

THE SIEGE OF LOUISBOURG

Quaint Account of the English Capture of Cape Breton's Capital Written 150 Years Ago.

AN ENGLISH OFFICER'S STORY

Troops of Undrilled Men Raised in New England Captured the French Stronghold After a Siege of Six Weeks' Duration.

The near approach of the one hundred and fifty-second anniversary of the capture of Louisbourg, Cape Breton, by the English and its capitulation, June 17, 1745, makes interesting this somewhat unique history of the siege. It was written 150 years ago by "a military gentleman in his Majesty's service" who is anonymous. The book from which the sketch is taken is an oblong folio of about 500 pages, containing thirty-three quaint full-page copper plates, relating to the subjects enumerated in an equally quaint title page. It is in the possession of Miss Carrie E. Silkman of Scranton, Penn. It is an heirloom in her mother's family, and a very rare specimen of the bookmaking of its time.

While the story of the siege differs in some particulars from the story as told by Parkman in his "Half Century of Conflict," it is none the less interesting, and is of value as being written by one well conversant with the facts and a probable participant in the siege.

The title page reads as follows:

A New Military Dictionary, or the Field of War, containing A Particular and Circumstantial Account Of the Most Remarkable Battles, Sieges, Fortifications, Expeditions, Whether by Sea or Land, Such as relate to Great Britain & her Dependents From the Descent of Julius Caesar to the present time. Those that regard the Continent of Europe, Traced from the first beginning with the Ninth Century, including Anecdotes of the most celebrated Admirals, Generals, Captains, &c., who have distinguished themselves in the Service of their Country, to which is added An Essay on Fortification, and A Table explaining the Military and Naval Terms of Art. Compiled from the best Authorities and most approved Authors By a Military Gentleman. ILLUSTRATED with a great number of elegant COPPER-PLATES. Heads of Admirals and Generals, Plans of Battles, Maps, &c. London.

Printed for J. Cooke at Shakespear's Head in the Chapter-Street, in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1760.

This is the dedication of the volume:

To The Right Honourable EDWARD ROBERTS, One of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, Admiral of the Blue Squadron of his Majesty's Fleet, One of the Elder Brethren of the Trinity-House, And one of his Majesty's most honourable Privy-Council.

SIR—What inference the world will draw from my addressing you in this public manner I know not; but my only motive is to lay before you a work, I hope not unworthy your perusal. Why I have done myself the honor of prefixing your name to these sheets rather than that of any other English gentleman, your public character sufficiently declares; for to whom should a work which records heroic actions be dedicated but to a hero. Without enumerating your victories, which must so conspicuously appear in a work of this nature, let me only remember to whom we owe the conquest of that valuable island Cape Breton, for which you have most gloriously distinguished yourself in the Senate; the highest honor a subject can obtain. Permit me, Sir, to add my mite to the public gratitude, by recording the glorious actions of illustrious warriors.

I am, Sir, with the highest esteem, your humble and obedient servant, THE AUTHOR.

Here is the story:

Siege of Louisbourg.

THE CAPITAL OF THE ISLAND OF CAPE BRETON, IN NORTH AMERICA. The possession of Cape Breton, of which this is the metropolis, commands the navigation to Canada by the River St. Lawrence.

At the commencement of the war all the British colonies in North America began to be sensible of the utility of Cape Breton, for in a few months the inhabitants of this island infested the coasts of the British settlements, ruining their fishery, interrupting the navigation, destroying the shipping, and reducing the bordering colonies to many extremities, and carrying the natives prisoners to a place reported impregnable, being a safe asylum for the West and East India fleets, and their men-of-war and privateers.

These hostilities of the French was the cause which roused the British colonies to a true sense of their danger, and regular operations which they looked upon to be every day more and more fatal, while the French possessed this island, the richest gem in their American treasures, and which had already cost them nine millions of livres in establishing it.

Sensible of what importance this place must be to England, Mr. Auckmuty, a native of Scotland, and Judge-Advocate of the Court of Admiralty in New England, candidly stated it to several of his friends, at whose desire he reduced the several branches of his consequence into a regular plan, at the framing a scheme for the reduction of it, which by the means of William Vaughan, Esq., a gentleman of great property in the colony, was communicated and recommended to the Hon. William Shirley, Esq., Governor of the Massachusetts colony, who laid it before the General Assembly, then met at Boston. The difficulties that presented themselves, and the undertaking of so arduous a nature, that it was deemed impracticable without parliamentary aid, where the very debates on it must have transpired to the French, and the success of the enterprise, Mr. Auckmuty, the original projector of the plan, secretly sounded the thoughts of the principal inhabitants, and finding them willing and ready in the measure, he proposed, they examined several prisoners returned from confinement in that island, by whom they were informed of the facility of the enterprise by a secret and early surprise.

The store ships from France had been newly driven off to Martinico, a fatal stroke of distress to Cape Breton at this juncture, as it was a happy incident in our favor. A redundancy of provisions at the time enabled us to supply the intended armament with everything necessary, so that the final resolution was taken on the twenty-fifth of January, though it was then carried by the majority of one single voice to attack Louisbourg.

In consequence of this Commodore Warren was ordered by the Government to proceed immediately, with three men-of-war, from Antigua to Boston, and contribute to the success of the expedition, while the Government consisted of 27,000 towards this undertaking, to be raised by way of lottery, for their service.

While Mr. Warren commanded the naval department, and as a person of military capacity to carry on the land operations, and to superintend the troops on disembarking; Mr. Pepperel of Piscataway, a gentleman of uncommon influence, and large fortune, was by the unanimous vote appointed to this command, to whose standard numbers, from their great attachment to his person, flocked in a surprising degree.

Plan of Campaign.

It is generally believed that no person in Europe knew of these secret proceedings, but his Britannic Majesty, to whom, in duty, the Governor Shirley had communicated the design; the secrecy in councils, the extraordinary management, and great dispatch in providing the levies and preparations both for the army and navy were carried in with such harmony, that the troops were assembled, and the fleet ready to sail before the rest of the world had the least intelligence of the apparatus. The inhabitants of the several colonies of New England, and those of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, so cheerfully concurred in seasonably expediting the expedition, that the Government consisted of 3,850 volunteers, principally men of property or beneficial businesses, were assembled at Boston, with 85 transports, and 8 privateers of 20 guns, and 100 men each, besides 10 ships of the line, and a strong force for their convey to Canso in Nova Scotia, where they were to wait the arrival of Commodore Warren.

This brave detachment, though yet undisciplined, embarked from Boston on

the 20th of March, 1745, for Canso. Pray for us, while we fight for you, was the valiant, endearing, and last expression, wherewith they comforted their parting countrymen, at their departure from their families, fortunes, and occupations. Mr. Pepperel's great interest among the country people of the country, both Indians and Mestizos, to whom he trusted whatever goods they wanted, and who returned that confidence by exact and honest payments, greatly conduced to the success of the expedition, for hundreds accompanied him as their father and protector, whom they had more in contemplation than any concern for the conquest of Louisbourg. How easy a task to procure love and respect! How difficult to create enemies and contract the odium of our countrymen! Mr. Pepperel, who was not ignorant of his interest, and who saw all the height of the Governor's proposals, yet modestly declined that honor, as being deficient in those branches of military knowledge, which he knew were necessary in so important a post; but was prevailed on at length by the repeated instances of his friends, and from a merchant became at once a warrior.

On the 2d of April the fleet arrived at Canso, a port town of Nova Scotia, near a narrow strait which separates that colony from Cape Breton, and about 167 leagues from Boston. In three weeks Commodore Warren appeared with the Superb of 60 guns, with the Launceston and Eitham of 40 each; he was soon joined by the Mermaid of 40 guns, and was reinforced by others destined to join him there.

Gabaron Bay was appointed for making the descent, which was within four miles of the rampart of Louisbourg; and there it was that the French first saw our movements, the surprise of which prevented them from getting in the provisions necessary for sustaining the siege. The garrison of Louisbourg, with all its forts, consisted only of 600 French and Swiss regulars and militia, formed of those inhabitants who were able to bear arms. The Governor of Canada, without any knowledge of this expedition, but sensible of the discontents and divisions which reigned in the town, and of the possibility of its being one time or another attacked by the English, had some time before offered the Governor of Louisbourg a reinforcement of 1,000 men, which was not to be justified, and for which he was afterward called to an account, he declined. But now he saw himself surrounded by the enemy, all the ways for applying for succor blocked up, and cut off from every communication of resource.

Thus he became besieged in form, with forces unequal to the defense of the place, and without the probability of receiving a reinforcement from either Canada or Europe. This was the first and not the least error to which his disgrace for the loss of the place was owing, as with the succors offered him he would have been enabled sufficiently enabled to sally out and drive before him a body of undisciplined troops no way equal to the reduction of the place. The design of surprise thus took place, and the English pushed the enterprise with the greatest dispatch and vigor, in order to be beforehand with the arrival of the annual supply from France, which, according to their plan, fell into their hands, and thus doubly profited the expedition, as at the same time it assisted their measures and broke those of the enemy.

A man-of-war and a frigate had previously been fitted out at Brest for carrying succors to this place, laden with all kinds of military stores, and ready to put to sea, when the man-of-war unfortunately took fire and burned to the water's edge. The Vigilante was the only ship, just on the point of being launched, that could supply the loss.

Delays Helped the British.

This delay also co-operated with the expedition with which the English carried on the enterprise. When the Vigilante, therefore, arrived near this coast it appeared extremely dangerous, on account of a thick fog, to make a near approach to the island, so that the Marquis de la Maison Forte, the commander, tacked till the weather should clear up. About the latter end of May he discovered near him a frigate of our fleet, which, as had been concerted, feigned to fly; the Marquis chased, and thus was decoyed into the middle of Commodore Warren's squadron. She was so deeply laden with military stores that her lower tier became useless, and she was, after a vigorous defense, taken, another previous and fortunate incident in our favor; for about the well nigh disgraced at the enterprise, which they began to look upon as romantic; and, as it is said, a resolution was entered into of abandoning the place when the place was not taken in a fortnight at least.

The debarkation of the troops was immediately put in agitation, though no sooner faced the sea, and the other the battery, commanding at once that and all the ships entering or going out of the harbor. It was in the greatest exigency and want of power to reinforce the troops, and that the French fleet destined for the relief of Cape Breton was blockaded up at Brest by the British squadron, a piece of information which greatly added to the success of the operations of the siege. Several ships meanwhile fell into the Commodore's hands, who little expected so unwelcome a reception in a port which they had thought their own. We were also informed by deserters that the Governor, on the intercepting so many ships, some destined for his relief, and having only 400 barrels of gunpowder in the whole island, had begun to despair of keeping the town, which caused the besiegers to redouble their fires against the

they began with erecting a new battery on the 1st of June, at the lighthouse, and dragged up some of the heaviest cannon and mortars on the cliff which overlooked and commanded the island battery. The French were amazed to see a work of such labor executed in one night, justly apprehensive of its great success, as one flanker faced the sea, and the other the battery, commanding at once that and all the ships entering or going out of the harbor. It was in the greatest exigency and want of power to reinforce the troops, and that the French fleet destined for the relief of Cape Breton was blockaded up at Brest by the British squadron, a piece of information which greatly added to the success of the operations of the siege. Several ships meanwhile fell into the Commodore's hands, who little expected so unwelcome a reception in a port which they had thought their own. We were also informed by deserters that the Governor, on the intercepting so many ships, some destined for his relief, and having only 400 barrels of gunpowder in the whole island, had begun to despair of keeping the town, which caused the besiegers to redouble their fires against the

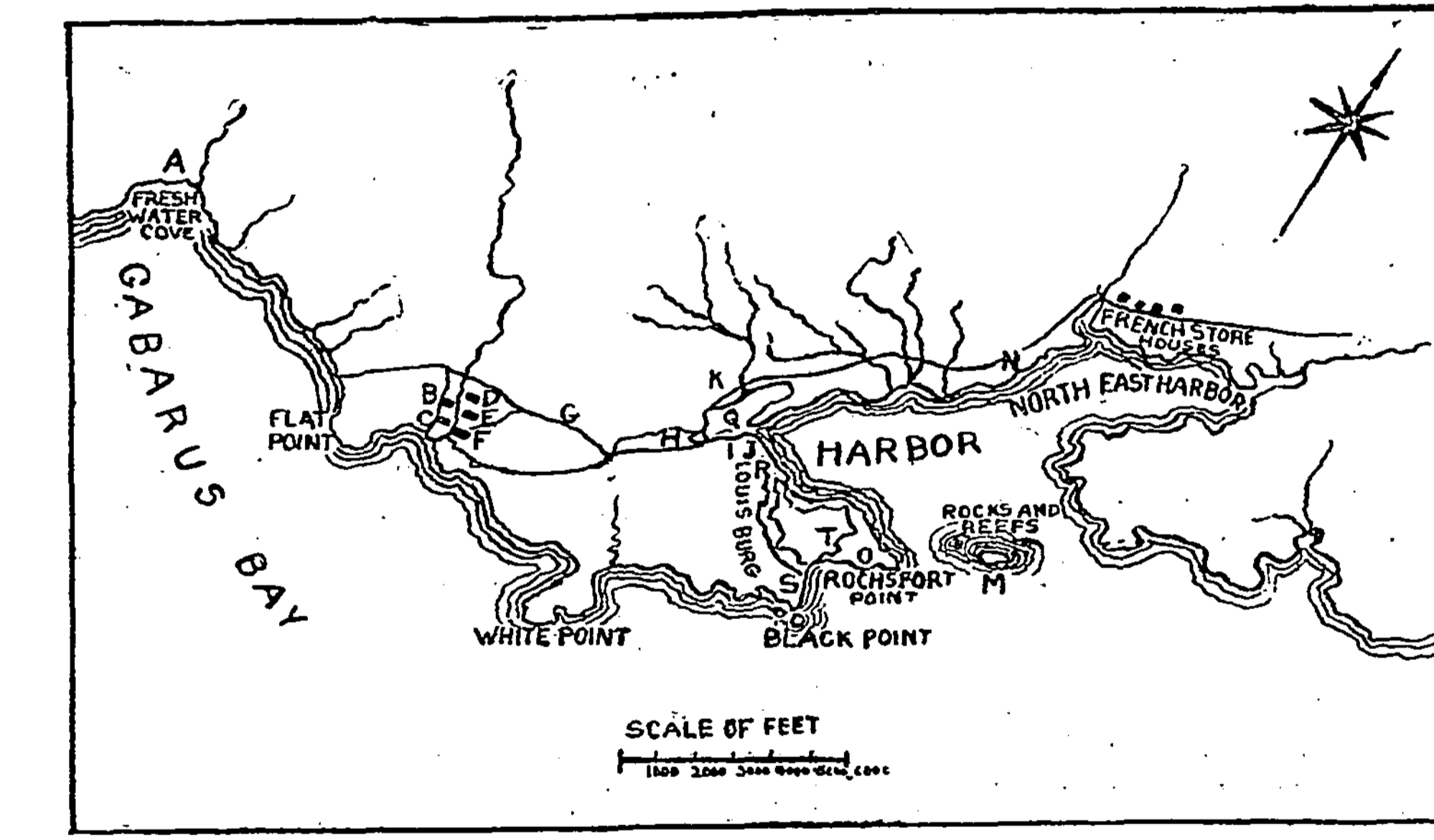
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Troops Enter a Battery.

On this signal the English entered it, and the artillery, having been very badly nallied in the hurry of retreat, was pointed against the town, which it battered in flank with great effect, beating down the roofs of several houses, the chimney and embrasures of the other batteries. The other part of the British forces on the other side of the harbor drew up a large train of artillery to an eminence called the Green Hill, about three-quarters of a mile from the city, from whence they briskly cannonaded it. On the 12th of May they had erected a fascine battery of twenty-eight guns within 200 yards of the walls, and broke down part of the circular battery with their shot. As the principal effort was to be made over this battery, not yet completely mounted, Col. Pepperel ordered several guns, forty-two-pounders, to be brought from the grand battery, and the fascine battery, though two miles distant, over all hills, and through morasses, the men being up to the middle in mire. The success was equal to the fatigue; for they soon dismounted their cannon, and destroyed their houses, walls, and flankers.

On the 23d of May the island battery, which incommoded both the men-of-war and the grand battery, began to be the object of attention, and the British, with other necessities for the attempt, were all ready; 300 men of the forces and marines embarked from the land battery, with a view of reducing that battery; but the fog arising, gave the French time to reinforce the battery with 320 men, which they did on the 27th. The British then began to scale the walls, but being discovered, this design was defeated, with the loss of 30 men killed and 118 prisoners, besides those who had been taken in the bay, also sunk by the French cannon from the battery in this hardy attempt. This, far from intimidating the bravery of our troops, operated to the contrary, and the imprisonment of their fellow-soldiers, which

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BATTLEFIELD OF LOUISBOURG.

From Parkmann's "Half Century of Conflict." Key to Map.

- A—Landing place of New Englanders.
- B—Camp of Burr's Regiment.
- C—Camp of Moulton's Regiment.
- D—Camp of Willard's Regiment.
- E—Camp of Moulton's Regiment.
- F—Green Hill Battery.
- G—Green Hill Battery.
- H—Battery.
- I—Third Battery.
- J—Advance Battery.
- K—Titcomb's Battery.
- L—Lighthouse Battery.
- M—Island Battery (French).
- N—Grand or Royal Battery (French).
- O—King's bastion or citadel.
- P—King's bastion or citadel.
- Q—Barricade.
- R—West Gate.
- S—South Gate.
- T—Mauripas Gates.

the island battery, erecting another fascine battery of five guns, forty-two-pounders, about a mile westward of the grand battery, and fronting the circular battery. Therefore, on the 14th of June, all things were preparing for a general assault by land and sea, when the French, finding themselves distressed to a great degree in the island battery by our shot and bombs from the lighthouse battery, sent a flag of truce on the 15th from the city about 4 o'clock in the afternoon to the British camp, with offers to deliver up the city upon which a council was called, and all the batteries commanded to cease firing. The flag of truce being ordered to attend the next morning, was punctual, and received the terms of capitulation, written by Commodore Warren and Col. Pepperel, which were agreed to by M. Chambron, the Governor of Louisbourg, whereby the French were permitted to enjoy all their personal effects and to be transported to France at the expense of the besiegers.

The French Colors Struck.

The French flag was struck on the 17th, and the British one hoisted in its place at the island battery, of which the besiegers took possession early in the morning. At 2 o'clock Commodore Warren, with all the men of war, privateers, storeships, and transports, entered the harbor, and at 4 o'clock the British forces marched to the south gate of the city, which they entered, and proceeded to the parade near the citadel, the guard and watch of the city, the garrison's magazines, and other places were delivered up. On the 4th of July the garrison and a great number of the inhabitants embarked on board fourteen cartel ships, conveyed by the Launceston man-of-war, who conveyed them to Rochfort, where the clemency of Commodore Warren and Gen. Pepperel shown to these prisoners was but ill-requited by Commodore McNamara, the commander of the French squadron in that port, who treated the British Captain and sailors with an unexpected severity, and even denied them the liberty of going on shore for fresh provisions, ordering the

sentinels to shoot every Englishman who attempted to land, though, it must be observed, that this rigor was not the effect of any resentment occasioned by the loss of Louisbourg and Cape Breton, but owing to the detention of Marshal Belleisle, at that time a prisoner of war in England.

This was a continued siege of forty-seven days, almost seven weeks, from the 1st of May to the 15th of June, 1745, the day of sending the flag of truce. Few histories can furnish instances of a braver, more resolute, and well conducted attempt; let it be recorded to the immortal honor of this brave band of undisciplined soldiers, that a French officer of distinction reported that it was thought by the Governor and the citizens, as well as officers and soldiers, civil and military, impracticable for less than 30,000 men to subdue so strong and well-fortified a city. And let posterity be also informed that no less a soldier, no less a politician, than Marshal Belleisle was heard to say, that the whole plan was too well concerted, too secretly conducted, and too vigorously executed, to be the scheme of a British Ministry, who, had they been the projectors of so noble an enterprise, it would have been early known, soon transpired, and from thence cautiously guarded against, and so defeated by the French Ministry. The besiegers, from the investiture to the

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men were willing to put an advantageous period to a state of life which had drawn them from their domestic concerns, and like Cincinnatus, the Roman, were willing to return from the field of war to the field of agriculture, as this kind of warfare was no way suitable to their dispositions.

The officers of the besieged were not ignorant that the most favorable occasion of repelling the enemy was to fall on them when they were beginning their works in forming their approaches; yet such was the mistrust they entertained from the late mutinies of the regular troops that though these made an offer to make a sally, it was not judged advisable for fear of a general desertion. In revenge for the oppression and severities which they had met with from their commanders.

Thus, from a combination of contrary events, crosses, and a weak garrison, the English made an acquisition of new dominions, while the colony of Boston acquired an increase of territory; prosperous as it was before, throughout its large increase, and which was not only this island to command the whole coast of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but also the French Ministry entertained of the supineness and indolence of the British.

Importance of the Victory.

The possession of Cape Breton, in the reduction of Louisbourg, was doubtless a valuable acquisition to Great Britain. It not only distressed the French in their fishery and navigation, but removed a fear of encroachments and rivalship from the breasts of the English fishermen on the banks of Newfoundland. It freed New England from the terrors of a dangerous neighbor and invader, overawed the Indians of that country, and secured the possession of Acadia to the crown of Great Britain. By this fishery Great Britain received the annual return of £2,000,000 for the manufactures yearly shipped to the plantations, many thousands from it found employment, who were otherwise unemployable; and the purchase of a large quantity of the produce of the fur trade, so long engrossed by the enemy.

Great Britain will do well to consider the importance of this acquisition, as the northern colonies may one day become the pillar of British liberty. When the nation (it is not impossible) shall be enslaved by domestic despotism or foreign dominion; when her substance is reduced to a mere broken, and the laws and constitution of Britain are no more, then these colonies, long since sent off by our fathers, may reconsidered with their sons as helpless and indigent, while the Southern plantations produce silk, and with care may furnish everything that could be expected from the most fertile soil and the happiest climate.

TO AID VACATION SCHOOLS.

Pupils of Several Institutions Set a Good Example—Money Needed.

Pupils of Trinity School, the Friends' Seminary, Academic Classes for Girls, (the Misses Whitten and Bangs,) and the Misses Merington's School have subscribed toward this for the little ones of the New York Vacation Schools, which are managed by the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor during the Summer season. In remitting the amount collected by her pupils, Miss Ruth Merington of the Misses Merington's School writes: "The members of our school were very much interested in the work of the Vacation Schools, and with much pleasure contribute their mite to help in such a good cause. The kindest way to aid children in becoming useful members of society is to educate them; to keep them busy and interested in work that will help them in their future lives. The value of the Vacation Schools in doing this for the little ones of the New York poor and keeping them out of harm's way during the hot Summer days cannot be overestimated." Co-operative work such as this would soon result in raising the \$4,500 needed by the association for conducting the Vacation Schools this Summer. Checks should be made payable to Warner Van Norden, Treasurer, 25 Nassau Street.