

CANADA — *East and West*.

and the continuous dream of French dominion—spreading over thousands of miles of lake and river, pathless prairies and trackless forests and reaching from Hudson Bay to the Gulf of Mexico and from the far, unknown wastes of the west to the Alleghanies. The struggle was a peculiar one. Kindling with fierce heat amidst the forests of America at the first signal of war in Europe; often blazing into local conflicts spread over a vast area while the respective nations were nominally at peace; sharing the passions of European pride and rivalry with the added impulse of provincial boundary disputes, commercial conflicts and Indian blood-stained surprises; the struggles of these alien races, stationed respectively upon the shores of the St. Lawrence and the coasts of the Atlantic, were of a character vitally different from the better-known conflicts of personal ambition, religious principles, or dynastic claims, which have reddened the pages of European history.

Battles in North America from the beginning of the seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth centuries did not resemble military conflicts elsewhere. No such splendid natural setting for the contest between France and England which belted the world and included in its scope the victories of Clive, the ambitions of Frederick the Great, the triumph of Wolfe and the rise of Washington, was anywhere else provided. During much of the period when the respective Mother Countries were at war—and frequently when they were resting or recuperating during an interval of apparent peace—the broad aisles of a primeval forest, the stormy waters of immense inland seas, the untrodden mazes of an illimitable wilderness, constituted the environment of some determined struggles.

The history of the founding of Port Royal (now Annapolis Royal, in Nova Scotia) by the gallant de Monts; the establishment of Montreal by De Maisonneuve (1642); the prolonged battle for existence by Quebec; the strife of Charnisey and de la Tour in Acadia; the gallant dash of Iberville Le Moyne upon the northern regions around Hudson Bay and his destruction of English forces and ships; the expeditions against the English of New York organized by the brilliant mind and determined energy of Frontenac; the Acadian invasion by Sir William Phipps, of Massachusetts; the sieges of Louisbourg and Quebec and the oft-repeated struggles around Forts Niagara, Ticonderoga and Duquesne present some of the most tragic and dramatic scenes ever described by pen or brush.

Around and about the opposing forces echoed the war-whoop of the savage. Over the head of the beaten white man—French or English—rested the shadow of the scalping-knife. The tramp of armed men and the roar of European guns were often preceded by the axe of the woodsman and by a path cut through the depths of the forest, so that the flag of England and the flag of France might “wave in war’s alternate chance” over regions known only to the wandering Indian, the adventurous voyageur, or the occasional hunter and trapper. It was, in fact, a battle of giants in an area so vast and varied as to defy the knowledge or the imagination of the contestants themselves.

Yet even when the armies of Amherst completed the victory of Wolfe upon the Heights of Quebec in 1759 and forced the surrender of Montreal, in 1760 the French population of Canada did not exceed 80,000, as opposed to the New England colonies with three millions of people backed by the might of England. For over 150 years New France had maintained a desperate struggle against frightful odds, and at the last the strange blending of martial spirit, aristocratic courage and religious enthusiasm which had held half a continent for the Church and Crown of France was conquered as much by the miserable corruption of Bigot and other mercenary rulers as it was by the skill or vigour of the English.

Still, the result was inevitable sooner or later. Daulac des Ormeaux might, in 1660, take his 16 youthful comrades up to the rapids of the Longue Sault, on the Ottawa, and hold, for eight days and at the sacrifice of their lives, the passage to Montreal against a thousand Iroquois warriors; Frontenac might for a time in the next century hold both the Indians and the English in check; Montcalm might defeat his foes at Oswego, at Fort William Henry and at Ticonderoga; but the one only illustrated French heroism as the others did French military skill and bravery. They could not really compete with the slow, irresistible movement of English colonizing strength or the irrepressible force of the English commercial instinct. Up the valleys of the Mohawk and the Ohio advanced the pioneers of a coming host, and the eastern slope of the Alleghanies heard the axe of the English settler even while Céleron de Bienville was burying plates of lead down through the heart of the continent and marking what he fondly hoped would prove the boundaries of a vast French Empire. The die once cast, the French-Canadian people, led by their devoted clergy, gave steadfast adhesion to the British Crown, and in 1775 and again in 1812-14 fought for the British flag in resistance to American invaders.

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