

Three plans were proposed in council. All had, as their basis, an attack below the city. The brigadiers rejected all, and advised an assault above. This scheme Wolfe accepted. Not that he was sanguine of success; he knew the adverse chances, and he was weak and ill. But, once taken, he did not waver in his resolution. He was always weak physically; and he said to his physician:—"You cannot cure me. Only make me free from pain for a few days, that I may do my duty." The first thing was to discover a place where the heights could be scaled; this was found at a spot called ever since 'Wolfe's Cove.' We all know the history of those eventful days. The British ships moved up and down the river, to deceive the French as to the real attack; while Montcalm watched with tireless patience. He had not had his clothes off, he tells us, since the 23rd of June; and his horses were always saddled. On the 12th September Wolfe issued his last orders. That night Saunders' fleet made a feint of landing below the city, while, from Holmes' ships above, boats were filled with soldiers. Twenty-four volunteers were chosen to lead the attack; the nature and place of which they knew not—only that it meant almost certain death. The night was clear, but dark. Nothing was to be seen but the twinkle of lights from the city and the distant camps. Towards two o'clock a lantern was raised in the maintop shrouds of the Sutherland, in the cabin of which Wolfe was sitting with his school-fellow Jervis. This was the signal that, the tide having turned, the ships with the boats alongside filled with men, were to drop down the river. Slowly they drifted with the ebb. Not a sound broke the silence. All nature seemed hushed, so fateful was that hour of mighty things to be. Everything favored the expedition. Some of the guards on the banks had been allowed to go home for the harvest. Some of the best troops had been delayed in coming up from Beauport. Certain provision boats were expected to pass down. The English ships, therefore, attracted no special notice. As they neared the north shore, they were challenged, and they replied in French. Again they were challenged, and replied. They had now reached the cove, and the volunteers disembarked and began the ascent. Reaching the top, they rushed upon the group of tents, and overpowered the guards. From the shouts and musket shots Wolfe knew that the advance party had scaled the heights. The command to follow was at once given, and the eager soldiers clambered up the rocky sides. Clearing away and obstacles which had been placed in their path, they moved steadily forward up and across the slope which crowns the summit, to the spot which Wolfe chose for his field of battle. Then, as the morning dawned in clouds and rain, there stood upon the Plains of Abraham the red-coated battalions of England.

Montcalm had passed a troubled night. He had heard the firing, and had sent for particulars. Not receiving news, he mounted his horse at 6 o'clock, and made his way towards Vaudreuil's headquarters. As he stood upon a rising ground and looked toward the west, he saw the British troops, a patch of red against the leaden sky. After a few words with Vaudreuil and his aides,