

## BATTLE OF MINAS, 1747.

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One little episode in the war which in 1744 broke out between England and France, marks, in a striking manner, the courage and endurance of the foe with whom the British American provinces had to contend. The Canadian of that day was no unworthy representative of the gallant race to which he belongs.

We must premise a few words to explain the situation. When the war began, Cape Breton was a French possession, with Louisbourg, the strongest fortress in America, for its capital. In the second year of the war New England had fitted out an expedition against Louisbourg, which had resulted marvellously in the capture of that stronghold. The French, mortified beyond measure at their humiliating loss, determined upon the most ample revenge. In the following spring they fitted out, and dispatched from La Rochelle, the largest fleet they had ever sent across the Atlantic. It consisted of eleven ships of the line and twenty-four frigates, besides thirty-four transports and five ships, manned by seven thousand sailors, and carrying a land force of three thousand men. It was placed under the command of the Duke D'Anville, an able and experienced commander. He was instructed to retake Louisbourg, and dismantle it; then to proceed to Annapolis, and take that fort and garrison it; afterwards to go on to Boston and burn that city; then to ravage the coasts of the British provinces to the south; and to wind up his operations by going on to the West Indies and capturing some of the British sugar islands in the Gulf of Mexico. The plan of operations was communicated to the French authorities at Quebec, who were instructed to send to Nova Scotia a detachment of troops to co-operate with the Duke in the projected attack on Annapolis. Accordingly the Chevalier de Ramesay was sent from Quebec early in the spring, so as to reach this province by the time the French fleet should arrive in this harbor, then known as Chebucto, which had been assigned as the place of rendezvous for the ships. Finding, on reaching Nova Scotia, that the fleet had not arrived, de Ramesay proceeded to Annapolis and invested the fort, but, having no cannon, he was unable to institute a regular siege. After waiting some time, and seeing no prospect of success, and receiving no tidings of the French fleet, he retired first to Minas, (now Horton), and afterwards to Beaubassin, (now Fort Lawrence). On reaching that place, he found awaiting him there, orders from the Governor of Canada, directing him to repair at once with his men to Quebec. Accordingly he embarked his force in several small vessels and crossed over to St. John, with a view of proceeding thence to Quebec by the river. Before however he had made much progress up the St. John, he was overtaken by messengers from the Duke D'Anville, who had on the 9th September arrived at Chebucto with some three ships of his fleet, bringing orders to him to return to Nova Scotia with the force under his command. De Ramesay at once retraced his steps and appeared with his detachment a second time before Annapolis, ready to take part in an attack on that place. After some delay he learned that the fleet had left Chebucto for Annapolis, but he waited in vain for its arrival in the basin. After waiting some weeks he again withdrew his forces, first to Minas, and afterwards to Beaubassin, with a view to proceed thence to Quebec.

We need not narrate the series of misfortunes which befell the French fleet from the time of its despatch from La Rochelle till the departure from our shores of a shattered remnant of it to return to France. We need not speak of the dispersion of the ships by storm after storm on the passage out, nor of the loss of many of them by capture or of others by wreck. Nor need we tell of the frightful plague which prevailed on the passage, and which carried off over 1200 men before reaching our shores, and which continued even after arrival here till it consigned 1100 more of these unfortunates to graves on the shores of Bedford Basin. Neither need we dwell on the suicide of the Duke D'Anville within six days after his arrival in this harbor, nor of that of his successor, Admiral D'Estourville, who reached here with three more ships of the line on the afternoon of the very day on which the Duke D'Anville died, and was so worried by the disastrous condition of affairs that within two days from that time he ended his life by falling on his sword; nor on the misfortune which befell the Marquis de la Jonquiere, the third in command, when, on leaving Chebucto with the remnant of his expedition to proceed to Annapolis, he encountered another storm off Cape Sable, which compelled him to bear away for France. A more melancholy tale is not to be found in history. We mention it now only to introduce the story we have to tell of a gallant exploit performed by the detachment under De Ramesay, which had already appeared twice before Annapolis, and had twice retired to Beaubassin, without having done anything reflecting credit on the French arms.

Mascarene, who was Lieut.-Governor of Nova Scotia, had an uneasy time during the summer of 1746. The appearance of a French force twice before his fort, the rumors that reached him of the aims and intentions of the huge armament from France, the reports, received through the Acadians, of the arrival of French ships-of-war at Chebucto, and of their departure some time afterwards for Annapolis, kept him during the whole season in a state of feverish excitement. He represented the condition of Nova Scotia to Governor Shirley, of Massachusetts, and solicited his aid. Shirley was sensible that the loss of this Province would seriously jeopardize New England, and did what he could to meet Mascarene's wishes. He succeeded in raising a body of 1000 volunteers to go to Nova Scotia with a view to over-

awe the Acadians at Minas, and to drive away the French from Beaubassin. Of this number, however, only 500 actually found their way to the Province, and they were of the quota furnished by Massachusetts. Shipwreck and other disasters prevented the volunteers of Rhode Island and New Hampshire from taking any part in the enterprise. The expedition was put in charge of Col. Arthur Noble, who had seen some military service. Noble was a native of Enniskillen, in Ireland. He had emigrated to Maine in his early days, and had obtained a grant of a considerable tract of land near the mouth of the Kennebec. There he had engaged in farming and trading, and had amassed a considerable fortune. He had built on his property one of those palisaded forts common in the frontier villages of that day as a protection against the savages. He was popular in his neighborhood. In 1715, when the expedition against Louisbourg was organized, he had been selected as Lieut.-Col. of a regiment raised for that service. At Louisbourg he had shown both ability and courage. He had led an attack upon a powerful battery situated on an islet at the mouth of Louisbourg harbor. He was repulsed, but not till after a hard struggle, in which he lost 189 of his men. His conduct on this occasion received the warm encomiums of his commander-in-chief. After the surrender he remained with his regiment at Louisbourg till relieved in the following spring by regulars from Gibraltar. He had been at home only a few months when he was called upon to take charge of the new expedition.

The 500 men from Massachusetts arrived in detachments at Annapolis in the fall and early winter of 1747. The path thence to Minas ran through bogs and swamps, which, on the arrival of the first detachment, were well nigh impassable. Mascarene, therefore, was anxious to forward the men to Minas by sea, and made several attempts to do so, but every time that his transports got out of the Basin of Annapolis, they were met by storms which drove them back again. Soon, however, the ground became stiff with frost, and he despatched a small body of troops by land, who arrived at Minas in November, and quartered themselves on the inhabitants. There still remained, however, at Annapolis, some 100 men. They were put on board some hired transports, together with cannon and munitions of war, and the frame of a block house, to be erected at Minas. Another attempt was made to proceed by water. The ships passed out of the Basin in safety, and directed their course up the Bay; but the season had now far advanced. The Bay was full of floating ice, which rushed up and down with the flow and ebb of the tide. As the ships approached Cape Split, the danger became greater. Through the narrow gorge between that point and the opposite shore, the waters of the wide Bay below, and of the broad Basin above, rush with frightful velocity, first one way, then another, carrying on their bosom huge bodies of ice. On approaching this point Noble felt that it was not right to risk the loss of his men by taking them further in the ships. He, accordingly, disembarked the whole force and landed on the edge of the north mountain, some forty miles below Minas. From that point he marched through the woods, in the direction of Minas, his men carrying 14 days' provisions on their backs. He crossed the mountain diagonally, through a dense forest, and in deep snow. On the eighth day, the party emerged on the level ground near Grand Pré. In the meantime, the ships had proceeded on their voyage and had, through great perils, arrived with their stores at Minas almost as soon as the troops. Mascarene had sent up an officer with the first detachment to arrange for quarters. Everything, therefore, was ready for the remainder of the force when it arrived.

The village of Grand Pré consisted of a string of houses, skirting the highway, and extending far in both directions from the church as a centre. The houses selected for quarters were twenty-four in number, not far from the centre of the village, but extending on the highway, a distance, in all, of well nigh a mile and a half. With one exception, they were small wooden huts, such as those now to be seen in the occupation of the poorer classes in Clare. The exception was a stone house, of rather greater dimension, but still by no means what could be called a large house. This Col. Noble subsequently made his guard house. On his arrival, he had hoisted the British flag on the church steeple, a proceeding which seems to have given some offence to the pious Acadians.

The weather continued to increase in severity. The ships had no sooner reached the landing place on the Gaspereau, than they were caught by the frost, and, in a single night, solidly embedded in ice. Noble thought that it was too late, when he arrived, to attempt the erection of his block-house then. He decided to put it off till the spring. He, therefore, left the frame and material on board, as also the powder and other munitions of war, except so much as were required for immediate use.

In a few days the men had recovered from their fatigues. They were in good health and spirits. The inhabitants had shown no hostile feeling. They had complied with the orders to furnish provisions. Everything seemed satisfactory. The men were looking forward to a pleasant winter. Noble had originally intended, if all the volunteers raised in New England had arrived, as expected, to proceed to Beaubassin, and dislodge the French from that place. On the 29th January, he wrote to Mascarene to that effect, but added that he was informed such an expedition was impracticable at that season of the year, and he thought he had good reason to believe his information correct.

During the winter months, especially after the first of January, passage across the Basin of Minas by ship is impossible. A vessel caught in the ice floes is helpless and hopeless. It is whirled up and down with the tide, and is either crushed between masses of floating ice-cakes, or is seized and imprisoned in a field of ice. The unhappy people on board such a vessel