

more was done till the spring that followed. Then vigorous measures were taken. A total force of 12,000 British gathered in Halifax harbour in 1757. They were on the point of sailing for Cape Breton when, hearing how strong the Frenchmen were, through inefficiency or cowardice, they slunk off over the sea.

Those were dark days for England, darker, indeed, than any she had known. But it proved the darkness that precedes the dawn. The Island Queen roused herself as from a sleep. From princeliest palace and peasant hut answer came to the great Pitt's call, and, gilded inefficiency set aside, soon every sea was whitened with English sail, triumph wrung from defeat, and the fountains of an ever since expanding empire laid.

But France had been elated by a brilliant series of successes and was prepared to dispute her enemy's advance at every turn. To both peoples it was plain that Louisbourg was the pivot-point on which all turned—not alone in the New but the Old World also.

On the 10th of February, then, 1758, an English fleet, under Admiral Boscawen, sailed for America; another under Osborne, kept Lé Clure a prisoner in the Mediterranean; whilst a third, under Hawke, succeeded in intercepting a French squadron bound with transports for Cape Breton. Boscawen was joined at Halifax by a few provincial troops. The ships-of-war on the station, too, came in. On the 28th of May all sailed for the formidable little city by the sea.

Vast sums of money had been spent in repairs since France came to her own again. Almost a mile's length of fortifications stretched in arc-like form across the low lying land that ends in Rochfort Point.

These were defended by three thousand regulars, beside Indians and militia. Within the walls were gathered also the neighbouring habitants.

Meeting the fleet at the mouth of Halifax harbour, General Amherst, who had sped post-haste from Germany, boarded the flagship, and planning his attack as they sailed, selected his men. Notable among these was one of three brigadiers, a lanky, sea-sick youth, James Wolfe by name.

On the 2nd of June the foremost of the fleet caught sight of Louisbourg, and anchored where the New England men had done thirteen years before. Next day the hindmost hove in sight. But for several days thereafter, a south-east gale from three thousand miles of open ocean made landing anywhere impossible. Only here and there, indeed, as we have seen, could landing be at any time effected.

At each landing place was set such guard and guns as, on that rocky coast, might bid defiance to the world. Despite England's vigilance, France had managed to get reinforcements into the town. When the English admiral cast anchor in the bay, France had in the harbour five ships-of-the-line, and seven frigates, mounting, together, more than five hundred guns, and manned by some three thousand men.

Yet, on the morning of the 8th of June, by one of those mistakes of the French on which great days so often turn, Wolfe managed, with his company and their shattered flag-staff, to get footing ashore under a horribly close range fire from a thousand cannon and musket mouths. This was at Freshwater Cove*—the very place where Vaughan landed. This time, too,

* Now Kennington Cove.