
1757

Year of Failure and Tragedy

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By Boyce Richardson

History does not usually accord a great deal of attention to losers or failures, so it is not surprising that though our history books overflow with detail about the glories of the British conquest of Louisbourg in 1758, they are relatively silent about the fiasco of the failed blockade of Louisbourg the year before. And so far as I have been able to discover, they pay no attention at all to the extraordinary circumstances of the return to France in October of that year of the disease-ridden French fleet under the command of De La Motte.

The British mounted a huge operation against Louisbourg that year, but De La Motte, with a little help from Nature, foiled them. It is cruelly ironic that Nature should then have turned on him so viciously by ravaging his fleet with a disastrous epidemic during what was surely one of the most miserable voyages ever undertaken from the shores of Canada. Hundreds died on this voyage back to France in October: it must have been an almost unimaginable horror. Six months later, when James Wolfe arrived in Halifax — seasick and grumbling — he remarked that he had just been on the most extraordinary voyage since the days of Columbus. In comparison with what the French had experienced only a few months before, one begs leave to doubt it.

All of the events of that year of failure, however, throw a fascinating light on those times. The British failure was the result of indecision. The problem was that William Pitt, who came back into office in December, 1756, did not really get a grip on things

until a new ministry was formed in June, 1757 — too late to turn things around that year.

Edward Boscawen was the naval star of the time, but in 1757 he was needed in Europe, and when Pitt decided to become aggressive in Canada, a lesser admiral, Francis Holburne, was put in command of a great fleet which gathered at Cork, in Ireland, along with thousands of soldiers who were to be carried across the Atlantic. In Halifax they were to be joined by thousands more from the North American armies under the command of the Earl of Loudoun. The two armies were supposed to converge and descend on Louisbourg like a mighty host — but they both arrived late.

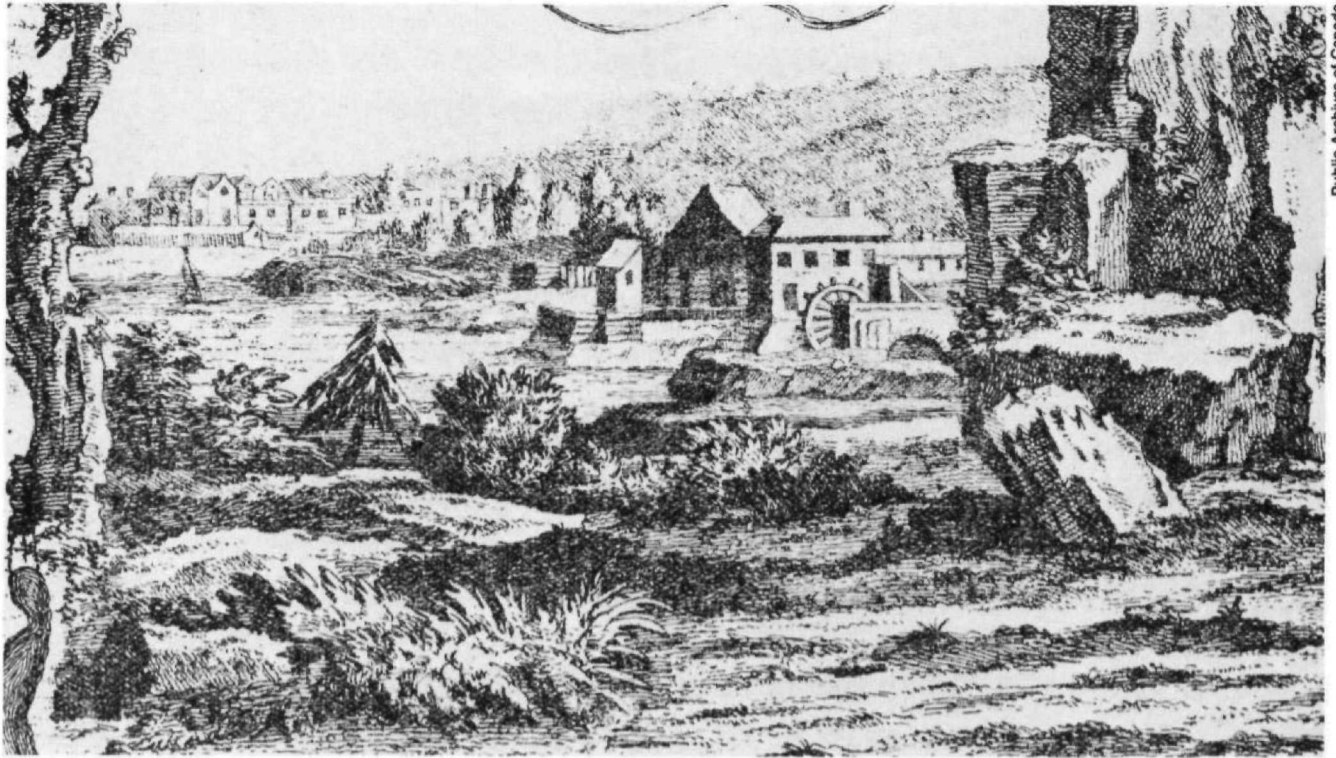
THE ARMIES ARE TOO LATE

Holburne was not able to get away from Cork until 7 May, when he should have already been in Halifax. These few weeks of delay put the British at a disadvantage from which they never recovered throughout the summer. De La Motte managed to arrive in Louisbourg from Brest on 19 June, a good three weeks before Holburne limped into Halifax, his fleet widely dispersed by severe Atlantic storms.

We have interesting accounts of these two voyages from Europe, especially of the English one, for one of the 5,200 soldiers who sailed from Cork was Capt. John

*James, Earl of Loudoun
from a mezzotint by Sir Joshua Reynolds.*





View of Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1750. Opposite page: Major Robert Roger.

Knox, a soldier of little distinction who has made his mark in history through his *Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America* — now regarded as the best record we have of those momentous times. Knox tells how the fleet was separated by “a dreadful storm” on 20 May, but the commander of his transport wasted time running northwards in the hope of picking up an enemy prize. He gave chase to a few ships but did not catch them, and the greatest excitement came from viewing “the great number of whales, grampusses and porpusses,” and “several mountainous islands of ice”, which Knox said he did not believe he would ever have tired of viewing.

Off the banks of Newfoundland they were told by a New England fisherman that some French men-of-war had arrived in Louisbourg by the first week of May.

THE JAIL DISTEMPER TAKES A HAND

Both fleets were weakened by disease, almost certainly the “Jail Distemper”, as it was then called, or typhus, which usually infected the fleet when, as often happened, the dregs of humanity from the jails and slums were rounded up by the press gangs. In a letter to his superiors from Halifax, Holburne wrote that when he arrived on the coast his fleet was in no condition to begin a blockade of Louisbourg, “being very sickley and in want of water”.

A thick fog delayed them outside Halifax harbor for five days, even though 12 vessels were sent out to look for them, with pilots to guide them into port.

“From being as Healthy as most that ever sailed from England, We had between Nine Hundred and a Thousand Men put ashore to the Hospital, Five Hundred of which will be left behind Sick, besides Two Hundred Dead, since We first sailed.” The acceptance of health disaster was almost laconic.

The French commander also had his health problems (though in May and June they were as nothing compared with what they were to be six months later). Emmanuel-Auguste de Cahideuc, Comte Dubois de la Motte, was already an old man who had been jousting at sea with the British for more than a half century. Only two years before, he had managed on the homeward journey to outwit a British fleet by sailing all his ships through the Strait of Belle Isle, something a French fleet had never done before.

But before De La Motte sailed from Brest this year, Fate dealt him a loaded hand: his fleet was joined by two ships that had taken on some men from the hospital at Rochefort, and from these invalids the fever spread so that even before leaving Brest he had to send 400 sick men ashore to the hospitals. Even so, on the way over the Atlantic these two ships had many men die and many others fall ill. After their arrival in Louisbourg, the fleet had so many sick seamen that they had to set up tent-hospitals, and since these were placed too close to the tents of healthy servicemen, the infection began



to spread throughout Louisbourg until it "became general", in the words of the British naval doctor, James Lind.

A STRIKE FORCE GATHERS — AND WAITS

Over on the other side, John Knox (never a man to criticize his superiors), found no fault with the late arrival of Holburne's fleet, but recorded that when they went ashore to present their compliments, the Earl of Loudoun, Commander-in-Chief in America, who himself had arrived only eight days before from New York, remarked that "we staid so long he had almost despaired of us; but being assured our delay proceeded principally from an obstinate set of contrary winds, that had retarded us in Ireland above two months after our arrival at the port of embarkation, His Lordship seems pleased." By the time everyone had arrived Loudoun had almost 12,000 men under arms, with at least 7,000 sailors manning the fleet. The intention was to attack Louisbourg as soon as possible.

Joseph Gorham, who had been a member of his brother John's infamous Rangers in the 1749 attack on Louisbourg, was sent out in a small captured French vessel to take a look at the French stronghold, and reported seeing 10 or 12 small ships. Holburne then sent Captain John Rous out to get a more accurate report, but "the Weather was so Thick Capt. Rous told me that He could not look into the Harbour the whole Time He was out." However, he confirmed by talking to fishermen that the French were by now present in Louisbourg in great strength, the fleet from Brest having been reinforced by some ships from Toulon and from Hispaniola in the West Indies.

Loudoun has often been harshly judged by the historians and it seems that his men were not overly fond of him either. Knox would never allow himself to say anything directly, but he records the curious circumstance that when Loudoun was reviewing his troops a ball was discharged that wounded one of his orderly sergeants in the arm. "But upon the strictest scrutiny, it appeared to be an accident," he remarked laconically, adding: "It is however remarkable that an affair of the same kind happened before, though not in this camp, as His Excellency was reviewing another battalion of this corps, by which a Lieutenant was killed who stood very near to His Lordship."

Loudoun exercised his troops and set them to planting gardens to grow vegetables that would be needed when the general hospital was set up to receive the sick and wounded from the forthcoming attack. The impact of these thousands of visitors on the small village of Halifax may be imagined. With Holburne's arrival the little town of 1,500 souls had to deal with 1,000 sick

seamen and soldiers, who were put into the houses that still served as hospitals. Rum was sold so freely and with such devastating effect that on 16 July the provincial council authorized the provost-major to enter any unlicensed house where drinking was evident to seize all liquor and store it in the king's storehouses until the departure of the military. Even so it was said that "debauchery and pestilence were out of hand in the town". (The following year, in very similar circumstances, Admiral Boscawen complained to Amherst, that the women who accompanied the army were "notorious suttlers", and said that he did not see a sober soldier in Halifax. He believed that on the attack on Louisbourg that year, only 300 of 2,000 seamen in half a dozen ships under his command were not drunk on the job.)

Defence was needed against Indian attacks, and a group of Rangers from New York, under Capt. Robert Rogers, "marched out every day to scour the country," wrote Knox. "These light troops have at present no particular uniform, only they wear their cloaths short, and are armed with a firelock, tomahock, or small hatchet, and a scalping knife; a bullock's horn full of powder hangs under their right arm, by a belt from the left shoulder; and a leathern, or seal's skin bag, buckled round their waist, which hangs down before, contains bullets, and a smaller shot, of the size of full-grown peas: six or seven of which, with a ball, they generally load". Simple country boys.

STRANGE BEHAVIOR OF HIS LORDSHIP

The weather was extremely variable: violent rains, thunder and lightning, windy, with thick fogs, one week; then "exceedingly hot" the next. Two men were executed for desertion. Loudoun's vegetable plots now gained their small place in history through the behavior of Major-General Lord Charles Hay, commander of one of the four brigades for the attack on Louisbourg who along the way began to come over rather strange. He was a member of the Council of War, but Loudoun reported to his commander-in-chief in London, "Lord Charles Hay took a very odd turn, and behaved indecently to almost every Member in the Council; Seldom Sett at the Table but got to the Window, laid up his legs in it and looked out, except in the course of Examining People any thing happened to hit his Fancy, then he Asked odd Questions, Grinning and Laughing, and using all the Gestures of a Man out of His Senses."

Lord Charles took to galloping through the camp, every now and then stopping and collecting crowds around him, denouncing the mock attacks that were being held in preparation for the siege. He accused Loudoun of expending the nation's wealth in planting cabbages when he ought to have been fighting. Loudoun



Halifax, 1757, from a watercolour by Thomas Davis. This view shows a squadron setting off for Louisbourg.

contrived to have the Council of War meet without Hay, who was considered by his fellow officers to have gone mad, and was closely confined for seven months. (Hay was ordered home, but no ship would take him, and in desperation he volunteered the following spring to go aboard one of the ships which arrived for the 1758 siege, and he witnessed that from the decks of *HMS Dublin*. Back in England he demanded and was given a court-martial. He was charged with inciting mutiny and sedition among the troops; but he died in 1760 before the King took any decision in his case.)

LITTLE PROSPECT OF SUCCESS

Holburne wanted to take his fleet out to blockade Louisbourg, but the generals would not agree to it. In spite of the rather formidable French forces, Loudoun embarked his army into transports on 2 August, but Holburne in a letter to the Admiralty recorded:

I intend proceeding with them . . . when the Wind and Weather will permit, and give them all the Aid and Assistance in my Power, but there is not the least prospect of being able to force the Harbour, if I had double the Number of Ships. It would have been very happy if we had been off there in the Month of May, as we should have had a chance of intercepting the different squadrons of the Enemy . . .

We are all laying ready, but the Winds are from the Sea every day, and very thick with Fogs, till there is an Alteration of Weather, there is no possibility of moving with the Fleet.

At the last minute the commanders changed their minds. On 3 August, with the whole army waiting in ships to take off, word arrived from the Newfoundland squadron that a French schooner had been captured that had just left Louisbourg for France. According to Knox, the French sailors had pretended to throw something overboard, but when the ship was searched a small bag was found under a packet of dry fish, containing

letters to the French ministry detailing the armaments of Louisbourg, including 22 ships of the line, and 7,000 men in "good spirits, and provided with every thing necessary for a good defence."

Loudoun immediately cancelled the attack. "The expedition is laid aside," commented Knox, "and all further design of acting offensively to the eastward for this campaign is given up." He rejected insinuations made "by some malevolent spirits" that the British commanders had fallen for a French trick, what we would now call "a disinformation ploy".

Two regiments disembarked, and three stayed on the ships ready to take off for elsewhere. The weather continued bad, and they hung around for several days. "Our transports are now much crowded ..." remarked Knox, "there not being sufficient births for the number of men on board." They left finally two weeks after they had been embarked on the ships — Loudoun south to New York, Holburne to blockade Louisbourg from the sea, and the rest to the Bay of Fundy. Holburne returned to Halifax ten days later, and Sir Charles Hardy advised Loudoun by letter that he was able to confirm the strength of the Louisbourg garrison, which, he said, "Must have ended with the Ruin of your Army, if a Landing had been Attempted."

Holburne sailed back north in mid-September and established his ships outside the harbor, but the French, in spite of their apparent strength, showed no disposition to sally out on the attack, and the reason for this is almost certainly because "the French crews were very sickly."

KNOCKOUT BY NATURE

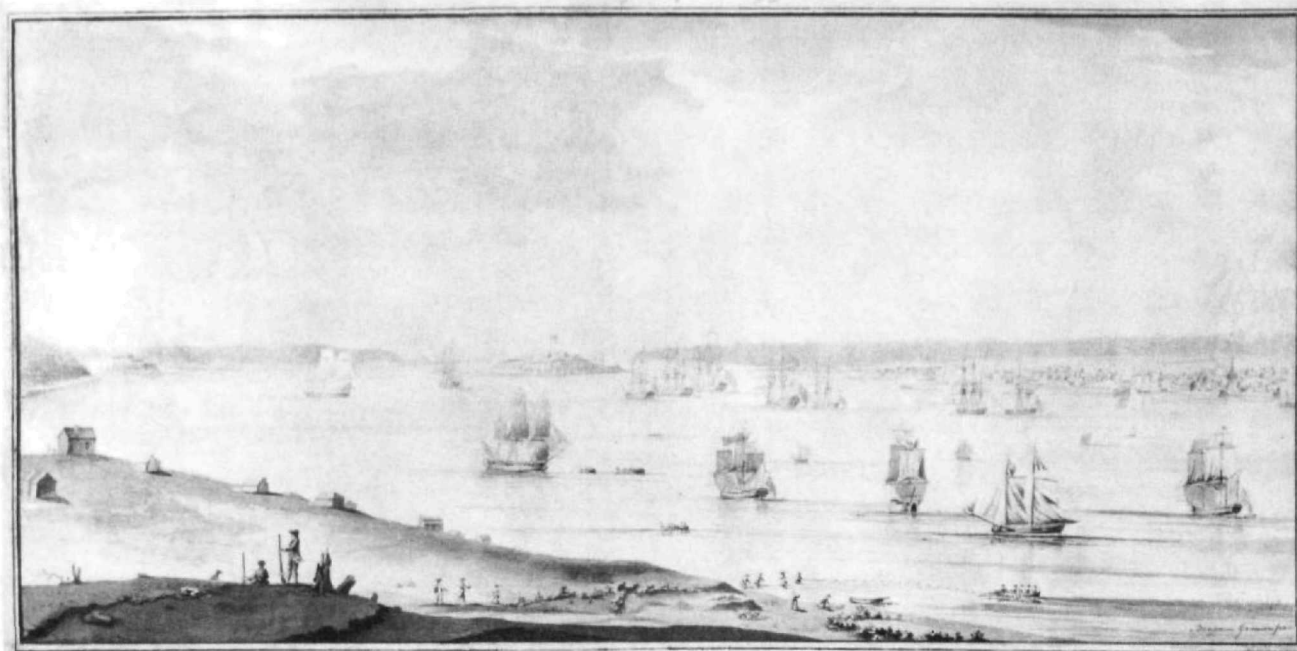
Though Fate was preparing a terrible blow to the French, it first delivered a knockout punch to the English. On the evening of 24 September, Holburne's fleet off Louisbourg was caught in an easterly gale, which, veering round to the southward, became "a perfect storm", as Knox remarked. "It continued violent all that night, and the greatest part of the forenoon following," and when it was over the British fleet was in ruins. (By this time Knox was in the Bay of Fundy, but he heard about the storm through dispatches.)

Holburne's flagship, the *Newark*, had to throw eight guns overboard and scuttle for Halifax. Ten of his other ships were dismasted. The *Tilbury* was driven ashore southeast of Louisbourg, and only 175 of the 400 men aboard were saved by the French, who sent them soon after, under flag of truce, to Halifax. If the French had been capable of attacking, they could now have demolished the helpless British fleet, but for almost a month De La Motte stayed in port, preparing for the return to Brest.

AN UNUSUAL MEDICAL HERO

The dramatic story of the French voyage home has been overlooked by most historians. But it is told in an obscure but fascinating work written in 1779 by Dr. James Lind, called *An Essay on the Most Effectual Means of Preserving the Health of Seamen*. Dr. Lind is one of the unsung heroes of history. As a sea-going naval

A view of Halifax, with ships.



Royal Ontario Museum



His Majesty's

DECLARATION

Of WAR against the *French King*.

GEORGE R.



THE unwarrantable Proceedings of the *French* in the *West Indies*, and *North America*, since the Conclusion of the Treaty of *Aix la Chapelle*, and the Usurpations and Encroachments made by them upon Our Territories, and the Settlements of Our Subjects in those Parts, particularly in Our Province of *New Scotia*, have been so notorious, and so frequent, that they cannot but be looked upon as a sufficient Evidence of a formed Design and Resolution in that Court, to pursue invariably such Measures, as should most effectually promote their ambitious Views, without any Regard to the most solemn Treaties and Engagements. We have not been wanting on Our Part, to make, from time to time, the most serious Representations to the *French King*, upon these repeated Acts of Violence, and to endeavour to obtain Redress and Satisfaction for the Injuries done to Our Subjects, and to prevent the like Causes of Complaint for the future: But though frequent Assurances have been given, that every thing should be settled agreeable to the Treaties subsisting between the Two Crowns, and particularly that the Evacuation of the Four Neutral Islands in the *West Indies* should be effected (which was expressly promised to Our Ambassador in *France*) the Execution of these Assurances, and of the Treaties on which they were founded, has been evaded under the most frivolous Pretences; and the unjustifiable Practices of the *French* Governors, and of the Officers acting under their Authority, were still carried on, till, at length, in the Month of *April*, One thousand seven hundred and fifty four, they broke out in open Acts of Hostility, when, in Time of profound Peace, without any Declaration of War, and without any previous Notice given, or Application made, a Body of *French* Troops under the Command of an Officer bearing the *French King's* Commission, attacked in a hostile Manner, and possessed themselves of the *English* Fort on the *Gis* in *North America*.

Notwithstanding this Act of Hostility, which could not but be looked upon as a Commencement of War, yet, from Our earnest Desire of Peace, and in Hopes the Court of *France* would disavow this Violence and Injustice, We contented Ourselves with sending such a Force to *America*, as was indispensably necessary for the immediate Defence and Protection of Our Subjects against fresh Attacks and Insults.

In the mean Time great Naval Armaments were preparing in the Ports of *France*, and a considerable Body of *French* Troops embarked for *North America*; and though the *French* Ambassador was sent back to *England* with specious Professions of a Desire to accommodate these Differences, yet it appeared, that their real Design was only to gain Time for the Passage of those Troops to *America*, which they hoped would secure the Superiority of the *French* Forces in those Parts, and enable them to carry their ambitious and oppressive Projects into Execution.

In these Circumstances We could not but think it incumbent upon Us, to endeavour to prevent the Success of so dangerous a Design, and to oppose the Landing of the *French* Troops in *America*; and in Consequence of the just and necessary Measures We had taken for that Purpose, the *French* Ambassador was immediately recalled from Our Court, the Fortifications at *Dunkirk*, which had been repairing for some Time, were enlarged; great Bodies of Troops marched down to the Coast; and Our Kingdoms were threatened with an Invasion.

In order to prevent the Execution of these Designs, and to provide for the Security of Our Kingdoms, which were thus threatened, We could no longer forbear giving Orders for the arming at Sea the Ships of the *French King*, and his Subjects. Notwithstanding which, as We were still unwilling to give up all Hopes that an Accommodation might be effected, We have contented Ourselves hitherto with detaining the said Ships, and preserving them, and (as far as was possible) their Cargoes entire, without proceeding to the Confiscation of them; but it being now evident, by the hostile Invasion actually made by the *French King* of Our Island of *Minorca*, that it is the determined Resolution of that Court to hearken to no Terms of Peace, but to carry on the War, which has been long begun on their Part, with the utmost Violence, We can no longer remain, consistently with what We owe to Our own Honour, and to the Welfare of Our Subjects, within those Bounds, which, from a Desire of Peace, We had hitherto observed.

We have therefore thought proper to declare War, and We do hereby Declare War against the *French King*, who hath so unjustly begun it, relying on the Help of Almighty God, in Our just Undertaking, and being assured of the hearty Concurrence and Assistance of Our Subjects, in Support of so good a Cause; hereby willing and requiring Our Captain General of Our Forces, Our Commissioners for executing the Office of Our High Admiral of Great Britain, Our Lieutenants of Our several Counties, Governors of Our Forts and Garrisons, and all other Officers and Soldiers under them, by Sea and Land, to do and execute all Acts of Hostility, in the Prosecution of this War against the *French King*, his Vassals and Subjects, and to oppose their Attempts: Willing and requiring all Our Subjects to take Notice of the same; whom We henceforth strictly forbid to hold any Correspondence or Communication with the said *French King*, or his Subjects. And We do hereby command Our own Subjects, and advertise all other Persons, of what Nation soever, not to transport or carry any Soldiers, Arms, Powder, Ammunition, or other Contraband Goods, to any of the Territories, Lands, Plantations, or Countries of the said *French King*, Declaring, That whatsoever Ship or Vessel shall be met withal, transporting or carrying any Soldiers, Arms, Powder, Ammunition, or any other Contraband Goods, to any of the Territories, Lands, Plantations, or Countries of the said *French King*, the same, being taken, shall be condemned as good and lawful Prize.

And whereas there are remaining in Our Kingdom, divers of the Subjects of the *French King*, We do hereby declare Our Royal Intention to be, That all the *French* Subjects who shall demean themselves dutifully towards Us, shall be safe in their Persons and Effects.

Given at Our Court at *Kennington*, the Seventeenth Day of *May*, 1756, in the Twenty ninth Year of Our Reign.

God save the King.

L O N D O N:

Printed by *Thomas Baskett*, Printer to the King's most Excellent Majesty; and by the Assigns of *Robert Baskett*. 1756.



Town and Harbour of Halifax as it appears from Dartmouth. Dominique Serres, oil on canvas.

surgeon for many years, he discovered by controlled experiment in 1753 that oranges and lemons were the best cure for scurvy, which had been the curse of the sea ever since long voyages began. Because a naval surgeon was the lowest rung of the medical profession, Lind's opinion was paid scant heed by his contemporaries, and it was more than 40 years before his cure was adopted by the navy (with spectacular results).

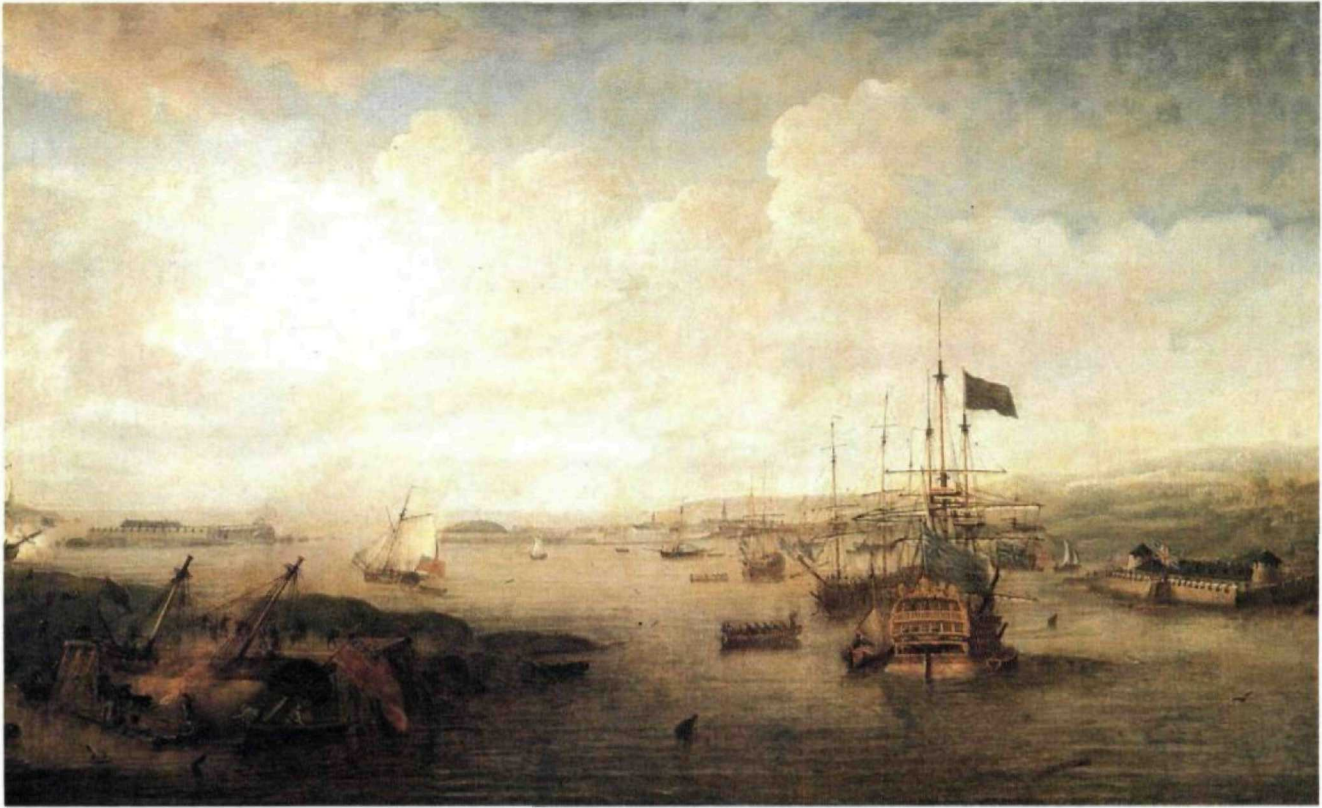
Almost everything known about health conditions during the Seven Years' War comes from Dr. Lind's observations. "The number of seamen . . . who died by shipwreck, capture, famine, fire or sword are but inconsiderable in respect of such as are destroyed by the ship diseases and the usual maladies of intemperate climates," Dr. Lind wrote. And he was right: during that war, 133,708 men were lost to the service by disease or desertion, compared with 1,512 killed in action.

According to Hans Zinsser, in his fascinating (and amusing) biography of the body-louse, *Rats, Lice and History*, typhus had been devastating European armies since at least the fifteenth century; it killed hundreds of thousands of people in Mexico with the arrival of the Spaniards; it overran Europe in the seventeenth century, and became so lively later that he described the eight-

eenth as the Century of Typhus, during which it was carried to the remotest parts of the earth. We have known only since 1909 that this disease is transmitted by body-lice, which were first carried by the rats that followed exploration around the world, and then simply spread from man to man. "Typhus fever was born when the first infected rat flea fed upon a man," says Zinsser.

Lind, of course, was puzzled by the provenance of the disease. In his day most diseases were ascribed to bad air, fogs, vapours, humidity or poisonous exhalations, but he could not quite believe it. The jails were undoubtedly the source of infection for the ships of the fleets, but it was also frequent in parish poorhouses, and he had also observed it among English felons in transport ships, and Dutch soldiers going to Batavia.

"It does not seem to originate in air," he wrote. And the nearest he could come to it was that there is in all infected places, adhering to certain substances, "an envenomed nidus, or source of effluvia," and that the air, especially if it is confined, becomes more or less strongly impregnated. In other words, the infections, though they did not "reside in air" were occasionally sent into the air from the substances in which they did reside. High among these substances he put dirty cloth-



A View of the Town and Harbour of Louisbourg by Richard Paton.

ing. He recommended a uniform for sailors. But it was a century before his idea was adopted. "The province has been mine to deliver precepts; the power is in others to execute," Lind remarked, a trifle sadly.

THE LOUSE GOES TO WORK WITH A WILL

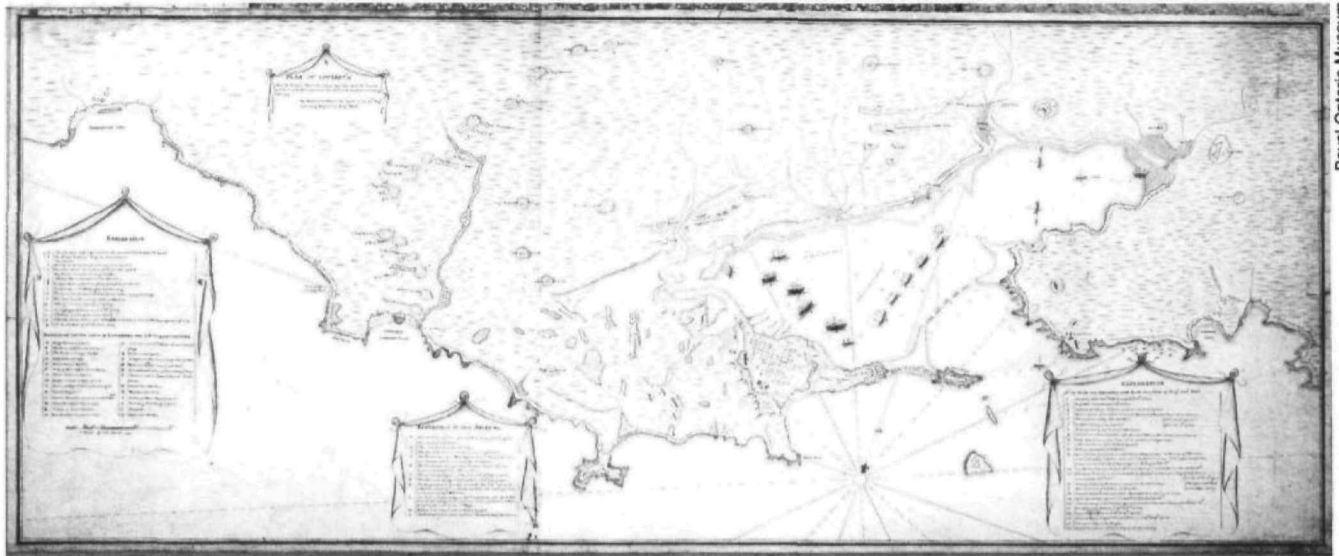
Before they sailed home from Louisbourg on 20 October, 1757, the French were still battling with the fever they had brought over with them from Rochefort hospital. They buried many of their men, decided to leave 400 behind who were dying, and in what was evidently a gamble with Nature, took along with them 1,000 invalids they hoped could still recover. The British were in no state to stop them from leaving port, but the louse went to work with a will: within six days most of the 1,000 invalids were dead, and many others had fallen ill. The symptoms, as described by Lind, are "a low fever attended with a violent thirst and heat in the skin, often with chills at the beginning, and always with a disorder in the head, which may rise to a delirium or stupor." The image is nightmarish: an entire naval force of fevered and delirious men, dying by the hour, their corpses dealt with by colleagues terrified that they would be next.

According to Lind, before it arrived at Brest on 22 November, the French fleet was entirely disabled, because it did not have enough healthy seamen left to work the ships, much less to help the sick. By this time 4,000 were ill, and the holds, the decks, every part of every ship was crowded with the sick. All the surgeons and almoners were dead or sick. In this dreadful condition, a fleet which had saved Louisbourg from attack limped to the French coast. They would have been easy pickings now, if the British Navy had been around.

SIX TERRIBLE MONTHS IN BREST

Seamen were sent from other ships to bring the fleet to anchor — this must have been a fearful assignment for any man — but the marine hospital in Brest was already crowded, for only a few days before two ships, the *Bizarre* and *Celebre*, had arrived from Quebec, and had sent 1,000 sick men to the hospital. There was nowhere for the 4,000 new invalids to go, and for a few days, Lind says, they were "promiscuously crowded together into every place they could gain admission, where death hourly thinned their numbers."

Eventually 15 hospitals were set up, and physicians and surgeons arrived "from all parts" to lend a hand.



A plan of Louisbourg.

But even these were inadequate, and “the mortality from thence prodigious.” Lind quotes the work of a French doctor on the state of these hospitals. They were so overcrowded it was impossible to keep them clean, and the stench became so intolerable that no healthy person could enter the hospitals without being seized with a headache. Any indisposition quickly became fatal. In “an air so highly contaminated”, the slightest infection attained the utmost degree of virulence, and even those who survived a first attack of fever were sure to suffer a relapse. Confinement in these hospitals, in fact, was “almost certain death”, and, Lind says, “such as had no fever when sent thither, soon served, equally with the infected, as additional fuel to the devouring flame.”

The disease soon spread to the attendants. Five physicians, 150 surgeons, 200 almoners and nurses, and many slaves (“who, by a promise of their liberty, were engaged to assist the sick”) fell victim.

But this was just the beginning. From the attendants, the disease spread to “the lower class of people” in the town, and soon whole houses were filled with the dead and dying. Though doctors, food and medicine were promised free of charge to everyone, in many houses it was discovered no one was left who was capable of calling a physician, and in some houses dead bodies remained undiscovered for several days.

“The disease afterwards began to appear in some parts of the neighboring provinces, being carried thither by people who fled from Brest,” records Dr. Lind. “But . . . in March the fever began to abate, and in April it entirely ceased, having carried off, in less than five months, upwards of 10,000 people in the hospitals alone, besides a great number who died in the city of Brest.” So it appears that almost the entire 1757 garrison of Louisbourg perished in the epidemic.

So ended a year of indecisive battle for the control of Canada — in an appalling tragedy that history has treated as a trifle.

By the following year Pitt (himself still only 50) was in total command of the British forces, and he swept Loudoun and other aristocrats aside, replacing them with young career officers such as Jeffrey Amherst, 41, James Wolfe, 31, and in the Navy, Edward Boscawen, 47.

THE COMMANDERS SURVIVE

Holburne paid the penalty for not getting to Halifax in time. When he returned to Britain he was named Port-Admiral of Portsmouth, but took no part in the coming triumphs against the French. In 1761 he struck his flag and quitted his command, was eventually given the civil rank of Rear-Admiral, and ended his days as Governor of Greenwich Hospital.

De La Motte’s naval career of more than 50 years ended with his arrival in Brest. He remained a combative old gentleman, however, and the following year, when the British landed near St. Malo, he went there, despite his 75 years, and helped repulse the enemy.

The commanders of 1757, therefore, did not go out in a blaze of glory: but at least they lived to old age — De La Motte died at 81, Loudoun at 77, Holburne at 67 — having never, presumably, been exposed to the lice-ridden quarters occupied by the poor men who served under them.

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