

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

SEASIDE STORIES  
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PART I  
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From "CHRONICLES OF THE ST.LAWRENCE"  
by James McPherson Le Moine, published  
in 1878.

KEN ANNETT

SEASIDE STORIES - PART I

INTRODUCTION

One of the aims of "GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY" since the series began has been to seek out and present the writing of various authors on Gaspesian themes. In particular, attention has been given to such literature as may not be readily available in Gaspesia. Indeed, in some cases, the material is out of print and to be found only in the "rare book" category.

The following items published in Volume I of "GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY" alone, illustrate this aim:

<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
RICHMOND, Frederick - - - - -	THE ARRIVAL OF JACQUES CARTIER IN GASPÉ IN 1534.
LE CLERCQ, Father C. - - - - -	THE NEW RELATION OF GASPEZIA. (1691)
CLARK, Dr. John M. - - - - -	PENINSULA POINT.
BELL, Capt. Thomas - - - - -	THE GASPEE EXPEDITION. (1758)
SHERWOOD, Capt. Justus - - - - -	EARLY TOURIST IN GASPEZIA.
COX, Major Nicholas (et al) -	CORRESPONDENCE OF THE COX PERIOD.
LOYALIST CLAIMANTS - - - - -	CLAIMS OF BAY CHALEUR LOYALISTS.
HOBSON, Benjamin - - - - -	REPORT AS PIONEER SCHOOLMASTER.
COMMISSIONERS FOR - - - - -	THE SHOOLBRED SEIGNIORY.
SEIGNIORIAL REFORM	
COMMISSIONERS FOR GASPE - - -	REPORT ON THE STATE AND NEEDS OF THE LAND CLAIMS DISTRICT OF GASPÉ (1919)
VON IFFLAND, Dr. Antoine - - -	VISIT TO GASPÉ (1821)
MOUNTAIN, Archdeacon George J. -	VISITS TO THE GASPÉ COAST. 1824 / 1826
BARTH, Joseph - - - - -	TESTIMONY BEFORE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE (1830)
LUCAS, Abel	
FERLAND, Abbé - - - - -	THE GASPÉ WHALERS.
FORTIN, Dr. P.	
MacHIRTER, Mrs. M.	
et al	

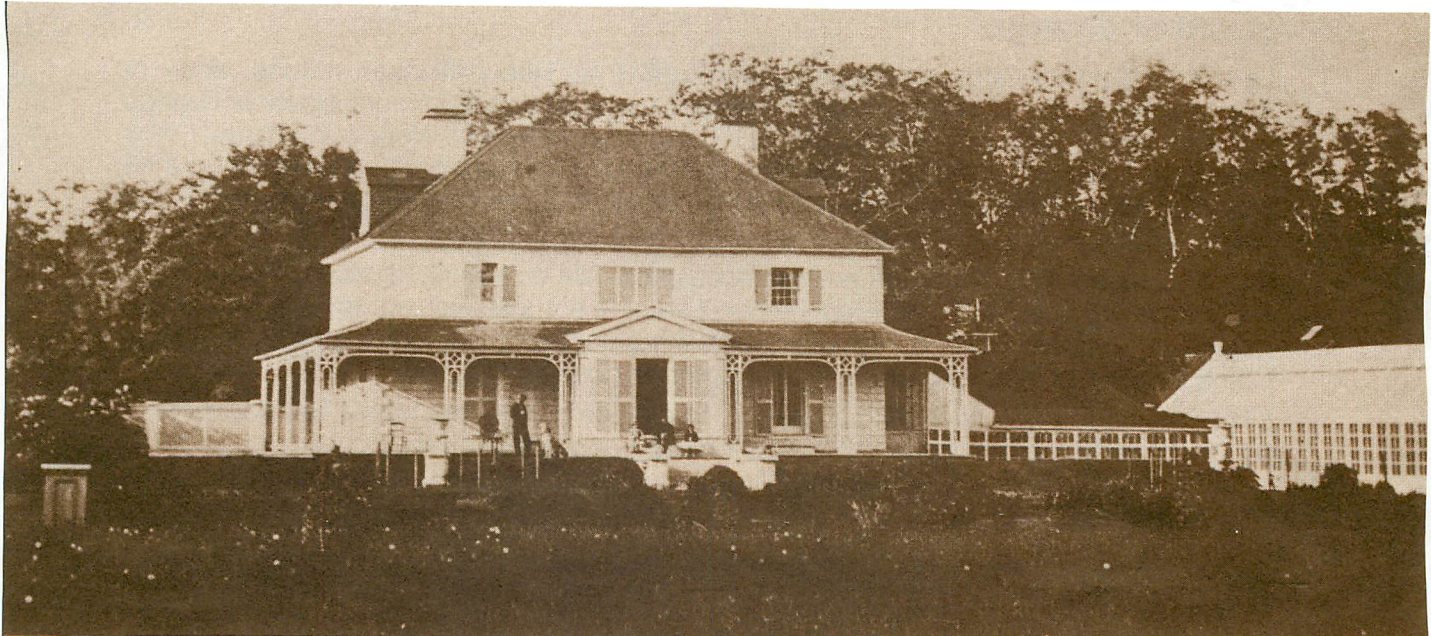
INTRODUCTION

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In line with its established practice, "GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY" proposes to present some of the writings of Sir James McPherson LeMoine (1825-1912) on his travels and experiences in the District of Gaspé.

LeMoine had sound Gaspesian connections as a grandson of Daniel McPherson of Point St.Peter and nephew of Colonel Henry Bisset Johnston of Douglastown. Personal acquaintance with many Gaspesians, both on the Coast and in his native city of Québec, provided a unique background for his writings on Gaspesia.

The distinguished career of LeMoine has been the subject of many biographers over the years. In 1985. Roger LeMoine published the latest of these entitled - "UN QUÉBÉCOIS BIEN TRANQUILLE" (Les Editions La Liberté) This volume has a detailed and very useful listing of all the literary works of Sir James McPherson LeMoine.



"SPENCER GRANGE"

THE QUEBEC CITY HOME OF JAMES MCPHERSON LE MOINE



THE  
CHRONICLES OF THE ST. LAWRENCE.

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PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE GULF PORT STEAMERS — FATHER LOFTUS — GASPÉ — ITS  
SCENERY AND AMUSEMENTS.

ON BOARD THE "GASPÉ," 12th Sept., 1871.

ON a soft and hazy afternoon the good steamer "Gaspé," Commander Baquet, was gliding noiselessly past the many lovely isles of the St. Lawrence, past the Traverse, past the Pilgrims; so noiselessly, in fact, that, to one standing on shore, it might have seemed that she had returned to her old trade, viz.: secretly carrying cotton from the land of Dixie to the white cliffs of Old England, in spite of the screeching of the American Eagle. Though a good sea boat, she is not by any means a fast one; as blockade runners are expected to show at times a pair of heels, and this she failed to do, she was forced, on receiving two shot holes in her bow, to alter her ways. It is owing to this that she became a respectable Canadian craft—one of the Gulf Port Steamers.

After enjoying a substantial meal, the passengers, one and all, ascended to the deck; some to smoke—others to talk politics—some to crack jokes: a motley assembly from every part of the Dominion, with a sprinkling of foreigners. Amongst the latter, was a big-fisted *padre*, who persisted in cracking ponderous jokes. There was in his behavior something peculiar; some made him out an Armenian Deacon—others said he belonged to the Greek dispensation. As he was fierce at times—as fierce, in fact, as a Greek when "Greek meets Greek"—we all agreed a Greek he should be, and such he remained to us, under the historic name of "Father Tom Loftus." \* \* \* \* \* Soon the wind sprung up; the ship rocked; a storm was brewing. Was it owing to having clergymen on board? An irreverent joker advised to throw one of them overboard; it was, however, mildly suggested to "wait until morning." No clergyman was thrown overboard, and next morning—why, it was calm. At 9 a.m. a boat came alongside, and took ashore the passengers for Father Point and Rimouski, including Mr. W——, a most jovial Quebec broker.

On all that day our brave steamer kept her course, under steam and sails, amidst the gorgeous scenery of the St. Lawrence. In the distance were visible the blue peaks of mountains bathed in autumnal sunshine, their wooded valleys and green gorges all aglow with the blaze of the colors which September drops on the

foliage of our maple and oak trees,—gold, crimson, red, maroon, amber, pale green, brown—a landscape such as neither Claude Lorraine, nor Landseer, ever dared to attempt in their brightest day dreams ; a spectacle which invests the most humble Canadian cot with hues and surroundings denied to the turreted castle and park of the proudest English baron. On we steamed, past Cape Chatte, a name borrowed two centuries back and more from the Commander de Chatte, a French nobleman,—and mentioned as such by Champlain in his map as early as 1612. A beacon for ships was lighted on it, on the 11th August last.

On the opposite side, where the Laurentian chain seems to end, is Pointe des Monts, (the Point of the Mountains), and not Point Demon (the Devil's Point) as some geographers have been pleased to inscribe on the charts ; others, however, say that M. de Monts, more than two centuries ago, bequeathed it his name. Antiquarians, there is a nut for you to crack !

We had on board several "choice spirits" of an enquiring turn of mind—ever ready to make experiments in order to ascertain what was the best cure for sea-sickness. As the steamer rolled heavily at times, the enquiry had a practical bearing. Was "hot Scotch" a specific in all cases ? Or was "Irish potheen" to be resorted to when the patient felt a kind of sinking sensation at the pit of the stomach ? Here, as well as at the Vatican,\* the opinions were divided, as on the question of infallibility. After steaming thirty-eight hours, the "Gaspé" was securely moored at Lowndes' wharf, Gaspé Basin, one of the most snug harbors in all British North America.† The beach below is occupied by stores, warehouses, offices ; the heights where the O'Harras, Perchards and Arnolds formerly lived are now held by the modern aristocracy of Gaspé and officials, on both sides of the Basin. On the south side, amidst trees, frowns Fort Ramsay with its cannon. The new and substantial residence of the Hon. John Leboutillier, M.L.C., ‡ is conspicuous from afar, amongst the less showy dwellings of the other members of the clan.

On the corresponding shore sits the roomy dwelling of the respected Collector of the port, J. C. Belleau, Esq., a true-hearted patriot of 1837, who, with the Vigers, DeWitts, and other men of note, were consigned to dungeons most dismal, for having dared to suspect that under the Family Compact there were

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\* The famous Œcumenical Council had just closed.

† Gaspé Bay is well described by Champlain, pages 1085-90, &c. The name itself, it is suggested by his commentators, is borrowed from the picturesque rock, detached from the shore, three miles higher than Cape Gaspé, known to seamen as "Ship Head," or the "Old Woman," from the singular transformation by mirage ; the Indian name being *Katsepjou*, which means *separate* (abridged into Gaspé).—See *Champlain's Voyages*.

‡ This gentleman has since died.

some abuses in Canada. Adjoining the Collector's residence, and facing the spot where the Royal squadron anchored in 1860, with the Prince of Wales on board, flourishes the temple of Roman Catholic worship. They were grand times, indeed, these gala days of 1860, when Albert of Wales visited his Royal mother's lieges, the Gaspeians. The officials, military and civil, turned out in tremendous force. Plumes, cocked hats, long-tailed coats, short-tailed coats, coats without tails, spurs, swords, helmets, every device, in fact, calculated to lend *éclat* to the pageant, was brought to the front.

Amongst other items of news, we heard it talked of to restore to Gaspé an office of high rank and ancient creation—the office of Lieut.-Governor of Gaspé. Major Cox, in 1775, appears to have been the resident Lieut.-Governor. We were shown a hickory chair that belonged to him. This seat did not seem firm, nor very durable, though it was a century old; we felt, on sitting down on it, just like a Governor—pardon, a Lieut.-Governor—as Lieut.-Governors *sit* less secure and luxuriously. In the good old Tory days, many offices existed with emoluments well defined and duties very problematical. The Lieutenant-Governorship of Gaspé, with a salary of £1,000 and perquisites?—why, there were many things worse than that!

Messrs. Joseph and John Eden own extensive wharves and stores on the beach; but, alas, the Free Port system, which in 1864, crammed the Gaspé stores with goods, and deluged the coast with cheap gin and St. Pierre de Miquelon brandy, is a dream now—a melancholy dream of the past. We have to thank the aforesaid active Government officers for their courtesies to us as strangers. The old Coffin Hotel, now much enlarged, is beautifully located on the hill, and merely requires an experienced "Russell" to render it profitable, and a source of pleasure to the many tourists who will hereafter wind their way each summer to Gaspé Basin.\*

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\* This hostelry was burned down in March, 1878.

Higher up than their wharves, the Messrs. Lowndes have in operation an extensive saw-mill, which provides daily bread for many, many Gaspé families. Let us hope it may flourish!

One of the chief amusements at Gaspé Basin, during the summer months, is yachting and bobbing for mackerel, just outside the Basin, in the Bay. It is a most exciting and invigorating pastime. The worthy American Consul counts on numerous American craft entering the basin so soon as the new Washington Treaty goes in force.

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## CHAPTER II.

GASPÉ BASIN—DOUGLASTOWN—POINT ST. PETER'S—MAL BAIE  
—NEW CARLISLE—PASPEBIAC—THE GREAT JERSEY FIRMS.

THERE is something singularly striking when, on a bright Saturday morning, at break of day, with the far-reaching Bay of Gaspé before you lit up with amber sunshine, your ear catches the boom of the heavy guns fired by the two Gulf Port steamers—the one from Pictou, the other from Quebec; their usual signal on nearing the placid waters of the Basin. They are so well timed that both frequently arrive together. Hark! to the wild echo bounding over the waters, and then leaping from peak to peak in this weird, mountainous region. Three centuries ago and more, other echoes no less wild disturbed the quiet of this forest home—the shouts of joy of Jacques Cartier's adventurous crew, when planting a cross on the sandy point at the entrance, on the 24th July, 1534; and when taking possession in the name of Francis I of France; not, however, without an energetic protest being then and there made by a great chief, "clad in a bear skin, and standing erect in his canoe, followed by his numerous warriors." Hakluyt tells us that the old chief was enticed on board the French ships, and, on his sons Taiguragny and Domagaya being decked out in most gorgeous raiment, he was prevailed to let the vain youths accompany the French captain to the court of the French King. Poor vain lads! had you been wise you would have jumped overboard and swam ashore when you passed Ship Head!

Look eastward on the dark waving woods hoary with age.  
Is this not

. . . . . the forest primeval! The murmuring pines and the hemlocks  
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight,  
Stand like Druids of old, with voices sad and prophetic,  
Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms,  
This is the forest primeval; but where are the hearts that beneath it  
Leaped like the roe, when he hears in the woodland the voice of the huntsman?

Where are now the descendants of the fierce Indians who then greeted Cartier, and whose huts were located on the rocky ledge where I now stand? There were then no swift steamers churning these glad waters—no golden wheat-fields, as those I can now see at Sandy Beach; but everywhere the forest primeval—its gloom—its trackless wilds—its uselessness to civilized man.

On we sped, with steam and sails. Soon opened on us the extensive old settlement of Douglastown. It was not named after any fierce black Douglas, celebrated in song, but by an unassuming land surveyor of that name. Numerous descendants of the first settlers, of 1785—the U. E. Loyalists—still survive: the Kennedys, Thompsons, Murisons, etc., industrious fishermen all. The whole bay is studded with fishing stations and small villages, in which generally the R. C. church is the most conspicuous object. After passing *Grande Grève* and *Chien Blanc*, both the scenes of awful marine disasters, the steamer hugs the shore towards Point St. Peter's, a large and

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important fishing settlement, and creeps through a deep channel between the rocky ledge called Plateau and Point St. Peter's, and another thriving fishing location called Mal Baie. According to Champlain and his commentator, the origin of the name is taken from *Molües* or *Morues* Baie (Codfish Bay) which the English turned into Mal Baie.

However, don't be surprised at any transformation in these wild regions, as Cat Cape (Cape Chatte) and Devil's Point (Pointe de Monts) sufficiently testify. I might add another queer transmogrification. At St. Luce there is a deep cove and jutting point; in spring, it is infested with mussels, which the French call *des Cocques*; hence the French name *L'Anse aux Cocques*. But the English must have a cock instead; they have named it Cock Point. I know I shall make the mouths of antiquarians water when I tell them I have at last, after a deal of research, got hold of the origin of the name of Father Point, a little higher up than Cock Point; but of this hereafter. Let us hurry on to the great, grand, and growing capital on the Canadian side of Baie des Chaleurs (New Carlisle). All know why the Bay was called Baie des Chaleurs (Bay of Heat) by Cartier, though all of us on board the "Gaspé" found the place extremely cold.

On a high bank, with a southern exposure, lies a fine champagne country laid out in square blocks of four acres each—for a town chiefly inhabited by English and Scotch. It has an Episcopalian church, a Roman Catholic church, a new courthouse and jail, and no less than two judges, living within view of each other. Two resident judges in New Carlisle remind one of the two rival Roman Catholic churches staring at one another at Trois Pistoles—one evidently will have to knock under, the place cannot afford such a luxury. It is said there is here enough litigation to fatten three resident lawyers, and that there are three physicians in the place. It is healthy notwithstanding, and some of the inhabitants have been known to attain great ages. Little or no fishing is done at the shire town. I had no time to find out whether it derives its name from an Earl of Carlisle, or from Tom Carlyle, the great Essayist and coiner of words. From the readiness with which words and names are altered, one would fain believe it hails from the great essayist. One case in point: that of the neighboring fishing settlement—its commercial emporium—Paspebiac. This is an Indian name—the English-speaking population have altered it into Paspys Jack. They call themselves Paspys Jacks, and the French, who get their backs up readily, especially since they have had Parliamentary elections to manage, call it *Pospillat* and themselves *Des Pospillats*. In Bishop Plessis's account of his mission, here, in 1811, we read that in many instances the maternal ancestors of the Pospillats were Micmac squaws, much to the disgust of the neighboring settlements. These half-breeds were then accounted fierce and revengeful. Tom Carlyle must have had something to do with this word-coining. But let us return to the county town. The view from the heights is most imposing. You notice here and there a better style of dwelling, trim flower-gardens interspersed with the scarlet clusters of the mountain ash or roan berry—comfortable old homesteads, like that of the Hamiltons—splendid new residences, like that of Dr. Robitaille, M.P.\*



There are several educated families located at New Carlisle which renders it a most pleasant residence, especially during the summer months; but beware how you utter the word "Election," and keep a dignified reserve on this explosive subject until you are at least past, on your return, Ship Head or Fox River.

Talking of fiercely-contested elections reminds one of the great election of Eatanswill, mentioned in "Pickwick." Forty-five green parasols be it remembered, judiciously bestowed, had turned the scale on that eventful day.

In Canada, barrels of flour and the coin of the realm, are said to be more effective. However, let us hope that in Bonaventure, the election was carried with that lofty patriotism and exquisite purity, the shining characteristic of all Canadian elections, in June last!!! Hem!!

For tourists in quest of health, sea-bathing and good fishing, I

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◦ New Carlisle was first settled by American Loyalists: that is, by persons whose loyalty to the British Crown induced them to leave the United States at the period of the Revolution. These persons obtained free grants of land, agricultural implements, seed and provisions for one year. Lieut.-Governor Cox was appointed, in or about 1774, as Governor of the district of Gaspé, and seems to have resided alternately in two shire towns, New Carlisle and Percé. He appears to have been sent for the purpose of settling the Loyalists in New Carlisle and Douglstown, and to have expended between the two places upwards of £80,000 sterling, a large amount when we consider the little progress made in either locality. The Abbé Ferland states that Judge Thompson once jocularly observed to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Québec, that "this sum can only have been spent in making excavations underground, nothing appearing on the surface to justify such an outlay."—*Pye's Gaspé Scenery.*

know few places more eligible than Baie des Chaleurs and Gaspé Basin.

Paspebiac, with its roadstead running out to a point in the Bay, is the seaport—the great fishing stand of the Messrs. Robin and the Messrs. LeBoutillier Brothers. The fishing establishments—a crowd of nice white warehouses, with doors painted red, comprising stores, offices, forges, joiners' shops, dwellings for fishermen, even to powder magazines—all stand on a low beach or sand bar, connected with the shore by a ford for horses, and a trestlework bridge for foot passengers, which is taken down every fall and restored in the spring at the expense of the Messrs. Robin. It seems singular that the business and wealth centered here cannot afford a bridge. Crossing by ford at night, when the tide is high, is anything but an agreeable prospect. It is scarcely safe. Perhaps when some of the magnates of the place are found drowned in the ford, the Bridge question will assume a more tangible phase.

Paspebiac is three miles east of New Carlisle. Here the Custom House is located. The Collector (1871) is J. Fraser, Esq., an active, well-informed old Scotchman.\* The bar on which the fishing warehouses stand, is a triangle formed by sand and other marine *detritus*. The interior of the triangle is gradually filling up. Here the fishermen dwell in summer; they remove to their winter quarters on the heights in rear in December.

It was in 1766 that Charles Robin, Esq., first landed at Paspebiac and explored the coast in a small brig called the "Sea-Flower." One hundred and forty-six years previous (1620)

other explorers, the Pilgrim-Fathers, were landing a little to the south in the "May-Flower." On 11th June, 1778, two American privateers plundered Mr. Robin's store of all his goods, furs, and seized his two vessels, the "Bee" and the "Hope;" both were moored in the Paspebiac Roads. But the "Bee" and the

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\* This worthy, aged official, having since accepted a pension lives in his old homestead, formerly the residence of the historian, R. Christie, at Cross Point; he is Warden of the County.

New England privateers were all recaptured in the Restigouche, by H. B. M. vessels, "Hunter" and "Piper;" and the heavy salvage Mr. R. was called on to pay, viz.: one-eighth, caused him to fail; he was off for Jersey. In 1783 he returned, sailing under French colors, and continued to accumulate wealth until 1802, when he left for Europe.

On the green hills in rear, the great Jersey houses have splendid farms, dwellings, gardens, parks. Fish manure and kelp are bountifully supplied here and largely used. The winter residences of the Managers of Messrs. Robin, and Messrs. LeBoutillier Bros., are most commodious, most complete. I was allowed to inspect a large store for the packing of pork on the establishment of the Messrs. Robin—the first I had ever seen on this principle. The thawing is done in the depth of winter without any artificial heat, and merely by a device which, whilst it excludes the cold air, retains the natural heat generated in the earth. In about a week the frozen pigs gradually thaw and are fit for salting. The walls of this building, between earth, sawdust, timber, etc., are about twelve feet thick, with a vacuum between each layer.

It is well worth a visitor's attention to examine the vast facilities and arrangements devised to carry on the gigantic trade in fish, oil, etc., of the two wealthy Jersey houses, whose head establishments are at Paspebiac. The western point of the bar, or beach, is occupied by Le Boutillier Bros., a respectable old Jersey house; but though a worthy rival of its neighbors, it is not so ancient as the great house of C. R. C. (Charles Robin & Co.) None of the Robins, however, reside here. C. R. C. is a mighty name on the Gaspé coast. It has existed more than a hundred years. Whether the "Co." is represented by sons, as formerly, I cannot tell; perhaps, like the great London house immortalized by Dickens, C. R. C. might now mean daughters—it is beyond doubt "Dombey & Son" turned out to be a daughter.\* C. R. C. amongst the Gaspésians represent mil-

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\* Since these lines were written in 1871, a notice of transfer of commercial rights appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* of Quebec, Oct. 8, 1877, giving the lions; seven vast establishments rejoice under this mystic combination.

It would be akin to sacrilege to say, at Paspebiac, that they could be affected by hard times. No one *can fathom* their resources: no one dare dispute the principle on which each establishment is carried on. The poor clerks and managers, 'tis true, cannot own wives or families at their residences at Gaspé; the founder of the house ordained it otherwise one hundred years ago, and their business rules are like the laws of the Medes and Persians—they alter not. C. R. C. is really a grand,

a glorious name, a tower of strength in Gaspesia, though it may mean a monopoly. Its credit is calculated to last until the end of time. Canada Banks may get in Chancery; the Bank of England may feel tight, hard up; but C. R. C. never. Its credit stands higher on all the range of this vast coast than the Bank of England. I should be the last to attempt to dim the lustre of these great Jersey firms; their word is as good as their bond, and in times of need, when the fishery fails, the poor fisherman never appeals to them in vain.

I cannot leave Paspébiac without noticing one of the most prominent elements of progress recently introduced—the extension of the Electric Telegraph, all the way down from Métis to Baie des Chaleurs and Gaspé. Times are indeed changed since those dark ages when a Gaspé or Baie des Chaleurs mail was made up once each winter and expedited to Quebec on the back of an Indian on snow-shoes. Thanks to their Parliamentary Members, thanks to the wealthy Jersey firms, thanks to the enterprise of the people who furnished the telegraph posts, (the Montreal Telegraph Co. agreeing to put them up), the wires place them now in hourly intercourse with every city of America and of Europe.

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following as the members of the commercial firm of Charles Robin, viz. :  
 “Messrs. Raulin Robin, Philip Gosset and William Lempriere, all of the Island of Jersey, in Europe, where is situate the head office.”