

THE EXPEDITION AGAINST QUEBEC IN 1759.

To the Editor of the "CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS."

Sir,—I am sorry to see, from Dr. Anderson's last letter, that my former communication proved such a bee in his bonnet; but I am glad that Dr. Anderson has at last awakened to the fact of the correctness of my statements, as the whole drift of his last communication tends to show. It will be easily seen that the doctor has advanced no new arguments, has offered no fresh proof in support of his claim, but stands as it were like one who feels the very disagreeable position in which he has placed himself and is unwilling to acknowledge it. His arguments (if he had any) have resolved themselves into accusing me of being a young man just come of age. However, notwithstanding my juvenility, the stern facts detailed in my former letter still remain unanswered. If the possession of a beard is an attribute of wisdom, then I might procure a billy-goat to do all the requisites of correspondence, and I have here to draw Dr. Anderson's attention to the very bad taste he has been guilty of in bringing in irrelevant matters. I think I have already shewn by my former letter and by its effects, and I also hope to shew before this letter is finished, that I do know something of the matter in question, and perhaps a little more than is desirable for the success of Dr. Anderson's pretensions.

This gentleman accuses me of using very unbecoming language towards himself. This I am not aware of, but if I have, the doctor has, to a certain extent, approved of it, as he has followed suit, and by ambiguous satire and innuendo, fairly succeeded in carrying a direct insult to my father.

When first prepared, in 1759, Moncrief's journal was accompanied by a well-executed plan, on a large scale, shewing the various positions occupied by the hostile forces contending for the defence and the capture of the city, and illustrating, by ample notes and references, the various incidents which occurred during the campaign. The plan to which reference is made in the journal, and of which it forms an essential part, was drawn according to the official surveys taken by the officers of the Expedition entrusted with this duty, viz.:—"The east side of the Falls of Montmorency, the Point of Orleans, and the south side of the river St. Lawrence, by Captain Debbieg, Engineer in Ordinary. The coast of Beauport from the river St. Charles to the Falls of Montmorency, by Captain Holland, of the Royal Americans, Assistant Engineer. The ground between the river St. Lawrence and the river St. Charles, by Lieut. Debarres, of the Royal Americans, Assistant Engineer. The British works are coloured yellow, and their encampments red, with the facings of the different corps." Words and passages from the Moncrief journal are quoted on this plan—and reference is made to it in the journal—both being contemporaneous, viz., 1759, and each the supplement of the other.

The readers of the *Illustrated News* will have noticed the simple elegance, with the other appropriate features appertaining to the mere style of Major Moncrief's journal; and all who are conversant with the peculiarities which distinguish the dictum of educated military men of that period whose professional writings, &c., have come down to us, can recognize in reading the document the fact that, from beginning to end, it is the work of the same hand, completed at the date which it bears, and in keeping throughout with what might have been expected in the production of a gentleman and officer employed "upon that Expedition." It is also evident from several passages of the journal the writer was one who possessed military and engineering experience, who had an officer's opportunities of knowing and appreciating what was occurring from day to day, and who was associated with other officers actually taking part in the reconnoitring and other movements which took place, as well as in preliminary consultations. It could not fail, therefore, to create surprise in all who read the document and Dr. Anderson's subsequent letters, as published in the *Canadian Illustrated News*, to find in the latter that Major Moncrief's name, as well as the original heading and date affixed to the journal, are now proposed to be ignored in favour of one who was simply a volunteer in the ranks of the 78th Fraser Highlanders. From official records I find Mr. Thompson, senr., subsequently procured employment as overseer of works and time-keeper in the Royal Engineer Department, Quebec, where he remained until his death in 1830. It may be said, in connection with this appointment, that the duties of overseer of works are always assigned to one who is a competent mechanic; and a portion of his duties at that period appear to have been that of keeping the time or *chèque*, as it is technically called, of the soldiers and labourers employed in executing the works laid out by the Military Engineers. Owing to his fidelity, his general intelligence, long life, and other circumstances on which it is unnecessary to expatiate, he attracted and maintained universal respect, and held his situation under the Government to the day of his death.

But I cannot agree with Dr. Anderson in his ideas respecting what constitutes an erasure. I remember Dr. Anderson pointing it out to me, and I had the very same opinion then as I have now—namely, that Mr. James Thompson, jr., erased it after discovering his mistake. Moreover, I have been informed, on good authority, that when a verbal suggestion was made to surviving members of the family, to the effect that Mr. Thompson, senr., might have been the author of Moncrief's journal, the idea was not only discouraged, but even ridiculed. I should like very much if Dr. Anderson would account for the absence of dates of the plans referred to, the erasures, the discrepancies, great and small, being over twelve hundred in number, evidently changed, omitted or revised in the alleged Thompson manuscript. No one doubts of the justice of the tribute paid to the Messrs. Thompson, &c., &c., and the esteem in which the family have been always held in Quebec; but until Dr. Anderson can shew that the claim to the authorship of that journal rests ultimately upon evidence derived from themselves, or upon proofs such as are usually advanced to establish the authenticity of historical documents, it is impossible to acquiesce in Dr. Anderson's assertion. That hasty conclusions are very apt to lead to mistakes, and to shew that such results do occur I think I may safely appeal to Dr. Anderson's own experience within the last two years in connection with the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec.

With regard to that part concerning certain falsehoods of which I have been said to accuse Mr. James Thompson, jr., of being guilty, I say that with regard to the claim of the MS.

I exonerate him, inasmuch as he has laid no claim to it, but Dr. Anderson has unfortunately come forward and has done so for him. If Mr. Thompson, jr., states that his father was Superintendent of Military Fortifications, he quibbles with words. He was Overseer of Works.

It is very much like the following:—After the American war, two darkies, who had been formerly slaves on the same plantation, met by accident in the city of New York. "Hallo, Sambo!" said one; "what is you doin'?" "Doin'? why, I'se carpenter and joiner." "Carpenter and joiner! My! What part of de work?" "De circular work." "What's dat?" "Turns de Grindstone!"—And so it is with Mr. Thompson. From the soaring height of Superintendent of Military Fortifications he has fallen to *Overseer of Works*—keeper of the cheque. Was not Mr. Thompson a mason by trade, and not an engineer by profession? Professional men can at least spell the most common words without making mistakes, which I am prepared to shew Mr. Thompson, senr., was incapable of doing.

Moreover, while the language or diction of the Moncrief journal, as already stated, is clearly that of the educated officer of the period when the diary was composed, many minor alterations of the original text occur in Dr. Anderson's document. These alterations are precisely such as would be made by one who aimed at giving a more modern turn to the phraseology in use by educated persons in the middle of the last century. I should be glad to furnish instances, but refrain at present, owing to the great length to which this article has already extended—merely observing that, so far as this argument applies, in regard to the question of priority, I can readily furnish examples *ad libitum*.

Although, as I hope, enough has been already advanced to deter Dr. Anderson from again coming forward in the public press, to parade irrelevant matter and mere assertion in support of his unfounded claims on the Moncrief journal, which it would surely have been more judicious to have submitted, in the first instance, to the members of the Quebec Literary and Historical Society, of which he is the President, I cannot conclude this article without noticing what appears to be an unanswerable objection to his theory of the authorship, which, doubtless, would have staggered the Doctor himself if he had observed it, or had he taken the trouble to consult others conversant with that period of Canadian history before committing himself as he has done.

The objection is suggested by the following question, viz.: Where was Mr. Thompson, senr., the alleged author of the journal, at the time it was commenced, and during the period covered by the entries for the first six or seven weeks of the Expedition? Dr. Anderson, quoting from a memorandum of Mr. Thompson, junr., informs us "that the elder Thompson held no rank in the army, that he was a volunteer in the Fraser Highlanders, which regiment was raised in Tain, Ross-shire, and numbered upwards of 1,400 men, commanded by Col. Simon Fraser. On the passage to Halifax, Capt. Bailey introduced my father to the Colonel. . . . After the conquest of Louisbourg, Quebec, and Montreal, he was left without employment."

Now, the passage to Halifax, and the introduction here referred to, occurred in 1758, prior to the siege and capture of Louisbourg, in July of that year, from which place the Fraser Highlanders accompanied General Amherst to Boston, and thence to Albany and New York, where they took up their winter quarters. In the following spring, the same regiment, namely, that in which Thompson was serving, being destined to take part in Wolfe's expedition against Quebec, passed from New York to Louisbourg, the appointed general rendezvous for the British fleet and troops from England, Halifax, and other places. Meanwhile, beginning at least six weeks before the Fraser Highlanders completed the passage from New York to Louisbourg, the real journalist was at Halifax, making the entries which we read in his diary, and subsequently on the passage from Halifax to Louisbourg. The journalist records in the first week of April, 1759, as follows:—"The first accounts of the intended expedition came to Halifax in the beginning of April." (April 22nd) he records: "The Hon. Brigadier-General Monckton arrived," and (April 30th) "Admiral Saunders arrived with a fleet from England; he had made attempts to get into Louisbourg, but was prevented by the ice." Under the same date (April 30th) it is stated in the journal: "Major-General Wolfe, the Hon. Brigadier-General Townshend, and Colonel Carleton, &c., with some other officers, arrived in the fleet." Passing over several other entries, all referring to Halifax, the journalist continues (May 13th): "Admiral Saunders sailed this morning for Louisbourg, with all the ships which were in readiness. We met Admiral Holmes off Cape Sambre with two ships. . . . These ships having met with rough weather and got some damage, were ordered into Halifax to refit. Admiral Holmes hoisted his flag aboard another ship, and proceeded with us to Louisbourg." "In the morning (May 15th) we made Cape Canso. About noon we made the Island of Cape Breton, the coast of which was still full of ice; in the evening we got into Louisbourg, where we found the 'Bedford' and 'Prince Frederick,' which had wintered there, and the 'Northumberland,' lately arrived from England;" finally, (May 17th) "the 'Nightingale' and 'Convoy,' with Fraser's battalion, arrived from New York,"—i.e., at Louisbourg, whither the author of the diary had already (on the 15th) come from Halifax, in Saunders' fleet. If the author had been a volunteer in Fraser's battalion, instead of being (as is recorded at the head and on the cover of the document) "an Engineer on that expedition," the statements and diction of the entries for the first six weeks of the journal would be utterly unintelligible; an insurmountable objection, therefore, to Dr. Anderson's theory of the authorship presents itself to the mind of every unprejudiced reader, in the first pages of the document. Moreover, if Dr. Anderson should feel disposed to hazard any contradiction of the inference now deduced from a few passages in the earliest part of the Moncrief journal, I warn him that I have critically examined the whole (in regard to internal evidence as well as to other points), and am prepared to shew, conclusively, that Mr. Thompson could not have been the author. As I have already hinted, however, there are reasons which appear to render the full discussion of this question, raised by Dr. Anderson so gratuitously and on such shallow grounds, (if not purely fictitious) so far as he has advanced any for raising doubts on the authenticity of the R. E. copy of the original journal, less proper in the first instance for the press than for a meeting of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, or a committee duly appointed to investigate the matter carefully, and decide impartially upon the details of all the evidence produced.

It will be seen, however, from the above extracts taken in

conjunction with the first date in the diary, that I have succeeded in proving an alibi. The journalist is in Halifax, and the claimant in New England.

I am very sorry that I cannot prove that Major Moncrief was cousin-german to Mrs. Arris; and it is Dr. Anderson's province to disprove the presence of Major Moncrief in this expedition. Who wrote the memoir in the *Quebec Star*, and what does it prove? What authenticity, if it comes to the point, is there in newspaper notes? Are they not liable to mistakes? "How did Mr. Walkem, senr., come to copy the Moncrief MS.?" What a question! With pen and ink, of course. "What was his object?" I think I can speak for my father, and say, "to protect Mr. Thompson, when brought forward as a literary pirate, which he should certainly have been had the spurious Thompson MS. been published." Dr. Anderson has forgotten the fact of my having pointed out to him, on one occasion, the name of Major Moncrief on the title-page.

If Dr. Anderson should see fit to continue this argument, then I think Napoleon's expression about the British troops will be forcibly applicable—"That they never knew when they were beaten," and again Goldsmith's village schoolmaster—"For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still."

I have now in my hand a letter, which will set the whole matter at rest; but which I will not produce for some time to come. Suffice it to say that when produced the claim of Thompson to this manuscript will be proved to be the most deliberately mendacious claim that was ever made, whose effrontery will exceed that of Tichborne, and whose daring is inexplicable.

In conclusion, I beg leave to tender to Dr. Anderson my sincere apologies for any unbecoming language I have made use of as regards himself, as I would be most unwilling to hurt the feelings of a gentleman who has, on more than one occasion, acted the part of a kind friend and wise counsellor; and want of gratitude is not one of my failings.

I am, sir,

Yours very sincerely,

W. WYMOND WALKEM,
Medical Student,
Universitas Collegii McGill.

Montreal, Feb. 20th, 1872.

FIRE-PROOF BUILDINGS.

The Providence *Journal* publishes the following extract of a letter from the Sculptor Powers to a friend in Rhode Island. It furnishes some valuable and timely hints with regard to the construction of fire-proof buildings:—

But it may be asked, "Is it possible to make a city fire-proof?" I answer, yes, and without any great extra expense. To prove this, I have only to say that although there have been frequent fires in the city of Florence during the thirty-four years of my residence in it, not one house has been consumed, except a theatre, and that was not entirely destroyed. Rooms, full of goods, have been heated like ovens by ignited calicoes, straw hats, etc., but as the floors above and below were all covered by thin brick tiles, the goods burned without ventilation. And as there was no flame, a smell like that of a coal pit soon gave the alarm, and the fire was soon extinguished by no other engine than a squirt holding about a gallon, which discharged a well-directed stream through some aperture. I once beheld some firemen marching to a fire in Florence. First were three men with picks, next four men with buckets, then three men with highly polished brass squirts on their shoulders; all marching with an air of pomp and importance! The fire was at the residence of Mr. Clevenger, the American sculptor, and had been burning twenty-four hours on the end of a joist just under his fire-place. He had smelt something like a coal-pit for some time, and at length perceived smoke rising from the brick floor. On going below he found the room full of smoke; and a rush-bottomed chair just under the joist was partially consumed. But the joist was not yet burned off, and why? Because the fire was bricked down. It could not rise and burst into flames.

The secret of fire-proof building, then, is this: It must be made impossible for the flames to pass through the floors or up the stairway. If you will have wood floors and stairs, lay a flooring of the thickest sheet-iron over the joists, and your wood upon that; and sheath the stairs with the same material. A floor will not burn without a supply of air under it. Throw a dry board upon a perfectly flat pavement and kindle it as it lies if you can. You may make a fire upon it and in time consume it, but it will require a long time. Prevent drafts, and though there will still be fires, no houses will be consumed. The combustion will go on so slowly that discovery is certain in time to prevent any great calamity. But the roofs, how about them? Slate or tiles? Zinc melts too easily. I believe that hard-burned tiles, if flat, would stand the frost at home; and if so, they constitute the best roofing. My house has no joists. All the floors are of tiles resting on arches. One of these arches was made over a room twenty-five feet square by four men in four days. The bricks are about one and one-half inches thick, and laid edgewise, with plaster of Paris. There was no framework prepared to lay them on unless you would so term four bits of wood which a man could carry under his arm. And yet this arch is so strong as to be perfectly safe with a large dancing party on it. I never have heard of one of those floors falling, and they are absolutely fire-proof. Of course light arches like these would not do for warehouses. It would pay, I think, to send out here for an Italian brick-mason who knows how to build these thin but strong arches for dwelling-houses. I know that there is a prejudice at home against brick or composition floors. "Too cold in winter," it is said. And so they are, if bare, but cover them with several thicknesses of paper and then carpet them, and no one can discover the slightest difference between their temperature and that of wood floors. Who doubts this let him try the experiment with the feet of the thermometer. The truth is that the brick of composition floor is no colder in itself than the wood—the thermometer attests this—but it is a better conductor. I do not insure my house, as I know that it is not combustible.

The people who live on the banks of the Mississippi are getting anxious upon the subject of a flood, which is likely to take place in the spring, when the heavy snows of the mountains and hills to the west shall melt and come down in torrents. The last great inundation in that region occurred in 1814.