

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAYAN INCIDENT IN THE SECRET SERVICE CAREER OF
CAPTAIN AZARIAH PRITCHARD

Reference to the remarkable career of Captain Azariah Pritchard, Sr., prior to, during and subsequent to his military service during the American Revolutionary War as an Officer of the King's Rangers, has been made in previous issues of "GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY".

The late A.D. Flowers, recording Capt. Pritchard's arrival in Bay Chaleur on the Snow, "LIBERTY" in 1784, in his volume, LOYALISTS OF BAY CHALEUR, noted:

"Captain Azariah Pritchard, a Welsh loyalist of Derby, Conn., where he was a miller and part owner of a ship, became Captain in the King's Rangers for which he raised a company, but served in the secret service and was placed on half-pay at the end of the war. He is said to have built the first grist mill on the coast..."

The following incident, published many years ago in the CANADIAN ANTIQUARIAN AND NUMISMATIC JOURNAL, bears directly on his career in the secret service during the Revolutionary War. The Montreal merchant, Pierre du Calvet, was suspected by Governor Haldimand of sympathy for and communication with the American "rebels". Captain Azariah Pritchard was to play a major role in his arrest and imprisonment.

KEN ANNETT.

THE CASE OF PIERRE DU CALVET.

AN ORIGINAL CANADIAN ANECDOTE.*



SOME years after the conquest of Quebec, there lived in the city of Montreal, a Gascon Merchant, named Du Calvert: he was a *Huguenot*, and wealthy, litigious, proud and jealous,—very rich in seignories and money. He imagined that the judges of Montreal slighted him, on account of his profession of faith, and his quality; and addressed a letter to them, taking for text, that they treated him ill, and had a different law for their friends and enemies.

This was construed a libel, and an insult to the Government, who took notice of it, and it was prosecuted by the Attorney General. It was tried by a jury of the first class in Montreal. The truth of libel was no palliation at that time, and the merchants who formed this jury appeared to have adopted that idea; and, satisfied that there had been provocation for it, on the part of the judges, acquitted Mr. Du Calvert. Some time after, he was taken out of his home* in the night, and removed by a military guard, between two soldiers, to Quebec, where he was conveyed on board the armed Province-schooner *Cancodox*,† in the stream of the St. Lawrence.

There he was confined from early in May, until the ice rendered it unsafe to continue afloat, when he was removed to the dungeon of the *Recollets'* Convent.

As he was a Gascon and a Huguenot, it may be supposed that he derived little satisfaction from the attendance of the ghostly fathers in his dungeon, with offers to restore him to the Church.

Mr. Du Calvert had been a prisoner in this dungeon some years,‡ when an unfortunate tradesman incurred the resentment of one of the judges at Quebec, who was then deputed prime minister, and by his influence was deposited in the same dungeon with Mr. Du Calvert. This unfortunate was a cooper by trade, whose offense is not known, but he possessed one blessing — a faithful wife.

She had found her way into the dungeon to her husband

* The following "Anecdote" was found among some M.S. notes of the late Frederick Griffin, Q.C., which he left, together with his books, to the Library of McGill College, and for the use of which the Editors are indebted to the courtesy of Principal Dawson. The first part of the article was published in the *York Courier*, to which no date is given; the remarks on the first part, were copied by the late Jacques Viger, of Montreal, in 1846, from a slip pasted in the back of a copy of the English edition of Mr. Du Calvert's work. Then follow some notes of Mr. Viger's, and two quotations are added by Mr. Griffin, who copied the whole paper as here given, in 1852. We have printed the article *exactly* as Mr. Griffin wrote it.—Eds.

* The house in which Mr. Du Calvert lived was only recently destroyed; it stood at the corner of St. Paul and Claude Streets.—Eds.

† "Canceaux."

‡ "... some years." The whole term of his imprisonment was two years and eight months; he was arrested some time about October, 1781, and liberated 2nd May, 1784.—Eds.

and his fellow-prisoner, and became well acquainted with their sufferings, and the hopeless state that awaited them. She formed her resolution — it was in the midst of war — and became a Roman or Scottish Matron.

She embarked at Quebec ; and, arrived in England, found her way to the palace (the Queen's House), in St. James' Park, and there exposed herself to the observation of the domestics, until it came to the Queen's ears, that such a person had no claim, but humanity, to her Majesty's notice. She was, however, ordered to attend, and to expose the claim, which she did to such effect, that, by the very first conveyance to Quebec, she was the bearer of a royal order to bring to trial, or to release, the two prisoners in the dungeon of the Recollets.

The compiler of this anecdote saw Mr. Du Calvert on his release from the dungeon without being charged with any crime, and never witnessed such horror, as the relaxed state of his human body presented. He (Mr. D.) followed Sir Frederick Haldimand to England, where Sir F. was arrested, at Mr. Du Calvert's suit, as he was buckling on his sword to go to Court, and Earl Mansfield, the Chief Justice, on proper enquiry, required £2000 bail, which was furnished by Mr. Haldimand, a London merchant.* The Cooper's wife should have had a statue erected to the memory of her conduct, and placed between Castle Lewis (le Château de St. Louis) and the Convent.

Mr. Du Calvert returned to Quebec, to seek evidence, which must have taken £2000 from his oppressor, which he was bearing triumphantly to England, when he was lost in the packet, and never since heard of until reference to his sufferings.†

The moral of this anecdote is addressed to the good people of Upper Canada, that they may feel with gratitude the change of law and manners which they have experienced in so short a time, as to obviate any possible recurrence of such government.—*Communicated to the "Courier."*

* Sir F. H. partit de Quebec, le 16 Nov. 1784, dans l'Atalante, Capt. Foley.

†D'après une note conservée dans la famille Griffin, à Montreal, ce seroit en 1786, et dans le *Shelburne*, que Mr. D. se seroit embarqué à New York, pour l'Angleterre. Un oncle de la famille Griffin étoit aussi du voyage. Le vaisseau périt en mer, avec ses passagers : la note n'en dit pas davantage.

The moral of the above is unquestionably true ; but we have also heard of an anecdote, which may serve as a key to the above. It is possible that Mr. Du Calvert may, till the moment of his death, have remained ignorant of the cause of his detention, which, however, most probably would have been produced, for his satisfaction, at the intended trial upon which he was so intent. The detention of any man within the walls of a prison, without the cause being clearly and explicitly stated on the face of the warrant of commitment, is no doubt contrary to the spirit of the English criminal law ; and, if such were the case with Mr. Du Calvert, the

act is deserving of reprobation. But that General Haldimand immured him from the mere spirit of oppression, and for the pleasure of putting down a proud and litigious man, is scarcely credible. The General, we believe, was by no means a bad man at heart.

A Captain Pritchard, of one of the provincial regiments raised during the American revolutionary war, being in charge of a scouting party near Pike River, at the southern extremity of Lake Champlain, and having obtained intelligence that a Mr. ———, who resided on the river Chambly, was making secret preparations to go by that route into the States, with a party, having, as it was suspected, despatches from the disaffected in this Province to the American revolutionary authorities, waylaid and succeeded in surprising them; nothing, in the shape of despatches, was found upon them; but, being conveyed to St. John's and delivered over to Major Carleton, or the officer who commanded at that post, measures were taken by that officer to prevail upon Mr. ——— to avow the object of his journey to the United States, which he did, upon the stipulation of his being liberated, and that his having divulged the matter, should be inviolably kept secret, lest he might incur the displeasure of those with whom he was connected and be destroyed by some of them. He accordingly acknowledged that he was the bearer of despatches to the revolutionary authorities in the revolted colonies, and that these despatches had been given him by Mr. Du Calvert, and were included in paper rolled up and inserted in the hollow of a cane or walking stick, which, at the moment when he and his party were surprised in the woods, he cast away from him; that he thought, if permitted to revisit the spot, he might find it, offering to return for the purpose, in proof of the truth of his declaration, if Major Carleton should think proper to let him proceed thither in company of Captain P. who had taken him. He was accordingly permitted to go, and, as he had foretold, recovered the walking stick, which was brought in the same state as found, and delivered to Major Carleton, who, without removing the head of the cane, satisfied himself with shaving down one side of it with a penknife, until reaching the hollow he discovered that it did contain paper, and, without going further, immediately released Mr. ———, and despatched Captain P. to Quebec, who delivered the cane in that state at the Castle of St. Lewis to General Haldimand, who took out the letters, and read them in the presence of Captain P. They were, as represented by Mr. ———, letters to the American revolutionary authorities, conveying information on the state of the then Province of Quebec, advising an invasion by way of Yamaska, and pledging himself that they would be seconded by a body of not less than ten thousand men, if the American powers should come in at that quarter. Upon this information, it was found necessary to place Mr. Du Calvert in safe-keeping; and he was accordingly recured without loss of time, but *remained under the impression that the Governor knew nothing of the despatches*, Mr. ———, for his own safety, assuring him that they had been thrown away, so as to be irrecoverably lost. Captain P., who secured Mr.

——, brought the despatches to Quebec, saw them taken from the cane in which they were concealed, and heard them read by Gen. Haldimand, (who observed at the time, that Mr. Du Calvert had, unfortunately for himself, signed his own death-warrant,) is, or rather was last autumn, still living, and has often related the circumstance to the compiler of this, and who knowing neither the compiler of the above "anecdote," nor Gen. Haldimand, nor Mr. Du Calvert, in their lifetime, only relates what he has received, believing it however to be perfectly true. The General may have had good reasons for not bringing Mr. Du Calvert to a public trial, for a traitorous intercourse with the enemy, which might have terminated by the legal forfeiture of his life, perhaps from a spirit of leniency towards Mr. Du Calvert personally, perhaps because the production of the papers necessary to convict him might involve others, whom, everything considered, it was well to leave unmolested, in the uncertainty of matters at the time; or, possibly, from no other reason than that a promise had been given to Mr. ——, the intercepted bearer of the despatches, that no use should be made of them in bringing Mr. Du Calvert to trial. Be this as it may, it was necessary to put a stop to the intercourse, and for this purpose to secure his person; and this may account for the sudden manner in which he was taken out of his house at night, and removed by a military guard to Quebec.

[The name of the subject of the foregoing "Anecdote" was *Du Calvet*, and not *Du Calvert*, as printed in the *Y. Courier*.]

Copié à Quebec d'un Imprimé cotté à la fin d'un exemplaire du * "Case of Pre. Du Calvert, Esq.," &c., la propriété de l'Hon. Henry Black.

Juillet, 1846. J. V.

"Extrait d'un dépêche du T. Hon. Comte Grey, Sec. d'Etat pour les Colonies, à S. Ex. le Comte Elgin & Kincardine, en date de Downing Street, le 3 Janvier, 1852 (No. 674)," en réponse à une adresse du Cons. Leg. de la Prov. du Canada, dépêchée par Lord Elgin le 26 Août, 1851, et par laquelle adresse le Conseil demandoit des "copies de certaine correspondance relative à la tenure seigneuriale, à dater de 1766,"—(Imprimé par ordre du Con. Lég., 4me. Par., 16 Vic., 1852.)

* The full title of the work here referred to, is—"The Case of Pierre Du Calvet, Esquire, of Montreal, in the Province of Quebec, containing, (amongst other things worth notice,) An account of the long and severe Imprisonment he suffered in the said Province, by order of General Haldimand, the present Governor of the same, without the least offense, or other lawful cause *whatever*. To which is prefixed, a dedication of it in the French language, (Mr. Du Calvet not understanding the English,) to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, humbly imploring the protection and countenance of His Majesty's Royal Justice in his endeavours to procure some compensation for the injuries he has received.—London, 1784." 8vo. This book is a translation of the French copy which was published at London in the same year.—Eds.

On trouve au nombre des papiers transmis avec cette dépêche du Lord Grey, qui donne *la cause de l'arrestation du Mr. Du Calvert* par ee Gouver. (le 27 Sept., 1780, suivt. Mr. Du C.—Tome 1re p, 185.) J. V.

“State Paper Office — Amerique et Indes Occidentales. Vol. 329.

(Le Gouver. Haldimand au Secrétaire d'Etat.)

(No. 90.)

Quebec, 6 Juillet, 1781,—R. 3 Août.

MILORD

J'ai l'honneur de vous transmettre par le “Quebec,” vaisseau marchand, les minutes et procédés du Conseil Législatif pendant la session de l'année courante.

Le 29 décembre dernier, j'ai reçu une lettre en chiffres de

Sir Henry Clinton, dont la copie est ci-jointe. J'avais découvert et arrêté en Octobre dernier plusieurs personnes qui portient des lettres au Congrès, à M. Washington, et au Marquis de la Fayette, et quoiqu'elles soient détenues dans des prisons séparées, je ne puis faire remonter la trame qu'à la dernière classe des Canadiens, néanmoins un coupon de papier trouvé parmi les lettres, contenait des informations écrites avec du lait, et qui ont du être tracées par quelque personne mieux qualifiée et plus à portée de faire des observations que ne l'est généralement la dernière classe de Canadiens. M. du Calvet, un marchand de Montréal, est en prison relativement à cette affaire. La personne qui a avoué avoir écrit des lettres, dit qu'elle a apposé la signature de du Calvet, à l'un de ces papiers, d'après son désir, et la personne qui a été arrêtée avec les lettres en sa possession, a déclaré avoir entrepris le voyage aux colonies rebelles à l'instigation de M. du Calvet.

“J'ai l'honneur, etc.,

(Signé.)

FRED. HALDIMAND.”

(The whole of the foregoing is copied from a MS. lent to me by Jacques Viger, Esq.*—F. GRIFFIN. Dec. 4, '52.)

Baron Masères, Gen'l. of the Province of Quebec, from Sept. 1766, to Sept. 1769, in his “Plan of a Legislative Council,” &c., published in “An Account of the Proceedings of the British to the inhabitants of the Province of Quebec,” &c., (London, 1775,) p. 103, says:—

“— there are Mr. Du Mas Saint Martin and Mr. Du Calvet, two protestant gentlemen of Montreal who were settled there in the time of the French government and who have acted as Justices of the Peace for that District, with great diligence and integrity for many years, and are very

* Born at Montreal, 7th May, 1787, died December, 1858. He compiled a large collection of materials for Canadian history, which have not as yet been published.—Eds.

much respected in the Province, and the latter of whom is not only master of a fortune that makes him independent, but possessed likewise of a great independency of spirit and temper that renders him peculiarly fit to be a member of a legislative body that is not intended to be totally subservient to the Governour."

And again—in the Appendix, called "Additional papers, &c." (London, 1776,) p. 8:—

" — Mr. du Calvet, a French Protestant of considerable fortune, and unspotted reputation at Montreal, who has acted with great integrity and disinterestedness as a Justice of the Peace in that place."
