

him beyond possibility of failure. He immediately dispatched Mr. des Ursins to Quebec with all the vessels intended for Canada, and which had come to Placentia under his escort;<sup>1</sup> but he expressly enjoined him to return with all expedition to inform him, in case he fell in with the English fleet in the river or Gulf of St. Lawrence.

1697.

De Nesmond's course.

He then proceeded to Great Burin Bay, twenty-two leagues west of Placentia, to receive the report of some ships he had sent out to reconnoitre, and to be on the spot for des Ursins, whom he had notified to meet him there. The reason of this step was, that if he had been surprised by an English fleet in Placentia Bay, he would have been obliged to enter the port, while at Great Burin he would have the weather gage and could bear down on them.

Early in August he learned from prisoners that the English were fortifying at St. John, whereupon he called another council of war, which decided unanimously that the fleet should sail there before the fortifications were completed. Yet it was far less any desire of taking St. John, that led to this resolution, than the hope of finding there a large number of ships which would prove an easy capture, for the same prisoners just mentioned, had assured him that they had left thirty-four vessels there, several of them ships of war.

Some of these, to the number of twenty-three, had sailed from Plymouth on the 14th of April under the command of Admiral Noris, and had reached St. John on the 17th of June. The others had brought from Ireland a thousand regulars commanded by Colonel Guipson. The fleet accordingly sailed for the eastern shore of Newfoundland, but found no ships there, and as the season was too far advanced to remain any longer in those seas, the Marquis of Nesmond was compelled, to his great regret, to return to France, without having had an opportunity to fire a single cannon, after having been flattered with the hope of effecting one of the most glorious campaigns of the whole war.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Two vessels were, however, captured. N. Y. Col. Doc., ix., p. 675-6.

<sup>2</sup> Neville brought 1500 men under Sir John Gibson. Brit. Empire, p. 143.