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FIGHTERS FOR THE FLAG

Story of the Royal North Lancashire Regiment and the Great Part They Played in Capturing Quebec—How Captain Cook Rose from Boatswain to Position Famous Explorer.

VII.—LOYAL NORTH LANCASHIRE REGIMENT.

OF all the Regiments in the Regular Army the North Lancashire is the only one allowed to use the prefix "Loyal," and its record of service amply justifies the honour. In point of age, it is one of the youngest regiments, it was raised by George II. in 1740, but in the time which has elapsed the Loyal North Lancashires have won laurels in every part of the globe. Within five years of their foundation they were holding Edinburgh Castle for the King against the forces of the Young Pretender; service in Canada followed; then came the Peninsular War and the Crimea, then the Indian Mutiny, then Afghanistan (1878-79), and afterwards South Africa, with the defence of Kimberley for their credit.

Of all their actions that which won Canada for the British was perhaps the greatest in its results. On their uniforms you may see a lasting memento of it still—that is, when khaki is not worn—for a black line in the lace is a symbol of perpetual mourning for Wolfe, who led them to their victory.

In 1759 a British force, in three divisions, set out to conquer Canada, the plan of campaign being that each should land at a different point, all converging towards Quebec, the capital, which was to be assaulted by the combined force.

One of these divisions, eight thousand strong, transported on a fleet of twenty-two ships of the line, and an equal number of frigates and smaller craft, set sail under Wolfe, and passing down the wide mouth of the St. Lawrence, came to a pause by the island of Orleans to await the arrival of the rest of the army.

But neither of the divisions came for one reason or the other had been held up, and the Loyal North Lancashires (who, with some Highland regiments, formed the main part of Wolfe's force) began to see that their chance of winning the capital was very remote indeed.

Sheer from the river—there narrowed so that it flowed with double strength in an uncertain channel—rose the high, flat plain on which the city stood.

But Wolfe, by his personal magnetism, inspired confidence, and not a man in all the force but would have followed wherever he led, confident that the general's will must lead to victory.

Yet Wolfe, still a young man, was slight of frame, enfeebled by suffering a martyr to rheumatism. No man ever seemed less fitted to be a soldier—no man endowed more splendidly with the mental power, the magnetic charm, the enduring courage that combine to make a born leader.

None knew better than he the difficulty of the task before him. Up on its mighty height the city seemed unassailable. The enemy army was strongly entrenched, and refused to come out into the open, and the enemy's fleet lay guarding the approach by river.

In desperation Wolfe determined on a frontal attack, an unconcealed attempt to storm the heights, and—as might have been expected—this led to disaster. Had he had more disciplined troops the plan might have succeeded by its very boldness, but as it was, the bravery of the troops defeated itself.

On the 31st of July the troops embarked—the Loyal North Lancashires, some Grenadiers and the Royal Americans. To quote Parkman, the men, "without waiting to receive their orders or to form their ranks, ran pell-mell across the level ground, and with loud shouts began, each man for himself, to scale the heights which rose in front; crested with entrenchments and bristling with hostile arms. . . . The slopes were soon covered with the fallen, and at that instant a storm, which had long been threatening, burst with sudden fury. . . . Night was coming on with double darkness. The retreat was sounded, and as the English re-embarked, troops of Indians came whoping down the heights and hovered about their rear to murder the stragglers and the wounded."

Wolfe saw the defeat with such bitterness of soul that physical prostration followed the mental agony. Fever supervened, and for days he lay in the Canadian farm which he had made his headquarters, stricken almost to death. In his semi-delirium a thousand schemes and plans for victory thronged in his brain, and from all their chaos one began to take definite form. There was yet hope of

victory in an attack made from the other side, but to do that the men must be transported up the river over uncharted and unknown rapids which bristled with sunken rocks and a thousand dangers, and then would be confronted by a sheer wall of rock many hundreds of feet high, up which it seemed hardly a mountain goat could find a foothold.

Yet by those rapid, up those heights lay the way to victory if the path could be found.

So he tossed and muttered in his fever, and his officers whispered among themselves that it was a pity he could not turn his tortured brain to saner thoughts. All the world knew the river could not be negotiated without a pilot, the heights could not be climbed, for that reason the guards in those directions were comparatively small.

Among the ships lying at anchor near the island of Orleans was the frigate "Mercury," and rumour of Wolfe's delirious fancy was repeated in the fo'c'sle, thus reaching the ears of a young man who had recently been promoted to be boatswain. He sat and thought for awhile, then made his way aft and—not without some difficulty—managed to reach the captain.

"If you will let me go in the dinghy at night," he said in effect, "I'll chart the channel and undertake to pilot any number of boats through."

The captain looked his surprise and his incredulity. "You!" he said. "Why, my good man, who taught you drawing or surveying?"

"I taught myself, sir," was the reply. "For two winters I was ashore, living in the house of the captain of the trading ship on which I sailed, and in the house were a goodly number of books. I worked hard all those months, and if you will trust me I will show you what I can do."

There was a quiet confidence about the man which impressed the captain, with the result on that night—and for many nights following—the little craft set off from the shelter of the ship, to grope its way 'mid rocks and rapids in the dark. Later the boatswain came aft again, bringing with him an elaborate and detailed chart, correctly drawn.

The captain looked at it in amazement. "If this proves correct," he said, "there will be no more fo'c'sle for you. You place is on the quarter-deck."

It was correct, and that young boatswain received his commission, to rise to further fame as Captain Cook, the explorer. In a narrow street of old Whitby may be seen still the tall old house where the apprentice lad read his master's books through the long winter nights and so laid the first foundation-stone of the victory which gave Canada to Britain.

Wolfe heard of the boatswain's efforts. The chart made possible the waterway to the unguarded heights above the city. And then there came forward another unexpected helper. One of the Loyal North Lancashires had been captured during the abortive attack, and, being imprisoned in the citadel, had contrived to win the sympathy of an Indian girl attached to the place. By her aid he escaped, and afterwards she showed him a secret way down the apparently inaccessible cliff, a hidden path known only to a few. Creeping down the steep cliff, noting landmarks as he came, he reached the river, swam the rapids, and, rejoining his regiment, brought the astounding news of what he had done.

Wolfe's fever had abated. Weak he was still, but full of courage and resolution when the night of September 12th arrived—a moonless night of starshine and beauty. Crowding into thirty boats went sixteen hundred men, and with Cook as their pilot the row of craft drifted with the tide. The current ran so strong it needed but an occasional movement of the muffled oars to keep all in the right course. In the stern of one of the leading boats Wolfe sat, wrapped in his cloak. He had received recently a volume of Gray's "Elegy," and as they crept along their dangerous way he whispered stanzas to the officers around. It is said that as he reached the line—"The paths of glory lead but to the grave,"

he paused as if struck by sudden thought. Then suddenly he spoke. "Gentlemen," he said, "I would rather have written that poem than take Quebec tomorrow."

On either side of the stream the great precipices rose as a sombre wall, clothed with pines, and out of the blackness a sentry's voice challenged. With great presence of mind a High-

land officer replied, in French, and knowing a convoy of supplies was expected, the sentry let the boats go by. They reached the little landing place, now called Wolfe's Cove, and in the first grey of the dawning the Loyal North Lancashires leaped ashore, Wolfe one of the first to set foot on land. The man who knew the pass was there as guide. Such guards as there were—and because the rock was thought unscalable they were but few—were cut down ere the alarm could be given, and up, up the steep rushed the British. When the sun was well above the horizon the people of Quebec stared with amazement, for the plain before their impregnable city was ablaze with British scarlet.

In solid ranks they stood, Highlander and Loyal North Lancashire. Sharpshooters hidden in an expanse of corn began to get busy. Again and again a British soldier fell where he stood; but eager hands dragged him back, another took his place, and still the scarlet ranks remained unbroken, undisturbed. The Loyal North Lancashires were going to prove their mettle; this time no day should be lost for lack of discipline.

From the gates of the city streamed the enemy, under the Marquis of Montcalm. They came in three divisions, shouting as they charged, their muskets sending a hail of lead and fire ahead. And still the British stood, a scarlet stain against the yellow corn, so motionless the seemed hardly living men. The charging foe felt the uncanoniness of their courage, the forward ranks wavered and swerved, as if they though this was a more than human foe. Had not these North Lancashires climbed heights where it was said no living thing could find a foothold? And now they waited in this grim indifference in the face of charging death.

The enemy was within forty yards of that strange, silent scarlet line, then Wolfe gave the word. To quote the historian: "From end to end of the British line the muskets rose to the level as if with the sway of some great machine, and the whole blazed forth at once in one crashing explosion. Like a ship in full career, arrested with sudden ruin on a sunken rock, the ranks of the enemy staggered, shivered and broke before the wasting storm of lead. The smoke rolling along the field for a moment shut out the view, but when the white wreaths scattered on the wind, a wretched spectacle was disclosed—men and officers tumbled in heaps, battalions dissolved into mob, order and obedience gone. And when the British muskets were levelled for a second volley the masses of the militia were seen to tremble and cower. Echoing cheer on cheer, trampling the dying and the dead, driving fugitives in crowds, the British troops advanced and swept the field before them. . . . Never was victory more quick and decisive."

"See how they run," cried an English officer, and the words reached Wolfe. He had had his wrist shattered by a bullet early in the fight, and even as he bound it up—refusing medical aid—another ball entered his side. He was dying fast and seemed unconscious but those words reached him and his eyes opened.

"Who run?" he asked.

"The enemy, sir, the enemy," was the answer. "They give way on every hand."

"Praise God," said Wolfe. "I will die in peace." And turning on his side, he passed away.

The victory was a surprise in many ways, the romantic adventures of the soldier who had discovered the pass, the wonderful courage and discipline of the men who had waited the attack when won, all made the Battle of the Heights remarkable; and in addition, on both sides died. Wolfe's death has already been told, and almost at the same time the Marquis Montcalm fell. He asked to be buried in one of the deep holes—the craters we call them to-day—made by the bursting of a British bomb, forerunner of the high explosive shells, and then dictated a message to General Townshend, on whom the command of the British had devolved.

"Monsieur, the humanity of the English sets my mind at peace concerning the fate of the French prisoners who have fallen into their hands."

That his confidence was justified events have proved. Descendants of those very men who came as prisoners of war to the hands of the Loyal North Lancashires at Quebec, to-day have rallied at the call of Britain, and of all our splendid fighting men none are greater in their loyalty and their heroism than are those from the land of the Maple Leaf. It is a long cry from the eighteenth century, when the British troops made prisoners of the defending force, till to-day when out of Quebec has come her noblest and her best to fight for the British flag.

Then the Loyal North Lancashires were the victors; to-day victory is not yet, but they are fighting their country's battles with no less courage and

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What Do You Think?

Among the letters received by the editor of a "heart to heart" column in a certain paper, was the following written by a young man:

"Please can you tell me why a girl always closes her eyes when a fellow kisses her."

In a moment of fieldish frankness the man of the pen intited the following reply:

"Send me your photograph and perhaps I can tell you."

Fatal about 1840.
He kissed her rosy lips,
Just kissed them in a frolic,
Ah, 'twas a dear, dear kiss,
For he died of painter's colic.

determination than that which held them rigid in the face of the charging foe till Wolfe's electric call roused them into life.

The spirit of Wolfe is still in the Lancashires is beyond doubt, and their old-time tenacity, which they are displaying in the present war, can have but one result—victory.

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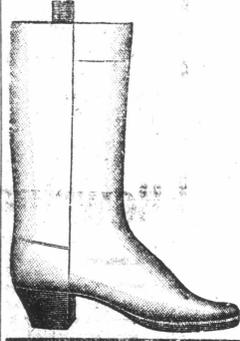
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