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ADM. BOSCAWEN.

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THE SECOND CAPTURE OF LOUISBURG ❁❁❁❁

A recent novel, which opens in 1762, describes the delight and astonishment with which the successive and quickly recurring victories of the English over the French and Spaniards, affected the public mind of that day. On one day, it was said, that the Windward group of Islands had been captured from France; on another that Havana had fallen; on a third that Manila and the Philippines had been taken. Each man saluted his neighbor with the inquiry, "What next?" The occurrences of the past year recalls to us the events of 1762.

This has witnessed the extinction of Spanish power in this hemisphere—*that* witnessed the banishment of the power of France east of the Mississippi.

It is, however, to only one event in the series of English and Colonial successes that I desire to call your attention this evening—the second capture of the City of Louisburg, on Cape Breton, in 1758.

This capture—the second which occurred in the Colonial Wars—has perhaps been rather dwarfed in importance by the first capture in 1744, in which the New England Colonies took so large a part, and which was regarded as an event largely of their achievement.

The general Society of Colonial Wars has already done much to commemorate the first siege of Louisburg; but the second capture has some points of interest which should not be overlooked, especially by our New York Society.

Louisburg had been returned to France by the Treaty of Aix La Chapelle in 1748, (in accordance with the plan of mutual restitution of conquests on which that Treaty was based) much to the chagrin of the American Colonies. France maintained a considerable armed force at this point, and from its harbor ships sallied out for the destruction of New England com-

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merce. Louisburg was commonly spoken of as the American Dunkirk—a nearby enemies' port convenient for the equipment and refuge of privateers, and in too dangerous proximity to be regarded with equanimity. Its position and relations to the war which ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1763 made its final fall, by the second capture in 1758, therefore, an event of no ordinary importance.

The final struggle for supremacy between the English and French Colonies, in America, opened in 1754, with the Braddock Campaign, although this expedition preceded any actual declaration of war, as that did not occur until February, 1756.

The result of the war became assured by the subjugation of Canada in 1760, and the culmination of the contest, and the permanency of the English success, was clinched by the victories over the French at Martinique, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Tobago, and Grenada; and over Spain (the belated ally of France) at Havana, in August, and at Manila in October, 1762.

The West India victories of 1762 were looked upon as the harbingers of peace, which was, in fact, concluded at Paris on February 10, 1763. The Province of New York had a large share in their achievement, for many of the troops which captured Havana sailed from New York, after having been in camp for some months on Staten Island, and were under the command of General Monckton, the Governor of the Province, and of Lord Albemarle.

The expedition of 1758 to Louisburg marked the turning of the tide of success in favor of the English arms in the nine years' contest, which commenced in 1754. Up to and including 1757, the French arms in America had been nearly everywhere successful.

The Braddock Campaign of 1754 had ended, as is well known, in slaughter and retreat.

Fort Oswego had been captured by the French under Montcalm, in 1757, an event which was looked upon as securing communication between Canada and the Mississippi Valley.

Fort William Henry had fallen in the same year, under cir-

cumstances which were far from creditable to the English commander.

Lord Loudon had led an army of 6,000 men from New York to Halifax in 1757, with a view of laying siege to Louisburg, but had ingloriously returned to New York at the end of the season, without attacking, because of the report that the French at Louisburg had nineteen ships of war with which to oppose the seventeen of the English Admiral, Halbourne—a disproportion in odds which did not always daunt English seamen.

A new master-spirit came, however, into control in 1758. William Pitt became Secretary of State in England—succeeding the incompetent Duke of Newcastle in the management of the war—and from that time the tide of battle turned, and, with the exception of the Ticonderoga fiasco, in the early Summer of that year, success followed success, until all of America east of the Mississippi was swept of French domination.

The first of these successes was the capture of Louisburg on July 26, 1758.

The expedition was under the command of Admiral, the Hon. Edward Boscawen, as to the Navy, and under General Amherst, as to the Army. Twenty-two ships of the line, fifteen frigates, one hundred and twenty smaller vessels, and a land force variously stated at from nine to eleven thousand men were engaged in the expedition.

Generals Lawrence and Whitmore and Wolfe were in command of brigades.

In General Wolfe's brigade served one of the most strenuous opponents, in Parliament, in after years, of the taxation of America, Isaac Barré.

New York was represented by many, and, among others, by the brave Richard Montgomery, who in after years died for his country, under the walls of Quebec. Richard Monckton, afterwards Governor of the Province of New York, had a prominent place in the expedition.

Louisburg was defended by the Chevalier de Drucour and a garrison of from 5,000 to 6,000 men. He had five ships of

the line and seven frigates and smaller vessels, four of which he sunk across the mouth of the harbor to prevent the ingress of the British fleet.

Those who know the city and harbor of Louisburg will remember that the city and principal fortifications occupy a promontory at the Southwestern part of the harbor. The harbor opens to the Southeast, and the entrance is partly occupied and defended by several small islands, the principal one of which is Goat Island. South of the City, and beyond Black Point, or Cape Noir, is Gabarus (or Gabreuse) Bay, which was the scene of the landing of the Provincial troops in the capture of 1744, and, at the second siege, was the place of landing of the brigade led by Wolfe.

With an enemy in command of the sea, and with an army landed at Gabarus Bay, Louisburg is essentially invested and cut off from succor.

On June 8, 1758, after waiting some six days for a violent surf to subside, a force, under General Wolfe, consisting of four companies of grenadiers and light infantry, and the New England Rangers, effected a landing. Divisions were rowed to the shore in small boats, under the fire of seven frigates, at three points in Gabarus Bay—White Point, Flat Point and Fresh Water Cove. Wolfe's division approached Fresh Water Cove, and were met by a hot fire, which caused signals to be given in return, but the boats of Lieutenants Hopkins and Brown, and of Ensign Grant disregarded or misunderstood the orders and pushed on, and Wolfe himself leaping into the surf and wading ashore, came to their support, and the French were driven from their positions.

On the 11th of June, artillery and supplies were landed, and the French retreated to the fortifications of the town proper.

A few days later, General Wolfe circled the city to the Northern Promontory which projects into the harbor opposite the city, and which was occupied by a lighthouse and fortifications, and succeeded in capturing those points. Placing a battery on Lighthouse Point, on the North of the harbor entrance, he was in a position to command the French battery on the Island in the center of the harbor exit, and to reach the shipping in the harbor itself.

I need not recall the incidents of the siege which have been so graphically told by Parkman, nor detail all of the courtesies which took place between the chivalrous commanders.

The Chevalier Drucour, after the losses on both sides had become considerable, sent word that the garrison had the advantage of having a distinguished surgeon, whose services he placed also at the command of any wounded officer of the besiegers, and General Amherst, on the arrival of a supply ship from the West Indies, sent in a flag of truce with a present of fresh pineapples, with his compliments to the brave wife of the French General.

The siege advanced, step by step, for weeks, drawing the lines tighter and tighter around the doomed city, but marked by little incident except a partially successful sally of the French on July 9th, which resulted in the death of the English Earl of Dundonald.

On July 21st, three of the largest French ships, the *Entreprenant*, *Capricieux* and *Celebre*, took fire, the *Entreprenant* from shells from the Light House Point or Maine battery, and the others from the *Entreprenant*. On July 22d, the citadel was burned and the town became practically a ruin. Forty of the fifty-two cannon were disabled. On the 25th of July, two English captains, Laforey and Balfour, entered the harbor at night in small boats and captured and burned the seventy-four-gun ship *Prudent*, and towed out the sixty-four-gun ship *Bienfasant*, with all on board, from under the walls of the town into the Northeastern harbor, where she was secured.

The celebrated navigator, James Cook, took part in this assault.

On the 26th of July, Chevalier Drucour capitulated—yielding to the importunities of the inhabitants, although himself desiring to defend against the impending assault.

I have here one of the original official notifications by Admiral Boscawen of the capitulation of the city. It is addressed to Governor Denny, of Pennsylvania, and is probably one of several notices in similar form sent to the different Colonial Governors. The laconic terms in which he announces this great event are worthy of imitation.

“Namur in Gabreuse Bay, 27th July, 1758.

Sir :

I have the pleasure to acquaint you that the Town of Louisbourg surrendered yesterday. A copy of the capitulation I send enclosed, and am Sir

Your Most obedient Humble Servant,

E. BOSCAWEN.

P. S. The ships taken, burnt or destroyed are as follows, viz. :”

Prudent, 74 guns ; Burnt by the boats of the fleet under Capt. Leforey.

Entrepremant, 74 guns ; Blown up and burnt by shot from the Marine Battery.

Capricieux, 64 guns ; Burnt by the Entrepremant.

Celebre, 64 guns ; Burnt by the Entrepremant.

Bienfaisant, 64 guns ; Taken by the boats of the fleet, towed from under the Walls of the Town into the East Harbor, by Captain Balfour.

Apollo, 50 guns ; Chevere, Biche, Fidello, Frigates ; Sunk by the enemy across the Harbor’s mouth to prevent the fleet from going in.

Diana, 36 guns ; Taken by his Majesty’s ship Boreas.

Echo, 26 guns ; Taken by his Majesty’s ship Juno.

To William Denny, Esq.

The capture of Louisburg, after the disastrous failures of the preceding years, created great enthusiasm both in America and England.

Captain Amherst, brother of the General, carried the news to England. Eleven stand of captured colors were borne in triumph through the streets of London and deposited in St. Paul’s Cathedral. Admiral Boscawen and General Amherst were honored with official congratulations, but General Wolfe’s dash and resourceful energy made him the popular hero, and insured for him the command of the expedition against Quebec in the following year.

New York celebrated the news by an official dinner at the Province Arms Tavern on Broadway, and by an illumination and fireworks.

Looking back, now, to the series of events which marked the fall of French power in America—commencing with this capture of Louisburg—we see and recognize the inevitable nature of the conflict which then took place. The French and English systems could not exist side by side on this continent. The time had come when the autocratic system of France and the free and popular methods of the English Colonies, intensified by the ancient antipathies of the parent nations, came to the point of an irreconcilable clash.

Many of the ostensible causes which precipitated war, seem now, as we look back upon them, most trivial in their nature, but it is clear that a “psychological moment” had arrived for conflict which made specific complaint almost unnecessary. Encroachments upon asserted territorial rights of each nation on the American continent were made the pretext for resort to arms, but it is difficult for us now to appreciate how vague territorial claims then were, or how comparatively unknown and undetermined were all boundaries in America only one hundred and fifty years ago.

England laid claim to nearly the whole of North America under the coast discoveries of Cabot, in 1496, and under the settlements which were effected early in the seventeenth century. France asserted jurisdiction in Canada, and Southward to the Ohio and along the Mississippi to its mouth, by virtue of the discoveries and travels of Joliet, De La Salle, D'Iberville, Crozat and others.

By the treaties of Utrecht, in 1713, and Aix La Chapelle, in 1748, attempts had been made to specify French and English territories, but so little was known of actual boundaries, and perhaps so little cared about the actual delimitations of vast stretches of unexplored country (not supposed to contain the valuable minerals for which nations were then seeking) that boundaries were necessarily indefinite.

In the neighborhood of Louisburg itself differences of opinion existed as to the extent of territory claimed, which left wide latitude for contention.

“Acadia” had been ceded to England by the treaty of Utrecht without designation other than that it was according

to its "ancient limits." But by some "Acadia" proper was held to include not only the peninsular of Nova Scotia, but the Island of Cape Breton; by others only Nova Scotia proper, and by still others the name was applicable to a region extending from Central New Brunswick to Southern Pennsylvania.

In a work entitled "The Present State of North America," printed in London in 1755 (which I have here before me), the prevailing lack of accurate information about America, even at that late date, was stated as follows:

"Every person that knows anything of North America in general, or of any one Province in particular, must be sensible that the histories or works of Mather, Old Nixon, Neal, Salomon, etc., who have chiefly copied each other, and of all that have copied after them relative to North America, might almost as properly have called their works Histories of Prester John's, or of the Hottentots' country, as histories of North America, or any other title they bear. Even Mather himself said Old Nixon, in his *British Empire in North America* had eighty-seven falsehoods in fifty-six pages. In short, there is not one work yet published to the world in our language that in any degree deserves the title of a History of North America, but Smith's *History of Virginia*, and Douglas's summary, historical and political, of the first settlement, progress and improvement, and present state of the British settlements in North America, etc., published a few years ago at Boston, in New England."

And again, the same work says:

"Most, if not all, of our maps also, preceding that of Dr. Mitchell, are very erroneous and injurious to His Majesty's rights. Such erroneous books and maps, as may be supposed, are of more consequence than people generally imagine, for, besides misleading ourselves, the French quote them against us even in national discussions, as authorities."

As to the proposals that had been made to adjust differences, the same work said:

"An author has also proposed a plan for settling the limits of North America with the French, whereby he gives the French two-thirds of the whole for the sake of enjoying the

other third in peace and quiet. Now, can any man, upon close reflection, imagine that if the French were suffered to avail themselves of and settle two-thirds of North America, we shall enjoy the other third in peace? If we submit to this and may judge of the future by what is passed, they will soon have the other third also, and by making such proposals, does it not look as if he doubted the validity of our right to the whole of our claim?"

With such a prevailing uncertainty as to both territory and claims, it is no wonder that the acts of aggression relied on as causes for war, were somewhat indefinitely set forth.

The French were supposed to be drawing a cordon of posts in the interior, to surround and hold back the coast Colonies, but the boundaries of those Colonies were stated in terms which seem somewhat singular at the present day.

The same work, "The Present State of North America," attempts to summarize the existing causes of complaint in 1755, and, among others, enumerates the following French "aggressions" and "outrages:":

(1) That they have "settled seven villages in the Province of *Massachusetts Bay on the South banks of the St. Lawrence River.*"

(2) That "as to the Province of *New York* and the five nations hereditary and conquered country, the French have got possession of that part of it which lies to the *Northward of the St. Lawrence River and the five Great Lakes.*"

(3) That the French have "built two forts on *Beef River*, which issued from the South side of *Lake Erie in His Majesty's Province of Pennsylvania.*"

(4) That in 1751 they built a fort *in the Province of Virginia* "at the junction of the Rivers *Missouri and Mississippi.*"

(5) That "in His Majesty's Province of *Georgia* the French have one fort built *at the mouths of the Mississippi.*"

These and other "insults, injuries and barbarities," committed (as the author said) "by the very people we have the name of peace with," seemed to the men at that time to call for war. Indeed, it had even then begun without formal declaration, and *Louisburg* was the forerunner of the successful issue.



