BUTTERFIELD CONSUL WILLSHIRE

HISTORY OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE NORTHWEST BY JOHN NICOLET IN 1634

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Содержание

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PREFACE

In the following pages, I have attempted to record, in a faithful manner, the indomitable perseverance and heroic bravery displayed by John Nicolet in an exploration which resulted in his being the first of civilized men to set foot upon any portion of the Northwest; that is, upon any part of the territory now constituting the States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. It is shown how he brought to the knowledge of the world the existence of a "fresh-water sea" – Lake Michigan – beyond and to the westward of Lake Huron; how he visited a number of Indian nations before unheard of; how he penetrated many leagues beyond the utmost verge of previous discoveries, with an almost reckless fortitude, to bind distant tribes to French interests; and how he sought to find an ocean, which, it was believed, was not a great distance westward of the St. Lawrence, and which would prove a near route to China and Japan.

The principal sources from which I have drawn, in my investigations concerning the life and explorations of Nicolet, are the Jesuit Relations. So nearly contemporaneous are these publications with his discoveries – especially those which contain a record of them – and so trustworthy are they in their recital of facts connected therewith, that their value, in this connection, can hardly be over-estimated. Each one of the series having a particular bearing upon the subject of this narrative has been studied with a care commensurate with its importance. Other accounts of the same period, as well as of a somewhat later date, together with the researches of modern writers, concerning the daring Frenchman, whose name stands first on the list of the explorers of the Northwest, have, likewise, been carefully examined, the object being, if not to exhaust all known sources of information illustrative of these discoveries, at least to profit by them. Aid has been received, in addition, from several living authors, especially from Benjamin Sulte, Esq., of Ottawa, Canada, to whom, and to all others who have extended a helping hand, I return my sincere thanks.

C. W. B.

Madison, Wisconsin, 1881.

INTRODUCTION.
PRE-HISTORIC MAN IN THE NORTHWEST – THE RED RACE – FIRST DISCOVERIES IN NEW FRANCE

Of the existence, in what are now the States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, at a remote period, of a race superior in intelligence to the red men who inhabited this region when first seen by a European, there are indubitable evidences. Who were these ancient occupiers of the territory just mentioned – of its prairies and woodlands, hills and valleys? There are no traditions of their power, of their labor, or of their wisdom – no record of their having lived, except in rapidly-decaying relics. They left no descendants to recount their daring deeds. All that remain of them – the so-called Mound-Builders – are mouldering skeletons. All that are to be seen of their handicraft are perishing earth-works and rude implements. These sum up the "types and shadows" of the pre-historic age.

There is nothing to connect "the dark backward and abysm" of mound-building times with those of the red race of the Northwest; and all that is known of the latter dating earlier than their first discovery, is exceedingly dim and shadowy. Upon the extended area bounded by Lake Superior on the north, Lake Michigan on the east, wide-spreading prairies on the south, and the Mississippi river on the west, there met and mingled two distinct Indian families – Algonquins and Dakotas. Concerning the various tribes of these families, nothing of importance could be gleaned by the earliest explorers; at least, very little has been preserved. Tradition, it is true, pointed to the Algonquins as having, at some remote period, migrated from the east; and this has been confirmed by a study of their language. It indicated, also, that the Dakotas, at a time far beyond the memory of the most aged, came from the west or southwest – fighting their way as they came; that one of their tribes[1] once dwelt upon the shores of a sea; but when and for what purpose they left their home none could relate.

The residue of the Northwest was the dwelling-place of Algonquins alone. In reality, therefore, "the territory northwest of the river Ohio" has no veritable history ante-dating the period of its first discovery by civilized man. Portions of the country had been heard of, it is true, but only through vague reports of savages. There were no accounts at all, besides these, of the extensive region of the upper lakes or of the valley of the Upper Mississippi; while nothing whatever was known of the Ohio or of parts adjacent.

The first of the discoveries in the New World after that of Columbus, in 1492, having an immediate bearing upon this narrative, was that of John Cabot, in 1497. On the third of July, of that year, he saw what is now believed to have been the coast of Labrador. After sailing a short distance south, he probably discovered the island of Newfoundland. In 1498, his son, Sebastian, explored the continent from Labrador to Virginia, and possibly as far south as Florida. Gaspar Cortereal, in 1500, reached the shore seen by John Cabot, and explored it several hundred miles. He was followed, in 1524, by John Verrazzano, who discovered the North American coast in, probably, the latitude of what is now Wilmington, North Carolina. He continued his exploration to the northward as far as Newfoundland. To the region visited by him, he gave the name of New France. The attention of the reader is now directed to some of the most important events, in the country thus named, which followed, for a period of a hundred and ten years, the voyage of Verrazzano.

[1] Ancestors of the present Winnebagoes.

CHAPTER I.
EVENTS LEADING TO WESTERN EXPLORATION

The discovery of the river St. Lawrence, and of the great lakes which pour their superabundant waters through it into the gulf, was not the least in importance of the events which signalized the opening of the history of the New World. The credit of having first spread a sail upon the majestic stream of Canada, and of obtaining such information as afterward led to a knowledge of the whole of its valley, belongs to James Cartier, a native of St. Malo – a port in the north of France. Cartier was a skillful mariner. On the twentieth of April, 1534, he sailed from his native place, under orders of the French admiral, for the coast of Newfoundland, intent on exploring unknown seas, and countries washed by them. He took with him two ships of fifty tons each, and in twenty days saw the large island lying between the ocean and the river he was soon to discover. Favorable winds had wafted him and his hundred and twenty-two sailors and adventurers to inhospitable shores, but at an auspicious season of the year.

Having sailed nearly around Newfoundland, Cartier turned to the south, and, crossing the gulf, entered a bay, which he named Des Chaleurs, because of the midsummer heats. A little farther north he landed and took possession of the country in the name of the French king. His vessels were now at anchor in the smaller inlet of Gaspé. Sailing still further north, Cartier, in August, discovered the river St. Lawrence. He moved up its channel until land was sighted on either side; then, being unprepared to remain through the winter, he sailed back again to the gulf, crossed the ocean, and moored his vessels in safety in St. Malo. He made the return voyage in less than thirty days. This was, at that period, an astonishing achievement. The success of the expedition filled the whole of France with wonder. In less than five months, the Atlantic had been crossed; a large river discovered; a new country added to the dominions of France; and the ocean recrossed. All this had been accomplished before it was generally known that an expedition had been undertaken.

The remarkable pleasantness of this summer's voyage, the narratives of Cartier and his companions, and the importance attached to their discoveries, aroused the enthusiasm of the French; and, as might be expected, a new expedition was planned. Three well-furnished ships were provided by the king. Even some of the nobility volunteered for the voyage. All were eager to cross the Atlantic. On the nineteenth of May, 1535, the squadron sailed. But Cartier had not, this time, a pleasant summer cruise. Storms raged. The ships separated. For seven weeks they buffeted the troubled ocean. Their rendezvous was the Straits of Belle Isle, which they finally reached; but the omens were bad. The adventurers had confidently looked for pleasant gales and a quick voyage, and these expectations had all been blasted. Now, however, they arrived within sight of Newfoundland, and their spirits rose. Carried to the west of that island, on the day of Saint Lawrence, they gave the name of that martyr to a portion of the gulf which opened before them. The name was afterward given to the whole of that body of water and to the river Cartier had previously discovered. Sailing to the north of Anticosti, they ascended the St. Lawrence, reaching, in September, a fine harbor in an island since called Orleans.

Leaving his two largest ships in the waters of the river now known as the St. Charles, Cartier, with the smallest and two open boats, ascended the St. Lawrence until a considerable Indian village was reached, situated on an island called Hochelaga. Standing upon the summit of a hill, on this island, and looking away up the river, the commander had fond imaginings of future glory awaiting his countrymen in colonizing this region. "He called the hill Mont-Réal, and time, that has transferred the name of the island, is realizing his visions;" for on that island now stands the city of Montreal. While at Hochelaga, Cartier gathered some indistinct accounts of the surrounding country, and of the river Ottawa coming down from the hills of the Northwest. Rejoining his ships, he spent the winter in a palisaded fort on the bank of the St. Charles, with his vessels moored before it. The cold

was intense. Many of his men died of scurvy. Early in the spring, possession was again taken of the country in the name of the French king; and, on the sixteenth of July, 1536, the Breton mariner dropped anchor in St. Malo – he having returned in two ships; the other was abandoned, and three hundred and twelve years after was discovered imbedded in mud. France was disappointed. Hopes had been raised too high. Expectations had not been realized. Further explorations, therefore, were, for the time, postponed.

Notwithstanding the failure of Cartier's second voyage, the great valley of the St. Lawrence was not to remain very long unknown to the world, in any of its parts. It was thought unworthy a gallant nation to abandon the enterprise; and one more trial at exploration and colonization was determined upon. Again the bold mariner of St. Malo started for the St. Lawrence. This was on the twenty-third of May, 1541. He took with him five ships; but he went, unfortunately, as subordinate, in some respects, to John Francis de la Roque, Lord of Roberval, a nobleman of Picardy, whom the king of France had appointed viceroy of the country now again to be visited. The object of the enterprise was declared to be discovery, settlement, and the conversion of the Indians. Cartier was the first to sail. Again he entered the St. Lawrence.

After erecting a fort near the site of the present city of Quebec, Cartier ascended the river in two boats to explore the rapids above the island of Hochelaga. He then returned and passed the winter at his fort; and, in the spring, not having heard from the viceroy, he set sail for France. In June, 1542, in the harbor of St. John, he met the Lord of Roberval, outward bound, with three ships and two hundred men. The viceroy ordered Cartier to return to the St. Lawrence; but the mariner of St. Malo escaped in the night, and continued his voyage homeward. Roberval, although abandoned by his subordinate, once more set sail. After wintering in the St. Lawrence, he, too, abandoned the country – giving back his immense viceroyalty to the rightful owners.

In 1578, there were three hundred and fifty fishing vessels at Newfoundland belonging to the French, Spanish, Portuguese, and English; besides these were a number – twenty or more – of Biscayan whalers. The Marquis de la Roche, a Catholic nobleman of Brittany, encouraged by Henry IV., undertook the colonization of New France, in 1598. But the ill-starred attempt resulted only in his leaving forty convicts to their fate on Sable island, off the coast of Nova Scotia. Of their number, twelve only were found alive five years subsequent to La Roche's voyage. In 1599, another expedition was resolved on. This was undertaken by Pontgravé, a merchant of St. Malo, and Chauvin, a captain of the marine. In consideration of a monopoly of the fur-trade, granted them by the king of France, these men undertook to establish a colony of five hundred persons in New France. At Tadoussac, at the mouth of the Saguenay, they built a cluster of wooden huts and store-houses, where sixteen men were left to gather furs; these either died or were scattered among the Indians before the return of the spring of 1601. Chauvin made a second voyage to Tadoussac, but failed to establish a permanent settlement. During a third voyage he died, and his enterprise perished with him.

In 1603, a company of merchants of France was formed, and Samuel Champlain, with a small band of adventurers, dispatched, in two small vessels, to make a preliminary survey of the St. Lawrence. He reached the valley in safety, sailed past the lofty promontory on which Quebec now stands, and proceeded onward to the island of Hochelaga, where his vessels were anchored. In a skiff, with a few Indians, Champlain vainly endeavored to pass the rapids of the great river. The baffled explorer returned to his ships. From the savages, he gleaned some information of ulterior regions. The natives drew for him rude plans of the river above, and its lakes and cataracts. His curiosity was inflamed, and he resolved one day to visit the country so full of natural wonders. Now, however, he was constrained to return to France. He had accomplished the objects of his mission – the making of a brief exploration of the valley of the chief river of Canada.

It was the opinion of Champlain that on the banks of the St. Lawrence was the true site of a settlement; that here a fortified post should be erected; that thence, by following up the waters of the interior region to their sources, a western route might be traced to China, the distance being estimated

by him at not more than two or three hundred leagues; and that the fur-trade of the whole country might be secured to France by the erection of a fort at some point commanding the river. These views, five years subsequent to his visit to the St. Lawrence, induced the fitting out of a second expedition, for trade, exploration, and colonization. On the thirteenth of April, 1608, Champlain again sailed – this time with men, arms, and stores for a colony. The fur-trade was intrusted to another. The mouth of the Saguenay was reached in June; and, soon after, a settlement was commenced on the brink of the St. Lawrence – the site of the present market-place of the lower town of Quebec. A rigorous winter and great suffering followed. Supplies arrived in the spring, and Champlain determined to enter upon his long-meditated explorations; – the only obstacles in the way were the savage nations he would every-where meet. He would be compelled to resort to diplomacy – to unite a friendly tribe to his interests, and, thus strengthened, to conquer, by force of arms, the hostile one.

The tribes of the Hurons, who dwelt on the lake which now bears their name, and their allies, the Algonquins, upon the Ottawa and the St. Lawrence, Champlain learned, were at war with the Iroquois, or Five Nations, whose homes were within the present State of New York. In June, 1609, he advanced, with sixty Hurons and Algonquins and two white men, up what is now known as the Richelieu river to the discovery of the first of the great lakes – the one which now bears his name. Upon its placid waters, this courageous band was stopped by a war-party of Iroquois. On shore, the contending forces met, when a few discharges of an arquebuse sent the advancing enemy in wild dismay back into the forest. The victory was complete. Promptly Champlain returned to the St. Lawrence, and his allies to their homes, not, however, until the latter had invited the former to visit their towns and aid them again in their wars. Champlain then revisited France, but the year 1610 found him once more in the St. Lawrence, with two objects in view: one, to proceed northward, to explore Hudson's bay; the other, to go westward, and examine the great lakes and the mines of copper on their shores, of the existence of which he had just been informed by the savages; for he was determined he would never cease his explorations until he had penetrated to the western sea, or that of the north, so as to open the way to China. But, after fighting a battle with the Iroquois at the mouth of the river Richelieu, he gave up, for the time, all thought of further exploration, and returned to France.

On the thirteenth of May, 1611, Champlain again arrived in the St. Lawrence. To secure the advantages of the fur-trade to his superiors was now his principal object; and, to that end, he chose the site of the present city of Montreal for a post, which he called Place Royale. Soon afterward, he returned to France; but, early in the spring of 1613, the tireless voyager again crossed the Atlantic, and sailed up the St. Lawrence; this time bound for the Ottawa to discover the North sea. After making his way up that river to the home of the Algonquins of Isle des Allumettes, he returned in disgust to the St. Lawrence, and again embarked for France.

At the site of the present city of Montreal, there had assembled, in the summer of 1615, Hurons from their distant villages upon the shores of their great lake, and Algonquins from their homes on the Ottawa – come down to a yearly trade with the French upon the St. Lawrence. Champlain, who had returned in May from France, was asked by the assembled savages to join their bands against the Iroquois. He consented; but, while absent at Quebec, making needful preparations, the savages became impatient, and departed for their homes. With them went Father Joseph le Caron, a Récollet, accompanied by twelve armed Frenchmen. It was the intention of this missionary to learn the language of the Hurons, and labor for their spiritual welfare. His departure from the St. Lawrence was on the first day of July. Nine days afterward, Champlain, with two Frenchmen and ten Indians followed him. Both parties traveled up the Ottawa to the Algonquin villages; passed the two lakes of the Allumettes; threaded their way to a well-trodden portage, crossing which brought them to Lake Nipissing; thence, they floated westward down the current of French river, to what is now known as Georgian bay; afterward, for more than a hundred miles, they journeyed southward along the eastern shores of that bay to its head; and there was the home of the Hurons.

Champlain, with a naked host of allies, was soon on the march against the Iroquois from the Huron villages, moving down the river Trent, as since named, to its mouth, when his eyes were gladdened with the view of another of the fresh water seas – Lake Ontario. Boldly they crossed its broad expanse, meeting the enemy at a considerable distance inland from its southern shores. Defensive works of the Iroquois defied the assaults of the besiegers. The Huron warriors returned in disgust to their homes, taking Champlain with them. He was compelled to spend the winter as the guest of these savages, returning to the St. Lawrence by way of the Ottawa, and reaching Quebec on the eleventh of July, 1616. He had seen enough of the region traversed by him to know that there was an immense country lying to the westward ready to be given to his king the moment he should be able to explore and make it known. Father le Caron, who had preceded Champlain on his outward trip to the Huron villages, also preceded him on his return; but he remained long enough with those Indians to obtain a considerable knowledge of their language and of their manners and customs.

Quebec, at this period, could hardly be called a settlement. It contained a population of fur-traders and friars of fifty or sixty persons. It had a fort, and Champlain was the nominal commander. In the interest of the infant colony he went every year to France. His was the duty to regulate the monopoly of the company of merchants in their trade with the Indians. In the summer of 1622, the Iroquois beset the settlement, but made no actual attack. A change was now at hand in the affairs of New France. Two Huguenots, William and Émery de Caen, had taken the place of the old company of St. Malo and Rouen, but were afterward compelled to share their monopoly with them. Fresh troubles were thus introduced into the infant colony, not only in religious affairs, but in secular matters. The Récollets had previously established five missions, extending from Acadia to the borders of Lake Huron. Now, three Jesuits – among their number John de Brébeuf – arrived in the colony, and began their spiritual labors. This was in 1625. When the year 1627 was reached, the settlement at Quebec had a population of about one hundred persons – men, women, and children. The chief trading stations upon the St. Lawrence were Quebec, Three Rivers, the Rapids of St. Louis, and Tadoussac. Turning our eyes to the western wilds, we see that the Hurons, after the return of Le Caron, were not again visited by missionaries until 1622.

In the year 1627, the destinies of France were held by Cardinal Richelieu as in the hollow of his hand. He had constituted himself grand master and superintendent of navigation and commerce. By him the privileges of the Caens were annulled, and a company formed, consisting of a hundred associates, called the Company of New France. At its head was Richelieu himself. Louis the Thirteenth made over to this company forever the fort and settlement at Quebec, and all the territory of New France, including Florida. To them was given power to appoint judges, build fortresses, cast cannon, confer titles, and concede lands. They were to govern in peace and in war. Their monopoly of the fur-trade was made perpetual; while that of all other commerce within the limits of their government was limited to fifteen years, except that the whale-fishery and the cod-fishery were to remain open to all. They could take whatever steps they might think expedient or proper for the protection of the colony and the fostering of trade. It will thus be seen that the Hundred Associates had conferred upon them almost sovereign power. For fifteen years their commerce was not to be troubled with duties or imposts. Partners, whether nobles, officers, or ecclesiastics, might engage in commercial pursuits without derogating from the privileges of their order. To all these benefits the king added a donation of two ships of war. Of this powerful association, Champlain was one of the members.

In return for these privileges conferred, behold how little these hundred partners were compelled to perform. They engaged to convoy to New France, during 1628, two or three hundred men of all trades, and before the year 1643 to increase the number to four thousand persons of both sexes; to supply all their settlers with lodging, food, clothing, and farm implements, for three years; then they would allow them sufficient land to support themselves, cleared to a certain extent; and would also furnish them the grain necessary for sowing it; stipulating, also, that the emigrants

should be native Frenchmen and Roman Catholics, and none others; and, finally, agreeing to settle three priests in each settlement, whom they were bound to provide with every article necessary for their personal comfort, and to defray the expenses of their ministerial labors for fifteen years. After the expiration of that time, cleared lands were to be granted by the company to the clergy for maintaining the Roman Catholic Church in New France. It was thus that the Hundred Associates became proprietors of the whole country claimed by France, from Florida to the Arctic Circle; from Newfoundland to the sources of the St. Lawrence and its tributaries. Meanwhile, the fur-trade had brought a considerable knowledge of the Ottawa, and of the country of the Hurons, to the French upon the St. Lawrence, through the yearly visits of the savages from those distant parts and the journeyings of the fur-trader in quest of peltry.

In April, 1628, the first vessels of the Hundred Associates sailed from France with colonists and supplies bound for the St. Lawrence. Four of these vessels were armed. Every thing seemed propitious for a speedy arrival at Quebec, where the inhabitants were sorely pressed for food; but a storm, which had for some time been brewing in Europe, broke in fury upon New France. The imprudent zeal of the Catholics in England, and the persecution of the Huguenots in France, aroused the English, who determined to conquer the French possessions in North America, if possible; and, to that end, they sent out David Kirk, with an armed squadron, to attack the settlements in Canada. The fleet reached the harbor of Tadoussac before the arrival of the vessels of the Company of New France. Kirk sent a demand for the surrender of Quebec, but Champlain determined to defend the place; at least, he resolved to make a show of defense; and the English commander thought best not to attack such a formidable looking position. All the supplies sent by the Hundred Associates to the St. Lawrence were captured or sunk; and the next year, after most of its inhabitants had dispersed in the forests for food, Quebec surrendered. England thus gained her first supremacy upon the great river of Canada.

The terms of the capitulation were that the French were to be conveyed to their own country; and each soldier was allowed to take with him furs to the value of twenty crowns. As some had lately returned from the Hurons with peltry of no small value, their loss was considerable. The French prisoners, including Champlain, were conveyed across the ocean by Kirk, but their arrival in England was after a treaty of peace had been signed between the two powers. The result was, the restoration of New France to the French crown; and, on the 5th of July, 1632, Émery de Caen cast anchor at Quebec to reclaim the country. He had received a commission to hold, for one year, a monopoly of the fur-trade, as an indemnity for his losses in the war; after which time he was to give place to the Hundred Associates. The missions in Canada which by the success of the British arms had been interrupted, were now to be continued by Jesuits alone. De Caen brought with him two of that order – Paul le Jeune and Anne de la Nouë.

On the twenty-third of May, 1633, Champlain, commissioned anew by Richelieu, resumed command at Quebec, in behalf of the Hundred Partners, arriving out with considerable supplies and several new settlers. With him returned the Jesuit father, John de Brébeuf. The Récollets had been virtually ejected from Canada. The whole missionary field was now ready for cultivation by the followers of Loyola. New France was restored to Champlain and his company, and to Catholicism.

Champlain's first care was to place the affairs of the colony in a more prosperous condition, and establish a better understanding with the Indians. In both respects, he was tolerably successful. His knowledge of the western country had been derived from his own observations during the tours of 1613 and 1615, but especially from accounts given him by the Indians. At the beginning of 1634, the whole French population, from Gaspé to Three Rivers, was hardly one hundred and fifty souls, mostly engaged in the trading business, on behalf of the Hundred Partners, whose operations were carried on principally at the point last named and at Tadoussac – sometimes as far up the St. Lawrence as the site of the present city of Montreal, but not often. Of the small colony upon the great river of Canada, Champlain was the heart and soul. The interior of the continent was yet to be explored. He

was resolved to know more of ulterior regions – to create more friends among the savages therein. The time had arrived for such enterprises, and a trusty conductor was at hand.

CHAPTER II.
JOHN NICOLET, THE EXPLORER

As early as the year 1615, Champlain had selected a number of young men and put them in care of some of his Indian friends, to have them trained to the life of the woods – to the language, manners, customs, and habits of the savages. His object was to open, through them, as advisers and interpreters, friendly relations, when the proper time should come, with the Indian nations not yet brought in close alliance with the French. In 1618, an opportunity presented itself for him to add another young Frenchman to the list of those who had been sent to be trained in all the mysteries of savage life; for, in that year, John Nicolet[2] arrived from France, and was dispatched to the woods.[3] The new-comer was born in Cherbourg, in Normandy. His father, Thomas Nicolet, was a mail-carrier from that city to Paris. His mother's name was Marguerite de la Mer.[4]

Nicolet was a young man of good character, endowed with a profound religious feeling, and an excellent memory. He awakened in the breast of Champlain high hopes of usefulness, and was by him sent to the Algonquins of Isle des Allumettes, in the Ottawa river. These Indians were the same Algonquins that were visited by Champlain in 1613. They are frequently spoken of, in early annals of Canada, as Algonquins of the Isle. But all Algonquins, wherever found, were afterward designated as Ottawas by the French. To "the Nation of the Isle," then, was sent the young Norman, that he might learn their language, which was in general use upon the Ottawa river and upon the north bank of the St. Lawrence. With them he remained two years, following them in their wanderings, partaking of their dangers, their fatigues, and their privations, with a courage and fortitude equal to the boldest and the bravest of the tribe. During all this time, he saw not the face of a single white man. On several different occasions he passed a number of days without a morsel of food, and he was sometimes fain to satisfy the cravings of hunger by eating bark.[5]

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[2] The proper spelling is "Nicolet," not "Nicollet," nor "Nicollett." The correct pronunciation is "Nick-o-lay." The people of the province of Quebec all pronounce the name "Nicoll*ette*," though improperly, the same as the word would be pronounced by English-speaking people if it were spelled "Nick-o-let." But it is now invariably written by them "Nicolet."

[3] Vimont, *Relation*, 1643 (Quebec edition, 1858), p. 3. The Jesuits, intent upon pushing their fields of labor far into the heart of the continent, let slip no opportunity after their arrival upon the St. Lawrence to inform themselves concerning ulterior regions; and the information thus obtained was noted down by them. They minutely described, during a period of forty years, beginning with the year 1632, the various tribes they came in contact with; and their hopes and fears as to Christianizing them were freely expressed. Accounts of their journeys were elaborated upon, and their missionary work put upon record. Prominent persons, as well as important events, shared their attention. Details concerning the geography of the country were also written out. The intelligence thus collected was sent every summer by the superiors to the provincials at Paris, where it was yearly published, in the French language. Taken together, these publications constitute what are known as the *Jesuit Relations*. They have been collected and republished in the same language, at Quebec, by the Canadian government, in three large volumes. As these are more accessible to the general reader in this form than in the original (Cramoisy) editions, they are cited in this narrative.There is no complete translation of the *Relations* into the English language. Numerous extracts from the originals bearing particularly upon the West – especially upon what is now Wisconsin – were made some years since by Cyrus Woodman, of Mineral Point, translations of which are to be found in Smith's history of that State, Vol. III., pp. 10-112. But none of these are from the *Relation* of 1643 – the most important one in its reference to Nicolet and his visit to the Northwest.

[4] "Jean Nicollet né à Cherbourg, était fils de Thomas Nicollet, messager ordinaire de Cherbourg à Paris, et de Marie La Mer." – Ferland's *Cours d'Histoire du Canada* (1861), Vol. I., p. 324, note. But, in his "Notes sur les Registres de Notre-Dame de Québec" (Quebec, 1863, p. 30), he corrects the mother's name, giving it as in the text above. That this was her real name is ascertained from the Quebec parochial register, and from Guitet's records (notary) of that city.

[5] Il [Nicolet] arriua en la Nouuelle France, l'an mil six cents dixhuict. Son humeur et sa memoire excellente firent esperer quelque chose de bon de luy; on l'enuoya hiuerner auec les Algonquins de l'Isle afin d'apprendre leur langue. Il y demeura deux ans seul de François, accompagnant tousiours les Barbares dans leurs courses et voyages, auec des fatigues qui ne sont imaginables qu'à ceux qui les ont veües; il passa plusieurs fois les sept et huiet iours sans rien manger, il fut sept semaines entieres sans autre nourriture qu'vn peu d'escorce de bois." – Vimont *Relation*, 1643, p. 3. (The antiquated orthography and accentuation of the *Relations* are strictly followed in the foregoing extract; so, also, in all those hereafter made from them in this narrative.)"On his [Nicolet's] first arrival [in New France], by orders of those who presided over the French colony of Quebec, he spent two whole years among the Algonquins of the island, for the purpose of learning their language, without any Frenchman as companion, and in the midst of those hardships, which may be

Nicolet, while residing with the Algonquins of Isle des Allumettes, with whose language he had now become familiar, accompanied four hundred of those savages upon a mission of peace to the Iroquois. The voyage proved a successful one, Nicolet returning in safety. Afterward, he took up his residence among the Nipissings, with whom he remained eight or nine years. He was recognized as one of the nation. He entered into the very frequent councils of those savages. He had his own cabin and establishment, doing his own fishing and trading. He had become, indeed, a naturalized Nipissing.[6] The mental activity displayed by him while sojourning among these savages may be judged of from the circumstance of his having taken notes descriptive of the habits, manners, customs, and numbers of the Nipissing Indians, written in the form of memoirs, which were afterward presented by him to one of the missionaries, who, doubtless, made good use of them in after-time in giving an account of the nation.[7]

Nicolet finally left the savages, and returned to civilization, being recalled by the government and employed as commissary and Indian interpreter.[8] It is probable, however, that he had signified his desire to leave the Nipissings, as he could not live without the sacraments,[9] which were denied him so long as he remained with them, there being no mission established in their country.[10]

Quebec having been reoccupied by the French, Nicolet took up his residence there. He was in high favor with Champlain, who could not but admire his remarkable adaptation to savage life – the result of his courage and peculiar temperament; at least, this admiration may be presumed, from the circumstance of his having, as the sequel shows, soon after sent him upon an important mission.

Whether Nicolet visited Quebec during his long residence among the Nipissing Indians is not known. Possibly he returned to the St. Lawrence in 1628, to receive orders from Champlain on account of the new state of things inaugurated by the creation of the system of 1627 – the Hundred Associates; but, in that event, he must have soon returned, for it is known that he remained with the Nipissings during the occupation of Quebec by the English – from July, 1629, to July, 1632. The month during which, in the early days of New France, the trade of the Ottawa was performed on the St. Lawrence, was July; and, in 1632, this trade was largely carried on where the city of Three Rivers now stands, but which was not then founded.[11] The flotilla of bark canoes used to spend usually from

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readily conceived, if we will reflect what it must be to pass severe winters in the woods, under a covering of cedar or birch bark; to have one's means of subsistence dependent upon hunting; to be perpetually hearing rude outcries; to be deprived of the pleasant society of one's own people; and to be constantly exposed, not only to derision and insulting words, but even to daily peril of life. There was a time, indeed, when he went without food for a whole week; and (what is really wonderful) he even spent seven weeks without having any thing to eat but a little bark." – Du Creux, *Historia Canadensis*, Paris, 1664, p. 359. "Probably," says Margry, "he must, from time to time, have added some of the lichen which the Canadians call rock tripe." —*Journal Général de l'Instruction Publique*, Paris, 1862.

[6] "Il [*Nicolet*] accompagna quatre cents Algonquins, qui alloient en ce temps là faire la paix auec les Hiroquois, et en vint à bout heureusement. Pleust à Dieu qu'elle n'eust iamais esté rompuë, nous ne souffririons pas à present les calamitez qui nous font gemir et donneront vn estrange empeschement à la conuersion de ces peuples. Apes cette paix faite, il alla demeurer huict ou neuf ans auec la nation des Nipissiriniens, Algonquins; là il passoit pour vn de cette nation, entrant dans les conseils forts frequents à ces peuples, ayant sa cabane et son mesnage à part, faisant sa perche et sa traitte." – Vimont, *Relation*, 1643, p. 3.

[7] "I'ay quelques memoires de sa main, qui pourront paroistre vn iour, touchant les Nipisiriniens, auec lesquels il a souuent hyuerné." – Le Jeune, *Relation*, 1636, p. 58.

[8] "Il [*Nicolet*] fut enfin rappallé et estably Commis et Interprete." – Vimont, *Relation*, 1643, p. 3.

[9] "Il [*Nicolet*]… ne s'en est retiré, que pour mettre son salut en asseurance dans l'vsage des Sacremens, faute desquels il y a grande risque pour l'âme, parmy les Sauuages." – Le Jeune, *Relation*, 1636, pp. 57, 58.

[10] It would be quite impossible to reconcile the *Relation* of 1643 (p. 3) with that of 1636 (pp. 57, 58), respecting Nicolet's retiring from his Indian life, unless he, for the motive stated, asked for his recall and was recalled accordingly.

[11] Champlain's map of 1632 shows no habitation on the St. Lawrence above Quebec. In 1633, Three Rivers was virtually founded; but the fort erected there by Champlain was not begun until 1634. – Sulte's *Chronique Trifluvienne*, p. 5."As for the towns in Canada, there are but three of any considerable figure. These are Quebec, Montreal, and Trois Rivieres [Three Rivers]… Trois Rivieres is a town so named from its situation at the confluence of three rivers, one whereof is that of St. Lawrence, and lies almost in the midway between Quebec and Montreal. It is said to be a well-built town, and considerable mart, where the Indians exchange their skins and furs for European goods." —*An Account of the French Settlements in North America*, Boston, 1746, pp. 12, 14."Three Rivers, or Trois Rivieres, is a town of Canada East, at the confluence of the rivers St. Maurice and St. Lawrence, ninety miles from Quebec, with which it is connected by electric telegraph, and on the line of the proposed railway thence to Montreal. It is one of the oldest towns in Canada, and was long stationary as regarded enterprise or improvement; but recently it has become one of the most prosperous places

eight to ten days in that place – seldom reaching Quebec. In the month and the year just mentioned, De Caen arrived in Canada; and he was, therefore, in the position to send word, by the assembled Indians, to the French who were living among the savages upon the Ottawa and the Georgian bay of Lake Huron, requesting their return to the St. Lawrence.

Champlain, in June, 1633, caused a small fort to be erected about forty miles above Quebec, for the rendezvous of the trading flotilla descending the St. Lawrence – to draw the market nearer Quebec. It was thus the St. Croix fort was established where the trade with the Indians would be much less likely to be interrupted by incursions of the Iroquois than at Three Rivers. At this time, one hundred and fifty Huron canoes arrived at the newly-chosen position, for traffic with the French. Possibly so great a number was the result of the change in the government of the colony – the return of the French to Quebec the preceding year. With this large fleet of canoes Nicolet probably returned to civilization; for it is certain that he was upon the St. Lawrence as early as June, 1634, ready to embark in an undertaking which, of necessity, would have caused so much consultation and preparation as to preclude the idea of his arrival, just then, from the Ottawa. An Indian interpreter – one well acquainted with the Algonquins of the Ottawa, and to a certain extent with the Hurons of Georgian bay – who could Champlain more safely depend upon than Nicolet to develop his schemes of exploration in the unknown western country, the door of which he had himself opened in previous years? Who was there better qualified than his young *protégé*, familiar as he was with the Algonquin and Huron-Iroquois tongues, to hold "talks" with savage tribes still further west, and smoke with them the pipe of peace – to the end that a nearer route to China and Japan might be discovered; or, at least, that the fur-trade might be made more profitable to the Hundred Associates? Surely, no one. Hence it was that Nicolet was recalled by the governor of Canada.

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in the province – a change produced principally by the commencement of an extensive trade in lumber on the river St. Maurice and its tributaries, which had heretofore been neglected, and also by increased energy in the manufacture of iron-ware, for which the St. Maurice forges, about three miles distant from the town, have always been celebrated in Canada. Three Rivers is the residence of a Roman Catholic bishop, whose diocese bears the same name; and contains a Roman Catholic cathedral, a church of England, a Scotch kirk, and a Wesleyan chapel, an Ursuline convent, with a school attached, where over two hundred young females are educated; two public and several private schools, a mechanics' institute, a Canadian institute, and a Young Men's Improvement, and several other societies. It sends a member to the provincial parliament. Population in 1852, was 4,966; in 1861, 6,058. The district of Three Rivers embraces both sides of the St. Lawrence, and is subdivided into four counties." —*Lippincott's Gazetteer*, Philadelphia, 1874.

CHAPTER III.
NICOLET DISCOVERS THE NORTHWEST

Notwithstanding Champlain had previously ascended the Ottawa and stood upon the shores of the Georgian bay of Lake Huron, and although he had received from western Indians numerous reports of distant regions, his knowledge of the great lakes was, in 1634, exceedingly limited. He had heard of Niagara, but was of the opinion that it was only a rapid, such as the St. Louis, in the river St. Lawrence. He was wholly uninformed concerning Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair, and Lake Michigan; while, of Lake Huron, he knew little, and of Lake Superior still less. He was assured that there was a connection between the last-named lake and the St. Lawrence; but his supposition was, that a river flowed from Lake Huron directly into Lake Ontario. Such, certainly was the extent of his information in 1632, as proven by his map of that date;[12] and that, for the next two years, he could have received much additional information concerning the great lakes is not probable.

He had early been told that near the borders of one of these "fresh-water seas," were copper mines; for, in June, 1610, while moving up the St. Lawrence to join a war-party of Algonquins, Hurons, and Montagnais, he met, after ascending the river about twenty-five miles above Quebec, a canoe containing two Indians – an Algonquin and a Montagnais – who had been dispatched to urge him to hasten forward with all possible speed. He entertained them on his bark, and conferred with them about many matters concerning their wars. Thereupon, the Algonquin savage drew from a sack a piece of copper, a foot long, which he gave Champlain. It was very handsome and quite pure. He said there were large quantities of the metal where he obtained the piece, and that it was found on the bank of a river near a great lake. He also declared that the Indians gathered it in lumps, and, having melted it, spread it in sheets, smoothing it with stones.[13]

Champlain had, also, early information that there dwelt in those far-off countries a nation which once lived upon the borders of a distant sea. These people were called, for that reason, "Men of the Sea," by the Algonquins. Their homes were less than four hundred leagues away. It was likewise reported that another people, without hair or beards, whose costumes and manners somewhat resembled the Tartars, came from the west to trade with this "sea-tribe." These more remote traders, as was claimed, made their journeys upon a great water in large canoes. The missionaries among the Hurons, as well as Champlain and the best informed of the French settlers upon the St. Lawrence, thought this "great water" must be a western sea leading to Asia.[14] Some of the Indians who traded with the French were in the habit of going occasionally to barter with those "People of the Sea," distant from their homes five or six weeks' journey. A lively imagination on part of the French easily converted these hairless traders coming from the west into Chinese or Japanese; although, in fact, they were none other than the progenitors of the savages now known as the Sioux,[15] while the "sea-

[12] This map was the first attempt at delineating the great lakes. The original was, beyond a reasonable doubt, the work of Champlain himself. So much of New France as had been visited by the delineator is given with some degree of accuracy. On the whole, the map has a grotesque appearance, yet it possesses much value. It shows where many savage nations were located at its date. By it, several important historical problems concerning the Northwest are solved. It was first published, along with Champlain's "Voyages de la Novelle France," in Paris. Fac-similes have been published; one accompanies volume third of E. B. O'Callaghan's "Documentary History of the State of New York," Albany, 1850; another is found in a reprint of Champlain's works by Laverdière (Vol. VI.), Quebec, 1870; another is by Tross, Paris.

[13] Champlain's *Voyages*, Paris, 1613, pp. 246, 247. Upon his map of 1632, Champlain marks an island "where, there is a copper mine." Instead of being placed in Lake Superior, as it doubtless should have been, it finds a location in Green bay.

[14] This "great water" was, as will hereafter be shown, the Mississippi and its tributary, the Wisconsin.

[15] Synonyms: Cioux, Scious, Sioust, Naduessue, Nadouesiouack, Nadouesiouek, Nadoussi, Nadouessioux, etc."The Sioux, or Dakotah [Dakota], … were [when first visited by civilized men] a numerous people, separated into three great divisions, which were again subdivided into bands… [One of these divisions – the most easterly – was the Issanti.] The other great divisions, the Yanktons and the Tintonwans, or Tetons, lived west of the Mississippi, extending beyond the Missouri, and ranging as far as the Rocky Mountains.

tribe" was the nation called, subsequently, Winnebagoes.[16] Upon these reports, the missionaries had already built fond expectations of one day reaching China by the ocean which washed alike the shores of Asia and America. And, as already noticed, Champlain, too, was not less sanguine in his hopes of accomplishing a similar journey.

Nicolet, while living with the Nipissings, must have heard many stories of the strange people so much resembling the Chinese, and doubtless his curiosity was not less excited than was Champlain's. But the great question, was, who should penetrate the wilderness to the "People of the Sea" – to "La Nation des Puants," as they were called by Champlain? Naturally enough, the eyes of the governor of Canada were fixed upon Nicolet as the man to make the trial. The latter had returned to Quebec, it will be remembered, and was acting as commissary and interpreter for the Hundred Associates. That he was paid by them and received his orders from them through Champlain, their representative, is reasonably certain. So he was chosen to make a journey to the Winnebagoes, for the purpose, principally, of solving the problem of a near route to China.[17]

If he should fail in discovering a new highway to the east in reaching these "People of the Sea," it would, in any event, be an important step toward the exploration of the then unknown west; and why should not the explorer, in visiting the various nations living upon the eastern and northern shores of Lake Huron, and beyond this inland sea, create friends among the savage tribes, in hopes that a regular trade in peltries might be established with them. To this end, he must meet them in a friendly way; have talks with them; and firmly unite them, if possible, to French interests. Champlain knew, from personal observation made while traveling upon the Ottawa and the shores of the Georgian bay of Lake Huron – from the reports of savages who came from their homes still further westward, and from what fur-traders, missionaries, and the young men sent by him among the savages to learn their languages (of whom Nicolet himself was a notable example) had heard that there were comparatively easy facilities of communication by water between the upper country and the St. Lawrence. He knew, also, that the proper time had come to send a trusty ambassador to these far-off nations; so, by the end of June, 1634, Nicolet, at Quebec, was ready to begin his eventful journey, at the command of Champlain.

The Issanti cultivated the soil; but the extreme western bands lived upon the buffalo alone…"The name Sioux is an abbreviation of *Nadoucssioux*, an Ojibwa [Chippewa] word, meaning *enemies*. The Ojibwas used it to designate this people, and occasionally, also, the Iroquois – being at deadly war with both." – Parkman's "La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West" (revised ed.), p. 243, note.

[16] From the Algonquin word "ouinipeg," signifying "bad smelling water," as salt-water was by them designated. When, therefore, the Algonquins spoke of this tribe as the "Ouinipigou," they simply meant "Men of the Salt-water;" that is, "Men of the Sea." But the French gave a different signification to the word, calling the nation "Men of the Stinking-water;" or, rather, "the Nation of Stinkards" – "la Nation des Puans." And they are so designated by Champlain in his "Voyages," in 1632, and on his map of that year. By Friar Gabriel Sagard ("Histoire du Canada," Paris, 1636, p. 201), they are also noted as "des Puants." Sagard's information of the Winnebagoes, although printed after Nicolet's visit to that tribe, was obtained previous to that event. The home of this nation was around the head of Green bay, in what is now the State of Wisconsin. Says Vimont (*Relation*, 1640, p. 35), as to the signification of the word "ouinipeg:""Quelques François les appellant la Nation des Puans, à cause que le mot Algonquin ouinipeg signifie eau puante; or ils nomment ainsi l'eau de la mer salée, si bien que ces peuples se nomment Ouinipigou, pource qu'ils viennent des bords d'vne mer dont nous n'auons point de cognoissance, et par consequent il ne faut pas les appeller la nation des Puans, mais la nation de la mer." The same is reiterated in the *Relations* of 1648 and 1654. Consult, in this connection, Smith's "History of Wisconsin," Vol. III., pp. 11, 15, 17. To John Gilmary Shea belongs the credit of first identifying the "Ouinipigou," or "Gens de Mer," of Vimont (*Relation*, 1640), with the Winnebagoes. See his "Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley," 1853, pp. 20, 21.

[17] It is nowhere stated in the *Relations* that such was the object of Champlain in dispatching Nicolet to those people; nevertheless, that it was the chief purpose had in view by him, is fairly deducible from what is known of his purposes at that date. He had, also, other designs to be accomplished.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.