

procession which it is estimated took an hour to pass a given point. As the boats were carried swiftly but silently on the ebb tide, Wolfe is said to have revealed his own forebodings by reciting to his companions the verse from Gray's *Elegy* which ends—

"The paths of glory lead but to the grave,"

General and  
poet.

and to have made the comment that he would rather have been the author of those lines than take Quebec. The anecdote in its traditional form, accepted for long as true, is not credible; it was subject to searching examination by Dr. E. E. Morris;<sup>1</sup> and it is reasonably certain that if Wolfe did recite Gray's *Elegy* and make any such comment, it was not on this occasion. Is it conceivable that he should break the rule of silence he had laid down, by so unnecessary a proceeding as even a whispered recitation, or that he should tell men who were embarking on a life and death errand that their and his work was of less account than the poet's? The original story is based on a statement made by a midshipman named Robison, and is to be found in a letter from Sir Walter Scott to Southey dated September 22nd, 1830, discovered by Mr. Augustine Birrell some years ago. Scott knew that Southey had in mind the publication of the life and letters of Wolfe, and recounted the anecdote, which he got first hand, for Southey's benefit.

"On the night when Wolfe crossed the river with his small army they passed in the men-of-war's long boats and launches, and the General himself in the Admiral's barge. The young midshipman who steered the boat was John Robison,

<sup>1</sup> *English Historical Review*, 1900, p. 125.