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# THE DEATH OF DULHUT

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## IV.—*The Death of Dulhut.*

By WILLIAM MCLENNAN.

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The Anglo-Saxon constantly asserts with much self-satisfaction that France is no colonizer and points his moral as he unfolds his tale of the fall of French Canada, or French India, with a description of the corruption of the home government, the vileness of the colonial officials and the failure of the King to send help in the hour of need. The inference of course is that England succoured her colonies—and hence the difference.

The true reason of her failure was that France busied herself altogether too much over her distant settlements. She not only attempted to order every detail of their internal government but even their policy towards their neighbours. She provided India, Canada and Louisiana with priests, soldiers and settlers. The officer who had gained his pension and retirement was offered a seigneury with many dignities, the soldier found no difficulty in taking up a respectable farm from his old commander at a ground rent of a few sous for each acre. The King provided the start in life, even up to the important part of a wife with a modest dowry of provisions, clothes and a few livres in good white money.

Every officer who settled in Canada must needs have a title or at least his "lettres de noblesse" and these were bestowed with a generosity which went far to make up the long despaired of arrears of pay.

The home government curbed the governor, the intendant, the bishop, and invited all the tittle-tattle they could write of each other. Without a permission (congé) you could not return to France, you could not go into the English colonies to the south, least of all could you go into the woods and you could not even change your place of residence, say from Montreal to Quebec. Were you a soldier you could not marry without due submission to and permission from your colonel. Were you a tavern-keeper you must have your pewter-pots regularly stamped, must not open before a certain hour or close your door before another. If a "bon bourgeois" you had many duties from that of keeping your ways clean of weeds and briars before your gates to that of being in your own pew in the parish church, upholding your share of the many charities of the town and of taking your place in any expedition which might be put a-foot under proper authority against those cruel devils.

the Iroquois, or against "our natural enemies those ambitious English of New York."

Never was more anxious care and supervision expended over an only child!

For her part England allowed her infants to grow up without overmuch supervision. Royal governors were sent out, more or less adequately supplied with means to carry out the system of the moment. But the mother country gave to her children no practical help or support. Her bantlings paddled about in water, hot or cold as they found it, and though in America they finally broke away from the maternal swaddling-bands yet they developed into a continent of English-speaking, English-thinking folk.

France was too anxious, too "motherly" to allow her children to walk alone, and as a result her name has disappeared from the map of North America; the one survival of her dream of empire remains only in the vague tradition of a peasantry bound in honourable loyalty to her old enemy.

France had great dreams for America, for "New France." The spirit of adventure and conquest was a birthright common to all her sons. She sought again a "Nouvelle France" in the New World as she had in her struggle against the Eastern Empire in the Old.

Think of her pretensions! She had Canada and the St. Lawrence. She had Louisiana and the Mississippi. England had a narrow strip down the Atlantic coast between French Canada on the north and Spanish Florida on the south; the Alleghanies served as a western boundary which her colonists never reached during the first century of their occupation, and to the east was the sea, a barrier and yet a tie to "Home."

Quebec in Frontenac's day held about 1,345 souls, Three Rivers 150, and Montreal 1,418. Westward from Montreal there were Forts Frontenac, Niagara and Detroit, besides some less important ones towards the north.

From Detroit down to the present New Orleans there were certainly not more than one hundred and fifty Frenchmen to hold this "New France" for His Most Christian Majesty. This force was distributed in about ten forts, or, more properly speaking stockaded posts, scattered along at various points between Detroit and the mouth of the Mississippi. The garrison of each, if complete, would consist of the commandant, his lieutenant, a storekeeper, a sergeant and ten soldiers—say from twelve to fifteen men in each.

On its face the situation seems absurd, but Frontenac never dreamed of holding the country by means of the scanty help sent by the

home government. His hundred and fifty men were simply so many representatives of the pomp and power of Old France, his reliance was on the friendly Indian tribes who occupied this long stretch of border territory.

Their allegiance was obtained partly by judicious attention and deference and partly by boldness through the medium of that large class of wandering Frenchmen who were explorers, fur-traders and even coureurs-de-bois. In the first class we find such men as LaSalle, Dulhut, Péré, Perrot, Nicolet, Jolliet and others, all of whom were fur-traders (but, *nota bene*, licensed fur-traders, holders of *congés*, that is, permits to trade.) These men had an intimate knowledge of the savage and many of them had remarkable influence over the wildest tribes; it was to their personal influence that France secured and held effective allies along her ever-spreading borders. They conciliated the tribes, acted as intermediaries between them and the governor, and, by just treatment and marvellous courage bound the Indian so firmly to France that she long held the West free from all intrusion.

With the exception of the conspiracy of Pontiac, Canada has been spared the horrors and miseries of Indian warfare since the conquest. The wandering fur-trader and later the lonely settler in our Northwest lived out their lives amid native and exiled tribes without danger or even alarm, and this because England was wise enough, in Canada at least, to accept and follow up the conciliatory policy towards the Indian which France had so happily inaugurated.

Apart from the explorers and licensed fur-traders, who were few in number, there was a surprisingly large body of men who had taken to the woods; some legitimately enough as voyageurs or employés, others simply for the love of the free, vagabond life, that curious desire of the return towards the savage. These were known as coureurs-de-bois; and, although a constant anxiety, they were at times an effective aid in the many expeditions set on foot by the ever-active government at Quebec.

Whether it was an expedition towards the West to overawe or combat unfriendly tribes, a raid to the North to surprise the English on the shores of Hudson's Bay or a sea-flight with d'Iberville to Newfoundland, Maine or Louisiana, the coureur-de-bois was ever ready to share in the adventure. Many of them lived the lives of outlaws with a price upon their heads and too many were merely wandering vagabonds, far below the Indian in every decency of life and honour.

Coureur-de-bois was as bad a name as a man could well be called in Canada two hundred and fifty years ago, and this was the stigma which Duchesneau, the intendant, tried to fasten upon Daniel de Greysolon, Sieur Dulhut, a man of the highest honour and unblemished life.

Ten years ago I published in Harper's Magazine (Sept. 1893) what I then knew of this gentleman-adventurer, explorer and fur-trader.

He had Italian as well as French blood in his veins, and was born at St. Germain-en-Laye about the middle of the seventeenth century. He was ensign in La Compagnie Lyonnaise in 1657, and in 1664 was a gendarme de la Garde du Roy, the King's Body Guard, which fixes his gentility beyond question, for one of the qualifications was the proof of the right to bear arms for two hundred years (deux cents ans de noblesse).

There can be as little doubt as to his title of explorer. M. Henri Lorin in his admirable study on Frontenac says that Dulhut "is a discoverer of the same title as LaSalle." As to fur-trader, every one in Canada from the governor downwards, men, women, clergy and laity were, or wished to be engaged in this extremely lucrative traffic.

When he came out to Canada I do not know, but he was in Montreal before 1674. That year he sailed for France and was in time to play his part as squire to the Marquis de Lassay through that awful August day at Seneff on the borders of Brabant. Seneff is a name which arouses no remembrance in English breasts to-day; but it was so close an affair between Condé and our Prince of Orange that it was doubtful with whom the advantage lay until Condé followed William and forced him to raise the siege of Oudenarde. The Hollanders and Spanish numbered 90,000 and the French less, each side lost between seven and eight thousand men. Condé had three horses killed under him and as the young Marquis de Lassay had two horses killed and was thrice wounded, his squire, our M. Dulhut, must have seen very active service on that now almost forgotten day.

It is a curious coincidence that the Recollet father, le révérend père Louis Hennepin, was at Seneff that day looking after the wounded, shriving the dying. It is improbable there was any meeting then, but years afterwards Dulhut and Hennepin met on the upper waters of the Mississippi, when the priest was in even greater danger than on the field of Seneff.

Dulhut must have returned to Canada by the last vessels of that year and when we next hear of him he and his younger brother Claude Greysolon de la Tourette had leased a modest property from Pierre Pigeon on the south-east corner of Notre-Dame and St. Sulpice (then St. Joseph) streets.

The brothers had both friends and relations in Canada; their uncle Jacques Patron had apparently been in Canada since 1659; their brother-in-law, Louis Tayeon, Sieur de Lussigny, was an officer in Frontenac's guard; Alphonse and his more famous brother Henri de Tonti,

the friend of LaSalle, were their cousins, and so apparently was Delietto. The Tonti were sons of Lorenzo Tonti, the Neapolitan banker, who, when a refugee in France founded the system of what we now know as Tontine Insurance. Delietto was an officer in the French army.

At that time there was no indication that Dulhut would become a wanderer. He had ample means, and, tired of lodgings, built for himself a handsome house with grounds running down to the river. The house stood on the northern side of the street across the foot of the present Jacques-Cartier Square, the gardens were behind and the lot between the street and the river was afterwards purchased to secure the view. Here he settled with his brother La Tourette and their fat and choleric friend Jacques Bizard, formerly captain of Frontenac's guard, now town-major. It certainly was a handsome establishment for a young man, probably the best in Montreal at that day and yet ere a year had gone Dulhut sold the place to his uncle, Jacques Patron, and started for the West, "le pays d'en-haut." This was on the 1st September, 1678, and he had with him, his brother La Tourette, six Frenchmen and three slaves, probably Panis, presented to him by friendly Indians, to serve as guides.

That he had great personal courage perhaps counted but for little in a day when most men had to be brave. But Dulhut's courage was not that of mere personal braving of danger, though no doubt he faced that often enough; it was the greater courage for duty's sake. When in command at one of his forts on Lake Superior in 1684, he actually pursued, captured, tried and convicted the Indian murderers of two Frenchmen, and despite all the threats, lies and cajoleries of a powerful and hostile tribe of Indians, at the imminent risk of his life and at the risk of the life of every Frenchman in the Northwest, but simply because he believed it his duty, replied to all the entreaties of the chiefs that had the culprits been prisoners of war he would gladly have released them but as murderers they must die. "It was a hard stroke for them," he says, "none of them believed I would undertake it."

There was not another post within possible reach, but he held that the safety of every white man west of Fort Frontenac lay in his hand and though he had not more than forty-two followers in all, probably not more than half of whom were white, he marched his little force out of his fort to within two hundred paces of the Indian encampment, and there in the face of over four hundred sore and truculent savages he carried out the sentence to which their own chiefs had agreed.

Thereafter there was no question of Dulhut's word in the Northwest. The Indians both feared and trusted him, his friends loved him, he was generous in thought and act and no one speaks of him dispa-

ragingly save the Intendant Duchesneau and LaSalle. But the intendant was a poor creature by nature and his position as an opponent to and spy upon the governor, no doubt, must answer for many of his faults. As for LaSalle he was a silent, forbidding man, struggling against a load of debt and the constant dread of a withdrawal of court favour. Every man in the West who had any standing, with perhaps the exception of Henri de Tonti, he looked upon with suspicion as a possible intruder on his field. He would neither consult, advise nor co-operate and he went his lonely way until the horrible tragedy on the borders of Mexico ended his unhappy life.

With these two exceptions every one speaks well of Dulhut: it is technically true that Frontenac imprisoned him, but when one reads that though he kept him within the bounds of the Château St. Louis he had a seat and cover for him each day at his own table; it is easy to see that it was only a device to keep him out of the clutches of Duchesneau, the intendant.

He built the first post at Detroit, another at Kaministiquia (the present Fort William) on Lake Superior, another, Fort La Tourette on Lake Nepigon and for nearly thirty years from 1678 to 1707 he was exploring, trading and giving his best services to the Government to hold the Indians not only in check but to keep them loyal to France. He was the first to strike a blow after the awful massacre of Lachine by the Iroquois in 1689; a massacre believed to have been instigated by the English and which ushered in that long series of murderous raids which drew a line of blood from the banks of the Mohawk to the shores of Maine and was the beginning not of a seven but a seventy years' war which lasted until the capitulation of Montreal in 1760.

Dulhut was the earliest explorer of the Northwest; he knew every stretch and bay of Lake Superior and much of the country to the North, he saw the upper waters of the Mississippi long before LeSueur made his famous journey from its mouth, he knew of the Great Salt Lake and only abandoned the journey there in order to save the Père Hennepin, who repaid him with grudging thanks and not a few lies. He held the wild tribes in effective subjection and more than once led them as allies to the French. For this at the end of twenty years he received promotion, a captaincy in the colony troops which meant pay of about 1,000 to 1,200 livres a year. He was heavily in debt and when his old uncle, Jacques Patron, died in 1691, he bequeathed all his property to La Tourette. Worse than this, he had been a life-long martyr to gout; that he should have kept at his post so long under this most exquisite of tortures speaks volumes for his endurance.

In 1695, through the intercession of the Iroquoise, Catherine Tegahkouita, he was relieved of his sufferings for a term of fifteen months after twenty-five years of martyrdom with attacks that sometimes lasted for three months without relief. In 1696 all are reported well at Fort Frontenac with the exception of Dulhut "who is suffering from his gout."

The latest trace I could find of Dulhut when I wrote my first article was in 1707, when Tonti relieved him at Detroit, and then the brief mention of his death in Vaudreuil's letter of 1710, stating that he had died during the previous winter.

I then accepted the general opinion that he had died somewhere in the West but last year a happy chance gave me the trace of his will and then I found that during the afternoon of the fourth day of March, 1709, Maître Michel LePailleur, Royal Notary for the Island of Montreal, with his two witnesses went to the house of Charles Delaunay, master tanner, where in a lower room giving on St. Paul Street they found "Daniel de Greysolon, escuyer, Sieur Dulhut, capitaine d'une compagnie des troupes du détachement de la Marine" seated in his armchair much troubled by his gout, who, considering "there is nothing more certain than death or more uncertain than the hour thereof," requested Maître LePailleur to make his will.

He commends his soul to God, to the Virgin, to St. Michael the Archangel and to all other Saints of Paradise. He wishes to be buried in the church of the Recollets (which stood until 1866, at the corner of Notre Dame and St. Helen Streets). He makes legacies in favour of the Recollets, the Sulpitians and the Jesuits. He leaves five hundred livres (equal to as many dollars of to-day) to Charles, the five-year old son of his landlord, as well as all his furniture and personal effects, and the residue of his estate he bequeathes to his heirs-at-law in such proportions as his brother La Tourette may decide.

He lived through that year, but when Maître LePailleur came again on the 12th February, 1710, accompanied by M. de la Chassaigne, formerly governor of Three Rivers, Charles Le Moyne, Baron de Longueuil, Antoine Forestier, surgeon, and St. Olive, apothecary, they found poor M. Dulhut no longer able to sit up and very ill indeed. He then altered his will. He bequeathed three hundred livres over and above any wages which may be due at the time of his death to his valet La Roche "for the great care and trouble he has had of him during his long illness." He leaves to Mme deLaunay and to her children all debts due to him especially those due by her husband, and, repeating "Have pity upon me, O God, according to Thy great mercy" he signed before the notary and witnesses.

He died during the night of the 25th-26th February, 1710. In the morning at eight o'clock, the Baron de Longueuil with Lienard de Beaujeu and the Sieur de Blain come and seal up all papers, etc., and on the day following they again appear with Maître LePailleur and make a detailed inventory of all his effects; of which the most interesting items are his diaries for 1676-1677-1678, and some others undated. None of these are known to-day and unless they were sent to his brother La Tourette, who had returned to Lyons, it is most unlikely that they will ever come to light.

Slight as this find may seem it gives us some valuable details of the personality of Dulhut. He held the lease of the ground floor of the house of Charles Delaunay, which stood on the lot now occupied by No. 60 St. Paul Street, he had his valet, his silver forks and spoons, his cane with its silver pommel and chain, his big atlas and a "History of the Jews" in five volumes, probably Josephus, his silk stockings, his cravates and cuffs of fine muslin, three perukes, his scarlet cloak and his good brown suit, gold-laced and with its buttons and button-holes embroidered in gold, but everything much used as became a man who no longer moved abroad, whose days were passed at a window in summer and by the fire in winter.

From his back windows he could look out on the broad St. Lawrence, that highway which had led him so many a weary league into the wilderness; from the front he could catch a glimpse of the house and garden he had built and planted over forty years before and from which he had gone forth for some reason we cannot now discover. When he built it he was a man of about twenty-five ; he stood well with many powerful personages in France; in Canada he was an intimate friend of Frontenac, he was well-to-do, perhaps wealthy; there is no hint of scandal or suggestion of any motive for his sudden departure. Surely there was some heart-break at the bottom of the whole story.

His life from the day he left Montreal was of necessity one of hardship and loneliness. He was often for years together in the depth of the woods, "aux profondeurs des bois" as it was expressively described in his day.

When he returned to Montreal, a man drawing towards the allotment of three score and ten, for such rest and comfort as were possible, he had not a relative near him. His brother, La Tourette, had returned to France and was living in Lyons, so probably had his brother-in-law Lussigny and his cousin Delietto; his uncle, Patron, was dead, as was his cousin Henri de Tonti, and Alphonse was stationed at Detroit.

Apart from the dry bones of notarial documents and occasional and generally hostile mention in the reports of the intendant,

we have nothing from the hand of Dulhut save his memorial to the minister in 1697, and this will and its codicils; but even with this scanty material we can add to Vaudreuil's curt eulogy "he was a very honest man," that he was a man of good judgment, of firm resolution, of strong faith and friendship, singularly modest in a day when self-assertion seemed a necessity for recognition; a man who under constant disappointment and great physical suffering was supported by a marvellous patience that endured until the hour of his release.