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*The Heroine of*  

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*Acadia*  

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*The Romantic Story of the Life  
of Frances Marie Jacqueline,  
Wife of Sieur de LaTour, and  
Her Heroic Defence of Fort  
LaTour, at the Mouth of the  
River St. John in the year 645*

*By*

*James Hannay, D.C.L., F.R.S.C.*

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### Publisher's Note

**A** FEW days before his death, which occurred on January 12, 1910, Dr. Hannay handed me the manuscript of the life story of Lady LaTour, with the request that it be published in pamphlet form. The main details of the story had already appeared in his *History of Acadia*, published in 1878, and has been frequently quoted by writers on early history of St. John. LaTour, the husband of Frances Marie Jacqueline, was practically the "first settler" on the River St. John, and an important figure in French Acadia for over half a century. At the end of a tempestous career he was laid to rest somewhere on the banks of the river he loved so well, where also is the resting place of his heroic wife, the Heroine of Acadia.

James Hannay, D.C.L., F.R.S.C., the author of this brochure, was a native of New Brunswick, having been born at Richibucto on April 22, 1842. With the exception of a few years spent in Montreal and New York, Dr. Hannay's whole life was lived in New Brunswick. At an early

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age he became interested in Acadian history and the result of his studies in this direction were given to the public in 1878 under the title of "A History of Acadia," a book which has been extensively read wherever the English language is spoken. As a journalist Dr. Hannay held a recognized position in Canada for many years. He was an excellent writer and possessed a large fund of information and a retentive memory.

¶ No man was more intimately acquainted than Dr. Hannay with the contemporary events of the last half century. From the beginning of the campaign which led up to the confederation of the four Provinces, which originally composed the Dominion of Canada, down to the last general election, he had taken some part in directing public opinion. ¶ Much of his time, during the five years preceding his death, was spent in gathering materials and preparing the manuscript for the History of New Brunswick, which was published only three weeks before his death. ¶ It was always a marvel amongst his friends where Dr. Hannay found the time to do so much work of a permanent character, requiring deep and painstaking research, as at a comparatively early age he attached himself to the staff of the St. John

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"Telegraph," and from that time until his retirement from active journalism, five years ago, he always held a responsible position in one of the most exacting professions, if such it may be called, of the present day. ¶ Dr. Hannay's published works are the "History of Acadia" (1878); "Life and Times of Sir Leonard Tilley" (1897); "History of the War of 1812" (1901), a second edition of this work was published in Toronto and another in Great Britain; "History of the Queen's Rangers" (1908); "Ballads of Acadia" (1909); "History of New Brunswick" (1909). His unpublished manuscripts include a History of the Loyalists. ¶ Dr. Hannay will always occupy a leading place as one of the pioneers among the writers of history in Canada.

JOHN A. BOWES.

St. John, N. B., 1910.







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**T**HE story of Lady LaTour is the most romantic in the annals of Acadia. The world's heroines have always been few in number, and fewer still have been those women who have been impelled to deeds of heroism by love of husband and home. Yet this was the influence that made Lady LaTour an Amazon and a heroine, so that her name will be handed down to the most distant ages linked with deeds of valor. The soil upon which she fought and died and in which her bones still rest must therefore always be looked upon with interest by those who admire those qualities by which men may become immortal.

The husband of our Acadian heroine was Charles de St. Etienne, Sieur de La Tour, who came to Acadia from France with his father about the year 1609, when he was only fourteen years of age, and formed a part of the Port Royal colony of Poutrincourt. Father and son were Huguenots, and the father had been ruined by the wars of the League which devastated France for so many years. The LaTours were of an ancient family and claimed to be allied to the noble house of Bouillon,

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but their fortunes were at a very low ebb when they came to Acadia. Yet they had influential and wealthy friends in France who were always ready to assist them, and upon whom they drew largely for help in after years. Most of the statements that have been published in regard to the LaTour family in France have been written by their enemies, so that it is not always easy to ascertain the exact truth in regard to them. It has been said that the elder LaTour became so poor that he worked as a stone mason in Paris. If this is true he deserves all the more credit for having risen to an important position in Acadia.

The Port Royal colony was broken up by Captain Samuel Argal and a force from Virginia in 1613. Biencourt, the son of Poutrincourt the founder of the colony, took to the woods and young LaTour, then only eighteen years old, went with him. They remained together until 1623, when Biencourt returned to France, leaving Charles LaTour in possession of his property and rights in Acadia. It was soon after this date that LaTour married Frances Marie Jacqueline, who became the heroine of Acadia. She was a Huguenot, and it is believed, a native of Rochelle, the great centre of Huguenot power at that time. The Menou family which was always hostile to LaTour published a memoir in which it is stated that LaTour's wife was selected for him by his agent in France and shipped to him like a bale of

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goods. The same memoir alleges that she was the daughter of a barber of Mans. It is impossible either to absolutely contradict or to verify these statements, at the present day. They are highly improbable, however, and as they were written by an enemy of LaTour and for the purpose of injuring him few persons will be disposed to believe them. One thing is certain, that if LaTour's wife was selected for him by another, his agent made an admirable choice, for no man ever had a more faithful and devoted life partner.

Francis Marie Jacqueline was probably not more than fifteen years old in 1625 when she was married to Charles LaTour. Acadia was then a wilderness, inhabited only by Indians and the few Frenchmen who followed the fortunes of her husband. Their home was at Port LaTour, near Cape Sable, where her husband had built a residence and fort which he named Fort St. Louis. It was not until ten years later, in 1635, that they took up their abode in Fort Latour in St. John harbor.

The ten years that elapsed between the arrival of Lady LaTour in Acadia and the taking up of her residence at St. John were years of war and adventure, but only one of many incidents need be stated, the one which gave her the title by which she is known in history. LaTour, the elder, while on his way to France was captured by an English ship and taken to England. There he



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became acquainted with Sir William Alexander, who then had a grant of Acadia from the King of England, and who was a court favorite. LaTour was introduced at the court of King Charles I. and was received with favor as a person likely to promote the plans of Alexander for colonizing Acadia. One of the maids of honor of the Queen Henrietta Maria fell in love with him and married him, and he was made a baronet of Nova Scotia. The same title was given to his son Charles whose wife thus became Lady LaTour. Moreover a grant was issued to father and son by Sir William Alexander of a large tract of territory in Nova Scotia having an area of about four thousand five hundred square miles. In consideration of these favors the elder LaTour promised that he and his son would become subjects of the English King and would assist in promoting its settlement by Sir William Alexander.

This arrangement became inoperative in consequence of the refusal of Charles LaTour to consent to it. He was rising in favor at the French court and did not feel disposed to change his allegiance. The reward of his fidelity came soon, for in 1631 he was granted a commission by King Louis XIII. appointing him to command as lieutenant general for the King in Acadia. The homeless wanderer of 1613 who was driven into the wilderness with Biencourt had risen to be the first man in Acadia.

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In 1635 LaTour removed his establishment to St. John and took possession of the fort whose ruins still speak of its former strength. Prior to this change of residence he had received a grant from the Company of New France of the fort at St. John and the lands surrounding it, comprising about 600 square miles of territory. This grant carried with it not only the ownership of a splendid domain, but the control of the trade of the vast St. John river, a trade which carried with it the potentiality of great wealth. Denys, a contemporary of LaTour, states that in those days the trade of this territory amounted to 3000 moose skins a year, besides large quantities of beaver skins and other peltry. Unfortunately for LaTour the prosperity which had thus fallen upon him provoked the jealousy of rivals and ultimately proved his ruin.

Fort Latour was a structure of four bastions, one hundred and eighty feet square, and enclosed by palisades after the fashion of that age. It mounted twenty-four cannon and usually had a garrison of 200 men. From its position it commanded not only the entire harbor to the south of it, but the entrance to the river, so that no boat or vessel could pass up without the permission of LaTour. Here he lived in state like a great feudal baron, the master of a region as large as a European kingdom, surrounded by armed retainers, and with the spoils of the sea, river and forest at his com-

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mand. In those days the fisheries of the river and harbor yielded enormously, while all manner of wild animals and birds swarmed in the forest. The visitor can see today the very place where LaTour caught fish in such abundance that they broke his nets, for there great ocean liners lie freighted with goods for Europe which have come over thousands of miles of railway from the prairies of the West.

Across the Bay of Fundy, at Port Royal, LaTour had an enemy who viewed his prosperity with jealous eyes, and sought to compass his ruin. This was Charles de Menou, Sieur d'Aulnay Charnisay, who had been second in command to De Razilly, who up to the time of his death in 1636 represented the Company of New France in Acadia. Charnisay succeeded to the command at Port Royal and at once began that series of intrigues which had such a sinister influence in the prosperity of Acadia. The family of Menou to which Charnisay belonged was in some way connected with that of Cardinal Richelieu, and Richelieu was then the master of France. Charnisay's father, who is described in state documents as "Councillor of the King," had the ear of the great minister and soon brought his influence to bear to advance his son's fortunes. His first efforts, however, were not very successful, for they resulted in the issuing of a royal letter addressed to both Charnisay and LaTour in which

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the boundaries of their commands were so plainly defined as to leave no room for controversy. In this letter it was stated that it was the will of the King that Charnisay should be his lieutenant-general on the coast of the Etchemins "beginning from the centre of the firm land of the French Bay, thence towards Virginia," and that LaTour should be his lieutenant-general from the coast of Acadia, "from the middle of the French Bay to the Strait of Canso." The French Bay, it may be explained, was the Bay of Fundy. Charnisay was told that he was not empowered to change any arrangement in the settlement of the River St. John made by LaTour, while LaTour on the other hand, was not to attempt to change anything in the settlements of Charnisay at La Have or Port Royal. The fatal defect of this arrangement was that both of Charnisay's settlements were in the territory which was under the government of LaTour, while LaTour's fort and settlement at St. John was in the territory which was under the government of Charnisay. The authority of the latter amounted to nothing so long as LaTour held the mouth of the River St. John and commanded the trade and resources of that great stream.

Charnisay was by no means satisfied with this settlement of his difficulties with LaTour and he continued his intrigues in Paris against his rival both personally and through the medium of his

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father. LaTour was accused of all sorts of crimes, his wife was denounced as a heretic, and as the author and instigator of his rebellious conduct. All these charges were made in LaTour's absence, for he was pursuing his business quietly in Acadia while his rival was in France seeking his ruin. The result of all these efforts was that in February, 1641, an order was issued by the King of France commanding LaTour to embark and return to France immediately to answer the charges which had been made against him. A letter was likewise sent by the King to Charnisay, directing him that if LaTour failed to obey the order of the King he was to seize his person and make an inventory of his effects. To accomplish this Charnisay was ordered to employ all the means and forces at his disposal, and to put LaTour's forts in the hands of persons well disposed to the King's services. LaTour, in short, was at one blow to be stripped of his property, deprived of his liberty, and sent a prisoner to France. A few days after this order was issued, the King in Council revoked the commission as governor which LaTour had held for ten years and which he had never disgraced.

A vessel named the St. Frances was sent by the King to Acadia to carry LaTour back to France, but when she made her appearance at Fort LaTour in August, 1638, the deposed governor utterly refused to obey the order of the King either in respect to yielding up his fort or returning to

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France a prisoner. He had with him a body of armed men who were faithful to him, and he had his heroic wife's advice and support to sustain him in defying the King's authority. Even a King's writ cannot always be executed without force, and LaTour felt himself to be master of the situation for the time and in a position to defy his enemies. Charnisay had no force to oppose that of LaTour, and he returned in the St. Frances to France, deeply disappointed, but more determined than ever to destroy his rival.

LaTour was well aware that by refusing to obey a royal order he had placed himself in a position which he could only sustain by superior force, so he at once began to look about him for aid against his enemies. Naturally enough he thought of the people of New England as most likely to become his allies in defying the King of France, and he immediately sent one Rochette, a Huguenot of Rochelle, who was in his employment, to Boston to endeavor to arrange a treaty with the men of Massachusetts. LaTour desired free trade with Massachusetts and assistance against his enemy Charnisay. The Boston people were willing enough to grant the former, but declined the latter on the ground that Rochette had brought no letters or commission from LaTour. This, however, was only a pretext, for when LaTour a year later sent his lieutenant to Boston with full power to arrange a treaty he had no better success than

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before, and no steps were taken to give him the assistance asked for. The only substantial result of this mission was the opening of a trade with certain merchants of Boston, who, in after years, perhaps regretted that they had made LaTour's acquaintance. These merchants freighted a small vessel with goods and sent her to Fort LaTour. They made a good sale of their wares and were treated by LaTour with much courtesy, but on their return journey they fell in with Charnisay at Pemaquid. He informed them that LaTour was a rebel and he showed them an order which he had obtained in France for his arrest. He sent a copy of this document to Governor Winthrop, accompanied by the threat that if any of the merchants of Boston sent their vessels to trade with LaTour he would seize them as lawful prize.

The King of France had granted this order of arrest to Charnisay in February, 1642, but he imposed upon the latter the cost of carrying it out. To accomplish this it was necessary for Charnisay to employ a large force, a measure which involved him in lavish expenditures and made it necessary for him to mortgage his property to persons in France. With all his diligence it was more than a year before he was ready to attack LaTour in his St. John stronghold. At length in the early spring of 1643 Charnisay appeared at Fort LaTour with his ships, a galley and three pinnaces, manned by five hundred men. As he found the

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fort too strong to be attacked he resorted to a blockade, anchoring his ships in the channel to the south west of Partridge Island and the smaller vessels in the channel north east of the Island. Thus Fort LaTour was effectually cut off from all kinds of supplies, except such as could be obtained from the river which rolled through a savage wilderness. It was evident that unless relief came LaTour and his men must in time be starved into surrendering.

This blockade continued for weeks and LaTour had no force sufficient to drive away his enemies. There was but one source from which relief could come and that was France. Many months before LaTour had sent Rochette to France to inform his friends in Rochelle of the danger which menaced him and to obtain aid if possible to enable him to maintain himself in Acadia. Rochelle, although stricken down and deprived of its ancient privileges, was still the home of a wealthy and energetic Huguenot population who hated the very name of Richelieu and were ready to defend any who dared to resist his orders. The people of Rochelle responded nobly to LaTour's appeal. They fitted out a large armed ship named the Clement, loaded her with ammunition and supplies, and putting on board of her one hundred and forty armed men sent her to the aid of LaTour in Acadia.

It was early in June before the Clement reached St. John but LaTour had kept a close watch for



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her, and his scouts warned her of the blockade of the harbor. So well was the affair managed that Charnisay had no knowledge of her arrival, and in the night LaTour and his wife passed down the harbor and through the blockading fleet, and boarding the Clement set sail for Boston. There he hoped that the interest of the merchants with whom he had dealings and who desired to retain his trade would induce the Massachusetts people to assist him against his enemies. The Clement entered Boston harbor on a Sunday morning just as the people of that pious town were returning from church, and her appearance caused no small amount of consternation. LaTour was not long in convincing the Boston people that he had no evil designs against them. Governor Winthrop called a meeting of the magistrates at which it was agreed to permit LaTour to have ships and men in Boston to enable him to reach his own fort in safety. Armed with this authority LaTour hired from Edward Gibbins and Thomas Hawkins of Boston four vessels, manned by fifty-two men and armed with thirty-eight cannon. He also enlisted ninety-two soldiers to augment the force on board his vessels and provided them with arms. As soon as this was accomplished he lost no time in setting sail for his fort, confident in his ability to destroy his enemy.

It was on a fine morning in July that Charnisay saw LaTour's fleet of five armed ships approaching.

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He did not wait for their onslaught but cut cables and fled to Port Royal. LaTour's vessels pursued him and drove the enemy into Port Royal River. Some of Charnisay's men fortified themselves in a mill near the mouth of the river, but were driven out of it with loss and a pinnace laden with four hundred moose skins and four hundred beaver skins was captured. Then the ships sailed back in triumph to St. John to succor its half famished garrison.

LaTour had been relieved for the time from a great danger, but he was well aware that his enemy would not be deterred by one repulse. More help must be obtained and it was only from his friends in France that he could look for efficient aid. To obtain that aid it was necessary to send a competent representative, and who was so fit for such a mission as his faithful and devoted wife? Accordingly when the Clement returned to France in the autumn of 1643 she carried with her Lady LaTour. It is to be regretted that we have no portrait and no description of our heroine at this period. She was then about thirty-four years old, an age when a woman should have reached the maturity of her beauty and vigor. She was the mother of several children, the oldest a daughter of seventeen named Jean, the only one of her children who remained in Acadia. There were sons also, for they are mentioned in a document written ten years later, but how many we

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are not told. But these children had all to be left behind while she undertook a long and tedious voyage to France to serve her husband's interests.

Charnisay set sail for France about the same time as Lady LaTour, and as soon as he got there he heard of her presence in Rochelle. He immediately went to Paris and, representing her as a traitor to the King, he procured an order for her arrest. Fortunately the designs of this ungenerous enemy were defeated by the vigilance of her friends. She received a timely warning of the danger in which she stood and fled to England, which, although vexed by civil war, was a safer retreat for a Huguenot lady than France. In England she found friends, and in March, 1644, she set sail for Fort LaTour with a large stock of provisions and ammunition, in a London ship which had been fitted out by Alderman Berkley and Captain Bailey. It is a singular fact that this ship had for a passenger Roger Williams, the founder of the Providence plantation. If any writings of his are extant, may it not be possible that among them are some records of this famous voyage.

Lady LaTour and Roger Williams were destined to be fellow passengers for six months, for the master of the vessel instead of proceeding on his voyage to Fort LaTour with all possible despatch, as he was bound to do, lingered on the coast of Nova Scotia to trade, and did not reach Cape

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Sable until September. As soon as he got into the Bay of Fundy he fell in with one of Charnisay's vessels, which was cruising to intercept supplies for LaTour. Charnisay himself was on this ship and boarded the London trader, but he had no suspicion of the prize that was within his grasp, for Lady LaTour was concealed in the hold. After this the voyage to Fort LaTour had to be abandoned, and Lady LaTour and her goods were carried to Boston. LaTour himself had left that place only a short time before, for, after waiting for months at St. John for the return of his wife, he had been forced to seek supplies elsewhere. He tried once more to enlist the people of Boston on his side, but the most he could accomplish was to obtain a ship load of provisions, with which he returned to Fort LaTour.

Lady LaTour's position when she got to Boston was a difficult one, but she was equal to the occasion. She brought an action on the charter party against the persons who freighted the ship for unreasonable delay and deviation in the voyage. The case was tried at a special court in Boston, before all the magistrates and a jury of the principal men, who gave her a verdict of two thousand pounds damages. On this judgment she seized the cargo of the ship, which was appraised at eleven hundred pounds, and, hiring three vessels in Boston to convoy her home, at length arrived safely at Fort LaTour.

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Great was Charnisay's rage when he heard of the escape of the hated wife of LaTour. As he had a great superiority of force, he was able to maintain the command of the Bay of Fundy and to prevent any supplies from reaching Fort LaTour. The people of Boston, who had no desire to encounter the enmity of so powerful a personage, agreed to withdraw their support from LaTour, although they did not bind themselves not to trade with him. LaTour's force had in the meantime been weakened by sickness and by desertions. He had to contend against treason within his fort, as well as an implacable enemy without. Supplies of all kinds had to be provided and they could only be obtained from New England. It was necessary for him, therefore, to have a well equipped ship at sea most of the time, and this weakened his force in Fort LaTour and gave his enemy an opportunity to destroy it.

Early in the winter of 1644-45, LaTour had to go to Boston to obtain provisions for his fort. Charnisay soon after began a blockade of St. John, and while his vessel was cruising there he was hailed from the shore by two friars, who asked to be taken on board. These men had been turned out of her fort by Lady LaTour, because she discovered that they were in league with her enemies and endeavoring to corrupt her men. They informed Charnisay that LaTour was absent and that the fort contained but fifty men. There

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was little powder left in the fort and that much decayed, and if he made a vigorous attack he might easily capture it. This was in February, 1645. Encouraged by this intelligence Charnisay entered the harbor of St. John and ranged his vessel in front of Fort LaTour. He expected to see its flag hauled down immediately, but he had miscalculated the spirit of the lady who held the command. She had inspired her men with a courage equal to her own, and Charnisay's attack was met by a still more vigorous defence. The cannon of the fort were handled so well that in a short time Charnisay's vessel was reduced to a sinking condition, and to keep her from going down beneath him he had to run her ashore on Sand Point, out of the range of the guns of the fort. In this affair the besiegers had twenty men killed and thirteen wounded. Lady LaTour had well vindicated her right to be the leader of brave men.

Charnisay repaired his shattered ship and sent to Port Royal for reinforcements. As the traitorous friars were able to tell him of the weak points in the defences of the fort, he resolved to attack it again from the land side. Fort Latour lies upon a long point of land, which is connected with the mainland on the west side of the harbor by a narrow neck. Charnisay's forces were landed and took up a position which commanded this neck, so that those in the fort were cut off on

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every side. There are only two contemporary accounts of the siege and capture of Fort Latour, one by Governor Winthrop, who has recorded the event briefly in his diary, and the other by Nicholas Denys, a neighbor and friend of LaTour, who relates the events of the siege in his book, which was published in 1672 in Paris. Denys says :

“Charnisay would have had great difficulty in accomplishing his design had he not been advised of the absence of Sieur de LaTour, 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 Charnisay, 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 while she, hoping for some respite, was making her followers rest. The Swiss, bribed by Charnisay'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 Charnisay 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, with the advice of his Council, he hung them, with the exception of

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a single one, whose life was spared on 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."

Lady LaTour did not long survive the destruction of her home and the death of her men. In three weeks she died, heart broken, leaving to the tender mercies of her enemy a young child, which was sent to France. Her grave is somewhere on the shores of the harbor of St. John, marked by no stone, the exact spot unknown. But her memory will never fade so long as courage and fidelity are admired by the human race, and she must always stand the foremost and the most heroic figure in Acadian history.

The believers in a nemesis will be glad to know that Charnisay did not live long to enjoy his triumph. Five years later he was drowned in the River of Port Royal, by the upsetting of a canoe. He might have been saved, but an Indian who was with him, remembering some blows that Charnisay had given him some days before, held his head under water until he died. With his death the whole fabric of his greatness vanished. All the proceedings he had obtained against LaTour were reversed, and the latter was made Governor of Acadia. Three years later LaTour married Charnisay's widow and entered into possession of all his dead rival's property. His



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fort was captured by Cromwell's men in 1654, but it was restored to him, and he died at a good old age by the River St. John, which had been the scene of his trials and triumphs, and which he loved so well.



