

III.—*The Site of Fort La Tour.*

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Amidst the many brave deeds which enrich Canadian annals, a foremost place must ever be given to the noble defence by Madame de la Tour of her husband's fort by the River St. John. There is no event in the history of Acadia, not even excepting the expulsion, which so powerfully touches the deepest chords of our human sympathies as does this incident, with its picturesque setting of French feudalism romantically colouring the cold rocks and dark forests of the north, with its true womanly devotion opposed to heartless treachery, with its pathetically futile heroism.

Happily the story is well authenticated, for it rests upon the authority of two of the most truthful of all the chroniclers of Acadian events; indeed, it may be added, almost solely upon their authority.¹ The bearers of this honour are Nicolas Denys, governor under the French King of all the Gulf shore from Rosiers to Cape Breton, and John Winthrop, puritan governor of Massachusetts, both of them contemporary with the event, both too near its harsh realism to see in it the romance with which the softening haze of distance shows it to us, both too practical and too honest to pervert its facts for literary decoration or dramatic effect.

Denys' narrative cannot be too often repeated.² La Tour's fort, he tells us, was "destroyed by d'Aunay after he had wrongfully taken possession of it, as he had no right whatever to do, and which he would have found great difficulty in accomplishing had he not been advised of the absence of Sienr de la Tour, who had taken with him a part of his garrison, leaving only his wife and the remainder of his people to keep the fort. After having sustained for three days and three nights all the assaults of d'Aunay, and having obliged him to withdraw beyond reach of her cannon, she was finally obliged to surrender on the fourth day, which was Easter day, having been betrayed by a Swiss who was on guard whilst she, hoping for some respite, was making her followers rest. The Swiss, bribed by d'Aunay's men, allowed them to mount to the assault, which was resisted for some time by the lady commander at the head of her garrison. She only surrendered at the last extremity, and under condition that d'Aunay should spare all, which, indeed, he did not do, for after making himself master of the place, he threw them all into prison along with their lady commander. Then by advice of his council, he hanged them, with the exception of a single one whose life was spared on the condition that he would do the hanging; and the lady commander had to be present at the scaffold with a rope around her neck as though she was the vilest criminal."

¹ Sir Thomas Temple's letters in the British State Paper office give an independent but brief and substantially similar account of the event.

² See appendix.