

OLD TIMES RECALLED

(Continued from Page Two)

essential. But Amherst, the commander-in-chief, was in no hurry. He was determined to have a first-rate siege. There were nine days of landing provisions and artillery before he surveyed the approaches to the town. He pushed his lines with scientific composure and precision towards the site he had selected for his batteries. Over the swampy ground he built roads as though they were to last for ever.

In the meantime Wolfe had been active. He marched around the harbour under cover of a fog and seized positions at Lighthouse Point, the island in the entrance to the harbour, and other strategic places. Here he is shown with Amherst in the only existing oil-painting of the siege of 1758. It is now in the Webster Collection. To the French he seemed to be everywhere. They said that he carried a mortar in one pocket and a twenty-four pounder in the other. After a sharp battle he captured a hillock at the back of the harbour, constructed siege works, and enfiladed the main fortifications of the city.

His action was one of the decisive events of the siege. The fleet blockaded the harbour. Amherst's batteries were finally brought into operation. The garrison and civil population, threatened with destruction, were forced to surrender.

When Amherst failed to follow up the capture of Louisbourg by a quick thrust at Quebec, Wolfe became petulant and returned to England.

The long journey at sea further impaired his health, but when he arrived in London his praises were everywhere, and overshadowing Amherst, who was a solid and competent soldier, he became popularly known as the "Hero of Louisbourg." It was during his short stay in England that the last important picture of him was painted from life. It was found a few years ago in a very dirty condition in a country house in the midlands that was being dismantled. When cleaned it was found to be in an excellent state of repair.

It was the discovery of Dr. Clarence Webster, who acquired it, and has since presented it to the New Brunswick Museum as one of the outstanding items in his collection.

The date of this portrait has been established as 1758. Wolfe holds a plan of Louisbourg in his hand, which indicates that it was made while he was known as the hero of that engagement. His later exploit at Quebec completely overshadowed that of Louisbourg, and after the Quebec, no artist would have thought of referring to the earlier event. Moreover the costume is that of a courtier, not of a soldier. The reason for this is not far to seek. His poor state of health took him to Bath. His sufferings were mitigated by finding there Miss Katherine Lowther, daughter of a former governor of Barbadoes.

With that impetuosity that he had displayed at Louisbourg, Wolfe made love to her, and within a few weeks they were engaged to be married. She was beautiful, and he was a hero. Her family did not object to one who promised to become a world-renowned general. The only obstacle was

Mrs. Wolfe "whose capacity for causing unpleasantness increased with years and practice." Nobody knows what she had against Katherine Lowther. Her attitude might be of interest to the psychoanalyst. Her anger was doubled when she realized that her son intended to disregard her wishes.

When Wolfe left for Quebec he never seems to have said goodbye to his parents. When he last saw Katherine is not known. He took this miniature portrait of her with him on his last voyage.

When he made his will, which we see here, on board H. M. S. Neptune at sea, he stated as the first clause, "I desire that Miss Lowther's picture may be set in jewels to the amount of five hundred guineas and returned to her. She afterwards became Duchess of Bolton, and destroyed Wolfe's letters, so that no intimate record of the affair survives.

We have now come to the point in Canadian history at which the old regime ends, and the new begins. The fall of Louisbourg had struck a vital blow at French power in America. In the previous year Forbes took Fort Duquesne, the key to the Ohio valley, and thus cut the chain that linked Canada with Louisiana.

But if Louisbourg and Fort Duquesne were the shoulders of French power, Quebec was certainly the head. Pitt staked his reputation and the supremacy of the British empire on the chance of its capture. One army was to operate on the Great Lakes and in the Niagara region, Amherst was to attempt to break into Canada by way of Lake Champlain. Although Wolfe was to engage the greater part of the French forces at Quebec itself, he was allowed no more than 12,000 men, fewer than had served at Louisbourg.

Colonel William Wood, the eminent authority on all events pertaining to the siege of Quebec, has drawn attention to the neglect of the naval side of the campaign. That it was of prime importance there can be no doubt, and the credit for what it achieved belongs to Admiral Sir Charles Saunders, who, though he never became a national hero, was one of the ablest officers in the British navy.

British sailors of the eighteenth century had a superstitious fear of the St. Lawrence. It was a difficult passage in those days when the treacherous currents and shoals were uncharted. It is not easy today. Nearly 15,000 men manned the twenty-two ships of the line, and smaller vessels. Saunders brought them through the treacherous waters to the foot of Quebec, without losing a ship. The French were astounded and dismayed, as they had counted on their inaccessibility. Moreover, the fleet kept Quebec from being relieved by the French navy, and it co-operated with the land forces at every stage in the siege.

Without much difficulty Wolfe secured control of the Isle of Orleans, the north shore east of the Montmorency, and the south shore opposite the city. On his points of vantage he erected siege works, and bombarded the city. Although he could wreck buildings and kill a few people by

this means, he could take the city only by a successful assault. Where that assault would be most effective was a matter of grave conjecture. The heights above the city were guarded by picketed troops, and the precipice below did not invite scaling. Below Quebec, from the St. Charles to the Montmorency river, the French lines, deeply entrenched, bristled with arms of every description.

For two months the besieging forces merely held their positions without gaining any ground. Wolfe's dash and vigour seemed to have deserted him. He was already a very sick man, and the strain and anxiety must have been tremendous. Moreover, he was aggravated by dissensions and jealousies in his own ranks.

Two of his brigadiers he had chosen himself. With one of these, James Murray, he had quarrelled earlier in his careers, but later commended his conduct at the siege of Louisbourg. With the second, Robert Monckton, he appears to have been generally on good terms. The other Brigadier was not of Wolfe's choosing. He was the Hon. George Townshend, son and heir of Viscount Townshend, and a member of a family with great political influence. Horace Walpole wrote that "his proud and sullen and contemptuous temper never suffered him to wait for thwarting his superiors till risen to a level with them."

Although allowances must be made for Walpole's prejudices against the family, there is no doubt that the Hon. George was arrogant, self-seeking, and satirical.

It has never been explained why a fashionable man such as Townshend should have consented to go to the despised colonial front to serve under a commander younger than himself and socially his inferior. He was not one of Pitt's men, and it may have been that, in the event of victory, he was expected to divert some of the glory to himself and his political party.

Certainly he took every means in his power, short of military insubordination, to annoy Wolfe.

He was a skilled caricaturist, and used his art to make Wolfe look either ugly, silly, brutal or obscene—never as a pleasant person. He passed these pictures about among Wolfe's junior officers, and sought thereby to undermine his commander's influence and prestige. In this picture he represented Wolfe as an upstart and a boaster, when he scrawled beneath it the words, "Hither and thence, our general begins his day."

In another he represented an old Cromwellian soldier gazing in disgust at a picture of Wolfe, and exclaiming, "Shades of Cromwell, has England come to this?"

In defence of Townshend it must be said, however, that he has left us this fine miniature portrait of the general, which does the latter full justice.

The dissension on the British camp was much more than matched by the intense and bitter hatred among the French leaders; Montcalm on the one hand and the Marquis de Vaudreuil, governor of New France, and Francis Bigot, the intendant, on the other. Montcalm, of whom this is a portrait, was in command of the French regulars. Vaudreuil was the real com-

mander-in-chief, and controlled the colonial militia and the Indians.

Whenever Montcalm won a victory, Vaudreuil tried to take the credit. When Montcalm lost, Vaudreuil accused him of disobeying orders, and denounced him to the home government. At many critical times during the siege, Vaudreuil countermanded Montcalm's orders. This was fatal to the French cause. Montcalm was a brave and capable general with far greater experience than Wolfe.

It is doubtful whether Wolfe would have succeeded if Montcalm had been unhampered in his command; and if Bigot, the intendant, had co-operated loyally. Bigot had been embezzling the funds of the colony on a colossal scale, and it is probable that he hoped Quebec might fall, for then his crime might be covered up in the general disaster.

Throughout June and July the British artillery showered Quebec with a rain of projectiles, and affected nothing. Early in the siege the French tried to burn the British fleet, first by sending fire-ships among it and then attempts failed, due to the courageous action of the seamen.

July drew towards an end and Wolfe realized that half his available time was gone. Montcalm's tactics had out-generaled him. He thought that Montcalm would have kept his troops close to the city, and that an assault could have been made. Instead Montcalm had flung his line along the Beauport shore. If Montcalm could hold out until autumn he knew that the appearance of ice in the river would be the signal for the withdrawal of the British, who could not face a sub-arctic winter in a hostile country, with insufficient provisions and shelter, and no retreat but that which lay along the road from starvation to death.

Wolfe had only two alternatives—either to get above the city onto the plains, or to attack the Beauport lines across the foot of Montmorency Falls. He chose the latter.

His tactical dispositions were crude. He made no effort to conceal his intentions. Monckton's troops were to land in front of the French lines, under cover of fire from the ships. Murray and Townshend were to cross the ford at the foot of Montmorency Falls, only passable when the tide was low. It was obvious to Montcalm that the attack was to be made, and he sent strong reinforcements to confront it.

When the British tried to land they were swept down by the fire of the French infantry, and recoiled in general disorder. A storm hastened the decline of daylight, and so much time had been wasted in trying to co-ordinate the different movements, that the rising tide menaced the retreat of Townshend and Murray. Wolfe was forced to order a general withdrawal.

Men who dined with Wolfe that night said that he seemed stunned by the blow. Thenceforward, until the last few hours of his life, he believed himself ruined.

The summer dragged on. It was ominous that on August the 22nd, the guns of the British batteries were limited to twenty rounds a day. The catastrophe at Montmorency made Wolfe's health worse, bad as it had been before. On August the 19th he

was unable to rise, and for some days he lay in great suffering. In the army it was spoken of as a "slow fever," but it was probably a flair-up of his tuberculosis.

His resolve to consult his brigadiers as to the next move must have cost him much, because he knew that he had been criticized for not doing so, and if their advice led to a successful issue, he would stand convicted as an incompetent egoist. For this he possibly did not care, since he believed himself to be a ruined man, and probably knew that he was dying. Quebec had to be taken no matter who won the glory.

The brigadiers recommended an attack at some point above the city. This was not a new idea, but one which Wolfe had entertained before arriving at Quebec. It had never at any time seemed feasible. He recovered sufficiently to go to the south shore, opposite the city, and study the formation of the cliffs, and the disposition of the French troops.

It was well established that the final plan of attack was Wolfe's own, and that to him alone was due the credit for what followed. Moreover he told his plans to only two of his officers, a precaution which helped to ensure success, since deserters were carrying information back and forth between the two armies. None of his brigadiers knew the details of the plan until it was actually in operation.

The clever thing about this plan was not so much the scaling of the heights of Abraham in the early hours of the morning of September 13, 1759, as it was the ruse of dropping down the river with the tide, pretending to be a French convoy from Montreal, instead of rowing up the river from the feet and being obviously British.

I suppose there is no better known incident in Canadian history than the capture of Quebec. It bears retelling in the same way that a familiar song bears retelling, or that a tale that has often been told continues to charm by virtue of its familiarity.

It was the forlorn hope. Word had already been sent to England that the siege had failed. Saunders had given orders for the fleet to commence withdrawing within a few days.

The British batteries thundered as they had never done before. A sham attack was launched against the Beauport lines below the city. The French knew that something big was impending. Wolfe was in the foremost boat as they dropped down with the tide.

When they came abreast of Sillery a sharp challenge rang out. Simon Fraser, of which this is a portrait, gave the password that had been learned from a deserter. "A quel regiment?" snapped the sentry. "De la Reine," announced Fraser. The sentry was still suspicious. "Pourquoi est-ce que vous ne parlez pas plus haut?" he persisted. "Tais-toi," muttered Fraser, "nous sommes entendus." The sentry was afraid that he would betray the convoy, and he relapsed into a reluctant silence. The hearts of the British began to beat again.

Wolfe was the first man ashore at the Anse au Foulon. "I don't think," he said, "we can by any possible means get up here, but however, we must use our best endeavour." It was only a matter of minutes for the troops to scramble up the steep, craggy cliff, overgrown with thickets, and to overpower the sleeping guard at the top.

As he surveyed the plains and disposed his advance guard, the bulk of his little army of three thousand men was landed at the Foulon, or what is now known as Wolfe's cove. Wolfe drew up his army too deep. Even three deep was thought by the military experts of the time to be foolhardy. For the first time in a battle between armies of two civilized powers one side fought with a line only two deep. It was the authentic "thin

red line" fifty years before that formation was officially authorized in the British army.

Battle of Plains of Abraham

Montcalm learned what had happened—too late. Even when he was within a mile of Wolfe he had no idea of the strength of the British force. Wolfe had put on a resplendent uniform. He walked up and down his lines talking genially to officers and men, and commanding that not a shot should be fired until the French were within forty paces.

When on the extreme left, he was hit on the wrist. He tied a handkerchief around it and moved toward the centre. A musket ball struck him in the groin, but he didn't seem to feel it. There is no doubt that he was experiencing the greatest happiness of his life.

It was fitting that the rain which had fallen earlier had now ceased, and that towards ten o'clock the sun broke through the clouds. He had in his last moments a magnificent spectacle on which to gaze—to the north, the great sweep of the Laurentian mountains, the backbone of New France; and to the south, the rolling hills that formed the northern end of the Alleghenies.

But his mind was on the work in hand, and of the distant scene he was probably hardly conscious.

The French advanced firing irregularly. When they were within forty paces, Wolfe gave the word to fire, and the double-shot volley crashed out, sounding like the report of a single gigantic gun. The French lines were shattered and fell back in a discordant mass.

Wolfe received a musket-ball in the chest. He was carried to the rear and it was evident that he had only a few minutes to live. A soldier, watching the battle from a distance, shouted, "They run, see how they run." "Who runs?" asked Wolfe, rousing himself as though from sleep. "The enemy, sir," came the answer, "they give way everywhere." His last words were: "Now I die content." But before he uttered them, he gave his last order. "Go, one of you," he said, "to Colonel Burton; tell him to march Webb's regiment to Charles' river, to cut off the retreat from the bridge." If this order had been carried out, the French governor and intendant would not have been able to escape to Montreal to hold out against the British for another year.

The central exhibit in the John Clarence Webster Collection is this scene of the "Death of Wolfe," by James Barry, painted in 1783. It dominates the rest of the collection by its size, its vivid colouring, and the dramatic grouping of the figures about that of the dying general. It ranks as one of the great art treasures to

which Canada can lay claim.

With Montcalm dead, and Vaudreuil and Bigot frown, the besieged forces held out for four days, when the commander de Ramozay, capitulated. Wolfe's body was brought back to England on the Royal William, and was interred in St. Alphege church, Greenwich.

It is said that if Montcalm had been given proper support by the governor, as a deserter had not informed the British that a convoy was expected from Montreal, if the sentry had not been fooled by Simon Fraser's French and a host of other "ifs," Wolfe could not have taken Quebec. It is said that Wolfe was lucky. But so is every great general. He was quick enough to turn his luck to account, and he had the genius to know how to do it.

One may be impressed, not so much by the fact that Wolfe captured Quebec, or that he was a postmaster at an art which involved the slaughter of his fellow men (he adhered to the ethics of the time, and war was normal in the eighteenth century), but that his ardent and lofty soul triumphed over his weak body; that he accomplished what he did, as it were, in spite of himself; and that he adhered with an unwavering devotion to the cause in which he believed. Causes change from one age to another, but loyalty, whatever its object, lives on.

(THE END)

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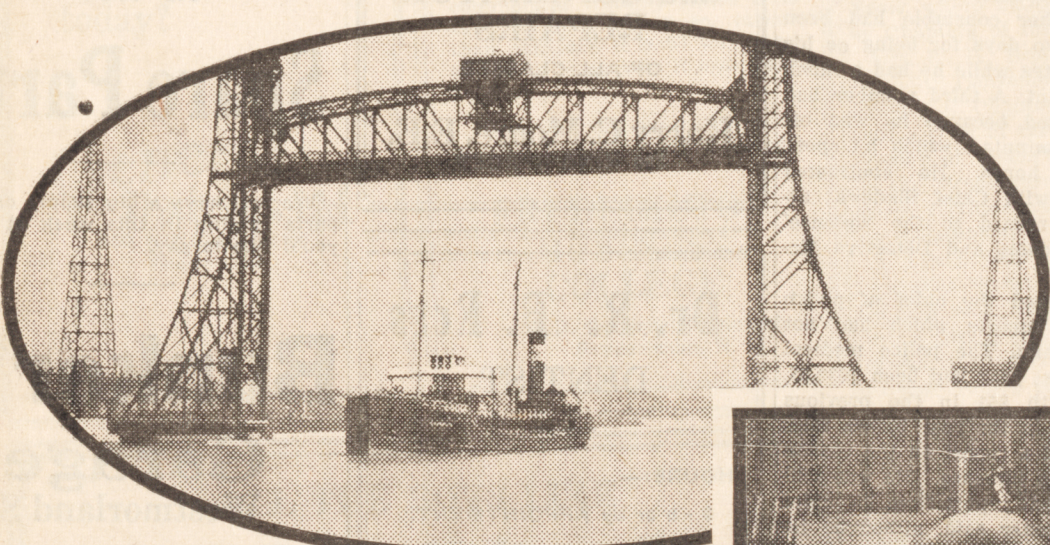
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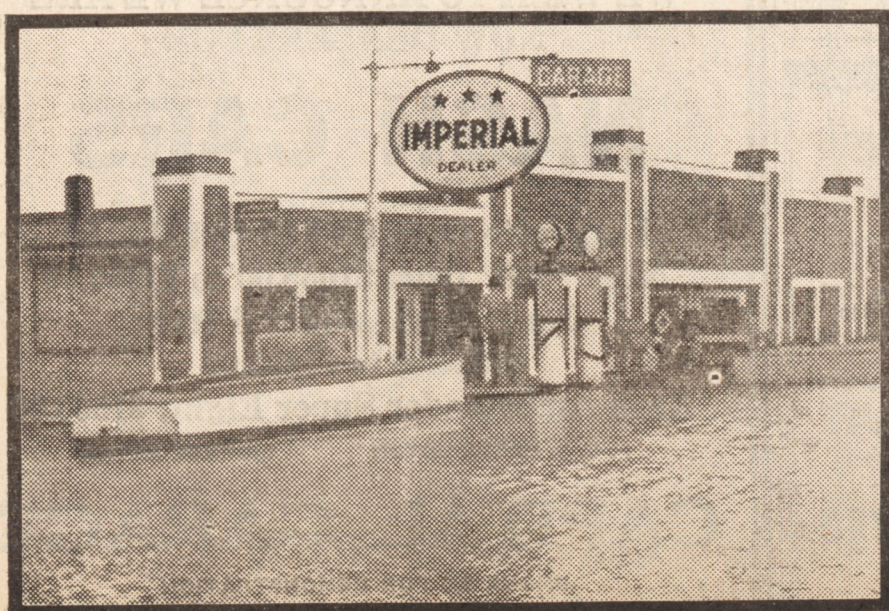
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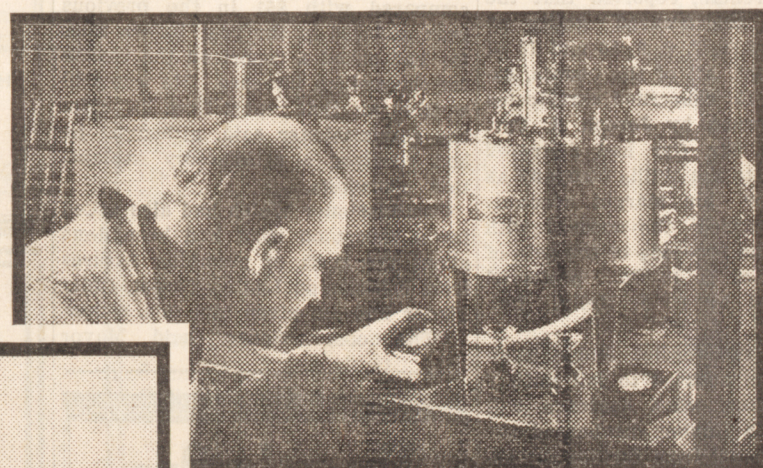
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