

DESTRUCTION OF THE FRENCH FLEET

Introduction

The events which follow are real. They show how fasting and prayer helped protect the New England colonies against certain destruction by a vast French armada. Unfortunately many if not all of the historical events leading to the founding of our nation that highlight the hand of Providence have been removed from the curriculum of our schools.

Scene #1

- *Governor Shirley is sitting at his desk with several advisors when a breathless messenger bursts into his office.*

Narrator: The year is 1746, there is tension between the English and French regarding the lands east of the Appalachians. The English have been building settlements in the land where the French and Indians have established a strong trade in fur. In response to the growing number of English settlers in the west the French build forts and the Indians conduct raids on the settlers.

Last year Governor Shirley strongly supported the successful siege of attack the French port of Louisbourg, located on the Atlantic coast of what is now Nova Scotia

William Shirley the governor of the Massachusetts is in his office where his messenger is related some dire news regarding the French response.

Messenger: Governor! A fleet is sailing under the command of Admiral Duc d'Anville, with orders to "retake and dismantle Louisbourg, affect a junction with the army of Bay Verte, and expel the British from Nova Scotia, consign Boston to flames, ravage New England, and waste the British West Indies". They have 73 ships and 13,000 men.

Advisor: What can we do? We cannot possibly withstand such a large force we don't have the ships or men and it will be impossible to send for reinforcements in time to withstand the French assault.

Governor: Since there is little we can do directly, let us set aside a day of prayer and fasting to ask for God's assistance in averting disaster.

Scene #2

- *The Reverend Thomas Prince stands at the pulpit of the Old South Meeting-house before a crowd.*

Narrator: It was a clear and calm autumn morning in Boston. People had walked to the church on this day of prayer and fasting. The meeting-house was crowded with hundreds of parishioners. The Reverend Thomas Prince was praying for a miracle to avert the disaster that awaited the colonists at the hands of the approaching French fleet.

Reverend Thomas Prince: "Deliver us from our enemy!" the minister implored. "Send thy tempest, Lord, upon the waters to the eastward! Raise Thy right hand. Scatter the ship of our tormentors and drive them hence. Sink their proud frigates beneath the power of Thy winds!"

Narrator: Scarcely had the words left the Reverends mouth when the sun was gone and the morning darkened. All the church was in shadow. A wind shrieked so hard that the great church bell struck twice.

Reverend Thomas Prince: (*raising his arms*) "We hear thy voice, O Lord! We hear it! Thy breath is upon the waters of the eastward, even upon the deep. The bell tolls for the death of our enemies!" (*bows his head and looks up*) "thine be the glory, Lord. Amen and amen!"

Scene #3

- *Governor Shirley is sitting at his desk with several advisors when someone knocks on his door.*

Narrator: It is a week later the Governor is awaiting news of what happened to the French fleet from vessels which entered the harbour.

Governor: Come in.

Messenger: Governor I have great news! It is unbelievable! Many of the French ships and supplies were lost at sea during the storm. Disease had ravaged the fleet. Over 2,000 men had already been buried and 4,000 were ill. Less than 1,000 of the land troops remain. The admiral is dead, it is said that he poisoned himself. The vice Admiral has committed suicide. The remaining ships, half-manned, are limping off to the south-westward, headed it is thought, for the West Indies.

Narrator: Pestilence, storm and sudden death - how directly and with what extraordinary vigor the Lord had answered New England prayers.

The country fell on its knees. Pharaoh's host overwhelmed in the Red Sea were no greater miracle. A paper with the Admirals orders had been found, instructing him to take Cape Breton Island, then proceed to Boston - "Lay that Town in Ashes and destroy all he could upon the coast of North America; then proceed to the West Indies and distress the Islands."

Storm and pestilence - why, it was like the destruction of the Spanish Armada! Governor Shirley said so, to the Massachusetts Legislatures assembled. Never had there been so direct an interference of Providence. The Governor said, "The Lord caused the wind to blow and they were scattered." A day of Thanksgiving and prayer was proclaimed. From every pulpit the good news rang. There was no end to the joyful quotation: If God be for us who can be against us?"

Note: More information on this exciting event in history can be found in the book "John Adams and the American Revolution", by Catherine Drinker Bowen, pp 10-12

See also the following the references:

- [The History of Canada: Canada under French Rule by William Kingsford](#), 1889, p 338-342. Available online in Google Books
- <http://www.blupete.com/Hist/NovaScotiaBk1/Part5/Ch02.htm>
- <http://www.thelibrarybook.com/entry/32/How-did-prayer-stop-the-French-invasion-of-America-of-1746>