

THE FUR TRADE OF CANADA.

NO. II.

The late happy junction of the two great Companies which almost exclusively engrossed the Fur Trade of the British Territories in North America, renders it necessary that, before proceeding further in our historical sketch of this most important branch of commercial enterprise, we should retrograde in our details, in order to bring clearly and distinctly before the reader's view in one connected chain, the rise and progress of that trade which has been the cause of so much individual and national wealth, as well as the various systems pursued from its foundation, for the attainment of that success which it is to be hoped has ultimately crowned the exertions of a number of individuals, no less renowned for their enterprize than daring intrepidity and skill, in conducting one of the most difficult branches of trade which commerce has opened up to the ambition of man.

The Fur Trade of HUDSON'S BAY is almost coeval with that of CANADA; and the history of the one is no less interesting than that of the other. The first discovery of those northern lands, were made by the adventurers from different parts of Europe, who endeavoured to find out the north-west passage to China and the East Indies. From the year 1576 to the year 1578, Sir Martin Forbisher made three different voyages to discover this still unexplored passage; but all that he discovered was the Strait which still retains his name. In three successive voyages, John Davis, who sailed from Dartmouth, was equally unsuccessful. About 1583, Sir Humphrey Gilbert took possession of Newfoundland for the Crown of England; but no farther attempts were made, till Henry Hudson, in 1607, is said to have discovered as far as 80 degrees; and prosecuted his discoveries, though very unsuccessfully, and with little appearance of profit. In the year 1610, he proceeded many leagues farther than any man had done before him, and entered the straits that lead into this new Mediterranean, coasted a great part of it, and penetrated into the heart of the frozen zone.—His ardor for discovery not being abated by the difficulties he struggled with in this empire of Winter, and world of frost and snow, he staid here until the ensuing Spring, and prepared in the beginning of 1611, to pursue his discoveries; but his crew, who suffered equal hardships, without the same spirit to support them, became mutinous, seized upon him and seven of those who were most faithful to him, and committed them to the fury of the icy seas in an open boat. Hudson and his companions were either swallowed up by the waves, or gaining the inhospitable coast, were destroyed by the savages; but the ship and the rest of the men returned home. The barbarians who treated him in this manner could not, however, rob him of the honour of the discovery he had made; and the bay which he first found out will ever be called by his name. In the year of his death, Prince Henry, who, for his public spirit, was so beloved by the people of England, encouraged Sir Thomas Button to pass Hudson's Straits, which he did; and sailing westward, discovered a continent, and gave it the name of NEW WALES.