CHAPTER XXIX.

ALMOST three weeks were consumed by Montgomery in ineffectual efforts to compel Carleton to surrender, or to make an attempt to enter the town. Mutinous murmurs became audible in the camp. The term of enlistment of many of the men was nearly expired, and the small-pox made its appearance among the soldiers. The commander perceived that something effectual must be done immediately, or the attempt to reduce Quebec must be abandoned.

A fearful web of difficulties was gathering around Montgomery, and he called a Council of War. Price and Antill had expressed a belief that if he could get possession of the Lower Town, the merchants and other citizens would induce Carleton to surrender rather than expose all their property to destruction. He laid before the council the plan he had hinted at in his letter to General Wooster on the 16th, and it was approved. But when he proceeded to make the final arrangements for the assault, he found some of Arnold's battalion indisposed to join in the measure, on account of difficulties among the officers.

"When last I had the honor to write to you," wrote Montgomery to Schuyler, "I hoped before now to have had it in my power to give you some good news. I then had reason to believe the troops well inclined for a *coup-de-main*. I have since discovered, to my great mortification, that three companies of Colonel Arnold's detachment are very averse from the measure. There is strong reason to believe their difference of sentiment from the rest of the troops arises from the influence of their officers. Captain Hanchett, who has incurred Colonel Arnold's displeasure by some misconduct, and thereby given room for harsh language, is at the bottom of it, and has made some declarations

which, I think, must draw upon him the censure of his country, if brought to trial. Captains Goodrich and Hubbard seem to espouse his quarrel. A field officer is concerned in it, who wishes, I suppose, to have the separate command of those companies, as the above-mentioned captains have made application for that purpose. This dangerous party threatens the ruin of our affairs. I shall, at any rate, be obliged to change my plan of attack, being too weak to put that in execution I had formerly determined on. I am much afraid my friend, Major Brown, is deeply concerned in this business. I will hereafter acquaint you more particularly with this matter."*

That after communication was never made. This was the last letter that Montgomery ever wrote to Schuyler. His suspicions concerning Major Brown's complicity in the affair, was justified by facts. That officer and Arnold had quarreled on Lake Champlain, and there was a deadly feud between them. Forgetful of his duty to the cause, Brown made the dispute with Captain Hanchett an occasion to annoy Arnold, from the time they left Point aux Trembles, by widening the breach, and endeavoring to seduce the three captains named, from the command of their leader to that of his own. He was so far successful that the commanders and their companies threatened to leave the army unless they should be detached from Arnold's corps. "I must try every means to prevent their departure," wrote Montgomery to Schuyler. "In this matter I am much embarrassed. Their officers have offered to stay, provided they may join some other corps. This is resentment against Arnold, and will hurt him so much that I don't think I can consent to it."

Montgomery's wisdom and firmness finally healed the dissensions and restored order. At sunset on Christmas day, he reviewed Arnold's battalion at Morgan's quarters, and addressed them with warmth of sentiment and eloquence of expression. He then called a council of war, and it was agreed to make a night attack upon the Lower

* Autograph letter, December 26, 1775.

Town, much after the manner he had already proposed. One third of his men were to set fire to houses in St. Roque, so as to consume the stockade in that quarter of the British works, while the main body should attempt to take Cape Diamond bastion, by escalade, and thus gain command of the fortress and the Upper Town.

Preparations for the assault were carried on actively. Young Burr, now holding the rank of captain in Montgomery's military family, was eager for renown. He sought and obtained permission to lead a forlorn hope in scaling Cape Diamond bastion. He prepared his ladders and drilled his men with care. Every evening, while waiting for the dark and stormy night on which Montgomery had determined to make the attempt, he reconnoitered the proposed point of attack, and made himself thoroughly acquainted with every foot of the locality.

It was with impatience that Montgomery waited for the serene cold days and nights to pass away, and a stormy hour to begin. Favorable omens at length appeared. On the 30th, only the day before the expiration of the term of service of his troops, the air thickened, and early in the evening a snow storm from the northeast set in. His troops were now reduced by desertion and the small-pox to seven hundred and fifty men. But the brave General was not to be deterred from attempting the capture of the Canadian capital. No doubt he would have succeeded, had not false Canadians, who deserted, apprised the garrison of his plans. Carleton and McLean, and the loyal inhabitants and the garrison, were consequently on the alert. Two-thirds of the men lay on their arms, to be prepared for a surprise, and Carleton and other civilians slept in their clothes. Aware of all this, Montgomery again changed his plan of attack.

Colonel Livingston, with his corps, was directed to

make a feigned attack on St. Louis Gate, and set it on fire, and at the same time Major Brown was to menace Cape Diamond bastion. Arnold, with three hundred and fifty of his men, and forty of Lamb's artillery company, was to assail the works in the suburb St. Roque, while Montgomery with the remainder was to pass below Cape Diamond bastion, carry the defenses at the base of the declivity, and endeavor to press forward and form a junction with Arnold. Being thus in possession of the Lower Town, the combined forces were to carry Prescott gate, at the lower end of Mountain street, and rush into the city.

Montgomery gave orders for the troops to be ready at two o'clock on the morning of the 31st; and that they might recognize each other, each soldier was directed to fasten a piece of white paper to the front of his cap. Some of them wrote upon the paper the thrilling words of Patrick Henry, "LIBERTY OR DEATH."

At the appointed hour the troops were put in motion. The New Yorkers, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell, and a party of Easton's corps, paraded at Holland House, and were led by Montgomery, in single file, down the ravine to Wolfe's cove, and thence along the St. Lawrence shore (now Champlain street), about two miles toward the barrier under Cape Diamond. Meanwhile Arnold, who had paraded with his division at Morgan's quarters, advanced from the General Hospital, on the banks of the St. Charles, through the suburb St. Roque, to attack the barrier below Palace Gate, and Brown and Livingston proceeded to their respective points of action.

The path along the St. Lawrence was exceedingly rough, being blocked with rocks, snow, and ice. The wind had increased almost to a gale. It came from the

northeast, freighted with snow, sleet, and cutting hail, and blew furiously in their faces. The progress of the troops on both sides of the town was very slow, and Montgomery was yet some distance from his expected point of attack, when Brown's signal of assault on Cape Diamond bastion was given. He pushed forward with his aid-de-camp, Macpherson, and the companies of Captains Cheesman and Mott, and arrived at the first barrier before daylight. It was undefended, and Montgomery and the brave young Cheesman were the first to enter it after the carpenters who accompanied them, had sawed away some pickets. He sent messengers back to hurry on the remainder of the troops, and at the same time he pressed eagerly forward along the narrow shelf between the foot of the Cape Diamond cliff and the river, to observe the character of the way and the nature of the obstructions. He found a log building across the path, with loop-holes for musketry, and a battery of two small field-pieces. Perceiving no signs of life, he believed the garrison not to be on the alert. Burning with impatience and certain of success, about sixty of his men had passed the first picket barrier. Montgomery shouted, "Men of New York, you will not fear to follow where your General leads; push on, my boys, and Quebec is ours!" and rushed forward to surprise and take the battery.

But there had been vigilant eyes and ears within that log-house all this while. It was occupied by thirty Canadians and eight British militia-men, under Captain John Coffin, with nine seamen, under Captain Barnsfare (master of a transport), who acted as cannoniers. The noise on Cape Diamond had given them the alarm, and through the vail of snow, in the dim light of a winter's dawn, they had seen the republicans approaching. They waited until Montgomery and his men had gained a slight eminence

within fifty yards of the mouths of their cannon, which were loaded with grape-shot, when Barnsfare gave the word, and they were discharged with deadly effect. Montgomery, Macpherson, Cheesman, and ten others in the narrow pass were slain. The remainder of the troops, appalled by the death of their general, fled in confusion toward Wolfe's Cove, when Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell, the quarter-master-general, being the senior officer, took the command.

Captain Samuel Mott was eager to go forward, but he was almost alone in sentiment. The other officers counseled a withdrawal. The deadly battery of cannon and musketry was pouring forth volley after volley, and Campbell, after brief consultation, ordered a retreat.

In the death of Macpherson and Cheesman, the cause of liberty lost two noble and gallant young champions. Only three weeks before, the former wrote to General Schuyler, saying:

"Will you give me leave to mention to you my inclination to serve in some regiment in the new levies? The happiness I experienced while in yours, and since I have been of General Montgomery's family, is lessened when I reflect that I am but half a soldier, as being at headquarters exempts me from many fatigues which others undergo. This, and a natural desire of rising, which is, I believe, common to every one, lead me to request the favor of your recommendation for such a commission as you think I deserve. If this takes place, I should not desire, on that account, to quit the present service till the reduction of Quebec (an event, I imagine, at no great distance), till when I think the service of all here indispensably necessary. After that, many of us may be spared."*

On the very day of the death of these gallant soldiers, Schuyler wrote to Montgomery—"I have warmly recommended Macpherson to Congress for a majority, happy if I can, at any time, serve so worthy a young gentleman."†

* Autograph letter, Dec. 6, 1775. † MS. Letter Books, Dec. 31, 1775.

Only a week before, young Cheesman wrote to his father, saying:

"I am now within one mile of Quebec, waiting for an opportunity, or rather a convenient time, to enter the city, which must be taken by storm. . . . Our army is dwindled away to almost nothing, officers as well as men. Every trifling disorder that overtakes them renders them unfit to remain longer with their company or in the service of their country. My company, only, keeps their officers, all of whom are in health, for which I thank that God who has hitherto preserved and given us victory. . . . I can't tell when I shall return home, for I can't do like many of my fellow-citizens—after putting my hand to the plow, look back; especially now, when my country calls loudly for assistance. I hope those who come to reinforce us will press forward, and not shrink, like numbers who came about the time I did in the service, both Yorkers and New England men. My love to brothers and sisters; my respects to Messrs. Franklin and inquiring friends, and duty to you and mamma."*

While these sad events were occurring on the St. Lawrence side of the town, Arnold was making his way through St. Roque to barriers on the St. Charles. The snow lay in huge drifts, and as he approached the Sault au Matelot the pathway was narrowed by heavy masses of ice, which the wind and tide had cast upon the shore.

It was before daybreak when Arnold, at the head of a forlorn hope of twenty-five men, passed the foot of the declivity below Palace Gate. The town was in an uproar. The bells of the city were ringing, the drums were beating a general alarm, the cannon were beginning to roar, and musketeers were mounting the walls. Arnold was accompanied by his secretary, Captain Oswald, and followed by Captain Lamb and his artillery, with a single field-piece upon a sled. Next to these were a party with ladders and other scaling implements, followed by Morgan and his riflemen; and in the rear of all was the main body, in number twice that of Montgomery's division. They were compelled

* Autograph letter, December 23, 1775.

to march in single file, and the drifts of snow became so deep, as the pathway narrowed, that Lamb and his company abandoned their cannon, and joined in the assault with small arms.

The first barricade was a two gun battery at the Sault au Matelot, a narrow place below a projecting crag of the promontory. Just as Arnold, with the advance, entered the narrow space leading to this battery, he was observed by the sentinels upon the walls, and the whole detachment were immediately exposed to an enfilading fire of musketry. Livingston, by some mistake, had failed to make the attack upon St. Louis Gate, and hence the attention of the enemy was not drawn off from Arnold's movements.

Arnold, with his forlorn hope, now rushed forward to attack the barrier, when he was severely wounded in the right leg, near the knee, by a musket ball that passed through it. He was completely disabled, and was borne away to the general hospital. Morgan's men immediately rushed forward and fired into the port-holes, while their leader, with Porterfield and others, mounted the redoubt by ladders, made prisoners of the captain and guard, and took possession of the battery with a shout that struck terror into the ranks of the enemy.

The command of Arnold's division now devolved on Morgan. The storm was beating furiously, and the cold was intense. Joined by Greene, Meigs, and Bigelow, the assailing party numbered about two hundred. Day was just dawning, and without guides or any knowledge of the way before them, they pressed forward in the morning twilight to the second barricade, at the eastern extremity of Sault au Matelot street. There the defenses extended from the rocky declivity to the river, and the present [1860] custom-house, then a private dwelling, had cannon projecting from the wings of the gable. A fierce contest ensued. For three hours the contestants fought desperately, and many

were killed on both sides. Above the din of battle and the roar of the tempest, the voice of Morgan was heard encouraging his men, and at last the republicans gained the victory. They drove the British from their guns, captured the battery, and took refuge in the stone houses near. Captain Lamb was severely wounded in the cheek by a grape shot, and was borne off senseless; and other officers were more or less injured.

Inspirited by success, Morgan was preparing to push forward and force his way into the town, when news of sad disaster reached him. Captain Dearborn had been stationed near Palace Gate, in the rear, and was discovered by the sentinels at day-break. By that time Carleton was aware of the repulse at Cape Diamond and that Brown's attack was only a feint; he therefore directed all his energies against Arnold's division. He immediately dispatched a considerable force toward the suburb St. Roque, to gain the rear of the Americans. As they sallied out of Palace Gate, they surprised and captured Dearborn's corps, pressed onward to the Sault au Matelot, and cut off the retreat of the republicans from the lower town. Intelligence of this movement and of the retreat of Campbell, reached Morgan at the same time. He perceived that further efforts to penetrate the walled city would be vain without coöperation, and he proposed to his soldiers to cut their way through their enemies in the rear. This was impossible, and at ten o'clock, the brave leader of riflemen and the whole surviving party under him, four hundred and twenty-six in number, were surrendered prisoners of war. More than one hundred, it was estimated, had been killed and wounded. The remainder of Arnold's division, who were in the rear as a reserve, retreated, leaving the brass six pound field-piece imbedded in the snow.

Carleton, still fearing the disloyalty of the inhabitants of

Quebec, was afraid to send out troops in pursuit of the fugitive Americans; and their camp, formed by order of Arnold a short distance from the town, remained undisturbed. Although badly wounded and suffering severely, that intrepid officer was not for a moment forgetful of his duty. He had been borne through the snow to the general hospital on the St. Charles, exposed to the enfilading fire of the musketeers upon the walls of Quebec; and, while tortured with pain, he wrote a dispatch to General Wooster, giving an account of the disaster as far as he was informed (his detachment was yet fighting), and asking for immediate reinforcements; for, he declared in another letter, "I have no thoughts of leaving this proud town until I enter it in triumph. I am in the way of my duty, and I know no fear." Well would it have been for his memory, had he perished like Montgomery on that tempestuous morning, and been wrapped in the winding-sheet of deep snow-drifts.

When the contest was ended and the prisoners were secured, Carleton sent out a detachment to search for the body of Montgomery, his old companion-in-arms, whom he remembered as a noble young man, and beloved by Wolfe's army for his vivacity, generous spirit, and manly virtues. He was also well-known and fondly remembered by Lieutenant Governor Cramahé, Major Caldwell, and other officers in Quebec, who were with him at its conquest by the English in 1759. His body was found with those of Macpherson, Cheesman and others, at a point now called Pres-de-Ville, where he fell, shrouded in the snow-drifts. The bodies were conveyed into the city; and when that of Montgomery was identified, it is said Carleton pronounced over it a brief and touching eulogy, while his eyes were streaming with the tears of real sorrow. Cramahé took charge of the remains and buried them, with those of

Macpherson, within the fortifications of the city, where they reposed forty-two years, and were then conveyed to New York and deposited beneath a beautiful mural monument erected by order of Congress, on the exterior of the front wall of St. Paul's Church, in that city.

Intelligence of Montgomery's death went over the country, like the tolling of a funeral bell. His victories had awakened the voices of loudest praise in all parts of the land, and his death was felt as a personal bereavement by thousands who admired and loved him for his bravery and goodness. "Never was a city so universally struck with grief," wrote Thomas Lynch, in Philadelphia, to Schuyler, in Albany, "as this was, on hearing of the loss of Montgomery. Every lady's eye was filled with tears. I happened to have company at dinner, but none had inclination for any other food than sorrow or resentment. Poor, gallant fellow! If a martyr's sufferings merit a martyr's reward, his claim is indisputable. I am sure from the time he left Ticonderoga to the moment of his release by death, his sufferings had no interval. He now rests from his labor, and his works can't but follow him."*

The sad intelligence fell with blighting force upon the heart of Schuyler, who loved Montgomery as a brother. In his last letter to him, he had said, in conclusion—"Adieu, my dear sir; may I have the pleasure soon to announce another of your victories, and afterward, that of embracing you." Five days afterward in a brief letter to Washington, Schuyler wrote, "I wish I had no occasion to send my dear General the inclosed melancholy accounts. My amiable friend, the gallant Montgomery, is no more! The brave Arnold is wounded, and we have met with a very severe check in an unsuccessful attempt on Quebec. May heaven

* Autograph Letter, January 20th, 1776.

be graciously pleased to terminate the misfortune here! I tremble for our people in Canada."*

Schuyler sent an express to the Continental Congress with the sad intelligence of Montgomery's death; and that body, by resolution, decreed to "transmit to future ages, as examples truly worthy of imitation, his patriotism, conduct, boldness of enterprise, insuperable perseverance, and contempt of danger and death," by erecting a monument to be procured "from Paris or any other part of France," by Dr. Franklin, "with an inscription, sacred to his memory, and expressive of his amiable character and heroic achievements." They also requested the Rev. Dr. Smith, of Philadelphia, "to prepare and deliver a funeral oration in his honor."†

The opposition members of the British Parliament, with eloquent words spoke his praise. Chatham and Burke displayed some of their happiest specimens of eulogy, mixed with the keenest reproof of ministers; and Colonel Barre, who was a fellow-soldier with Montgomery in the last war, shed tears of real grief, as, upon the floor of the House of Commons, he expatiated upon the virtues of the slain hero. But the premier, Lord North, whose unwise measures had kindled the war, said, "I can not join in lamenting the death of Montgomery, as a public loss. He was undoubtedly brave, humane, and generous; but still he was only a brave, humane, and generous rebel. Curse on his virtues, they've undone his country." Fox retorted—"The term rebel is no certain mark of disgrace. All the great assertors of liberty, the saviors of their country, the benefactors of mankind in all ages, have been called rebels. We owe the Constitution which enables us to sit in this House to a rebellion."

* MS. Letter Books, January 13th, 1776.

† Journals of Congress, January 25, 1776.

END OF VOL. I.