

CAPE BRETON.

50. The Island of Cape Breton is separated from the Province of Nova Scotia by the Gut of Canso, not more than from one to two miles broad. The population is estimated at 20,000. The militia has not been embodied lately, but are stated to amount to 3,000 men from sixteen to sixty years of age. There are 440 stand of arms (at Sydney) in charge of a Major Leonard, who formerly commanded the militia. 255 muskets and bayonets are in possession of one of the battalions.

The Island of Cape Breton was of very great consequence to the French at the time they were in possession of Canada; as from the Port of Louisbourg they were enabled to guard the entrance into the Gulph of St. Lawrence. From Cape North, on Cape Breton, to Cape Ray, on Newfoundland, the distance is not more than sixty miles, and of course could be easily watched by one or two cruisers from Louisbourg, the excellent harbour of which afforded safe anchorage for the fleet.

By the treaty of 1763, which ceded Cape Breton permanently to Great Britain, it was stipulated that the fortifications of Louisbourg, which were very complete, should be destroyed. This has been very effectually performed. The town has been removed from Louisbourg to the head of a very deep and secure inlet, called the Spanish River, and is now named Sydney. It is a small place, principally frequented by fishing vessels and colliers, there being extensive coal-pits in the vicinity. A very trifling earthen redoubt, and two batteries, one for four guns, and the other for two, have been constructed for the defence of Sydney; also a block-house at the coal-pits, now dismantled. These are all the fortifications, and they are nearly in ruins. There are wooden barracks for eighty men and their officers at Sydney, in tolerable repair.

The superiority of our navy during late wars, has rendered the re-constructing of any works at Louisbourg unnecessary. Should we, however, ever unfortunately lose that advantage, and have to apprehend the co-operation of a superior naval force from Europe in an attack upon the Canadas, combined with an invasion from the United States; Louisbourg may again be a very important point, and require to be fortified, in order to shelter the men-of-war employed to defend the entrance into the Gulph of St. Lawrence. It may also be necessary (should we lose our naval superiority, even putting any attempt at Canada out of the question,) to occupy Louisbourg, to prevent an enemy taking possession of it, and establishing his cruisers at the mouth of the St. Lawrence. Should circumstances require it, the harbour of Louisbourg could easily be placed in a respectable state of defence, by constructing a tower and battery on Light House Point, and another on Goat Island, at the entrance of the Bay.

Inclosure 2 in No. 15.

Lord Hill to the Duke of Wellington.

My Dear Duke of Wellington,

Horse-Guards, March 5, 1841.

THE Secretary of State having requested of me to invite your Grace to give your deliberate opinion upon the accompanying papers upon the defence of Canada, and having founded that request on the conviction that your Grace's services are always promptly given on any occasion where the interests of the Sovereign and the country are at stake, I should in any case have offered as an excuse for thus addressing your Grace upon this matter; but having in my own person received, upon so many occasions from your Grace, the most valuable support upon every question connected with the interests of the army, I could not have been satisfied without having again taken the liberty of applying for it in this instance, had not the Secretary of State made it so imperatively a part of my duty to do so.

In the hope of affording some assistance in the consideration of this important subject, I have annexed to this letter a paper containing those observations which have occurred to me from the best information in my power to