A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies

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A PHILOSOPHICAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE SETTLEMENTS AND TRADE OF THE EUROPEANS IN THE EAST AND WEST INDIES.

Translated from the French of the Abbé Raynal, By J. Justamond, M.A.

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BOOK XVI.

Account of the French Settlements in North-America, continued.

The war carried on for the Spanish succession, had raised a ferment in the four quarters of the world, which for the two last centuries have felt the effects of that restless spirit with which Europe hath been agitated. All kingdoms were shaken by the contests excited on account of one, which under the dominion of Charles V. had struck terror into them all. The influence of a house whose sovereignty extended over five or six states, had raised the Spanish nation to a pitch of greatness which could not but be extremely flattering to her. At the same time another house, whose power was still superior, as its dominions were more connect-

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ed together, was ambitious of giving the law to that haughty nation. The names of Austria and Bourbon, which had been rivals for two hundred years, were now exerting their last efforts to acquire a superiority, which should no longer be considered as precarious or doubtful between them. The point of contest was, which should have the greatest number of crowns, to boast the possession of Europe, divided between the claims of the two houses, which were not altogether groundless, was inclined to allow them to extend their branches, but would not permit that several crowns should center in one house, as they formerly did. Every power took up arms to disperse or divide a vast inheritance; and resolved to dismember it, rather than suffer it to be attached to one, which, with this additional weight of strength, must infallibly destroy the balance of all the rest. As the war was supported by each party with numerous forces and great skill, with warlike people and experienced generals, it continued a long time: it desolated the countries it should have succoured, and even ruined nations that had no concern in it. Victory, which should have determined the contest, was so variable, that it served only to increase the general flame. The same troops that were successful in one country, were defeated in another. The people who conquered by sea, were worsted on land. The news of the loss of a fleet and the gaining of a battle arrived at the same time. Success alternately favoured each party, and by this inconstancy served only to complete the mutual destruction of both. At length, when the blood and treasure
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treasure of the several states were exhausted, and after a series of calamities and expences that had lasted near twelve years, the people who had profited by their misfortunes, and were weakened by their contests, were anxious of recovering the losses they had sustained. They endeavoured to find in the New world the means of peopling and re-establishing the old. France first turned her views towards North-America, to which she was invited by the similarity of soil and climate, and the island of Cape-Breton became immediately the object of her attention.

The English considered this possession as an equivalent for all that the French had lost by the treaty of Utrecht, and not being entirely reconciled to them, strongly opposed their being allowed to people and fortify it. They saw no other method of excluding them from the cod-fishery, and making the entrance into Canada difficult for their ships. The moderation of queen Anne, or, perhaps, the corruption of her ministers, prevented France from being exposed to this fresh mortification: and she was authorized to make what alterations she thought proper at Cape-Breton.

This island is situated at the entrance of the gulph of St. Lawrence, between the 45th and 47th degrees of north latitude. Newfoundland lies to the east, on the same gulph, and is only 15 or 16 leagues distant from it; and to the west, Acadia is only separated from the island by a freight, not more than three or four leagues over. Cape-Breton thus situated between the territories ceded to its enemies, threatened their possessions, while it

The French to recover their former losses people and fortify Cape-Breton; and establish considerable fisheries there.
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protected those of France. The island measures about 36 leagues in length, and 22 in its greatest breadth. It is surrounded with little sharp-pointed rocks, separated from each other by the waves, above which some of their tops are visible. All its harbours open to the east, turning towards the south. On the other parts of the coast there are but a few anchoring-places for small vessels, in creeks, or between islets. Except in the hilly parts, the surface of the country has but little solidity, being everywhere covered with a light moss and with water. The dampness of the soil is exhaled in fogs, without rendering the air unwholesome. In other respects, the climate is very cold, owing either to the prodigious quantity of lakes, which cover above half the island, and remain frozen a long time, or to the number of forests, that totally intercept the rays of the sun; the effect of which is besides decreased by perpetual clouds.

Though some fishermen had long resorted to Cape-Breton every summer, not more than twenty or thirty had ever fixed there. The French who took possession of it in August 1713, were properly the first inhabitants. They changed its name into that of Isle Royale, and fixed upon fort Dauphin for their principal settlement. This harbour was two leagues in circumference. The ships which came to the very shore, were sheltered from winds. Forests affording oak sufficient to build and fortify a large city, were near at hand, the ground appeared less barren than in other parts, and the fishery was more plentiful. This harbour