

**CHAPTER
VIII.**

among them, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, in 1583, took possession of these parts under a commission from Queen Elizabeth. Encouraged by the success of the English, the French formed settlements on the northern and southern coasts, particularly at the great bay of Placentia. After various disputes for the dominion of the island, the whole was surrendered by France to England by the treaty of Utrecht in 1713, with a reservation to the French of a right to fish on the great bank, and of the possession for that purpose of the unfortified isles of Saint Peter and Miquelon. Since that time this country has constantly remained under the dominion of the British crown, but the French and Anglo-Americans are permitted to fish on the banks in its vicinity. The government is vested in a vice-admiral of the British navy, in whose absence, which has place in winter, when the harbours are frozen, his authority devolves to a military officer styled the lieutenant-governor. In case of the latter's death the power is exercised by the chief justice until the vacancy is filled.

The area of this triangular island, of which the southern base extends about three hundred miles, and the altitude from south to north near two hundred and eighty, may contain, with allowance made for its inlets, full twenty-four millions of acres. The population is ill proportioned to such a space. The inhabitants consist of Europeans, and a very small number of indigenous people. Subsisting solely on the profits of the fishery, the former dwell only on the coasts, almost all indeed on the eastern. Of these the greater part are not permanent inhabitants, but return at