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A Letter from St. Ann's Bay, 1634 A letter sent by Father Julien Perrault, of the Society of Jesus, to his Provincial, in France, in the years 1634 and 35. The Island of Cape Breton is about nine hundred leagues distant from our France by sea. It is seventy or eighty leagues in circumference. The mountains here are very high and numerous, at the foot of which are seen great bogs and frightful precipices. The land is covered with all sorts of trees, such as oak, beech, birch, pine, hemlock, and others, Chibou (St. Ann's Bay), which is the principal part of this Island, is a great Bay about two leagues wide at its entrance, becoming narrower little by little, in the six or seven leagues which form its extent. In the middle, on the left hand ascending, on the summit of the shore that faces the Northwest, is built the fort of sainte Anne, at the entrance of the harbor, opposite a little Cove, The situation of the place is so advantageous, according to the report of those who are acquainted with it, that with ten or twelve pieces of cannon, all the hostile ships that might present themselves could be sent to the bottom. Those who have grown old upon the sea protest that they have never seen a more desirable Port, either in extent or for its facility of access. Three thousand ships could easily anchor there, and be sheltered from every wind, in a beautiful enclosure very pleasant to look upon; for its form is circular, or nearly so. The tides here are very mild and regular; there is always from ten to twelve fathoms of water. Furthermore, notwithstanding that the Island is in forty-six and a half degrees north latitude, the cold is extreme, the island lying in the midst of snow five or six months of the year. This is the situation of the place, let us come to the conveniences of life which it offers to its inhabitants. On this subject we may say, in general, that the Savages are more comfortable here than in many other places. If the Winter supplies them with fewer Beavers upon the water, it gives them, by way of compensation, more Moose upon the land. In summer, they live very well on Marmots and Parrot fish, with Cormorants and other marine birds. They have also Bustards, Smelts, Mackerel, Codfish, and like supplies, according to the different seasons, in the forests or upon the coasts of the sea. As to the people, there is nothing anomalous in their physical appearance; you see well-formed men, good-looking, of fine figures, strong and powerful. Their skin is naturally white, for the little children show it thus; but the heat of the Sun, and the rubbing with Seal oil and Moose fat, make them very swarthy, the more so as they grow older. Most of them go bareheaded, and they have long, black hair, with very little or no beard, so that the women cannot be distinguished, except that they use a girdle and are less naked than the men; quite the reverse of what is practiced in many Christian lands, to the shame of Christianity, One sees there old men, of eighty and a hundred years, who have hardly a gray hair. As to their intelligence, if we may judge from their conduct and from their way of dealing with the French, they are not at a great disadvantage. You do not see in their gestures and bearing any foolishness or nonsense, but rather a certain gravity and natural modesty, which makes them agreeable. They are indeed so clever that, in order to disguise their language, they add to every word a



syllable, which only serves to confuse the minds of those by whom they do not wish to be understood. What they do lack is the knowledge of God and of the service that they ought to render to him, as also of the state of the soul after death; it is wonderful that we have not yet been able to discover any trace of this knowledge in what we know of their language. Perhaps we shall discover something more, when we become better LETTER

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