

THE STORY OF THE WORLD

BOOK IV.

**THE STRUGGLE FOR SEA
POWER**

*FROM THE AMERICAN WAR TO WATERLOO
1745-1815*



NAPOLEON

THE STRUGGLE FOR SEA POWER

BY

M. B. SYNGE

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CHAPTER 1

THE STORY OF THE GREAT MOGUL

“Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the
twain shall meet.”

—KIPLING.

THE wonderful story of England's conquest of India reads, even to-day, like some fairy legend of the Old World.

It is the story of how one small island, away in the Northern seas, conquered an empire ten times its own size, at a distance of 6000 miles. In the ages of long ago, when the Egyptians were building their pyramids, when the Phœnicians were sailing to the Pillars of Hercules, when the Greeks were adorning Athens and the Romans were spreading their empire far and wide, this England was still sleeping on the waves of the boundless sea.

It was not till after the Roman Empire had fallen, not till the Portuguese had found their way across the Sea of Darkness to India, not till the Spaniards had discovered the New World, that England awoke to a sense of the great possibilities

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that lay before her. Slowly and surely, from this time onwards, she stretched forth her arms over the broad seas that had once been her barriers, until, by her untiring energy, she won for herself an empire “on which the sun never sets.”

Her first great conquest was that of India or Hindostan—the land of the Hindoos. It is a country cut off from Asia by a lofty range of mountains known as the Hima-laya, or snow abode. Here are some of the highest peaks in the world, never scaled by man. Here, too, rise the largest rivers in India—the Indus and the Ganges, on which most of the large towns are built. Most of the country lies within the tropics. Hence it is a land of wondrous starlight and moonlight, a land of whirlwind and tempest, of pitiless sun and scorching heat. Here to-day, as of old, are men with dark faces and long beards, dressed in turbans and flowing robes—men for the most part Mohammedans, praying at intervals throughout the day, with their faces toward Mecca.

At the time that Alexander the Great entered India,—327 years before the birth of Christ,—the land was parcelled out into a number of small kingdoms, each under the government of its own Raja. Each Raja had a council known as the Durbar. When a Raja conquered other Rajas he was known as a Maha-*raja* or Great Raja, and all these words are used in India to-day.

In the sixteenth century a race of Mongols or Moguls swept into India from Central Asia and founded an empire in the north. Marco Polo had

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heard a great deal about these Mongols when he was at the court of the Great Khan. The first of the Mogul emperors was called Baber, or the Tiger; but he was succeeded by a yet more famous grandson called Akbar, whose power is spoken of still in India to-day. Akbar added to the Mogul Empire until it became the most extensive and splendid empire in the world. In no European kingdom was so large a population subject to a single ruler, or so large a revenue poured into the treasury. The beauty and magnificence of the buildings, the huge retinues and gorgeous decorations, dazzled the eyes of those accustomed to the pomps of Versailles.

But under the Great Mogul Aurangzeb, the "Conqueror of the Universe," the empire reached the height of its glory. He had usurped the throne, put his father into prison, and murdered his three brothers. His crown was uneasy, but secure. At Delhi he held his magnificent court. Here was the palace of the Great Mogul, built on the river Jumna, a tributary of the Ganges. The magnificent gateway of the palace was guarded by two huge elephants of stone, each bearing the colossal statue of a Raja warrior on his back. Here too was the grand hall of audience, where the Durbar was held. The ceiling was of white marble, supported by thirty marble columns, bearing an inscription in gold: "If there be a Paradise on earth, it is this." The throne was in a recess at the back of the hall, and over the throne was a peacock made of gold and jewels, valued at a million pounds.

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One day Aurangzeb was sitting on his throne at a Durbar at Delhi, when his old tutor appeared before him. The Great Mogul had suddenly stopped his pension, and he had come to know the reason. Aurangzeb gave him the explanation in public.

“This tutor,” he cried, “taught me the Koran (Mohammedan Bible) and wearied me with rules of Arabic grammar, but he told me nothing at all of foreign countries. I learnt nothing of the Ottoman Empire in Africa. I was made to believe that Holland was a great empire, and that England was bigger than France.”

When his birthday came round the Great Mogul was weighed in state, and if he was found to weigh more than on the preceding year there were great public rejoicings. All the chief people in the empire came to make their offerings: precious stones, gold and silver, rich carpets, camels, horses, and elephants were presented to him. He had tents of red velvet embroidered in gold. He had seven splendid thrones,—one covered with diamonds, one with rubies, one with pearls, one with emeralds, though the Peacock Throne was the most valuable. While the Great Mogul was on his throne, fifteen horses stood ready on either side, their bridles enriched with precious stones. Elephants were trained to kneel down before the throne and do reverence with their trunks. The Emperor’s favourite elephant was fed on good meat, with plenty of sugar and brandy.

THE STORY OF THE GREAT MOGUL



The Great Mogul

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Aurangzeb himself was nearly one hundred years old when he died. Suspicion lest his sons should subject him to the fate which he had inflicted on his own father left him a solitary old man. As death approached terror and remorse seized him. "Come what may," he cried desperately at the last, "I have launched my vessel on the waves. Farewell! farewell! farewell!"

So passed the last of the Great Moguls who ruled for over two hundred years in India. The empire was soon after broken up, and the way left clear for England to found her great Eastern Empire beyond the seas.

CHAPTER 2

ROBERT CLIVE

“Clive kissed me on the mouth and eyes and brow,
Wonderful kisses, so that I became
Crowned above Queens—a withered beldame now
Brooding on ancient fame.”

—KIPLING (Madras).

DURING the forty years after the death of Aurangzeb a great change passed over India. The great Mogul Empire was broken up; enemies invaded the land from north and south. They preyed on the defenceless country, they marched through the gates of Delhi and bore away in triumph the Peacock Throne and all its priceless jewels.

From the time of Alexander the Great little intercourse had been held between Europe and the East. But from that May day in 1498, when Vasco da Gama and his brave Portuguese sailors stepped ashore at Calicut, there was constant communication with the ports on the western coast. For some time Portugal had claimed exclusive right to her Indian trade, but after a time Dutch ships sailed to her eastern ports. The enterprise of Holland roused commercial enthusiasm in England and France until

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these three nations had established trading stations in the East.

The Dutch headquarters was at Batavia; the French at Pondicherry, on the east coast of India; the English at Madras, some eighty miles to the north. The governor of Pondicherry was a Frenchman called Dupleix. He was the first European to see the possibility of founding an empire on the ruins of the Great Mogul, though it was reserved for the English to carry out his wonderful idea.

Neither the French nor the English traders knew much about the government of India at this time. They knew that they paid a yearly rent to the native ruler or Nawab, who lived in Oriental splendour at the city of Arcot, some sixty-five miles west of Madras. This Nawab of Arcot was in his turn under the Nizam of Hyderabad, and both in the old days were under the Great Mogul.

Dupleix, full of his dreams of empire, saw that his first step must be to capture the English trading station of Madras. England and France were at war, so he seized this opportunity of attacking Madras, which was but poorly defended, and carried off the English in triumph to Pondicherry. Here all was joy and gladness. Salutes were fired from the batteries, Te Deums were sung in the churches. The Nizam came to visit his new allies. Dupleix, dressed in Mohammedan garments, entered Pondicherry with him, and in the pageant that followed took precedence of the native court. He was declared

ROBERT CLIVE

Governor of India from Hyderabad to Cape Comorin, a country the same size as France itself; he was given command of seven thousand men; he ruled over thirty millions of people with absolute power, and the Nizam himself became but a tool in his hands.

It was at this moment that the genius and valour of a single young Englishman, Robert Clive, changed the whole aspect of affairs, and won the empire of India for England.

“Clive,” said a Frenchman afterwards, “understood and applied the system of Dupleix.”

Robert Clive was the eldest of a large English family. He was born in Shropshire in the year 1725. At a very early age he showed that he had a strong will and a fiery passion, “flying out on every trifling occasion.” The story is still told in the neighbourhood of how “Bob Clive,” when quite a little boy, climbed to the top of a lofty steeple, and with what terror people saw him seated on a stone spout near the top. He was sent from school to school, but made little progress with his learning. Instead, he gained the character of being a very naughty little boy. True, one far-seeing master prophesied that he would yet make “a great figure in the world,” but for the most part he was held to be a dunce. Nothing was expected from such a boy, and when he was eighteen his parents sent him off to India, in the service of the East India Company, to “make his fortune or die of a fever.”

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His voyage was unusually long and tedious, lasting over a year. At last he arrived at the port of Madras—a barren spot beaten by a raging surf—to find himself very lonely and very poor in a strange land. He found some miserably paid work in an office, but he was shy and proud and made no friends. Moreover, the hot climate made him ill.

“I have not enjoyed one happy day since I left my native land,” he cried piteously. Twice, in desperation, the poor home-sick boy tried to shoot himself, but twice he failed.

“Surely,” he cried at the second failure—
“surely I am reserved for something great.”

So it happened that Robert Clive was at Madras when the French came and carried away the English captives to Pondicherry. Disguising themselves as natives, in turbans and flowing robes, Clive and some friends managed to escape to another English trading station. There was no more office work to be done at present, and Clive, together with hundreds of other Englishmen, entered the army to fight against the French. His bravery and courage soon raised him above his fellows, and he became a captain.

Clive was now twenty-five. He saw plainly that unless some daring blow were aimed at the French soon, Dupleix would carry all before him. He suggested a sudden attack on Arcot, the residence of the Nawab; and though the scheme seemed wild to the point of madness, he was given command of 200

ROBERT CLIVE

Europeans and some native troops to march against the town.

Arcot was sixty-five miles away. The fort was known to be garrisoned by 1100 men, but Clive marched bravely forth. During the march a terrific storm arose. The rain swept down in a deluge on the little army, the lightning played around them, the thunder pealed over their heads; but they pushed on through it all, undaunted in their desperate undertaking. Tidings of their fearless endurance reached the town before them. A panic seized the native garrison: they abandoned the fort. Not a shot was fired, and Clive with his 500 men entered the city in triumph. The young boy-captain had already won a deathless renown.

CHAPTER 3

THE BLACK HOLE OF CALCUTTA

“Clive it was gave England India.”
—BROWNING.

IT was not likely that the spirited little army should be left in undisputed possession of Arcot, and Clive now prepared for an inevitable siege. Soon 10,000 men had swarmed into the place, hemming in the garrison on every side. Days grew to weeks, and the ready resource of Clive alone saved the situation. The handful of men—European and native—caught the spirit of their leader, and each became a hero. History contains no more touching instance of native fidelity than that related of the men who came to Clive, not to complain of their own scanty fare, but to propose “that all the grain should be given to Europeans, who required more nourishment than the natives of Asia. The thin gruel, strained away from the rice, would do for them,” they said. With such as these Clive held the fort for fifty days.

At last the French resolved to storm the town. Clive busied himself with preparations. In the

THE BLACK HOLE OF CALCUTTA

evening he threw himself down to sleep, utterly tired out; but he was soon awakened, and at his post in a moment. The French attacked in strong force. They had brought with them huge elephants, with great pieces of iron fixed on their foreheads, to try and break down the gates. The English fired on them; and the unhappy creatures, unused to firearms, turned round and fled in their fright into the midst of the French, trampling many under foot. Night fell, and Clive, with his little band of weary men, passed an anxious time. Morning dawned to find the enemy had melted away. The siege of Arcot was ended. The growing power of the French in India was arrested. Robert Clive was the hero of the hour.

Indeed, not long after this Dupleix was recalled from the East by Louis XV., his dream of empire ended, to die in France heart-broken.

But India's troubles were by no means at an end. English trade in the East was growing, and the English had long ago established a trading station at Calcutta on the river Hoogly, one of the mouths of the Ganges. They had had no water-way at Madras; but here, at Calcutta, they had been able to penetrate inland and annex some of the surrounding country, known as Bengal.

Now the Nawab of Bengal hated the English. His imagination was fired with fabulous stories of the vast wealth stored up in the treasury at Calcutta. So he collected a huge army, and in the year 1756 he appeared on the outskirts of the town. The English were taken by surprise,—they had no Clive to lead

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them to victory,—and the Nawab took Calcutta with ease, making 146 prisoners. But the treasury did not yield the vast riches he had been led to expect, and he wreaked his revenge on the luckless prisoners. It was a hot night in June when the 146 English captives were driven by clubs and swords into a little room some twenty feet square, with only two small gratings at the entrance to let in air. The “Black Hole” had been built to shut up troublesome soldiers: it was intended to hold four or five at a time. To cram in 146 human beings was to court slow but certain death. The day had been fiercely hot, the night was sultry and stifling. Not a breath of air could enter to relieve the sufferings of the Europeans, too tightly packed into the small space to move. In vain they cried for mercy; in vain they appealed to the guards in their agony. The guards only replied from outside that the Nawab was asleep, and none dared wake him or remove a single prisoner without his leave. Then followed cries for water. A few water-skins were brought to the gratings, but in the mad struggle to reach it many were trampled to death. The heartless guards only held burning torches to the gratings and mocked at their frantic struggles. As the long night passed away the struggles ceased, the screams died away, and a few low moans were the only sounds audible. Morning dawned at last. The Nawab awoke and ordered the doors to be opened. Twenty-three fainting people alone staggered forth: the rest lay dead in heaps upon the floor. And even to-day, though nearly 150 years have passed away since that

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horrible crime, the Black Hole of Calcutta cannot be mentioned without a shudder.

The tale of horror thrilled through the British Empire. All eyes turned to the young hero of Arcot to avenge the wrongs done to his countrymen, and Robert Clive was soon hurrying to the scene of action.

Early in January he arrived at Calcutta, and soon the British flag was waving above the town. Meanwhile the Nawab was waiting for him at Plassey, some ninety-six miles to the north of Calcutta, with a tremendous army, at least twenty times the size of Clive's. Clive was marching north, hoping for help to be sent, but he reached the banks of the Hoogly with a force wholly inadequate for the work before him. He was in a painfully anxious dilemma. Before him lay a wide river, across which, if things went ill, not one would ever return. For the first time in his life he shrank from the fearful responsibility of making up his mind. He was but thirty-two at the time. He called a council of war. Should they attack the mighty force before them with their little band of men, or wait for help?

"Wait for help," said the officers; and Clive himself agreed with them.

But still he was not satisfied. He retired alone under the shade of a tree near by, and spent an hour in the deepest thought. Then he returned to the camp. He knew his mind now: he was determined to risk everything. "Be in readiness to attack tomorrow," he cried.

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The river was soon crossed, and Clive with his army took up his quarters in a grove of mango-trees, within a mile of the enemy. He could not sleep. All night long he heard the sound of drums and cymbals from the vast camp of the Nawab. He knew but too well the fearful odds against which he would fight on the morrow.

The day broke—"the day which was to decide the fate of India."

An hour after the battle began, all was over. The Nawab had mounted a camel and was in full flight, and the great native army was retreating in wild disorder. Clive stood triumphant on the battlefield of Plassey. With a loss of twenty-two men he had scattered an army of nearly 60,000, and subdued an empire larger than Great Britain. The "heaven-born general" was conqueror not only of the battlefield of Plassey, but of the British Empire in India.

CHAPTER 4

THE STRUGGLE FOR NORTH AMERICA

“Few, few were they whose swords of old
Won the fair land in which we dwell,
But we are many, we who hold
The grim resolve to guard it well.”

—BRYANT.

“It was the volley fired by a young Virginian in the backwoods of America that set the world on fire.”

So said the great English minister Horace Walpole. Let us see why that volley was fired.

While the English and French were fighting for the mastery of India away in the East, a great struggle was going on between the same two peoples—New England and New France—for the mastery of North America in the Far West. Clive had fought till the English flag waved over the cities of Madras and Calcutta. Now Wolfe was to fight in America till the English flag waved from the capitals of Quebec and Montreal.

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At present the lilies of France floated over these towns. They had floated there since the early days when the first Frenchman—Jacques Cartier broke the solitude of this distant wilderness. Canada was the seat of French power in North America. French Canadian life centred round Quebec and Montreal, on the banks of the river St Lawrence. Here, in the castle of St Louis, upon the famous rock of Quebec, sat the all-powerful governor of Louis XV., King of France. A new governor had recently been sent out—a man who viewed his country's prospects in America with the keenest anxiety. He knew full well the rivalry that existed between France and England in that land of the Far West. The English had already viewed with distrust the long arms stretched out by France over the fur-bearing regions around Hudson's Bay.

But it was in the south that the coming storm was now brewing; it was to the south that the French governor was looking with those dreams of empire that inspired Dupleix to conquer Southern India.

From the Canadian lakes southwards stretched a dense "ocean of foliage," broken only by the white gleam of the broad rivers Ohio and Mississippi. The beautiful valleys formed by these large rivers reached to the French settlement of New Orleans, on the Gulf of Mexico. At distant intervals, faint wreaths of smoke marked an Indian village: otherwise all was solitude. The country was unclaimed, for the most part, by either French or English.

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Now these two rivers, the Ohio and Mississippi, practically cut North America in two. A cork dropped into the small stream that rises near Lake Erie, not far from the Falls of Niagara, would flow out through the mouth of the Mississippi at New Orleans into the Gulf of Mexico.

On the sea side of these rivers lay the thirteen English colonies, fronting the broad Atlantic Ocean. These colonies were under no one local governor: each was independent, the only tie holding them together being their allegiance to the mother country. Each colony had started life on its own account. There were the colonies founded by the Pilgrim Fathers, by the Puritans, by the Quakers. There were colonies of English, Irish, and Scotch, and each colony had its own governor. Thus the English possessions at this time consisted of a long straggling line of little quarrelling Commonwealths, resting along the sea-coast between the Atlantic and the Ohio river and Alleghany mountains. Both France and England now claimed the Ohio valley, and there was little doubt that some day their respective claims must be settled by the sword. No treaty could touch such debatable ground; no one could adjust the undefined boundary in this far-distant land.

One day, in the summer of 1749, the French governor started a small expedition to explore the country about the river Ohio. It was the first of many such. Slowly but steadily the French pushed farther and farther down the valley of the Ohio. They built fort after fort, until suddenly the governor

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of the English colony of Virginia became aware of what was happening.

He selected a young Virginian, George Washington, to go and protest against such encroachment. He was to march to the last new French fort, with a note from his English governor, expressing a hope that the French would at once retire from British territory, and so maintain the harmony at present existing between the two countries.

It was late autumn; but George Washington pushed manfully through the dripping forests with his little band of men, till he reached the fort. He delivered his message, and started home with the first formal note of defiance from France to England. After a three months' absence and numerous hairbreadth escapes, young Washington rode into Virginia with his ominous message from the French.

There was danger ahead. The French were pushing their dreams of empire too far. The Governor of Virginia exerted himself more vigorously. He too would build forts on the Ohio. In the early spring of 1754, a little band of Virginians was sent to build a fort in a spot where two large streams meet to form the river Ohio, a spot to become famous later as the site of the city of Pittsburg. But the French were there already, and they soon tumbled the forty Virginians back again into their English settlements. Washington was now sent with 150 men to the French fort on the Ohio.

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He was marching on through the pathless wilderness, when news reached him that the French were advancing to clear the English out of the country.

Taking forty men, Washington groped his way through a pitch-dark soaking night to the quarters of a friendly Indian chief. The news he found was but too true. There was not a moment to be lost. At daybreak he stole forth and found the French lying in a ravine. He gave orders to fire. A volley was given by his men and returned by the French. Their commander was slain, and the French were all taken prisoners.

And so the war began.

“It was,” as Horace Walpole had said—“It was the volley fired by a young Virginian in the backwoods of America that set the world on fire.”

CHAPTER 5

GEORGE WASHINGTON, SOLDIER AND PATRIOT

“Washington—the perfect citizen.”

—EMERSON.

THE “young Virginian” spoken of by Horace Walpole was destined to do great things for England in America. The stories of his boyhood shadow forth his wonderful career.

George Washington was born on February 22, 1732, in a little farmhouse on the Potomac river in Virginia. His great-grandfather had sailed over to America in the days of Oliver Cromwell, and his father was now a successful landowner. The eldest son, Lawrence, was sent to England to be educated, but George was taught by the village sexton at home. He led a free open-air life, playing in the meadows, and grew up to be a manly and truthful boy.

One day his father gave him a hatchet, and the little boy had carelessly tried its edge on the bark of a young English cherry-tree which was much valued by his father. The bark was injured, and Mr

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Washington was seriously displeased, and began to question the servants as to who could have done such a thing.

“I did it, father,” suddenly said George, looking him straight in the face and holding out the hatchet, which he knew he must forfeit; “I did it with my new hatchet.”

“Come to my arms, brave boy,” said his father, drawing George to him; “I would rather every tree I possess were killed, than that you should deceive me.”

When he was about eight years old the big brother Lawrence returned from England, and soon a very strong friendship had sprung up between the two brothers. Not long after his return to Virginia he volunteered for service in the West Indies, and George saw him depart, in his soldier’s uniform, to the martial sound of drum and fife, with a heavy heart. But a martial spirit had been aroused in the boy, and from this time forward his favourite occupation was playing at soldiers. A stick or broom-handle served for gun or sword, the meadow by the river was the battlefield, and George Washington was always the commander-in-chief. He was a good-looking boy, tall and straight, athletic and muscular. He bore a high character at home and also at school.

“George has the best writing-book in the school,” his master used to say.

After his death, among his papers was found an old copy-book—which must have been written

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about this time—in a quaint schoolboy handwriting. It was called “Rules for Behaviour in Company and Conversation,” and there were no less than one hundred of these rules carefully copied out. Here are a few of them:—

“Speak not evil of the absent, for it is unjust.”

“Undertake not what you cannot perform, but be careful to keep your promise.”

“Show not yourself glad at the misfortune of another, though he were your enemy.”

“Make no show of taking delight in your victuals; feed not with greediness, lean not on the table, neither find fault with what you eat.”

“Labour to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called Conscience.”

After his father’s death in 1743, George went to live with his beloved brother Lawrence, who was now married and living at Mount Vernon in Virginia. Here he rode and hunted, helped to survey the surrounding country, and heard much talk of the disputed boundary between the French and English possessions in North America. War was in the air.

Virginia was now divided into military districts. At the age of nineteen George Washington found himself in command of one of these. So capable a soldier did he become, that, two years later, he was the “young Virginian” selected by the Governor of Virginia to carry his message a thousand miles across country to the French. The

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story of how he delivered that message, and its answer, has already been told.

From this time, George Washington was a marked man and a public character. His name was known in the Court at Paris as well as in London, and it was to him the Virginians now looked to help them in their troubles. They did not look in vain: Washington was one of the greatest men America ever produced. His greatness did not consist so much in his intellect, in his skill, or in his genius, but in his honour, his utter truthfulness, his high sense of duty. He left behind him, when he died, one of the greatest treasures of his country, the example of a stainless life—of a great, honest, pure and noble character—a model for his nation to form themselves by in all time to come.

“No nobler figure ever stood in the forefront of a nation’s life.” He was, as Emerson, the great American thinker, had said, a “perfect citizen.” He was, as a fellow-citizen said after his death in 1799, “The man first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his fellow-citizens.”

CHAPTER 6

HOW PITT SAVED ENGLAND

“If England to itself do rest but true.”
—SHAKSPERE.

WHEN war was formally declared between France and England in 1756, it seemed as if the dreams of a French empire in America might indeed be realised. Louis XV. of France had sent the Marquis de Montcalm to press the boundary claims of Canada, and soon a long chain of forts threatened to cut off the English coast colonies from any possibility of extending their lands in any direction. The colonies themselves were hopelessly divided, and, so far, England had not awakened to a sense of her great responsibilities with regard to her empire beyond the seas.

Besides this, there were constant alarms of a French invasion on her own shores. An English fleet had just retreated before the French; Minorca, the key to the Mediterranean, had fallen into the hands of France; while Dupleix was apparently founding a French empire in India.

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A despair without parallel in history took hold of English statesmen.

“We are no longer a nation,” cried one English minister.

He did not know that England was on the eve of her greatest triumphs in America as well as in India. It was this dark hour that called forth the genius of William Pitt, afterwards Earl of Chatham, one of the greatest statesmen England ever had. He was the son of a wealthy governor of Madras. He had sat in Parliament for twenty-two years before his chance came.

“In England’s darkest hour, William Pitt saved her.”

“I want to call England out of that enervate state in which twenty thousand men from France can shake her,” he said as he took office. He soon “breathed his own lofty spirit into the country he served. He loved England with an intense and personal love. He believed in her power, her glory, her public virtue, till England learnt to believe in herself. Her triumphs were his triumphs, her defeats his defeats. Her dangers lifted him high above all thought of self or party spirit.”

“Be one people: forget everything but the public. I set you the example,” he cried with a glow of patriotism that spread like infection through the country.

“His noble figure, his flashing eye, his majestic voice, the fire and grandeur of his

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eloquence, gave him a sway over the House of Commons far greater than any other Minister possessed.”

“I know that I can save the country, and I know no other man can,” he had said confidently.

This was the man who now turned his eyes westwards and won for his country Canada, which is hers to-day. He saw that if the English colonies in America were to be saved from the French, the mother country must save them. He appealed to the very heart of England, and by his earnestness and eloquence he changed his despairing country into a state of enthusiasm and ardour. He now made plans for the American campaign of 1758. A blow should be struck at the French in America, at three separate points. The French forts of Duquesne and Ticonderoga were to be captured, while the great French naval station Louisburg, on Cape Breton Island, beyond Nova Scotia, was to be taken. It commanded the mouth of the river St Lawrence, and no English ships could reach the capital, Quebec.

The genius of Pitt showed itself in his choice of the man selected for this difficult piece of work.

James Wolfe, the future hero of Quebec, had fought at the battle of Dettingen when only sixteen, and distinguished himself at Culloden Moor. He was now given supreme command of the expedition to the famous fortress of Louisburg, the key to Canada, which he was to conquer triumphantly.

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All England now thrilled with the coming struggle in America. The merchant at his desk, the captain on the deck of his ship, the colonel at the head of his regiment,—all felt the magic influence of William Pitt. All eyes were strained towards the backwoods of the wild West, where the drama was to be played out.

Fort Duquesne was taken from the French, and to-day, on the same site, stands the city named after Pitt,—Pittsburg, one of the largest towns in Pennsylvania.

So Pitt had roused England to a sense of her danger and her responsibility, and helped her to rise to a greatness far surpassing the dreams of either Elizabeth or Cromwell.

CHAPTER 7

THE FALL OF QUEBEC

“They have fallen
Each in his field of glory. Wolfe upon the lap
Of smiling victory, that moment won.”

—COWPER.

WOLFE left England late in February 1759, but the winds being contrary and the seas running high, May had opened before the wild coast of Nova Scotia was dimly seen through whirling mists of fog. The Louisburg harbour was still choked with ice, and it was not till June that the advanced squadron of the fleet could begin the passage of the St Lawrence. Wolfe had never seen Quebec, the city he was sent out to capture; but he knew that Montcalm, the French general, had four times as many troops as he had, and he spared no pains to make his own troops as efficient as possible.

“If valour can make amends for want of numbers, we shall succeed,” he wrote to Pitt at home. Enthusiasm soon spread through the troops. “British colours on every French fort, post, and garrison in America,” they cried, as they sailed

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cautiously along the lower reaches of the St Lawrence river towards their goal. It seemed incredible to the French in Canada that an English fleet should navigate its way through the difficult channels of the river St Lawrence; and they received the news that the English had landed on the shores of the Isle of Orleans with surprise and dismay.

“Canada will be the grave of the British army,” they said confidently; “and the walls of Quebec will be decorated with British heads.”

It was June 26 when the fleet anchored at the Isle of Orleans, and beheld for the first time the rock city of Quebec. The bravest British heart might well have quailed at the sight. High up against the western sky it stood, perched on its rocky throne. The rugged outline of batteries, bristling with cannon, seemed to frown defiance at the mere handful of Englishmen, now looking across the waters at it for the first time.

“I will be master of Quebec if I stay here till the end of November,” Wolfe had said.

The task before him seemed wellnigh hopeless, yet his gallant heart never despaired. He would perform this last service if it were possible. He seized Point Levi, exactly opposite the city of Quebec. This gave him complete command of the river mouth. From here, too, his troops could fire across on to the city, and he might destroy it if he failed to capture it.

Meantime Montcalm kept rigidly within the walls of Quebec. He knew that a hard Canadian

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winter, with its frost and snow, must compel Wolfe to retreat.

So July came and went. Daring feats were performed on both sides, but Quebec remained uncaptured by the British forces. One day the French chained some seventy ships together, filled them with explosives, and set the whole on fire. Down the river, towards the English fleet, came this roaring mass of fire, until the courageous British sailors dashed down upon it and broke it into fragments.

August arrived, with storms and cold. Fever took hold of Wolfe. Always frail in body, he lay for a time between life and death, his "pale face haggard with lines of pain and anxiety." But he struggled back to life, and planned his great attack on Quebec.

In one of his many expeditions he had discovered a tiny cove, now called Wolfe's Cove, five miles beyond Quebec. Here was a zigzag goat-path up the steep face of the towering cliff, which was over 250 feet high at this point. Wolfe had made up his mind. Up this mere track, in the blackness of the night, he resolved to lead his army to the attack on Quebec. He kept his plans to himself.

The night arrived: it was September 12.

"Officers and men will remember what their country expects of them," he cried, as he gave his troops the final orders.

It was one of the most daring exploits in the world's history.

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At two o'clock at night the signal to start was given. From the Isle of Orleans, from Point Levi, the English boats stole out in the silence and darkness of the summer night. Wolfe himself was leading. As the boats rowed silently through the darkness on this desperate adventure, Wolfe repeated some lines recently written by the poet Gray,—

“The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

“Gentlemen,” he said to the officers with him in the boat, “I would rather have written that poem than take Quebec.”

Suddenly the voice of a sentry at the top of the cliff challenged them.

“Who goes there?”

“The French,” sang out a Highlander who had served in the foreign wars and picked up a little French.

“From which regiment?” asked the suspicious sentry.

“From the Queen’s,” answered the ready Highlander in French.

A convoy of provisions was expected, and the sentry let them pass. But it was a narrow escape for the British fleet stealing stealthily along under the enemy’s lines. At last the cove was reached in safety.

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The soldiers began to climb in single file up the face of the steep cliff. Wolfe was among the first, weakened though he was with fever and anxiety. It was an anxious time. Like a chain of ants the men crawled up the steep cliff in the darkness, until, with the first streak of dawn piercing the darkness, Wolfe and his troops stood triumphantly at the top. When morning broke Montcalm was greeted with the news that the British commander, whom he had kept at bay for months, now stood with an army of 4500 men in line of battle on the plains of Abraham, overlooking Quebec. Never a word of dismay uttered the French general as he mustered his troops to defend their city against the English.

He had some 10,000 men. By nine o'clock all was ready. The battle began. In fifteen minutes it was all over. The French opened fire on the English lines at a distance of 200 yards. The English had been told by Wolfe to reserve their fire, and the men now stood with shouldered arms, as if on parade. Silent and motionless they stood amid the rain of French bullets and the din of French cheers. Then came the order to fire. Since the invention of gunpowder never had such a tremendous volley been delivered. The sudden explosion of 4000 muskets sounded like the blast of a single cannon-shot. As the smoke lifted, the French could be seen lying dead in heaps. Then Wolfe sprang forward, at the head of his men, sword in hand, and the whole line advanced. At that moment the sun burst forth, lighting up the gleaming bayonets and flashing

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swords. Another moment and Wolfe fell, hit by two bullets.

“Don’t let my gallant soldiers see me fall,” he gasped to the few men who rushed to help him.

They carried him in their arms to the rear, and laid him on the ground. They mentioned a surgeon.

“It is needless,” he whispered; “it is all over with me.”

The little sorrowing group stood silently round the dying man. Suddenly one spoke.

“They run! See how they run!”

“Who run?” murmured Wolfe, awaking as if from sleep.

“The enemy, sir,” was the answer.

A flash of life returned to Wolfe. He gave his last military order. Then turning on his side, he whispered, “God be praised, I now die in peace.”

That night, within the ruined city of Quebec, lay Montcalm mortally wounded.

“How long have I to live?” he asked painfully.

“Twelve hours possibly,” they answered him.

“So much the better,” murmured the defeated and dying man; “I shall not live to see the surrender of Quebec.”

So the two leaders died,—one at the moment of victory, the other in the hour of defeat. If France was grieved at Montcalm’s failure, all England was intoxicated with joy at Wolfe’s magnificent victory.

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The country flamed into illuminations, for the English colonies in America were saved. French power in the Far West was crushed as it had been in the East, and “the whole nation rose up and felt itself the stronger for Wolfe’s victory.”

CHAPTER 8

“THE GREAT LORD HAWKE”

“When the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow.”

—CAMPBELL

THE French had been beaten by the English in the East and in the West by land. Now they were to be beaten again by the English, this time by sea, and off their own coast. France was threatening an invasion of England, when Sir Edward Hawke was given command of an English fleet, with orders to blockade the French fleet and destroy the ships if possible.

How, through wild storms and tempests, the English sailor kept his dogged watch, and how, finally, he destroyed the fleet with “heroic daring,” and by so doing saved his country, is one of the most thrilling stories in history.

Born in the year 1705, Hawke had been at sea ever since he was a small boy.

“Would you like to be a sailor, Ned?” he had been asked.

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“Certainly, sir,” the boy had answered quickly.

“Are you willing to go now, or to wait till you are bigger?”

“This instant, sir,” replied the little hero.

His mother grieved bitterly over his departure from home.

“Good-bye, Ned,” she said, with difficulty controlling herself. “I shall expect you soon to be a captain.”

“A captain,” replied the boy with derision; “Madam, I hope you will soon see me an admiral.”

He rose quickly in the service. More than once he distinguished himself in sea-fights. He had more than fulfilled the traditions of the British navy, lately disgraced by the behaviour of the British Admiral Byng, who for the loss of Minorca had been tried and shot on the deck of his own ship.

Pitt had chosen Wolfe to carry out his plans at Quebec; he now chose Hawke to sail against the French, and so frustrate the threatened invasion of England.

It was in the middle of May 1759 that Hawke hoisted his flag and sailed from Torbay, to fulfil his difficult task. The French fleet, under Conflans, the ablest of French commanders, was lying snugly in the well-sheltered harbour of Brest, while more ships lay to the south at the mouth of the Loire. Hawke was to block all the ships in the harbour of Brest, and prevent their joining the others. He sailed over

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to the French coast, and there for six months he doggedly blockaded the French fleet. But it was a stormier season than usual. His officers and men died of disease, the bottoms of the ships grew foul, the vessels were battered by autumn gales and knocked about by the high rolling seas from the Bay of Biscay. Still the British sailor stuck to his post. Autumn drew on. Again and again the wild north-west gales drove him from his blockading ground at the mouth of the harbour of Brest; again and yet again he fought his way back.

On November 6, a tremendous gale swept over the English fleet. For three days Hawke stood his ground, but he was forced to run back to the shores of England for shelter. Two days later he put to sea again, but the wind was blowing as furiously as ever, and he was again obliged to put back to Torbay. His own ship was rotten and water-logged, so he shifted his flag to the Royal George and struggled out again into the storm.

He was just too late. The French fleet had escaped, and the ships were even now running gaily with the wind behind them down the west coast of France to join the rest of the fleet. Conflans' daring plan might have succeeded had he not had against him a man whose genius, patience, and resolution were proof against the wildest waves and the fiercest winds. In the teeth of the gale Hawke fought his way across the channel to France to find the harbour empty, his prey gone. On ran the French ships before the gale. Very soon the white sails of the English might have been seen hurrying after them.

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With the waves breaking over their decks, weighed down by the weight of sail, battered by the wild wind that whistled through their rigging, the English ships ran on, every hour bringing them nearer and nearer to the enemy.

“I will attack them in the old way,” cried Hawke, “and make downright work of them.”

As night drew on, the wind blew harder than ever. Conflans now devised a bold plan. He ran his ships coastwards, among islands and shoals of which he knew the English to be ignorant. It was a wild stretch of dangerous coast, on which the huge Atlantic waves broke with a roar as of thunder, tossing their white foam high into the air. The wind blew with ever-increasing fury, and the night was black as pitch. Only the genius of a Hawke could save the fleet in such a night. But to the successor of Drake and Hawkins all things were possible. “Where there is a passage for the enemy, there, is a passage for me. Where a Frenchman can sail, an Englishman can follow,” cried Hawke. “Their pilot shall be our pilot. If they go to pieces on the shoals, they will serve as beacons for us. Their perils shall be our perils.”

“And so, on the wild November afternoon, with the great billows that the Bay of Biscay hurls on that stretch of iron-bound coast, Hawke flung himself into the boiling cauldron of rocks and shoals and quicksands. No more daring deed was ever done at sea.”

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The battle began, and the roar of the guns answered the din of the tempest. The wildly rolling fleets were soon hopelessly mixed up together. Ship after ship went down with its guns and its crews, but the flagship with Hawke on board was making for the white pennant which flew from the mast of Conflans' ship. Soon the two great ships had begun their fierce duel. Night fell before the battle was ended,—a wild night filled with the shrieking of the gale, and morning broke no less wild and stormy. Seven French ships had run for shelter to the coast, two had gone to pieces on the rocks. But in the very centre of the English fleet lay the flagship of Conflans, battered and helpless. In the darkness and confusion of the night the French commander had mistaken his friends for his foes, and anchored unconsciously in the middle of the English fleet.

As the misty grey dawn showed him his mistake, Conflans cut his cables and made for the shore. The battle of Quiberon was over. The French ships were too much damaged to put to sea any more, and Hawke was free to sail home to receive the honours that a joyous England was ready to bestow upon the faithful and brave Admiral who had saved her from a French invasion.

CHAPTER 9

THE BOSTON TEA-SHIPS

“Oh thou, that sendest out the man
To rule by land or sea,
Strong mother of a Lion-line,
Be proud of these strong sons of thine
Who wrench'd their rights from thee.”
—TENNYSON.

THE year 1759 was a year of victory for England. By the triumph at Plassey Clive had founded the Indian Empire. “With the victory of Wolfe on the Heights of Abraham began the history of the United States;” while Hawke’s defeat of the French ships at Quiberon showed the growing strength of the English on the seas.

“We are forced to ask every morning what victory there is,” laughed an English statesman, “for fear of missing one.”

The year 1762 found peace between England and France, but an unsatisfactory state of things arising beyond the seas in America.

It had cost England very large sums of money to save her colonies from the French. She now

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demanded those colonies, growing yearly in wealth and prosperity, to help to pay for the war. The colonies were quite willing to do this: they would pay a voluntary sum, but not a sum extracted by means of taxation. England did not understand the spirit of her colonies at this time, and she passed the famous Stamp Act, charging certain stamp-duties in the colonies.

The news that the Stamp Act had actually been passed in England was received in America by a storm of indignation. The colonists denied that the mother country had any right to tax them. Bells were tolled, ships in the harbour flew their flags half-mast high, shops were shut, for it seemed as though the liberty of the American colonies were dead.

Men denounced it openly. "Caesar," cried one in a voice of thunder, "had his Brutus, Charles the First had his Cromwell, and George the Third——"

"Treason! treason!" shouted his hearers.

The young colonist paused.

"George the Third," he finished, "may profit by their example."

A distinguished American, Benjamin Franklin, went to England to protest against the Stamp Act.

"What will be the consequences of this Act?" the English asked him.

"A total loss of the respect and affection the people of America bear to this country, and of all the commerce that depends on that respect and affection," he answered firmly.

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“Do you think the people of America would submit to a moderated Stamp Act?” they asked him again.

“No, never!” he cried with emphasis; “never, unless compelled by force of arms.”

For the first time in their history the colonies united in the face of a common danger. The colonists held a great Congress. Each colony was represented, and they resolved to resist the Stamp Act.

England was startled by the news: it called Pitt to the front again. He understood the American colonies; he knew the value of their friendship, the danger of their separation. He had been ill when the Stamp Act was passed. Now his old eloquence burst forth again.

“This kingdom has no right to lay a tax on the colonies,” he cried. “America is obstinate; America is almost in open rebellion. Sir, I rejoice that America has resisted. Three millions of people so dead to all feelings of liberty as voluntarily to submit to be slaves would have been fit instruments to make slaves of the rest.”

His words carried conviction: the Stamp Act was repealed.

In America the news was received with enthusiasm. Bells were rung, bonfires blazed forth, loyal addresses to the King of England were sent across the seas. The quarrel seemed to be at an end.

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And the colonies had learnt something of the strength of their union.

The Stamp Act had been repealed, but England reserved the right of regulating American trade by imposing duties upon merchandise imported into the colonies. Discontent again arose; and when, in 1773, a duty on tea was levied, the colonies were ablaze with indignation. They declared that England had no right to enforce a tea-duty, and they refused to receive the tea.

It was the morning of Thursday, December 16, 1773—one of the most momentous days in the history of the world. Seven thousand persons were gathered in the streets of Boston. One of the English tea-ships rode at anchor off Boston harbour and the citizens of the town refused to land the tea unless the duty were repealed. A watch of twenty-five colonists guarded the wharf by day and night, sentinels were placed at the top of the church belfries, post-riders were ready with horses saddled and bridled, beacon fires were prepared on every hill-top, should the English use force to land their tea. There was a law that every ship must land its cargo within twenty days of its arrival. At sunrise on December 17 the twenty days would have expired. The English ship still lay at anchor with her cargo on board. Would she sail home again, or would her sailors fight?

It was late in the afternoon of the 16th. The crowds waited on into the dusky evening to see what would happen. The old meeting-house was dimly lit

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with candles, where an important conclave was being held.

“This meeting can do no more to save the country,” said a voice amid profound silence.

It was the watchword appointed by the men of Boston to use force. Suddenly a war-whoop was heard through the silent air, and fifty men, disguised as Indians, ran quickly towards the wharf. They were men of standing, wealth, and good repute in the Commonwealth, but in gaudy feathers and paint, with tomahawks, scalping-knives, and pistols. They alarmed the English captains not a little. They quickly cut open the chests of tea on board and emptied the contents of each into the sea. By nine o'clock that evening no less than 342 chests of tea had thus been treated, while the vast crowds of colonists looked down on the strange scene in the clear frosty moonlight.

Next morning the salted tea, driven by wind and wave, lay in long rows along the coast of Massachusetts, while citizens, booted and spurred, were riding post-haste to Philadelphia with the news of Boston's action.

America had at last thrown down the gauntlet for the mother country to pick up.

The great Revolution had begun.