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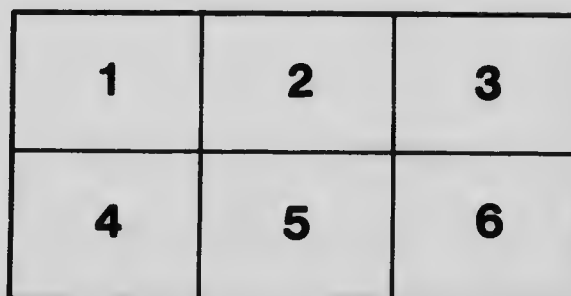
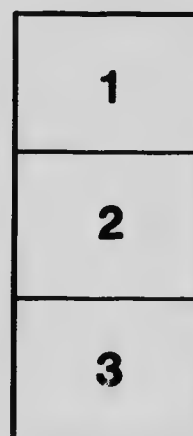
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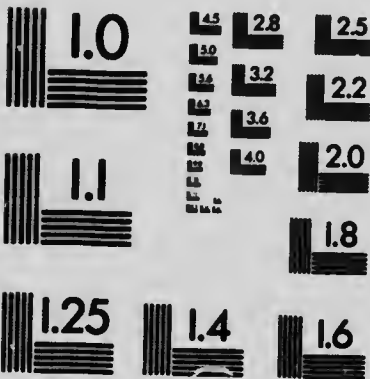
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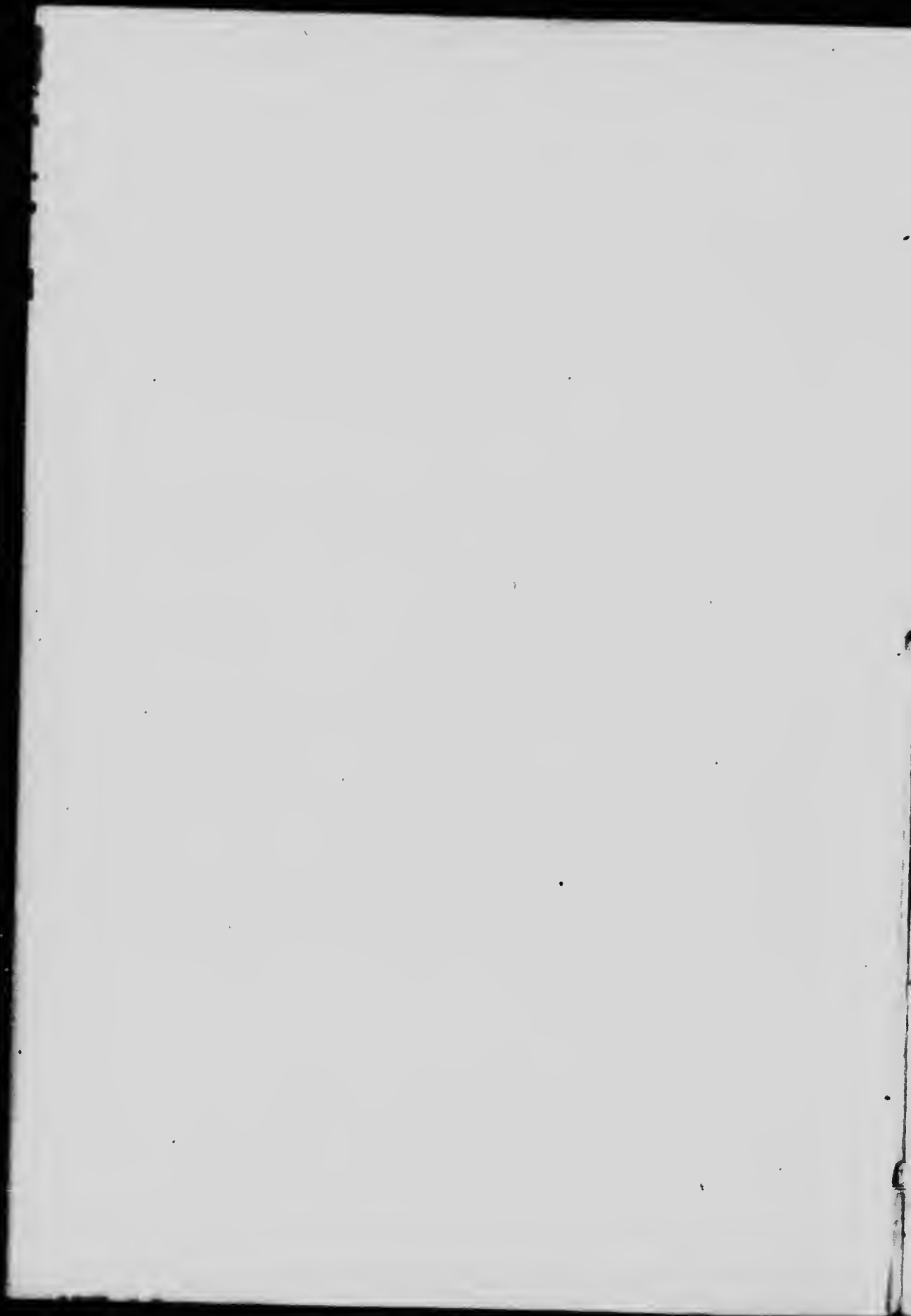
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The Fight of
the Atalante



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The Fight of the
Atalante

The following has been published by the leading newspapers throughout the Dominion and has also appeared in leading publications outside Canada. The author desires to gratefully acknowledge the high praise that has been bestowed upon it, and especially the warm and sympathetic commendation it has received from the French Canadian press. May the heroic episode of which it treats always be remembered with pride as one of the most glorious in Canadian history.

Tercentenary year,

1908.

The Fight of the Atalante

By JOHN BOYD.



(Dedicated to the memory of Louis Frechette, one of whose poems, L'Atalante, suggested the following tribute by an English-speaking Canadian to the memory of those heroes who so gloriously upheld the honor of France in the closing days of the struggle between Great Britain and France for the possession of Canada and of the brave French-Canadians who fought under Montcalm.)

Presented by the author to the Union Nationale Française of Montreal.



Now let the tale be told,
It is worth the telling too,
Of the gallant Vauquelin,
Of the French ship Atalante,
And of her dauntless crew.
How they faced a British fleet,
Boldly braved the British guns,
Never faltered, never wavered
Though outnumbered three to one;
Mid a storm of cannon shot
Kept the flag of France aloft,
To their lives gave not a thought,
Fought like heroes on the deck,
Nobly stood and fiercely fought,
Fought for France.

'Twas the last days of the war,
Glorious war for British arms,
Victory both on land and sea,
Mid the din of strife's alarms;
Battle of the Plains was o'er,

Wolfe and Montcalm were no more,
Murray hemmed up in Quebec,
By brave Levis kept in check
Through the cruel winter months,
While the weary days did drag.
But with spring had come the ships,
Ships of war from over seas,
Flying proudly in the breeze
Britain's flag.

On the mighty river's deep,
Where the current swiftly flows,
Past Pointe aux Trembles' shores,
Six small ships of France's fleet
On the mighty river lay,
In the early days of May.
Six they were, but only one
Counted in the fight to come,
The Atalante, a sixteen gun,
Admiral of the sorry fleet,
Jean Vauquelin, mark the name,
Worthy of undying fame.
Nearby proudly rode the stream
Three ships of the British fleet,
Mighty monarchs of the deep,
With a hundred or more guns,
And their decks all cleared and trim.
Thus did the fight begin
With such odds.

Never seen was such a fight
On the land or on the sea,
As was seen that day of May
In the early morning light,

Where the mighty river flows
Past Pointe aux Trembles' shores—
One ship boldly fighting three,
Sixteen to a hundred guns,
Manned by Britain's stalwart sons.
Two long hours the conflict raged,
Mortal duel there was waged,
Till the little Atalante,
In the storm of shot and shell
 Stood a wreck.

Gone were all her stays and sails,
As if swept by mighty gales,
Toppled was each spar and mast,
Shattered by the fiery blast;
Flames enwreathed her as of hell,
Circling France's gallant sons,
Spent were all her shot and shell,
All dismantled were her guns.
But amid the storm and wreck,
From a blackened, riddled staff,
Rising from the battered craft,
Flew the fleur de lys of France,
While the heroes still fought on
Around their leader Vauquelin,—
Fought till all but he had fallen,
Fallen on the blood-stained deck,
 Fallen for France.

Then a voice came from the deck
Of the foremost British ship,
Words addressed to Vauquelin,
Standing on the battered wreck.
" You have fought a glorious fight,

You have proven France's might,
You and all your gallant crew.
We are British, we are men,
And we gladly own your might,
But to you is lost the fight.
Strike your flag then, yield your ship
Yield to us and save your life:
Ours the odds of war and ours
Britain's might."

Swiftly back the answer came
By the voice of Vauquelin,
" You have shot and you have shell,
You have guns and gunners too;
I have none, or need I tell ?
Spent are all my shot and shell,
Not one left of all my crew.
Still I shall not yield to you,
Do your worst. I fear not death,
I shall fight to my last breath;
Die I may, but never shall
Haul down the flag of France."
Nobly spoken Vauquelin
In the very face of death,
Hail to France!

And still the cannons roared,
Shot and shell still were poured
On the frigate's sinking shell,
All there was of the Atalante,
While amid the deadly din
Stood the dauntless Vauquelin,
Stood upon the deck alone,
Fighting grimly to the last,

Like a hero of old Greece,
Or the palmy days of Rome,
Sword in hand fighting fell,
Fell upon the blood-stained deck,
Carried captive off the wreck.
But the royal fleur de lys,
Flag of France, still flew free,
Floated from the riddled staff,
Till the shattered Atalante
Sinking like a blood red sun,
All its course of glory run,
Sank from view.

And the gallant British tars
Tributes paid to Vauquelin,
Noble hero he, though fallen,
Foeman worthy of their might,
Who had fought a glorious fight,
Gave the honors that were due
To a foeman brave and true,
Cared for him and set him free,
Gave him passage over sea,
Sent him homeward on his way
Back to France.

Thus hath the tale been told,
It was worth the telling, too,
Of the gallant Vauquelin,
Of the French ship Atalante,
And of her dauntless crew,
French they were, for France they fought.
We are British, proud the name,
But their deeds are one in fame;
For bravery speaks one tongue,

Speaks by such deeds as sung,
Deeds that as brightly shine
In every age, in every clime,
Nobly lost or nobly won.

And as long as hand joins hand
Over all our widespread land,
As long as hearts are stirred
By the memory of the brave,
Be they British, be they French,
We are all one by the grave,
Should be told the deathless story
Of the Frenchmen's deed of glory,
Of the Atalante's fight.
Long live Canada our land!
Long live Britain and her might!
Long live the fame of Vauquelin
And of the gallant band
Who faced the British fleet,
Boldly braved the British guns.
Long live her who bore such sons,
Long live France!

The subject of the foregoing, it may be explained, was suggested to the author by a reading of Louis Frechette's poem *L'Atalante*, contained in his *Légende D'Un Peuple*. The work had been completed and it was the author's intention to have submitted it to Dr. Frechette, but in the meantime he was stricken by the attack which resulted in the loss to the Dominion of one of the most gifted poets Canada has produced. It is now dedicated to his memory, which should be cherished by all Canadians. It is not necessary to explain to those familiar with Louis Frechette's works that the above is not a translation of his poem, the subject only being the same.

It would seem fitting that at this time especially one of the most heroic exploits of the struggle between Great Britain and France for the possession of Canada should be remembered. Following the battle of Ste. Foye, Lewis besieged the British forces under Murray in Quebec during the winter, but early in May, to the unbounded joy of the besieged, a British

frigate entered the port. " On May 15," to quote Garneau, " two other British warships entered the port. Then Levis decided on raising the siege, being apprehensive of having his retreat cut off and losing his magazine stores, for the enemy was stronger on the water than the French, who had only two frigates, both ill armed and without proper crews. M. de Vauquelin, who commanded them, fell, sword in hand and covered with honourable wounds, into the enemy's power, after an heroic combat of two hours maintained against several frigates, opposite Pointe-aux-Trembles. Almost all his officers were killed or wounded, as well as most of the scanty crew of the Atalante, aboard which vessel he had hoisted his flag and would not strike it." Parkman in his Wolfe and Montcalm relates how, on the morning of May 16, the British vessels passed Quebec to attack the French vessels in the river above. " There were six in all," says Parkman, " two frigates, two smaller armed ships and two schooners, the whole under the command of the gallant Vauquelin. He did not belie his reputation, fought his ship with persistent bravery till his ammunition was spent, refused even then to strike his flag, and being made prisoner, was treated by his captors with distinguished honor. The other vessels made little or no resistance."

Vauquelin, after his return to France was, as the result of an intrigue against him, disgraced and put in prison. After some months' detention he was set at liberty, but was assassinated by some unknown enemies, his body being found covered with wounds. Under Louis XVI. his services to France were remembered and his son, Pierre Vauquelin, a man of considerable learning, was appointed to several important missions.



