

Report of the Annual Meeting

Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada

Report of the Annual Meeting

The Military Reputation of Major-General James Wolfe

Presidential Address

E. R. Adair

Volume 15, Number 1, 1936

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/300153ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/300153ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0317-0594 (print)

1712-9095 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Adair, E. R. (1936). The Military Reputation of Major-General James Wolfe: Presidential Address. *Report of the Annual Meeting / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, 15(1), 7–31. <https://doi.org/10.7202/300153ar>

All rights reserved © The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada, 1936

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

THE MILITARY REPUTATION OF MAJOR-GENERAL
JAMES WOLFE

Presidential Address Delivered by

E. R. ADAIR

This is an age when heroes are viewed with a somewhat sceptical eye, when it is felt that mere blind veneration for the reputations of the past should not turn aside the chilly wind of historical criticism, that the legends devised to charm worshippers must be tested by the acid of facts.

So far General Wolfe has survived any serious attacks upon his reputation, very largely because he was fortunate enough to die in the moment of victory, a victory moreover that came like a blessed thunderbolt to an England that thought that all hope of it had departed, for, as Horace Walpole aptly says, Wolfe's final despatch couched "in the most artfull terms that could be framed" had "left the nation uncertain whether he meant to prepare an excuse for desisting, or to claim the melancholy merit of having sacrificed himself without a prospect of success."¹

But if his reputation has so far survived practically untarnished, it is not because he has been wholly exempt from all the dangers to which dead heroes are exposed. On the one hand he has been rendered at times a little ridiculous, by the praises of his more eulogistic biographers, of whom Beckles Willson is one of the worst,² and who have found it necessary to discover even in his earlier years those splendid qualities which they thought it proper for a hero to possess; that there was no particular authority to justify their views seemed quite immaterial. On the other hand two distinguished soldiers have expressed considerable doubts of his military skill, considerable hesitation in accepting the story of his masterly strategy. But their views do not appear to have had much effect, largely because they were incidental to biographies of Wolfe's military rivals—Major-General Mahon was writing the life of General Murray³ and Colonel Townshend that of his relative General Townshend⁴—and consequently these critics were considered to be naturally biased in favour of their own heroes and anxious to add to their glory even at the cost of unfairly diminishing that of General Wolfe. To the military critics might also be added the name of Col. William Wood, but the small pamphlet⁵ in which he voiced his doubts has been completely overwhelmed by his earlier and more famous work *The Fight for Canada* in which he accepts to the full the claims of Wolfe's supporters. In fact, it would hardly be unfair to say that the only controversy in regard to Wolfe that has attracted popular attention during the last thirty years has been that concerning the words that he uttered as he lay wounded on the Heights of Abraham, if he uttered any at all; this arose from Dr. Doughty's publication of the letter of Samuel Holland⁶ by which he practically snatched Wolfe's last words from his dying lips.

¹H. Walpole, *Memoires . . . of George II* (ed. of 1822) II, 384.

²B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe* (1909).

³R. H. Mahon, *Life of General the Hon. James Murray* (London, 1921).

⁴C. V. F. Townshend, *The Military Life of Field-Marshal George First Marquess Townshend* (1901).

⁵W. Wood, *Unique Quebec* (Quebec, 1924).

⁶*Canadian Historical Review*, I, 45-46.

If a historian is to examine the military reputation of a soldier, he must do much more than ask himself whether he attained high rank in the army of his country, whether he won victories, whether he was acclaimed by his contemporaries as a great general; for contemporary opinion may be wrong, either because it is blinded by patriotic enthusiasm or because all the facts are not available; and victories may be won as the result of accident or of the gross mistakes of opposing generals; and rank is too often the fruit of purchase or of influence, rather than of merit. Moreover, the historian must not only attempt to consider impartially the real facts of a soldier's military career, as seen by his opponents as well as by his own men, but he must also try and show what sort of a man the soldier really was, what were his character, his emotions, his virtues and his vices. For a general plays a game in which his fellow-men are the pawns; whether he does it by love or by fear, whether he succeeds in understanding them, or in being understood by them, how he gets on with his superiors, his equals, his subordinates, all these are factors that are vastly important in judging the soundness of his military reputation, because they may serve to explain the motives for his actions, and may enable us to judge whether his success was the fruit of careful planning or of pig-headed luck, whether he was trading on somebody else's skill or honestly relying on his own.

To picture the character of General James Wolfe is an extremely difficult task, for he seems to have been a man who was singularly devoid of friends—or at least of those who cultivated the art of writing. The only person, outside his immediate relatives, to whom he ever seemed to unburden himself was Captain Rickson, and even with his relatives he was too often posing for effect. Many people must have seen Wolfe, but in very few cases did he arouse enough interest to induce them to record in any detail what they thought about him. He seems to have gone his angular and somewhat discontented way alone. Of course, no sooner was he victoriously dead, than everyone who had ever met him began to batter their memories into producing such reminiscences as a hero deserved; everything that could be remembered about him was soon clothed with an anachronistic glory. Samuel Holland's letter referred to above is, for instance, a beautiful example of the art of interpreting the past in the light of the future; even Wolfe's disastrous attack on the Beauport lines on July 31 is referred to as "one amongst those masterly manoeuvres that led to the great and successful event of the 13th of September."⁷ And so, in order to get some idea of what Wolfe was really like, one is driven to rely on his own letters, of which a considerable number survive.

Of his physical characteristics little need be said, for everyone knows his thin lanky figure, his sloping shoulders, his curious triangular profile with its long nose and its puffy, yet retreating chin. He was not beautiful and what was worse, in his early years he was awkward and endowed with few social graces. This probably made him at first shy and then, as sometimes happens to shy men, created a rather acrid determination to stand on his rights and extort every tittle that was due to him. This goes far to explain his inability to see much good in the officers of his regiment whom he always seemed to find "loose and profligate", "persons of so little

⁷*Ibid.*, 46.

application to business and . . . so ill educated";⁸ it makes more understandable the secretive jealousy with which he treated his brigadiers at Quebec—"he asks no one's opinion and wants no advice" as James Gibson writes to Governor Lawrence.⁹ To maintain this attitude and to convince himself of its justice, he must succeed, for he had no other means of securing the centre of the stage. There is no question but what he showed great zeal in his profession, spared no pains in making his regiment efficient, realized the deficiencies in his own education and set to work to remedy them. In Glasgow he studied mathematics so that he might "become acquainted with . . . the construction of fortification and the attack and defence of places" and instead, to his despair, merely found that they had "a great tendency to make men dull" and that finding "out the use and property of a crooked line, which, when discovered serves me no more than a straight one . . . but . . . adds to the weight that nature has laid upon the brain and blunts the organs"; and elsewhere he solaced his loneliness with the reading of many books on the art of war—the list that he is able to suggest as desirable for a young ensign is almost overwhelming.¹⁰

But if Wolfe was conscious of the deficiencies in his education he was also rather too conscious of the measures he was taking to repair them and of the competence he was acquiring as an officer. He was vain and at times he was somewhat smug. With rather mock modesty he reckons it "a very great misfortune to this country that I . . . should be thought, as I generally am, one of the best officers of my rank in the service", though with what was almost a prophecy he added that "the consequence will be very fatal to me in the end, for as I rise in rank people will expect some considerable performances, and I shall be induced in support of an ill-got reputation to be lavish of my life, and shall probably meet that fate which is the ordinary effect of such conduct."¹¹ In conjunction with all this it must be remembered that he was given authority at an age when men to-day are commonly still under the direction of others, and during his long years in Scotland he was practically an autocrat over the lives and welfare of several hundred soldiers; this fed his vanity and ruined his temper. He himself realized something of this, for he wrote that he feared he might give way insensibly "to the temptations of power" and "become proud insolent and intolerable".¹² And he possessed few resources within himself that might have combatted this tendency. He had small sense of humour: his early letters are ponderous and filled with platitudes; there is a definite improvement during and after his visit to Paris in 1752; but there is rarely much fire or any striking phrase, and the only other quip that can be compared with his modest joke about mathematics is his famous remark about the ladies of Glasgow who "are cold to everything but a bagpipe—I wrong them, there is not

⁸B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 223, Wolfe to his father, Oct. 22, 1753; 280, Wolfe to his mother, Nov. 8, 1755.

⁹Doughty and Parmelee, *The Siege of Quebec*, V, 65.

¹⁰B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 107, Wolfe to his mother, Sept. 8, 1749; 295-7, Wolfe to Thomas Townshend, July 18, 1756.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 280, Wolfe to his mother, Nov. 8, 1755.

¹²*Ibid.*, 165, Wolfe to his mother, Jan. 2, 1752.

one that does not melt away at the sound of an estate; there's the weak side of this soft sex."¹³

Added to all this, he was prudish and proper and proud of it—even rather proud of his one meagre fling amidst the snares of London, one small wild oat amidst a large field of carefully tended wheat. All this was very admirable, no doubt, but it did not serve to commend him to his fellow men, even though one captain calls him “a Paragon”;¹⁴ and with his fellow women, too, he was not always a great success. His mother was a difficult person whom he conciliated rather than loved; with the merchants' wives and daughters in the towns where he was quartered, his colonel's uniform carried him through most social difficulties; and with Miss Lawson he undoubtedly was, for a time, in love. A great deal of nonsense has been written about this, for there is no evidence at all that she was in love with him, and this blow to his self-esteem was probably at the root of his desire to go abroad. He made a great parade of his wish to study foreign military technique, but when he did go to Paris, he was the earnest young man who dined every now and then with the English ambassador and spent the rest of his time learning to speak French, to ride, to fence, and to dance, though in dancing his progress was slow. He really went to capture some of the social graces that he had discovered he lacked, and he set about the task as conscientiously as he did about his study of *The King of Prussia's Regulations for his Horse and Foot*. He was in Paris, but not of it: he had neither the money nor the social charm. But he had discovered that one “by discoursing with the other sex may learn some civility and mildness of carriage” though, as he very properly says, he would “never pay the price of the last improvement with the loss of reason.”¹⁵ The year before he was killed he fell in love once more, this time with Miss Katherine Lowther and his affection was apparently returned, but the episode was too brief to have any influence upon his character.

Of amusements Wolfe apparently thought little, and outdoor recreation was taken mainly in order to improve his health, though he showed some liking for shooting, even if he did not particularly shine at it. His one real passion seems to have been for dogs and even when he could not have them with him, he owned several that were boarded out with his parents.

And so we get the completed picture of an earnest, puritanical young man, rather vain and determined to succeed, fond of power, somewhat difficult in temper, suffering, to use a modern cliché, from a social inferiority complex, and inclined to be very censorious of his equals and, in private, of his superiors, though in public he was accustomed rather carefully to tune his tongue to his material interests; inclined to discontent, for he often felt that he was getting the worst of the deal—he found Scotland horrible, but then Dover turned out to be just as bad; inclined to show off where it would impress the proper people,¹⁶ and always

¹³*Ibid.*, 212, Wolfe to his mother, May 13, 1753.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 144, Wolfe to Rickson, June 9, 1751; 109, Capt. Macrae to [?], Nov. 16, 1749.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 120-121, Wolfe to his father, Apr. 6, 1750; 165, 191, 194, Wolfe to his mother, Jan. 2, Nov. 25, Dec. 12, 1752.

¹⁶This is very marked in the series of letters to Lord George Sackville.

exaggerating the difficulties with which he was faced, so that the ultimate glory might be the greater.¹⁷ The truth of the story of his astonishing outburst of self-praise when Pitt entertained him just before he set out for the St. Lawrence, has been vigorously denied; true or not, it is quite in keeping with his character; he had at last arrived and he knew it.¹⁸

Over against all this must be set his brilliant efficiency as a regimental commander and his skill in training his men; his interest in their musketry practice was far beyond that of the average officer of the day;¹⁹ and this was supplemented by his care for their welfare, his kindness towards them in so far as it did not interfere with the necessities of a military life. As he said he knew "nothing more entertaining than a collection of well-looking men, uniformly clad and performing their exercise with grace and order."²⁰ The army—or rather the army in war—was his god; he did not care much for peace; his bravery was unquestionable, he pined for action and in war he was absolutely ruthless if it seemed necessary. He would allow the destruction of a detachment of his own men, so that a Highland clan might in revenge be exterminated; he could threaten to tie fire-rafts to the vessels containing the helpless French prisoners in order to prevent any more such contrivances being sent down against Saunders' fleet.²¹

And finally his almost constant ill-health must be taken into consideration. A recent biographer of Karl Marx has suggested that the latter's intellectual achievements were almost entirely the result of his Jewish parentage combined with a disordered liver.²² In the case of Wolfe I would not like to go so far as that, but ill-health certainly influenced his character. In Scotland he was afflicted with a skin disease that was said to be scurvy, at Salisbury he had gravel and rheumatism, and during his last years he suffered from tuberculosis of the kidneys and bladder:²³ it can hardly be wondered if he was at times difficult and ill-tempered, if he sometimes felt that there must be no delay, that every means must be taken, no matter what the cost, if he were to achieve before he died, the fame for which he so passionately longed. As Horace Walpole wrote: "The world could not expect more from him than he thought himself capable of performing. He looked on danger as the favourable moment that would call forth his talents."²⁴

His early military career need not detain us long: an ensign in the 12th Foot at fifteen, he became a captain at seventeen, a brigade-major and aide-de-camp to Gen. Hawley at eighteen, major and acting commander of the 20th Foot at twenty-two, lieutenant-colonel at twenty-three.²⁵

¹⁷e.g., in letters at beginning of both Louisbourg and Quebec expeditions.

¹⁸B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 415-416; W. T. Waugh: *James Wolfe* (Montreal, 1928), 189.

¹⁹B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 254-255, Wolfe to Captain Rickson, March 7, 1755.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 241, Wolfe to his mother, Oct. 31, 1754.

²¹*Ibid.*, 254-255, Wolfe to Captain Rickson, March 7, 1755; Knox, *Historical Journal*, ed. A. G. Doughty (Champlain Soc.), I, 445.

²²O. Rühle, *Karl Marx*.

²³B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 150, 403; J. C. Webster, *Wolffiana* (1927), 10.

²⁴H. Walpole, *Memoires . . . of George II*, II, 239.

²⁵J. C. Webster, *Wolffiana*, 3.

During this time he had taken part in the battles of Dettingen, Falkirk, Culloden and Laffeldt, in the latter of which he served with some distinction and was slightly wounded; but much of his attention, even in war-time, seems to have been directed by his superiors to routine regimental work.

A good deal of nonsense has been written about his youth and the overwhelming merit which must have given a poor unknown soldier such rapid promotion. In the first place he was not by any means lacking in influence or in powerful friends and he used both without any hesitation. His father was a brigadier-general still seeing service, though his gout prevented it from being very active, as late as 1745, and he naturally used his not inconsiderable influence in his son's favour; in 1749 Wolfe was looking forward anxiously to purchasing a "lieutenant-colonel's commission within this twelvemonth";²⁶ and when he obtained his commission in 1750 it was by the influence of Lord Bury, Lord George Sackville and the Duke of Cumberland—from a military point of view, three rather dubious sponsors.²⁷ And he finally became a full colonel in 1757, only after a long and bitter fight on his own behalf; his claim that all his "hope of success must be grounded upon right and just pretension," sounds a little hollow. Throughout his life he was always peculiarly sensitive to the promotions of other men; when he was in danger of being asked to serve at Halifax under an officer who was, so he said, "but a few months before put over my head, I thought it was much better to get into the way of Service, and out of the way of being insulted";²⁸ therefore he left for England at once.

Moreover Wolfe was no exceptional youthful prodigy; they caught them much younger in those days, and there were plenty of other officers as young or nearly as young as Wolfe himself. He was a lieutenant-colonel at a little over twenty-three, Monckton was one at a little under twenty-five, Townshend at twenty-four, John Hale at thirty, even Wolfe's own father, who was anything but a military genius, was only thirty-two.²⁹ And just the same applies to the much prized colonel's commission which Wolfe was given when he was thirty-one; Monckton gained his when he was thirty-three, and Hale, Townshend and Guy Carleton when they were thirty-four;³⁰ and these men are not exceptions, they are mentioned merely because they happen to be closely connected with Wolfe's career.

Down to 1757 Wolfe was steadily building up a reputation as a good regimental commander; in that year his first great chance came. Pitt, fresh to office, was anxious to do something to counteract the disastrous news from Germany; a military and naval diversion against Rochefort seemed to provide exactly what was needed. Though Sir Julian Corbett says that judged "by the most fastidious science, Pitt's expedition to Rochefort was absolutely correct", Sir John Fortescue in his *History of the British Army* asserts just as strongly that "military opinion had been

²⁶B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 93, Wolfe to Captain Rickson, Apr. 2, 1749.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 117, 120, Wolfe to his father, March 23, Apr. 6, 1750; 118, Wolfe to his mother, March 29, 1750.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 259, Wolfe to his mother, March 26, 1755; 433-434, Wolfe to Viscount Barrington, June 6, 1759.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 4.

³⁰Knox, *Historical Journal*, I, 163-4, n.1., 222-3, n.2., 328-9, n.3., 330, n.1.

against the expedition from the first. Ligonier, a daring officer but of ripe experience and sound judgment, wrote of it in the most lukewarm terms as likely to lead to nothing.³¹ Extraordinarily little was known about the fortifications of Rochefort and what information there was, was either on dubious authority or out of date. Though there were some good officers under him the leadership of the military forces was placed in the hands of Sir John Mordaunt, old and hesitating, and Wolfe, who had been on Mordaunt's staff in the late war and had since courted his niece, was made his quartermaster-general. The fleet was late in getting started, when it arrived off the French coast, there was further delay, owing first of all to an error in judgment on the part of Admiral Hawke and then to lack of a favourable wind, so that all hope of a surprise seemed to be destroyed. It has been pointed out that a surprise could actually have been effected, but the English leaders had no reason to know this and in fact within a few days the 3,000 French troops available had been raised to 8,000.³² There was undoubtedly a good deal of vacillation on the part of the general commanding, but the suggestions that Wolfe put forward at the later court of enquiry, as the ones that should have been adopted, were by no means sound. He asserted that Fort Fouras should have been carried by storm, that, as it was on a peninsula, it might have been attacked on all sides by the ships which could then batter it down. Meanwhile a feint should have been made towards La Rochelle and the Ile de Rhé. As against this scheme Admiral Knowles pointed out perfectly justly that bomb-vessels, let alone men of war, could not come within three miles of Ft. Fouras—even the over-confident French pilot Thierry could not take a bomb-ketch within shot of it. Consequently the fort could not be battered nor could the landing of the troops or their re-embarkation be protected. Furthermore the only two spots where a feint to the north could be made were near the point of Chatelaillon; and as a result of sounding by Admiral Brodrick it had been found that the transports could not come nearer to the shore than one and a half miles. Again the troops would have to disembark and re-embark entirely without protection, and as Wolfe himself admitted that the sandhills offered so much natural concealment that the landing could have been prevented by 1,000 foot and 300 horse, the folly of his whole scheme is apparent. It had, as a matter of fact, been considered by the military council on Sept. 24 and definitely turned down, largely on the advice of the admiral who could not undertake under the circumstances, to give any adequate naval protection. Again there was undoubted vacillation; but when on the night of Sept. 28 a landing at Chatelaillon was attempted, it was abandoned upon the perfectly proper ground put forward by the naval officers in charge of the boats, that the offshore wind was so strong that the landing would be appallingly slow, if it could be managed at all, as some of the boats would scarce be able to make any headway; to proceed would have been merely inviting disaster.³³

The expedition had been badly mismanaged; but Wolfe's suggestions

³¹J. S. Corbett, *England in the Seven Years War*, I, 209; J. W. Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, II, 308-9.

³²J. S. Corbett, *England in the Seven Years War*, I, 214-215, 219.

³³*Ibid.*, I, 209-221; Reports of the commission of enquiry and court-martial in the *Gentleman's Magazine* 1757, 491, 582-4; 1758, 28-29.

were impracticable and showed no appreciation of naval problems and no particular care for the men involved. In fact, he was quite frank in his private letters when he extolled the beauty of blundering, so long as it meant fighting, and laid it down "that, in particular circumstances and times, the loss of a thousand men is rather an advantage to a nation than otherwise, seeing that gallant attempts raise its reputation and make it respectable."³⁴ So colossal was his belief in his own judgment, moreover, that he wrote a rather condescending letter to his friend Captain Parr in which he asserted that he could have told Parr even before the expedition started "that we should attempt nothing, or execute ill what we did attempt. I will be open enough and vain enough to tell you that there might be a lucky moment to be seized for the public service, which I watched for; but it came too late, and there ended the reputation of three bad Generals".³⁵ It was easy to be wise after the event, and that wisdom, combined with the popular appeal of the vigorous action he had advocated and the censorious criticisms of the leaders of the expedition he had uttered, brought him his reward—the coveted commission as a colonel. This has been usually interpreted as a proper recognition for the one officer who wanted to do the right thing. It was almost certainly nothing of the sort, as can be seen if the political circumstances of the moment are considered. Pitt had just come into office and his first military action had been a decisive failure. Somehow it must be justified: so a commission of enquiry must be held and Mordaunt brought before a court martial, Pitt himself, very improperly, coming down to the court to make "an imperious speech" in favour of his plan.³⁶ Unfortunately for this scheme the court acquitted Mordaunt and did not show much appreciation for the plan. Meanwhile the one officer—Wolfe—who had shown himself ready to go bull-headed against the enemy and, irrespective of reasonable precautions, secure what Pitt wanted, must be rewarded. Seen in this light the whole business falls automatically into its proper political pattern.

On the whole the Rochefort expedition does not add to one's opinion of Wolfe's strategical ability, especially when it is remembered that what he advocated there was only too similar to what he tried out in his disastrous attack on the Beauport lines at Quebec on July 31, 1759; but it must be added that he also drew from the failure of the expedition a set of doctrinaire principles on the conduct of combined operations which were, in general, quite sound, though they hardly merit the extravagant eulogy which Corbett pours upon them.³⁷ Fortescue is not far wrong when he sums up the whole affair by saying that "it seems that the troops were sent on a fool's errand, and that the blame lay solely with Pitt".³⁸

But it is true enough to say that from now on Wolfe was a man

³⁴B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 336, Wolfe to Major Walter Wolfe, Oct. 18, 1757; 339, Wolfe to Major Rickson, Nov. 5, 1757.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 344, Wolfe to Captain Parr, Dec. 29, 1757. Incidentally neither Conway nor Cornwallis were bad generals, and there is no good evidence, as is usually alleged (e.g., by Waugh, *James Wolfe*, 140) that the Prince of Wales sent for Wolfe to question him about Rochefort.

³⁶H. Walpole, *Memoires . . . of George II*, II, 263-5.

³⁷B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 339, Wolfe to Major Rickson, Nov. 5, 1757; J. S. Corbett, *England in the Seven Years War*, I, 221-2.

³⁸J. W. Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, II, 308-9.

marked out by Pitt for advancement, and when the expedition under Jeffrey Amherst was sent in 1758 against Louisbourg, Wolfe went as junior brigadier. The main plan of these operations is perfectly well known, therefore it will be enough to deal with those aspects for which Wolfe is given the lion's share of credit.

When Amherst reached Halifax he found that a plan for landing had been already drawn up by the brigadiers. It is alleged that this plan was Wolfe's; for this there is no evidence and indeed it is unlikely on the face of it, for as he showed at Rochefort and at Quebec he much preferred a strong frontal attack with a feint on the flank, and this is the basis not of this first plan, but of the later one adopted by Amherst, possibly on Wolfe's advice. Anyway, the original scheme was a bad one, because it took no account of the dangers of traversing the ten miles of unknown and difficult country between Miré Bay and Louisbourg, and because it divided the English forces into three parts with no safe means of sea communication owing to the prevalence of fog and surf which often made landing impossible.³⁹

The plan of landing ultimately adopted, quite possibly at Wolfe's suggestion, especially as he was given the leading part in its execution, consisted in a direct attack upon Cormorandière Bay, with two feints a little further to the east and a third beyond the harbour at Lorembec near the Lighthouse Point.⁴⁰ Notwithstanding a preliminary reconnaissance, the strength of the French at Cormorandière Bay was underestimated; Wolfe failed to reach the shore and was forced to order his men to retire. The day was saved by the dashing but wholly accidental landing of three subalterns and their men in a little inlet on the extreme right, which was protected by a slight ridge from the enemy's fire. Wolfe followed this up, the enemy were driven from their positions, and the whole English army landed with comparative ease.⁴¹ Wolfe with his usual habit of exaggerating the difficulties he had to overcome writes of the landing as "rash and ill-advised", "next to miraculous", but he forgets to make any mention of the three young officers and their men who were responsible for his success.⁴² Moreover after his somewhat biting criticism it is rather surprising to find that the total casualties on the English side were only 46 killed and 59 wounded—and of the 46, 38 were drowned by the overturning of the boats in the surf and were not killed by the enemy's fire at all. Both the danger and Wolfe's share in the glory seem to have been rather over-emphasized.

Once on shore the English began the formal siege of Louisbourg. Wolfe has been given an enormous amount of credit for establishing a battery at Lighthouse Point, which silenced the Island Battery and played

³⁹J. S. McLennan, *Louisbourg from its foundation to its fall* (London, 1918), 239-240, James Cunningham to Lord George Sackville, May 30, 1758; J. S. Corbett, *England in the Seven Years War*, I, 318.

⁴⁰Knox, *Historical Journal*, ed. A. G. Doughty, (Champlain Soc.), III, 3, Amherst to Pitt, June 11, 1758.

⁴¹J. S. McLennan, *Louisbourg from its foundation to its fall*, 247-253, 256-259; *Nova Scotia Historical Soc.'s Collections*, V, 116. Gordon's Journal; J. C. Webster, *Wolfiana*, 13-14; *Collection des Manuscrits . . . relatifs à la Nouvelle France*, IV, 160.

⁴²B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 384, Wolfe to Major Walter Wolfe, July 27, 1758; Wolfe to Lord George Sackville, July 30, 1758.

upon the ships in the harbour, and for rapidly extending his batteries round the north-west corner of the harbour and thence assisting materially in the reduction of the town; and all the while Amherst and his engineers, it is said, were plodding away at building their epaulements and setting up their guns against the land side of the fortifications. There is no doubt whatever that Wolfe worked rapidly and well; as one correspondent writes "There is no certainty where to find him—but, wherever he goes, he carries with him a Mortar in one pocket and a 24 pounder in the other."⁴³ But it is entirely unsound to suggest, as some historians have done, that it was Wolfe's sparkling ability that brought Louisbourg to her knees, while Amherst acted the part of a respectable figure-head.

In the first place the plan of occupying the Lighthouse Point and establishing batteries round the harbour was not Wolfe's at all; it probably was not even Amherst's, for Brigadier Samuel Waldo, who had commanded the land forces at the capture of Louisbourg in 1745, had sent Pitt, in November 1757, a plan of operations, accompanied by a chart which contained all these features clearly set out.⁴⁴ Pitt had this and there can be no doubt that he laid it before Amherst; and anyway the plan was rendered so obvious as to be almost inevitable when the French for lack of numbers were forced to abandon the Lighthouse Battery and the Batterie Royale. In the next place, Wolfe enjoyed no independent command; what he did was done at Amherst's instructions and was made possible only by the way in which, on occasion, Amherst sacrificed his own progress so that Wolfe might have the guns that he needed: "I sent away everything to Br. Wolfe that he asked, added to his Artillery two 18-inch and two 13-inch Mortars" is a typical entry in Amherst's journal. And when the engineers wanted to use Wolfe's guns elsewhere, Amherst insisted that he be allowed to continue.⁴⁵ Finally until he reached the north-west shore of the harbour, Wolfe met with little real opposition, for the Island Battery was "vieille et négligée, rongée et désunie par l'air et le sel de la mer",⁴⁶ the harbour side of the town had few guns, and except for Vauquelin in the *Aréthuse* the captains of the French men-of-war wholly neglected their duty of making Wolfe's batteries as untenable as they could, and in addition the constant fogs covered many of his operations.⁴⁷

What, on the other hand, was the position of Amherst? He has been charged with lack of progress because he was thinking of the siege in terms of European warfare,⁴⁸ while Wolfe had acclimatized himself to the American method—whatever that may be. This is quite unsound: Wolfe's methods were just as European as Amherst's and anyway, the whole argument is based on the assumption that Amherst knew in what

⁴³Quoted by Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, I, 117, from an "Authentic Account of the Reduction of Louisbourg", by a Spectator (London, 1758).

⁴⁴*Dominion Archives Report* for 1886, cli-cliii, Nov. 7, 1757.

⁴⁵*Journal of Jeffrey Amherst*, ed. by J. C. Webster, 52, 57. Knox, *Historical Journal*, III, 10-11, Amherst to Pitt, July 6, 1758.

⁴⁶Rapport de la Houlière quoted by R. Waddington, *La Guerre de Sept Ans*, II, 348.

⁴⁷"La brume épaisse dont nous sommes couverts nous dérobe les travaux des assiégeants qui établissent en sureté leurs batteries surtout dans les parties qui entourent la rade." La Houlière au Ministre, June 22, 1758. (*Collection des Manuscrits . . . relatifs à la Nouvelle France*, IV, 162-3.

⁴⁸W. T. Waugh, *James Wolfe*, 168.

bad condition the walls of Louisbourg were. He did not: Louisbourg was still universally considered the greatest fortress in America, though the men who were defending it were sadly aware "que la place est dans le plus mauvais état malgré les travaux et la dépense excessive qu'on a faits, parce que la nature des matériaux est très défectueuse et que l'intempérie des saisons détruit tout".⁴⁹ Careful preparations for the siege were certainly necessary and even Wolfe, looking across at the disastrous results of rashness at Ticonderoga, could write, "We have been extremely fortunate in this business. If Abercromby had acted with half as much caution and prudence as General Amherst did, this must have been a dear campaign to the French."⁵⁰ And Amherst had other and even better reasons for his apparent delay: the weather was often stormy and, what is commonly forgotten,⁵¹ surf on a rocky coast lasts a long time after the storm has subsided; consequently it was very difficult to get the necessary guns and supplies on shore. And even when this had been accomplished, largely as a result of the whole-hearted co-operation of the sailors from the fleet, his troubles were only just beginning. Almost the whole of the fortifications on the land side of Louisbourg were screened by a marsh that made the transport of guns extraordinarily difficult, and the difficulty was not rendered any the less by the raking fire from the *Aréthuse* which had taken up a position in the northwest corner of the harbour. All this meant that progress was inevitably slow, but when Amherst did get his guns in position and his batteries opened fire, the besieged realized the hopelessness of further resistance.

If there is any blame to be allotted for not bringing about the earlier surrender of Louisbourg, it must be laid at the door of Boscawen and the fleet. Their co-operation had been magnificent, but it might have been expected that with the Island Battery silenced they would enter the harbour and bombard the ships and the town. That they did not do so was probably due to a very understandable distrust of the Cape Breton coast and the Atlantic weather, combined with an overestimate of the possible danger from the French fleet; but they more than made amends by their brilliant boat attack under Balfour and Laforey; "ce coup de main audacieux . . . trancha le sort de Louisbourg."⁵²

Wolfe had done well, as he always did when he had well-conceived plans laid down for him to follow; he had carried his operations out with skill and vigour. Indeed Knox's anonymous correspondent puts the whole thing in a nutshell when he writes "Mr. Amherst has displayed the General in all his proceedings, and our four Brigadiers are justly entitled to great praises; Mr. Wolfe being the youngest in rank, the most active part of the service fell to his lot; he is an excellent Officer, of great valour, which has conspicuously appeared in the whole course of this undertaking."⁵³

But Wolfe was bitterly disappointed, he had wanted to go on to

⁴⁹La Houlière au Ministre, June 10, 1758, quoted in R. Waddington, *La Guerre de Sept Ans*, II, 346; J. S. Corbett, *England in the Seven Years War*, I, 323.

⁵⁰B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 395-6, Wolfe to his mother, Aug. 11, 1758.

⁵¹e.g., by W. T. Waugh, *James Wolfe*, 164.

⁵²R. Waddington, *La Guerre de Sept Ans*, II, 358.

⁵³Knox, *Historical Journal*, I, 253. Four brigadiers is obviously a mistake for three.

Quebec and finish the war. Again Amherst has been blamed for holding the hero back from his destiny; and again quite unfairly. Wolfe was so bitter that he criticized violently and without just cause the whole conduct of the siege: "This place could not have held out ten days if it had been attacked with common sense", "We lost time at the siege, still more after the siege, and blundered from the beginning to the end of the campaign",⁵⁴ are fair samples of his views; he also began somewhat peevishly and officiously to tell Amherst how he ought to run the rest of the war. The General's final reply was a model of courteous forbearance. The irony of the situation lay in the fact that Amherst was just as anxious to go on to Quebec as Wolfe was. On July 27 he wrote to Pitt, "If I can go to Quebec, I will"; on Aug. 1, Aug. 3, Aug. 5, Aug. 6 he discussed the matter with Boscawen, reiterating on each occasion the same theme "what I wished to do was to go to Quebeck," and on each occasion the admiral replied that he thought it impossible.⁵⁵ This is a sufficient answer to Wolfe's petulant disregard of facts, of the difficulties of weather, of getting the artillery back into the ships, of victualling and repairing the Louisbourg works before the army and fleet could possibly set out up the St. Lawrence. So Wolfe went through with his raiding expedition on the Gaspé coast, then threw in his hand in a rage and sailed for home. From the Louisbourg affair he had emerged far better than from that of Rochefort, but there is still no evidence of the great strategist or of the soldier who has any understanding of, or much sympathy with the problems of naval operations.

Amherst remained in America labouring to put together once more the scattered pieces of Abercromby's defeated army; Wolfe was in England and, as he was on the spot, received a good deal of personal glory for the capture of Louisbourg. Therefore it was only natural that in next year's campaign he should be given an important command, his first independent command, for though he was nominally under Amherst as commander-in-chief in America, the difficulties of distance eliminated all real control. On the basis of his previous achievements, it was a perfectly justifiable appointment and it is interesting to note that as early as Dec. 1758, three of the most competent officers in America, Monckton, Murray and Burton, had suggested it to Pitt.⁵⁶ This is important, because it goes to prove that both Monckton and Murray at least embarked upon the campaign with a respect and liking for their commander. At Wolfe's special request they were appointed brigadier-generals under him and to them Pitt added a third—George Townshend.

As these three brigadiers are rather intimately associated with the problem of Wolfe's military reputation it might be well to spend a few words upon them. Robert Monckton, the senior brigadier, was the second son of Viscount Galway; born in 1726, he was six months older than Wolfe, and after service in Germany he had spent the last seven years in America, mainly in Nova Scotia, where in 1755 he had been appointed

⁵⁴B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 429, Wolfe to Major Walter Wolfe, May 19, 1759; 402, Wolfe to Col. Rickson, Dec. 1, 1758.

⁵⁵Pitt, *Correspondence with Colonial Governors*, ed. by G. S. Kimball, I, 307; *Journal of Jeffrey Amherst*, 73-74.

⁵⁶J. S. Corbett, *England in the Seven Years War*, I, 398, quoting S. P. Col. (America and West Indies), 76, Dec. 29, 1758.

lieutenant-governor. Quiet, competent and experienced, he was thoroughly conversant with the conditions of war against the French and Indians along the St. Lawrence.

The second brigadier was George Townshend, eldest son of Viscount Townshend, and just three years older than Wolfe. In the war of the Austrian Succession he had seen decidedly more service than Wolfe had, being in action at Dettingen, Fontenoy, Culloden and Laffeldt; it is interesting to note that accounts from both Wolfe and Townshend of the conduct of the battle of Dettingen survive, and there is no question, but what Townshend's judgment on this battle was the sounder of the two.⁵⁷ The same may be said of his remarks on the battle of Laffeldt. In 1755 Townshend quarrelled with the Duke of Cumberland and later resigned from the army; but Pitt, on coming into office in 1758, offered him a commission as Colonel of Foot, which Townshend accepted, requesting an appointment on active service as soon as possible. Townshend had served with Monckton in 1745 on the staff of Lord Dunmore, but there is no evidence that he and Wolfe were personally known to one another before his appointment to the Quebec expedition. He was probably the most intellectually brilliant of the commanders before Quebec; a man of wide interests, he had sat in the house of commons and played some part in political life, he was an artist of very considerable skill, and possessed of a keen sense of humour which found vent, on occasion, in some extremely good and witty caricatures. In addition he was a soldier of experience and ability, who applied his brain as well as his muscle to the conduct of his profession.

Murray, the third brigadier, the fifth son of Lord Elibank, born in 1721, was six years older than Wolfe; he had been a soldier for nearly twenty years and Wolfe had already served with him at Rochefort and at Louisbourg and had come to value his vigour, independence and military skill.

It has been alleged, that as all three of his brigadiers were the sons of noblemen, they more or less combined to look down on Wolfe, and that he felt abashed and quite naturally irritated before such splendour.⁵⁸ For this view there seems no justification: Monckton and Murray were chosen at Wolfe's special request and at any rate, at the beginning of the campaign, he liked them. There is no evidence at all that the brigadiers had any tendency to hang together in opposition to Wolfe, until, when success or failure was trembling in the balance, they were practically driven to do so by Wolfe's secretive policy and his determination to stand upon his military rank and authority.

Lastly, but by no means least, there was Charles Saunders, admiral in command of the fleet. Older than his military colleagues, he had seen over twenty years of distinguished service in the navy. The harmony and co-operation between Amherst and Boscawen at Louisbourg had been admirable,⁵⁹ and Saunders was to show that he and his fleet were ready to make even greater contributions to the final success of the expedition

⁵⁷B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 36-38, Wolfe to his father, July 4, 1743; C. V. F. Townshend, *Life of . . . Townshend*, 24-30, Townshend's Journal.

⁵⁸W. T. Waugh, *James Wolfe*, 248.

⁵⁹B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 388-389, Wolfe to Lord George Sackville, July 30, 1758, had borne unhesitating testimony to this.

against Quebec. But Saunders was a reticent man and as late as May 19 when the army and the fleet had assembled at Louisbourg, Wolfe did not expect that he would do more than "send four or five of his smallest ships of the line to assist at Quebec, and remain with the rest at an anchor below the Isle aux Coudres";⁶⁰ we know now how much more splendidly Saunders intended to co-operate in Wolfe's attack on the city. But here again, while there is not the slightest hint of anything but the most proper behaviour on the part of the reserved and efficient Saunders, Wolfe on one or two occasions seemed to find reason to complain of his attitude.

Thus Wolfe started out with almost every advantage that a general could desire; were the French in as good a position, or were there defects in their military arrangements which would make Wolfe's task easier?

Of the corruption and peculation in Canada which Bigot and his subordinates had raised almost to the dignity of a fine art, there is little need to speak; it is well known and anyway it affected the military situation in 1759 only indirectly, and then probably not as much as most people imagine, for while Bigot saw to it that the king paid extravagantly for what he got, he also tried to see that the king got enough to carry on operations as efficiently as possible. Consequently Montcalm, while he disliked Bigot's dishonesty, admitted that he was reasonably effective, and on several occasions we find that it was Bigot who was supporting Montcalm in his desire to take early action in preparing for the protection of Quebec, while Vaudreuil would do nothing.⁶¹ And therein really lay the greatest stumbling block to the adequate defence of New France, the greatest ally that Wolfe was to acquire—the Marquis de Vaudreuil. Opinionated and unintelligent, weak yet always obstinate at the wrong times, vain and flamboyant, determined to steal any glory there was for himself and throw all the blame on other people, he had not even the merit of being a rogue, the furthest he had the courage to go was in the adjustment of the truth to serve his own interests; and to crown it all he was possessed to the full of that quality which has burgeoned so often and so unfortunately on Canadian soil, an egotistic suspicion of anyone who had not been born or at least lived for many years in Canada. Consequently it cannot be expected that there would for long be very much co-operation between Vaudreuil and Montcalm. Vaudreuil was not only governor-general but also the supreme commander of all the armed forces in New France, and at times he seemed to take almost a pleasure in preventing Montcalm from doing anything at all; the zenith of his tepid condescension is reached in a plan of operations he produced on April 1, 1759, when he wrote "Comme j'aurai toujours grand plaisir à leur (i.e., Montcalm and Levis) faire part de tous les mouvements que j'ordonnerai, je serai à même de faire usage des réflexions que les circonstances et les lieux leur suggéreront".⁶² Two months later he was to receive so vigorous a rap over the knuckles from Berryer, the minister of marine,⁶³ that even his self-satisfaction must have been pierced, but it was too late, the damage had been done.

As early as September 1757 Montcalm had urged the necessity of

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 428, Wolfe to Major Walter Wolfe, May 19, 1759.

⁶¹e.g., Montcalm au Ministre, May 24, 1759, *Collection des Manuscrits*, IV, 228.

⁶²*Manuscrits du Maréchal de Lévis: Lettres et pièces militaires*, 161.

⁶³See R. Waddington, *La Guerre de Sept Ans*, III, 256-257 for Berryer's letters.

erecting a battery on Cap Tourmente that would rake with ease any ships that might try to come through the Traverse; for he had no illusions about the strength of Quebec: "Les fortifications en sont si ridicules et si mauvais qu'elle seroit prise aussitôt qu'assiégée." These suggestions were repeated again and again down to the spring of 1759, but Vaudreuil did nothing; "malheureusement l'indolence a encore triomphé des conseils les plus salutaires",⁶⁴ as Montcalm's journal records. By May 1759 it was too late to build the battery, so it was proposed at the council on May 23 to sink eight or ten large French ships in the Traverse and so block the road; but when investigations were made the French learnt to their surprise that the fairway was far too wide to be blocked in this manner "nos marins canadiens . . . rougissent donc de honte . . . d'avoir exposé les armes du Roi et toute une colonie aux insultes pour ne s'être pas donné la peine de rien sonder."⁶⁵ In the same way the suggestion to erect a battery on Pointe de Lévis or to hold it with an adequate entrenchment produced no results, and consequently the English were able to seize it when they pleased.⁶⁶ The real truth was that while Montcalm believed that Quebec would be attacked, Vaudreuil was either too blind or too obstinate to admit that this was possible. "A Québec," wrote Montcalm in April 1759, "l'ennemi peut venir si nous n'avons pas d'escadre . . . Cependant nulle précaution—la réponse, nous aurons le temps."⁶⁷

Such was the state of affairs at Quebec and it is important for our purpose to realize exactly how the situation stood, for not only did it make the initial phases of Wolfe's expedition a relatively simple matter, for he met with none of the opposition that ought to have been encountered, but these dissensions within the French high command made it far more difficult for them to resist his actual attack with any success.

When Wolfe reached Halifax on April 30 he found that ice conditions had prevented Durell from patrolling the St. Lawrence and consequently Bougainville and his provision squadron had been enabled to slip up the river to Quebec. It has often been said that the information that he carried that the English were about to attack Quebec, gave the French time to perfect their defences; as has been shown above, little was done and anyway, had Durell been sailing up the river instead of Bougainville, news of his arrival would have been carried just as soon by signals to

⁶⁴*Journal de Montcalm*, 307-8; *Rapport de l'Archiviste de . . . Québec*, 1923-4, 15, Memoir sent to France in 1758; *Documents relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, X, 928. Memoir on the Position of France and England in America; *Québec Literary and Historical Society, Documents*, 9th Series, Johnstone, Dialogue des Morts, 108. Lévis had the same view that Quebec was indefensible, see *Calendar of Northcliffe Collection, Dominion Archives*, 213.

⁶⁵*Journal de Montcalm*, 523-4, 526, 557; Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, IV, 167-8, Journal de Foligné; *Siège de Québec en 1759 copié . . . par l'Hon. D. B. Viger* (Quebec, 1836), 7.

⁶⁶Knox, *Historical Journal*, I, 392, author's note; *Rapport de l'Archiviste . . . de Québec*, 1923-4, 15, Memoir sent to France in 1758; *Ibid.*, 1933-4, 121-122. Here M. De la Pause speaks very strongly of the importance the French ought to have attached to holding Pointe de Lévis.

⁶⁷Montcalm à Belleisle, Apr. 12, 1759, quoted by R. Waddington, *La Guerre de Sept Ans*, III, 263; Vaudreuil, Plan of operation, Apr. 1, 1759 in *Collection . . . de Lévis; Lettres et pièces militaires*, 157; *Documents relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, X, 876, 877. Montcalm's Memoir of Sept. 1758 and Vaudreuil's Remarks thereon.

Quebec. All that Bougainville can be credited with, is the bringing of encouragement and some supplies.

On leaving Louisbourg on June 6 Wolfe ran true to form by sending home to Pitt a letter starting with a spirited enumeration of the defects in all that was under his command, even blaming Saunders because he was making him send off his letter to Pitt so early in the voyage. But even Wolfe had had to admit that Amherst had laboured with great zeal and success to provide him with everything he needed; in fact he had at his disposal an extremely efficient and well-supplied army and a large and invaluable fleet.⁶⁸

By July 1 after a brilliant feat of navigation, the English forces had reached Quebec, a camp had been established towards the western end of the Isle of Orleans and Pointe de Lévis had been seized; and over against the English forces lay the French entrenchments stretching along the edge of the old north shore line from the River St. Charles to the river Montmorency. But it must be remembered that the fact that Wolfe could occupy Pointe de Lévis at all was the result not only of neglect on the part of the French to fortify it, but also of some information that a prisoner had given them on the evening of June 30, to the effect that the real attack was going to be made on Beauport and the occupation of Pointe de Lévis was a mere diversion. Both Montcalm and Vaudreuil believed this and in consequence countermanded the vigorous assault against the English across the river which the former had planned for that night. This fortunate accident probably saved the English from having to capture Pointe de Lévis all over again and in the face of heavy odds.⁶⁹ As it was, within twenty-four hours they had established themselves and the opportunity was gone.

What was the military problem that faced Wolfe? In words, it was quite simple—to bring Montcalm to open battle, either by forcing him to abandon his entrenchments, by luring him out of them, or by making a direct attack upon them; and the direct attack upon an enemy entrenched upon his own chosen ground is obviously little more than the last resort of a great self-confidence or of a great despair. On the other hand Montcalm could be induced to leave his position by a variety of expedients, of which the two most promising were a threat to his communications, or a serious blow to the safety of Quebec.

How did Wolfe decide to solve this problem? In the first place, it must be remembered that he had several great advantages over the French; he could divide his forces with reasonable safety, because the ships or the boats would provide rapid communication between the different parts of his army; the guns of the fleet could be used to protect the landing of his troops; and the ships or their boats could provide a formidable diversion without calling upon more than a very small number of his soldiers to give them assistance. Before he reached Quebec Wolfe had been thinking of

⁶⁸B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 423-4, 431-3, Wolfe to Pitt, May 1, June 6, 1759.

⁶⁹*Journal de Montcalm*, 562-3, 565; *Quebec Literary and Historical Soc. Documents*, 1st Series, Événements, 5-6; *Ibid.*, 4th Series, Journal du Siège de Québec en 1759 par J. C. Panet, 11; *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques*, IX, 329-330, Journal de M. Récher; *Siège de Québec en 1759 copié . . . par l'Hon. D. B. Viger* (Quebec, 1836), 15-16; *Rapport de l'Archiviste de . . . Québec*, 1920-21, 161-2, Journal du Siège de Québec, (by De Vienne?).

landing his main force on the Beauport flats and attacking the enemy across the river St. Charles, while a possible feint might be made above Quebec to distract their attention.⁷⁰ When he arrived, he found that Montcalm had been so inconsiderate as to entrench his own men on the very spot where Wolfe had been intending to land; therefore his plans had to be recast. What Wolfe says in his journal makes it almost certain that all he did was invert his original design: "to get ashore if possible above the town", to which Saunders agreed, and to land Townshend's brigade "below the Falls of Montmorency to draw the Enemy's attention that way and favour the projected attempt." Murray reconnoitred up the south shore on July 4 and reported on the following day that he was satisfied "with the practicability of the attempt at Michel".⁷¹ Then the scheme seems to have been abandoned for the time being at any rate, probably for the same reason that made him drop a similar idea a fortnight later, that the landing of the troops would be so slow that the enemy could attack them with ease;⁷² under the circumstances a very sound decision. The French on their side were perfectly aware of the possibility of landing immediately above Quebec; in Jan. 1759 M. de Pontleroi had drawn up a memoir dealing with this subject, but he felt that as long as the town batteries could prevent boats getting up the river, the shore line was secure; and although early in July there was some alarm felt, Montcalm and Vaudreuil thought that the adding of a few Indians to the 300 men stationed on the cliffs above Quebec, would be enough for safety.⁷³

Meanwhile the English troops had established themselves on the night of July 8 on the east bank of the Montmorency, as a diversion in favour of the attack that had been planned above the town. Townshend in his journal criticizes very vigorously the careless way in which Wolfe allowed the encampment to be left unprotected and, as a result of a successful Indian raid, he set to work himself to prepare some adequate entrenchments; for doing this Wolfe rebuked him with considerable violence.⁷⁴ The entrenchments were absolutely justified and, if Wolfe is not to be charged with negligence and an unwillingness to permit another man to do what he had forgotten, his actions can be explained only on the ground that he intended the unprotected men as a bait to persuade Montcalm to attack. Remembering his plan for the extermination of a Highland clan which was referred to above, this is not as impossible as it might seem; but it does not add to one's good opinion of Wolfe, whichever solution of the puzzle is accepted as the true one. Montcalm, however, was not risking an attack and for the next few days there was a distinct pause in the operations. So far Wolfe's tactics had, on the whole, been sound.

⁷⁰B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 428, Wolfe to Major Walter Wolfe, May 19, 1759.

⁷¹Wolfe's Journal (in the McCord Museum, Montreal) under July 3, 4, 5; Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, V, 37-8, Journal of Major Moncrief; Wolfe's letter to Pitt on Sept. 2 (B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 455) does not suggest that this landing at the Montmorency was a feint, but Wolfe's letter did not by any means tell the whole truth.

⁷²B. Willson, *Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 455-6, Wolfe to Pitt, Sept. 2, 1759.

⁷³*Collection . . . de Lévis; Lettres et pièces militaires*, 102; *Rapport de l'Archiviste . . . de Québec*, 1920-1, 162, 168; *Lettres du Marquis de Montcalm au Chev. de Lévis*, 175.

⁷⁴Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, V, 242-244, Townshend's Journal.

On July 12 the bombardment of Quebec began from the Pointe de Lévis and the town batteries could now be dominated; on July 16 both tide and wind were favourable for the ships to pass Quebec and go up the river, and although they failed on that night, because the wind died away at the critical moment, they succeeded on the night of July 18.⁷⁵ On the following day Wolfe "reconnoitred the country immediately above Quebec and found that if we had ventured the Stroke that was first intended (i.e., at St. Michel) we should probably have succeeded." But the French were alarmed and as he wrote to Pitt, the scheme was now too dangerous.⁷⁶ Still he seems to have failed altogether to realize the tremendous advantage control of the river above Quebec now gave him and although Carleton very successfully raided Pointe-aux-Trembles on July 20-21, it was merely an experimental diversion and from now on Wolfe turned his attention to a frontal attack on the eastern end of the Beauport lines. But even in regard to this Wolfe could not make up his mind; as Montcalm had refused most judiciously to play his part in Wolfe's game, he seemed hardly to know what to do and Gibson wrote on July 20 "Within the space of 5 hours we recd at the generals request 3 different Orders of consequence, which were contradicted immediately after their reception; which indeed has been the constant Practice of the Gen. ever since we have been here to the no small amazement of everyone who has the liberty of thinking. Every step he takes is wholly his own; I'm told he asks no one's opinion and wants no advice."⁷⁷ All the same the French could have given him very good advice, because they knew quite well that he could make them fight when he pleased, if he were only able enough to realize it. On July 19, after the ships went up the river, M. Dumas was at once sent off with 600 men, and 300 more along with the cavalry were added on the following day, so that the shore immediately above Quebec might be safeguarded against a landing; the Samos battery was set up and Montcalm's journal records what all the French officers were fearing "Si l'ennemi prend le parti de remonter le fleuve et peut descendre dans un point quelconque, il intercepte toute communication avec nos vivres et nos munitions de guerre." Therefore to make assurance doubly sure, the roads up from the shore to the top of the cliffs at the Anse au Foulon, Sillery and St. Michel were well broken, so as to render the ascent more difficult.⁷⁸ All the same M. de la Pause puts his finger clearly on the weak point in the French position, that with the appearance of the fleet above Quebec "tout le monde regarde cette marche comme très décisive pour l'avenir. L'on craint que la communication avec nos derrières ne soit interrompue et . . . nous ne pouvons pas autant nous diviser qu'eux sans courir les risques trop évident de nous faire battre en détail." But

⁷⁵R. H. Mahon, *Life of Gen. . . . Murray*, 114-115.

⁷⁶Wolfe's Journal under July 19. He first wrote "infallibly" then crossed it out and put in "probably"; B. Willson, *Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 455-6, Wolfe to Pitt, Sept. 2, 1759.

⁷⁷Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, V, 65, J. Gibson to Governor Lawrence, Aug. 1, 1759.

⁷⁸*Journal de Montcalm*, 578, 580; Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, V, 314, 315, Relation du Siège de Québec; *Ibid.*, IV, 9-10, Montcalm à Bougainville, July 20, 1759; *Quebec Literary and Historical Soc. Documents*, 1st Series, Evénements, 49; *Collection . . . de Lévis; Lettres du Marquis de Montcalm au Chev. de Lévis*, 203, July 28, 1759.

this Wolfe did not grasp, so he turned his attention to the Montmorency which from being a mere diversion now became a main frontal attack. All this is precisely confirmed by Admiral Holmes' letter of Sept. 18 in which he says that the plan of attacking above Quebec had been proposed to Wolfe "when the first ships passed the Town, and when it was entirely defenceless and unguarded; but Montmorency was then his favourite scheme, and he rejected it."⁷⁹

It is not necessary to discuss in detail the follies of his disastrous and costly repulse on July 31. He undertook the assault on the Beauport lines directly against the advice of his general officers, who expressed their strong dislike for it. It was badly planned, and based on an entirely erroneous conception of the ground where the attack was to be made, a mistake for which Wolfe must take the responsibility; he cannot shift the blame on to the shoulders of the grenadiers who allowed their enthusiasm to get out of hand. The attack lacked inevitably all the elements of a surprise, the soldiers had to sit, "exposed to the heat of the Sun and a furious Canonading from the Enemy for 7 hours and ½";⁸⁰ and it was made against the east end of the French entrenchments where it would do least harm to the enemy; what they were really afraid of was an assault upon their lines between Beauport and the St. Charles, which, if successful, would cut their army in two and probably result in the surrender of a large part of their left wing; this Wolfe seems never to have thought of. Even had the English won, they could have done so only after great losses, for the whole road to the west of Beauport "was nothing else but one intrenchment at the back of another"; and they would not have prevented the French from retiring to a strong position across the St. Charles. It was, in short, a mere gamble on the possibility of the French-Canadian militia breaking from their trenches before the threat of an attack; instead they stayed and shot the English down; a fortunate storm alone enabled the landing parties to retire with safety.⁸¹ And the causes of the disaster were quite properly pointed out by the Chevalier de Johnstone to be much the same as those that brought Abercromby to defeat at Ticonderoga.⁸² Practically all the time Wolfe had played straight into Montcalm's hands; and well might Montcalm say as he looked across at Wolfe's camp on the Montmorency "Drive them thence, and they will give us more trouble; while they are there they cannot hurt us; let them amuse themselves."⁸³

So far Wolfe had failed and failed badly; he became more vacillating

⁷⁹*Rapport de l'Archiviste de . . . Québec*, 1933-4, 98, 100, Continuation du Journal de la Campagne 1759; Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, IV, 296, Letter of Admiral Holmes, Sept. 18, 1759.

⁸⁰Wolfe's Journal under July 30; Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, V, 66-67, James Gibson to Governor Lawrence, Aug. 1, 1759; Knox, *Historical Journal*, I, 449-452.

⁸¹*Collection de . . . Lévis; Lettres du Marquis de Montcalm au Chev. de Lévis*, 168, July 1, 1759; *Calendar of Northcliffe Collection, Dominion Archives*, 211-212, Plan of Operations by Lévis; *Dominion Archives Report*, 1923, App. C, Bourlamaque Papers, 58, Vaudreuil to (Lévis?); Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, V, 93-94, Memoirs of John Johnson; *Rapport de l'Archiviste de . . . Québec*, 1931-2, 93, Copie de la Relation envoyée à M. de Crémilles; *Quebec Literary and Historical Soc. Documents*, 9th Series, Johnstone, Dialogue des Morts, 119-120.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 122.

⁸³Knox, *Historical Journal*, I, 426.

than ever; trying a variety of schemes, but still failing to see the right one. He thought of a direct assault on Quebec from the river and along with Saunders examined the town, but on the advice of Mackellar, the chief engineer, decided that such an attack was quite impracticable;⁸⁴ this was undoubtedly the desperate plan to which he referred in that letter to Admiral Saunders which has been so frequently misinterpreted.⁸⁵ He sent Murray up the river with 1,200 men to destroy the ships, and burn the magazines of supplies supposed to be at Deschambault, and in general to provoke the French to attack him wherever possible;⁸⁶ it was too many men for a mere raid and too few if any position was to be taken and held. Wolfe was, in fact, still thinking of Beauport as the main point of attack and the upper river as a mere diversion. But Murray's work was well done and succeeded in thoroughly alarming the French for the safety of their communications and supplies, with the result that Bougainville was put in command of some 2,000 men—the élite of the French forces—whose duty it was to guard the shore line up to Jacques Cartier, thus materially weakening the strength of the main French army. In addition the successes of Amherst had caused the departure early in August of Lévis and 800 men for Montreal. But among the English leaders serious difficulties were arising; Wolfe had not seen eye to eye with Saunders over the battle of July 31 and elsewhere the period of delay and indecision had undoubtedly bred discontent. With Townshend, Wolfe seems to have been at odds ever since the incident of the entrenchment of the Montmorency camp on July 10. Moreover, Townshend probably found Wolfe's rather old-maidish habits, his display of propriety, and his lack of humour decidedly funny and whiled away some of the periods of inaction in drawing caricatures. If Wolfe ever saw them, he was not the sort of person to appreciate their humorous aspect. And added to all this Wolfe fell sick, his chronic ill-health being aggravated by despair at his failure. Therefore about August 29 he determined to appeal to his brigadiers for suggestions and advice, still reiterating his own belief in the frontal attack on the Beauport line. The brigadiers in their famous reply criticized very soundly the idea of making any further assault between the St. Charles and the Montmorency, and advocated an attack above Quebec, probably above Cap Rouge, pointing out with complete justice that by cutting Montcalm's communications in this way he would be forced to come out and fight. To this reply they appended a plan of operations,⁸⁷ and to say, as Waugh does, that these two documents "contained no idea of importance which Wolfe had not thought of before" is unwise hero-worship, for if he had realized the possibilities of this plan, he was all the more culpable for failing to adopt it earlier.

As the brigadiers well knew, the French were having their troubles, too. The problem of getting provisions to Quebec was becoming more and

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, II, 36-7, Aug. 18, 1759; B. Willson, *Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 462, Wolfe to Saunders, Aug. 30, 1759; 470, Wolfe to Pitt, Sept. 2, 1759.

⁸⁵e.g., by W. T. Waugh, *James Wolfe*, 274.

⁸⁶Knox, *Historical Journal*, III, 165, Murray to Holmes, Aug. 11, 1759; Kimball, *Correspondence of W. Pitt with Colonial Governors*, II, 156, Wolfe to Pitt, Sept. 2, 1759.

⁸⁷B. Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 466-7; C. V. F. Townshend, *Life of . . . Townshend*, 205-8; Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, II, 242; R. H. Mahon, *Life of . . . Murray*, 128-129.

more acute; the English ships were making it difficult to bring them down as in the past by water, and transport by road was slow and arduous, because the road was very bad, especially in wet weather, and the carts were too few and were always breaking down;⁸⁸ still on August 23 there had slipped through by water a convoy that would keep the army fed until Sept. 10 but no longer, and on Aug. 29 the ration of bread was reduced from one pound to three-quarters, in the hope of postponing the day of starvation.⁸⁹ Moreover, in consequence of these hardships, and still more of discouragement resulting from the length of the campaign, large numbers of the Canadians "dont le genre de guerre est de faire un coup subit" were deserting and going home.⁹⁰ Therefore it was becoming very obvious that for reasons both psychological and practical, Montcalm might well be forced to fight if pressure were brought to bear on his communications: this had been true for at least a month, and at last Wolfe was stirred by the brigadiers' letter to action, and action along the right lines. On Sept. 3 the troops were evacuated from the camp at Montmorency, though Wolfe made a last desperate attempt to trap Montcalm into attacking what looked like an unprotected camp; Montcalm very wisely refused to accede to his officers' requests for action, and in the morning the English withdrew.⁹¹ But even yet Wolfe was not entirely converted to the idea of throwing all his men into an attack above Quebec, or if he were, he was still acting unwisely, for on Aug. 31 he drastically weakened his force by sending some 1,600 men down the river on a raiding expedition. They were not present at the final battle as they did not return until Sept. 20.⁹²

Having transferred the greater part of his army to Pointe de Lévis and above, there is little doubt that Wolfe in all good faith accepted the brigadiers' plan; there is not an iota of evidence that he had anything else in his mind. The plan was a good one, previous experiment had shown that a landing could be effected, in fact, the landing at Deschambault under Murray on Aug. 19 was almost a dress rehearsal for the Anse au Foulon a month later; exactly the same preparations were used, there had been the same alarming of the French elsewhere, even the landing was about the same time, 4.00 a.m.—the only difference being that the boats went up river instead of down.⁹³ In addition it was pretty certain that the brigadiers' plan would produce results; the only real point to settle was where the landing was to be made. This is the perfectly simple

⁸⁸*Quebec Literary and Historical Soc. Documents*, 1st Series, Evénements, 51, 56, Aug. 1, 16, 18; Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, IV, 45, Bigot à Bougainville, Aug. 16, 1759.

⁸⁹*Journal de Montcalm*, 595, 599, Aug. 23, 28; Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, IV, 65-66, Vaudreuil à Bougainville, Aug. 23, 1759; 67, Cadet à Bougainville, Aug. 24, 1759; Knox, *Historical Journal*, II, 53, note; *Rapport de l'Archiviste de . . . Québec*, 1920-21, 196. *Journal du Siège de Québec* (par De Vienne?); *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques*, IX, 193-4, *Journal de M. Récher*.

⁹⁰Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, V, 293, *Journal Abrégé d'un Aide-de-Camp*; *Journal de Montcalm*, 576-7, July 17, 1759; *Siège de Québec en 1759 copié . . . par l'Hon. D. B. Viger* (Quebec, 1836), 22.

⁹¹J. S. Corbett, *England in the Seven Years War*, I, 457; Knox, *Historical Journal*, II, 58-59.

⁹²R. H. Mahon, *Life of Murray*, 129; Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, III, 124; Knox, *Historical Journal*, II, 54-5, 136.

⁹³W. Wood, *Logs of the Conquest of Canada*, 319, *Sutherland's Log* under the date Aug. 18.

explanation of the passing backwards and forwards on the river both of the generals and of the ships—for while the former were spying out the land, the latter were confusing the enemy as to their ultimate intentions. So on Sept. 7, Monckton, Murray, Townshend and Wolfe all went up in the *Hunter* to look at Pointe-aux-Trembles, after the ships had threatened Cap Rouge; on the 8th "Genl. Wolfe went a reconnoitering down the River" while a reconnaissance or a feint was made against Pointe-aux-Trembles; on the 9th the weather was thoroughly bad and operations were suspended; on the 10th Wolfe took Townshend, Monckton, Holmes, Mackellar, Carleton and Capt. Chads down to Goreham's Post on the south shore to examine at what point a landing might be made. By this time he had certainly selected the place he preferred, for on that same day he wrote to Col. Burton, giving him exact details.⁹⁴ Both the idea and the general outlines of the plan were the brigadiers', though Wolfe had certainly considered an attack above Quebec early in July and had definitely abandoned it. The details of method and the selection of the place of landing were Wolfe's, though Murray had reported that, early in August when on his way up river with Admiral Holmes, he had made a feint of landing at the Anse St. Michel next to the Anse au Foulon.⁹⁵

The first point to be settled, therefore, is whether the Anse au Foulon or some spot above Cap Rouge would have been the better. A great deal of discussion has been rather wasted on this question. It has been pointed out that a landing at the Foulon placed the English across only the upper road from Quebec to Montreal, while one made above St. Augustin would have given Wolfe control not only of the upper road but also of the lower one that ran from Quebec through the St. Charles valley and joined the upper one close to that village. In this way French communications would have been completely cut, their line of retreat to Montreal destroyed, and a complete surrender of the whole French army inevitable, once they were defeated. All this is perfectly sound, but against it, is urged the fact that the landing at the Foulon was a direct and immediate threat to Quebec and therefore forced on a battle at once; this is also quite true. Frankly, neither of these arguments matters very much; even if Wolfe and the brigadiers knew anything about the importance of the lower road, and there is no evidence that they did, the one thing they were thinking of, was to bring Montcalm to battle away from his entrenchments. Wolfe believed, and in fact it was perfectly true, that the French were getting straitened for supplies, and the only area from which they could draw their supplies was Montreal; therefore any serious threat to his line of communications would force Montcalm to act, and, when the transport was slow moving waggon trains, the threat was just as serious from the Foulon as from St. Augustin. On the other hand Wolfe could advance on Quebec as easily, though not quite so quickly, from St. Augustin as he could from

⁹⁴Knox, *Historical Journal*, II, 79-80, 84, 85; Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, IV, 121, Remigny à Bougainville, Sept. 11, 1759; V, 185-6, Journal of the Particular Transactions, Sept. 6-10; 266-7, Townshend's Journal, Sept. 7, 8, 10; *Quebec Literary and Historical Soc. Documents*, 4th Series, A Journal of the Expedition up the St. Lawrence, 17; B. Willson, *Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, 477-8, Wolfe to Col. Burton, Sept. 10; 485, Wolfe to Monckton, Sept. 12; W. Wood, *Logs of the Conquest of Canada*, 231, 240-1, 293-4, 320-1.

⁹⁵R. H. Mahon, *Life of . . . Murray*, 123.

the Foulon; Quebec was quite indefensible and Montcalm knew it,⁹⁶ and there is not the slightest doubt but that he would not have dared to let it be captured without a battle even if he had wanted to do so:⁹⁷ Vaudreuil's opposition and the psychological effect on his troops would have been too great. As to bringing about the surrender of the whole French army, it might possibly have been done after the battle on the Heights of Abraham, it quite probably would not have resulted from a battle near St. Augustin, for the French Canadians would merely have faded off through the woods. Therefore, so far as potential results are concerned, there is little to choose between the brigadiers' landing place and Wolfe's; either would have produced a battle.

The story is very different when the question of a reasonable chance of success is considered. The establishment of the English army somewhere on the shore road above St. Augustin could undoubtedly have been accomplished with adequate safety, and the fact that they would have had to fight Montcalm and Bougainville's forces combined would have made little difference. This was hardly the case at the Anse au Foulon. Of course there was no real geographical difficulty about the landing; De la Pause when he surveyed the north shore, probably in June or July, found "Un grand chemin" down which two men could descend side by side; and an anonymous French officer describes it as "a convenient Road . . . wide enough even for carriages".⁹⁸ The French knew the danger but they also knew that a guard of 100 men or so, on the alert and giving the alarm at once, could hold the cliff top until reinforcements could arrive—if those reinforcements were reasonably close at hand; that is why the regiment of Guienne was placed by Montcalm in reserve behind the Anse St. Michel on Sept. 5 only to be sent back on Sept. 6 by Bougainville at the urging of Vaudreuil.⁹⁹ Wolfe's plan made no allowance whatever for an adequate French defence of the Foulon and he was saved from disaster only by two accidental circumstances over which he had no control.

In the first place, at Cadet's earnest request, Bougainville was going to send down a convoy of provisions by water to Quebec on the night of Sept. 12; the sentries were warned to let it pass and, when the English boats came along, accepted the explanation a Scotch officer gave in French that they were the convoy and no noise must be made; consequently the alarm was not given until it was too late.¹⁰⁰ This was not part of Wolfe's plan and the English knew nothing whatever about the convoy until two

⁹⁶See above, 21.

⁹⁷There is no contemporary French authority that doubts that Montcalm would be obliged to fight Wolfe, if the English landed on the north shore above Quebec.

⁹⁸*Rapport de l'Archiviste de . . . Québec, 1933-4, 95. Itinéraire de ma Route; Doughty and Parmelee, Siege of Quebec, IV, 253, Journal of a French Officer, Sept. 5.*

⁹⁹Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec, IV, 93, Montcalm à Bougainville, Sept. 5; 96, 99-100, 101-102, Vaudreuil à Bougainville, Sept. 5, 6; 103, Montreuil à Bougainville, Sept. 6; Malartic, Journal des Campagnes au Canada, 280-1; Quebec Literary and Historical Soc. Documents, 1st Series, Evénements, 61; Rapport de l'Archiviste de . . . Québec, 1933-4, 130, 131, Continuation du Journal de la Campagne 1759 de M. de la Pause; Dominion Archives Report, 1899, Supplement, 179, Montcalm à Vaudreuil, undated, but probably in August.*

¹⁰⁰Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec, IV, 126, Cadet à Bougainville, Sept. 12; 203-4, Journal de Foligné; V, 187, Journal of the Particular Transactions; 213-4, Townshend's Rough Notes on the Siege of Quebec; Quebec Literary and Historical Soc. Documents, 1st Series, Evénements, 65, 80; Collection . . . de Lévis; Lettres de Divers Particuliers, Montreuil à Lévis, Sept. 15, 1759; Rapports de l'Archiviste de . . . Québec, 1920-1, 199.*

deserters came on board the *Hunter* at 11.00 p.m. on the night of Sept. 12.¹⁰¹ Had the leading boats not heard this news, and still more, had there been no convoy at all to cover their descent, the attempted landing might have been very disastrous. The second accident which gave Wolfe's plan a possibility of success was the fact that Montcalm had ordered the regiment of Guienne to camp at the head of the Anse au Foulon on Sept. 12, only to have this order postponed by Vaudreuil with his famous "nous verrons cela demain".¹⁰² What would have happened had the English advance-guard been opposed by a whole regiment of regulars instead of Vergor's sleeping handful need not be emphasized. But for these two unforeseen accidents, Wolfe's famous plan would have been little better than a gamble with his men's lives as stakes; the plan proposed by the brigadiers might have been much less spectacular, but it would have produced the same results, without the risk of a serious disaster.

Lastly, Wolfe's position when he did reach the Heights of Abraham was so unsound on the basis of any recognized military tactics that it has induced Major-General Mahon, in order to explain and justify his operations, to invent a fantastic story of treachery on the part of French officials and a frail lady luring Bougainville from his post.¹⁰³ Wolfe's communications with his ships and his guns were thoroughly bad, and he was obviously in danger of being attacked by Montcalm in front and by Bougainville in the rear. He was relying on the superiority of his troops over the French, and I think that even under these circumstances he would probably have won the day. But he was undoubtedly saved from a very dangerous position by three factors, two of which, at least, must have been entirely unforeseen: the decision of Montcalm to fight at once, a decision that was by no means inevitable though approved of at the time by all his officers, the culpable negligence of Vaudreuil in not making sure that Bougainville was warned as promptly as possible of what was happening, and the unpardonable refusal of de Ramezay to send the guns for which Montcalm had asked.¹⁰⁴ There was no diversion by the ships to hold Bougainville up the river as has been suggested; the *Sutherland* remained where she was almost opposite Cap Rouge, the rest of the ships dropped down to the Foulon and the *Sutherland* then followed.¹⁰⁵ But the feint made by the fleet off Beauport and the bombardment of the town from the batteries on the Pointe-aux-Pères were soundly conceived and admirably executed.

The essential part of the battle lasted barely a quarter of an hour; Wolfe's two-deep line of which a good deal has been written, was not the result of considered policy, but of the fact that, if he held his reserves,

¹⁰¹Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, V, 50, Journal of Major Moncrief; 111-113, Memoirs of John Johnson; W. Wood, *Logs of the Conquest of Canada*, 232, the *Hunter*, Sept. 13.

¹⁰²*Bulletin des Recherches Historiques*, IX, 139, Journal de M. Récher; *Journal de Montcalm*, 610; Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, V, 50-1, Journal of Major Moncrief. Vaudreuil's letter on the subject written after the event, is almost certainly a lie.

¹⁰³R. H. Mahon, *Life of . . . Murray*, 170-187.

¹⁰⁴Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, IV, 126-7, Vaudreuil à Bougainville, Sept. 13; J. W. Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, II, 379. He goes so far as to say that had Montcalm received all the guns he might have had he could have blasted the English army off the field.

¹⁰⁵Doughty and Parmelee, *Siege of Quebec*, III, 107; R. H. Mahon, *Life of . . . Murray*, 182-3; W. Wood, *Logs of the Conquest of Canada*, 242, 321-2.

he had too few men to make a three-deep line or a four-deep line. But anyway the victory was won. Vaudreuil was in ignominious flight and the fall of Quebec was practically a foregone conclusion, though de Ramezay could not be said to have acted with great courage. As a consequence French historians have since been faced with the awkward predicament of blaming de Ramezay, one French Canadian, in order to save Vaudreuil, another French Canadian, from the shame of this surrender, there being no foreign-born scapegoat available.

How then should the military reputation of Major-General James Wolfe be regarded? Neither at Rochefort nor at Louisbourg did he show any real strategical ability. Had he died in 1758, on his way back to England, his name would have been known to few historians; but, as it is, hypnotized by his later victory, they have interpreted his actions and policies at Rochefort and at Louisbourg wholly in the light of what they believed he did at Quebec. And the judgment that has been passed upon his Quebec campaign owes far too much to the appeal of its romantic, but fictitious setting. There were all the appurtenances of the Gothic School of writers ready to hand: the climbing of unscalable cliffs in the dead of night, the lines of solemn poetry read in the wings, the standing at dawn before the frowning fortress-capital of New France, the exaggeration of the size of the French army, the sweeping Highland charge, claymore in hand, and finally the wounding or the death of nearly all the leaders on both sides. Few could resist the temptation to find in Wolfe an almost infallible hero, when he was set against such a background as this.

But when we come down to earth and study what actually happened, we soon discover how different the real story is: the disastrous defeat of July 31, brought about almost entirely by Wolfe's bad judgment; the fumbling, the lack of any real plan, the month of futility that followed, the appeal to the brigadiers, and the final scheme that developed very largely under the stimulus of his subordinates, and to which Wolfe contributed those factors whose success must depend almost entirely upon blind chance.¹⁰⁶ It was daring, it was dramatic, but it was hardly the sound military strategy in which a general, responsible for the lives of his soldiers, ought to indulge.

Wolfe has been acclaimed as a master of combined operations, yet for weeks he failed to use the advantage his ships gave him above Quebec, and he knew very little of the problems of naval action or of the sea; he hated it—to him it was always a green-faced monster—and he had a peculiar gift for making light of those difficulties that other men had to meet, while his censorious tongue seemed to urge him on to amplify their faults. These are not qualities of a great general. Wolfe was a thoroughly good regimental officer, a commander who would care well for his men, for they were the raw material he must use in war, a subordinate for whom hard work and danger had no terrors. But beyond this he never went; when thrown upon his own initiative, when faced by a general, such as Montcalm, who knew exactly what he had to do, when asked to weave the strategic elements of a complicated situation into a coherent pattern, Wolfe still remained a competent regimental officer despairingly faced with a problem that, alone and unaided, he did not know how to solve.

¹⁰⁶These views are very similar to those held by M. de la Pause, aide-de-camp to Lévis, and one of the most acute military critics in the French army in Canada. (*Rapport de l'Archiviste de . . . Québec*, 1933-4, 154).