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THE EXPLORATIONS OF PÈRE MARQUETTE

What wonder Père Marquette must have felt as he paddled his canoe down waterways never before seen by white men!

A missionary from France, Marquette had come to North America to answer some imponderable questions: How extensive was this New World? Was it just a narrow strip of land between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans? From the Indians he heard about a vast river to the west. Did this river, which some tribes called the Mississippi, empty into the Pacific Ocean? If so, what a great discovery that would be!

Here is a vivid and lively account of Père Marquette's famous explorations of the Mississippi Valley and the Great Lakes basin—explorations that opened up an exciting new world for the countless millions that followed.

JIM KJELGAARD

Illustrated by

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**To Norma Rathbun of the Milwaukee Public Library, who has faith in young
people and books**

Contents

1	Into the Wilderness	3
2	Three Rivers	17
3	Night Mission	27
4	Winter Journey	41
5	Ordered North	57
6	The Fabled River	67
7	Flight	81
8	A Visitor to St. Ignace	93
9	Plans	103
10	Canoes Westward	113
11	The Mississippi	125
12	Attack	139
13	The Turning Point	149
14	A Child Is Baptized	163
15	The Last Journey	173

THE EXPLORATIONS OF PÈRE MARQUETTE

1. Into the Wilderness

Father François le Mercier, or Père le Mercier, as he was known to the French-speaking people of Quebec, where he was Superior of the Jesuit Mission, picked up his goose quill. Dipping it in ink, he wrote:

"October 10, 1666. Père Jacques Marquette goes up to Three Rivers to study the Algonquin language with Père Druillettes."

Père le Mercier leaned back for a moment of quiet thought. Then he rose and went into the chapel. He must offer a prayer for the safety of Père Marquette and those who accompanied him. Though the homelands of the Iroquois, bitter enemies of all Frenchmen, were to the south and west, the fierce Indians sometimes came into the very outskirts of Quebec itself.

And the Iroquois were again on the warpath.

Sitting in the big birch-bark canoe that was carrying him and his companions up the broad St. Lawrence, young Père Marquette knew a happiness such as he had never felt before. To this end—to travel up this river into the dark and almost unknown wilderness of North America—he had shaped his entire life.

Père Marquette watched the French Canadian boatmen, or *voyageurs*, who shared the canoe. Then he shifted his paddle, trying to grip it exactly as his seat mate held his. About three feet long, including the grip, and about three inches wide at the blade, the paddle was light and delicate. However, Père Marquette had found out speedily that handling it properly was an art. He tried to forget the ache in his shoulders.

They had been on the river less than an hour, and already he was tiring! He remembered the instructions given him before he left France:

"You should love the Indians as brothers. Never make them wait for you in embarking. Do nothing to annoy them upon their various journeys."

Père Marquette smiled softly. Plainly the training he had received in the Jesuit college at Nancy, and later as a teacher in various places, was only part of what a missionary to wilderness savages must know. He must never annoy the Indians, but he knew that he was annoying his companions now.

They did not express their displeasure openly, for all of them were deeply religious and were honored to have a missionary in their craft. But the big thirty-five-foot canoe, carrying thousands of pounds of goods for the French trading post at Three Rivers and manned by Père Marquette and thirteen *voyageurs*, would have gone more swiftly and smoothly had there been fourteen *voyageurs*.

Père Marquette turned intent eyes on the supple back of the canoeman just ahead of him. There was a definite rhythm in the way the man handled his paddle. It seemed to be an extension of his own arm.

Père Marquette tried hard to swing his paddle with that of the little *voyageur*, but it was impossible. All the *voyageurs* were stroking once every second, in perfect time, sinking their paddles eighteen inches into the river and bringing them back in unison. The canoe would have gone forward as smoothly as a greyhound on fresh quarry if every paddler had done exactly the same thing.

Père Marquette could not. The paddles in the *voyageurs'* hands seemed alive. His was simply another wooden thing, but it was not so wooden as his arms and shoulders seemed now. This was the most difficult physical labor he had ever attempted. Père Marquette did his best to keep up with the others, but he almost dropped his oar into the river.

Then, just as he knew that he could not force one more stroke, the canoe glided to a halt in a quiet cove.

At once the bowman and the steersman pushed slender poles over the side into the river's soft bottom and anchored the canoe by holding onto the poles. There was a flurry of activity as each man hauled out a pipe and a pouch of tobacco. Sparks flew from flint and steel, and thirteen canoemen puffed in contentment.

Père Marquette relaxed gratefully. He was about to shift his legs to a more comfortable position when he was halted by the steersman's alarmed, "No!"

Père Marquette looked questioningly around. The steersman, Pierre du Chesne, chided him.

"The canoe, she is only bark. You must learn how to move or you make the hole."

"I'm sorry," Père Marquette said, and tried to ease his aching legs by flexing their muscles. He should have remembered, for he had also been instructed in canoeing before he left France. The fragile bark canoes were very easily damaged. Anyone who embarked in such a craft must always exercise the utmost care.

The *voyageurs* smoked their pipes to the end, and the canoe was put under way once more. Père Marquette did his best to find the proper rhythm of paddling, and still could not. His arms became huge, aching things that seemed ready to drop off. He found himself looking forward to the next stop and the next pipe.

They had left Quebec at daylight, but the sun was sinking and evening shadows were gathering before the steersman swung the canoe towards the shore. In spite of the sun, the air was cold. Père Marquette gathered his black robe tighter about him, grateful for its warmth. Paddling more slowly, the canoemen moved their big craft towards the lee of a wooded island, off the shore of which swam a flock of ducks. The paddlers stopped in shallow water fifty yards below the ducks, which watched curiously but without fear.

So expert that they scarcely rocked the canoe, each paddler sprang out to land knee-deep in the icy river. Sticks were driven into the river bottom beside the canoe, and to these the craft was anchored.

Père Marquette hesitated. He had stepped into the canoe from a pier, and until now it had never occurred to him that there must be some safe way of leaving the craft. He looked doubtfully at the water, not afraid of a cold bath, but unsure that he could disembark without damaging the canoe.

Pierre du Chesne waded to his side and looked pleasantly up.

"Come," he invited.

"Come?"

"Get upon my shoulders," the little steersman said. "I will carry you."

Still doubtful, but not knowing what else to do, Père Marquette stood erect. The canoe rocked alarmingly, and *voyageurs* gathered on either side to steady it. Père Marquette placed his legs beneath Pierre du Chesne's arms, and grasped his mount by the shoulders. At once the Jesuit felt a sense of confidence.

All the *voyageurs* were small, none over five feet six, but they were very strong. Never faltering, absolutely sure of his footing on the slippery river bottom, Pierre du Chesne carried Père Marquette ashore and put him down. Other *voyageurs* came with various bundles. Pierre du Chesne shook himself and laughed.

"Ha! A good place!"

"The island?" asked Père Marquette.

"Yes," replied du Chesne. "We see the Iroquois if they come."

Pierre walked back to the canoe, and returned with a bell-mouthed gun called a blunderbuss. He strode up the shore until he was opposite the ducks. Then, raising his gun, he discharged it into the flock.

There was a great squawking and a mighty thrashing of wings as startled birds beat hurriedly into the air. But a dozen floated quietly, limp wings spread and heads trailing beneath the water.

Père Marquette looked at them with interest. This was his first experience with men who killed food as they traveled. However, neither Pierre du Chesne nor any of the other boatmen made any move towards the slain ducks.

Père Marquette looked questioningly towards the steersman.

"Are you not going to recover your game?"

"No," said du Chesne. "Food we have."

"Why did you shoot them?"

"It is no matter," Pierre du Chesne shrugged. "When one is shot, two will come to take its place."

Père Marquette said nothing. His heart had bade him work among the savages of the new world. He had not expected his own French countrymen to be only a little less savage than the Indians, but he could not change that. Meanwhile, he could think of the *voyageurs'* many good qualities. Certainly they could not be excelled as water men!

As though by magic a fire had sprung up and a big kettle, supported on three stones, stood over it. The kettle was three-quarters filled with water into which a brooding cook was measuring dried peas, a quart for each man. When the mixture was soft enough, the cook added to it three or four pounds of finely cut fat pork.

Père Marquette sniffed hungrily. The stew was crude, but it smelled appetizing.

"We eat," Pierre du Chesne said with enthusiasm.

Père Marquette took his place beside the fire and gravely received the huge portion which the little cook ladled out on his plate. The Jesuit ate slowly, with a spoon, trying not to look at his companions, who were noisily stuffing the stew into their mouths with greasy fingers or even licking it direct from the plates.

When Père Marquette had finished he went down to the river to wash his plate and spoon. Then he replaced them in his kit of personal belongings. Apparently a Jesuit had only one privilege in this wild land. When there was danger that he would upset the canoe in disembarking, he could be carried ashore. Otherwise he would do his full share of the work.

After eating, Père Marquette sat quietly, near enough the fire so that he could take advantage of its heat, but far enough away so that he would not interfere with his companions. It had been an exhausting day, and he could not remember ever having been more tired. The *voyageurs* could not feel differently.

Père Marquette went a little farther away from the fire and sought his blankets. He drew them around him, reveling in their warmth. Although he was tired, his happiness soared to new peaks. This was an unknown land, a dark country filled with savage and heathenish tribes. It was the finest possible land for one such as he.

As he rested, strange sounds puzzled him. Raising himself from his blankets, he looked towards the fire. The *voyageurs*, who had paddled from dawn to dark, a full twelve hours, were dancing around the fire and singing! Père Marquette's smile seemed to illumine his gentle features. These canoemen must spring from some hardy super-race.

He fell asleep to the sound of their gay song. The stars were still bright in the heavens early in the morning when he was awakened by a hand on his shoulder. Pierre du Chesne said, "Come now."

2. Three Rivers

Shortly after noon of the next day they reached a place seventy-five miles from Quebec. This was Three Rivers, which stood where the St. Maurice River empties into the St. Lawrence. It was a village of bark shanties and log huts. The stockaded buildings of the French fur traders dwarfed everything around them.

Père Marquette watched with interest as the big canoe swung in towards a pier that thrust like a long finger into the river. Three Rivers, he had heard, was an outpost of some five hundred people. It was also a meeting place of tribes wandering to or from their favorite hunting grounds. As a result, Three Rivers was apt at times to have anywhere from half a dozen to several thousand visitors.

A throng lined the shore, and so many people had come out onto the pier that it seemed in danger of collapsing from their weight alone. Père Marquette saw warriors, naked even in this cold weather save for a breechcloth. French woods-runners and trappers, gay in colorful clothing, looked as if they owned the place. Squaws roamed about with babies on their backs. Curious children stared shyly. A horde of assorted dogs howled and barked so loudly that their clamor drowned out every other noise.

The canoe glided smoothly next to the wharf, and every canoeman on the pier side reached out to steady it.

Pierre du Chesne said to Père Marquette, "Step upon the pier. Be careful you do not fall."

Gathering his small packet of belongings, Père Marquette stepped out of the canoe onto the rough-hewn pier. He stood uncertainly, not knowing exactly what to do in this wild place. A fierce-looking Indian with a hawk's wing in his hair swaggered insolently down the pier.

"One side, Black Robe!" he growled in French.

Père Marquette stepped aside, letting the proud warrior pass. He looked about in bewilderment, trying to bring some order out of what seemed utter confusion. Then he felt a hand on his elbow and whirled to face another black-robed Jesuit.

"You are Père Marquette?" the stranger asked.

"I am," Père Marquette replied. "And you are Père Druillettes?"

"Indeed, that is I," said the other man. "I had word three days ago that you would arrive with Pierre's canoe."

Père Marquette looked with vast respect at the lined face of the older Jesuit. He was a man who knew the wilderness and the savages in it better than almost anyone else. Père Druillettes had lived much among the Abenakis of Maine, and he had also worked among other tribes. He laid a gentle hand on Père Marquette's elbow.

"Come, Jacques—I may call you Jacques? We will go where we may talk without being shouted or barked down. There is always great interest when a canoe arrives with trade goods."

"I must confess that I had not expected such a horde," Père Marquette admitted.

Père Druillettes laughed. "This is only a small portion of two tribes. We'll have a larger gathering in the spring, when the Indians come with more fur, and later in the fall. Did you have a hard journey?"

"It seemed so to me."

"The first canoe trip always seems endless," Père Druillettes said. "However, you will become so accustomed to this mode of travel that in time you will outdo the *voyageurs* at their own trade."

The two men made their way through the crowd on the pier and the bank. Some of the Indians stood graciously aside. Others, like the chieftain who had brushed past Père Marquette on the pier, stayed where they were and pretended not to notice the two Jesuits. Expertly Père Druillettes steered Père Marquette around these Indians and headed away from the water. As the two men drew farther back, the clamor on the shore died out.

"May I see your church?" Père Marquette asked.

"Spoken like a Jesuit! It is this way," said Père Druillettes.

He guided Père Marquette past the rows of buildings and into a quiet grove of trees. Beyond this, on a small hillock that rose to command a view of the river, nestled a log church graced by a finely polished cross. Père Druillettes opened the door and stood aside so Père Marquette could enter. There was a little silence and then the two priests knelt and prayed.

When they rose, Père Druillettes asked, "What do you think of it?"

"It is not what I had expected."

"It is not," Père Druillettes said wistfully, "to be compared with the cathedrals of France."

"Oh, but you mistake me!" Père Marquette insisted. "It is peaceful and beautiful, and altogether fitting for a church! I had expected in this new world to have almost nothing save an altar stone."

Père Marquette thought of the little altar stone he had brought from France. With the stone, a missionary could conduct services on the stump of a tree or anything else he could find. What missionary could expect to have a church in the wilderness?

"You will not be disappointed, Jacques," said Père Druillettes, laughing. "A fair share of the time an altar stone will be all that you'll have. Now I think you must be weary. Come, I will show you to our quarters."

Père Druillettes led his companion to a neat log house near the church, and entered. An Indian boy with one withered leg and a pleasant, smiling face limped as he came to meet them. Père Druillettes laid a gentle hand on the youth's head.

"This is François," he said in French. "I found him in the snow, where his tribe had left him to die. Having only one useful leg, he could not keep up with their winter travels. Ever since then he has attached himself to me. François is an excellent cook and housekeeper." Père Druillettes grimaced. "He is even clean."

The Indian boy said something in his own tongue and Père Druillettes translated.

"He bids a happy welcome to Père Jacques Marquette, and hopes you may prosper in your mission here."

"Will you have him repeat it?" Père Marquette requested.

"Be not overeager, Jacques. One does not master the Algonquin tongue in a single day, or in many days. However, since my sentiments and François' are similar, I will repeat them slowly for you."

Père Marquette made a stumbling attempt to say the words after the older priest, tasting them with his tongue, rolling them over and over, eager for their full flavor. It was a strange language, unlike any European tongue, but he would master it. He *must*. One did not go out among Indians unless one was prepared to speak to them in their own language. François looked puzzled at Père Marquette's attempt to speak Algonquin. Père Druillettes smiled.

"Not at all a sorry first attempt. But you must be very weary, Jacques. Rest until our dinner is prepared."

François scurried about and laid a fire on the hearth. Its warmth took the raw chill out of the room. Père Marquette reclined in a chair, a wooden frame covered with stretched moose hide. Sitting in a similar chair, Père Druillettes was serious.

"Jacques, I shall not tell you what to expect. Had our superior in France not felt that you could do a Jesuit's work, you never would be here. But tell me, what are your impressions of our wild land?"

"It is impossible to tell you!" exclaimed Père Marquette. "Those wild rivermen! The weariness of paddling! The savages that met us! I fear that as yet I have no clear thoughts."

"You still feel that it is worthwhile?"

"If I came this far, and much farther, and converted but one savage, I would not have failed."

Père Druillettes said, "You will go far, Jacques."

"I do not understand you," Père Marquette replied.

"You will journey a long way as a Jesuit, and I am glad that you have come. Here is François."

The Indian boy put on the table a dish of venison haunch cooked with wild rice and another dish of pounded corn. Père Marquette ate heartily, for he was very hungry. Then he leaned back in his chair.

"Don't you think you should sleep?" Père Druillettes asked.

"I would like to."

"Then do so. I shall awaken you only if it is necessary."

Père Marquette settled his tired body on the bed, marveling at the richness of the tanned furs that covered it. Almost at once he fell into a sound sleep.

So deeply did he slumber that, when he was awakened, he thought himself back on the river with Pierre du Chesne shaking him. Père Marquette opened his eyes to stare at a single lighted candle on the table. He heard Père Druillettes' soft, "Come, Jacques, there is work for us."

3. Night Mission

Père Marquette raised himself on his bed, and blinked at the burning candle. Outside, a moaning wind plucked at the little house in the trees and rattled the shingles. Père Marquette closed his eyes and opened them again, wanting to make sure he saw this night scene correctly.

Père Druillettes still bent over the bed. Partly hidden in the moving shadows beyond the candle's flickering light was a strange, wild creature who might have stepped out of some terrible dream.

His face, naturally dark, looked almost black in the candle's feeble light. The lower part of his body was hidden in shadow; the upper part was clad in some silken fur. A fur cap covered most of his head without hiding a ragged scar which trailed from the base of his ear to the point of his chin.

Only when Père Marquette had fully awakened did he realize that this was an Indian who had come to visit them.

Père Druillettes shook Père Marquette's shoulder again. "Are you awake, Jacques?"

"Yes. Yes, I am awake."

"Then we must go. Have no fear. This is Stag Horn, one of my converts. He has come for us."

Père Marquette got out of bed and dressed. He put on his shoes, smoothed his long black cassock, or robe, and went into the other room where Père Druillettes awaited with Stag Horn.

"We must hurry," Père Druillettes said. "Stag Horn's brother lies back in the forest. He has been mortally wounded in a battle with the Iroquois, and Stag Horn was unable to bring him here. If you are ready, we will go."

The silent Stag Horn led the way into the wind-lashed night. The first snow of the winter blew cold and wet against them.

Three Rivers slept. Only an Indian dog roused to snarl as they made their way to the river.

Père Marquette followed Stag Horn out onto the pier, and looked doubtfully at the little canoe bobbing beside it. It seemed a tiny thing in which to brave the mighty St. Lawrence, but neither Stag Horn nor Père Druillettes hesitated.

Père Druillettes turned to the younger Jesuit.

"Take the middle seat, Jacques. You will not be expected to wield a paddle on this trip, but remember not to move. The canoes are seaworthy as long as they are treated with respect."

"I will remember," Père Marquette promised.

While Stag Horn held the stern of the canoe and Père Druillettes steadied the bow, Père Marquette embarked. He did it clumsily, and was aware of his lack of skill. At the same time, he was aware of Stag Horn's silent contempt for anyone who did not know how to handle a canoe.

Père Marquette made a firm resolution. Plainly, if a man wished to work among Indians he must live like an Indian. He must learn to do anything they could do. What is more, he must become equally as skilled as they in all the crafts of forest and water. Père Marquette told himself that he would learn.

Stag Horn and Père Druillettes took their places, and the little canoe started across the angry river. Père Marquette drew his cassock a little closer about him, and pulled his hat more firmly onto his head. It was very cold and the snow fell faster. The wind treated him more cruelly than his companions, for he had not the exercise of paddling to keep him warm.

As Père Marquette tried to control his chattering teeth, he watched the small canoe cut across the rolling waves. It seemed a foolhardy, almost a suicidal mission to brave such a river in this craft. With conscious effort he hid his fear.

Finally they were in quiet water. They had, Père Marquette guessed, crossed the mighty St. Lawrence and were in a small tributary. He worked cold-cramped fingers and flexed his legs, trying not to move. Still he must have disturbed the

paddlers. Stag Horn said something in his own language and Père Druillettes translated.

"You must not make even a small motion, Jacques."

Hours passed, but still they remained on the water. Père Marquette wondered at Stag Horn, who must have made the journey to Three Rivers all alone and now, without even a short rest, was going back. By slow degrees the night lifted.

They were on a small, still creek whose waters looked almost black in the morning light. Snow dusted the banks and the branches of the evergreens that overhung the creek. Shell ice clung to the rocks and sticks in their path.

Père Marquette saw and marveled. It must be impossible, he thought, to travel far through this land of tangled swamps and brooding forests. Fortunately, it was cut by numberless waterways that furnished means of transportation.

Were it not for the water and the canoeman's art, North America might for many centuries have remained an unexplored wilderness.

It was well into the morning when Stag Horn spoke again. At once Père Druillettes stopped paddling. Handling the little craft alone, Stag Horn steered it towards the bank. The Indian thrust his paddle into the mud and held the canoe with it.

"From here we must go by land, Jacques," said Père Druillettes. "Gather up your cassock when you disembark, for if you do not it will get wet."

Père Marquette gathered the skirts of his long, black robe and tucked them into his belt. He stepped from the canoe into the water, and felt a little pleasure because he seemed to have done it successfully. At any rate, the canoe had not rocked. Père Druillettes joined him.

Looking at neither priest, Stag Horn disembarked, carried his canoe up the bank, laid it near a tree, and without so much as glancing over his shoulder, plunged into the forest.

Père Druillettes fell in behind him, with Père Marquette bringing up the rear. He was so thoroughly chilled that he could not stop his teeth from chattering. His legs stung from contact with the icy water, but at least walking was physical exertion. He no longer had to sit in a cramped canoe and let the cold work its will. Then his effort to walk as swiftly as Stag Horn brought warmth back to his body.

The Indian plunged into the forest, seeming to find his path by some keen sense of his own. A snorting bull moose, jet-black against the white background, paced clumsily out of their way. Père Marquette winced when a patch of snow fell from a branch upon his unprotected neck.

A half-hour after they left the river, faint in the distance, Père Marquette heard the howling of Indian dogs. A few minutes later he caught the pungent odor of wood smoke. Père Druillettes dropped back to walk beside him.

"We approach the encampment, Jacques, and our reception will probably be cool. I have only two converts among this tribe, Stag Horn and The Bear. The dogs probably will attack us, and if they do nobody will lift a hand to restrain them. We must protect ourselves; the savages will not respect us unless we do. I hope that somewhere along the way you have learned to kick hard."

Père Marquette said grimly, "I have learned many things in this new land. I shall try to learn one more."

They came to the camp, and Père Marquette looked curiously at the dozen hastily erected lodges. A little group of warriors stared coldly at them, saying nothing and making no move. A couple of children ran behind the lodges. Then the dogs came.

They were a snarling pack of curs, ranging in size from small beasts that weighed fifteen or twenty pounds to huge animals whose wolf blood was very evident. Père Druillettes walked to meet them. He kicked one of the bigger dogs squarely under the chin, and the creature retreated to the rear of the pack. The rest snarled forward.

Père Marquette kicked a dog in the ribs and moved in to kick again. The raging pack, meeting their masters in the two Jesuits, fled.

Père Marquette wiped the perspiration from his forehead and followed Père Druillettes. A pack of half-starved dogs was

not the greatest obstacle he had expected to overcome in this new world but, he had to admit, it was one of the most unnerving.

At that moment he saw Stag Horn and another Indian arguing in front of a skin-covered lodge, and Père Marquette looked with interest upon the stranger.

He was stockily built, and his body was naked save for a breechcloth that swished about his thighs. His hat was the stuffed head of a skunk, from which a piece of furry skin hung down upon his neck. The man's face was horribly streaked with red and black, and a red sunburst glowed on either arm. He and Stag Horn were exchanging angry words.

Père Druillettes stopped just short of the pair, and Père Marquette halted beside him.

"It is the medicine man," Père Druillettes explained. "Such people know only heathenish rites and are ever our bitter enemies. When we come, and if we triumph, they must go. That is why they do not like us."

"What must we do now?"

Père Druillettes said calmly, "I will go in to Stag Horn's brother."

He stepped forward, and as he did the medicine man became dangerously quiet. Père Druillettes, never hesitating, took another forward step.

Père Marquette wished to cry a warning, to tell of what must come, for he saw evil in the medicine man's eyes. Suddenly, so swiftly that it seemed to have come out of thin air, the medicine man waved a tomahawk. He swung with deadly aim.

At that moment there was a choking cry and the medicine man staggered on nerveless feet. His tomahawk dropped into the snow, and he bent at the knees.

Stag Horn calmly jerked his knife from the medicine man's ribs and wiped it on his coat. Père Druillettes disappeared in the lodge.

Père Marquette, fighting back his first spell of sickness, knelt beside the dying medicine man. He bathed him with holy water from his flask and intoned the words of baptism.

4. Winter Journey

Two months after Père Marquette arrived at Three Rivers, a little band of Indians came trudging to the church door. As Père Druillettes hastened to admit them, Père Marquette watched silently.

In two months he had learned much. He could speak enough of the Algonquin tongue to make himself understood and he could understand when he was spoken to. From hours of practice on the river he had learned the tricks of handling a canoe. Now he was learning how to guide himself through the endless waterways.

As he watched the forsaken little group arrive at the church, he knew why they had come.

There were nine men, but only seven women. Somewhere back in the forest's silent reaches two women must have lain in crude graves. Perhaps they had even been abandoned on top of the snow. Only three children remained, and there were no dogs. Doubtless when game and fish had proved impossible to get, the dogs had been eaten.

"These people are hungry, Jacques," Père Druillettes murmured. "Tell François to prepare at once all the food there is."

"At once."

While Père Druillettes remained in the church, welcoming the weary travelers, Père Marquette hurried into the mission house. He knew he would find some venison, corn, and frozen fish—a small store of food, but enough for present needs. He knew, too, that when it was gone the Jesuits would have to get more as best they could. But first they must think of the desperately hungry people in the church.

Père Marquette said to François in the Algonquin tongue, "We have guests and must make ready for them."

"I know. I saw them come."

Père Marquette smiled his approval, for already François had venison turning on the spit and fish thawing in front of the fireplace. Père Marquette filled the blackened kettle two-thirds full of water and swung it over the blazing fire. He waited until the kettle began to boil, and stirred corn meal into it. Gathering up a supply of plates and spoons, he returned to the church.

Père Druillettes was moving quietly among the visitors, and speaking softly to them. The exhausted Indians stared dully, seeming to be too far gone to have any thoughts of their own.

Then a brave with three fingers missing from his left hand spoke.

"Our Manitou forsook us. We came to see if the Black Robe's Manitou can give us food." He pondered on what he had said, then continued, "We came a very long way. Many died."

"Patience," Père Druillettes counseled. "You shall have food."

He looked appealingly at Père Marquette, who nodded and hurried back into the house. Hungry people were not to be stayed with any promises other than that of a meal very soon, and if the meat were not well cooked it would make little difference to the Indians. Theirs was usually eaten half raw anyway.

Père Marquette filled a huge platter and carried it into the church. He stood aside, for the wandering tribesmen moved towards him like a pack of hungry wolves. They stopped short of the food, and Père Marquette thought they hesitated more through fear of the carving knife in Père Druillettes' hand than from any thought of courtesy. Père Druillettes carved the meat and served the children first.

Père Marquette did not wait while the hungry visitors wolfed their portions. They had had little to eat in many days and even a great store of food would not be enough. Père Marquette helped François carry the fish and cooked corn meal into the church, and stood aside while Père Druillettes portioned it out.

The Indians ate, seeming to have no thought save for the food. Even their guns—precious possessions to the tribesmen—had been forgotten by the three men who carried them.

Père Marquette spoke softly to Père Druillettes.

"Did they respond to your teachings?"

Père Druillettes smiled wistfully. "There was an eager response, Jacques. While you were helping François, all praised the Black Robe's Manitou. I fear that they would have praised the devil had I offered them food in his name. By tomorrow we and our church will be forgotten."

"Where are they going?" Père Marquette asked.

"Anatik, their chief, said they go to the South Lakes. They hope to find good hunting there."

"It is a rich harvest," Père Marquette said. "So many to bring in all at once. They should not be lost."

"I agree, but what may we do?"

"If we could continue to feed them——?"

"We cannot, for there is nothing left to eat. They must go."

"Then," Père Marquette said, "I am going with them."

"Jacques! You don't realize what you are saying. These people are so poor that they are unable to provide even for themselves! It is probable that more of them will die before they reach the South Lakes."

"All the more reason why I should be with them."

Père Druillettes was very grave. "I cannot let you take such risks, excellent though your suggestion may be. I myself will go with them."

"No. I shall go."

"Are you determined, Jacques?"

"Quite determined."

"Then," Père Druillettes said with a sigh, "my prayers shall go with you and with these unfortunate people. Anatik, will you come here?"

The dusky chieftain, his appetite satisfied for the first time in many days, came forward. He stood apart from the two Jesuits, a wild forest prince who knew no power save that resting in his gun and his own strong arm.

"The Black Robe summoned me?" he said.

"Anatik," Père Druillettes said, "Père Marquette wishes to go with you to the South Lakes."

Anatik looked searchingly at Père Marquette, and back at Père Druillettes.

"We cannot take care of a Black Robe."

"You need not. The Black Robes' Manitou cares for them."

Without another word, Anatik turned his back and strode regally back to his seat. He started to fuss with his gun, and then gathered up his few personal possessions.

When Père Marquette went into the mission house for his snowshoes and his own small pack, François pressed a wrapped parcel upon him.

"It is corn," he said. "I did not let all of it be served, for I knew that one or the other of you would go."

"Thank you, François."

With his pack slung over one shoulder, Père Marquette left the mission house and laced on his snowshoes. Then he fell in behind the Indians, who were already winding their way into the snow-locked forest. Père Druillettes waved a farewell, and Père Marquette hurried to catch up with the party of travelers. He did not find it difficult; life at Three

Rivers had toughened his body.

At last Père Marquette reached a straggler, a man who plodded along with downcast head. Plainly, and in spite of the fact that he had eaten, the man was very weak.

Père Marquette said quietly, "May I carry your pack?"

The Indian stared suspiciously, for this was an unheard-of suggestion. A member of a savage tribe, he knew only savage law. In time of trouble it was every man for himself, and he died who was unable to help himself.

Gently Père Marquette loosened the other's pack and added it to his own burden. When he reached for his companion's gun, the Indian swung swiftly aside and anger flashed in his eyes.

Père Marquette made no further effort to take the gun. Most Indians who had such a weapon would not let it go until they were dead.

Late that night, Père Marquette and his companion reached a little clearing where the rest of the tribe lay around huge fires. If hunters had gone out they had found nothing, for nobody was eating. Settling beside the Indian whom he had accompanied since leaving Three Rivers, Père Marquette looked sidewise at him.

The man merely sat beside a fire with limp head drooping. He made no move to arrange a comfortable place for himself, or even to brush the snow from his clothing. Père Marquette produced his little packet of corn.

"Eat," he invited.

The Indian stared suspiciously at him. Then, warily, as though afraid of a trap, he took a handful of the ground corn and ate it. As he took more corn, a friendly light entered his eyes for the first time.

Père Marquette glanced at the other Indians. Open-mouthed, they were staring at him. The Jesuit looked wistfully at his small store of corn. There was not much, a few grains for each, but it was food. Père Marquette divided his remaining corn into equal portions and doled it out. The half-spoonful that remained he gave to a child.

That night, cold and hungry, the Jesuit arranged his bed on the snow. The next morning, at the first sign of movement, he rose and traveled on with the tribe. Now there were three stragglers, and Père Marquette walked slowly to keep pace with them.

When he reached that night's camp, he found that the hunters had brought in two deer and that the wanderers were gorging themselves on stringy venison. None questioned the Jesuit's right to as much as he wished, for when there was plenty all could have plenty. Père Marquette ate enough to stay his own hunger, but he wisely put some venison in his pack.

The Indians themselves lacked even a faint notion of thrift, and they laughed at the idea of saving for tomorrow. Tomorrow could always take care of itself, and tonight they would be merry.

The next night there was nothing to eat, and Père Marquette divided the venison he had saved among the five weakest members of the tribe. He was an accepted part of the trek now, and if his actions could not be explained, certainly he had shown his good will. All the Indians, even those who got no venison, were more friendly.

Day after day they pushed into the snowbound, cold-lashed forest, eating whenever the hunters got anything. Often on days when they found no game they went hungry. On the thirteenth day they reached the South Lakes.

The Indians set up their camp on the frozen shore of a small lake, and at once set to work making shelters of evergreen boughs. Then every man went into the forest in search of game.

One by one they straggled back, discouraged and empty-handed. Again the hunters went out, and again returned with nothing. That night one of the children cried restlessly in his shelter, and Père Marquette lay awake, listening to that wail of misery.

The next morning the hunters did not go out.

They huddled miserably about their fires, spiritless and beaten. Journeying from one land of starvation, they had merely found another. Determinedly Père Marquette approached Anatik.

"Why do you not hunt?"

"There is no game," Anatik replied.

"Have you searched everywhere?"

"Everywhere, and not even a rabbit's track breaks the snow. Our Manitou proved false, in directing us here."

Père Marquette said gently, "Your Manitou will always lead you falsely, Anatik, for in truth he does not even exist."

Anatik looked sarcastically at him. "Does yours?"

"My Manitou is always with me," Père Marquette said, "and He never plays me false. If you will not hunt, give me your gun and I will go out."

"You cannot have my gun."

"Take mine, Black Robe," said the Indian to whom Père Marquette had given the corn. "I know you as a man of good heart, and I know you will bring the gun back if you can. Besides, I think that your Manitou may be powerful."

Armed with the Indian's gun, powder and shot, Père Marquette set off across the snow. He had not the least idea where he was going, but surely it was not right merely to give up. Père Marquette veered away from the tracks left by the Indian hunters. There was little point in looking for game where they had already searched.

He fought the weariness in his legs and the hunger in his stomach as his courage led him around the forested shore of a frozen lake. Anatik had been right. Not even the track of a field mouse marked the virgin snow.

Père Marquette went on, for it was not within him to do otherwise. He stopped to rest, leaning against a tree.

He rubbed his eyes, closed them, and opened them again. At that moment he saw the head and upper back of a running moose. The moose stopped.

Père Marquette leveled his gun, took careful aim, and shot. The moose went down. Hunger and weariness forgotten, Père Marquette ran as fast as he could to the fallen animal.

The moose had been running along a trail deeply beaten in the snow. All about were other trails, and in the distance Père Marquette saw three more moose disappearing into the evergreens. He had come to a yard, a place where moose gather to live through the time of deep snow.

The hunters, directed by Père Marquette, started out. Anatik and his tribe could live luxuriously throughout the winter.

5. Ordered North

Wise Père le Mercier, Superior of the Jesuits in the New World, knew his men and gave them duties according to their abilities. From the very first he probably had intended to send Jacques Marquette deep into the wilderness to the most difficult missions the Jesuits had established. However, he realized the necessity of the training that Père Marquette would receive at Three Rivers.

So it was not until April 21, 1668, about eighteen months after Père Marquette was sent to Three Rivers, that Père le Mercier made this entry in his journal:

"Several of our men are going to embark to go up the river to Montreal. Among them are Père Marquette, two men, and a young lad who will await an opportunity of going to the Ottawa country."

To Père Marquette, this was a dream come true—the work for which he had prepared himself ever since he entered the Jesuit college at Nancy. He had always been fascinated by the Jesuit Relations, accounts written by Jesuits who had penetrated the wilderness.

He had pieced the story together as it appeared in the Relations. French traders, ever hungry for more fur, were steadily fighting their way into the forest. Jesuits went with them, and one or more were always found at the farthest-known points of the wilderness. Often Jesuits opened the way for others who would follow.

However, of the great North American continent, little was known except the eastern seaboard. The French held the northern parts of the east coast, the English and Dutch were in its central regions, and the Spanish claimed the south. There were vast gaps even in the "settled" parts. So far, explorations inland had been little more than pin pricks.

What lay in the wilderness beyond the farthest point to which even a Jesuit had penetrated? What was North America? Was it, as some men thought, a narrow neck of land which would open up through the Northwest Passage to the fabled shores of China? What were the wild tribes who had not yet known a missionary, and who therefore had such great need of one? What lay beyond the known frontiers?

This last question was one to which the most adventurous men of all ages have always tried to find an answer. It was now foremost in Père Marquette's mind when he and his companions joined a canoe brigade of Indians who were returning to their own country after a visit to the French towns on the lower St. Lawrence.

They could not follow the usual route offered by the Great Lakes, for the Iroquois held complete control of Lake Ontario. It was known that they killed any Frenchmen unfortunate enough to fall into their hands.

Had Père Marquette still been ignorant of forest ways, he would have hesitated to burden his friends in the face of this danger. But the Père Marquette who fought his way up the St. Lawrence and into the Ottawa River was no longer an unskilled canoeist and woodsman. He did his share of the paddling as they ascended the Ottawa and Mattawa. He bore his share over the portage, a place where boats and cargo had to be carried over land, into Lake Nipissing. The party wove their way across those island-studded waters and descended the French River to Georgian Bay. Out of that they came into Lake Huron.

During their travels they had many an enforced stopover when storms raged or strong winds blew. They had many a pow-wow, too, with curious tribesmen who lived along the way and came to beg trinkets from the voyaging Jesuit.

Eventually Père Marquette and his party reached the St. Mary's River, the outlet of Lake Superior, and ascended the river to the falls of Sault Ste. Marie. The territory around the falls was a vast forest known as the Ottawa country.

As his canoe stopped in shallow water, Père Marquette looked curiously at a number of frail canoes that were being cleverly maneuvered among the snarling rapids. They were manned by boatmen who stood erect, bearing long-handled nets.

Presently an Indian stabbed his net into the water. He retrieved his net, loaded with big whitefish, and promptly tossed them into the canoe. The Indian dipped for another catch.

Père Marquette turned aside, feeling a warm glow. It was to this place he had been sent to replace Père Louis Nicolas. Père Marquette smiled to himself. It had been good to see the fishermen. Had not Peter, the Master of all missionaries,

been a fisherman?

Père Marquette made his way towards the mission house. A woman with stricken eyes and a baby in her arms looked at him with mute appeal when he paused beside her. As he opened his lips to speak, the woman turned her back and walked away.

Inside the mission house, Père Marquette's glance fell upon a naked Indian who lay on a rude couch. His eyes were open, staring at the ceiling, and perspiration bathed his forehead. He must, Père Marquette thought, be suffering great pain, but save for the perspiration he did not show it. Indians seldom did.

The black-robed Jesuit who was working on the man's leg glanced up when Père Marquette entered. He smiled.

"Père Marquette?"

"Yes."

"I am Père Louis Nicolas," the other said, "and of course I knew you were coming. I heard the canoes announced, but was unable to meet them. They brought Copper Spear to me only a few minutes before your arrival. He fell out of his canoe while netting whitefish, and fractured his leg in the rapids."

"Let me assist you."

"Gladly," said Père Nicolas.

Père Marquette went to his brother Jesuit's side, and called his knowledge of surgery into play. Together they straightened the Indian's leg until the bones were set, and then bound them with splints. Père Marquette wound a bandage many times around these to hold the injured bones in place.

Père Nicolas bathed his patient's sweat-streaked face with cold water, patted him reassuringly, and covered him with a blanket. He went to the door and called.

A moment later the woman who had been standing outside brought her baby in. With fear-filled eyes she looked down upon her husband.

"Copper Spear will be all right," Père Nicolas said soothingly, "and you must stay here, to eat at our table, until he is again able to fish. There is no cause to worry."

The woman knelt beside her husband and the two Jesuits stood aside. The woman spoke so softly that neither Black Robe could hear her, and they in turn kept their own voices low.

"Almost a daily scene," Père Nicolas murmured. "Some poor wretch is forever getting hurt in a brawl with his fellows, or falling into the rapids, or becoming injured in another of the countless ways whereby Indians may be injured."

"Do they welcome our teaching?" inquired Père Marquette.

"Some do, but others never will. They ridicule and make a mockery of everything we tell them, and Copper Spear is foremost among those who despise us. He will go his way and laugh at the Black Robes. He will say that we are weak because when we had him in our power and could have killed him, we helped him instead."

"There is hope for all," Père Marquette pointed out, "and this seems an especially hopeful land. Certainly there is abundant food."

"Here at the Sault there is," Père Nicolas agreed. "There are endless whitefish in the rapids, where more than twenty tribes come to fish. When famine drives them, even the Crees journey from Hudson Bay to fish here. But few Indians ever provide for the future. Today they will have a hundred fat whitefish, so they gorge until all are eaten. Tomorrow they go hungry. For twenty days, during the past winter, we lived on a paste made of pounded fish bones."

"Is there no way to provide for them?"

"We are doing our best. We even seek, by good example, to teach them agriculture. We have our gardens, but an Indian who can hunt or fish will not work. The difficulties are great, and they multiply at our more distant missions. Only a

week ago I had a letter from Père Allouez, who for four years has labored alone at La Pointe. He writes that he seems to be losing ground."

"I have heard much about La Pointe," said Père Marquette. "Just where is it?"

"At a place called Chequamegon Bay, on the southern shore of Lake Superior. But come, Père Marquette. You must be weary. Will you not rest?"

Père Marquette smiled his refusal. "There is much to be done. I shall start to work in the gardens."

6. The Fabled River

For four long years Père Louis Allouez had lived all alone, battling great odds. He had endured every kind of insult that savage minds could imagine. For a fair share of the time, he had suffered cold and hunger.

During all those years, Père Allouez had labored mightily to bring Christianity and a better way of life to the savages of a vast wilderness area whose only speck of civilization was the mission at La Pointe, near the present city of Ashland, Wisconsin.

Finally Père Allouez was sent to a mission at Green Bay. With calm assurance Père Marquette set out from Sault Ste. Marie to take Père Allouez' place.

Père Marquette's hardiness and principles had led him into the Jesuits. He had wished to number himself among the very select and very courageous group of men who had given up everything else in order that they might go forth on the greatest mission of all: to preach and to educate.

The years in the wilderness had made Père Marquette a skilled woodsman, but they had also given him greater strength of character and steadiness of purpose. Jesuits were only men, and he knew that human flesh and spirit could fail. The Jesuit ideal, to serve God and man, could never even bend. To anyone who appreciated that, hardships of the flesh meant nothing. The crudest and most distant Jesuit mission, Père Marquette thought, was the finest one, as long as it offered an opportunity to serve and to learn.

Moreover, he had changed his ideas about the North American continent. It was more than a spit of land standing between Europe and the Orient, but how much more? During every waking hour he puzzled over the riddle of what lay beyond the farthest-known point in this new world. Often he dreamed of it. He was one of the few men who understood the real problems that must be overcome if all men would know the true fullness of this new continent.

The most important problem was that so few people were interested in learning more about North America. The people on the seaboard cared only for trade; not more than a handful of Jesuits and adventurous fur traders had gone into the interior. Almost a hundred and fifty years were to pass before Lewis and Clark would make the great trek that would finally link the Atlantic coast with the Pacific.

Therefore it was with a light heart that Père Marquette and his party paddled their canoe through the ice-strewn waters of Lake Superior. After a month, at almost daily risk to life itself, they arrived at La Pointe. It was one of the most distant outposts; not even the country around it was familiar to white men. Beyond it lay only wilderness. If there was ever any news from this wilderness, thought Père Marquette, it should first be learned at La Pointe.

Père Allouez had already left for his post at Green Bay, but two Ottawa Indians met Père Marquette and escorted him to the church and mission house. Compared with the buildings of Three Rivers these were rude shelters, sparsely furnished, but that made little difference. The Cross, the symbol of Redemption, was there. With the help of such Indian labor as he could get, Père Allouez had constructed a chapel.

Père Marquette turned to his Ottawa guides and said:

"I see none of your people at prayer."

"Some of us come," the Indian evaded.

"Why not all?"

"Our Black Robe has left us."

"Another Black Robe has come," said Père Marquette. "Where are your people?"

"At work in the fields."

"I will go to them."

Père Marquette walked among the Indians in their corn fields. He knew that this tribe was one of the few to practice any agriculture at all. As he greeted the Indian farmers, some of the smiles and welcoming words bestowed upon him were

false. Père Marquette's resolve did not falter. If he labored among many, and saved only one, his labors were not in vain.

Leaving the fields, he walked through the village, followed by a crowd of curious Ottawas. Père Marquette stopped in front of the chief's lodge, where a pole was thrust into the ground. From the pole a squirming dog, a sacrifice to the Sun God, was suspended by a leather thong.

Père Marquette faced the chief.

"Release the dog," he commanded.

Without protest the chief stepped forward and cut the leather thong. The dog dropped to the ground, rose, and cringed away. Père Marquette paid no more attention to it. One by one his followers dropped away, leaving only one of the Ottawas who had met him. The man remained, as though wanting to speak but unable to find the words.

Finally he said, "Black Robe, my brother is sick."

"Where is your brother?" Père Marquette asked.

"In his lodge," the Ottawa said. "He burns with fire which the medicine man said was caused by a devil that entered him. But my brother listened to the Black Robe who was here before you, and he knows that there is not such a devil. He is sure that he will die, but he fears hellfire because he has not been baptized."

"Why did your brother not let Père Allouez baptize him?"

"He was not sick then," the Ottawa said honestly.

"I will go to your brother."

He let the Ottawa lead him to a bark lodge. It was a house of death, and therefore shunned by the living. Père Marquette stooped to enter the cabin.

A terrible odor of sickness met his nostrils. Père Marquette went to the glassy-eyed Indian who was stretched on a skin-covered pallet and laid a gentle hand on his head.

The man was very feverish. Whatever illness he suffered from had been made worse by the Indians' usual slipshod and unclean ways of living. He might die, but given proper care he had a chance of living. Père Marquette prepared him for baptism and left the lodge. The patient's brother, fearing that the devil might infect him too should he come near, hovered anxiously at the entrance to the cabin.

"I want a clean, new lodge erected at once," Père Marquette directed. "It must have a bed with plenty of warm blankets, but no fire."

Père Marquette returned to the mission house and set a kettle of water to boiling. Into this he put corn meal and thin slices of meat.

Half an hour later the sick man's brother came into the house.

"The lodge is ready," he said.

"Move your brother to the clean bed."

"Black Robe, I dare not. Nor will anyone else do so. They fear the devil."

Père Marquette re-entered the house of death, cradled the sick man in his arms, and carried him into the hastily erected lodge. He laid him on the bed, stripped off his filthy clothing, and bathed him with warm water. Père Marquette forced him to swallow a little of the soup he had made.

Every day he visited and cared for the sick Ottawa. Little by little he saw him recover, and at last leave the lodge to walk again among his fellows.

Two days later the fully recovered Ottawa walked into the mission house with a young Indian beside him. He pushed his companion forward.

"A slave," he said. "I myself took him when we made war on the tribes of the Illinois. I owe my life to you, Black Robe, so he is now your slave."

The Ottawa left as abruptly as he had entered. Père Marquette looked at the trembling youngster left behind.

"Have no fear," the Jesuit said kindly. "You are no longer a slave. Go when and where you wish."

"Let me stay with you!" the youth begged. "I do not wish to go back to the Ottawas!"

"Did they treat you unkindly?" asked Père Marquette.

"No, but in time of hunger they will! They will eat me!"

Père Marquette said nothing; it was no secret that many of these wild tribes ate human beings. He looked pityingly at the frightened slave.

"What is your name?"

"Broken Knee."

"From where do you come?" Père Marquette asked.

"From across the Great River, the Mississippi."

"The Great River?"

"Yes, it is as wide as from here," the Indian pointed to a stone a great distance away, "to that stone. It flows from north to south."

Père Marquette's interest mounted excitedly. A great river that lay to the west, and flowed north to south! Breathlessly he asked, "Where does this river empty?"

"My people do not know, for none have ever been to its mouth."

"Are your people warriors?"

"Great warriors," Broken Knee said proudly, "but we do not like to fight. We would rather trade. Black Robe, would we not have peace and plenty if one such as you came among us?"

Père Marquette paced the floor, his head whirling with thoughts of the great river and of the tribes that lived along it. Someone must go there! Wild tribes and a great river! What a wonderful opportunity for the Church. What a great discovery for his homeland—the French empire!

Père Marquette turned to the slave.

"Broken Knee, would your tribe welcome a Black Robe?"

"They would welcome you," the youth said. "They would build you a canoe with which you might travel on the Great River."

"Rest, Broken Knee. I have work to do."

For years, long before Père Marquette was born, reports of a great river to the west had been trickling into Quebec. But as far as Père Marquette knew, the Illinois slave was the first person who had ever seen the Mississippi and told a white man about it. Père Marquette started to write.

His superior at Quebec must hear this exciting news as soon as possible.

7. Flight

Père Marquette arrived at La Pointe in the autumn of 1669, and remained there until the summer of 1671.

During this time he conducted his mission and worked among the numerous Indians who either lived at La Pointe or journeyed there for the excellent fishing it offered. At the same time he added to his knowledge of the western country and gathered every possible shred of information about the Great River.

Some tribes, he learned, called it the Mississippi. It flowed through a fruitful land abounding in wild game. The river itself was filled with great fish. No tribesman could be shaken in his story that it was the home of numerous fierce creatures, and many demons and devils.

By piecing together everything he had learned, Père Marquette constructed a map of the river he had never seen. He became greatly excited over one possibility.

Far in the interior, and to the south, the Fox River emptied into Green Bay, an arm of Lake Michigan. The Fox River started its course very close to the source of a westerly flowing stream that must discharge its waters into the Mississippi itself. Supposedly there was only a short portage between the two rivers where canoes would have to be carried.

However, there was much that must remain a mystery until someone actually went to find and explore the Mississippi. The Indians said that as far as they knew it flowed from north to south. How much did they know? Did the Mississippi bend westward, and discharge into the Vermilion Sea, or Pacific? Did it curve eastward and empty into the Atlantic by way of Virginia's unexplored swamps? Or did it pour its waters into the Gulf of Mexico? Was this river the northern portion of one which had already been explored by the Spanish to the south?

This and more Père Marquette pondered, but he did not neglect his mission.

Beyond doubt, somewhere to the west there was a strange and very warlike tribe known as the Nadouessi, or Sioux. They never came to the mission, but some of the Indians at La Pointe had been among the Sioux.

They were a ferocious tribe, these travelers told Père Marquette. They lived by hunting, and war was their pleasure. Since they had never had contact with white men, they had no guns. But when they fought they were so skillful with the bow that a very rain of arrows fell among their enemies. The Sioux were expert at this even in retreat, when they could turn suddenly and shoot a volley that often killed most of their pursuers.

Though they fought for the joy of fighting, they were not vicious or cruel warriors. Often, when they captured a large group of prisoners, they let all of them go in the hope that later they could fight with them again.

Busy every second of the day at his mission, Père Marquette was unable to make a journey to the Sioux tribes. He did dispatch an Ottawa runner with an offering of religious pictures. Some time he must go among the Sioux, and when he did he wished to have them prepared.

Then, in the summer of 1671, a strange warrior came to the mission at La Pointe. He was tall, and as he walked, muscles rippled over his handsome body. Though he was alone he showed a fierce disdain of the Ottawas and Hurons, who watched him from a respectful distance. The stranger entered the church, left a buffalo-skin-wrapped bundle on the altar, and without speaking a word, walked out again.

Coming from the fields with Otter Tail, a Huron chieftain, Père Marquette found the bundle. He unwrapped it and looked at the pictures he had sent to the Sioux. Puzzled, Père Marquette turned to Otter Tail.

"It means," replied Otter Tail, visibly shaken, "that the Sioux have declared war. They will come by the thousands to destroy the mission at La Pointe and kill all of us."

"Why?" asked Père Marquette. "We have done nothing to them."

"The Ottawas did. They went to the west country and killed men of the Sioux tribe."

Otter Tail left the church, and when Père Marquette followed him to the door he saw the tall Indian running towards the

Huron village. Père Marquette hailed Bear Claw, a passing Ottawa, and escorted him into the church. There he showed Bear Claw the pictures and the buffalo skin in which they had been wrapped. The Ottawa trembled.

"The Sioux are coming!" he gasped. "We must flee!"

"Your tribe warred first against the Sioux."

"No," Bear Claw denied. "The Hurons started it. Their warriors went to the west and killed some Sioux women and children."

Père Marquette sighed. The Hurons were blaming the Ottawas for bringing the Sioux down upon them and the Ottawas had blamed the Hurons. The truth would never be known, but that made small difference now. The Sioux were coming, and nobody thought that either the mission or the villages could be defended.

Otter Tail reappeared at the church. "Black Robe!" he gasped, "the chiefs of both the Ottawas and Hurons are holding a council to determine some place of safety where we might flee! You are asked to attend!"

Père Marquette accompanied Otter Tail to the big council house, where the assembled chiefs of both tribes were arguing hotly among themselves.

Otter Tail made himself heard above all the others.

"To the east we meet the Iroquois and to the west there are the Sioux!" he thundered.

"There are the swamps to the south," a chieftain suggested.

"They are filled with bad spirits, fierce beasts, and fiercer men." Otter Tail pointed out. "We cannot go there!"

The argument tilted back and forth. Voices rose and fell. Père Marquette looked on, making no comment. He would have liked to go to the Mississippi, but there was no possibility of doing that as long as he was accompanied by either Hurons or Ottawas. Sioux war parties were sure to be guarding all the trails.

Finally, after everyone in the council house had shouted himself hoarse, the decision was made. The Ottawas would return to their old home on Manitoulin Island, in the northern waters of Lake Huron. The Hurons would go to Michillimackinac, Mackinac Island, in the strait where the waters of Lake Michigan meet those of Lake Huron.

While the chiefs debated, the villages had become beehives of activity. Women and children were in the fields destroying growing crops in order that they might furnish no food for the oncoming Sioux. Scores of men were at the waterfront, repairing old canoes or building new ones.

To make the canoes, they first constructed a frame of thin, seasoned, white cedar boards. This was covered with strips of birch bark sewed together, and lashed to the framework with *wattape*, the fine root of the red spruce. Seams were made water-tight by applying melted gum from pine trees.

Finally all was ready. Hundreds of canoes set out loaded with dried food, weapons, furs, robes, and everything else a canoe will carry. They crept along the shore of Lake Superior to a portage across Keewenaw Peninsula, near the present L'Anse, Michigan. Following Whitefish Bay, they hugged the shore until they reached the St. Mary's River. From that point the river waters carried them to Sault Ste. Marie.

There they stopped, Père Marquette to visit Père Druillettes, who had been transferred to the Sault, and the Indians to replenish their food supplies with fish.

After this pause the brigade split. The Ottawas turned eastward to Manitoulin Island and the Hurons paddled west to Michillimackinac. Père Marquette accompanied his Hurons and took charge of St. Ignace Mission, which was near the present city of St. Ignace, Michigan.

Throughout the long voyage Père Marquette was sad. The sweat and almost the life's blood of Père Allouez and himself had gone into the mission at La Pointe.

Fortunately he did not know that never again would a missionary be active upon the shores of Lake Superior while the French held the country. For more than a hundred years it was to be almost exclusively the haunt of the wild Indian and

the wilder fur trader.

8. A Visitor to St. Ignace

Though he was disappointed because he had had no opportunity yet to visit the western lands and the Mississippi, Père Marquette threw himself whole-heartedly into his work at the mission of St. Ignace.

It was endless toil. Some of the Hurons had settled on Mackinac Island, but others had gathered around the mission. Fearing the Iroquois, they had erected a fort. This gave them so much confidence that Huron war parties, made up for the most part of fiery youngsters, raided the neighboring tribes. A great many of the venturesome young braves were brought back wounded and in need of all the skill at Père Marquette's command.

Healing the sick or hurt and conducting church services were only part of the Jesuit's task. He must also work ceaselessly to secure new converts and to see that they remained faithful after they were converted. Many did not. The Indians would readily agree to anything Père Marquette asked as long as they could see some gain for themselves. When they had their knives, their beads, or their bright cloth, they returned at once to their own savage practices.

Medicine men were always a threat. It became a seesaw battle in which Père Marquette sometimes held the upper hand. At other times the medicine men gained.

If Père Marquette succeeded in curing some desperately ill person, he was idolized by all the tribespeople who heard of the miracle. Should his patient die, the medicine men, with their wailings and magic, were again in power. They held sway until Père Marquette, by sensible medical and sanitary practices, was again able to cure someone whom all thought doomed.

Day or night, there was always a demand for his time. Père Marquette rested when he could, often throwing himself down beneath some towering tree and sleeping for a few minutes before journeying on to his next call.

Then came autumn, with hardwood trees turning color and the great evergreens somber and still, as though they were fully aware of the season of hardship that lay just ahead. Savage wolf packs which all summer long had hunted in the forest prowled nearer and nearer the mission and Indian villages. Sometimes they boldly entered the villages to snatch the food or refuse which the Indians always discarded in times of plenty.

Père Marquette redoubled his efforts. It was in the winter, when life at its best was difficult and there was never enough to eat, that his Indian charges became restless and unruly. It was then that men and women took part in savage rites or did anything else that they hoped would bring them food.

One night after receiving a canoe full of Indians who had come from the north and feeding them what the mission had to offer, Père Marquette retired for a while. On the next day, Saturday, December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin would be celebrated. Père Marquette had often asked the Blessed Virgin to intercede for him so that he might successfully carry the word of God to the tribes on the Mississippi. Even though there would be no lessening of his labors on the coming feast day, it would be a time of glory and a cause for rejoicing.

With this happy thought, the Jesuit fell asleep. An hour later he was awakened by a hand on his shoulder.

"Who is it?" he asked the man who had entered the dark house.

"It is I, The Eel," an Indian replied.

"What do you wish?"

"I am in sore trouble." The Eel's anxiety was very plain in his voice. "You, Black Robe, told me that anyone who kills will burn with everlasting hellfire. You made me believe it. Yet there has come a time when I must kill."

Père Marquette swung out of bed, sought in the darkness for his shoes, and donned his black robe. He smoothed his hair with his hand and asked gently, "Why must you kill?"

"Today I hunted," The Eel said. "I shot a fine wildcat, one of the last fat ones we will get, for from now on wildcats will have only poor hunting. I took it to my lodge to feed my family. Red Fish, knowing that I had listened to you and would not fight back, took the wildcat from my lodge. I have thought long about this act of thievery, and there is nothing I can do but go and kill Red Fish."

Père Marquette frowned. Red Fish was one of the more troublesome Hurons, a man who scoffed openly at all Jesuit teachings and allied himself with the medicine men. Père Marquette said, "We will go to Red Fish's lodge."

Side by side they walked into the Huron village. The lodges were quiet now, except for one. Red Fish knew well that he had broken tribal law, and he expected The Eel to visit him. He wished to be ready, and when Père Marquette and The Eel halted in front of his lodge, Red Fish emerged from the shadows beside it. There was a tomahawk in his hand.

"Go!" he said fiercely. "Go, or I will kill you both!"

Père Marquette stood quietly, knowing this for an empty threat. There were those among the Hurons who hated him, but there were many who loved and respected him. Red Fish knew well that if he hurt the Black Robe, he would be hunted down and killed no matter where he fled.

Père Marquette said, "I have come for the fat wildcat which you stole from The Eel."

"If The Eel wants his game," Red Fish insisted, "is he not man enough to fight me for it?"

"The Eel has placed himself under the protection of the Great Manitou," Père Marquette replied. "There is no need for him to fight, for the Manitou is greater than all fighting men together."

"Go!" Red Fish snarled. "Go now, or I kill!"

He swung the tomahawk within an inch of Père Marquette's head, and withdrew his arm to strike again. Suddenly there was a loud snap. The tomahawk had broken. Its two pieces fell at Red Fish's feet.

Père Marquette looked on calmly, knowing what had happened. Doubtless there had been a flaw or crack in the copper axe, and Red Fish's violent swinging had broken it.

Red Fish shrank back. To his superstitious mind no other sign was needed. Plainly the Black Robe's Manitou, angry because Père Marquette had been threatened, had shattered the tomahawk. For a moment Red Fish did not speak. Then, "I will bring the wild cat."

He hastened into the lodge, reappeared with The Eel's game, and returned it to its rightful owner.

Without a word The Eel turned and stalked into the darkness.

When Red Fish tried to make himself small in the shadows, Père Marquette asked, "Will you walk with me, Red Fish?"

"I will walk with you."

Side by side they set off along the rocky shore. A wind blew over the lake and sent waves creeping up the beach. They spent their force and fell back.

As the dawn broke, Père Marquette told the story of Jesus and Mary. He spoke as clearly and as simply as he could, knowing from experience that the story was hard for Indians to understand.

The sun rose higher in a gray and threatening sky, but still Père Marquette walked and talked to Red Fish. The Indian said nothing. They halted on a rocky headland and looked across the lake. Red Fish glanced at the half-hidden sun, and felt the wind. He was still a savage, testing the things a savage knows, but finally he said, "I will come to your church, Black Robe."

"You will be welcome."

Red Fish looked out across the lake and stiffened. He closed tense fingers around the hilt of his knife, then relaxed.

Père Marquette followed his gaze, but saw nothing.

"Who comes?" he inquired. "Who travels these ice-filled waters?"

"A canoe," Red Fish said wonderingly. "A small canoe, and surely the man who paddles it is mad. Else at this season he never would be on the lake alone, and in such a small craft."

Two minutes later Père Marquette saw the canoe. It was small, and it hugged the shore line. The man who paddled it might be mad, to venture onto the lake in such weather, but certainly he was a master of the canoe. He steered his frail cockleshell of a boat across the waves, meeting them at exactly the right angle and almost miraculously avoiding wreck.

As the Indians started towards the landing, Père Marquette and Red Fish joined them. The lone, daring voyager ran his craft into shallow water and stepped out. He caught up his canoe as though it were a toy and carried it ashore.

The newcomer was a careless young Frenchman wearing a fur hat, a gay coat, and a colorful sash. He turned his saucy face towards those on shore and smiled.

Père Marquette exclaimed, "Louis Joliet!"

9. Plans

Père Marquette rushed to the water's edge and warmly embraced this young man who, at twenty-eight years of age, was one of the bravest and most famous explorers in the new world.

Their paths had crossed before. When Père Marquette had arrived at Quebec, Joliet, the son of a poor wagon-maker, had been studying for the priesthood in the Jesuit mission. The young priest and the student had taken an instant liking to each other.

Adventurous Joliet, however, was temperamentally unfitted to become a Jesuit. He had left the mission shortly after Père Marquette was sent to Three Rivers. Joliet traveled to France and spent a year in gay living. Restless, unable to bear any sort of confinement, and certainly unsuited to life in the narrow world of Europe, he had returned to Quebec and taken up the calling of explorer.

He had gone down the Ohio to the falls where Louisville, Kentucky, now stands. For years he had wandered the upper Great Lakes, searching for copper mines. While so doing he had visited Père Marquette at Sault Ste. Marie. Nobody had roamed the new world more than he and no one person knew more about it.

Now he stood on this wild shore, gay and carefree as ever. When Père Marquette stepped back, Joliet stooped to wring water from his leggings.

Père Marquette looked wonderingly at the canoe.

"Where did you come from, Louis?"

"Quebec."

"In—," Père Marquette was startled. "In that canoe?"

"It is a very good canoe, Jacques. I made it myself."

"You are mad!" exclaimed Père Marquette.

"Pouf! I had no wish to be slowed by *voyageurs* or savages. I had to reach you before the waters were closed by ice."

Père Marquette shook a whirling head. Anybody could start from Quebec for St. Ignace in such a craft. Only Louis Joliet would get through.

"Are you not going to invite me in?" the young explorer asked.

"Forgive me, Louis! In my joy at seeing you again, I had forgotten that I am your host. Do come!"

Side by side, they walked up to the mission house. There before a blazing fire kindled by an Indian who had attached himself to Père Marquette, Joliet warmed himself. As he rubbed his hands together, he beamed happily.

"Ah, Jacques, I am now about to make you sorry."

"Sorry?" queried Père Marquette. "For what?"

"For writing all those reports to Quebec about the River Mississippi, and expressing your great desire to go there. For," and Joliet paused dramatically, "you and I are going."

"We're—we're going?" Père Marquette gasped.

"That is right." The young explorer nodded. "We are going on special orders from Monsieur Louis de Frontenac, Governor-General of New France, and Père Dablon, who is now the Jesuit Superior at Quebec."

Père Marquette felt a great joy swell within him. That he should receive such news on this, a day devoted to the Immaculate Virgin! His eyes were wet with tears of happiness when he looked again at his friend.

"Louis, you're serious!"

"Most serious, Jacques," the newcomer insisted. "Monsieur de Frontenac, he wishes to extend the empire of France, to discover mines of gold and copper, and to close in the English colonists by a solid array of French forts to the west. Père Dablon, you know what he wants. But maybe a little bit you and I just wish to see the Mississippi. Eh, Jacques?"

"I have prayed to be sent there!"

Louis Joliet rubbed his hands gleefully. "Ah!" he breathed, "such a magnificent undertaking! Nobody knows as much of this new world as you and I will discover! It is a marvelous thing!"

Père Marquette said eagerly, "I have made maps, Louis, and while I was at La Pointe a slave named Broken Knee taught me the Illinois language! I am partially prepared."

"Good," said Joliet, "but let us do more. You know, Jacques, that it will be a venturesome journey. It need not be a foolhardy one if we ready ourselves properly."

"Let me show you my maps," Père Marquette said. He unrolled his great array of hand-drawn maps and pointed out the mission at La Pointe. Everything to the east was mapped; nearly everything to the west was blank.

"I met Broken Knee at La Pointe," Père Marquette explained. "He was a slave taken from the Illinois, and he was about thirty days on the trail. Later, when peace prevailed, other Illinois tribesmen visited La Pointe. They asked me to come among them, and I felt that I must do so.

"Now look at this map, Louis," the Jesuit continued. "Here is the Fox River, emptying into Green Bay, and at this point is the village of the Mascoutens. Père Allouez and Père Dablon were there two years ago, in 1670. Père Allouez himself told me that the Mascoutens spoke of a westerly flowing river only a few days' journey from their village. It is the Meskousing, or Wisconsin. Now——"

"Now what?" Joliet asked smoothly.

"That I do not know," Père Marquette admitted. "There is no way of telling, for no white man has ever gone beyond the Mascouten village. From this point on I can only guess, but if the Wisconsin flows west, and the Mississippi north to south, does it not seem certain that the Wisconsin empties into the Mississippi?"

"It cannot fail." Joliet was frowning as he studied the maps. "But, if possible, we must make sure that you are right. Now this place, Jacques——"

Sitting together, forgetting everything else, they scanned the maps Père Marquette had drawn. Joliet, expert at this sort of thing, used a piece of charcoal to shade various portions or to mark something that interested him. They had eyes and thought only for the venture before them.

They sought an answer to the most important question that faced the new world. To the west, beyond the farthest point any white man had seen, lay a wilderness. Nobody knew how big it was, but every sign indicated that it was cut by a great river.

Where did that river flow? What promises did it offer?

Père Marquette rose. "Come with me to the church, Louis, and I shall ask anyone who has information about the Mississippi to bring it to me."

Little by little the news trickled in. A wandering Indian who came to St. Ignace announced that, though he had never been there, a party of his tribesmen had started down the Mississippi. There had been ten warriors, all in one canoe, and being stoutly armed they had no reason to fear anything. As they sailed along they heard a great roaring, and knew it for a monster, but decided to attack. The monster swallowed the canoe and nine men. Only one warrior returned to tell the tale.

Other Indians came to say that the Mississippi was the abode of devils with wings, who skipped about on the water and never failed to kill any man who came near.

News of the forthcoming expedition trickled through the whole north country. A fur trader went two hundred miles out of his way to tell Père Marquette and Joliet that they would find warlike tribes on the Mississippi. He advised them not to

go, for they would certainly be killed.

Père Marquette and Joliet listened to everyone. They set aside what was clearly silly, but gave careful thought to everything else. When it seemed certain that someone had information they could use, they changed their maps.

As spring drew near, both explorers felt a growing urge to be off. This would be the greatest exploration to be undertaken since the days of Columbus, and in spite of continued warnings neither Père Marquette nor Joliet had any thought of giving up their plans.

Choosing a crew to accompany them was difficult. The Indians, expert canoemen and forest runners, refused to think of going along. They believed the tales of demons and monsters, and were sure that the explorers would never be seen again should they sail their canoes down the Mississippi.

Then five French *voyageurs*, unafraid of devils or of anything else, volunteered to serve. The *voyageurs*, who were even better canoemen than the Indians and much more dependable, busied themselves making two fine canoes.

Spring came, but Père Marquette could not leave. Louis Joliet had also brought information that as soon as a canoe could be sent from Quebec, Père Philippe Pierson would arrive to take his place at St. Ignace. Père Marquette had to await and instruct Père Pierson, who arrived with the first brigade of northbound canoes.

On the 17th of May, 1673, the little group of adventurers set out from St. Ignace. Nobody, not even they, knew exactly where they were going. Nobody except the men themselves believed that they would ever come back.

10. Canoes Westward

As the explorers left St. Ignace, Joliet and Père Marquette each commanded a canoe. They also helped to paddle, but their happiness made the work seem easy.

Rounding Point La Barbe, they fought against the fierce current that surges through the narrowest part of the Straits of Mackinac, and traveled westward along the northern shore of Lake Michigan.

During this time Père Marquette knew some troubled moments. He had been schooled in science and had studied further himself. He knew the positions of the stars, he had become an expert navigator, and he had learned to draw maps. Yet men are only human. Suppose he had been wrong in persuading Joliet to attempt to reach the Mississippi by way of the Wisconsin?

Before long, Père Marquette regained his calm. He had not been wrong! A man is not God, but he has a God-given mind that is meant for thought, reason, and logic. None except the savages knew definitely how the Wisconsin flowed, but providing it flowed west, it had to empty into the Mississippi.

The travelers took their canoes around Point Detour and into Green Bay. Père Marquette halted to visit with some Winnebago Indians, a tribe of the Sioux, who dwelt along the shores of the Menominee River. Telling them of his intended visit to the Mississippi, he heard the usual warnings about savage tribes, demons, and monsters who lived along the path he must follow. The two explorers disregarded the warnings and pointed their canoes southward.

Lashed by winds and stirred by strong cross-currents that were violent much of the time, Green Bay was the famed "Death's Door" of the early French travelers. Camping on shore when the water was too rough, advancing whenever they could, Père Marquette, Joliet, and their crew went slowly forward, living almost entirely on game, fish, wild fruits, and vegetables.

They entered the weed-choked mouth of the Fox River, disturbing hordes of wild geese, ducks, and other waterfowl. They fought their way up to the rapids at De Pere, where stood the new mission of St. Francis Xavier, established during the winter of 1671-72 by Pères André and Allouez.

At the mission of St. Francis Xavier, Père Marquette paused briefly. Before departing from Mackinac he had been transferred to De Pere, in order to be nearer the Illinois tribes whom he was to serve from that time forward.

But the flame that burned within Joliet and himself was far too hot to permit any long delays. Somewhere ahead and to the west lay the magic Mississippi. Paddles flew as they hurried up the Fox and into Lake Winnebago.

As they left the great lake to venture into the Fox's upper waters, Père Marquette's heart beat faster within him. They were nearing the half-legendary village of the Fire Nation, the Mascoutens, whose fame had spread as far as Paris. No known white man had gone beyond it.

The land through which they passed was wealthy with nature's gifts. Bears and wildcats prowled through the bushes beside the river. Graceful deer drank from the stream, stared in astonishment at the explorers' canoes, and bounded away. Waterfowl, feeding upon the river's plants, squawked into the air, and settled back to feed again as soon as the canoes had passed. Sluggish buffalo bellowed on both sides of the river, and crushed their ponderous way through cane brakes. Flocks of pelicans whitened the banks. There were endless fruits and berries. Surely no one could go hungry in such a place!

On the 7th of June they came to the landing place at the Mascouten village and drew up their canoes. Père Marquette looked at his younger companion.

"We are here, Louis."

"Aye!" Joliet laughed. "This far we have come! Do you doubt that we will go the rest of the distance?"

"Not I," Père Marquette said, and smiled. "Let us visit the village."

Louis Joliet looked to the priming of his gun, and made sure that nothing clogged the draw string of his bullet pouch. He checked to see if his powder horn ran freely.

Père Marquette scolded him gently. "You'll have no need of a gun. The village is friendly."

Leaving the canoes in charge of two *voyageurs* who stood by with loaded guns, Père Marquette, Louis Joliet, and three *voyageurs* struck inland to the Mascouten village. It was about two and a half miles distant, but long before they reached it they could see the village on the highest hill for miles around.

The settlement was huge, covering most of the hill, and save for an occasional lonely cabin, it was entirely surrounded by a high stockade. Within it lived almost three thousand Miamis, Kickapoos, and Mascoutens. The three tribes had banded together as the best defense against the Iroquois, whose restless hunting and war trails led them even to this distant place.

Joliet and the three *voyageurs* who accompanied him fingered their guns. Père Marquette's hand stole to the crucifix around his neck. As the explorers reached one of the stockade's several gates, an almost naked Indian greeted them with upraised hands. His palms were outspread to show that he held no weapons.

"Welcome, Frenchmen!" he said cordially.

Almost sheepishly Joliet and the three *voyageurs* lowered their guns. Père Marquette looked admiringly at the man who had welcomed them.

He was taller than any member of the exploring party, and his hard muscles rippled like water in the sun. He wore a necklace of bear claws, and upon his chest were several strange-looking marks which, Père Marquette supposed, told of his skill both in battle and in the hunt. He had a high forehead and intelligent eyes.

Père Marquette looked back at the river, then turned away. All about was sweeping prairie, with groves of stately trees scattered here and there. But there were not many trees, and most of the Indian cabins were made of woven rushes instead of wood.

Some of the Indians were adorned like the one who had greeted them, but others were not so well dressed, probably because they were less skilled in the art of making clothes. Nor did they seem so alert and intelligent, all of which bore out Père Allouez' report.

The Miamis were the most courtly and most intelligent of the three tribes living in the Mascouten village. They were also the best warriors, and almost never failed when they went on the warpath. The Mascoutens and Kickapoos fell naturally under the leadership of the more intelligent Miamis.

A great crowd gathered around them as they walked towards the council house. Joliet, who knew well his role as emissary of a mighty land, walked proudly and pretended to notice nobody. And it was Joliet who took the speaker's stand in the council house.

"I have been sent by Monsieur de Frontenac," he proclaimed. "A leader so mighty that his warriors, all armed with the best of guns, are as many as the grasses of the prairie——"

Joliet, a master of flowery Indian speech, told the savages of his wish to find new lands. He spoke of Père Marquette's mission, and of the greatest King of all whom Père Marquette served. With many grand gestures and fine words he explained that Père Marquette was safe in the protection of the Great Manitou. As a result, he had no fear of the death to which he exposed himself in journeys so dangerous.

Joliet asked the Indians for help. If anyone had information about the Mississippi, it would be thankfully received. But it was useless to warn of demons and devils; they had been so warned many times and had no intention of turning back.

The explorer finished by giving a little packet of gunpowder to each of the chiefs and requesting two guides to pilot them over the portage into the Wisconsin River.

There followed three days of feasting and merrymaking. Père Marquette, assigned to one of the lodges, had little time for sleep because tribesmen came at all hours of the day and night to see him. Plainly Père André and Père Allouez had laid a firm groundwork for future missions to the Mascouten village.

At the end of three days the explorers set out with two Miami guides who took them through the winding channels of the upper Fox and across the portage, near the present city of Portage, Wisconsin, that led into the Wisconsin. There the

Miami guides left them and returned to their village.

Père Marquette lowered to the surface of the Wisconsin the burden he had carried over the mile-and-a-half portage. Then in his heart he gave humble thanks for the privilege of being there.

11. The Mississippi

On the 17th of June, seven days after they had left the village of the Mascoutens, the two canoes glided out of the Wisconsin and into the Mississippi's rolling currents. Louis Joliet snatched his hat off and, at the risk of upsetting the canoe whirled the hat madly about his head. An Indian war whoop burst from him.

"We are here!" he screamed at the top of his voice. "Jacques! This is the river! This is the Mississippi!"

"Yes," said Père Marquette, his trembling voice expressing his joy somewhat more quietly. He took five forward strokes before he discovered that his paddle was not even in the water, and said, "This is the Mississippi, Louis."

"It is!" Joliet screamed. "It is!"

Joliet seemed about to explode. "Jacques," he exclaimed, laughing, "you've knocked your hat sideways with the end of your paddle!"

Père Marquette grinned back at his young companion in the other canoe, but made no move to straighten his hat. Surely even a Jesuit could be forgiven for not maintaining complete dignity on an occasion as important as this.

Joliet steered his canoe very close and turned a beaming face on his Jesuit comrade.

"Think, Jacques! Think of what this means!"

"I am thinking, Louis."

For years most of Père Marquette's thoughts had turned to this, the great western river. Nothing could be more important to the new world.

The discovery of the Mississippi meant, first of all, that the mission to which Père Marquette had devoted his life could now be undertaken among previously unknown tribes. It meant that important new regions could be explored and settled. It meant that the way was open into a whole new land.

Now that Père Marquette and Joliet had proved that there was a route into the west, other white men would certainly follow.

The two men let their canoes drift while they gazed upon this marvelous river. A mile wide where they had entered it, the Mississippi was flanked on either side by forested bluffs. The shores were indented by many bayous, or slow streams, and there was evidence of swampland. A herd of grunting buffalo, so many that they seemed one brown blanket, grazed in a sandy meadow. The animals scarcely bothered to lift their heads when the canoes floated past. There were numberless waterfowl, and birds of every description screeched and squawked in the trees and river growth.

Joliet started a haunting boatman's song in which the *voyageurs* joined. Père Marquette busied himself with observing. Nothing about this western river must escape notice, for Père Dablon, back in Quebec, would wish to know every detail. Then, too, Père Marquette intended to make new maps. Now that the river was found, it must not be lost again.

Père Marquette's observations were interrupted by Joliet's gay laugh.

"This is no fit place to tarry, Jacques. You have not, I trust, forgotten that we are going to the Pacific, or Virginia, or the Gulf of Mexico, or wherever this river betakes itself in its various wanderings. Now you have three boatmen, and I have only two, but we in this canoe feel that we are superior. Come! Let us race!"

Almost before he had finished speaking, Joliet's two *voyageurs*, happily agreeing to the challenge, dug paddles deeply into the water, and their canoe spurted two lengths ahead.

As Père Marquette's boatmen took up the gauntlet, their canoe leaped down the river. The laughing Joliet looked back at them.

Inch by inch the four paddlers struggled against the three, but those three were mighty canoemen. Soon the gap between the boats narrowed. Père Marquette's canoe crept up so that its bow was even with the other's stern.

Suddenly Joliet's canoe skidded and Père Marquette heard the shouted warning, "Swerve, Jacques! Swerve quickly!"

There was a sharp, sickening bump, as though Père Marquette's canoe had flung itself upon a floating tree trunk. This was followed by a swirl in the water, and then quiet. Instantly one of the boatmen was on his knees, patching a hole in the canoe through which water bubbled. Père Marquette looked around to see what they had hit.

Just beneath the surface, looking almost yellow in the murky water, a great fish swam. Fully five feet long and with an almost unbelievably thick body, it pursued the unhurried course upon which it had started when struck by the canoe.

"Come and look, Louis," Père Marquette invited.

Joliet swung his canoe around to gaze at the sluggish creature. Though neither knew it, it was a channel catfish. Joliet turned understanding eyes on Père Marquette.

"A Mississippi 'monster,'" he pronounced. "We must proceed with more caution, Jacques."

Towards evening they landed to let the *voyageurs* hunt, and roasted fat buffalo hump over a small fire on the shore. Then they paddled their canoes into the river, anchored them to driven sticks, and, careful that one of their number always remained awake and alert, they slept in the canoes.

It was strange, wild country, with never any way of knowing what lay beyond the next bend or the next turn. Anything could be there, but for eight days the adventuring canoeists saw only the usual game herds and bird flocks.

It was not until the 25th of June, when they had been eight days on the river, that Joliet stopped his canoe. He stared towards the bank.

"Look there," he said.

Père Marquette followed his gaze. At the edge of the river was a well-worn path, and a big canoe lay on the bank. Joliet turned questioningly towards Père Marquette.

"Savages cannot be very far away, Jacques. What now?"

"We will go and find them," Père Marquette said.

"Suppose they do not care to be found?"

"I did not come this far to turn back, Louis."

"That is all I must know," said Joliet.

They ran their canoes into shallow water, disembarked, and left the five armed *voyageurs* in charge. Joliet gave them final instructions.

"You are to remain alert and under no condition let yourselves be surprised. If you are attacked, fight. When you can, take to the river and flee. Should anything go amiss, Père Marquette and I will try to return to last night's camp. If you do not find us there within three days, go back the way you came. Above all, guard the maps and reports with your lives. Mine must go to Monsieur de Frontenac. Give Père Marquette's to Père Dablon."

Side by side the two explorers walked up a narrow trail that threaded the flat prairie. Joliet walked cautiously, his roving eyes taking in as much as they possibly could. Père Marquette looked only straight ahead. A half-hour later they saw the village with two others a little way beyond it.

At sight of the settlements, the explorers stopped. Joliet was nervous, but Père Marquette remained calm.

"We might still go back," Joliet pointed out.

"I cannot go back," Père Marquette said, "for if I did I would be false to all I have taught and to all I believe. We may, however, let the savages know that we come in peace. Let us shout."

They shouted as loudly as they could, and tensely awaited the result of their signal. Presently four old men came from the village. Two of them bore stone pipes ornamented with bird feathers which had handles about two feet long. Père

Marquette looked at them. They must be Illinois, for they bore the same headdress and the same face markings as the Illinois who had visited La Pointe. The two pipe-bearers puffed rhythmically, then held their pipes to the sky as though offering them to the sun.

Joliet sighed his relief.

"The calumet," he said.

"What is that?"

"The peace pipe," Joliet explained, "though there is also a calumet for war. Smoke it when they offer it to you, Jacques, even though you only let the smoke pass your lips. Otherwise they will consider you an enemy."

Unspeaking, the four old men approached them. Père Marquette and Joliet puffed briefly on the peace pipe, then walked with their guides to the village. A breech-clouted Indian with upraised hands greeted them at the entrance to a big lodge, and took them inside. Père Marquette and Joliet seated themselves on woven mats.

"It lightens our hearts to see you at last," the chief said gravely. "We have long been hoping you would come, for some of our people visited La Pointe and brought word of the miracles performed by the Black Robe there. But before we tire you with talk, let us give you refreshment."

An Indian came with food, and the chief put some between the lips of both Père Marquette and Joliet. There was another course, but when that was followed by a large roasted dog brought in on a platter, Père Marquette turned a little pale. Joliet looked mischievously at him.

"It is only dog," he said carelessly. "Eat, Jacques."

"I," Père Marquette said in the Illinois tongue, "am a Black Robe, and cannot eat dog."

Without protest the roasted dog was taken away and cooked fish offered in its place. The feasting finished, the pow-wow started. These were indeed Illinois Indians, Père Marquette discovered, and though none from this particular village had visited La Pointe, the Black Robes' fame had spread throughout the Illinois country. Mightily they wished for a Jesuit to come and live among them.

The next day the chief gave Père Marquette a fine calumet, decorated with the bright feathers and dried heads of various birds.

"Carry it, Black Robe," he said. "It is our wish that you remain safe, for we hope that you will come again among us. The sun was so bright when you came, and has grown so dim now that you are about to leave, that our hearts are heavy within us."

"I promise," Père Marquette said, "that now you are found, you shall not be lost. I will come again among you."

12. Attack

With the cheers and shouted encouragement of nearly six hundred Illinois tribesmen ringing in their ears, the little group of adventurers again set sail upon the Mississippi.

Père Marquette was occupied with his own thoughts, for the Illinois Indians had furnished much valuable information. The Mississippi, they said, did not swing westward and therefore it could not possibly empty into the Pacific. But there was a river that flowed into the Mississippi from the west. It was inhabited by man-eating monsters of every description, and was also the abode of demons. There were tribes living along its banks, but the Illinois did not know much about them.

They *did* know about the Mississippi. Certainly the explorers would run into warlike peoples, but the Illinois knew of none who did not respect the calumet. Much farther down, they had heard, were other tribes with long hair on their faces. Their houses were built on the water. These tribes had guns, beads and cloth which they were glad to trade for furs.

Père Marquette pondered all this information and tried intelligently to fill the many gaps. The demons and devils he did not think about, for he had also been told that he would meet them on the Mississippi.

But what of the eastward-flowing river? Was not the very fact that it flowed in an easterly direction proof of much unexplored land to the west? Was this North American continent far bigger than anyone had thought? Certainly if the river flowed east it flowed from high lands. Were there mountains between the Mississippi and the Pacific?

These questions must go unanswered for the present, but there were others whose answers could be guessed. Tribes with "hair on their faces and houses on the water" meant white men with ships. More than likely these men were the Spanish who occupied the mouth of a river that emptied into the Gulf of Mexico.

Père Marquette maneuvered his canoe so that it floated beside Joliet's.

"Louis," he called, "what do you think of the information furnished by the Illinois?"

Joliet shrugged. "I can no longer think that this Mississippi flows into the Pacific or through Virginia. It must empty into the Gulf of Mexico. I also believe that this river is the one whose mouth is held by the Spanish."

"That is now my own opinion," Père Marquette agreed.

"Disappointed, Jacques?"

"No," said Père Marquette, "for the source of the river that empties into this one is certainly near another that flows into the Pacific. Do you think we could——?"

"We could not," Joliet broke in quickly. "We came to explore the Mississippi, and that's what we're doing. Calm yourself, Jacques. There will be no time to follow the river that flows from the west."

"I was merely thinking about the wild tribes that live along this Pekitanoui, as they call it, and what might be done for them."

"You are only one man, Jacques," said Joliet, "not the entire Jesuit order. Did it ever occur to you that you can do only one man's work?"

Père Marquette gave himself over to paddling, but his thoughts were busy. He had once believed that the Mississippi would reveal the outermost boundaries of North America, and lead to the Pacific. Clearly it would not. But there was this new river, the Pekitanoui, or Missouri. Certainly it had its own secrets to reveal. God willing, Père Marquette decided, one day he would seek them out.

The explorers went on, avoiding the swiftest currents, sand bars, and floating debris in their way. Then, one day, one of the boatmen gasped, "Look!"

Père Marquette followed the *voyageur's* gaze, and he stifled his astonishment. High on the face of a smooth rock were two terrible painted creatures.

They were as large as calves, but they bore deer horns on their heads. There was something horribly evil in their painted expressions. The faces were those of men, but the beards were those of tigers. The bodies were covered with scales. Winding around the bodies, passing over the heads, and going back between the legs, long tails ended in fish's fins.

For the first time, Père Marquette noted fear on Louis Joliet's face. The young explorer turned to the missionary.

"What does it mean, Jacques?" he whispered.

"It is the work of some imaginative savage," Père Marquette replied.

"A savage, to paint so perfectly? The masters of France could not improve upon it."

"Put it from your mind, Louis."

In spite of such assurances, Père Marquette could not at once put the images from his own mind. It was an age of superstition, when even well-informed people were not above believing that real devils walked the earth. Père Marquette fought with his own cold fear, and finally conquered it. He was a Jesuit who believed as a Jesuit. The images had been very real and very fierce, but he could not for long fear devils, painted or otherwise. Doubtless some gifted Indian had merely intended to paint river spirits.

The party went farther, camping wherever they found themselves at night and gathering food along the way. A little while after they had passed the painted monsters on the rock, a faint rumbling in the distance struck Père Marquette's ears.

He hesitated, backing water with his paddle while he sought to define the sound. Père Marquette remembered the Indians' tale of the demon that supposedly guarded the Mississippi, and that swallowed men and canoes. Joliet brought his canoe to rest beside Père Marquette's and the two looked questioningly at each other.

"It sounds like a waterfall," Joliet said.

"It does," Père Marquette agreed. "What now?"

"Keep going and find out."

The current became swifter, fiercer, as the noise increased. Père Marquette exercised all his canoeing skill to keep his craft straight in the rushing water. Then they were in the middle of that place where the broad Missouri joins the Mississippi.

Quickly they struck for the farther shore, where the incoming waters would have spent much of their force. Even so they needed all their skill and water craft to meet the danger. The fragile canoes were tossed about, threatening to beach themselves. Then finally they were in calm water below the meeting of the two rivers.

Père Marquette wiped the perspiration from his brow and sighed in relief. Doubtless this was another of the many Mississippi demons, but it was easy to see how such fierce water could swallow a canoe and nine men. An Indian, running unawares into the place, might easily feel the demon breathing down his neck.

The travelers went on, passing the mouth of the Ohio and suffering in the hot climate of the land where they now found themselves. Clouds of mosquitoes, so numerous and savage that it was necessary to spread sails over the canoes, besieged the group of men.

On shore the explorers built a platform of sticks, and made a smoke fire beneath it. Then they lay on the platform to escape the mosquitoes' torment.

While in this place they met and talked with a group of Chickasaw Indians who had guns, knives, hatchets, and various other trade goods. Joliet identified these as Spanish-made articles which the Chickasaws had obtained by trading with tribes farther down the river. This meeting strengthened the explorers' belief that the Mississippi emptied into the Gulf of Mexico and that the Spanish controlled its mouth. The Chickasaws told them that at this point of the river they were only ten days from the sea.

Again the travelers launched their tiny canoes and started down the river which never before had been broken by a white man's paddle. They went more cautiously now, overlooking nothing, and never failing to post a sentry. If the sea was

only ten days away, the Spanish might be anywhere. The kindest fate they could expect in Spanish hands was captivity.

Suddenly, and without any warning, where there had been only peaceful shores many Indians appeared. They lined the water's edge in a yelling, screaming crowd. Indian archers bent their bows. Arrows whistled over the canoes or nicked into the birch bark that covered them.

The Indians raced to the shore and uncovered their dugouts, which had been hidden in tall weeds. Club-swinging warriors manned them as the dugouts pulled out to head off the canoes.

13. The Turning Point

Père Marquette stood erect, bracing his feet against the canoe's ribs lest he break through the paper-thin bark, and held the calumet aloft. Joliet and the *voyageurs* looked calmly to their guns. Every man was prepared to repel the attack.

As Joliet leveled his gun against a dugout, Père Marquette cried,

"No! Not yet! Don't fire at them, Louis!"

"How near," Joliet asked, remaining calm, "would you have them come?"

"They are excited and have not yet seen the calumet! Let us not kill needlessly!"

A half-dozen warriors ran to the water's edge and plunged in, evidently intending to swim out and upset the canoes. The fierce currents hurled the Indians back on shore.

Standing up in a dugout, a warrior threw a club that fell short of the explorers. Another club sailed over Père Marquette's head, so close that it seemed almost to touch his hair. Several Indians were swinging clubs, preparing to throw them.

Joliet's unexcited voice penetrated the general uproar.

"One more like that, Jacques, and there will be some very dead savages around here."

"Time!" Père Marquette breathed. "Give them time! Do not act hastily!"

So near that it seemed almost impossible for him to miss, an Indian stood up and whirled his war club. Other dugouts were pushing in strongly, preparing to attack. Then they stopped.

Holding their crafts in the snarling water, the dugouts' paddlers glared at the explorers even while they listened to a command from the bank. Some old men, neither as hot-headed nor as eager for battle as the young ones, had finally seen the calumet.

A symbol of the sun, which these tribes worshipped, it was at all times to be revered and respected. Even in the heat of battle, a warrior who displayed the calumet might pass unharmed through all his enemies. None would hurt whoever showed the sacred symbol.

Louis Joliet grinned wryly at Père Marquette, and lowered his gun. The *voyageurs* did likewise. They remained tense, ready for anything that might come.

At another order from the bank, the dugouts put back to shore. Two of the older men, laying down their bows and arrows, stepped into dugouts and were rowed to the canoes. Without ceremony, one of the older men stepped into each canoe, and he who wore the principal chief's feathers spoke.

"Do you know what he's saying, Jacques?" Joliet called.

Père Marquette shook his head. "It is not one of the six Indian languages I understand. These are an alien people and I have never met their like."

One of the old men pointed towards the shore and grunted. He made motions indicating plainly that the canoes should put in. Warily the *voyageurs* took up their paddles and obeyed. Keeping a firm hold on their guns, they stepped out of the canoes, beached them, and climbed the banks.

While scowling warriors ringed the explorers, Père Marquette looked in vain for women and children. There were none—a sign that this was a war party on the march. Again they were addressed by one of the leaders.

Père Marquette could not understand, and failing, he spoke in the Algonquin tongue. The warriors looked questioningly at each other while Père Marquette cast about in his mind for some way to make them understand. It was only when he spoke to them in the Illinois tongue that an old man came forward.

"I know what you say, Black Robe," he told the Jesuit, growling, "and I will interpret."

One of the chiefs asked a question and the interpreter turned to Père Marquette.

"From where do you come?"

"From a land you have never seen," replied Père Marquette. "It is many days' journey up this river, and from there many months' to the east, and thence across a great water. Compared to it, even the Mississippi is but a puddle. This distant land is called France."

The puzzled interpreter translated for the benefit of his comrades, who looked upon the visitors with new curiosity. Then the Indian asked another question.

"What brings you to the land of the Mitchigamea?"

Père Marquette hesitated. These men were a war party, and like all Indians they would be proud of their battle prowess. It would be small use to tell them of France, or even of God. They would not have the slightest idea of what he was talking about. Père Marquette said, "We seek the sea into which this river empties."

"Are you friends of the white men who are already there?"

"We are not their friends," said Père Marquette.

"Then," the Indian advised, "you had better turn around and go back. You are but two days' journey from the sea, and if you go farther you will be caught and killed by the white men. They kill or make slaves of everyone they catch. They are so ignorant that they do not even respect the calumet."

"Can you tell us of these white men?" asked Père Marquette.

"No, for I have never been among them. However, there is another tribe that know them well. You are to spend the night with us and tomorrow morning we will take you there. It will be best to show the calumet, for then you will not be harmed."

The next morning, after an uneasy night during which the explorers slept little, they set out again. Ahead of them, showing the way, went a dugout manned by ten strong Mitchigamea braves.

In the middle of the afternoon they found an encampment at the mouth of the Arkansas River, and Père Marquette gained safe passage with the invaluable calumet.

A party of warriors escorted the explorers into the village and gave them a place of honor. After corn and roast meat were served, the Arkansas tribesmen produced a young man who spoke Illinois much more fluently than had the man of the Mitchigamea.

Joliet spoke of France and all its glory. Père Marquette spoke of his mission, and then they gathered much valuable information.

The Spanish, they learned, were only two days down the river, which emptied into the Gulf of Mexico. Also down the river were various Indians who, having associated with the Spanish, had been corrupted by them. All the renegades had guns, and they restlessly prowled the river banks. Furthermore, having forsaken their own customs and practices for those of the Spaniards, they shot without warning anyone who passed.

Late that night the explorers tore themselves away from the endless celebrating and the endless courses of food which were pressed upon them. When at last Père Marquette and Joliet retired to the cabin which had been given them, they excitedly compared notes.

"What do you think now, Louis?" the Jesuit asked.

"There can no longer be any doubt that the Mississippi empties into the Gulf of Mexico," said Joliet. "Nor can there be doubt that more and greater lands lie to the west."

"Shall we go on?"

"I'm against it," Joliet said firmly. "To do so would only mean to become prisoners of Spain, or to be shot by some of

their lurking renegade Indians. Should that happen, our whole journey is lost, and no good will ever come of it. I say turn back now."

Père Marquette nodded his agreement.

Neither Joliet nor Père Marquette could know that the Indians had misinformed them, and that the mouth of the Arkansas River is almost 700 miles from the Gulf of Mexico.

Had they known that, they might have gone on.

14. A Child Is Baptized

The sun burned down so fiercely that steam appeared to rise from the river's surface. Only an occasional sleepy twitter came from the flocks of birds along the bank. Père Marquette, turning his canoe to follow Joliet's across the Mississippi's strong current, felt himself bathed in what seemed a river of perspiration.

Heat burned through the sail overspreading the canoe. Père Marquette took another forward stroke, then looked wonderingly at the light paddle.

Suddenly it seemed a heavy, leaden thing, almost too much of a burden to bear. Père Marquette was attacked by an unaccountable spell of dizziness.

Then, and he did not know how it happened, the sail was again spread and a fine, brisk breeze bore them swiftly along. The breeze freshened as it blew, bearing almost the icy sting of a winter wind at Sault Ste. Marie. Père Marquette refreshed himself in it, happy for Joliet and the *voyageurs*. They had worked very hard and been very hot.

Then Père Marquette knew a great burning and a great noise in his head. He stirred fretfully and tried to raise himself. Unable to do so, he opened feverish eyes.

He lay on the shore under the spread sail. A fire heaped with wet wood and rushes made a yellow smoke that drove the ever-hungry mosquitoes away.

Seeing Joliet's concerned face, Père Marquette tried to talk and could not. Then he gasped, "Louis! What happened?"

"Patience," said Joliet as he laid a cool cloth soaked in water on Père Marquette's head. The Jesuit closed his eyes and drifted back to sleep. The next time he awakened night had come.

Joliet, the hardiest of explorers, but a tender nurse, still knelt beside him. Père Marquette sat up with renewed strength.

"What happened?" he asked in bewilderment.

"A small illness," Joliet soothed. "You are not to worry about it, Jacques. These night fogs and this hot river have not been good for our health. But we have started north again, and soon will be in a more agreeable climate."

"I'm sorry to have caused trouble."

"Think nothing of it, it was small trouble." Joliet grinned. "Ah, Jacques, your body was here but your soul was not. While you tossed with fever you still spoke of taking time to ascend the Pekitanoui. Are you never contented?"

Père Marquette fell into a sound and restful slumber from which he awakened refreshed. They went on, battling the river's currents, angling against them when they had to, and using sails to help whenever there was a favorable wind. It was hard labor, but there were compensations.

All seven Frenchmen had had vast experience on the water, and if they had sailed blindly on the way down, they had marked the river's danger spots and were able to avoid them going up. They did not stray into any of the great river's numerous winding bayous, but were able to keep to the main current without getting lost.

Day by day they traveled upstream, and a little way below the Illinois River they met a party of Illinois Indians who were engaged in a buffalo hunt. The explorers beached their canoes to talk with the hunters.

They were strangers, but some of their tribesmen had been to La Pointe while Père Marquette was there and had returned to speak reverently of the Black Robe. He was a Manitou far greater than any other, the wandering tribesmen had told their fellows, and wherever the Black Robe came there was sure to be peace and plenty. Furthermore, those who put themselves in the keeping of the Black Robes' Manitou were sure of good hunting in this life and happiness in the hereafter.

The Illinois hunting party spread buffalo robes for the travelers and brought them roasted buffalo hump. They stood attentively nearby while the exploring party ate, then resumed their conversation.

"Whither do you journey?" the chief asked.

"Far up this river to the Wisconsin," Père Marquette replied. "There we will turn east and travel until we have come again to Lake Michigan."

The Indian looked puzzled. "If you would reach Lake Michigan, why do you not choose an easier way?"

Père Marquette's interest was aroused. "Is there an easier way?"

"There is. Turn east on the Illinois River, which is not far distant, and you will pass the village to which we belong. It is Kaskaskia, and there you may be sure of a welcome. Tarry as long as you wish. Then some of our warriors will take you over a short portage to a river flowing into Lake Michigan."

Père Marquette and Joliet paddled up the broad, still Illinois. This was new, and very worthwhile. Knowing that there were at least two canoe routes to the Mississippi was of utmost importance.

In time they reached the Indian village of Kaskaskia. This was an Indian town near the present Utica, Illinois, and not the Kaskaskia which later became famous in American history. It was a big village of seventy-four long houses, each of which sheltered several families. As the explorers beached their canoes, a joyful throng trooped down to meet them.

Père Marquette's great happiness showed in his eyes. It often happened that Indians received the Jesuits with less kindness than they offered their dogs. Almost never did the tribes welcome a missionary so enthusiastically.

As though a whispered word had gone among them, the assembled tribespeople stepped aside to form two groups. Between them stood a lone warrior, and Père Marquette's heart went out to him.

The warrior, whose eyes were heavy with misery, was unable to conceal the sorrow that clung like a cloak about him. Slowly he walked forward, and his head was erect as he looked straight into Père Marquette's eyes.

"Black Robe, will you come to my son?"

"I will follow you," Père Marquette said gently.

The Indian turned and walked to one of the long houses and went inside. A child lay on a skin-covered bed, attended by a woman, and as Père Marquette looked at the small figure his heart twisted again.

The child was wasted and feverish, with sunken, staring eyes. But even his desperate illness could not hide what he had been. Traces of sunshine clung to him, and bits of gentle breeze, and a great and merry laughter. Probably he was the village's favorite child.

As Père Marquette performed the baptismal rites, the dying child smiled. It was as though the long house had suddenly lighted. Unashamed tears glistened in the woman's eyes and the man was crying too. Père Marquette stayed to comfort them.

Three days later a group of warriors led the exploring party up the Illinois River and over the height of land separating it from the south branch of the Chicago River. The Indians looked at Père Marquette with imploring eyes.

"You will come again, Black Robe?" one asked.

"I will come again."

15. The Last Journey

Père Marquette kept his promise. Both he and Joliet spent the winter at De Pere, the mission of St. Francis Xavier.

The illness which had seized Père Marquette as a result of hardships endured on the Mississippi became worse as the winter advanced. He could do little except write an account of his explorations and complete his maps.

Joliet was occupied in a similar fashion, but as soon as the ice broke he started for Quebec. Although he made the greater part of the trip in safety, his canoe was wrecked in the Lachine Rapids above Montreal and all his records lost. Thus, only Père Marquette's written account of the Mississippi was preserved.

Père Marquette did not improve until summer arrived. Then slowly he seemed to grow better.

On the 25th of October, 1674, he felt well enough to attempt the journey back to Kaskaskia in fulfillment of his promise to its Indians. He left De Pere with two men, Pierre Porteret and Jacques L'Argilier.

When they reached the Chicago River it was frozen, and there Père Marquette became very ill. Unable to move any farther, he passed the winter in a hut which his two men erected on the site of the present city of Chicago. Pierre and Jacques hunted for him, and the Illinois tribesmen who brought him food and medicine begged him to visit them when they could.

Towards the last of March he resumed his journey to Kaskaskia. He spent eleven days among the Illinois. Then, knowing that he could not live long, he asked his two men to take him back to his old mission at St. Ignace.

He was never to reach it. Since Père Marquette wished to go to St. Ignace and not back to De Pere, they started up the east shore of Lake Michigan rather than the west.

When they came to a place near the present city of Ludington, Michigan, Père Marquette could go no farther. Pierre and Jacques erected a rude bark hut, where he spent his last hours in prayer. On the 17th of May, 1675, Père Marquette died peacefully. He was thirty-eight years old and had spent only nine years in the American wilderness pursuing his chosen work.

Père Marquette will never be forgotten. His statue stands in the Hall of Fame at Washington, with those of America's greatest men. He has been honored by other statues or monuments at Portage, Wisconsin, where he entered the Wisconsin River; in the city of Marquette, Michigan; at Summit, Illinois; in Chicago, Detroit, and various other cities.

Harvard and Marquette Universities have placed stained glass windows in his honor. Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa each have a city or village named Marquette. At Adams and Dearborn Streets, in Chicago, the magnificent Marquette Building was dedicated to him. The river on whose banks he died and a railway system in Michigan bear his name.

Perhaps it is in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where the most suitable memorial to Père Marquette has been established. It is Marquette University, founded and conducted by the Jesuits as a means of keeping alive and furthering Père Marquette's ideals.

Nor, despite the fact that he died in poverty, will Joliet be forgotten. In Chicago, on the Michigan Boulevard Bridge, there is a bronze plaque: "In honor of Louis Joliet and Père Marquette, the first white men to pass through the Chicago River." The city of Joliet, Illinois, was also named for the explorer.

Even without these tangible memorials, the names of Père Marquette and Louis Joliet can never be separated from the America we know today. They opened the Mississippi Valley and the Great Lakes basin, thus paving the way for the countless millions who followed. They were the first to prove that North America was not just a spit of land, inconveniently separating Europe from the Orient's fabled riches, but a mighty continent in its own right.

Index

Allouez, Louis, [66-68](#), [70](#), [73](#), [91](#), [108](#), [115](#), [122](#), [124](#)

Anatik, [46-48](#), [53](#), [55](#)

André, Father, [115](#), [124](#)

Arkansas River, [159](#), [161](#)

Ashland, Wisconsin, [68](#)

Bear Claw, [85-86](#)

Broken Knee, [76](#), [79](#), [107-08](#)

Chicago River, [174](#), [177](#), [179](#);
maps, [117](#), [169](#)

Chickasaw Indians, [147](#)

Copper Spear, [63-65](#)

Dablon, Claude, [106-08](#), [128](#), [132](#)

De Pere Mission, [115-16](#), [173-74](#), [177](#);
map, [117](#)

Druillettes, Father, [19-26](#), [27-39](#), [41-48](#), [91](#)

du Chesne, Pierre, [7-10](#), [13-14](#), [16](#), [19](#)

Eel, The (Indian), [97-100](#)

Fox River, [82](#), [108](#), [115-16](#)

François (Indian boy), [23-25](#), [42-43](#), [45](#), [48](#)

French River, [60](#);
map, [61](#)

Frontenac, Louis de, [106-07](#), [122-23](#), [132](#)

Georgian Bay, [60](#);
map, [61](#)

Green Bay, [68](#), [70](#), [82](#), [108](#), [114-15](#);

map, [117](#)

Huron Indians, [84-86](#), [89-91](#), [93-94](#), [98](#)

Huron Lake, [60](#), [90](#);
map, [61](#)

Illinois River, [166](#), [168](#), [171](#);
map, [169](#)

Illinois Tribes, [75](#), [79](#), [107-08](#), [116](#), [133-34](#), [139-41](#), [166-67](#), [174](#), [177](#)

Iroquois Indians, [4](#), [60](#), [89](#), [93](#), [120](#)

Joliet, Louis, [102-12](#), [114-16](#), [119-37](#), [141-45](#), [149-52](#), [159-65](#), [174](#), [179](#)

Kaskaskia village, [168-69](#), [174](#), [177](#);
map, [169](#)

Keewenaw Peninsula, [91](#)

Kickapoo Indians, [120](#), [122](#)

Lachine Rapids, [174](#)

La Pointe Mission, [66](#), [68](#), [70](#), [81](#), [83-85](#), [91](#), [107-09](#), [133-34](#), [137](#)

L'Argilier, Jacques, [174](#), [177](#)

Le Mercier, François, [3](#), [57](#)

Lewis and Clark expedition, [70](#)

Manitoulin Island, [89-91](#);
map, [61](#)

Marquette University, [178](#)

Mascoutens, [108-09](#), [116](#), [118](#), [120](#), [122](#), [124-25](#);
map, [117](#)

Mattawa River, [60](#);
map, [61](#)

Menominee River, [114](#);
map, [117](#)

Meskousing River, [108](#)

Miami Indians, [120](#), [122](#), [124](#)

Michigan, Lake, [82](#), [90](#), [114](#), [167-68](#);
map, [117](#)

Michillimackinac, [90-91](#), [93](#);
map, [117](#)

Mississippi River, [106-62](#), [174](#)

Missouri River, [143](#), [145](#)

Mitchigamea Indians, [158-59](#)

Nadouessi Indians, [83-86](#), [89-90](#)

Nicolas, Louis, [62-63](#)

Nipissing Lake, [60](#);
map, [61](#)

Ottawa Indians, [61](#), [70-75](#), [84-86](#), [89-91](#)

Ottawa River, [60](#);
map, [61](#)

Otter Tail, [85-86](#), [89](#)

Pekitanoui River, [142-43](#), [166](#)

Pierson, Philippe, [112](#)

Point Detour, [114](#);
map, [117](#)

Portage, Wisconsin, [124](#)

Porteret, Pierre, [174](#)

Red Fish (Indian), [97-102](#)

Saint Francis Xavier Mission, [115-17](#);
map, [117](#)

Saint Ignace Mission, [91](#), [93](#), [112-13](#), [177](#);
maps, [61](#), [117](#)

Saint Mary's River, [61](#), [91](#);

map, [61](#)

Sault Sainte Marie, [61](#), [65](#), [68](#), [91](#), [104](#);
maps, [61](#), [117](#)

Sioux Indians, [83-86](#), [89-90](#), [114](#)

Stag Horn, [28-39](#)

Superior, Lake, [61](#), [70](#), [90-91](#);
map, [61](#)

Three Rivers, Canada, [3](#), [17-26](#)

Wattape, [90](#)

Whitefish Bay, [91](#), [117](#)

Winnebago Indians, [114](#)

Winnebago Lake, [116](#);
map, [117](#)

Wisconsin River, [108-09](#), [114](#), [125](#), [167](#);
map, [117](#)

[The end of *The Explorations of Pere Marquette* by Jim Kjelgaard]