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## CHAPTER I

COMBINED OPERATIONS IN THE  
ST LAWRENCE RIVER, 1759

(*See Map I, p. 103*)

I had always been deeply interested in the capture of Quebec, and the good comradeship and the achievements of General Wolfe and Admiral Saunders and their respective commands were a shining example of Naval and Military co-operation, and we soldiers and sailors strove to live up to their traditions throughout the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915.

My knowledge of the operations in the St Lawrence River was then limited to books and maps, but in August 1934 I had the good fortune to spend some days in Quebec, and had the opportunity of studying Wolfe's two battles, under the guidance of Major Wood, whose knowledge of them and of the locality is second to none. Later I spent some time in the Archives Museum at Ottawa with another great authority—Dr Doughty.

The capture of Quebec was a vital link in the elder Pitt's scheme for the security and the extension of the British Colonies in North America, and he directed the preparations and the proceedings with extraordinary energy.

His selection of Wolfe for the Military Command was a happy one. In those days of almost constant warfare, promotion sometimes came swiftly to those who merited it.

Wolfe commanded a regiment at the age of 23, and was Quartermaster General of the Army in the abortive expedition to Rochfort at 30, and at the age of 31 he commanded a Brigade and greatly distinguished himself in the capture of Louisburg.

At Rochfort he realized the immense possibilities of Naval and Military co-operation, and commented caustically on that ill-conducted enterprise thus: '... in war something must be allowed to chance and fortune, seeing that it is in its nature hazardous and an option of difficulties; that the greatness of an object should

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[More information](#)

## 10 *Combined Operations in the St Lawrence River, 1759*

come under consideration as opposed to the impediments that lie in the way; . . . The famous Council sat from morning until late at night, and the result of the debates was unanimously not to attack the place they were ordered to attack, and for reasons which no soldier will allow to be sufficient.' After the capture of Louisbourg, Wolfe wrote a warm appreciation of the generous help the Army had received from Admirals Boscawen and Hardy and the seamen and marines of the Fleet.

Lord Anson, the First Lord, was responsible for the selection of Admiral Saunders, who had accompanied him during the greater part of his voyage round the world, and thus he had opportunities of appreciating his admirable qualities, which fitted him for command in a Combined Operation.

Pitt's letters to the principal officers concerned were an inspiration. The concluding passage in the secret instructions to General Wolfe is of particular interest.

### *Secret Instructions to General Saunders*

'Whereas the Success of this Expedition will very much depend upon an entire Good Understanding between our Land and Sea Officers, We do hereby strictly enjoin and require you, on your part, to maintain and cultivate such a good Understanding and Agreement, and to order that the Soldiers under Your Command, shall man the ships when there shall be occasion for them, and when they can be spared from the Land Service, as the Commander-in-Chief of Our Squadron is instructed on His Part to entertain and cultivate the same good Understanding and Agreement and to order the Sailors and Marines, under his Command to assist our Land Forces, and to man the Batteries when there shall be occasion for them and when they can be spared from the Sea Service; and in order to establish the strictest Union that may be, between You and the Commander-in-Chief of Our Ships, You are hereby required to communicate these instructions to Him as he is required to communicate those he shall receive from Us to You.'

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

### *Combined Operations in the St Lawrence River, 1759* 11

Admiral Saunders had under his command Rear Admirals Holmes and Durrell with twenty-two ships of the line, seventeen frigates and sloops and about 120 transports, store ships and auxiliaries.

General Wolfe's army consisted of three Brigades under Brigadier Generals Murray, Townshend and Monkton (between 9000 and 10,000 men).

The French having removed all the buoys, and having destroyed all the aids to navigation in the St Lawrence, had good reason to hope that a fleet of vessels sufficient to carry an expeditionary force large enough to capture Quebec would not succeed in overcoming the intricate navigation of a difficult passage, known as the Traverse, some miles below Quebec.

It happened that James Cook, who afterwards became famous as a great navigator, was Master of one of Admiral Durrell's ships, which preceded the main force, and his log describes how the passage was 'sounded out' and how he 'acquainted' himself with 'ye channel'.

To the consternation of the French on 26th–27th June, 1759, Saunders with 141 sail anchored abreast of the Isle of Orleans.

Drake's maxim—'Time . . . is half a victory, which being lost is irrecoverable'—was observed, and without any loss of time, Wolfe's army was landed and by the evening of the 27th was disembarked on the island without the loss of a ship or man. A violent gale sprang up after the troops were landed, which caused some damage to transport and the loss of anchors and small boats; and on the night of 28th June, seven fire-ships were sent from Quebec into the crowded anchorage. However, these were towed clear and ran aground and no damage was suffered.

The next night General Monkton's Brigade crossed the river and took up a position at Point Levi and with great energy and speed batteries of guns and mortars were mounted, to bombard Quebec across the river.

On 9th July, with two Brigades, Wolfe occupied a position on

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 12 *Combined Operations in the St Lawrence River, 1759*

the north shore, below the falls of Montmorency, leaving a small force at the north-west point of Orleans Island.

In the meantime, Admiral Saunders had stationed his vessels in the basin and between Point Levi and Point of Orleans. On 17th July he sent some ships above the town of Quebec with a few troops on board, to give General Wolfe the opportunity of reconnoitring the river.

On 28th July the enemy made yet another determined attack with fire-stages and rafts, but had no better success than before.

On 31st July General Wolfe launched an attack in daylight against the enemy's main force, which was strongly entrenched at Beauport and along the foreshore between Montmorency River and Quebec.

The water was too shallow to allow the ships to give close support, but the *Centurion*—a 50-gun ship—was anchored between the Island of Orleans and the Montmorency River, in a position to engage the enemy's redoubts from their eastern flank, and which commanded the ford across which Townshend's and Murray's Brigades were to march, when the tide was sufficiently low.

Meanwhile, two light draft transports, which had been heavily armed for the purpose, were run ashore at high water to engage the redoubts and batteries covering the beach, on which the troops from Monkton's Brigade at Point Levi were to be landed in boats from the Fleet.

The rise and fall of tide, as in all amphibious operations, played a decisive part, and by the time it was possible for the troops to march across the ford, the tide was sufficiently low to make the landing on the muddy beach difficult. The impetuosity of the leading sea-borne troops involved them in difficulties before the main force were able to land and those advancing from the eastward were in a position to attack. Eventually, after suffering considerable loss, Wolfe decided to withdraw his troops, which he succeeded in doing before nightfall—the two transports being abandoned and burnt, as they were fast aground.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

### *Combined Operations in the St Lawrence River, 1759* 13

Wolfe, as was his wont, directed the proceedings personally, with utter disregard for his safety, and whilst on board one of the grounded transports, reconnoitring the position and movements of the enemy, he was hit three times by splinters and had his stick knocked out of his hand by a cannon ball.

On 5th August Saunders sent Admiral Holmes to join the ships above Quebec, and embarked about 1200 troops under Brigadier General Murray, to operate against the enemy there. They returned three weeks later, having inflicted some damage to the enemy's ammunition and store dumps, and caused a diversion.

During the later days of August, Wolfe was very ill with fever, and it is clear from the last letter that he wrote to Pitt, dated 3rd September, that he was very harassed by the difficulties of the situation, for he had come to the conclusion that even if he succeeded in beating the enemy by a frontal attack on his main position, the assault of the town would be a very hazardous proceeding, since it was covered by entrenchments and batteries, which could not be commanded by the guns of the Fleet.

Wolfe decided, therefore, to advance from above Quebec with the object of drawing the enemy from their entrenched positions below the town and bringing them to action.

I do not propose to dwell on the details of the operations which followed, but rather on the lessons to be learned from them.

It is said that General the Marquis of Montcalm—the Commander-in-Chief of the French land forces, and M. de Vaudreuil—the Governor General of the Province (a Captain in the French Navy)—were not on good terms. The General had been anxious to station 4000 troops and a considerable force of artillery, strongly entrenched at Point Levi, but the disposition—which would have been exceedingly inconvenient to Wolfe, and might well have defeated the British plan which was eventually carried out—was overruled at a Council of War by M. de Vaudreuil, who insisted that their duty was to act on the defensive with the whole of the available force on the north side of the basin, protecting every possible landing place. On no account should their forces

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

#### 14 *Combined Operations in the St Lawrence River, 1759*

be divided. Montcalm, apparently against his better judgment, conformed to this plan.

When the British actually seized the position Montcalm had wished to occupy, he embarked a force of 1600 men to drive them out; but to quote Wolfe—‘Unluckily they fell into confusion, fired upon one another and went back again; by which we lost an opportunity of defeating this large detachment.’

Standing at the various points of vantage in Quebec—from which the French Commander-in-Chief watched the proceedings of his enemies—I could picture the whole scene, and having seen some modern battles, what struck one most was the diminutive size of the stage on which the great events were enacted, and the small number of the forces engaged.

At one time Montcalm seems to have been fairly confident that the natural strength of the position would enable him to hold out, until the winter forced his adversaries to raise the siege. The defeat of Wolfe’s attack on the Beauport coast must have encouraged this view, as some weeks passed before any other considerable effort was made.

In the light of our knowledge of the strength of the French position I cannot help feeling that perhaps Wolfe was fortunate to have been repulsed at Beauport, before he was too deeply committed.

In the days that followed, the value of the command of the sea, and the wonderful mobility it gave to the Army, became more and more apparent, and we know now that the constant threat of the water-borne troops, covered by Admiral Holmes’s squadron above Quebec, caused the deepest anxiety to Montcalm and ceaseless vigil to General Bougainville—who commanded the French troops on the western flank.

When Wolfe decided not to repeat his attack on the Beauport position, the transfer of the British troops and batteries from the Montmorency Falls was skilfully effected without the loss of a single man on 3rd September. Troops and batteries were then concentrated on the south side of the St Lawrence opposite

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

### *Combined Operations in the St Lawrence River, 1759* 15

Quebec. A small force was left on the island of Orleans with orders to make themselves as conspicuous as possible.

Three thousand men were embarked in the transports and kept afloat above Quebec ready to land anywhere, and water transport was standing by to take the remainder wherever they might be required. Thus the French were kept on the *qui vive* for a distance of 30 miles, and General Bougainville's force wearily marched and counter-marched for three weeks, trying to keep pace with the various threatened landings.

On 12th September all was ready to carry out Wolfe's plan. The vessels above Quebec were constantly under way, and manœuvred to convey the impression that a landing would take place at a point 13 miles above Quebec. Saunders made a very successful feint, by putting all his Marines in boats and standing in towards Beauport just before dark. During the night he laid buoys inshore, to make the French think that the ships would move in at daylight to cover a landing there.

The main attack was to be made by Monkton's and Murray's Brigades at Foulon, the one accessible approach to the Heights of Abraham, Wolfe being with Admiral Holmes in the flagship of the squadron covering the transports. Meanwhile the batteries on the south shore were heavily bombarding Quebec all night.

At 4 a.m. on 13th September the attack was launched, Wolfe and his Staff in the leading boat being the first to spring ashore. The landing was carried out so quietly that the small French post at Foulon was surprised, and the battery 300 yards to the west was taken in reverse and captured. By 8 a.m. Wolfe had nearly 5000 men in battle order across the Plains of Abraham, awaiting Montcalm's attack, while the sailors were disembarking guns and siege material.

Wolfe, who had been a sick man for some weeks and whose anxieties must have been intense, was ablaze with confident ardour during the battle, striding up and down the line encouraging his troops. He was twice hit before he received his mortal wound,

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 16 *Combined Operations in the St Lawrence River, 1759*

but lived long enough to know that the French were in full retreat and that victory was assured.

The forcing of the St Lawrence and the capture of Quebec were the first steps to the winning of the great Canadian Dominion, which now stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific; but it is well to remember that we should have lost Quebec the following spring, but for our command of the sea and the timely arrival of a British Squadron some weeks before the passage of the river was considered possible. In the meantime, weakened by scurvy and fever, our small garrison, under General Murray, were themselves besieged in Quebec by a vastly superior force of French troops under General Levis, after suffering a severe reverse within a mile of Wolfe's victorious battle.

One can well imagine the excitement and relief of the sorely pressed garrison, when they were able to distinguish the British ensign flying from the approaching ships. Those ships would in all probability have been French, but for Hawke's victory over the French Fleet in Quiberon Bay, 3000 miles away, which gave us the command of the sea.

As a sailor, I welcome this opportunity of paying a tribute to the memory of Wolfe, a soldier who was such a masterly exponent of amphibious warfare, and one who appreciated to the full the value of Sea Power.

I am sure if Wolfe had lived he would have generously acknowledged that but for the skilful and enterprising navigation of the Fleet up the St Lawrence River, and the devoted co-operation of Admiral Saunders and all who sailed with him, he would never have carried out his brilliant achievement. But Wolfe's passing in the hour of victory, like that of Nelson—whom he so closely resembled in many characteristics—overshadowed everything, and the magnitude of the Navy's share in the victory—like the value of Sea Power—is often forgotten.

The lessons which, I submit, stand out in the operations which resulted in the capture of Quebec, are:

The danger of static or passive defence against an enterprising



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Excerpt

[More information](#)

---

*Combined Operations in the St Lawrence River, 1759* 17

and aggressive foe. When Montcalm neglected to hold strategic points which commanded the waters adjacent to Quebec, and allowed the British to seize them, Saunders was able to cut him off from water-borne supplies and threaten, by amphibious strokes, his land communications for a distance of about 30 miles.

The power of defence over attack, even in those days, was such as to stress the importance of surprise, to effect which, highly disciplined troops trained in *night fighting* are essential to success.

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## CHAPTER II

## THE CHINA WAR, 1900

(See *Maps II, III and IV*, pp. 104, 105, 106)

Early in June 1900, owing to the Boxer rising in China, about thirty men-of-war belonging to almost every nation possessing a navy assembled off Taku. Owing to shoal water, battleships and cruisers had to anchor about 4 or 5 miles from the bar across the Peiho River, which was 7 miles from the entrance, and on which there was only about 2 feet of water at low spring tides.

Vessels drawing up to 12 feet could cross the bar for two or three hours each tide and lie at anchor between Taku and Tongku, which was about 4 miles up the river. Tongku was the terminus of the only railway to Tientsin and Peking.

In 1858 a British Squadron of gunboats under Admiral Sir Michael Seymour had entered the Peiho River without opposition. In 1859 another British Squadron of gunboats, not expecting serious opposition, had tried to force a passage past the forts, and had been repulsed with heavy losses. In 1860 a combined operation was undertaken and a considerable army from India was landed at Pei-Tung, 8 miles to the north-east of the entrance to the river. The forts were captured from the rear with very slight loss, as the guns of the forts could not train inland. This secured a base for the Navy, through which the expedition to Peking was supplied.

In 1900 the entrance of the river was fortified on both sides by batteries, mounting about seventy modern Krupp and Armstrong guns of from 5 to 8 in. calibre of the most up-to-date type, whilst the garrison had been trained by Europeans. All the guns which could bear on the upper reaches of the river were on central pivot mountings and could command all the approaches from inland. From seaward the forts were really impregnable, as they were out of range of the heavy ships and only small vessels of shallow draft