



GENERAL WOLFE CLIMBING THE HEIGHTS OF ABRAHAM.

*Drawn by R. Caton Woodville, R.A.*

SEE "THE CRISIS IN CANADIAN HISTORY."

## THE CRISIS IN CANADIAN HISTORY.

*HOW WOLFE CHANGED THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD.*

By ARTHUR REED ROPES.

IT was the "year of victory" for England; the crowning glory of the "Great Commoner's" administration. The fell before the expeditions launched by Pitt; in battle and chase the French navy was swept from the sea; in Germany the



THE MARQUIS DE MONTCALM DE SAINT-VÉRAN.

*General of the French Army at the Battle of Quebec.*

Bourbon power, so long the bitter rival of English colonial enterprise and maritime supremacy, was grappled with, the world over, and thrown. In the West Indies, on the African coast, the French colonies

allied army of Ferdinand of Brunswick routed the army of Marshal Contades; the outlying forts of the Canadian colony were taken; and for the crowning victory, the French power was struck

down at the very heart of its dominion in North America.

Pitt had well said that he would "conquer America in Germany." Year by year the patient stubbornness of Ferdinand of Brunswick and his mixed army of British, Hanoverians, and Hessians wore out the great hosts that the incapable Generals of Louis XV. hurled against him. Year by year the French treasury was drained to keep up the strength of Austrian and Russian armies against Frederick the Great, who fought on, overmatched but indomitable. Canada was left to her own resources; the sea was barred to reinforcements. The gallant Marquis de Montcalm had fought well, had begun by conquests, and fairly held his own; but the odds were heavy. After all, the French and the Canadians and the Indians of the French party were but a handful, though good fighters and wary foresters; and once the weight of the English forces and the New England colonies was brought fairly to bear, the weaker party must go down. Already Louisburg, on Cape Breton Island, the gate of the French power, had fallen, with the outpost of Fort Duquesne, the cause of the war. In the year 1759 Pitt had planned a wide-reaching combination, which was to crush the last despairing resistance of French Canada in the citadel of its power. Amherst, the chief of the British forces in America, was to move up from the south by Lake Champlain, and take Fort Ticonderoga, where Abercromby had been killed the year before in a futile assault. Johnson, the vanquisher of Baron Dieskau, was to capture the fort at Niagara, and move down the St. Lawrence. Under the walls of Quebec the two forces were to meet an army and fleet sent direct up the river, the troops commanded by Wolfe, a young man, but already noteworthy for his military skill and fiery energy.

Sailing up the St. Lawrence under the careful guidance of Admiral Saunders, Wolfe's force arrived opposite Quebec on June 13, 1759. The task before him was formidable. He had some 8000 men, against Montcalm's army, stronger in numbers; and though the Canadian

militia, many of them without bayonets, could not be expected to stand the shock of his veteran Grenadiers and Highlanders in the open field, they were formidable enough behind intrenchments. Wolfe could occupy the south bank of the St. Lawrence and the Isle of Orleans in its current; but with the artillery of those days he could do little damage across the great river. North of the river Montcalm held a strong line of works on the Beauport ridge, above the Montmorency River, and barred the road to any force advancing on Quebec by the direct route up the north bank. Above the city the steep and lofty Heights of Abraham, rising from the river, seemed to forbid attack, even if unguarded.

Wolfe was face to face with a grave difficulty. He tried to entice Montcalm into a pitched battle, but without success. His Grenadiers assaulted the lines on the Montmorency, but were beaten off with loss, and solaced their defeat by a ribald song against the French cowards who would not fight in the open. There were no tidings of either of the supporting columns. When winter came to freeze the rivers, Wolfe would have to withdraw with the fleet that supplied him, and Montcalm, steadfast in his works, would have earned another year's respite. Wolfe was fretting himself sick with impatience and disappointment, and his antagonist seemed to mock him from his rocky fastnesses.

Montcalm was far from being so secure as he seemed. Ill-seconded by his subordinates and colleagues in administration, left without support from France, keeping his motley forces together by sheer force of personality, he was coming to think the contest hopeless—if not for this year then for the next. Yet he did his best as a brave and loyal man. He was not to be drawn from his position on the Montmorency by Wolfe's feints up the St. Lawrence, only detaching forces to guard the crossing. Wolfe wrote home in language approaching despair. Nowhere could he approach Quebec without great disadvantage of ground, unless he could scale the Heights of Abraham above the city. Then

he would stand on their plateau with no natural obstacle between him and the town, and Montcalm must come out and fight on even terms to save his charge.

While the attention of the French was distracted by feints, Wolfe had collected

who had detected his boat. Without opposition, the heights were climbed by a narrow and precipitous path where a handful of men could have checked an army; one cannon was carried up by sheer force; and some four thousand men, a



THE CAROUSE IN GENERAL WOLFE'S TENT THE NIGHT BEFORE THE TAKING OF QUEBEC:  
WOLFE SINGING A DRINKING SONG.  
*Drawn by R. Caton Woodville, R.I.*

enough boats to ferry his men over. Before daybreak on Sept. 13, 1759, the passage began. Two incidents of it are well known—the recitation of Gray's "Elegy," and Wolfe's preference of the poet's fame to the victory he was about to win—and the apt answer by which a British officer disarmed the suspicion of a French sentry

slight army to decide the fate of an empire, were formed by Wolfe on the plateau above Quebec. They were all that he could spare—Grenadiers, Highlanders, veteran soldiers.

Montcalm, at first incredulous of the news that the enemy had scaled the cliffs, hurried his troops back from their lines through Quebec to meet and crush Wolfe's



THE TAKING OF QUEBEC : GENERAL FRASER CALLING UPON HIS HIGHLANDERS TO CHARGE.  
"They threw their muskets over their heads, and drew their claymores, and drove the French back in their impetuous charge."  
Drawn by R. Calais Woodville, R.A.

men. He had the advantage in numbers, though not in the quality of his army; and a defeat of the British force would mean its destruction. He has been blamed for not waiting to collect all his scattered detachments; but doubtless he felt that delay would bring discouragement and despair to his isolated and heterogeneous forces. Whether by sound policy or driven on by his doom, he gathered up what men he had with him—French regulars, Canadian militia, and Indian scouts, and led them to attack Wolfe's line.

The French were the better marksmen, and soon drove in Wolfe's skirmishers. Their advanced troops kept up a brisk and annoying fire, to which no reply was made. Encouraged by this small success, the main body surged forward against the grim and silent line of the British troops with tumultuous shouts and irregular fire. Then at last, just before the ranks met, one murderous volley blazed out from the steady front; and with the smoke of that volley passed away the power of France in America. Torn with gaps of death, the advancing line halted and huddled into groups; and Wolfe's line, thrown forward to the charge, easily pushed the throng back into Quebec and followed it with fire. Montcalm, borne back in the rout, and vainly striving to rally his men, was mortally wounded by a ball, and died in Quebec. But his conqueror had passed away already.

In the first onset of the fight Wolfe had been struck in the wrist; but disregarding the wound, he was ordering a

charge when another bullet pierced his breast. borne to the rear, he still watched the fight; he was told that the enemy were running, and his eyes closed with the shout of victory rising around him.

It was not only Quebec that was gained; Wolfe had changed the history of the world. Had he failed to snatch the one desperate chance of victory, had his men failed on the Heights of Abraham, Canada might have remained French till next year, and till the end of the war; the French menace to New England would have endured, and with it the loyalty of the English colonies; the foundation of the United States would have been otherwise, and perhaps the parting of the kindred nations might have been made in peace.

It is vain to speculate on what might have been. Wolfe had done his work, once for all. Quebec surrendered in somewhat needless despair; and though in the winter the French came down, defeated the British garrison outside Quebec and beleaguered the city, yet with the spring the British fleets returned, and the surrender of Montreal closed the long chapter of the Western war. The Colonial struggle, begun under William III. as a side issue of his great duel with Louis XIV., continued in greater importance, but still as a side issue, in the War of the Spanish Succession, stifled by a futile truce at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, had at last been fought out to the end: France had lost. Revenge she could and did take for her loss; recovery of what was lost she hardly attempted. So final was Wolfe's victory.