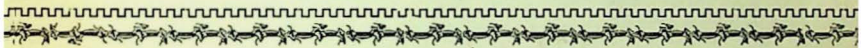




THE LOUISBOURG MEDALS.

BY

R. W. McLACHLAN.



THE LOUISBOURG MEDALS.

A CELEBRATED geological writer adopted the phrase, "Medals of Creation," as a title for one of his works, thus acknowledging the important place that numismatics occupies in history. For, since the invention of coined money, most great events have been commemorated and radical changes chronicled by this medium. And, while older America has had few, if any, medallists, like those of the mother continent, ever ready to indelibly grave the records of passing events, enough has been done in this direction by which, were our written history blotted out, we might build up a skeleton of the past that could be clothed with flesh by those who tell of deeds of valor in the "Old times in the Colonies."

Every medallic memento of this past has been sought out and treasured up with great care and, from time to time, made to yield up stories of how the savage continent was reduced to law and order. The most interesting, to us, are those which relate to the struggles for the mastery and the final victory of one of the two diverse forms by which two races attempted to work out this problem. The object of this paper is, therefore, to give a history of the numismatic mementoes of the first decided success in this grand victory of free institutions on this continent.

After the capture of Acadia and its final cession in 1713, to Great Britain, the French felt the necessity for a better defence of their frontier. A chain of forts was therefore begun that finally extended from the island of Cape Breton to the Ohio river. These guarded every accessible avenue leading into the country; and around each of them one or more battles were fought and deeds of valor enacted worthy to be recorded in the most brilliant pages of history.

As the treaty that ceded Nova Scotia to the English, permitted the French to retain possession of Cape Breton they chose, for the site of their Fort, one of its harbours called Havre aux Anglaise, because in earlier times when the Island was not appropriated by any power, the English fishermen were wont to resort to it to dry their fish ; as did the Spaniards to what is now called Sydney Harbour. There the French built and fortified a town calling it Louisbourg in honour of their King. It was to be a strong place where the fleet engaged in the Gulf fisheries could resort in times of danger ; and which would be an outward bulwark to protect the St. Lawrence shipping trade from the raids and encroachments from New England. Vast sums were expended on masonry and earthworks ; and so strong did the fortifications appear that the town was considered impregnable. When, in 1720, it was completed it was a proud day for the inhabitants of New France. A medal was struck in commemoration of the event the obverse of which bears the bust of the child King with the long hair so fashionable at that time and the reverse a tolerably good view of the town and harbour. Two or three vessels are represented as lying at the wharves in the harbour, one or two others sailing out to sea and some fishing boats making for the port. The whole view, when compared with old plans, seems very accurate, shewing as it does, the pond or marsh near the entrance of the harbour and the bastions of the fortifications. Thanks to the care with which the French Government has guarded the dies, prepared under its authority, restrikes of this medal can easily be had from the Musée Monétaire, specimens may therefore be found in many collections of medals relating to America. Two other varieties besides the one described above have come under my notice ; both, apparently, the result of carelessness in the handling of the dies. One has, for an obverse, an older head of the King, apparently much older than he could have been when Louisbourg was built. The other

has the reverse of the medal struck in commemoration of the treaty of 1763. Peace is represented as standing with an olive branch in her hand while war, as a naked male figure, is seated bound on a battering ram. A curious medal when we consider that one side represents the founding of the place which was ceded to the nation against whose encroachments it was built, by the treaty commemorated on the other side. The mistake that produced this medal occurred under my own knowledge, for having ordered two or three of each of these two medals to be struck at the medal mint at Paris, what was my surprise, on examining my purchase, to find the two obverses and the two reverses muled together, forming the medal as described above, and another with a head of the king for reverse as well as obverse; one at the age of ten the other at fifty.

For a time the fortifications were kept in good repair and additions and improvements were made as necessity suggested. But, towards the beginning of 1745, they were neglected and allowed to become ruinous. The Garrison also was greatly reduced. During the year an expedition was fitted out at Boston, and sailing for Louisbourg invested the place, which, after a siege of some weeks, capitulated. It remained in the hands of the English Colonists until the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle when, much against their wishes, it was returned to France. On regaining possession of the town, work was immediately begun by the French, in the repairing, enlarging and improving of the fortifications. Although much of this money was diverted from the purpose for which it was intended to the pockets of a peculating governor and dishonest contractors the work was at length completed; and so strong was Louisbourg believed to be that it was called the "Dunkirk of America" and was considered to be the greatest fortress on the continent. And yet, from the use of salt-water in mixing the mortar, it was easily crumbled and, as some of the provisions of the original plan were not carried out,

the fortifications were by no means so strong as they appeared.

From this safe retreat raids were made on the colonial fishing fleet and expeditions fitted out against the coasts of Nova Scotia and New England. The colonists so continued to long for its capture: that one or two expeditions were organized for that purpose but they came to nothing. Although more populous than Canada, the separate and almost independent English colonies were weak in organization. They, instead of acting together kept up constant disputings or quarrelling with their governors about prerogatives and powers, refusing to vote the supplies and men necessary for the defence of the country until some trivial dispute should be granted. Meanwhile the French colony, less populous and so dependent that save at the dictates of the king it could not move hand or foot, but with a united front and supplied with money, munitions and men by that king, seemed to be victorious in every direction, dealing devastation all along an unguarded frontier. Especially, after the battle of the Monongahela did the Canadians, by the aid of their Indian allies, spread death and desolation throughout the border settlements of Pennsylvania and Virginia. In the meantime the generals, sent out from England by Newcastle to conduct the war, proved so incompetent that they more often led their troops to ambush and disaster than to victory. Defeat following defeat told of the encroachments of their northern neighbours. The extinction of the "American Colonies" seemed at hand. Although a crusade against the modern Babylon was preached from the New England pulpits the New Englanders seemed paralyzed.

But at length a change came. Pitt, by the will of the English people, was made Prime Minister and new generals—competent men—superseded Newcastle's favorites. Hope again seemed to revive throughout the colonies, the French were brought to a stand-still. But that did not satisfy

Pitt who aimed at nothing less than the extinction of their dominion in America. With this end in view an expedition was fitted out, in 1758, against Louisbourg. The command was given to Admiral Boscawen who had elsewhere distinguished himself for bravery and discretion.

On the first of June the white sails of the English fleet were seen off Louisbourg, but on account of the stormy and tempestuous weather, it was not until the eighth that a landing, under Wolfe, was effected. Batteries were soon erected and the siege began in good earnest. Wolfe afterwards the Hero of Quebec seemed ever present in the strife encouraging, planning and pressing forward operations. An unabating and ever nearing storm of shot and shell was poured into the doomed town. The place became at length almost untenable ; so untenable, indeed, that, on the twenty fifth of July, Drucour, the Governor, hoisted a flag of truce. Negotiations were completed and the terms of capitulation signed at midnight. On the morning of the twenty-sixth the Union Jack floated over the wreck of that bulwark of the French Dominion in the New World.

This, the first decisive victory for the upholders of, and the perpetuation of free institutions in the new land so bravely won, filled the hearts of New Englanders as well as Old Englanders with joy. They saw the final triumph near at hand and from the pulpits of the one came pœans of praise for a fallen Babylon, and the public places, of the other from end to end of the land, glowed with the beacon fires of gladness over a defeated foe.

Medalists too, were not slow in contributing to the public joy. Although not so loud or so brilliant, their indelible work is more lasting and more apparent to us who live "in these degenerate days" than songs of triumph or fires of joy. No less than eleven medals chronicle this event varying in design and excellency of workmanship, some, the work of skilled artists, are beautiful in themselves, but others, the work of untrained men, are only treasured for the events they

were struck to celebrate. All of them were either executed in London or Birmingham and seem to be the work of five different engravers. By the first, who has not recorded his name, there are two varieties. One has the bust of George II for the obverse ; and, for reverse, a figure of Britannia in a chariot drawn by a lion over ground strewn with *fleur-de-lis*. By her right hand walks Justice, and on her left Liberty. This medal was struck to commemorate the British victories of 1758, of which eight are enumerated thereon, three of them being in North America. That of Louisbourg, which by the way, is dated on the medal July 27th instead of July 26th, as the most important, appears in the most prominent place. The other has the same reverse muled with the reverse of a similar medal struck to commemorate the victories of 1759.

The next variety is also by an unknown medalist and is perhaps, the rarest. The workmanship although not of the highest order, lacking as it does in finer finish and the more delicate touches of the true artist, is bold and original. The obverse has a rather expressionless head of Britannia with a trident, the emblem of supremacy at sea, behind it, and the words "O fair Britannia, hail". The reverse represents a winged Victory standing on the prow of an ancient war vessel ; in her right hand she holds a wreath and in her left a palm branch. The dies, especially that of the reverse, seem to have given way before many impressions were struck. All of the few specimens, that have come under my notice, shew a deep indented break on the left of the reverse. This probably accounts for its scarcity. A medal much after the same design and apparently by the same person, was struck on the capture of Goree, off the coast of Africa, in the same year.

The next is by Kirk, a well known medallist and one whose works are still cherished, apart from the subject which they treat. The art displayed is of a higher order than any other of the series. The obverse is like that of the last but

the face of Britannia has an expression of sadness. A liberty cap, which with the trident accompany the head, indicates that freedom as well as Britannia triumphed through this success. The reverse represents Victory running with a palm branch, a shield and an ancient cuirass on a pole over her left shoulder. In her right hand she carries a larger fish and a number of smaller ones above it, while, the battle trophies represent success in war, the great and smaller fish represent the capture and seem to argue for the retention of the important Island of Cape Breton and the smaller islands dependent thereon.

The medal by Pingo is by far the most original in design and in execution, and little, if anything, behind that of Kirk. The central object on the obverse is a large globe showing a map of the eastern part of North America which is inscribed "Canada" and "America." The latter is intended to indicate the English Colonies; a term still used in England for these colonies as represented by the United States. This globe seems to be crushing a naked female figure who lies prostrate on a rock and who is pointing to an inverted *fleur-de-lis*, or, rather, the *fleur-de-lis* has just dropped from her grasp. This represents the crushing out of French rule in the New World and the loss of the great colony. To the right of the globe is a sailor, representative of New England with his hat raised, apparently cheering; and on the left is a British soldier who is pointing to Canada on the map to tell the colonist that Canada his enemy will soon be captured and that the danger that has so long menaced his existence will be removed. The inscription "*Paritur in bello*" tells that, although in the days of the Newcastle regime, the English soldier despised the colonial militiaman, that, in these latter days of success, they were equal in war. Fame blowing a trumpet and the Union Jack fill up the balance of the space on the obverse. The reverse gives a view, and a very good one too, of the harbour during the last days of the siege. A shell from the

battery in the foreground has set fire to the French ship *Prudent* and the sailors are out in a number of small boats towing her away from the battery where she was likely to strand and cause damage. A ball from the battery is about to strike in the town. Part of the British fleet appears anchored at the entrance of the harbour and to the left is Lighthouse Point shewing the lighthouse. The whole scene is vivid and full of life and action.

The remaining six medals seem to be the work of one man or by those who were close imitators of his work. All but one are similar in design although differing considerably in detail and are of a low order of workmanship, much inferior in execution to any of the rest of the series. They are said to have been issued by a man named Christopher Pinchbeck who commenced business in London in the early part of the eighteenth century, as a watchmaker and jeweller. His name still lives in the language in the word *pinchbeck* which means in slang anything inferior or deteriorated as used by Anthony Trollope in *Framly Parsonage*, "Where, in these pinchbeck days, can we hope to find the old agricultural virtue in all its purity." In ordinary English it designates an alloy of copper and zinc in which considerably more of the latter metal is used than in making brass. This invention of Pinchbeck is thus described in a manuscript written about 1725:—"Mr. Xtopher Pinchbeck has a curious secret of a new metal w^{ch} so naturally resembles gold (as not to be distinguished by y^e most experienced eye) in color, smell and ductibility, y^e secret is communicated to his son." This alloy before it has become tarnished has all the appearance of colored gold; and so popular was it in those days that Pinchbeck made vast quantities of cheap jewellery, watch cases and ornamental articles from it. He also made a musical clock which was much admired and which he sold to the King of France in 1729, for £1500. Pinchbeck was a well-known character in London. He invented a pair of snuffers which he made

of his favorite metal and presented them to the king. This "event," a local poet, named McGregor celebrated in an ode in which he thus addressed his hero:

"Illustrious Pinchbeck ! condescend,
Thou well-beloved, and best King's friend,
These lyric lines to view ;
Or may they prompt thee, e'er too late,
To snuff the candle of the State,
That burns a little blue ! "

Pinchbeck wrote a poetical reply ; and the two pamphlets were so popular that they reached their eighth edition. He seems to have gone extremely into the medal business as many of the Admiral Vernon medals, glorifying the capture of Carthagena in 1741, some, relating to the suppression of the rising of the Highlanders in favor of the Stuarts in 1745, and others, commemorating memorable events in the eighteenth century, were struck by him. Pinchbeck seems to have given up the medal business shortly after the Louisbourg medals were struck as I have come across nothing of a later issue which can be classed as his work. Had he continued to issue medals he would not have neglected such an important event as the taking of Quebec.

All the medals issued by Pinchbeck, are rude in design and poorly executed. They have a worn or old and dirty appearance shewing that the metal pinchbeck from which many of them seem to have been made, although so like gold when fresh and new, became, with wear more unsightly even than old brass. Five of these medals bear a figure, not by any means a likeness, of Boscawen on the obverse with the inscription "Adml Boscawen took C pe Breton"; lauding the General or Admiral in command of the expedition as do all the Pinchbeck medals. The reverses have a view intended to represent the siege of Louisbourg but as unlike Louisbourg as it is unlike anything else in nature or art. They all differ in detail, some have one hill, others two, and one three. The ships, are what a Chinese junk would be ashamed of, differ in number and position while

men appear as great wedges with caps on. Perspective is so outraged as to make one wonder if a blacksmith would not have done better. A town, consisting of one large house and five or six smaller ones, clusters at the foot of a hill upon which is a tower from which a flag is drooping, in one variety a ball just fired from a mortar, is about to crash through the tower, in another Louisbourg is spelled without the last "u"; and in still another the date is pushed forward ten years, reading 1768. The inscription reads in four "Louisbourg Jul 26 1758" while one has "Louisbourg harbour Jul 26 1758." The sixth is totally different in design having, on the obverse, the usual figure of Boscawen with the inscription "To Brave Adml Boscawen" and the reverse "I surrender prisoner 1758" Drucour is represented on one knee surrendering his sword to Boscawen who is standing with his sword stretched over his prisoner's head.

These, then, remind us of a town that is no more. Her fortifications are dismantled and sheep peacefully graze on the mounds that mark her battlements. No merchant vessel enters the harbour and only once in a while does a fishing boat visit the hamlet of impoverished fishermen that clusters on the opposite shore. Here it was, that one hundred and thirty years ago, four thousand people cowered and hid from the hissing bombs and thudding balls that spread desolation and made the wild and uninhabited waste that now remains. Here freedom and self-dependence fought against absolutism and dependence and here the first vantage in this final struggle in America, was gained for the former. Shall we then not cherish in these mementoes the names and memory of the dead heroes whose triumph has made this continent a land of liberty.

LIST OF MEDALS RELATING TO LOUISBOURG.

All these medals, but two, are in my own collection and those I have had by me while writing this paper. Thus every variety has been verified and carefully prepared. I

am unaware of the existence of any other varieties ; although Sandham describes two others. These, after carefully examining every collection accessible to me, and after writing to owners of collections that I have had no opportunity to inspect, I have come to the conclusion do not exist.

1. *Obv.*—LUDOVICUS XV. D. G. FR. ET NAV. REX. Youthful bust of the king, with long hair. Under the bust which faces to right DU VIVIER.

Rev.—LUDOVICOBURGUM FUNDATUM ET MUNITUM.
Ex: M. DCC. XX. A view of the town and harbour of Louisbourg. Bronze ; size, 41 millimetres.

2. *Obv.*—LUDOVICUS XV. REX CHRISTIANISSIMUS. Laureated older head of the King to the right.

Rev.—Same as last. Bronze, size 41 m.

3. *Obv.*—PAX UBIQUE VICTRIX *ex* :—GALLORUM ET BRITANORUM | CONCORDIA | MDCCLXIII. Peace to the right standing with an olive branch in her extended right hand, and a caduceus in her left. At her feet, seated on a battering ram is War as a nude male figure bound, surrounding them are flags, battle-axes, and other implements of ancient warfare. Bronze ; size, 41 m.

4. *Obv.*—GEORGIUS II. REX. Laureated bust of the king to the left.

Rev.—SENIGAL MAI. 2. MARSH MASON. ST. MALOS IUN. 16. MARLBORO. CHERBOURG AUG. 16. HOWE. LOUISBOURG. IUL. 27. BOSCAWEN. AMHERST. FRONT. AUG. 27. BRADSTREET. DUQUESNE NOV. 24. FORBES. GOREE. DEC. 29. KEPPEL. Britannia in a chariot drawn by a lion over ground strewn with *Fleurs-de-lis* by her right walks Justice, and on her left Liberty. Above is a scroll inscribed FÆDUS-INVICTUM. and underneath the date MDCCLVIII. Brass ; size 43 m.

5. *Obv* :—GUADALOUPE BARING^N MOORE. MAY 1. NIAGARA JOHNSON JULY. 25. QUEBEC WOLFE MONCK^N TOWNS^P SEP. 13 and 18 CROWN POINT AMHERST AUG. 4. LAGOS BOSCAWEN AUG. 19. HAWKE QUEBERON NOV. 20. MINDEN FERDINAND AUG. 1. A shield with a *fleur-de-lis* reversed, supporters a lion to the left and a unicorn to the right. Garter inscribed PERFIDIA EVERSA and ribbons with W. PITT. AUSP. GEO. II PR. MI. underneath is the date MDCCLIX. Brass ; size 43 *m*.
6. *Obv* :—O. FAIR BRITANNIA HAIL. A nude female bust to the left. From behind the bust appears the top of a trident.
- Rev* :—LOVISBOVRG TAKEN. MDCCLVIII. Victory to the right standing on prow the of an ancient war vessel. In her right hand she holds a wreath and in her left a palm branch. Copper ; size 39 *m*.
7. *Obv* :—O · FAIR · BRITANNIA · HAIL.
A nude female bust to the left, with a liberty cap before and a trident behind, underneath is I. KIRK.
- Rev* :—LOVISBOVRG · TAKEN · MDCCL VIII.
EX :—I · KIRK · F. Victory to the right running, in her hand is a large fish with a number of smaller fishes above it, and in her left a palm branch on a pole with a shield bearing a *fleur-de-lis* and an ancient cuirass. Bronze, size 41 *m*.
- 8 *Obv* :—A globe inscribed CANADA AMERICA, resting on a nude female figure which is prostrate on a rock, and is pointing to an inverted *fleur-de-lis*, on the left of the globe is a soldier with musket and bayonet pointing to Canada on the globe, and to the left is a sailor waving his hat. Over the globe is a scroll inscribed PARITER · IN · BELLA, behind it the Union Jack, and above, Fame with a wreath in her left hand blowing a trumpet. In the distance are five small boats and a high rock. To the left on the rock is T. PINGO · F. Bronze, 44 *m*.

Rev.:—LOVISBOVRG · TAKEN · MDCCL VIII.

View of Louisbourg harbor. In the foreground is a battery firing on two war vessels one of which is burning, to the right is the town and in the distance are six vessels, on the left is Lighthouse Point.

9 *Obv.*:—ADML. BOSCAWEN · TOOK · CAPE · BRETON.

Half length figure of Boscawen in mailed armour to the right.

Rev.:—LOVISBOVRG. *Ex.*:—IUL 26 1758.

A rude view, intended for, but altogether unlike the town and harbor of Louisbourg. To the right is a hill surmounted by a tower. A ball from a mortar is about to strike the tower, and the flag seems to be about to drop or is being lowered. The town is clustered at the foot of the hill. To the left is a small tower with six men around it. In the harbor in front of the town are five vessels, three small and two large ones. Brass, or better, Pinchbeck, size 40 *m.*

10 *Obv.*:—Same as last.

Rev.:—LOVISBOVRG *Ex.*:—IUL 26 1758.

Similar view but the hill is larger and the mortar and ball are wanting there are only two men beside the tower. To the right two small and two larger vessels. Copper, or dark mixed metal, size 41 *m.*

11 *Obv.*:—ADML. BOSCAWEN TOOK CAPE BRETON.

Three quarters figure of Boscawen to the right in naval uniform. In his right hand he holds a baton.

Rev.:—LOVISBOVRG *Ex.*:—IUL. 26 1768. Similar view but the tower on the hill is to the left. There are five small vessels and two larger ones. Brass, size 37 *m.*

12 *Obv.*:—Similar to last but there are fewer buttons on the coat and the baton is shorter.

Rev.:—LOUISBURG HARBOUR. *Ex.* IUL 26 1758. Similar view. There are three hills with the tower on the one to the left. The other hills are each surmounted with a small building. In the harbour are four small vessels and one large one. Brass, size 37 *m.*

13. *Obv.*—Similar to No. 11.

Rev.:—LOVISBOVRG *Ex.*: IUL. 26. 1758. Similar view. Tower on rising ground to the left, other buildings scattered over the field. There are no men standing beside the smaller tower to the right. In the harbour, there are five small vessels and two large ones. Brass size 23*m.*

14. *Obv.*:—TO BRAVE ADM^L: BOSCAWEN. Figure of Boscawen as in No. 9.

Rev.:—I SURRENDER PRISONER *Ex.* 1758. Drucour to the right on one knee handing his sword to Boscawen. Copper size 26 *m.*

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