

their hawsers and feeling their way into range. But the fort was ready for them, and opened fire before they could train their guns; a lucky shot cut the moorings of one clean and close by the stem and, the current carrying her inshore, she was hulled twice as she drifted helplessly down stream. The other three essayed a few shots without effect in the dusk, and, warping back out of range, waited for daylight to improve their aim.

And with daylight began one of the strangest of sieges, between an assailant who knew only that he had to deal with stout walls, and a defender who dared not attempt even a show of a sortie for fear of exposing the weakness of his garrison. The French had ammunition enough to last for a month, and cannon enough to keep two hundred men busy; and ran from one gun to another, keeping up pretences but doing little damage in their hurry. Their lucky opening shots had impressed the British General, and he was one to cling to a notion of his enemy's strength. He solemnly effected a new landing at six hundred yards' distance, opened his lines across the north-western corner of the fort, kept his men entrenching for two days and two nights, brought up thirty guns, and, advancing them within two hundred yards, began at his leisure to knock holes in the walls. Meantime, twenty guns, anchored out in the river, played on the broad face of the fort and swept the Commandant's lunette out of existence. And with all this prodigious waste of powder but five of the garrison had fallen, and three of these by the bursting of a single shell. The defenders understood now that they were fighting for time, and told each other that when their comedy was played out and the inevitable moment came, the British General would not show himself fierce in revenge—"provided," they would add, "the old man does not try his patience too far." It was Father Launoy who set this whisper going from lip to lip, and so artfully that none suspected him for its author; Father Launoy, who had been wont to excite the patriotism of the faithful by painting the English as devils in human shape.