

# = LATOUR. =

A BALLAD OF THE ST. JOHN. A.D. 1643.

BY JAMES HANNAY.

Of all the gallant Frenchmen whose names and deeds endure  
In old Acadian annals, the greatest was Latour.  
Son of a Huguenot father, husband of Huguenot bride,  
He clung still to the ancient faith in which his grandsires died.  
While yet a simple school-boy unto this land he came;  
Little he thought what stirring tales would gather round his name;  
That here before his life was spent 'twould be his lot to know  
Misfortunes great and triumphs grand—success, care, joy and woe.  
Five years he dwelt with Biencourt among the Micmac braves,  
Whose wigwams were on Restigouche and hard by Fundy's waves.  
None followed up more keenly the Mohawk foeman's trail;  
The grim old warriors loved him, altho' his face was pale.  
He built a potent fortress beside that harbour deep,  
Thro' which the broad and strong St. John flows with a mighty sweep.



"But none within that fortress, tho' tried in many a fray—  
Sons of the gallant men who fought on Ivry's bloody day—  
Possessed more dauntless courage to dare or to endure,  
So kind and yet so brave a heart, as the wife of Lord Latour."



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Down from the fall's great rapid the river rushes free;  
It doubles round a point of land and turns towards the sea.  
A bow-shot off, an island divides the racing tides,  
Whose current for a thousand years has frayed its rocky sides;  
But bold would be the swimmer, and strong his arm and sure,  
To venture o'er the narrow strait and cross to Fort Latour.  
The Danube's tide is sluggish, slow is the Severn's stream,  
Compared to this swift current; it passes like a dream.  
Yet still the ancient rampart a rugged front uprears,  
'Tho' this strong tide hath sapped its base more than two hundred years.  
Strong were its earthen bastions, its palisades were tall,  
Heavy and great the cannon that frowned above the wall;  
And bold and true its soldiers, all men of fair Rochelle—  
Stout Huguenots who knew no fear, but loved Latour full well.  
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Sons of the gallant men who fought on Ivry's bloody day—  
Possessed more dauntless courage to dare or to endure,  
So kind and yet so brave a heart, as the wife of Lord Latour.  
Her father was a noble—last of an ancient line,  
Which civil strife had stricken as the lightning blasts the pine.  
Her grandsire fell at Ivry, charging by Henry's side,  
When the last onset broke their ranks and quelled the Leaguer's pride.

Cruel and fierce was D'Aulnay; he held Latour in hate;  
His fort was at Port Royal, and there he dwelt in state.  
High o'er that ancient river its gloomy bastions rose,  
Scowling defiance upon all who dared to be his foes.  
And many an armed retainer obeyed his mandates there—  
When'er he raised his banner, five hundred swords were bare;  
And musketeers and pikemen, all soldiers tried and bold,  
Gascons and hardy Bretons, were gathered in his hold.

He sent Latour a letter, signed by the king's own hand,  
And thus it read: "Give up thy fort! such is the king's command.  
For thou art charged with treason; now prove the charge untrue  
By yielding it to D'Aulnay, and to us homage do."  
Then made Latour this answer: "I built these earthen walls:  
I will not basely yield them, altho' King Louis calls.  
In this rude land a soldier holds, by his own sword alone,  
A ten-fold stronger tenure than homage to the throne."  
Forthwith he sent a message for aid to fair Rochelle,  
Where dwelt his Huguenot brothers; their friendship served him well.  
They sent the *Clement* laden with stores and armed men;  
But warlike clouds had gathered o'er fort Latour ere then.  
For from the heights the sentry, one pleasant morn in May,  
Beheld six gallant vessels sweep'g across the Bay.  
Their tall white sails careening beneath the western breeze,  
Their bows embraced by foam wreaths, they leaped across the seas;  
And from each lofty mainmast the sentry could descry  
The flag of haughty D'Aulnay flouting against the sky—  
That flag long viewed with terror on many a dismal day  
By the fishermen of Casco and the men of Boston Bay.  
Then from the northern bastion the bugler blew a blast;  
Over the wide-spread forest the note of warning passed:  
And homeward fast the stragglers by tens came hastening in,  
Wondering and much surmising the cause of such a din.  
Now in the fort were gathered two hundred men and more,  
And on the bastions mounted were cannon twenty-four.  
No lack was there of daring within the fortress' walls,  
But little stores of powder or shells or musket balls.  
Latour stepped lightly forward, his sword girt on his thigh:  
Quoth he, "The wolf is coming; to falter is to die.  
Thou raise aloft my banner, unfurl it in his sight,  
Man all the seaward cannon, and arm ye for the fight."  
Forth came his gentle lady, the banner in her hand:  
"Be mine the task to raise it before this gallant band:  
And may that hand be withered, be it of friend or foe,  
Even be that hand of weakness mine, that dares to lay it low!"  
Then, as its broad folds gaily above them floated free,  
The soldiers raised a mighty cheer that swept across the sea.  
The dark-brow'd D'Aulnay heard it as he paced his deck in pride,  
And cursed the sound, and cursed Latour, and cursed the adverse tide.

They passed by Partridge Island—by rocks and shoals of dread,  
And up the silent harbour the gallant squadron sped;  
Bold D'Aulnay, in his flagship, led the flotilla on:  
Never before had such a fleet parted the broad St. John.  
Upon the eastern bastion Latour had ta'en his stand:  
Beside him was a cannon—the match was in his hand.  
One touch, and forth in vengeance the bolt of battle fled,  
And traced on D'Aulnay's flagship a line of mangled dead.  
At once from ship and fortress began the combat then,  
With cannon's roar and hiss of shot, and groans of wounded men;  
Nor ceased the din of battle until an hour had passed,  
And D'Aulnay's stoutest vessel lay shattered, hull and mast.  
Then five tall ships stood seaward, with press of canvas on;  
But one as staunch was sinking beneath the broad St. John.