

drifting off in airy wreaths of vapour Boscawen perceived with astonishment, the *Aréthuse* sailing jauntily away, the white flag, glittering with golden fleur-de-lys, emblem of French sovereignty in the New World, floating proudly on the breeze. The old chronicle which we have already quoted says "The English admiral, surprised at the boldness of this escape, sent several of his fleetest ships in pursuit, but Vauquelin eluded them all, and arrived safely at Bayonne."

It was well it happened so for a few days later that desperate struggle, against the inevitable, ended. The French fleet was entirely destroyed. Six hundred Englishmen took possession of the *Prudent* and the *Bieufaisant* during the night. The *Prudent* burned down to the watermark and as the *Bieufaisant* was being towed away "her masts fell, she had been so shattered by the cannon." The 26th July, 1758, Louisbourg capitulated. Even Vauquelin's fiery impetuous valour could not have saved him from the destiny of his companions but amidst all these disasters and humiliations, he had succeeded in saving his ship and the honour of his flag.

Conversing with some French naval officers after the capitulation, Admiral Boscawen exclaimed:

"Gentlemen, I don't know who commanded the *Aréthuse* when she so cleverly escaped me. I'll wager that he is a merchantman, he knows his trade so well. If the captain of a frigate under my command had done as much, my first care on arriving in England would be to ask the rank of captain of a man-of-war for him."

Services so brilliant would certainly seem to merit a worthy recompense. France, however, has always had an unfortunate propensity for slaying her prophets and martyrs, for reviling or ignoring her heroes. The nautical skill of this fearless sailor was admired even by his enemies, his superiority admitted by the whole French navy, but he was of plebeian birth, and he belonged to the merchant service, these facts placed an impassable barrier between Vauquelin and the officers of the line. "The most petty naval officer would have blushed to acknowledge him among his comrades," says the old annal. So smarting with a wound that crushed his pride, as well as his sense of justice, his hot heart blazing with impotent resentment, the right of serving as one of the King's officers denied him, the gallant mariners only recompense was to be again sent out.

Vauquelin was given two frigates, with orders to sail for Quebec, to warn the Governor to prepare for resistance. On his arrival he received from the Marquis de Montcalm command of all that remained of the French fleet in New France. Nearly all the English squadron, twenty vessels of the line, twenty frigates and a number of transports were anchored between Montmorency and Quebec. Our hero lived through the tragic drama whose first scenes had been enacted at Louisbourg. Wolfe's batteries for sixty-five days showered shot and shell upon Quebec and the south shore for a hundred miles together blazed with the fires of devastation. The senses all stimulated to the highest point reproduced vividly the scenes of tragedy. From the deck of his ship Vauquelin could watch the heavens glowing with the lured light as the wild flames shot up from the burning villages of Ange-Gardien, St. Joachim, Château Richer, St. Nicholas, St. Croix and Isle d'Orléans. He saw Quebec set on fire by the enemies' guns, and beheld the fall of the cathedral, Notre Dame des Victoires, from whose arched roof had hung the flag of Admiral Phipps, so heroically taken by Lemogne de St. Helène. He did good service during the bombardment of Quebec. At the battle of the Plains of Abraham he directed the management of the heavy guns, heading marines, who inspired by the unconquerable energies of their chief, performed prodigies of valour, and laboured strenuously to resist the English batteries at Point Lévis.

When the history of New France was finished at one fatal blow, Vauquelin, unwilling that his frigates should be included in the capitulation, resolved to gather his people together and get out of Quebec. He was fortunately able to reach a spot not guarded by the enemy. There he chose winter quarters, he and his men living as best they could on board the *Atalante*, always maintaining communication with the *Chévalier de Lévis*, and watching with cool, unwearied vigilance all that passed at Quebec. Anyone who is familiar with the rigour of this northern climate, can appreciate the miseries and perils of such a mode of life. In Captain John Knox's journal we find constant mention of the alarms occasioned the English garrison by Vauquelin, among others those of the 23rd of October, 1759, and the 23rd of November. All his manoeuvres were carried out with a marvellous dash and gallantry. One dark night, the 28th of November, he set fire to a wrecked vessel and turned the guns towards the English, who astonished at receiving a fire of mysterious bullets, never suspected that this was the French sailor's fashion of revenging the burning of the *Bieufaisant* at Louisbourg. During the night of the 5th of May, 1760, with a dare devil audacity which is almost incredible, he sailed a war sloop beneath the English batteries, and the enemy never perceived her until she had passed away out of reach. All that night with the reckless temerity of a forlorn hope, he laboured steadily, carrying cannon from Lévis' camp to the open trench before Quebec. He then started out in the hope of meeting the eagerly longed for fleet and on the 9th returning, he passed in open day under the English guns and reported himself to his commander. "The 11th of May," says Knox's journal, "all Quebec was aroused. The garrison flew to arms and remained in readiness until the morning." This was again Vauquelin who had been reconnoitring, and who narrowly escaped a shell from

the English ship *Leostoff*, then in the harbour. Immediately after the French had gained the victory of St. Foye, Vauquelin brought the *Atalante* and the *Pomone* up to L'Ause du Foulon.

At Quebec, the days between the 28th of April and the 7th of June, 1760, were freighted with all the anguish of an intolerable suspense. The people of New France, while still fighting desperately, began to realize the terrible possibility that they might be basely and deliberately abandoned by their king. Montcalm, as the Marshall de Belle Isle had coldly bade him, had made "the best fight he could to save the king's honour and his own." Longing eyes, from both armies, anxiously and incessantly scanned the horizon in search of the fleet that was to give Canada to England or to save her again for France. The 7th of June, a cry arose that a sail had been sighted by the sentinels. The besieged flew to the ramparts; the besiegers climbed every eminence from which they could obtain a view. There was something oppressive in this concentrated intensity of interest. Does the solitary sail, gleaming white in the sunshine, mean deliverance or utter loss? Another and still another sail dots the sparkling waters. A flag is run up. There is still an interval of uncertainty before it is unfurled; then it waves bravely in the air, visible to all. A hearty, ringing cheer breaks from Murray's soldiers—to them the royal standard is an emblem of home and country. The French regard each other in despairing silence, the keenness and completeness of the stroke crushed the spirit within them, circumstances, overwhelming in force and ruthlessness, had proved too strong. Lévis raised the siege, sending Vauquelin orders to move higher up the river. "The weather was bad," says a journal of the siege. "The river having been wonderfully rough during the night, the orderly failed to reach the captain of the *Atalante*."

At day break a vessel of the line and two frigates, the *Vanguard* commanded by Commodore Swanton, the *Leostoff* by Captain Dean, and the *Diana* by Captain Schomberg, started in pursuit of the French ships. The *Pomone* was stranded at Lillery. Vauquelin signalled to the small boats to run aground at the entrance of the harbour at Cape Rouge and he did the same at Pointe-aux-Trembles. The sun had risen over the hill tops of Laugon and gilded the bold, dark crests of the Laurentides. The great promontory of Quebec, crowned with fortifications and invested with proud memories of conflict and heroic devotion, lay radiant in the sunshine. Realizing a position which was fast becoming desperate, for two hours Vauquelin endured the fire of the English guns, returning shot for shot. He fought resolutely until his ammunition was exhausted and not a single cartridge remained. His officers had, without an exception, been all killed. Then the captain of the *Atalante* ordered any of his men who were still able to fight to take to the boats and make their way to Lévis. The ship was shattered and dismantled. The masts had been shot away and to the stump of the mizzen mast Vauquelin nailed his colours. His comrades, wounded, dying and dead, lay on every side. The commander throws himself down among them. It is one of those hours of voiceless, helpless suffering which are so terrible to the strong. To the patriotic Frenchman's fiery pride this defeat meant unspeakable humiliation, an anguish beyond expression, the relinquishment of every hope. Perhaps—let us hope that it may have been so—at this supreme crisis, some whisper of that white-robed angel of consolation, who strengthens the soul in periods of utter desolation, may have reached him, teaching the hero to comprehend the divine truth that failure and earthly loss are not irremediable—that misfortune borne bravely and patiently may be infinitely more noble than the most brilliant success. Then fire burst out on the *Atalante*.

When the English boarded the French vessel not a sound was to be heard except the crackling of the flames. The scene was solitary and mournful, there was something ghastly in the utter stillness, in the desolation of river, sky and sea. Finally they perceived Vauquelin. He had thrown his sword overboard that he might not be obliged to give it up. He was in full dress, wearing the laced coat and waistcoat, chapeau, lace ruffles and sash of the period.

"Why don't you bring your flag?" demanded the English officer. Colour and heat came rushing back to the Frenchman's cheeks and lips. "If I had any powder left, Monsieur, I should still talk to you," he responded with proud defiance. "As to my flag, if you want it you must take it. My duty as a French sailor bids me try to take the enemy's colours, not to give up our own."

The English officer himself took down the French flag, made arrangements for aiding the wounded and burying the dead, and caused the captain to embark in his boat.

At Quebec, Admiral Swanton received the captain of the *Atalante* as a hero.

"I appreciate your gallantry so highly," he said, "that I want you to ask me without restraint for whatever you wish."

"What I would prize above all else, Monsieur, would be my liberty and permission to return to France."

An English document of the time observes: "The Admiral had so much respect for this officer that he sent a ship to carry him to Europe, with orders to the captain to obey Vauquelin and to allow him to land at whatever port he might select. He was permitted to take with him any Frenchmen he chose."

His adversaries esteemed Vauquelin's heroism more highly than his own people. The Duchess de Montemart,

who had known him from his birth, strove to interest M. Berryer, Secretary of the Navy, in her protégé.

"Madame," that gentleman wrote in reply, "I know that M. Vauquelin has served the king with extraordinary zeal and courage. He is a hero but he is not a noble, and I have quantities of young men of good family waiting promotion. He formerly belonged to the Merchant service, I should advise him to return to it."

It was this same Berryer who, in answer to Bourgainville's last desperate appeal to save Canada for France, responded by the heartless sarcasm:

"Monsieur, when the house is on fire who troubles about the stable?"

"At least no one will deny that you speak like a horse," rejoined Bourgainville, curtly.

However, in 1763 Vauquelin was at length rewarded by a lieutenant's commission. The memoirs, from which many of these details have been taken, add: "The greater portion of the Royal Navy were displeased at this promotion, which would render Vauquelin eligible for the highest posts." The cravings of a soaring ambition, the longing for action and achievement, impelled the sailor to renewed effort. M. de Preslin, Minister of Marine, sent Vauquelin on a mission to the Indies in command of a vessel of sixty guns. This choice excited the most violent jealousy; every possible obstacle was thrown in his way. During the voyage, we are told that he was goaded and galled by the paltry impertinence of the officers under his command. His mind must have been sore upon almost every point except that of duty. One can imagine the fierce passion that may have blazed up in his heart; there must often have swept over his being, like a wild wind, a bitter outcry against Fate, but we have no record that our hero yielded to passions that were humbling or unworthy, or that he failed to maintain his proud composure. He accomplished his mission successfully, and returned to France the following year.

When he reached France the Duc de Preslin was no longer Minister of Marine, and his successor had been prejudiced against Vauquelin. He arrived, glowing with the pride of success, and as soon as he landed was ordered to consider himself under arrest. A cold, hard light of reality was fast dissipating the brilliant illumination of fervour and enthusiasm. Again the kindly Duchess interested herself in his favour, and after three or four months' imprisonment he recovered his liberty. His first duty was to give an account of his voyage at Versailles. This son of the Dieppe merchantman was of a grateful spirit: before leaving Paris he wished to thank in person some naval officers who had not feared to stand by him in his disgrace. His late depression was lighted by a transient gleam of hilarity, his natural buoyancy of temperament re-asserted itself. The simple-hearted sailor clung to a belief in his country's gratitude with a certain fanaticism of devotion. He left his home one evening, glowing with hope and vigour and energy—he was found next morning shot through the heart. Such events were not uncommon at that day in France. It was never known who committed the murder, nor does any trouble seem to have been taken to trace the perpetrator of the crime. Thus, in the prime of his manhood, at the early age of thirty-seven, a hero perished, one so disinterested and chivalrous, so brave and loyal and generous, that he would have been an honour to any land. Love of country had been to him a passion and an inspiration. His firmness, his courage, his extensive knowledge of nautical science, had enabled him to overcome every obstacle. Obligated to struggle against caste prejudices, he had resolutely opposed his patriotism, his strength of character, his brilliant services and proud disdain against the calumnies and humiliations which had followed him throughout his brief career. The petty jealousies and animosities, the sting of scorn and envy have all faded away in the eternal silence of death, but the simple facts of this man's loyalty, daring and devotion still remain pure and untarnished.

*Le Moniteur de la Flotte*, 1857, quoted by M. Alfred Garneau, relates the following particulars of the sailor hero's family:—

"He left a son, Pierre Vauquelin, who distinguished himself as a student of African history and geography, and was crowned in 1771 by the Académie de Lyons. Under the patronage of a gallant sailor who had known his father, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, he was admitted by Turgot into the office of the Minister of Marine. Urged by a burning desire to clear his parent's fame from the stains which calumny had cast upon it, determined that the world should acknowledge the merits of the man whose courage neither fates nor furies could appal, as a grand type of innate loyalty and daring, he wrote a memoir on the subject. A fortunate circumstance furthered his cherished design. In 1775, Queen Marie Antoinette was present at the first communion of the young girls of Meudon. After the ceremony had been performed, one of the maidens, chosen by her companions, presented the Sovereign with a bouquet of white roses, reciting an address thanking her Majesty for the benefits she had conferred on the country. This young girl was Mademoiselle Elizabeth Vauquelin, sixteen years of age, who during the summer lived with her aunts at Meudon. It was a touching scene of purity, innocence and guileless youth; the pretty, modest damsel pleased the Queen, the surroundings captivated her imagination. After embracing her, Marie Antoinette inquired if there was anything she could do to gratify Mademoiselle Vauquelin.

"The young girl's eyes filled with tears.

"Dare I ask that justice should be rendered to my grandfather's memory?"