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AMERICAN PIONEERS AND PATRIOTS.

**THE ADVENTURES
OF THE**

CHEVALIER DE LA SALLE

AND HIS COMPANIONS,

IN THEIR EXPLORATIONS OF THE
PRAIRIES, FORESTS, LAKES, AND RIVERS, OF THE NEW WORLD,
AND THEIR INTERVIEWS WITH THE SAVAGE TRIBES,
TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

By

JOHN S. C. ABBOTT.

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TO

THE INHABITANTS OF THE GREAT VALLEY OF THE WEST,
WHOSE MAGNIFICENT REALMS
LA SALLE AND HIS COMPANIONS WERE THE FIRST TO EXPLORE,
THIS VOLUME
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED, BY

JOHN S. C. ABBOTT.

PREFACE.

There is no one of the Pioneers of this continent whose achievements equal those of the Chevalier Robert de la Salle. He passed over thousands of miles of lakes and rivers in the birch canoe. He traversed countless leagues of prairie and forest, on foot, guided by the moccasined Indian, threading trails which the white man's foot had never trod, and penetrating the villages and the wigwams of savages, where the white man's face had never been seen.

Fear was an emotion La Salle never experienced. His adventures were more wild and wondrous than almost any recorded in the tales of chivalry. As time is rapidly obliterating from our land the footprints of the savage, it is important that these records of his strange existence should be perpetuated.

Fortunately we have full and accurate accounts of these explorations, in the journals of Messrs. Marquette, Hennepin, and Joliet. We have still more minute narratives, in *Etablissement de la Foix*, par le P. Chretien Le Clercq, Paris 1691; *Dernieres Découvertes*, par le Chevalier de Tonti, Paris 1697; *Journal Historique*, par M. Joutel, Paris 1713.

For the incidents in the last fatal expedition, to establish a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi, and the wonderful land tour of more than two thousand miles from the sea-coast of Texas to Quebec, through the territories of hundreds of tribes, we have the narratives of Father Christian Le Clercq, the narrative of Father Anastasias Douay, and the minute and admirably written almost daily journal of Monsieur Joutel, in his *Dernier Voyage*. Both Douay and Joutel accompanied this expedition from its commencement to its close.

In these adventures the reader will find a more vivid description of the condition of this continent, and the character of its inhabitants two hundred years ago, than can be found anywhere else. Sir Walter Scott once remarked, that no one

could take more pleasure in reading his romances, than he had taken in writing them. In this volume we have the romance of truth.

If the writer can judge of the pleasure of the reader, from the intense interest he has experienced in following these adventurers through their perilous achievements, this narrative will prove to be one of extraordinary interest.

JOHN S. C. ABBOTT.

FAIR HAVEN, CONNECTICUT.

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CHAPTER I.

The Enterprise of James Marquette.

The Discovery of America. Explorations of the French in Canada. Ancestry of James Marquette. His noble character. Mission to Canada. Adventures with the Indians. Wild Character of the Region and the Tribes. Voyage to Lake Superior with the Nez-Percés. Mission at Green Bay. Search for the Mississippi. The Outfit. The Voyage through Green Bay. Fox River and the Illinois. Enters the Mississippi. Scenes Sublime and Beautiful. Adventures in an Indian Village.

Nearly three hundred and forty years ago, in April 1541, De Soto, in his adventurous march, discovered the majestic Mississippi, not far from the border of the State of Tennessee. No white man's eye had ever before beheld that flood whose banks are now inhabited by busy millions. The Indians informed him that all the region below consisted of dismal, endless, uninhabitable swamps. De Soto, world-weary and woe-stricken, died upon the banks of the river. In its fathomless depths his body found burial.

These cruel adventurers, insanely impelled in search of mines of gold, founded no settlements, and left behind them no traces of their passage, save that by their cruelties they had excited the implacable ire of the Indian against the white man. A hundred years of earth's many griefs lingered slowly away, while these vast solitudes were peopled only by wandering savage tribes whose record must forever remain unknown.

In the year 1641, some French envoys, from Canada, seeking to open friendly trade with the Indians for the purchase of furs, penetrated the northwest of our country as far as the Falls of St. Mary, near the outlet of Lake Superior. The most friendly relations existed between these Frenchmen and the Indians, wherever the tribes were encountered. This visit led to no settlement. The adventurous traders purchased many furs, with which they loaded their birch canoes: established friendly relations with these distant Indians, and greatly extended the region from which furs were brought to their trading posts in Canada.

Eighteen more years passed away, over the silent and gloomy wilderness, when in 1659, a little band of these bold and hardy explorers, in their frail canoes, with Indian guides, paddled along the lonely, forest-fringed shores of Lake Ontario, ascended the Niagara River to the Falls, carried their canoes on their shoulders around the rapids, launched them again on Lake Erie, traversed that inland sea over two hundred and fifty miles, entered the magnificent Strait, passed through it to Lake St. Clair, crossed that lake, ascended the St. Clair River to Lake Huron, and traversing its whole length, a distance of three hundred miles, reached the Falls of St. Mary.

Here, at the distance of more than a thousand miles from the least vestiges of civilization, and surrounded by numerous and powerful bands of savages, these hardy men passed an inclement winter. Amidst rocks and gloomy pines they reared their hut. Game was abundant, fuel was at their door, the Indians were hospitable, and they wanted for nothing. One event only darkened these wintry months. The leader of the band became lost in the woods and perished.

In the spring the men returned rejoicingly to Canada, with their canoes laden with the richest furs. They also brought such reports of the docility and amiability of the Indians, as to inspire the Christians in Canada with the intense desire to establish missionary stations among them. Five years passed away, when Father Claude Allouez, with a small band of Christian heroes, penetrated these wilds to proclaim the glad tidings of the Gospel. Two years after, he was followed by Father James Marquette, a noble man, whose name will never die.

As the explorations of Marquette opened the way for the still more wonderful excursions of La Salle, I must here introduce a brief account of his adventures. There is something in blood. The Marquette family had been illustrious in France from time immemorial. Generation after generation, many of its members had obtained renown, not only for chivalric courage, but for every virtue which can adorn humanity. Their ancestral home was a massive feudal castle on an eminence near the stately city of Leon. The armorial bearing of the family commemorates deeds of heroic enterprise five hundred years ago. They were generally earnest Christians.

James Marquette was born at the ancient seat of the family in the year 1637. His mother was a woman of fervent piety and of unusual strength and culture of mind. Her brother, John Baptiste de la Salle, was the founder of a system of Christian schools for the gratuitous education of the poor. Thousands were thus instructed long before the present system of public schools was introduced. It was to the instructions of his noble mother that James Marquette was indebted for his elevated Christian character, and for his self-sacrificing devotion to the interests of humanity, which have given his name celebrity through a large portion of the Christian world.

At the age of seventeen this noble young man, resisting all the brilliant allurements the world opened to one of his wealth and rank, consecrated himself to the service of religion by entering the ministry in the Catholic Church, in which he was born and educated, and by whose influences he was exclusively surrounded.

Two years were devoted to intense study. Then, for twelve years, he was employed in teaching and in many laborious and self-denying duties. As was natural, with a young man of his ardent nature and glowing spirit of enterprise, he was very desirous of conveying the glad tidings of the Gospel to those distant nations who had never even heard of the name of Jesus.

Canada and its savage tribes were then attracting much attention in France. Wonderful stories were told of the St. Lawrence River, and of the series of majestic lakes, spreading far away into the unknown interior, and whose shores were crowded with Indian tribes of strange aspect, language, and customs.

In the year 1666, Marquette set sail from France, On the 20th of September, he landed, on the banks of the St. Lawrence, at a little hamlet of French log-cabins and Indian wigwams, called Quebec. He was then but twenty-nine years of age. There was, at that time, another missionary, M. Allouez, on an exploring tour far away upon the majestic lakes of the interior. With adventurous footsteps he was traversing prairie solitudes and forest glooms, upon which no eye of civilized man had ever yet looked. His birch canoe, paddled by Indian guides, glided over solitary waters hundreds of leagues beyond the remotest frontier stations.

There was quite an important trading-post at the mouth of Saguenay River. This was a remarkable stream, which entered the St. Lawrence about one hundred and twenty miles below Quebec. It came rushing down, from unknown regions of the north, with very rapid flood, entering the St. Lawrence at a point where that majestic river was eleven miles in width.

Here the French government had established one of the most important commercial and religious stations of that day. At certain seasons of the year it presented an extraordinary wild and picturesque aspect of busy life. There were countless Indian tribes, clustered in villages along the banks of the St. Lawrence, the Saguenay, and their tributary streams. In the early summer, the Indians came by hundreds, in fleets of canoes—men, women and children—to this great mart of traffic. They came in their gayest attire, reared their wigwams on the plain, kindled their fires, and engaged in all the barbaric sports of Indian gala days. The scene presented was so full of life and beauty, that the most skilful artist might despair of his ability to transfer it to the canvas.

Father Marquette took his station at this point. Here for twelve years he patiently labored, trying to teach the Indians the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Full of enthusiasm, and naturally endowed with a very enterprising spirit, his heart glowed with zeal as he listened to the narrative of Father Allouez, of populous tribes, far away on the majestic shores of Huron, Michigan, Superior. These tribes had never heard of the mission of the Son of God, to save a lost world. They had but very faint conceptions of the Heavenly Father. Marquette could not resist the impulse to carry the Gospel to these realms of darkness.

It is difficult for us now to form any adequate conception of the little hamlet, at the mouth of the Saguenay, where

Marquette commenced his missionary labors. The log-cabins of the French, their store-house, and, most prominent of all, the cross-surmounted log chapel, were clustered together. At a little distance, on the plain, were hundreds of Indian wigwams. Bark canoes, light as bubbles, were seen gliding over the still waters, which were there expanded into a beautiful bay. The glooms of the gigantic forest, spreading back to unexplored and unimagined depth, added to the sublimity of the scene.

There seemed to be no apprehension of hostility on either side. The intercourse between the two parties of civilized and uncivilized men was truly fraternal. The French conformed, as far as possible, to the modes of life of the Indians. They shared in their games, married the daughters of their chiefs, and in all points endeavored to identify the interests of the natives with their own.

M. Marquette had a remarkable facility in the acquisition of languages. There was a general resemblance in the language of all the tribes on the St. Lawrence. He could very soon speak fluently with all. Taking Indian guides with him, he commenced tours in various directions, paddled by Indians in the birch bark canoe. He visited tribe after tribe, met the chiefs at their council fires, slept in the wigwams, administered medicines to the sick, and, with zeal which no discouragement could chill, endeavored to point the living and the dying to that Saviour who taketh away the sins of the world.

After spending two years in these labors, he obtained an appointment to connect himself with a mission established nearly a thousand miles west, far away upon the shores of Lake Superior. On the 21st of April, 1668, he left Quebec for Montreal. The distance was one hundred and eighty miles up the river. The voyage was made in a birch canoe, with three boatmen to aid him in paddling it against the stream. They could proceed about thirty miles a day. The voyage occupied about a week. There were Indian villages on the banks where they occasionally slept. At other times they encamped in the forest, the night wind lulling them to sleep, as it sighed through the leafless branches, which the returning sun of spring had scarcely yet caused to bud.

At Montreal there was a little cluster of cabins and wigwams, presenting a very different aspect from the stately city which now adorns that site. After a short tarry there, waiting for a suitable guide, to traverse more than a thousand miles of almost pathless wilderness, a party of Nez-Percé Indians, from Lake Superior, came down the river in their canoes. With them Marquette embarked. It was a wonderful voyage which this gentleman, from the refinement and culture of France, made alone with these savages.

They paddled up the Ottawa River a distance of nearly four hundred miles. Thence through a series of narrow streams and minor lakes, they entered Lake Nipissing. Descending the rapid flood of French River, through cheerless solitudes eighty miles in extent, they entered Georgian Bay. Crossing this vast sheet of water over an expanse of fifty miles, they saw the apparently boundless waves of Lake Huron opening before them. The northern shores of this inland sea they skirted, until they reached the river St. Mary, which connects Lake Superior with Lake Huron. Here two missionary stations were established.

One was near the entrance of the river into Lake Huron, about forty miles below the celebrated Falls of St. Mary. The other was at Green Bay, an immense lake in itself, jutting out from the northwestern extremity of Lake Michigan. Father Marquette reared his log-cabin in the vicinity of a small Indian village, on the main land, just south of the island of Mackinaw. He named the station St. Ignatius. In this vast solitude this heroic man commenced his labors of love. There were about two thousand souls in the tribes immediately around him. With great docility they listened to his teachings, and were eager to be baptized as Christians. But the judicious father was in no haste thus to secure merely their nominal conversion. The dying, upon professions of penitence, he was ever ready to baptize, and to administer to them the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. With the rest he labored to root out all the remnants of their degrading superstitions, and to give them correct ideas of salvation through repentance, amendment, and trust in an atoning Saviour.

Gradually Marquette gathered around him a little band of loving disciples. For three years he labored with them cheerfully, joyously. His gentle and devoted spirit won, not merely the friendship of the Indians, but their ardent affections. He was just as safe among them as the most beloved father surrounded by his children. Three years this good man remained in these lonely wilds, peacefully and successfully teaching these benighted children of the forest. During all this time his mind had been much exercised with the thought of exploring the limitless and unknown regions south and

west.

He had heard rumors of the Mississippi, the Father of Waters; and his devout mind peopled the vast realms through which it flowed with the lost children of God, whom he perhaps might reclaim, through the Gospel of Jesus, who had come from heaven for their redemption. The Governor of Canada was desirous, for more worldly reasons, of exploring these regions, where future empires might be reared.

Even the Indians knew but little respecting this great and distant river. There was much uncertainty whether it ran south, into the Gulf of Mexico, or west, emptying into the Gulf of California, which Spanish explorers had called the Red Sea, in consequence of its resemblance to that Asiatic sheet of water, or whether it turned easterly, entering the Atlantic Ocean somewhere near the Virginia coast.

In the spring of the year 1673, Governor Frontenac sent a French gentleman, M. Joliet, from Quebec, with five boatmen, to Point St. Ignatius, to take Father Marquette on board and set out to find and explore the downward course of this much talked of river. M. Joliet was admirably qualified for this responsible enterprise. He was a man of deep religious convictions, had spent several years among the Indians, was a very courteous man in all his intercourse with them, was thoroughly acquainted with their customs, and spoke several of their languages. As to courage, it was said that he absolutely feared nothing. The good father writes, in reference to his own appointment to this expedition:

"I was the more enraptured at this good news, as I saw my designs on the point of being accomplished, and myself in the happy necessity of exposing my life for the salvation of all these nations. Our joy at being chosen for this enterprise, sweetened the labor of paddling from morning till night. As we were going to seek unknown countries, we took all possible precautions, that if our enterprise were hazardous, it should not be foolhardy. For this reason we gathered all possible information from the Indians, who had frequented those parts. We even traced a map of all the new country, marking down the rivers on which we were to sail, the names of the nations through which we were to pass, and the course of the great river."

On the 13th of May, 1673, this little band, consisting of M. Joliet, Father Marquette, and five boatmen, in two birch canoes, commenced their adventurous voyage. They took with them some Indian corn and jerked meat; but they were to live mainly upon such food as they could obtain by the way. The immense sheet of water, at the northwestern extremity of Lake Michigan, called Green Bay, is one hundred miles long by twenty or thirty broad. The boatmen paddled their frail canoes along the western border of this lake until they reached its southern extremity, where they found a shallow river, flowing into it from the south, which they called Fox River. They could propel their canoes about thirty miles a day. Each night they selected some propitious spot for their encampment. Upon some dry and grassy mound they could speedily, with their axes, construct a hut which would protect them from the weather. Carefully smoothing down the floor, they spread over it their ample couch of furs. Fish could be taken in abundance. The forest was filled with game. An immense fire, blazing before the open side of the hut, gave warmth, and illumined the sublime scene with almost the brilliance of noonday. There they joyously cooked their suppers, with appetites which rendered the feast more luxurious to them probably than any gourmand at Delmonico's ever enjoyed.

Each night Father Marquette held a religious service, which all reverently attended. Prayers were offered, and their hymns of Christian devotion floated sweetly through those sublime solitudes. The boatmen were men of a gentle race, who had been taught from infancy to revere the exercises of the church.

They came upon several Indian villages. But the natives were as friendly as brothers. Many of them had visited the station at St. Ignatius, and all of them had heard of Father Marquette and his labors of love. These children of the forest begged their revered friend to desist from his enterprise.

"There are," they said, "on the *great river*, bad Indians who will cut off your heads without any cause. There are fierce warriors who will try to seize you and make you slaves. There are enormous birds there, whose wings darken the air, and who can swallow you all, with your canoes, at a mouthful. And worst of all, there is a malignant demon there who, if you escape all other dangers, will cause the waters to boil and whirl around you and devour you."

To all this, the good Marquette replied, "I thank you, dear friends, for your kind advice, but I cannot follow it. There are souls there, to save whom, the Son of God came to earth and died. Their salvation is at stake. I would joyfully lay down my life if I could guide them to the Saviour."

They found the navigation of Fox River impeded with many rapids. To surmount these it was necessary often to alight from their canoes, and, wading over the rough and sharp stones, to drag them up against the swift current. They were within the limits of the present State of Wisconsin, and found themselves in a region of lakes, sluggish streams, and marshes. But there were Indian trails, which had been trodden for uncounted generations, leading west. These they followed, often painfully carrying their canoes and their burdens on their shoulders, for many miles, from water to water, over what the Indians called the *Carrying Places*.

At length they entered a region of remarkable luxuriance, fertility, and beauty. There were crystal streams and charming lakes. Magnificent forests were interspersed with broad and green prairies. God seemed to have formed, in these remote realms, an Eden of surpassing loveliness for the abode of his children. Three tribes, in perfect harmony, occupied the region—the Miamis, Mascoutins, and Kickapoos. There was a large village with abundant corn-fields around. River and lake, forest and prairie were alike alive with game.

To their surprise they found that the French missionary, Father Allouez, had reached this distant spot, preaching the Gospel, eight years before. The Indians had received him with fraternal kindness. He had left in the centre of the village a cross, the emblem of the crucified Son of God.

"I found," Marquette writes, "that these good people had hung skins and belts and bows and arrows on the cross, an offering to the Great Spirit, to thank him because he had taken pity on them during the winter and had given them an abundant chase."

No white man had ever penetrated beyond this region. These simple, inoffensive people seemed greatly surprised that seven unarmed men should venture to press on to meet the unknown dangers of the wilderness beyond—wilds which their imaginations had peopled with all conceivable terrors.

On the 10th of June these heroic men resumed their journey. The kind Indians furnished them with two guides to lead them through the intricacies of the forest to a river, about ten miles distant, which they called Wisconsin, and which they said flowed westward into the Father of Waters. They soon reached this stream. The Indians helped them to carry their canoes and effects across the portage. "We were then left," writes Marquette, "alone in that unknown country, in the hand of God."

Our voyagers found the stream hard to navigate. It was full of sand-bars and shallows. There were many islands covered with the richest verdure. At times they came upon landscapes of enchanting beauty, with lawns and parks and lakes, as if arranged by the most careful hands of art.

After descending this stream about one hundred and twenty miles, they reached the mouth of the Wisconsin River, and saw the flood of the Mississippi rolling majestically before them. It was the 17th of June 1673, Father Marquette writes that, upon beholding the river, he experienced a joy which he could not express.

Easily they could be swept down by the rapid current into the sublime unexplored solitudes below. But to paddle back against the swift-rolling tide would try the muscles of the hardiest men. Still the voyagers pressed on. It was indeed a fairy scene which now opened before them. Here bold bluffs hundreds of feet high, jutting into the river. Here were crags of stupendous size and of every variety of form, often reminding one of Europe's most picturesque stream, where

"The castled crags of Drachenfels,
Frown o'er the wide and winding Rhine."

Again the prairie would spread out its ocean-like expanse, embellished with groves, garlanded with flowers of gorgeous colors waving in the summer breeze, checkered with sunshine and the shade of passing clouds, with roving herds of the stately buffalo and the graceful antelope. And again the gloomy forest would appear, extending over countless leagues, where bears, wolves, and panthers found a congenial home.

Having descended the river nearly two hundred miles they came to an Indian trail, leading back into the country. It was so well trodden as to give evidence that a powerful tribe was near. It speaks well for the Indians—for the reputation which they then enjoyed—that Marquette, with his French companion, M. Joliet, far away in the wilderness, seven hundred miles from any spot which a white man's foot had ever before trod, should not have hesitated alone to enter this trail in search of the habitations of this unknown tribe. They left all their companions, with the canoes, on the bank of the river.

"We cautioned them," writes Father Marquette, "strictly to beware of a surprise. Then M. Joliet and I undertook this rather hazardous discovery, for two single men, who thus put themselves at the discretion of an unknown and barbarous people."

These two bold adventurers followed the trail in silence for about six miles. They then saw, not far from them, upon a meadow on the banks of a small stream, a very picturesque group of wigwams, with all the accompaniments of loafing warriors, busy women, sporting children, and wolfish dogs, usually to be found in an Indian village. At the distance of about a mile and a half, upon a gentle eminence, there was another village of about equal size.

As the Indians had not yet caught sight of them, they fell upon their knees, and Father Marquette, in fervent prayer, commended themselves to God. They then gave a loud shout, to attract the attention of the Indians, and stepped out into open view. The whole community was instantly thrown into commotion, rushing from the wigwams, and gathering in apparently an anxious group.

After a brief conference they seemed to come to the conclusion that two unarmed men could not thus approach them, announcing their coming, with any hostile intent. Four of their aged men were deputed to go forward and greet the strangers. They advanced with much dignity, not uttering a word, but waving, in their hands, the pipes of peace. As it afterwards appeared, they had often heard of the arrival of the French in Canada, of the wonderful articles which they brought for traffic, and of the missionaries, with their long black gowns. The name of Blackgowns was the one with which, in all the tribes, they designated these preachers of the Gospel. When they had come within a few paces of the strangers, they regarded them attentively and waited to be addressed. Both M. Joliet and Father Marquette understood that these ceremonies indicated friendship. Father Marquette broke the silence by inquiring

"To what nation do you belong?"

"We are Illinois," one of them replied, "and in token of peace we have brought you our pipes to smoke. We invite you to our village, where all are awaiting you with impatience."

The Frenchman and the four Indians walked together to the village. At the door of one of the largest wigwams, one of the ancients stood to receive them. According to their custom, on such occasions, he was entirely unclothed. This probably was the savage mode of indicating that there were no concealed weapons about the person. This man, with his hands raised toward the sun, which was shining brightly, said:

"How beautiful is the sun, O Frenchmen! when you come to visit us. All our people welcome you, and you shall enter all our cabins in peace."

He then led them into the wigwam. A large concourse remained outside in respectful silence. Only the principal men entered the wigwam. Mats were provided, for the guests, in the centre. The rest took seats around. The calumet of peace was passed. All in turn partook of the smoke of the weed which both the civilized and uncivilized man have prized so highly.

While thus employed, a messenger came in from the head chief, who resided in the village on the eminence to which we have alluded. He brought a message from the chief, inviting the strangers to his residence.

"We went with a good will," writes M. Marquette. "The people, who had never before seen a white man, could never tire looking at us. They threw themselves upon the grass, by the way-side, to watch as we passed. They ran ahead, and then turned and walked slowly back to examine us. All this was done without noise and in the most respectful manner."

The chief was standing, with two venerable men, at the door of his residence. The three were entirely destitute of clothing. Each one held the calumet of peace in his hand. The guests were received with smiles and a few cordial words of welcome. Together they all entered the spacious wigwam. It was very comfortable and even cheerful in its aspect, being carpeted, and its sides were lined with mats ingeniously woven from rushes. The Frenchmen, as before, were placed upon central mats, while all the dignitaries of the village silently entered and took their seats around.

The chief rose, and in a few very appropriate words bade the strangers welcome to his country. Again the pipe of peace was presented to them and passed the rounds. M. Marquette, who, as we have said, was quite at home in all matters of Indian etiquette, then arose, and addressing the chief, said:

"We have come as friends to visit the nations on this side of the great river." In token of the truth of these words, he made the chief a handsome present. He then added, "God, the Father of us all, has had pity on you, though you have long been ignorant of Him. He wishes to become known to all nations, and has sent me to communicate His will to you, and wishes you to acknowledge and obey Him." Another present was handed the chief. He then continued, "My king, the great chief of the French, wishes that peace should reign everywhere; that there should be no more wars. The Iroquois, who have been the enemies of the Illinois, he has subdued." Another present was given, in confirmation of the truth of these words. In conclusion of this brief yet comprehensive speech, he remarked, "And now I have only to say that we entreat you to give us all the information, in your power, of the sea into which the great river runs, and of the nations through whom we must pass on our way to reach it."

The chief rose, and addressing Father Marquette, said, "I thank thee, Blackgown, and thee also," bowing to M. Joliet, "for taking so much pains to come and visit us. Never has the earth been so beautiful to us, and never has the sun shone so brightly upon us as to-day. Never has our river been so calm or so free from rocks. Your canoes have swept them away. Never has our tobacco had so fine a flavor, or our corn been so luxuriant as we behold it to-day, now that you are with us."

Then, turning to a little Indian captive boy, at his side, whom they had taken from some hostile tribe, and had adopted into the family of the chief, he added:

"Here is my son. I give him to you that you may know my heart. I implore you to take pity upon me, and upon all my nation. Thou knowest the Great Spirit who has made us all. Thou speakest to Him and hearest His word. Ask Him to give me life and health, and to come and dwell with us, that we may know Him."

He then led the little captive to the side of M. Marquette. This was in return for the first present. Holding in his hand a calumet very highly carved and ornamented with feathers, he presented it to the father, saying:

"This is the sacred calumet. It signifies that, wherever you bear it, you are the messengers of peace. All our tribes will respect it, and will protect you from every harm."

The bowl of the pipe was of some highly polished red stone. The stem, elaborately decorated, was of a reed about two feet long. "By this present," said he, "we wish to show our esteem for your chief, whom we must all revere after the account you have given us of him." The third and fourth presents consisted, so far as we can judge from the rather obscure narrative, of two thick mats, one for each of the guests, to serve them for beds on their voyage. At the same time the chief said:

"I beg of you, in behalf of the whole nation, not to go any farther down the river. Your lives will be in the greatest peril.

"I replied," Father Marquette writes, "that I did not fear death, and that I esteemed no happiness greater than that of losing my life for the glory of God, who made us all. But this, these poor people could not understand."

The council now broke up, and a great feast was given. It consisted of four courses. The first much resembled what is called in New England hasty pudding. It consisted of Indian meal, and corn pounded fine, and boiled in an earthen pot, and was eaten with melted fat. The master of ceremonies took some on a wooden plate, and with a horn spoon, quite neatly made, fed the two Frenchmen as a mother feeds a child.

The second course consisted of three boiled fishes. Carefully the bones were removed, and the Indian who served them placed the food in the mouths of their guests as before. He blew upon it, to be sure that it was sufficiently cool. For the third course there was brought forward a large baked dog. This was considered a great delicacy, and was deemed the highest compliment which could be shown to a guest. But the prejudices of the Frenchmen were such that they could not eat dog, and this dish was removed. The fourth course consisted of fat and tender cuts of buffalo meat. This also was placed in their mouths as parents feed a child.

There were three hundred wigwams in the village. After the feast the guests were led into each one of them, and introduced to the inmates. As they walked through the streets a large crowd accompanied them. Some men, officiating as a kind of police, were continually haranguing the throng, urging the people not to press too close, and not to be troublesome. Many presents were made them of belts and scarfs woven from hair and fur, and other small articles of Indian manufacture, brilliantly colored and richly embroidered with shells. They had also knee-bands and wrist-bands which were quite ornamental.

That night the guests slept in the wigwam of the chief. The next morning they took leave of their generous entertainers. The chief himself accompanied them to their canoes, followed by a retinue of nearly six hundred persons.

We cannot record this friendly reception without emotion. How beautiful is peace! How different would the history of this world have been but for man's inhumanity to man!

CHAPTER II.

The First Exploration of the Mississippi River.

River Scenery. The Missouri. Its Distant Banks. The Mosquito Pest. Meeting the Indians. Influence of the Calumet. The Arkansas River. A Friendly Greeting. Scenes in the Village. Civilization of the Southern Tribes. Domestic Habits. Fear of the Spaniards. The Return Voyage.

Father Marquette and M. Joliet had astronomical instruments with which they ascertained, with much accuracy, the latitude of all their important stopping places. As they state that the two villages, which they visited, were on the western side of the Mississippi, at the latitude of forty degrees north, and upon the banks of a stream flowing into the Great River, it is supposed that these villages were upon the stream now called Des Moines, which forms a part of the boundary between Iowa and Missouri. The Indians called the villages Pe-ou-a-sea and Moing-wena. They were probably situated about six miles above the present city of Keokuk.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon, of a day near the end of sunny, blooming June, when our voyagers resumed their adventurous tour. Nearly the whole tribe they had visited stood upon the bank to bid them adieu. They floated along through a very dreary country of precipitous rocks and jagged cliffs, which quite shut out from their view the magnificent prairie region which was spread out beyond this barrier.

Upon the smooth surface of one of these rocks, apparently inaccessible, they saw, with surprise, two figures painted in very brilliant colors and with truly artistic outline. They thought that the painting would have done honor to any European artist. The figures were of two rather frightful looking monsters, about the size of a calf, in red, green, and black. Stoddard, in his history of Louisiana, says that these painted monsters, between the Missouri and the Illinois Rivers, still remain in a good degree of preservation.

"As we were discoursing of them," writes Father Marquette, "sailing gently down a beautiful, still, clear water, we heard the noise of a rapid, into which we were about to fall. I have seen nothing more frightful. A mass of large trees, entire, with branches, real floating islands, came rushing from the mouth of the river Pekitunoüi, so impetuously that we

could not, without great danger, expose ourselves to pass across. The agitation was so great that the water was all muddy, and could not get clear."

This was the rush and the roar of the incoming billows of the terrible Missouri, the most tremendous river upon this globe. It enters the Mississippi through a channel half a mile in breadth, rushing down with a sort of maniacal fury, from its sources among the Rocky Mountains at the distance of three thousand and ninety-six miles. Its whole course, from its rise to its entrance into the Gulf of Mexico, is four thousand three hundred and forty-nine miles. More than two hundred and fifty years after this, Mr. George Catlin ascended this river in the first steamer which ever ventured to breast its torrent.

It took the steamer three months to ascend to the mouth of the Yellowstone, two thousand miles from the city of St. Louis. At this point the American Fur Company had erected a very substantial fort, three hundred feet square, for the protection of their property against the savages. The banks of the stream were lined with the villages of the Indians. Their wigwams were of a great variety of structure. The scenes presented were astonishing in their wild and picturesque aspect. Crowds of weird-like savages would often be collected on the bluffs, watching the appalling phenomenon of the passing steamer.

The Missouri is different, perhaps, from any other river in the world. Its boiling, turbid waters rush impetuously on, in an unceasing current, for hundreds of leagues, with scarcely a cove, an eddy, or any resting place where a canoe can be tranquilly moored. The Indian name of the river signifies Muddy Water. It is so opaque, like a cup of chocolate, that a newly coined shilling, placed in a tumbler, cannot be seen through the eighth part of an inch of the water.

For nearly a thousand miles the whole bed of the stream was impeded with gigantic trees, torn from the rich alluvial banks, forming snags and sawyers and rafts, through which, often with difficulty, the steamer cut her way. Every island and sandbar was covered with dreary looking masses of driftwood of every conceivable variety.

This desolate and savage aspect of the rushing flood is much relieved by the aspect of marvellous beauty often presented on the banks. It was almost a fairy scene. Hills and vales, bluffs and ravines, were continually presented in successions of sublimity and beauty which charmed the eye. Prairies were often spread out before them of boundless expanse, upon which vast herds, often numbering thousands, of buffaloes, elks, and antelopes, were seen grazing. In the gloomy forests, wolves were roaming. Mountain goats bounded over the cliffs. And at times, the air seemed darkened with the myriad birds which rose from the tall grass.

There was one twelve-pound, and three or four eight-pound cannon on board the steamer. At every village which was passed, the banks would be crowded with the astounded natives. Mischievously, the captain would order all the cannon to be simultaneously discharged. The effect upon the terrified savages was ludicrous in the extreme. They were all thrown into utter consternation. The more devout threw themselves upon the ground, and, hiding their faces, cried to the Great Spirit for protection. The cowards, with the women and the children, ran screaming back into the prairie, or behind the hills. Occasionally, a little band of veteran warriors, the bravest of the brave, would stand their ground, ready to meet the terrors of even a supernatural foe.

"Sometimes," writes Catlin, "they were thrown neck and heels over each other's heads and shoulders—men, women, children and dogs; sage, sachem, old and young, all in a mass—at the frightful discharge of the steam from the escape-pipe, which the captain of the boat let loose among them, for his own fun and amusement."

As our voyagers, in their birch bark canoes, passed the mouth of this wonderful stream, they had no conception of the scenes which were transpiring in thousands of Indian villages on its far-distant waters. They began now to think, from the course of the Mississippi, that it must flow into the Gulf of Mexico. They had however learned, from the Indians, that if they were to ascend the Missouri, or, as they called it, Pekitanouï, five or six days' sail, they would come to a very beautiful prairie, ninety-five miles long. This splendid country, which was represented as an Eden of loveliness, the Indians said could be easily crossed, carrying their canoes. They could then take another river which ran southwest into a small lake. This was the source of another large and deep river, which emptied into the western sea.

In subsequent years, this description of the Indians was found to be unexpectedly correct. By ascending the Missouri to the Platte River, and following that stream to its source among the Rocky Mountains, the traveller is brought within a few

leagues of the Colorado, which flows into the Gulf of California. Having passed the dangerous rush of the Missouri, as it entered into the Mississippi, and floating upon the surface of their combined waters, they came, after the sail, as they judged, of about sixty miles, to the mouth of another large river, of gentle current, and whose waters were of crystal purity, flowing in from the east. The Indians very appropriately called it Wabash, which signified Beautiful River. The French subsequently called it La Belle Rivière. We have given it the name of Ohio, appropriating the name Wabash to one of its most important tributaries.

The voyagers learned that this stream was fringed with a succession of Indian villages. The various tribes were peaceful, averse to war. In one district there was a cluster of twenty-three villages; in another, of eighteen. But alas for man! It would seem that the fallen children of Adam were determined that there should be no happiness in this world. The ferocious Iroquois would send their war parties, hundreds of miles through the wilderness, to make unprovoked attacks upon these unwarlike people. They would rob them of their harvests, wantonly burn their wigwams, kill and scalp men, women, and children, and carry off captives to torture and burn at the stake, in barbarian festivities.

Near the mouth of this river they found deposits of unctuous earth, having quite brilliantly the colors of red, purple, and violet. Father Hennepin rubbed some of the red upon his paddle. The constant use of that paddle in the water, for fifteen days, did not efface the color. This was a favorite resort of the Indians to obtain materials for painting their persons.

They now entered the region of that terrible pest, the mosquito. Elephants, lions, tigers, can be exterminated. The mosquito bids defiance to all mortal powers. The Indians would build a scaffolding of poles, a mere grate-work, which would give free passage to smoke. A few pieces of bark, overhead, sheltered them from the rain, and the excessive heat of the sun. Upon these poles they slept, kindling smouldering fires beneath. They could better endure the suffocating fumes which thus enveloped them and drove away their despicable tormenters, than bear the poison of their stings. The voyagers were greatly annoyed by these insects.

As they were thus swept down the infinite windings of the stream, day after day, mostly at the will of the current, they perceived one morning, much to their surprise, a small band of Indians on the shore, armed with guns. The savages seemed very much at their ease, and waited the approach of the canoes. Father Hennepin stood up and waved toward them his peace calumet, with its imposing decoration of feathers. His companions held their muskets in readiness to repel any assault. Drawing near the shore, the father addressed them in the Huron language. They did not understand him, but made friendly signs for the party to land. The Indians led the Frenchmen into their wigwams and feasted them upon buffalo steaks, with bear's fat, and some very delicious wild plums.

It appeared that these Indians were a band of warriors, probably from the Tuscarora nation. They had seen the Spaniards, on the Florida coast, and had purchased of them guns, axes, and knives. They kept their powder in strong glass bottles. From them they learned that a ten days' voyage down the rapid current of the Mississippi would bring them to the ocean. The indefatigable missionary endeavored to give them some idea of God, and of salvation through Jesus Christ, who came to seek and save the lost.

And now, with renewed courage, our adventurers entered their canoes and resumed their paddles. The prairies, which had so long delighted their eyes, gradually disappeared, and the dense forest lined both sides of the stream. It was very evident, however, that upon the other side of the forest-crowned eminences, the prairies continued to extend in all their sublimity and beauty; for they often heard the bellowing, as the roar of distant thunders, from thousands of wild cattle roving the plains.

They had now descended to nearly the thirty-third degree of north latitude, when they came to a large Indian village, situated upon a plain raised but a few feet above the level of the water. These Indians had undoubtedly received some great outrage from the Spaniards; for no sooner did they catch a sight of the Europeans than they were thrown into great commotion, and all their warriors rallied for battle. They were evidently aware that a few men, armed with the dreadful musket, might overpower a large number who wielded only the Indian weapons of warfare.

These warriors were armed with bows and arrows, javelins, and war clubs. They seemed to know that the invisible bullet could strike with death far beyond the reach of any of their missiles. They moved therefore with great caution. In those southern latitudes the birch tree, from whose bark the canoes of the northern Indians were made, did not thrive.

Their boats were made of large logs, hollowed out and neatly shaped. They were often ornamented with infinite labor. Some of the warriors prepared to overwhelm the strangers with a shower of arrows from the land. Others embarked in their larger boats to ascend the river, and others to descend, so as to cut off all possibility of retreat.

As the voyagers drew near the shore, Father Marquette stood up in his canoe, though exposed to imminent danger of being pierced by their arrows, and earnestly waved the calumet of peace, at the same time, as he writes, imploring the aid of "our patroness and guide, the Blessed Virgin Immaculate. And indeed," he continues, "we needed her aid, for we heard, from afar, the Indians exciting one another to the combat by continual yells."

In the terror and tumult of the moment the calumet had not been seen. But as soon as some of the chiefs caught sight of it, they rushed into the water, threw their bows and arrows into the canoes, which they seized and brought to the shore. Father Marquette and M. Joliet were so familiar with the customs of the Indians that they understood this to be a friendly movement, and they no longer felt any great anxiety; though they were aware that, through some sudden outbreak of the savage sense of revenge, they might lose their lives. The good father addressed them in six Indian languages, none of which they understood. At last an old man came forward, who spoke a little Illinois.

Very friendly relations were soon established. They made the Indians several valuable presents, and informed them of their desire to find the way to the ocean. "They perfectly understood our meaning," writes Father Marquette, "but I know not whether they understood what I told them of God, and the things which concerned their salvation. It is a seed cast in the earth, which will bear its fruit in season."

The Indians, in return, presented them with corn pounded into meal, and some fishes. They said that, at some distance farther down the river, there was a large village called Akamsea; that there they could learn all they wished to know respecting the course and the out-flow of the Father of Waters. The voyagers slept in the wigwams of the Indians during the night, though the father confesses that it was not without some uneasiness. The Akamsea, to which the Indians referred, was what we now call Arkansas.

It is supposed that this village was near the Indian village of Guachoya, where the unhappy De Soto, whose romantic history we have given in a previous volume of this series, breathed his last, one hundred and fifty years before. In the narrative which has descended to us of that ill-fated and cruel expedition the historian writes:

"The same day, July 2, 1543, that we left Aminoya, we passed by Guachoya, where the Indians tarried for us in their canoes."

It was at Aminoya that De Moscoso, who succeeded De Soto, built his little fleet of seven strong barges, with which the Spaniards descended, in a voyage of sixteen days, to the mouth of the river. The Spaniards were as ignorant of the sources of the mighty river upon which they were sailing, as were the French of the termination of the majestic flood, which they had discovered nearly two thousand miles, far away amidst the lakes and prairies of the north.

The next morning, at an early hour, the Frenchmen resumed their voyage. A party of ten Indians accompanied them, leading the way in one of their large boats. The old man, who understood a little of the Illinois language, also went with them as an interpreter. When they had descended the river nearly thirty miles, and were within about a mile and a half of the Arkansas village, they saw two boats, crowded with warriors, push out from the shore, and advancing to meet them. The keen eyes of the savages had probably discerned the Indian boat which led the frail canoes of the Frenchmen. They knew that persons thus approaching could come with no hostile attempt.

The chief of this party, distinguished by his gorgeous dress, stood up in his boat, and, waving the plumed calumet, sung, in a very plaintive but agreeable tone, some Indian ode of welcome. He came with smiles and friendly signs alongside of the two birch canoes which kept close together. First, having taken a few whiffs from the pipe, he presented it to them to smoke. Then, having given them some bread, made of Indian meal, he made signs for them to follow him to the shore.

The chief had a large scaffolding, such as we have before described, as a protection from the mosquitoes. It also afforded a cool shelter from the rays of an almost tropical sun. The ground floor was carpeted with very fine rush mats. In the centre of this spacious awning, the Frenchmen were seated, as in the post of honor. The head chief, with his

subordinates, surrounded them. Then the encircling warriors, several hundred in number, took their seats. A motley but perfectly orderly crowd of men, women, and children gathered around as witnesses of the scene.

Fortunately there was a young warrior there who had travelled, and who was much more familiar with the Illinois language than the old man who had accompanied the voyagers as interpreter.

"Through him," says the faithful missionary, "I first spoke to the assembly by the ordinary presents. They admired what I told them of God, and the mysteries of our holy faith, and showed a great desire to keep me with them to instruct them."

In answer to inquiries in reference to the sea, they said that it could be easily reached, in their canoes, in ten days. They, however, stated that they knew but little about the nations who inhabited the lower part of the river, because they were their enemies. These Indians had hatchets, knives, and beads. This proved that, in some way, they had held intercourse with Europeans. Upon being consulted on this question, it appeared that they had obtained them through the Spaniards in Florida and Mexico. They warned the voyagers not to go any farther down the river, as they would certainly be attacked and destroyed by the war parties of these hostile bands.

While this conference was going on, which continued for several hours, the Indians were continually presenting their guests with plates of food, which consisted principally of meal-pudding, roast corn, and dogs' flesh. The Indians were very courteous. But it was not a powerful or warlike tribe. They often had but a meagre supply of food, as the ferocity of their surrounding enemies prevented them from wandering far in pursuit of game.

Their main reliance was upon corn. They sowed it at all seasons, raising three crops a year. While some fields were just sprouting, others were in the soft and milky state suitable for roasting, and other fields were waving with the ripe and golden harvest. These southern tribes were generally much more advanced in the arts than those farther north. They manufactured many quite admirable articles of pottery for household use. It is said that some of them were hardly inferior in form and finish to the exquisite vases found in Herculaneum and Pompeii.

Still they were in many respects degraded savages, of loathsome habits, but little elevated above the brutes. Many of the men wandered about without any clothing. The women were not regarded with any honor. They were beasts of burden, dressed in wretched skins, without any ornaments. Their wigwams were long and wide, made of bark, with a single central entrance. Almost like the cattle, they slept together at the two extremities, upon mat-covered elevations, raised about two feet from the ground. From the description of Father Marquette, we should infer that, in this melancholy village, the chiefs alone enjoyed the luxury of sleeping upon poles enveloped with suffocating smoke to drive away the mosquitoes.

"We ate no fruit there," writes Marquette, "but watermelons. If they knew how to cultivate their grounds they might have plenty of all kinds."

In the evening M. Joliet and Father Marquette held a conference in reference to their future course. They had ascertained that they were at 33° 40' north latitude. The basin of the Gulf of Mexico was at 31° 40'. Though the Indians had said that they could reach the sea in ten days, it was manifest that they could easily accomplish the distance in four or five. The question was consequently settled that the Mississippi ran into the Gulf of Mexico. To decide this point was the great object of their voyage. Spanish outrages had exasperated all the Indians along the southern coast. The voyagers could not prosecute their enterprise any farther, but at the imminent peril of their lives. Should they thus perish, the result of their discoveries would, for a long time, be lost to the world.

They feared the Spaniards even more than they did the savages. The Spaniards, jealous of the power of France, would certainly hold them as prisoners, if they could take them, and would not improbably put them to death to prevent the fact of their having descended the whole course of the Mississippi from being known. They therefore wisely determined to retrace their steps with all energy. On the 17th of July they left the village of Akamsea, near the mouth of the Arkansas River, to stem the strong current of the Mississippi on their return. At high-water the vast flood, a mile in width, rushed along at the rate of five or six miles an hour. They found it very difficult to force their way against this current. We have no particular account of the incidents of their long and laborious return voyage. When they had reached the latitude of thirty-eighth degree north, they came to the mouth of the Illinois River. The Indians informed them that this would be a

shorter route to Lake Michigan than to go up the Mississippi still farther to the Wisconsin River. They therefore entered this stream, which takes its rise within six miles of the lake. In the glowing account which Father Marquette gives of this river, he writes:

"We had seen nothing like this river for the fertility of the land, its prairies, woods, wild cattle, stags, deer, wild-cats, bustards, swans, ducks, parrots, and even beavers. It has many little lakes and tributary rivers. The stream on which we sailed is broad, deep, and gentle, for sixty-five leagues. During the spring, and part of the summer, when the rivers are full, the portage is only a mile and a half in length."

They ascended the Illinois until, by a short portage, they could transport their canoes across the prairie to the Chicago River. Descending this stream to its mouth, where the thronged city of Chicago now stands, but which was then only a dreary expanse of marshy prairie, they paddled up the western coast of Lake Michigan until they reached the mission at Green Bay, about the middle of September. About two months were spent in the toilsome voyage from Arkansas.

General Wool, Inspector-General of the army of the United States, has made, from a personal acquaintance with the route, the following estimate of the distances of the several stages of this eventful journey:

From Green Bay up Fox River to the portage	175	miles
From the portage down the Wisconsin to the Mississippi	175	"
From the mouth of the Wisconsin to the mouth of the Arkansas	1087	"
From the Arkansas to the Illinois River	547	"
From the mouth of the Illinois to Chicago	305	"
From Chicago to Green Bay, by the lake shore	<u>260</u>	"
Total	2,549	

The accompanying fac-simile of a map attached to Marquette's Journal, reduced from the original, and which we take from Mr. Sparks's brief but admirable sketch of Marquette's Life, will give the reader a very clear idea of the route he pursued. The dotted line from the Mississippi to the Illinois, marked "Chemin du retour," is evidently a mistake, added by some other hand. It is clear, from the narrative, that the voyagers returned up the Illinois River.

Father Marquette, who was never known to utter a murmuring word, and who was serene and cheerful amidst the sorest trials, was so utterly exhausted by the toils of the expedition that he could proceed no farther than Green Bay. Here M. Joliet separated from him and continued his route, in a birch canoe, along the vast expanse of Huron, Erie, and Ontario, and down the St. Lawrence to Montreal. In descending the rapids of the river his canoe was over-set and all his papers lost, he narrowly escaping with his life. He subsequently dictated, from memory, a few pages of the incidents of the voyage; but the manuscript of Father Marquette alone remained to tell the wondrous story. This was sent to France, and there published.

Even Marquette had no conception of the true grandeur of that valley he had entered, extending from the Alleghany ridges to the Rocky Mountains. Still, when the tidings of his wonderful discoveries reached Quebec, the exciting intelligence was received with the ringing of bells, with salvos of artillery, and, most prominent and important of all, by nearly the whole population, led by the clergy and other dignitaries of the place, going in procession to the cathedral where the Te Deum was sung in thanksgiving to God.

CHAPTER III.

Marquette's Last Voyage, and Death.

The Departure from Green Bay. Navigating the Lake in a canoe. Storms of rain and snow. Night Encampments. Ascending the Chicago River. A Winter with the Savages. Journey to the Kankakee. The Great Council on the Prairie. Interesting Incidents. The Escort of Savages. The Death Scene. Sublime Funeral Solemnities.

Father Marquette spent the winter and the whole summer of 1674 at Green Bay, actively engaged in the services of the mission, though in a very feeble state of health. It is said that he was remarkably genial and companionable, fond of pleasantries, ever greeting others with pleasant words and benignant smiles. He had promised the Illinois Indians that he would return to them, to teach them the religion of peace and goodwill brought to the world by the Son of God.

His health being somewhat recruited, he set out, by direction of his superiors, with two boatmen, Pierre and Jacques, to establish a mission among these Indians, who were anxiously awaiting his arrival. The mission at Green Bay was at the southern extremity of that inland sea. Taking their canoe and all their effects upon their shoulders, they crossed the peninsula, which separated the bay from the lake, through an Indian trail about thirty miles in length. They then launched their canoe upon the broad surface of Lake Michigan. The cold gales of November had now begun to plough the surface of this inland sea. Their progress was very slow. Often the billows were such that the canoe could not ride safely over them. Then they landed, and, in the chill November breezes, trudged along the shore, bearing all their effects upon their shoulders!

Ice formed upon the margin of the water, and several snow-storms impeded their march, adding greatly to their discomfort. But not a repining word escaped the lips of Father Marquette. It was but a dismal shelter they could rear, for the night, on the bleak shore. Through this exposure his health began rapidly to fail. It took them nearly four weeks to reach the mouth of the Chicago River. They ascended the river several leagues, until they came to a small cluster of Indian wigwams. The savages were poor, but few in number, and their abodes comfortless. But Père Marquette was so sick that they could go no farther. These Indians were of the Miami tribe.

Here the voyagers built a small log-cabin, and, destitute of what many would deem the absolute necessities of life, passed the remaining weeks of the dreary winter. One would suppose that the lone missionary must at times have contrasted painfully his then situation, with the luxuries he had enjoyed in the ancestral castle in which he was cradled. A few wretched wigwams were scattered over the snow-whitened plains, where poverty, destitution, and repulsive social habits reigned, such as is perhaps never witnessed in civilized life.

His home was but a cabin of logs, with the interstices stuffed with moss. The roof was covered with bark. The window was merely a hole cut through the logs. In storms a piece of cloth hung over it, which partially kept out wind and rain. The fireplace was one corner of the room, with a hole in the roof through which the smoke ascended. Often the state of the atmosphere was such that the cabin was filled with smothering smoke. A few mats, woven coarsely from bulrushes, covered a portion of the earth floor. A mat was his bed. A log, covered with a mat, was his chair; his food was pounded corn, and fishes and flesh of animals, broiled on the coals; his companions, savages. Such was the home which this noble man had cheerfully accepted in exchange for the baronial splendors of his ancestors. It was two hundred years ago. Father Marquette has received his rewards. His earthly labors and sacrifices were for but about twenty years. For two hundred years he has occupied a mansion, which God reared for him in heaven. There he is now, with his crown, his robe, and his harp, with angel companionship. And there he is to dwell forever.

There is something exceedingly beautiful in the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ. God, in the person of his Son, came to earth and suffered and died to make atonement for human sin. All who will abandon sin, and try to live doing nothing wrong, and endeavoring to do everything that is right, He will forgive, and make forever happy in heaven.

This is the Gospel; the Good News. God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The loitering Indians, ignorant, degraded, wicked, gathered in constant groups around the fire, in the cabin of the sick Christian teacher. And when he told them of that happy world where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, and where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, the truth came home to their hearts, and became its own witness.

And yet here, as elsewhere, the Gospel of Jesus found its bitter antagonists. With the Indians, as in every city and town in Christendom, there were those who did not wish to be holy. They hated a Gospel which demanded the abandonment of sin. These men, with bloody tomahawks and gory scalping knives, and who, from infancy, had been practising the hideous war-whoop; who consider the glory of their manhood to depend upon the number of enemies they had slain, and whose greatest delight consisted in listening to the shrieks, and witnessing the convulsions of their agonized victims at the stake, denounced the Christian teacher, as the Jews denounced the Son of God, crying out "Crucify him."

Every day Father Marquette was sinking in languor, which both he and his companions supposed to be a monition of speedily approaching death. And yet he was a cheerful and happy man. All incomers at his cabin were greeted with smiles. Death had no terror. Brighter and brighter grew the path, as he drew nearer to the celestial city. His log-cabin was continually crowded with those who sought instruction. The two humble companions who attended him were devout men, though uneducated, and in life's lowly station. They joined heartily in the devotions of the cabin. The voices of the three were joined in matins and vespers, and floated sweetly over those dreary wastes, where such heavenly strains had never been heard before.

Louis XIV. was then upon the throne of France. He was one of the greatest, most powerful, most opulent of all earthly monarchs. The wealth and the genius of earth could construct nothing more grand than his palaces at Marly and Versailles. His banqueting-hall was unsurpassed by any other hall ever reared upon this globe. His chambers, his saloons, his galleries, are still visited by astonished and admiring thousands. And yet no one, familiar with his life, will deny that Father Marquette, in his log-cabin, surrounded by Indian wigwams, probably passed a happier winter than did Louis XIV., amidst the most dazzling splendors which ever surrounded a mortal.

Christmas came. It was made by the three a season of special devotion, that God would so reinvigorate Father Marquette, as to enable him to fulfil his promise, and visit the Illinois Indians, and teach them the Gospel. These devotions were called a Novena, which was a nine days' prayer-meeting. Their prayers were heard. Contrary to all reasonable expectation, he so far regained his strength as to be able, on the 29th of March, to resume his journey. The chill winds of departing winter still swept the plains. Storms of sleet often beat upon them. The ground, alternately thawing and freezing, was frequently whitened with snow. And still these heroic men, with chivalry never surpassed in the annals of knighthood, pressed on. Their journey was slow. Sometimes they floated upon the stream. Again they followed the Indian trail through forest and prairie. After traversing a route about a hundred and fifty miles in length, they reached, on the 8th of April, the Kankakee River, an important tributary of the Illinois. At this point, which is now in the present county of Kankakee, and near where the village of Rockport stands, the Illinois Indians had their large and populous village.

The missionary was received, we are told, as an angel from heaven. He assembled all the chiefs of the tribe, with the renowned warriors, that with imposing ceremonies he might announce to them the object of his coming, and impress them with the momentous importance of his message. There was no wigwam sufficiently capacious to accommodate such a multitude as the occasion would assemble.

Near the village there was a smooth, verdant, beautiful prairie, richly carpeted with the velvet green of early spring. On a mild and sunny morning a wonderful crowd of savages—men, women, and children—were seen crowding to the appointed station. The chiefs were dressed in truly gorgeous habiliments, of plumes, skins richly embroidered and fringed, and brilliantly colored. Their robes were more showy than any court-dress ever witnessed at Windsor Castle or the Tuileries. The warriors, with proud demeanor and stately tread, marched along, with quivers of arrows at their backs, and bows in their hands. Tomahawks and scalping knives were ostentatiously displayed, and the scalps of enemies dangled at their javelin points, as badges of their nobility. Of these they were more proud than were ever English, French, or Spanish grandees of the decoration of stars or garters. The women and the dogs came next. They were alike regarded as necessary drudges to bear burdens, and to be fed with the refuse which their masters left. Then came the boys and girls, many of them half naked, shouting, laughing, racing, engaging in all the uncouth merriment of a savage gala day.

The spot selected for the council was decorated according to the most approved fashion of the people and their times. The ground was covered with mats, made of the skins of bears and other animals. Posts were planted, draped and festooned with green boughs. Upon each of the four sides of the square, the good father, who had ever been taught to

regard with the utmost veneration the Mother of Jesus, hung a picture of the Blessed Virgin, that all might gaze upon her sad yet beautiful features.

Father Marquette took his seat upon a mat, in the centre of the enclosure. Then the chiefs, and the veteran warriors, who in many a bloody foray had won renown, took their seats around him. Silently and with the dignity becoming great men, they assumed their positions. The young men, who had not yet signalized themselves, and who were ever eager to go upon the war-path, that they might return with their trophies of gory scalps, to receive the applause of the nation as braves, came next.

In respect to the war spirit, which is one of the most direful traits of our fallen race, there is but little difference between the civilized and uncivilized man. I was once breakfasting with one of the most distinguished officers of a European army. To my question whether the officers generally wished for peace or war, he replied:

"War, of course. In times of peace promotion comes slowly. But upon the battle field promotions are very rapidly made."

The young warriors counted about fifteen hundred. Outside of their circle, the women and the children were clustered. It was estimated that the whole population of the village amounted to about three thousand.

The Illinois Indians were at war with the Miamis, among whom Father Marquette had passed the winter. The Illinois chiefs had obtained of the traders a few guns. Immediately upon Marquette reaching their village, they hastened to entreat of him powder and ball, that they might fit out an expedition against their foes. Father Marquette rose at the council, and after presenting the chiefs with some valuable gifts, in token of the sincerity of his desire to be their friend and do them good, addressed them in substance as follows:

"I have not brought you any powder or balls. I do not wish you to fight your brethren the Miamis. You are all the children of the same Father. You should love one another. I have come to tell you of God, and to teach you to pray. God, the Great Spirit, came to the world, and became a man, whose name was Jesus. He died upon the cross to atone for the sins of all men. And now, if you will cease to sin; if you will love your Father, the Great Spirit, pray to Him and do everything in your power to please Him, He will bless you, and when you die will take you to dwell with Him and will make you happy forever."

Such was, in general, the address of Father Marquette. Such was ever, in substance, his teaching. Jesus the Christ, and Him crucified, was his constant theme. Two or three days were spent in similar exercises. The Indians crowded around the father constantly. They listened to his teachings with respectful and apparently with even joyful attention. He was pale and emaciate. Even the Indian could perceive, from his feeble voice and emaciate steps, that he was not far from the grave. On Easter Sunday, the faithful missionary, with solemn and imposing ceremonies, took, if we may so speak, spiritual possession of the land, in the name of Jesus Christ.

The rapidly failing health of the missionary, rendered it expedient for him to endeavor to return to his friends at Green Bay. The poor Indians really mourned at the idea of his departure. Time hung heavily upon their hands. They had but little to think of, and but little to do. Loitering indolently around, from morning till night, it was a great source of enjoyment to them, to crowd the large wigwam they had built for the father, to listen to his words, to question him, and to witness the ceremonies with which he was accustomed to conduct his devotions. They were therefore much troubled at the thought of his departure, and were but partially comforted by his repeated assurances that he would either soon return again, or send some one else to continue the mission which he had thus commenced.

Slowly and feebly he set out on his long journey back to Green Bay. It was ninety miles from Kankakee to the southern extremity of Lake Michigan. They could paddle in canoes over a portion of the route. But there were also weary miles of portage which they had to pass over, through Indian trails, carrying their canoe, and all their effects, upon their backs. It was a severe undertaking for a sick man, who was so feeble that even if a horse could have been provided for him to ride, he could scarcely have held himself upon the saddle.

A large party of the Indians accompanied the father, on this weary journey to the lake. They administered to his wants with the tenderest care, relieving him of every burden, and aiding him over the rough ways. At the night encampments,

they provided for him a shelter, kindled his fire, cooked his food, and spread for him a couch of leaves and twigs. When they reached a small stream, which ran into the lake, they placed him as comfortably as possible in his canoe, and intrusting him to the care of his two faithful boatmen, Jacques and Pierre, bade him an affectionate farewell.

The savages, after these deeds of almost Christian kindness, returned to their wigwams, to sharpen the edges of their tomahawks, the points of their javelins, the barbs of their arrows; and were soon, with hideous yells, rushing upon their foes the Miamis, burning, killing, scalping—performing deeds of cruelty which ought to cause even demons to blush.

Father Marquette was too weak to wield the paddle. He reclined in the bottom of the canoe, with his head slightly elevated, so that he could see all the beauties of the scenery through which they were passing. His prayer-book was in his hand; his talk was of heaven; he was cheerful and happy. His companions have testified to the wonderful amiability, gentleness, and joy he maintained. He told them plainly that he should die upon the voyage, but encouraged them to bear courageously all the hardships they were to encounter on the way, assuring that the Lord would not forsake them.

As his attendants plied their paddles he read prayers to them, sang sweet hymns of devotion, and in many fervent utterances commended them and himself to God. He was in no pain. His eye sparkled with animation. His soul was triumphant. It may be doubted whether, on the broad continent of North America, there were, in these hours, an individual to be found more happy than he.

It was one of the mornings of lovely May, when this frail birch canoe, with its three inmates, emerging from a small stream, entered upon the ocean-like expanse of Lake Michigan. On the north and the east the majestic inland sea spread out to the horizon, with no bounds but the sky. For some unexplained reason they decided to take the eastern shore of the lake, on their return voyage, though their outward voyage had been by the western shore. They had still a journey of three hundred miles before them.

Father Marquette was so weak that he could no longer help himself. He could neither move nor stand, and had to be carried from the canoe to the shore like an infant. At each encampment the attendants would draw the canoe, with Father Marquette in it, gently upon the beach. They would then hastily rear a shelter, spread for him a couch of the long and withered herbage, and lay him tenderly upon it. The only food they could prepare for the fainting invalid, was corn pounded into coarse meal, mixed with water, and baked in the ashes, with perhaps a slice of game broiled upon the coals.

Thus they moved along, day after day, expecting almost every hour that the death summons would come. On Friday evening, the 27th of May, 1675, he told them, with a countenance radiant with joy, that on the morrow he should take his departure for his heavenly home.

He gave them minute instructions respecting the place he wished to be selected for his burial; directed how to arrange his hands and feet, and how to wrap him in his robes, for he could have no coffin. While one was to read the burial service the other was gently to toll the small chapel bell which he bore with him on his mission. The canoe was gliding along near the shore, as the father gave these instructions, reclining upon his mat. The setting sun was sinking apparently into the shoreless waters of the lake, in the west. They were all examining the land, the boatmen searching for a suitable spot for their night's encampment, and the father looking for a good place for his dying bed and his burial.

They came to the mouth of a small, pleasant river, which presented a sheltered cove for their canoe. There was an eminence near by, crowned by a beautiful grove, and commanding a wide prospect of the lake and of the land. It had a sunny exposure, drained of moisture, and composed of just such soil as seems suitable for a grave. Father Marquette pointed to the eminence in the lone, silent, solitary wilderness, and said, "There is the spot for my last repose."

The boatmen ran their canoe up the mouth of the river, a few rods, and landed. Hastily they threw up a frail camp, kindled a fire, spread down a mat for a couch, and placed their revered spiritual father upon it. He was then left entirely alone, with his God, while his companions were engaged in unloading the canoe. They were silent and sad, for they could not but perceive that the dying hour was at hand.

When they returned, Father Marquette gave them his last instructions. "I thank you, my dear companions," he said, "for all the love and tenderness you have shown me during this voyage. I beg you to pardon me for the trouble I have given

you. Will you also say to all my fathers and brethren in the Ottawa mission that I implore their forgiveness for my imperfections. I am now very near my home. But I shall not forget you in heaven. You are very weary with the toils of the day. I shall still live probably for several hours. I wish you would retire and take that rest which you so greatly need. I will call you as soon as the last moments arrive."

They left the cabin with stricken hearts and weeping eyes. The dying Christian was left alone with his God. Who can imagine the peace and joy which must then have filled his heart and suffused his eyes. The victory was won. Death was conquered. The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof were waiting at the door of the humble cabin, to transport the victor, through the pathways of the stars, to his throne and his crown. Glorious death! Blissful journey!

Three hours passed away, and his feeble voice was heard calling his companions to his side. He threw his arms around the neck of each one, and drawing him gently down imprinted a kiss upon each cheek. Then, taking the crucifix, which he ever wore around his neck, he placed it in the hands of one of them, requesting him to hold that emblem of the atoning sacrifice of his Saviour before his eyes until the last moment. Then, inspired with the faith of Stephen the Martyr, clasping his hands and fixing his eyes upon this memorial of God manifest in the flesh, in fervent prayer he said:

"O Lord God, I thank Thee for the boundless grace Thou hast conferred upon me in permitting me to die in the service of Jesus Christ Thy Son. O God, I thank Thee, that I have been His missionary; and that I am permitted to die, in a cabin, in the depths of the forest, and far removed from all human aid."

There were a few moments of perfect silence. No sound fell upon the ear but the gentle breathing of the dying man. He was then heard feebly to say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Again he said, in accordance with the faith which he had received from childhood, "Mary! Mother of Jesus my Lord, remember me."

Suddenly he raised his eyes from the crucifix and looked upward, as if a vision of wonderful glory was bursting upon his entranced view. His countenance shone radiant with joy. A sweet smile was upon his lips. Without a struggle, without a sigh, his soul took its flight to its home in heaven. He had fallen asleep.

"Asleep in Jesus! Far from thee,
Thy kindred and their graves may be.
But thine is still a blessed sleep,
From which none ever wake to weep."

His two bereaved companions wept bitterly. They laid out the body as directed; wrapped it in the threadbare garments it so long had worn, and having dug the grave, placed the revered remains within it. While one devotedly covered the body with its mother earth, the other tolled the little bell which had so often summoned them to prayer. They remained upon the spot until the next day. A large cross was made, and planted firmly in the ground, in a position which would attract the attention of all passing along the shore of the lake. The two faithful boatmen, Jacques and Pierre, then, after kneeling upon the grave in fervent prayer, returned to their canoe and continued the long journey to Green Bay. They reached the mission in safety, with their sad tidings.

Father Marquette died at the early age of thirty-eight.

He had spent twenty-one years an earnest, self-denying minister of Jesus Christ. Twelve of these were in France. Nine were devoted to the savages of the New World. At the early age of nine years, he became an earnest Christian. Every Saturday was, with this wonderful child, a day of fasting and prayer.

There were quite a number of Christian Indians at the Mackinaw mission. They had long known Father Marquette, and revered and loved him. A band of these Indians were, some months after this, on the shores of Lake Michigan, upon a hunting excursion. They sought out the grave of Father Marquette. They took up the remains, carefully enclosed them in a box of birch bark, placed them in one of their canoes, and paddled them, three hundred miles, to the mission of St. Ignatius.

A convoy of canoes, thirty in number, in single file, formed this wonderful funeral procession. It is doubtful whether such a scene was ever before witnessed on this globe. For more than ten days this band of Indian hunters, in their picturesque

costume, silently and solemnly paddled along the shores of the lonely lake, that the remains of their beloved pastor might repose where they could visit the spot, and honor them with their testimonials of gratitude.

As they approached the shore, where the mission was established, with its cross-surmounted chapel, surrounded with Indian wigwams, a courier was sent forward rapidly, in a canoe, to announce the arrival of the cortége. The whole community promptly gathered upon the beach. A funeral procession was formed, led by Fathers Nouvel and Pierson, who were Superiors of the two missions, one to the Ottawas, and one to the Hurons, which were located side by side. Interrogations were first made to verify the fact, that the body they bore was really that of Father Marquette.

The two ecclesiastics then chanted the sublime anthem,

"Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord.
Lord, hear my voice; let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications."

The canoes were still on the water, while quite a throng of the Indians crowded the shore. With the customary religious ceremonies, the body was conveyed to the chapel. It remained there for a day, covered with a pall. On the morning of the next day, which was the ninth of June, the remains were deposited in a grave, in the middle of the log chapel, which we infer had no floor but the earth; there to repose until the trump of the archangel shall sound, when all who are in their graves shall come forth.

CHAPTER IV.

Life upon the St. Lawrence and the Lakes Two Hundred Years Ago.

Birth of La Salle. His Parentage and Education. Emigrates to America. Enterprising Spirit. Grandeur of his Conceptions. Visits the Court of France. Preparations for an Exploring Voyage. Adventures of the River and Lake. Awful Scene of Indian Torture. Traffic with the Indians. The Ship-yard at Lake Erie.

About two hundred years ago, a young man, by the name of Robert de la Salle, crossed the Atlantic to seek his fortune in the wilds of Canada. He was born on the 22d of November, 1643, in the city of Rouen, the ancient capital of Normandy,^[1] France. He was the child of one of the most distinguished families, and enjoyed all the advantages of social and educational culture which the refinement and scholarship of those times could confer. He was by nature a thoughtful, pensive young man, whose soul was profoundly moved by the unsearchable mystery of this our earthly being. In very early life he found, in the religion of Jesus, a partial solution of the sublime drama of conflict, sin, and sorrow which is being enacted on this globe, and which has no solution whatever but in the revelations of the Bible.

Born almost beneath the shadow of the great cathedral of Rouen, and of an ancestry which from time immemorial had been the children of the Catholic Church, and instructed from infancy by revered ecclesiastics of that communion he almost as a matter of necessity accepted Christianity as presented to him in the ritual of the Church of Rome. Nature had endowed him with a restless, enterprising spirit, which led him eagerly to plunge into those wild and perilous adventures from which most persons would have turned with dismay.

La Salle received an accomplished education in one of the best seminaries in Europe. Upon graduating, he received from the professors a testimonial of his high intellectual attainments and his unblemished moral character. About the year 1669 he sailed from France for Canada. His object probably was to accumulate a fortune by the barter of European commodities for the furs and skins obtained by the Indians. He pushed forward to the frontiers, established trading houses, and in the well-freighted birch canoe, explored remote lakes and rivers.

At that time the whole of the great northwest of this country was an entirely unknown land. No one knew whether the

continent was one thousand or ten thousand miles in breadth. It was the general impression that the waves of the Pacific were dashing against the rocks a few miles west of the chain of great lakes which fringed the southern shores of Canada. La Salle was meditating an expedition up the St. Lawrence, through the majestic chain of lakes to Lake Superior, from the western end of which he confidently expected to find easy communication with the Pacific Ocean. There he would again spread his adventurous sail, having discovered a new route to China and the Indies.

There was grandeur in this conception. It would entirely change the thoroughfare of the world's commerce. It would make the French possessions in the New World valuable beyond conception. This all-important route, between Europe and Asia, would be under the control of the French crown.

M. Frontenac, an ambitious and energetic Frenchman, was then governor-general of Canada. He entered cordially into the plans of La Salle, conferred frequently with him upon the subject, and was sanguine in the expectation that, by this great discovery, his own name would be immortalized, and he would secure the highest applause from the Grande Monarque, Louis XIV.

As early as the year 1660, the Indians had reported, at Quebec, that many leagues west of the great lakes there was a wonderful river, the Great River, the Father of Waters, the most majestic stream in the world, flowing from the unexplored solitudes of the wilderness in the north, far away into the unknown regions of the south.

One day a birch canoe, with a little band of hardy, wayworn voyagers, French and Indians, came paddling down the swift current of the St. Lawrence and ran their boat upon the beach where the little cluster of dwellings stood, called Quebec. They brought the startling intelligence that Father Marquette, a great and good man whom all knew, had discovered the Great River, which the Indians called the Mississippi, and had followed down its majestic current for hundreds of leagues, until he had reached the thirty-third degree of latitude. He had ascertained, beyond all question, that it emptied its flood into the Gulf of Mexico. This important discovery, it was claimed, gave to the French, according to the received law of nations, the whole valley of the Mississippi and its tributaries, however great that valley might prove to be.

This intelligence was received with every demonstration of public rejoicing. It gave, as it was supposed, to France a new world of boundless resources. The garrison band played its most exultant airs. Salvos of artillery echoed along the majestic cliffs. There was feasting, dancing, and singing, and the spacious church was thronged with worshippers praising God with the national anthems of *Te Deum*.

This great event gave a new impulse and a new direction to the ambition of La Salle. He at once conceived the idea of establishing a series of military and trading posts along the whole length of the lakes, and upon all the important points of the great river and its tributaries. But even then he was but little aware how magnificent was the realm which these tributaries watered. He would thus, however, in the name of the King of France, take military possession of the whole territory.

Governor Frontenac gave his most cordial approval to the gigantic plan. His own mind was greatly excited by the thought of the grandeur of a chain of forts extending from the mouth of the St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico. He urged La Salle to go immediately to France, seek an audience with the king, lay the plan before him, and seek the royal patronage. The renowned Colbert was then minister of finance and marine. The governor furnished La Salle with letters to the minister which would secure for him a respectful reception.

La Salle, a penniless adventurer, recrossed the ocean. It was the year 1675. His plan at once attracted attention, and he was cordially received by both minister and king. The courtiers rallied around him with much enthusiasm. The king, having honored him with the title of chevalier, authorized him to rebuild, on the shores of Lake Ontario, Fort Frontenac, which was falling to decay, and invested him with the office of seignory or governorship of the fort and its adjacent territory.

The sublime plan which La Salle thus proposed, could only be carried into execution by the continuous labors of many years. La Salle returned to Canada full of bright dreams for the future. For more than two years he was employed in rearing the walls of Fort Frontenac and improving the region around. This important post occupied a commanding

position near the eastern extremity of Lake Ontario.

At the close of the year 1677 he again returned to France, to report the progress he had made. His reception by the court was even more cordial than before, and he received from the king new honors and more extended privileges. On the 14th of July, 1678, he sailed from Rochelle for Quebec. He took with him an Italian gentleman, by the name of Tonti, as his lieutenant, and a party of thirty men. After a two months' voyage, they landed at Quebec on the 15th of September. Then, paddling up the swift current of the St. Lawrence, they passed the little cluster of log-cabins surrounded with Indian wigwams at Montreal, and after a voyage of between three and four hundred miles reached Fort Frontenac.

This was indeed a post far away in the wilderness. It was strongly built, with four bastions on the northern side of the entrance to the lake, at the head of a snug forest-fringed bay, where quite a fleet of small vessels could be sheltered from the winds.

It was a very curious spectacle which was then witnessed upon this remote frontier of civilization. The unbroken wilderness, where wolves howled and bears roamed, spread in apparently unbroken gloom in all directions. The fort rose in quite massive proportions, enclosing within its palisades a number of cabins, which the garrison occupied, and which were stored with goods suitable for traffic with the natives. There was a small green meadow spread around, which was covered with wigwams of every picturesque variety. Groups of Indians, of various tribes, were moving about. The warriors were painted and plumed, and many of them very gorgeously attired. Women, young and graceful girls, and little children, were clustered around the camp fires, some with busy hands usefully employed; others shouting and sporting in all the varieties of barbaric pastimes.

It was an instructive scene, emblematic of this fallen world. The frowning fort, with its threatening armament, proclaimed that sin had entered the world with its war and blood and misery, making man the direful foe of his brother man. The crystal stream and lake; the azure of the overarching skies; the bright, serene autumnal day; the foliage, the verdure, the picturesque wigwams; the peaceful employments of the women, and the sports and shouts of the merry children, showed that our ruined Eden still retained some of those glories which embellished it before man rebelled against his Maker.

La Salle, on his return from Europe, in the autumn of 1678, had brought with him a select company of sailors, carpenters, and other mechanics. At Quebec a number of Canadian boatmen joined him. These men he sent forward to Fort Frontenac, which was now virtually his castle, with the surrounding territory his estate. The boats were heavily laden with all articles for trading with the Indians, and with all the essentials for building and rigging vessels. He soon followed them, in an open birch canoe, with one or two companions. It was a long and perilous river voyage, paddling up the swift current of the St. Lawrence between its thousand islands, struggling against its rapids, and seeking for the eddies along its lonely forest-fringed shores. Several times they came near being wrecked, with inevitable death.

At the close of the day it was always necessary to run the canoe ashore, to land and encamp. But with hardy men, fond of adventure, these were pleasures rather than pains. With their axes, in half an hour they could construct a sheltering camp. A brilliant fire would dispel all gloom, with its wide-spreading illumination. The fragrant twigs of the hemlock furnished a soft couch. Here they cooked their suppers, sang their songs, told their stories, and, free from all care, probably experienced at least as much pleasure as is usually found in parlors the most sumptuous.

Indian villages were quite profusely scattered along the banks of this majestic river. The scene was often quite exciting as the canoe of the voyagers approached one of these clusters of picturesque wigwams in the evening twilight. The Indians were fond of the song, and the dance, and the blaze of the bonfire. The whole expanse of river, cliff, and forest, would be lighted up. Shouts of barbaric revelry echoed through the sublime solitudes. And the warrior, the squaw, and the pappoose, flitted about in all the varied employments of savage life.

In these Indian wigwams, at night, the voyagers almost invariably found hospitable refuge. The Indians were generally friendly. The traffic which the French traders introduced was of inestimable value to the poor savages. And even those who were disposed to look with suspicion upon the encroachments of the white men, were overawed by the thunderings and lightnings of their death-dealing muskets. There were fishes of delicious flavor in the stream, and game in great variety upon the banks. These viands, with the food they took with them, furnished breakfasts and suppers which they

deemed even sumptuous.

The fort was reached in safety. On the 18th of November, La Salle sent a small vessel of ten tons burden, with a deck, to go to the farther end of Lake Ontario, a distance of about two hundred miles, and to ascend the Niagara River until the falls were reached. The vessel contained about thirty workmen, with provisions and implements for erecting a fort and building a vessel beyond the falls at the extreme eastern end of Lake Erie. Having ascended the river as far as possible, they were to transport their effects along an Indian trail, in the wilderness, several miles above the falls and the rapids, until they reached comparatively still water at the opening of the lake. Here, in mid-winter, they were to construct their fortified magazine, and build a vessel for their vast inland tour through almost unknown seas, in search of the distant Mississippi.

Even then this continent was so little known that many supposed that the Mississippi emptied into the Pacific Ocean, and that thus the long-sought-for route to China would be found.

Only about ten years before, in the year 1669, La Salle, on an exploring tour with a party of missionaries in birch canoes, had discovered these falls. M. Galinee, in his journal of the expedition, writes:

"We found a river one eighth of a league broad, and extremely rapid, forming the outlet from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario. The depth is extraordinary, for we found close to the shore, fifteen or sixteen fathoms of water. This outlet is forty miles long. It has, from ten to twelve miles above its embouchure into Lake Ontario, one of the finest cataracts in the world. All the Indians say that the river falls from a rock higher than the tallest pines. We heard the roar at the distance of ten or twelve miles. The fall gives such momentum to the water, that its current prevented our ascending, except with great difficulty. The current above the falls is so rapid, that it often sucks in deer and stags, elk and roebuck, endeavoring to cross the river, and overwhelms them in its frightful abyss."

This is the earliest description of the falls on record. At this time nearly the whole of the present State of New York was a dense, unbroken wilderness. It is very evident, that among the Indians there were, as in every community, good men and bad men. But on the whole, the condition of humanity among the savages must have been dreadful. What are we to think of a state of society in which every man's reputation and distinction depended upon the number of human scalps, torn from the slain victims by his own hands, with which he could fringe his garments?

On this tour La Salle visited the Seneca Indians in Western New York, where the beautiful cities of civilization and Christianity now adorn the landscape. Here they witnessed one of the most tragic spectacles of savage life.

Some warriors arrived in one of the villages with a prisoner. He was a finely formed young man, about nineteen years of age, from the Shawnee tribe residing near the Scioto River. They had clothed their victim for the sacrifice. Anxious that he should endure the torture as long as possible, they had treated him tenderly, that his bodily strength might not be weakened. He had been given, according to their custom, to an aged Indian woman, in place of her son who had been killed. It was at her option to adopt him or to cause him to be put to death by torture. She chose the torture.

The young man was taken into a cabin adjoining that which was occupied by La Salle and Galinee. The two Frenchmen visited him in the evening. Three women were wailing the death of their relative who had been killed, and were heaping imprecations upon the victim through whose tortures they hoped to avenge the death of the one who had been slain. The Christians pleaded earnestly for him, and offered large rewards to obtain him as a guide to conduct them to the Ohio. All was in vain.

At the earliest dawn of the next morning, a group came rushing into La Salle's cabin to announce that the torture was about to commence. They went out and found the victim entirely stripped of his clothing, and so bound to a stake that he could move for a distance of two or three feet. The whole band—men, women, and children—were gathered exultingly around, to enjoy the cruel pastime. The poor boy well knew what he had to undergo, for he had probably often assisted in similar scenes.

M. Galinee was slightly acquainted with the Algonquin language; he could hold some conversation with the captive. The

victim, pale and terror-stricken, entreated the Frenchmen to intercede for him, that his execution might be postponed until the next day. Again they renewed their efforts to save the boy. They offered to pay a large amount of their most valuable effects for his ransom. But the Indians shook their heads and said, "It is our custom: he must die."

A large fire had been kindled near by. In it there was a long gun-barrel heated to a red heat. An Indian warrior, a staid, sober man, came forward with much dignity of manner, and taking the red-hot gun-barrel pressed it upon the soles of the victim's feet, and moved it slowly up his legs. The skin and flesh smoked and crackled under the terrible infliction. The agony was such that the poor boy could not refrain from loud shrieks, and he was thrown into the most convulsive contortions.

The savages—the stern men, the women, the girls, the boys—were delighted. As they listened to the shrieks and witnessed the agonizing struggles of their victim, they clapped their hands, and danced and shouted in fiend-like exultation. The heated iron was passed over his whole body, from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head. There was not a spot left which was not blistered and roasted. And still they carefully avoided touching any vital point, that the horrible torture might be continued as long as possible.

For six hours this poor creature endured every variety of agony which diabolical ingenuity could inflict. I will not continue the narration. It is too harrowing to be contemplated. But it is needful to go thus far to show what the Indians were without the Gospel. Galinee writes:

"At length they knocked him down with a stone, and throwing themselves upon him, cut his body in pieces. One carried off his head, another an arm, a third some other member, which they put in the pot to boil for a feast. Many offered some to the Frenchmen, telling them there was nothing in the world better to eat; but no one desired to try the experiment.

"In the evening all assembled in the public place, each with a stick in his hand, with which they began to beat the cabins on all sides, making a very loud noise, to chase away, they said, the soul of the deceased, which might be concealed in some corner to do them injury."

This scene took place in Western New York, a mile and a half west of Boughton Hill, but about two hundred years ago. Surely the religion of Jesus has improved the condition of humanity.

La Salle and Galinee, unable to endure the spectacle, retired, in anguish of spirit, to their cabin. "As I was praying to God," writes Galinee, "and very sad, La Salle came and told me that from the excitement he saw prevailing, he was apprehensive that the Indians might insult us, and that we had better return to the canoes." Hastily they retired.

But let us return from this digression. La Salle joined his companions at the head of Niagara River, on the borders of Lake Erie, on the 29th of January, 1679. The river, above the falls, was a sheet of ice, resembling a plain paved with fine polished marble. While many of his men had been employed building a vessel to be launched upon the lake, others had boldly explored all the surrounding region, purchasing of the Indians furs and skins. The winter was intensely cold, and the snow was deep. There was a small cluster of Indian wigwams on the Niagara River below the Falls.

The Indians, men, women and children, received La Salle and his party even affectionately. They took the strangers into their warm cabins, spread bear-skin couches for them, to sleep with their feet toward the fire, and fed them with their daintiest bits of game. White-fish were taken in great abundance at that place, and were deemed in flavor equal to the golden brook-trout. The floating ice endangered their brigantine. The Indians aided with infinite labor in dragging it to a safe place upon the beach, just below those towering cliffs which fringe so large a portion of this wild river. This spot was near the present site of Queenstown, on the western side of the stream.

All the goods were to be transported through a trail of the forest, encumbered with snow, around the falls, a distance of about twenty miles, on the shoulders of men. The Indians, with fraternal kindness, aided in these herculean labors, and were amply repaid for days of toil, by a knife, a hatchet, or a few trinkets, as valuable to them as are diamonds and pearls to a duchess. La Salle constructed a fortified *dépôt* at this place, to serve as a base for future operations. Here he could store such additional supplies as he might order from Fort Frontenac. Strange as it may seem, it appears that he

could leave priceless treasure in a frail log-hut, thus far away in the wilderness, under the protection of the Indians themselves. And yet these very men and women, had La Salle been captured in battle, would have shouted and leaped for joy in seeing him writhing and shrieking beneath fiend-like tortures. Such is fallen man. He is the ruin of a once noble fabric. But many fragments of his former grandeur still remain. There is no philosophy, save the religion of the Bible, which can explain these discordances.

On the 20th of January, 1679, La Salle, with his long train of heavily laden men in single file, reached his large log-cabin and ship-yard in the midst of a dense forest on the shore of Lake Erie. They brought upon their backs provisions, merchandise, ammunition, and materials for rigging the vessel. The dock-yard—it could hardly be called a fort—was about six miles above Niagara Falls, on the western side of the river, at the outlet of a little stream called Chippewa Creek.

The men there had been employed in erecting their hut, cutting ship timber, and preparing the ground for building their vessel. There were many Indians continually visiting them. La Salle, the very week of his arrival, laid the keel of his vessel, and with his own hand drove the first bolt. He had no thought of encroaching upon the lands of the Indians, or of erecting any forts in antagonism to them. The object of his expedition was solely to make discoveries in the name of France, to establish trading stations for the purchase of valuable furs of the Indians, and to erect throughout the region he traversed military posts, over which the banners of France might float, which would prove that by the right of discovery, the region belonged to France and not to England. The foe to be guarded against was the British Government, not the Indian tribes.

With characteristic sagacity, La Salle summoned a council of the chiefs of all the neighboring tribes, and addressed them in substance as follows:

"I come to you as a friend and a brother. I wish to buy your furs. I will pay you for them in guns and powder, knives, hatchets, kettles, beads, and such other articles as you want. Thus you can do me good, and I can do you good. We can be brothers. I am building a vessel, that I may visit other tribes, purchase their furs, and carry to them our goods. Let us smoke the pipe of friendship, and shake hands. The Great Spirit will be pleased to see us, His children, love one another and help each other. I wish to establish a trading-post here, where I can collect my furs, where you can come to sell them. And here you will find mechanics who will mend your guns, knives, and kettles, when they get out of order."

These were honest words. They were convincing. All smoked the pipe and grasped hands in token of fraternity. The Frenchman was a benefactor, not an enemy. His life was to be carefully protected. Should he, from unkind treatment, refuse to come to their country, they could buy no more guns, or knives, or kettles. Henceforth every wigwam welcomed the entrance of a Frenchman.

La Salle, while engaged in building his vessel, despatched several canoes along each shore of Lake Erie, to visit every Indian village and purchase their furs. Indian friends paddled the canoes and acted as interpreters. The arrival of one of these canoes at an Indian village was an occasion of universal rejoicing. Happy was the chief who could be honored by entertaining the white trader in his wigwam. The Frenchman was in no more danger in moving about amid their dwellings and forests, than he would have been in traversing the boulevards in Paris.

A poor Indian would bring in some rich furs, to him scarcely of any value, but worth ten dollars in London or Paris. He would receive in exchange a strong, keen-edged pocket-knife, worth in London or Paris perhaps half a dollar, but to him worth ten times ten dollars. He would go home to his wigwam so happy that he could scarcely sleep. He would show his almost priceless treasure to his wife, his children, his neighbors. Accustomed to shave down his bow and arrows only with such an edge as a hard stone could afford, he was filled with inexpressible delight as the keenly cutting steel performed its wondrous work.

The young lady of wealthy parents may rejoice when the grand piano first enters her father's parlor. The fashionable matron may feel some degree of exultation as she regards the splendor of her newly furnished reception-room. But their joy was as nothing compared with the delight with which an Indian woman, for the first time in her life, hung a stout iron kettle over her cabin fire.

La Salle named his vessel the "Griffin," as that animal was one of the emblems on his family coat-of-arms. During the winter, while the vessel was on the stocks, circumstances required the presence of La Salle at Fort Frontenac. Promptly he set out for a journey on foot of three hundred miles through the snow and the woods. Two men accompanied him. A strong dog dragged a portion of the baggage on a sled. Wherever night overtook them they hastily constructed their camp, built their fire, cooked their supper, wrapped themselves in furs, and fell asleep. He seemed to think no more of such a journey than a gentleman does now of a trip, in cushioned cars, from Boston to New Orleans. But nothing in this world ever goes smoothly a long time. In every man's life it may be said,

"Storm after storm rises dark o'er my way."

Several boats laden with supplies bound from Frontenac to Niagara were lost in tempests on the lake. This caused great embarrassment. Provisions even became scarce. The laborers would have suffered for food but for the services of Indian hunters who brought in deer and other game. The fur trade was becoming a matter of great importance. There were many private traders and companies engaged in the traffic, who were alarmed in view of the magnitude of the operations contemplated by La Salle, and of the monopoly which had been granted to him by the king. Here again we see the dark side of human nature. These men, Frenchmen, nominal Christians, endeavored to rouse the Indians against La Salle, even to burnings and massacres. They said to the savages:

"La Salle wishes to take possession of your whole country. He is building a fort at Niagara, and another at Erie. He is building a large vessel, that he may explore all your distant lakes and large rivers. He will erect his strong forts upon every commanding spot. These forts he will garrison with armed men, well provided with muskets, and big guns whose roar is like that of thunder. Then he will take your lands and bring in white men by thousands, and you will all be killed or driven away.

"Your only safety is in destroying the forts at Niagara and Erie, and in burning the vessel he is building, before it is launched. We will not trespass on your lands. We will build no forts. We will bring to your villages, in our canoes, all the goods you want and will buy all your furs. Thus you will be in no danger."

These plausible representations alarmed the Indians. Some of them visited the encampment, and with a suspicious eye watched all the movements. There were two parties formed, the friendly and the unfriendly. La Salle was embarrassed. He might be attacked. His little handful of men would need a strong fortress for their protection. But to strengthen his works would confirm the fears of his foes and add to their number. An Indian woman revealed to him a plot to set fire to his brigantine on the stocks.

He kept a careful watch, ordered all his men to be secretly ready for a surprise, and pushed forward the building of the vessel with all vigor. Early in April the vessel was launched. The sublime *Te Deum* resounded through the solitudes of the forest as thanksgivings were offered to God for the success of the enterprise thus far. Prayers were breathed forth that God would guide and bless the vessel and its crew. The vessel was moored at a safe distance from the shore. All the men swung their hammocks on board their floating fortress, and were quite secure from any intrusion of the savages.

¹ De La Salle among the Senecas, in 1669. By O. H. Marshall, Buffalo Historical Society.

CHAPTER V.

The Voyage Along the Lakes.

The Embarcation. Equipment of the Griffin. Voyage through the Lakes and Straits. The Storm. Superstition

of the Voyagers. Arrival at Mackinac. Scenery there. Friendship of the Indians. Sail on Lakes Huron and Michigan. Arrival at Green Bay. The well-freighted Griffin sent back.

On the 7th of August, 1679, the Griffin spread her sails for her adventurous voyage into the vast unknown. Her armament consisted of five small cannon, two of which were of brass, and three clumsy guns called arquebuses. The vessel was of but sixty tons burden. Most of the men had muskets for taking game. The current in the river, where the vessel was moored, was very rapid. But by aid of a fair wind, and twelve men pulling by a rope on the shore, all difficulties were overcome, and the Griffin entered triumphantly the broad expanse of Lake Erie.

As the anchor was raised and the canvas spread, a simultaneous salute was fired from the five cannon, the three arquebuses, and all the muskets. Such an uproar was never before heard in those silent wilds. An immense number of Indians crowded the shore. They gazed with astonishment, awe, and indefinable dread upon the novel spectacle. The whole company of Frenchmen embarked, being thirty-four in number. None were left at Erie. But at Niagara, as the magazine at Queenstown was called, Father Melethon remained, with one or two laborers, to receive such supplies as might be forwarded to that place.

Three missionaries accompanied the expedition, Fathers Hennepin, Zenobe, and Ribourde. They were venerable and good men, ready at any moment to lay down their lives in advocacy of the Christian faith. Lake Erie is about two hundred and sixty miles long, and from ten to sixty broad. They ran along the northern shore of this majestic inland sea, and on the third day reached its western bounds, where they cautiously entered the mouth of the strait through which flows the waters of all the upper lakes. It was about twenty-eight miles long, and one mile broad. As canoes alone had thus far passed over its surface, it was necessary for them to feel their way with much care. La Salle gave the strait the name of Detroit. Soon entering another lake, twenty-four miles long by thirty broad, he gave it the name of St. Clair, in honor of the saint whose name appears in the calendar of the church for that day.

Passing safely over the shallow waters, the Griffin entered another strait, about thirty miles long, to which La Salle gave the name of St. Clair River. The current was strong, and the navigation perilous. Gigantic steamers now run through from Lake Erie to Lake Huron in a few hours. It required thirteen days for the Griffin to accomplish the passage. The whole distance is about ninety miles.

Lake Huron opened magnificently before them. The route along the shore of the lake to its head, where it receives the waters of Michigan and Superior, is about three hundred and sixty miles. Its greatest breadth is one hundred and sixty miles. The progress of the voyagers was slow. They were impeded by calms and head winds. It was often necessary to cast the lead and to watch for rocks and sand-bars. They had but just entered upon Lake Huron when they encountered one of the severest tempests which ever swept that stormy lake. The whole ship's company were devout Catholics.

In those dark days both the fathers and the crew were alike disposed to call upon the Virgin Mary and the saints to aid them, rather than upon God. Father Hennepin tells us that the stout soul of La Salle quailed before the horrible tumult which threatened to engulf him. They all alike fell upon their knees and addressed their prayers and their cries to St. Anthony of Padua. They solemnly vowed that if he would intercede with God and obtain their rescue, they would, in the newly-discovered countries, erect a chapel in his name. St. Anthony was called the patron of mariners, and therefore his aid was especially invoked.

Greatly was their confidence in the saint's intercession increased, as the wind lulled, the clouds dispersed, the sun shone forth in all its autumnal glory, and with a fair wind pressing their sails they glided along over a smooth sea, skirting the southern shore of the lake, past mountains and valleys, prairies and forest, which presented every variety of picturesque beauty.

At the extreme northwestern extremity of Lake Huron, near the point where the lake receives the waters of Lakes Michigan and Superior, there was a large island, whose swelling hills were crowned with a dense forest. This island was called by the Indians, from its peculiar form, Mackinac, or the Turtle, sometimes Michilimackinac, or the big Turtle. On the 27th of August, 1679, the Griffin ran into a beautiful little bay in this island. It was a lovely summer's day, serene, sunny, and cloudless. The waters of the bay, fringed with forest-crowned hills, were as placid as a mirror. There was

quite a village there of wigwams. Naked children were sporting upon the beach. Buoyant birch canoes, driven by the paddles of gayly-dressed men and women, were gliding swiftly in all directions. The scene opened before the eyes of the voyagers like a vision of enchantment.

Nearly ten years before, Father Marquette, inspired by apostolic zeal, had traversed this whole distance in a birch canoe. Several Indians accompanied him as boatmen and interpreters. Upon the main land, across a narrow strait, he had established a mission-post among the Hurons. The Indians at Mackinac thus knew something of the white men. With wonder they gazed upon the "great wooden canoe." They crowded on board the Griffin with every testimonial of confidence and friendship, and when one of the cannon was fired, and its roar reverberated through the forest, they were astonished, but not frightened.

Though this remote village seemed so peaceful and happy, the strong palisades which surrounded it proved that the voyagers had not yet got beyond the vestiges of Adam's fall. Those defences spoke of midnight assaults, of savage yells, of tomahawks, scalps, blood, misery, and death. La Salle, aware of the influence of outward appearance upon the minds of men, dressed himself in a very rich scarlet cloak fringed with gold lace. With a plumed military cap upon his head, a long sword at his side, and an imposing escort of well-dressed and well-armed men, he was rowed ashore, to make a visit of ceremony to the chief. His reception was as hospitable and friendly as those untutored men were capable of giving.

La Salle had sent forward several canoes of men, to collect all the furs they could on their way, and store them at Mackinac. These furs, upon his arrival, La Salle would transfer to the Griffin and send them back to Fort Frontenac, to be thence transported to Europe. But these men had bitterly disappointed him. Some of them had run away and joined the Indians, attracted by the apparently careless, easy life which the wigwam presented. Others had been bribed, by higher wages, to join rival trading parties. One of the canoes of deserters had pushed on to the Falls of St. Mary. These falls, quite renowned in the early explorations of these remote regions, were situated on the strait which connects Lake Superior with Huron.

After a short tarry at Mackinac, the sails of the Griffin were again spread, and passing through the strait between Mackinac and the main land, they entered the head of Lake Michigan. They coasted along its northern border in beautiful summer weather, and within pleasant view of the shore, until they came to an island where there was a pleasant, sheltered cove, at the mouth of Green Bay, a sheet of water which, through a broad entrance studded with islands, spread out on the west of Michigan, a hundred miles in length, by about twenty in breadth.

A tribe of Indians, called Pottawatomies, inhabited this island. Here it was La Salle's good fortune to find one of his large canoes, well freighted with furs. He had also laid in a large store at Mackinac. As he was soon to leave the Griffin, to cross the land by portages, and paddle in birch canoes down distant and unknown rivers, he decided to send back the Griffin to Erie, with her rich freight of furs. At Erie they would be carried on men's shoulders around the falls to Niagara, thence reshipped to Frontenac, and thence sent to Europe. He remained at the island a fortnight, freighting his ship. She commenced her return voyage with a pilot and five mariners. The value of the cargo was such as to make La Salle a rich man. Notwithstanding all his discouragements, his voyage had thus far been a success. Cheered with hope, he now prepared to resume his adventurous explorations in birch canoes.

La Salle, having despatched the richly freighted Griffin from the mouth of Green Bay to his abandoned ship-yard at Erie, resumed his voyage in four heavily laden birch canoes. The company remaining with him consisted of seventeen men. His freight consisted of a blacksmith's forge, mechanic tools, household utensils, merchandise, arms, and ammunition. A very skilful and intelligent Indian accompanied the party as interpreter and hunter. They paddled down the western shore of Lake Michigan, landing every night to build their camp, kindle their fire, and cook their supper. Immediately upon landing, the Indian, with his musket on his shoulder, disappeared in the forest, and almost invariably soon returned with an ample supply of game.

It was the 19th of September, 1679, when the canoes left the mouth of Green Bay. The stormy days of autumn were approaching, when these northern lakes were often ploughed by fierce gales. The island from which they set out was several leagues from the main land. They had no sails. Their boats were propelled only by the paddle. The first night, before they reached the main land, dense clouds seemed hurrying through the skies and thickening over their heads. The

wind increased into a gale. The blackened waters of the lake were lashed into foam-crested billows. The sun went down, and gloomy darkness curtained the sky and enveloped the sea. The spray dashed over them. Occasionally a wave would break into the canoes. At length they discerned the dim outline of the shore. It was a long sandy beach, with no cove, no indentation, into which they could run their boats. The surges, driven by the northeast storm, struck the shore so furiously that it seemed impossible to effect a landing; and yet every moment they were threatened with destruction. In the darkness they kept as near together as they could, to help one another in case of disaster. Thus hour after hour passed; as our voyagers, weary, hungry, cold, and drenched, struggled against the waves. A little after midnight the wind lulled. Watching their opportunity they ran their canoes upon the shore, and leaping into the water, carefully dragged them above the waves. The rain still fell. They unloaded each canoe, and so packed the precious contents that they could protect them from the rain by covering them with the canoes turned upside down. With their axes they soon constructed a frail camp. With the flash of powder they with difficulty kindled a fire, for everything was dripping with moisture, and every log was soaked.

They threw themselves down to sleep upon the wet ground, and in their drenched garments, but with, their feet toward roaring fires. Accustomed as they were to exposure, these hardships must have caused severe suffering. The lurid morning revealed to them but a raging sea and a bleak and barren expanse, where no game could be found. Here, in their cheerless camp, they were detained by the wind and the rain four days. The only game their Indian hunter brought in, was a single porcupine. They found its flesh savory, though it afforded scarcely a mouthful for each man.

The storm at length ceased. Again they launched their fragile canoes, and paddled along the placid waters. Soon another storm arose suddenly, and so severe, that they were glad to take shelter upon the lee side of a rocky island. There was no growth of timber with which they could build a camp, and scarcely sufficient fuel for a fire. Here, like shipwrecked mariners, they remained for two days, wrapped in their blankets, and huddled for shelter in the cavities of the rocks. Mercilessly they were pelted with rain mingled with snow.

But again the clouds were dispelled; the sun shone brightly. The mirrored waves of the lake invited them to its surface. Though sobered by their sufferings, they paddled rapidly along, hoping that a long calm was to succeed the storm. Their voyage was cheered by one bright and sunny day, when the angry clouds again began to gather to do them battle. The tempest rose so suddenly that they had no time to seek a harbor, but had to run their canoes through the surf on the shore. All had to leap into the waves to save the frail boats from being broken on the stony beach. This, their third landing, was near the point where the River Milwaukie enters the lake.

They had not taken a large supply of provisions with them in their canoes, for they had hoped to find a supply of game by the way. Nearly all their store of corn and vegetables was now exhausted. Two or three Indians were seen in the distance; but they did not venture to approach so formidable a looking band. Three men were sent, with the calumet of peace, to search for their villages and obtain food. They came to a cluster of deserted wigwams, where the sagacity of their Indian guide showed them an abundance of corn, concealed from the ravages of wild beasts, in cells under ground. These honest or politic men took all they wanted, and left behind them ample payment.

In the evening twilight, as the boatmen were gathered around their camp fire, quite a group of Indians was seen cautiously approaching. La Salle advanced to meet them, with the calumet uplifted in his hands. As soon as the Indians saw this emblem of peace, all their fears were dispelled. They rushed forward like a joyous band of children, singing and dancing. They had been to their wigwams, found the treasures which had been left there, and their joy was inexpressible. They returned late in the evening to their homes; but in the morning the grateful creatures returned, bearing an abundant supply of game and corn. La Salle richly rewarded them.

Nature seemed in sympathy with these blessings of peace, for the sun, emerging from the clouds, shone down serenely upon these children of a common Father, and the weary voyagers, greatly cheered, again launched their canoes upon the solitary lake.

Thus they continued, day after day, paddling along the apparently interminable journey to the South. They passed the spot where the majestic city of Chicago now stands. It was two hundred years ago. Not even an Indian wigwam was seen to break the expanded and dreary solitude. A constant succession of storms was encountered until they reached the foot of the lake. Any one who has witnessed the grandeur with which the ocean-like billows of Lake Michigan often break upon

the western shore, will wonder how it was possible for those frail canoes to ride over such surges. Every night it was necessary to land, and often the storm detained them for many hours.

Having reached the foot of the lake, they turned to the eastward. Here they found a milder climate and more tranquil waters. Deer and wild turkeys were very abundant, and their Indian hunter kept them supplied with game. The trees were festooned with grape-vines, which were laden with the richest clusters of the delicious fruit. They found a spot at the foot of the lake so attractive in its landscape beauty, so abounding in fruit and game, that, weary as they were with their arduous voyage, they drew their canoes on shore for a few days of rest.

The labor of one or two hours constructed a comfortable cabin for the accommodation of all. Fuel was abundant for the cheering camp fire. The lake furnished the choicest fish, and the forest supplied them with venison and every variety of game. Having feasted upon the most delicious of hunters' fare, they wrapped themselves in their blankets, and enjoyed that rich sleep which is one of the greatest blessings of the worn and the weary.

Moccasined footprints had been seen on the sands of the beach, indicating that there were Indians near. One of the men out hunting at a little distance from the camp, came upon a large black bear, which had climbed a high tree, and was feeding upon the luscious grapes. Taking deliberate aim he sent a bullet through the head of the bear, and the huge animal tumbled lifeless to the ground. It so happened that there was a large party of Indian hunters not far off, who heard the report of the gun. It was to them a very unusual sound; for they were armed only with bows and arrows. Carefully concealing themselves, they followed the man as he dragged the carcass to the camp. It was evening. A brilliant fire illuminated the whole scene. They examined the encampment, counted the number of men, and saw at some distance on the beach, piles of precious goods, screened from rain by the canoes which were turned bottom upward over them.

In the darkness of the night, two or three of them crept noiselessly to the unguarded canoes, and stole several articles of value. A wakeful eye chanced to catch a glimpse of the shadowy form of an Indian stealing through the forest, and gave the alarm. All sprang to arms. La Salle had, as we have said, an Indian guide and hunter with him, from Green Bay. The Indian band proved to be from that vicinity. They soon entered into a conference with La Salle's guide. The savages assumed great frankness and friendliness. One of the chiefs said:

"We heard the gun and feared that a party of our enemies was approaching. We crept near your camp to ascertain whether you were friends or foes. But now that we know that we are among Frenchmen, we are with our brothers. We love Frenchmen, and wish to smoke with them the pipe of peace."

La Salle was cautious. He replied, "Let four of your men, and four only, come in the morning to our camp." In the meantime he kept a careful watch. Four venerable men came in the morning, smoked their pipes and proffered friendship. Mutual pledges were exchanged, and they departed. It was not until after they had left, that the discovery was made that several valuable articles had been stolen. This entirely changed the aspect of affairs. La Salle, as energetic as he was conciliatory, resolved to have satisfaction.

Fearing that if the affront were unavenged he would be exposed to new insults, he took several well-armed men, penetrated the woods and captured two Indians. Having led them as prisoners to his camp, he liberated one, and sent him to the chiefs of the band to say, that if the stolen goods were not immediately restored, the other captive would be put to death.

The Indians, who seemed to have set a high value upon life, were appalled. They could not restore the goods. Many of them had been destroyed. The chiefs returned this reply. As the Indians greatly outnumbered the Frenchmen, they resolved to attempt to rescue the captive by force. In strong military array they advanced to the attack. La Salle marshalled his little force upon a mound, surrounded by a sandy plain, where there was neither tree, rock, nor shrub, to protect the assailants. The bullet could be thrown much farther than the arrow. The hostile forces stood gazing at each other for some time. The chiefs saw that an attack was hopeless, and that advance was certain death. La Salle had no wish to redden his hands with their blood.

In this emergency Father Hennepin in the peaceful garb of a priest went forward with the Indian interpreter and solicited a conference. Two old men advanced to meet him. With unexpected intelligence they proposed that the goods which

could be restored, should be sent back, and that the rest should be amply paid for. This brought peace. Rich presents were interchanged, the Indians giving several beaver-skin robes. There were feasting and dancing and speech-making. All hearts were happy.

Again the canoes were put afloat. Coasting up the eastern shore of the lake fifty or sixty miles they reached the mouth of St. Joseph's River, then called the River of the Miamis. This is the second river in importance in the State of Michigan. It has a good harbor at its mouth, flows through an expanse of two hundred and fifty miles, and affords boat navigation for a distance of one hundred and thirty miles. Here the weary travellers found a port, after a voyage of forty days from Green Bay.

Gloomy clouds of trouble now darkened around. His men, weary of their hardships, became mutinous. They remonstrated against continuing their journey into the depths of the unexplored wilderness, peopled by they knew not what hostile tribes. La Salle had ordered Lieutenant Tonti, with twenty men, to cross the head of the lake and meet him at that point by a much shorter route. The lieutenant had not arrived. It was feared that he was lost. At length he came. But he brought no tidings of the Griffin. Two months had elapsed since that vessel sailed from Green Bay. Her orders were, after discharging her freight at Niagara, to return immediately to St. Joseph's, for another cargo of furs. La Salle had embarked more than all his fortune in that vessel. There was no insurance in those days. He was deeply in debt to the traders in Quebec and Montreal.

Fearful were his apprehensions that the vessel was lost. If so he was ruined, a hopeless bankrupt. The vessel was lost. No tidings of her ever reached any human ears. In some dreadful tragedy, witnessed only by God, the vessel and its crew sunk in the depths of the waters. While thus harassed with anxiety, the cold blasts of approaching winter swept the bleak plains. The rivers would soon be closed with ice. His provisions were exhausted, so that his party was entirely dependent for food upon such game as could be taken. Under these adverse circumstances the resolution of this indomitable man remained unshaken. Gathering his murmuring companions around him, he said:

"I have set out to explore the Mississippi. If you abandon me I cannot proceed. But I shall remain here with the missionaries. You may find your way back as you can, or disperse through the forest as you please."

The men continued to murmur. But for their own protection they worked diligently upon the fort. From this point La Salle intended to establish communication with his depot at Niagara. The boatmen also, who were earnestly devoted to the ritualism of the church, under the direction of the missionaries built a log chapel, where religious services were daily held. A numerous tribe of Indians, the Miamis, but to which the missionaries gave the name of St. Joseph's band, had a flourishing village here. There were very friendly. From the fine boat harbor they could fish upon the lake, or, in pursuit of game, could paddle hundreds of miles up the forest-crowned river and its numerous tributaries. Day after day La Salle watched the horizon of the lake, hoping to catch a glimpse of the sails of the returning Griffin, bringing him supplies, and the tidings that his precious furs were safe and his fortune secure. Night after night he placed his head upon his pillow, the victim of that hope deferred which maketh the heart sick.

Thirty-three days of anxiety and toil thus passed away. The boatmen, who had come with Lieutenant Tonti, increased his number to over thirty men. At the point of land where the river entered the lake, there was a bluff, of considerable elevation and of triangular form, containing an acre or more of pretty level land. It was at that time covered with trees. This commanding position was chosen for the fort. Two sides were bounded by water. On the third or land side of the triangle there was a deep ravine. A breastwork of hewn logs was raised several feet high, enclosing a space eighty feet long by forty feet broad. And this all was surrounded by stout palisades.

The fortress was artistically constructed, and could bid defiance to any attack by the Indians. It was also admirably selected to give the French command of the region, against any encroachments of the English.

Through the whole month of November the men toiled upon these works, fed only upon the flesh of turkeys, deer, and bears, which their Indian hunter brought in. It was learned that the Griffin, which, it will be remembered, sailed from Green Bay, bound first to Mackinac, did not reach that port. The vessel must have foundered somewhere by the way. The natives on the coast had heard nothing of the vessel. Seventy days had now elapsed since she sailed, and all hopes of ever hearing from her again were relinquished.

On the 3d of December the whole party of thirty-three persons, in eight canoes, left Fort Miami, as La Salle called his works, and paddled up the river, a distance of seventy miles, toward the south. Considerable time was lost in the endeavor to find the trail or portage which led across, westerly from the St. Joseph's River, to the head waters of the Kankakee, which is the eastern branch of the Illinois River.

La Salle, imprudently exploring alone, became lost in the forest. The darkness of a stormy night, with falling snow, overtook him. He fired his gun as a signal of distress; but silence was the only answer. Soon he espied, in the distance, the light of a fire. It was the encampment of a solitary Indian, who had formed for himself a soft bed of leaves. Alarmed by the report of the gun, he had fled. La Salle appropriated to himself the cheerless quarters and slept soundly until morning. All the forenoon of the next day he wandered, and it was not until the afternoon that he rejoined his companions. He came in with two opossums hanging at his belt, which he had killed.

At length their Indian hunter found the trail. They had gone too far up the river. The men took the canoes and the freight upon their shoulders, and carried them over the portage, of five or six miles, which the Indians had traversed for countless ages. Dreary in the extreme was the wintry landscape which now opened before them. The ground was frozen hard. Ice fringed the stream, and the flat marshy expanse was whitened with snow. For nearly a hundred miles the sluggish Kankakee flowed through a morass, which afforded growth to but little more than rushes and alders. Their provisions were nearly exhausted. No game could be found. They were hungry. Each night they landed, built their fires, and with scarcely any shelter wrapped themselves in their blankets for almost comfortless sleep.

At length the river emerged from these dreary marshes and entered upon a large undulating prairie, treeless, but whose fertility was attested by the tall, yet withered grass. The scene became far more cheering. Though most of the herds, which in summer grazed these rich fields, had wandered far away to the south, their indefatigable hunter succeeded in shooting two deer and a stray buffalo, which was found mired. He also took several fat turkeys and swans.

Thus, with revived spirits, the party, having paddled three hundred miles down the infinite windings of the Kankakee, entered the more majestic and beautiful river Illinois. The length of the stream from this point to its entrance into the Mississippi is two hundred and sixty miles, exclusive of its windings. As they were swept down by the current, they came to a large Indian village on the right bank of the river, near the present town of Ottawa. There were four or five hundred cabins, very substantially built, and covered with thick mats very ingeniously woven from rushes. Extensive corn-fields were near the village, but the harvest had been gathered in.

Silence and solitude reigned there. Not a living being was to be seen. The inhabitants had all migrated, according to their custom, to spend the winter in more southern hunting-grounds. Large quantities of corn were stored away for summer use in dry cellars. La Salle removed fifty bushels to his canoes, hoping to find the owners farther south and amply repay them. It would have been of no avail to have left payment, for it would be carried away by any band of Indians who chanced to be passing by. The hunger of his men, in his judgment rendered the taking of the corn a necessity. This spot was probably near the site of Rock Fort, in La Salle county, Illinois.

For four days they continued their course without coming in sight of any human being or any habitation. Yet they passed through scenery often very charming, presenting a wide-spread ocean of undulating land, with groves and lawns and parks smiling so peacefully in the bright sunshine.

The morning of the 1st of January, 1680, came. All gathered around the missionaries to commemorate the opening of the new year by religious services. Prayers were offered, hymns were chanted, sins were confessed, and the blessing of God was invoked upon their enterprise. At the conclusion of these devotions the canoes were again pushed out into the stream. On the fourth of the month they entered an expansion of the river where the breadth of water assumed the dimension of a lake. This sheet of water, now called Peoria Lake, was twenty miles long and three broad.

At its foot they came upon a very large Indian encampment. La Salle presented the calumet of peace, and fraternal relations were immediately established. At this point he decided to build a large boat to sail down the river. The loss of the Griffin, thus depriving him of his supplies, had frustrated all his plans. He built a strong fort, which he called, from his own grief, "Crève-cœur," or the Broken Hearted. Here this extraordinary man left most of his company, and with five men, in mid-winter, set out to cross the pathless wilderness on foot, a distance of twelve hundred miles, along the

southern shores of Erie and Ontario to Fort Frontenac. The wonderful journey, through storms of snow and rain, across bleak plains and morasses and unbridged rivers, was safely accomplished in about seventy days. He obtained the needful supplies, freighted several canoes, engaged new voyagers, and after innumerable perils again reached the head waters of the Illinois. Here he learned that his garrison at Crèvecœur was dispersed and the fort destroyed. This ended his hopes. He went back to Frontenac a disappointed but indomitable man, and the enterprise was for the time relinquished.

Here we must leave La Salle for a time, while we give an account of the expedition from Crèvecœur, up the Mississippi, and of the destruction of the colony.

CHAPTER VI.

The Expedition of Father Hennepin.

Seeking a Northwest Passage. The Voyage Commenced. The Alarm. Delightful Scenery. The Indian Village. Entrance to the Mississippi. Appearance of the Country. The Midnight Storm. Silence and Solitude. A Fleet of Canoes. Captured by the Savages. Merciful Captivity. Alarming Debate. Condition of the Captives.

Two days before La Salle set out from Crèvecœur, on his adventurous journey, through the wilderness, to Fort Frontenac, he despatched Father Louis Hennepin to explore the Mississippi River from the mouth of the Illinois to its source. So little was then known of this continent that La Salle had strong hopes that near the source of the Mississippi, another stream might be found, flowing toward the west, which, by a short voyage, would conduct one to the Pacific Ocean. In this way he hoped that the long-sought-for northwest passage to the Pacific might be discovered.

On the morning of the 29th of February, 1680, Father Hennepin, with but two companions, entered his birch canoe, to prosecute his grand and perilous enterprise. They were to explore unknown realms, crowded with savage tribes. They had their guns, not for attack or defence, but for taking game, with a good supply of ammunition, and with several hundred dollars worth of goods, to conciliate the savages by presents, and to exchange with them for provisions.

With the early dawn they commenced their voyage. The day was fine, the river placid in its gentle flow, and the scenery, on both sides of the stream, of undulating hills, majestic forests, and wide-spread prairies, upon which herds of wild cattle were grazing, was picturesque and alluring in the extreme. As they rapidly descended the river, they met several parties of Illinois Indians, returning to their village at the head of the lake. Their canoes were laden with the game they had taken. The Frenchmen and the Indians exchanged friendly greetings.

The kind-hearted savages endeavored to dissuade them from their perilous voyage, assuring them, with all the wildest exaggerations of Indian superstition, that they would encounter birds as large as buffaloes, who would carry them in their talons as an eagle seizes a rabbit; that there were enormous beasts in the river, doubtless referring to the alligators, who would dash their canoe to pieces, and devour a man at a mouthful; then there were rapids and whirlpools from which they could not escape, and in which they would be surely engulfed; and that if by any possibility they escaped, all these perils, they would fall into the hands of ferocious tribes, who would enslave them, torture them, cook them, and eat them. They entreated the Frenchmen to go back with them to their village, where they could live in safety and in abundance.

The two boatmen, Anthony Auguelle and Michael Ako, were alarmed by these representations, and were strongly inclined to return. But Father Hennepin constrained them to press onward. As they descended the Illinois, they found the river deep and broad, much resembling the Seine at Paris. It would, at times, expand to nearly a mile in breadth. Large trees crowned many of the gentle eminences which lined the stream. Upon ascending the hills, as they landed for their night's encampment, they gazed, with delight in the gorgeous sunset, upon the magnificent prairies spread out before them

as far as the eye could reach.

There is nothing which earth has ever presented more beautiful than those Eden-like landscape resembling the ocean in expanse, which were thus for the first time, unveiled to the view of civilized men. Here and there groups of trees appeared, in small groves, as if planted by the exquisite taste of a landscape gardener. Herds of buffaloes, antelopes, and deer, grazed the herbage in countless numbers. Birds of every variety of song and plumage found here their paradise. And in these fair realms the children of Adam might have experienced joys hardly surpassed by those of their first parents in Eden, were it not for that inhumanity of man to man which has caused countless millions to mourn. To redeem this world from the curse of sin, Jesus the Son of God has suffered and died. And there can be no possible true happiness for the human family until the result of his mission shall be accomplished.

Our voyagers, on the seventh day of their journey, having passed down the windings of the river, about two hundred miles, as they judged, came to a pleasant Indian village of about two hundred wigwams. These Indians had an eye for beauty. Their little cluster of homes was picturesquely situated upon a green plain, gently ascending from the banks of the river, which commanded a view of the water for some distance above and below. The prairie, in its grandeur, spread far and wide around. The village was about six miles above the entrance of the Illinois into the Mississippi River. The tribe was called the Maraos. The hospitable savages, who without any difficulty could have killed the Frenchmen and have taken possession of all their goods, treated the strangers as brothers, and urged them to visit their houses. In these hospitable rites we see beautiful vestiges of the character of man before the fall. But alas! we can never meet the children of Adam anywhere, or under any circumstances, without soon seeing the evidence of that fall when sin entered Eden,

"Earth felt the wound; and nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe
That all was lost."

They heard fearful accounts of attacks by ferocious tribes rushing down upon them, plundering, burning, killing, scalping, with mercilessness which demons could not exceed. They were expecting soon another attack, and were then upon the point of abandoning their homes and emigrating to the other side of the Mississippi, to join, for their protection, another large and friendly tribe.

Soon after Father Hennepin resumed his voyage, the Indians, according to his narrative, had their suspicions excited that he was conveying hatchets and guns to their enemies, either intentionally, or which might fall into their hands. They therefore sent a band of their swift-footed warriors down the river, to a narrow pass, to intercept the canoe. This could hardly be considered contrary to the laws of warfare among civilized nations. The Indians had witnessed the lightnings and thunders of the white man's guns, and the terrible energies of their death dealing-bolts. They might surely consider the canoe as freighted with goods which were contraband of war.

We know not what reason Father Hennepin had for suspecting this movement of the Indians. He gives no proof of any such hostile design. It is not improbable that his suspicions were groundless. As he approached the narrow pass where he imagined the warriors to lie in ambush, he saw the smoke of the camp fires ascending from a grove which crowned one of the eminences. This certainly did not indicate any secret movement. He paddled close to the other side of the river, not only without being attacked, but without obtaining even a glimpse of his imagined foes.

On the 8th of March they reached the Mississippi River. The broad flood, a mile in width, swept majestically along, from unknown regions of the north, quite covered with floating ice. The vast masses, two or three feet in thickness, and which could not be eluded, would speedily tear their frail birch canoe into fragments. At the mouth of the Illinois there was a gentle elevation, covered with the stately forest, which commanded a fine view of both of the rivers and of the adjacent region.

Here the Frenchmen drew their canoe upon the shore, erected a camp, with open front, as a shelter from the cold north wind, built their fire, cooked their game, of which they found abundance all around, and waited patiently, four days, for the ice to run by.

In the middle of the Mississippi River, nearly opposite the mouth of the Illinois, there were three small islands, covered with large trees and a dense, tangled growth of brush and vines. The heads of these islands were clogged, for a long distance up the river, with the deformity of immense rafts of drift logs, stumps, and trees. They presented an exceedingly dreary aspect, swept by the freezing winds, with truly arctic masses of ice grinding by, and often ploughed up into great hillocks upon the sand-bars.

At a short distance back from the river a range of hills or bluffs was seen. Between the bluffs and the river the meadow or bottom lands were often treeless, and evidently fertile in the highest degree. On the morning of the 12th of March the Mississippi was sufficiently clear of ice for these intrepid voyagers to venture to launch their canoe upon its surface. Slowly and cautiously they paddled up the stream, keeping near the shore and taking advantage of every eddy which could be found. Through vistas opening between the hills and woods occasional glimpses were caught of prairie regions beyond, whose solitude and silence were only relieved by the spectacle of grazing herds, and thousands of birds upon the wing. There were no signs of human life. Apparently eternal silence reigned over those Eden-like solitudes, disturbed only by the lowing of the herds and the varied notes of bird songs.

As they continued their voyage they came upon many islands, whose thick growth of forest trees was so interlaced with vines and undergrowth as to render them almost impenetrable. Vigorously they plied their paddles, day after day, breasting the strong current of the river, encountering no incident of importance. Every night they landed, drew their canoe upon the grass, turned it over, so as to cover its contents from the rain and the dew, built their frail shelter for the night, kindled their camp fire, whose flame is ever as companionable as it is cheerful, cooked their supper, which they ate with the appetite and zest which labor gives, and then, having offered their vesper prayers and chanted their evening hymn, enjoyed that sweet sleep which is one of the greatest of all earthly blessings. At noon they always had a short religious exercise in their canoe.

They often had mild and beautiful mornings, when the whole wide-spread scene of crystal waters, forest, and prairie seemed illumined with almost celestial radiance. Bird songs filled the air. The prairies seemed crowded with all the varieties of animal life in peaceful enjoyment. No sights of violence or suffering met the eye. No discordant sound fell upon the ear. All was beauty, harmony, and joy. The landscape resembled our imaginings of the world before the fall, when it came fresh from its Maker's hands, and all the morning stars hailed its birth.

But again clouds, like marshalling armies, hurried through and darkened the sky. The tempest rose with its dirge-like wailing. The surface of the river was lashed into surges which threatened to devour them. The rain drenched them. The sleet cut their faces. Hastily they sought the shores. Frequently they had to paddle a great distance along the precipitous banks before they could find any place where they could land. Reaching at length the shore, they first covered their goods with the upturned canoe.

Black night would already envelop them. Groping through the darkness, drenched with rain, and numbed with sleet, they would, with great difficulty, raise some frail protection against the storm. No fire could be kindled. No change of clothing was possible. Throwing themselves upon the wet sod, hungry, shivering, and sleepless, they would anxiously await the dawn. The cry of the lone night-bird, and the howling of wolves, would be added to the discord of the angry elements. In such hours this globe did indeed seem to be a sin-blighted world, upon which had fallen the frown of its Maker.

Amid such changes and toils as these, Father Hennepin and his companions, in their frail birch canoe, paddled along against the strong current of the Mississippi. They breakfasted with the earliest dawn, and continued their voyage through ever-varying scenes of sublimity and beauty, until late in the afternoon. Then they began to look eagerly for some sheltered nook suitable for their night's encampment. The silence and solitude through which they passed, at times seemed pleasing, and again almost awful.

For weary leagues, not a village, not a wigwam, not a solitary Indian, appeared. They seemed to be exploring an uninhabited world. The mouths of many rivers were passed, whose names were unknown to them. With feelings akin to awe, they looked up the long reaches of streams, now known by the names of the Des Moines, the Iowa, the Rock River, and the Wisconsin. They wondered what scenes were transpiring far away upon the banks of these apparently solitary waters.

They had ascended the Mississippi several hundred miles, when, about two o'clock in the afternoon of the 11th of April, they were startled by seeing suddenly coming round a near headland, thirty large bark canoes, crowded with Indians, plumed, painted, and armed for battle. It was a gorgeous as well as an appalling spectacle. The blades of their paddles sparkled in the sunlight. The savages were dressed in the highest style of barbaric splendor. Their brilliantly colored feathers, fringed garments, and highly decorated bows, war-clubs and javelins, surpassed, in picturesque beauty, any of the ordinary military trappings of civilized life.

The moment the savages caught sight of the Frenchmen's boat, they simultaneously raised a shout or yell, which reverberated along the banks of the river and struck the hearts of the voyagers with dread. Escape was impossible. Resistance was not to be thought of. The little fleet of canoes, descending the river by the aid both of the current and their paddles, approached with great rapidity. Father Hennepin stood up in his boat and in his hands extended toward the savages, the calumet of peace. Speedily he was surrounded, the calumet was snatched from him, and his canoe was taken to the shore, while all the others followed. During all the time the savages were raising frightful cries and yells, the signification of which, whether welcoming or threatening, could not be understood. It was probably near the mouth of the Wisconsin River that this capture took place.

Father Hennepin had been so long among the Indians, visiting various tribes, and had so long been accustomed to contemplate his violent death as an event which might any day take place, that he was far more tranquil in mind than most persons could have been under these circumstances. Speedily his well-trained eye recognized the chief of the savages. He presented him some tobacco, and then endeavored by signs to enter into conversation with him.

The two head chiefs conferred together. They declined smoking the peace calumet, and were by no means cordial in their reception of the strangers. There was evidently a diversity of opinion among them, as to the disposition they should make of their captives. Three blows of the tomahawk would silence them all in death. Their bodies could be thrown into the stream, and their canoe, with all its freight, of such priceless value to the savages, would be in their possession. Probably some of them had visited the French forts, and knew how to use the musket, and appreciated its death-dealing power. Already they had examined every article in the canoe. They had inspected the rifles, and counted the store of bullets and powder. Such an acquisition would aid them inestimably in the war-path upon which they had entered.

The young men clamored for this decision of the question. In the mind of an untutored savage, who has never enjoyed the light of revealed religion, the dividing line between right and wrong must necessarily be faint. With these men, the pride of life consisted in the numbers of enemies they had slain. Inspired by this desire, they were now on the way to attack a neighboring tribe, to burn their homes, destroy their property, kill and scalp men, women, and children, and to take back some of the leading warriors, that they, their wives, and their children might enjoy the delight of seeing them put to death by diabolical torture. Why should they hesitate to tomahawk three white men who had crossed their path? Why not rob and murder them, when by doing so they could acquire possessions of the greatest value?

But God seems to have implanted in every human heart some sense of right and wrong, some conviction of responsibility to a Superior Being. So far as Father Hennepin could understand their sign language, the chiefs informed him that they were going down the Mississippi to attack a village of the Miamis on the Illinois River. The war party consisted of but one hundred and twenty braves. They intended to attack the village by surprise at night. In an hour they would accomplish their fiend-like deed of murder, scalping, and conflagration. Then, with their gory trophies and their prisoners, they would take to their boats and be far away up the river before there could be any rallying of the tribes in pursuit.

Father Hennepin told them that the Miamis had been informed of their intended attack; that they had abandoned their village, had fled across the Mississippi, and having joined another powerful tribe were watching for their approach. The savages on the shore surrounded their captives, and for some unknown reason frequently gave simultaneous utterance to the most unearthly yells.

Father Hennepin affected great composure, assuming that he was among friends. He presented to the chiefs two large fat turkeys which he had shot coming up the river. Then, with his two companions, he built a fire, hung his iron kettle, and commenced boiling some venison. The Indians looked quietly on for a few minutes, and then all gathered in a group to hold a council. Father Hennepin secretly watched their proceedings with the utmost anxiety. Their speeches were

accompanied with very much action. The debate was prolonged and vehement. He sufficiently understood the language of signs to perceive that they were divided in opinion, that while a part were in favor of putting them to death, others were urging that their lives should be spared.

With one of his men he went to the canoe, took six axes, fifteen knives, and a quantity of tobacco, and advancing into the midst of the council presented them to the chiefs. He then took an axe, and bowing his head, made signs that the Indians might kill him if they wished to do so. This chivalric deed touched whatever there was of chivalry in the savage bosom. There was a general murmur of applause. Some of them had been roasting, at a fire near by, some beaver's flesh. One of the savages ran, cut a piece of the smoking meat, and bringing it, on a plate of birch bark, with a sharpened stick for a fork, put three morsels into the mouth of Father Hennepin and his companions. As the food was very hot, the savage blew upon it to cool it. He then set the plate before them, to eat at their pleasure.

Still there was a degree of restraint on the part of the Indians, which indicated that there was by no means perfect reconciliation. There was much talking apart, and it was evident that the fate of the prisoners was not yet decided. The representations, however, which Father Hennepin had made, induced them to relinquish their contemplated enterprise, and to turn back from the war-path upon which they had entered. Just before night, one of the chiefs silently returned to Father Hennepin his peace calumet. This greatly increased their anxiety, as it was inferred that it was an act renouncing friendship.

Savages and Frenchmen all slept alike on the ground and in the open air, by the side of their camp fires. There was no watch kept, and the captives had no indication that they were abridged of their freedom. Still they had many fears that they were to be assassinated before the morning. The two boatmen, Auguelle and Ako, slept with their guns and swords by their sides. They declared that if attacked they would sell their lives as dearly as possible. But Father Hennepin said to them, "I shall allow myself to be killed without any resistance. I came to announce to the savages a God, who for the world's redemption allowed Himself to be falsely accused, unjustly condemned, and cruelly crucified, without showing the least enmity to those who put Him to death. I shall imitate the example thus set me."

The night passed peacefully away, and the morning of the 12th of April dawned upon this scene so wild and picturesque.

As all were gathered around their camp fires, cooking their breakfasts, one of the chiefs, Narketoba by name—presenting a hideous aspect in his barbarian military trappings, his face and bare chest smeared with war paint—approached Father Hennepin and asked for the peace calumet. Receiving it, he filled the cup with tobacco, and having taken a few whiffs himself, presented it to one after another of the whole band. Each one smoked the pipe, though some with evident reluctance. The Frenchmen understood this to indicate that, for the present at least, their lives were to be spared. They were then informed that they must accompany the Indians up the river to their own country.

"I was not sorry," Father Hennepin writes, "in this conjuncture, to continue our discovery with this people."

CHAPTER VII.

Life with the Savages.

Ascending the River with the Savages. Religious Worship. Abundance of Game. Hardihood of the Savages. The War-Whoop. Savage Revelry. The Falls of St. Anthony. Wild Country Beyond. Sufferings of the Captives. Capricious Treatment. Triumphant Entrance. The Adoption. Habits of the Savages.

Father Hennepin and his two companions reëmbarked in their canoe, and, oppressed with varied feelings of anxiety and curiosity, recommenced their journey up the river. The thirty large canoes, filled with their captors, surrounded them. The current was rapid; the savages were seldom in a hurry, and their progress was slow. At night they always landed

and slept in the open air, unless it was stormy, when they would sometimes construct for themselves a frail shelter.

The devout ecclesiastic felt in duty bound daily to say his office, as it was called, in accordance with the rules of the Catholic Church. He had his breviary, composed of matins, lauds, vespers, and compline, or last prayer at night. These exercises he scrupulously performed. The superstitious Indians, seeing him open his book, and move his lips, imagined that he was practising some sort of incantation against them. Angrily they cried out against it, exclaiming, in their own language, "witchcraft."

Michael Ako, who had no ambition to receive a martyr's crown, entreated him, if he must say his prayers, to say them in secret. "If you persist in this course," said he, "you will so provoke the Indians, that we shall all be inevitably killed." Auguelle, who was more religiously inclined, joined in these entreaties, begging him to retire apart, morning and evening, into the forest for his devotions.

But the suspicions of the Indians were aroused. They had a great dread of diabolical influences. Whenever he entered the woods a party followed him. He could get no chance to pray out of their sight. At length he said to his companions:

"I cannot dispense with my prayers, whatever may be the consequences. If we are all massacred, I shall be the innocent cause of your death, as well as of my own."

To accustom the Indians to his mode of worship, he commenced chanting the litany of the Virgin. He had a well-trained, melodious voice. The Indians were pleased with the novel strains floating over the still waters. Paddle in hand they paused to listen. Adroitly, he led them to believe that the Good Spirit had taught him to sing, and had sent him to them for their diversion. It would seem, on the whole, that the Indians treated their captives with remarkable kindness. The canoe of the Frenchmen was heavily laden with articles for trade, and there were but three to paddle. They therefore found it very difficult to keep up with the well-manned war canoes of the savages. The chief placed one or two warriors on board the Frenchmen's boat, to help them stem the current. It was with difficulty that the little fleet accomplished more than twenty or twenty-five miles a day.

The savages were collected from various villages, and it was quite evident that they were still divided in opinion respecting the disposition to be made of their prisoners. One of the chiefs took the Frenchmen under his special protection. He caused them, at each encampment, to occupy the same cabin with him, or to sleep by his side. But there was another chief who clamored for their death. He had lost a son, killed by the Miamis. Every night his dismal howlings were heard, as he wailed piteously, endeavoring to stimulate his own passions, and to rouse his comrades to kill the Frenchmen, so as to seize their arms and avenge themselves upon the Miamis.

But others, who were far more considerate, said, If we kill or rob these Frenchmen, we shall soon use up the few goods they have in their canoe, and no other Frenchmen will dare to visit us to bring us more. But, if we treat them kindly, and purchase their goods fairly, others will come, bringing a great abundance. Thus we can all sell our skins and furs, and supply the whole tribe with the things we so greatly need.

As they were paddling along one day, a large flock of turkeys was seen feeding near the river. Cautiously Father Hennepin paddled near them, and one of his boatmen, taking careful aim, struck down three with a single shot. The savages, who had watched the proceeding with intense interest, were amazed. Many of them, perhaps all, had never seen a gun discharged before, though the knowledge of the arrival of the French, and the wonderful power of their guns, had been widely spread through the tribes. The canoes were all paddled to the shore. With the deepest interest they examined the dead turkeys, and reexamined the musket. The unseen bolt had struck them down at twice the distance their arrows would reach. An arrow could have killed but one. The bullet had killed three. "Manza ouacangege," exclaimed one of the chiefs, in astonishment, which signified, *The iron has understanding*.

The situation of the Frenchmen was very peculiar, as they hardly knew whether the savages regarded them as prisoners or not. Father Hennepin was still pursuing his original design of exploring the sources of the Mississippi. If the Indians were truly friendly, their companionship was an element of safety, and was to be desired. In order to test the question whether he was his own master, and could follow his own will, he suggested to the chief his design of turning back and following down the Mississippi to its mouth. He might thus find a short passage to the Indies, though he admits that he

thought it more probable that it emptied into the Gulf of Mexico, than into the Red Sea. The chiefs however, promptly signified that they could not consent to be thus deprived of the pleasure of his company.

Though the Indians paddled all day long, with great vigor, against the current, not stopping even to eat until their night's encampment, they never seemed at all fatigued. There was an ample supply of game for food. Having reared their frail shelters, if it rained, kindled their fires and cooked their suppers, they invariably had a war dance, each smoking in turn the war calumet. This was distinguished from the peace calumet by different colored feathers. Their whoops and yells were hideous. And there was something indescribably mournful in the wailings of those who had lost relatives during the war.

Fortunately for the French, all their expeditions had thus far been conducted under the control of religious men. Not an Indian had been killed or wronged by them. They had proved only great benefactors to the Indians. Had a solitary Indian been killed by any Frenchmen, these captives, in revenge, would have been put to death with tortures of the most diabolical cruelty. Had any Miami warriors fallen into the hands of these savages, awful would have been their doom. Father Hennepin and his companions could not but shudder as they listened to the wailing yells of those who mourned their dead, and witnessed the fiend-like expression of their countenances and gestures.

With the earliest dawn, after the night's encampment, some one gave a whoop, which instantly brought every man to his feet. No time was lost in washing or dressing. They generally, as a measure of protection against their enemies, endeavored to encamp upon the point of an island. While some went out to hunt for game, others replenished the fires, and cooked the breakfast, while still others sought the neighboring eminences to discover whether there were any smoke or other indications of a lurking foe. They then entered their birch canoes, which they did not leave until the close of the afternoon, when they landed for another night's encampment.

Thus for nineteen days they continued ascending the river. Father Hennepin estimated that they had made between three and four hundred miles.

One afternoon, as the thirty canoes were being paddled up the stream in a long line, a large bear was seen swimming across the river, a little above them. The canoes in advance promptly surrounded him, and he was speedily killed. Upon dragging him ashore he proved to be a monster in size, and very fat. It so happened that they were opposite a very beautiful prairie. The head chief, whose name was Aguipaguetin, ordered all the canoes ashore for a grand feast. The warriors decorated themselves with paint and feathers, and after partaking of what they considered a sumptuous feast, commenced the wild orgies of the war dance, with hideous yellings and contortions. They all leaped about on the greensward of the prairie, with their arms akimbo, and violently beating the ground with their feet, in measured tread.

The wailing for the dead was blended with their discordant cries. One of the chiefs who was very loud in his demonstrations of grief for his lost son, and who had previously urged putting the Frenchmen to death, frequently in the course of the frantic dance approached the Frenchmen, and placing his hands on each one of their heads, uttered the most piercing dirge-like cries. Father Hennepin could not understand the significance of this strange ceremony, but he had many fears that it indicated violence to come.

Hoping to conciliate the chief, he made him a very valuable present of knives, axes, beads, and tobacco in honor of the son whose loss he so deeply deplored. By these frequent presents, the small store of goods which the canoe could hold was rapidly disappearing. They were then on the borders of a wide expansion of the Mississippi resembling a lake. Father Hennepin gave it the name of Pepin, or the Lake of Tears, from the lugubrious cries of the chieftain in the funeral dance. The next day, or day after, quite a large herd of buffaloes was seen swimming across the river. The enormous creatures, thus taken at disadvantage, were easily killed. Thirty or forty, pierced by arrows and javelins, were soon dragged ashore. The savages had another feast, from the tongues and other most delicate morsels of the animal. All the remainder was left to putrefy, or be devoured by wild beasts. The frail canoes were so crowded that there was no room to store away any game. Neither was there need to do so, for every day brought almost invariably a full supply. It required hunger, and an acquired appetite for such food, to make it palatable; for it was eaten without bread or salt, or any other seasoning.

Some days the Indians seemed very good natured. Again, with no known cause, they were morose and threatening. Even

the chief who had protected them was as capricious in his conduct as a child. He would at times feed them abundantly, minister to all their wants, and caress them. Again he would allow them, in a stormy night, to be driven from his cabin, to find such shelter as they could. Usually some Indians would be placed in their canoe to help them paddle. Again they would be left to struggle unaided against the rushing flood. The Frenchmen could not speak a word of the language of their captors, or understand a word spoken to them. It is probable that they often misunderstood the significance of signs. But there was no difficulty in perceiving the difference between smiles and frowns, between blessings and curses.

On the nineteenth day of their navigation, the Indians reached one of their villages on the river banks. It was afterwards found that this spot was about twenty-five miles below a remarkable fall in the river, to which Father Hennepin gave, in honor of his patron saint, the name of the Falls of St. Anthony. This hamlet, far away in the north, was a cold and cheerless assemblage of savage homes. The families, in the culture and comforts of life, were but slightly elevated above the brutes around them. There were several chiefs who had lost sons during the war. The captives were given one to each of three of them. Nominally, they were to be adopted in the place of the lost ones. In reality, they were slaves, to be driven farthest from the fire, to have the most scanty supply of food, in case of want, and in all things to endure the hardest fare.

Having thus distributed their captives, the savages seized their property and divided it among themselves. They probably did not consider this an act of robbery, but since the Frenchmen had been graciously received as sons of the tribe, their goods should be appropriated to the public welfare. The village near the Falls of St. Anthony was but a temporary encampment. The tribe into whose hands the captives had fallen, was called Issatis. Their principal village was still farther up the river, nearly a hundred and fifty miles in a northwesterly direction. Probably in consequence of the innumerable windings of the stream, they abandoned their canoes at the Falls, and commenced the journey on foot, traversing an Indian trail which led through forest and moor, over prairie and mountain. It was indeed a wearisome and almost fatal journey to those newly adopted into such hardships of barbarian life. In those early days of spring, and in those high latitudes, it was often bitterly cold. There were remaining snow drifts, and deeper clammy mud and pools of water to be waded, skimmed over with ice, and freezing storms of rain and sleet. They encountered many rivers and swollen brooks, which they were compelled either to swim or ford.

These streams, flowing down from unknown regions in the north, were often encumbered with large blocks of ice. There was but little game in those dismal forests, and on those sear and bleak prairies. The savages were pitiless, and would often give but a meagre portion to their adopted brethren. Father Hennepin often divested himself of his clothes, bound them upon his head, and swam across these streams. Upon reaching the shore, his limbs would be so chilled and benumbed that he could scarcely stand. The blood would trickle down his body and limbs, from wounds inflicted by the sharp edges of the ice. The trail invariably led to spots where the crossings of the swollen streams were not very wide. Several of the Indians were men of gigantic stature. Father Hennepin was a tall man, but his companions were very short, and neither of them could swim. When they came to a ford where the water was over the heads of the short men these tall Indians would carry them across on their shoulders. When all were compelled to swim they would help the unfortunate men across on pieces of drift wood.

The Indians seemed to have sinews of steel. They were alike insensible to hunger, to drenched garments, and to freezing blasts. The celerity with which they pressed on their way, astonished the Europeans. On several occasions Father Hennepin, while traversing the broad bleak prairie, was quite in despair. His trembling, tottering limbs would scarcely support his body. Once, feeling unable to take another step, he threw himself upon the ground, declaring that there he must die. The rank and withered grass of the prairie was five or six feet high. Very deliberately one of the savages set fire to the grass. It burst forth in a consuming flame. "Now," said he, "you may follow us or be burned to death."

On one occasion, when Father Hennepin had thrown himself upon the ground, in utter exhaustion, one of the chiefs of the party came to him, and pulling up a quantity of dried grass, made a soft bed for him to lie down upon. Then seating himself by his side, he took from his pocket two pieces of wood, very dry. One was a small block of cedar, with an indentation in the centre, about two thirds of an inch in diameter. The other was a round peg, five or six inches long, which fitted into the hole in the block. This block he placed upon his knee, and fitting the peg into the socket, spun it round with wonderful rapidity between his two palms. Soon smoke began to appear, then a few sparks were elicited, and then a gentle flame rose from the dust of the charred wood. He lighted his pipe, and after smoking for a moment,

gave it Father Hennepin to smoke. He then put his hands affectionately on the Frenchman's head, and moaned and wept.

What did this all mean? Were the sympathies of the savage excited, in view of the sufferings of the white man? Were his tears caused to flow in anticipation of torture at the burning stake, to which he might suppose the victim to be doomed? Or was this an act of barbarian mourning over some loved one lost in battle? Father Hennepin could not interpret the deed. But he greatly feared that it indicated dreadful woes to come—sufferings, the thought of which was sufficient to agitate even a savage breast.

After a weary journey of five days, this party of forty or fifty warriors, with their captives, approached their destined village. It was far away in the northern wilderness, east of the Mississippi, which majestic stream had there dwindled into a rivulet. They were near the head waters of a river, since called the St. Francis. It was indeed a dreary and savage wild which they had penetrated, and from whose glooms the captives could not expect ever to emerge. In some way the inhabitants of the village had heard of the approach of the warriors, and quite a number of the women and children came out to meet them.

In a sort of triumphal entrance, like that of the ancient Romans, they took Auguelle, dressed him as gorgeously as they could, in Indian costume, painted his face, daubed his hair with grease, and fastened upon his head a plume of eagle's feathers, brilliantly colored. They placed a gourd in his hand, containing a number of round pebbles, which he was directed to shake for music, with the accompaniment of his voice, shouting a French song. The Frenchmen, in dreadful incertitude respecting their fate, were agreed in the conviction that it was good policy to do every thing in their power to conciliate their captors.

The warriors were much chagrined in returning from their expedition without a single scalp, without a single captive from their enemies, without having even struck a blow. It was necessary for them therefore to make as much parade as they could of their French prisoners. Yet the most ignorant Indian of them all could not but perceive that there was not much to be boasted of in a hundred and twenty warriors having picked up three peaceful canoe men, who had made no resistance, who had never done them any harm; who had come into their country as friends, making them rich presents, and who undeniably desired only to do them good.

They could not utter the scalp halloo, nor the yell announcing that they were bringing victims for the stake. But they made the forest resound with their war-whoops, and with their shouts of triumph. During the absence of the war party, the women and the old men had planted several stakes, and had gathered around their large quantities of dried grass, with which they intended to scorch and blister and consume the prisoners, whom they doubted not the victors would bring back. They were anticipating a grand gala day in dance and yell, as they witnessed the writhings of their victims and listened with delight to the shrieks which agony extorted.

Father Hennepin and his companions were appalled as they looked at these stakes and these preparations for torture, and feared that they were to occupy the places prepared for the Miamis. They, however, concealed their fears, carefully abstained from the slightest indication of anxiety, and assumed that they were contented and beloved members of the tribe which had adopted them.

It was about the 21st of April, 1680, when these unfortunate men, who had been cradled in France, were led into the miserable hovels of this village of savages. They were all conducted into the wigwam of the principal chief. Here, much to their encouragement, the chief presented them his own peace calumet, to smoke. He then gave them, in a birch bark dish, some boiled wild rice, seasoned with dry whortleberries. Half-famished as the Frenchmen were, this was by no means unpalatable food.

After this feast each one was conducted to the wigwam of the Indian by whom he had been adopted. These Indians lived in different villages several miles apart. The captives now found, much to their sorrow, that they were to be separated. Father Hennepin was adopted by the chief Aquipaguetin, and was conducted nearly three miles, often through marshes knee-deep with mud and water, till they came to a considerable stream, probably one of the upper tributaries of the St. Francis River. Here five wives of the chief, with their canoes, were obsequiously waiting the approach of their lord and master. A young son of the chief was also with them. The chief informed them all that he had adopted the white man in the place of the child he had lost; and that his wives were to call him their son, and that his son was to call him brother.

The women paddled the canoes down the dark stream fringed with gloomy evergreens and tangled underbrush, until they came to an island upon which there was a small cluster of cabins. Here was the residence of the chief. His wigwam was large, though but a single room, and was crowded with his wives and children. Father Hennepin was immediately presented with some boiled fish on a birch bark plate. But he was so very weak, from exposure, toil, and emaciation, that he could not rise from the ground without assistance.

The medical practice of the chief was peculiar; but either in consequence of it, or in spite of it, the sick man got well. A small hut, called a sweating cabin, was built, very tight. This was made more impervious to the air by covering it with buffalo skins. A large number of stones heated red hot were placed inside, which raised the temperature almost to that of an oven. The sick man crept in, followed by four medical practitioners. The entrance was closed. The Indians then began to wail and howl, probably to frighten off the evil spirits, who they supposed had invaded the sick man's body. At the same time they commenced rubbing their patient violently from head to foot. The perspiration oozed from every pore, and fell from him like rain drops. The heat was intolerable. He nearly fainted, and was for the time greatly debilitated. This regimen was followed three times a week for two or three weeks, when, Father Hennepin writes:

"I felt as strong as ever."

CHAPTER VIII.

Escape from the Savages.

Preaching to the Indians. Studying the Language. The Council. Speech of Ou-si-cou-dè. The Baptism. The Night Encampment. Picturesque Scene. Excursion on the St. Francis. Wonderful River Voyage. Incidents by the Way. Characteristics of the Indians. Great Peril. Strange Encounter with the Indian Chief. Hardships of the Voyage. Vicissitudes of the Hunter's Life. Anecdote. The Return Voyage.

There was a singular combination of intelligence and childish simplicity developed by the Indians. Father Hennepin had a small pocket compass, of which they stood in great need. When they saw him turn the needle with a key, they were awe-stricken, and whispered to one another that it was a spirit which had become obedient to the white man's will. He had an iron pot, with three feet resembling a lion's paws. This they never dared to touch, unless their hands were covered with some robe. What could have been the cause of this senseless fear, it is impossible to imagine. The same men on other subjects would reason with great logical acumen.

The good ecclesiastic was still very anxious for the conversion of the Indians. He manifested more solicitude for their salvation, than for his own restoration to liberty or the preservation of his own life. He immediately entered upon the vigorous study of the language. Having learned that the phrase, "Taket chia biheu," meant, "How do you call that," he commenced compiling a dictionary. He had a natural facility for the acquisition of languages, and made rapid progress. Fortunately he had paper and ink, and eagle's quills were easily obtained.

Hour after hour he spent inquiring the meaning of words and the names of things. The chiefs were quite pleased in teaching him and in seeing how fast he was acquiring the power of talking with them on all familiar subjects. His writing the words was an inexplicable mystery to them. They would often question him respecting the names of things. He would refer to his memorandum and then tell them correctly. This not only surprised but seemed to overawe them.

Father Louis Hennepin was called, by his two French boatmen, Père Louis. The chief who had adopted him was one day exhibiting to some chiefs who were visiting his wigwam, this wonderful power of the white man in recalling a difficult name, by looking at the characters he had written. Very solemnly he said:

"There must be an invisible spirit who tells Père Louis everything we say."

Neither of the other Frenchmen could write. The dress of the ecclesiastic was much more imposing than that of the boatmen. He was a tall, fine-looking man, ever moving with that dignity which seems instinctive in one accustomed to command. The keen-sighted Indians were not slow in recognizing his superiority of rank, and all considered him invested with supernatural powers. Often, when it rained as they were wishing to go hunting, they would entreat him to sweep away the clouds. His invariable reply was, pointing to the skies, "The Great Spirit there controls all things. I have no such ability." They stood in awe of his spiritual power, and their good feelings were won by his invariable serenity and kindness. They contributed beaver skins, to the value of about one hundred dollars, which they presented to him to induce him to remain and take some wives and have a richly furnished wigwam. But he declined the present, saying:

"I did not come among you to collect beaver skins, but to teach you to love and obey the Great Spirit. I wish to live as you do, sharing your hard fare."

Very wisely he assumed that he came voluntarily among them, and that when the time came for his departure, no one would think of throwing any obstacle in his way. It was a time almost of famine with the Indians. The summer birds had not returned. Game was very scarce. There was great suffering for want of food. And these strangely inconsistent creatures, while affecting the greatest kindness, would conceal the little food they had, get up in the night and eat it secretly, leaving Père Hennepin to the gnawings of hunger.

"Although women," he writes, "are for the most part more kind and compassionate than men, they gave what little fish they had to their children, regarding me as a slave made by their warriors in their enemy's country, and they reasonably preferred their children's lives to mine."

One day a deliberative council of Issati chiefs was held, to consult respecting various matters. Père Louis, having been adopted into the tribe as the son of the head chief, attended. He could understand nearly all that was said. There was a very able chief, by the name of Ou-si-cou-dè, who had manifested great esteem for the father. He rose and said:

"We all ought to feel indignant in view of the insulting manner in which our young men treated Père Louis on the way. They were young warriors without sense, and perhaps knew no better. They robbed him and wanted to kill him. They acted like hungry dogs, who snatch a bit of meat from the bark dish, and run. They abused men who brought us iron and merchandise, which we never had before."

Père Louis had considerable medical skill, and had brought with him several simple remedies. He was ever ready to attend the sick, and his success in medical practice gave him great renown. A little child was dying. According to the belief of Father Hennepin, if it should die unbaptized, it was lost. But how could he baptize the heathen child of heathen parents. Great was his anxiety, and fervent were his prayers for enlightenment. At length his kind heart obtained the victory over his theological creed. The solemn rite was performed with deepest emotion. Giving the child, a little girl, the Christian name of Antoinette, in honor of St. Anthony, he said:

"Creature of God, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

To his great grief he could not say mass, for want of wine and the appropriate vestments, which had been taken from him. He however spread an altar cloth, which he had retained about his person, upon the body of the child. When the spirit had taken its flight, he gave the remains Christian burial.

The news of the arrival of the Frenchmen in the villages of Issati, spread far and wide through the adjacent tribes. An embassy of Indians came to visit Father Hennepin from the distance of several hundred miles in the far west. They approached him with reverence, and had many questions to ask him. They were men of high rank and dignity, and their questions indicated much thought.

"We live," they said, "in a much milder clime, where there are immense plains and boundless prairies; where herds of thousands of buffaloes roam, and where deer and turkeys and innumerable other kinds of game are found in abundance. There is no hunger there, for food can always be obtained."

They expressed the earnest wish to take Father Hennepin back with them. But his own tribe were just about to set out on a grand hunting excursion, to the sunny realms of the southwest. A hundred and thirty families, and also two hundred and fifty warriors, embarked in a fleet of eighty birch canoes, about the middle of July. The embarkation was a wondrous spectacle, such as civilized eyes have rarely beheld, and can never witness again. A canoe had been provided for the three Frenchmen. But the two Frenchmen were jealous of the extraordinary respect with which Father Hennepin was treated and refused to take him on board.

As this strange fleet in a long and straggling line descended the St. Francis River, Father Hennepin stood upon the banks extending his hands in a benediction. Two Indians, passing by in a small canoe, seeing him thus deserted, paddled ashore and took him with them. This overloaded the canoe, and it began to leak. It required constant exertion on the part of Father Hennepin to bail out the water with a small birch cup, as fast as it ran in. The canoe did not weigh fifty pounds. Great care was necessary to preserve its equilibrium, for almost the slightest irregular motion of the body would upset it.

At night all landed. Sleeping in the canoes, or navigating them in the dark, was impossible. Here again one of the strangest of earthly spectacles was witnessed. Beneath the gloomy pines which fringed the stream, countless camp fires were gleaming. Men, women and children were running about in all directions. Some were cooking the supper; some, rearing frail shelters for the night. There was chattering and bandied jokes and laughter. The proud warriors, despising any menial employment, strutted about with lordly air.

Michael Ako was a most graceless fellow, and it was his influence which had excluded Father Hennepin from the canoe. But Anthony Auguelle was much more devoutly inclined. He was ashamed of their conduct. In the evening he sought out Father Hennepin, and offered a poor excuse for not receiving him into their canoe, saying it was so small and frail that had three been in it, it would inevitably have been swamped. The father was not deceived, though he accepted the apology.

After four days' paddling down the St. Francis River, the little fleet reached its mouth, where it empties into the Mississippi. They crossed to the west shore of the great river, and encamped upon an eminence there. It was impossible for Father Hennepin to be very accurate in his estimate of distances. He judged that they were then about twenty-four miles above the Falls of St. Anthony.

At this spot there was a forest of birch trees, and suitable wood for canoe frames. They had commenced the voyage with old canoes, which were frail and decayed, and in which they could not safely launch forth upon the turbulent flood of the Mississippi. The whole band consequently encamped for several days upon this eminence, to construct new canoes. The veteran hunters wandered through the forests and over the prairies, to hunt stags, deer, and beaver. The larger boys and girls brought to the encampment their arms full of birch bark, with carefully selected twigs for frames. The experienced women, with nimble fingers, joined the seams and fashioned the buoyant and graceful boat. All were busy.

But the hunters were unsuccessful. They brought in but little game. The whole community was fed upon thin broth, and there was but little of that. Father Hennepin, accompanied by Anthony Auguelle, in their great hunger, wandered about searching for wild berries. They found but few, and those which they ate often made them sick. The surly Michael Ako refused to go with them.

The tribe of Indians encamped in July, 1680, upon the Upper Mississippi, opposite the mouth of St. Francis River, numbered between four and five hundred souls. There was a great want of food in the camp. According to Father Hennepin's estimate, they were about two hundred miles above the mouth of the Wisconsin River. He told the Indians that when La Salle left Crèvecoeur for Fort Frontenac to obtain supplies, he promised to send to the mouth of the Wisconsin River, a reinforcement of men, with powder and guns, and very many other articles for traffic with the Indians.

They therefore consented that he should descend the river to this point, to obtain the supplies. These strange men were too polite to intimate that they distrusted his word and considered this merely a plan devised for his escape, as it probably was. They however, furnished him with a canoe only sufficiently large to bear him and Anthony Auguelle, with their needful luggage. By this contrivance, Michael Ako was left behind as a hostage for their return.

The two Frenchmen set out, in a birch bark canoe, for this river voyage, going and returning, of four hundred miles. The only articles they could obtain to take with them, to meet the casualties of the way, were a gun, fifteen charges of powder, a knife, an earthen pot, and two robes of beaver skins, as blankets for the night's encampments. They safely reached the falls. Taking the canoe and freight upon their shoulders, they carried them along the well-trodden trail which constituted the portage. Here they found five or six of their Indian hunters. One of them had climbed a gnarled oak tree opposite the foaming cataract, and was offering the following prayer, which Father Hennepin took down on the spot. Peculiar moans and wails, as of penitence, were blended with the prayer.

"O Thou who art a Great Spirit, grant that our nation may pass these Falls quietly without harm. Help us to kill buffaloes in abundance. May we take prisoners who shall serve us as slaves. Some of them we will put to death in thine honor. Aid us to avenge our kindred whom they have killed."

At the same time this devout savage hung upon the tree, as an offering to the spirit of the falls, a rich robe of fur, gorgeously fringed and embroidered with porcupines' quills, variously colored. A few miles below the falls, they met another party of four or five hunters. They were encamped upon a small island, and were feasting upon an abundance of buffalo meat. The Frenchmen paddled ashore and joined eagerly in the repast. Scarcely two hours had elapsed ere four or five more canoes were seen descending the river. Sixteen warrior hunters of their own party leaped ashore. They seemed to be very angry. Tomahawk in hand, they knocked their cabin to pieces, and seized all the meat. Father Hennepin was astonished, and inquired what this meant. One of the warriors, who professed to be his uncle, replied:

"These men, contrary to our laws, have gone on a buffalo hunt before the rest. Thus, while they have furnished themselves with an abundance of meat, they have frightened away the buffaloes, and left us destitute. In punishment, we have a right to strip them."

The two solitary voyagers paddled down the stream, as they judged, one hundred and sixty miles. During this time they killed but one deer, which they shot as it was swimming across the river. The July heat was such that the flesh could be kept but for a few hours. They saw many turtles. But for a long time in vain they endeavored to take one. The timid animals would plunge into the water the moment they heard the least noise. At last they succeeded in taking one of them. But as Father Hennepin endeavored to cut off the turtle's head, he came very near losing one of his own fingers in its sharp jaws. The Frenchmen were very hungry, and had paddled their canoe to the shore. While the father was endeavoring to dress the turtle to be cooked. Anthony, with his gun, went back into the prairie, hoping to shoot some game. Father Hennepin chanced to look up from his work, and behold, a gust of wind had swept the canoe from the shore out into the stream, and it was floating rapidly down on the strong current.

Unless the canoe could be recovered, this would prove a terrible calamity. Not a moment was to be lost. Divesting himself of most of his clothing, he plunged into the stream, and being a strong swimmer, soon overtook the boat. It floated buoyant as an eggshell. He could not get into it. By pushing it before him he succeeded in effecting a landing, about half a mile down stream, and quite cut of sight of the spot he had left. In the meantime Anthony returned. Seeing the half-dressed turtle, and the father and the canoe both gone, he was thrown into a dreadful panic. He could not doubt that some hostile Indians had appeared and carried them both away, and that he was abandoned to perish of starvation. He went back into the prairie, to ascend an eminence which commanded a view of the country for some distance around.

Father Hennepin paddled up the stream with all possible diligence, drew the canoe well upon the shore, and had just re clothed himself, when he saw, near by, a herd of sixty buffaloes, swimming across the river. Anthony had the only gun. The father ran back into the prairie, shouting for him with all his might. It was indeed a joyful cry which reached the ears of Anthony. Eagerly he responded to it. They sprang into the canoe, pursued the buffaloes, and succeeded in shooting one. They towed him to the bank of the river. The father paddled, Anthony holding the huge carcass by the horns. But they could not drag the creature ashore. They could only cut off the tender morsels and leave the remainder to float down the stream. In consequence of their great hunger they ate so voraciously, that they were both made sick, and for two days could not leave their camp. Father Hennepin writes:

"Never have we more admired God's providence than during this voyage. We could not always find game. And when we did, could take but little meat with us, as our canoe was so small, and besides, the excessive heat spoiled it. When we embarked in the morning, we seldom knew what we should have to

eat during the day. But the eagles, which were very common in those vast countries, frequently dropped from their claws large fishes, which they were taking to their nests!"

On the 11th of July, as they were paddling down the river in search of the mouth of the Wisconsin, they were startled by the sudden appearance of a large canoe descending rapidly upon them, containing eleven warriors. They proved to be the chief Aquipaguetin, and ten of his braves. This savage chieftain had been very unwilling that his adopted son should leave the tribe for this voyage, though the other Indians had given their consent. There was a frown on his brow, and severity in his tones, as he asked whether they had yet found the Frenchmen, who were to bring the goods. They all landed and ate together. Then the chief and his party started off, leaving Father Hennepin behind, and with vigorous paddling drove their canoe rapidly down the stream. Rather menacingly the chief said that he would go to the Wisconsin River, and that if the Frenchmen were there, he would take charge of their goods.

After three days' absence, he again appeared, with his canoe of warriors, on his return. He had been to the mouth of the river. There were no signs of the Frenchmen there. He came back in a very unamiable mood. Father Hennepin had landed, and was alone in a frail cabin which he had reared as a shelter from the hot sun. Anthony had gone into the prairie for food. Father Hennepin writes:

"Aquipaguetin, seeing me alone, came up tomahawk in hand. I seized two pocket pistols, which we had regained from the Indians, and a knife. I had no intention of killing my pretended father, but only wished to frighten him, and to prevent his killing me, in case he had that intention."

Probably the savage had no such murderous designs. He informed his adopted son that there were no Frenchmen at the Wisconsin, and none had been there, and therefore urged his return up the river. There was no alternative. But Father Hennepin and Anthony could not keep pace with the eleven-oared, or rather paddled, canoe of the savages. They crept along slowly after them. They thus paddled up the swift current of the Mississippi two hundred miles, running the risk, Hennepin says, of perishing of hunger.

They had but ten charges of powder left. These they divided into twenty, and succeeded in killing some wild pigeons. At one time, for two days, they had no food whatever, though they landed and searched for game. They found a fish whose flesh was almost putrid, dropped by an eagle. With bits of this they baited two hooks, which they floated from the stern of the canoe. Father Hennepin then fell upon his knees and prayed to St. Anthony that he would come to his relief. While praying, they perceived a strain upon the lines, and running to the canoe, drew in two fishes, so large that they could with difficulty take them from the water. They broiled pieces upon the coals, and the starving men made an abundant repast.

The next morning they met the remainder of the Indians whom they had left above the Falls of St. Anthony. They were descending the river, in search of more southern hunting grounds. Michael Ako was with them. He had developed want of courage and energy which excited the contempt of the savages. There was a large number of canoes, composing this fleet, crowded with a motley group of men, women, and children. They had encountered herds of buffaloes, and were well supplied with food.

Father Hennepin and Anthony again joined them, and accompanied them back down the river, as he says, about eighty leagues. But as we have before remarked, we cannot place much reliance upon his estimate of distances. The discomforts of this voyage must have been innumerable. The crowded canoes, the loathsome personal habits of the savages, elevated but little above the beasts, the blistering midday sun, the drenching storms and showers, the cheerless encampments, often upon the open prairie with no protection whatever from wind and rain, and the food often scanty, consisting of nothing but flesh, without any seasoning, boiled in earthen pots, or broiled upon the coals, must have rendered the excursion irksome in the extreme to civilized men accustomed to the comforts of European life.

In our last chapter we left the Indians, several hundred in number, in a fleet of canoes descending the upper waters of the Mississippi, in search of game. The three Frenchmen were with them. They were somewhere near the mouth of the Wisconsin River. Conscious that they were trespassing upon hunting grounds which other tribes claimed, they practised the utmost caution to elude their enemies. There were two hundred and fifty warriors, thoroughly armed with all the weapons of savage warfare, who composed the guard of the tribe.

Whenever they landed, they selected a spot where they could hide their canoes in the tangled brush which often fringed the banks of the river. Some warriors were sent to the tops of the adjacent eminences to see if there were any indications of hostile parties in the vicinity. They then pushed back twenty or thirty miles into the prairie land, where they almost invariably found herds of buffaloes grazing. Without horses to aid in the pursuit, and with only arrows and javelins as weapons, the killing of a buffalo was indeed an arduous task. Still, in the course of a few weeks, a hundred and twenty were slaughtered. They jerked the meat; that is, they cut it into very thin strips and hung them in the sun over a smouldering fire, so that it was both smoked and dried at the same time.

One day an Indian ran a splinter far into his foot, inflicting a very serious wound. Father Hennepin made a deep incision in the sole, to draw out the wood. He was performing the painful operation when an alarm was given, that foes were approaching the camp. The wounded Indian immediately sprang upon his feet, seized his arms and rushed to meet the enemy, regardless of his swollen, throbbing foot. The alarm proved a false one. A herd of eighty stags in the distance had been imagined to be hostile warriors. The excitement being over, it was with very great difficulty the crippled savage could hobble his way back to the camp.

When Father Hennepin and Anthony Auguelle rejoined the Indians, they were again separated, and each was taken into the family by which he had been adopted. In their voyaging, as they passed from point to point in the river, there was assigned to the father the duty of conveying in his small canoe, a shrivelled Indian woman, eighty years of age, and three little children. These long years had not sweetened the woman's disposition. She was a terrible scold, and often threatened to beat the children with her paddle.

Thus they wandered about in this successful buffalo hunt, until the close of July, when they were returning to their village far up the St. Francis River. They were here not very far west of the western end of Lake Superior. As they were returning, two wandering members of the tribe came in, and stated that they had been to Lake Superior, that they found there five Frenchmen, and that when they told them that there were three of their countrymen with the Issati tribe, the Frenchmen were very anxious to come to them, as they could not imagine by what roundabout way they had reached those distant regions.

Soon after, they met on the Mississippi River M. de Luth, with five French soldiers, descending the stream in a canoe. There is some confusion in Father Hennepin's narrative here, so that it is impossible to ascertain at what point of the river the two parties of Frenchmen met. On the 14th of August they all reached the villages of the Issati. As they were ascending the river they passed the grave of an Indian warrior. Many of the savages cast upon it some valuable article, in token of regard for the departed. Father Hennepin, who understood the Indians thoroughly, spread upon it a blanket. M. Luth contributed nothing. The generous act of Hennepin was exceedingly gratifying to the Indians.

Soon after their return, they had a great feast, Father Hennepin and M. Luth were both present. In the midst of the entertainment one of the chiefs, who was a relative of the deceased warrior, brought in a large buffalo robe, very softly dressed, one side being brilliantly embroidered with variously colored porcupines' quills, while the curly wool remained upon the other. This robe was neatly folded, and upon it was placed a birch-bark dish filled with food. On this, as a tea-tray, he presented the dish to the father. After he had eaten the meat, the chief spread the robe over his shoulders, saying:

"He whose body thou didst cover, now covers thine. He has carried tidings of thee to the land of spirits. Brave was thy act in his regard. All the nation praises thee for it."

He then reproached M. Luth for not having paid any tribute of respect to the remains of the dead. M. Luth replied that he covered the bodies only of those who were chiefs, of the same rank with himself. The chief replied:

"Père Louis is a greater captain than thou art; for his robe is more beautiful than thine. We have sent his robe to our allies who are distant more than three moons' journey from our country."

By his *robe* the chief meant the rich dress, embroidered with silver lace, which the ecclesiastic wore at mass, and which he called his "brocade chasuble." This garment had so dazzled the eyes of the Indians, that they had appropriated it to themselves as of supernatural splendor.

Toward the end of September, Father Hennepin informed the Indians that it was his wish and that of his two companions, to return with the five other Frenchmen to their own country; and that then they would fit out expeditions laden with goods to trade with these distant tribes. The Indians gave their consent. The length of the journey to Montreal by the route they must take, they estimated at twenty-four hundred miles.

The eight Frenchmen set out in two canoes. They paddled down the St. Francis, and the Mississippi to the mouth of the Wisconsin. On their way they met a fleet of one hundred and forty canoes, filled with about two hundred and fifty warriors. The chiefs visited the Frenchmen, and treated them with greatest kindness.

Entering the Wisconsin, they paddled up its lone and silent banks one hundred and twenty miles, as they supposed. They followed the same route which Father Marquette had previously pursued going in an opposite direction. They carried their canoes and their effects on their shoulders, across a portage of a mile and a half to Fox River. Here they reëmbarked, following a river of wonderful windings, and through a series of magnificent and beautiful lakes, and through a country which they described as charming in the extreme, until they entered the magnificent expanse of Green Bay, at its southern extremity. They had accomplished, as they judged, about twelve hundred miles of their journey. Father Hennepin writes:

"I had not celebrated mass for over nine months, for want of wine. I had still some hosts. We remained two days to rest, sing the Te Deum, high mass, and preach. All our Frenchmen went to confession and communion, to thank God for having preserved us amid so many wanderings and perils."

They purchased for a gun, a canoe, large enough to contain them all. With this they paddled a hundred leagues, until they reached Mackinac. The blasts of approaching winter were beginning to sweep these cold regions. Here they spent the winter.

At this point they found, as they expected, an important military and trading post. Many Indians, even from remote tribes, were continually coming and going. Father Hennepin engaged very earnestly in preaching to the French, and in trying to teach the Indians the Gospel of Christ. They were deeply impressed with the heroism he had exhibited in his long and perilous journey. They said that the father must have been protected by the Great Spirit, for had any of the Indians attempted to go so far they would certainly have been put to death by these distant tribes.

Early in April, 1681, the father, with a few boatmen, set out on his long voyage to Fort Frontenac, at the extreme end of Lake Ontario. A broad belt of thick ice still fringed the shores of these northern lakes. For thirty miles they dragged their canoes over the ice of Lake Huron; and then, as they came to thin ice, launched them upon this fresh water sea. They sailed along the lake a "hundred leagues," closely following the shore, landing every night, and living mainly upon white-fish, which were caught in abundance, in twenty fathoms water. They passed "The Strait" and Lake St. Clair for "thirty leagues." In the still waters of Lake St. Clair they killed with an axe, thirty sturgeons which had come to the shallow waters of the banks to spawn. Near this place they came upon an Ottawa Indian chief, wan and woe-stricken, who told him that he had been unsuccessful in hunting, and his wife and five children had all starved to death.

Emerging from "The Strait," they entered Lake Erie, and paddled along its shores a hundred and twenty leagues. Carrying their canoes and effects upon their backs, they passed the great Falls of Niagara, and again took to the water, coasting along the southern shore of Lake Ontario. After a voyage of about ninety miles, they reached a large village of Seneca Indians, on the southern shore of the lake. It was the middle of May. These Indians had constant intercourse with the French in Canada, and were in cordial alliance with them. Father Hennepin attended a council of the chiefs, accusing them of having enslaved, as he had learned by the way, several Indians of the Ottawa tribe, who were also allies of the French. The chiefs made many apologies; said that the deed had been perpetrated by some mad young warriors, and that the captives should be restored to their tribe.

One of the chiefs, named Teganeot, speaking in the name of all assembled in the council, presented Father Hennepin with several rich furs, which were valued at about twenty-five dollars. The father accepted the gift, but immediately passed it over to the son of the chief, saying:

"I give it to you, that you may purchase such things as you need of the French traders. I cannot accept any presents. But I

will report your kind feelings to the French Governor."

Reëmbarking, they continued their voyage forty leagues, when they reached Fort Frontenac. Father Hennepin was received with great rejoicing, as one risen from the dead. After a short tarry, they again entered their canoes, and descending the rapids of the St. Lawrence, in two days reached Montreal, sixty miles distant from the fort. Here Count Frontenac resided. He was Governor of all the French possessions in the New World.

"This governor," Father Hennepin writes, "received me as well as a man of his probity can receive a missionary. As he believed me killed by the Indians, he was for a time thunderstruck. He beheld me wasted, without a cloak, with a garment patched with pieces of buffalo skin. He took me with him, twelve days, to recover, and himself gave me the meat I was to eat, for fear I should eat too much, after so long a diet. I rendered to him an exact account of my voyage, and represented to him the advantages of our discovery."

CHAPTER IX.

The Abandonment of Fort Crèvecœur.

Departure of La Salle. Fathers Membré and Gabriel. Their Missionary Labors. Character of the Savages. The Iroquois on the War Path. Peril of the Garrison. Heroism of Tonti and Membré. Infamous Conduct of the Young Savages. Flight of the Illinois. Fort Abandoned. Death of Father Gabriel. Sufferings of the Journey to Mackinac.

It will be remembered that on the last of February, 1680, M. La Salle left the fort at Crèvecœur, with four Frenchmen and an Indian guide, for his perilous journey of four hundred leagues, through the pathless wilderness, to Frontenac, at the eastern extremity of Lake Ontario. His chosen companion, Lieutenant Tonti, was intrusted with the military charge of the garrison. Fathers Membré and Gabriel, both inspired with the noblest spirit of missionary enterprise, were appointed to instruct and, if possible, to convert the Indians.

They raised a pretty capacious log-cabin, which was both their residence and their chapel. This humble sanctuary was every day crowded with Indians from various tribes. A very large Indian village was on the shores of Lake Peoria, about half a mile from the cabin of the missionaries. Father Membré, a true apostle of Jesus Christ, wrote an account of the momentous scenes which transpired. To his narrative we are indebted for the facts which we now give.

One of the chiefs, Oumakouka, adopted, according to Indian custom, Father Membré as his son. He ever welcomed him to a warm seat by his wigwam fire, and presented him with tender morsels of game. While Father Gabriel spent the most of his time in the fort with Lieutenant Tonti and the workmen, Father Membré, who was soon quite familiar with their language, devoted much of his time to the instruction of the Indians in their wigwams. This was the arrangement which La Salle had made. He felt that the wild and reckless spirits in the garrison needed the restraints of the constant presence of their spiritual father. Individuals might otherwise be guilty of violating the rights of the Indians, and thus the whole of the little community might be involved in ruin.

The large Indian village where Father Membré exerted his ministry contained a population of about eight thousand souls. There were also a large number of villages within a circle of fifty miles in diameter, some of which belonged to other tribes. These the unwearied missionary frequently visited. All these Indians made their wigwams of mats of braided flat rushes. They were tall, well formed, and very skilful archers. But the good father does not give a very flattering account of the characters they developed. They were genuine loafers; idle, excessively superstitious, quarrelsome, under scarcely any restraints of law, and they would steal everything upon which they could lay their hands. Their lands were exceedingly fertile that, with very slight labor, they had an abundance of corn. Pounded corn, mixed with water and baked in the ashes, would afford but a meagre repast in the humblest log-cabin. It was deemed all-sufficient in the

wigwam.

All who could afford it had several wives. They were as unfeeling as brutes. If a wife displeased her lord and master, he would mercilessly cut off her nose; and with apparently as little concern as a dog-fancier trims the ears of a terrier. United with these execrable traits of character, there were others, to which we have already alluded, which were alluring. In the summer, the men often went without any clothing, except moccasins made of buffalo hide.

These poor savages were engaged in almost incessant wars. Even the religion of Jesus, whose great mission was to bring peace on earth and goodwill to man, has not yet been able to obliterate these sanguinary propensities from the human heart. England, France, Germany, are great slaughterhouses, where millions of men have hurled themselves upon each other in demoniac strife. What, then, could be expected of savages.

The Miamis of the north were organizing an expedition against the Illinois. The rumor reached the Indian village at Crève-cœur, and created great consternation. Lieutenant Tonti endeavored to inspire the Indians with a spirit of defence. He taught them how to surround their village with palisades, and influenced them to build a fort with intrenchments. Some of the French garrison, weary of the restraints of the fort, deserted, and wandered away among the Indian tribes; and so incorporated themselves with the savages, in dress, in war-paint, in habits, and in taking Indian wives, that it required very close scrutiny to distinguish them from the Indians.

The two missionaries, conscious that there was no substantial remedy for the ills of humanity but in the regeneration of the soul which the religion of Jesus enjoined, consecrated, with increasing zeal, all their energies in the endeavor to make Frenchmen and Indians good men, new creatures in Jesus Christ.

One of the Illinois chiefs, Asapista by name, became very strongly attached to good Father Gabriel, and adopted him as his son. This was quite a favor. The generality of the Indians, like the populace everywhere, were exceedingly fickle. The friendship and caresses of to-day might be hatred and the tomahawk tomorrow. The adoption of a stranger into the tribe, as the son of a chief, was a great security against any sudden outburst of suspicion, which might lead to massacre.

The Gospel of Christ makes slow headway against the wickedness of man. As in our own enlightened times, the multitude listened, were respectful to their teachers, even revered them, but did not heed or obey.

"With regard to conversions," Father Membré writes, "I cannot rely on any. There is in these savages such an alienation from the faith, so brutal and narrow a mind, such corrupt and anti-Christian morals, that much time would be needed to hope for any fruit. It is however true, that I found many of quite docile character. We baptized some dying children, and two or three dying persons who manifested proper dispositions. As these people are entirely material in their ideas, they would have submitted to baptism, had we liked, but without any knowledge of the sacrament."

During the summer, the Indians wandered about in large hunting expeditions. The missionaries accompanied these bands, seeking day by day opportunities to teach them. Father Membré also visited several remote tribes. He found much to discourage him. He said that their blindness and obduracy were quite indescribable.

On the 10th of September, 1680, when the Indians had generally returned from their hunting parties, and were loitering about in indolent groups, with nothing to do, an Indian, from an allied tribe, came rushing almost breathless into the village, with the tidings that a united army of the Iroquois and the Miamis from the north, five hundred in number, had already entered their territory, and were on the rapid march to attack their village by surprise. He also made the astounding assertion that M. La Salle himself was leading this band of hostile warriors. There was no foundation for this last statement excepting that the chief of the Iroquois wore a European coat and hat. This led the courier to think he was La Salle, whom he had seen similarly dressed.

The Indians, accepting this statement, of course believed that there was treachery. Supposing the Frenchmen at Crève-cœur were prepared to join the invading army immediately upon its arrival, they resolved to tomahawk them all. The peril of the French was great. The Indians, like children, were apt to act first and think afterwards. The French were entirely unprepared for such a sudden change of feeling.

But Lieutenant Tonti, whose presence of mind never forsook him even in the greatest perils, ran from the fort to the

village, and assured the warriors that La Salle was not with their foes, and that he was ready to muster his whole force, at the garrison, with their fire-arms, and accompany the warriors to repel the enemy. This caused another change of public sentiment. All looked to the French as their deliverers. In a few hours several hundred warriors, with the French, were on the march.

The arrow from the bow is but a feeble weapon compared with the bullet from rifle. The Iroquois, having had much intercourse with the French in Canada, were many of them supplied with fire-arms. They were allies of the French, and were very anxious to preserve friendship with them. The Illinois Indians, being more remote, had not been able to obtain the efficient European instruments of warfare.

The two parties approached each other; and the Illinois, guided by Tonti, were placed in a commanding position to resist attack. The allies were much disappointed in finding their plan of assailing the village by surprise frustrated. They paused in the march; and the two armies for some time looked each other in the face, neither venturing to commence the assault. The result of the battle was at least doubtful. So many of the Iroquois warriors were armed with muskets or rifles, and had become so skilful in the use of them that, in Indian warfare, dodging from rock to rock and from tree to tree, they were fully equal to the French. Whatever might be the result of the battle, it was certain that many on each side must be slain.

Lieutenant Tonti called the chiefs of the Illinois around him, and, after quite an earnest colloquy, induced them to consent that he should go to the Iroquois chiefs and endeavor to avert hostilities. It was a perilous enterprise. While some of the Indian chieftains were of much moral worth, there were many savages who were miserable wretches, and over whom the chiefs had but very little control.

Lieutenant Tonti, partly from necessity, partly from choice, was dressed mainly in Indian costume. As the European garments of the Frenchmen were worn out, they were constrained to supply their place with deer-skin jackets and leggins, generally painted and fringed after the fashion of the natives. Thus Lieutenant Tonti, at the council of the chiefs, in general appearance resembled the rest. But the Christian Fathers always wore a long black gown. As we have mentioned, they were called by that name among all the tribes, "The Black Gowns." Their teachings, their ministrings at the couches of the sick and dying, their utter renunciation of the character of warriors, and their self-denying devotion to the welfare of the Indians, had caused them to be generally revered. But, among the untutored tribes as in almost every village of our land, there were "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort," who hated the clergy.

Father Membré, with that calm, peaceful Christian chivalry which cannot be surpassed amidst the tumult and carnage of the field of battle, offered to accompany Lieutenant Tonti on his mission of peace.

The two opposing forces were facing each other, with the space of perhaps an eighth of a mile between them. Both parties were concealed, as far as possible, though occasionally the nodding plumes of a warrior were visible, as he moved from one hiding-place to another. Lieutenant Tonti, holding high above his head, as a flag of truce, the gorgeously decorated calumet of peace, accompanied by Father Membré in his long, flowing black robe, boldly moved forward toward the Iroquois encampment. Several of the chiefs met him, and were surprised to find that he was a Frenchman. He addressed them in their own language, in substance as follows:

"I bring you the calumet of peace. The Illinois, against whom you are waging war, are our brothers. They are the friends and allies of the French. The great father in Canada is the protector both of the Iroquois and of the Illinois. He cannot see one destroy the other."

The chiefs were deeply impressed by this statement. It would be ruinous for them to bring down the terrible arm of the French power upon their nation. The French could withhold entirely from them arms and ammunition, and could supply their foes abundantly with these terrible materials of war. Such were the thoughts of the considerate chieftains. They perceived the necessity of heeding the remonstrance. But the reckless young men, who had their reputation as warriors to make, and whose hearts were glowing with the thought of returning to their village waving gory scalps as the trophies of their heroism, were resolved that there should be no peace. To render a battle inevitable they determined to kill the two envoys from the Illinois camp.

A small band of these ferocious, savage young men, crept up, cautiously and unperceived, to a spot within arrow-shot of the place where the conference with the chiefs was held. Suddenly they discharged several arrows upon Tonti and Membré, which whizzed by, fortunately, without hitting them. The perfidious wretches then rushed forward, with gleaming knives. The chiefs interposed to save those who were under the sacred protection of the calumet.

One young Indian, with vigorous arm and a gleaming knife, aimed a blow at the heart of Lieutenant Tonti. As by a miracle, he escaped from death. The blow struck him to the ground, and the blood gushed forth from a fearful gash. But the point of the knife glanced from a rib, and did not penetrate the heart. All this was the work of an instant. The chiefs, veteran warriors, who had a reputation for honor to sustain, promptly drew their knives, surrounded the envoys with their protection, and drove off the assassins. Tenderly they bound up the wound of Tonti, expressed to him their grief and indignation, assured him that hostilities should cease and that they would immediately withdraw, with their warriors, back to their own village.

The wounded lieutenant, aided by his clerical friend, returned to the Illinois camp, with the glad tidings that the Iroquois had consented to peace. Several hours passed, and the Iroquois bands, instead of retiring, were continually drawing nearer, in a very suspicious manner, apparently with the intention of surrounding the Illinois, and cutting off their retreat. The Illinois chief held another council, and requested Father Membré to go back to the Iroquois and inquire into the reason of their conduct. Father Membré writes:

"This was not a very agreeable mission to a savage tribe. Nevertheless, I made up my mind, and God preserved me from all harm."

The chiefs received him kindly. They were ashamed of the course which the warriors, notwithstanding their remonstrances, were pursuing. They said to him frankly:

"Our real trouble is that we are starving. We expected to find abundant food in the Illinois village, and have consumed all we brought with us. Our march has frightened away the game, so that we can expect to find but little on our return. We are in danger of perishing for want of food."

Membré brought back this message. At his suggestion an abundance of food was immediately sent, on many heavily-laden shoulders, to the Illinois camp. The good father accompanied this peaceful embassy, and slept in the camp of the Illinois. Still the young savages were determined, if possible, to bring on a fight. They longed for the excitement of battle. The hideous war-whoop, with the shrieks of women and children, falling beneath their tomahawks, was music to their ears. The burning wigwams, the mangled bodies, the bloody scalps, were pictures of beauty to their eyes. And, most glorious of all, to their purely unangelic natures, was the triumphant return to their village with prisoners to run the dreadful gauntlet; and to writhe, and perhaps be forced to scream, beneath the fiend-like tortures of the stake.

The next morning the Iroquois warriors, instead of turning their steps homewards, flocked, in large numbers, into the village of the Illinois. They were evidently bent upon picking a quarrel. They swaggered through the streets, insulted the women, trampled the corn-fields, and went even so far as to disinter, and knock about the bones of the dead.

It soon became manifest to all, that a bloody conflict was inevitable. The chiefs directed all the women and children to retire as silently and unobserved as possible, and hide themselves in the forest, behind a distant hill. Here they were in the vicinity of a trail which led quite directly to the Mississippi River. If the Illinois were defeated in the battle, they could by this line of retreat, cross the Great River, and take refuge with a friendly tribe upon the other side. Then the Illinois warriors, in a body, without venturing upon an engagement abandoned the village to the Iroquois, and commenced a precipitate flight to the Mississippi. They were not pursued. The Iroquois chiefs would not lead the young men in an enterprise which they deemed so dishonorable.

As we have said, the control of the chiefs over the daring and lawless spirits of the young savages was feeble. The French garrison was greatly weakened by death and desertion. There was much reason to fear that the savages would fall upon them, and kill them all, for the sake of the plunder they would find in the fort. There was nothing to detain the missionaries. Upon the retirement of the Iroquois, they would be left in a lone and silent wilderness.

Lieutenant Tonti, and his two clerical associates, Fathers Membré and Gabriel, held a consultation, and decided upon an immediate withdrawal. It was the 13th of September, 1680. Their desire was to go back to Mackinaw, which station La Salle would necessarily revisit on his return from Frontenac, with reinforcements and supplies. Their numbers were so diminished, and their departure so hasty, that they all embarked in one frail canoe. The chiefs so far restrained the young savages, that no attack was made upon them. But the leaders of this feeble little garrison were well aware, that in all probability bands of the young men would pursue them, to lie in ambush at some narrow passage of the river, and cut them off, if possible.

They left the fort about noon, packing in their canoe only a few articles of absolute necessity. All the afternoon they plied their paddles vigorously, ascending the Illinois River, and passing through the broad expanse of Lake Peoria. Their canoe was leaky and heavily laden. The current was strong, and their passage slow. They did not venture to land until after dark, that the landing might not be seen by any foe, skulking through the forest along the banks of the river. They also took the precaution to seek their night's encampment on the side of the stream opposite that which was occupied by the Iroquois band.

At an early hour the next morning they resumed their voyage, still ascending the Illinois River. They had paddled along but a few hours, and had reached a point between twenty-five and thirty miles above the fort, when their dilapidated canoe leaked so badly, that they were forced to land, that they might repair it. They were on the borders of one of Illinois' most beautiful prairies. The smooth and verdant expanse, extending to the horizon, was dotted with groves, presenting a landscape of enchanting loveliness.

Father Gabriel, as he could be of no service in repairing the boat, decided to walk into one of the groves at a little distance from the river, with his prayer-book in his hand, that he might, alone in those lonely solitudes, worship his Creator. It was a temple for devout meditation and adoration such as no cathedral reared by man's hand ever presented.

It took all day to repair the canoe. Hour after hour passed away, and Father Gabriel did not return. His companions began to feel a little solicitude about his safety. Toward evening Father Membré set out in search of him. He was not in the grove. There were no traces of him to be seen. There were several groves in the distance; and there were gentle eminences in the rolling prairie, behind which he might be concealed. The anxious father ascended one after another of these eminences, but nowhere over the vast plain could he catch any sight of the lost one. Again and again he shouted. The silence of the prairie was the only response to his cry.

Greatly alarmed, he returned to his companions, who had now completed their repairs of the canoe. The whole party then set out on the search. They moved in various directions; hallooed, and fired their guns. All was in vain. Night had settled over the prairie, when they reassembled in great despondency at the canoe. Father Gabriel was greatly loved. He was a gentle, self-sacrificing man, of kindly words and generous deeds.

The party crossed the river, as a precaution against an attack from any band of the Iroquois who might be following them. They then built a large fire, that its rays, shining far and wide over the prairie, might arrest the eye of the lost one, and guide him on his return. The morning dawned. Still there was no clue to the disappearance of Father Gabriel. The voyagers returned to the other side of the river, and lingered there until the middle of the forenoon.

Lieutenant Tonti then said that it was clear that their companion had not wandered into the prairie and become lost; for from any of the eminences he could have discerned the line of the river, nor could he have wandered so far as neither to have heard the report of their guns nor seen the light of their fire. It was certain that he had either been cut off by some prowling band of savages, or that he had decided to follow up the banks of the river on foot, intending to enter the canoe when it came along. In either case it was their duty to press forward on their journey as rapidly as possible.

For a long time they heard no more of Father Gabriel. Finally they learned that some young savages, of the Kikapoo tribe, who were at war with the Iroquois, were prowling about when they caught sight of the father engaged in his devotions in the grove. His eyes were probably closed, and his whole soul absorbed in prayer. There is one advantage which the arrow has over the bullet. It performs its deadly mission without making any noise. The wily savages, unseen and unheard, crept near, and piercing him with their arrows he fell dead. They took his scalp, threw the body into a ditch, covering it with a few leaves, and fled. When they arrived at their village they very boastfully exhibited the scalp

of the defenceless missionary, as that of an Iroquois warrior. To obtain this renown was the only object of the cowardly assassins in their murderous deed.

Thus died Father Gabriel. He was the last scion of a noble family of Burgundy. He had renounced his inheritance, and all the brilliant prospects of a courtly life, to consecrate himself to the service of his Saviour, the Son of God. In his own country, his family name, his many virtues, and his entire devotion to the ministry upon which he had entered, had elevated him to high positions of influence and honor. All these he relinquished, after he had passed his three-score years, to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to the savages of North America. He landed in Canada, in the summer of 1670. For some time he was employed as chaplain of Governor Frontenac. Here he was untiring in his efforts to instruct the Indians. Having become in a good degree familiar with their language and customs, he embarked with La Salle to establish new missions in the vast and unexplored regions he was about to penetrate.

The good old man was now seventy years of age. For forty years he had been earnestly engaged in preaching the gospel of peace on earth, and good will among men. And now the blessed hour had come when God sent his angel to take the victor in many a hard-fought spiritual conflict, to his home in heaven; for God can convert even the wickedness of man into an agency for the accomplishment of His purposes.

How sublime the scene of his departure. It was a serene, beautiful autumnal day. The deep blue of the overarching skies were embroidered, as it were, with fleecy clouds. The waters of the river, clear as crystal, flowed gently by. The luxuriant prairie, brilliant with the bloom of autumn, almost entranced the eye as a garden of the Lord. In a majestic grove the veteran Christian knelt, at peace with God, with himself, and with all the world. His eyes were closed. His hands were clasped. His soul was all absorbed in prayer. Suddenly a shower of arrows pierce him, and he falls dead!

Dead! do I say? No! He awakes to a new life of inconceivable vitality and grandeur. A retinue of angels are there, ready to receive him. In their blest companionship he takes his rapturous journey to the bosom of his Saviour and his God.

"Oh, 'tis a glorious thing to die
As dies the Christian, with his armor on."

The saddened voyagers, as they plied their paddles in ascending the river, all unconscious of the fate which had overtaken the beloved father, had still a journey of nearly two hundred and fifty miles before them, ere they could reach their friends. The dilapidated canoe soon failed them entirely, and they were compelled to abandon it. The remainder of the long journey was to be made on foot. Their destitution was alarming. They had no food but such as they could pick up by the way. Their clothing was old, worn out, and very scant; for they had been waiting for supplies to be brought them by La Salle. They had neither companion nor guide. The route they were to follow was in a northerly direction through the pathless forests, and over the pathless prairies, many miles west of Lake Michigan, to the missionary station at the foot of Green Bay.

Father Hennepin had left his cloak in the canoe. They cut up the garment to repair their shoes and clothes. Often, in days of storm, they wandered bewildered and lost. They found but little game, for they were not professional hunters. Their food consisted mainly of acorns and roots. After a journey of fifteen days, and when almost starved, they were so fortunate as to kill a deer. Upon venison steaks they feasted luxuriously.

At length they came to a little cluster of Pottawatomi wigwams. This powerful tribe occupied an extensive territory southwest of Lake Michigan. About ten years before, a delegation from the tribe had visited the French, and friendly relations were established between them. Very hospitably they received the worn, emaciated, and ragged wanderers. They fed them with such morsels as could be fished from the pots of the Indians. The wigwams were comfortable, affording ample protection from wind and rain. The weary wanderers, who were scarcely able to stand, threw themselves upon mats before the wigwam fires and slept long, long hours of rich enjoyment.

Somewhat recruited by the repose of a few days, they again took up their line of march. After the endurance of great fatigue and many sufferings, they at length reached the missionary station at Green Bay. Here they were received as brothers, and here they passed the winter. Early in the spring, as soon as the ice had disappeared from the bay, Lieutenant Tonti and Father Membré set out in a canoe, with a few boatmen, for the station at Michilimackinac. After a

prosperous voyage of a few days, they reached that important point in safety. They had been there but a short time, when a small fleet of canoes came paddling into the harbor. It was about the middle of June. To their great joy they found that it was an expedition of La Salle, and that he was on board. He had a sad story to tell of disasters and sufferings, which we must reserve for our next chapter.

CHAPTER X.

La Salle's Second Exploring Tour.

Disasters. Energy of La Salle. The Embarcation. Navigating the Lakes. Sunshine and Storm, Beauty and Desolation. Ruins at Crèvecœur. Steps Retraced. Christian Character of La Salle. Arrival at Mackinaw. The Enterprise Renewed. Travelling on the Ice. Descent of the Illinois River. Entering the Mississippi. Voyage of the Canoes. Adventures with the Indians.

It will be remembered that late in February, 1680, La Salle left Crèvecœur for Frontenac, to obtain supplies. We have no record of the details of that wonderful journey of four hundred leagues through the wilderness. He reached the post after a long and exhausting journey. There he encountered tidings of disaster sufficient to crush the stoutest heart. The Griffin had foundered, when but a few days out from Green Bay. All on board perished; and the whole of La Salle's fortune, consisting of ten thousand dollars' worth of furs, had gone down into the bottom of the lake.

The rumor reached Frontenac that La Salle had perished in his vessel. He had sent quite a fleet of canoes, laden with articles for the Indian trade, to purchase all the furs they could along the northern and southern shores of Lake Ontario. The canoe men heard the rumor of the death of La Salle, and treacherously appropriated to themselves all the goods with which they had been intrusted. Before setting out on his first excursion, he had sent to France for more goods, to the amount of five thousand dollars; a very considerable sum in those days. The vessel laden with these articles, after having safely crossed the Atlantic, was driven upon one of the islands of St. Peter, and everything was lost. There was no insurance in those days; La Salle did indeed experience the truth of the adage that "sorrows come in troops."

Still the enterprise, energy, and noble character of the man was such that friends came to the rescue. The Governor was very desirous of continuing the exploration, to the mouth of the Mississippi, which La Salle had begun. It was his great ambition there to unfurl the banner of France, and there, in the name of his king, to take possession of the most majestic valley on this globe.

Another small fleet of canoes was soon prepared, freighted with such articles, for use and traffic, as he would need on the expedition. The canoes, eight or ten in number, were large and strong. The party consisted of twenty-three Frenchmen and thirty-one Indians; fifty-four, in all. The statement seems almost incredible that, of these Indians, ten were women, and three were children. But Father Zenobe, who accompanied the expedition, mentions that the Indians insisted upon taking the women, as servants, to cook their food, and to perform the drudgery at their several encampments. Some of these women had children whom they could not leave behind.

It was indeed an imposing spectacle, when, at an early hour of a still, sultry summer morning, this gayly decorated fleet of canoes pushed out from the little harbor at the fort, upon the mirrored surface of Lake Ontario. It was, to a considerable degree, a national expedition. The banners of France fluttered in the gentle breeze over all the battlements of the fort. The forests and the hills resounded with the roar of the salute from her heavy guns. Hundreds of Indians crowded the shore to witness the departure. The Frenchmen returned the salute by a discharge of their muskets and by three cheers. The canoes speedily disappeared behind a headland, as the voyagers, with their paddles, pressed forward upon one of the most extraordinary expeditions ever undertaken by man.

The voyage along the southern shore of the lake proved to be very stormy. Again and again the gale and the surging

billows drove them ashore. To the Indians, and to the Canadian boatmen generally, there was no hardship in this. It was the customary life of these men; and to the Indians, the life to which they had been inured from infancy, and the only life they had ever known. Indeed the crew generally had no more thought of yesterday or tomorrow than the few dogs who accompanied them. The weight of responsibility rested only upon the minds of La Salle and his gentlemanly, highly educated ecclesiastical companions.

When landing, for an encampment at night, or forced to take shelter from the storm, they easily drew their canoes up upon the greensward; turned them over to protect the freight from the rain, entered a little distance, the dense, primeval forest, which from time immemorial had fringed the shores of the lake, and there speedily reared a shelter which, to them, presented all the comforts which the palatial mansion offers to its lord. They spread their mats upon the floor. They built their camp fires, whose brilliant blaze enlivened the scene. They cooked their suppers, of corn-bread and venison steaks, which health and hunger rendered luxurious. They sang songs, told stories, cracked jokes, and enjoyed perhaps as much as the *mere animal man* is capable of enjoying.

This is indeed the sunny side of such a life. But it is a real side. For such men it has a real charm; charms so great that they reluctantly relinquish them for all that civilization can offer. But it must be evident to every reader of these pages, that this wandering, homeless life, has also its shady side. They, like all other men, had often occasion to say in the beautiful verse of Longfellow:

"The day is cold, and dark, and dreary,
It rains, and the wind is never weary,
The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,
At every gust the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary."

La Salle left Fort Frontenac on the 23d of July, 1680, about two months before the abandonment of Crèvecoeur by Tonti. In consequence of the series of storms, he was nearly three weeks in reaching the western extremity of Lake Ontario. The canoes and the goods were then carried around the falls, to the station called Fort Conti, which had been established at the head of Niagara River. He did not reach this station until about the middle of August.

Fort Conti had become quite a resort of the neighboring Indian tribes for trade. Here La Salle intended to lay in fresh supplies of corn. The season had been an unfavorable one. The small crop annually raised by the thoughtless, indolent savages, was still smaller than usual, affording but a scant supply for the winter. The Indians were not disposed to sell. Many days passed away, and but little had been brought in. La Salle had quite a store of French brandy. He offered to exchange brandy for corn. The poor Indians, who would sell the clothes from their backs for intoxicating liquors, brought the corn in so abundantly, that the canoes were immediately filled. In one day sixty sacks were urged upon him.

On the 28th of August, 1680, the voyagers reëmbarked in their canoes, and beneath sunny skies and with a smooth expanse of water before them, paddled joyously along the northern shores of Lake Erie, ascended the Detroit River, crossed Lake St. Clair, passed through the Straits of St. Clair, and coasted along the eastern and northern shores of Lake Huron, a distance of two or three hundred miles, until they reached the station at Mackinac, the latter part of September.

The voyage from the head of Niagara River had occupied nearly a month. When the little fleet of birch canoes entered the harbor at Mackinac, Lieutenant Tonti had just abandoned his dilapidated birch canoe on the Illinois River, in his retirement from the fort, and, with his few companions, was struggling on foot through the wilderness west of Lake Michigan, seeking also the same refuge.

La Salle, entirely unconscious of the disasters which had overtaken his garrison at Crèvecoeur, reëmbarked, on the 4th of October. Following the same course he had pursued before, he paddled down the eastern coast of Lake Michigan, to the River St. Joseph. At the head of which river, it will be remembered, he had erected Fort Miami, on territory inhabited by the Miami Indians. It was a long voyage, with many obstructions from the autumnal storms, which seemed to be incessantly sweeping that bleak and harborless lake. After the tempestuous voyage of a month, he reached Fort Miami on the 3d of November.

Eleven months before, on the 3d of December, 1679, he had left that station, on his route to the Illinois River. Le Clercq says that four men were left in charge there. This is not sustained by other accounts. It is not probable that so small a number would have been left in a position so greatly exposed. But, however this may be, he found the Miami village in ashes, and all who dwelt in it dispersed. His log fort was also in utter ruin. It was a melancholy scene which met his eye; another indication of man's inhumanity to man.

The St. Joseph's River takes its rise in Indiana. For nearly a hundred miles before it empties its flood into Lake Michigan, it flows in a course of narrow windings, almost directly from the south. By paddling up this stream, in a canoe voyage of three or four days, or about seventy miles of our measurement, they came to a portage, five or six miles in length, by which they could reach the Kankakee River.

This was an important tributary of the Illinois River. It will be remembered that it was by this stream that La Salle and his party, more than a year before, prosecuted their voyage to Lake Peoria. It was then, for much of its distance, rather a dismal stream, sluggishly winding through marshes lined with alders. Rapidly they paddled on, day after day, through a country of silence and solitude, until they entered the broader, deeper waters of Illinois River.

Still, as they descended this beautiful stream, which presented as attractive situations for happy homes as perhaps earth could afford, they passed no Indian villages, no solitary wigwam, no sign whatever of human life. They came to the site where the Indian village had formerly stood in its picturesque beauty, with six or eight thousand inhabitants swarming around, in the various costumes, and engaged in the diversified employments of savage life. Naught remained but smouldering ruins and trampled harvests. Man bitterest foe, his brother man, had been there, and had left behind but the traces of desolation, blood and woe. Neither wolf nor bear could have been more merciless, or could have left behind them ravages so dreadful.

The dispersion of the garrison, and the destruction of all the works commenced and the stores deposited at Crèvecoeur, was another blow upon the head and the heart of La Salle, apparently frustrating all his plans. He must have experienced emotions of the keenest anguish. But this remarkable man, invincible by the reverses of fortune, presented to his companions only a smiling aspect, and addressed them only with cheerful words. Having lost everything which he had expected to find at Crèvecoeur, it became necessary for him to return to Mackinac. This required a journey by river, forest, prairie, and lake, of nearly five hundred miles.

Immediately he reëmbarked his whole force, in his canoes, and commenced the laborious ascent of the stream he had just descended so pleasantly, borne along by the aid of the current. When they reached the mouth of the Kankakee, instead of following up that stream, they struck across the country, by a portage directly north, until they reached the Chicago River. Here they again launched their canoes and followed down the windings of the stream until they came to its entrance into Lake Michigan, where Chicago now stands.

At this port La Salle found fragments of many war-scathed tribes, in a half-starving condition. They informed him that the terrible Iroquois; composed of five united savage nations, and whose central power was in the vast territory south of Lake Ontario, had in overwhelming numbers invaded the valley of the Illinois. Many of their warriors were armed with guns purchased from the French. The feeble tribes fled in terror before them. The ferocious bands wandered in all directions. By day and by night the hideous war-whoop resounded. Villages were burned, captives were seized, women and children were slaughtered, and thousands of fugitives, war-bereaved, woe-stricken, fled to the western side of the Mississippi to seek protection by being incorporated into friendly tribes in those apparently limitless realms.

Around the lovely shores of Lake Peoria there had been seventeen flourishing Indian villages. These were all destroyed, in awful scenes of conflagration and massacre. The survivors fled beyond the Mississippi, six hundred miles from their desolated homes. And even to these regions the ferocious Iroquois pursued them, thirsting for blood and scalps.

La Salle was a Christian. He was interested in the religious welfare of the poor Indians, as the only instrumentality by which they could secure for themselves pleasant homes on earth, and happy homes in heaven. He agreed with the missionaries, that if they wished to establish missions in those parts, with any hope of seeing Christianity make progress among the natives, they must secure them immunity from the horrors of war. This could only be done by uniting the remaining tribes in a firm union for a common defence.

At the mouth of the Chicago River, La Salle was, as he thought, by the route he had taken, about one hundred and twenty miles from Lake Peoria. He reached this point probably some time in January 1681. The lake, for some distance from the shore, was encumbered with ice. Fierce wintry storms swept the bleak prairies, and piled the snow in drifts. It was almost impossible to journey, either by land or water. La Salle and his party went into encampment upon the banks of the Chicago River, to wait a few weeks until the severity of winter was over. At the same time, though he knew not of it, the few remaining members of the garrison which he had left at Crèvecœur were seeking shelter from these piercing blasts, about a hundred miles north, in the wigwams of the friendly Pottawattomies.

La Salle and his ecclesiastical companions improved these few weeks of leisure in seeking interviews with the chiefs of the various tribes in the vicinity, and in endeavoring to unite them in a strong confederacy. He assured them that if they would thus be true to themselves, the French would become their allies and send them efficient aid. It was not until the 22d of May that he was able to launch his canoes upon the lake. There was then a voyage of about two hundred and sixty miles before him.

About the middle of June his fleet of canoes was seen, coming around a point of land, as the boatmen rapidly paddled into the harbor at Michilimackinac. Here La Salle met Lieutenant Tonti, Father Membré, and their associates, as we have mentioned in the last chapter. The good Father Membré writes:

"I leave you to conceive our mutual joy, damped though it was by the narrative he made us of all his misfortunes, and of that we made him of our tragical adventures. Though La Salle related to us all his calamities, yet never did I remark in him the least alteration. He always maintained his ordinary coolness and self-possession. Any other person would have abandoned the enterprise. But La Salle, by a firmness of mind and constancy almost unequalled, was more resolute than ever to carry out his discovery. We therefore left, to return to Fort Frontenac with his whole party, to adopt new measures, to resume and complete our course, with the help of heaven, in which we put all our trust."

We have no detailed account of the long voyage back to Frontenac, or of the return voyage to the mouth of the Chicago River. In the meagre narratives which have descended to us, there are slight discrepancies which it is impossible to reconcile. Entering Lake Michigan at its northern extremity through the Straits of Mackinac, they paddled down the eastern coast, passed the mouth of St. Joseph's River, rounded the southern curvature of the lake, and reached the mouth of the Chicago River on the 4th of January, 1682. The winter in that region was short, but very severe. The Chicago River presented a solid surface of ice.

Sledges were constructed, upon which the canoes were placed, and dragged by the men over the ice of the river. This journey in mid-winter, over a bleak and often treeless expanse, was slow and toilsome. Having reached the point where the portage commenced, they dragged their sledges, laden with the canoes, baggage, and provisions, across the portage to the Illinois River. They reached this point on the 29th of the month, having spent twenty-three days in the exhausting journey. They were, at that point, according to Father Membré's estimate, two hundred and forty miles from the mouth of the Illinois where it enters into the Mississippi.

Drawing their sledges upon the ice, they day after day followed down the lonely and silent stream, whose banks were had desolated. They passed the smouldering sites of many former villages, where only melancholy scenes of devastation met the eye. They reached Crèvecœur about the 1st of February. It would seem that La Salle, on his previous visit, had repaired the ruins there, so as to provide a temporary home for his party upon its arrival. He found all things as he had left them.

The river below Crèvecœur was free from ice. Having rested for about a week, in the enjoyment of warm fires, in their log-cabins, they launched their canoes into the Illinois River, and on the 6th of February reached the mouth of the river. They found the swollen flood of the Mississippi full of vast masses of ice, pouring down from the distant regions of the north. This detained them till the 13th of the month. They encamped at the same point where Father Hennepin had tarried. A short voyage of a day bore them to the mouth of turbid and turbulent Missouri.

Here they landed at an Indian village, where they seem to have been very kindly received. It will be remembered that La Salle was still intent upon finding some short passage across the continent, of whose width he knew nothing, to the

Pacific Ocean. He was much excited by the strange tidings he heard from the Indians here. They assured him that by ascending the river ten or twelve days he would come to a range of mountains where the river took its rise; that numerous and populous Indian villages were scattered all the way along the banks of the river; that by ascending one of the mountain eminences, he would have a view of the vast and boundless sea where great ships were sailing. We cannot now tell whether this was the mere fabrication of some imaginative savage, or whether such was the general opinion of the tribe.

The next day, after a sail of about thirty miles, they reached another Indian village on the bank of the river. Here again they landed peacefully, and warmed the hearts of the savages by a few presents which were to them of priceless value. They journeyed slowly. They could not, in their crowded canoes, carry a large amount of provisions. Consequently they were under the necessity of making frequent stops to catch fish or to hunt for game. Not long after this visit of La Salle, a mission was established in this little village, which was called Marou. It is said that most of them were converted to, at least, nominal Christianity.

Continuing their voyage one hundred and twenty miles down the river, they came to the mouth of the Ohio. Here they made another stop to lay in fresh supplies. The friendly Indians there informed them they could find no suitable camping ground for a distance of nearly one hundred and fifty miles, the banks were so low and so encumbered with rushes and dense brush.

The voyagers remained at the mouth of the Ohio ten days, sending out parties in various directions. One of the Frenchmen, Peter Prudhomme, wandering from his companions, did not return. There were many fears that he had been captured by the Indians, as some of the party had seen fresh Indian trails. The heroic La Salle was not disposed to abandon the man. He threw up some entrenchments for the protection of his company, and despatched several well-armed Frenchmen, with Indian guides, to follow vigorously the trail of the savages, for the recovery of the captive if he had been taken by them. For four days La Salle tarried in his encampment at the mouth of the Ohio.

On the 1st of March the detachment, sent in pursuit of the lost one, returned. They had seen and heard nothing of Peter. Five Indians, however, had been seen, two of whom were caught and brought into the camp. They knew nothing of the lost man. Receiving only friendly treatment, they seemed quite anxious that La Salle should visit their village, which they falsely assured La Salle was distant but a day and a half's journey from the point where they then were. These Indians belonged to the Chickasaw tribe, which subsequently became quite prominent in the history of our land.

With the Indians a day's journey was about thirty miles. La Salle and Father Membre set out to visit the village, guided by the Indians. They do not appear to have had any hesitation in thus placing themselves entirely in the hands of the savages. But after having travelled day and a half through a country diversified with forest, prairie, and mountain, they became satisfied that the Indians were deceiving them, and charged them with it.

They confessed the deception, made some lame apologies for it, and confessed that their village was still at the distance of three days' journey. Without any apparent reluctance they accompanied La Salle and Membre back to the camp. La Salle then sent one of the Indians to the Chickasaw village, with several presents, and to invite the chiefs to meet him, some hundred miles below, as he descended in his canoes. The other Indian consented to remain, and accompany his party down the river.

Just as the voyagers were reëmbarking, the missing man appeared. He had been lost in the forest and for nine days had wandered in the unavailing search for his companions. Fortunately, the weather was mild, game abundant, and, as he had his gun with him, he did not want for food. Cheered by his return, they rejoicingly entered their canoes, and, with cloudless skies overarching them, pushed out into the rapid current, to be swept along through realms to them entirely unknown, and to a point they knew not where.

It was a singular and a beautiful spectacle, which was presented by this *flock* of large birch canoes, eight or ten in number, filled with Indians, and Frenchmen in Indian costume, gliding down the broad, swift current of the river. The paddles glistened with the reflected rays of the sun. All were in health. There was no toil. New scenes of marvellous desolation, or beauty, or grandeur, were continually opening before them. They were well fed. The mind was kept in a state of delightful excitement. The French are proverbially good-natured and mirthful. Each night's encampment

presented a scene of feasting, bonfires and innocent joyous revel. These were indeed sunny days, and this was the poetry of travelling.

The 3d of March, 1682, came. They had then descended the river, as they judged, about one hundred and twenty miles below the mouth of the Ohio. They were approaching, though they knew it not, a large village of the Arkansas Indians, situated on the western banks of the Mississippi. It was concealed from them by a bluff, and by a turn in the stream. An Indian, upon the lookout on the bluff, caught sight of the formidable looking fleet, far up the river, and, supposing it to be filled with hostile savages on the war-path, gave the alarm.

The whole village was instantly thrown into a state of great excitement. The women and children fled back into the forest. The warriors grasped their arms and rallied for battle. As the fleet drew near, all unconscious of the commotion it had excited, the voyagers, not seeing a single Indian, were surprised to hear, on the other side of the bluff, the yells of apparently hundreds of savages. Their piercing war-whoops were blended with the loud beatings of a kind of drum which they had fabricated.

Warned by these hostile demonstrations, La Salle guided his canoes to the other side of the river, which was here about a mile in width. He landed in direct view of the village. With his customary caution, he immediately threw up some intrenchments, behind which his men, with their guns, could beat off almost any number of savages. He knew not but that hundreds of warriors would cross the river in their canoes, to make an impetuous assault upon him.

Having thus guarded against surprise, and afforded the Indians a little time to recover from their first alarm, he then, unarmed, advanced to the water's edge, and by friendly signs endeavored to invite some of the chiefs to come over to meet him.

Several of the chiefs entered a large boat, called a periagua. It was made of the trunk of an immense tree, hollowed out, and carved and decorated with immense labor. Such a wooden canoe was capable of holding a large number of warriors. The chiefs crossed the river until they came to within a quarter of a mile of the shore, and then they stopped, and beckoned the strangers to come and meet them.

La Salle sent one Frenchman, we infer from the narrative that it must have been Father Membré, in a canoe, to meet them. Two of his Indians paddled the boat, until they came alongside of the periagua of the natives. Father Membré, familiar as he was with several Indian dialects, could not speak their language. He however held out to them the calumet of peace, which at once won their confidence; and he found no difficulty in communicating with them by signs. He invited the chiefs to accompany him back to the encampment. They were six in number. Retaining him with them, in the large periagua, they speedily paddled ashore, followed by Membré's canoe, with the two Indian boatmen.

Without any hesitancy, the six Indian chiefs entered into the redoubt which La Salle had thrown up. They appeared frank, unsuspecting, and cordial, and were made very happy by several presents which La Salle placed in their hands. They invited the whole party to cross the river to their village. The canoes were launched, and all crossed the stream, led by the chieftains in their wooden boat. The whole adult male population of the village crowded the banks to receive them; and with every demonstration of friendship. But the timid women and children kept cautiously in the distance.

Eight or ten large birch canoes, from which more than fifty persons landed upon the beach, presented a very imposing appearance. They were nearly all armed with guns, not for aggressive warfare, but for hunting and protection.

The natives crowded around the strangers, conducted them up to their wigwams, which were very pleasantly situated on a rich and tolerably well cultivated plain extending back from the river. The guests were regaled with the greatest profusion of barbarian hospitality. These Indians had attained a very considerable degree of civilization. They had quite a large number of slaves, whom they had captured from tribes with whom they were at war. The fertile fields around were quite well cultivated with corn, beans, melons, and a variety of fruits. Peaches were abundant. Large flocks of turkeys and other domestic fowls crowded their doors. They were a very handsome race; and it was observed that, while the northern Indians were generally moody and taciturn, these savages, beneath more sunny skies, were frank, generous, and gay in the extreme.

CHAPTER XI.

The Great Enterprise Accomplished.

Scenes in the Arkansas Villages. Indian Hospitality. Barbarian Splendor. Attractive Scenery. The Alarm. Its Joyful Issue. Genial Character of La Salle. Erecting the Cross. Pleasant Visit to the Koroas. The Two Channels. Perilous Attack. Humanity of La Salle. The Sea Reached. Ceremonies of Annexation.

For several days La Salle and his party remained with their hospitable friends the Arkansas Indians. On the 14th of March, 1682, La Salle took possession of the country in the name of the king of France. He invested the ceremony with all the pomp he could command. An immense cross was raised in the centre of the village; and the Christian's God was recognized with anthems, prayers and imposing religious rites. Thousands of savages gathered around, gazing with delight upon the scene so novel to them. They had no conception of its significance. They supposed it a festival got up for their entertainment, as they would get up a war-dance to please their guests. As the cross was raised, Father Membré made some attempt to teach them the significance of this emblem of the way of salvation through faith in an atoning Saviour. He writes:

"During this time they showed that they relished what I said by raising their eyes to heaven, and kneeling as if to adore. We also saw them rubbing their hands over their bodies, after rubbing them over the cross. In fine, on our return from the sea, we found that they had surrounded the cross with a palisade."

On the 17th of the month, the explorers reëmbarked, and continued their voyage down the river about eighteen miles, when they came to two other villages of the Arkansas tribe. Here they were again received with the utmost hospitality. Continuing their sunny voyage beneath cloudless skies and upon a glassy stream for four days, they came to quite a large lake formed by an expansion of the river. This sheet of water seemed to be fringed with villages. There were forty on the east side of the lake, and thirty-four on the west side, upon its banks. All were picturesquely situated and, in the distance, presented an aspect of much beauty.

The houses were well built, of clay mixed with straw baked in the sun. The roofs were constructed of canes quite gracefully bent in the form of a dome. Their beds or mats were raised on wooden bedsteads, and they had many convenient articles of household furniture. The bark of a tree furnished very fine white fibres, which they braided into blankets and other articles of dress. The head chief was an absolute sovereign, having the property and the lives of his subjects entirely at his disposal. A retinue of slaves attended him. He was luxuriously clothed, fed, and housed.

The village of the chief was at a little distance from the banks of the lake. La Salle was quite sick, and unable to go up to the palace to pay his respects to the monarch. He encamped upon the borders of the expanded stream, and beneath the shade of his roof sought repose upon his mat. He, however, sent Lieutenant Tonti and Father Membré with presents to the chief. In return, several men were sent to La Salle, munificently laden with provisions and other gifts. Soon after, the king himself appeared in regal state. First came a master of ceremonies, with six pioneers, to remove every obstruction from the way, and to make the path level for the feet of royalty. They selected a spot upon which the monarch was to give audience to his guests. The ground was carefully smoothed, and carpeted with beautiful mats.

The monarch soon made his appearance. He was richly dressed in white robes. Two officers preceded him, bearing plumes of gorgeously colored feathers. He was followed by another official, bearing two large plates of copper, highly polished. The king had the bearing of a gentleman. He was grave, dignified, and courteous. Having ever been accustomed to absolute command, he had that peculiar air of self-possession and authority which seems to be the inheritance of those who can boast a long line of illustrious ancestry.

It was the 22d day of March, 1682. The scene presented was in the highest degree picturesque and beautiful. The widely expanded lake glittered in the sunlight as placid as a mirror. The villages of the Indians, clustered so thickly along the shores, were composed of substantial dwellings, whose roofs of curved canes, thatched with thick mats, were rounded into graceful domes. The barbarian splendor assumed by the monarch, the group of French adventurers, with their Indian companions, gathered near by, the thousands of the Taensa tribe, men, women, and children, standing at a respectful

distance, silently gazing upon the scene, the little fleet of canoes upon the beach, and the encampment hastily thrown up—these combined to open to the eye a picture of peace and loveliness, which the pencil of the most skilful artist might in vain attempt to rival.

It did indeed seem then and there, as though God had intended this for a happy world—for a world where his children might live together in paternal love, and with the interchange of the kindest sympathies. Though in the early spring, the foliage beneath those sunny skies was in full leaf, and the flowers in full bloom.

"The whole country," writes Father Membré, "is covered with palm trees, laurels of two kinds, plums, peaches, mulberry, apple, and pear trees of every variety. There are also five or six kinds of nut trees, some of which bear nuts of extraordinary size. They also gave us several kinds of dried fruit to taste. We found them large and good. They have also many varieties of fruit trees which I never saw in Europe. The season was however too early to allow us to see the fruit. We observed vines already out of blossom."

The interview between the monarch and La Salle passed off very pleasantly. It was conducted mainly by signs. Smiles and presents were interchanged. For four days the voyagers remained the guests of these friendly people. They rambled through their villages, entered their dwellings, and were abundantly feasted. The natives seemed very amiable, quite intelligent, and were far in advance, in civilization, of the nations or tribes farther north. Father Membré was much pleased with their candor, and with the clearness with which he thought they comprehended his instructions. They readily accepted his teaching of God; and apparently comprehended, without any difficulty, the plan of salvation through an atoning Saviour.

In truth, this doctrine is apparently the most simple and the most powerful which can be presented to the savage. All over the world, the necessity of an atonement for sin seems to be implanted in the human breast. And when the missionary teaches the savage that God, our Heavenly Father, in the person of His Son has borne our sins in His own body on the tree, the most ignorant can comprehend it, and the most wicked can be moved by it.

On the 26th of March, La Salle and his companions, greatly refreshed by their delightful visit, resumed their voyage down the river. They descended very rapidly, by the aid of the current and the paddle. Having sailed about forty miles, they saw in the distance below them, a large wooden boat containing a number of Indians. The savages seemed alarmed as they caught sight of the fleet of canoes coming down so rapidly upon them. They plied their paddles with all diligence, and run into the eastern shore.

La Salle, with his usual caution, landed upon the opposite bank. The two parties gazed at each other across the rolling flood, a mile in width. La Salle sent Lieutenant Tonti, in a canoe with several Indians, to carry to the boatmen the calumet of peace. While the Indians plied their paddles, he stood up in the canoe, waving toward the boatmen the plumed badge of fraternity. As Lieutenant Tonti was crossing the river, a large number of Indians were seen running in, from various directions, and crowding the banks. When within arrow-shot of the shore, he stopped, still presenting the calumet, which all the tribes seemed to recognize and respect.

All suspicion was allayed. The savages, unapprehensive of any treachery, crowded their periagua, and the boat and the canoe, with the inmates on terms of the kindest fellowship, passed over to the French on the western bank. The two parties blended as brothers. The Indians were fishermen of the Natches tribe. They had a large village about nine miles inland, east of the river. Without any hesitancy La Salle, Father Membré, and a few others, accepted an invitation to accompany them to their village.

There are some men so frank, genial, kind-hearted that they win affection at sight. La Salle was such a man. With no special effort to make friends, his nature was such that the savage and the civilized man alike were immediately won by the fascination of his presence. Father Membré gives frequent testimony to these peculiar attractions of the chivalric pioneer. On this occasion he writes:

"We slept in the wigwams of these savages. They gave us as kindly a welcome as we could desire. The Chevalier La Salle, whose very air, engaging manners, and captivating mind, everywhere commanded respect and love, so impressed the hearts of these Indians that they did not know how to treat us well

enough. They would gladly have kept us with them permanently."

For three days La Salle and his companions enjoyed the hospitality of these friendly natives. About thirty miles below the Natches Indians, there was another powerful tribe called the Koroas. They were friends and allies of the Natches. A courier was despatched to inform the chief of the Koroas of the arrival of the distinguished strangers, and to invite him to come and share in giving them a suitable welcome. He hastened to Natches with an imposing retinue of his head men. They also paid prompt homage to the dignity and the attractions of La Salle.

Again a cross was erected, while admiring multitudes gazed admiringly upon the religious and civil pomp with which the ceremony was invested. A plate was attached to the cross, upon which was engraved the arms of Louis XIV. The Indians were delighted with the show, and with the memorial thus left of the visit; though they could not comprehend the significance of the rite as taking possession of their country in the name of the King of France.

La Salle and his companions returned to their canoes. The Chickasaw Indian who had accompanied them from their encampment near the mouth of the Ohio, and which they had named Camp Prudhomme, from the man who had been lost and found there, remained at the village of the Natches Indians. The journey of a few days would take him to his own tribe.

The chief of the Koroas, having invited La Salle to visit his village, embarked with his suite, in their wooden boats, and descended the river in company with the French in their birch canoes. A sail of about four hours swept them down to the village, which was called Akoroa. It was beautifully situated on an eminence, commanding a view of a wide-spread and exceedingly fertile prairie, with large fields of corn, whose spear-like leaves were already waving in the gentle breeze.

The Indians were fond of ceremony. They held a council, presented the calumet, smoked the pipe of fraternity, made speeches which were but poorly understood, and exchanged presents. After a short tarry, the voyage was again resumed. The chief furnished them with a pilot, telling them that it would still require a voyage of ten days to reach the sea, and that the river broke into several channels or independent streams as it approached the Gulf. As the Indians considered thirty or forty miles a good day's voyage in descending the river, it was estimated that there was a journey of between three and four hundred miles still before them. They were also informed that there were numerous tribes upon the lower river, but that they were generally well-disposed.

On the 2d of April, when the canoes had descended the river about eighteen miles below Akoroa, the river branched into two arms or channels, with an island between, which they estimated to be one hundred and eighty miles in length. They had been directed to take the channel on the left. But it so chanced that there was a heavy river fog, and they did not see it. La Salle's canoe was in the advance, and the canoe which held the guide happened to be far in the rear. Though the keen eyes of the Indian pierced the fog, and he did all in his power by signs to show them that they were wrong, the whole fleet followed its leader, and were swept along in the channel on the right.

The reason why they were cautioned to take the left branch, was that the eight or ten tribes on the western banks were friendly, and would make them no trouble, while those upon the eastern branch were ferocious, and would be likely to attack them. They soon experienced the wisdom of the advice which had been given them.

On the 2d of April, when they had descended the river about one hundred and twenty miles, they saw a number of Indians on the bank of the river, fishing. The moment the savages caught sight of the fleet of canoes they fled. Immediately the forest seemed filled with the clamor of hideous war-whoops the beating of drums, and all other sounds of hostility. The branch of the river which they were descending, was here compressed into a narrow channel. A dense forest fringed both banks. It was evident that there were populous villages near by, for the warriors were seen rapidly gathering, as they ran from tree to tree to get good positions to overwhelm the canoes with their arrows.

The bows were very strong. The muscular arms of the Indians would throw an arrow with almost the velocity and precision of a rifle bullet. These barbed weapons would tear their way through the birch bark of the canoes as if they were but sheets of brown paper. With appalling suddenness this cloud of war was marshalling its forces. It was sufficiently menacing to alarm the bravest heart.

La Salle ordered all the boats to stop. He then sent one canoe forward, with four Frenchmen, to present the calumet of peace. They received orders not to fire upon the savages under any emergence. As soon as the canoe came within arrow-shot, the savages, regardless of the calumet, let fly a shower of arrows upon them. Fortunately, they nearly all fell a little short, and no one was hit. With the utmost precipitation, the Frenchmen paddled back to their companions. La Salle then sent another canoe, with four Indians, bearing the calumet. They advanced with great caution, and met with the same hostile reception.

He then directed the canoes to press as near the opposite bank as possible, to ply their paddles with all energy, and thus hurry by the point of peril. Humanely he ordered not a gun to be fired. He had no wish to engage in a battle in which nothing was to be gained. Very easily his sharpshooters could cause many of those savage warriors to bite the dust, and thus lamentation and woe would be sent to many of those wigwams. But this would do no good. It would not subdue the savages; it would only exasperate them. He also remembered that he was to return, and that if the savages had received no harm at his hands, their spirit of revenge would not be aroused, and it would be much less difficult to establish friendly relations with them.

Though the savages yelled, and ran frantically along the shore, and threw their arrows with their utmost strength, the canoes, swept along by the rapid current, and the sinewy strength of the paddles, all passed in safety. The kind-hearted La Salle must have congratulated himself that none were left behind to mourn. He afterwards learned that this inhospitable tribe was called the Quinnipissa.

They had paddled down the stream but about six miles, when they came to other and still more deplorable evidences of man's inhumanity to man. They found upon the banks the smouldering remains of a large village, which had recently been sacked and burned. It was evident that the inhabitants had been given up to indiscriminate massacre, with the exception of those who had been carried away into slavery, or to add to the revelry of a gala day, in the endurance of demoniac torture. The ground was covered with the bodies of men, women, and children, in all the loathsome stages of decay. Sadly the voyagers rambled through these awful scenes for an hour, meeting with no living being, and then hurried on their way. This village, it was subsequently ascertained, was called Tangibao.

Still they continued descending the river four days longer, without meeting any incident of importance. Their day's sail averaged about thirty miles. It was always necessary to land for the night's encampment. They had made, as they estimated, about one hundred and twenty miles from Quinnipissa when they came to the delta of the Mississippi. Here the majestic river divided into four branches. At this point they landed, and encamped in the midst of a dense and almost tropical forest, upon the bank, but slightly elevated above the surface of the water.

In the morning La Salle divided his fleet into three bands, one to descend each of these three branches. He took the one on the extreme right, or the western branch. Lieutenant Tonti, with Father Membré, took the middle. The eastern branch, on the left, was assigned to Mr. Dautray. Upon reaching the sea, the canoes on the right and left were to turn toward the centre until they should meet the party of Lieutenant Tonti, whose route to the sea, it was supposed, would be a little shorter than that of either of the other two.

They all found the water deep and brackish, and the current very slow. After sailing a few miles they tasted the salt of the ocean. Soon their eyes were gladdened with the sight of the open sea. It was mild, serene, beautiful summer weather. The region, as far as the eye could reach, was low and marshy, with no landmarks. The fleets were, however, all reunited in safety. La Salle having heard the report respecting the middle and eastern channels, decided to return to the western, by which he had descended.

They then ascended this branch before they could find any dry and solid ground, suitable to afford a permanent foundation for the cross of Christ and the arms of France. On the ninth of April, they were all assembled on a ridge slightly elevated, for the celebration of this all-important ceremony. First, they raised a massive column, at the foot of which they buried a leaden plate, bearing an inscription in Latin, to the following purport:

"Louis the Great Reigns. Robert, Cavalier, with Lord Tonti, Ambassador, Zenobia Membré, Ecclesiastic, and twenty Frenchmen, first navigated this river from the country of the Illinois, and passed through this mouth on the ninth of April, sixteen hundred and eighty-two."

The names of all the Frenchmen of the party were attached to this plate. La Salle then made a speech, which was carefully worded, and seems to have been recorded at that time. It was in substance as follows:

"In the name of Louis the Great, and in virtue of the commission I hold in my hand, I take possession of this country of Louisiana, its seas, harbors, ports, bays, and adjacent straits; and also of all the nations, people, provinces, cities, towns, villages, mines, minerals, fisheries, streams, and rivers, comprised in the extent of the said Louisiana, from the mouth of the great river called the Ohio, and this with the consent of the people dwelling therein, with whom we have made alliance; and also of the rivers which discharge themselves therein, from the sources of the Mississippi to its mouth in the sea; upon the assurance of all these nations that we are the first Europeans who have descended or ascended the said Mississippi. I hereby protest against all those who may in future undertake to invade any of these countries, to the prejudice of the right of his Majesty, acquired by the consent of all the nations herein named. Of this I take to witness all those who hear me, and demand an act of the Notary as required by law."

To this the whole assembly responded with shouts of *Vive le Roi* and with a salute of fire-arms.

The civic ceremony being thus ended, the transaction was now to be ratified with religious rites. By the side of the column, a massive cross had been erected. The devout La Salle, who was earnestly a religious man, took his position at the foot of the cross, and said:

"His Majesty, Louis the Great, the eldest son of the Church, will annex no country to his crown without making it his chief care to establish the Christian religion therein. Its symbol must now be recognized." Several Christian hymns were then chanted. The sublime strains of the *Te Deum* resounded through the arches of the forest; and other ceremonies of the Catholic Church were performed with all the pomp which the circumstances would allow.

Thus the great achievement was accomplished. According to the then existing law of nations, the whole valley of the Mississippi was annexed to France. It was indeed a magnificent acquisition. It is estimated that the kingdom of France comprises an extent not quite three hundred thousand square miles. It is judged that the valley of the Mississippi drains a region of one million square miles. Thus the pioneer, La Salle, conferred upon France a territory more than three times as large as the kingdom of France itself.

CHAPTER XII.

The Return Voyage.

The Numerous Alligators. Destitution of Provisions. Encountering Hostile Indians. A Naval Battle. Visit to the Village. Treachery of the Savages. The Attack. Humane Conduct of La Salle. Visit to the Friendly Taensas. Severe Sickness of La Salle. His Long Detention at Prudhomme. The Sick Man's Camp. Lieutenant Tonti sent Forward. Recovery of La Salle. His Arrival at Fort Miami.

There was no game to be taken in the vast swamps at the mouth of the river. The provisions of the voyagers were nearly exhausted. They, however, chanced to find an abandoned Indian camp, where there was a small quantity of strips of the flesh of some animal, dried in the sun. As they were eagerly eating it, the Indians who accompanied them informed them that it was human flesh. It is needless to say that they could eat no more; though the savages, who devoured it with much gusto, declared that it was exceedingly delicate and savory.

On the 10th of April, the next day after the ceremony of annexation, they commenced their toilsome ascent of the river on their voyage back. Enormous alligators were often met with, sunning themselves on the sand-bars. The sharp-shooters soon learned where the bullet would strike a vulnerable point. For several days they lived mainly on wild potatoes and the flesh of alligators. The country was so low, and so bordered with almost impenetrable canes, that they could not hunt

without making long delays. At length they reached the blackened ruins and the mouldering dead of Tangibao. The desolation remained complete. None had returned.

It was a matter of the utmost importance, apparently of absolute necessity, that they should lay in a store of corn. There was so much uncertainty as to hunting, that they might be many days without food, and thus perish. But a pint of corn, pounded into meal and baked in the ashes, would afford a hungry man a very nutritious dinner. And if so successful as to take some game, this bread gave great additional zest to the repast.

On the thirteenth day, as they were slowly paddling against the stream, they saw, far away in the north, a great smoke, apparently from Indian fires. It was evidently not far from the region where the Quinnipissa Indians had so fiercely attacked them, but a few days before. Much apprehension was felt lest they should again be assailed. The passage against the rapid current was necessarily very slow. The Indians had large wooden boats, which they could fill with warriors, and being above them on the river, could completely cut off their retreat.

La Salle sent one of the canoes forward to reconnoitre. As his Indian boatmen were paddling cautiously along beneath the dense foliage of the banks, they caught sight of four women. Under the perilous circumstances, it was thought best to capture them, if possible, and hold them as hostages for the good behavior of the tribe. This was not doing evil that good might come, for the measure was fully justifiable, in view of the attack which had been made upon them, and as the only means of preventing the effusion of blood.

The men landed, and the swift runners caught the women and took them back to the fleet. It was then learned that the Quinnipissa Indians, a peculiarly warlike and ferocious race, had a large village but a little distance farther up the river. This village it was necessary to pass. There could be no doubt that the savages would fiercely assail them. As they could probably bring many hundred warriors into the conflict, and could make the attack not only from their capacious periaguas, but also from the shelter of the trees on the bank, the situation of the French seemed quite desperate.

La Salle, in this emergence, drew his canoes to the shore, a little below the village, and on the opposite bank. He hoped, by the aid of his captives, to open some communication with the foe. But the Indians had already learned of his approach. Again the hideous clamor of demoniac war was heard, as the noise of their rude drums and savage yells fell upon the ear.

It was early in the afternoon of a day of almost tropical warmth and serenity, when all the voices of nature seemed to invite man to love and help his brother. Soon quite a fleet of massive boats was seen, descending the river, each boat crowded with twenty or thirty warriors, plumed and painted, and armed with bows and arrows, javelins, and clubs. They were yelling like demons, as if expecting by noise to rouse their courage to the highest point.

La Salle himself, with two or three picked companions, pushed out in a canoe, and advanced to meet them. Though one or two guns were in the bottom of the canoe, to be used in case of absolute necessity, they appeared entirely unarmed—a single canoe advancing to meet a fleet. La Salle stood up and waved the calumet, the sacred emblem of peace and friendship. The savages, thirsty for blood, paid no heed to this appeal. They redoubled their yells, and like a band of desperate villains as they were, shot a volley of arrows toward the one canoe with its three or four unarmed occupants. With new vigor the savages plied their paddles, being now sure of the capture of the strangers.

The moment for prompt and decisive action had come. The guns were heavily loaded. One of the boats, larger and more richly ornamented than the rest, contained evidently the head chief. He was a man of herculean frame, dressed in the most gorgeous of barbaric attire. As he stood up in his boat, giving orders, he presented just the target, though at a great distance, to which a sharp-shooter might direct unerring aim. La Salle ordered one of his marksmen to strike him down. After a moment's pause, there was a flash, a slight puff of smoke, a loud report, and the invisible bullet pierced the heart of the chief. The blood gushed forth in a torrent, and the warrior dropped dead in the bottom of the boat.

The warriors were appalled, terrified. Never before had they heard the report of a gun. They knew not what had struck down their chief. No missile had been seen. None could be found. The savages were very superstitious. They thought this must be the work of witchcraft; that they were attacked by evil spirits, whose power was invincible. They had seen the lightning flash, and the rising, vanishing cloud. They had heard the thunder peal. Their chief had been struck dead by

some resistless bolt, at twice the distance to which any arrow could be thrown. It was folly to contend against such a foe. The next instant every one might be stricken down. They were seized with a panic. Instantly, heading the bows of their boats up the river, they fled with the utmost precipitation.

La Salle returned to his companions, conscious that he had secured a truce only. He had still the village to pass; and the current was so strong that he must pass very slowly. It was probable that the Indians would so far recover from their consternation, that some of the boldest would again assail his boats, from behind sheltering rocks and trees. The frail canoes might easily be pierced by their missiles, and the inmates thrown into the water. The savages would soon become accustomed to the report of the guns. Finding that rocks and trees protected them from the invisible bolt, they would all be emboldened; and thus a general and prolonged attack, following them up the river, would cause their entire destruction.

The utmost wisdom was still requisite, to rescue the party from these perils. La Salle loaded one of the women with rich presents of axes, knives, and beads, and sent her across the river in one of his canoes. By signs he told her to inform her tribe that he wished for friendship with them; that if they would be friendly, and bring him in a supply of corn, he would liberate his three other captives, and pay liberally for the corn, in articles which would be of great value to the Indians.

The next morning a large number of Indian warriors were seen approaching the encampment, where the Frenchmen had thrown up defences which would enable them to sell their lives dearly, were the savages determined upon their destruction. La Salle, as bold as he was humane, advanced alone to meet them, presenting the calumet. The Indians assumed a friendly attitude, entered into a treaty of peace, and invited La Salle, with his party, to visit their village. They also brought him a considerable store of corn. Though their manner was such as to lead La Salle greatly to doubt their sincerity, he accepted their invitation, first exacting hostages to remain in the camp until his return. He took with him Father Membré, his invariable companion on such occasions. The mild, fearless, heroic missionary writes:

"We went up to the village where these Indians had prepared us a feast in their fashion. They had notified their allies and neighbors; so that when we went to enjoy the banquet, in a large square, we saw a confused mass of armed savages arrive, one after another. We were however welcomed by the chiefs; but, having ground for suspicion, each kept his gun ready, and the Indians, seeing it, durst not attack us."

Toward evening, La Salle and his companion returned to the camp, still apprehensive that the Indians meditated treachery. They released the three women, whom they made very happy, with rich presents. A careful watch was kept through the night. Before the dawn of the next morning the sentinels reported that they heard a noise, as if a multitude of men were stealthily gathering in a dense growth of canes, but a short distance from the encampment. All were instantly summoned to arms.

It was a gloomy morning, very dark, with moaning wind and gathering clouds and falling rain. The men had but just taken their stations, behind the intrenchments which had been so prudently raised, when the shrill war-whoop burst from apparently hundreds of savage lips; and from the impenetrable darkness a shower of arrows came whizzing through the air. They all fell harmless in and around the spot where the men stood, behind their ramparts, with muskets loaded and primed.

Though the savages kept up an incessant yell, and threw their arrows almost at random into the narrow enclosure, they were so concealed by the darkness and the thick cane-brake, that not one was to be seen. The French kept perfect silence. Not a loud word was spoken. Not a musket was fired. It was very important that every bullet should accomplish its mission and lay a warrior dead in his blood. The Indians were to be taught that every flash and peal was the sure precursor of the death or the serious wound of one of their number.

Soon the day began to dawn. With the increasing light the savages were revealed, as they dodged from point to point. There was no random firing of the guns. Deliberate aim was taken. The savages were very cautious in exposing themselves. The Frenchmen were perfectly protected from their arrows by the rampart of logs. For two hours this strange battle raged—twenty Frenchmen against hundreds of savages. Ten Indians were shot dead. Many others were dreadfully wounded with shattered bones. It is probable that every bullet hit its mark. Not an arrow of the savage had drawn blood.

As the sun rose, revealing the deadly fire of the guns and the utter impotence of the missiles of the Indians, the savages were again thrown into a panic, and fled precipitately. La Salle, with nearly all his force, pursued them up to the village, where, with axes, he speedily demolished all their boats, so that they could not pursue, as he should continue his voyage. His men urged him to burn the village of his treacherous foes. But he refused, saying that he would inflict no farther injury upon them than was absolutely necessary in self-defence.

At the close of this day of gloom, battle, and blood, another night came, of darkness and rain. Enveloped in the shades of night, the French reëmbarked. Silently they passed the village. Not a savage "opened his mouth or peeped." The storm passed away. And when the sun of another lovely morning shone down upon them, the voyagers were far beyond the reach of their cruel foes. Father Membré returned thanks to God that He had borne them, unharmed, through such great peril, and had restrained them from the exercise of any unchristian revenge. It was the morning of the 19th of April.

For twelve days they continued breasting the current of the stream, as they laboriously paddled their way upward. Anxious to return to Quebec as soon as possible, with the tidings of their glorious achievement, they made no tarry at the many villages which were scattered along the banks. They often saw assemblages of Indians, who seemed to assume a hostile attitude. No attack was, however, made upon them.

In descending the river they had a good supply of corn, and stored away quite a quantity in a *cache*. They found it, on their return, in good condition, and it furnished them with a very opportune supply. They were surprised to see how rapidly the corn in the fields matured. Fields were passed on the 29th of March, where the tender blades were just sprouting from the ground. And now, in less than four weeks, the corn was fit to roast. They were told that, in fifty days from planting, it often ripened.

A short tarry was made at the friendly village of the Taensa Indians, where they were again very hospitably entertained. On the 1st of May they resumed their slow and laborious voyage, and reached the Arkansas Indians about the 15th of the month. On the 16th La Salle took two light canoes, propelled by sturdy Indian rowers, and pushed on in advance of the rest of the party. He gave directions for the other canoes to follow as fast as they could. But he was taken dangerously sick on the way.

A birch canoe, in which one is exposed to the rays of the noonday sun, to the chill dews of morning and evening, to drenching showers and dreary days of clouds and rain, presents but few comforts to a man in sickness and suffering. He, however, succeeded, after a toilsome voyage of about ten days, in reaching his old encampment, which he had named Prudhomme, near the mouth of the Ohio River.

Here his malady grew so alarming that he could go no farther. His party landed, drew their canoes up upon the grass of the prairie, repaired their camp, so as to make it an effectual protection from sun and rain, spread mats upon the ground, and made the sick man, who they feared was soon to die, as comfortable as possible.

In such cases a camp was generally built in the form of a shed, with the front entirely open. This camp was on the eastern side of the river, facing the majestic stream and the splendors of the setting sun. La Salle had no physician, no medicine, no tender nursing, no delicate food to tempt a failing appetite. He could only lie patiently upon his mat, and await the progress of the disease, whether it were for life or for death. The silence and solitude of the river, the prairie, and the forest surrounded him.

Strange must have been his reflections in those solemn hours, when he was anticipating the speedy approach of death, upon the banks of that wonderful stream which his enterprise had caused to be explored from its sources to its mouth. As in languor and suffering he reclined upon his couch, all the beauty and bloom of May, in a delightful clime, were spread around him. The silent flood swept by, rushing down a distance of countless leagues in the north, until, after a serpentine course of more than a thousand miles, through the most wonderful scenes of nature, and fringed with the villages of innumerable savage tribes, it was lost in the great Mexican gulf. The Indians moved about in silence, seldom exchanging a word with each other. They brought in game, and were continually cooking and eating at the fire, which was kept in a constant blaze in front of the camp.

Two days and nights were thus passed, when, on the 2d of June, the remaining canoes of the fleet were seen in the

distance, approaching the encampment. They soon landed; and the whole party, over fifty in number, presented to the eye a new scene of bustle and activity. La Salle was sinking, in the ever-increasing languor of something like typhoid fever. It was manifest that many days must elapse before he could leave that spot, and it was probable, in his own judgment as well as in that of all his companions, that he would there sink into that last sleep from which there is no earthly waking.

In these trying hours, his serenity and trust in God did not forsake him. He called Lieutenant Tonti to the side of his couch, and directed him to take several canoes, with the larger part of the company, and make his way, as vigorously as possible, up the river three hundred miles to the mouth of the Illinois River. Then, ascending that, and its upper branch, the Kaskaskias, he was to cross by the portage to a tributary of the St. Joseph's, and paddle down those streams to Fort Miami, where the St. Joseph empties into Lake Michigan. Thence by the lake he was to make his way to Mackinac. This required a journey of over a thousand miles. M. Tonti was furnished with documents addressed to Count Frontenac, Governor of Canada, giving a detailed account of the explorations and discoveries which La Salle had so successfully accomplished. Father Membré, with several others of the party, remained with the sick man.

For more than a month the burning fever raged, and La Salle was brought to the verge of the grave. The fever then left him. For some time it was doubtful whether there was sufficient strength remaining for him to recover. Slowly he gained. After a detention of forty days, they placed him carefully upon mats, in the bottom of a canoe, and, by short stages, resumed their voyage. They left Fort Prudhomme, and, following the same track which Tonti had pursued, did not reach Fort Miami, at the mouth of the St. Joseph's River, until the end of September. But July and August were months of delightful weather. The scenery, rich with forest grandeur and prairie flowers, was varied and enchanting. Game was abundant. Ripe fruit hung on many boughs. Hospitable villages were scattered along the way, where the general voyagers were invariably received with kindness truly fraternal.

The motion of the canoe, as the Indians, with brawny arms, paddled over the mirrored surface of the stream, was soothing and grateful to the languid, yet convalescent patient. In the cool of the beautiful mornings they could glide along the stream for a few leagues, then shelter themselves in some shady grove from the rays of the noonday sun, and in the cool of the serene evenings, resume their voyage till the deepening twilight admonished them to seek their night's encampment.

Thus pleasantly journeying, La Salle rapidly regained strength; and when he reached Fort Miami he was restored to almost his customary vigor. He found the habitation called Fort Miami quite renovated by Lieutenant Tonti, and a few men left in garrison to receive him upon his arrival. Quite a cluster of Indian wigwams had also been reared there, giving a very animated and cheerful aspect to the spot. Father Membré, in describing the scenery through which they passed, in this ascent of the Mississippi and the Illinois, writes:

"The banks of the Mississippi, for twenty or thirty leagues from its mouth, are covered with a dense growth of canes, except in fifteen or twenty places where there are very pretty hills and spacious, convenient landing-places. Behind this fringe of marshy land you see the finest country in the world.

"Our hunters, both French and Indian, were delighted with it. For an extent of six hundred miles in length, and as much in breadth, we were told there are vast fields of excellent land, diversified with pleasing hills, lofty woods, groves through which you might ride on horseback, so clear and unobstructed are the paths.

"These little forests also line the rivers which intersect the country in various places, and which abound in fish. The crocodiles are dangerous here; so much so, that, in some places, no one would venture to expose himself, or even to put his hand out of his canoe. The Indians told us that these animals often dragged in their people, where they could anywhere get hold of them.

"The fields are full of all kinds of game, wild cattle, does, deer, stags, bears, turkeys, partridges, parrots, quails, woodcock, wild pigeons, and ringdoves. There are also beaver, otters, and martens. The cattle of this country surpass ours in size. Their head is monstrous, and their look is frightful, on account of the long, black hair with which it is surrounded, and which hangs below the chin. The hair is fine, and scarce inferior to wool. The Indians wear their skins, which they dress very neatly. They assured us

that, inland, toward the west, there are animals on which men ride, and which carry very heavy loads. They described them as horses, and showed two feet, which were actually hoofs of horses.

"We observed wood fit for every use. There were the most beautiful cedars in the world. There was one kind of tree which shed an abundance of gum, as pleasant to burn as the best French pastilles. We also saw fine hemlocks, and other large trees with white bark. The cotton-wood trees were very large. Of these, the Indians dug out canoes forty or fifty feet long. Sometimes there were fleets of a hundred and fifty at their villages. We saw every kind of tree fit for ship-building. There is also plenty of hemp for cordage, and tar could be made in abundance.

"Prairies are seen everywhere. Sometimes they are fifty or sixty miles in length on the river front, and many leagues in depth. They are very rich and fertile, without a stone or a tree to obstruct the plough. These prairies are capable of sustaining an immense population. Beans grow wild, and the stalks last several years, bearing fruit. The bean vines are thicker than a man's arm, and run to the top of the highest trees. Peach trees are abundant, and bear fruit equal to the best which can be found in France. They are often so loaded, in the gardens of the Indians, that they have to prop up the branches. There are whole forests of mulberries, whose ripened fruit we began to eat in the month of May. Plums are found in great variety, many of which are not known in Europe. Grapevines and pomegranates are common. Three or four crops of corn can be raised in a year.

"The Indian tribes, though savage, seem generally amiable, affable, and obliging. They have no true idea of religion by a regular worship. Tribes separated by not more than thirty miles, speak a different language. And yet they manage to understand each other. There is always some interpreter of one nation residing in another, when they are allies, and who acts as a kind of consul. They are very different from our Canada Indians, in their houses, dress, manners, inclinations, and customs. They have large public squares, games, assemblies. They seem mirthful and full of vivacity. Their chiefs have absolute authority. No one would dare to pass between the chief and the cane torch which burns in his cabin, and is carried before him when he goes out. All make a circuit around it with some ceremony.

"The chiefs have servants and officers, who follow them and wait upon them everywhere. The chiefs distribute their favors at will. In a word, we generally found them to be men. We saw none who knew the use of fire-arms. They had no iron or steel articles, using only stone knives and hatchets."

This wonderful expedition was accomplished without the loss of a single life, on the part of the voyagers. Not one was even wounded. Father Membré attributes this, next to God's goodness, to the tact and wisdom manifested by La Salle. As to the missionary fruits of this enterprise, the devoted ecclesiastic writes:

"I will say nothing here of conversions. Formerly the apostles had but to enter a country, when on the first publication of the Gospel, conversions were seen. I am but a miserable sinner, infinitely destitute of the merits of the apostles. We must acknowledge that these miraculous ways of grace are not attached to the exercise of our ministry. God employs an ordinary and common way, following which, I contented myself with announcing, as well as I could, the principal truths of Christianity to the nations I met. The Illinois language served me for about three hundred miles down the river. I made the rest understand by gestures, and some term in their dialect which I insensibly picked up. But I cannot say that my feeble efforts produced certain fruits. With regard to these people, perhaps some one, by a secret effect of grace, has profited, God only knows. All we have done has been to see the state of these tribes, and to open the way to the Gospel, and to missionaries."

CHAPTER XIII.

Sea Voyage to the Gulf of Mexico.

La Salle returns to Quebec. Sails for France. Assailed by Calumny. The Naval Expedition. Its Object. Its Equipment. Disagreement between La Salle and Beaujeu. The Voyage to the West Indies. Adventures in the Caribbean Sea. They Enter the Gulf. Storms and Calms. The Voyagers Lost.

Father Membré's journal abruptly terminates with the arrival of the party at Fort Miami. We have no detailed account of the adventures of La Salle during the next eight or ten months. We learn incidentally, that Father Membré was sent to Quebec, and thence to France, to convey to the court the tidings of the great discovery, and of the annexation of truly imperial realms to the kingdom of Louis XIV. On the 8th of October, Father Membré left Fort Miami for Quebec. Thence he sailed with Governor Frontenac for France, where he arrived before the close of the year. La Salle remained with the Miami and the Illinois Indians, probably retrieving his fallen fortunes by extensive traffic in furs, of which he had, at the time, a monopoly conferred upon him by the king.

At length, in the autumn of 1683, he also returned to Quebec, and sailed for France, landing at Rochelle on the 13th of December. No man can, in this world, accomplish great results without exposing himself to malignant attacks. Bitter enemies assailed La Salle with venomous hostility. Their hostility was excited by the monopoly of the fur trade, which he enjoyed over all the vast regions he had explored. They despatched atrocious charges against him to the government, denouncing him as a robber, and denying the discoveries which he professed to have made. But Governor Frontenac and Father Membré were both at Versailles, and La Salle's cause was not seriously injured by these malignant charges.

It was the chevalier's object, in this his return to France, to organize a colony to form a settlement in the earthly paradise which he thought that he had discovered on the banks of the Mississippi. He designed to arrange an expedition of such magnitude as would enable him to establish several permanent settlements, and also to explore more extensively the newly discovered country.

The king and the court entered eagerly into plans, which promised to redound greatly to the glory of France. The reputation of La Salle, the grandeur of the undertaking, and a natural curiosity to visit scenes so full of novelty and wonders, induced several gentlemen of distinction and intelligence to embark in the enterprise. Among them was a younger brother of La Salle, with an ecclesiastic called M. Cavalier, and also a nephew. The king conferred a new commission upon La Salle, investing him with the powers almost of viceroyalty. The whole valley of the Mississippi, from Lake Michigan to the Gulf, was called Louisiana, in honor of the then reigning king. The sway of La Salle embraced the whole of this almost limitless region. Seven missionaries accompanied the expedition, under the general supervision of Father Membré, whose virtues and eminent qualification for the station all alike recognized.

Four vessels were equipped for the expedition. The first, called the *Joli*, was a man-of-war armed with thirty-six guns. The second was a frigate called the *Belle*. The king made a present of this vessel to La Salle. He had furnished it with a very complete outfit, and with an armament of six guns. The third, called the *Aimable*, was a merchant-ship of about three hundred tons. It was heavily laden with all those implements and goods which it was deemed would be most useful in the establishment of a colony. The fourth was a light, swift-sailing yacht, called the *St. Francis*, of but thirty tons. This vessel was also laden with munitions, supplies, and goods for traffic with the Indians. The whole number who embarked, including one hundred soldiers and seven or eight families of women and children, amounted to two hundred and eighty. Care was taken to select good mechanics for the various trades. But, unfortunately, soldiers and seamen were engaged without apparently any reference to character. Thus some of the worst vagabonds of earth were gathered from the seaports of France to colonize the New World.

Nothing with the quarrelsome race of man ever goes smoothly for any considerable length of time. Captain Beaujeu, a Norman seaman of great valor and extensive experience, was commander of the man-of-war, and, as such, was intrusted with the general direction and supervision of the vessels. He was a proud man, accustomed to authority, and he regarded La Salle and his party as passengers, whom he was conveying to their destination, and who, while on board his vessels, were to be subservient to his will.

On the other hand, La Salle regarded Beaujeu as one of his officers, who was to be implicitly obedient to his directions. The idea never occurred to him that Beaujeu was to be taken into partnership, or consulted even, in regard to any of his measures, any farther than La Salle might deem it expedient to consult him or any other of his subordinates. With views so different, a speedy quarrel was inevitable. Beaujeu is represented as a man full of conceit, of narrow mind, and very irritable. La Salle was reserved, self-reliant, keeping his own counsel. Scarcely had the two men met, before they found themselves in antagonism. Before the vessels sailed, Beaujeu wrote to the king's minister as follows:

"You have ordered me, sir, to afford this enterprise every facility in my power. I shall do so. But permit me to say that I take great credit to myself for consenting to obey the orders of La Salle. I believe him to be a worthy man, but he has never served in war except against savages, and has no military rank. I, on the contrary, have been thirteen years captain of a vessel, and have served thirty years by sea and land.

"He tells me that, in case of his death, the command devolves on Chevalier de Tonti. This is certainly hard for me to bear. Though I am not now acquainted with the country, I must be a dull scholar not to obtain an adequate knowledge of it in a month after my arrival. I beg you therefore to give me a share in the command, so that no military operation may be undertaken without consulting me. Should we be attacked by the Spaniards, I am persuaded that men who have never commanded in war could not resist them, as another could do, who had been taught by experience."

Three weeks later, he wrote: "The Joli is prepared for sea. I hope to sail down the river tomorrow. It remains for M. La Salle to sail when he is ready. He has said nothing to me of his designs. As he is constantly changing his plans, I know not whether the provisions will be enough for the enterprise. He is so jealous, and so fearful that some one may penetrate his secrets, that I have refrained from asking him any questions.

"I have already informed you how disagreeable it was for me to be under the orders of M. de la Salle, who has no military rank. I shall however obey him, without repugnance, if you send me orders to that effect. But I beg that they may be such that he can impute no fault to me should he fail to execute what he has undertaken. I am induced to say this because he has intimated that it was my design to thwart his plans. I wish you would inform me what is to be done in regard to the soldiers. He pretends that, on our arrival, they are to be put under his charge. My instructions do not authorize this pretence. I am to afford all the aid in my power, without endangering the safety of the vessels."

The ministry paid no attention to these complaints. They probably decided to leave the commanders to settle such questions among themselves. The four vessels sailed from Rochelle on the 24th of July, 1684. They had advanced but about one hundred and fifty miles when a violent tempest overtook them. The Joli lost her bowsprit. Consequently the little squadron returned to Rochefort. Having repaired damages, the fleet again set sail, on the 1st of August.

La Salle and his *suite*, if we may so speak of his chosen companions, were on board the Joli, which Captain Beaujeu commanded. On the 8th of August the fleet passed Cape Finisterre, the extreme northwestern point of Spain. On the 20th they reached the island of Madeira. Captain Beaujeu wished to land here, to take in a fresh supply of provisions. La Salle said, emphatically, "No!"

"We have," he said, "an ample supply of both food and water. To anchor there will cause us a delay of six or eight days. It will reveal our enterprise to the Spaniards. It was not the intention of the king that we should touch at that point."

Beaujeu was compelled to submit. But he was very angry and sullen. His sub-officers and sailors were also angry. Time was nothing to them, and they were anticipating grand carousals in port. Sharp words were interchanged, and the quarrel became more bitter. On the 24th they reached the influence of the trade winds, which blow continually from east to west. On the 6th of September they reached the Tropic of Cancer. In crossing this line a custom had long prevailed of performing a rite called baptism upon all on shipboard who then crossed for the first time. The indignity was inflicted upon all alike, without any regard to character or rank. But, by giving the sailors a rich treat, one could secure for himself a little more moderation in the performance of the revolting ceremony.

A very stout sailor, generally the most gigantic man of the crew, grotesquely dressed to represent Father Neptune, would come up over the bows of the vessel and seize his victim. First he would catechize him very closely respecting his object in crossing the line; then he would exact an oath that he would never permit any one, when he was present, to enter the tropics without subjecting him to baptism. Then he would dash several bucketsful of salt water upon his head. This was the mildest form of performing the rite. If the subject for the baptism were, for any reason, obnoxious to the sailors, his treatment was much more severe. He was greased and tarred and shampooed, and shaved with an iron hoop, and treated, in all respects, very roughly.

On board this fleet, the passengers, including one hundred well-armed soldiers, greatly exceeded the number of sailors. La Salle, learning that the sailors were making great preparations for this baptism, resolved that he would not submit to such an indignity, and that his companions and followers should not be subjected to it. He therefore issued orders prohibiting the ceremony. This exasperated the sailors. Beaujeu openly advocated their cause. The seamen were compelled to submit. The antagonism between the two commanders was embittered.

On the 11th of September they reached the latitude of St. Domingo. A dead calm soon ensued. The ships floated as upon a sea of glass. One of the soldiers died. After imposing religious rites, his body was consigned to its ocean sepulchre. The calm was succeeded by a storm. In the darkness and tumult of this tropical tempest the vessels lost sight of each other. Gradually the storm abated. The change of climate had caused much sickness. Fifty were in hospital on board the Joli, including La Salle and both of the surgeons. On the 20th, the grand mountains of St. Helena hove in sight, and the majestic bay of Samana opened before them.

It still required a sail of five days before they reached the Port de Paix, on the northwestern extremity of the island. Here there was a very fine harbor, and here the French governor of the neighboring isle of Tortue had his residence. La Salle had letters to this governor, M. de Cussy, directing him to supply the fleet with everything it might need, and which it was in his power to give. For some unexplained reason Beaujeu silently declined obeying these orders. In the night he sailed directly by the Port de Paix, and doubling Cape St. Nicholas, a hundred miles distant at the western extremity of the island, circled around to the southern shore, and on the 27th cast anchor in a small harbor called the Petit Guave. The voyage thus far, from Rochelle, had occupied fifty-eight days.

This unaccountable change of place for the rendezvous of the scattered vessels caused much embarrassment. We do not know what were the remonstrances of La Salle, or what was the defence of Beaujeu. The Joli had scarcely cast anchor in this remote and silent bay, when a large sail-boat, containing twenty men, who had caught sight of the ship, entered the port, and informed La Salle that not only Governor Cussy was at the Port de Paix, but also the Marquis of Laurent, who was governor-general of all the French West India Islands. This greatly increased the chagrin of La Salle for an interview with them would have greatly facilitated his operations.

Religious ceremonies were, in a remarkable degree, blended with all these explorations. The next day after the Joli cast anchor, all the ship's company was assembled for divine worship, to return thanks to God for their prosperous voyage. La Salle, being convalescent, went ashore with a boat's crew to obtain some refreshments, and to send intelligence across the island, to the governor, of his arrival at Port de Paix. In this message he expressed intense regret that he had not been able to stop at Port de Paix, and entreated the governor, if it were in his power, to visit his ship at Guave.

In consequence of the number of sick on board, they were all landed, shelters were reared for them, and they were refreshed with fresh vegetables, fruit, and exercise in the open air. La Salle was still very feeble. A slow fever was consuming him. The conduct of Beaujeu caused him the greatest embarrassment. We should infer from the narrative of M. Joutel that there was no European settlement at the spot, and but very few native inhabitants, though all the natives were friendly.

In a few days two of the vessels which had been separated from the Joli by the storm, entered the bay, having probably learned from the natives, as they coasted along the shore, where the ship was. The whole of the eastern portion of the island was then held by Spain. As the three vessels were sailing along, two large boats, filled with armed Spaniards, pushed out from the shore and seized the smallest of the vessels—the St. Francis—and carried it off as a prize, with all its crew. This was a very heavy loss, as it deprived the expedition of supplies of which it stood greatly in need. The chagrin of La Salle was increased by the reflection that had Beaujeu obeyed orders and entered Port de Paix, the fleet

would have rendezvoused there in perfect safety. The governor very loudly expressed his indignation, in view of the conduct of Captain Beaujeu.

The state of mind of the captain may be inferred from the following extracts from a letter to the French minister, which he wrote at that place:

"Were it not the sickness of Chevalier La Salle, I should have no occasion to write to you, as I am charged only with the navigation and he with the secret. We have arrived here almost all sick. La Salle has been attacked by a violent fever, which affects not more his body than his mind. His brother requested me to take charge of his affairs. I excused myself because I know that when restored to health he would not approve of what I had done.

"It is said that the Spaniards have, in these seas, six men-of-war, each carrying sixty guns. It is true that if the Chevalier de la Salle should not recover, I shall pursue different measures from those which he has adopted, which I do not approve. I cannot comprehend how a man should dream of settling a country surrounded by Spaniards and Indians, with a company of workmen and women, without soldiers.

"If you will permit me to express my opinion, the Chevalier de la Salle should have contented himself with the discovery of his river, without attempting to conduct three vessels and troops across the ocean through seas utterly unknown to him. He is a man of great learning, who has read much, and has some knowledge of navigation. But there is a great difference between theory and practice. The ability to transport canoes through lakes and rivers is very different from that which is required to conduct vessels and troops over remote seas."

After a short delay in this lonely harbor, the fleet, now consisting of but three vessels, again spread its sails. It was agreed to direct their course to Cape St. Antoine, about nine hundred miles distant, at the extreme western point of the island of Cuba. Should the vessels be separated by a storm, they were to rendezvous at that place.

As the *Aimable*, a heavily laden merchantman, was the slowest sailer, it was decided that she should take the lead, the other two following. La Salle, with his brother, Father Membré, and some others, transferred their quarters from the *Joli* to the *Aimable*. This movement was also probably influenced by La Salle's desire to escape from the uncongenial companionship of Captain Beaujeu. It was on the 25th of November, 1684, that the voyage was resumed.

Two days' sail brought the fleet within sight of the magnificent island of Cuba. They ran along its southern shore, generally in sight of its towering mountains and its luxuriant foliage, but having the enchanting scenery occasionally veiled from their view by dense fogs. On the 1st of December they caught sight, far away in the south, of the grand island of Cayman. On the 4th of December, they cast anchor in a sheltered bay of the beautiful Island of Pines, but a few miles south of the Cuban coast.

La Salle, with his companions, took a boat and went on shore. Several of the ship's crew rowed the boat. As they approached the sandy beach, they saw an immense crocodile, apparently asleep, enjoying the blaze of a tropical sun. The boatmen drew near as noiselessly as they could. La Salle took deliberate aim and fired. Fortunately the bullet struck a vulnerable point. The monster, after a few convulsive struggles, was dead. The sailors, eager for a taste of fresh meat, kindled a fire and roasted the flesh, which they found tender and palatable. There were no inhabitants at that point. The party separated in small groups, and wandered in all directions, lured by the beauty of the region, and feasting upon the rich tropical fruits which grew in spontaneous abundance.

When about to reëmbark, two of the sailors were missing. Several guns were fired as signals for the lost men, but in vain. The boat returned to the ship. The next morning, at sunrise, a boat's crew of thirty men was sent to search for the wanderers. At length they were found, thoroughly frightened, having passed a very uncomfortable night. The beauty of this island charmed all who beheld it. They were lavish in their praises of its luxuriance, its fruits, its game, and its birds of brilliant plumage.

Again the fleet weighed anchor and, on the 11th, reached Cape Corrientes, one of the most prominent southwestern

points of Cuba. Here again they ran into a solitary bay, which, in clustering fruits and vine-draped bowers, and birds on the wing, presented an aspect of almost Eden loveliness. They tarried but a day. Then, taking advantage of a breeze fresh and fair, they passed from the Caribbean Sea into the Gulf of Mexico. They had proceeded but about fifteen miles when the wind changed, and became adverse. For two days, by beating, they worked their way slowly against it.

Captain Beaujeu took a boat, and came on board the *Aimable*, and insisted that the vessels should put back to Cape Antoine, and ride at anchor there until the wind should prove favorable. La Salle could not consider this measure judicious. But, weary of contention and anxious to agree with Beaujeu whenever he could, he reluctantly gave his consent. They ran back to the land, cast anchor, remained two days in a dead calm, when suddenly a tropical tempest arose, which was almost a tornado. The *Belle* dragged her anchor, and was driven violently against the *Aimable*, carrying away her bowsprit, and greatly injuring much of her rigging. The *Aimable* would have been sunk had she not cut her cable and escaped. The anchor was lost.

On the 18th, the wind became fair. Having repaired damages as far as was in their power, the fleet again set sail. It was ten o'clock in the morning of a very delightful day. Directing their course northwesterly, they sailed, with a gentle breeze and occasional calms, nine days' without seeing land or encountering any event of importance. On the 28th, land was discovered. It was but a few miles distant. It was evidently the continent of North America, and consisted of a long reach of low land, fringed with a dense forest, and elevated but a few feet above the level of the Gulf.

A shallop was speedily equipped, and La Salle, with a few of his chosen companions and a boat's crew, all well-armed, repaired to the shore to reconnoitre. Another boat, also similarly equipped, was ordered soon to follow. The *Belle* was directed to keep up careful soundings, and to range along the coast as near the shore as was safe.

La Salle's party soon reached the shore, and landed upon a very beautiful meadow. But they had no time for exploration. The freshening wind rolled in such a surf that there was great danger that their boat would be swamped. They were compelled hastily to reëmbark, and return to the ship. Slowly the vessels coasted along the uninviting shore, looking in vain for any inlet or any river's mouth.

On the 2d of January, 1685, a dense fog settled down over the sea and the land, so enveloping the ships that no object could be seen at the distance of a few yards.

La Salle ordered cannon occasionally to be fired on board the *Aimable*, to let the other two vessels know where he was. As there was scarcely a breath of wind, there was no necessity that the fleet should be scattered. When the fog the next day was dissipated, the *Joli* was not in sight. Toward evening, however, the ship was again seen. In a few days they discovered an inlet, which La Salle carefully examined from the mast-head. He judged it to be the Bay of Appalachicola, then called *Espiritu Santo*, on the Florida coast. They therefore pressed on westerly, hoping soon to reach the Mississippi.

To make it sure that he should not pass the mouth of the river, which, flowing through very low and marshy soil, was designated by no landmark, La Salle desired to send a party of thirty men ashore to follow along the coast. But the wind rose, and the surf dashed so violently upon the muddy banks, that a landing could not be effected. Slowly the fleet moved along until the 13th, when it was found necessary to land to take in water. A shallop was sent ashore, with five or six seamen, well-armed. There was no inlet, and no creek to afford any protection, and the surf still rolled in heavily.

Though the dense forest spread its gloom far and wide around, there opened before them a small meadow of but a few acres, green, treeless and smooth as a floor. The boat was directed toward that spot. When within a gun-shot of the land, a troop of about a dozen savages, tall, stalwart men, entirely naked, emerged from the forest, and came down to the water's edge. The surf was so high that there was much danger that the boat would be swamped in an attempt to land. The seamen therefore cast anchor, to consider what was to be done.

When the savages saw that they were at a standstill, they made friendly signs, inviting the strangers to land. They waded out into the surf and beckoned to them. Apparently the boat could not pass safely through the surf. There was a large amount of driftwood lining the shore. Several of the savages selected a large smooth log. This they pushed through the surf. Ranging themselves on each side, they clung to the log with one arm, while, with the other, they paddled. Without

any hesitancy, unarmed and helpless, they clambered into the boat.

When five were in, the seamen motioned to the others to go to another boat which was then approaching, and which conveyed La Salle. The savages seemed not to entertain the slightest suspicion of danger. La Salle was very glad to receive them. He hoped that they could give him some information respecting the river he sought. But all his efforts were in vain. Though he spoke several Indian languages, he could not make them understand him. They were all taken on board the vessel. With much curiosity they examined its wonders. They were feasted, and seemed quite at home in smoking the pipe of fragrant tobacco. The sheep, the swine, and the poultry, they had evidently never seen before. But when they were shown the skin of a cow, which had recently been killed, they seemed much delighted, and indicated that they had seen such animals before, doubtless referring to the buffaloes.

Having received many presents, a boat was sent to carry them as near the shore as it was safe to go. The savages bound their presents upon their heads, and letting themselves gently down into the water, swam to the land. Marvellous must have been the stories which they narrated that night, in their wigwams, to admiring crowds. Quite a large group of Indians was seen gathered upon the shore to greet them, as they came back.

La Salle had found it impossible to understand their signs. But his apprehensions were somewhat excited by the thought that they might have endeavored to indicate to him that he had already passed the mouth of the Mississippi.

That evening the wind rose fresh and fair. Raising their anchors, and keeping near the shore, with frequent soundings, they pressed on toward the southwest. The next day came a dead calm. Each vessel floated on the glassy sea, "like a painted ship on a painted ocean." Thus they moved along, day after day, encountering calms, when not a ripple was to be seen on the mirrored expanse, and fresh breezes, which tossed the ocean in billowy foam, and storms which threatened to tear the masts from the hulls.

On the 14th of January they attempted again to effect a landing in the boats. But the surf prevented. They saw, however, upon a beautiful prairie, extending with its waving grass and gorgeous flowers as far as the eye could reach, vast herds of wild horses and buffaloes. All on board the vessels were greatly excited by this spectacle. They were eager to land, that they might enjoy the pleasure of an encampment and the excitement of hunting and the chase.

The land was now found trending more and more to the south. They had reached a latitude considerably below that of the mouth of the Mississippi, as ascertained by La Salle, upon his first visit. The whole aspect of the country seemed changed. There were immense treeless prairies continually opening before them, crowded with game, and especially with immense herds of horses and buffaloes.

At length they came to apparently the mouth of a small river. A boat was sent on shore, with orders to kindle a fire, as a signal, should they find a good place for landing. La Salle stood upon the deck of the *Aimable*, eagerly watching. Soon he saw the smoke curling up through the clear air of the prairie. Just as La Salle was entering his boat for the shore, the wind freshened and tumbled in such billows from the open sea that the boat, which had already landed, was compelled precipitately to return. The next morning the wind abated La Salle felt himself lost. He resolved to land, with a strong party, and make a thorough exploration of the region, that he might, by observation or by communication with such inhabitants as he might discover, find out where he was. He had many apprehensions that he had passed the mouth of the Mississippi, and that he was far in the west, skirting the coast of Mexico.

CHAPTER XIV.

Lost in the Wilderness.

Treachery of Beaujeu. Accumulating Troubles. Anxieties of La Salle. March on the Land. The Encampment. Wreck of the *Aimable*. Misadventure with the Indians. Commencement of Hostilities. Desertion of

Beaujeu with the Joli. The Encampment. The Indians Solicit Friendship. The Cruel Repulse. Sickness and Sorrow. Exploring Expeditions. The Mississippi sought for in vain.

The altercation between La Salle and Beaujeu still continued. The chevalier feared that the captain designed to abandon him and return to France. Parties were formed, and the dispute on board the vessels was bitter. La Salle was convinced that he had passed the Mississippi. Others argued that they had not reached it. In fact they were beyond Matagorda Bay, in the southwestern part of Texas, and were within a hundred miles of the Rio Grande. A dense fog prevented the landing of the boat's crew. La Salle insisting upon a return, the vessels coasted slowly along, a distance of about thirty miles, till they came to an inlet, which the fog had prevented them from seeing before, and which proved to be Matagorda Bay.

The expedition was now in serious trouble. Their provisions were nearly exhausted. They had thus far seen no settlement, on the American coast, from which they could obtain supplies. A large party was landed on the western entrance of the bay. They threw up a camp, and while some explored the prairie with their guns, others followed up the stream with their fishing rods. An ample supply of game, of great variety, was taken, and also an abundance of fish. All who could be spared from the ships hastened to the shore. The weather was delightful; the scenery enchanting; and the whole ship's company, after so long an imprisonment in the crowded vessels, revelled in feasting and joy.

"Uneasy lies the head which wears a crown." La Salle, feeling keenly his responsibility for the success of the expedition, was heavily oppressed by care. One of the boats was sent up the bay, seven or eight miles, in search of a river or brook; but their search was in vain. A few springs of tolerably good water were found, from which they replenished their empty barrels. Ducks and other water-fowl were met in great abundance.

The vessels were all anchored in the bay, near the shore, and for several days, in this sunny region, beneath cloudless skies, the voyagers generally enjoyed all the pleasures of the most delightful picnic party. La Salle saw increasing evidence that Beaujeu was intending to desert him. He was anxious to lay in supplies for a long voyage. La Salle wished to delay only to obtain provisions for fifteen days. He was satisfied that it would not take longer than that to return to the point where he now believed the mouth of the Mississippi to be.

In this emergence he decided to have the vessels coast along near the shore, while he sent a chosen party of one hundred and thirty men, to march along upon the land. The adventurous band commenced its journey in a fog so dense that those in the rear could not see those in front. M. Joutel, the historian of the expedition from the time it sailed from France until its close, led this party.

The march was commenced on the 5th of February. Each man carried his pack upon his own shoulders. They kept along as near as possible to the sea. The first night they encamped on a slight eminence, where a large fire was built to signalize to the vessels their position. For a week they thus journeyed along, through marsh and prairie and forest, building each night their signal fires. During all this time they caught no sight of their vessels. On the 13th they came to the banks of a wide creek or bayou, which they had no means of crossing.

The carpenters were immediately set to work in building a boat. The next day, while thus employed, the Joli and the Belle hove in sight. The short twilight of the tropics was then passing into night. A signal-fire was built, and seen by those on the ships. The next morning, the slow-sailing Aimable, which bore La Salle and his companions, appeared. La Salle landed and visited the encampment. Having sounded the creek, he decided to bring the three vessels in, and to send a boat to explore inland, hoping that the creek might prove to be the mouth of some river. The channel was carefully staked out for the entrance of the vessels, safe anchorage chosen, and orders were issued for the three to enter at the next high tide. La Salle would give the signal from the shore, when they were to move.

Captain Beaujeu sent back the insolent answer, "I can manage my own vessel without any instructions from Monsieur La Salle."

As this message arrived, a party of the ship's company, who had been at some distance from the camp, came running in, much alarmed, saying that quite an army of savages was approaching. La Salle instantly called all his force to arms, that he might be prepared for any emergence. Though earnestly desirous of peace, he yet deemed it important to show a bold front. In imposing military array, with muskets loaded, and the beating of drums, he led his band of about one hundred

and fifty men, to meet the Indians.

Both parties halted and faced each other, neither knowing whether the other wished for peace or war. La Salle directed ten of his men to lay down their arms, and advance toward the Indians, making friendly signs, and endeavoring to invite an unarmed party to meet them. The whole body at once threw down their arms, consisting of bows and javelins, and ran forward joyously, caressing the Europeans, according to their custom, by rubbing their hands first over their own breasts and arms, and then over the breasts and arms of their newly found friends.

Six or seven accompanied a party of the French back to their encampment. La Salle, with the rest, accepted an invitation to visit the Indian village, which they represented as distant about five miles. Just as they were starting, La Salle turned his eyes toward the bay, when he saw, much to his consternation, that their store-ship the *Aimable*, which was left under the care of Captain Beaujeu, instead of following the channel marked out by the stakes, was paying no regard to them. He was greatly alarmed; but there was nothing which he could do to repel the danger.

He therefore, though in great perturbation, followed the savages to their village. It consisted of about fifty wigwams, erected upon an eminence but slightly elevated above the level prairie. The huts were built of mats or of the tanned skins of the buffalo. Just as they were entering the village, a cannon was fired from one of the ships. The savages were greatly terrified, and simultaneously threw themselves upon the ground, burying their faces in the grass. But La Salle reassured them, stating that it was merely a signal to him that one of his ships had come to anchor.

Though La Salle was very vigilant to guard against any treachery, still the hospitality manifested by the Indians seemed sincere and cordial. The Indians feasted them abundantly with fresh buffalo steaks, and jerked meat consisting of thin slices of flesh dried in the sun and smoked. Their village was near the creek, and La Salle counted forty large boats, made of logs hollowed out, such as he had seen on the Mississippi.

Upon returning to the camp, La Salle found his worst fears realized. The *Aimable* was driven aground, and under circumstances which rendered it almost certain that it had been done through the treachery of Captain Beaujeu. La Salle had marked out the channel by stakes, had sent the vessel a pilot, whom Beaujeu had refused to receive, and had stationed a man at the mast-head, who had given a loud warning, but whose cry was entirely disregarded.

"Those who witnessed the manœuvre," writes Joutel, "were convinced, by irresistible evidence, that the vessel was wrecked by design, which was one of the blackest and most detestable crimes which can enter into the human heart."

The vessel was run upon the shore at the highest tide. All efforts to float her again were unavailing. The calamity was irretrievable. The *Aimable* contained all the ammunition, the mechanic tools, and the farming and household utensils. But La Salle, ever rising superior to the blows of misfortune, still retained his firmness. Diligently he engaged in removing the stores from the wrecked ship. One of the shallops had been, as it was believed, treacherously destroyed.

With the one shallop which remained, he succeeded, that afternoon, in removing from the ship to an encampment on the shore, the ammunition, a considerable portion of the mechanic tools, the farming and domestic utensils, and a few barrels of provisions. During the night a storm arose. The vessel was dashed to pieces. In the morning the bay was covered with barrels, chests, bales, and other débris of the wreck. While affairs were in this deplorable state, the savages, about one hundred and twenty in number, made another visit to the camp. The shores were strewed with articles of inestimable value to these poor Indians. Sentinels were stationed to prevent any robbery; but the Indians manifested no disposition to perpetrate any acts of violence.

La Salle was in great want of more boats. The Indians had some, which were dug out from immense trunks of trees, of graceful form and rich carving, capable of carrying twenty or thirty men. As all the work on these boats had been performed with stone hatchets, almost an infinity of labor had been expended upon them, and they were deemed very valuable.

La Salle sent two trusty men to the village of the Indians, to purchase, if they could, two of the boats. When they entered the wigwams, they found that a bale of blankets, which had drifted along the bay, had been picked up by the Indians, and divided among them. They made no attempt at concealment. Not having any clear views of the rights of property, they had no thought that they had done anything wrong in taking goods which they had found drifting in the water. The officers

returned to La Salle with this report.

Suffering from shipwreck and great destitution, it was necessary for him to economize, as much as possible, in his expenditures. He therefore decided to send some men to the Indians, to endeavor to obtain two boats in exchange for the blankets and a few other articles which they had picked up. M. Hamel, one of Beaujeu's officers, volunteered to go on this mission, with a boat's crew, in the shallop of the Joli. He was an impetuous young fellow, with more bravery than prudence. Assuming that the Indians had stolen the blankets, and that they were to be browbeaten and forced to make restitution by the surrender of two of their boats, he advanced, upon his landing, in such menacing military array as to frighten the Indians. Most of them fled into the woods.

He entered the deserted cabins, picked up all the blankets he could find, stole a number of very nicely tanned deer skins, and then, seizing two of the best boats, put men on board of each, and commenced his return to the ship. He was quite elated with his performance, thinking it a heroic achievement. As they were paddling slowly down the bay, the wind rose strongly against them. Night came on cold and dark. It became necessary to land and wait for the morning.

They built a large fire. Wrapped in blankets, they threw themselves upon the grass around, with their feet toward the glowing coals, and soon all fell asleep. Sentinels had been stationed at a short distance from the fire, but they slept also.

The Indians returned to their wigwams. They found their treasures gone and two of their best boats stolen. As night came, they saw in the distance the light of a camp fire, and understood full well what it signified. With silent tread, and breathing vengeance, they crept through the forest upon their sleeping foes. At a given signal, the forest resounded with the dreadful war-whoop, and a shower of arrows fell upon the sleepers. Two were killed outright; two were severely wounded. The rest sprung to their arms, while some fled in terror.

The Indians, aware of the terrible power of the white man's musket, did not wait for a battle. Having inflicted this deed of revenge, they suddenly disappeared. One of the men, M. Moranget, a nephew of La Salle, succeeded in reaching the encampment of his friends, though faint and bleeding. One arrow had inflicted a terrible wound, almost cutting its way through his shoulder. Another had cut a deep gash along his bosom.

La Salle immediately sent an armed party to the spot. He was exceedingly chagrined by the cruel blunder perpetrated by his envoy. Though he could not blame the Indians, he knew full well that, their vengeance being thus aroused, they would, if they could, doom all to indiscriminate slaughter. It was necessary for him therefore to take the most decisive action in self-defence. The dead were buried. One man, helplessly wounded, was brought back to the camp. The others returned unharmed. This disaster took place in the night of the 5th of March, 1685.

These calamities operated fearfully against La Salle. Beaujeu took advantage of them, and lost no opportunity of proclaiming them as evidence that La Salle was utterly incompetent to conduct such an enterprise as that in which he was engaged. Quite a number, who had formerly been friends of La Salle, ranged themselves on the side of Beaujeu, who now openly proclaimed his intention of abandoning the enterprise and returning to France. Still he continued to do everything in his power to embarrass the operations of La Salle. There were several pieces of cannon on board the Belle. But nearly all the cannon balls were in the hold of the Joli. Beaujeu, on the eve of his departure, refused to give them up, saying that it was inconvenient for him to get at them.

About the 14th of March, Captain Beaujeu spread the sails of the Joli, and disappeared over the horizon of the sea, on his voyage to France. He took with him sixty or seventy of the company, and many stores which were deemed essential in the establishment of a colony. La Salle was left with about two hundred men, encamped upon the banks of an unknown inlet, and with one single small vessel, the Belle, anchored in the bay. To add to the gloom of his situation, the Indians were justly exasperated against him.

The first thing to be done was to build a fort for defence. Thinking it not impossible that the broad creek he had entered might prove to be one of the mouths of the Mississippi, he decided to set out on an exploring tour up the river for some distance into the interior. Five boats, containing a well-armed party of about fifty persons, embarked upon this enterprise. La Salle himself took the command. About one hundred and forty persons were left behind in the fort, under the control of M. Joutel. Those who were left in garrison, were to employ their time in strengthening the fort, and in

building a large boat on the European plan.

The savages came frequently around the encampment at night, barking like dogs and howling like wolves. They did not venture upon any attack. Upon one occasion, however, a few men were at work at a little distance from the encampment, when they saw a large band of savages approaching. The workmen fled to the fort, leaving all their tools behind them. The savages gathered them up and retired. It was not safe to wander far for game. But fish was taken in great abundance from the bay.

Early in April, the garrison was alarmed by the sight of a distant sail. It was feared that it was a war-ship of the hostile Spaniards, coming to destroy them. The vessel, however, passed by, without apparently seeing the encampment. Several tragic incidents ensued. One man was bitten by a rattlesnake. After suffering dreadful agonies he died. Another, who was fishing, was swept away by the current and was drowned. Fortunately, beds of excellent salt were found, formed by the evaporation of salt water in basins on the land.

It must be confessed that the savages manifested much of a Christian disposition. They frequently came near the fort, and made signs indicative of their desire that friendly relations might be restored. But La Salle, fearing treachery, and not having full confidence in the prudence of those he left behind, gave orders that no intercourse should be opened with the savages until his return.

Early in May, quite a large party of Indians appeared near the fort. Three of them, laying aside their weapons, came forward and made signs that they wished for a conference. M. Joutel, instead of sending three unarmed men to meet them, invited them to come into the fort. Though they thus placed themselves entirely in his power, they, without the slightest hesitation, entered the enclosure. They quietly sat down, and, by signs, said that hunters from the fort had often been near them, so that they could easily have killed them. But they refrained from doing them any injury. M. Moranget, who had been so severely wounded, urged that they should be terribly punished, in revenge for the attack upon the camp. This infamous proposal M. Joutel rejected.

But his conduct was inexcusable. He gave them a very unfriendly reception; and soon ordered them to depart. They had scarcely left the entrance gate, when he ordered several muskets to be fired, as if at them. They thought that they were treacherously fired upon, and fled precipitately. He then ordered several cannon-shot to be thrown to the eminence, where the large party was peacefully assembled. This scattered them. Such was the response to the Indians' appeal for friendship. Thus insanely did the garrison establish open hostilities between the two parties, when it was evident that the Indians desired friendship.

La Salle, in ascending the river, found a prairie region far more rich and beautiful than that occupied by the encampment at the mouth of the creek. He sent back two boats, with directions that about thirty of the most able-bodied men should remain to garrison the fort, while the rest, including all the women and children, were to embark, under M. Moranget, for the new location. Early in July another messenger came with instructions for all the remaining garrison to embark, with all the stores they could carry, in the Belle, and ascend the river many leagues, to join their companions in the new settlement, and to bury, in careful concealment, all the goods which could not be removed.

But sorrows and troubles without number came. The blazing sun of summer withered them. Many were sick. All were languid, discontented, disheartened. The wood to build their huts had to be drawn three miles by hand. There was no heart for the work. Discontented men always quarrel. Even La Salle lost hope, and no longer displayed his customary energy and sagacity. Those who had professed to be good house-carpenters, were found to be totally ignorant of their business. Food became scarce. More than thirty in a few weeks died. These funeral scenes spread gloom over the whole encampment, and all wished themselves back in France.

La Salle could intrust weighty responsibilities to no one. He was compelled to superintend everything, and even to devote himself to the minutest details.

La Salle called this river La Vache, or Cow River, in consequence of the vast number of buffalo cows in which he saw grazing upon the banks. The spot chosen for the village or encampment, if we can judge from the description of M. Joutel, must have been quite enchanting. There was an elevated expanse, smooth and fertile, raised many feet above the

level of the stream. An undulating prairie, covered with waving grass and flowers, spread far away for leagues toward the north and the west, bordered, in the distance, by forest-covered hills. The river flowed placidly upon the east, entering into the long and wide bay upon the south. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the prairie, waving in the richest bloom of flowers of every variety of tint.

A large cellar was dug, that the ammunition and other valuables might be stored beneath the ground, as a protection against fire. La Salle, with a few companions, made several excursions of fifteen or twenty miles into the country, hoping to find the Mississippi, or some Indians who could give him information upon that point. Failing in all these, he decided upon a more extensive exploration.

The property at the settlement now consisted of only two hundred muskets, two hundred swords, one hundred kegs of powder, three thousand pounds of bullets, three hundred pounds of lead, several bars of steel and of iron to be hammered into nails, and a tolerable supply of farming and mechanic tools. They had no ploughs, horses, or oxen. Without these, farming could be carried on only upon a very limited scale. They had, however, twenty barrels of flour, a puncheon and a half of wine, a few gallons of brandy, one or two swine, and one cock and hen.

The exploring party of fifty set out in two bands, in October, from the bay, which he had named St. Louis. M. Joutel was left in command at the settlement, with the strictest injunctions to have no intercourse with the Indians. One band ascended the river in boats. The other followed along upon the shore. Having ascended the river many leagues, and being fully convinced that it was not a branch of the Mississippi, they drew their boats upon the eastern shore, and all commenced their march, over the boundless prairies, with packs upon their backs, toward the rising sun.

Ere long they saw in the distance an Indian village, consisting of a cluster of thirty or forty wigwams. It was delightfully situated. The Indians, in locating their villages, ever had a keen sense of landscape beauty. It is difficult to account for the fact that, under the leadership of La Salle, there should have been a battle. But it was so. We have no explanation of the circumstances. After a brief conflict, the savages fled, many being wounded and probably some killed, for they were accustomed to carry their dead with them on a retreat.

La Salle and his party entered the abandoned village. They found, cowering in one of the wigwams, a woman who had been struck by a bullet in the neck, and who was dying. A young girl was with her. Just after this, La Salle sent a party of six men to explore a stream. After a toilsome day the party encamped for the night. They built their fire, cooked their supper, and, without establishing any watch, wrapped themselves in their blankets for sleep.

The next day they did not return. La Salle's anxieties were roused. He set out in search of them. The dead bodies of the six were found, pierced with arrows, scalped, and half devoured by wolves. The details of this midnight tragedy were never known. Saddened by this calamity, yet striving to maintain cheerful spirits, the party pressed on their way. After many days' march they came to another large river, which proved to be that which is now known as the Colorado, which empties into Matagorda Bay, more than four hundred miles west of the mouths of the Mississippi.

As they were journeying along, one of the men, with blistered feet, stopped to adjust his shoes. When he resumed his march, he found that the party was out of sight, and he could not overtake them. The grass of the prairie was higher than the men's heads, and there were many tracks through it which were called buffalo streets. It was impossible for him to tell which path the men had taken. He was hopelessly lost. To follow either one of them might lead him farther and farther from his companions, where he would perish miserably.

Night came. He fired his gun several times, but could get no response. He threw himself upon the grass. In the intensity of his anxiety, he could not sleep. All the next day and the next night, he remained upon the spot, hoping that his companions might come back in search for him. They did not return. He had been reprimanded the preceding day for some misconduct, and it was supposed that he had deserted.

Almost in despair he retraced his steps, travelling mostly by night, through fear that he might encounter the savages. After a month of toil and suffering, ragged and emaciate he at midnight reached the settlement. Many weeks passed away, and no tidings whatever were heard of the exploring party. One morning early in March, M. Joutel chanced to be upon the roof of a hut, when he saw far away on the prairie, eight men approaching. He immediately took a well-armed party and

advanced to meet them. They proved to be a portion of the exploring band. They said that others were returning by another route. They were all in a deplorable condition. Their clothes were in tatters. Most of them were without hats. Their shirts were entirely worn out.

All were rejoiced to see La Salle again. But he had no tidings to give of the long-sought-for river. The situation in which the colonists, with their greatly diminished numbers, now found themselves was appalling. They were utterly lost in the boundless wilderness of this new world. All communication with their friends in France was cut off. There was no hope that any French vessel would ever search for them; or could find them, even if such search were undertaken. The Indians were hostile. Death would gradually diminish their numbers, and finally the remnant would either be exterminated or carried into captivity by the savages.

To add to the affliction of La Salle, the Belle, the only vessel remaining to him, was wrecked and utterly lost. Several of the sailors were drowned; and stores of inestimable value were destroyed. Father Le Clercq, in describing this untoward event, writes:

"We leave the reader to imagine the grief and the affliction felt by the Chevalier La Salle, at an accident which completely ruined all his measures. His great courage even could not have borne him up, had not God aided his virtue by the help of extraordinary grace."

Until the loss of the Belle, he had been sustained by the hope that, in the last extremity, the remnant of his company might find their way back to St. Domingo, and thence to France. This hope was now extinguished.

Under these circumstances La Salle resolved to undertake another exploring tour. Having refreshed himself and his men, and obtained new articles of clothing, mainly by distributing the garments of the dead among the living, early in May, 1686, the party again set forth. Those who remained behind employed themselves in strengthening the fortifications; in unsuccessfully cultivating the soil, for most of the seeds would not sprout, and in the chase, laying in a store of jerked meat. They had several hostile rencontres with the Indians, in which the savages were invariably beaten, in consequence of the superiority of the weapons of the Europeans.

But there was no harmony in the settlement. Loud murmurs ascended continually. Some denounced La Salle. Some defended him. The antagonistic parties were almost ready to draw their swords against each other.

CHAPTER XV.

A Trip toward Mexico.

Arrangements for the Journey. The Departure. Indians on Horseback. Scenes of Enchantment. Attractive Character of La Salle. Visit to the Kironas. The Bite of the Snake. Adventures Wild and Perilous. Hardihood of the Indian Hunter. The Long Sickness. A Man Devoured by a Crocodile. The Return.

Though La Salle was now more than four hundred miles west of the Mississippi River, he was still under the impression that he was east of that point. He therefore, in his blind search, directed his steps toward the setting sun. Father Douay, who accompanied this expedition, has given a detailed account of its adventures.

After religious ceremonies in the chapel of the fort, the party, consisting of twenty persons, set out, on the 22d of April, 1686. They took, for the journey, four pounds of powder, four pounds of lead, two axes, two dozen knives, two kettles, and a few awls and beads.

On the third day out they entered one of the most beautiful prairies they had ever seen. To their astonishment they saw, on

the plain, a large number of people, some on foot and some on horseback. Several of these came galloping toward them, booted and spurred, and seated on saddles. They were Indians who were in a high state of civilization, having long held intimate relations with the Spaniards. They gave the Frenchmen an earnest invitation to visit them, in their village, which was about twenty miles distant. But as this would take them quite out of their course, the invitation was declined. Continuing their tour, they encamped at night, being careful to throw up around them entrenchments which would protect them from attack. The next two days they continued their journey over the prairie, until they reached a river, which La Salle named Robek. The amount of wild cattle seen was prodigious. Many of the herds numbered thousands. In a few moments they shot ten. The meat they cut into very thin slices, and dried in the blazing sun, over the smoke of a smouldering fire. Thus they were provided with nutritious food for four or five days.

Crossing the Robek in a hastily constructed raft, after marching about five miles they came to another very beautiful river, wider and deeper than the Seine at Paris. It was skirted by a magnificent forest, with no underbrush, presenting a park such as the hand of man never planted. In this Eden-like grove there were many trees laden with rich fruit.

This river, which La Salle named La Maligne, they also crossed upon a raft. Passing through the forest beyond, they entered upon another extensive prairie. Continuing their tour through a country which they describe as full of enchantments, with blooming plains skirted with vines, fruit trees, and groves, they came to a river which they called Hiens, from one of their party, a German, who, in endeavoring to ford it, got stuck fast in the mud. Two men swam across with axes on their backs. They then cut down the largest trees, on each side, so that their branches met in the middle. By this bridge the party crossed. More than thirty times, during this trip, they resorted to this measure for crossing streams.

"After several days' march," writes Father Douay, "in a pretty fine country, we entered a delightful territory, where we found a numerous tribe, who received us with all possible friendship; even the women coming to embrace our men. They made us sit down on well-made mats, at the upper end of the wigwam, near the chiefs, who presented us with the calumet, adorned with feathers of every hue, which we had to smoke in turn."

The Indians feasted them abundantly, with the best of their fare, and presented them with some excellently tanned buffalo skins, for moccasins. La Salle gave them, in return, some beads, with which they seemed to be greatly delighted. Father Douay writes:

"During our stay, Chevalier La Salle so won them by his manners, and insinuated so much of the glory of our king, telling them that he was greater and higher than the sun, that they were all ravished with astonishment."

Continuing their journey, they crossed several rivers, until they came to a large Indian village of three hundred cabins. Just as they were approaching the village they came upon a herd of deer and shot one. The Indians, who heard the report and saw the deer fall dead, were terror-stricken. In a mass they fled to the neighboring forest. La Salle, to avoid surprise, entered the village in military array.

Entering the largest cabin, which proved to be that of the chief, they found a very aged woman, the wife of the chief, who, from her infirmities, was unable to fly. La Salle treated the terrified woman with the greatest kindness, and by signs assured her that he intended no harm. Three grown-up sons of the chief, who were watching the progress of events with great solicitude, seeing no indication of hostile measures, cautiously returned. La Salle met there with friendly signs, and accepted the presented calumet. The young chiefs then called to their people in the distance, and all returned. The evening was passed in feasting, dancing, and all kinds of semi-barbarian festivities.

Still La Salle did not venture to sleep in the wigwams, where his party would be entirely in the power of those who might prove treacherous. He returned to encamp in a dense cane-brake, where no foe could approach without giving warning. In the night, some thought they heard approaching footsteps. But La Salle made it manifest that they were all on the alert, and the foe, if there were any foe approaching, drew off.

The alarm was doubtless groundless. The next morning there was a repetition of all the tokens of friendship which were manifested the evening before. Continuing their route about thirty miles, they came to another Indian village. The savages seemed to have no suspicions whatever of the strangers. A party, seeing them approaching in the distance, came out to

meet them as if they were old friends. They seemed to be quite gentlemanly men in their courteous and polished demeanor. They gave the strangers an earnest invitation to visit their village.

These Indians had heard of the Spaniards, and of the atrocities of which they were guilty farther west. They were quite overjoyed when told that the French were at war with the Spaniards; and were quite eager to raise an army and march with the French to attack them. La Salle entered into a cordial alliance with these Indians, who were called the Kironas. He promised that he would eventually, if it were in his power, return with more numerous troops.

It would appear that La Salle was now convinced that he would not find the Mississippi by journeying further west; for he turned his steps toward the northeast. There was a large river near the village, across which the hospitable Indians paddled them in their boats. As they were crossing a beautiful prairie, their Indian companion, whose name was Nika, called out suddenly, "I am dead! I am dead."

A venomous snake had bitten him, and the limb began instantly to throb and swell. In rude surgery, they, with their pocket-knives, cut out the flesh around. Deep gashes were cut near the wound hoping that the poison would be carried away in the free flowing of the blood. They applied poultices of herbs, which they had been told were available in such cases. After much suffering, which the Indian bore with wonderful stoicism, he recovered from the perilous wound.

Journeying on, day after day, they at length reached a broad river, whose current was so rapid that they saw, at once, that it would be very difficult to effect a passage. This was probably the Colorado, many miles above the point where they had touched it in one of their previous excursions. They made a raft. Most of the company were afraid to attempt to cross upon it. La Salle, with his brother Cavalier and one or two others, got on. As soon as they pushed out from the shore, into the middle of the stream, the swiftly rushing torrent seized them, whirled the raft around, and swept it down the stream with resistless velocity. In a few moments it disappeared, as the foaming flood bore it around a bend in the stream.

"It was a moment," writes Father Douay, "of extreme anguish for us all. We despaired of ever again seeing our guardian angel the Chevalier de la Salle." Several hours passed away. The men left upon the bank were in utter bewilderment. They knew not what to do. "The day was spent," it is written, "in tears and weeping."

Just before nightfall, to their great joy, they saw La Salle and his party on the opposite side of the river. It subsequently appeared that the raft struck a large tree, which had been torn from the banks, and was almost stationary in the middle of the stream; its roots, heavy with earth and stone, dragging on the bottom. By seizing the branches they dragged themselves out of the current, and by grasping the branches of other trees, overhanging the water, they at length, through a thousand perils, succeeded in gaining the eastern bank, several miles below the point where they had constructed the raft. One of the men was swept from the raft and swam ashore.

The party was now divided, with the foaming and apparently impassable torrent rushing between them. On both sides the night was spent in great anxiety. Many were the plans suggested and abandoned, to form a reunion. In the morning, La Salle shouted to them across the river, that they must build two light rafts, of the very buoyant canes, and cross on them, promising them that he would send several strong swimmers into the river to aid them.

One such raft was constructed. With fear and trembling five men ventured upon it. The raft was so light that it barely supported its burden. With long poles they succeeded in reaching the centre of the stream. Then two men from the opposite side swam out, and by their aid, with vigorous paddling, they safely reached the land, after drifting far down the stream.

The most timid ones were left behind. They dared not venture the passage. La Salle, seeing their hesitation, ordered his men to pack up and continue their march, leaving them behind. The greater peril overcame the less. To be abandoned there they deemed sure destruction. They shouted across the river, begging for delay. Inspired by the energies of almost despair, they vigorously built their raft, and by noon all were happily reassembled to press on their way.

For two days they moved slowly and laboriously along, cutting their way, with the two axes, through an immense forest of cane-brakes. On the third day an incident occurred which peculiarly illustrates the sagacity and endurance of the Indians. Their Indian hunter, Nika, who, as we have said, accompanied La Salle from Canada, left the party the day before they reached the river, in search of game. They had heard nothing from him since. It was in vain to search for him,

and the party could not delay its march to wait for his return.

On the evening of the fourth day after his absence, as the men were gathered around the camp fire, little expecting to see Nika again, he came quietly into the camp as composed as if nothing unusual had occurred. He had on his shoulders a large amount of the choicest cuts of venison, which he had dried in the sun, and nearly the whole of a deer which he had just killed. He had probably swum the stream, floating the venison across on a log by his side. And all this he had done, notwithstanding his wound from the bite of a snake and all the cruel surgery he had undergone. La Salle was so overjoyed to see again his faithful attendant and friend, that he ordered several guns to be fired in salute of his safe return.

"Still marching east," writes Father Douay, "we entered countries more beautiful than any we yet had passed. Here we found native tribes who had nothing barbarous about them but the name. Among others we met a very honest Indian returning from the chase with his wife and family. He presented Chevalier de la Salle with one of his horses, and some meat. He also invited all our party to his cabin. To induce us to visit him, he left his wife, children, and game with us as pledges, and galloped off to his village to announce our coming and to secure for us a cordial welcome."

Nika, and another of the attendants of La Salle, accompanied him. The village was at some distance, so that two days passed before their return. The hospitable Indian came back with two horses laden with provisions. Several chiefs and warriors came back with him on horseback. They were all neatly and even beautifully dressed, in softly tanned deer-skins, tastefully fringed, and with head-dresses of waving plumes. In picturesque beauty their attire would favorably compare with the court dresses of most of the European monarchies.

The principal chief rode forward, bearing conspicuously the plumed calumet of peace. La Salle had been slowly advancing, and the two parties met about nine miles from the village. After cordial greetings, the united band continued its march. When but a short distance from the cluster of native dwellings, an immense concourse of people was seen flocking out to meet the strangers. The young men were quite imposingly marshalled in military array. But the reception was so cordial, and the indications of sincerity so unquestionable, that no one entertained the slightest apprehension of treachery.

La Salle and his party remained three days, enjoying the good cheer of this truly hospitable people. This very prudent commander encamped three or four miles outside of the village. He had no fear of the natives, but he had not full confidence in his own men. Any impropriety of the members of his party toward the females of the village, might suddenly turn their friendly relations into bitter hostility. There were apparently many pleasant families. The young maidens were generally of pleasing features, and graceful as sylphs in form. La Salle purchased several horses, which proved to be of inestimable value to him.

The region which the explorers had reached was probably not far from Austin County, in the present State of Texas. It was a more highly civilized and more densely inhabited country than any they had hitherto passed through, in any portion of the continent. For a distance of sixty miles they found a continuous series of villages, but a few miles apart, all prosperous, harmonious, and happy.

Their cabins were large and commodious, frequently forty or fifty feet high, with dome-like roofs, in the shape of the old-fashioned bee-hives. They were made by planting very tall saplings in the ground, in the form of a circle. Their tops were bent down and bound together. This whole framework was very neatly and effectually thatched with the long grass of the prairie. The beds, consisting of soft mats, were ranged around the cabin, raised about three feet from the ground. The fire, seldom needed except for cooking, in that warm latitude, was in the middle. Each cabin usually accommodated two families.

These Indians were called the Coenis nation. It was very evident that they had held some intercourse with the Spaniards. La Salle found among them silver coins, silver spoons, and various kinds of European clothes. Horses were abundant. A horse was readily exchanged for an axe. La Salle could only converse with them by signs. They said no Spaniards had ever yet visited them, though there was a settlement of them at the distance of about six days' journey west. Several of their most intelligent men drew a map of the country upon some bark. They delineated a large river many days journey to the east, which La Salle had no doubt was the Mississippi.

"The Chevalier La Salle," writes Father Douay, "who perfectly understood the art of gaining the Indians of all nations, filled these with admiration at every moment. He told them that the chief of the French was the greatest chief in the world; that he was as far above the Spaniards as the sun is above the earth. On his recounting the victories of our monarch they burst into exclamations of astonishment. I found them very docile and tractable. They comprehended well enough what we told them of the truth of a God."

After the refreshment of this delightful visit, the explorers continued their journey. After travelling about thirty miles, four of the men, during a night's encampment, deserted and went back to cast in their lot for life with the Indians. They were houseless and homeless adventurers, with no ties to bind them to the cares, toils, and restraints of civilized life. It is not surprising that they should have been charmed with the ease, abundance, and freedom of life in the wigwam. They probably became incorporated in the tribes, took Indian wives, and were heard of no more.

At this encampment La Salle and his nephew, M. Moranget, were both attacked with a violent fever. They had frequent relapses, so that two weary months passed before the march could be resumed. During this long delay they did not suffer for food, for there was abundance of game, and of great variety. Their powder, however, began to fail them. According to their estimate, they were about four hundred and fifty miles, in a straight line, from their settlement. It was resolved now to hasten back. Their horses, which found abundant pasturage on the rich prairies, did them good service, bearing the sick upon their backs and the burdens of all.

They came to a river which it was necessary to cross by a raft. Indeed every few leagues they encountered such a stream. They generally swam their horses over. In this case, La Salle, with one or two of his men, was upon a light raft of canes. Suddenly an enormous crocodile, twenty feet in length, raised his head out of the water, and with one snap of his horrid jaws grasped one of the men by the waist and drew him under. As the monster sank, there was one short, wild shriek from the victim, a slight crimson tinge of the waves, and a small circling whirlpool marking the spot where the huge beast had gone down. Thus, in an instant, as by the lightning's flash, another of the terrible tragedies of this tragic world had come and gone.

On the 17th of October this wearied and diminished party reached the camp, after an absence of six months. Of the twenty who left, but eight returned. The meeting was one of joy and of sadness. Both parties had narratives to give of disaster; and gloom impenetrable still hung over the feeble colony, so rapidly wasting away. In commenting upon this enterprise, Father Douay writes:

"It would be difficult to find in history, courage more intrepid or more invincible than that of the Chevalier de la Salle. In adversity he was never cast down. He always hoped, with the help of heaven, to succeed in his enterprises, despite all the obstacles that rose against it."

CHAPTER XVI.

The Last Days of La Salle.

Plan for the New Journey. Magnitude of the Enterprise. Affecting Leave-taking. The Journey Commenced. Adventures by the Way. Friendly Character of the Indians. Vast Realms of Fertility and Beauty. The Joys and the Sorrows of such a Pilgrimage. The Assassination of La Salle and of three of his Companions.

La Salle was now fully convinced that he was west of the Mississippi River. He resolved to set out on a journey across the country to Canada, a distance of probably not less than two thousand miles. His design was to send tidings to France of his disasters, and thus to secure aid to be sent thence to his suffering and expiring colony.

By pursuing his route toward the northeast, he was sure of eventually striking the Mississippi. He would then feel quite at home. Following up that stream and the Illinois, he could easily pass over to the lakes, and then reach Canada through regions with which he was quite familiar. More than two months were spent in strengthening the defences of the settlement, and in laying in stores of provisions for those who were to be left behind.

At midnight of the 7th of January, 1687, the whole company met in the little chapel for a solemn religious service, to implore God's blessing upon the enterprise. The scene was very affecting. Nearly all were in tears. There were but few chances that those then bidding each other adieu would ever meet again. Those who left, and those who remained, were alike exposed. La Salle selected twenty men to accompany him. Among those, were his brother, his ever-faithful Indian attendant, M. Douay, to whose pen we are indebted for the record of the last expedition, and M. Joutel, who kept a daily journal of the events of this journey. M. Douay wrote also quite a minute account of the expedition. Both of their narratives now lie before me. We have no reason to doubt the accuracy of either. There were but twenty French left behind, including seven women and children. La Salle gave them a parting address. Father Douay writes:

"He made an address full of eloquence, with that engaging way so natural to him. The whole colony was present, and were all moved to tears. They were alike persuaded of the necessity of his voyage and the uprightness of his intentions."

The property left with the colonists consisted of seventy pigs, large and small, twenty hens and chickens, a few barrels of corn, which was carefully kept for the sick, a considerable quantity of powder and lead, and eight cannons, but without balls.

The heroic and devout Father Membré remained as the spiritual guide. M. Barbier was left with the secular command. La Salle drew up very minute directions for the administration of affairs during his absence.

"We parted," writes M. Joutel, "in a manner so tender, so sorrowful, that it would seem that we had a secret presentiment that we should never again see each other. Father Membré was deeply affected. He said to me that never before had he experienced a parting so painful."

It was the 12th of January, 1689, when this truly forlorn hope set out upon its long journey. They took with them the five horses, bearing some articles of food and such things as they would need for their night's encampment. The second day of their journey they came to a plain about six miles wide, which seemed to be covered with buffaloes, deer, flocks of wild turkeys, and every variety of game. Beyond the plain there was a splendid growth of trees. Upon entering the grove, they found that it fringed a small river. Concealed by these trees, they succeeded in shooting five buffaloes which had come to the river to drink. They crossed the river on a raft, and camped a mile and a half beyond, in a drenching rain. The skins and meat of these animals were packed upon the horses. The skins, easily tanned, were of immense value in their subsequent lodgings.

The next morning, the 14th, the sun rose in a cloudless sky. The prairie seemed spread out for leagues before them, covered with herds of buffaloes and deer, while immense flocks of turkeys and other birds of the prairie rose before them. About noon they saw, in the distance, an immense herd of buffaloes rushing over the plains as if mad. They conjectured at once that some Indian hunters were pursuing them. Their conjecture proved correct.

Soon they saw a savage, on the full run, and very flat-footed, pursuing the herd. Hastily the load was thrown from one of the horses, a man was mounted upon him, and galloping over the plain soon overtook the Indian, and led him back to the company. When the poor man saw himself surrounded by a group of white men, such as he had seen before, he was greatly terrified. And he had cause to be frightened. La Salle's associates infamously urged that he should be put to death, in revenge for the murder of their companions by some unknown Indian band. The humane, magnanimous leader found it necessary to present to his reckless followers such motives as they could appreciate. He said to them:

"We are but few in number. We have before us a journey of hundreds of miles through a region crowded with Indian tribes. If we rouse the vengeance of the savages, we shall all be cut off. Let us treat them with kindness, and thus we shall secure for ourselves kind treatment in return."

The cordial smiles and friendly signs of this truly good man soon dispelled apparently the great alarm of the stranger. A fire was built. After abundantly feeding their hungry guest, and smoking with him the friendly pipe, La Salle, assuring him of his desire to do harm to none, but good to all, dismissed him with presents which to the savage must have seemed almost like celestial gifts. Still the cautious Indian, accustomed to treachery, was evidently uncertain as to the fate which awaited him. As he withdrew, he cast anxious glances around, until he had attained the distance of a few rods, when he took to flight, with almost the rapidity of a deer.

The travellers continued their route, and after an hour or two, overtook another Indian hunter. They caught him, and lavished upon him the same acts of kindness. As evening was approaching, they saw a large band of savages in the distance. Their attitude was somewhat menacing. When they caught sight of the little cluster of strangers, they separated into two parties, and advanced on the right and left, as if to surround them. When the two bands had come within musket-shot, La Salle ordered a halt. The savages halted also. For a few moments they attentively regarded each other, no movement being made on either side.

Then La Salle, laying aside his arms, walked slowly forward toward the party where the head chief seemed to be, making signs for the chief to come and meet him. The chief was a tall man of powerful frame, and richly decorated. He came cautiously forward, while the rest of his party followed slowly at a little distance behind. As soon as it was seen that the two chiefs met cordially, all came running together in the interchange of caresses and every mark of friendly greeting.

Fires were built, food was cooked, pipes were smoked. There was feasting and dancing and shouting. It was a marvellous spectacle which was then and there presented of semi-civilized and full barbarian jollification.

The savages were evidently delighted with their reception. They examined their presents with astonishment. With unfeigned joy they learned that La Salle intended to return and settle in their country; and that he would bring an abundance of his treasures, which he would exchange with them for such articles as they had to part with. It was now the hour of evening twilight. The two parties separated, each going its own way. About a mile and a half in advance, there was a beautiful grove and a running stream. La Salle encamped there. With his customary prudence he threw up intrenchments, and established sentinels as if he were in the enemy's country.

They had but just established their camp, when they saw six savages approaching, following each other in single file. They came forward without any hesitation, as if visiting old friends. By signs they said that they had heard of the kind treatment their fellow countrymen had met with, and that they were brothers, not enemies. After a short and pleasant visit they retired, and the camp was left to undisturbed repose.

In the morning, at an early hour, the march was resumed. There was before them a stream too deep to be forded. Not wishing to lose time in constructing a raft, they followed up the west bank of the stream for several miles. Their route led through an enchanting region of lawn-like prairies and park-like groves. The river was fringed with trees of every variety, without any underbrush. There were many pretty little creeks to be crossed, which ran into the main stream. The water was pure, sweet, and clear as crystal. Occasionally they came to a cane-brake, through which they cut their way with axes. Their appetites were fed with abundance of game.

The next day, the 19th, they made but a short journey, and experienced great fatigue in fording streams and cutting their way through cane-brakes. They came across a few deserted cabins of the Indians. During the slow progress of the day, their skilful Indian hunter Nika killed eight buffaloes. The most tender cuts were taken from them, and they there crossed the river by a ford.

After traversing a few leagues, they came to another river, flowing through a low plain, elevated but slightly above the stream. A dense fog set in, accompanied by a deluging rain. Here they encamped in the woods which bordered the river. They passed a comfortless night, and the storm detained them all the next day.

On the 19th the rain ceased, but the fog continued. Their path led through marshy ground thoroughly soaked with rain, so that they often sank to their knees in the mire. Their feet were shod with moccasins made of the hide of buffaloes. These being alternately wet and dried, became stiff, and blistered their feet cruelly. Fortunately, they struck upon one of the

"streets" made by the buffaloes, as in thousands they followed one after the other, crushing their way through the cane-brakes. These animals were, by instinct, good engineers, and invariably selected the most favorable routes. Still the voyagers were often compelled to wade through deep mire, and their sufferings were at times severe.

On the night of the 19th, they fortunately came upon a ridge, where they could enjoy a dry encampment. They built a roaring fire, cooked a savory supper, nursed their blistered feet, and during a few hours of refreshing sleep forgot their toils. As they awoke the next morning the river was again falling. Still they pressed on, entering upon another vast prairie covered with herds of buffaloes. At night they encamped upon the banks of a river too deep to be forded. On the 21st they ascended the banks of the stream, hoping to find a shallow spot where they could cross. Instead of this, they came to a place where the river flowed through a narrow and deep channel, with large trees on each side. They cut down two of these trees, so that their branches met in the middle, crossed on this bridge, and swam their horses over.

On the other side, a beautiful country, of elevated, undulating prairie, opened before them. As they were preparing to encamp in the shelter of a grove, they heard voices, and soon beheld fifteen Indians approaching. The savages manifested no alarm, but in token of peace laid aside their bows and arrows, and came into the camp. They ate, smoked, exchanged presents, and went on their way rejoicing, promising to visit the camp again.

The horses, as well as the men, were quite exhausted. They therefore remained, for a day of rest, on their very pleasant camping ground. During the day a band of twenty-two Indians came to them. They had shields impervious to arrows, made of the hide of buffaloes. They were at war with another tribe. They said that there were other white men, at the distance of ten days' journey on the west, doubtless referring to the Spaniards. The interview was mutually pleasant, and La Salle obtained some important information in reference to the continuance of his route.

Onward they pressed, day after day, with alternate sunshine and storm, through marsh and forest, over prairies and across rivers, without encountering any adventure of much importance until the 1st of February. That day they discovered, at a distance, an Indian village. La Salle, leaving M. Joutel in charge of the camp, took his brother and seven men, and set out to reconnoitre. They came to a village of twenty-five wigwams, very pleasantly situated. Each wigwam contained four or five men, besides quite a number of women and children. The Indians received their guests very hospitably, conducted them to the dwelling of their chief, and seated them upon mats of buffalo skins. A great crowd gathered within and around the cabin. The chief, after feeding them abundantly upon buffalo steaks, informed them that he had been expecting their arrival. Other Indians had told him that they were in the country, and that they were on a route which would lead them near his village.

Perfect harmony prevailed. Presents were exchanged. The Indians were eager to give a nicely tanned buffalo robe for a knife or almost any trinket in the hands of the white men. But La Salle had no means of transporting the robes, which would prove so valuable in European markets. They continued their journey, often meeting with Indians, who were always friendly. At times a brotherly band would accompany them during the march of a whole day. By the aid of the Indians, the very light frame of a canoe was constructed, which was easily packed and carried. By stretching over it the skin of a buffalo, from which the hair had been removed, they were furnished with a very buoyant boat, with which to cross the rivers. The horses could easily swim the streams.

On the 10th of February, they saw before them a vast plain which had been swept by the flames. Thinking that they might not find game there, they made a halt of two days, to lay in a store of jerked meat. Resuming their journey, they soon passed the scathed region and entered again upon a country of bloom and verdure. On the evening of the 15th, they camped on the borders of a stream, where they saw evidences that a band of savages had recently passed that way.

The next morning La Salle took his brother and seven men, and followed a well-trodden Indian trail in search of a village. After a short walk, they came upon a cluster of fifty or sixty cabins. His reception was, as usual, cordial in the extreme. The leading men of the village were courteous in their bearing and intelligent in reference to matters relating to their own country. They gave the names of twenty tribes or nations, through whose territories La Salle had already passed from his settlement, which he called St. Louis. On the 17th, one of the horses fell, and sprained his shoulder, so that he had to be left behind.

For several days the journey was somewhat monotonous. They made about twenty or twenty-five miles a day. Indian

hunters were continually met with, and Indian villages entered with essentially the same rites of friendship and hospitality. From some of these Indians they heard tidings of those Frenchmen who had deserted. They were living in a very friendly manner among the Indians. On the 1st of March they came to an immense marsh, partially submerged in water. The intricate passage across it was very difficult to find, and required the services of a guide. Several of the Indians volunteered, and with great tenderness led them safely across.

Passing the morass caused a delay of four or five days, as it could not be undertaken in a drenching rain which chanced then to be falling. On the 15th they emerged from this gloomy region and entered a country which, from the contrast, appeared to them remarkably beautiful. Here they encamped for a brief rest. Nika brought in word that he had killed two buffaloes, and wished to have a couple of horses sent to bring in the meat. A party of five was sent out, led by M. Moranget, who was a rash and irritable man. There were three men who had accompanied the hunter, and who were cutting up and drying the meat, in preparation for transporting it to the camp. At the same time they were cooking for themselves some of the choicest pieces.

When Moranget reached the place and found the men feasting, as he thought, rather than jerking the meat, he reprimanded them, in his accustomed tones of severity. The men chanced to be the very worst and most desperate in the camp. Moranget accompanied his denunciations with still more irritating actions. He took from them the delicious morsels which they cooked. Four men, for another had joined them, greatly enraged, sullenly abandoned their work, and retiring a short distance agreed to avenge themselves by killing Moranget, and also by killing Nika and another man who was the valet of La Salle. Both of these men were friends and supporters of Moranget.

They waited till night. All took their supper together. It was the night of the 17th of March. Though in that genial climate the weather was serene and mild, a rousing fire was found very grateful in protecting them from the chill of the night air. With the fading twilight the stars shone down brightly upon them, and, surrounded by the silence and solemnity of the prairie and the forest, they were soon apparently all asleep.

One of the murderers, Liotot, cautiously arose as by agreement, and with a hatchet in his hand, creeping toward Moranget, with one desperate blow split open his skull from crown to chin. The deed was effectually done. And yet with sinewy arm blow followed blow, till the head was one mass of clotted gore. The other two were despatched in the same way. The three remaining conspirators stood, with their guns cocked and primed, to shoot down either of the victims who might succeed in making any resistance. There is some slight discrepancy in the detail of these murders. It is said that Moranget, upon receiving the first blow, made a convulsive movement, as if to rise; but that the valet and the Indian did not stir.

One crime always leads to another. The conspirators, having perpetrated these murders, now consulted together as to what was next to be done. Moranget was the nephew of La Salle. The valet and the Indian were his devoted friends. Their death could not be concealed. It was certain that La Salle would not allow it to go unavenged. Though punishment might be postponed until they should emerge from their long and perilous journey through the wilderness, there could be no doubt that as soon as they should reach a French military post they would all die upon the scaffold.

They decided to return to the camp, enlist a few others on their side, kill La Salle, and others of his prominent friends, when unsuspecting of danger; and thus involving all the rest in their own criminality, effectually prevent any witnesses from rising against them. Probably in some degree tortured by remorse, and trembling in view of the task which they had undertaken, they remained for two days, the 18th and 19th, where they were, ostensibly employed in jerking the meat.

La Salle, not knowing how to account for this long absence, became uneasy. He decided to go himself, taking a few others with him, to ascertain the cause. To his friends he expressed serious apprehensions that some great calamity had happened. M. Joutel was left in charge of the camp, and La Salle, with Father Douay and another companion, set out in search of the lost ones.

Father Douay gives the following account of the tragic scene which ensued:

"All the way La Salle conversed with me of matters of piety, grace, and predestination. He expatiated upon all his obligations to God, for having saved him from so many dangers during the last twenty years

that he had traversed America. He seemed to me to be peculiarly penetrated with a grateful sense of God's kindness to him. Suddenly I saw him plunged into a deep melancholy, for which he himself could not account. He was so troubled that he no longer seemed like himself. As this was an unusual state of mind with him, I endeavored to rouse him from his lethargy.

"Two leagues after, we found the bloody cravat of his valet. He perceived two eagles flying over his head. At the same time he discerned some of his people on the edge of the river. He approached them, asking what had become of his nephew. They answered incoherently, pointing to a spot where they said we should find him. We proceeded some steps along the bank, to the fatal spot where two of his murderers were hidden in the grass, one on each side, with guns cocked. One missed Monsieur de la Salle. The one firing at the same time shot him in the head. He died an hour after, on the 19th of March 1687.

"I expected the same fate. But this danger did not occupy my thoughts, penetrated with grief at so cruel a spectacle. I saw him fall, a step from me, his face all full of blood. He had confessed and performed his devotions just before we started. During his last moments he manifested the spirit of a good Christian, especially in the act of pardoning his murderers.

"Thus died our wise commander, constant in adversity, intrepid, generous, engaging, dexterous, skilful, capable of everything. He, who for twenty years had softened the fierce temper of countless savage tribes, was massacred by the hands of his own domestics, whom he had loaded with caresses. He died in the prime of life, in the midst of his enterprises, without having seen their success. I could not leave the spot where he had expired, without having buried him as well as I could. After which I raised a cross over his grave."

In reference to the burial, Joutel gives a little different account. He says: "The shot which killed La Salle was the signal for the accomplices of the assassin to rush to the spot. With barbarous cruelty they stripped him of his clothing, even to his shirt. The poor dead body was treated with every indignity. The corpse was left, entirely naked, to the voracity of wild beasts."

Both of these accounts may be essentially true. The barbarities practised by the assassins may have preceded or followed the hasty burial of Douay. Father Douay, in his account, continues:

"Occupied with these thoughts, which La Salle had a thousand times suggested to us, while relating the events of the new discoveries, I unceasingly adored the inscrutable designs of God in this conduct of His Providence, uncertain still what fate He reserved for us, as our desperadoes plotted nothing less than our destruction. We at last entered the place where Monsieur Cavalier was. The assassins entered the cabin unceremoniously, and seized all that was there. I had arrived a moment before them. I had no need to speak; for as soon as Cavalier beheld my countenance, all bathed in tears, he exclaimed aloud:

"'Ah, my poor brother is dead.'

"This holy ecclesiastic, whose virtue has been so often tried in the apostolic labors of Canada, fell at once on his knees. I myself, and some others did the same, to prepare to die the same death. But the murderers, touched by some sentiment of compassion at the sight of the venerable old man, and besides half-penitent for the murders they had committed, resolved to spare us, on condition that we should never return to France. But as they were still undecided, and many of them wished to go home to France, we heard them often say to one another, that they must get rid of us; that otherwise we should accuse them before the tribunals, if we once had them in the kingdom.

"The leader of these desperadoes, a wretch by the name of Duhaut, at once assumed the supreme command. The company now consisted of but seventeen. The timid ones, trembling for their lives, feigned entire devotion to the cause of the assassins. Duhaut ruled with an iron hand. It was manifest that the least indication of an insubordinate spirit would lead to instant death. Some of the best men were for

organizing a conspiracy to assassinate the assassins. But the priest Cavalier continually said no, repeating the words, 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord.'"

It is impossible to determine the precise spot where the murder of La Salle and his companions took place. We know that it was several days' journey west of the Ceniz Indians, whose territory extended along the banks of Trinity River, which empties into Galveston Bay. It is therefore conjectured that it must have been near one of the streams flowing into the Brazos, in the heart of Texas, probably not far from where Washington now is.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Penalty of Crime.

Nature's Storms. The Gloom of the Soul. Approach to the Ceniz Village. Cordial Welcome. Barbaric Ceremonials. Social Habits of the Indians. Meeting with the French Deserters. Traffic with the Indians. Quarrel between Hiens and Duhaut. The Assassins Assassinated. Departure of the War Party. Fiend-like Triumph. The March Resumed.

The morning of the 21st ushered in a day of gloom, wind, and rain. Nature, in the moaning storm, seemed in sympathy with the sadness which must have oppressed all hearts. Silently they toiled along, drenched with the falling rain, until noon, when the storm became so severe that they were compelled to halt. They threw up their camp in a deep and dark ravine. The murderers could have no rest. They were in continual fear that the friends of La Salle would rise and kill them. Father Douay, M. Joutel, and La Salle's brother the Chevalier, knew full well that the murderers had the strongest possible incentive to kill them also.

There is no storm so desolating, so ruinous to all happiness, as sin. Could these voyagers have continued their journey with fraternal love, its material obstacles could all have been pleasantly surmounted. But henceforth, for them, there were no more sunny skies, no more blooming prairies, no more joyous gatherings and feasting around the camp fire. Journeying on, through a gloomy country, and in sombre weather, they came, on the 24th, to a river. Most of the party swam across. Father Douay, M. Joutel, and Cavalier could not swim. Some friendly Indians came along and, swimming by their side, helped them over. A journey of four days more brought them to a large village of the Ceniz Indians, on a stream which they called by the same name.

The region was beautiful. There was no continuous forest, but extended, well-watered plains, interspersed with groves of a great variety of majestic trees. They frequently met with Indians, from whom they always received kind treatment. Most of the men encamped a few miles from the village, M. Joutel was sent, with three others, to purchase from them, if possible, some corn. One of the men thus sent forward was Hiens, one of the original conspirators with Duhaut. M. Joutel was annoyed in accompanying a murderer on this mission, but it was not safe to make any remonstrance. Duhaut kept careful guard over all the effects. He intrusted a few hatchets and knives to his envoys, with instructions to purchase corn, and, if possible, a horse.

They had not gone far before they saw three savages approaching them on horseback. One had a hat and cloak, which he had probably obtained in some way from the Spaniards. The other two were entirely naked. The three had panniers closely woven of fibres of cane, and filled with corn meal pounded or ground very fine. They had been sent forward by their chief, with the meal as a present, and to invite the strangers to visit his village. After smoking together, and the Indians having received some knives and beads in return for their gift, the united party set out for the village.

It was still some distance to the village. Night had come. The horses of the travellers were weary and hungry. They therefore encamped in a rich meadow, by a rippling stream. Two of the Indians returned to their village. One remained

with the strangers. The next morning they went forward, and were conducted by their Indian companion to the cabin of the chief. They were received with very unusual courtly etiquette.

About a third of a mile from the village there was a very large building, which we should call the town house, or the city hall. It was constructed as the place for the gathering of all their great public assemblages. The floor was very neatly carpeted with finely woven mats. A very imposing procession was formed to escort the strangers from the cabin of the chief to this council house.

First in the procession came all the men of the village, venerable in character and age. They were richly dressed, in very tasteful picturesque garments, of softly tanned deer-skin. These robes and leggins and scarfs were of different colors, of brilliant hue, and were profusely decorated with fringes and embroidered with shells. They wore plumes of colored feathers upon their heads, which waved gracefully in the gentle breeze. In their hands they held javelins, or bows, with quivers of arrows suspended on their shoulders.

On each side of the ancients, who were twelve in number, there were files of warriors, as if for their protection. They were all young men of admirable figure, painted and dressed, and armed as if on the war-path. The procession being thus formed in front of the chief's cabin, and the whole population of the village, many hundred in number, men, women and children, gathered around to witness the spectacle, M. Joutel and his attendants, led by the chief, were brought out to be received by the ancients and conducted to the council house.

These venerable men greeted them with much formality. Each one raised his right hand to his head, and then performed a peculiar series of bows. They then embraced each one, gently throwing their arms around the neck. This ceremony was followed by the presentation of the pipe of friendship, each one taking but a few whiffs.

The cortège advanced to the council house. The guests were seated on couches in the centre. The ancients, silently and with much dignity of movement, took seats around them. A large multitude crowded the vacant spaces. They were feasted with the choicest viands of the Indians, boiled corn meal, cakes baked in the ashes, and truly delicious steaks of venison. Presents were interchanged, and kind speeches made, mainly by signs.

M. Joutel informed them that it was his great desire to obtain corn for their long journey. They said that their supply was short, but that in a neighboring village, at the distance of but a few leagues, there was an abundant supply. They also signified their readiness to accompany their guests to this village.

A large party set out together. The trail led along the banks of one of the branches of the Brazos. The region was delightful, the soil fertile, and quite a dense population blessed with abundance, peopled the lovely valley. It might have been almost an Eden, but for the wickedness of fallen man. This powerful tribe the Ceniz, was at war with another tribe, called the Cannohantimos. Frequently the valley would be swept by an irruption of fierce warriors, with gleaming tomahawks and poisoned arrows and demoniac yells. Conflagration, blood, and shrieks of misery ensued. The valley, which God had made so beautiful for his children, those children had converted into a Gethsemane, where all the fiends seemed struggling.

But our travellers passed up this valley in one of the serene and blooming spring mornings. There was a lull in war's tempest, and a heavenly Father's smile illumined all the scene. Large dome-like cabins and cultivated fields were met with all along the route. Many of these dwellings were sixty feet in diameter. They afforded perfect protection from wind and rain, were neatly carpeted, and gave ample accommodation often for four or five families.

One central fire, which was never permitted to go out, was common for all. There were no partitions. Each family occupied a certain portion of the space, and slept on comfortable beds, raised a foot or two from the floor. They were naturally a very amiable people among themselves, and lived together on the most brotherly terms.

In cultivating the fields they worked together. Often a hundred men and women would meet to plant the field of one man. They would spend six or seven hours in carefully digging the field with wooden forks, and in planting seeds of corn, beans, melons, and other vegetables. They would then have a feast, provided by the one in whose behalf they were laboring. This would be followed by games and dances. The men dug the soil, while the women planted and covered the seed. These children of the prairie must have found, in these co-operative labors, far more enjoyment than the solitary

farmer can find in his lonely toils. Thus this band would pass from field to field throughout the whole village.

M. Joutel says that, so far as he could learn, they did not seem to have any definite idea of God. They had certain shadowy notions of some being or beings above themselves, but apparently did not consider that these beings took any special interest in scenes occurring here below. Upon the subject of religion it could hardly be said that they had any definite idea. They had no temples, no priests, no worship. Their minds were in a state of vacuity. In this respect they were much in the condition of mere animals. They had certain ceremonies, the meaning of which they could not explain, except that such was their custom—that their fathers did so. Be it remembered that this is the account which is given of the Ceniz Indians. Others were more enlightened, and others less. There are well-authenticated accounts of some Indians, who were in the habit of daily prayer.

They reached the village in the early evening. Couriers had preceded them to announce their coming. The principal men came out and conducted them to a cabin, which had been prepared for their reception. After supper and a social pipe, the guests were left to the repose which they greatly needed. The cabin assigned to them was one of the largest in the place. It had belonged to a chief who had recently died. A gentle fire was burning in the centre. There were several women in the cabin, attending to sundry household duties. The guests slept soundly.

The next morning was the 1st of April, 1687. The fathers of the village again called upon the strangers with much courtesy of demeanor, and brought them an ample breakfast. Presents were exchanged, and a very fine horse was purchased for a hatchet. The day was spent in purchasing corn, which was placed in panniers, to be carried on the backs of the horses.

Here were found three Frenchmen who, a year before had deserted from La Salle. With painted faces, and in the dress of savages, no one could distinguish them from others of the tribe. The fact that in one year they had almost entirely forgotten their native language, seems at first thought almost incredible. But it must be remembered that they were vagabond sailors, with no mental culture, who could neither read nor write, and with whom language was merely a succession of sounds, which were very easily obliterated from the memory.

M. Joutel sent his companions back to the camp with the corn which had already been purchased, while he remained to obtain more. Alone in the cabin, far away in the wilderness, the companion of murderers, and a very uncertain fate before him, he could not sleep. At midnight, as he was reclining upon his mat, absorbed in thought, he saw, by the light of the fire, an Indian enter the cabin, with a bow and two arrows in his hand. He took a seat near where M. Joutel was apparently sleeping.

M. Joutel spoke to him. He made no reply; but arose and took another seat near the fire. M. Joutel, being sleepless, followed him, to enter, if possible, into conversation. Fixing his eyes earnestly upon the taciturn Indian, he saw, to his surprise, that he was one of the French deserters whom he had formerly known very well. His name was Grollet. He informed M. Joutel that he had a comrade by the name of Ruter, who did not dare to come with him, from fear that he should be punished by La Salle, of whose death they had not heard.

"They had," writes M. Joutel, "in so short a time so entirely contracted the habits of the savages, as to become thorough savages themselves. They were naked, and their faces and bodies were covered with painted figures. Each of them had taken several wives. They had accompanied the warriors of the tribe to battle; and with their guns had killed many of the enemy, which had given them great renown. Having expended all their powder and bullets, their guns had become useless. They had therefore taken bows and arrows and had become quite skilful in their use. As to religion, they never had any. The libertine life they were now practising was quite to their taste."

Grollet seemed much moved when he heard of the death of La Salle and the others. Upon being questioned whether he had ever heard the Indians speak of the Mississippi, he said that he had not, but that he had often heard them speak of a very large river, about five days' journey northeast of them, and upon whose banks there were very many Indian tribes.

The two next days M. Joutel continued purchasing corn. It could not be bought in large quantities, but many families could spare a little. On the 8th of April he returned to the camp, with three horses laden with corn. During this delay the murderer, Duhaut, had had many hours for reflection. To return to a French military or trading post, accompanied by the

witnesses of his crime, was certain death. To attempt to kill all those not implicated in the murder, would be a very serious undertaking; especially as they were now on their guard, and the assassins had begun to quarrel among themselves.

Duhaut formed the plan of turning back, with his confederates, to the settlement which they had left at the bay of St. Louis. Where he designed to build a vessel and to sail for the West India Islands, The persons whom Duhaut greatly feared were Father Douay, M. Joutel, La Salle's brother, M. Chevalier, and a young man who was called Young Chevalier. The head murderer now adopted the policy of separating these men from the rest of the company, that he might freely talk with his confederates of his plans. M. Joutel and his associates were also well pleased with this arrangement, for they too could now talk freely. Duhaut tried to compel the other party to go back with him. But they absolutely refused. Finding that he could not force them, and that they were resolved to continue their journey to the French settlements, and that thus they might send an armed ship to capture the murderers; he resolved to continue in their company. Probably he hoped that some opportunity would occur in which he could cut them off.

There were five men who were active participants in the assassination. Duhaut, the instigator, Hiens, who was the next most prominent in the plot, and three others, who were rather their tools, Liotot, Tessier, and Larchevèque. The rage of Hiens was kindled only against Moranget. He was willing to kill Moranget's two companions that they might not be witnesses against the murderers. He would conceal their bodies, and would have it understood that they had wandered away and become lost, or that they had been captured by the Indians.

Liotot was appointed to strike the fatal blows upon Moranget and his companions with the hatchet, while the others stood ready, with their guns, to aid, should it be necessary. The subsequent murder of La Salle was contrary to the wishes of Hiens. Duhaut and Larchevèque waylaid him. They both fired nearly at the same moment. The bullet of Larchevèque, either intentionally or by accident, passed wide of its mark. Duhaut's bullet pierced the brain.

There was no sympathy between Hiens and Duhaut. When the latter so arrogantly assumed the command, Hiens became very restive, and was waiting for an opportunity to dethrone him. Trembling in view of the peril of approaching the French settlements, and having no disposition to imbrue his hands any farther in the blood of innocent men whose conduct had only won his regard, he was extremely anxious to return to the bay of St. Louis.

Finding that Duhaut had altered his plan and had decided to continue on the Mississippi, he took one or two of his companions aside and deeply impressed them with a sense of the danger they would thus encounter. They conspired to kill Duhaut and his most resolute supporter Liotot.

Hiens then entered into a secret alliance with the savages, promising that if they would aid him in his plans, he would stop the march of the party toward the Mississippi, and with several others would join them, with their all-powerful muskets, in a hostile expedition they were about to make against a neighboring tribe. He also enlisted, in co-operation with his plans, the French deserters who had already become savages.

Thus strengthened, and with twenty-two well-armed savages in his train, he sought Duhaut. In brief words he thus addressed him:

"You have decided to go on to the French settlements. It is a danger which we dare not encounter. I therefore demand that you divide with us all the arms, ammunition, and goods we have. You may then pursue your own course and we will pursue ours."

Without waiting for any reply he drew a pistol and shot Duhaut through the heart. The miserable man staggered back a few steps and dropped dead. At the same moment one of his accomplices, Ruter, with his musket, shot down Liotot, inflicting a mortal wound. As the man was struggling in death's agonies, Ruter advanced and discharged a pistol-shot into the convulsed body. Douay writes, "His hair, and then his shirt and clothes took fire, and wrapped him in flames, and in this torment he expired." It was the intention of Hiens also to kill Larchevèque, but he, terror-stricken, escaped by flight.

A small hole was dug, and the two dead bodies were thrown in and covered up. M. Joutel was present, and witnessed this dreadful scene. He writes:

"Those murders took place before my eyes. I was dreadfully agitated, and supposing that my death was immediately to follow, instinctively seized my musket in self-defence. But Hiens cried out:

"You have nothing to fear. We do not wish to harm you. We only avenge the death of our patron La Salle. Could I have prevented his death I certainly should have done so."

The savages were astonished at this scene. They were not at all prepared for it. But Hiens explained to them that it was done to avenge murders which they had committed; and that as Duhaut and Liotot had resolved to take with them all the guns and ammunition, it was necessary to kill them that Hiens and his associates might join the Indians in their war party. This statement seemed to give entire satisfaction.

Hiens was now the leader of the rapidly dwindling band. He informed them that he should take several of his companions, with the guns and ammunition, and accompany the Indians on their military expedition. In the meantime, until his return, they were to remain in charge of friendly Indians. Thus they were virtually prisoners. Their means for continuing the journey were taken from them. Probably Hiens intended that they should never return to France.

Early in May, the war party commenced its march. Hiens accompanied the warriors, with four of his party, and two of the French deserters. This made seven Frenchmen, well armed with powder and ball. As they were to encounter foes who bore only bows and arrows, the French allies became an immense acquisition to the force of the expedition. Each one of these had a horse. Hiens exacted a promise, from those he left behind, that they would not leave the village until his return.

A fortnight passed away. Those who remained were encamped at a little distance outside of the village. They were frequently visited by the men and the women, who ever manifested the most friendly feelings. They could converse only by signs, and their attempted communication of ideas was not very satisfactory.

On the 18th of the month a great crowd came rushing out to the encampment. The men and women were painted and decorated. Their smiling faces, songs, and dances indicated plainly that they had received tidings of a great victory. For several hours, there was exhibited a very picturesque scene of feasting, smoking, and barbarian jollity. In the midst of these wild festivities, a courier arrived, stating that the victorious army was returning, and that they had killed more than forty of their enemies. The next day they arrived.

They brought very glowing accounts of the achievements of the French with their muskets. They found the foe drawn up in battle array in a dense grove. Approaching within musket-shot, but not within arrow-shot, the French with deliberate aim shot down forty-eight of the foe. The rest in terror fled. The shouting Cenis pursued. They took a large number of women and children as prisoners, most of whom they instantly killed and scalped. Two mature girls they brought back with them to subject to fiend-like torture. One of them had been cruelly scalped. Faint and bleeding she could endure but little more. An Indian, borrowing a pistol from a Frenchman, deliberately shot her through the head, saying:

"Take that message to your nation. Tell them that ere long we will serve them all in the same way."

The other maiden was reserved for all the horrors of demoniac torture by the women and the girls. These were arranged in a circle. The poor girl was led into the middle of them. They were all armed with strong sticks sharply pointed. They then, with hideous yells, fell tumultuously upon her, like hounds upon a hare. She soon dropped to the ground beneath their blows. They thrust their sharp sticks into her body. With sinewy arms these savage women beat her in the face, over the head, upon every part of her frame until her body presented but a mangled mass of blood. As she lay upon the ground scarcely breathing, a burly Indian came forward, and with one blow of a club crushed in her brain.

The next day there was another great celebration. Great honor was conferred upon the French who had caused the victory. The Indian warriors had done but little more than kill the women and children whom they had taken prisoners, and scalp all the slain. After several speeches were made by their orators, a procession was formed. Each warrior had a bow and two arrows in his hand, and was accompanied by one of his wives, who, like a servant or rather like the squire of the knights of old, waved in her hands the gory scalps, revolting trophies of her husband's chivalric achievements. The whole day was devoted to barbarian feasting and carousing.

Hiens the next day held an amicable conference with M. Joutel and his friends, to come to some agreement as to their future operations. "I am not willing," he said, "to return to the French settlements. It would inevitably cost me my head. But I am willing to divide all our property equally between the two parties. Those who wish may accompany Joutel; others may remain with me."

The division was made. M. Joutel, Father Douay, M. Cavalier, and his nephew, young Cavalier, and three others, De Marle, Tessier and Barthelmy, composed the party which was to return to the French settlements. Thus the band of twenty which had left the bay of St. Louis had dwindled down to seven. They had three horses, thirty hatchets, five dozen knives, thirty pounds of powder, and thirty pounds of bullets. Three Indians volunteered as guides for a portion of the way.

When the Cenis chief found that M. Joutel was about to undertake so long and perilous a journey, with so small a band, he was astonished, and did everything in his power to dissuade him from such an enterprise.

"If you will remain with us," said he, "we will give you cabins and wives, and food in abundance. The dangers before you are appalling, not only from hostile Indians, whose territories you must pass through, but from the innumerable difficulties of broad rivers and deep marshes you must encounter by the way."

M. Joutel and his companions were firm. Very reluctantly the chief consented that the three Indian guides should, for a time, accompany them. It was about the 25th of May, when they resumed their march from the village of the Cenis. The second day they came to a broad river, which they crossed on a raft, swimming their horses. The country was quite densely populated. They daily passed cabins and villages of the Indians, but encountered no opposition. We have minute accounts of their reception in many of these villages. All are essentially the same with those which we have already narrated.

Day after day, with occasional halts in consequence of rains, the travellers pressed on, through the month of May and to the middle of June. Their route was generally in a northeastern direction. Their path led them through a rugged country of forests, ravines, and rivers. The average territory of each Indian tribe was about twenty miles square. Friendly Indians were always found to guide them, as it were, from post to post on their way.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Close of the Drama.

Ludicrous Scene. Death of M. Marle. Sympathy of the Savages. Barbaric Ceremonies. The Mississippi Reached. Joyful Interview. Ascending the River. Incidents by the Way. The Beautiful Illinois. Weary Detention. The Voyage to Mackinac. Thence to Quebec. Departure for France. Fate of the Colony.

The latter part of June they approached a village, when a large number of men came out to greet them, and to escort them in. The Indians insisted upon carrying the Frenchmen into the village upon their backs, saying that it was their invariable custom in the reception of guests. They were constrained to submit. Seven savages stooped down, and each one received one of the guests upon his shoulders. Others led the horses.

M. Joutel was a very tall man and very heavy. He also carried a gun, two pistols, some powder and lead, and several articles of clothing. The savage who undertook to carry him, was a small man, so that M. Joutel's feet almost touched the ground. As he tottered beneath his burden, two other savages came to his aid, helping to sustain him by the legs. Thus he had three porters.

The Frenchmen, whose vivacity seemed never long to forsake them, found it very difficult to restrain their laughter in

view of the ludicrous spectacle they presented. It was three-quarters of a mile to the village. The porters, quite exhausted, surrendered their burdens in the cabin of the chief. The Indians wore but little clothing; some of them none at all. They brought water, saying that it was their custom to wash their guests, but as they perceived that the Frenchmen were encumbered with garments, they would wash only their faces.

After this ceremony, they were placed upon a platform about four feet high, and addressed in long speeches of welcome. As usual there was smoking, feasting, and the exchange of presents. They then opened a very successful traffic with the Indians for the purchase of corn.

These Indians had never heard the report of a gun. They were astonished in view of the deadly power of the invisible bullet; and they implored the strangers to remain with them and aid them in a war expedition. Though M. Joutel was the historian of this expedition, they seem, by common consent, to have regarded La Salle's brother, M. Cavalier, as their leader. He informed the Indians that they must hasten on their way, but that they hoped, ere long, to return and bring with them guns, powder, hatchets, knives, and other articles to exchange for their furs. This pleased them greatly.

A melancholy accident occurred at this place. M. Marle went into the river to bathe. Accidentally he got beyond his depth and was drowned. The savages manifested the deepest sympathy on the occasion. They rushed to the spot in large numbers, plunged into the water, regained the lifeless body, and with mournful wailings bore it back to the village. They watched with intensest interest the rites of Christian burial. The grave of the unfortunate man was in a beautiful grove, on the banks of the river. His mourning companions raised over the spot a cross, the touching emblem of the great atoning sacrifice for sin.

"It is our duty to testify," writes M. Joutel, "to the kindness of this affectionate people. Their humanity, manifested in this sad accident, was very remarkable. Their sympathy in our grief was greater than we could have experienced in any part of Europe."

There were four very pleasant and populous villages here, situated near each other. The inhabitants seemed to be united in the most fraternal alliance. And yet these people, who could be so gentle, tender and sympathetic in receiving their friends, could be as merciless as demons in torturing their enemies.

On the 30th of June, the travellers again took up their line of march. There was a wide river, near by, to be crossed. They had spent several days in this village, receiving unbounded acts of politeness and hospitality from the people. The men and the women alike vied in delicate attentions, such as could not have been expected from savages.

There was a broad and deep river near by to be crossed. The chief and a large escort of the natives accompanied them to the river, and paddled them over in their canoes, swimming the horses. M. Chevalier, in taking leave of his friends, gave them some rich presents, not forgetting to make the women happy in the gift of some gorgeous beads. Several Indians guided the party to the next tribe, at a distance of about thirty miles. Here again they were received in the cabin of the chief with unbounded hospitality.

After being welcomed with their many ceremonials of greeting, guides were furnished to accompany them to the next tribe. Thus they pressed on, day after day, with but occasional delays. Their route lay through a very rich country, abounding with deer and turkeys and prairie chickens. Village after village they entered. Tribe after tribe they met. But everywhere they encountered the same invariable hospitality. On one occasion a group of singers came to their cabin, and treated them with a serenade of plaintive music. At the same time one of their number crowned M. Chevalier with a beautiful head-dress of colored plumes.

The ceremony, on this occasion, was very elaborate, in which the females as well as the men took an active part. Two girls, of remarkably graceful form, and whose symmetric limbs were but slightly veiled, were brought, evidently without any intentional immodesty, into such affectionate contact with M. Chevalier, as greatly to confuse him.

It was quite evident that the Indians did not expect that their wealthy guests would receive these attentions without making them some return. They seem to have regarded themselves as abundantly rewarded by a gift of a hatchet, four knives, and a few beads. They regarded the French as superior beings, and were amazed and awed by the report of the guns, and the deadly flight of the bullet. They entreated the strangers to remain with them, offering them cabins and food

and wives.

They had reached a broken, hilly country, with ravines and forests, and Indian trails leading in many directions. Guides were greatly needed; and guides were always furnished. On the evening of the 24th of July, they came to the banks of a river of unusual flood and breadth. To their surprise and delight they saw, upon the opposite bank, a large cross, and near by a spacious log-cabin, such as the French were accustomed to rear at their stations.

"No one," writes M. Joutel, "can imagine the joy with which this sight inspired our hearts. We threw ourselves upon our knees, and with tearful eyes thanked God for having so safely led us. We had no doubt that those on the opposite shore were Frenchmen, and the cross proved that they were fellow Christians."

The inmates of the log-cabin caught sight of the strangers. Probably their dress indicated that they were not Indians. They fired two muskets as a salute. The salute was promptly returned. Immediately several canoes pushed off, from the opposite bank, paddled by Indians, and in which the travellers saw two men in European dress. They were two Frenchmen, M. Charpentier and M. Launay, both from Rouen. Their station was on the northern bank of the Arkansas River, not far from its entrance into the Mississippi. Lieutenant Tonti had established the post, that he might receive news from La Salle's expedition.

In this interview, as in nearly all the scenes of earth, joy and grief were blended. The travellers felt that now they were safe, and that return to friends and home was secure. But all wept over the death of La Salle, for he was revered and loved by all who knew him. There was quite a large number of Indians at the station. They unloaded the horses, brought up the baggage, and men and women crowded around with unfeigned joy.

After a short time the Indians all left the cabin, and the white men held a conference together, narrating past events. Lieutenant Tonti had stationed six men at that post. They were to remain there until they should receive tidings of La Salle's landing at the mouth of the Mississippi. As the months passed away, and they heard nothing of his expedition, four of the party went to fort St. Louis on the Illinois River, leaving but two behind. It was decided that it was best to conceal the death of La Salle until it could be communicated by his brother, Chevalier, to the court in France. In the meantime the impression was to be left that he was still superintending the affairs of the settlement at the bay of St. Louis.

At a little distance from the log-cabin of the French there was quite a group of Indian wigwams. The chief soon came and invited the newly arrived strangers to dine with him and his chief men. Mats were spread in the large cabin of the chief, and an ample feast provided. At the close of the entertainment M. Cavalier addressed them, in substance as follows:

"We accompanied the Chevalier La Salle from France, to establish a settlement at the mouth of the Mississippi River. We left our colony on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, and are on our way to Canada. We have passed through the territories of very many tribes, who have all treated us in the kindest manner. It is our intention to return from Canada to the mouth of the river, with a large supply of merchandise. The people, through whose countries we have passed, have furnished us with guides. We ask the same favor of you, with canoes to ascend the river, and with a supply of food. The guides shall be well rewarded, and we will pay you for all the supplies with which you may furnish us."

All this was very easily said, through an interpreter. The chief expressed his surprise that they could have passed through so many tribes without having been either killed or robbed. He said that he would immediately send couriers to the other villages of his tribe, to inform them of the wishes of the Frenchmen and to decide what could be done to aid them in their object.

M. Joutel gives a very alluring account of the situation and structure of this village. It was delightfully situated on an elevated plain commanding an extensive view of the river and of the adjacent country. The wigwams were substantially built, presenting very comfortable interiors. The region around was almost crowded with buffaloes, deer, antelopes, and a vast variety of prairie and water-fowls. Fruit trees and vines were abundant, and they were richly laden with their delicious burdens. Extended fields were waving luxuriantly with the golden corn. Fish of many kinds were taken from the river. It is indeed a glowing account which the pen of the historian gives of this favored land.

The tribe at that point was called the Arkansas. They occupied four large villages. Two of these villages were on the Arkansas River, and two upon the Mississippi. These savages did everything in their power to testify the pleasure with

which they received the strangers. Some of their ceremonies were so tedious that the guests would gladly have avoided them. A delegation of the chiefs, from the other villages, was soon assembled. A very formal council was held. It was decided that the four villages should furnish one large boat, and one man from each village to aid in navigating it, and also the needful supply of food.

One of M. Cavalier's party, M. Barthelmy, who was a young man from Paris, weary with the long journey he had already taken, and charmed with the friendly character of the natives and the Eden-like region they had found, decided to remain there. The horses also were left. They had, as they judged, a voyage of twelve hundred miles from the mouth of the Arkansas to the mouth of the Illinois. They had travelled, according to their estimate, seven hundred and fifty miles from their settlement on the Gulf.

The French party had now dwindled to five persons. The boat in which they embarked was forty feet long. Fifteen Indians, men and women, entered the boat with them, to accompany them a part of the way. The windings of the river were such that it required a voyage of several leagues to reach its mouth. It would seem, from the narrative, that they reached a village at the mouth of the river on the 29th. Here they exchanged their large and heavy periagua, for two light canoes, with which to ascend against the swift current of the Mississippi.

The next day they made twenty-four miles, and reached Cappa, the last village of the Arkansas on the Mississippi. Here the chief contrived to detain them a day, that the Indians might enjoy a few hours of barbaric festivity. On the 2d of August the party reëmbarked, nine in number, five Frenchmen and four Indians. The rapidity of the current was such that they were frequently compelled to cross the river to take advantage of the eddies. Sometimes, at points in the river, the flow was so swift that they were compelled to land, and carry the canoes and all their luggage on their shoulders around the point.

The first night they encamped upon an island for greater security. The Indians in that vicinity had a bad reputation. The hardships of this voyage were very great. It was necessary for each one to ply the paddle with the utmost energy. They had often marshes to wade, dense forests to cut their way through, and desert plains to traverse beneath the rays of a blistering sun.

Weary days and nights came and went. Long accustomed to every variety of wilderness life, there was no novelty to charm them. On the 19th of August they reached the mouth of the Ohio. Occasionally they landed to shoot a buffalo or a deer or a turkey. Their Indian attendants now manifested a disposition to leave them, which caused the Frenchmen great alarm. Should the Indians stealthily, at night, take the canoes and descend the swift current of the stream, pursuit would be impossible, and the travellers would be left on the banks of the river, in a truly deplorable condition. This rendered it necessary for them to keep a constant watch, with their arms in their hands.

In this state of anxiety they continued their laborious voyage until the 30th of August, when they reached the mouth of the Missouri River. On the 2d of August they passed the famous painting on the rocks to which we have before alluded. On the 3d of September they joyfully left the Mississippi, and entered the more placid current of the Illinois.^[2] They judged it to be one hundred and eighty miles from the Ohio to the Illinois.

Upon this river they found a great and delightful change of scenery. The richest verdure and bloom of summer were all around them. Meadows, and prairies, and lawn-like groves crowded with game, constantly regaled the eye. The gentle flow of the river greatly relieved them from the fatigue of the paddle. Day after day they ascended the charming stream. Night after night they enjoyed encampment in lovely groves, beneath serene skies, and feasting upon the choicest game. They frequently came to villages and encampments of the Illinois Indians, with whom they felt entirely at home.

On the 11th of September a solitary Indian came down to the bank of the river, and hailed them. They understood his language, and informed him that they had come from M. de la Salle, and that they were bound to the station, farther up the river. He ran back to the encampment with the news. The whole multitude came rushing down to the river, with joyous shoutings; and several guns were fired by them in salute. The salute was returned from the boats. This was a band of the numerous tribe of Illinois Indians from the region of Kaskaskia.

The French fort on the Illinois River, as we have mentioned, was called St. Louis. The Indians said that Lieutenant Tonti

was not then at the fort, but that he had accompanied a party of their warriors in an expedition against the Iroquois. They urged the voyagers to land and take some food with them. But the Frenchmen declined. Being now so near what they deemed their journey's end, they were eager to press on their way.

At two o'clock in the afternoon of Sunday, the 14th of September, 1687, the weary and wayworn travellers reached the trading and military post of St. Louis. Compared with the humble wigwams of the Indians, the fort assumed majestic proportions, standing upon an eminence which commanded an extensive view of the region around. A group of Indians was gathered upon the bank. When informed that the strangers were from the settlement of La Salle, they ran back to the fort with the joyful tidings. Immediately a Frenchman was seen, rushing down to the river, followed by a tumultuous group of Indians. M. Joutel writes:

"We returned together to the fort, where we found three Frenchmen. They inquired of us of the Chevalier de la Salle. We informed them that he had accompanied us a part of the way, and that we had left him about one hundred and twenty miles south of the great Cenis nation; and that he was then in good health. In that statement there was nothing which was untrue; for M. Cavalier and I, who said this, were not present at his death. He had left us in good health. I have already spoken of the reasons which induced us to conceal his death until we should arrive in France."

Upon entering the fort, the first movement was to go to the chapel in a body, with prayers and the *Te Deum*, to return thanks to God, for having conducted them so safely on their long and perilous way. La Salle was universally beloved and revered. His noble bearing, his winning deportment, his familiarity with Indian languages, his authority derived from the king, his extended explorations and perilous adventures, and his pure and sincerely devout spirit, caused him to be regarded as eminently the great man of the pioneers in this new world. He was Alonzo did everything in his power to redeem the captives, and that he ordered the dead to be buried, weeping over their misfortunes, and praying most earnestly for the salvation of their souls.

Such was the wonderful career of La Salle. Next to Columbus, he was the most illustrious of the pioneers of the New World. It would be difficult to find, in history, any one who has displayed in a higher degree the noble qualities of energy, courage, and perseverance, combined with the more gentle virtues of tenderness, humanity, and amiability. Adversity seemed to have no power to dishearten him. His character was pure, and we have no reason to doubt that he was in heart a sincere Christian. In the past history of our country, there are but few names which are entitled to stand so high on its roll of fame, as that of the Chevalier de la Salle.

² M. Douay says, the 5th of September. These slight discrepancies in dates are very frequent.

THE END.

[End of *The Adventures of the Chevalier De La Salle and his Companions* by John Stevens Cabot Abbott]