

THE FOUNDATION OF HALIFAX.

BY HARRY PIERS, ASSISTANT LEGISLATIVE LIBRARIAN, HALIFAX.

By the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, the British restored Cape Breton to France, but retained the mainland of Nova Scotia. It became evident that some change must be made in the condition of the latter colony, if it was to prosper and remain in British possession. A great proportion of its inhabitants consisted of French Acadians whose sympathies were entirely anti-English, and who could hardly fail to be a retarding element in its progress under British rule. Those who gave the subject most thought advised that the strength of the Crown be augmented by increasing the population by loyal colonists from the motherland.

At the conclusion of the late war, many regiments had been broken or reduced; and England was filled with discharged soldiers and seamen, who were looking for new channels in which to turn their energies. These, it was thought, formed good stock with which to revitalize and strengthen the transatlantic colony.

The scheme seemed an excellent one, and was approved by His Majesty, who referred its execution to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, at the head of whom was the Earl of Halifax. This gentleman entered into the project with great zeal. An advertisement was inserted in a London newspaper, offering inducements to dismissed officers and private men of the land and sea service, as well as artificers, to emigrate to Nova Scotia. The government promised a free passage, grants of land in fee simple, free from the payment of any quit rents or taxes for ten years, as well as necessary arms, agricultural, fishing and building implements, and food for twelve months. The grants of land were to vary from fifty acres for every private soldier or seaman to six hundred for every officer above the rank of a captain, with additional grants for each member of a family.

This offer immediately attracted attention, and in a couple of months' time 2,576 adventurers—men, women and children—were ready to sail for their new home. Parliament granted £40,000 to cover the first expenses, and thirteen transports were ordered to embark the colonists.

The new town was to be formed on the harbor of Chebucto, on the eastern coast of the province. The excellence of this harbor had