FLAGG EDMUND, PIERRE-JEAN DE SMET

FLAGG'S THE FAR WEST, 1836-1837, PART 2; AND DE SMET'S LETTERS AND SKETCHES, 1841-1842

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Flagg E.

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Содержание

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THE FAR WEST
[PART II]

XXXIII [1]

"Stranger, if thou hast learn'd a truth which needs
Experience more than reason, that the world
Is full of guilt and misery, and hast known
Enough of all its sorrows, crimes, and cares
To tire thee of it; enter this wild wood,
And view the haunts of Nature."

Bryant.

The moon had gone down; the last star had burned out in the firmament; and that deep darkness which precedes the dawn was brooding over the earth as the traveller turned away from the little inn at the village of Pinkneyville. Fortunately he had, the previous evening, while surveying the face of the region from the door of the hostelrie, gained some general idea of the route to Kaskaskia; and now, dropping the reins upon his horse's neck, he began floundering along through a blackness of darkness perfectly Cimmerian. It was, indeed, a gloomy night. The early mists were rising, damp and chill, from the soil saturated with the showers of the preceding day; and the darkness had become of a density almost palpable to the sense. Crossing a narrow arm of the prairie in the direction presumed to be correct, my horse carried me into a dense wood, and, if possible, the darkness increased. I had penetrated some miles into the heart of the forest, and was advancing slowly upon my way, when my attention was suddenly arrested by a low, whispering, rustling sound in the depths of the wood at my right; this gradually increasing, was almost immediately succeeded by a crashing, thundering, rushing report, till every echo far and wide in that dark old wood was wakened, and the whole forest for miles around resounded with the roar. My horse, terrified at the noise, leaped and plunged like a mad creature. An enormous forest-tree had fallen within a dozen rods of the spot on which I stood. As I left the noble ruin and resumed my lonely way, my mind brooded over the event, and I thought I could perceive in the occurrence a powerful feature of the sublime. The fall of an aged tree in the noiseless lapse of time is ever an event not unworthy of notice; but, at a moment like this, it was surely so in an eminent degree. Ages since – long ere the first white man had pressed the soil of this Western world, and while the untamed denizens of the wilderness roamed in the freedom of primitive creation – ages since had seen the germe of that mighty tree lifting up its young, green leaf from the sod, beneath the genial warmth of the sunlight and the summer wind. An age passed away. The tender stem had reared itself into a gigantic pillar, and proudly tossed its green head amid the upper skies: that young leaf, expanded and developed, had spread itself abroad, until, at length, the beasts

[1] Volume xxvii of our series begins with chapter xxxiii of the original New York edition (1838) of Flagg's *The Far West*. The author is here describing the part of his journey made in the late summer or early autumn of 1836. – Ed.

of the earth had sought out its shade, and the tree stood up the monarch of the forest. Another age is gone, and the hoary moss of time is flaunting to the winds from its venerable branches. Long ago the thunderbolt had consecrated its lofty top with the baptismal of fire, and, sere and rifted, the storm-cloud now sings through its naked limbs. Like an aged man, its head is bleached with years, while the strength and verdure of ripened maturity yet girdle its trunk. But the worm is at the root: rottenness at the heart is doing its work. Its day and its hour are appointed, and their bounds it may not pass. That hour, that moment is come! and in the deep, pulseless stillness of the night-time, when slumber falleth upon man and Nature pauses in her working, the offspring of centuries is laid low, and bows himself along the earth. Yet another age is gone; but the traveller comes not to muse over the relics of the once-glorious ruin. Long ago has each been mouldering away, and their dust has mingled with the common mother of us all. Ah! there is a *moral* in the falling of an aged tree!

I was dwelling with rather melancholy reflections upon this casual occurrence, when a quick panting close at my side attracted my attention; a large, gaunt-looking prairie-wolf had just turned on his *heel* and was trotting off into the shade. The gray dawn had now begun to flicker along the sky, and, crossing a beautiful prairie and grove, I found myself at the pleasant farmhouse of a settler of some twenty or thirty years' standing; and dismounting, after a ride of eighteen miles, I partook, with little reluctance or ceremony, of an early breakfast. Thus much for the *night adventures of a traveller* in the woods and wilds of Illinois! My host, the old gentleman to whom I have referred, very sagely mistook his guest for a physician, owing to a peculiarly convenient structure of those indispensables ycleped saddle-bags; and was just about consulting his fancied man of medicines respecting the ailings of his "woman," who was reclining on a bed, when, to his admiration, he was undeceived.

Passing through an inconsiderable village on the north side of the Little Vermillion called Georgetown, my route lay through an extended range of hills and *barrens*.[2] Among the former were some most intolerably tedious, especially to a horseman beneath a broiling sun, who had passed a sleepless night: but the sweep of scenery from their summits was beautiful and extensive. At length the traveller stood upon the "heights of Chester," and the broad Mississippi was rolling on its turbid floods a hundred yards beneath. The view is here a noble one, not unlike that from the Alton or Grafton bluffs at the other extremity of the "American Bottom," though less extensive. Directly at the feet of the spectator, scattered along a low, narrow interval, lies the village of Chester. Upon the opposite bank the forest rolls away to the horizon in unbroken magnificence, excepting that here and there along the bottom the hand of cultivation is betrayed by the dark luxuriance of waving maize-fields. A beautiful island, with lofty trees and green smiling meadows, stretches itself along in the middle of the stream before the town, adding not a little to the picturesqueness of the scene, and, in all probability, destined to add something more to the future importance of the place. To the right, at a short distance, come in the soft-flowing waters of the Kaskaskia through deeply-wooded banks; and nearly in the same direction winds away the mirror-surface of the Mississippi for twenty miles, to accomplish a direct passage of but four, an occurrence by no means unusual in its course. As I stood gazing upon the scene, a steamer appeared sweeping around the bend, and, puffing lazily along with the current past the town, soon disappeared in the distance. From the heights an exceedingly precipitous pathway leads down to the village. Chester is one of the new places of Illinois, and, of course, can boast but little to interest the stranger apart from the highly scenic beauty of its situation.[3]

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[2] The Vermilion River (which Flagg incorrectly wrote Little Vermilion) rises, with several branches, in the western and southern portions of La Salle County, and flows north and west, entering Illinois River at Rock Island, in Livingston County.

[3] Chester is on the Mississippi River, in Randolph County, just below the mouth of Kaskaskia River. In the summer of 1829, Samuel Smith built the first house there, and two years later he, together with Mather, Lamb and Company, platted the town site. It was named by Jane Smith from her native town, Chester, England, and was made the seat of justice for Randolph in 1848. – Ed.Steelesville (formerly Georgetown) is about fifteen miles east of Kaskaskia, on the road between Pinkneyville and Chester; the site was settled on by George Steele in 1810. A block-house fort erected there in 1812 protected the settlers against attacks from the Kickapoo Indians. In 1825 a tread-mill was built, and two years later a store and post-office were erected. The latter was named Steele's Mills. The settlement was originally called Georgetown and later changed by an act of state legislature to Steelesville, being surveyed in 1832. – Ed.

It has been mostly erected within the few years past; and, for its extent, is a flourishing business place. Its landing is excellent, location healthy, adjacent region fertile, and, for aught I know to the contrary, may, in course of years, rival even the far-famed Alton. Its landing, I was informed, is the only one for many miles upon the river, above or below, suitable for a place of extensive commerce.

From Chester, in a direction not far from north, a narrow pathway winds along beneath the bluffs, among the tall cane-brakes of the bottom. Leaving the Mississippi at the mouth of the Kaskaskia, it runs along the low banks of the latter stream, and begins to assume an aspect truly delightful. Upon either side rise the shafts of enormous sycamores to the altitude of an hundred feet, and then, flinging abroad and interlacing their long branches, form a living arch of exquisite beauty, stretching away in unbroken luxuriance for miles. Beneath springs from the rich loam a dense undergrowth of canes; a profusion of wild vines and bushes clustering with fruit serving effectually to exclude the sunbeams, except a few checkered spots here and there playing upon the foliage, while at intervals through the dark verdure is caught the flashing sheen of the moving waters. Upon the right, at the distance of only a few yards, go up the bluffs to the sheer height of some hundred feet, densely clothed with woods. The path, though exceedingly narrow and serpentine, is for the most part a hard-trodden, smooth, and excellent one when dry. The coolness and fragrance of these deep, old, shadowy woodlands has always for me a resistless charm. There is so much of quiet seclusion from the feverish turmoil of ordinary life within their peaceful avenues, that, to one not wedded to the world, they are ever inexpressibly grateful.

"The calm shade
Shall bring a kindred calm, and the sweet breeze,
That makes the green leaves dance, shall waft a balm
To thy sick heart. Thou wilt find nothing here
Of all that pain'd thee in the haunts of men,
And made thee loathe thy life."

In the wild, fierce glaring of a summer noontide, when amid "the haunts of men" all is parched up, and dusty, and scathed, how refreshingly cool are the still depths of the forest! The clear crystal streamlet gushes forth with perennial laughter from the rock, seeming to exult in its happy existence; the bright enamelled mosses of a century creep along the gnarled old roots, and life in all its fairy forms trips forth to greet the eremite heart and charm it from the world. But there was one feature of the scene through which I was passing that struck me as peculiarly imposing, and to which I have not yet referred. I allude to the enormous, almost preternatural magnitude of the wild-grape vine, and its tortuosity. I have more than once, in the course of my wanderings, remarked the peculiarities of these vast parasites; but such is the unrivalled fertility, and the depth of soil of the Kaskaskia bottom, that vegetation of every kind there attains a size and proportion elsewhere almost unknown. Six or seven of these vast vegetable serpents are usually beheld leaping forth with a broad whirl from the mould at the root of a tree, and then, writhing, and twining, and twisting among themselves into all imaginable forms, at length away they start, all at once and together, in different directions for the summit, around which they immediately clasp their bodies, one over the other, and swing depending in festoons on every side. Some of these vines, when old and dried up by the elements, are amazingly strong; more so, perhaps, than a hempen hawser of the same diameter.

Having but a short ride before me the evening I left Chester, I alighted from my horse, and leisurely strolled along through this beautiful bower I have been attempting to describe. What a charming spot, thought I, for a Romeo and Juliet! – pardon my roving fancy, sober reader – but really, with all my own sobriety, I could not but imagine this a delightful scene for a "Meet me by moonlight alone," or any other *improper* thing of the kind, whether or not a trip to Gretna Green subsequently ensued. And if, in coming years, when the little city of Chester shall have become all that it now seems

to promise, and the venerable Kaskaskia, having cast her slough, having rejuvenated her withered energies, and recalled the days of her pristine *traditionary* glory; if then, I say, the young men and maidens make not this the consecrated spot of the long summer-evening ramble and the trysting-place of the heart, reader, believe us not; in the dignified *parlance* of the *corps editorial*, believe *us* not.

Some portions of the Kaskaskia bottom have formerly, at different times, been cleared and cultivated; but nothing now remains but the ruins of tenements to acquaint one with the circumstance. The spot must have been exceedingly unhealthy in its wild state. There is, however, one beautiful and extensive farm under high cultivation nearly opposite Kaskaskia, which no traveller can fail to observe and admire. It is the residence of Colonel M – , a French gentleman of wealth, who has done everything a cultivated taste could dictate to render it a delightful spot.[4] A fine, airy farmhouse stands beneath the bluffs, built after the French style, with heavy roof, broad balconies, and with a rare luxury in this region – green Venetian blinds. The outhouses, most of them substantially constructed of stone, are surpassed in beauty and extent only by the residence itself. Fields yellow with golden harvest, orchards loaded with fruit, and groves, and parks, and pastures sprinkled with grazing cattle, spread out themselves on every side. In the back-ground rise the wooded bluffs, gracefully rounded to their summits, while in front roams the gentle Kaskaskia, beyond which, peacefully reposing in the sunlight, lay the place of my destination.

Kaskaskia, Ill.

[4] Flagg is probably referring to Colonel Pierre Menard. See our volume xxvi, p. 165, note 116. – Ed.

XXXIV

"Protected by the divinity they adored, supported by the earth which they cultivated, and at peace with themselves, they enjoyed the sweets of life without dreading or desiring dissolution." – Numa Pompilius.

"A pleasing land of drowsy head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye."

Castle of Indolence.

In a country like our own, where everything is fresh and recent, and where nothing has yet been swept by the mellowing touch of departed time, any object which can lay but the most indifferent claim to antiquity fails not to be hailed with delighted attention. "You have," say they of the other hemisphere, "no ivy-mantled towers; no moss-grown, castellated ruins; no donjon-keeps rearing in dark sublimity their massive walls and age-bleached battlements; nothing to span the mighty chasm of bygone years, and to lead down the fancy into the shadowy realms of the past; and, *therefore*, your country is steril in moral interest." Now, though this *corollary* is undoubtedly false, I yet believe the proposition in the main to be *true*: especially is this the case with regard to that region which lies west of the Alleghany range. Little as there may be in the elder sections of our Atlantic states to demand veneration for the past, no sooner does the traveller find himself gliding along the silvery wave of the "beautiful river," than at the same moment he finds himself forsaking all that the fairy creations of genius have ever consecrated, or the roll of the historian chronicled for coming time. All is NEW. The very soil on which he treads, fertile beyond comparison, and festering beneath the undisturbed vegetation of centuries; the rolling forests, bright, luxuriant, gorgeous as on the dawn of creation; the endless streams pouring onward in their fresh magnificence to the ocean, all seem new. The inhabitants are emigrants late from other lands, and every operation of human skill on which the eye may rest betrays a recent origin. There is but a single exception to these remarks – those mysterious monuments of a race whom we know not of!

In consideration, therefore, of the circumstance that antiquities in this blessed land of ours are, indeed, very few and far between, I deem it the serious duty of every traveller, be he virtuoso or be he not, whenever once so happy as to lay his grasp upon an antique "in any form, in any shape," just to hold fast to the best of his ability! Such, reader, be it known, was my own praiseworthy determination when drawing nigh to the eastern shore of the stream opposite the ancient French village Kaskaskia. The sun was going down, and as I approached the sandy edge of the sea-green water, a gay bevy of young folks were whirling the long, narrow, skiff-like ferry-boat like a bird across the stream, by means of a hawser to which it was attached, and which extended from shore to shore. In my own turn I stepped into the boat, and in a few moments the old French negro had forced it half across the river, at this spot about three or four hundred yards in width. For one who has ever visited Kaskaskia in the last beautiful days of summer, a pen like my own need hardly be employed to delineate the loveliness of the scene which now opened upon the view. For miles the gleamy surface of the gentle Kaskaskia might be seen retreating from the eye, till lost at length in its windings through the forests of its banks, resting their deep shadows on the stream in all the calm magnificence of inanimate nature. The shore I was leaving swelled gracefully up from the water's edge, clothed in forests until it reached the bluffs, which towered abrupt and loftily; while here and there along the landscape the low roof of a log cabin could be caught peeping forth from the dark shrubbery. The bank of the stream I was approaching presented an aspect entirely the reverse; less lovely, but more picturesque. A low sandy beach stretched itself more than a mile along the river, destitute of trees, and rounding itself

gently away into a broad green plain. Upon this plain – a portion of the American Bottom – at the distance of a few hundred yards from the water, is situated all that now remains of "old Kaskaskia." From the centre rises a tall Gothic spire, hoary with time, surmounted by an iron cross; and around this nucleus are clustered irregularly, at various intervals, the heavy-roofed, time-stained cottages of the French inhabitants. These houses are usually like those of the West India planters – but a single story in height – and the surface which they occupy is, of course, in the larger class, proportionably increased. They are constructed, some of rough limestone, some of timber, framed in every variety of position – horizontal, perpendicular, oblique, or all united – thus retaining their shape till they rot to the ground, with the interstices stuffed with the fragments of stone, and the external surface stuccoed with mortar; others – a few only – are framed, boarded, etc., in modern style. Nearly all have galleries in front, some of them spacious, running around the whole building, and all have garden-plats enclosed by stone walls or stoccades. Some of these curious-looking structures are old, having bided the storm-winds of more than a century. It is this circumstance which throws over the place that antiquated, venerable aspect to which I have alluded, and which equally applies to all the other villages of this peculiar people I have yet spoken of. The city of Philadelphia and this neglected village of Kaskaskia are, as regards age, the same to a year;[5] but while every object which, in the one, meets the eye, looks fresh as if but yesterday touched by the last chiselling of the architect, in the latter the thoughts are carried back at least to Noah's ark! Two centuries have rolled by since the "city of the Pilgrims" ceased to be a "cornfield;" but where will you now look for a solitary relic of that olden time? "State-street," the scene where American blood was first poured out by British soldiery; "Old Cornhill;" the site of the "Liberty-tree;" and the wharf from which the tea was poured into the dock, are indeed pointed out to you as spots memorable in the history of the "Leaguer of Boston;" and yonder frowns the proud height of Bunker's Hill; *there* lay the British battle-ships, and *there* was "burning Charlestown: " but, with almost the solitary exception of the "Old South" Church, with the cannon-ball imbedded in its tower, where shall we look for an *object* around which our associations may cluster? This is not the case with these old villages. A century has looked down upon the same objects, in the same situations and under the same relations, with a change scarcely appreciable. Yon aged church-tower has thrown its venerable shadow alike over the Indian *corn-dance*, the rude *cotillon* of the French villager, the Spanish *fandango*, the Virginia *reel*, and the Yankee *frolic*. Thus, then, when I speak of these places with reference to antiquity, I refer not so much to the actual lapse of years as to the present aspect and age of the individual objects. In this view there are few spots in our country which may lay more undisputed claim to antiquity than these early French settlements in the Western Valley.

There is one feature of these little villages to which I have not at this time alluded, but which is equally amusing and characteristic, and which never fails to arrest the stranger's observation. I refer to the narrowness of those avenues *intended* for streets. It is no very strange thing that in aged Paris structure should be piled upon structure on either side even to the clouds, while hardly a footpath exists between; but that in this vast Western world a custom, in all respects the same, should have prevailed, surpasseth understanding. This must have resulted not surely from lack of *elbow-room*, but from the marvellous sociality of the race, or from that attachment to the customs of their own fatherland which the Frenchman ever betrays. In agriculture and the mechanic arts they are now about as well skilled, notwithstanding the improvements which they must perceive have been going on around them, as on the day their fathers first planted foot on this broad land. The same implements of husbandry and

[5] Philadelphia was founded in 1682. There has been much discussion about the exact date of the founding of Kaskaskia. E. G. Mason was of the opinion that this uncertainty had arisen in the confounding of Kaskaskia with an earlier Indian settlement of the same name on the Illinois River. It seems probable that Kaskaskia on the Mississippi was started in 1699. Consult E. G. Mason, "Kaskaskia and its Parish Records," in *Magazine of American History* (New York, 1881), vi, pp. 161-182, and *Chapters from Illinois History* (Chicago, 1901); also C. W. Alvord, *The Old Kaskaskia Records* (Chicago Historical Society, 1906). See also A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 69, note 132. – Ed.

the arts which a century since were seen in France, are now seen here; the very vehicle they drive is the vineyard-car, which is presented us in representations of rustic life in the older provinces of the same land. The same characteristics of feeling and action are here displayed as there, and the Gallic tongue is sacredly transmitted from father to son. But here the parallel ceases. We can trace but little resemblance between the staid, simple-hearted French villager of the Mississippi Valley, and the gay, frivolous, dissolute cotemporary of the fifteenth Louis; still less to the countryman of a Marat or a Robespierre, rocked upon the bloody billow of the "Reign of Terror;" and less than either to the high-minded, polished Frenchman of the nineteenth century. The same fact has been remarked of the Spanish population of Florida and Mexico; their resemblance to their ancestors, who have been slumbering for more than three centuries in their graves, is far more striking than to their present brethren of "Old Castile." The cause of this is not difficult to detect. The customs, the manners, the very idioms of nations never remain for any considerable period of time invariably the same: other men, other times, other circumstances, when assisted by civil or religious revolutions, produce surprising changes in the parent land, while the scanty colony, separated by mountains and seas, not more from the roar and commotion than from the influenced sphere of these events, slumbers quietly on from century to century, handing down from father to son those peculiarities, unaltered, which migrated with them. Climate, soil, location, though far from exclusive, are by no means inconsiderable agents in affecting character in all its relations of intellect, temperament, and physical feature. And thus has it chanced that we now look upon a race of men separated but a few centuries from the parent stock, yet exhibiting characteristics in which there are few traits common to both.

It was through one of those long, narrow, lane-like streets to which I have alluded, and, withal, a most unconscionably filthy one, that I rode from the landing of the ferry to the inn. The low-roofed, broad-galleried cottages on either side seemed well stocked with a race of dark-eyed, dark-haired, swarthy-looking people, all, from the least unto the tallest, luxuriating in the mellow atmosphere of evening; all, as if by the same right, staring most unceremoniously at the stranger; and all apparently summing up, but in the uncouthest style imaginable, their divers surmises respecting his country, lineage, occupation, etc., etc. The forms and features of these French villagers are perfectly unique, at least in our country, and one can hardly fail distinguishing them at first sight, even among a crowd, once having seen them. Their peculiarities are far more striking than those of our German or Irish population. A few well-dressed, *genteel* gentlemen were lounging about the piazza of the inn as I drew nigh, and a polite landlord, courteously pressing forward, held the stirrup of the traveller and requested him to alight. Something of a contrast, this, to the attention a stranger usually is blessed with from not more than nine tenths of the worthy publicans of Illinois. Alas! for the aristocracy of the nineteenth century! But *n'importe*. With the easy air of gentility and taste which seemed to pervade the inn at Kaskaskia in all its departments, few could have failed to be pleased. For myself, I was also surprised. Everything about the establishment was in the French style, and here was spread the handsomest *table d'hôte* it has been my fortune to witness in Illinois.

The moon was pouring gloriously down in misty mellowness upon the low-roofed tenements of this antiquated village, when, leaving my chamber, I stepped from the inn for a leisure stroll through its streets and lanes. Passing the gray old church,[6] bathed in the dim, melting moonlight of a summer night, such as for more than a century had smiled upon its consecrated walls as one year had chased away another, the next considerable structure which arrested my attention was a huge, ungainly edifice of brick, like Joseph's coat, *of many colours*, forsooth, and, withal, sadly ruinous as regards the item of windows. This latter circumstance, aside from every other, agreeable to all observed precedent, would have notified me of the fact that this was neither more nor less than a western courthouse. Continuing my careless ramble among the cottages, I passed several whose piazzas were thronged

[6] The church of the Immaculate Conception, the first permanent structure of its kind west of the Alleghany Mountains, was built in 1720. It was torn down in 1838 and a large brick church built. For a more detailed description of the former, see *post*, pp. 62-64. – Ed.

with young people; and at intervals from the midst rang out, on the mild evening air, the gay fresh laugh, and the sweet, soft tones of woman. A stately structure of stone, buried in foliage, next stood beside me, and from its open doors and windows issued the tumultuous melody of the piano. A few steps, and the innocent merriment of two young girls hanging upon a gentleman's arms struck my ear. They passed me. Both were young; and one, a gazelle-eyed brunette, in the pale moonlight, was beautiful. The blithe creatures were full of frolic and fun, and the light Gallic tongue seemed strangely musical from those bright lips. But enough – enough of my evening's ramble – nay, more than enough: I am waxing sentimental. It was at a late hour, after encountering divers untold adventures, that I found myself once more at my hotel. The gallery was thronged with French gentlemen, and it was some hours before the laugh and chatter had died away, and the old village was buried in slumber.

Kaskaskia, Ill.

XXXV

"Glanced many a light caïque along the foam,
Danced on the shore the daughters of the land."

Byron.

"How changed the scene since merry Jean Baptiste
Paddled his pirouge on La Belle Rivière,
And from its banks some lone Loyola priest
Echoed the night song of the voyageur."

It is now more than a century and a half since the sturdy Canadian voyageurs, treading in the footsteps of the adventurous Sieur la Salle, forsaking the bleak shores and wintry skies of the St. Lawrence, first planted themselves upon the beautiful hunting-grounds of the peaceful Illini. Long before the Pilgrim Fathers of New-England, or the distressed exiles of Jamestown, scattered along the steril shores of the Atlantic, had formed even a conception of the beautiful valley beyond the mountains – while this vast North American continent was yet but a wilderness, and the nations of Christendom, ignorant of its character or of its extent, knew not by whom of right it should be appropriated – a few French Jesuit priests had ascended in their bark canoes a distance of three thousand miles from the mouth of the "endless river," and had explored its tributaries to their fountains. It is with admiration almost bordering on astonishment that we view the bold adventures of these daring men.[7] The cause of their fearless undertaking was, we are told, to investigate the truth of an idea which at that era was prevalent among the Canadian French, that a western passage through the American continent existed to the Pacific Ocean. The Indian hunters had spoken of a vast stream far away to the west, which on their long excursions they had seen, but of whose source, course, or termination they could tell nothing. This river was supposed to disgorge itself into the Pacific Seas; and, to prosecute the inquiry, Father Marquette, a recollet monk, and Sieur Joliet, an Indian trader of Quebec, by authority of M. Talon, Intendant of New France, a man of singular enterprise, entered upon the expedition. Thridding the great chain of the Northern Lakes in their slender skiffs, and pursuing the Ouisconsin River, on the 17th of June, 1673, the first Europeans descended the "Father of Waters."[8] By the natives whom they met they were kindly received, and entertained with a deference due only to superior beings. Among these Indians, the Illini, then residing on both sides of the Mississippi, were chief, and their nation was made up of seven distinct tribes: the Miamies, Michigamies, Mascotins, Kaskaskias, Kahokias, Peorias, and Taumarwaus, a peaceful, benevolent, unwarlike race.[9] A village was found at the mouth of the Illinois. Descending the Mississippi, the French voyageurs were dissuaded from their design of exploring the Missouri by a tradition of the natives that near its mouth dwelt a *Manito*, whose residence no human being could pass with life: nor did the Indians fail to tell the legend of the *Piasa* cliff above. Turning up the Illinois, therefore, they glided with amazement through the green woodlands and over the silvery wave of that beautiful stream. It is, perhaps, at this distant day, and in the present era of "speculators and economists," hardly possible to conceive the delighted emotions which must then have swelled the bosoms of those

[7] Hall. – Flagg.

[8] Jacques Marquette was a Jesuit missionary, not a Recollect. Consult R. G. Thwaites, *Father Marquette* (New York, 1902). On Jolliet see Francis Parkman, *La Salle* (Boston, 1869); and the latest authority, Ernest Gagnon, *Louis Jolliet* (Quebec, 1902). – Ed.

[9] For a short note on the Illinois Indians, consult our volume xxvi, p. 123, note 86. – Ed.

simple-hearted men. Sieur Joliet, on his return to Canada, published an account of his adventures, in which narrative language seems almost too meager for description of the golden land he had seen.[10] Father Marquette remained a missionary among the peaceful Indians. To the river partially explored was given the name of the celebrated Colbert, Minister of Marine, by Count de Frontenac; and to the trader Joliet, as a reward, was granted the island of Anticosti in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.[11]

Years passed away, and no enterprising spirit rose up to prosecute the discoveries already made. The missionary Marquette died among the Indians two years after, and Joliet took possession of his island. At length appears M. Robert, Cavalier de la Salle, a native of Rouen in Normandy, celebrated as the birthplace of Fontenelle and the two Corneilles, and for the martyrdom of the heroic Maid of Orleans more than two centuries before. La Salle was a man of bold talents and dauntless enterprise. Ambitious of fame and wealth, he emigrated to Canada; listened to the wonderful tales of the *endless river*; conceived the idea of a Northwest Passage to the East Indies; communicated his views to the commandant of Fort Frontenac on Lake Ontario, and was advised to lay his plan before the Court of St. Cloud. On his arrival at Paris, under the patronage of the Prince de Conti, La Salle received letters of nobility and extensive grants of land in America. Associating with himself the Chevalier de Tonti, an Italian officer, who had the peculiarity of a copper hand as substitute to one lost in the wars of Sicily, and Father Lewis Hennepin, a Franciscan friar, as historian and missionary, together with about thirty others, the enterprise was immediately entered upon, under special sanction of Louis XIV., king of France. After a variety of fortune, prosperous and adverse, they reached the Illinois, and having descended that beautiful river some distance, discovered an Indian village consisting of five hundred cabins completely deserted. Here, having found a large quantity of corn concealed in the earth under each of the wigwams, the party remained six days. Descending ninety miles, they came to Peoria Lake, where they found two encampments of the natives. At first hostility was manifested, but soon they were on most amicable terms with the voyageurs, and a feasting, and dancing, and rejoicing was kept up for three days. Not long after this the boat containing supplies was lost upon "*Le Baie des Puants*," or Green Bay; and La Salle was forced to erect a fort, which received the appropriate name of "*Creve Cœur*" – broken heart. The site of this fortification is supposed to have been a spot now called "Spring Bay," not far from Peoria, on the Illinois. This is a singular place. It is a broad sand basin, some hundred feet in diameter, opening upon the river, the waters of which, in the higher stages, fill it to the brim, but when low they retire, and a number of large springs gush copiously forth from three sides of the ridge, and form a stream. "Blue Creek" empties itself just below, crossed by a bridge of earth, while yet farther down is seen a large mound, which has been opened, and found to contain human remains twenty feet from the summit.[12]

At the time of the erection of Fort *Creve Cœur* the Illini were at war with the warlike Iroquois Indians; and the former, anticipating assistance from their friends the French, and receiving none, resolved to destroy La Salle. His boldness and eloquence alone saved him and restored amity. No sooner was this disturbance quelled than a mutiny arose among his own men. On Christmas-day his dinner was poisoned, and powerful medicine alone saved his life.

Preparations were now made to explore the Mississippi. Father Hennepin, with four Frenchmen, two Indians, and M. Dacan, commander, ascended the river to the falls, and named them, in honour of their patron saint, *St. Anthony*. They were here taken prisoners by a party of Sioux,

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[10] Flagg errs in saying that Jolliet published an account of his adventures. His journal was lost in the St. Lawrence River on the return journey. Father Marquette, however, wrote a journal of his travels. See Thwaites, *Jesuit Relations*, lix, which also contains Jolliet's map of North America (1674). – Ed.

[11] The Island of Anticosti, in the estuary of St. Lawrence River, contains about 3,900 square miles, and is not only of importance as a centre of hunting and fishing interests, but is rich in undeveloped mineral resources. The population of a few hundred souls is chiefly concerned in fishing. The island is now the property of M. Henri Menier, a Parisian chocolate manufacturer, who personally rules his seigniory with benevolent despotism. – Ed.

[12] Concerning La Salle's discoveries, see Ogden's *Letters from the West*, in our volume xix, pp. 44-53, and accompanying notes. – Ed.

carried one hundred and sixty miles into the interior to their villages, and detained several months, when they regained their liberty. Father Hennepin returned to Canada, and subsequently to France, where he published his travels in splendid style, dedicating the book to the celebrated Colbert. These early writings, though deeply imbued with a spirit of superstition and exaggeration, are yet valuable as the *only* records of the time.[13] The chief of these historians were Hennepin, Tonti, and Charlevoix.[14] Difficulties arising with the Indians, La Salle resolved to erect another fort, which, after infinite difficulty, was completed. The site is described as "a rock, very high, the top of which was even and of convenient space, so that it commanded the river and country round about." This description applies to no place on the Illinois so well as to the "Starved Rock." The fort was called "St. Louis."

La Salle visited Canada, and a crowd of adventurers returned with him. Descending the Illinois and Mississippi, the company stopped for some time at the mouth of the Missouri, then the *Osage* River, and found a village of the Taumarwaus, which was deserted, the natives being on a hunting expedition. In three days they were at the *Oubachi* or Ohio. At the Chicasaw Bluffs a fort called *Prudhomme* was erected, and formal possession of the country first taken, and, in honour of the reigning monarch, named *Louisiana*. Several other forts were erected, and one of them, the ruins of which yet remain, is supposed to have stood between St. Louis and Carondelet. Descending the river on the 7th of April, 1683, La Salle reached the Gulf of Mexico, where a *Te Deum* was sung; a cross, with the arms of France, was suspended from the summit of a lofty tree; and the river, which had occupied three months in its exploration of about one thousand miles, was named "St. Louis." On his return, the associates of La Salle founded the villages of Kaskaskia and Cahokia on the American Bottom, while he hastened on to Canada and thence to France, to obtain a colony for the country at the mouth of the Mississippi. Losing his route on returning with this expedition, he commenced a journey over land to Illinois; but, while on his way, was treacherously assassinated by two of his followers.[15] It is a remarkable fact in the history of retributive justice, that these men soon after dealt death to each other; and two priests of the mutineers became penitent, and confessed all the circumstances of the crime. The burial spot of the noble La Salle is unknown to this day. Marquette, "the apostle of

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[13] Concerning Hennepin's expedition from Crêvecœur to the Falls of St. Anthony, Flagg is in error. Hennepin was accompanied by two Frenchmen, Michel Accault and Antoine Auguel, and probably went merely as their spiritual companion. His publications were: *Description de la Louisiane* (Paris, 1683); *Nouvelle Découverte d'un tres grand Pays Situé dans l'Amérique* (Utrecht, 1697); *Nouveau Voyage d'un Pais plus grand que l'Europe* (Utrecht, 1698). The first was dedicated to Louis XIV, the last two to William III, king of England. For bibliography of Hennepin, see Victor Hugo Paltsits, "Bibliographical Data," in Thwaites, *Hennepin's New Discovery* (Chicago, 1903), pp. xlv-lxiv. – Ed.

[14] M. Tonti, among other writers, speaking of the country, according to Mr. Peck's translation, says:"The soil is, generally speaking, so fertile, that it produces naturally, without culture, those fruits that nature and art together have much ado to bring forth in Europe. They have two crops every year without any great fatigue. The vines bring extraordinary grapes, without the care of the husbandman, and the fruit-trees need no gardeners to look after them. The air is everywhere temperate. The country is watered with navigable rivers, and delicious brooks and rivulets. It is stocked with all sorts of beasts, as bulls, *orignacs*, wolves, lions, wild asses, stags, goats, sheep, foxes, hares, beavers, otters, dogs, and all sorts of fowl, which afford a plentiful game for the inhabitants."In another place, this writer gives an amusing account of hunting "wild bulls," which "go always by droves of three or four hundred each." This description answers well for the buffalo, but it is not so easy to determine what animals they mistook for "wild asses, goats, and sheep."Passing down the Mississippi, Tonti mentions the same animals, and describes the forest-trees with tolerable accuracy, had he not added, "one sees there whole plains covered with pomegranate-trees, orange-trees, and lemon-trees; and, in one word, with all kinds of fruit-trees." Goats are frequently mentioned by different writers. Hennepin, while narrating the account of an embassy from Fort Frontenac to the Iroquois nation, and the reception the party met with, says: "The younger savages washed our feet, and rubbed them with grease of deer, *wild goats*, and oil of bears." When upset in their boat and cast on the western shore of Lake Michigan, an Indian of their company "killed several stags and wild goats."Wild goats are named so frequently, and in so many connexions, as hardly to admit of an intentional misrepresentation. – Flagg.*Comment by Ed.* For sketches of Charlevoix and Tonty, see Nuttall's *Journal*, in our volume xiii, pp. 116 and 117, notes 81 and 85 respectively.

[15] For a recent work on La Salle, consult P. Chesnel, *Histoire de Cavelier de La Salle* (Paris, 1901). With the exception of Crêvecœur, Prudhomme, and St. Louis, we have no definite proof that La Salle established any other forts in the Mississippi Valley. He erected a monument at the mouth of the Mississippi on April 9, 1682, on taking possession of the country in the name of Louis XIV. Kaskaskia and Cahokia were not founded by the associates of La Salle on the latter's return. For historical sketches of these towns, see A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 69, note 132, and p. 70, note 135, respectively. La Salle was assassinated March 19, 1687, on a branch of the Trinity River, in the present state of Texas. – Ed.

the wilderness," died under circumstances of touching interest on the lonely shores of Lake Michigan while upon his mission. Charlevoix, the historian, throws an interest of melancholy romance over the fate of this venerable man. According to this writer, Father Joseph Marquette was a native of Laon, in Picardy, and of distinguished family. About two years after his discovery of the Mississippi, while engaged in his missionary labours among the savages, he was journeying from Chicago to Michillimackinac, and on the 8th of May, 1675, entered the mouth of a small river emptying into Lake Michigan upon its eastern side, which now bears his name. Here he landed, erected an altar, and said mass. After this ceremony he retired a short distance, and requested the two voyageurs who conducted his canoe to leave him alone for half an hour, while in private he returned thanks. The period having expired, they went to seek him, and found him dead in the attitude of devotion:[16] the circumstance then recurred to them, that, on entering the river, he had dropped an intimation that he should there end his days. The distance was too great to Michillimackinac to convey there his remains, and the voyageurs accordingly buried them near the bank of the stream, which they called by his name. From that time the river, as if from reverence for the missionary's relics, has continued to retire, and his grave is yet pointed out to the traveller. Thus did the venerable Marquette, at an advanced age, alone with his God, yield up his blameless life to its giver, while engaged in his holy errand of peace to the savage, and amid the magnificent solitudes of the land of his discovery.

Subsequent to these explorations, colonies from Lower Canada rapidly settled the recent villages of Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Peoria.[17] But their designs seem not to have been those of the speculators of our own day. Their sole anticipation was to amass opulence by mining in a country then supposed incalculably rich in the precious metals, from its resemblance to the silver region of South America; and we find exclusive grants of extensive tracts bearing this date to Cruzat, Renault, and other individuals.[18] In pursuit of this golden chimera, many expeditions were fitted out at vast expense. In 1699 M. de Seur, an enterprising traveller, with ninety men, descended the Mississippi to a spot six hundred miles above the Illinois, and erected a fort upon the present site of Fort Armstrong for the purpose of exploring a mine of *terre verte*, said to have been discovered in that beautiful region.[19] It

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[16] Father Marquette died May 18, 1675, on the present site of Ludington, Michigan. – Ed.

[17] For the settlement of Peoria, see our volume xxvi, p. 133, note 93. – Ed.

[18] Owing to the exhaustion of France following the War of the Spanish Succession, Louis XIV, determined to develop the resources of the vast Louisiana territory, granted (September 14, 1712) to Antoine Crozat, a wealthy merchant, the exclusive right of trade in Louisiana for a term of fifteen years. Among other privileges, Crozat was permitted to send one ship a year to Africa for a cargo of negroes; to possess and operate all mines of precious metals in the territory, on the condition that a fourth of the metal be turned over to the king; and to possess in perpetuity all buildings and manufactories erected by him in the colony. On the other hand, Crozat was obliged to import two shiploads of colonists each year, and after nine years to assume all the expenses of the government. In the meantime the king was to furnish fifty thousand livres annually. Crozat did all in his power to develop the resources of the country; but owing to discord among the subordinate officials, in despair he surrendered the charter to the prince regent (August 13, 1717). See Charles Gayarré, *History of Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1903). After Crozat's surrender, Louisiana territory was turned over to the Mississippi (or Western) Company, directed by John Law; see *post*, p. 49, note 28. Philip François Renault was made the principal agent for a French company, whose purpose was the development of the mines of the territory. In 1719 he sailed from France with more than two hundred mechanics, stopped at the West Indies, and secured a cargo of five hundred negro slaves, and in due course arrived at Fort Chartres in the Illinois (1721). Large grants of land for mining purposes were made to Renault – an extensive tract west of the Mississippi River; another, fifteen leagues square, near the site of Peoria; and still another above Fort Chartres, one league along the river and two leagues deep. He founded St. Philippe, near the fort, and built what was probably the first smelting furnace in the Mississippi Valley. In 1743 he returned to France, where he died. – Ed.

[19] Pierre Charles le Sueur went to Canada when a young man, and engaged in the fur-trade. In 1693, while commandant at Chequamegon, he erected two forts – one on Madelaine Island, in Chequamegon Bay (Lake Superior), and another on an island in the Mississippi, near Red Wing, Minnesota. Later he discovered lead mines along the upper Mississippi. In 1699 he returned from a visit to France, and under Iberville's directions searched for copper mines in the Sioux country, where Le Sueur had earlier found green earth. Le Sueur reached the mouth of Missouri River (July 13, 1700) with nineteen men, according to Bénard de la Harpe's manuscript, compiled from Le Sueur's Journal – with twenty-nine men, as related by Pénicaut, a member of the expedition. The company was later increased to perhaps thirty or forty, but not ninety, as Flagg says. Le Sueur ascended the Mississippi, and its tributary the Minnesota, and erected a fort in August, 1700, one league above the point where the Blue Earth River (St. Peter's River, until 1852) empties into the Minnesota. This fort he named l'Huillier, in honor of his patron in France. Flagg has confused this site with that of Fort Armstrong at Rock Island, Illinois. In May, 1701, Le Sueur left the fort in care of d'Eraque, who remained in charge until 1703, when he abandoned the place. For extracts from original documents relating to Le Sueur's activities, consult: "Le Sueur's Mines on the

need hardly be said that all these adventurers were disappointed: but the buoyant hilarity of the race did not forsake them, and as boatmen, hunters, *couriers du bois*, Indian traders, and small farmers,[20] they gained a comfortable subsistence, and merrily did they enjoy it. Most of their lives were passed upon the broad prairies, and in penetrating every section of this vast valley in their birch pirogues wherever a stream presented to them its bosom; and yet with the violin, the grape-juice, and a short pipe, they seemed the blithest mortals on the face of the earth. It was by men such as these that the village of Kaskaskia, in old French chronicles styled "*Notre dame de Cascasquias*," originating in the name and residence of an Indian tribe, first was settled; and in a few years it had become an extensive depôt for the trade in furs. It was probably by the same Indian tribe which originally possessed the site of Kaskaskia that a party of the unfortunate expedition of Ferdinand de Soto, by whom Florida was partially conquered, was almost destroyed about the year 1539. Indeed, there was a tradition still extant upon the arrival of the French, of their having exterminated the first *white faces* they had ever seen. For three years did the chivalrous De Soto, with his nine hundred steel-clad warriors, scour the land in search of the reality of his golden dreams: at length he died; he was an object of hatred and terror to the Indians; and to conceal his death, or to preserve from violation his remains, his followers enclosed them in a coffin constructed from the section of a hollow tree, and sunk them beneath the floods of the *eternal river*. His followers, reduced to only two hundred and fifty, returned to Spain. And so the burial-places of the first explorers of the Mississippi are unknown.[21]

The extent of the territory of Kaskaskia was originally very great, stretching from the Kaskaskia River to the Mississippi, a breadth of about two miles, and comprising the area from the confluence of the streams, seven miles below, to the present site of the place. The tract below the town is incalculably fertile, abounding in the plum, the persimmon, the cherry, the delicate *pecan*, the hickory, and the hazel-nut; and for the most part was comprised in one vast "common field," over which herds of wild horses, introduced by the emigrants, long roamed in undisturbed possession. This *common*, consisting of seven thousand acres, was granted "to Kaskaskia and inhabitants for ever" by Vaudreuil, governor of the Province of Louisiana, as early as 1743.[22] In this arrangement we observe a striking feature in

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Mississippi," "Le Sueur's Voyage up the Mississippi," and "Le Sueur's Fort on the Mississippi," in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, xvi, pp. 173, 174, 177-200. – Ed.

[20] "*Petits paysans.*" – Flagg.

[21] The battle of Mauilla, to which Flagg is referring, was fought in October, 1540, between De Soto's men and the Mobilian Indians, near the present site of Mobile. Our author is mistaken in supposing that these Indians were the Kaskaskia. De Soto reached the Mississippi in May, 1541, and died May 21, 1542. He started on the expedition with less than seven hundred men, instead of one thousand. According to Herrera, his body was laid in a hollow live-oak log, and lowered into the Mississippi; but it seems more probable that the corpse was wrapped in mantles made heavy by a ballast of sand, and thus lowered into the water. See John G. Shea, "Ancient Florida," in Justin Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History of America* (Boston and New York, 1886), ii, pp. 231-283; also E. G. Bourne (ed.) *Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto* (New York, 1904). – Ed.

[22] Annexed is a copy of the grant of the celebrated *commons* attached to the village of Kaskaskia. It is the earliest title the citizens hold to seven thousand acres of the most fertile land in the West – perhaps in the world."Pierre de Rigault de Vaudreuil, Governor and Edme Gatien Salmon Commissary orderer of the Province of Louisiana, seen the petition to us presented on the sixteenth day of June of this present year by the Inhabitants of the Parish of the Immaculate Conception of Kaskaskia dependence of the Illinois, tending to be confirmed in the possession of a common which they have had a long time for the pasturage of their cattle in the Point called *La point de bois*, which runs to the entrance of the River Kaskaskia. We, by virtue of the power to us granted by his Majesty have confirmed and do confirm to the said Inhabitants the possession of the said common on the following conditions —"First, That the concessions heretofore granted either by the India Company either by our predecessors or by us in the prairie of Kaskaskia on the side of the point which runs to the entrance of the river, shall terminate at the land granted to a man named *Cavalier*, and in consequence, that all concessions that may have been made on the said point from the land of the said Cavalier forward, on the side of the entrance of the said river shall be null and void and of no effect. In consequence of which, the said Point, as it is above designated, shall remain in common without altering its nature, nevertheless, reserving to us the power whenever the case may require it, of granting the said commons to the inhabitants established and who may establish, and this, on the representations which may be made to us by the commandants and sub-delegates in the said places."Secondly, on the road vulgarly called the *Square Line* between the large and small line shall be rendered practicable and maintained for the passage of the Carts and Cattle going into the Common, and this by lack of the proprietors as well of the great as of the small line whose lands border on the roads of the *Square line*. And as to the places which ought to run along the side of the village from the said road of the Square line unto the river, as also the one on the side of the point running to the Mississippi and to the Kaskaskia river, they shall be made and maintained at the expense of the community, to the end that the cultivated lands be not injured by the cattle."Thirdly, To facilitate to the inhabitants the means of making their autumnal

the policy both of the French and Spanish governments, in their early settlements on the Mississippi. The items of door-yards, gardens, stable-yards, etc., and of settling colonies in the compact form of towns and villages, as a protection from the savages and to promote social intercourse, were all matters of special requisition and enactment; while to each settlement was granted two tracts of land for "*common fields*" and "*commons*." This distinction was not, however, invariably observed. The former consisted of several hundred acres, conveniently divided among the individual families, and the whole enclosed by the labour of all the villagers in common. If the enclosure opposite any plat was suffered to become ruinous, the right to the common was forfeited by the offending individual. The seasons, also, for ploughing, sowing, reaping, etc., were by public ordinance simultaneous: yet with these restrictions, each individual, so long as he complied with the necessary regulations, possessed his lot in *franc allieu*– fee simple, subject to sale and transfer. The "*common*" was a far more extended tract, embracing in some instances several thousand acres without enclosure, and reserved for the purpose of wood and pasturage. Here there was no grant of severalty, and no individual portion could be appropriated without the special and unanimous consent of the whole village. To the indigent who came to settle among them, and to young married pairs, donations from this tract were often made by the villagers, and, if conveniently situated, might subsequently become a portion of the "*common field*."[23] That such an arrangement, under all the circumstances of the period when instituted, and with such a people as the early French settlers, was the best that could have been made, no one can doubt. But how such a regulation would suit a race of *enterprising* Yankees, fidgeting eternally for *improvements*, or a squad of long-sided Kentuckians, grumbling about elbow-room, is problematical.

The proceedings of our national government towards these ancient villages have been characterized by generosity, whatever may be said of the conduct of individuals. In 1788, an extensive tract lying along the Mississippi was by act of Congress granted to the French inhabitants east of that river; and to those of Kaskaskia was secured for a common field twenty thousand acres. It is under direction of the trustees of the town by provision of the state legislature.[24]

Unlike the policy of all other Europeans who have planted themselves upon the Western continent, that of the French emigrants towards the aborigines, with the single exception of the extermination of the Natchez in the South, has invariably been conciliatory, peaceable, and friendly.[25] This has been the effect rather of debasing themselves than of elevating the natives. Surrounded by everything which could fascinate the eye or delight the fancy, we find these inoffensive foreigners, therefore, unlike the English settlers along the Atlantic and in the elder Western states, at peace with all their savage neighbours; unambitious, contented, and happy, increasing and flourishing; and in a few years, they tell us, Kaskaskia, "the terrestrial paradise," numbered a population of eight thousand souls![26] Blessed with a soil of boundless fertility, and prolific in all Nature's luxurious stores to a

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harvest, and prevent its being damaged by the cattle, we forbid all persons to leave their cattle range upon cultivated lands – they are, notwithstanding, permitted to graze upon their own proper lands on having them diligently watched."Fourthly, Willing that the wood which is on the land granted belong to the proprietors of the said lands, we forbid all persons to cut down any elsewhere than on their own lands, and as to the wood which may be found in the commons to cut down for their own use, either for building or for fire wood, and this shall be the present regulation."Read, published and affixed to the end that no person may be ignorant thereof. Given at New-Orleans the fourteenth day of August, 1743.VAUDREUIL."Salmon." – Flagg.>

[23] "Under the old management all the inhabitants had equal access to the commons for pasturage and fuel. By an act of the legislature passed in 1854, the citizens were authorized to elect five trustees every two years, who should exercise the charge of the commons, lease portions thereof, and apply the proceeds to church and school purposes only. The common fields were also originally owned jointly by the villagers, though each resident was assigned an individual portion. The United States commissioners, in 1809, determined the rights of each citizen, and the lots have since been held in fee simple." See *Combined History of Randolph, Monroe, and Perry Counties, Illinois* (Philadelphia, 1883), p. 308. – Ed.

[24] For the memorial of George Morgan, upon these lands along the Mississippi River, the report of the committee to which the above had been referred, and the resolutions of Congress thereon (August 28, 29, 1788), see *Laws of the United States, etc.* (Bioren edition, Philadelphia, 1815), i, pp. 580-585. – Ed.

[25] For an account of the extermination of the Natchez, see F. A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 254, note 53. – Ed.

[26] Doubtless an exaggeration. – Flagg.*Comment by Ed.* "From 1810 to 1820 the town (Kaskaskia) probably contained more people than at any other period of its history. A census taken at that time showed a population of seven thousand." See *History of Randolph,*

degree of which less-favoured climes can form no conception: subsisting solely by culture of the little homesteads around their own thresholds, by hunting the wild denizens of their noble forests, or angling upon the calm bosom of their beautiful stream: simple-hearted and peaceful, almost without the *terms* of law, gently ruled by the restraints of a religion they venerated and a priesthood they loved: without commerce, the arts, or the elegances of life; a thousand miles from a community of civilized men; from year to year they went on, and from generation to generation they flourished, until, in that of our own age and our own day, they are found still treading in the steps in which their fathers trod! So long as the peaceful French villager retained the beautiful land of his adoption in undisputed possession, all was flourishing and prosperous. A little more than half a century from its origin, Kaskaskia was capital of Illinois; and on the visit of Charlevoix in 1721, a monastery and Jesuit college was in successful operation, the ruins of the edifice remaining extant even at the present day.[27] This institution was successful in converting a number of the aborigines to its peculiar tenets, and at one period *is said* to have "embraced twenty-five hundred catechumens!!" A most preposterous assertion, most assuredly.

It was in the early part of this century that the scheme of that celebrated projector, John Law, of Edinburgh, on the strength of which he elevated himself to the dignity of Comptroller-general of the Finance of France, was first set on foot with reference to the Valley of the Mississippi. The design, so far as it is now known, was to establish a bank, an East India, and a Mississippi Company, from the anticipated enormous revenue of which was to be liquidated the national debt of France.[28] The territory of Louisiana had already acquired a reputation abroad for the boundlessness of the wealth and fertility of its soil; and, to foster the delusion of Law's scheme, descriptions of this beautiful region, tinted with all the rainbow hues of romance, were scattered throughout Europe, until the distant wilderness of *les Illinois* became the paradise of the slumberer's vision. "The Illinois" was the fairyland of fancy realized. A few years, the vast fabric of fictitious credit crumbled, almost annihilating the finance of France, and burying thousands of families in its ruins. Law was exiled and retired to Venice, where in poverty he soon died. It is a coincidence not a little remarkable, that the same year, 1720, witnessed the same desperate game enacted by the South Sea directors in England. But the attention of France was now directed towards her remote colony in North America; and notwithstanding the failure of Law's scheme, old Kaskaskia continued to flourish beyond all compare. Other villages sprang into existence around; a lucrative fur-trade was carried on by the Canadian voyageurs, and agriculture became the peculiar province of the French villager. The extent and luxuriance of the agriculture at this period may be gathered from the fact, that in the single year 1746, eight hundred thousand weight of flour was sent to New Orleans from these settlements.[29] At this period there was not a solitary village west of the Mississippi, though the lead-mines then known and worked were resorted to by traders.[30] Twenty years after the failure of Law's scheme, the French government formed the design, almost as chimerical, of securing her immense possessions in the Mississippi Valley by a continuous line of military posts, connecting them with Canada; and vast were the sums of money expended in the undertaking.

A century, and the whole region was ceded to England, thence to our own government in 1783, and now old Kaskaskia is but the wreck of its former prosperity. It makes one almost sad to wander

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Monroe, and Perry Counties, p. 307.

[27] A monastery and accompanying college, liberally endowed from Europe, was founded at Kaskaskia by Jesuit missionaries in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. – Ed.

[28] "The idea," says Adam Smith, "of the possibility of multiplying paper money to almost any extent, was the real foundation of what is called the *Mississippi scheme*, the most extravagant project, both of banking and stock-jobbing, that perhaps the world ever saw." – Flagg.*Comment by Ed.* John Law died at Venice, March 21, 1729. Concerning his financial methods, see Émile Levasseur, *Recherches historique sur le system de Law* (Paris, 1854). Ample and accurate is Andrew M. Davis's *A Historical Study of Law's System* (Boston, 1887), reprinted from *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (Boston, 1887), i, pp. 289-318, 420-452.

[29] Breckenridge. – Flagg.

[30] For an account of the early lead-mines, see Flagg's *Far West*, in our volume xxvi, p. 95, note 60. – Ed.

about among these ruinous, deserted habitations, venerable with departed years, and reflect that once they were thronged with population, the seat of hospitality, and the home of kindly feeling. The quiet villagers have been not a little annoyed by the steady and rapid influx of immigration on every side of them, dissimilar in customs, language, religion, and temperament, while the bustling enterprise has fretted and displeased them. Long accustomed, also, to the arbitrary but parental authority of their military commandants and priesthood, they deemed the introduction of the common law among them exceedingly burdensome, and the duties of a citizen of a republic, of which we are so proud, intolerable drudgery. Many, therefore, of the wealthy and respectable, on cession of their territory to our government, removed to Louisiana, where civil law yet bears sway; others crossed the river and established Ste. Genevieve and St. Louis;[31] while the foreigners returning to the lands from which they had emigrated, few but natives of the country remained behind. The ordinance of 1787,[32] prohibiting involuntary servitude in the region then called the Northwestern Territory, induced many who were desirous of preserving their blacks to remove to the new villages west of the Mississippi, then under Spanish rule. From these and a variety of similar causes, this peaceful, kind-hearted people have within the last thirty years been more than once disturbed in the dwellings of their fathers.

Kaskaskia, Ill.

[31] For an historical sketch of Ste. Genevieve, see Cuming's *Tour*, in our volume iv, p. 266, note 174. – Ed.

[32] The French civil law still prevails in Louisiana.For a good monograph on the Ordinance of 1787, and the text of the same, see Jay Amos Barrett, *Evolution of the Ordinance of 1787, with an Account of the earlie Plans for the Government of the Northwest Territory* (New York, 1891). – Ed.

XXXVI

"If my readers should at any time remark that I am particularly dull, they may rest assured there is a design under it." —*British Essayist.*

"Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor."

Gray's Elegy.

Few things are more difficult, and, consequently, more rarely met, than correct portraiture of character, whether of the individual or of a community. It is easy enough, indeed, to trace out the prominent outlines in the picture; and with a degree of accuracy which shall render it easily recognised, while yet the more delicate shading and lighting is false; just as the artist may have transferred every feature in exact form, size, and proportion to his canvass, while the expression thrown over the whole may be incorrect. This has more than once been the case in descriptions hastily drawn of that singular being, *the French villager of the Mississippi*. One distinguished writer has given an absolute caricature of the race. My own design has been, therefore, merely to throw before the reader those characteristic traits which not even the most careless observer could have failed to detect.

Though betraying but little of that fiery restlessness which distinguishes the Parisian, these men are yet Frenchmen in more respects than mere origin. In their ordinary deportment we view, indeed, rather the calm gravity, the saturnine severity of the Spaniard; and yet in their *fêtes* and amusements, which were formerly far more frequent than at present, they exhibit all the gayety of the native of La Belle France. The calm, quiet tenour of their lives presenting but few objects for enterprise, none for the strivings of ambition, and but little occasion of any kind to elicit the loftier energies of our nature, has imparted to their character, their feelings, their manners, to the very language they speak, a languid softness strongly contrasted by the unquiet restlessness of the emigrant who is succeeding them. Hospitality was formerly, with them, hardly a virtue: it was a matter of course, arising from their peculiarity of situation; and the swinging sign of the tavern is a recent usurpation. The statute-book, the judiciary, courts of law, and the penitentiary, were things little recognised among these simple-hearted people; for where the inequalities of life were unknown, what was the inducement to crime demanding this enginery of punishment? Learning and science, too, were terms scarcely comprehended, their technicalities not at all; for schools were few, and *learned men* still more so; and thus reading, writing, and ciphering are, and ever have been, the acme of scholastic proficiency with the French villager. How many of the honest fellows can do even this, is not for me to estimate. As to politics and the *affairs of the nation*, which their countrymen on the other side of the water ever seem to think no inconsiderable object of their being, they are too tame, and too lazy, and too quiet to think of the subject. Indeed, the worthy villagers very wisely look upon "earthly dignities" and the like much with the stoicism of Cardinal Wolsey in disgrace,

"Oh, 'tis a burden, Cromwell, 'tis a burden,
Too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven."

The virtues of these people are said to be many: punctuality and honesty in their dealings; politeness and hospitality to strangers; though, it must be confessed, the manifold impositions practised upon their simplicity of late years has tended to substitute for the latter virtue not a little

of coolness and distrust. There is much friendship and warmth of feeling between neighbours and kindred, and the women make affectionate wives, though by no means prone to consider themselves in the light of goods and chattels of their liege-lords, as is not unfrequently the case in more enlightened communities. Indeed, as touching this matter, the Mississippi French villager invariably reverses the sage maxim of the poet, for he never presumes to depend upon any one but his faithful helpmate, whether things are of moment or not. As to religious faith, all are Catholics; and formerly, more than of late years, were punctilious in observance of the ceremony and discipline of their church, permitting but few festivals of the calendar to pass unobserved. Their wealth consisted chiefly of personal property, slaves, merchandise, etc.; land being deemed an item of secondary consideration, while lead and peltry constituted the ordinary circulating medium. Rent for houses was a thing hardly known. All this changed long ago, of course; and while real estate has augmented in value many hundred per cent., personal property has somewhat proportionally depreciated.

"In things of moment on *yourself* depend;"

In the ordinary avocations of the villagers, there is but little variety or distinction even at the present day, and formerly this uniformity of pursuit was yet more observable. The wealthier and more enterprising *habitans* were traders, often with peculiar and exclusive privileges; and they kept a heterogeneous stock of goods in the largest room of their dwelling-houses, by way of being merchants. There are but few who practice the mechanic arts for a livelihood: carpenters, smiths, tailors, shoemakers, etc., as *artisans*, were formerly almost unknown, and there is now in this respect but little change. Now, as then, the mass of the population are agriculturists, while many of the young and enterprising men embrace with pride, as offering a broad field for generous emulation, the occupations of boatmen, traders to the Rocky Mountains – in the vicinity of which most of their lives are passed —*engagés* of the American Fur Company, or hunters and trappers upon the prairies. The bold recklessness of this class has long been notorious.

The *idiom* of these villages, though by no means as pure as it might be, is yet much more so, all things considered, than could be expected. It requires no very close observation or proficiency in the language to detect a difference, especially in pronunciation, from the European French. There is not that nervous, animated *brilliancy* of dialect which distinguishes the latter; and the nasal, lengthened, drawling sound of words, gives their conversation a languid, though by no means a disagreeable movement. It is said to be more soft and euphonious than the vernacular, though very different from the Creole dialect of the West India Islands. There are some provincialisms, and some words which a century ago might have been recognized in some provinces of France, though not now.

As to the item of *costume*, it is still somewhat unique, though formerly, we are told, much more so: that of the men was a course blanket-coat, with a cap attached behind in lieu of a cape; and which, from the circumstance of drawing over the head, gave the garment the name of *capote*. Around the head was wreathed a blue handkerchief in place of a hat, and on the feet moccasins instead of shoes and stockings. All this, however, has pretty generally given place to the American garb, though some of the very aged villagers may still be seen in their ancient habiliments, the *capote*, moccasins, blue handkerchief on the head, and an endless queue lengthened out behind. Their chief *amusement* ever has been, and, probably, ever will be, the dance, in which all, even from the least to the greatest, bond and free, unite. Their *slaves* are treated well, if we may judge from appearances; for nowhere in the West have I seen a sleeker, fleshier, happier-looking set of mortals than the blacks of these old villages.

Previous to the cession of Louisiana to our government, the *Laws* of Spain were pretty generally in force throughout the province, so far as related to municipal arrangement and real estate, while the common law of France —*Coutume de Paris*– governed all contracts of a social nature, modified

by and interwoven with the customs of the people.[33] Each district had its commandant, and each village its syndic, besides judges in civil affairs for the province, and officers of the *militia*, a small body of which was stationed in every district, though too inconsiderable to afford much protection to the inhabitants. These rulers were appointed by the governor at New-Orleans, to whom there was an appeal; and the lieutenant-governor, who resided at St. Louis, was commander of the troops. Thus the government was a mixture of civil and military; and, though arbitrary to the last degree, yet we are told the rod of domination was so slight as scarcely to be felt.[34] However this may be, it is pretty certain they did not well relish at first the change in the administration of justice when they came under the jurisdiction of our laws. The delay and uncertainty attendant on trial by jury, and the multifarious technicalities of our jurisprudence, they could not well comprehend, either as to import, importance, or utility; and it is not strange they should have preferred the prompt despatch of arbitrary power. Nor is the modern administration of justice the *only* change with which the simple-hearted villager is dissatisfied. On every side of him *improvement*, the watchword of the age, is incessantly ringing in his ears; and if there be one term in all our vocabulary he abhors more than all others, it is this same: and, reader, there is much wisdom in his folly. In 1811 the invention of Fulton's mighty genius was first beheld walking upon the Western waters; and from that hour "the occupation" of the daring, reckless, chivalrous French voyageur "was gone." Again the spirit of improvement declared that the venerable old cottage, gray with a century's years, must give place to the style and material of a more modern date; and lo! the aged dwelling where his fathers lived, and where his eyes opened on the light, is swept away, and its very site is known no more. And then the streets and thoroughfares where his boyhood has frolicked, as the village increases to a city, must be widened, and straightened, and paved, and all for no earthly reason, to his comprehension, but to prevent familiar chat with his opposite neighbour, when sitting on his balcony of a long summer night, and to wear out his poor pony's unshodden hoofs! It is very true that their landed property, where they have managed to retain it from the iron grasp of speculation, has increased in value almost beyond calculation by the change; but they now refuse to profit by selling. Merchandise, the comforts and luxuries of life, have become cheaper and more easily obtained, and the reward of industrious enterprise is greater. But what is all this to men of their peculiar habits and feelings? Once they were far better contented, even in comparative poverty. There was then a harmony, and cordiality, and unanimity of feeling pervading their society which it never can know again. They were as one family in every village; nearly all were connected either by ties of affinity, consanguinity, propinquity, or friendship: distinction of rank or wealth was little known, and individuals of every class were dressed alike, and met upon equal and familiar footing in the same ballroom. It is needless to say, that now "*Nous avons changé tout cela.*"[35]

As to the poorer class of these villagers, it is more than doubtful whether they have *at all* been benefited by the change of the past twenty years. We must not forget that, as a race, they are peculiar in character, habits, and feeling; and so utterly distinct from ourselves, that they can with hardly more facility associate in customs with us than can our red brother of the prairie. Formerly the poorest, and the laziest, and the most reckless class was fearless of want or beggary; but now a more enterprising race has seized upon the lands with which they have imprudently parted, perhaps with little remuneration, and they find themselves abridged in many of their former immunities. Their cattle may no longer range at will, nor have they the liberty of appropriating wood for fuel wherever it seemeth good. It cannot be denied, that many a one gains now a precarious subsistence,

[33] Under the feudal régime in France, the local or customary laws of the more important centres of population came gradually to extend their sway over larger and larger districts. With the rising importance of Paris, the *coutume de Paris* (common law of Paris), reformed in 1580 by order of the parliament, in time displaced all others; it breathed the national spirit. Codified, it was in a sense the forerunner of the Code Napoleon. – Ed.

[34] Breckenridge – to whom the author is indebted for other facts relative to these early settlements. – Flagg.*Comment by Ed.* Henry Marie Brackenridge (not Breckenridge), *Views of Louisiana* (Pittsburgh, 1814).

[35] Sganarelle. – Flagg.*Comment by Ed.* Sganarelle is a character in Molière's plays, notably in "Le Médicin malgré lui."

where formerly he would have lived in comfort. Nearly every one possesses a little cart, two or three diminutive ponies, a few cattle, a cottage, and garden. But in agriculture, the superior industry of the new immigrant can afford them for lease-rent double the result of their toil, while as draymen, labourers, or workmen of any kind, it is not difficult for foreigners to surpass them. In a few years the steamer will have driven the keel-boat from the Western waters, and with it the *voyageur*, the *patron*, and the *courier du bois*; but the occupation of the hunter, trapper, and *engagé*, in which the French villager can never be excelled, must continue so long as the American Fur Company find it profitable to deal in buffalo robes, or enterprising men think proper to go to Santa Fé for gold dust. Nor will the farmer, however lazy, lose the reward of his labour so long as the market of St. Louis is as little *over*stocked as at present. Nathless, it is pretty certain "*times ain't now as they used to was*" to the French villager, all this to the contrary notwithstanding.

Kaskaskia, Ill.

XXXVII

"All things have an end.
Churches and cities, that have diseases like to man,
Must have like death that we have."

"Birth has gladden'd it: Death has sanctified it."

"The roof-tree sinks, but moulders on the wall
In massy hoariness."

Childe Harold.

In remarking upon the history of the French in the West, and the peculiarities which still continue to characterize them, I am aware I have lingered longer than could have been anticipated; much longer, certainly, than was my original intention. The circumstances which have induced this delay have been somewhat various. The subject *itself* is an interesting one. Apart from the delight we all experience in musing upon the events of bygone time, and that gratification, so singularly exquisite, of treading amid the scenes of "things departed," there is an interest which every individual who has cast his lot in the great Valley cannot fail to feel in every item, even the most minute, which may pertain to its history. In dwelling, too, upon the features of "old Kaskaskia," my design has been to exemplify the distinguishing characteristics of all these early settlements, both French and Spanish, in the Valley of the Mississippi. The peculiarities of all are the same, as were the circumstances which first conduced to them. The same customs, the same religion, the same amusements, and the same form of government prevailed among all; and though dissimilar in dialect, and separated by the broad Mississippi, yet, cut off from all the rest of mankind, both the French and the Spanish villagers were glad to smother differences, and to bind themselves to each other in their dependant situation by the tendrils of mutually kind offices and social intercourse. Thus, several of the villages stand opposite each other upon the banks of the Mississippi. Ste. Genevieve is only across the stream from Kaskaskia, and many fine old traditionary legends of these early times are yet extant, and should be treasured up before too late.

But another circumstance which has been not unfavourable to that prolixity into which I have suffered my pen to glide, and without which other inducements might have proved ineffectual, has been the quiet, dreamy seclusion of this old hamlet, so congenial to the workings of the brain. Yesterday was like to-day, and to-morrow will be the transcript of yesterday; and so time's current slips lazily along, like

"The liquid lapse of a murmuring stream."

As to objects of interest, one could hardly have lingered so long as I have within the precincts of this "sleepy hollow" without having met with some incidents worthy of regard for their *novelty*, if for naught else.

There are few situations in Illinois which can boast advantages for mercantile transaction superior to Kaskaskia. But the villagers are not a commercial, enterprising, money-making people, and the trade of the place is, therefore, very small. The river is said to be navigable for fifty miles from its mouth; the current is gentle, and an inconsiderable expense in clearing the channel of fallen timber would enable small boats to penetrate nearly two hundred miles higher, by the meanderings of the stream, to Vandalia. Measures for this purpose have been entered upon. A land-office for the

district is here established.[36] The number of families is seventy or eighty, nearly all French and all Catholics, besides considerable transient population – boatmen, hunters, trappers, who traverse the great rivers and broad prairies of the valley.

Opposite Kaskaskia, on the summit of a lofty crag overlooking the river, once stood a large fortress of massive timber, named Fort Gage. Its form was an oblong quadrangle, the exterior polygon being several hundred yards in circumference. It was burnt to the ground in 1766. About twelve years subsequent to this event, the place was taken by the American troops under Colonel George Rogers Clarke, "Hannibal of the West." After most incredible exertions in the march from Virginia, he arrived before Kaskaskia in the night; and, though fortified, so bewildering was the surprise of the villagers, that not a blow was struck, and the town was taken.[37]

The aged Catholic church at Kaskaskia, among other relics of the olden time, is well worthy a stranger's visit. It was erected more than a century since upon the ruins of a former structure of similar character, but is still in decent condition, and the only church in the place. It is a huge old pile, extremely awkward and ungainly, with its projecting eaves, its walls of hewn timber perpendicularly planted, and the interstices stuffed with mortar, with its quaint, old-fashioned spire, and its dark, storm-beaten casements. The interior of the edifice is somewhat imposing, notwithstanding the sombre hue of its walls; these are rudely plastered with lime, and decorated with a few dingy paintings. The floor is of loose, rough boards, and the ceiling arched with oaken panels. The altar and the lamp suspended above are very antique, I was informed by the officiating priest, having been used in the former church. The lamp is a singular specimen of superstition illustrated by the arts. But the structure of the *roof* is the most remarkable feature of this venerable edifice. This I discovered in a visit to the belfry of the tower, accomplished at no little expenditure of sinew and muscle, for stairs are an appliance quite unknown to this primitive building. There are frames of two distinct roofs, of massive workmanship, neatly united, comprising a vast number of rafters, buttresses, and braces, crossing each other at every angle, and so ingeniously and accurately arranged by the architect, that it is mathematically impossible that any portion of the structure shall sink until time with a single blow shall level the entire edifice.[38] It is related, that when this church was about being erected, the simple villagers, astonished at the immense quantities of timber required for the frame, called a meeting of the citizens, and for a time laid an interdict upon operations, until inquiry respecting the matter should be made. It was with difficulty the architect at length obtained permission to proceed; but, when all was completed, and the material had disappeared, they knew not where, their astonishment surpassed all bounds. The belfry reminded me of one of those ancient monuments of the Druids called *Rocking-stones*; for though it tottered to and fro beneath my weight, and always swings with the bell when it is struck, perhaps the united force of an hundred men could hardly hurl it from its seat. The bell is consecrated by the crucifix cast in its surface, and bears the inscription "*Pour Leglise des Illinois. Normand A. Parachelle*, 1741." The view from this elevation was extremely beautiful: the

[36] A land-office was established at Kaskaskia by act of Congress approved March 26, 1804, "for so much of the lands included within the boundaries fixed by the treaty of the thirteenth of August, one thousand eight hundred and three, with the Kaskaskia tribe of Indians, as is not claimed by any other Indian tribe;" this was discontinued by order of the president, November 12, 1855. The records were transferred to Springfield the following February. – Ed.

[37] During the Indian troubles a fort was erected in 1736 on an eminence, later known as Garrison Hill, opposite Kaskaskia. It was repaired and occupied by a French garrison at the opening of the French and Indian War. In 1766 the fort was burned, but another soon afterward built, was occupied by the English (1772) and named Fort Gage, in honor of the British commander-in-chief. On the night of July 4, 1778, Colonel George Rogers Clark captured the fort and made it his headquarters while in Illinois. It was abandoned at the close of the Revolution, but was re-occupied for a short time by American troops in 1801. Colonel Pike's regiment was stationed there for a short period. See R. G. Thwaites, *How George Rogers Clark Won the Northwest* (Chicago, 1903). – Ed.

[38] The reader will recollect that these notes were sketched two years ago. Since that time some changes in this old edifice have taken place; the whole southwest angle has fallen to the ground, and, agreeable to the text, the entire roof would have followed but for the extraordinary strength of one solitary piece of timber. High mass was in celebration at the time, and the church was crowded, but no accident occurred. The old building has been since dismantled, however; its bell removed from the tower, and the whole structure will soon, probably, be prostrated by "decay's effacing finger." – Flagg.

settlement scattered for miles around, with the quaint little cottages and farms all smiling in the merry sunlight, could hardly fail of the lovely and picturesque. The churchyard attached to the building is not extensive, but crowded with tenants. It is into this receptacle that for four generations Kaskaskia has poured her entire population. I saw but a few monuments and a pile of stones. The first record on the register belonging to this church is, I was informed by the priest, to the following effect, in French: "1741, *June* 7. *This morning were brought to the fort three bodies from without, killed by the Renards, to whom we gave sepulture.*" There is here also a baptismal record, embracing the genealogies of the French settlers since 1690, and other choice old chronicles.[39] Some land deeds still remain extant, bearing date as early as 1712, and a memorial also from the villagers to Louis XV., dated 1725, petitioning a grant of "*commons*," etc., in consequence of disasters from the flood of the preceding year, in which their all had been swept away, and they had been forced themselves to flee for life to the bluffs opposite the village.

The Nunnery at Kaskaskia is a large wooden structure, black with age, and formerly a public house. With this institution is connected a female seminary, in high repute throughout this region, and under superintendence of ten of the sisters. A new nunnery of stone is about being erected.[40]

It was a glorious morning, and, with many a lingering step, I left behind me the village of old Kaskaskia. As I rode leisurely along the banks of that placid stream, and among the beautiful farms of the French settlers, I was more than once reminded forcibly of similar scenery high up the Kennebeck, in a distant section of Maine, known by the name of "*Indian Old Point*," where I once took a ramble with a college classmate during an autumn vacation. The landscape is one of singular beauty; yet, were it otherwise, there is a charm thrown around this distant and lonely spot by its association with an interesting passage in the earliest history of the country. In the expressive language of an eloquent writer, who has made the place the scene of an Indian tale, *the soil is fertilized by the blood of a murdered tribe*. Here, one hundred years ago, stood the village of the Norridgewocks, a tribe of the powerful Abnaquis, who then held undisputed domination over the extensive wilds of the far East. Though possessing not the fierce valour of the Pequods, the sinewy vigour of the Delawares, the serpent-like subtlety of the Penobscots, the bell-toned idiom of the Iroquois, we are yet told they were a powerful tribe for their intelligence and their numbers. The Jesuit missionaries of Canada, while at this era they were gliding upon the beautiful rivers of the distant West, had not neglected the steril rocks of the equally remote East: and the hamlet of the Norridgewocks had early been subjected to the influences of the fascinating ceremony and the lofty ritual of the Catholic faith. Under the guidance of the devoted Sebastian Rasle, a rude church was erected by the natives, and its gray, cross-crowned spire reared up itself among the low-roofed wigwams. Beloved by his savage flock, the venerable Father Rasle lived on in peacefulness and quietude for thirty years in the home of his adoption. During the troubled period of the "French and Indian War" which ensued, suspicions arose that the Norridgewocks were influenced by their missionary to many of their acts of lawless violence upon a village of English settlers but a few miles distant. In the autumn of 1724 this distrust had augmented to a conviction that the Abnaquis had resolved on the extermination of the white race, and a detachment of soldiers ascended the Kennebeck. It was a bright, beautiful morning of the Sabbath when they approached the Indian hamlet. The sweet-toned bell of the little chapel awoke the echoes

[39] The earliest "extract from the baptismal records of the mission among the Illinois, under the title of the Immaculate conception of Our Lady," bears date March 20, 1692. The first ceremony recorded after the removal of the mission to Kaskaskia, was performed April 17, 1701. See "Kaskaskia Church Records," in Illinois State Historical Library *Publications* (Springfield, 1904), pp. 394-413; Edward G. Mason, "Kaskaskia and its Parish Records," in *Fergus Historical Series*, No. 12 (Chicago, 1881), pp. 1-22; C. W. Alvord, *The Old Kaskaskia Records* (Chicago Historical Society, 1906); *Magazine of American History*, vi, pp. 161-182; *Michigan Pioneer Collections*, v, pp. 94-109. – Ed.

[40] A convent of the Visitation was established at Kaskaskia in May, 1833, by a colony from the parent house at Georgetown, District of Columbia. It was patronized by Pierre Menard, and connected with the academy named in his honor. A large building was erected and opened for pupils in 1836. The institution enjoyed a high reputation until the flood of 1844 forced its abandonment. See *History of Randolph, Monroe, and Perry Counties*, p. 308. – Ed.

with its clear peal, and announced the hour of mass just as the early sunlight was tinting the far-off hill-tops. A few moments, and every living soul in the village was within the church, and had bowed in humbleness before the "Great Spirit." The deep tones of the venerable Rasle were supplicating, "*Ora, ora pro nobis*," when the soldiers rushed in. Terrible and indiscriminate was the massacre that ensued. Not one was spared; not *one*! The pious Rasle poured out his heart's blood upon the altar of his devotion. Those of the natives who escaped from the chapel were either shot down or perished miserably in the river, their bark canoes having been previously perforated by the treachery of their foes.[41] The drowsy beams of that day's setting sun dreamed beautifully as ever among the fragrant pine-tops and the feathery hemlocks of the river-bank; but his slanting rays smiled upon the ancient hamlet beneath whose ashes its exterminated dwellers were slumbering the last sleep!

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[41] I give the tradition of the farmers now resident upon the spot. History differs somewhat.Most of the historical facts relative to the extermination of the Abnaquis will be found condensed in the subjoined extract from a late valuable work."Determined on destroying this assemblage of Indians, which was the headquarters of the whole eastern country at this time, the English, in 1724, sent out a force, consisting of 208 men and three Mohawk Indians, under Captains *Moulton*, *Harman*, and *Bourne*, to humble them. They came upon the village the 23d August, when there was not a man in arms to oppose them. They had left 40 of their men at Teconet Falls, which is now within the town of Winslow, upon the Kennebeck, and about two miles below Waterville College, upon the opposite side of the river. The English had divided themselves into three squadrons: 80, under *Harman*, proceeded by a circuitous route, thinking to surprise some in their cornfields, while *Moulton*, with 80 more, proceeded directly for the village, which, being surrounded by trees, could not be seen until they were close upon it. All were in their wigwams, and the English advanced slowly and in perfect silence. When pretty near, an Indian came out of his wigwam, and, accidentally discovering the English, ran in and seized his gun, and giving the warwhoop, in a few minutes the warriors were all in arms, and advancing to meet them. *Moulton* ordered his men not to fire until the Indians had made the first discharge. This order was obeyed, and, as he expected, they overshot the English, who then fired upon them in their turn, and did great execution. When the Indians had given another volley, they fled with great precipitation to the river, whither the chief of their women and children had also fled during the fight. Some of the English pursued and killed many of them in the river, and others fell to pillaging and burning the village. *Mogg*, their chief, disdained to fly with the rest, but kept possession of a wigwam, from which he fired upon the pillagers. In one of his discharges he killed a Mohawk, whose brother, observing it, rushed upon and killed him; and thus ended the strife. There were about 60 warriors in the place, about one half of whom were killed."The famous *Rasle* shut himself up in his house, from which he fired upon the English; and, having wounded one, Lieutenant *Jaques*, of Newbury, burst open the door, and shot him through the head, although *Moulton* had given orders that none should kill him. He had an English boy with him, about 14 years old, who had been taken some time before from the frontiers, and whom the English reported *Rasle* was about to kill. Great brutality and ferocity are chargeable to the English in this affair, according to their own account; such as killing women and children, and scalping and mangling the body of Father *Rasle*."There was here a handsome church, with a bell, on which the English committed a double sacrilege, first robbing it, then setting it on fire; herein surpassing the act of the first English circumnavigator in his depredations upon the Spaniards in South America; for he only took away the gold and silver vessels of a church, and its crucifix, because it was of massy gold, set about with diamonds, and that, too, upon the advice of his chaplain. 'This might pass,' says a reverend author, 'for sea divinity, but justice is quite another thing.' Perhaps it will be as well not to inquire here what kind of *divinity* would authorize the acts recorded in these wars, or, indeed, any wars."Upon this memorable event in our early annals, Father *Charlevoix* should be heard. There were not, says he, at the time the attack was made, above 50 warriors at Neridgewok; these seized their arms, and run in disorder, not to defend the place against an enemy who was already in it, but to favour the flight of the women, the old men, and the children, and to give them time to gain the side of the river, which was not yet in possession of the English. Father Rasle, warned by the clamours and tumult, and the danger in which he found his proselytes, ran to present himself to the assailants, hoping to draw all their fury upon him, that thereby he might prove the salvation of his flock. His hope was vain; for hardly had he discovered himself, when the English raised a great shout, which was followed by a shower of shot, by which he fell dead near to the cross which he had erected in the centre of the village: seven Indians who attended him, and who endeavoured to shield him with their own bodies, fell dead at his side. Thus died this charitable pastor, giving his life for his sheep, after 37 years of painful labours."Although the English shot near 2000 muskets, they killed but 30 and wounded 40. They spared not the church, which, after they had indignantly profaned its sacred vases and the adorable body of Jesus Christ, they set on fire. They then retired with precipitation, having been seized with a sudden panic. The Indians returned immediately into the village; and their first care, while the women sought plants and herbs proper to heal the wounded, was to shed tears upon the body of their holy missionary. They found him pierced with a thousand shot, his scalp taken off, his skull fractured with hatchets, his mouth and eyes filled with dirt, the bones of his legs broken, and all his members mutilated in a hundred different ways."Such is the account of the fall of *Rasle*, by a brother of the faith; a deplorable picture, by whomsoever related! Of the truth of its main particulars there can be no doubt, as will be seen by a comparison of the above translation with the account preceding it. There were, besides *Mogg*, other chief Indians who fell that day: 'Bomazeen, Mogg, Wissememet, Job, Carabesett, and Bomazeen's son-in-law, all famous warriors.' The inhumanity of the English on this occasion, especially to the women and children, cannot be excused. It greatly eclipses the lustre of the victory." *Drake's Book of the Indians*, b. iii., c. 9. – Flagg.*Comment by Ed.* Instead of the French and Indian War (1754-1763), Flagg is doubtless referring to Queen Anne's War (1702-1713).A large amount of valuable but scattered documentary and secondary information concerning this massacre and the causes leading to it may be found under captions "Norridgewock" and "Rasle" in indexes to Maine Historical Society *Collections*, and *Documents relative to Colonial History of State of New York* (Albany, 1854-61). See also William Allen, *History of Norridgewock* (Norridgewock, 1849).

The grave of Father Rasle, a green mound overlooking the stream, was pointed out to us. A granite obelisk to his memory was erected by Bishop Fenwick, of Boston, a few years since, but was demolished by a party of miscreants soon after its completion. My object in this lengthened episode upon the Norridgewocks, so casually introduced, has been twofold: to illustrate the peaceful policy of the French towards the Indian all over the continent, and to contrast it with that of other Europeans.

The ride from Kaskaskia to Prairie du Rocher in early autumn is truly delightful. Crossing *Aubuchon*, formerly called St. Philippe – a passage from the Mississippi to the Kaskaskia, about four miles above the town, and through which, in high floods, a rapid current passes from one river to the other – the path lay through a tract of astonishing fertility, where the wild fruit flourishes with a luxuriance known to no other soil. Endless thickets of the wild plum[42] and the blackberry, interlaced and matted together by the young grape-vines streaming with gorgeous clusters, were to be seen stretching for miles along the plain. Such boundless profusion of wild fruit I had never seen before. Vast groves of the ruby crab-apple, the golden persimmon,[43] the black and white mulberry,[44] and the wild cherry,[45] were sprinkled with their rainbow hues in isolated masses over the prairie, or extended themselves in long luxurious streaks glowing in the sun. The pawpaw,[46] too, with its luscious, pulpy fruit; the peach, the pear, and the quince, all thrive in wild luxuriance here; while of the nuts, the pecan or Choctaw nut, the hickory, and the black walnut, are chief. As for grapes, the indigenous vines are prolific; and the fruit is *said* to be so excellent, that wine might be, and even has been, made from them, and has been exported by the early French in such quantities to France, that the trade was prohibited lest the sale of a staple of that kingdom should be injured! But all this is undoubtedly exaggeration, if no more. Although the grape and the wine of southern Illinois have long been the theme of the traveller through that delightful region, from the worthy Father Hennepin, who tells us of the purple clusters lending their rich hues to the gliding wave, to the tourist of the present day, yet from personal observation I am confident they are *now* by no means of much importance, and from good authority am inclined to think they *never* were so. As to the manufacture of wine becoming a matter interesting to commerce, there is no probability of that. A kind of liquor was formerly made in some quantities from what is called the *winter grape*, common to the same latitude in many portions of the United States, but it is said to have been a very indifferent beverage. It was made in the following simple manner: the clusters were heaped in broad, shallow vessels of wood, and, after being crushed, the juice was expressed through perforations for the purpose in the sides and bottom, by the application of heavy weights, into vessels prepared for its reception. Slight fermentation then completed the process.[47]

A ride of some hours through this delightful region brought me to the bluffs, which, at this point extending into the plain, confine the bottom to a narrow strip, bounded on the one side by the Mississippi, and on the other by the battlement of the cliffs, upward of an hundred feet in height. Beneath lies the French village of *Prairie du Rocher*, so called from its situation.[48] It is thirteen miles from Kaskaskia, and its low cottages scattered along, like the tents of a nomadic tribe, for miles, are completely overhung by the huge, beetling crags above. From the deep alluvion along the river's verge rises an enormous growth of cottonwood-trees and sycamores, concealing the stream from the view. From the bluffs to this belt of forest stretches away the vast *common field*, rustling with maize. The castor-bean and tobacco-plant are also often seen carpeting the ground with emerald. Around each tenement, as usual, is a plat of cultivated land, and the luxuriance of vegetation is unrivalled.

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[42] *Prunus Americana.*– Flagg.

[43] Indian Date, by the French called Placminier, *Diosporus Virginiana*. – Flagg.

[44] *Morus Rubra* and *Alba*. – Flagg.

[45] *Prunus Cerasus Virginia.*– Flagg.

[46] Custard apple, *Annona glabra*. – Flagg.

[47] Breckenridge. – Flagg.*Comment by Ed.* Henry Marie Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana*, p. 60.

[48] For a sketch of Prairie du Rocher, see A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 70, note 133. – Ed.

Passing these outskirts, I at length arrived at the body of the village, lying upon a creek or *bayou* of the same name, which winds through its centre, and empties into the Mississippi. This quiet stream was once the scene of a very bloody tragedy. When Illinois first came under territorial government, and courts of civil judicature were established, the functionaries of the law, in passing one day from Cahokia to Kaskaskia, to hold at the latter place a session, stopped a few moments at this creek to water their horses. The animals had scarcely begun to drink, when a shower of balls from an adjoining thicket laid three of the party weltering in their blood.[49] They had neglected the usual precaution to disguise themselves in the garb of the French villagers; and such was the hostility of the Indian tribes, especially that of the Kickapoos, to our countrymen at the time, that to travel in American costume was almost inevitable death. The Indians at that day had the ascendency in point of population, and the Kaskaskia tribe, as well as others, was powerful.

At Prairie du Rocher, as everywhere else where these ancient villages remain as yet undisturbed in their century slumbers, the peculiarities to which I have so frequently alluded stand forth to the traveller's eye. The narrow lanes, the steep-roofed houses, the picketed enclosures, the piazza, the peculiar dress, manners, and amusements of the villagers, all point back to a former age. At this place I tarried for dinner, and while my olive-browed hostess, a trim, buxom little matron, was "making ready," I strolled forth to the bluffs, having first received most positive injunctions to make my reappearance when the *horn sounded*; and, scrambling up a ravine, soon stood upon the smooth round summit. The whole tract of country over which my route had led was spread out like a map before me; and the little village lay so directly at my feet I could almost look down its chimneys. Among the crags I obtained some fine petrifactions, which I exhibited to my simple host, much to his astonishment, on my return. Forty years had this man dwelt upon the very spot he then inhabited, the scene of his birth; and almost every day of his life had he ascended the cliffs among which I had been clambering; and yet, though the seashells were standing out in every direction from the surface of the ledge, not the slightest peculiarity of structure had he ever dreamed of. That the great ocean had rolled among these rocks, he could have formed no conception. Experience had told him that when burned they were lime, and he neither knew nor cared to know anything farther of their character or history. This slight incident well exemplifies the simplicity of this singular people. Content to live where his father lived; content to cultivate the spot he tilled; to tread in the steps which he trod; to speak the language he spake, and revere the faith he observed, the French villager is a stranger to the restless cravings of ambition, and acknowledges no inclination to change. At Prairie du Rocher is a little, dark-looking, ancient Catholic church, dedicated to St. Sulpice, formerly "Chapel of Ease" to Fort Chartres, but at present it has no resident priest. The population of the village is about two hundred. Its site is low, and, buried as it is in such enormous vegetation, the spot must be unhealthy: yet, year after year, and generation after generation, have its present inhabitants continued to dwell where death almost inevitable must have awaited an American. But where will you search for a fleshier, sleeker, swarthier-looking race than these French villagers? Some attribute this phenomenon to diet; some to natural idiosyncrasy; and other some do not attribute at all, but merely stand amazed. The truth of the matter is – and the fact is one well ascertained – that, give a Frenchman a fiddle, a pipe, a glass of claret, and room enough to shake his heels, and, like a mushroom, he'll vegetate on any soil!

La Prairie du Rocher, Ill.

[49] This tradition does not appear to have been noticed in the local histories of the region. – Ed.

XXXVIII

"I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The thistle shook there its lonely head: the moss whistled to the wind. The fox looked out from the windows; the rank grass of the wall waved round his head." – Ossian.

"We do love these ancient ruins:
We never tread upon them but we set
Our foot upon some reverend history."

To those of the present day who are in some degree acquainted with the extent of the vast Western Valley, it is not a little surprising to observe how inadequate the conception with which, by its early proprietors, it was regarded, and the singular measures which their mistaken estimates originated. It is but within a very few years that the extent and resources of this country have become sufficiently developed to be at all appreciated. That the French government was wholly unaware of its true character in the cession of old Louisiana to Mr. Jefferson in the early part of the present century, and that our own people were at that time little less ignorant of the same fact, need hardly be suggested to one acquainted with the diplomatic negotiations of the day, or with the views and the feelings of the respective powers then expressed.

But there are few circumstances which more definitely betray the exceedingly inadequate idea entertained by France respecting her possessions in North America, than that early article of her policy, of uniting her Canadian colonies, by a continuous chain of military posts, with those upon the Gulf of Mexico. That any ministry should seriously have entertained the idea of a line of fortifications *four thousand miles* in extent, through a waste, howling wilderness such as this valley then was, and along the banks of streams such as the Ohio and Mississippi yet continue to be; and that the design should not only have been projected, but that measures should actually have been entered upon for its accomplishment, seems, at the present day, almost incredible. And yet, from the very discovery of the country, was this scheme designed, and ever afterward was steadily pursued by the government of France. La Salle, in his last visit to Paris, suggested the policy of a *cordon* of posts from the St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico, and urged the measure upon Colbert as affording a complete line of defence to the French settlements against those of the English along the Atlantic shore. In furtherance of this design, he sailed to establish a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi, in prosecution of which expedition he lost his life. A line of fortifications was, however, commenced, and gradually extended along the southern shore of Lake Erie: one stood on the present site of the village of that name; another between that point and the Ohio; a third on the present site of Pittsburgh, named Du Quesne; a fourth at the mouth of the Kentucky River; a fifth on the south bank of the Ohio below; a sixth on the northern bank at the mouth of the Wabash; a seventh at the confluence with the Mississippi; half a dozen others on the latter stream below the junction, and several above upon its banks and along those of the Illinois. Among these last, and the most extensive of the fortifications then erected, was Fort Chartres, long the most celebrated military post in North America, now a pile of ruins.[50]

[50] For sketches of Forts Presqu' Isle (present site of Erie), Machault (on Allegheny River), Duquesne (present site of Pittsburg), Le Bœuf (near the present town of Waterford, Pennsylvania), St. Joseph (Michigan), and Ouiatonon (on the Wabash), Detroit, and the fort on the Maumee River, see Croghan's *Journals*, in our volume i, p. 101, note 62; p. 102, note 64; p. 85, note 45; p. 102, note 65; p. 117, note 85; p. 55, note 18; and p. 122, note 87, respectively. On Forts Chartres (on the Mississippi) and Massac (on the Ohio), see A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 71, note 136, and p. 73, note 139, respectively. Fort Massac was the only one upon the Ohio. Juchereau's post was erected (1702) at the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi, but was soon abandoned. – Ed.

It was a beautiful afternoon, when, leaving the little French hamlet *La Prairie du Rocher*, after a delightful ride of three or four miles through rich groves of the persimmon, the wild apple, and the Chickasaw plum,[51] I began to believe myself not far from the ruins of this famous old fort. Accosting a French villager whom I chanced to meet, I inquired the site of the ruins. He turned on me his glittering dark eye for a moment, and, pointing away to the dense belt of forest upon the left in a direct line with an enormous black-locust on the right of the pathway, passed on. Not the slightest indication of the object of my inquiry was to be seen; but deeming it fruitless to attempt gathering farther information from the dark-browed villager, who was now some distance on his way, I turned my horse's head from the path, and, after labouring several rods through the deep, heavy grass of the prairie, entered the wood. The dense undergrowth of bushes and matted vines was undisturbed, and there was not an indication of visiters at the spot for months. All seemed deserted, and silent, and drear. The ruins were completely shrouded in foliage, and gigantic trees were rearing their huge shafts from amid the crumbling heaps of rubbish. Wild grape-vines and other parasites were creeping in all directions over the trembling structures; or, drooping forth in pensile gracefulness from the disjointed walls, seemed striving to bind up the shattered fragments, and to conceal the pitiless ravage of time. The effect of this noble old pile of architecture, reposing thus in ruins, and shrouded in the cathedral duskiness of the forest, was singularly solemn.

"The trees, though summer, yet forlorn and lean,
O'ercome with moss and baleful mistletoe.
Here never shines the sun; here nothing breeds
Unless the nightly owl or fatal raven."

Securing my horse to the trunk of a young sapling rearing up itself beneath the walls, I at length succeeded, by dint of struggling through the rough thickets and the enormous vegetation, in placing myself at a point from which most of the ruins could be taken at a *coup d'œil*. Some portions of the exterior wall are yet in good preservation, and the whole line of fortification may be easily traced out; but all the structures within the quadrangle are quite dilapidated, and trees of a large size are springing from the ruins: an extensive powder-magazine, however, in a gorge of one of the bastions, yet retains its original form and solidity. The western angle of the fort and an entire bastion was, about fifty years since, undermined and thrown down by a slough from the Mississippi; but the channel is now changed, and is yearly receding, while a young belt of trees has sprung up between the ruins and the water's edge. The prairie in front of the fort was in cultivation not many years since, and was celebrated for its blue grass.

Fort Chartres was erected by the French in 1720, as a link in the chain of posts which I have mentioned, uniting New-Orleans with Quebec; and as a defence for the neighbouring villages against the Spaniards, who were then taking possession of the country on the opposite side of the Mississippi, as well as against the incursion of hostile Indian tribes. The expense of its erection is said to have been enormous, and it was considered the strongest fortification in North America. The material was brought from the bluffs, some four or five miles distant over the bottom by boats across a considerable intervening sheet of water, and from the opposite side of the Mississippi. In 1756 it was rebuilt; and in 1763, when France ceded her possessions east of the Mississippi to England, the adjoining village embraced about forty families, and a church dedicated to St. Anne.[52] When the English troops took possession of the country, the villagers all removed to the hamlets across the river, then under the French government, having been previously ceded, in the treaty of St. Ildefonso, by Spain to France.

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[51] *Prunus Angustifolia.*– Flagg.

[52] Immediately after the erection of Fort Chartres (1720), a village sprang up and the Jesuits established there the parish of Ste. Anne de Fort Chartres. The earliest records of this parish now extant, bear the date 1721. – Ed.

The fort was not evacuated, however, until July, 1765, when its commandant, *M. de St. Ange de belle rive*, proceeded to St. Louis with his forces.[53]

While Fort Chartres belonged to France, it was the seat of government for all the neighbouring region; and in 1765, when taken possession of by Captain Sterling, of the Royal Highlanders, it continued to retain its arbitrary character. It was here that the first court of justice, established by Lieutenant-colonel Wilkins, held its sessions.[54] Seven judges were appointed, who came together monthly at the fortress; but their decisions were very ill received by a people who, until then, had been released from all but *arbitrary* restriction.[55][295][296]

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[53] Philip Pittman, who visited Fort Chartres in 1766, says in his *Present State of the European Settlements on the Missisippi* (London, 1770), p. 46, concerning Fort Chartres: "In the year 1764 there were about forty families in the village near the fort, and a parish church, served by a Franciscan friar, dedicated to St. Anne. In the following year, when the English took possession of the country, they abandoned their houses, except three or four poor families, and settled at the villages on the west side of the Missisippi, chusing to continue under the French government."In a personal letter dated November 3, 1762, Louis XV deeded to Charles III of Spain all of the French territory in North America lying to the west of Mississippi River; see Shepherd, "Cession of Louisiana to Spain," in *Political Science Quarterly*, xix, pp. 439-458; also Thwaites, *France in America* (New York, 1905), pp. 272-275. Napoleon coerced Charles IV to retrocede Louisiana to France, by the secret treaty of St. Ildefonso, signed October 1, 1800. Three years later (April 30, 1803), Napoleon sold Louisiana to the United States for $15,000,000.Captain Louis St. Ange de Bellerive formally surrendered Fort Chartres to Captain Sir Thomas Sterling on October 10 (not July), 1765, went to St. Louis, and entering the Spanish service was placed in command of the little garrison there, composed almost wholly of his French compatriots who had removed thither from the Illinois. For a sketch of St. Ange, see Croghan's *Journals*, in our volume i, p. 138, note 109. – Ed.

[54] Sir Thomas Sterling (1733-1808), commissioned captain of the 42nd Highlanders (1757), served with his men in the conquest of Canada, and the capture of Martinique (1759) and Havanna (1762). Having taken command of Fort Chartres in October, 1765, he was relieved of this unpleasant duty, December 4 of the same year, by Major Robert Farmer, heading a detachment of British foot from Mobile. Sterling and his regiment set sail from America (1767), but returned (1776) and served with distinction at the storming of Fort Washington (1776) and of Elizabethtown (1779). He was wounded at Springfield (Massachusetts) in June, 1780. Promoted through the various ranks, he was made a royal aide-de-camp of the king and in turn a colonel (February 19, 1779), major-general (November 20, 1782), and general (January 1, 1801). He became baronet of Andoch on his brother's death, July 26, 1799. Several Illinois historians strangely persist in killing Sterling in 1765, shortly after he took command at Fort Chartres. See *Dictionary of National Biography*; and *Documents relative to Colonial History of New York*, vii, p. 786.Lieutenant-Colonel John Wilkins, appointed captain of the 55th foot (1755) and then major (1762), commanded at Niagara. In 1763, while marching to relieve Detroit, he was attacked by Indians and forced after heavy losses to retreat to Fort Schlosser. Later, he made an unsuccessful attempt by water, but was caught in a disastrous storm. In August, 1764, Wilkins was promoted to the majorship of the 60th, and in the following January was appointed lieutenant-colonel of the 18th Royal Irish with seven companies. In May, 1768, he was ordered from Philadelphia to Fort Pitt, and thence to Fort Chartres. His administration was unpopular, and grave charges – notably misappropriation of land and funds – were brought against him. He was suspended in 1771, set sail for Europe the following year, and either died or left the army (1775). See *Historical Magazine*, viii, p. 260; and *Documents relative to Colonial History of New York*, viii, p. 185. – Ed.

[55] Subjoined is a copy of the preliminary proceedings of the first regular court of justice held in Illinois while under the British government. It purports to be transcribed from the state records, and first appeared in a Western newspaper. It lays before the reader a view of the subject, which the most graphic description would fail to present."At a Court held at Chartres Village, in the Illinois, this sixth day of November, in the eighth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord, George the Third, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c., &c., &c., in the year of our Lord Christ one thousand seven hundred and sixty-eight, 1768."Present, George Morgan, James Remsey, James Campbell, James M'Millar, Jean Baptist Barbeau, and Peter Girardot, Esqrs., Justices. Commissions of the peace granted by John Wilkins, Esqr., Governor and Commandant of the said country, and directed to the gentlemen named, were produced and read."Whereupon the said Justices took the several *oaths* of allegiance to his Majesty's person and government, and also the oaths of Justices of the peace; which oaths were administered to them by the Governor and Commandant aforesaid."A commission from the said Governor to Dennis M'Croghan, Esq., to be Sheriff of the country aforesaid, was produced by the said Dennis M'Croghan, Esq., and read, who took and subscribed the usual oaths of allegiance to his Majesty's person and government, and also the oath of sheriff for said country."The Governor and Commandant aforesaid entered into a recognizance in the sum of five hundred pounds lawful money of Great Britain for the said Sheriff's due performance of his office."It would appear from the following deed, made by a *military sergeant*, executing the office of sheriff under the style of Provost under Commandant Hugh Lord, in 1772, that the government in Illinois was then purely *military*."Be it remembered that on this nineteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-two, by virtue of a writ unto me directed, I, Andrew Hoy, Provost, did seize, levy, and distrain upon the dwelling-house and lot of John Baptist Hubardeau, situated in the village of Kaskaskia, for a debt due as *per* note of hand, of the signature of the aforesaid Hubardeau, for the sum of two thousand and forty *livres,* with interest and *damages.* Now, know ye, that the aforesaid writ of *Fieri Facias* was issued by Hugh Lord, Esq., Captain in his Majesty's 18th or Royal Regiment of Ireland, in manner and form following:"George the Third, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. "To Sergeant Hoy, Provost. "We command you that you cause to be made of the (goods) and chattels of John Baptist Hubardeau, in your bailiwick, two thousand and forty *livres,* which Franks & Company, lately, in our court, before us, at Kaskaskia, recovered against him by virtue of a power of attorney, for a debt, with lawful interest, and damages which they have sustained, occasioned as well by the detaining of the said debt, as for their expenses and costs by them laid out in and about their suit in that behalf, whereof the said Hubardeau is convicted, and have you the money before us at Kaskaskia as

The original form of Fort Chartres was an irregular quadrangle, with four bastions; the sides of the exterior polygon being about five hundred feet in extent. The ditch and scarp were commenced, but left uncompleted. The walls, massively constructed of stone, and stuccoed with lime, were upward of two feet in thickness and fifteen feet in height. They still retain this altitude in some portions which are uninjured; and many of the loopholes and the ports for cannon, in the face of the wall and in the flanks of the bastions, are yet to be seen entire. The elegantly dressed freestone, however, which was employed about them, as well as for the cornices and casements of the gate and buildings, has long since been removed. Specimens are to be seen incorporated in some of the elegant structures which have since gone up in the neighbouring city.[56]

The military engineering of the early French fortifications in North America was of the school of Vauban; and the massive structures then erected are now monuments, not less of the skill of their founders than of departed time. The almost indestructible character of their masonry has long been a subject of surprise. The walls of Fort Chartres, though half a century has seen them abandoned to the ravages of the elements and of time, yet remain so imperishable, that in some instances it is not easy to distinguish the limestone from the cement; and the neighbouring villagers, in removing the materials for the purposes of building, have found it almost impossible to separate them one from the other.

The buildings which occupied the square area of Fort Chartres were of the same massive masonry as the walls. They consisted of a commandant's and commissary's residence, both noble structures of stone, and of equal size: two extensive lines of barracks, the magazine of stores, with vaulted cellars, and the *corps de guarde*. Within the gorges of the eastern bastions were the powder-magazine and a bakehouse; in the western, a prison, with dungeons and some smaller buildings. There were two sally-ports to the fortification in the middle of opposite faces of the wall; and a broad avenue passed from one to the other, directly through the square, along the sides of which were ranged the

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soon as the sale of said effects shall admit, to render to the said Franks & Company their debt and damages aforesaid, and have then there this writ. "Given at Fort Gage, this 19th day of December, 1772. "Hugh Lord, Commandant of Illinois."Andrew Hoy, Provost. "Moreover, that in consequence of further orders from the commandant aforesaid, I did give general notice of the sale thereof by the following advertisement, which was publicly placed for perusal and knowledge of the inhabitants in general, both here and at the village of Caho.[295] "PAR AUTORITE"Vendredi, à onse heur du Matin le 29th du mois prochain, sera vendu au porte de L'Eglise, la Maison et Terrain du Sieur Jean Baptist Hubardeau, qui est puis en exêcution, payable en Pèlletrie, Bon Argent, lettres de change, ou la bon esclaves, dans le moi de Mai qui vient. "Au Kas,[296] Decembre 29 [19] th, 1772. "Andrew Hoy, Provost."Making allowances for bad French, the following is a translation of this notice: "BY AUTHORITY"Wednesday, at eleven o'clock in the morning of the 29th of next month, I shall sell at the gate of the church, the House and lot of Mr. Jean Baptist Hubardeau, which is taken in execution, payable in peltry, good silver, bills of exchange, or in good slaves, in the month of May coming. "Kaskaskia, Dec. 19th, 1772." "At the expiration of which time, the aforesaid house was, agreeable to law, justice, and equity, exposed to sale, first at the church gate, and afterwards at different parts of the village, to prevent as much as possible, any persons pleading ignorance of the sale thereof. Now, know ye, in discharge of the duty of my office and the trust reposed, after having kept up the said house and lot from the hours of ten to two at the sum of 3200 *livres*, and no person bidding higher, or likely so to do, that the same was struck off to James Remsey, inhabitant of Kaskaskia, who, by these presents, is invested with full right and title thereto, to have and to hold the said messuage and tenements, and all and singular of the premises above mentioned and every part and parcel thereof, with the appurtenances unto the said James Remsey, his heirs and assigns forever: and I, the said Andrew Hoy, Provost, from myself my heirs, the said messuage and tenement and premises and every part thereof against him and his heirs, and against all and every other person and persons whatever, to the said James Remsey, his heirs and assigns shall and will warrant and forever defend by these presents. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal. "Andrew Hoy, Provost. (L.S.)"Fort Gage, 29th Dec., 1772. "Signed, sealed, and delivered in presence of "William Dunbar,"Isaac Johnson.""By virtue of the power and authority in me invested, I do hereby grant unto Mr. James Remsey, late Lieut. of his Majesty's 34th Regiment, a certain tract of land containing – acres in part from the river Kaskaskia to the Mississippi, once the property of one La Bacchou, whereon formerly did stand a water mill, the remains of which are now to be seen. The whole being agreeable to his Majesty's proclamation, confiscated to the King, and is hereby given to said James Remsey, in consideration of His Excellency Gen. Gage's recommendation and for the speedy settlement of his majesty's colony, as likewise the frame of a house with a lot of land thereunto appertaining, opposite the Jesuit's College in the village of Kaskaskia. "Given under my hand, at Fort Chartres, Nov. 12th, 1767. "GORDON FORBES,"Capt. 34th regiment."This grant of land where the *old mill* stood, is now the site of a speculative *city* called "*Decoigne*," and is about five miles from Kaskaskia on the road to St. Louis. – Flagg.

[295] Cahokia.

[296] Kaskaskia.

[56] Flagg's description agrees in the main with that given by Philip Pittman (see *ante*, p. 77, note 53), save that the latter is more detailed. Judging from the phraseology, Flagg must have read Pittman's description. – Ed.

buildings. A small banquette a few feet in height ran parallel to the loopholes, for the purpose of elevating the troops when discharging musketry at an enemy without.

Such was Fort Chartres in the pride of its early prime; the seat of power, festivity, and taste; the gathering-spot of all the rank, and beauty, and fashion the province could then boast. Many a time, doubtless, have the walls of this stern old citadel rung to the note of revelry; and the light, twinkling footstep of the dark-eyed creole has beat in unison with a heart throbbing in fuller gush from the presence of the young, martial figure at her side! Fort Chartres, in its early years, was doubtless not more the headquarters of arbitration and rule than of gentility and etiquette. The settlers of the early French villages, though many of them indigent, were not all of them rude and illiterate. Induced by anticipations of untold wealth, such as had crowned the adventurers of Spain in the southern section of the Western Continent, grants and charters of immense tracts of territory in these remote regions had been made by the crown of France to responsible individuals; and thus the leaders in these golden enterprises were generally gentlemen of education and talent, whose manners had been formed within the precincts of St. Cloud, then the most elegant court in Europe. Many of these enthusiastic adventurers, it is true, returned to France in disappointment and disgust; and many of them removed to the more genial latitude of Lower Louisiana: yet a few, astonished at the fertility and extent of a country of which they had never dreamed before; delighted with the variety and delicacy of its fruits, and reminded by the mildness of the climate of the sweetest portions of their own beautiful France, preferred to remain. By the present degenerate race of villagers, those early days are referred to as a "golden age" in their history, and the "old residenters" as *wonderful* beings. Consider the singular situation of these men – a thousand miles from the Atlantic shores, surrounded by savages and by their own countrymen scarce less ignorant, and separated by pathless mountains from a community of civilized man. The higher stations in the French army were at that era, too, more than at present, occupied by men of genius and information, while the Catholic priesthood was equally distinguished for literary attainment. Under circumstances like these, was it other than natural that reciprocity of feeling and congeniality of taste should have sought their gratification by mutual and frequent intercourse? Fort Chartres must, therefore, have been the seat of hospitality, religious celebration, and kindly feeling. Here the fleshy old *habitans* of the neighbouring villages dozed away many an hour of sober jovialness with their "droughty cronies" over the pipe and the claret of their own vineyards; while their dark-haired daughters tripped away on the green sward before them in the balmy moonlit summer eve with the graceful officers of the fortress.

Here, too, has been witnessed something of "the pride, and pomp, and circumstance of glorious war." The *fleur-de-lis* of the Fifteenth Louis has rolled out its heavy folds above these stern old towers; the crimson Lion of England has succeeded; and the stripes and stars of our own republic have floated over both in triumph. The morning gun of the fortress has boomed across the broad prairie, and been reverberated from yonder cliffs: the merry reveille has rose upon the early breeze, and wakened the slumbering echoes of the forest; and the evening bugle from the walls has wailed its long-drawn, melancholy note along those sunset waters of the *Eternal River*!

Such, I repeat, was Fort Chartres in its better days, but such is Fort Chartres no more. I lingered for hours with saddened interest around the old ruins, until the long misty beams of the setting sun, streaming through the forest, reminded me that I had not yet secured a shelter for the coming night. Remounting my horse, I left the spot at a brisk pace, and a ride of a few miles brought me to a dwelling situated upon a mound somewhat elevated from the low, flat bottom-land around, about one mile from the Mississippi, and commanding a view of the distant lake and bluffs to the north. Here, then, I affix the name by which is known all the surrounding region.

Fort Chartres, Ill.

XXXIX

"I know not how the truth may be,
I tell the tale as told to me."

"Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war."

Othello.

Fort Chartres has already detained me longer than was my design. My pen has been unconsciously led on from item to item, and from one topic to another; and now, in leaving this celebrated fortress, I cannot forbear alluding to a few incidents connected with its origin and early history, which have casually presented themselves to my notice. Selection is made from many of a similar character, which at another time and in a different form may employ the writer's pen. The conclusion of my last number attempted a description of the spot from which it was dated; and, reader, a beautiful spot it was, beneath the soft, gentle radiance of a summer evening. Not soon, I ween, shall I forget the wild romance of that moonlit scene as I reclined upon the gray old bench at the door of the farmhouse after the evening meal was over, and listened to the singular events of which that region had been the theatre in other days. More than forty years had seen mine host a resident of the spot, and no one, with diligence more exemplary than his own, had gathered up the curious legends of the place, many of them from aged men who had themselves been witnesses of the events they chronicled. By these traditions, whatever may be our inclination to yield them credence at this late period, the origin and history of the fortification of Fort Chartres is by no means devoid of interest. In 1720, when it was resolved on by the crown of France to erect a fortress at this point upon the Mississippi, in continuation of her line of posts uniting Quebec with New-Orleans, and for the defence of her colonies, a military engineer of the school of the celebrated Sebastian Vauban was sent over to project and accomplish the design.[57] To his own discretion, within prescribed limits – so goes the story – was confided the whole undertaking. Far and wide throughout the province resounded the note of preparation. The peaceful villager was summoned from his pipe and his plough; the din of steel and stone broke in upon the solitudes; and at length, at the enormous expenditure of nine millions of livres, arose Fort Chartres; and its battlements frowned over the forests and cast their shadows along the waters of the *Eternal River*! The work was completed, and fondly believed its architect that he had reared for his memory a monument for the generations of coming time. A powerful battery of iron ordnance protruded from the ports, and every department of the fortress was supplied with the most extensive munitions of war. A large number of cannon for many years were laying beneath the walls of the fort, in the early part of the present century, buried in matted vines and underbrush. The fortress was completed, and the *silver lilies* floated over the walls; but the engineer had far exceeded the limits prescribed in erecting a work of such massive and needless strength, and a missive royal summoned him to St. Cloud. The miserable man, aware that little was to be hoped from the clemency of the warlike Louis XV., poisoned himself upon arriving in his native land, to escape the indignation of his sovereign. Previously, however, to his departure for France, immense sums in gold for defraying the expenses of the fortress had been forwarded him to New Orleans and sent up the river, but, owing to his subsequent arrest, were never distributed to the labourers. Tradition averreth these vast treasures to have been buried beneath the foundations of the fort. However the truth may be, the number of those who have believed and searched has not been inconsiderable: but unhappily, as is ever the case with these "hidden treasures," the light has gone out just at the critical moment, or some luckless

[57] Relative to Fort Chartres, see *ante*, p. 75, note 50. – Ed.

wight, in his zeal, has thought proper to *speak* just as the barrel of money has been struck by the mattock, or some other untoward event has occurred to dissolve the charm of the witch-hazel, and to stir up the wrath of those notable spirits which are always known to stand guard over buried gold! And thus has it happened that the treasure yet reposes in primeval peace; and the big family Bible, always conveyed to the spot on such inquisitorial occasions, has alone prevented consequences most fatal! Whether the good people of the vicinity in the present unbelieving generation have faith to dig, I know not; but, when I visited the spot, the earth of the powder-magazine to which I have alluded exhibited marvellous indication of having been disturbed at no distant period previous. So much for the origin of Fort Chartres. The story *may* be true, it may *not.* At all events, it will be remembered I do not endorse it.

There is also a tradition yet extant of a stratagem of war by which Fort Chartres was once captured, worthy the genius of Fabius Maximus, and partaking, moreover, somewhat of history in character. The name of George Rogers Clarke is familiar to every one who can claim even indifferent acquaintance with the early border warfare of the West. This extraordinary man, having satisfied himself, like Hannibal of Carthage, that the only way decisively to conquer a crafty and powerful foe was by carrying the war to his own altars and hearths, placed himself at the head of a few hundred of the Virginia militia in 1778, and set forth upon one of the most daring enterprises ever chronicled on the page of military history – the celebrated expedition against the distant post of Fort Vincent, now Vincennes. Our country was then at war with Great Britain, and this fort, together with those upon the lakes and the Mississippi, were in possession of the enemy and their savage allies. Colonel Clarke crossed the mountains with his little band; descended the Monongahela and the Ohio to within sixty miles of the mouth of the latter, and there concealing his boats, he plunged with his followers through swamps, and creeks, and marshes almost impassable, a distance of one hundred and thirty miles, and in a space of time incredibly short, arrived at night opposite the village of Kaskaskia. So overwhelming was the surprise, that the town, though fortified, was taken without a blow. History goes on to tell us that a detachment of troops, mounted on the horses of the country, was immediately pushed forward to surprise the villages of Fort Chartres and Cahokia, higher up the Mississippi; and that they were all taken without resistance, and the British power in that quarter completely destroyed.[58] So much for History, now for Tradition. When the little band arrived beneath the walls of Fort Chartres, the numbers of the garrison far exceeding those of the besiegers, the latter, as if in despair of success, shortly took up the line of march and disappeared behind the distant bluffs. Days passed on; diligent examination of the heights was kept up with glasses from the walls, but no enemy returned. At length, when apprehension had begun to die away, early one morning a troop of cavalry appeared winding over the bluffs, their arms glittering in the sunlight, and descended from view apparently into the plain beneath. Hour after hour the march continued; troop after troop, battalion upon battalion, regiment after regiment, with their various ensigns and habiliments of warfare, appeared in lengthened files, wound over the bluffs, and disappeared. Alarmed and astonished at the countless swarms of the invaders, the garrison hastily evacuated the fortress, and for dear life and liberty, soon placed the broad Mississippi between themselves and the cloud of locusts! Hardly was this precipitate manœuvre well accomplished, when the alarum of drum and fife was heard, and the identical force which but a few days before had raised the siege, and in despair had retreated from beneath the walls, now paraded through the open sally-ports, their rags and tatters fluttering by way of "pomp and circumstance" in the evening breeze. This fortunate *ruse du guerre* had been accomplished through the favourable nature of the ground, a few extra stand of colours manufactured for the occasion, and a variety of uniforms and arms of like character. After winding over the bluffs into the plain beneath, they again

[58] Hall. – Flagg.*Comment by Ed.* Flagg's authority is James Hall, *Sketches of History, Life, and Manners in the West* (Philadelphia, 1835).Owing to the encroachments by the Mississippi, Fort Chartres was abandoned in 1772, and was never again used as a garrison. The legend given by Flagg is somewhat exaggerated. The French settlements adjacent to Kaskaskia readily accepted the situation on being invited by Clark's representatives, who were accompanied by Kaskaskians as friendly interpreters.

ascended through a defile unobserved by the garrison, and once more appeared in different guise and order in rear of their comrades. "Distance," too, cast doubtless not a little "enchantment" over "the view;" and then the fear and trepidation of the worthy garrison probably sharpened their optics to detect all the peril in store for them, and, perchance, somewhat more. Now, reader, you can do as you choose touching belief of all this. And while you are making up a decision on the point, permit me to furnish yet another scrap of *History*, which may, peradventure, assist.

For sixteen days was Col. Clarke employed in his march from Kaskaskia to Vincennes, after the capture of the military posts upon the Mississippi. At length, after toils incredible, he reached the Wabash. High upon the eastern bank, its base swept by the rolling flood, stood Fort Vincent, the British fortress, at that period garrisoned by a superior corps of soldiery, with an auxiliary force of six hundred Indian warriors, and under the command of a skilful officer, Gov. Hamilton. On the western bank was spread out a broad sheet of alluvion five miles in breadth, completely inundated by the swollen stream. After five days of toil this wilderness of waters was passed; the rolling current of the Wabash was crossed in the night, and the morning sun beheld these daring men before Vincennes. As they approached the town – history goes on to relate – over the broad and beautiful prairie upon which it stands, at the moment his troops were discovered by the enemy, Clarke found himself near a small ancient mound, which concealed part of his force from the foe. Under this covert he countermarched his men in so skilful a manner, that the leading files, which had been seen from the town, were transferred undiscovered to the rear, and made to pass again and again in sight of the enemy, until his whole force had several times been displayed, and his little detachment of jaded troops assumed the appearance of an extended column greatly superior to its actual strength. The garrison was promptly summoned to surrender, and, after a brief defence, Gov. Hamilton struck his flag to a body of men not half as powerful as his own.[59]

Next in importance to Fort Chartres, of that chain of military posts commenced by the French in the Valley of the Mississippi, was Fort du Quesne;[60] and of this celebrated fortress, so notorious in the bloody annals of border warfare, it may not be irrelevant, in concluding the present subject, to add a few sentences. This post was erected on that low tongue of land, at the head of the Ohio and confluence of the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers, where Pittsburgh now stands, commanded on all sides by lofty bluffs. It was built by M. de la Jonquier, at command of the Marquis du Quesne, governor of Canada. In 1754 the bold Contrecœur came down the Alleghany, with a thousand Frenchmen in canoes, and eighteen pieces of artillery; and, dispersing the small colonial force, intrenched himself upon the spot. This was the prologue to that bloody drama, the catastrophe of which deprived France of all her possessions east of the Mississippi. In 1758 Fort du Quesne was taken by Gen. Forbes; a more scientific and extensive fortress was erected on the spot, at an expense of sixty thousand pounds sterling, and, in honour of William Pitt, then Premier of England, named Fort Pitt. It is difficult to conceive what could have been the design of these commanders in erecting such a massive fortress on such a spot, unless to impress the minds of their savage but simple neighbours; for resistance to artillery planted upon the neighbouring heights would have been quite as vain as any attack of the Indians upon its walls with their primitive weapons. The same may be said of nearly all the early fortifications in the West, and of some of more modern date upon our frontier. Subsequently Fort Pitt came into the possession of our government as part of the estate of the Penn family, and is now only a heap of rubbish. Thus much for early military posts in the Valley of the Mississippi.

So deeply interested was I in listening to the "legendary lore" associated with the spot upon which I was sitting, that hours glided unobserved away, and the full moon was culminating in cloudless splendour from the zenith when we retired.

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[59] Hall. – Flagg.*Comment by Ed.* Compare with R. G. Thwaites, *How George Rogers Clark won the Northwest*, pp. 52-62.

[60] A fort was begun by Charles Trent, with a few Virginia troops, in February, 1754. On April 17, Contrecœur took the place, completed the fort, and named it Duquesne in honor of the then governor of New France. See Croghan's *Journals*, in our volume i, p. 85, note 45; also F. A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 156, note 20. – Ed.

Early the following morning I was in the saddle. The heavy night-mists lay wavering, like a silvery mantle, all over the surface of that broad plain; and the crimson clouds, rolling up the eastern sky, proclaimed the rising sun. After a short ride I reached the former site of St. Philippe, a settlement of the French, since called *Little Village*. Its "common field" is now comprised in the single plantation of Mr. M'David. It was at this point that Philippe Francis Renault – from whom the village received its name, as well as a large section of the neighbouring region, known to this day as "Renault's Tract" – established himself in 1719, with two hundred miners from France, in anticipation of discovering gold and silver.[61] He was disappointed; but is said to have obtained large quantities of lead from the region along the opposite bank of the Mississippi, in the vicinity of Ste. Genevieve; and to have discovered, moreover, a copper mine near Peoria. St. Philippe was once a considerable village. Previous to 1765 – when possession of the country was claimed by the English government, and, like the other French settlements, it was abandoned by the villagers – it is said to have comprised twenty or thirty families, a Catholic church, and a water-mill; while the surrounding meadow afforded pasturage for extensive herds of cattle.

Leaving St. Philippe, the winding pathway in a few miles had conducted me into the depths of a forest of gigantic cotton-trees upon the left, encircled by enormous grape-vines, and the ground beneath entangled by a wilderness of underbrush and thickets of wild fruit. In a few moments the forest opened unexpectedly before me, and at my feet rolled on the turbid floods of the Mississippi, beyond which went up the towering cliffs of limestone, hoar and ragged, to the sheer height of some hundred feet from the water's edge. They were the cliffs of Herculaneum, with their shot-towers.[62] For the first time I discovered that I had mistaken my way. Perceiving the low log-cabin of a woodcutter among the trees, I had soon obtained the requisite information, and was retracing my steps; but a weary plod through the deep black loam, and the tall grass weltering in the night-dews, and the thickets of the dripping meadows, was anything but agreeable. There were but few farms along my route, and the tenants of those with whom I chanced to meet betrayed too plainly, by their ghastly visages, and their withered, ague-racked limbs, the deadly influences of the atmosphere they inhaled. As I wandered through this region, where vegetation, towering in all its rank and monstrous forms, gave evidence of a soil too unnaturally fertile for culture by man, whose bread must be bought by "the sweat of his brow," I thought I could perceive a deadly nausea stealing over my frame, and that every respiration was a draught of the floating pestilence. I urged onward my horse, as if by flight to leave behind me the fatal contagion which seemed hovering on every side; as if to burst through the poisonous vapours which seemed distilling from every giant upas along my path. That this region should be subject to disease and death is a circumstance by no means singular. Indeed, it seems only unaccountable to the traveller that it may be inhabited at all. A soil of such astonishing depth and fertility, veiled from the purifying influences of the sun by the rank luxuriance of its vegetation, in the stifling sultriness of midsummer sends forth vast quantities of mephitic vapour fatal to life; while the decay of the enormous vegetables poisons the atmosphere with putrid exhalations. Cultivation and settlement will, of course, as in the older states, remedy this evil to some extent in time. It is said that the southern border of a lake in this region is less unhealthy than the northern, on account of the prevalence of winds from the former quarter during the summer months; and that the immediate margin of a river, though buried in vegetation, is less liable to disease than the neighbouring bluffs, upon which hang the night and morning vapours. A dry and somewhat elevated spot is preferable to

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[61] Renault sailed from France in 1719, but did not reach Illinois until 1721. For a short sketch of Renault, see *ante*, p. 42, note 18.St. Philippe, five miles from Fort Chartres on the road to Cahokia, was founded about 1725 by Renault, on a tract granted to him in 1723. Philip Pittman, who visited the place in 1766, wrote that there were about sixteen houses and a small church left standing, although all the inhabitants save the captain of the militia had crossed the Mississippi the preceding year. In 1803, John Everett was the sole inhabitant. – Ed.

[62] For location and settlement of Herculaneum, see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 212, note 122; for the shot-towers there, see our volume xxvi, p. 103, note 66. – Ed.

either for a cabin; and it should be well ventilated, and never closely surrounded by cornfields. The rank and massive foliage shields the earth from the sunbeams, which exhale its poisonous damps; and in its rapid growth, the plant abstracts from the surrounding atmosphere one of its vital ingredients. Indeed, most of the diseases peculiar to the West are superinduced by imprudence, ignorance, or negligence in nursing. Let the recent emigrant avoid the chill, heavy night-dews and the sickening sultriness of the noontide sun; provide a close dwelling, well situated and ventilated, and invariably wear thicker clothing at night than in the day, and he may live on as long and as healthily in the West as in his native village. Bilious intermittents are the most prevalent and fatal diseases in the sickly months of August, September, and October; and in the winter and spring pleurisies are frequent. The genuine phthisic, or pulmonary consumption of New-England, is rarely met. A mysterious disease, called the "*milk* sickness" – because it was supposed to be communicated by that liquid – was once alarmingly prevalent in certain isolated districts of Illinois.[63] Whole villages were depopulated; and though the mystery was often and thoroughly investigated, the cause of the disease was never discovered. By some it was ascribed to the milk or to the flesh of cows feeding upon a certain unknown poisonous plant, found only in certain districts; by others, to certain springs of water, or to the exhalations of certain marshes. The mystery attending its operations and its terrible fatality at one period created a perfect panic in the settlers; nor was this at all wonderful. The disease appears now to be vanishing. But, of all other epidemics, the "fever and ague" is the scourge of the West. Not that it often terminates fatally, except by superinducing a species of consumption; but, when severe and protracted, it completely shatters the constitution; and, like Mezentius, the victim ever after bears about him a living death. In its lighter form, most of the settlers at some time or other experience it, as it is brought on by exposure: and when I consider that, during my ramble in the West, I have subjected myself to every variety of climate and circumstance; have been drenched by night-dews and morning-dews; by the vapours of marshes and forests, and by the torrents of summer showers; have wandered day after day over the endless prairies beneath a scorching sun, and at its close have laid myself anywhere or nowhere to rest; when I consider this, I cannot but wonder at the escape of a constitution naturally feeble from complete prostration. Yet never was it more vigorous than during this tour on the prairies.

At length, after a ride which seemed interminable, I found myself at the foot of the bluffs; and, drawing up my horse, applied at a cabin attached to an extensive farm for refreshment. A farmer of respectable garb and mien came tottering towards the gateway; and, to my request, informed me that every individual of his family was ill of the "fever and ague." I inquired for the state of his own health, remarking his *shattered* appearance. "Yes, I am shattered," he replied, leaning heavily against the rails for support; "the agues and fevers have terribly racked me; but I am better, I am *better* now." Ah, thought I, as, returning his kind good-morning, I resumed my route, you think, poor man, that health will revisit your shattered frame; but that pallidness of brow, and those sunken temples, tell me that you must die. Consumption's funeral fires were already kindling up in the depths of his piercing eye. At the next cabin, where I was so fortunate as to succeed in obtaining refreshment, I was informed that the poor fellow was in the last stages of a decline brought on by undue exposure to the chill,

[63] Milk-sickness, no longer so diagnosed by medical authorities, is described by early writers in the Middle West as a malignant disease attacking both men and stock. It was supposed that the disease was contracted by eating the flesh or dairy products of animals that had grazed on a certain weed. In the case of the human being the symptoms were intolerable thirst, absolute constipation, low temperature, an extreme nervous agitation, but with an absence of chills and headaches. Recovery seemed to be the exception. Although no specific remedy was used, the best results were thought to be obtained by judicious stimulation and careful nursing. The same disease among stock was usually known as "trembles." The symptoms were the same as with men, and death followed, generally within eight or ten days. A farm where this dreaded disease had come was called a "milk-sick farm," and was rendered almost unsalable. For a later and more detailed account, see Thomas L. M'Kenney, *Memoirs, official and personal, with Sketches of Travels among the Northern and Southern Indians*, etc. (New York, 1846), p. 141. Dr. William M. Beach, a pioneer physician in Ohio, who had had much experience with milk sickness, wrote an article for Albert H. Buck, *Reference Handbook of Medical Science* (New York, 1884-87), volume v. An abstract of the above article by Beach is given in the edition for 1902. – Ed.

poisonous night-dews of the bottom. The individual from whom this information was received was himself far from enjoying uninterrupted health, though thirty-five years had seen him a tenant of the spot upon which I met him.

Monroe County, Ill.

XL

"'Tis many moons ago – a long – long time."

R. H. Wilde.

"Rich, silent, deep, they stand; for not a gale
Rolls its light billows o'er the bending plain:
A calm of plenty! till the ruffled air
Falls from its poise, and gives the breeze to blow."

The Seasons.

In the course of my journeying in the regions of the "Far West," it has more than once chanced to me to encounter individuals of that singular class commonly termed "Squatters;" those sturdy pioneers who formed the earliest American settlements along our western frontier. And, in my casual intercourse with them, I have remarked, with not a little surprise, a decision of character, an acuteness of penetration, and a depth and originality of thought betrayed in their observations, strangely enough contrasting with the rude solitude of their life. For more than half a century, mayhap, Nature and whether, in the present exhibition of intellectual energy, we are to claim an argument for the influence of natural scenery upon character, or may find a corroboration of the theory of diversity of mental ability; or to whatever circumstance it may be attributed, very assuredly it owes not its origin to the improvements of education or the advantages of society. There is also remarked in these rude men a susceptibility and refinement of feeling, and a delicacy of sentiment, which one would suppose hardly compatible with a protracted continuance of their semi-savage life.

"Had been to them a more familiar face
Than that of man;"

It was at the frugal, though well-spread board of an individual of this class that I was pleased to find myself seated, after my tedious morning ramble of several hours through the weltering vegetation of the prairie. Mine host was a man of apparently forty, though in reality some eight or ten years in advance of that age: his form, of medium stature, was symmetrical, erect, and closely knit, betraying considerable capability of endurance, though but little of muscular strength: his countenance, at first sight, was by no means prepossessing; indeed, the features, while in repose, presented an aspect harsh – almost forbidding; but, when lighted up by animation, there was discoverable in their rapid play a mildness which well compared with the benevolent expression of a soft blue eye. Such was the *physique* of my backwoods pioneer, who for forty years had been a wanderer on the outskirts of civilization, and had at length been overtaken by its rapid march.

As I had before me but an easy ride for the day, I proposed to mine host, when our repast was over, that he should accompany me to the summit of the range of bluffs which rose behind his cabin, towering to the height of several hundred feet above the roof. To this he readily assented, and well did the magnificent view commanded from the top compensate for the toil of the ascent. The scene was grand. "Yonder," said my companion, seating himself on the earth at my side, and stretching out his arm to the southeast, "yonder lies the village of old Kaskaskia, with the bluffs of the river beyond, rising against the sky; while a little to the left you catch the white cliffs of Prairie du Rocher. In that heavy timber to the south are the ruins of Fort Chartres, and to the right, across the lake, fifty years ago stood St. Philippe. The Mississippi is concealed from us, but its windings can be traced by the irregular strip of forest which skirts its margin. Beyond the stream, stretching away to the northwest,

the range of heights you view are the celebrated *cornice-cliffs*[64] above Herculaneum; and at intervals you catch a glimpse of a shot-tower, resting like a cloud against the sky, upon the tallest pinnacles. The plain at our feet, which is now sprinkled with cornfields, was once the site of an Indian village. Forty years ago, the ruins of the wigwams and the dancing circle surrounding the war-post could be distinctly traced out: and even now my ploughshare every spring turns up articles of pottery which constituted their domestic utensils, together with axes and mallets of stone, spear and arrow heads and knives of flint, and all their rude instruments of war. Often of a fine evening," continued my companion, after a pause, "when my work for the day is over, and the sun is going down in the west, I climb up to this spot and look out over this grand prospect; and it almost makes me sad to think how the tribes that once possessed this beautiful region have faded away. Nearly forty years ago, when I came with my father from old Virginia, this whole state, with its prairies, and forests, and rich bottoms, was the hunting-ground of the Indians. On this spot we built our cabin; and though I have since lived far off on the outskirts of the Missouri frontier, I always had an affection for this old bottom and these bluffs, and have come back to spend here the rest of my days. But the Indians are gone. The round top of every bluff in yonder range is the grave of an Indian chief."

While my singular companion was making these observations, somewhat in the language I have attempted to give, interrupted from time to time by my inquiries, I had myself been abstractedly employed in thrusting a knife which was in my hand into the yielding mould of the mound upon which we sat, when, suddenly, the blade, striking upon a substance somewhat harder than the soil, snapped into fragments. Hastily scraping away the loose mould to the depth of some inches, the *femur* of a human skeleton protruding from the soil was disinterred, and, in a few minutes, with the aid of my companion, the remnants of an entire skeleton were laid bare. Compared with our own limbs, the bones seemed of a size almost gigantic; and from this circumstance, if from no other, it was evident that our melancholy moralizing upon the destinies of the Indians had been indulged upon a very fitting spot – the grave of one of its chieftains. Originally, the body had no doubt been covered to the depth of many feet, and the shallowness of soil at the present time indicates a lapse of centuries. Still these graves of the bluffs, which doubtless belonged to the ancestors of the present aborigines, will neither be confounded nor compared with the gigantic earth-heaps of the prairies. Strangely enough, this *has* been the case, though a moment's reflection must convince one that they are the monuments of a far later race.

Descending the bluffs by an ancient path in a ravine, *said* to have been made in conveying oak timber to Fort Chartres at the period of its erection, my host conducted me into one of the enclosures of his farm, a spot which had evidently once been the ordinary burial-place of the ancient Indian village. Graves, sufficient, apparently, for hundreds of individuals, were yet to be seen upon every side. They were arranged parallel to each other in uniform ranges, and were each formed by a rough slab of limestone upon either side, and two at the extremities, terminating in an obtuse angle. From several of these old sepulchres we threw out the sand, and, at the depth of about four feet, exhumed fragments of human remains in various stages of preservation, deposited upon a broad slab of limestone at the bottom. When taken together, these slabs form a complete coffin of stone, in which the body originally reposed; and this arrangement, with the silicious nature of the soil, has probably preserved the remains a longer period than would otherwise have been the case. But the circumstance respecting these ancient graves which chiefly excited my astonishment was their marvellous littleness, none of them exceeding a length of four feet; and the wondrous tales of a "pigmy race of aborigines" once inhabiting the West, which I had often listened to, recurred with considerable force to my memory. Resolved to decide this long-mooted question to my own satisfaction, if possible, the earth from one of the graves, the most perfect to be found, was excavated with care, and upon the bottom were discovered the *femur* and *tibia* of a skeleton in a state of tolerable preservation, being

[64] Two ranges of cliffs are known by this name. One is below Ste. Genevieve. – Flagg.

parallel to each other and in immediate proximity. Proof incontestible, this, that the remains were those of no Lilliputian race four feet in stature, and affording a fair presumption that the limbs were forcibly bent in this position at the time of burial, occupying their stone coffin much as the subject for scientific dissection occupies a beef-barrel. In this manner may we satisfactorily account for the ancient "pigmy cemetery" near the town of Fenton, on the Merrimack in Missouri, as well as that on the *Rivière des Pères*, in the same vicinity, already referred to, and those reported to exist in various other sections of the West, in which, owing to the dampness of the soil, the remains have been long resolved to dust, and only the dimensions of the grave have remained.[65]

Among the articles which my host had procured from these old graves, and deemed worthy of preservation, was a singular species of pottery, composed, as appeared from its fracture, of shells calcined and pulverized, mixed with an equal quantity of clay, and baked in the sun. The clay is of that fine quality with which the waters of the Missouri are charged. The vessels are found moulded into a variety of forms and sizes, capable of containing from a quart to a gallon.[66] One of these, which my host insisted upon hanging upon the bow of my Spanish saddle as I mounted, was fashioned in the shape of a *turtle,* with the form and features very accurately marked. The handle of the vessel, which was broken off, once formed a tapering tail to the animal, presenting a *rare* specimen of a turtle with that elegant appendage.

Ascending the bluffs by a tortuous though toilsome pathway through the ravines, my route for some miles wound away through a sparse growth of oaks, and over a region which seemed completely excavated into *sink-holes*. Some of these tunnel-shaped hollows were several hundred feet in diameter, and of frightful depth, though of regular outline, as if formed by the whirl of waters subsiding to the level of the plain beneath. They were hundreds in number, yet each was as uniformly circular as if excavated by scientific skill. I have met with none so regular in outline, though I have seen many in the course of my journeyings.

The puissant little village of Waterloo furnished me a very excellent dinner, at a very excellent tavern. The town appeared, from a hasty view in passing through its streets, remarkable for nothing so much as for the warlike *soubriquet* attached to it, if we except a huge *windmill*, which, like a living thing, flings abroad its gigantic arms, and flaunts its ungainly pinions in the midst thereof. The place, moreover, can boast a courthouse, indicative of its judicial character as seat of justice for the county of Monroe; and, withal, is rather pleasantly located than otherwise. About five miles north of the

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[65] For further information on the pigmy cemetery in the Meramec, see our volume xxvi, p. 105. – Ed.

[66] Mr. Flint's remarks respecting the Ancient Pottery found in the West coincides so well with the result of my own more limited observation, that I subjoin them in preference to extended description myself. Preceding these remarks is an interesting notice of the Lilliputian graves on the Merrimac, to which allusion has several times been made."At the time the Lilliputian graves were found on the Merrimac, in the county of St. Louis, many people went from that town to satisfy their curiosity by inspecting them. It appears from Mr. Peck that the graves were numerous; that the coffins were of stone; that the bones in some instances were nearly entire; that the length of the bodies was determined by that of the coffins which they filled, and that the bodies in general could not have been more than from three feet and a half to four feet in length. Thus it should seem that the generations of the past in this region were mammoths and pigmies."I have examined the pottery, of which I have spoken above, with some attention. It is unbaked, and the glazing very incomplete, since oil will soak through it. It is evident, from slight departure from regularity in the surface, that it was moulded by the hand and not by anything like our lathe. The composition, when fractured, shows many white floccules in the clay that resemble fine snow, and this I judge to be pulverized shells. The basis of the composition appears to be the alluvial clay carried along in the waters of the Mississippi, and called by the French 'terre grasse,' from its greasy feel. Samples of this pottery, more or less perfect, are shown everywhere on the river. Some of the most perfect have been dug from what are called the 'chalk-banks,' below the mouth of the Ohio. The most perfect that I have seen, being, in fact, as entire as when first formed, was a vessel in my possession. It was a drinking jug, like the 'scyphus' of the ancients. It was dug from the chalk-bank. It was smooth, well-moulded, and of the colour of common gray stoneware. It had been rounded with great care, and yet, from slight indentations on the surface, it was manifest that it had been so wrought in the palm of the hand. The model of the form was a simple and obvious one – the bottle-gourd – and it would contain about two quarts. This vessel had been used to hold animal oil; for it had soaked through, and varnished the external surface. Its neck was that of a squaw, known by the clubbing of the hair, after the Indian fashion. The moulder was not an accurate copyist, and had learned neither statuary nor anatomy; for, although the finish was fine, the head was monstrous. There seemed to have been an intention of wit in the outlet. It was the horrible and distorted mouth of a savage, and in drinking you would be obliged to place your lips in contact with those of madam the squaw." —*Flint's Recollections*, p. 173-4. – Flagg.Comment by Ed. For bibliography on Indian antiquities, see our volume xxvi, p. 69, note 33; p. 159, note 111; and p. 184, note 128.

village is situated a large spring, and a settlement called Bellefontaine. This spot is celebrated as the scene of some of the bloodiest atrocities of the Kickapoo Indians and predatory bands of other tribes some fifty years since. Many of the settlers were killed, and others carried into a captivity scarce to be preferred.[67]

An evening ride of a dozen miles, interesting for nothing but a drenching shower, succeeded by a glare of scorching sunshine, which, for a time, threatened perfect fusion to the traveller, or, more properly, an unconditional resolution into fluidity; such an evening ride, under circumstances aforesaid, brought me at sunset to the town of Columbia, a place, as its name denotes, redolent of patriotism.[68] "Hail Columbia!" was the exhilarated expression of my feelings, if not of my lips, as I strode across the threshold of a log-cabin, the appurtenance of a certain worthy man with one leg and the moiety of another, who united in his calling the professions of cobbler and publican, as intimated by the sign-board over his door. Hail Columbia! All that it is possible to record touching this patriotic village seems to be that it adds one more to the five hundred previous villages of the selfsame appellation scattered over the land, whose chief consequence, like that of a Spanish grandee, is concentrated and consists in a title. Every county of almost every state of the Union, it is verily believed, can boast a Columbia. Indeed, the name of the Genoese seems in a fair way of being honoured as much as is that of George Washington; a distinction we are sure to find bestowed upon every bullet-pated, tow-haired little rascal, who, knowing not who his father was, can claim no patronymic less general, having been smuggled into the world nobody can tell when or how: George Washington, "*Father* of his *country*," indeed, if the perpetration of a very poor pun on a venerated name may be pardoned.

The earliest peep of dawn lighted me into the saddle; for, with the unhappy Clarence, *feelingly* could I ejaculate,

"Oh, I have pass'd a miserable night!"

In sober sadness, sleep, gentle sleep, had visited not my eyes, nor slumber mine eyelids; though, with the faith of a saint and the perseverance of a martyr, I had alternated from *bed* to board and from *board* to bed. And throughout that livelong night, be it recorded, even until the morning dawned, did a concert of whippoorwills and catydids keep up their infernal oratorio, seemingly for no other reason than for my own especial torment; until, sinner as I am, I could not but believe myself assoilzed of half the peccadilloes of a foregone life. Happy enough to find myself once more in the saddle, the morning breeze, as I cantered through the forest, fanned freshly a brow fevered by sleeplessness and vexation. The early beams of the day-god were flinging themselves in lengthened masses far athwart the plains at my feet as I stood upon the bluffs. Descending, I was once more upon the American Bottom.[69] This name, as already stated, was a distinction appropriated to that celebrated tract so long since as when it constituted the extreme limit in this direction of the Northwestern Territory. Extending northwardly from the embouchure of the Kaskaskia to the confluence of the great rivers, a distance of about one hundred miles, and embracing three hundred thousand acres of land, of fertility unrivalled, it presents, perhaps, second only to the Delta of Egypt, the most remarkable tract of country known. Its breadth varies from three miles to seven. Upon one side it is

[67] Waterloo, in Monroe County, about thirty miles northwest of Kaskaskia, was incorporated in 1848. In 1818 George Forquer purchased the land on which the village now stands, and in the same year he and Daniel P. Cook (later a member of Congress) laid out and named the town. In 1825 the county seat was changed from Harrisonville to Waterloo. About 1830, John Coleman erected a large wind-mill, later changed to an ox-mill (1837).Bellefontaine is the name applied by the early French to a large spring a mile south of the present site of Waterloo. In 1782 Captain James Moore, who had served under George Rogers Clark, settled at this spring, and in accordance with orders from the Virginia government built a blockhouse fort as a protection against the Indians. Owing to his tact and good judgment, amicable relations with the Indians were maintained until 1786, when serious trouble really began. During the next decade the Indians killed several whites. – Ed.

[68] Columbia, eight miles north of Waterloo, and fifteen miles south of St. Louis, was laid out in 1820 on land belonging to Louis Nolan. – Ed.

[69] With reference to the American Bottom, see Ogden's *Letters from the West*, in our volume xix, p. 62, note 48. – Ed.

bounded by a heavy strip of forest a mile or two deep, skirting the Mississippi; and upon the other by an extended range of bluffs, now rising from the plain in a mural escarpment of several hundred feet, as at the village of Prairie du Rocher, and again, as opposite St. Louis, swelling gracefully away into rounded sand-heaps, surmounted by Indian graves. At the base of the latter are exhaustless beds of bituminous coal, lying between parallel strata of limestone.[70] The area between the timber-belt and the bluffs is comprised in one extended meadow, heaving in alternate waves like the ocean after a storm, and interspersed with island-groves, sloughs, bayous, lagoons, and shallow lakes. These expansions of water are numerous, and owe their origin to that geological feature invariable to the Western rivers – the superior elevation of the immediate bank of the stream to that of the interior plain. The subsidence of the spring-floods is thus precluded; and, as the season advances, some of the ponds, which are more shallow, become entirely dry by evaporation, while others, converted into marshes, stagnate, and exhale *malaria* exceedingly deleterious to health. The poisonous night-dews caused by these marshes, and the miasm of their decomposing and putrefying vegetation, occasion, with the sultriness of the climate, bilious intermittents, and the far-famed, far-dreaded "*fever and ague*," not unfrequently terminating in consumption. This circumstance, indeed, presents the grand obstacle to the settlement of the American Bottom. It is one, however, not impracticable to obviate at slight expense, by the construction of sluices and canals communicating with the rivers, and by the clearing up and cultivation of the soil. The salubrious influence of the latter expedient upon the climate has, indeed, been satisfactorily tested during the ten or twelve years past; and this celebrated alluvion now bids fair, in time, to become the garden of North America. A few of its lakes are beautiful water-sheets, with pebbly shores and sparkling waves, abounding with fish. Among these is one appropriately named "Clear Lake," or the *Grand Marais*, as the French call it, which may be seen from St. Louis of a bright morning, when the sunbeams are playing upon its surface, or at night when the moon is at her full. The earliest settlements of the Western Valley were planted upon the American Bottom, and the French villagers have continued to live on in health among the sloughs and marshes, where Americans would most assuredly have perished. Geologically analyzed, the soil consists of a silicious or argillaceous loam, as sand or clay forms the predominating constituent. Its fertility seems exhaustless, having continued to produce corn at an average of seventy-five bushels to the acre for more than a hundred years in succession, in the neighbourhood of the old French villages, and without deterioration. Maize seems the appropriate production for the soil; all of the smaller grains, on account of the rank luxuriance of their growth, being liable to *blast* before the harvesting.

Cahokia, Ill.

[70] See our volume xxvi, p. 263, note 163. – Ed.

XLI

"Gramercy, Sir Traveller, it marvels me how you can carry between one pair of shoulders the weight of your heavy wisdom. Alack, now! would you but discourse me of the wonders you saw ayont the antipodes!"

"Peace, ignoramus! 'tis too good for thy ass's ears to listen to. The world shall get it, caxtonized in a great book." —*Traveller and Simpleton.*

"Farewell! a word that must be, and hath been;
A sound which makes us linger – yet – farewell!"

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.

Of the alluvial character of the celebrated American Bottom there can exist no doubt. Logs, shells, fragments of coal, and pebbles, which have been subjected to the abrasion of moving water, are found at a depth of thirty feet from the surface; and the soil throughout seems of unvarying fecundity. Whether this alluvial deposition is to be considered the result of annual floods of the river for ages, or whether the entire bottom once formed the bed of a vast lake, in which the waters of the Mississippi and Missouri mingled on their passage to the Gulf, is a question of some considerable interest. The latter seems the more plausible theory. Indeed, the ancient existence of an immense lake, where now lies the American Bottom, upon the east side of the Mississippi, and the Mamelle Prairie upon the west side, extending seventy miles northwardly from the mouth of the Missouri where the Bottom ends, appears geologically demonstrable. The southern limit of this vast body of water seems to have been at that remarkable cliff, rising from the bed of the Mississippi about twenty miles below the outlet of the Kaskaskia, and known as the "Grand Tower." There is every indication from the torn and shattered aspect of the cliffs upon either side, and the accumulation of debris, that a grand parapet of limestone at this point once presented a barrier to the heaped-up waters, and formed a cataract scarcely less formidable than that of Niagara. The elevation of the river by this obstacle is estimated at one hundred and thirty feet above the present ordinary water-mark. For more than an hundred miles before reaching this point, the Mississippi now rolls through a broad, deep valley, bounded by an escarpment of cliffs upon either side; and, wherever these present a bold façade to the stream, they are grooved, as at the *cornice-rocks*, by a series of parallel lines, distinctly traced and strikingly uniform. As the river descends, these water-grooves gradually rise along the heights, until, at the Grand Tower, they attain an altitude of more than an hundred feet; below this point the phenomenon is not observed.[71] This circumstance, and the disruption of the cliffs at the same elevation, clearly

[71] The passage subjoined relative to the *Geological Transformations* which have taken place in the Mississippi Valley, is extracted from "Schoolcraft's Travels in its central portions," and will be found abundantly to corroborate my own observations upon the subject."It seems manifest, from various appearances, that the country we have under consideration has been subjected to the influence of water at a comparatively recent period; and it is evident that its peculiar alluvial aspect is the distinct and natural result of the time and the mode in which these waters were exhausted. One striking fact, which appears to have escaped general observation, is, that at some former period there has been an obstruction in the channel of the Mississippi at or near Grand Tower, producing a stagnation of the current at an elevation of about one hundred and thirty feet above the present ordinary water-mark. This appears evident from the general elevation and direction of the hills, which, for several hundred miles above, are separated by a valley from twenty to twenty-five miles wide, which now deeply imbosoms the current of the Mississippi. Wherever these hills disclose rocky and precipitous fronts, a series of distinctly-marked antique water-lines are to be observed. These water-lines preserve a parallelism which is very remarkable, and, what we should expect to find, constantly present their greatest depression towards the sources of the river. At Grand Tower they are elevated about one hundred and thirty feet above the summit level, at which elevation we observe petrifactions of madrepores and various other fossil organic remains which belong to this peculiar era. Here the rocks of dark-coloured limestone, which pervade the country to so great an extent, project towards each other as if they had once united; but, by some convulsion of nature, or, what is still more probable, by the continued action of the water upon a secondary rock, the Mississippi has effected a passage through this barrier, and thus producing an exhaustion of the stagnant waters from the level prairie lands above." —*Schoolcraft's Travels*, p. 218, 219. –

indicate the former surface of the lake. Organic remains, petrifactions of madrepores, corallines, concholites, and other fossil testacea, are found imbedded in a stratum nearly at the base. Similar phenomena of the water-lines exist upon the cliffs of the Ohio, and a barrier is thought once to have obstructed the stream at a point called *the Narrows*, sixty miles below Louisville, with the same result as upon the Mississippi. The eastern boundary of the expansion of the latter stream must have been the chain of bluffs now confining the American Bottom in that direction, and considered a spur of the Ozark Mountains. This extends northeasterly to the "confluence;" thence, bending away to the northwest, it reaches the Illinois, and forms the eastern bank of that river. Upon the western side, the hills along the Missouri are sufficiently elevated to present a barrier to the lake until they reach the confluence of the rivers. At this point spreads out the Mamelle Prairie, sixty or seventy miles in length, and, upon an average, five or six in breadth. West of this plain, the lake was bounded by the range of bluffs commencing with the celebrated "Mamelles," and stretching north until they strike the river; while the gradual elevation of the country, ascending the Upper Mississippi, presented a limit in that direction.

The event by which this great lake was drained appears to have been of a character either convulsive or volcanic, or to have been the result of the long-continued abrasion of the waters, as at Niagara. The rocks at the Grand Tower are limestone of secondary formation – the stratum being several hundred feet in depth, and imbedding hornstone and marine petrifactions throughout. They everywhere exhibit indications of having once been subjected to the attrition of rushing water, as do the cliffs bounding the Northern lakes, which have long been chafed by the waves. The evidence of volcanic action, or violent subterranean convulsion of some kind, caused by heat, seems hardly less evident. The former workings of a divulsive power of terrific energy is betrayed, indeed, all over this region. In the immediate vicinity of the Grand Tower, which may be considered the scene of its most fearful operations, huge masses of shattered rock, dipping in every direction, are scattered about; and the whole stratum for twenty miles around lies completely broken up. At the point in the range of bluffs where this confusion is observed to cease, the mural cliff rises abruptly to the altitude of several hundred feet, exhibiting along the façade of its summit deep water-lines and other evidence of having once constituted the boundary of a lake. At the base issues a large spring of fresh water, remarkable for a regular ebb and flow, like the tides of the ocean, once in twenty-four hours.[72] At this spot, also, situated in the southeastern extremity of St. Clair county, exists an old American settlement, commenced a century since, and called the "*Block-house*," from the circumstance of a stoccade fort for defence against the Indians.[73] By a late geological *reconnoissance*, we learn that, from this remarkable *tide-spring* until we reach the Grand Tower, the face of the country has a depressed and sunken aspect, as if once the bed of standing water; and was evidently overlaid by an immense stratum of calcareous rock. A hundred square miles of this massive ledge have, by some tremendous convulsion of Nature, been thrown up and shattered in fragments. The confused accumulation of debris is now sunken and covered with repeated strata of alluvial deposite. Evidence of all this is adduced from the circumstance that huge blocks of limestone are yet frequently to be encountered in this region, some of them protruding twenty or thirty feet above the surface. As we approach the

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Flagg.*Comment by Ed.* This hypothesis, in the main formulated by H. R. Schoolcraft, is still in its general features accepted by many geologists. See also Elisée Reclus, *The Earth and its Inhabitants* (New York, 1893), article "North America," iii, pp. 224, 225.

[72] A similar spring is said to issue from *debris* at the foot of the cliffs on the Ohio, in the vicinity of Battery Rock. Its stream is copious, clear, and cold, ebbing and flowing regularly once in six hours. This phenomenon is explained on the principle of the syphon. Similar springs are found among the Alps. – Flagg.

[73] Flagg is somewhat mistaken concerning the age of the block-house settlement. Previous to 1800, the only American settlement in St. Clair County was Turkey Hill, which at that date numbered twenty souls. William Scott, the first settler, moved thither with his family from Kentucky in 1797, and became a permanent resident. About 1810, Nathaniel Hill, Joshua Perkins, Reuben Stubblefield, James and Reuben Lively, and Richard Bearley settled in the southeastern corner of St. Clair County, and for protection against the Indians built a block-house near the present city of Hillstown on Dosa Creek (a tributary of the Kaskaskia). The fort was later abandoned, and the settlers moved to other parts of the state. For a description of the fort, see *History of St. Clair County, Illinois* (Philadelphia, 1881), pp. 261, 262. – Ed.

Grand Tower – that focus, around which the convulsed throes of Nature seem to have concentrated their tremendous energy – the number and the magnitude of these massive blocks constantly increase, until, at that point, we behold them piled up in mountain-masses as if by the hand of Omnipotent might. Upon all this vast Valley of the West the terrible impress of Almighty power seems planted in characters too deep to be swept away by the effacing finger of time. We trace them not more palpably in these fearful results of the convulsions of Nature, agonized by the tread of Deity, than in the eternal flow of those gigantic rivers which roll their floods over this wreck of elements, or in those ocean-plains which, upon either side, in billowy grandeur heave away, wave after wave, till lost in the magnificence of boundless extent. And is there nothing in those vast accumulations of organic fossils – spoils of the sea and the land – the collected wealth of the animal, vegetable, and mineral worlds, entombed in the heart of the everlasting hills – is there naught in all this to arouse within the reflecting mind a sentiment of wonder, and elicit an acknowledgment to the grandeur of Deity? Whence came these varied productions of the land and sea, so incongruous in character and so diverse in origin? By what fearful anarchy of elements were they imbedded in these massive cliffs? How many ages have rolled away since they were entombed in these adamantine sepulchres, from which Nature's convulsive throes in later times have caused the resurrection? To such inquiries we receive no answer. The secrecy of untold cycles veils the reply in mystery. The *effect* is before us, but the *cause* rests alone with Omniscience.

How wonderful are the phenomena betrayed in the geological structure of our earth! And scarcely less so are the ignorance and the indifference respecting them manifested by most of our race. "It is marvellous," says the celebrated Buckland,[74] "that mankind should have gone on for so many centuries in ignorance of the fact, which is now so fully demonstrated, that so small a part of the present surface of the earth is derived from the remains of animals that constituted the population of ancient seas. Many extensive plains and massive mountains form, as it were, the great charnel-houses of preceding generations, in which the petrified exuviæ of extinct races of animals and vegetables are piled into stupendous monuments of the operations of life and death during almost immeasurable periods of past time." "At the sight of a spectacle," says Cuvier,[75] "so imposing, so terrible as that of the wreck of animal life, forming almost the entire soil on which we tread, it is difficult to restrain the imagination from hazarding some conjectures as to the cause by which such great effects have been produced." The deeper we descend into the strata of the earth, the higher do we ascend into the archæological history of past ages of creation. We find successive stages marked by varying forms of animal and vegetable life, and these generally differ more and more widely from existing species as we go farther downward into the receptacle of the wreck of more ancient creations.

That centuries have elapsed since that war of elements by which the great lake of the Mississippi was drained of its waters, the aged forests rearing themselves from its ancient bed, and the venerable monuments resting upon the surface, satisfactorily demonstrate. Remains, also, of a huge animal of graminivorous habits, but differing from the mastodon, have, within a few years, been disinterred from the soil. The theory of the Baron Cuvier, that our earth is but the wreck of other worlds, meets with ample confirmation in the geological character of the Western Valley.

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[74] William Buckland (1784-1856), a distinguished English geologist, who was as well canon of Christ College, Oxford (1825), and dean of Westminster Abbey (1845), contributed many valuable papers to geological publications. The Royal Society's *Catalogue of Scientific Papers* shows that Buckland was the author of fifty-three memoirs. His most important publication, *Geology and Mineralogy Considered with Reference to Natural Theology* (a Bridgewater thesis, 1836), attempts to prove by aid of science, "the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, as manifested in the Creation." – Ed.

[75] George Leopold Crétien Frédéric Dagobert, baron de Cuvier (1769-1832), a French naturalist, was founder of the science of comparative anatomy. He was chosen as one of the original members of the Institute, organized in 1795. After holding various administrative offices under Napoleon, he was appointed (1814) a councilor of state, which position he held under Louis XVIII. In 1819 he was made president of the committee of the interior, and chancellor of the University of Paris. Louis Phillipe made him a peer of France. Cuvier's scientific work falls into three divisions – paleontology, systematic zoology, and comparative anatomy. He wrote extensively in all these fields, and in each achieved high recognition. Consult: Sarah Lee, *Memoirs of Baron Cuvier* (London, 1833), and Ducrotay de Blainville, *Cuvier et Geoffrey Saint Hilaire* (Paris, 1890). – Ed.

As to agricultural productions, besides those of the more ordinary species, the soil of the American Bottom, in its southern sections, seems eminently adapted to the cultivation of cotton, hemp, and tobacco, not to mention the castor-bean and the Carolina potato. The tobacco-plant, one of the most sensitively delicate members of the vegetable family, has been cultivated with more than ordinary success; and a quantity inspected at New-Orleans a few years since was pronounced superior to any ever offered at that market.

As I journeyed leisurely onward over this celebrated tract, extensive and beautiful farms spread out themselves around me, waving in all the gorgeous garniture of early autumn. The prairie was carpeted with the luxuriant richness of the *golden rod*, and all the gaudy varieties of the *heliotrope* and *asters*, and the crimson-dyed leaves of the dwarf-sumach; while here and there upon the extended plain stood out in loneliness, like a landmark of centuries, one of those mysterious tombs of a departed race of which I have already said so much. Some of them were to be seen rearing up their summits from the hearts of extensive maize-fields, crowned with an exuberance of vegetation; and upon one of larger magnitude stood a white farmhouse, visible in the distance for miles down the prairie. The number of these ancient mounds upon the American Bottom is estimated at *three hundred*; far more than are to be found upon any other tract of equal extent.

At the old French village of *Prairie du Pont*,[76] situated upon a creek of the same name, I made the necessary tarry for some refreshment, upon which breakfast or dinner might have laid nearly equal claim to bestow a name. The most striking circumstance which came under my observation during my delay at this place was a very novel mode of producing the metamorphosis of cream into butter pursued by these villagers; a manœuvre executed by beating the cream with a spoon in a shallow basin. This operation I beheld carried on by the dark-browed landlord, much to my ignorance and wonder, with not an idea of its nature, until the substance produced was placed upon the board before me, and called *butter*. Prairie du Pont is one of the dampest, filthiest, most disagreeably ruinous of all the old villages I have ever visited. A few miles to the north is situated Cahokia,[77] one of the earliest settlements in the state, and the ancient residence of the *Caoquias,* one of the tribes of the Illini Indians. The place is supposed to have been settled by the followers of La Salle during his second expedition to the West in 1683, on his return from the mouth of the Mississippi. More than a century and a half has since elapsed; and the river, which then washed the foot of the village, is now more than a mile distant. This removal commenced, we are told, shortly after the first settlement, and well exemplifies the arbitrary character of the Western waters. Formerly, also, a considerable creek, which yet retains the name of the village, passed through its midst, discharging itself into the Mississippi not far below. The outlet is now several miles higher up; and tradition attributes the change to the pique of an irritated villager, who, out of sheer spite to the old place and its inhabitants, cut a channel from the creek to the river, and turned the waters from their ancient course.

As French immigration at Cahokia increased, the Indian tribe receded, until the last remnant has long since disappeared. Yet it is a singular fact in the history of this settlement, that, notwithstanding the savages were forced to abandon a spot endeared to them by protracted residence and the abundance of game in the neighbouring prairies and lakes, they have ever regarded their successors with feelings of unchanging friendliness. How different, under the same circumstances, was the fate of the settlements of Plymouth and Jamestown; and even here, no sooner did the American race appear among the French, than hostilities commenced.

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[76] Prairie du Pont (Prairie Bridge), located upon a creek of the same name, was so christened for a log bridge which in early times crossed the creek at this point. The settlement was first made about 1760 by people from Cahokia who, according to tradition, fled thither from the floods; the site is ten or twelve feet higher than that of Cahokia. The Sulpician missionaries had built a mill there in 1754. In 1844 the place was nearly destroyed by floods. – Ed.

[77] For a short historical sketch of Cahokia, see A. Michaux's *Travels,* in our volume iii, p. 70, note 135. Flagg, in common with the earlier writers, places the date of Cahokia too early. – Ed.

For many years Cahokia, like old Kaskaskia, was the gathering-spot of a nomadic race of trappers, hunters, miners, voyageurs, engagés, *couriers du bois*, and adventurers, carrying on an extensive and valuable fur-trade with the Indian tribes of the Upper Mississippi. This traffic has long since been transferred to St. Louis, and the village seems now remarkable for nothing but the venerableness of age and decay. All the peculiarities of these old settlements, however, are here to be seen in perfection. The broad-roofed, whitewashed, and galleried cottage; the picketed enclosure; the kitchen garden; the peculiar costumes, customs, poverty, ignorance, and indolence of the race, are here met, precisely as has more than once already been described in these volumes. Here, too, is the gray old Catholic church, in which service is still regularly performed by the officiating priest. Connected with it is now a nunnery and a seminary of education for young ladies. The villagers still retain their ancient activity of heel and suppleness of elbow; and not a week is suffered to pass without a merry-making and a dance. The old "common field" is still under cultivation; and, uncurtailed of its fair proportions, stretches away up the bottom to the village opposite St. Louis. This valuable tract, held in common by the villagers of Cahokia and Prairie du Pont, has been confirmed to them by act of Congress; and, so long since as fifty years, four hundred acres adjoining the former village were, by special act, granted to each family.[78] The number of families is now, as has been the case this century past, about fifty, neither diminishing nor increasing. Very few of the inhabitants are of American origin, and these are liable to annual attacks of fever, owing to the damp site of the place and the noxious effluvia of the numerous marshes in the vicinity. Upon the French villagers these causes of disease exert no effect, favourable or unfavourable. A few acres of corn; a log cabin; a few swarthy responsibilities, and a few cattle; a cracked fiddle, and a few cartloads of prairie-grass-hay in autumn, seems the very ultimatum of his heart to covet or his industry to obtain.

The road from Cahokia to the city, inasmuch as it is not often conscious of a more dignified equipage than the rude market-cart of the French villager, is of no wonderful celebrity for breadth, or uniformity of track, or excellence of structure. It extends along the bank of the Mississippi, and is shaded on either side by the strip of forest which skirts the margin. After a tarry of several hours at Cahokia, and an excursion among the mounds of the neighbouring prairie, near sunset I found myself approaching "Illinois-town," opposite St. Louis.[79] It was the calm, soft evening hour; and, as I now advanced briskly over the prairie, the cool breeze was whispering among the perfumed grass-tops, and "night's silvery veil" was slowly gathering along the retreating landscape. The sun went down like a monarch, robed in purple, and the fleecy clouds which had formed his throne rolled themselves in rich luxuriance along the horizon, suffused in the beautiful carmine of the heavens. At intervals an opening in the forest laid bare the scene of splendour as I hastened onward, and then all was dusk again. Winding among the group of mounds reposing in the deepening twilight, and penetrating the grove of pecans, the moon was just beginning to gild the gliding wave at my feet as my horse stood out upon the bank of the stream. Clear and distinct beyond, against the crimson back-ground of the evening sky, were cut the towers, and cupolas, and lofty roofs of the city; while in front, the lengthened line of white warehouses gleamed from the shade along the curving shore: and the eye, as it glanced up the far-retreating vistas of the streets, caught a glimpse of deeper glories along the narrow zone

[78] By act of Congress approved March 1, 1791, "a tract of land including the villages of Cohos [Cahokia], and Prairie du Pont, and heretofore used by the inhabitants of the said village as a common," was, "appropriated to the use of the inhabitants … to be used by them as a common, until otherwise disposed of by law." By the same act, four hundred acres were ordered to be laid out, and "given to each of those persons who in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three were heads of families at Vincennes, or in the Illinois country, on the Mississippi, and who, since that time, have moved from one of the said places to the other." – Ed.

[79] In 1815 Etienne Pinçoneau (now spelled Pensoneau) laid out a town on the present site of East St. Louis, and named it Jacksonville. His efforts proving unsuccessful, he sold the land to McKnight and Brady, who in May, 1818, platted the site and named it Illinoistown. During the succeeding autumn, the citizens of Cahokia appointed five agents to lay out a town site on the Cahokia commons. Illinois City thus came into existence, and the action of the citizens was legalized by Congress (May 1, 1820). Illinoistown, Illinois City, and other small villages were later united to form East St. Louis, which was incorporated in 1861 and chartered four years later. – Ed.

of horizon beyond. The broad sheet which I was now crossing seemed, with the oily gliding of its ripples, completely died in the tender roseate of the sunset sky. As the shades of evening deepened into night, one after another these delicate hues faded gently away: and the moonlight streamed in full floods of misty magnificence far over the distant forests; the evening-bells of the city pealed out merrily over the waters; the many lights of the steamers cheerfully twinkled along the landing; and, as the last faint glimmer of day had gone out, and night had resumed her sable reign, I found myself once more amid the "crowd and shock of men," threading the long, dusty streets of St. Louis…

Gentle Reader, the tale is told – our task is ended —

"And what is writ, is writ;
Would it were worthier!"

Our pilgrimage is over, fellow-wanderer. Full many a bright day have we trod together the green prairies, and glided over the far-winding waters of the fair Valley. Together have we paused and pondered beside the mysterious mausoleum of a race departed. We have lingered among the time-stained dwellings of an ancient and peculiar people, and with kindling interest have dwelt upon the early chronicles and the wild legends of the "far off," beautiful West. But autumn is upon us – shadowy autumn, dark on the mountain-brow. Her purple mistiness is deepening over the distant landscape; and the chill rustle of her evening wind, in melancholy whisperings, wanders among the pennoned grass-tops. Our pilgrimage ceases, yet with no unmingled emotions do I say to thee "*pax vobiscum*!"

"Ye! who have traced the Pilgrim to the scene
Which is his last, if in your memories dwell
A *thought* which once was his, if on ye swell
A *single* recollection, not in vain
He wore his sandal-shoon and scallop-shell:
Farewell!"

St. Louis, Oct., 1837.

PREFACE

To those who love their country, and their fellow men, we present this interesting Narrative, with the hope, we might say, the certainty, that its perusal will afford them some moments of the purest gratification. We have seldom met any thing more entertaining. Its simple, manly eloquence enchants the attention. The facts it makes known to us of the "far, far West," the dispositions and habits of the Indian Tribes who roam over the vast region of the Oregon, their present state and future prospects, are such as cannot fail to awaken lively interest in all who love to look around them beyond the narrow horizon of every-day scenes, and learn what the holy servants of God are doing for His sake and in His name in distant parts of the world. We have conversed with the apostolic man from whose pen we receive this narrative; and as we listened we felt at once honoured and delighted to be so near one who in our days and in his own person brings before us that lofty spirit of missionary devotedness – those thrilling scenes of Indian life and adventure which we so much admire in the pages of Charlevoix and Bancroft.

Truly our country is full of interest to those who watch its progress, and compare it with the past. Who, for example, could have dreamt that the Iroquois, the savage Mohawk, – under which name we best know the tribe, and whose startling yell so often made our forefathers tremble, – would have been chosen to kindle the first faint sparks of civilization and Christianity among a large portion of the Indian tribes beyond the Rocky Mountains? This is one of the singular facts which these pages present to us. They abound in others not less singular and interesting. Many of these Indian nations actually thirst after the waters of life – sigh for the day when the real "Long Gown" is to appear among them, and even send messengers thousands of miles to hasten his coming. Such longing after God's holy truth, while it shames our colder piety, should also enflame every heart to pray fervently that laborers may be found for this vast vineyard – and open every hand to aid the holy, self-devoted men, who, leaving home and friends and country, have buried themselves in these wilds with their beloved Indians, to live for them and God. One of their favourite plans at this moment is to introduce among them a taste for agriculture, with the means to pursue it. They believe it to be the speediest, perhaps the only way by which the Indians may be won from the wandering life they now in general lead and from the idle habits it engenders. To aid them in this philanthropic object is our sacred duty as men, as Americans, as Christians. It is at least one method of atonement for the countless wrongs which these unfortunate races have received from the whites. We should be grateful to have such an opportunity of doing good: let none suffer the occasion to pass unhonoured by some tribute to the noble cause – some evidence of their love for God, their country and their fellow man.

The frontispiece is from the pencil of one of the Indian Missionaries.

It blends the skill of the artist with the fancy of the poet, and will hardly be understood without a word of explanation. In the foreground we see several of the gigantic trees of the Oregon forests, fallen and crossing each other. On these repose two wolves, a squirrel and several serpents. Above, two Indian chiefs, surnamed in baptism after the great Apostles of the Gentiles, Peter and Paul, are supporting a large basket of hearts, – an offering to heaven from the grateful wilderness. On the right are the emblems of Indian life and warfare: the bow and arrows, battle-axe and shield. Below and above these are seen some of the most remarkable animals of the country – the bear, the wild horse, the badger, the graceful antelope, intermingled with the plover, the pigeon, the wood-cock, the bittern, and other birds of the region. On the left are the peaceful symbols of Christianity – the Bible and the Cross, the chalice and altar lights – the anchor, symbol of faith and hope – the trumpet, to proclaim the word of God and bid the desert bless His holy name. Here too we behold several of the noble animals of the territory – the buffalo, the deer and elk, the mountain sheep and different birds. In the distance are seen on the right, Indian mounds, and a water-spout rising from the river Platte, and on the left, the Rocky Mountains surmounted by the Cross. Festoons, composed of the various

flowers the Fathers have met on their way over mountains and prairies and through lonely vallies, complete the picture – the whole supported at the extremities by different birds of the country, and in the centre by the American eagle, – fit emblem, we may say, of their own dauntless faith, as well as of the heroic spirit of the nation within whose borders they have their principal station, and from whose genuine piety they have received the most consoling assurances of final success, viz: the Flat Head Indians and the Pends-d'oreilles, who are styled, even by their foes, the "nation of chiefs."

Once more we earnestly commend the noble cause of these devoted Missionaries to the charity of every sincere Christian. The short time allowed to prepare the work for the press must be our apology for several imperfections or errors which may meet the eye of the reader.

BOOK I

Dies venit, dies tua
In qua reflorent omnia,
Lætemur et nos in viam,
Tua reducti dex-tera.

The days of spring are drawing near
When all thy flowers will re-appear,
And we redeemed by thy right hand,
Shall walk in gladness thro' the land.

LETTER I

St. Louis University, Feb. 4, 1841.

TO THE REV. F. J. B

Rev. and Dear Sir:

I presume you are aware, that in the beginning of last Spring, I was sent by the Right Rev. Bishop of St. Louis,[80] and my Provincial, on an exploring expedition to the Rocky Mountains, in order to ascertain the dispositions of the Indians, and the prospects of success we might have if we were to establish a mission among them. It is truly gratifying to me to have so favorable a report to make. – My occupations do not allow me to enter into all the details; I shall therefore be satisfied at present with giving you a brief sketch of my journey and its result.

I started from Westport on the 30th of April, in company with the Annual Expedition of the American Fur Company, which for this year had appointed the rendezvous on Green River, a tributary of the Rio Colorado of the West.[81] Captain Dripps, who commanded the caravan, treated me on all occasions with the most polite attention.[82] On the 6th day of our journey I was seized with the fever and ague, and have been subject to it for nearly five months. Nothing particularly worth noticing, occurred during the journey, except, when we halted in the village of the Sheyennes.[83] I was introduced to the Chiefs as a minister of the Great Spirit: they showed me great deference, and I was invited to a feast. I had to pass at first through all the ceremonies of the calumet; the great chief approached me to shake hands, and gave me a heartfelt "How do you do." – "Blackgown," said he, "my heart was filled with joy when I learned who you were. My lodge never received a visitor for whom I feel a greater esteem. As soon as I was apprised of your coming, I ordered my great kettle to be filled, and in your honor, I commanded that my three fattest dogs should be served up." The bravest warriors of the nation partook of the repast, and I availed myself of the opportunity to explain

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[80] Father de Smet was sent on the mission to the Flathead Indians by Joseph Rosati. For an account of the latter, see Flagg's *Far West*, in our volume xxvi, p. 164, note 115. – Ed.

[81] In 1821, Pierre Chouteau, Jr., of the American Fur Company, established a general agency in the bottom opposite Randolph Bluffs, about three miles below the present site of Kansas City. His buildings having been destroyed by a flood in 1826, he erected others on higher ground, in the present Guinott addition, near the foot of Walnut street. The place was called Chouteau's Warehouse, and soon became a favorite shipping point for the Indian trade. In 1831 John McCoy built a trading house at the crossing of the roads from Chouteau's Warehouse and Independence. Two years later he platted a town at this point and named it Westport. Westport first used Chouteau's Warehouse as a landing place, but later built a wharf on the high rocky bank of the river, at the present foot of Grand Avenue, Walnut, Main, and Delaware streets. Because of superior natural advantages, this latter place soon became the principal landing, and in 1838 a company purchased the site, platted a town, and named it Kansas City. Westport thus became the starting point for the caravans to the Western country.Prior to 1822, the overland expeditions seem to have been composed of men on foot carrying their wares in packs. Later, pack horses were substituted, and by 1830 wagons were used almost exclusively. Owing to the dangers from hostile Indians, the traders going to Santa Fé or points in the Rocky Mountains formed themselves into caravans for mutual protection, with an organized system of guards and camps. See Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies*, in our volume xix, pp. 198-201, for a description of these caravans. – Ed.

[82] Andrew Drips was born in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania (1789), went west, and with eight other St. Louis men formed the Missouri Fur Company (1820). He was later a member of the independent firm of Fontenelle and Drips. When the American Fur Company began their westward expansion, Drips entered into their employ, having charge after 1836 of annual expeditions to the mountains. In 1842, the company having encountered strong opposition, the federal government was prevailed upon to revive the office of Indian agent. Drips served four years as agent to the Sioux of the upper Missouri, with an annual salary of $1500. In this capacity, Drips rendered valuable service to the company. Upon the expiration of his term of office, he re-entered the company's employment, in which he continued until his death at Kansas City, Missouri (1860). He married a woman of the Oto Indian nation. Their daughter, Mrs. William Mulkey of Kansas City, has in her possession many of her father's valuable papers. See H. M. Chittenden, *American Fur-Trade of the Far West* (New York, 1902). – Ed.

[83] For a sketch of the Cheyenne, see Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, p. 140, note 88. – Ed.

to them the most important tenets of Christianity. I told them the object of my visit, and enquired whether they would not be satisfied to have also Black-gowns among them, who would teach them to love and serve the Great Spirit, as he wished. "Oh yes," they eagerly answered, "we will gladly provide for every thing that they stand in need of; they will not die of hunger amongst us." I have no doubt but a zealous missionary would do a great deal of good among them. They are about two thousand in number. Their language, it is said, is very difficult. On the 30th of June we arrived at the rendezvous.[84] An escort of warriors had been provided for me by the Flat-heads. Our meeting was that of children who come to meet their parent, and in the effusion of their heart, they bestowed upon me the fondest names with a simplicity truly patriarchal. They told me of all the interesting particulars of their nation, and of the wonderful preservation of sixty of their men, in a battle against two hundred Black-feet, which lasted five whole days, and in which they killed fifty of their enemies, without losing a single man of their number. "The Great Spirit watched over them;" they said, "he knew that we were to guide you to our camp, and he wanted to clear the road of all the obstacles that you might have found on your way. We trust we will not be annoyed any more by the Black-feet; they went off weeping like women." We thanked heaven for the signal preservation, and implored its assistance for the new and perilous journey we were on the point of undertaking. The Indians of different nations and the trappers, had assembled at the rendezvous in great numbers, for the sake of the trade. On Sunday, the fifth of July, I had the consolation of celebrating the holy sacrifice of Mass *sub dio*. The altar was placed on an elevation, and surrounded with boughs and garlands of flowers; I addressed the congregation in French and in English, and spoke also by an interpreter to the Flat-head and Snake Indians. It was a spectacle truly moving for the heart of a Missionary, to behold an assembly composed of so many different nations, who all assisted at our holy mysteries with great satisfaction. – The Canadians sung hymns in French and Latin, and the Indians in their native tongue. It was truly a Catholic worship… This place has been called since that time, by the French Canadians, *la prairie de la Messe*.

About thirty of the principal chiefs of the Snake Indians invited me to a council.[85] I explained to them the Christian doctrine in a compendious manner – they were all very attentive – they then deliberated among themselves for about half an hour, and one of the chiefs, addressing me in the name of the others, said: "Black-gown, the words of thy mouth have found their way to our hearts; they never will be forgotten. Our country is open for thee; come to teach us what we have to do, to please the Great Spirit, and we will do according to thy words." I advised them to select among themselves a wise and prudent man, who, every morning and evening, should assemble them to offer to Almighty God their prayers and supplications; that there the good chiefs should have an opportunity of exhorting their warriors to behave as they ought. The meeting was held the very same evening, and the great chief promulgated a law, that for the future, the one who would be guilty of theft, or of any other disorderly act, should receive a public castigation. On Monday, 6th, we proceeded on our journey.[86] A dozen Canadians wished to accompany me, to have an opportunity, as they said, to practise their religion. Eight days afterwards we arrived safely in the camp of the Flat-heads, and Ponderas, or Pends d'oreilles.[87]

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[84] The rendezvous in 1840 was held in the upper valley of Green River, near Fort Bonneville, in western Wyoming. Near the headwaters of the Missouri, Columbia, and Colorado rivers, this place was a natural and well-known meeting point. For a description of Green River, see Wyeth's *Oregon*, in our volume xxi, p. 60, note 38; for the rendezvous at this place in 1834, see Townsend's *Narrative*, in the same volume, p. 192, note 40. – Ed.

[85] For a sketch of the Snake Indians, see Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, p. 227, note 123. – Ed.

[86] In the *Voyages aux Montagnes Rocheuses*, De Smet says, "on the 4th of July, I resumed my travels, with my Flatheads." – Ed.

[87] Flathead was a term applied to various tribes of Indians who were supposed to practice the custom of flattening the heads of their infants. A division of the Choctaw was known by this name. The tribe here referred to belonged to the Salishan stock; see Franchère's *Narrative*, in our volume vi, p. 340, note 145. They were not in the habit of flattening the head, and the origin of their cognomen is unknown. The specific tribe visited by De Smet dwelt along the lake and river which bear their name, with their chief centre in the Bitterroot Valley. By the treaty of 1855 they ceded to the government an extensive tract of land in this region, being

Immediately the whole village was in commotion; men, women and children, all came to meet me, and shake hands, and I was conducted in triumph to the lodge of the great chief Tjolizhitzay, (the Big face.) He has the appearance of an old patriarch. Surrounded by the principal chiefs of the two tribes, and the most renowned warriors, he thus addressed me: "This day Kaikolinzosten (the Great Spirit) has accomplished our wishes, and our hearts are swelled with joy. Our desire to be instructed was so great, that three times had we deputed our people to the Great Black-gown[88] in St. Louis, to obtain a father. Now, Father, speak, and we will comply with all you will tell us. Show us the road we have to follow, to come to the place where the Great Spirit resides." Then he resigned his authority to me; but I replied that he mistook the object of my coming among them; that I had no other object in view, but their spiritual welfare; that with respect to temporal affairs, they should remain as they were, till circumstances should allow them to settle in a permanent spot. – Afterwards we deliberated on the hours proper for their spiritual exercises and instructions. One of the chiefs brought me a bell, with which I might give the signal.

The same evening about 2,000 persons were assembled before my lodge to recite night prayers in common. I told them the result of my conference with the chiefs; of the plan of instructions which I intended to pursue; and with what disposition they ought to assist at them, etc. Night prayers having been said, a solemn canticle of praise of their own composition, was sung by these children of the mountains, to the Author of their being. It would be impossible for me to describe the emotions I felt at this moment; I wept for joy, and admired the marvellous ways of that kind Providence, who, in his infinite mercy, had deigned to depute me to this poor people, to announce to them the glad tidings of salvation. The next day I assembled the council, and with the assistance of an intelligent interpreter, I translated into their language the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Apostles' Creed, the ten Commandments, and four Acts. As I was in the habit of reciting these prayers, morning and evening, and before instructions, about a fortnight after, I promised a beautiful silver medal to the one who would recite them first. One of the chiefs rising immediately, "Father," said he, smiling, "that medal is mine," and he recited all the prayers without missing a word. I embraced him, praised the eagerness which he had evinced of being instructed, and appointed him my Cathecist. This good Indian set to work with so much zeal and perseverance, that in less than a fortnight all knew their prayers.

Every morning, at the break of day, the old chief is the first on horseback, and goes round the camp from lodge to lodge. "Now my children," he exclaims, "it is time to rise; let the first thoughts of your hearts be for the Great Spirit; say that you love him, and beg of him to be merciful unto you. Make haste, our Father will soon ring the bell, open your ears to listen, and your hearts to receive the words of his mouth." Then, if he has perceived any disorderly act on the preceding day, or if he has received unfavorable reports from the other chiefs, he gives them a fatherly admonition. Who would not think, that this could only be found in a well ordered and religious community, and yet it is among Indians in the defiles and vallies of the Rocky Mountains!!! You have no idea of the eagerness they showed to receive religious instruction. I explained the Christian doctrine four times a day, and nevertheless my lodge was filled, the whole day, with people eager to hear more. At night I related those histories of the Holy Scriptures that were best calculated to promote their piety and edification, and as I happened to observe, that I was afraid of tiring them, "oh no," they replied, "if we were not afraid of tiring you, we would gladly spend here the whole night."

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nearly two degrees in width and extending from near the forty-second parallel to the British line. In November, 1871, the president issued an order for their removal from Bitterroot Valley to the Jocko reservation. Arrangements were further completed by the article of agreement of August 27, 1872. After considerable delay they removed thither, and together with the Pend d'Oreille and Kutenai, kindred tribes, still inhabit the reservation. See Peter Ronan, *Historical Sketch of the Flathead Indian Nation* (Helena, 1890).The Pend d'Oreille (Ear-ring) Indians, whose native name was Kalispel, were kindred to the Flathead, speaking a similar dialect. Their habitat lay northwest of the Flathead proper, upon the Idaho lake and its tributary river bearing their name. – Ed.

[88] The Bishop. – De Smet.

I conferred the holy sacrament of Baptism on six hundred of them, and if I thought it prudent to postpone the baptism of others till my return, it was not for want of desire on their part, but chiefly to impress upon their minds a greater idea of the holiness of the sacrament, and of the dispositions that are required to receive it worthily. Among those baptised, were the two great chiefs of the Flat-heads and of the Ponderas. As I excited the catechumens to a heartfelt contrition of their sins, the *Walking Bear*, chief of the Ponderas, answered: "Father, I have been plunged for a number of years in profound ignorance of good and evil, and no doubt, during that time, I have often greatly displeased the Great Spirit, and therefore I must humbly beseech his pardon. But when I afterwards conceived that a thing was bad, I banished it from my heart, and I do not recollect to have since deliberately offended the Great Spirit." Truly, where such dispositions are found, we may well conclude that a rich harvest is to be gathered.

I remained two months among these good people, and every day they were adding to my consolations, by their fervor in prayer, by their assiduity in coming to my instructions, and by their docility in putting into practice what they had been taught.

The season being far advanced, and as I had waited in vain for a safe opportunity to return to St. Louis, I resolved to commit myself entirely to Providence, and on the 7th of August,[89] I took leave of my dear Neophytes. I appointed one of the chiefs to replace me during my absence, who should preside in their evening and morning devotions, and on the Sabbath exhort them to virtue, baptize the little children, and those who were dangerously ill. Grief was depicted on the features of all, and tears were glistening in every eye. The old chief addressed me, saying, "Father, the Great Spirit accompany thee in thy long and dangerous voyage; every day, morning and evening, we will address to him our humble supplications, that thou mayest arrive safely among thy brethren. And we will continue to do so, till thou be again among thy children of the mountains. We are now like the trees that have been spoiled of their verdure by winter's blast. When the snow will have disappeared from these vallies, and the grass begins to grow, our hearts will begin to rejoice; when the plants will spring forth our joy will increase; when they blossom, it will still be greater, and then we will set out to meet you. Farewell, Father, farewell."

[89] Evidently a misprint for 27th of August. Consult the succeeding letter. – Ed.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.