

Lady La Tour, the Heroine of Acadia

By Effie M. Ross, in Toronto Globe

AMONG the chief factors in the early drama of Canadian history, few names merit greater praise and recognition for their courage and unflinching devotion to duty than that of the heroine of Acadia—Lady La Tour.

A daughter of a Huguenot barber in Mous, France, Frances Marie Jacqueline married Charles de St. Etienne, Seigneur de la Tour, who, when a mere boy, had come with his Huguenot father in 1609 to Acadia, on the loss of their family estates during the civil wars which devastated la belle France prior to the reign of Henry IV.

In spite of their Huguenot training and belief, which prejudiced the French Court against them, the De la Tours rapidly prospered in the new world, and the year 1631 found Charles de la Tour not only in possession of Fort St. Louis, or Fort Lomeron, at Cape Sable, but rewarded for his faithfulness to France by his appointment as the King's Lieut.-General in Fort Lomeron, and its dependencies, and commandant in Acadia; while stores, men and munitions of war were sent out to give him solid power behind this honor. In addition, Charles and his father, Claude de la Tour, had received a more than princely grant of 4,500 square miles along the Atlantic coast of Acadia from Charles I. of England, through Sir William Alexander, besides both being created Knights-Baronets of Nova Scotia on May 12th, 1630, and November 30th, 1629, respectively.

Having received Sir William Alexander's permission to occupy the grant of 450 square miles on the River St. John given him by the French King, Charles de la Tour built a fort near its mouth, and in 1635 removed thither his force, leaving his father in charge of Fort Lomeron. This new fort, known as Fort La Tour, was a strongly palisaded structure, 180 feet square, with four bastions guarded with cannon, while from its rounded turret waved in the breeze the proud flag of France. Though not large, the fort was well and compactly built of stone and provided with a stone vault for ammunition, a well, a mill, a great store oven, and a storehouse for beaver and other skins, and afforded ample accommodation for the garrison, sometimes numbering two hundred men.

The exact site of this important stronghold of our early history has long been a matter of dispute, and "where doctors differ" one can merely state the two places around which contention centres. Hannay, the historian, insists that the place of ground known as the "Old Fort" or Carleton was the site of the original Fort La Tour, as the Duval maps in the editions of 1653 and 1654 place it on the west side of the harbor, opposite Navy Island. On the other hand, a third edition of this map, issued in 1677, shows an unnamed fort on the east side of the harbor, and, arguing from Denys' description of its situation, W. F. Ganong, Ph.D., who has devoted much time and

thought to the subject, has decided that Fort La Tour was on the east side of the harbor, and identifies it with an important French fort known to have once existed on Portland Point. It has also been asserted that Fort La Tour was at Jemsec, about 70 miles up the river, in spite of the fact that in the second mortgage of the fort to Major Gibbons on May 10, 1645, it is minutely described as "situe pres de l'embouchure de la riviere de St. Jean," and as it would have been impossible for Charnisay to bring his large ship of war past a cataract which is just above the mouth of the river, the fort must of necessity have been situated below the falls.

Wherever the precise location of the fortification, we know that on the death of Isaac de Razilly in 1636, Acadia was left under the divided leadership of De la Tour, as Lieutenant of the French king, ruling the half of Acadia as an absolute master, while directly across the Bay of Fundy, at Port Royal, dwelt the ambitious and crafty Chas. de Menou, Sieur d'Aulnay Charnisay, who governed the centre and western portions of Acadia. Having rebuilt and re-fortified Port Royal, he aimed at making money by trading in furs, and thus considerably adding to the large portion of De Razilly's estates and privileges, to which, as his lieutenant, he had fallen heir. Two such men, governed largely by motives of self-gain and lust for power, and naturally jealous of the other's possessions, soon came into conflict. Each lived in semi-state as a feudal lord in his own particular stronghold, surrounded by his soldiers and retainers, while Charnisay watched with envious eyes the ever-growing prosperity of his rival.

De la Tour, with his fund of wood-lore and knowledge of the Indian's habits gained during his wild early life as a trapper with Biencourt, had built up such an extensive fur trade that his vast territories, it is said, yielded him annually about 3,000 mink skins, besides large quantities of beaver and other furs. Charnisay, who was a relative of the great Cardinal Richelieu (at that time the all-powerful Minister to Louis XIII.), finding himself impotent against his rival in Acadia, took advantage of his Huguenot predilections to prejudice the French Court against him, and after years of successful intriguing, at last obtained an order from the French King revoking De la Tour's commission, and demanding his presence in France to answer the many charges preferred against him. La Tour, on receipt of this command, which deprived him of his means of livelihood, naturally refused obedience, and dared his rival to arrest him, but Charnisay, fearing to risk an assault on the strong battlements of Fort La Tour, decided that "discretion was the better part of valor" and withdrew to Port Royal, well prepared for the struggle that was plainly inevitable.

Aided by the great Cardinal's influence in Paris, Charnisay easily received assistance, but

De la Tour was mainly dependent upon the Huguenot merchants of La Rochelle, who equipped and sent out the Clement, by which he and his wife escaped to Boston to seek further help. From these Puritan allies he hired four vessels, well manned and armed with thirty-eight pieces of cannon, to augment his inferior force, which thus enabled him on returning to inflict such loss on the enemy's ships that Charnisay had to retire precipitately before the onslaught. Had it not been for the scruples of the Bostonians, De la Tour would have completely crushed Charnisay's power at that time; but they, satisfied with their rich booty, insisted on the virtues of moderation, and forced him to cease the combat when the work was only half done.

While still strengthening his defences, in the conviction that the fight would soon be renewed, De la Tour sent his wife to France to seek further help, where also proceeded Charnisay, more than ever determined, since his defeat, to master his rival. Unscrupulous in all his acts, he endeavored to have Lady La Tour arrested in France, accusing her of being the cause of her husband's disobedience to the king's orders; but, fortunately, being warned in time, she managed to escape to London, where she equipped a ship with provisions and ammunition for Fort La Tour. Early in 1644, this intrepid and undaunted woman set sail once more for the new world, destined to be her farewell to Europe—and after a prolonged voyage, beset with perils and an attempted capture by Charnisay en route, in September of that year Lady La Tour at last found herself landed in Boston, instead of at Fort La Tour, according to the agreement made on leaving London. For this breach of contract she brought an action, based on the original charter, against the person who freighted the ship, and, obtaining a verdict of £200, seized its cargo, valued at £1,700, and immediately hired three vessels in Boston to convey her to Fort La Tour, from which she had been absent more than a year.

In the winter of 1644-5 La Tour, on his wife's advice, went to Boston to seek supplies and procure a Protestant minister to preach to his people; and at the same time made the offer that, if the authorities would help him to overcome Charnisay and conquer Acadia, he would share the conquest with them. During his absence, while his wife was left in charge of a small garrison of but forty-five men to defend the fort, Charnisay seized the opportunity to make an attack, and, mustering every man about Port Royal, embarked in the month of February in the armed ship of three hundred tons that had brought him from France, crossed the Bay of Fundy and anchored in a small harbor, a league from St. John, in the expectation that the flag of Fort La Tour would be instantly lowered at his summons.

In this anchorage he lay two months, being

joined in the meantime by another ship and pinnace from Port Royal, and only resolved to make an attack on receiving the report of his two spies, who, on being discovered in the fort, would have been speedily hanged from its ramparts, had not Lady La Tour, in her compassion and kindness of heart, simply driven them in contempt from her gates, to carry the news to Charnisay that their food was low, the powder nearly gone and the garrison too weak to stand assault. His battleship at once moved up beneath the walls and opened fire, but the garrison, fired by the courage of their fair leader, forced the enemy to withdraw with battered ships and diminished forces. His own vessel was so shattered by the fort's cannon that, to prevent her from sinking, Charnisay ran her ashore below Sand Point, and the result of this engagement was but the loss of twenty of his men, with thirteen badly wounded.

During the progress of this siege De la Tour had persuaded the Boston merchants to send one Grafton to Fort La Tour in a small vessel loaded with provisions, and bringing a letter to Lady La Tour, saying her husband would join her in a month; but on its arrival at the mouth of the St. John Charnisay seized it, placed Grafton and a few men with him on an island, and finally set them adrift in a leaky sailboat.

On Holy Thursday, April 14th, of this eventful year, Charnisay again advanced to the attack with a much larger force, and after landing two pieces of cannon to batter the fortress on the land side, and bringing his largest ship within pistol-shot of the water ramparts, he summoned the garrison to surrender. They answered sharply with volley after volley of shot and shell, hung out the red flag of defiance, and, according to Charnisay's reporter, shouted a thousand insults and blasphemies. Towards evening a breach was made in the wall and Charnisay ordered a general assault, but, animated by the example of their intrepid mistress, the sturdy defenders fought with desperation, and killed or wounded many assailants, though not without suffering severe loss in their own ranks. Inside the walls Lady La Tour not only personally directed operations, but tended the wounded, cheered the women and children and inspired the soldiers, who had pledged themselves at the beginning of the fight to defend the fort for herself and husband; but their numbers became gradually diminished to twenty-three men and one officer during three days and nights of able defence.

This brave and resourceful woman had also to contend with treachery in her camp, for Charnisay had found means to bribe a Swiss sentry in the garrison, and on the "Jour de Paques" (Easter Sunday), the fourth day of fighting, while the men were either at prayers or resting from their arduous tasks, this traitor let the enemy approach without giving warn-

ing, and were already scaling the walls when observed. Lady La Tour, even in this extremity, opposed the assault at the head of her force with so much vigor that the besiegers were repulsed with a loss of twelve men killed and many wounded.

Despairing of ever capturing the fort by assault, Charnisay proposed terms of capitulation to Lady La Tour, who, knowing how low were her supplies and the impossibility of resisting a long siege, accepted his offer of life and liberty to her garrison on their surrender, and both names were signed to the agreement. On his entrance to take possession of this long-coveted stronghold, and discovering how feeble the force which had so long and successfully resisted his attacks, the baseness of Charnisay's nature was suddenly revealed by his repudiating instantly the terms of capitulation, and ordering all the garrison to be immediately hanged. His offer to save the life of one of the garrison, on condition that he act as hangman for his comrades, was indignantly spurned, and the brave soldiers made but one plea to their despicable enemy, namely, that they might be accorded death by shooting, rather than to be hanged like dogs.

Lady de la Tour, still beautiful in her black Huguenot gown, with a broad kerchief of white lace draped over her shoulders, and wearing the close cap which added a widowed appearance to the natural dignity of her carriage, pleaded long and steadfastly for the lives of the garrison, in return for all the money, plate, jewels, furs and stores of the fort handed over according to the terms of surrender. The man who could not defeat her in actual warfare, however, now mocked her entreaties, now that she was in his power, but forced his reluctant men to bind a noose about her neck, so that she presented the appearance before her force as of one who should have been executed, but who by favor was reprieved.

Bound like a felon, and supported by an unwilling soldier, Lady La Tour was compelled to witness the execution of her courageous followers, and it is little wonder that this outrage, in addition to the ruin of her husband and the destruction of her home, caused her death within the next three weeks, during which Charnisay was repairing the fort for his own use. Thus died, in 1645, of a broken heart, this woman of marvellous resource and unusual calibre, whose body was laid to rest along the banks of the River St. John, which had been the scene of so many hardships and dangers during the strenuous life of the heroine of Acadia—Lady La Tour.

Hooligan—"O! do be wonderin' how th' number av min in church compares wid th' wimmin?" Hinnessy—"About th' same as th' wimmin compare wid th' min in th' pintin' chery."—Judge.

Death of Great Irish Scholar

THE Irish Times, in its issue of January 11, 1908, says:

We deeply regret to announce the death, which took place yesterday, at his residence, Clareville, Rathmenes, of Professor Robert Atkinson, for many years Professor of Sanskrit and of the Romance Languages in Trinity College, Dublin. The late Professor Atkinson was not only one of the most notable men whom Trinity College has produced, but he was a scholar, who in the department of study which he had made his own, held a position unique and acknowledged, in which no one else can succeed him, though the area of selection were widened to embrace every seat of learning now in existence. Indeed, if we are to judge by the number of his works, he was a man of a most extraordinary range of knowledge, and his attainments in the various languages, and in the various departments of literature, and in the various branches of science, and in the various fields of human knowledge, were such as to make him a man of a most extraordinary range of knowledge, and his attainments in the various languages, and in the various departments of literature, and in the various branches of science, and in the various fields of human knowledge, were such as to make him a man of a most extraordinary range of knowledge, and his attainments in the various languages, and in the various departments of literature, and in the various branches of science, and in the various fields of human knowledge, were such as to make him a man of a most extraordinary range of knowledge, and his attainments in the various languages, and in the various departments of literature, and in the various branches of 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