost from burning them, which it otherwise would do
equal to fire. Now they put out traps for fur near the post & take advantage of every
thaw to skin out & put the fat into Vats or Casks till spring. But in May is the great
work of skinning & melting out the fat. The Casks are then stored in the shade to pre-
vent the heat of the sun from causing a leakage in them. The Nets are again dried
more effectually, the ships lodged in safety and the people having delivered up all
their craft are dismissed to follow their other occupation of Cod-fishing for the summer.

As for the Indian Trade it will be carried on to most advantage by the Mo-
ravians, or rather monopolized by them, in consequence of their being settled in the
midst of the savages by means of a grant from the Government. I have some trifling
traffick with them when they were in this neighbourhood; but it can no longer answer
to pursue it with a vessel fitted out at a great expence as we did last year. Beads are
the staple commodity in this barter after the Indians have supplied their wants in Tools
of iron & a few other conveniences; and in return they furnish whale-bone, young seal
skins, Fox, Otter, Marten, Deer, Bear & Wolf skins in small quantities.

To Lieut. John Cartwright

Ranger Lodge 20 Sep. 1771

Four days after you sailed, the Enterprize returned. Poor Lucas
brought an Indian family with him, which wintered with me. Soon after a
Crew of Shore-men arrived at Seal island - They killed 800 Seals, 33 foxes,
5 Otters, 1 Deer & 1 Wolf. On the 21st October after dispausing of supplies
the boat which Coghlen sent in consequence of your arrival at Fogo, arrived
with Provisions & Winter Crews. Two men with Charles & myself commenced
Furriers. I was the best of the crew, so you may imagine we made a fine
hand of it. But I will pass over the affairs of the winter, having filled my other
letters with them, & come to occurrences of the summer. On the 4th of July five
Indian shallops arrived at the Cape. Some of the men came up here that night
& lay in the dining room. Next day I went with them to visit their wives; the day
after the women & children with some men came up here again, 32 in number,
a goodly company! They were exceedingly pleased with their treatment de-
voured a great quantity of salmon & carried more away with them. At night
five did not choose to leave me & so they spent their evening here. The next day
I took Charles with me & pitched my tent amongst them by the side of the
little tichle. My winter friends had made so favourable a report of me
that they all behaved exceedingly well, nor did they steal any thing although
the tent was full from morn till night & goods were lying about. I employed
my time so well that before it was known at Chateau that they were here, I
had got almost all the things they brought for truck but they amounted indeed to a
very small quantity as the Moravians take care to supply all their wants before
they leave home. On the 16th I accompanied them to Camp Island & took my
passage in the boat of their Chief: after a stay of two days, we proceeded together
to Table Point where I killed a brace of Deer. On the 26 five boats more
came

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blood hounds are increased to five couple and all broke to the harness, so that when I get upon
the fresh slot of deer I shall travel at a merry pace. The Table Land is the best place for
Deer and White Bear in Spring, of any I yet know. I shall live there from February till
June; burrowing like a rabbit in the snow. I must get you to order me a tent from the Oil
Cloth Manufactory at Knightsbridge, one side white the other brown; it must be the shape
of a soldiers, but supported by a strong wooden frame as well as poles, for in winter it will
be cover'd with snow, in summer with boughs or sods. Let the frame be 8 feet long & 7 broad,
joined at the angles with screws. The ridge pole to be 5 feet high, supported at each end by a
perpendicular pole: & from the ridge pole to the frame on each side have nine rafters,
(pointed with iron at each end) for bearing up the snow &c. The tent to be in one piece & closed
at each end; except a square hole 2 feet square by the side of one of the perpendiculars,
over which must hang down a canvas door. The holes in the ridge pole & the frame which
receives the iron points of the rafters, ~~must~~ ^{must} also be iron bound: on the outside too of the ground
frame all round, let there be short stumpy spikes of iron, corresponding with eyelet holes
in the border of the tent, in order to keep it tight & close down. Pack all in a chest with
a ~~few~~ spare canvas for repairs. If it is well executed I shall be able to shift
my winter quarters, as often as I shall be inclined.