

THE GENERAL

Robert Cockburn

Walking by the house he built here,
I think of him,
swarthy and embittered,
limping these streets.*

Did he remember
in this snow, this wind,
another winter, other faces?

Morgan's Riflemen, fringed from Virginia
with their squirrel-guns;
the salt-green speech of Biddeford and Saco-
men who followed his eyes' fire
up the numbing Kennebec, over the Height of Land
to the Chaudière and high Quebec,
and there
fought until he fell
under the walls of Lower Town
in choking snow that New Year's Night

. . . three cheers

aboard his ships at Valcour Island
when the British hove in sight—
victory at Freeman's Farm,
then the wild surge of men
rallying to his imploring arm,
he on his charger at Saratoga!

Would you go back, General,
and pace your fury down
stone floors above the Hudson—
or did you act as you knew right?

Once the answer went
along these stinging streets,
bent to the wind
and memory.

*Benedict Arnold lived in Fredericton in 1789-90.