

ESTABLISHING THE COLONY OF CAPE BRETON.

To a mind turned for observation and reflection, the various scenes in the long course of service DesBarres had been upon afforded much subject, and he considered it his duty, as an officer, to lay before His Majesty's Ministers such points as appeared to him susceptible of improvement for the national advantage.

Among others of that tendency, he had suggested a measure, peculiarly adapted to this great maritime country, and capable of being productive of the most important advantages to His Majesty's service, and benefit of navigation and commerce; the execution of which he was led to expect the honor of conducting, should Earl Howe, who had highly approved thereof, come to preside at the Admiralty Board. But Ministry, in the mean time coming to the resolution of forming a Government, and carrying on the settlement of the Island of Cape Breton, the utility and expediency of which he had some years before suggested also, and having been pleased to recommend him to His Majesty for directing the several operations of it, he relinquished the prospect of greater benefit to himself from his Lordship's intentions; which would have placed him in a permanent situation, wherein the faithful exertions of his talents must have proved of essential utility to the public.

Government, in this period, paid much attention and experienced considerable difficulty and expence in providing an asylum for the loyalists, and the disbanded troops, and multitudes, which the unhappy War in America, and the loss of employment at the Peace, had reduced to circumstances of extreme distress. Upon the ascertainment and enforcement of the Navigation Laws in 1784, great numbers on the coasts of the American States, had discovered a wish to repair under His Majesty's Government, particularly the whole Inhabitants of Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, &c. in order to carry on the Whale Fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and the seas adjacent to Cape Breton, in which before the war they had employed yearly more than four hundred Vessels. This presented an opportunity of transferring to this country the advantages which France had formerly derived from the Island of Cape Breton, by the employment in its Fisheries of above three hundred topsail Vessels, fifteen hundred Shalloops, and twelve thousand Seamen; producing an annual amount of *Half a Million*, and besides other objects, susceptible of being greatly enhanced in the more energetic hands of Britons (7).

In result DesBarres had the honor of kissing His Majesty's Hand, in July 1784, on being appointed Lieutenant Governor of the Island of Cape Breton and its dependencies. It was also determined

(6) Reasons on the expediency of colonising Cape Breton, submitted by DesBarres: also estimate of the expence, elucidations, &c. given in by command of Lord North in 1782.

(7) Cape Breton, lying between 45° and 47° of N. latitude and between 59° and 62° of W. Longitude, extends 116 in length and 99 (in miles) breadth, contains about 2300000 acres of land; a considerable portion of which is covered with wood, and abounds in timber fit for building and the construction of shipping: The soil is chiefly of a fertile nature, yielding wherever cultivated, ample crops of Wheat, Rye, Barley, Pease, Oats, Grass and all sorts of nourishing vegetables. The whole Island is variously intersected, with rivers and lakes, several of which are navigable, and its coasts are surrounded with valuable fishing banks, and abound in bays, inlets, and conveniences for carrying on the Fishery: There are also excellent harbours of sufficient capacity for the reception and shelter of large Fleets and Armaments. The Coal Mines are an inexhaustible source of Revenue.

When in possession of this valuable nursery of seamen, France, projected to lay here the foundation of an extensive political plan of aggrandisement, in which the fishery was a prominent feature: Neither encouragement nor expence were therefore spared to stimulate adventurers in its arduous pursuit, until, by the reduction of Louisbourg in 1758, all its hopes terminated.

The situation alone, of Cape Breton, relatively to Great Britain, to the North American Continent, and to the West Indies, renders it of peculiar importance.

From its Eastern projection into the Atlantic Ocean, it derives not only the advantage of greater proximity and celerity of communication with Europe; but also, ships from thence may sail direct to any of the West India Islands; whereas, from any of the harbours of the American States, vessels in order to head the westerly currents and avoid falling to leeward of the Ports of their destination, are under the necessity of stretching out as far Easterly as the longitude of Cape Breton before they can attempt to shape their course for any of the said Islands. This unrivalled situation is obviously the fittest and most convenient of any in North America, for establishing an *emporium* of commerce as well as a *place of arms* and *rendezvous* for enterprise. and, whether in the view of improving the national interests, or of securing the enjoyment of permanent tranquillity and peace to His Majesty's transatlantic Dominions, Cape Breton, if duly considered, therefore will appear in the light of an object deserving the serious attentions of Government.

Measure proposed 28
by Earl Howe, to be executed
by DesBarres, for the Benefit
of Navigation & Commerce.
Vide Page 86. N° 359.

Measures which 29
induced the Settlement of the
Colony of Cape Breton.

DesBarres appointed 29
Governor & Commander in
Chief of Cape Breton.

Importance of its
Location, and Value of its
Natural Advantages.

The fittest Place of Arms for the
Protection of all His Majesty's
transatlantic Dominions, and the
most convenient Employment
for establishing an Emporium
of Commerce in America.

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