Western men suppose that I find some secret commodity by reason that I do search the harbours, creeks and havens, and also the land much more than ever any Englishman hath done". He gave an excellent account of the fertility and goodness of this country and tested it for himself by sowing wheat, barley, peas, etc., the first seeds that were set in Newfoundland. Parkhurst was the first to urge upon Queen Elizabeth the advisability of annexing and fortifying the island, so that Englishmen might become the "lords of the whole fishing";[1] and his letter foreshadows the long struggle to found a colony to monopolise for England the wealth of the fisheries. It was still tacitly accepted that the King of Portugal held whatever shadowy claims to the *Tierra dos Baccalaos* were conferred by right of prior discovery, but the fertile ingenuity of Dr John Dee recalled to the memory of Englishmen that John Cabot under the standard of Henry VII had anticipated the Portuguese by three years, and he did his best to persuade the Queen and Burghley that this gave England a valid right to Newfoundland against other nations. They listened to him sceptically and refused any official help, for they knew how little such arguments weighed in practical politics. However, he had set the ball rolling, and his friends among the advocates of colonisation took up his cry with enthusiasm, and by their writings soon firmly established the statement of England's prior claim in the public mind. This supplied good material for propaganda against the Iberian claims to a monopoly of oceanic power, but the struggle for the fisheries could not be decided by appeals to antiquarian learning. It demanded practical and effective occupation of the disputed territory, and Sir William Monson fairly expressed the legal position when he wrote some thirty years after Dee—"We can challenge no right of inheritance [to Newfoundland], wanting proof of possession which is the law acknowledged by the right of discovery".[2]

The first attempt at formal annexation came from Dee's friend, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, in 1583, which was considered in our first volume.[3] His proceedings were not especially directed by a desire to dominate the fishing as Parkhurst had proposed. His aim was to found a great lordship in America, and what he did in Newfoundland was to have been only an incident on his way southward to *Terra Florida*.[4] He crossed by the "trade way" because the fishing merchants informed him that he could obtain supplies cheaply in the Newfoundland harbours. St John's was an *entrepôt* for the fishermen of all nations, and when Gilbert arrived (3 August 1583) he found it "populous and frequented" and an abundance of provisions of all kinds that was "unexpected in that desolate corner of the world".[5] He had to force his way in against the objections of the fishermen, who knew what to expect from a "gentleman adventurer". Their fears were

[1] Hakluyt, v, 348.
[2] Churchill, *Voyages*, III, 203.
[3] See *C.H.B.E.* vol. I, pp. 67, 105–6.
[4] Hakluyt, VI, 8.
[5] *Ibid.* VI, 17–19.

justified, for he proceeded at once to levy contributions of provisions from the masters of the barks at St John's and in all the neighbouring harbours, whether English or strangers. Under his guns they could not refuse, and when he went on to proclaim with imposing formalities the annexation of all the territories for 200 leagues around, the fishermen had to submit. But only seventeen days after his arrival Gilbert's pageant came to an end. After much spoil and destruction by his unruly crews he sailed away to continue his voyage (20 August 1583), and Newfoundland settled down again to its accustomed business with entire disregard of his annexation, his laws and his leases.[1] The episode had no direct effect on subsequent history, and England's claims to the island were neither more nor less valid than before.

The next expedition, undertaken by the orders of the Government, had permanent effects upon the fishery. Between 1555 and 1585 the Spaniards furnished the largest contingents to the annual fishing fleets, and their trade attained a prosperity that was never afterwards approached. The growing demands of the Indies flotas for sailors and Philip II's drafts upon the fishing ports for his Armada for the invasion of England crippled the Spanish industry, and in 1585 it received its death-blow at the hands of an expedition sent out under Sir Bernard Drake as one of the first strokes in the naval war. More than 600 Spaniards and Portuguese were taken prisoners and 60,000 quintals of fish were seized. The Spanish fishing fleet never recovered, and whereas before 1585 some 150 barks sailed annually to the Banks from the Biscayan ports, even in the best of later years their numbers were reduced to ten or under, manned by Basques who pretended to be subjects of the King of France. Only the English and the French were left as serious competitors, and Spain and the Mediterranean countries had to purchase their supplies of stock-fish from them even in time of war and pay for them mostly in money. This was one of the reasons that made the Newfoundland trade so valuable in the eyes both of English and French statesmen. In exchange for nothing but the export of labour and some food supplies the nation was enriched by the influx of treasure and the encouragement of mariners. In time of war the fisheries supplied a reserve of skilled and experienced men for the fighting fleets and their barks an indispensable addition of auxiliary craft. Arguments such as these carried great weight, and they account for the favour with which even the most exacting demands of the fishermen were listened to for a couple of centuries.

During the Wars of Religion the French fleets declined, but by the end of the sixteenth century more fishermen sailed annually from French than from English ports, though the English would not admit

[1] Hakluyt, VI, 25.