

## REMARKS

These two valedictory letters of General Murray addressed to his brother Admiral Murray, appeared, with other correspondence, in the history of the Earls of Cromarty, compiled by Mr. William Fraser, F. S. A. Scot, and issued privately last year by the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland. Admiral Murray afterwards succeeded his elder brother Patrick, and became sixth Lord Ellibank. He married Lady Isabella Mackenzie, daughter of George third and last Earl of Cromarty; their daughter, the Hon. Maria Murray, married Mr. Hay, of Newhall, (brother of the seventh Marquis of Tweeddale), and succeeding to the Cromarty-Mackenzie estates on the death of her cousin, Kenneth Mackenzie, took the name of Hay-Mackenzie, and was the grandmother of the present Duchess of Sutherland, who in 1864, was created Countess of Cromarty in her own right. This, therefore, explains how General Murray's letters found their way into the Cromarty charter chest.

The letters are, I think, of considerable interest. In the first, written only a month after the battle of the Plains of Abraham, General Murray announces to his brother that he has been appointed Governor of Quebec, he also states that he is at the head of 6,000 trained troops, and that he contemplates a winter expedition against the Chevalier de Levis, and especially has an eye to his magazines. The Chevalier, who was cantoned at Fort Jacques-Cartier, had formed the design of attacking the City as soon as the river should be ice-bound, and when Murray could expect no assistance from the English fleet. The French General was obliged to retreat on Montreal. In the meantime, Murray vigorously pushed forward the repairs of the fortifications of Quebec, but the insufficiency and badness of provisions and the rigour of the climate introduced scurvy and other complaints among the troops, and had reduced his garrison to about one-half, when, on the 26th April 1760, he heard that the Chevalier de Levis, having collected about 10,000 men, had landed at Pointe-aux-Trembles.

We may now turn to the second letter. It was written a year after the first, and six months after the events I am about to summarize. The General commences by stating that it is only the approbation of his Sovereign the Ministers and his brother soldiers that he is desirous of obtaining, and after referring to his share in the battle of the Plains of Abraham, he proceeds to defend the action he took on the day of the 28th of April.

As soon as he heard that de Levis had landed, Murray advanced to Sillery, and there determined to give him battle. He says in his letter: "My journal in the hands of the Minister points out all at large." Reviewing Murray's conduct, General Sir E. Cust, in his "Wars of the eighteenth century," says: "Murray now resolved on a plan which has been much criticised and justly condemned. He thus explained his view of the case, in his dispatch to the Secretary of State — that the enemy was greatly his superior in numbers, but considering that the British forces were habituated to victory, and were provided with a fine train of artillery, he thought that an action in the field was less risk in the single chance of successfully defending a wretched fortification. Nothing appears to be more contrary to sound rules of war, than that a Commander of garrison should risk a battle to prevent his being shut up and besieged. Considering, too, that his troops were sickly, and the army of Mr. de Levis well conditioned and of triple numbers, it certainly was the rashest resolve that an officer, charged with the command of a most important fortress, could have entertained."

After reading the above, I am doubtful if many soldiers, at least at the present day, would answer without hesitation "To be sure," to General Murray's question. The critical moment of attack was probably made use of as Murray perceiving the Chevalier advancing in single column, proceeded to attack him before he could properly form. The disaster of the day may also be attributed to the action of the right. The ardor of the troops carried them further, in pursuit than prudence should have dictated, and tho' they succeeded in the commencement, they met with a severe check. The force taking possession of the redoubts defended them with great determination, but were eventually outnumbered and forced to retire. The left also gave way, and Murray, driven back on both flanks, had no alternative but to seek shelter within the walls of his fortress. On the whole he seems to have fought his battle bravely, but the vital mistake lay in fighting at all.

The same night, M. de Levis commenced his trenches before Quebec, but Murray, by extraordinary exertions, succeeded in mounting a number of guns, and when the French batteries opened on the 11th of May, they were silenced by the fire of the town. On the 15th, the English fleet, which had wintered at Halifax, arrived at Point Levis, and captured the French vessels lying in the river; M. de Levis, in disgust, raised the siege, and retreated again on Montreal, abandoning his military train and siege artillery. It was now the turn of the English to take the offensive. General Amherst advanced from Oswego with 10,000 men, and reached Montreal on the 6th of September; Murray was already in the vicinity, and the next day Colonel Haviland arrived from Isle-aux-Noix. The Marquis de Vaudreuil, despairing therefore of his ability to stand a siege, demanded a capitulation, which was granted, and this ending the war, Canada became a British Province.

Read in connection with the accounts of the campaign, I think that these two letters of General Murray add something to the history of the stirring times in which they were written; and I trust they may prove acceptable