

THE SWORD  
OF  
BRIGADIER-GENERAL  
RICHARD MONTGOMERY;  
A Memoir,

COMPILED BY

J. M. LEMOINE, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF "MAPLE LEAVES," "LEGENDARY LORE OF  
THE ST. LAWRENCE," "THE BIRDS OF  
CANADA," ETC.

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Major General - General  
7 Aug 1864  
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Major H. Latour  
presented by  
J. M. Schuman

THE SWORD

OF

Brigd'r-General Richard Montgomery.

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TO  
FRANCIS PARKMAN, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

"FRANCE AND ENGLAND IN NORTH AMERICA," ETC., ETC.,

*THIS INCIDENT*

OF

AMERICAN AND CANADIAN HISTORY

IS

Respectfully Inscribed,

BY

HIS FRIEND AND ADMIRER,

THE AUTHOR.

SPENCER GRANGE, NEAR QUEBEC,

1st August, 1870.

44-31748

3.00

11.2.52

Ketcheson

Lorne Pierce

## INTRODUCTORY.

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This MEMOIR has for object to collect, in a succinct form, the particulars of the Death and Burial of Brigadier-General Richard MONTGOMERY, the leader of the invading army sent into Canada in 1775, by Congress; together with an account of the SWORD the General wore at the time of his death, and how it came into the possession of Mr. James Thompson Harrower, its present owner.

These particulars, supported by historical *data*, are taken chiefly from the journal of the late Mr. James Thompson, overseer of Public Works in the Royal Engineer Department at Quebec, who was, in his official capacity, present when the Brigadier's body was discovered at Près-de-Ville, near Quebec. This gentleman remained possessor of Montgomery's sword for upwards of fifty years—until his death. Mr. Thompson, formerly of the 78th Highlanders, and last survivor of Wolfe's army in Quebec, expired there on the 30th August, 1830, at the advanced age of ninety-eight years, surrounded with the respect of his fellow-men. His demise was noticed in every newspaper in the province. The *Quebec Star*, (1) a leading journal of the period, mentions it in its issue of the 8th of September, 1830, with several incidents of his career.

Mr. James Thompson bequeathed this famous sword to his son James, who died (2) recently at

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Quebec, after enjoying for many years his half-pay pension as Deputy-Commissary-General. Deputy-Commissary-General James Thompson willed the historical blade to his nephew, Mr. James Thompson Harrower, of Quebec, the present owner of General Montgomery's sword.

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(1) *From the Star Newspaper, Quebec, 8th Sept., 1830.*

"THE LATE MR. J. THOMPSON.

"Mr. Thompson was born in the year 1738, at Tain, in Ross-shire, Scotland.

"Owing to a strong attachment to a young man about his own age, who had obtained leave to recruit for a company in a regiment of Highlanders (Captain William Baillie, his cousin), he volunteered to accompany him on the service meditated in 1758, to take place in North America. In this corps, commanded by the Honourable Simon Fraser, of Lovatt, he served in the harassing siege and conquest of Louisbourg, where, on the landing of the troops, and in the same boat with himself, it was his misfortune to lose his friend and captain, he having been the first officer killed.

"From a presentiment of what was to befall him, and motives of pure friendship, this officer, the day previous to the landing, addressed a letter to Colonel Fraser, recommending Mr. Thompson to his protection, and took an opportunity of introducing him to his personal knowledge, thereby securing to him a pledge which, throughout all the various services in which the regiment was afterwards engaged, was faithfully redeemed.

"Mr. Thompson served at the memorable siege and reduction of Quebec in 1759, and was present at the capitulation of the town of Montreal, the following year.



"After the disbandment of the regiment, the early occurrence of which having operated against him obtaining the commission to which he was to have succeeded, he was attached to the Royal Engineer Department in the capacity of overseer of works, in which he continued until the year 1828, being a total period of service of seventy-one years. It was principally owing to an infirmity, contracted during the fatigues of the American war in 1775, the effects of which in his 96th year, constrained him to desist from his official duties. He was particularly active during the first winter after the capture of Quebec in the preparations for the means of defense against an attack by the French, expected to take place the ensuing spring; and in the battle of the 28th April, 1760, on the plains of Abraham, he so highly distinguished himself in the exploits of "Fraser's Highlanders," that after the pressure of duty had somewhat subsided, General Murray, who personally knew his merits, made him an offer of the situations, either of Barrack-Master of Quebec or of Town-Major of Montreal; but he gave the preference to the nature of duties he had to perform in the Engineer Department.

"Mr. Thompson's services were eminently conspicuous on the occasion of the invasion of Canada by the American army in 1775, there having been no commissioned officer of Engineers present at the time.

"On General Arnold's division appearing in front of St. Louis Gate, and then saluting the town of Quebec with three cheers, in expectation that they would be immediately admitted, it was Mr. Thompson who, from expertness in gunnery acquired at Pointe Levy in 1759, levelled and fired the first discharge from a 24-pounder at them from Cape-Diamond Bastion, which caused their precipitate retreat to Pointe-aux-Trembles.

"On the defeat of the other American division, at Près-de-Ville, under General Montgomery, who was

killed, it fell to Mr. Thompson to superintend the private interment of that General's body, whose sword he considered himself entitled to withhold, and which still remains with the family.

"From his general intelligence, particularly on military points, his strong memory, faculties which enabled him to treasure up a store of most interesting anecdotes, and which, up to a period nearly approaching his dissolution, he would freely relate in all their minuteness of circumstances, and with all his frankness of manner, he acquired general esteem, in which he had the happiness to number that of each succeeding Commander of the Forces, and which seems to have gained strength with his increasing years.

"Of his numerous family, four sons attained the age of manhood: two are officers in the Commissariat; a third is the present Judge of Gaspé; and the fourth, who died in Montreal, was a senior lieutenant in the Royal Artillery."

(2) *From the Quebec Chronicle, December 8th, 1869.*

"THE LATE DEPUTY-COMMISSARY-GENERAL THOMPSON.

"One by one our old living landmarks are disappearing from our midst, and this morning we have to record the death of our respected friend, Deputy-Commissary-General Thompson. Of late we had missed him from his familiar walks, and on enquiry we regretted to learn that he had for some weeks been confined to his chamber, and that his memory, which had been hitherto wonderfully clear in connexion with the events of the olden time, had completely failed him; from this we augured that the end was near; and though we heard it with regret, we were not surprised when, yesterday evening, we received notice of his death.



"Mr. Thompson's father came to Quebec with his regiment, which formed part of Wolfe's army, and was present at the battle of the Plains. He had also taken a part in the capture of Louisbourg. On the completion of the conquest, Mr. Thompson settled in Canada, and was a resident of Quebec at the time H. R. H. the Duke of Kent came here in command of the Royal Fusiliers, in 1791. His son, the subject of the present notice, had a distinct recollection of seeing him march at the head of his regiment, from the wharf to the Jesuit Barracks; and only a few weeks ago, in talking over the matter with us, affirmed that a more commanding-looking man than the Prince, or a finer body of men than his regiment, he had never seen in his long life. He told us that the Duke took a great interest in everything in connexion with the operations preceding the conquest, and learning that his father had been present, sent for him and made him describe what he recollected of the events in which he had been a participator. H. R. Highness continued during his residence in Quebec to treat with condescending kindness Mr. Thompson, and on several occasions invited him and his sons to breakfast with him at Haldimand House. The life of Mr. Thompson, senr., was extended to great old age; and it is well known that he was invited by Lord Dalhousie to take part in the ceremony of laying the foundation-stone of the Wolfe and Montcalm monument. The last public act of his son, who has just left us, was the assisting at the re-laying of the same stone, on the re-building of the monument, a few months ago.

"We will miss our old friend very much from his familiar haunts. We will miss his kindly smile and cordial greeting, and his interesting details of what he had witnessed during his long residence in Canada. We had almost omitted to mention that Mr. Thompson and his brothers were proteges of His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, and owed their advancement in life greatly to his kind patronage. Mr. Thompson served long in

the Commissariat, and on his retirement settled in Quebec, where he has been known and respected by a large circle of friends. He has died full of years, being, we believe, the senior of Quebec, and full of honor, if honor consists in a life spent in unblemished integrity. **REQUIESCAT IN PACE."**

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## THE INVASION OF CANADA IN 1775.

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Canada has certainly been, so far, remarkably successful in repelling the many and formidable American invasions of its soil. From the glorious era of lion-hearted Frontenac, in 1690, to the more peaceful and utilitarian times of Sir John Young, in 1870,—for close on two centuries, in fact,—the retreating foe might, with propriety, have inscribed but one word on its blood-stained banner—*Defeat*. At all times Canada's record is a bright one—in early days for the Gaul, and later on, for the Briton. Of this protracted border warfare, none more momentous, none more formidable, than that of 1775.

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“The invasion of Canada by the troops of the American Congress, rendered the year 1775 remarkable in the annals of the Province. The principal points which will demand our attention are the expedition of Arnold, the storming of Quebec, and the death of Montgomery.

Canada, supposed to be perfectly secure, had been left almost destitute of regular troops, nearly all of which had been removed to Boston. The whole force of this description consisted of only two Regiments of Infantry, the 7th Fusiliers, and the 26th, amounting to no more than eight hundred men. Of these the greater part were in garrison at St.

John's, the rest dispersed through the various posts. The Province was, however, extremely fortunate in the character, talents and resources of the Governor, General Carleton.

On the 17th September, 1775, Brigadier General Richard Montgomery, who had formerly been in the British service, appeared at the head of an army, before the Fort of St. John's; which, after a gallant defence, surrendered on the 3rd November, the garrison marching out with the honors of war. Montreal, which was entirely defenceless, capitulated on the 12th November; and General Carleton, conceiving it of the utmost importance to reach Quebec, the only place capable of defence, passed through the American force stationed at Sorel, during the night, in a canoe with muffled paddles, and arrived in Quebec on the 19th, to the great joy of the garrison and loyal inhabitants, who placed every confidence in his well known courage and ability.

While the Province was thus threatened with subjugation on the side of Montreal, a new danger presented itself from a quarter so entirely unexpected, that until the particulars were ascertained, the fears and superstitions of the inhabitants of the country parishes had ample subject for employment and exaggeration. An expedition of a singular and daring character had been successfully prosecuted against Quebec from the New England States, by a route which was little known and generally considered impracticable. This expedition was headed by Colonel Arnold, an officer in the service of Congress; who with two regiments, amounting to

about eleven hundred men, left Boston about the middle of September, and undertook to penetrate through the wilderness to Point Lévi, by the means of the Rivers Kennebec and Chaudière.

The spirit of enterprise evinced in this bold design, and the patience, hardihood and perseverance of the new raised forces employed in the execution, will forever distinguish this expedition in the history of offensive operations. A handful of men ascending the course of a rapid river, and conveying arms, ammunition, baggage, and provisions through an almost trackless wild—bent upon a most uncertain purpose—can scarcely be considered, however, a regular operation of war. It was rather a desperate attempt, suited to the temper of the fearless men engaged in it, the character of the times, and of the scenes which were about to be acted on the American continent. The project, however, of Arnold was by no means an original thought. It had been suggested by Governor Pownall, in his "Idea of the Service of America," as early as the year 1758. He says : "The people of Massachusetts, in the counties of Hampshire, Worcester and York, are the best wood-hunters in America. \* \* \* I should think if about a hundred thorough wood-hunters, properly officered, could be obtained in the County of York, a scout of such might make an attempt upon the settlements by way of Chaudière River."

On the 22nd September, Arnold embarked on the Kennebec River in two hundred batteaux; and notwithstanding all natural impediments—the ascent of a rapid stream—interrupted by frequent *portages* through thick woods and swamps—in spite of

frequent accidents—the desertion of one-third of the number—they at length arrived at the head of the River Chaudière, having crossed the ridge of land which separates the waters falling into the St. Lawrence from those which run into the sea. They now reached Lake Megantic, and following the course of the Chaudière River, their difficulties and privations, which had been so great as on one occasion to compel them to kill their dogs for sustenance, were speedily at an end. After passing thirty-two days in the wilderness, they arrived on the 4th November at the first settlement, called *Sertigan*, twenty-five leagues from Quebec, where they obtained all kinds of provisions. On the 9th, Colonel Arnold arrived at Point Lévi, where he remained twenty-four hours before it was known at Quebec; and whence it was extremely fortunate that all the small craft and canoes had been removed by order of the officer commanding the garrison. On the 13th, late in the evening, they embarked in thirty-four canoes, and very early in the morning of the 14th, he succeeded in landing five hundred men at Wolfe's Cove, without being discovered from the *Lizard* and *Hunter*, ships of war. The first operation was to take possession of what had been General Murray's house on the St. Foy Road (*Sans Bruit*), and of the General Hospital. They also placed guards upon all the roads, in order to prevent the garrison from obtaining supplies from the country.

The small force of Arnold prevented any attempt being made towards the reduction of the fortress until after the arrival of Montgomery from Montreal, who took the command on the 1st December, and established his head-quarters at Holland House.



Arnold is said to have occupied the house near Scott's Bridge, lately inhabited by the Honorable Mr. Justice Kerr (the old homestead of the Langlois family).

The arrival of the Governor on the 19th November had infused the best spirit among the inhabitants of Quebec. On the 1st December, the motley garrison amounted to eighteen hundred men—all, however, full of zeal in the cause of their King and country, and well supplied with provisions for eight months. They were under the immediate command of Colonel Allan Maclean, of the 84th Regiment or Royal Emigrants, composed principally of those of the gallant Fraser's Highlanders who had settled in Canada.

**STATEMENT OF THE GARRISON 1ST DECEMBER, 1775.**

- 70 Royal Fusiliers, or 7th Regiment.
- 230 Royal Emigrants, or 84th Regiment.
- 22 Royal Artillery.
- 330 British Militia, under Lt. Col. Caldwell.
- 543 Canadians, under Col. Dupré.
- 400 Seamen under Capts. Hamilton and Mackenzie.
- 50 Masters and Mates.
- 35 Marines.
- 120 Artificers.

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**1800 Total bearing arms.**

The siege, or rather the blockade, was maintained during the whole month of December, although the incidents were few and of little interest. The Americans were established in every house near the

walls, more particularly in the Suburb of St. Roch, near the Intendant's Palace. Their riflemen, secure in their excellent cover, kept up an unremitting fire upon the British sentries, wherever they could obtain a glimpse of them. As the Intendant's Palace was found to afford them a convenient shelter, from the cupola of which they constantly annoyed the sentries, a nine pounder was brought to bear upon the building; and this once splendid and distinguished edifice was reduced to ruin, and has never been rebuilt. The enemy also threw from thirty to forty shells every night into the city, which fortunately did little or no injury either to the lives or the property of the inhabitants. So accustomed did the latter become to the occurrences of a siege, that at last they ceased to regard the bombardment with alarm. In the meantime, the fire from the garrison was maintained in a very effective manner upon every point where the enemy were seen. On one occasion, as Montgomery was reconnoitring near the town, the horse which drew his cariole was killed by a cannon shot.

During this anxious period the gentry and inhabitants of the city bore arms, and cheerfully performed the duties of soldiers. The British Militia were conspicuous for zeal and loyalty, under the command of Major Henry Caldwell, who had the Provincial rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He had served as Deputy Quarter Master General with the army, under General Wolfe, and had settled in the Province after the conquest. The Canadian Militia within the town was commanded by Colonel Le Comte Dupré, an officer of great zeal and ability, who rendered great services during the whole siege.

General Montgomery, despairing to reduce the place by a regular siege, resolved on a night attack, in the hope of either taking it by storm, or of finding the garrison unprepared at some point. In this design he was encouraged by Arnold, whose local knowledge of Quebec was accurate, having been acquired in his frequent visits for the purpose of buying up Canadian horses. The intention of Montgomery soon became known to the garrison, and General Carleton made every preparation to prevent surprise, and to defeat the assault of the enemy. For several days the Governor, with the officers and gentlemen, off duty, had taken up their quarters in the Récollet Convent, where they slept in their clothes. At last, early in the morning of the 31st December, and during a violent snow storm, Montgomery, at the head of the New York troops, advanced to the attack of the Lower Town, from its western extremity, along a road between the base of Cape Diamond and the river. Arnold, at the same time, advanced from the General Hospital by way of St. Charles street. The two parties were to meet at the lower end of Mountain street, and when united were to force Prescott Gate. Two feint attacks in the mean time on the side towards the west, were to distract the attention of the garrison. Such is the outline of this daring plan, the obstacles to the accomplishment of which do not seem to have entered into the contemplation of the American officers, who reckoned too much upon their own fortune and the weakness of the garrison.

When, at the head of seven hundred men, Montgomery had advanced a short distance beyond the spot where the inclined plane has since been

constructed, he came to a narrow defile, with a precipice towards the river on the one side, and the scarpd rock above him on the other. This place is known by the name of *Prés-de-Ville*. Here all further approach to the Lower Town was intercepted, and commanded by a battery of three pounders placed in a hangard to the south of the pass. The post was entrusted to a captain of Canadian militia, whose force consisted of thirty Canadian and eight British militiamen, with nine British seamen to work the guns, as artillerymen, under Captain Barnsfare, master of a transport, laid up in the harbor during the winter. At day-break, some of the guard, being on the look out, discovered, through the imperfect light, a body of troops in full march from Wolfe's Cove upon the post. The men had been kept under arms waiting with the utmost steadiness for the attack, which they had reason to expect, from the reports of deserters ; and in pursuance of judicious arrangements which had been previously concerted, the enemy was allowed to approach unmolested within a small distance. They halted at about fifty yards from the barrier ; and as the guard remained perfectly still, it was probably concluded that they were not on the alert. To ascertain this an officer was seen to approach quite near to the barrier. After listening a moment or two, he returned to the body ; and they instantly dashed forward at double quick time to the attack of the post. This was what the Guard expected : the artillerymen stood by with lighted matches, and Captain Barnsfare at the critical moment giving the word, the fire of the guns and musketry was directed with deadly precision against the head of the advancing column. The consequence was a precipitate retreat—the enemy

was scattered in every direction—the groans of the wounded and of the dying were heard, but nothing certain being known, the pass continued to be swept by the cannon and musketry for the space of ten minutes. The enemy having retired, thirteen bodies were found in the snow, and Montgomery's Orderly Sergeant desperately wounded, but yet alive, was brought into the guard room. On being asked if the General himself had been killed, the sergeant evaded the question, by replying, that he had not seen him for some time, although he could not but have known the fact. This faithful sergeant died in about an hour afterwards. It was not ascertained that the American General had been killed, until some hours afterwards, when General Carleton, being anxious to ascertain the truth, sent an aide-de-camp, to the Seminary, to enquire if any of the American officers, then prisoners, would identify the body. A field officer of Arnold's division, who had been made prisoner near Sault-au-Matelot barrier, consenting, accompanied the aide-de-camp to the *Pres-de-Ville* guard, and pointed it out among the other bodies, at the same time pronouncing, in accents of grief, a glowing eulogium on Montgomery's bravery and worth. Besides that of the General, the bodies of his two aides-de-camp were recognized among the slain. The defeat of Montgomery's force was complete. Col. Campbell, his second in command, immediately relinquished the undertaking, and led back his men with the utmost precipitation.

The exact spot where the barrier was erected before which Montgomery fell, may be described as crossing the narrow road under the mountain,

immediately opposite to the west end of a building which stands on the south, and was formerly occupied by Mr. Racey, as a brewery. It is now (1834) numbered 58. At the time of the siege this was called the Potash. The battery extended to the south, and nearly to the river. An inscription commemorating the event might properly be placed upon the opposite rock."

(It has been since placed there, with the words : " HERE MONTGOMERY FELL.")

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## GENERAL MONTGOMERY.

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(From Hawkins' *New Historical Picture of Quebec*—1834.)

Richard Montgomery was a gentleman of good family, in the North of Ireland, and connected by marriage with Viscount Ranelagh of that Kingdom. He had been Captain in the 17th Regiment of Foot, and had fought successfully the battles of England, under the immortal Wolfe, on the Plains of Abraham. He afterwards married a daughter of Judge Livingston, of Livingston Manor, on the North River who was living in 1818. Montgomery imbibed the prevalent politics of his father-in-law's family, and joined the cause of the Colonists against the mother country.

Marshall, however, in his life of Washington, remarks that, "though he had embraced the American cause with enthusiasm, he had become wearied with its service" \* \* \* He had determined to withdraw from the army, and had signified before marching from Montreal, his resolution to resign the commission which had been conferred upon him." Marshall adds as a probable incentive to the storming of Quebec on the 31st December, 1775, "the desire of closing his military career with a degree of brilliancy suited to the elevation of his mind, by the conquest of Quebec, and the addition of Canada to the United States."

The excellence of his qualities and disposition procured him an uncommon share of private affection, as his abilities and services had of public esteem. Soon after his death, the Continental Congress ordered a magnificent Cenotaph to be erected to his memory, in St. Paul's Church, New York, with the following inscription:

"Montgomery falls! Let no fond breast repine,  
That Hampden's glorious death, brave Chief, was thine.  
With *his* shall Freedom consecrate *thy* name,  
Shall date her rising glories from thy fame,  
Shall build her throne of Empire on thy grave—  
What nobler fate can patriot virtue crave!"

The following matter of fact, relating to the disinterment of the remains of this officer, is unquestionably authentic. In the year 1818, a request having been made to the Governor-in-Chief, Sir John Sherbrooke, for leave to disinter the remains of General Montgomery, in order that they might be conveyed to New York, and there re-interred, His Excellency acceded to the request, which came to him on the part of Mrs. Montgomery, the widow of the General. Mr. James Thompson, an old gentleman of respectability, serving in the Engineer Department at Quebec, (a sergeant under General Wolfe at the conquest,) who bore arms during the siege of the winter 1775-6 in defence of the city, and on the morning after the attack, had found the body of the deceased General, and afterwards saw it interred in one of the bastions near St. Lewis-Gate, by order of the British Commander, was now ordered to explore the place of interment and dig up the remains. This he accordingly did in the presence of one of His Excellency's Aides-de-Camp, Captain Freer; and although the spot where the body had been deposited was entirely altered in appearance, from the demolition of an old building or powder magazine which was near it, and the subsequent construction of a range of barracks, he hit upon the foot of the coffin, which was much decayed, but of the identity whereof there could not be a doubt, no other body having been interred in its immediate neighborhood, except those of the General's two Aides, M<sup>r</sup> Pherson and Cheeseman, which were placed on each side of their master's body, in their clothes, and without coffins. Mr. Thompson gave the following affidavit of the facts in order to satisfy the surviving relations and friends of General Montgomery, that the remains which had been so disinterred after the lapse of forty two years by the same hand that had interred them, were really those of the late General.

"I, James Thompson, of the City of Quebec, in the Province of Lower Canada, do testify and declare—that I served in the capacity of an Assistant Engineer during

the siege of this city, invested during the years 1775 and 1776 by the American forces under the command of the late Major General Richard Montgomery. That in an attack made by the American troops under the immediate command of General Montgomery, in the night of the 31st December, 1775, on a British post at the southernmost extremity of the city, near *Près de Ville*, the General received a mortal wound, and with him were killed his two Aides-de-Camp, McPherson and Cheeseman, who were found in the morning of the 1st January, 1776, almost covered with snow. That Mrs. Prentice who kept an hotel, at Quebec, and with whom General Montgomery had previously boarded, was brought to view the body, after it was placed in the Guard Room, and which she recognised by a particular mark which he had on the side of his head, to be the General's. That the body was then conveyed to a house, (Gobert's)\* by order of Mr. Cramahé, who provided a genteel coffin for the General's body, which was lined inside with flannel, and outside of it with black cloth. That in the night of the 4th January, it was conveyed by me from Gobert's house, and was interred six feet in front of the gate, within a wall that surrounded a powder magazine near the ramparts bounding on St. Lewis Gate. That the funeral service was performed at the grave by the Reverend Mr. de Montmolin, then chaplain of the garrison. That his two Aides-de-Camp were buried in their clothes without any coffins, and that no person was buried within twenty-five yards of the General. That I am positive and can testify and declare, that the coffin of the late General Montgomery, taken up on morning of the 16th of the present month of June, 1818, is the identical coffin deposited by me on the day of his burial, and that the present coffin contains the remains of the late General. I do further testify and declare

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\* Gobert's house was at the corner of St. Lewis and St. Ursule streets, on the site of the house now numbered 42, St. Lewis street.

that subsequent to the finding of General Montgomery's body, I wore his sword, being lighter than my own; and on going to the Seminary, where the American officers were lodged, they recognized the sword, which affected them so much, that numbers of them wept, in consequence of which, I have never worn the sword since.

"Given under my hand, at the city of Quebec, Province of Lower Canada, 19th June, 1818.

"JAMES THOMPSON."

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(*From the Journal of Mr. James Thompson, late of the 78th Highlanders, as dictated to his son James, at Quebec, 1828.*)

### CAPTAIN MONTGOMERY,

AFTERWARDS GENERAL IN THE AMERICAN SERVICE.

1759—1775.

"I knew Montgomery at the taking of Quebec, in 1759; he was then a captain, and commanded a fencible corps, of which I do not recollect the name. He was posted just on the off-side of the Falls of Montmorency, and was sent by General Wolfe on some particular business down towards Ange Gardien. As he advanced, some of the people turned out and fired upon his advanced party, and this brought on a more general action. Amongst the number that opposed him in this way, was the priest of the parish, as commanding officer. Montgomery defended himself obstinately, and killed most of the Canadians, including the priest himself.\*

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\* Notwithstanding the version of Mr. Thompson, I am inclined to believe, with Lieut. Fraser, who was present at the St. Joachim butchery, that the officer in charge was not Lieut. Richard Montgomery, of the 17th Foot, but Capt. Alexander Montgomery, of the 43rd Foot.—(*Vide Fraser's Journal*, p. 13, published by the *Literary and Historical Society of Quebec*.)

This exasperated them so much, that they became frantic, and scarcely knew what they were about, and, from want of discipline and order, they exposed themselves to Montgomery's mercy.

"Montgomery knew how to take advantage of this, and his party killed every one who came in his way, without any mercy. He fell in with one of his sergeants, having under his charge a young Canadian gentleman who had been placed with the priest for his education, and who, after having lost his teacher, had placed himself under the protection of this sergeant in order to save himself from the butchering work which he had witnessed. Montgomery, after finding out that he was a Canadian, had him shot that instant.

"General Wolfe was very much vexed at Montgomery's conduct. It afterwards appeared that the cause of his resentment towards the Canadians was, his having lost a brother who had been killed, and his body afterwards cruelly mangled by the *savages*\* in connection with the *Canadians* that were in alliance with the savages.

"After the war, Montgomery's corps was disbanded, and he went back to New England, where he engaged in the Revolutionary war against Great Britain; and from his previous knowledge of Quebec, he was no doubt considered the best qualified to head the army that came to the attack of the place in the year 1775, on which occasion he and many of his army lost their lives on the night of the 31st Dec. It was I who found his body in the snow, and afterwards had the direction of burying it privately, by order of General Carleton. The remains were, about the year 1820, taken to the States by his nephew, Mr. Lewis, who obtained the permission of the Governor to that effect. He was the only officer of that army who wore a sword, that ever I discovered; and that self-same sword is in my possession to this very

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\* The word "*Canadians*" is written above those words erased in manuscript.—(Note of the Editor.)

day. It is silver-mounted, but altogether but a poor-looking thing. It has, however, been the means of my receiving the visits of a great number of American ladies and gentlemen, who put so many questions to me, that I am heartily tired of answering them, now that old age has got the better of me.

“ (Related by my father, in August, 1828.)

“ This sword,” adds Mr. Jas. Thompson, junior, “ is now (18th March, 1831,) in my possession, at the Cedars; together with a detailed account of the manner in which Montgomery met his death; the particulars of his burial and of his disinterment, the whole certified by my father’s own signature.”

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*(Extract from HAWKINS' New Historical Picture of Quebec, published in 1834.)*

### GENERAL RICHARD MONTGOMERY—HIS SWORD, &c.

AS RELATED BY MR. JAMES THOMPSON, OVERSEER OF WORKS FOR THE GARRISON OF QUEBEC, WHO, FROM HIS PUBLIC SITUATION, HAD A PARTICULAR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

“ General Montgomery was killed on the occasion of his heading a division of American troops, while moving up to the assault of Quebec, on the night of the 31st December, 1775, or, rather, the morning of the 1st of January, 1776, during a heavy snow-storm from the north-east; under the favor of which, as also to avoid the exposed situation to which his men would have been subjected had the attack been made on the land side, where there were lantern and composition pots kept burning every night during the absence of the moon, he expected the better to carry his point.



"The path leading round the bottom of the rock on which the garrison stands, and called *Près-de-Ville*, was then quite narrow; so that the front of the line of march could present only a few files of men. The sergeant\* who had charge of the barrier-guard Hugh McQuarters,—where there was a gun kept loaded with grape and musket-balls, and levelled every evening in the direction of the said foot-path—had orders to be vigilant, and when assured of an approach by any body of men, to fire the gun. It was General Montgomery's fate to be amongst the leading files of the storming party; and the precision with which McQuarters acquitted himself of the orders he had received, resulted in the death of the general, two aides-de-camp, and a sergeant; at least, these were all that could be found after the search made at dawn of day the next morning. There was but one discharge of the gun, from which the general had received a grape-shot in his chin, one in the groin, and one through the thigh, which shattered the bone. I never could ascertain whether the defection of Montgomery's followers was in consequence of the fall of their leader, or whether owing to their being panic-struck, a consequence so peculiar to an unlooked-for shock in the dead of night and when almost on the point of coming into action; added to which, the meeting with an obstruction (in the barrier) where one was not suspected to exist. Be that as it may, he or rather, the cause in which he had engaged, was deserted by his followers at the instant that their perseverance and intrepidity were the most needed. I afterwards learnt that the men's engagements were to terminate on 31st December (1775.)

"Considering the then weak state of the garrison of Quebec, it is hard to say how much further the enterprise might have been carried had Montgomery effected a

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\* There were other Canadian worthies, who can legitimately share the credit of this *fait d'armes*—Chabot, Coffin, and the captain of an English transport, Barnsfare.—(J. M. L.)

junction with Arnold, whose division of the storming party, then simultaneously approaching by the Sault-au-Matelot extremity, was left to carry on the contest alone, unaided, and which was left to sustain the whole brunt of the battle. But as I do not undertake to give a detailed history of the whole of the events, I return to the *general* and the sword. Holding the situation of overseer of works in the Royal Engineer Department at Quebec, I had the superintendence of the defences to be erected throughout the place, which brought to my notice almost every incident connected with the military operations of the blockade of 1775; and from the part I had performed in the affair generally, I considered that I had some right to withhold the general's sword, particularly as it had been obtained on the battle-ground.

"On its having been ascertained that Montgomery's division had withdrawn, a party went out to view the effects of the shot, when, as the snow had fallen in the previous night about knee deep, the only part of a body that appeared *above* the level of the snow was that of the general himself, whose hand and part of the left arm was in an erect position, but the body itself much distorted, the knees being drawn up towards the head; the other bodies that were found at the moment, were those of his aides-de-camp Cheesman and McPherson, and one sergeant. The whole were hard frozen. Montgomery's sword (and he was the only officer of that army who wore a sword that I ever perceived) was close by his side, and as soon as it was discovered, which was first by a drummer-boy, who made a snatch at it on the spur of the moment, and no doubt considered it as his lawful prize, but I immediately made him deliver it up to me, and some time after I made him a present of seven shillings and sixpence, by way of prize money.

"The sword has been in my possession to the present day (16th Aug. 1828). It has a head at the top of the hilt, somewhat resembling a lion's or bulldog's, with cropt ears, the edges indented, with a ring passing through the chin or underjaw, from which is suspended a double

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silver chain communicating with the front tip of the guard by a second ring; at the lower end of the handle there is, on each side, the figure of a spread eagle. The whole of the metal part of the hilt is of silver. About half an inch of the back part of the guard was broken off while in my possession. The handle itself is of ivory, and undulated obliquely from top to bottom. The blade which is twenty-two inches long, and fluted near the back, is single edged with a slight curve towards the point, about six inches of which, however, is sharp on both edges, and the word "Harvey" is imprinted on it, five and a half inches from the top in Roman capitals in a direction upwards. The whole length of the blade is two feet four inches (when found it had no scabbard or sheath, but I soon had the present one made, and mounted in silver to correspond). As it was lighter and shorter than my own sword, I adopted it and wore it in lieu. Having some business at the "Seminaire," where there was a number of American officers, prisoners of war of General Arnold's division, I had occasion to be much vexed with myself for having it with me, for the instant they observed it they knew it to have been their General's, and they were very much affected by the recollections that it seemed to bring back to their minds, indeed, several of them wept audibly! I took care, however, in mercy to the feelings of those ill-fated gentlemen, that whenever I had to go to the Seminary afterwards, to leave the sword behind me. To return to the General; the body on its being brought within the walls (the garrison) was identified by Mrs. Widow Prentice, who then kept the hotel known by the name of "Free Mason's Hall," by a scar on one of his cheeks, supposed to be a sabre cut, and by the General having frequently lodged at her house on previous occasions of his coming to Quebec on business. General Carleton, the then Governor General, being satisfied as to his identity, ordered that the body should be decently buried, in the most private manner, and His Excellency entrusted the business to me; I accordingly had the body conveyed to a small log house in St. Lewis

street, (opposite to the then residence of Judge Dunn,) the second from the corner of St. Ursule street, owned by one Francois Gaubert, a cooper, and I ordered Henry Dunn, joiner, to prepare a suitable coffin; this he complied with, in every respect becoming the rank of the deceased, having covered it with fine black cloth and lined it with flannel; after the job was completed there was nobody to indemnify six dollars that Dunn gave to the six men who bore the body to the grave; he wished to insist upon my paying his account, as the orders for the other work had been given and paid by me, but as I could not have required his men (having enough soldiers of my own) I contrived to put him off from time to time, and I really believe it remains unpaid till to this day; however, Dunn is long since dead, and as he could well afford to be at the loss, it was perhaps after all, only compelling him to a generous action towards a fallen foe. He deserved, in some measure, to sustain the loss, for I gave him no directions about the six men, as I had a party of my own in waiting at the Chateau to carry the corpse to the grave at the moment that General Carleton conceived proper; and when I did ascertain his wishes to that effect, I proceeded to Gaubert's, where I was told that Mr. Dunn had just taken away the corpse; this was about the setting of the sun on the 4th January, 1776. I accordingly posted up to the place where I had ordered the grave to be dug, (just alongside of that of my first wife, within, and near the surrounding wall of the powder magazine, in the gorge of the St. Lewis bastion,) and found, in addition to the six men and Dunn, the undertaker, that the Rev. Mr. De Montmollin, the military chaplain, was in attendance, and the business thus finished before I got there. On satisfying myself that the grave was properly covered up, I went and reported the circumstances to General Carleton, who expressed himself not too well pleased with Dunn's officiousness. It having afterwards been decided to demolish the powder magazine, and to erect a casemated barrack in its stead, I took care to mark the spot where Montgomery was buried (not so much perhaps on his

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account, as from the interest I felt for it on another score) by having a small cut stone inserted in the pavement within the barrack square, and this precaution enabled me afterwards to point out the place to a nephew of the General, Mr. Lewis, who, learning that the person who had had the direction of the burial of his uncle's corpse was still living, came to Quebec about the year 1818, for the laudable purpose of obtaining the permission of the military commander, General Sherbrooke, to take away the remains. I, of course, was called upon for the purpose of pointing out the spot; and having repaired thither with young Mr. Lewis and several officers of the garrison, together with Chief Justice Sewell and some friends of the deceased, I directed the workmen at once where to dig, and they accordingly took up the pavement exactly in the direction of the grave. The skeleton was found complete, and when removed a musket ball fell from the skull; the coffin nearly decayed. No part of the black cloth of the outside nor of the flannel of the inside were visible; a leather thong with which the hair had been tied, was still in a state of preservation after a lapse of forty-three years; there is a spring of water near the place, which may have had the effect of hastening the decay of the contents of the grave.

The particulars attending the removal of the remains through the several towns of the United States to their ultimate place of deposit (Broadway, New York) were published in all the public papers in that line of communication.

“(Signed) JAMES THOMPSON,  
“Overseer of Works.

“Quebec 16th August, 1828.”

#### ADDITIONAL.

(RELATED FRIDAY EVENING, 19TH DEC., 1828.)

“While engaged in giving directions in respect of the burial of the General's two aids (who were both put into the same grave, just as they had been found, a little in advance of the spot where the General was interred,)

there were sent seventeen dead soldiers of General Arnold's division brought up from Sault au Matelot for the purpose of being buried; these were all put into one pit dug in the slope of the rampart, just in the rear of the powder magazine, also without coffins, as is the practice on the battle field, but no particular mark was left to show the place; many of the American soldiers that were killed in their attempt to force the barrier at Sault au Matelot, were buried on the beach in front of the property of Mr. Wilson and Mr. Racey, both brewers.

"The foregoing particulars were committed to writing in consequence of the frequent visits of American ladies and gentlemen to obtain a view of Montgomery's sword, and a recital of the circumstances attending his death and burial; and in a view, also, of averting the fatigue occasioned by the repeated recital at my father's very advanced age—95 years.

"(Signed,) JAMES THOMPSON, JR.

"A Mr. Ford and a Mr. Gibson, two American gentlemen, the former a historian and the latter a painter, called upon my father in 1828, to be permitted to participate in the information which he possessed in regard to the American attack on Quebec; the particulars of General Montgomery's death and burial; his sword, &c., &c.; and Mr. Gibson begged to be allowed to take my father's portrait for the purpose of being appended to an historical work then in a state of progress, which being acquiesced in, he (Mr. Gibson) continued some time in contemplating the outlines of his features, and expressed his ability to design a portrait from the impression alone which he had framed of his features, on inspection.

"(Signed,) JAMES THOMPSON, JR."

"Before I was relieved from my charge, the Americans invaded Canada (year 1775) when I received the orders of General Carleton, afterwards Guy, Lord Dorchester, to put the extensive fortifications of Quebec in a state of defence at a time when there was not a single article of



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material in stone with which to perform such an undertaking. I was consequently authorized to purchase all that was needful, and to prosecute the work with the greatest dispatch. My first object was to secure stout spar timber for pallsading a great extent of open ground between the gates called Palace and Hope, and again from Cape Diamond half-bastion, along the brow of the cape, towards the Castle St. Lewis. I accordingly succeeded in securing from Monsieur Lefleche's timber-yard, as much spar-timber as I required at three farthings per foot. I made a beginning with fourteen Canadian carpenters at Palace Gate in pallsading with loop-holes for musketry, and made a projection in the form of a bastion, as a defence for the line of pickets, in the gorge of which I erected a block-house which made a good defence. While employed at this station of the works, a company of artificers arrived from Halifax, and another company from Newfoundland joined me soon after. The Halifax men I set to work at pallsading the open ground on Cape Diamond, and framing and erecting a large block-house on the outside of Port St. Louis, to serve as a captain's nightly guard house, in order to be prepared against a surprise, also a block-house on the cape, under Cape Diamond bastion; at the same time a party was employed in laying platforms and repairing embrasures. I also had a party of the carpenters barricading the extremities of the Lower Town, by blocking up all the windows of the houses next to the river side, and those facing the water, leaving only loopholes for musketry, as a defence in case the St. Lawrence shall freeze across. Whilst these detached services were in progress I was on horseback from the rising to the setting of the sun, in attending the several points where my presence was required; and again, owing to the weak state of the troops in garrison, I had to mount picket with my artificers, who were armed for that purpose, from nine o'clock at night until day break each morning, and again resume our labours at the fortifications. Thus I continued during the blockade, without being enabled in the interval to lie down in a

bed—after completing the works of defence, I, with all my artificers, were called upon to do duty as soldiers, and ordered to join Major John Nairn's party as a *corps de réserve*, in case of alarm, the grand parade being fixed upon as our rendez-vous.

"On the 3rd November, 1775, General Arnold, with a party of upwards of seven hundred Americans, came out of the woods at the settlements on the River Chaudière; and on the 9th they marched to Point Levy, where they shewed themselves on the bank, immediately opposite the town of Quebec. On the 14th, in the night, they passed across the St. Lawrence, and paraded in front of Port St. Lewis, at about three hundred yards distance, where they saluted the town with three cheers, in full expectation, no doubt, that the gates would be opened for their reception. At this juncture, I was on Cape Diamond bastion, and myself levelled and fired a 24-pounder at them, which had the effect of making them disperse hastily and retire to Pointe-aux-Trembles.

"On the 5th December, General Montgomery, their chief commander, came with troops from Montreal, and joined Arnold, making their head-quarters at St. Foye. They sent in a flag of truce, which General Carleton utterly disregarded, declaring that he would not have any communication with rebels, unless they came to claim the King's mercy. Montgomery was then induced to try his strength by erecting a six-gun battery in front of St. John's Gate; a battery of two guns on the off-side of River St. Charles; and one of four guns on the Point Levy side, none of which did us any material injury. At this time, the nights being dark, I strongly recommended the use of lanterns extended on poles from the salient angles of all the bastions, the effect of which, as witnessed by Colonel McLean, commanding the 84th Regiment, was highly approved. By means of these lights, even a dog could be distinguished if in the great ditch, in the darkest night. This we continued during the absence of the moon, with the exception of a composition burned in iron pots substituted for candles.

"On the 31st December, before daylight, General Montgomery made an attempt at assault by Près-de-Ville and Sault-au-Matelot, the southern and northern extremities of the Lower Town: Montgomery moved forward with his division to the advanced barrier (which he did not expect to meet with), where a stop was put to his further progress, and where he and two of his officers and a sergeant were shot dead by a single discharge of grape from the second floor of the house now called Cape Diamond Brewery. As soon as these fell, the whole made a precipitate retreat.

"From the part I had performed in this service generally, as also for having had the disposal of the body of the General, which I interred, with permission, inside the St. Lewis Gate bastion, alongside the grave of my first wife, I considered myself entitled to withhold the General's sword, and which has remained in my possession to the present day, (31st July, 1828). It bears the imprint of an eagle's head on the hilt, but is no doubt made by an English cutler, having "Harvey" on the blade.

"General Arnold made his advance by Sault-au-Matelot, and forced a blind made of one-inch boards, and placed in front of two guns at the outside of a barrier. There he received a wound, and was carried away to the Hospital General. All attempts to force the barrier were fruitless; but the enemy got into the houses, and fired from the windows, when a sally through Palace Gate, attacking them in rear, succeeded in surrounding them—in number about three hundred and fifty, about sixty more having been killed. During the contest, the garrison sustained a loss of only five killed and thirteen wounded.

"On the 6th of May, there arrived three ships-of-war, bringing two companies of the 29th Regt., which, with the marines, about 200 in all, immediately landed, and were marched out with our small garrison in pursuit of the enemy, who were found to be in full retreat, and having left behind them everything which they could not carry on their backs.

"Now that the enemy had ceased to disturb us, I had leisure to think of my own situation; and being excessively worn-down with fatigue and anxiety, I ventured upon an indulgence which I had not enjoyed for six months before, viz., that of extending my wearied limbs on a bed. It would seem that the luxury had been ill-timed, for I was immediately afflicted with a debility which confined me to my bed for fourteen days, and my ultimate recovery was extremely tedious. Here I think it worthy of note, that although the American General had ordered scaling ladders to be made by the inhabitants, and brought and laid down on the ground in parcels in several places in front of the works, for the purpose of storming, yet he must have desisted from his original purpose from a consideration that a night attack upon a rampart thoroughly lighted was much too hazardous, and that his better chance of success would be in attacking the lower town, under the favor of a snow-storm, as was, indeed, the case. \* \* \* \*

"It having been decided that the whole of the State prisoners in our possession should be quartered in some place of security, and the remoteness of Malbaie, about 90 miles below Quebec, on the north side of the St. Lawrence, being considered as well adapted to the purpose, I received orders to proceed thither, and to erect suitable buildings for their reception; accordingly, I selected a spot of ground, with the concurrence of the proprietor, Colonel Nairne, and laid down picketing for three buildings, contiguous to each other. The workmen, who were selected from among the prisoners themselves, were taken down with me, and I remained with them until the mason-work rose about a foot from the surface, including a double stack of chimneys to each building. This service, from the circumstance of the country's being unsettled with inhabitants, and the workmen being disaffected, was exceedingly irksome. It was not long after I had left them under the directions of an overseer whom I had chosen, that an express announced their having all deserted, by means of two flat-bottomed boats, across to Kamouraska, where the river is twenty-one

miles broad. From the vigilance of the Canadian peasantry, they were all, however, brought back to Quebec; for which act of loyalty the inhabitants met with a generous reward."

Let us close this short memoir of a distinguished man with the eloquent remarks of the historian of the United States, the Hon. George Bancroft:—

"Montgomery, at his death, was in the first month of his 40th year. He was tall and slender, well limbed, of a graceful address, and a strong and active frame. He could endure fatigue, and all changes and severities of climate. His judgment was cool, though he kindled in action, imparting confidence and sympathetic courage. Never himself negligent of duty, never avoiding danger, discriminating and energetic, he had the power of conducting freemen by their voluntary love and esteem. An experienced soldier, he was also well versed in letters, particularly in natural science. In private life he was a good husband, brother, and son, an amiable and faithful friend. The rectitude of his heart shone forth in his actions, which were habitually and unaffectedly directed by a nice moral sense. He overcame difficulties which others shunned to encounter. Foes and friends paid tribute to his worth. The governor, lieutenant-governor and council of Quebec, and all the principal officers of the garrison, buried him and his aide-de-camp, Macpherson, with the honours of war.

"At the news of his death, 'the whole city of Philadelphia was in tears; every person seemed to have lost his nearest relative or heart friend.' Congress proclaimed for him 'their grateful remembrance, profound respect, and high veneration; and desiring to transmit to future ages a truly worthy example of patriotism, conduct, boldness of enterprise, insuperable perseverance, and contempt of danger and death,' they reared a marble monument 'to the glory of Richard Montgomery.'

"In the British Parliament, the great defenders of liberty vied with each other in his praise. Barré, his veteran fellow-soldier in the late war, wept profusely as he expatiated on their fast friendship and participation of service in that season of enterprise and glory, and, holding up the British commanders in review, pronounced a glowing tribute to his superior merits. Edmund Burke contrasted the condition of the eight thousand men, starved, disgraced, and shut up within the single town of Boston, with the movements of the hero who in one campaign had conquered two-thirds of Canada. 'I,' replied North, 'cannot join in lamenting the death of Montgomery as a public loss. He was brave, he was able, he was humane, he was generous; but still, he was only a brave, able, humane, and generous rebel. Curse on his virtues, they've undone his country.' 'The term of rebel,' retorted Fox, 'is no certain mark of disgrace. All the great assertors of liberty, the saviours of their country, the benefactors of mankind in all ages, have been called rebels. We owe the constitution which enables us sit in this house to a rebellion.'"

"So passed away the spirit of Montgomery, with the love of all that knew him, the grief of the nascent republic, and the eulogies of the world."

I shall now bring to a close this brief notice of a devoted soldier and defender of American liberties. By his acts, by his death, he challenged, nearly one hundred years ago, the old maxim, "Once a British subject, always a British subject:" this doctrine is now, though tardily, abandoned in Britain. His trusty sword—neither a Damascus blade nor an *Andrea Ferrara*—has now for nearly a century been a valued heir-loom in Mr. Thompson's family, attracting the attention of American gentlemen visiting Quebec.

J. M. L.

SILLERY, near Quebec, 1st of August, 1870.



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