The FRENCH ADVENTURER

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ROBERT CAVELIER DE LA SALLE

THE FRENCH ADVENTURER

The Life and Exploits of

LASALLE

by MAURICE CONSTANTIN-WEYER

Author of

A MAN SCANS HIS PAST
(Goncourt Prize Novel.)
TOWARDS THE WEST
THE HALF BREED
Etc.

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To the City of Montreal

I Offer the Homage of This Book

CAVELIER DE LA SALLE

It is to you, oh Montreal, Ville Marie, that I dedicate these pages.

Not that Cavelier de la Salle was born or died on your soil. But among those whose fortunes have been, for an hour or for all time, bound up with yours, none is more worthy of your glory.

And Canada remembers more readily than France. . . .

There is indeed Rouen, which has guarded the memory of its adventurous son. But to what corner of Paris may we go to seek inspiration from his energy?

In our cities there are no squares devoted to Great Adventures, with statues and bas reliefs. . . .

There is no square for the Indies, with Dupleix and Lally-Tollendal.

There is no square for Africa, with Brazza, Flatters, Fourreau, Lamy, Baratier, Marchand or De Foucauld.

There is no square for the Americas, wherein Canada would have the better part. An entire city would be needed for all the statues. . . .

For if France gave to Canada Champlain, Maisonneuve, Talon, Cavelier de la Salle, Marquette, Tracy, Frontenac, Vaudreuil and Montcalm, Canada has given back to France the glory, unknown to Paris, of Papineau and those others who died for the French language.

And those great adventurers into the snows—Monseigneur Provencher, the three bishops, Tasché, Laflèche, Grandin, and that martyr of the Arctic circle, the Abbé Grollier.

Canada is filled with crosses, and many of them are crosses of glory.

Now I myself, in my time, was a *coureur de bois*. But the War led me so close to the gates of Death that I have never altogether lost sight of the threshold. . . .

That is why, when my work is done, I cannot find that repose which is the reward of other men.

To cheat insomnia and suffering, I sing songs to myself, as one sings to a child.

This is the song of Cavelier de la Salle.

M. C-W.

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The French Adventurer—The Life and Exploits of Lasalle

CHAPTER ONE

The headwinds which had been blowing for two days slackened. The Captain, his hands thrust into his faded silk belt, beside his pistols, was shouting his commands. Barefoot sailors scurried forward. They furled the limp staysails, clambered up the ropes and clung to the mastheads. Astride the loftiest yards they reefed the skysails. Cavelier marveled that in spite of the ship's rolling, apparently indifferent to it, they were able to handle the heavy canvas. He imagined that more than one of them must be gripping the spars with nervous legs. . . . Had they already forgotten that only three days ago a squall had swept an apprentice from the main royal? He had never reappeared! His leather cap had floated for a while. . . .

Leaning back against the gunwale the young man gazed toward the East whence the ship had come. He studied the sea and sky: blue silk slightly inflated and quivering,—a high window of transparent crystal shot with iridescent reflections. But when he turned he saw that the ship was bearing down on what seemed to be a wall of darkness. The bowsprit struck it first. The forecastle disappeared as if crushed. At the same moment the voices of sailors who were standing there seemed deadened. Then the foresail and the main mast vanished. Even the captain's voice was muffled, although it usually dominated a storm without the aid of a megaphone. . . . All at once the young adventurer felt a longing for the snapping of taut sails, the roar of waves, the fury of a storm. But the ship seemed as if it had dissolved. It had plunged into the fogs of the Grand Banks.

A phantasm! It surpassed by far the misty veils of a Channel fog. It was both material and immaterial; heavy, yet not sufficiently so to crush the waves. A choppy sea dashed an oily spray against the ship's sides. The waves, running obliquely toward the ship, were barely visible at a distance of a few yards. Deprived now of some of its canvas, borne onward only slightly by the wind, the ship yawed under the shock of the waves. The helmsman would bring her back to her course, while the keel groaned as if weary of its labors.

It required faith rather than sight to reach the forecastle. Cavelier could barely discern the lookout who, clinging to the jib-boom, peered ahead. Beyond him was the fog, so dense that Cavelier smiled at this vain attempt to penetrate the impenetrable. If there were a ship, a reef, immediately ahead, how could the vessel be swung round quickly enough to avoid it?

But the thrill of danger which pervaded the ship with the fog did not displease him. He amused himself by watching the lookout. Every time the ship heaved the bow dipped slightly. Sometimes, at that moment, the next wave struck, and the lookout then received the full impact of the sea. Cavelier would hear him rip out a curse and then see him cross himself, as if in penitence.

However, wet by the spray and wearied by the heavy cloak of fog, Cavelier longed for escape. He could find it only in dreams. He left the forecastle, and stripping off his coat, sank into his hammock. Memories assailed him there.

Two melodies accompanied his revery. That produced by the negro cook set his teeth on edge. During his off-hours the kinky-haired negro left the galley and trilled tunes on his flute in an adjoining cabin. Cavelier would have gladly dumped him out of his hammock, but except for God, the Captain was the sole ruler on board. This idea also irritated Cavelier.

For a while, however, he dreamily thought of the old sea dog. Is he taller than I, or shorter? he mused. Or just the same height? Is he stronger or less husky than I? Is he braver? (Certainly not! he murmured to himself proudly.) Or less brave? He is a man! Arrogant! Pugnacious! An expert with the compass and a skilled navigator. And on his proud, eagle-like face is a pink scar that ends above a moustache, tinged gold by the sea.

“Yes, he is a man!” thought Cavelier. “He has fought for the King against England, Holland, Spain. I should honor him for having served the same ruler. But he commands here, and what are men who command to me?”

To divert his thoughts he forced himself to ignore the negro’s dismal tune and listen only to the deep, harmonious lamentation of the ship. Each time the helmsman brought her back into her course, the bass voices of the keel and planking rose in a melancholy chant of the sea. Then, an octave higher, the decks would re-echo the refrain.

Years ago in Rouen when his classes in the Jesuit school had ended he had loved to stroll along the wharves. There galleons and caravels unloaded bales of rare spices whose odor subtly bore the promise of unknown empires. These precious bales would then be loaded on barges to be towed to Paris and sold to the nobility.

A babel of strange tongues. Quarrels would flare up and more than once he had seen knives flash like rays of light on the river. However, Robert's older brother would tear him from his dreams.

"You pig-headed Norman!" Jean would exclaim. "Why weren't you born in the days of Duke Rollon the Pirate? With your passion for ships and voyages you'll lose both your soul and body!"

When they passed the church of Saint Heblard on their way home to their father's shop they would doff their hats and cross themselves. . . . At home Dame Catherine Gert Cavelier in the light of smoking candles directed the setting of the table. Lights played on the diamond-shaped points of the somber buffet. Tall, strong, imperious, clad in a suit of rough serge, his hands carefully washed after he had laid aside his account books, the worthy Jean Cavelier would bow his bald head, place his hands on the earthenware tureen, and bless the meal.

Then there were the long hours with his Jesuit teachers; the boredom of Greek and Latin, the pleasure of geography. A Father Professor would describe the voyage of Columbus, the search for the Western route to China, or the quest for Cipango. The old Iberian names would ring like the verses of an epic. Cavelier would repeat them to himself, as the names of admired and hated rivals.

Don Pedro Alvares Cabral, who discovered the Amazon and the lands of Brazil.

Vasco Nunez de Balboa who, crossing Darien, was the first to behold the waves of the Pacific unfurling at his feet.

Juan Ponce de Leon, seeker of eternal youth, who eight days before Easter discovered Florida.

Fernando Cortez, bloody conqueror of Mexico.

And Pizarro who plundered the treasures of Peru.

Hernando de Soto, whose tomb was the giant river, the vast Mississippi.

Thus these names sang in his head, rhythmically, like memories of an epic. But to the Spaniards, whom he had learned to consider cruel and

treacherous, he opposed those gallant Norman and French adventurers—Cartier, Landonnière, de Monts, Poutrincourt and Champlain. Faithful to their God and to their King they had planted the Cross of Jesus and the Fleur de Lys of France side by side in the soil of America.

His thoughts reverted to the gloomy school where the Jesuits had taught him both prayers and classics, geography and mathematics. He had liked especially Father d'Hocquelus who, being a Norman like his pupils, lectured with enthusiasm on the great discoveries. Tall, erect and broad shouldered, the Father would become more and more excited. Then springing from his chair, his skull cap over one ear, he would rap on the map with his ruler. The soul of an apostle rang in his voice. At such times he would extol the work of missionaries and their heroic sufferings. Quoting another apostle he would thunder in Latin:

"How beautiful are the feet of them that travel over the earth to preach the gospel of peace."

Among all his pupils the Father was fondest of Robert who, to the astonishment of his schoolmates, was the only one who could name all the seas, capes and rivers with never a mistake. And when the Jesuit Father would question him mischievously about still unexplored regions, he would rise on tip-toe to reply in a strangely defiant voice, "*Terra incognita*."

When they left the dark chapel the good Father liked to take his young pupil's arm. He would then discourse on the glory of roving over land and sea in the service of God.

"Ah! What glorious privateering!" he would exclaim. "What rich plunder still awaits the King of Heaven!"

Then he would praise the vast enterprises of the Jesuits across the seas. In a trembling voice he would extol that empire of God in Paraguay where not a single heretic was tolerated. Thanks to an alliance between the Jesuits and the Catholic King of France, a vast colony of faithful souls was being founded there. Moreover, God had been careful to recompense His zealous servants. For this colony which had been created by Paraguayan converts on lands belonging to the Jesuits was not the least source of that Order's revenue. He earnestly advised the young student to put his thirst for unknown lands to the service of the Jesuits and of God.

Father Guiscard who taught mathematics also liked this lad who was interested in the course of the stars and the calculations of distances. After

class he would sometimes explain the nautical instruments employed by navigators to get their bearings.

But Father d'Antheuse, the classical Professor, was much more reserved in his praise. The story of his travels which Ulysses recounts to Alcinous was the only section of Greek literature that aroused Robert's interest. But even so he had been flogged for expressing surprise that a man who could give way to tears should be held up as a model.

"This switch will make you give way to tears," the teacher replied. But the lad accepted the punishment without a murmur.

"Of all the Greeks I like only the Argonauts," he confessed to Father d'Hocquelus. "But alas! I fear they never existed."

"When the Order receives you among them," replied the priest, "it will be easy for you to make real voyages and to test your soul with danger."

Cavelier then relived the long years as a novitiate. He had enjoyed certain privileges. His knowledge of geography had obtained him a position as substitute for a teacher who was ill. But all discipline irked him.

"*Perinde ac cadaver!* Like a corpse!" he exclaimed. "Am I really lifeless, a dead thing in the hands of my superiors? And later on if, instead of sending me to the West Indies where I wish to go, it should please the Father Superior to force me to teach the Euclidian theorems to brats, what shall I reply? *Perinde ac cadaver!* And again, if in America I should choose one road and am told to take a different one! *Perinde ac cadaver!* But I must either accept this stupid existence or forfeit my rights of inheritance, since such is the will of our good King."

Thin, pale and obstinate in his dark cassock, he had argued so heatedly with the Father Superior that he had incurred solitary confinement. Then when he had been released he had argued with his own father.

At his first words the old man, as hot-tempered as his son, had raised his voice.

"What, return to the world again after you have left it to become a Jesuit? You who are too proud to measure lace and ruffles behind my counter! What demon is at work there under your cassock? I tell you it's impossible to return to the world now. And if you should, I shall divide your inheritance among your brothers, and penniless you shall have to beg for a living."

“Or earn it,” the young novitiate retorted proudly. “I have strong arms, sturdy legs, keen eyes, and his Majesty’s ranks are always open to husky recruits.”

“Bless me! So you plan to be a brigand or a privateer! With a hot head like yours you’ll end under the black flag or be hanged from the highest yard of one of His Majesty’s warships.”

“Whose disgrace would that be?”

“So you wish to avenge yourself by dishonoring my gray hairs and ruining my business? People will point at me and say: ‘There goes the father of Cavelier the Corsair, Cavelier the Pirate who was hanged.’ Yes, that will be the thanks I get for all the care I’ve given you!”

“Permit me, Father, to leave the Order and re-enter the world. If you do not entirely disinherit me I can earn an honest living there.”

Then to the irascible old man he outlined the plan he was developing. His older brother, a member of the Order of Sulpicians, had written him from Ville Marie that colonization along the St. Lawrence was doing very well. Land could be bought there cheap. The demobilized soldiers of the Canadian garrisons gladly consented to remain in the colony rather than to return to France.

“Yes!” the choleric old man interrupted. “Because they’ve acquired the habit of debauching Indian girls.”

Robert had not attempted to argue this point. It was important to prove to his father that with the aid of discharged soldiers he could easily build up a thriving colony. Others had done so and, as his brother had written him, were extremely successful. He cited names and figures. Undecided, the old man shook his head. Then dismissing his son he turned to the door. Stooping forward in his dark clothes, his thin legs bent at the knees, he paused as he placed his hand on the latch.

“My son, I shall think it over,” he said, turning. “Good-bye and don’t lose your head. May God give you the patience you lack.”

The heavy door quivered as it closed behind him.

Fog succeeded fog. A choppy sea buffeted the ship. Sometimes, however, the fog lifted and then the ocean became visible, streaked with green and black like a mackerel. Or perhaps a sunbeam would filter through the mist and spread over the waves like golden oil.

Nevertheless the Captain took no chances. Shortly before entering this sea of fog the other ships of the convoy had disappeared. Near the American coast there was danger, he said, of encountering pirates.

"Our ship is well-armed and a good sailer," he explained. "In the open sea we could easily drive them off or show them our heels. But here, if a pirate ship heaved into sight a few yards off, before we could sound to clear the decks we would be boarded."

For this reason he was never without his cutlass and frequently reloaded his pistols. He rebuked the gunners if they left their carronades for a moment. Following his example, Cavelier girded himself with a Damascene sword, the gift of his uncle Nicholas Gest, and slipped into his belt a brace of pistols he had bought in Rouen before leaving. The belt was heavy. In its buckskin lining his mother had sewn the ten thousand livres his father, in agreement with the other children, had advanced him on his inheritance the day he had abandoned the church for high adventures. Robert also remembered Father d'Hocquelus, who still resented the fact that he had not put his love of voyaging to the exclusive service of the Jesuits.

"One day you will learn," he had said, "that it is better to serve the King of Heaven than all the Kings of the earth. Louis the Fourteenth cannot open the gates of Paradise to you. However, I can bear you no ill will. You were my best student and I am certain that a little faith still dwells in your heart."

Spanish and English pirates did not loom up in the curtain of fog. The sun burst forth suddenly upon a glittering and gently swelling sea. A deep blue flooded the horizon. Not a sail was in sight.

The Captain ordered the sails set and at dawn the following day a coast pounded by high surf that gleamed against the dark cliffs lay in the far distance. Someone said it was Cape Breton. Then the joyous sailors greeted the sight of land and chanted in chorus:

"At Saint Malo, that harbor fine,
Three sturdy ships have just arrived."

Meanwhile the course veered North by North-West.

As the ship neared land the plowed wake, a transparent emerald green between lanes of blue velvet, stretched toward the horizon where the arrows of the sun pitted the sea with splotches of light. Gulls flew out to meet the

ship and played in the foam. Cavelier amused himself by tossing them pieces of bread and scraps of meat which they caught in their sharp beaks.

Late that afternoon the jib stood out against high land toward which the ship was bearing. The Captain informed Cavelier that it was Anticosti Island and that they were now in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

He made ready to gybe. The ship groaned under the helm. The sails snapped in the wind. The jib-boom, the bowsprit and their sails, as if striving toward the setting sun, pierced it with their shadows.

Cavelier awoke in the dead of night. A gentle rocking had replaced the long swell of the sea. He leaped from his hammock, slipped on a cloak and went on deck. Silver streamed alongside the ship. The dwarfed and thick-set figure of the mate passed, carrying a lantern. Robert questioned him.

"We are riding at anchor," he replied. "The river mouth has been sighted. There are buoys, of course, but at night it is the devil and all to find them. At dawn we will set the sails. Only a few will be necessary, just enough so the ship will answer the tiller."

"Where is the reef?" asked Cavelier.

"It's easy to see that you're from Rouen. This is quite a different estuary from the Caudebec. The tide goes up here, I should say, further than the distance between Rouen and Paris. Besides, the river is wide and that keeps a bar from forming."

He moved on.

"So at last I'm in Canada," Robert thought. "So this is the country I have dreamed of. This water flowing like liquid moonlight is the water of this mysterious world. What course is my life to take from now on? Am I to face dangers immediately? Am I to be the first to penetrate unknown regions? Am I to experience the suffering of adventures? Am I to give my name to a new kingdom? Am I to discover the western passage to China which Christopher Columbus searched for?"

Thus was outlined the tapestry of his dreams.

Sometimes aided by the rising tide, sometimes impeded by it, the ship slowly ascended the gigantic river. Cavelier, eager to know the country, tirelessly scanned the distant horizon.

“Is it really a river?” he asked himself, when he saw, far to the north, the mauve peaks of mountains which the Captain assured him were very high.

The nearest shore seemed several leagues distant. He would have liked to ask the Captain many questions. But a head wind made it necessary to tack frequently, and the Captain had to oversee the rapid changes in the ship’s course.

Standing aft the mate continually took soundings. One would see him grease the lead, swing it above his head and then hurl it out into the water. Then he would haul it in, calling out the number of fathoms and the nature of the river bottom. The Captain shouted brief commands. The ship tacked gracefully, while, perched on the yards, quick to answer the shouted commands, the sailors took in or let out the sails.

On the evening of the second day of their course up the river, the anchor was dropped near a low-lying reef which the ebb tide was slowly revealing. Solemn cranes standing on their long legs were silhouetted against the bank. A wedge of bustards alighted there and breaking ranks swam in disorder toward the shore. Dark points among the spars, the sailors reefed the sails. A longboat was manned and rowed toward the shallows. Cavelier watched them cast a net and then empty a catch of silvery minnows in a wooden bucket. Then climbing back into the boat, they sounded at several cable lengths from the shore, and finding the bottom favorable dropped their fish lines.

“Fishing for bass,” the Captain explained.

Meanwhile dark figures were gathering on the shore. Calls of greeting drifted toward the ship.

“Indians who want to trade their furs,” the mate announced.

The Captain then ordered another boat manned, while Cavelier, suddenly remembering a quotation, repeated to himself:

“*Eheu! Fuge littus avarum. . . .*”

“A presentiment?” he asked himself, laughing. To overcome it he asked the Captain’s permission to accompany him. The Captain deliberated.

“Yes,” he replied. “A good companion is never in the way. You are a man pretty nearly of my tonnage. I’m sure the two of us could bring a few of these heathen to reason. Be sure to bring your pistols along. But above all

don't use them until I have fired mine first. These Iroquois want to trade. I don't believe they're in a fighting mood."

They clambered down the swinging rope ladder to the longboat. Oars raised, the sailors awaited the Captain's orders.

"Give way all!" he cried, and eight blades struck at the same instant, slashing the waters of the St. Lawrence into foam.

The longboat cut the current. The Indians grew in size. Arms raised, palms open, they signaled that they were unarmed. The boat drew up to the shore.

"They have their peace paint on," the Captain whispered to Cavelier. "All is well. However, avoid mingling with them. Stick close to the boat. If there's any danger I will shoot one of them. At that signal the head gunner will fire a blank charge."

The Captain advanced, tall and arrogant. Cavelier admired him.

"A fine lesson in coolness," he said to himself. "With neither braggadocio nor meekness, seemingly imperturbable, this man stakes his very life against these Iroquois. In fact that is how he dominates them."

He followed the scene intently. Six men, naked to the waist, their bodies painted with red ochre, beardless, their heads partly shaved, tall, lithe and wiry, they greeted the Captain with calm reserve. Robert watched the Captain approach them. After sitting down on a rock he invited the Indians to do likewise. One of the Iroquois offered him a long pipe. First the Captain, then the six Indians, took three puffs of smoke. One of them arose. Slowly, deliberately, emphasizing his words with frequent gestures, he spoke. From where he stood, Cavelier could not understand the words. When the Iroquois had finished and sat down, the Captain in his turn rose to his feet. He spoke in his strong, loud voice, which he had trained to carry above the roar of a storm. Fragments of sentences drilled into Robert's brain.

"Thank his brothers . . . very much . . . what they offer . . . but . . . sorry . . . price much too high . . . furs hard to sell now."

Another Indian rose to his feet and spoke. Then Cavelier heard the Captain's booming voice again. He admired the shrewdness with which the Indians' offers were rejected.

"What bargaining! What diplomacy!" he enthused. "And if he were to die, he could exclaim, like the old Roman about whom the Jesuits once told me, 'Now a great actor passes on!' "

The orators followed each other. When all had spoken and the Captain had replied six times, there was a silence. The pale smoke rose from the peace pipe as it was passed from hand to hand.

After having deliberated for a while, the Captain rose for the seventh time and spoke. His short sentences, broken by the wind, drifted toward Cavelier. He nevertheless caught the words "fire-water" and "fur." At the conclusion of the speech the Indians appeared to take council, and the one who held the peace pipe made a gesture of assent. Then the Captain returned slowly to the longboat. Victory gleamed in his eyes.

"The game is won," he murmured, as he passed Cavelier. "Young man, catch them with bait. There lies a barrel of cider brandy that will yield large returns. But mum's the word. I will make you a fine present. However, don't talk about it. His Majesty's Steward doesn't like anyone to trade with the Indians without paying him a bonus, which I do not care in the least to give him."

"But what about the rights of the King?" Cavelier exclaimed.

"This is none of the King's business. Believe me, when you have dealt with a few of the King's agents you will learn why such rich lands yield France such little revenue. Understand that I am not stealing, I do not permit myself to steal, and I advise you to do the same. . . . But here are our Indians returning with the furs. You there!" he said, addressing the sailors. "Roll up the keg. Make haste to load the furs. And as soon as that's done pull for the ship. We'll join the other boat on the way back."

The farther they progressed up the river, the more the country fascinated Cavelier. His soul became slave to all its majesty.

How could one fail to realize the solidity of this soil? Not even the vast current of the St. Lawrence in its swift course to the sea could wear down the little islands that strove to maintain themselves against it.

At ebb tide the Captain pointed out Grosse Island. Smoke from a settler's cabin, turquoise and amber in the play of light and shadow, rose above the trees and drifted off through the air. A herd of red cows, caught by the tide on a flat to the east, were swimming back to the island. Waves foamed against the rocks.

Farther along the Captain pointed out a larger island—the island of Orleans. There the spirals of smoke were more numerous, and in spite of the

distance, the inhabitants there ran along the shore waving their hats in greeting to the ship.

“Two years ago,” said the Captain, “a murder was committed on that Island. A certain Jean Serreau, a Poitevin, had settled there and his labors bore fruit. But along came a Swiss, a man named Terme, Jean Terme, I believe. I was putting in port here, for I had some cargo to drop. Now this Jean Serreau had for wife a girl named Boileau, who was pretty but who, it must be admitted, was not overly virtuous. This fellow Terme began hanging about and visiting the Serreaus a little too often. Jean Serreau became suspicious. As he was gentle and patient, according to all his neighbors, he peacefully requested this fellow Terme not to visit his wife so often. He told him that there was gossip already and that he did not wish a public scandal. He also remonstrated with his wife. Both of them promised not to see each other again, swearing to the husband that nothing had happened between them.

“But only eight or ten days later Serreau again surprised his wife and her lover. It is said that they were conducting themselves in a manner that was both indecent and unseemly and one towards which any husband might conceive a legitimate resentment. Serreau lost his temper, threatened his wife with a club and Terme with his fists, which were as hard as rocks. There were no blows, as Terme took to his heels.

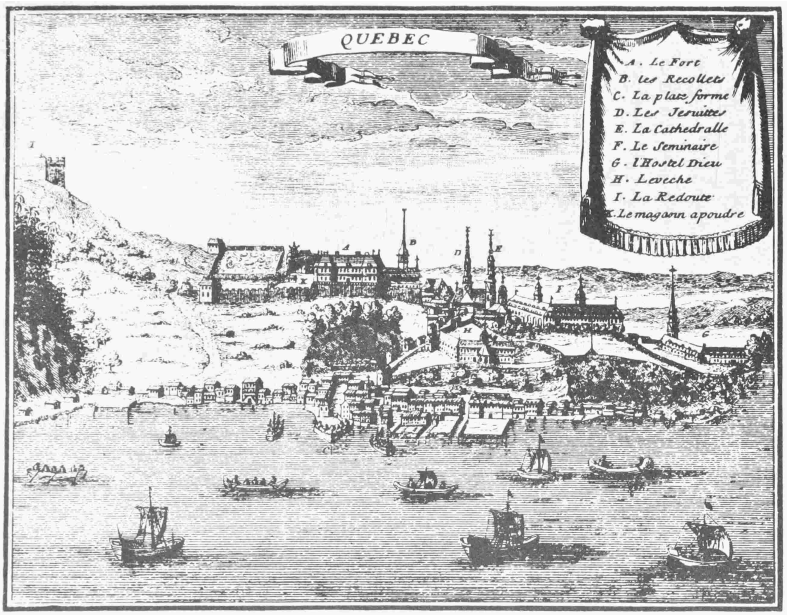
“Serreau then threatened to turn his wife out, but the Priest persuaded him against doing so. He then exacted a promise from his wife that she would thereafter lead a strictly virtuous life. Now two leagues from the Serreau home was a certain Maurile, a good-hearted man who had cleared a piece of land to raise cattle on. Serreau placed his wife with Maurile. For though he had pardoned her, he felt the necessity of not seeing her for a while. Then quite suddenly he decided to go and fetch her back. With a wife away from home the cows don’t get the proper care and no one in the house eats. No one can get along without a female except a sailor.

“Now half way between his house and Maurile’s, Serreau met the girl strolling along with her gallant. Terme had his sword along with him and Serreau was unarmed, except for his cudgel. Serreau could not keep himself from speaking sharply to Terme. The latter laid his hand upon his sword hilt. Serreau swung his cudgel and knocked Terme stone dead. Then fearing the law he hid away in the woods.

“But those who had witnessed the killing testified that he had done it in self-defense. So the Priest could implore a pardon of Seigneur de Tracy who

then governed the country. Today it is governed by Monseigneur de Courcelles. Seigneur Tracy thereupon withdrew the case from the courts and referred it to His Majesty, who pardoned Jean Serreau. It was I myself who brought the pardon. That is how I learned the story."

In the meantime they were nearing the north shore. In the distance were slender waterfalls, which the Captain said were at least a hundred feet high. They were the falls of Montmorency. Then, barring the river, almost strangling it, was the city of Quebec and its high cliffs.



Quebec as it looked at the Period when La Salle Settled in Canada.
From a contemporary print.

They did not go ashore, even though there was time enough while the ship's papers were being put into order. The cargo was consigned to Ville Marie, to the Sulpician priests among whom was Jean Cavelier. According to the Captain's statement, the largest ships of His Majesty's navy could sail up the river as far as Ville Marie, and even farther, he said, if it weren't for the rapids near that city, which made the river unnavigable.

During this long progress up the river, Cavelier was astonished at its great width even at Three Rivers, where adventurous settlers were clearing the good land.

And on the first of July, 1667, they landed at Ville Marie.

CHAPTER TWO

The Abbé Jean Cavelier welcomed his brother in the reception room of the Sulpician Mission. A breeze fresh from the St. Lawrence came through the open window. Great clouds passed in procession, sweeping both the blue sky and the blue water. In the distance a low beach supported the dark blue fringe of the forest, while above the tree tops the mauve halo of the horizon was obscured by mist.

Face to face the two brothers scrutinized each other. The Abbé, who had not seen Robert for many years, inquired of the family, asked after the health of his father, mother, his sister, his two younger brothers. Then followed a barrage of "Do you remembers?"

A glass door reflected their images. The same prominent forehead, the same expressive aquiline nose, the same obstinate mouth. The only noticeable difference was the light moustache which shadowed the mouth of the younger.

"How did you leave your Jesuit fathers?" demanded the Abbé. "On good or bad terms?"

Robert shrugged.

"Neither good nor bad," continued his brother. "So much the better. Here in Canada, Jesuits and Franciscans share the influence. The Jesuits have the good will of His Majesty's Intendant. But the Franciscans have the ear of the Governor. And that is not so bad either. We Sulpicians maintain very cordial relations with the Franciscans."

"And also with the Jesuits, I hope. They too are men of God."

"Hum! Our relations are less cordial. Men of God. That is understood, my dear Robert. But you argue like a man of the world. You laymen are such queer people. You imagine, don't you, that a priest has no right to personal sentiments? Perhaps that is true of the Jesuits."

"*Perinde ac cadaver*," Robert muttered half to himself.

"*Perinde ac cadaver*—that is just it. I was sure, knowing you as I do, that discipline alone would lead you to break your allegiance."

"Were you angry, brother?"

“Heaven forbid! As a servant of God I admire the Jesuits, their zeal, their discipline and their work. But, my dear brother, for all that I may be a man of God, I am none the less a loyal subject of His Majesty.”

“Do you mean to insinuate that the Jesuits are less so?”

“They are Romans, my brother. They bow only to God. . . . His Holiness himself. . . . *Sint ut sunt, aut non sint*. . . . You know all that. In short, I fear that the work of the Jesuits is more Catholic than French.”

These Gallic sentiments in no way astonished Robert. He listened to his brother’s account of the Jesuits’ work. Indefatigable, ardent, heroic to the point of martyrdom, their members braved the waste lands and preached to the most savage tribes. For the triumph of their faith, many of their Order had already endured the cruelest torture and the most ignominious death under the claws of the Indian women. But the Jesuits, in the opinion of the Abbé, did not devote a sufficient part of their heroic energy to serving the King of France, who nevertheless gave them his highest protection here. Bitterly he reproached them for thinking only of the glory of their Order. Entirely different, he said, was the spirit of the Franciscans.

“Nevertheless,” he affirmed, “they are just as good servants of God.”

Cavelier disputed these assertions. He spoke enthusiastically of the work of the Jesuits in Paraguay. He recounted the stories of his masters, of Father d’Hocquelus, of Father Guiscard. However, the Abbé concluded with a final word:

“You must maintain cordial relations with your former masters. But, believe me, you should not lean too heavily on them. They would paralyze your initiative.”

Impatient and ambitious, Cavelier told his brother of his desire to set out for himself. The hospitable Sulpicians urged him, on the contrary, to remain with them longer in the narrow whitewashed cell which they had at his disposal. He was invited to taste the marvelous products of the country. Enormous golden perch with metallic scales, monstrous pike, gray trout, salmon with black spots, and great sturgeon, brought there by the fishermen, abounded in the kitchen. Sometimes a Christianized Huron, his two black oily braids hanging on either side of his sorrel face, came to offer a gift of venison, moose, or caribou. Wild duck and bustards, too, were plentiful; and the monastery garden produced marvelous cabbages and carrots.

The Father Steward, who was fat and jolly, admired the hearty appetite of his young guest, but jokingly reproached him, heavy eater that he was, for not being sufficiently *gourmet*. Then he took this as the text for establishing a neat distinction between a *gourmet* and a *gourmand*.

"The former, my dear child," he said, "makes an indirect eulogy of Creation. That such a variety of tasty dishes should have been dispensed to mankind is certainly reason for giving praise to God. Politeness demands that we appreciate them. Such is a *gourmet*—a connoisseur of the excellences of Divine Creation. But what can be said for the other? He is tempted, even possessed, by a demon. He eats beyond his hunger, and as a sort of terrestrial penance, Heaven deprives him of the complete enjoyment of the flavor of his food. Weighed down with fat, he passes a sad old age, beset by maladies of the stomach. Therefore, be *gourmet*, my son, and you will be absolved at the tribunal of penance."

Cavelier was annoyed by these remarks. Still he replied politely. But the meal barely ended, he hurried up to his room. It gave on the rear of the monastery, whence he could see the somber mass, rocky and wooded, of Mount Royal. He scarcely looked at it. Instead he avidly read accounts of explorations, borrowed from the library of which the Fathers were extremely proud.

His brother found him there.

"There is," he said, "some very beautiful country above the rapids and on the other side of the river. It is rarely visited by Indians. With the recommendation of the Father Superior, we could easily obtain the concession for you. It appears to be worthless because it is partly covered by marshes. I am sure that by deepening certain coulees, the stagnant water could be drained back into the river. Thus, at small expense, you can establish yourself on a domain whose future appears to me to be certain. It is not far from us, and is protected from the enemy by His Majesty's garrisons."

A Huron took them across in a canoe. The wind was strong and the immensity of the St. Lawrence was ruffled by blue-green billows. Kneeling in the bow of the canoe, the Huron paddled without evident effort, profiting, it seemed, by the least eddy to make the canoe advance. Cavelier marveled at him. At that very instant his heart was torn between a desire to brave the forests and adventures, and a desire to clear his land in peace and tranquillity.

They landed on a low muddy shore. A little above them foamed the fury of the rapids. The Abbé explained that the granite of the Canadian soil is so resistant, that after millions of years the river at this point had not yet worn it sufficiently to cut itself a passage.

Cavelier recalled the Captain's assertion that if the rapids were not there, the largest boats could ascend the river much higher. Delighted to display his knowledge of the country, the Abbé launched upon a passionate geographical account of the St. Lawrence. He explained that it had its source in a veritable inland sea, composed of several large lakes. The Indians said there were five. In truth, no white man had yet completely explored them. Even Lake Erie and Lake Ontario guarded most of their secrets. The Indians spoke too of the imposing Falls of Niagara, the noise of which could be heard at a great distance, troubling the solitude of tall forests. At one point there were a thousand islands in the river. The lakes were supposed to be navigable and, according to the Indians, they communicated with one another.

Cavelier suggested that perhaps beyond them, another river, twin to the St. Lawrence, opened a similar water route to the other ocean. The Abbé could not confirm it, but nevertheless he considered it possible. He had heard the Indians speak of another great river, but he knew little about it.

"A route to China," murmured Cavelier.

Amid willows, firs and maples, they walked over the concession. On the edge of the marshes they startled a covey of ducks. The mother duck pushed her ducklings toward the bank, made them disappear into the reeds, and disappeared in her turn.

The Abbé pointed out to his brother a swimming musk rat.

They were in the midst of a wild waste. The Abbé, more accustomed to the stimulating effect that "wilderness" has on the human soul, picked up clods of earth, examined them closely, judged them knowingly. He also calculated rapidly the probable level of the marshes and the river. Robert was surprised to discover him to be so versed in agriculture. Meanwhile, the Sulpician was giving advice——

"Here, you see, you have a cluster of sugar maples. It would be better to leave them. Moreover, I should advise you to cultivate them; in the Spring the sap will flow in greater abundance. Maple sugar sells at a good price in Ville Marie and Quebec."

Farther on he said,

“This soil is equal to the richest soil of our beautiful Normandy. You might plant a fine orchard here. What cider it would give!”

Or again,

“Here is a plateau on which I should like to see a fine field of Indian corn. Indians are fond of it, but they are lazy. Not far from here are peaceable Algonquins and Christianized Hurons who will come to buy it. They know how to cultivate the ground, but they prefer hunting. A deer skin, well tanned, is worth an ecu. Three ecus are paid for the skin of a wild cat, three for a bear skin, five for a beaver. They would gladly trade their furs for your corn. In a country like this you must know how to make money. Besides, our father is a mercer, and are we less honored to be his sons? It is only at Court that commerce is considered degrading. Nevertheless, many things are bartered there—even the least honorable.”

They walked on, their boots covered with mud. Before them, clearing a passage, the Huron glided, his feet turned inwards. His supple moccasins made no sound. Cavelier, thinking more of the future than of the present, promised himself to wear them when he explored the forest.

His opinion was confirmed when his brother, having halted to drive away the mosquitoes, which were numerous, with a branch, asked the savage if there was a possibility of showing his brother some game.

“Ugh,” replied the Indian, his slant eyes blinking, “French shoes make too much noise. Much too much. Moose become frightened. Hide in the wood from French.”

Slowly they made their way back to the river. Robert scarcely heard his brother’s explanations. He cut him short with an impatient—“Yes, yes, it is agreed. I shall settle here.” But in his heart he did not know whether or not he was taking a wise step. It mattered little to him. Was not his real desire to go much farther, in quest of unknown lands, in quest, even, of the possible route to China?

“Cavelier, the colony of Cavelier. . . . Or even Caudebec. Those are fine names for a settlement. What do you think, brother?” asked the Abbé. Trembling, Robert replied,

“My colony is to be called La Chine.”

There was a silence. A tumult of conflicting thoughts stirred him to the depths of his being.

In an attempt to distract him, the Abbé had the Indian portage the canoe up stream. They descended the river by shooting the rapids. The Abbé smiled at his brother's pleasure.

In every city there is a place to find men without work—the docks, where new arrivals wander, still bewildered. Oh, the fine Breton peasants with embroidered vests and silver buttons, large rough felt hats with floating ribbons! Their carved wooden shoes clumped noisily on the cobble-stones. But would they know what to do, torn from their gorse covered land?

Cavelier wandered along the docks, scrutinizing the faces of the men he met. . . . Lashed to their moorings were three tenders and many fishing barks, their sails reefed. An old man was darning his nets, singing. A sailor was unwinding a rope and braiding a splice, singing. A blacksmith was repairing the shackle of an anchor chain, singing. Each sang his trade, his joys and his sorrows.

Thus Cavelier went from one man to another. He admired the straightforward glances, aflame with the fire of adventure. He disliked such and such a poltroon, thrown by chance on the shores of the New World after having fallen into the hands of a "press gang," and who wandered in a daze, not yet quite sure of being on land once more.

At the neighboring tavern was a man, drinking cider . . . good face, round and open; a wrinkle of disappointment at the corners of his mouth, a wrinkle of laughter at the corners of his eyes. Such is life, good and bad. . . . For all his youth, Cavelier well knew that such a man is able to laugh, after suffering. He sat down at the table and ordered a pitcher of cider.

"Monsieur honors me," said the man. And he added, "Great joy is mine. Pardon for Jean Serreau."

Cavelier was immediately interested. He recalled the story told off that Island of Orleans which stretched blue, yellow and green to the starboard of the ship. The man continued,

"Last year the King pardoned me. Pardon for Jean Serreau. I don't know how to read, worse luck. But our Curé read it for me from the parchment. At present I am hunting for my wife, Monsieur. I have looked for her in Quebec, I have looked for her in Three Rivers, and only Ville Marie is left. As for me, I was in the woods, awaiting my pardon. But—pardon for Jean Serreau. Monsieur—perhaps you don't know that I committed murder?"

“Yes, I know,” said Cavelier, “I have heard your story. And do you pardon your wife?”

“One must pardon, so our religion tells us. The King pardoned me—pardon for Jean Serreau. I pardon my wife—pardon for Marguerite Boileau. It is the way life goes . . .”

“And will you live with her again without reserve, freely?”

“Certainly. The lover is dead, and fear is a good guardian of the home.”

“And you still love her?”

“Aye, more’s the pity! I have pardoned her in full, as I was pardoned.”

Elbows on the table, hat pushed back on his peruke, sword dragging on the ground, Cavelier studied the man. “Good soul,” he told himself, “and more virtuous than I should be in his place. However, I have no desire for the sins of the flesh. But would I pardon thus readily? Frank and laughing face, robust body, hands made to wield the axe . . .” and aloud,

“Will you work for me? I am looking for strong men who know the country and who are able to swing an axe and drive a plow.”

“Gladly, Monsieur, I know how to do all that. In addition I know how to harness horses, and make them work. Nevertheless, I do not swear at them. The law would punish me for it . . .”

“Talkative,” thought Cavelier.

“And I also know how to swing and grind an axe. And I will enter into Monsieur’s service if he will pay me. But I will have to bring my wife and live with her.”

“But you do not know where she is.”

“She isn’t in Quebec, or in Three Rivers, so she must be in Ville Marie.”

“So be it. I give you eight days to find her. In a week’s time ask for me at the Sulpician Mission. I am called Monsieur Cavelier. In the meantime you may hire me other men, if you find them. Good men, understand. Hardened to labor and fatigue. I want no idlers. Here is an ecu on account.”

He paid and departed, thinking, “Such men are often more intelligent in their work than in their daily lives.”

Behind him, in the tavern, Jean Serreau merrily clinked his glass against the pitcher and repeated to himself, “Pardon for Jean Serreau.”

High booted, pacing with long strides over his new domain, Cavelier flourished a branch, as he had seen his brother do, to ward off the annoying mosquitoes. He congratulated himself upon having hired Jean Serreau, when he saw the skill with which the Poitevin directed the work.

"Knowing how to choose men," Robert told himself, "is the mark of the chief. I made a lucky find—this Serreau is valuable."

Serreau had arrived on the appointed day, shoulders bent under the weight of his "treasures." Tied up in a big brown canvas slung on a stick over his shoulder, was his clothing. Behind him followed, smiling and coquettish, Marguerite Boileau his wife, whose eye brightened every time she was sure of escaping her husband's glance. A dirty faced child clung to her skirts; another was in her arms. Cavelier, who liked children, asked his brother to give them a piece of maple sugar, which they sucked greedily.

Then came some twenty men hired by Serreau. The names of many of them testified to a military past: Laramée, Lavenue, Lafresnière, Larrivé, Lespérance, Lapipe—Cavelier recognized therein nick-names dear to the hearts of His Majesty's soldiers. One by one, he questioned them at length. But above all he sought to gauge their energy by the cut of their chins, the curve of their noses.

Christianized Hurons, acting as ferrymen, pushed off their canoes from the Island of Hochelaga. The houses of Ville Marie and of Montreal de Maisonneuve drew away, became indistinct. The color of the foliage faded. The inverted image woven in the water seemed to be washed by the current. In the middle of the river a large blue spot mirrored the sky.

Thus they debarked at La Chine. A few chopped trees served to fortify a temporary camp. The men had divided their first days between wood-chopping and sentry duty. For it was wise to be on the watch for an unexpected visit from the Iroquois. The Abbé had warned his brother of the nature of these dangerous savages. One day far away, the next day near at hand, armed with guns supplied by the English; killing, scalping, torturing, burning, pillaging.

Axes resounded through the forest. Tall fir trees crashed to earth, breaking the branches of neighboring trees, crushing saplings in their fall. As soon as the tree was felled, woodsmen were ready with their axes. They stripped off the branches, cut it up into long logs, and then peeled the logs. A teamster arrived, his horse harnessed to a whipple-tree. He tied a rope around the trunk, set the animal hauling. The log was dragged away to an

already cleared space of an acre or more, where a pile of them was being assembled.

Here the excavators had already dug foundations and had filled them with dry stones. A moderately large house was being erected, of the type common to that country. It was of logs laid flat, properly squared, dovetailed at right angles, and joined under the meticulous measure of Jean Serreau's plumb line. Swinging from their hips, the sawers were cutting boards for the flooring, the doors, the interior planking, the roof. A former mason was mixing clay to make chimneys.

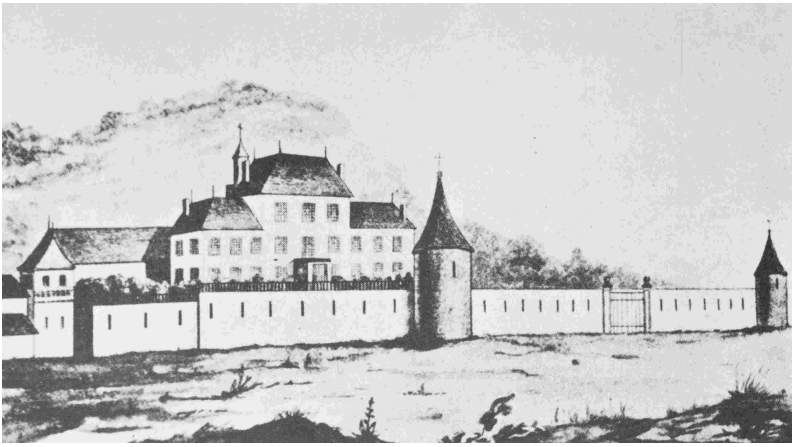
In the meantime, under a tent, Marguerite Boileau, assisted by two Huron squaws, was roasting enormous quarters of meat.

Even before the house was built—and it had been erected speedily—the men were primed for quarreling. Masterful, strong of mind and body, Cavelier with a commanding voice checked them sharply. He threatened to deliver the most quarrelsome to the Officer of Justice, and pointed with his finger across the space already cleared, and across the St. Lawrence to the smoke of Montreal and Ville Marie, where the sentinel would take care of delinquents. Order reigned. . . .

Since the year was well advanced, it was useless to think of clearing more ground. The Abbé would gladly have urged his brother to do so. But Jean Serreau was there. Consulted by Robert, Serreau, in a sententious voice, respectfully enumerated on his fingers the reasons why a late clearing would be a waste of effort. Half seriously, half mockingly, Cavelier agreed with him, despite the Abbé's evident mortification.

Nevertheless, the men were not idle. They dug trenches destined to drain the marshes.

Robert reconquered the good graces of his brother by asking him to plan the draining outlets. Flattered, the Sulpician floundered about in the water, frightening the ducks and water hens, falling into muskrat holes, and always saved just in time by Serreau. Despite the impassibility of the latter and the ostentation with which he hurried to the aid of the Abbé, Cavelier detected the joy with which the workman welcomed these frequent misadventures. He would willingly have begged his brother not to expose himself to such ridicule. But knowing him to be of as haughty a disposition as himself, he judged it wiser to say nothing. Besides, the work was quickly and well done.



An Old Fort at La Chine, Site of the Colony Established by La Salle, from the Profits of which he Organized his Exploring Expeditions.

In everything connected with the defense of La Chine, Cavelier relied upon no one. He himself laid out the plan of the palisades, built of heavy pointed posts and fortified by wooden towers. The Cadet d'Aubagne, Gentleman, who was serving in the army and who came from Hochelaga to visit the domain, approved with the air of a connoisseur. While he was taking refreshment he used the fortifications of La Chine as a pretext to describe his campaigns and to put his own exploits in the most favorable light.

The workmen were set to other tasks. Axe or pick in hand, they dug up stumps and stones in order to prepare the ground for the plow, in the coming Spring.

Then Winter covered all with a thick blanket of snow, and the workmen did nothing but chop wood.

Spring arrived, preceded by the perfumed bursting of pussy-willows. In the morning the forest still seemed like chased silver. But the sun soon sent this metal to the foundry. On the St. Lawrence could be heard the noise of ice floes, striking against one another in their course, assembling to form ephemeral dams which were broken, just in time, by the sovereign weight of the waters.

Cut off by the river thaw, the Abbé Cavelier, who had been visiting Robert, was forced to remain. The ardent and bustling priest, at heart less

energetic perhaps, but outwardly more active than his brother, busied himself, with the aid of Serreau, in gathering the precious maple sap.

In respect to his wishes, the clump of trees had been left intact. More than that, during the last days of Autumn, Serreau had set his best men to work clearing out the surrounding underbrush. The tall straight trunks with tender new sprouts had now a most imposing aspect.

"My cathedral," said the Abbé. Gesticulating, enthusiastic, smiling happily, he called the trunks "my pillars" and the branches "my vaults." At times interfering with Serreau, bothering the workmen, he criticized the way they pierced the trunks, cut the bark drains, or placed the crude troughs to catch the sap, which was gathered by two other men and set to boil.

The great gray clouds of a rainy April disappeared. Only light mists dragged lazily across a clear sky.

Swollen by the rain, the St. Lawrence was a headstrong and irresistible mass, in whose current floated an accumulation of trees torn violently from the soil.

The sight pleased Cavelier. From time to time he enjoyed crossing, in a canoe guided only by Jean Serreau, the dark whirling eddies of the river.

Hochelaga was settled with new houses and new fields. Ville Marie, Montreal, the missionary colony and that of Maisonneuve endeavored to unite their gardens, in which the first shoots of Indian corn were piercing the soil with their tender spears. A blue haze rose from the river, scaled the escarpment of Mount Royal, and lost itself in the brushwood.

Returning from one of these crossings, as Serreau was beaching the canoe, Cavelier asked him to push on to the rapids. Two of his men joined them, muskets on their shoulders. Almost at once they saw before them the furious foam.

"Look—Indians!" exclaimed Serreau.

Cavelier raised his eyes, following the direction indicated by Serreau's paddle. In the middle of the rapids, four men were struggling desperately with a long bark canoe. His hand shading his eyes, Cavelier watched their efforts anxiously.

"They will be drowned," he cried.

“Good riddance! The dirty dogs! It’s an Iroquois canoe,” grumbled Serreau.

With a gesture, Cavelier turned aside the already leveled musket of one of his companions. In that instant he lost sight of the canoe. When he looked again the empty craft was whirling in an eddy below the rapids. Four copper-colored heads floated in the mad waters. Seizing the long light paddle from Serreau, Robert threw it adroitly. It fell a few feet from one of the savages, who succeeded in grasping it. With its aid he skillfully held himself above water. Almost immediately his three companions disappeared, carried away by the furious torrent.

The man with the paddle, however, let himself drift. Using a stroke unknown to Cavelier, his left hand described a curve above the water, struck out straight from the shoulder and reappeared at the thigh. Every stroke brought him nearer the shore. Almost running to keep up with the current, Cavelier descended to meet the castaway. At a point lower down, the Iroquois was able to land, and Robert aided him without thinking of wetting his velvet suit.

Exhausted as he was, the Indian rose immediately to his feet. Half nude, with wide and fringed leather trousers, he regarded the river.

“That mixture which is dripping from his cheeks and chest,” thought Robert, “is his paint diluted by the water. There is black, white and ochre. . . . War paint. The St. Lawrence is surely bearing away the eagle’s feather which was stuck in his topknot.”

The man was tall and good looking, with a face almost noble, had it not been for the inordinately high cheek bones. He examined Cavelier for a moment, and his face, stern until then, suddenly softened. His eyes narrowed more than ever as he said,

“Ugh! My white brother threw me the paddle just in time. My red brothers are gone. . . . They now swim with the fish, seeking the hunting and fishing grounds of Manitou. . . . Tomorrow three squaws of my people will have no men to bring them meat.”

“Come with me,” said Cavelier.

With his elbow he pushed aside Jean Serreau who, rising on tip-toe, whispered in his ear,

“Monsieur is wrong. . . . My good master would have done better to let the dirty dog drown. . . . A dog of an Iroquois. . . . I tell you, Monsieur, they are men you can’t trust. They belong to . . .”

“Silence, Idiot!”

Serreau scowled, but was silent.

The Indian accompanied Robert. Had he or had he not heard Serreau’s words? There was no telling, so placid was he. His hand made no move toward the scalping knife hanging from his belt. That belt was ornamented with human hair.

“Trophies of war,” thought Cavelier. “Is Serreau right? Bah! . . .”

A fire burned on the hearth. Cavelier motioned the savage to a wooden chair beside it. The Indian looked at the chair, then sat down on the floor, leaning on his elbow. Cavelier was momentarily undecided. . . . Did the situation demand courtesy? He hesitated only a moment. Deliberately he too sat down on the floor, facing the savage, resting his hand negligently on the chair.

“I am being ridiculous,” he thought. He was more and more confirmed in his opinion upon seeing Serreau standing transfixed, his mouth and eyes wide open. “Serreau is asking himself if I have gone mad. That is the last straw,” Robert told himself. “Now how am I going to preserve my dignity? Does it matter?” With a sharp command he ordered food brought.

Serreau departed backwards. Not hearing the door close, Cavelier looked. Serreau was gone, but a sentinel, his musket in readiness, was leaning against the door jamb.

There was silence. Should he emphasize the impropriety of this suspicion toward a guest by discharging the sentinel? On the other hand, had not the Indian, despite his impassiveness, already felt the affront? Robert decided. . . .

“Will my Indian brother,” he said, “permit me to let that man retire? He is here to do honor to my brother—(‘How am I going to save the situation?’ he thought, as he continued)—to my brother, who is surely a chief among his people. But my brother is tired, and perhaps wishes to remain alone with me?”

The savage nodded his head affirmatively. Was his indifference real or feigned? At Cavelier’s command the man departed, closing the door. The Iroquois, lost in revery, watched the dance of flames in the shadow.

Minutes passed silently. There was a rap at the door. . . . At a word from Robert it was opened by disgruntled Serreau, carrying a plate piled high

with food. In a low voice Cavelier ordered him to put it on the floor, between himself and the savage, and to retire. Serreau withdrew.

"My brother has need of food," said Robert quietly. "His day has been hard. Will he share my meal?"

The Iroquois raised his head and his serious eyes met those of Robert. His face gleamed in the firelight. The Frenchman was better able to examine his guest, and saw that he was a man in the prime of life. Had it not been for his slanting eyes and high cheek bones, Cavelier thought, he might have been remarkably handsome.

Slowly, with negligent fingers, the Indian undid his belt. It sailed across the room, together with the knife it carried. The unknown guest had disarmed.

Meanwhile Robert served him, carefully choosing the best pieces. But before eating, the savage spoke:

"My white brother," he said, "is surely a great chief. He saved my life. Many men with red faces or with white faces would not have done as my brother did. Ugh!"

Cavelier was surprised by the ease with which the Indian expressed himself. Certainly his grammar was incorrect. And those guttural intonations! . . . But they were not without charm, and his vocabulary was ample.

"My brother is a great chief," the savage continued. "He knows, like a chief, the laws of hospitality. He sent away the warrior that the man who does not like me" (evidently a reference to Serreau) "put there to kill me. As if I had a coward's heart! As if I could strike one who received me as a brother! But my white brother had confidence, and he was right."

Suddenly silent again, he ate. No doubt he felt that he had uttered the essential words. He ate with a hearty appetite the food Cavelier offered him.

But when they had finished eating and had smoked the same pipe, in the Indian manner, he replied without hesitation to the questions put to him.

"From where was I coming? . . . From the country of the Great Lakes. But it is not my own country. My people are a three days' march from here, towards the rising sun. What was I doing on the Great Lakes? . . . My brother was looking awhile ago at the scalps hanging from my belt. Eight months ago, some young men of my people were voyaging on the Great

Lakes. The Chippaways took three of their scalps. I have been to pay my debt to the Chippaways. . . .

"My friend also wishes to know whether I am friendly to the Whites. . . . I shall speak openly to my brother. There came among my people Black Robes who bore words of peace. From those Black Robes I learned the language of my brother. I learned also that following after the Black Robes came white men, who crossed the Great Salt Lake, with boats as big as villages and winged like gulls. And these men, who pretended to follow the Black Robes' religion of peace, did not bury the tomahawk. They came to us and said, 'Cursed savages! Your land is good—we are going to take it from you.' Then we were obliged to go farther away, toward the setting sun, without being able to take with us the bones of our fathers, who slept on the shores of our rivers. And the white men passed with horses and plows over the tombs of our fathers. We hunted for the tombs and we found Indian corn. Ugh! Could the bones of our fathers be replaced by ears of corn? So then we were obliged to go toward the setting sun. There we met other peoples. The Illinois, who are between the lakes and the great river, and the Chippaways, who are to the north of the lakes. And other men, too, who are not of our people, but who have, like us, red skins. . . . And then we were obliged in our turn to see if we could drive away the other red people, and take their place, because the whites drove us away, and took our place. Then, men of the *Yanguie* people, who drove out the Mohicans as my brother's people drove us out, said, 'Cursed savages! They think only of killing.' But, my brother! Before the arrival of white men, a man sometimes lived half his lifetime without war. And when there was a war it was because a bad Indian —there are bad Indians—had hunted in the hunting grounds of another people and stolen the game which the Great Spirit had sent them to eat. Then, if he were caught, killed and scalped, vengeance was necessary. But they were little wars which did not last long. Right away the messenger of peace was sent. He said, 'Chiefs, enough blood has been shed. Today we must smoke the pipe of peace and bury the tomahawk deep. And we have provisions. Tell us if you will come to feast with us, or if, having plenty yourselves, you wish us to come and rejoice with you, like brothers with brothers. Today my white brother knows that we are obliged to make war. The white warriors think that our wives are their wives. Perhaps, if they came to us with presents and if they asked us for our daughters, we would give them our daughters for them to keep forever—unless they had a just grievance—and to care for them tenderly and generously. But it happens that they have taken some of our women from us. And that has made war between us. They also claimed that certain lands were theirs, whereas they

were lands to which the Great Spirit sent us our game. . . . For the red man must hunt if he wants to live. . . . He does not know the white man's occupations, and he does not want to know them. And I tell you this: my name is Mashquah, which you would call Big Bear. And I am a chief and I know how to make my way through the woods, the mountains, and the rivers, like the bear whose name mine is. And I hate the French. But because you have received me like a brother, you and yours, save for a mortal offense, will be spared by my warriors. And if you wish to visit me, I will teach you the secrets of the woods. But now that I have told you everything you want to know, tell me where I may stretch myself to sleep, for tomorrow, when the sun rises, I must go to carry three women the news that their men will never hunt for them again. One has three children. And the Great River took those three men, as you saw.'"

While the savage slept soundly in the bed which Cavelier had made for him in his own room, the young man reflected that here was the guide who would perhaps open to him the route to China. . . .

He resolved to see him very soon again, and learn from his Indian experience how to travel through the forests.

CHAPTER THREE

He who has eyes already possesses the world, Cavelier told himself.

At every bend of the river, the canoe, left behind it a flight of mottled water, successions of light and shade, and the play of color on trees and rocks; but each of those same turnings offered, in place of what it took away, waters just as richly inlaid, shadows just as fresh, lights just as warm, and a play of color just as capricious. Thus Robert did not have to turn his head to stamp upon his memory the images of things seen. Others ahead were just as alluring.

The glorious wilderness was bedecked with all the ancient and inexhaustible treasure of Autumn. Copper and gold rivaled each other. The leaves of the ash tree were of flawless brass. Those of the oak proved the tree's time-honored nobility by their patina of solid gold. But the brilliance of the maples even surpassed them.

Animal life appeared always in an unexpected fashion. Kneeling in the bow of the canoe, the Indian, Big Bear, paddled with even and rhythmic strokes. His ease surprised Cavelier. The canoe was moving against a strong current. But with a simple bend of his body, Big Bear gave the necessary propulsion with the paddle; the canoe cleaved the current lightly, and attained the small eddy, unsuspected until then by Robert, which carried it forward. Then another stroke of the paddle.

But even more astonishing than his skill was his capacity for observation. He would seem to be intent upon avoiding a rock or a dead tree imbedded in the river, but at the same moment he would turn toward Cavelier and point out to him the wild flight of a deer or marten, the pursuit of a giant trout over the river bed. Nothing in the air, on the ground, or in the water escaped him, and he immediately called everything he saw to the Frenchman's attention, knowing he was anxious to learn and to possess all the secrets of the wilderness.

For several days these two men had lived together in solitude. Faithful to a promise made on leaving La Chine, the Iroquois returned one day (to Serreau's great terror) to take the master of the domain away with him. The Abbé Cavelier, who liked to command, had obtained authorization from his superiors to replace Robert during his absence.

After a breakfast of broiled fish, the men at dawn boarded their canoe and paddled upstream, silently, without even disturbing the delicate song the river sang to herself.

Shortly before sundown the Iroquois headed for shore. There, after beaching the canoe, they camped. The Indian told his companion the names of animals and things in a songlike language. The sound translated them so exactly that each time Cavelier was astonished that such words were not universal. How could other words have occurred to the minds of white men? The study of the Iroquois language was far more interesting to him than the classical beauties taught formerly by the professor of Latin at the college of Rouen.

He acquired other knowledge. . . . All summer, on rainy days and particularly in the evenings, they had been bothered by mosquitoes. He had learned to suffer the ceaseless torture without scratching, until protection could be found in the smoke of their campfire. There were also stinging flies and other insects, imperceptible to the eye, which dug cruelly into the skin. . . .

Sometimes they encountered Indian camps. They were always Iroquois, for it was in the very heart of their country that Robert was learning woodland lore. Even though they were evidently *nomadic*—at least by instinct—Big Bear always seemed aware of their presence. He greeted them, but did not mingle directly in their life. Only after the evening meal, while Cavelier smoked, did the Indian talk with the men of his own race. The slant eyes of the squaws brightened at some story which Cavelier heard without understanding, but of whose musical qualities he never tired. There were guttural intonations similar to the sound of a theorbo; others had the resonance of an alto.

But Cavelier remained the White Man. Men, women and children, despite the courtesy with which they bade him farewell before going away to try their luck at fishing, maintained toward the stranger a cold and somewhat haughty reserve.

One afternoon the voice of a distant waterfall silenced the murmur of the river.

The canoe was then gliding in calm, almost oily water, made even smoother by the shadows of mossy rocks and gigantic pines. Big Bear

landed the canoe between two rocks and pronounced the single word: Portage.

Cavelier sighed. The shock of the landing, for all its lightness, reverberated like a wave in his heart. Dreams were broken, and it was with sorrow that he thought of their disappearance forever. It is difficult to grasp again the broken threads of a dream when there is a portage to make.

Before him, an Indian path cut a tunnel through the forest, whose obscurity was lighted here and there by the gleam of dry leaves. Several hundred rods from the river, the path climbed a steep hill.

Robert followed the Indian. The latter easily carried the greater part of the baggage, and on it he had succeeded in loading the bark canoe, so light, but so cumbersome when out of water.

Nevertheless, Big Bear marched tirelessly on, whereas Robert, lightly laden with only eighty pounds slung on his back by a wide strap across his forehead, was bothered by the musket which he carried in his hand.

Shortly before arriving at the summit of the hill, he stopped. Head and shoulders freed from their burden, he took a deep breath. Then, to rest the muscles of his neck, stiff from having been too long curved forward under the weight, he raised his head.

He saw then that giant pines rose on all sides. Enormous trunks stretched some sixty feet from the ground without a branch, their rough bark catching a few orange lights through the deep violet shadows. The lowest branches, bowed from having held so many winter snows, swayed gently. Higher still, at one hundred feet or more from the ground, the pointed tops, although invisible, probably swayed rhythmically at the will of an unsuspected wind. That, no doubt, accounted for what seemed to be the vibration of an æolian harp, chanting high above—celestial melodies of which the ears perceived only the muted echo.

Robert was enchanted. He remained motionless, spellbound, so long that the Iroquois, who had continued his route, returned without his load, the portage having ended. He smiled at his young companion, without a word, and assumed the burden himself. The smile seemed to Robert the extreme limit of cordial blame. A trifle ashamed, he followed.

“A feast for the ears,” he thought. He was certain that the ascent would offer an equal feast for the eyes.

They reached the summit. Before them hundreds of ancient trees had been felled by a storm, and the view stretched a great distance without

encountering an obstacle. Below them was a lake, all aquiver under the play of light, while on its opposite shore there rose a semi-circle of sister hills, each crowned alike with pines, each one as beautiful and as friendly as the others.

Cavelier asked the name of the lake. The Iroquois word was so melodious that it seemed to have been chanted by the pines themselves, or at least to have been whispered by them to the Redskin chief. But doubtless only an Indian could pronounce it without sacrilege or ridicule. He envied Big Bear for speaking naturally a language so noble, and out of respect, even though he did not know the meaning of the word, he would not ask for a translation.

"A lake of sighs," he told himself. "No doubt it must be called Louis, or Talon, or Colbert. But why? I am the guest of an Iroquois here, and can I impose on his friendship by giving it a name he would abhor? For my part, I hear the wind playing hymns in the tree tops. Sighs! That is it, no doubt, with something more religious in the meaning of the word. But among so many words, how can I find one which has not been profaned? This savage word is so musical, that by virtue of its very music, it assumes an element of mystery."

Complacently, the Indian had stopped. He enjoyed the astonishment of his white companion. Who spoke of impassibility? The narrowed eyes, the sorrel face smiled, as did his mouth. No doubt he was happy that a white man was not solely preoccupied in bargaining for furs, or stealing land. Perhaps, because of this, he pardoned the white man for not being of Indian blood. How otherwise explain the fact that not only did he tolerate the admiration of a stranger for this magnificent country, but also to make it possible, he himself voluntarily carried the stranger's load?

Cavelier attempted to absorb this beauty. He felt himself both intoxicated and oppressed. There was too much of it for the human soul to conquer all at once, even if aided by the best eyes in the world. Between Nature and man, it is Nature who is much the stronger. Strong enough to employ her strength with gentleness, a gentleness so insinuating that Robert was captivated without realizing it.

He turned to Big Bear and said:

"We shall camp here tonight."

Big Bear laughed softly and pointed to the sun, still high. Cavelier misunderstood. He repeated, “We shall camp here.” But gravely the Indian turned to him—

“My brother will camp tonight with my people—we have arrived.”

At a bend in the path they saw smoke. Trotting sideways, hostile dogs came to meet them. A word from the chief changed one of them, the largest, from a wild beast to a domestic animal, and the rest of the pack ceased barking.

Behind the firs, silhouettes moved. . . .

Days, in this village, were woven in a tapestry of great blue woods. Cavelier learned to understand the Indians. The simple dignity of their lives astonished him. At first aloof, but respectful because of their chief’s attitude toward him, they in turn learned to like the tall, broad-shouldered and energetic paleface. They delighted in taking him hunting, in teaching him the art of navigating without a compass across the ocean of verdure, and how to stalk moose, which gives meat—that is to say, life. They revealed to him such secrets as white men do not know:—what roots and barks are edible, what lichen is nourishing. Also the art of walking noiselessly, shod in soft-soled moccasins, through the woods. The forest was filled with the songs of birds, the rustle of dead leaves, the discreet breaking of dried branches. There was also the strange noise which holds one breathless until one learns that it is caused by a dead tree, half felled, rubbing gently against the branches of other trees as it sways in the wind. And again, the murmur of the stream or the choir of waterfalls. Afar off the noise of a cataract. The grandiose symphony of Life. But perhaps it conceals the unforeseen chant of Death.

There were games of hide-and-seek played by the copper-colored boys with slant eyes. Here a little chap skillfully glides from tree to tree, unseen by his comrades until he appears farther along, triumph shining in his eyes. . . . One day he will thus avoid the hostile Ottawas or Illinois. Then here another bright-eyed lad plays at being captive. Two older boys, making terrifying faces, grasp his puny arms and tie his little body to a tree trunk, mimicking the tortures their fathers practice. Their prisoner heaps insults upon them. A tall boy, with a long hooked nose, scalps with a wooden knife the rabbit he has just shot with an arrow. . . . Games of death.

But if Cavelier, meditating, came back from the edge of the woods toward the smoking village, he saw crouching at the doors of bark huts, young girls learning to embroider under the eyes of their elder sisters. Or a wrinkled squaw, hips disfigured by hard labor, breasts hanging from too much child-bearing, tranquilly supervises the family cooking. . . . Labors of a rustic life!

He entered then into the council tent. Sitting in a circle around a small fire, the elders gravely passed the calumet from hand to hand. One of them, Big Bear or another, rose, draped himself majestically in his beaver robe and emphasizing the rhythm of his remarks with gestures, discoursed at length on village politics. Careful not to interrupt the orator, but making mental note of their objections as well as his arguments, the others listened impassively. In the rear the circle of young warriors stood respectfully, awaiting orders.

Big Bear explained the Iroquois form of government to Robert. The chiefs and the elders decided all problems, after having deliberated in council. If a member of the tribe refused to submit to the orders given, he was punished by exile. Obliged to roam the woods exposed to the most horrible dangers, he was without the aid of his brothers or his friends until, sincerely repentant, he obtained pardon from those whom he had disobeyed.

Feasts were held. The young warriors, stripped to the waist and painted in ochre, with eagle feathers over one ear, went off into the woods. They brought back several moose. Their skillfully conducted hunt had been fruitful. One of them had been wounded by a bear, fattened with raspberries, cornflowers and wild honey. Aided by his companions, he was scarcely more than a mass of mangled shreds when he was brought to Cavelier. However, he uttered no complaint. In examining him Robert found his wounds more painful than serious. He tore up a clean shirt to dress them.

The accident apparently did not interfere with the success of the banquet. The women's gardens furnished ears of corn. Roasted in the embers—Cavelier found the corn succulent—they whetted the appetites of the gathering. The chiefs honored their guests with tender filets of moose, greasy bear cutlets, cooked as expertly as if by a court chef, and served on wooden plates. There were no sauces, however, nor drink. Despite the refreshing water, the Norman missed the cider of his native country.

As if he had read the thoughts of his friend, Big Bear evoked the joys and miseries of "fire-water." He spoke in Iroquois, with a cadenced voice,

accenting his remarks with gestures.

"The White Brothers," he said, and his hand designated the East, "came by way of the Salt Lake, in their great canoes with white wings. Our fathers then lived not far from the Salt Lake, on the shores of the Great River." Cavelier understood him to mean the St. Lawrence. "They welcomed as brothers these white men, who, like my brother, were men whose tongues and whose hearts spoke in unison. Many times since then, the sun and the moon have turned around the earth, for I am telling you a story of long ago, and when I say our fathers, I speak of the fathers of the fathers of our fathers. And we had never known muskets. They did not turn them against our people, but they went hunting with our young men, and their muskets brought down first a bear, and our young men were greatly frightened. The times have changed, I tell you. This was in the times of the fathers of the fathers of our fathers.

"Those men went away leaving us a Black Robe who told us of the Great Spirit of the white men. But we were grateful to the Great Spirit of the Indians, whom we call Manitou, and we did not wish to grieve him by giving our hearts to his rival, even if his rival were more powerful, as the Black Robe assured us. It must be remembered that ever since the world has been world—and that is longer than the human mind can remember—our Great Spirit has given us the game of the forest and the fish of the water to eat. The Black Robe, saddened, left us and went off to the Hurons, who listened to his words. And see how bad it is for a man to anger the Great Spirit of his race. These Hurons became Christians, and lost their old courage. When the tomahawk, which had been so long buried was dug up, we made a great massacre. This was permitted by the Great Spirit of the Indians. For you must know also that formerly the Hurons were enemies worthy of us.

"You may think I am telling a story which has nothing to do with fire-water, but wait. The first palefaces had gone, whom we had loved. Others came, without Black Robes, who brought fire-water. Our fathers drank it, but their senses remained in the barrel, in the very place where the fire-water had been. They became imbecile. They say that some of them struck one another. At any other time the chiefs and the elders would have stopped the fighting, but they too had lost their senses. When they recovered them, there were dead men. The elders held a council and said, 'Who killed them?' Then the grandfather of my father, who was called Big Bear like me, and who was filled with wisdom, arose and said, 'How may we know who killed them, since we were all deprived of reason? But we know who took away our

reason, and that was the man who brought us the fire-water. He gave us the fire-water but in exchange he took our reason for a while. This was not an honest bargain. It is he who is responsible for the blood-shed!' 'Good!' said an elder, 'but who will pay the blood money?' So they deliberated and decided that the blood money should be paid by the man who had brought the fire-water. He was already far from the village with his companions, on his way back to the great canoe with white wings. It was decided to torture him for six hours before killing and scalping him. Look," he held out his peace pipe, "my grandfather took his scalp and put it on the calumet, and so it has come to me. However, our fathers knew that blood calls for blood, and they abandoned the village for a time, because arrows are less powerful than muskets. And they did well, for when they returned the village was burned down. But that was not all. The palefaces had gone to the Hurons and urged them to pursue our fathers in the woods. And the Hurons dug up the tomahawk. But I have already told you—our fathers made a great massacre. And that was as it should be, for the Hurons furthered a bad cause. So, believe me, fire-water is not good for the Iroquois. It should not be missed."

Robert shared Big Bear's hut, the wigwam as he had learned to call it. At the door of the wigwam, a striped pole supported numerous scalps. Big Bear was proud of them. He politely refrained, however, from relating to his friend the story of a certain scalp, abundantly covered with blond hair.

"It must be that of a compatriot," thought Robert. He was curious to know, but the Iroquois remained silent.

When they entered the wigwam, after disarming, they were followed by the docile eyes of a tall, strong and pleasant woman. Maternity had robbed the chief's wife of the real title to the name she bore—Honeysuckle. Nevertheless, she was still attractive, in her elk-skin clothing embroidered with porcupine quills and glass beads purchased from white traders. Two black eyes made her bronzed coloring seem even darker. Her round face had a caressing and feline charm. She smiled frequently, even while scolding the children, who loved her more than they feared her. She punished them without whipping, by sprinkling a few drops of cold water from her calloused fingers into their faces.

The constraint of the first night having passed, the chief, even though he preserved a noble and haughty manner toward Cavelier, suddenly lost all decorum whenever his children slipped between his friend and himself.

The two children clung to the fringes of his trousers, untied the strings of his moccasins, tore from his glittering shoulders the sumptuous beaver robe that covered them, moved his eagle's feather from place to place on his head, scratched at his paint with their finger nails, forcing him finally onto all fours to play horse. The fire, sole light in the hut, threw into relief the fantastic shadow of the father, squirming under the playful kicks of his children. And, thought Cavelier, the laughter that resounded here was much like that of a good French household.

Cavelier sent a messenger to his brother, the Abbé. The invitation of the chief had been cordial. He urged the young Frenchman to spend the Winter in the Iroquois village.

Autumn already filled the woods with the murmur of dry leaves. Firs, cedars and pines alone defied the approach of Winter with its silver armour. In the course of walks through the forest, their shadows changed from blue to fawn color. The chief called Robert's attention to the first signs of the cold season among the animals. The lynx and the wildcats were taking on thicker fur, at once softer and heavier. The beavers were repairing their dams. Gnawed all around their base, young cedars had been felled by the animals and dragged to their aquatic timber yards. The season promised to be a good one for furs.

Big Bear offered to exchange at the end of the Winter the result of his own, as well as his family's hunting, for beads, knives, hatchets and muskets.

All this Robert wrote to his brother, writing with blood—not his own but that of a moose—on strips of white birch bark. The messenger, a young athlete of some twenty years, carried them to La Chine, wrapped carefully in skin. He promised to serve, on returning, as guide to whomever the Abbé should designate to bring back the merchandise.

There were astonishing Autumn evenings. Now that Cavelier began to understand the Iroquois dialect, he enjoyed in all their richness the stories and the legends told by Big Bear. The tall savage, crouching before the fire, his back leaning against a post, evoked with great satisfaction the dark and glorious past of his race.

Cavelier believed he stuck very close to the truth. Taken all together the anecdotes were reasonably faithful to the annals kept by His Majesty's

archivist. But the details varied. It was obviously necessary to take racial vanity into account. A number of points at variance with the version of French colonists, seemed natural.

Certainly Indian cruelty was not absent from these narratives. But the chief, with a spontaneous and admirable gift for natural philosophy, disclosed its value. Only the horror of war made it of short duration among savages. No matter how great a stoic one may be, and despite the pride that fixes a smile of disdain on hairless lips, the torture stake appears to the bravest as a not very enviable destiny. Thus, from that very cruelty was born the peaceful custom of the calumet, whose purpose was to serve as passport between tribes. Big Bear himself had frequently experienced its effects. He recounted his expeditions all around the Great Lakes, among the Ottawas, the Chippaways, the Delawares, the Senecas, the Cayugas, the Illinois and the Mohicans. Thanks to the peace pipe, he affirmed, the stranger may travel safely, if he strictly observes the laws of courtesy, if he abstains from uselessly killing the game of his neighbors, and if he respects their wives. He cited the white men who thus wandered through the forests. They were even permitted to marry Indian women, provided the alliance took on the character of a serious marriage, and not a passing debauch. However, all these tribes, except for the enfeebled Hurons (the chief spat disdainfully) would not permit their lands to be cultivated.

Surprised, the young man asked the reason. The chief's face became grave. Honeysuckle stopped embroidering her piece of elk skin and, finger to lips, eyes serious, imposed silence on the two children.

"The *Coureur de bois*," said the Iroquois, "does not trouble us. He is a man of no consequence. He comes, buys our furs, pays for them, and goes away. He avoids telling other palefaces about lands that are fertile. He knows that cultivation drives away game. He is our ally in his respect for the wilderness. But cultivation forces us to depart, and what a departure it is! When the fathers of our fathers left the place where they had settled, on the shore of the Great River, they dug up the whitened bones of their fathers, loaded them into their canoes and carried them away with them. But did the spirit of our fathers return to haunt their bones as it did while they slept in the land that was theirs? Neither you nor I know. If you had seen, as I saw—I was scarcely bigger than these children—my father carry respectfully the bundle of bones of his own father, and his father's father, you would know why we love the land of our fathers. Here we are still at home. But how many human lives will be lost before it is definitely our own? Ugh! . . . I have spoken."

Those days, while waiting for the merchandise which the young emissary was to bring back to him, Cavelier spent in long meditations. With the aid of a stick the chief had traced in the sand the course of rivers and the shape of the Great Lakes. He spoke of a great river, whose banks were bordered with high canes, which wound through prairies to the South. Grass grew there in abundance, a blue grass which nourished thousands of buffaloes. These buffaloes had long soft wool and a hump on their shoulders. Their flesh was savory, and their fat better than that of either bear or moose.

Was that the passage to China?

Robert's dream, however, was not separated from that other love of his for the kingdom, across the seas, in which he had been born. It seemed to him possible, these Indians being infinitely closer to civilization than it was believed—even in Ville Marie, Montreal or Quebec—to make of them good, and not the least valuable, subjects of the King.

That great river, south of the Great Lakes, which lost itself in he knew not yet what ocean, was it not the very route to a Promised Land? Other Frenchmen had left the mark of that Christianized genius of Normandy, which ever has been *to conquer*, on this American continent. No doubt his ancestors, at the time of Duke Rollon, would have rushed through the land with a torch or a sword in the hand. But under a monarch as enlightened as Louis the Fourteenth, and when one has the good taste to feel oneself Christian. . . .

While Big Bear was preparing his traps for the winter's hunting, Cavelier wore him out with questions. He wanted to know all about the chief's former travels, the customs of the different Indian tribes, the languages, and if other white men had already explored the country. On this last point the Iroquois believed not. He knew a scout whose exact name he recalled as Jolliet (he pronounced it J-o-iette) who frequently spoke of his desire to explore the country with a Black Robe. The chief also knew the Black Robe, even though he avowed mistrusting him. He named the priest, Marquette. He was, according to Big Bear, a man astonishingly thin and dry, with a lank appearance but the most intrepid heart that existed. A warrior! But one who fought for the Great Spirit of the white men.

The unconcealed admiration of the chief for these two explorers who were unknown to him, annoyed Cavelier. Since Big Bear thus vaunted their

endurance and their energy, it was because they were really capable of facing the worst dangers of such a trip.

Would one of these men, or both of them, steal from him his glory?

Thus jealousy gnawed cruelly at his heart. No doubt it was visible, since Big Bear now strove to change the subject whenever Cavelier broached it.

The arrival of Jean Serreau with the young Indian and the merchandise, however, distracted his thoughts.

The arrival of his aide touched Cavelier. He knew how much Serreau hated and feared the Iroquois. First of all the Poitevin burst into imprecations against his guide. The voyage had been difficult. The rivers were swollen by rains. Trees clogged certain currents. It had been necessary to wade through water up to the waist, pushing the canoe and the "sacré" cargo. The portages had been long. At one point they had gone twenty-four hours without eating. (He forgot to add that his bad humor had frightened a deer come down to drink which his companion was preparing to kill.)

Aside from that, he brought excellent news from La Chine. The first harvest of Indian corn, sown during the spring clearing, had been satisfactory. The work of clearing, too, had been continued. The Abbé had given himself the title of "chaplain of the domain," which permitted him to remain on the spot and to superintend the work. In addition he had charged Serreau with a missive. . . .

Cavelier opened it feverishly. His brother wrote that all went well, but he thought it wise to negotiate a loan for the spring, if Robert consented. With additional capital the value of the domain could be rapidly increased. He entered into tedious details.

Then came the first fall of snow. To the great delight of the Indians, Cavelier put on snow shoes. His habit of walking with feet turned outwards tripped him and he fell, rolling like a thunderstruck hare. He was slightly mortified by the experience.

The hunting began well. Knives, glass trinkets, beads and second-hand muskets passed from Cavelier to the Iroquois. The treasure of furs was enriched day by day. And Robert felt his heart swell with the desire it contained for great solitudes—and glory.

Love for this country and for the red men entered as deeply into his soul as love for his own France.

CHAPTER FOUR

The lure of adventure filled Cavelier's heart, and also, perhaps the love of profit—which sometimes worried him.

"Have I then become avaricious?" he asked himself. "Here are soft beaver skins transforming themselves into Tours currency, into silver ecus, into pistoles and golden louis. I rejoice over it. However, I always thought I despised vain riches. Have I inherited from my father the soul which kept him behind his counter? Despite all my respect for him, I wanted to escape from that mercantile life. Have I then come to Canada simply to sell, at a profit, the skins of beasts trapped by Big Bear and his relatives?"

He opened his heart to the Abbé, who burst out laughing.

"What absurd scruples. Avaricious? You? No one is more prodigal and, besides, what a love for adventure is yours! No miser has that. . . . Certainly by trading in furs you could become rich quickly. Here, too, is La Chine, which is being transformed into a village, and whose land bears rich profits.

"But will you hoard your money? It does not seem likely. You live nine months out of twelve like the savages. Sleeping in the open . . . wandering through virgin forests . . . navigating hostile lakes and rivers. . . . Fatigue is thinning and hardening your body. Your face is emaciated. Nevertheless, your eyes burn with an inner fire. And shall I speak of all the dangers you encounter? I tremble, I who would gladly accompany you through all the perils—I tremble every time you are away for fear someone will come to tell me that my beloved brother has fallen prey to savages, wild beasts, or illness. . . . Avaricious? You, who speak of equipping, at your own expense, expeditions to explore unknown lands for the glory of the King? Avaricious? Ah!—if you told me that the demon of adventure and perhaps also that of pride were disputing for your soul, tearing at it—yes! But avarice! . . ."

"What do you advise, then, brother? Here in two campaigns I have amassed more gold than all our family has ever dreamed of possessing. Must I retire to this La Chine, live here like a seigneur on his fief? Settle quarrels? Advise my tenants?"

"Certainly it would be a life whose peaceful charm would not be without dignity. But even though I am not responsible for directing your soul, I know you well enough to be sure that you would never be quite content with it.

"You tell me constantly the stories that you hear from your Iroquois friends. You talk of lakes, of forests, of gigantic rivers, and of endless plains. It suffices me, who, having heard many confessions, know how to read the secrets of men's souls—it suffices me simply to hear your words to know what dream haunts you. Still, it lends itself well enough to the glory of God and to the interests of the King."

The Abbé sat down and with a familiar gesture stroked his face with his hands. Rocking slowly in his chair, he continued:

"Builder of Empires! Why should I turn you from your dream? Oh, how unhappy she would be, the young girl I might have you marry, for of your heart she would possess only as much as ambition deigned to leave her. But if you are possessed by that ambition, why should I ask you to overcome it? It is, I tell you, doubtless the will of God and in the interests of the King.

"You want to leave, you say. You want to explore the course of that river, perhaps fabulous, of which your Iroquois friends have told you. Very well. If you want to push on to that warm sea into which, they say, it flows, the money you possess and which would suffice to make a contented man rich, could not pay the cost of your voyage. Why not then sell part of La Chine to our Order? In return, and as protection against those who are jealous of your success as a fur trader, I shall see that our Father Superior gives you as partner a Sulpician missionary. One of our Order, the Abbé Dollier, is burning to be martyrized by the western people. Besides, the Franciscans also might participate in the voyage of discovery. That would be an added support. . . ."

The days passed. Following his brother's advice, Cavelier negotiated with the Sulpicians for the sale of a part of La Chine. Shared by Chevrier de Faucamps, Lachaussée and Saint Sulpice, the island of Montreal was becoming too small for the activities of the Abbé Ollier's priests. They were anxious to acquire Cavelier's colony. But as shrewd business men, the priests charged with the negotiations let them drag on interminably.

Cavelier sent his brother to see Monsieur de Courcelles. That gentleman was acting-governor since the departure of Monsieur de Tracy, whom the King had decided was too old to lead seriously and to a satisfactory conclusion, the work of colonization. Monsieur Colbert also accused the old man of a lack of constructive ideas, a leaning towards avarice that left urgent work unattended, and sudden caprices which upset everything. It was known that the Court had organized a cabala against the choice of the Comte de

Frontenac, who was supported by Monsieur Colbert and the Prince de Conti, but whose amatory successes had created powerful enemies. His Majesty sought to gain time, and Monsieur de Courcelles did not arouse too strong jealousy. This nonchalant gentleman willingly accorded to the Abbé the necessary authorizations.

"I cannot see," he said, "why they strive so hard to forbid exploring. If my consent alone is necessary, you have my permission."

At last Cavelier succeeded in concluding with Saint Sulpice an arrangement which seemed satisfactory to both parties. He left part of his funds on deposit with the bankers and with the rest undertook the preparations for his expedition to the Great Lakes.

Father Dollier, to whom his brother had spoken, interviewed him at length. A kindly man, before donning his robe he had served with distinction in His Majesty's army. He liked to tell of the part he had played in the battle of Rocroy wherein, although still a boy, he had charged the Spaniards. Gravely wounded in a duel, he had vowed, if he recovered, to enter orders. Now he aspired to the palm of martyrdom. But by one of those frequent contradictions to which his nature lent itself, he had kept the haughty and uncompromising character which had precipitated the duel. His gentility ill-concealed this side of his nature. To Cavelier he introduced another priest, Father de Galinée, who was tormented by a passion for mathematics. Small, pink, wrinkled like a winter apple, already aged, the priest always carried his breviary, which he read with unction, in one pocket, and, in another, the geometry of Descartes whose disciple and continuator he claimed to be. Charmed to learn that Cavelier had studied mathematics at the college in Rouen, he engaged him in conversation. He had every intention—"if he lived long enough—to continue the work of his master, and to proceed from the analysis of figures and surfaces to that of numbers and algebraic formulas."

Robert listened politely. He foresaw certain difficulties in a voyage accompanied by a dictatorial man who would most certainly try to command the expedition. To that Cavelier would be opposed. Would conflicts not arise in such circumstances? And what would be the consequences? On the other hand, there was no use counting on Father de Galinée for any practical assistance. Absorbed by his mathematical chimeras, the learned Sulpician could conceive of no duty except to God and Science, and he served them with equal enthusiasm.

"*Aiein o Theos geometrei*," he often quoted. "It is beyond doubt that geometric figures alone have the purity necessary to satisfy an infinitely perfect mind."

While Cavelier and Father Dollier, with just a shade of rivalry in their voices, attended to the loading of the canoes, Father de Galinée, crouching on the river bank, traced complicated equations in the sand. From them he deduced solutions which he contentedly expounded to the two already impatient men.

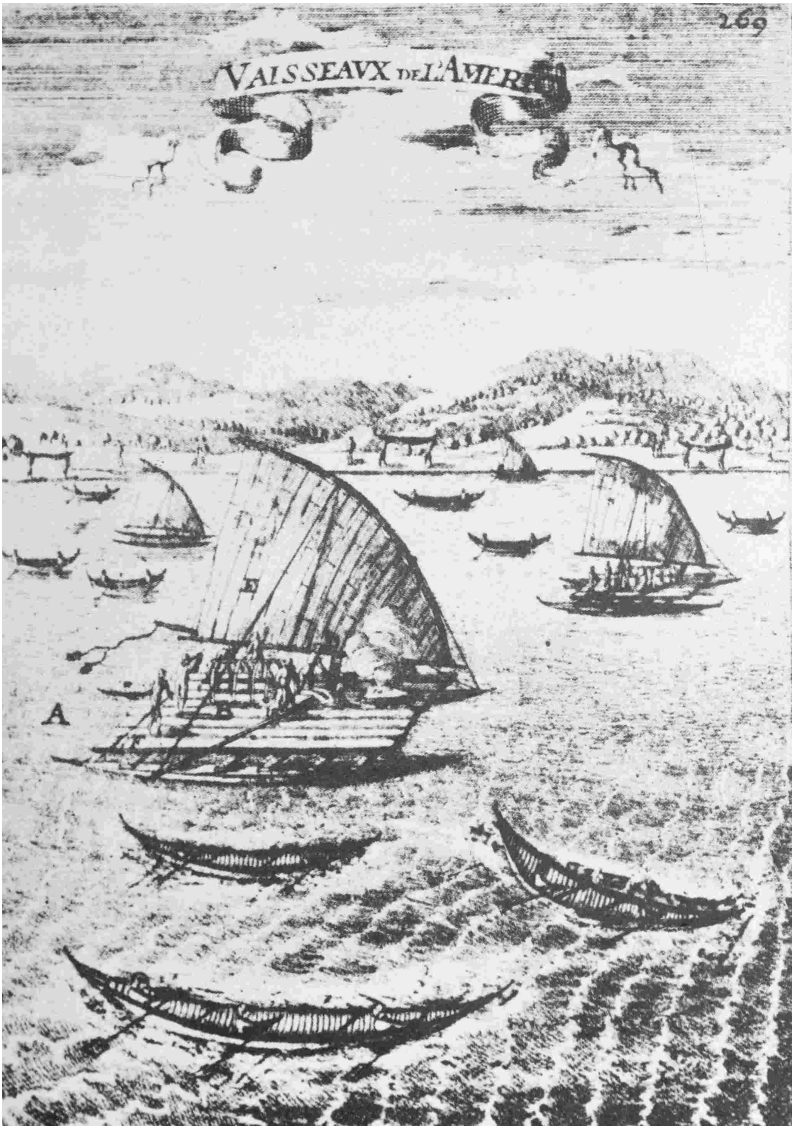
"I tell you, Father, that his canoe is too heavily loaded in the bow."

"But Monsieur Cavelier, you are absolutely wrong. Recall the principles of any loading—keep the load well in front."

"Father, I do not doubt that this precept is excellent in so far as it concerns cavalry. But I tell you that a bark canoe must be lighter in the bow. Permit me to remind you that I have had a little experience on Canadian rivers. Let the wind be against us, and you will see what nasty waves the St. Lawrence can summon up, however small they may seem."

"Yes, but with your system where shall I put my sacramental wine?"

"And my merchandise, Father? You are going to preach. Perfect! We are agreed. For myself, I feel my interests better protected when God takes them in charge."



Types of Vessels used by Early Explorers. Sailing Vessels were made by laying a Deck on Transverse Timbers, Joining two large Bark Canoes.

"Bosh! Monsieur. You singularly belittle the rôle of the Divinity. The Holy Trinity has other things to do than to bother with your trading."

"Have you forgotten," Cavelier was purple, "that it is with the money made from my traffic in furs that this expedition is being financed? It would seem to me in this respect that the ways of God conform to those of my

negotiations. Who has furnished the canoes? Who has recruited the men? Who has arranged for guides?"

"God, who provides all, Monsieur, has put you in our path as an instrument of His designs."

"Very well, Father, do not break that instrument."

Whereupon Father de Galinée ran up to them, beaming. He brandished a piece of birch bark.

"Monsieur Cavelier, the ways of Providence are infinite. A happy chance, which is due only to Celestial permission, has just led me to discover an interesting theorem concerning the properties of these curves called spirals."

"Alas, Father, I am sorry not to be able to lend you an attentive ear." Then, struck with a sudden idea, "Father, I beg you to put your mathematical science to the service of our expedition."

"What are the given quantities of the problem, Monsieur Cavelier?"

"Can you demonstrate to the Abbé Dollier the laws opposed to the propulsion of a canoe too heavily loaded in the bow?"

"Wait—let me see. Being given on one hand the Archimedian principle —Hum! Yes, I see—and on the other hand—hum! Yes—the resistance to the pressure of fluids—hum! the swiftness of the current must also be considered, I suppose. Hum! Where must the center of gravity be placed? Yes—wait a minute or two, while I collect my thoughts. Good Heavens—pardon me, my God—but this soil is trampled—where can I draw my equations? Ah, here is a place! Monsieur Cavelier, I ask but two minutes."

"Good!" Then turning to the Abbé Dollier, "Father, let us accord Father de Galinée ten minutes, and let us arrange a truce."

"I was going to ask it of you, Monsieur Cavelier."

They sat down on a small rock. Ten yards away the Abbé de Galinée was dabbling in the wet sand; his activity was refreshing. Armed with a stick, he drew lines and equations. He could be heard muttering: "No, that is not right —I have postulated the problem badly. Begin again." And rubbing out with his muddy hand the signs already drawn, patting down the surface, he recommenced. Finally he straightened up, triumphant.

"By dividing the length of the canoe by the mean and extreme ratio . . ."

Cavelier burst into laughter. Father Dollier, for the moment an accomplice, laughed with him. Rumpling his lace cravat and crossing his long legs, Robert said:

"You forget, Father, that if even I have difficulty in following your learned deductions, Father Dollier is avowedly ignorant of the matter. How must we distribute the load?"

"It must be appreciably nearer the stern than the bow."

Cavelier clapped his hands.

"Excuse me for winning, Father. But as you see, mathematics are in accord with Iroquois experience."

"Do as you will," replied Father Dollier coldly enough. And he added: "You will excuse me for having passed the age of going to school." He withdrew, annoyed.

However, on the sixth of July, 1669, the seven canoes of Cavelier, and the two canoes of Big Bear, volunteer guide to the expedition, were ready to start. Each of Cavelier's canoes and those of the missionaries carried a white man and an Iroquois. The latter knelt in the stern, paddling. The distance which already separated the voyagers from La Chine, and the waving hats of the Abbé Cavelier, Serreau and others who had watched the departure, increased rapidly.

The days passed, bringing with them little variation in the scenery. But its monotony was forgotten in its beauty. The farther they went up the river, the more numerous were the islands. Rapids were frequent. It was necessary to unload the canoes and follow, heavily burdened, the well beaten and well kept portage. Big Bear explained that the riverside tribes attended to this work. But in times of war, these portages became choice ambushes.

Cavelier and the two ecclesiastics displayed equal courage, but in entirely different ways. Robert carried his load with the impatience of a man determined to vanquish the obstacle, at whatever cost. One felt that energy was the very fibre of his being. Father Dollier accomplished his task with a rigid and somewhat discouraging aloofness. Father de Galinée interested himself by gaily calculating the effort accomplished and in measuring the power furnished by each muscle. . . .

They were annoyed by mosquitoes and were obliged every night to raise a smudge of green leaves in order to find some protection. Along the way,

numerous Iroquois came to visit them. Their hostility was overcome by Big Bear. On his advice Cavelier asked the missionaries not to preach to them. They agreed reluctantly.

The canoes entered a region in which innumerable islands seemed to be drifting down the river. Green domes shadowed the narrow channels. The inverted reflections of trees were woven on the water into trembling tapestries, broken suddenly by the leap of a fish.

Then the view opened upon a horizon of clouds, of lights and water, saluted by the lapping of waves on an endless shore. They had reached Lake Ontario. The canoes were drawn up on a shallow beach, and the campfire was lighted.

The following morning the wind blew up sizable waves. In the outlet, the Iroquois River, a sort of shoal had formed. Cavelier judged it to be similar to that of Caudebec. A raging foam danced atop the waves. Even though Big Bear wanted to cross the lake at once, Cavelier countermanded the order.

Caught near the beach in too shallow water, large fish were carried by the waves and tossed onto the dry sand. Cavelier's men gathered several large pike, their gills still quivering. Gladly the Norman, Sager, whom Robert had engaged as his personal servant, would have cried "Miracle!" But the savages explained that it was a frequent and natural phenomenon. They pointed out, all along the beach, skeletons of thousands of fish which, caught in this way, by the tempest, and driven ashore, had been devoured by fish hawks or insects.

While the pike were being roasted, a large band of savages, attracted by the smoke, appeared a short distance away. Their attitude was not hostile. Big Bear proposed going to them with the pipe of peace. He returned in a few minutes to report that they were a party of Oneidas, allies of the Iroquois. He also brought back an invitation to visit their village, which was nearby.

The voyagers went, leaving their canoes guarded by Sager and two other men. Cavelier took several hatchets and a few handsful of trinkets to win their friendship. Draped in a beaver robe, the chief accepted the presents and had a meal of fish, venison and grilled corn prepared for his guests.

Cavelier discovered by questioning that furbearing animals were plentiful in the surrounding country. He attempted to establish an agreement

for trading in furs.

While he was occupied in these negotiations, Father Dollier felt the call of his apostolic vocation. For several days he had been polishing up his Iroquois grammar and rehearsing the sermons he had prepared. So while Cavelier was sitting in the council hut talking with the elders, there came from the village the confused roar of a crowd and the sound of a strong voice discoursing.

The dean of the chiefs, an old man with a hooked nose, whose back was toward the entrance, slowly turned his scrawny neck on his immobile shoulders, in the manner of a bird of prey. Cavelier, surprised by his attitude, stopped speaking. He saw the old man's mouth fall open. A slobbery tongue emerged from between his toothless gums. . . . But with hurried steps, Big Bear was approaching the hut, anger in his face. His tall and solidly built figure stopped momentarily at the entrance, filling the silent room with darkness.

Cavelier signaled to him, and the Iroquois sat down beside his friend.

"What is the matter?" Cavelier asked in French.

"The Black Robe is preaching," whispered the chief, "and nobody knows what might happen. Perhaps they," he indicated the Oneida elders, "will tolerate it. They are the masters of their own home. But as for me, I have men whom I brought hither. Some of them are discontented, and I myself am discontented with some of them. As for the women!—you know what women are! My brother. . . . There is my niece whose husband insisted upon bringing her with him, under pretext that they had just married. I, you know, did not approve. She had gone mad . . . she is there in the first row of those stupid people, listening open-mouthed to the Black Robe. And the first thing I shall hear tomorrow is that my niece is going to change her religion, and I will not permit that. No, no, and no!"

"But if it is her wish?"

"White men think white, and red men think red. The religion of the palefaces is good for them and we have proof of it, since the palefaces are driving us, little by little, from our lands. But it is bad for Indians. Look at the Hurons. I have told you often enough that the religion of the palefaces turned them into beaten dogs. If it please the Oneidas to be like the Hurons, so much the worse for them. It is their affair. But as for me, I am an Iroquois chief, and I say for my people, no, no, and no! Come and stop your brother from preaching."

In the village square, Cavelier forced his way through the crowd. Comments were being exchanged, which he partially understood. A majority considered that the orator was speaking of curious matters, which merited reflection. A young woman was listening, wide-eyed. Beside her a young man was attempting gently, but in vain, to draw her away. Cavelier recognized the chief's nephew and niece.

Reaching the first row, he crossed the space respectfully left open by the auditors, and whispered a few words in the priest's ear. But the latter refused to listen. With his left hand he held off Cavelier's arm, with his right hand he brandished a crucifix, declaiming magnificent phrases in purest Iroquois. His eloquence was in reality gentle and humble. Divided between admiration and anger, Cavelier restrained himself until the end. In the first row Big Bear, scowling, was making signs of protest.

Finally the Father ended his peroration. Dropping Cavelier's arm, he spread his two hands in a sculptural benediction. A heavy silence fell. . . .

"Do you not think, Father? . . ."

"My son, it is magnificent. See how respectfully these infidels listen to me. We are going to convert all of them. And as for you, the instrument of conversion, it will be counted up for you in Heaven."

"But Big Bear is furious."

The priest's gesture consigned Big Bear to some distant inferno. . . . "What matters the fury of that bloody demon? These who tomorrow will be Christians, shall furnish us with guides."

"But . . ."

Cavelier was not able to finish. The dean of the elders, his fur robe negligently thrown over his thin shoulders, tottered up. Saliva drooled from his lips. Open-mouthed, he looked from the priest to Cavelier. Then reaching a decision, he announced that the elders would be glad to hear in council what reasons the Black Robe could offer for having assembled the people of the Oneidas without having asked permission of their chiefs.

A trifle abashed, Father Dollier wrinkled his nose. Followed at a distance by the crowd, he walked beside the chief. Cavelier, red with rage, ground the earth under his heel with every step.

His fears were not exaggerated. The elders expressed serious doubts as to the benefits of the Christian religion. They refused to allow their people to follow the example of the Hurons, whom anyone could now massacre with impunity since they no longer avenged their dead.

A few gifts distributed by Robert appeased the anger of the Oneida chiefs. They nevertheless exacted from Father Dollier the promise to preach no more during the few days it might please the white men to be their guests.

Father Dollier took it all badly. Robert calmly explained to him the best way to assure the success of his mission would be to found a center of propaganda among less hostile peoples. The friendliness of the Illinois had been spoken of, and they were not far from their territory. The Abbé promised to abstain from preaching during the remainder of their stay.

Cavelier had scarcely finished forcing this promise from him before Big Bear was at his side. The Iroquois had been in consultation, he said, and he refused to act as guide to the expedition any longer. He protested that his affection for Robert remained intact. If it should please him sometime to travel without the company of Black Robes, he would gladly accompany him. He added that the Oneida elders would willingly furnish guides on condition that the voyagers would quit on the very next day the village in which Father Dollier had attempted to preach the faith. To indicate further that the Oneidas had no particular resentment toward Cavelier himself, they had commanded Big Bear to inform Cavelier in all friendliness that they accepted his conditions in respect to fur trading.

Upon his return to the canoes, Robert was presented with a magnificent red stone calumet, decorated with white feathers.

Crossing Lake Ontario, the majestic tumult of Niagara somewhat lessened the tension between Cavelier and the two priests. The gorges resounded with the distant clamour as they ascended the dark river, narrow and swift, against contrary currents of oily and whirling eddies. The Oneida guides became grave. They were approaching, they said, the spot where the Great Spirit manifests his fury.

A sudden turn in the river brought them face to face with the Falls. Even though Cavelier had often heard them described by the Indians, they surpassed anything he might have imagined. That vast horse-shoe! . . . the curved and luminous sheet of water, hanging as if suspended in the air,

before it fell. . . . That unexpected island, right in the middle of the river, in appearance waiting to be swept violently down. And below, the dashing spray. . . .

The canoes landed noiselessly. Outstripping even the customary haste of Cavelier, Father Dollier was the first to leap ashore. His thin ascetic figure bowed, his knees bent. He was the first to pray. Under the inscrutable eyes of the savages, the white men followed his example.

Cavelier raised his bowed head. Too many thoughts were bubbling and whirling, like these swirling waters, in his mind. Was this wonderful country filled everywhere with similar marvels? Already the immensity of Lake Ontario had made him wish that his heart had been made to its measure. . . .

Father Dollier and Father de Galinée prayed too long to his liking. Trodden by the feet of so many generations of Indians, the portage opened, wider than usual, before him. He was in a hurry to follow the Indian guides, to get closer to the marvel, to enjoy it, and to pass on to others, even more extraordinary.

His long meditation ended, Father Dollier invited the voyagers to resume the route. Ordinarily Cavelier would have been annoyed by such an interference in the giving of commands which, in his opinion, belonged only to himself. But face to face with such a spectacle, it seemed to him entirely natural to bow before the man of God. He even permitted the priest the honor of preceding him along the portage.

They started the tortuous climb. Father de Galinée panted along behind Robert. As they emerged above the Falls, they suddenly perceived on a short promontory just ahead, a moose that had come to drink. Startled by their presence, the animal regarded them, sable colored silhouette against the silver of a cloud.

The Falls urged them on. Father de Galinée, enthusiastic, tried to calculate the volume of the water, the velocity of the fall, its force. He interrupted the course of Cavelier's meditations by suggesting the possibility of its turning gigantic mill wheels. As was his habit, he began to expound its future development. An important city would doubtless be built here one day . . . engineers would invent machines to transform the cataract into power. But Father Dollier combatted the idea. It seemed to him more rational to leave the scene as it was, firstly as a manifestation of the power of God, and secondly in order not to spoil the wild scenery. At the most he proposed opening clearings in the woods and choosing the site on which to build a residence worthy of the Governor of New France. In what other part

of Canada could be found a site more worthy of His Majesty's representative? . . . Cavelier wished ardently to obtain the concession of the Falls.

They decided to camp there for a few days, in order to rest and also to enjoy the sight before starting their exploration of the lake of the Eries, or Cats, of whose dangers they had been warned by the guides. Robert suspected the guides of exaggerating these dangers so that they might obtain a larger recompense than that which had been agreed upon.

After five days of navigation along the shores of Lake Erie, the voyagers reached the straits of Detroit, through which the waters of Lake Huron precipitated themselves into the lower basin. Feeling themselves on enemy territory, the Oneida guides demanded the hatchets and trinkets promised by Cavelier, and announced their intention of returning to their own country. According to them they would surely meet, in a few days, a canoe of Hurons, who frequented these waters to fish for muskallonge, cat fish and white fish. Many of these Hurons were Christians, and all of them venerated the Black Robes, but more particularly the Bare Feet. This Robert understood to mean the Franciscan priests.

Before letting them go, he questioned them again. They assured him that men of their tribe had voyaged to the south of the lakes and that there they had navigated a great river which flowed into a warm sea. The Indians called that river the Mississippi. In the dialect of one of the riverside nations, the Sioux or Nadouessioux, the word meant Great River. Yes, they thought that its source lay farther west—but their men had reached it by following one of its affluents, the Ohio, or Beautiful River, which should be located almost directly to the south. One of them drew on the sand with a dead branch a crude map which Cavelier copied on a strip of birch bark.

Several days passed before their fires attracted the desired visit of either Hurons or Ottawas. Autumn filled the woods. The forest was empurpled with the imperial death of maple leaves. Anxious to husband their provisions, towards evening Cavelier wandered with silent steps in the darkening woods filled with the trembling of dead leaves and the sleepy lullaby of rivulets.

With a piece of birch bark rolled into a horn, Indian fashion, he made a trumpet. Towards dusk could be heard the cry—Hung-hung-hung . . . ou-ou-

ou—of a moose, prey to the desires of the season. Cavelier found a clearing and then, sheltered by a rock, listened attentively until he heard the call. Then he replied through the bark trumpet; a vibrant dialogue was exchanged between him and the animal. The call of challenge came nearer. Suddenly he heard the rustling of underbrush and the movement of a heavy body. Superb and furious, the moose appeared, his great horns extended, his nostrils raised, his beard floating. Motionless on his high, too delicate hoofs, he searched for the rival who had provoked him. His myopic and badly set eyes forced him to sway his head . . . the wind rumpled the collar of dark hair on his chest. . . . Cavelier, holding his breath, carefully took aim. Suddenly a flash leaped in the pan, the detonation of the musket broke the silence of the woods. Trembling for a moment on his high hoofs, then kneeling on all fours, the moose fell, his head stretched out.

The sun was already setting. After having bled the animal and tied a handkerchief to its antlers in order to frighten away wolves, Robert regained his route with difficulty and returned to the bay wherein all the blood of the sun was slowly dissolving.

One evening, upon returning to the encampment, Robert saw an unknown figure, reddened by the light of the fire. Politely, a man arose. He was a tanned and jovial giant. Father Dollier explained—

"Monsieur Jolliet, a 'coureur des bois' like yourself, Monsieur Cavelier. Monsieur Jolliet saw our fire and has given us the pleasure of coming to seek our hospitality."

"Greetings!" said the giant. "Monsieur Cavelier, I have heard a lot of talk about you among the Iroquois. They say that you have the stuff of a daring explorer. But when fatigue, and danger, and the savages, have treated you as roughly as they have me—I hope you will still be here and able to talk about it!"

Cavelier thanked him curtly. This Jolliet was already known for his adventurous voyages. He was a great friend of the Jesuits, and with the profits from his fur trading he financed the mission of a certain Father Marquette, whom Cavelier had met. He compared the colossal stature and the cheerful aspect of Jolliet with the ascetic gauntness and the austere eyes of Father Marquette. He should have been pleased with the daring of both of them, but a jealousy of which he was not master made him embarrassed at the very mention of their names.

In order to reflect quietly, he excused himself on the ground of his duties. Sager was dressing the moose killed the night before, preparing the finely cut strips of flesh for drying by smoke and sun. The scraped and hairless skin, which had been boiled with part of the brain, was already being smoked over a fire of green wood. The sinews of the neck and the back, which Cavelier saved for sewing moccasins, were drying on branches.

Marquette and Jolliet, La Salle's Rivals in Discovery, enter the Mississippi, June 17, 1673

He thought that it might be worth while to find out the man's plans. Jolliet had undoubtedly voyaged more extensively in the region of the Lakes than any other Frenchman. Others accused him, however, of boasting.

During the meal Cavelier questioned him. With his hunting knife Jolliet cut long slices of the broiled meat, which he seemed to plunge into the depths of his throat. He listened politely, made an effort to swallow, and then replied briefly:

"Do other rivers prolong the Great Lakes? Perhaps yes, perhaps no." But was there not a great river which emptied into warm seas? "The Indians say so, but can the gossip of the 'sacré' Indians be credited? Half of it is lies and the other half is not at all true." Had he voyaged in the south? "To what purpose? There are enough furs around here."

Nevertheless, Cavelier felt that he was being duped. Had not Jolliet, earlier in the conversation, spoken of the savage Illinois who inhabit the southeastern end of Lake Huron? He had said that he knew their language, and that through their aid he had plans to further the mission of Father Marquette among the Chippaways of the prairie, (what prairie?) the Sioux and the Nadouessioux.

Had Jolliet projects connected with that mysterious prairie? Here there were only woods, mountains, rocks and lakes. What might that prairie be? And what might be the plans of this Jolliet and Father Marquette?

Rolled in his beaver robe, he could not stop thinking, and worry kept him awake all night. There was a full moon, and the lake was covered with its light. In the sky sounded now and then the raucous call of wild geese and bustards which, hurrying to flee the Autumn, passed low in the wind.

The next morning Cavelier suggested to the two missionaries and to Jolliet that they cross the lake and start exploring the regions to the south.

"They are uninhabited, or almost," interrupted Jolliet. "These preacher Fathers would do better, and you too, my young sir, to come with me to the northwest among the Ottawas. They are a good lot of savages, and they need missionaries. You can preach to them properly, sure of winning them for God. For nobody goes there. And as for furs, my young sir, you will do much better business there than in the south."

Father Dollier became interested. He had, in addition to Iroquois, learned Ottawa, which was also an Algonquin language. In the south there was every risk of falling among Indians whose dialects were altogether different. Cavelier pretended to agree.

His decision was reached during the afternoon. Despite his troubles with Father Dollier, he esteemed the two priests who, besides, were his elders. He

complained of suffering from fever and announced his intention of retracing his route. To the astonished Jolliet he declared:

"As far as my fur trade is concerned, I made a bargain with the Oneidas. I shall therefore pass the winter with them."

That very evening, led by Jolliet, the two priests and their paddlers set forth on a little river which was to lead them to the Ottawas. Cavelier remained on the shore with his five canoes and his men.

The following morning he set to work. He would need money. So he decided that Sager should carry out the agreement with the Oneidas in his stead.

Having learned how to make Indian canoes, he dried and bent the red roots of fir trees over the fire. He cut birch bark into squares and sewed them together with the dried moose sinews. In two days he had a canoe, small but well balanced. He loaded it with dried meat and small objects destined to win the friendship of whatever savages he might encounter. Then putting Sager in command of the party, he ordered them to return to the Oneidas and to wait for him there. Sager wept and implored. He did not want to leave his good master alone in hostile country. But he was forced to obey.

Kneeling in the stern of his canoe, on watch for the smoke of an Indian fire, Cavelier followed the southern shore of the lake. On the third night he encountered a young Indian at the mouth of a small inlet. Naked to the waist, painted with the brilliant colors of peace, the Indian was cooking a pike in a bed of embers.

The double feather was stuck in his topknot in the Iroquois manner. The slightly pointed cut of his moccasins were also Iroquois.

He had certainly noticed Cavelier, but he did not turn his head to watch him. Robert paddled his canoe to a shallow beach and landed. Then taking from its protective case of elk skin a large cape of scarlet cloth laced with gold, the brilliance of which always impressed the savages, he put it on and with an air of assurance walked over and sat down opposite the young Iroquois. After several minutes of silence, he offered the peace pipe; the other accepted it.

They smoked in silence, according to the ritual. The young Indian examined the newcomer slowly. For his part, Cavelier was curious to know why this youth happened to be all alone in the woods. Raw-boned, cross-

eyed, he appeared to have encountered hardships. After they had both eaten, Robert succeeded in making him talk.

The young man came from the south. He had accompanied a missionary, a Black Robe. He had left the Black Robe among the Eries. He was returning now by slow stages. The voyage had been tiring. There were chains of hills that ran obliquely (his hand indicated a southwesterly direction). Consequently access to the south was somewhat difficult. Portages were frequent. There were portage paths which crossed the hills and joined one valley to another. The ascent was hard, the descent abrupt.

"But one moon from here," he added, "is a beautiful wide valley and a beautiful river."

Cavelier questioned him further. Where did it flow? Into a lake? Or did it flow into the Great Salt Lake?

Proud to display his learning, squinting at the fire into which he threw little twigs, the young Indian declared that the river flowed into another and even larger river, and that this latter (he named it: the Mississippi) flowed into the Great Salt Lake, at the place where the waters are always warm. So an old man of the Eries, from whom he had received hospitality, had told him. His two eyes stared at the tip of his nose. There was a short silence and then a chuckle.

"Ugh! The old one has a pretty daughter."

"Perhaps my young brother would like to see her again?" asked Cavelier.

"Ugh! The Wolf (such was the name he gave himself, and he slapped his skinny chest proudly), the Wolf feels himself pulled by two strings. One pulls from the north, and a whole Iroquois village is tugging. The other pulls from the south, and only a young girl is tugging. Ugh! She pulls hard."

"So my young brother the Wolf loiters along the way to eat fish from the lake of the Eries, not knowing whether he will return to his own people or if he will retrace his steps. . . . My young brother bears a fine name: the Wolf. It is the name of a warrior. No doubt the young Wolf is the son of a powerful chief. One day he will himself be a chief. The young daughter of the Eries could not help noticing all that, and perhaps she regrets the departure of the young Wolf."

"Ugh! The wolves run through the woods, they come and go, they go away and they return."

“Undoubtedly my young brother has told the young daughter of the Eries of his love?”

“The Wolf has often thrown twigs of wood into the lap of the young girl, and she has thrown others back to him.”

Cavelier smiled. Even though he was not interested in women, he had not failed to notice the courting of lovers in the Indian villages. And it was exactly as the Wolf described.

“The wolves know how to find their way through the forests,” he replied with a smile. “My young brother has at his side a friend who wishes to see the great river. Will the Wolf act as his guide? Perhaps he may find in my canoe enough beads to be a dowry worthy of the daughter of the Eries.”

The young Iroquois scrutinized him with all the fire of his cross-eyes. He was silent for an instant. “The Wolf will guide his white brother,” he answered, finally.

It was a long and difficult voyage. They were forced to ascend treacherous little rivers with shallow but swift currents, no longer by paddling, but with a pole. Often the current was too swift, and the two travelers, quitting the canoe, wading up to their waists in the icy water, laboriously pushed their craft. There were also portages over rugged hills that lasted as long as two days. Then they entered swampy marshes. Flies and mosquitoes tortured them. In the evening even the smoke of their fire failed to protect them. Cavelier’s eyes were swollen. Trying to keep them open was torture. He was so racked by fever that he believed himself affected by some poisonous herb.

There were moments when his legs refused to carry him further. The landscape appeared suddenly to recede, then to disappear. The trees vacillated. As tired as he, but equally obstinate and determined, the young Indian bore in silence the sufferings of that atrocious journey. Snow started to fall, and for several days they were obliged to seek shelter in a sufficiently thick wood, and to keep a fire burning. Happily the country was rich in venison. Despite his exhaustion, Cavelier profited by these few days to lay in a supply of meat. Hunting served to distract his thoughts from his fatigue. He liked to follow the wandering tracks in the snow, slowly, noiselessly, until the cloven hoof marks commenced to describe circles and figure eights, when it was necessary to abandon the trail, get to windward and advance step by step, searching for the bushes in whose shelter the beast was lying. A

sudden flash of fawn and white . . . it was the moment to fire the musket, which did not always reach its mark.

Several days of thaw enabled them at length to cross the marshes. On a morning shrouded in old rose and silver mist, they entered a wide valley covered with tall blue grass. At their feet a wide river flowed evenly and sluggishly toward the southwest.

Alone in his canoe Cavelier let himself drift. His young companion had left him, richer by several handsful of beads, richer still in the hope of a prompt marriage with the daughter of the Eries, whose villages were well up stream from the spot at which they had reached the river.

Days passed. Cavelier was surprised to find the country so deserted. He did not know that during the winter season the riverside tribes buried themselves in the woods, there to live and hunt under shelter from the winds.

His supplies exhausted, he discovered that his munitions too were nearing an end. He was forced to abandon his canoe and return to the north afoot, living on roots which he dug from under the snow or a rare piece of winter-thinned game.

When he reached the hills to the south of Lake Erie he was again forced to take shelter in the woods for several days in order to regain his strength. It was bitterly cold and snowing heavily. He was obliged to make snow shoes, as he had been taught by his old friend Big Bear. How far away those days were! What had become of all the others? He was astonished to find himself caring so little about the way in which Sager might have accomplished his mission among the Oneidas. Doubtless the faithful servant was still there. But would Cavelier have the strength to rejoin him?

CHAPTER FIVE

In Quebec, in the antechamber of Monsieur de Frontenac, Governor of New France, Cavelier jostled with other applicants for an audience. There were several scouts still dressed in the garments copied from the Indian clothing of tanned moose skin, ornamented with fringes and embroideries. Worn and soiled, their clothing exhaled that acrid odor of the smoke with which they had been tanned. Cavelier compared himself with these men. Had he acted wisely or not in exchanging his usual clothes for a velvet garment and a coat of red cloth with gold lacings? He was suddenly embarrassed by the sword hanging at his side. And also nervous. The antechamber depressed him, and he longed for the fresh scent of the woods after rain and his habitual companions. How would the Comte de Frontenac receive him? Certainly the reply to his request for an audience had been cordial. . . . An attendant called his name twice before he emerged from his revery.

He was plunging back into it again, attempting to decide in advance whether or not Monsieur de Frontenac would receive his plans favorably, when a door opened. He heard his name called: “Monsieur Cavelier.”

He quickly pressed his way through the waiting group. One of the men turned with ill grace. His yellow thin face oozed envy. Slightly impatient, the voice repeated, “Monsieur Cavelier.”

“I am Monsieur Cavelier.”

He found himself face to face with a very young man, too elegant for Quebec. A young dandy, he thought. Velvet, lace, silk, gold braid—who might he be? But already the young man, with great courtesy, was addressing him:

“Monsieur Cavelier, I have the pleasure of introducing myself to you. I am the Chevalier de Barrois. Monseigneur le Comte de Frontenac has done me the great honor of appointing me his secretary. I have received from him an order to have you wait in my office” (he lowered his voice) “until he rids himself of several tiresome people. So if you will please follow me and take a seat—this one is comfortable. . . .”

Frail and slender, with adolescent vivacity, the Chevalier de Barrois pushed forward a chair whose covering was worn, but whose upholstery was

excellent. A finger to his temple, the secretary sat down at his desk and crossed his legs.

"Whence comes the honor of this privilege?" Cavelier wondered, aloud. Monsieur de Barrois adjusted his cuffs, straightened a rebellious curl, and smiled.

"Monsieur de Frontenac did not tell me. He asked me to receive you and to make you comfortable until he is free. I shall not, however, conceal from you the fact that Monsieur de Lahontan has mentioned you in very eulogistic terms."

"Monsieur de Lahontan?" exclaimed Cavelier, "I scarcely know him. I have met him once or twice in Montreal, and he came one day to visit my colony, La Chine. We spoke of nothing of particular interest, so far as I can remember."

"Monsieur de Lahontan requires little. Monsieur de Frontenac considers him to be an excellent judge of human nature."

"I do not dispute that, but . . ."

Cavelier stopped short. Monsieur de Barrois winked an eye and smiled:

"These walls have no ears, Monsieur Cavelier, I give you my word. Besides, my profession of secretary has quickly taught me the virtue of discretion. You may speak freely."

"I was going to say, Monsieur, that in Montreal Monsieur de Lahontan has not escaped criticism."

"He is a wee bit of a libertine, I agree." Monsieur de Barrois waved a negligent hand as if to mark the slight importance to him of such an accusation. "But he is so clever! That is why Monsieur de Frontenac gladly shields him from the thundering of the clergy. He comes here with his latest ideas, speaks openly, with that grimace which you know . . . you recall that twitch of the eye and the lip, which gives him a constant air of sarcasm? . . . and brings us the most diverting news. He considers you an example of masculine energy. Speaking of Monsieur de Lahontan, have you heard his latest mishap?"

"No, Monsieur," Cavelier replied politely.

"Perhaps you know that Monsieur de Lahontan has a very distinguished mind. He knows Greek like Dacier—a trifle less if you will—and Latin like a dean of classics. He has among his possessions many curious volumes, but which I am unable to read—I confess my ignorance, humbly. We de Barrois

are of the sword. But I beg your pardon, Monsieur Cavelier, perhaps you know Latin?"

"A little, Monsieur." Then added somewhat dryly, "It is true that I am not of the gentry."

Monsieur de Barrois excused himself gracefully:

"I had no intention of offending you, Monsieur Cavelier. His Majesty honors real merit all too generously for me to doubt that at the first opportunity, Monsieur d'Hozier will be commanded to inscribe your blazon in the Golden Book. But let me tell you the story about Monsieur de Lahontan.

"Among these volumes there is, or rather there was, a work of Petronius, the *Satyricon*, I believe, of which he was very proud. However, it appears that it is simply too shocking. . . . That book, which he called his 'breviary,' was illustrated with licentious plates. He showed them to me, and while it is true that they are curious, they are really unwholesome.

"One day he was sitting on a bench in the park of Montreal when two ecclesiastics passed by. They stopped and asked to see what he was reading. One of them took the book, opened it, and turned scarlet. He thereupon tore it up and threw the pieces to the wind before Monsieur de Lahontan could stop him. But the harm was done. Monsieur de Lahontan laughs about it now—wryly, it is true. He has a great deal of *sang-froid*. But I imagine he must have wanted to run his sword through the censor! What do you think, Monsieur Cavelier?"

Somewhat coldly, Cavelier replied evasively:

"It is difficult for me to judge, as I have little knowledge of books. I fear, Monsieur, that my tastes lie elsewhere."

Once more Monsieur de Barrois straightened his rebellious curl. His delicate hand flipped a ruffle of lace.

"It is indeed true, Monsieur Cavelier," he replied, "that the loss of a book cannot be considered of very great importance. It appears, however, that Monsieur de Lahontan thought otherwise. His annoyance amused Monsieur de Frontenac, who nevertheless sympathized with him, and I received an order to write to France for the purpose of finding out whether the library could replace the volume. But let us end the story there. . . . I am told that you have traveled extensively, Monsieur. . . ."

Cavelier was about to reply, when there was an imperious knock at the door. De Barrois sprang from his chair, holding his peruke in place with his hands. He disappeared. A moment later he returned, flushed: “Monsieur Cavelier, Monsieur le Gouverneur awaits you.”

Thin and delicate, he withdrew to allow the stalwart Norman to pass.

Monsieur de Frontenac, dressed simply in black velvet, was seated in an ornately gilded room consulting a map. He raised a fine and somewhat haughty face and with a gesture beckoned Cavelier to approach. Left standing for a moment, Robert launched into a confusion of words:

“Monseigneur, I—I have the honor of thanking Monseigneur, for having graciously—having—having accorded me an audience.”

“Let us stop there. Monsieur Cavelier, I am here by the order of His Majesty to act by him and for him. How could I do so if I do not keep myself informed? Now I have been told—it was Monsieur de Lahontan who told me, and others as well—that you are a great traveler. Monsieur de Lahontan likes you for that reason—others do not. Perhaps your voyages have been profitable enough to incur jealousy. . . . That, however, does not concern me, particularly since, as you know, trading is strictly regulated.”

“Monseigneur. . . .”

Monsieur de Frontenac silenced the nascent question with a wave of his hand. Then the better to indicate the nature of the audience, he threw himself back in his chair, his shoulders sagging slightly.

“Monsieur Cavelier, will you be seated?”

There was a pause. Cavelier waited to be questioned.

“Let us see—what are your plans?”

That was the very question on which Cavelier wished to interview the Governor. At the moment, however, he felt his face flush with timidity. The reserved but kindly attitude did not reassure him. He made an effort to control himself, grateful to the Count for not inflicting upon him the humiliation of encouragement. To his great surprise he found that with the very first words he had sufficiently mastered his emotions, and his voice became increasingly steady.

“My voyages, Monseigneur, and my association with Indians who have taught me many of the secrets of this new world, have led me to believe that south of the Great Lakes is a great river which flows directly to the sea. I have read, as everyone has, of Hernando de Soto who discovered a great

river in the south. If I am correct in my deductions, the two rivers are one and the same, or at least the one of which I speak is a branch of the other. It appears, therefore, easy to join Canada and the Gulf of Mexico by a water route. Monseigneur will agree with me that it is in the interest of France to investigate the possibility of this water route, and to take possession of all the intervening country in the name of His Majesty."

"I do agree with you, Monsieur Cavelier. But only His Majesty or at any rate Monsieur Colbert can give you the necessary authorization. You are aware, I suppose, that my authority is limited."

"But Monseigneur! I am merely asking permission to form an expedition of which I myself intend to pay all the expense."

"You are very rich, Monsieur Cavelier?"

"Without being rich, Monsieur, I am comfortably well off. My colony of La Chine gives some returns. And it is true that during my travels I have traded in furs with success. With your authorization I would gladly employ what money I have in financing the expedition I have planned."

Frontenac inclined his head. Playing with a ring which he had taken from his finger, he studied Cavelier with a strangely meditative air, an air which compelled silence. It was he who broke the silence.

"Monsieur Cavelier, you seem honest. You are a Norman, I believe. The people of your country are noted for their ability to evade embarrassing questions. Nevertheless, I should like to know what profit you expect to gain from this voyage?"

"Why, none at all, Monseigneur. It would be more profitable for me to continue my present trade in furs, from which I could become rich without any risk."

"They tell me that you are on friendly terms with the Iroquois."

"It is true, Monseigneur, that I have friends among them. They give their furs to me more readily than to any other trader."

"And your project is entirely disinterested?"

"If necessary, Monseigneur. I had counted on asking for the grant of a reasonable concession of land to cover my expenses and my risks. But if that would be an obstacle to the authorization I am soliciting, I would perform the voyage, with Monseigneur's permission, expecting no recompense whatsoever. In that case I should find my reward in the glory of having given to France her greatest possession."

“And your imagination, I wager, has already found a name for the new colony?”

“Monseigneur, I shall call it Louisiana!”

“I approve the name,” replied Frontenac with a smile. “I might find it flattering, too, for I also am named Louis, but I am not vain. I am pleased that the name of His Majesty should lead on the future exploration. Monsieur Cavelier, you are continuing a splendid enterprise. You doubtless know that after Jacques Cartier, Verrazzano took possession, in the name of King François First, of all that stretch of land which is today inhabited by the English and the Dutch. Our wars of religion turned our attention from a profitable colony. Monsieur Colbert, who really knows many things, showed me a memorandum of Michel Hurault, chancellor of Navarre, in which it is noted that gold from the Indies, which is the backbone of Spain, was more disastrous for us than steel. For it is indeed true that gold prolonged civil war among us. . . . Are you a believer in the Spanish method, Monsieur Cavelier?”

“I do not understand, Monseigneur.”

“I mean, are you planning to pass through Louisiana like an exterminating angel?”

Leaning forward, Frontenac was intently studying the aquiline face before him. Cavelier seemed to interest him greatly.

“Certainly not,” replied Robert. “Monseigneur wished me to know what Michel Hurault said, whom I know to have been the friend of Champlain and Lescarbot. Will Monseigneur permit me to recall that Lescarbot justly opposed certain individuals who wanted to despoil the savages? He said somewhere that the Indians should enjoy the same civil liberties as the French.”

“What an astonishing man,” thought Frontenac. “An energetic but kindly face.” Aloud, he replied, “Yes, but this same Lescarbot said—‘We are asked if there are treasures, if there are gold or silver mines? The richest mines are those of grain and cattle. Who has them has money!’ Now, Monsieur Cavelier, how do you reconcile a respect for the rights of the savages with cultivation of the soil? You know how hostile the Indians are to it.”

“But Monseigneur, can’t the two races live side by side? It is no more difficult to buy lands than furs from the savages.”

“Nevertheless, they are hostile to colonization.”

“That is true, Monseigneur. But from information I have gathered, the southern tribes might be more amenable to the idea. In any case it will cost little to find out, since it is I who will bear the expense.”

“Of which I shall reimburse you in so far as I am able. In the meantime, Monsieur Cavelier, the King disposes! But it is the privilege of the Governor to propose. Subject to the approval of His Majesty, would it displease you if I were to have the name of ‘de la Salle,’ which belongs to your family, inscribed in the nobiliary?”

“What should I do with a title, Monseigneur?”

“Do not refuse, Monsieur Cavelier, or I shall believe that you are disdainful of the nobility to which I belong. It is, however, understood that only letters patent, sealed by His Majesty, will give you the right of inscription in the Golden Book. But His Majesty and Monsieur Colbert gladly recompense the good servants of the Kingdom. Only an ephemeral power may permit himself ingratitude.”

“I accept, Monseigneur,” replied Cavelier politely. But he thought, “So that is it. It is not fitting that a plebeian, the son of a mercer, should make his name illustrious!”

Monsieur de Frontenac prolonged the conversation regardless of the hour. Since his decision to ennoble Cavelier, his attitude had changed. He now permitted himself a certain degree of familiarity without, however, ceasing to maintain his reserve.

“Monsieur de la Salle,” he said, “I spoke a while ago of those who envy you. But first of all tell me if you are Jesuit or Franciscan—I mean of which faction are you? I have been told that you passed your novitiate among the Fathers of St. Ignatius.”

“It is true, Monseigneur. But to tell the truth, I am about to make a Norman response—” He smiled. “I am Sulpician.”

Monsieur de Frontenac appreciated the sarcasm. “Of course—Monsieur l’Abbé Cavelier is your brother. Naturally you are subject to the influence of the Abbé Ollier’s disciples. . . . But your response is less Norman than you think. The gentlemen of St. Sulpice are more friendly with the Franciscans than with the Jesuits.”

“And I also, Monseigneur.”

“So much the better. Do not take me for a libertine. But Monsieur l’Intendant Talon and I are regarded somewhat askance by the Jesuits. They have not forgiven me for having said that ‘the good fathers are more occupied with the conversion of beavers into fur than with the conversion of Indians into good Christians.’ ”

“It is true, Monseigneur, that they trade in furs, but so do the Franciscans.”

“Naturally, and both of them are right. What I said of the Jesuits applies also to the Franciscans. I do not blame either of them. They both seek to enrich their Orders, which is understandable. But Monsieur de la Salle, I am the mandatory of His Majesty here, and as such I treat religion as a spiritual force. Do I go to mass? Do I go to confession? In such matters I am a subject. But, in the name of His Majesty, in questions of temporal welfare, I am master. I am therefore obliged to be somewhat of a Gallician.”

He rose and strode up and down the room. “Oh, Monsieur de la Salle—do not rise, I beg you—these Jesuit gentlemen are seeking to found a dominion here similar to the one in Paraguay. But I shall maintain control. . . . Do you know that Monsieur Patoulet, the Intendant of Montreal, is of the Jesuit faction? How much of their profits do they give him annually?”

Cavelier listened attentively. He suddenly recalled certain conferences among the Iroquois which he had attended. The restlessness of the Count—these apparently random remarks which all revolved around the same subject. . . . Monsieur de Frontenac, his face a trifle too red, wiped his forehead with a handkerchief of fine batiste and lace. He crossed the room and placed his two hands familiarly on Robert’s shoulders.

“But, my dear sir, that is just where the shoe pinches. These Jesuits have complained of you to Monsieur Patoulet. Monsieur Patoulet has brought me their complaints. . . . You are aware that trading in furs has been restricted? Do you pay a license? It seems you do not. . . .”

“But, Monseigneur, I have never been told—I shall go to Monsieur Patoulet and . . .”

“Above all, don’t do that. We can arrange matters between ourselves, Monsieur de la Salle. . . . It is true that His Majesty has given orders for the regulation of the traffic and the imposition of severe penalties for illicit trading. The Jesuits have said that the *coureurs des bois* debauch young Indians and impede the spread of Christianity. I have pointed out to His

Majesty that the savages, badly paid by both Jesuits and Franciscans, who go shares in their profits, are taking the furs to the English and that we are losing the revenue. His Majesty listened to my reasons and willingly granted me the power of giving the authorizations necessary. Monsieur Perrot, Governor of Montreal, is furious, and so is Monsieur Duchesneau, who complains of the conduct of women deserted by the *courier de bois*. But I am not governing saints. Do you know, Monsieur de la Salle, that the yearly license of a canoe for the transport of furs, with three men, costs two hundred and fifty livres? . . .”

He removed his hands from Cavelier’s shoulders and bit his lips. He was now pale and his hands trembled. There was a silence. Then he burst forth.

“Damn it all, man! I tell you that to do honor to His Majesty, I follow an ignoble profession. A dog would not want it, and with reason. Do you know what His Majesty pays me to represent him here? I will tell you to the thousand . . . the thousand. Just that. His Majesty pays me a yearly salary of one thousand ecus—and I spend fifteen thousand a month. My chateau, my lands, are mortgaged. Monsieur Colbert accorded me that permission. Before anyone else I would blush, I, Louis de Frontenac, to speak thus. One thousand ecus! Monsieur de Tracy was content with them, the miser! He was rich and stingy. Do you know the saying? No? You do not know the Loire country from which the Tracys come? Beautiful country. The vintners say with a voice as dry as their wines:

‘The treasures of Tracy:
Small joy and great worries.’

A thousand ecus a year, Monsieur. Think of it! Could I tell that to anyone else? But you understand. Who is dishonored, myself or—or—or the Royal treasury? A thousand ecus a year for giving a quarter of the world to France. Monsieur de la Salle, I want to be frank with you—you are a gentleman. I give you full privilege to construct forts. When you have found a suitable site, write to me. You will receive the license. But I want to be your partner —how much will you give me as my share?”

CHAPTER SIX

All the captive riches of the soil lifted up their chorus to Cavelier. In the evenings he heard their voices: the Forest longed to deliver its wood, log by log; the River would carry on its singing waters the noisy rafts of felled logs; the Mountain had its minerals, the Marsh its furs of marten, beaver and otter; the Lakes would give perch, bass, trout and pike; the Cataracts would lend themselves to the yoke; and those great plains to the south, along the Ohio or the mysterious Colbert, would ripen Indian corn and nourish, instead of wild bison, herds of red cattle and strong Norman horses. This confusion of voices, this lyricism of captive riches intoxicated Cavelier de la Salle who, in hearkening to them, became impatient of the present.

That first voyage of 1669, to the Ohio! The difficult return alone in mid-winter. Trudging wearily on, stumbling, disheartened, and ever close to his lips the vow—"I shall never come back." But the vow had remained unspoken; he had not put the irreparable between himself and this unknown world.

And now, laughing, defiant, this second voyage in 1671 by a northwesterly route over the Great Lakes.

In that far away country Winter is colder than one suspects. Two pairs of moccasins on his feet, leather hose such as the Indians wore, and, at the halting places, near the little fire built twig by twig as the Indians had taught him, a beaver robe was draped over his fringed coat. Sometimes the wind drove across Lake Superior a fine and stinging powder of snow. . . .

There were those great polished spaces, incapable of reflecting the sky, but which were changed by the setting sun, the dying sun, into pools of blood. The Lake crackled as it froze. Water danced between the dark green walls of the crevices. Fish rose to the surface, and were harpooned by laughing Indians. . . . Then there came the sharp noise of a frost-riven aspen in the forest. . . . Again there were the luminous nights. The brilliant embroidery of the northern lights danced for the dazzled eyes of the stars. . . . In the evenings there came the barking of dogs. The Chippaway Indians returned, their sleds laden with furs. Cavelier gave the chief's wife two handsful of beads, a yard of cotton cloth and a striped blanket. . . . They ate beaver tails and grilled corn. The night that furs were exchanged for

trinkets, the entire Indian village danced. . . . The dogs fought over the last bone. . . .

Then came Spring and all the buds burst open at once—their explosion powdered the fawn colored branches with delicate green. The canoes of La Salle's transport descended toward Montreal. Smiling behind his counter, Le Bert, the merchant with gray curls and kindly words, gave the very best prices for their cargo of furs. . . .

But he, Robert, watched his fortune and his companions depart over the foaming waves. Gravely determined, he pushed his canoe onward despite Spring winds, his shoulders and arms lame from paddling. . . . And at last, beached on the Illinois shore, he saw Indian canoes . . . and the Chicago River from which the frightened ducks fled before the skiff.

A portage—Nadouessioux warriors, naked, but dragging behind them the glory of their long eagle feathers, smoked the proffered pipe in silence. One of them arose from the bison skin on which he was seated and waved his hand. "The Mississippi River? This is it. It flows, they say, into a warm sea. But it is guarded by spirits."

Those enormous rocks, streaked with ochre, streaked with black, streaked with green. Enormous bearded fish, with cat-like heads. Excitement, fever. The summer belonged to mosquitoes. Heads low, thick lipped, bearded, humpbacked, whole herds of bison charged into the river bed to escape biting insects. The mouth of the Ohio River (already seen). Must the route be retraced? Yes, cried the fanfares of Autumn.

"Then," La Salle recounted, "I returned afoot, as I had done two years before. I cut my bullets in two, in order to save powder by firing half charges. I ate roots and lichen. I begged, I begged corn from some haughty Eries. Then at last the Iroquois huts. . . . They were just torturing a Huron prisoner. In reply to my supplications I received the unanswerable reply—'If our race had not hardened its heart, it would long ago have been obliterated from the number of the living. A cruelly tortured skeleton saves ten murderous wars!' "

Was it possible that without a cry, a man could be so atrociously mangled as was that unfortunate being? Afterwards they ate him. . . .

Yes! To have emerged from that terrible voyage as if it had been a horrible but magnificent dream with, nevertheless, a desire to be caught up in it again! And how to be reliving every day, those months of misery and delirium. . . .

In his heart he was jealous of Father Marquette, he was jealous of Jolliet. Marquette had obtained from Frontenac a mission to explore the upper Mississippi. At that very moment the Jesuit with the compelling eyes of an apostle must be evangelizing the Nadouessioux, who live naked in summer. And Jolliet must be buying—on shares with the Intendant Perrot—silky bison robes.

He was with Frontenac; at his first words the Governor became animated.

"Ah! Monsieur de la Salle! Not since the late Monsieur de Montmagny has anyone known how to deal with the Indians. Monsieur de Tracy despised them greatly, and Monsieur de Courcelles ignored them. You have an ambition, you say, to reign over the Cataraqui country? And Lake Ontario? Let us go together to visit this country where, you have assured me, the trading will be good. I should like you to assemble all the Iroquois sachems. I shall join you with a large fleet, in the bay of Quinti which your finger is covering on the map. Or even better, at the mouth of the Cataraqui River itself. Do you think that the Ontario might be called Lake Frontenac? In any case, I shall build you a fort there, so that our interests will be protected."

When La Salle was on the way to Onondaga, the Iroquois capital, Frontenac announced his project. Immediately he was besieged by his courtiers. Some of them protested against the folly of the plan. At first he laughed, then became annoyed. He was so angry that he broke a China vase. Everyone was silent. Then the others had their turn.

"Shall I go with you, Monseigneur?"

"I can draw maps, and you will need an engineer."

"I flatter myself that I can speak a little Iroquois."

"Monseigneur knows that I would give my life for him."

Too many of them came.

He wanted his equipage to be magnificent. Quebec, Montreal and Three Rivers promised their best men. Two great barks were painted, one scarlet for the officers, the other in azure with the gold griffon of the Frontenacs. One hundred and twenty canoes followed.

On the third of June they put off from the rock of Quebec. By slow stages they ascended the river, and stopped in passing to receive the homage of the garrisons. After Three Rivers, Montreal. . . . The low and long façade of St. Paul Street, the massive Sulpician seminary and, as an act of faith, the fretted church spire. . . . On shore the variegated crowd. . . . Governor Perrot. The surpliced clergy bestowing blessings. The garrison. Ladies. A few savages. Acclamations. Salute of musketry. *Te Deum*. A hurried messenger came with word that the Dutch fleet was coming up the St. Lawrence to take Quebec. Frontenac scented false news. . . . Gaily—"Please return to them. Tell them that I am at Cataraqui, on Lake Ontario, and their very humble servant."

Then the river and its rapids unfolded new splendors. The forest, bending beneath the weight of its branches, wove inverted landscapes in the water, broken by the foam of rapids. Portages were made to the tumult of cataracts. If Monsieur Raudin, the engineer, complained, the Governor made witticisms. . . . A flash of sun. . . . They reached the Thousand Islands, blue against blue. In the stagnant waters the whiteness of aquatic flowers broke the shadows with derisory brilliance. . . . Then, like a shield of blue steel, shone the dazzling Ontario, resonant with light. . . .

Peering through his telescope, Frontenac perceived on the beach, behind the last white foam of the breakers, the assembled Iroquois. Drawn up on the sand, their canoes—hundreds of them—were turning blue in the sun. Amidst the dark moving mass a spot of red: La Salle! The scarlet cape waved. The canons of Frontenac fired a blank shot in reply.

Immediately (the procession had been prepared in advance), sixty canoes of Frontenac's party formed in single file. The paddling was marvelously cadenced. The Royal standard and that of Frontenac—a golden griffon on azure—floated from the prows. Behind the first canoes, the two large barks took up their places of honor, to the measured rhythm of the oars. To the left was a line of ten canoes from Three Rivers. To the right were ten canoes of the Indian escort. Behind, in compact order, were the remaining forty canoes.

Slowly a great Iroquois fleet left the shore. Six sachems and Cavelier de la Salle brought to Frontenac the pipe of peace. . . .

A military camp was formed close to the village erected by the Indians. Night fell. The call of the sentinel's "All's well" re-echoed strangely from the edge of the forest.

At dawn the following day (June thirteenth) the drums sounded reveille. In their fine uniforms, muskets on shoulders, the veterans of Carignan formed a double line. Cavelier, in his mantle of scarlet and gold, sword at his side, went to seek the principal Iroquois chiefs. Big Bear had availed himself of their old friendship to take part in the deputation, which counted only sixty members. In the aisle formed by the soldiers at attention, the Indians advanced gravely, silently, slightly astonished.

They drew near. A flap of Frontenac's tent was turned back and he appeared, seated on a gilded chair. Dressed in their blue uniforms with amaranthine facings, his officers surrounded him, standing with their hands on their sword hilts.

The sails of the boats, forming an immense carpet, were carefully stretched on the ground which had been cleared and leveled during the night. With a gesture Frontenac invited the savages to sit down upon it. Tobacco was brought them. He himself lighted the peace pipe which had been presented to him the day before.

Minutes passed—the eyes of the Iroquois turned towards the ancient Garakoitie, the dean of the sachems, so old that no one could recall ever having seen him young. His face was lined with deep wrinkles; he seemed appallingly gaunt when, with an oratorical gesture, he let fall from his bare shoulders the dark beaver robe which, until then, had covered him. With toothless gums he mumbled:

"Onontio[1] has invited the sachems of the Iroquois to smoke with him the calumet of peace. Let us all listen to Onontio."

Trembling, slobbering, the old man's too feeble legs gave way. He sat down. Frontenac arose and at an imperceptible sign La Salle came proudly to his right hand and stood beside and slightly behind him.

For a moment the Governor permitted the Iroquois to admire his appearance. The long curls of his peruke, his mantle of blue velvet faced with ermine and richly embroidered with gold, his cerise costume, crossed by the wide ribbon of his orders, gave him a regal bearing. He spoke slowly in French and Cavelier de la Salle translated his words for the Indians in a haughty voice.

"Children, Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, Senecas! Your Father is happy to see you smoking in peace at his fireside and listening to his words. He thanks his children for having obeyed his paternal commands.

His heart holds for them only words of peace and tenderness. He has not come to this place with plans for war. The few warriors he has brought" (with a sweeping gesture he indicated his troops) "are here solely to assure you that your Father would be able to aid his children in vanquishing their enemies. But whenever he comes to see his sons, the Iroquois, Peace walks by his side. I have spoken."

And underneath his breath to a servant: "Give to each of those boobies six twists of tobacco, a bad musket, and prunes and raisins for their wives. And you, Raudin, you are to do something to astonish them."

The engineer nodded and left the tent. At his order several groups of workmen, commanded by subalterns, stripped to the waist. Axes and shovels were distributed among them; and at once they set to work to build a fortress. To the surprise of the Indians, a clearing was opened in the forest.

Cavelier escorted the Iroquois chiefs back to their camp. A few minutes later Frontenac appeared, followed by his servants carrying bread and candy to be distributed among the children.

As twilight fell, six violinists, who had likewise followed Frontenac, opened the ball. The pleasantly astonished squaws let themselves be guided in the dance by the veterans of Carignan.

In five days Fort Frontenac was finished. Just before embarking, the Governor assembled anew his "children." He exhorted them gently to embrace Christianity. Then, in a martial tone, he continued:

"Children, reflect. The rapids did not prevent your Father from appearing with a considerable force to pay you a paternal and friendly visit. If the day should come when your Father has to chastise his disobedient children, with how great an army could he do it! Remember that he is the arbiter of peace and war. Nevertheless his last words will not be a threat to you. Here in Cataraqui, which henceforth will be called Frontenac, you will find supplies which you may have in exchange for furs. The men in charge will be men of character and honor (he stepped back and, resting his hand on Cavelier's shoulder, pushed him forward) men such as Monsieur de la Salle here before you, to whom will be given shortly the duty of representing me in this fort. You will obey him, my children."

And in Cavelier's ear: "Monsieur de la Salle, I think the comedy is ended. But before establishing yourself here, you must first return with me

to Quebec. I shall leave Raudin with men to finish the organization of the Fort."

Cavelier's canoe danced amid whirlpools and rapids. He reached Montreal before Frontenac.

Smiling behind his counter, Le Bert ceased measuring the red cloth he was selling to an Indian, and extended his square fingered hand. The scissors ground through the cloth.

Corpulent, authoritative, austere in her black dress trimmed with white lace, Madame Bourdon entered. Madame Le Bert hurried obsequiously to meet the devout lady. The pale hands of the latter declined the offer of help, a sigh rose in her flabby throat. She sank breathless into a chair which happened quite conveniently to be at hand, and gasped—"It is incredible! Monsieur le Comte de Frontenac! A man of the best society! Have you heard the news?"

No one had heard. They crowded about the lady, who was recovering her breath. Le Bert, out of the corner of his eye, watched an Indian who was more interested in merchandise than in the story.

"This Monsieur de Frontenac, as I say—I could give you a thousand guesses—but you would never guess. He has quarreled with our good Monsieur Perrot, the Intendant. He quarreled with him, he had him arrested, yes, arrested! Monsieur Perrot is in prison!"

"Ah!" cried Madame Le Bert. "And what have those gentlemen priests of Saint Sulpice to say?"

"They are indignant, naturally. His Majesty gave them the right to appoint the Intendant of Ville Marie, and now Monsieur le Comte de Frontenac wrongfully assumes the right of depriving him of his Intendancy —and arrests him."

Le Bert's deep voice interrupted—"They are indignant? But Madame, they are wrong. Monseigneur has rendered them a great service. This Monsieur Perrot, good Christian though he may be, reduced them to beggary."

The lady would not listen. She dissolved into mournful silence. But a shabby gentleman leaning on the counter, went still farther. "This Monsieur de Frontenac," he said, "is always blundering. His Majesty would have been

better inspired in sending over here Monsieur le Comte de Grignan. He is a relative of mine, and a most worthy man. But this Fron——"

He did not finish. Hand on his sword hilt, Cavelier stepped forward.

"If there is anyone here," he thundered, "who dare blame Monseigneur, he will find out whom he has to deal with. I am Monsieur Cavelier de la Salle."

A heavy silence fell. Madame Bourdon recovered a marvelous agility for a person so overcome as she was. She rose, measured La Salle angrily, and departed. At the door the shabby gentleman offered her his arm.

"My word, Monsieur Cavelier," said Le Bert, "you are absolutely right. I am a merchant and there are things that I cannot say. But the devil take me if Monseigneur has not done well. This Monsieur Perrot is an Egyptian plague —yes, an Egyptian plague." He stopped and in a half tone higher repeated, "An Egyptian plague."

Sunday came. Cavelier attended High Mass celebrated by the Abbé Perrot in the Sulpician church. In the aisle he passed Madame Bourdon. That lady's disagreeably mocking eyes met his.

"What is going to happen now?" he wondered, and the thought at first distracted him from his prayers. He regained his composure just as the sermon commenced.

The Abbé Fénelon mounted the pulpit. Chairs were turned noisily toward the eloquent preacher. Cavelier's eyes again met those of Madame Bourdon. The matron smiled. Ill at ease, La Salle regarded the officiants. The Abbé Fénelon was gracefully arranging the folds of his surplice. The Abbé Perrot avoided the preacher's eye. The Abbé Cavelier, who was assisting, frowned. Robert could not see the expression of the second assistant, the Abbé Faillon, who was hidden by the high shoulders of Father Perrot.

"My dear Brethren. . . ." There was a pause as the Abbé Fénelon glanced defiantly at his congregation. It seemed to La Salle that the defiance was accentuated when the glance fell upon him. The musical voice of the orator swelled:

"I shall speak to you today, my brethren, of the responsibilities to the State of the man who, by his birth and by the choice of his Sovereign, has been invested with certain temporal authorities. If on this humble earth a

King is the very august representative of the Very Highest Sovereign, sole master of the universe, those whose high mission it is to represent him should, in all places and in all circumstances, remember the very spirit of justice and equity which it is their mission to represent in the absence of their prince and in his name. The magistrate invested with temporal authority owes it to himself, first of all, to seek inspiration from our Divine Saviour, Jesus Christ. If in the exercise of his authority he be obliged to chastise severely those who offend against the dignity of the Monarch, he should nevertheless seek in his heart that inexhaustible treasure of forgiveness which has been taught to us by Christ, and not permit his personal feelings to influence his judgment."

La Salle felt his face flushing with anger. To whom but Frontenac might these words be addressed? Thus the Abbé Fénelon was openly siding with Intendant Perrot against the Governor. Phrases insulted him: ". . . take for favorite the flatterer. . . ." The preacher's voice rang out—". . . let him not conceal himself behind the mantle of the Prince in order to bring to unjust fruition his own private ambitions."

This was too much for La Salle. He sprang to his feet.

"What ought I to do?" he thought, his hand on the hilt of his sword. He stood for a moment, undecided. The noise had attracted all eyes. Madame Bourdon was pale. Someone behind him pulled gently at his mantle, which fell from his shoulders and noisily overturned the chair. This increased the commotion. His neighbor, Baron de Lahontan, murmured, "This priest is insolent. You are in the right. But I beg you, be calm."

The Abbé Fénelon, crimson, continued arrogantly. Cavelier cast a despairing glance at the Abbé Perrot, who was watching him, but who merely shrugged his shoulders. He saw the imploring gesture of his brother. Lahontan's hand gently disengaged his from the sword hilt. Calmly the Baron's voice came to him. "No imprudence. Let us leave. It is the best way of protesting."

Without knowing why, Cavelier followed his advice. Once past the porch he turned. Lahontan alone had followed him. Affectionately, his hand on La Salle's shoulders, the Baron scolded him.

"My dear Sir—what were you going to do? You, an exemplary Christian. What a scandal! Our friend Frontenac would have had more trouble to face it. I do not count—I am a libertine put on the index long ago by the good Fathers. But you! Look here—do me the honor of coming to my lodgings.

We shall lunch together, and if you wish, we shall hang this unpleasant orator in effigy. And you shall tell me of your voyages."

Cavelier let himself be led down St. Paul Street. Lahontan, in fine form, continued:

"They are a family of great talkers. Their uncle, the Marquis de Fénelon, is one of the most insupportable phrase spinners in existence. There is also a brother, or rather a half brother, who was chaplain of the dragoneers of Poitou and Saintonge. He is at present director of a ladies' convent in Paris, and his sermons are widely followed. He speaks well, but his eloquence lacks force. Madame de Béthune is favoring him, and I should not be surprised if one day he obtains a rich parish. He has not the quarrelsome temperament of our Fénelon here. But they say he is a better classical scholar. He knows Greek perfectly, which is not the case with his brother."

No doubt echoes of the quarrel reached Frontenac. A kindly letter urged Monsieur de la Salle to take passage on some bark or ship leaving for Quebec. There they would discuss the concession of Fort Frontenac and Lake Ontario (which he would like very much to be called Lake Frontenac). As far as the concession was concerned, Monsieur de Frontenac thought that it could be successfully arranged—despite the difficulties produced by the envious. That sentence made Cavelier reflect. . . .

"Yes, Monsieur de la Salle, I have requested Monsieur de Tilly and Maître Nicolas Dupont to start proceedings against the Abbé Fénelon. I am accustomed not to tolerate impudence, even from the gentlemen of the clergy. The King would certainly not permit it either. As Protectors of the Faith our princes have the right to some respect. Rome knows that! But she ought to teach it to her clergy. Monsieur de la Salle, it would be a pretty state of affairs if the Governor of New France should allow, in his person, the Royal Sovereign to be molested. I represent His Majesty here, I believe, by virtue of letters patent which were conceded to me by him. . . . To return to our affair, it is going well, since I wish it to go well. Our agreement of course remains unchanged. I know you to be a man of honor and of your word. Nevertheless jealous enemies have written to the King. Monsieur l'Intendant Talon himself has been warned against you. It was not difficult for me to reassure him. But even though I owe you an infinite debt for having protested the other day against those intolerable remarks—and a Frontenac never forgets—your zeal has not facilitated my task. I already had

the Jesuits on my back, and now here are the Sulpicians as well. . . . This is what you must do now: I am going to give you letters patent pending the approbation of His Majesty. Armed with these letters you will leave to take possession of Fort Frontenac, which I know His Majesty has been requested to order me to demolish. Would you believe that wickedness could reach such a degree of stupidity? When you have taken possession and put everything in order, you will depart for France. By the same boat I shall send a letter to Monsieur Colbert requesting him to receive you. But I shall conceal nothing from you—I know that many men, either because they are aiming at you directly, or because they are striking at me through you, have formed a cabala against you at Court. You think yourself a man unknown beyond the limits of New France. Do not deceive yourself. You are already well enough known in France to have many enemies. In addition, you have all of mine. You perhaps know who was seeking the post of Governor against me?"

"I must avow my ignorance, Monseigneur. I was in the wilderness at the time."

"That is true." Frontenac played with a glove and appeared to be very much occupied in evoking old memories. "The Count de Grignan was my competitor. In his favor was the fact that he is the son-in-law of a prude—of good family, however—who prides herself on her wit. As a matter of fact this Sévigné is nothing but a scandal monger with a gossipy pen. Still, she has enough friends to wield a certain influence. But they pushed their maliciousness too far. They accused me—but it is better for me not to say."

Nothing in the world would have induced Cavelier to question Frontenac. The latter regarded him for a moment, struck the table with his glove, and cried in a voice that did not ring quite true:

"If I do not tell you, you may imagine horrible things! Monsieur de la Salle, just imagine, those people accused me of being the successful rival of His Majesty for the lovely Athénäis de Montespan. Need I ask you not to believe a word of it?"

But his triumphant smile belied the last sentence. Cavelier did not know what to think. Frontenac stopped an instant, as if to allow his interlocutor the time to reflect upon his glorious conquest. Then half closing his eyes:

"Need I tell you, Monsieur de la Salle, that it was all a bundle of lies? To absolve me of that calumny, His Majesty deigned to accord me the honor I was soliciting.

“In short, Monsieur de la Salle, you have enemies here. Monsieur Perrot never liked you, and will now like you even less. Monsieur Duchesne who, they say, has the ear of Monsieur Colbert, positively detests you. Do not think that your friend Le Bert is less jealous of your good fortune. All these people have friends in France. Monsieur de Grignan and his cabala have gathered together all their tales. That is why you must return to France and see Monsieur Colbert. First of all there are the letters of nobility which I have requested for you. I have had no reply on this subject. There is next the concession of the colony of Frontenac which, to be of value, must be registered under the Royal signature. Last of all, you are going to need funds to execute the terms of the concession. With your letters patent in your pocket, you will no doubt find them more readily in France than here where, I repeat, people are not well disposed toward you. After all, it is only human. . . .”

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[1] Onontio in Iroquois meant Great Mountain and was the name by which the Senecas translated Montmagny, the name of the celebrated Governor. It remained ever after the Indian name for all French Governors of Canada.

CHAPTER SEVEN

This voyage to the Old Country Cavelier de la Salle was to remember as if it had been a dream.

There was, for example, the joy of embarking. In the morning Quebec and its rock drew farther and farther away. Far to the north was the silver ribbon of Montmorency Falls. The Island of Orleans was emerald. Dwarfs in the distance, the colonists waved their hats. Above Grosse Island the surf of the rising tide spread over the rocks. Three cranes watched the waves approach. Ahead the sun melted the metal of the river. Toward evening the two shores had already receded far away and were bathed in a violet haze. . . .

The fog was just where it had been before, off the shores of Newfoundland. The ship jostled the crowding waves. The captain was a fat dumpy man, booted to his hips, dressed in oil-skin, bare headed, bald, his face varnished by sea and brandy. The enamel of his skin was cracked. He hated the passengers, who returned his hatred. . . . Days of dark and oily seas. . . . Days of blue seas, swelling, undulating, breaking at last into lacy showers. . . . One noon the captain put down his sextant. He reported "46°5' longitude, 6° latitude. We shall reach La Rochelle tomorrow. Steer due East."

The water was silvered with minnows. By evening the waves would be beating viciously against the rocks of France. . . .

The jolting coach . . . where was the gentle cradling of the birch canoe? . . . Elbow to elbow with Cavelier in the lurching coach was a grumbling gentleman. At first reserved, he at length began to discuss the lawsuit which was taking him to Blois.

"And you, Monsieur, are you also going to Blois? Is it for litigation?"

"I am coming from New France, and I am going to Paris where I have business with Monsieur Colbert."

"Ah, Monsieur, can it be possible that you come from so far away? You have seen Indians? Is it true that they eat men? So Monsieur comes from America! I have a cousin who is a Jesuit. He is in Paraguay—not far from you—perhaps you have met him?"

“Monsieur, I do not know Paraguay, which must be as far from New France as it is from France itself.”

“Is it possible? Are the Americas so large? It confuses me.”

At Blois, Cavelier could not control himself. Paris? No, Rouen first.

On the sill of the paternal home, before its somber doorway, he thought of the dead father who had reprimanded him so sharply. Two raps of the knocker, just as when he was a child. The clatter of a servant’s shoes shuffling through the hallway. Would it be Agathe, or Catherine? The little peephole was opened . . . inquisitive eyes . . . the lock grated . . . the door was opened defiantly, and old Agathe thrust out her thick lipped and wrinkled face.

“Heavens above! Am I dreaming? If it isn’t Master Robert!” She passed a hand over her bleary eyes. “Is it you in flesh and blood? Surely you are not a ghost. . . . Madame! Madame! It is Master Robert!”

“Oh, my poor child.”

They were all speechless!

Cold and composed, there was the brother-in-law whom he scarcely knew—Creval de Moranger—awkward in his black clothes. He was disturbed by this tall sinewy man, thin and sun tanned, whose presence suddenly filled the entire house. Marie Creval de Moranger, tall, fine, smiling and flushed, re-entered the room. “My brother, here is your nephew. Thank me, for he is your living image. And he has your indomitable character.”

Her husband’s cold face grew cloudy. The child bubbled over with sudden love for his uncle: “. . . and besides I have an old knife that Agathe gave me to go away with you and kill the wicked Indians.”

“Be still, my son, you will tire your uncle.”

“No, let him talk. I love children, and particularly this boy, since he is my sister’s child.”

“Will you stay with us long?”

“Alas, I must go on to Paris, where I have urgent business. But I shall come back. Will you reserve a seat for me in the coach?”

Paris! Along the steep banks—the mass of Notre Dame dissolved in a violet mist. All the vapors of the Seine arose, washing the houses, condensing, falling back into the river, loading it with dissolved color. A gilded coach arrogantly bespattered the pedestrian Cavelier de la Salle. And at last the Arsenal.

Cavelier hunted for the missive given him by Monsieur de Frontenac:

To Madame de Buade
Comtesse de Palluau and de Frontenac
At the Arsenal
Care of M. du Lude
Grand Master of Artillery
By Monsieur C. de La Salle

On the back was the scarlet seal of the Frontenac griffon.

The Arsenal . . . brick and stone. Cavelier stopped an instant. "Some day," he thought, "I shall build your equal in some city of my Louisiana. But larger, higher, and more splendid."

He was stopped by a lackey. Under his servile and at the same time insolent eyes, Robert regretted not having a sound stick. A second lackey accompanied him to the landing. Before the white and gold door of Madame de Frontenac, two other lackeys were conferring.

It was dark in the antechamber. So dark that the oak of a huge buffet gleamed where it was struck by a tiny ray of light. The valet placed the letter on a silver tray. "Whom shall I announce to Madame la Comtesse?"

He left the door open. The light was blinding. Then opening his eyes he beheld a striking portrait. A helmeted Minerva, armed with a lance and a shield on her arm. Beneath it sat the lady herself, less young than the portrait. Another lady stood near her. Her face was concealed by the stiff, motionless figure of the valet. A wave of perfume . . . roses dying in a vase. A peal of laughter.

"My dear" ('God, how ugly and disagreeable is a woman who laughs like that,' thought Cavelier) "the Count has deigned to think of me. I thought him too occupied with his Indian beauties. Poitou, who is the messenger?"

"Madame la Comtesse, it is Monsieur de la Salle."

"La Salle? My dear, he is the man they are all talking about. Monsieur de Frontenac has not changed at all—always careless in his friendships. Did you not see the letter that Monsieur Duchesneau wrote to Monsieur de

Grignan? A farmer, my dear! What are we going to do with him? Receive him here now and ask him about Monsieur de Frontenac's health, or shall we send him a glass of red wine? What do you think about it, d'Outrelaise?"

At this point, as Cavelier might describe it, "I slammed the door. All the lackeys must have thought there was a fire. At the tennis court of the Croix Noire my cheeks were still flaming."

Coldness everywhere! The calumnies of Monsieur Duchesneau, and doubtless others, had done their work. Monsieur de Cadillac sided with the Intendant Perrot. Monsieur de Courcelles was brusque. For twenty consecutive days Monsieur Colbert's lackeys kept him waiting. After two hours in the antechamber he would be told, "Monseigneur will receive no one else today."

But had Monsieur Colbert really received his request for an audience? Would it not have been better to have greased a few palms?

A last letter burned Cavelier's pocket. "But what use would there be? It will be the same everywhere. Are not the most humble Iroquois worth as much as these men? Why should I not be content with my peaceful colony of La Chine? . . . However, let us try."

He read the address: Monsieur Renaudot, Abbé, care of His Highness, Monseigneur le Prince de Conti. From the Abbé de Galinée, Priest of Saint Sulpice.

In an attic cluttered with books and papers, the Abbé, a small, withered man, smelling of musk, but with alert, piercing eyes, pushed forward the better of his two chairs.

"Ah, Monsieur de la Salle, I was in despair. But may I scold you? I knew you were in Paris, and I had hoped eventually to meet you. . . . You will allow me to read what the Abbé de Galinée has written? Hum . . . his letter is emphatic. The worthy priest avows great friendship for you. On Lake Erie, he says, 'Monsieur de la Salle was our saviour. He is a man of great intelligence and fine character.' This is the tenth time he has written me of you. I know all your story, and I have related it to His Supreme Highness. His Highness is holding audience now. Perhaps he will receive you today."

Waving his arm, gesticulating, the quaint little man jostled his chair and the table . . . a goose quill pen fell. "Do not bother about it, please. Besides, it was in great need of sharpening. I shall be back in a moment. . . ." He ran to the door, leaving La Salle giddy.

How did it happen that Father de Galinée had been so friendly? It was true that on two or three occasions Father Dollier had spoken in praise of Robert, despite their differences of opinion during the voyage. How far away that was! The lake had been aglow with sunlight the last day they spent together. . . . Jolliet—had he not just been granted the domain of the Island of Anticosti in return for a voyage—contested by certain people—to the Mississippi?

The Abbé's footsteps resounded on the stairs. Breathless, substituting gestures for words, he motioned to Cavelier to rise and follow him. On the way he explained—"His Highness awaits you . . . do not make him angry . . . very well disposed . . . let me do the talking . . . say yes always."

He pushed Cavelier into the room. An extremely fat man was sitting in an immense upholstered chair with gilded feet. The wainscotting gleamed.

"Monseigneur, here is Monsieur Cavelier de la Salle, of whom I have spoken to Your Highness."

A gruff low voice came from beneath the tangled peruke:

"*Palsambleu!* Monsieur de la Salle, I am glad to see you. You are sowing, they tell me, a wind of discord. Monsieur de Frontenac is a friend of mine, and they tell me you are a friend of his. I shall therefore be glad to protect you from those who wish you ill . . . even though it be against the '*Divines*!' "

The Abbé Renaudot, who seemed to have the privilege of speaking freely, crossed his hands and said: "Monsieur de la Salle is perhaps too recently arrived in Paris to know whom his Highness thus designates."

The Prince's long nose went up, his heavy lips suggested a smile: "Eh! *Palsambleu*, yes! The *Divines*, Monsieur de la Salle, are none other than the Comtesse de Frontenac and her inseparable Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise. Have you not been to see them?"

"I have, Monseigneur."

"You did wrong. That is just like my Frontenac! Through gallantry toward a woman who detests him, he sends his friends into the lion's den. . . . But you must hear all the story, Monsieur de la Salle."

A fluent speaker, the Prince turned a beaming face to his listener. A finger to his lips the Abbé imposed silence, smiling. Conti struck his forehead and began in a booming voice:

“Monsieur de Frontenac fell in love with Anne de la Grange Trianon. Her father, the Baron, was a solemn booby who had been a good and faithful servant to the King. Understand thereby that at the time of the Fronde he fought for us against Mazarin.”

At a signal from the Abbé, Cavelier understood that these words called for a smile, which he gave with a grace that touched the Prince. The voice continued in the same commanding tone:

“I do not know why the Baron took it into his head to oppose the marriage. Of course it was a good match. . . . The Buades are fine gentlemen, and la Grange Trianon does not lack the noblest blood. But the Baron had not counted on the cleverness of my Frontenac, who succeeded in carrying off the lady. The parish of St. Pierre aux Boeufs has the privilege of uniting disobedient children and they were married there. But Monsieur de Frontenac is a somewhat fickle man—it is certainly his greatest weakness. The Countess likewise was wrong in listening to the diatribes of Mademoiselle at a time when His Majesty objected to her love affair with Monsieur de Lauzen. Quarrels in the household! Eventually Frontenac went off to Canada, where he covered himself with glory. He returned to solicit the post of Governor of New France, which was vacant. He was opposed by Monsieur de Grignan, no doubt to please that goose of a Sévigné. Do you know what the Countess did?”

“Monseigneur, I do not know.”

“It is understandable that you do not know. How could you have known?” replied the Prince, enchanted. “This is the story: I shall be telling you nothing you do not already know, if I mention the favors that were then being showered upon the charming Athénaïs de Tonnay-Charente, Madame de Montespan. They say that the attentions of Monsieur de Frontenac did not displease her. What did the Countess do? She spread all over Paris the following verses. . . . I know them by heart. Renaudot, how now do they begin?”

Discreetly the Abbé whispered:

“ ‘I’m delighted that the King
Loves the Lady Montespan. . . .’ ”

“Oh yes. Now wait. . . . I remember the rest:

“ ‘I’m delighted that the King
Loves the Lady Montespan
But I, Frontenac, must . . .’

“ ‘But I, Frontenac, must smile. . . .’ ” prompted the Abbé.

“ ‘Knowing who is cheating him. . . .’ What next, Abbé?”

“ ‘And I chuckle up my sleeve,
You have only what I leave.’

“Not another word, Abbé. I know the rest perfectly:

“ ‘You have only what I leave King!
You have only what I leave!’

“There, I knew I hadn’t forgotten it!”

“Your Highness has a prodigious memory,” said the Abbé softly. He assumed the air of a man deeply impressed. Flushed with pleasure, tapping his forehead with his fists, the Prince continued:

“Well, Monsieur de la Salle, what should have caused Monsieur de Frontenac’s downfall turned greatly to his advantage. His Majesty became furious with Monsieur de Grignan, whom he accused of being the author of the calumny, and Monsieur de Frontenac received the appointment. So Monsieur de Grignan went around repeating everywhere that His Majesty found Madame de Frontenac greatly to his liking, and it was for this reason that the husband had been sent away. But that is sheer nonsense. Madame de Frontenac, or even her friend Mademoiselle d’Outrelaise, the other ‘*Divine*,’ may be reproached with almost anything else, but I hold her to have good sense. Besides, did she not have herself painted in the guise of Minerva? It is a heart she lacks, not a head. . . .”

“That reminds me, Monsieur de la Salle, have you seen Monsieur Colbert?”

“He has not received me, Monseigneur.”

“What? He has not received you? I shall see to this. . . . Renaudot!”

“Monseigneur?”

“You must take Monsieur de la Salle to see Monsieur Colbert yourself. Did you not speak of letters of nobility for Monsieur de la Salle?”

“Monseigneur, Monsieur le Comte de Frontenac has asked for them. But I do not believe they have yet been signed.”

“I shall present Monsieur de la Salle to His Majesty myself. It would be disgraceful for a man of such merit as Monsieur de la Salle to remain a commoner. I shall speak to the King. . . .”

Majestic, thundering kindly words in an awe-inspiring voice, he dismissed the two men.

The all powerful Minister, fat and pallid, spoke slowly, his chin resting on his hand:

"I have here a brief concerning you. There are letters from Monsieur Duchesneau denouncing you, as well as from a certain Monsieur La Forest, and from someone else, whom I shall not name. There are also letters from the Abbé Fénelon, whose brother came to see me and spoke of you in no uncertain terms. But on the other hand I have received a letter from Monsieur le Comte de Frontenac praising your abilities. He recommends you highly, and asked me to receive you. Why did you not come?"

"I did come, Monseigneur. For twenty days I presented my request for an audience, and every day it was returned to me."

"What?" An indignant contraction of the eyebrows wrinkled the Minister's forehead. With the back of his hand he swept the table into disorder. Immediately regaining control of himself, he said:

"Very well, I believe you. But I will find out the clerk who . . . Monsieur de la Salle, I am waiting to hear your message."

In an even, precise voice Cavelier recounted his past life and exposed his plans for the future. Looking him straight in the eye, Colbert listened. . . .

The words of the King fell, kindly, conclusively. At the bottom of the Act of Concession which Colbert presented to him he deigned to sign his name. The Prince de Conti approved, respectfully. Monsieur d'Hozier was summoned.

He brought the letters of nobility. "Louis, by the Grace of God, King of France and of Navarre, to all present and to come, greetings: The Kings our predecessors having ever esteemed honor the greatest incentive to valorous deeds. . . ."

When he had come to "Signed at Compiègne the thirteenth of May," Colbert held out the pen. With his calm even voice Monsieur d'Hozier finished: "The Year of Grace One Thousand Six Hundred and Seventy-five, and of our reign the thirty-third."

The King pulled back his cuff and signed.

“You have had the coat of arms designed, Monsieur d’Hozier?”

“Yes, Sire, they will be, if it please Your Majesty, an escutcheon of sable with a running wolfhound of argent surmounted by a star with eight rays d’or. This, in keeping with the desire expressed by Your Majesty to symbolize the voyages of Monsieur de la Salle toward a brilliant goal.”

Now, at last, Robert was able to prepare for the completion of his plans. The letters patent authorized him to undertake voyages of exploration and to take possession of lands in the name of His Majesty. He must now find the necessary funds, since the authorization stipulated that the crown of France was to disburse nothing. But there was the revenue of the fur trade at Fort Frontenac. And also a monopoly in the traffic of bison or buffalo hides.

He disclosed his plans in detail to the Abbé Renaudot. Gesticulating, smoothing with unctuous fingers a map of the New World, abolishing inch by inch those parts marked *Terra incognita*, the ecclesiastic followed them with enthusiasm.

“But I must have funds,” said Cavelier.

At once the Abbé summoned the scrivener Simonnet, a dark thin man with a hooked nose surmounted by thick spectacles. His peruke fell over his bent shoulders as he followed their explanations on the map. Upon seeing the letters patent and the Royal seal, he became enthusiastic. Nevertheless, he examined the signature carefully.

Three days later he returned with a contract. His own contribution would be four thousand livres. His cousin, the barrister Raoul, promised to advance twenty-four thousand more. However, Maître Simonnet hoped that they would consider giving him a small commission on the money, as well as on the six thousand that he had persuaded one of his clients, Monsieur Dumont, to invest in the project.

ROBERT CAVELIER DE LA SALLE.
With La Salle's Patent of Nobility went this Coat of Arms which was intended to Symbolize the Spirit of Discovery.

By good fortune Maître Simonnet had relations with Monsieur François Plet—"A very worthy man, a very worthy man," he declared. Peering at Cavelier over the rim of his spectacles, he added, "This Monsieur Plet boasts of being a relative of yours, Monsieur de la Salle."

In fact, Robert remembered his cousin Plet, who was about his own age. He had come with his father to visit the Caveliers at Rouen. Since then, Robert had forgotten him.

"He lives in the rue St. Martin, where he is engaged in business," said the scrivener. "Perhaps we might go to see him. His affairs are prospering."

They went together.

Messages poured into the rue de la Truanderie, where Cavelier lodged obscurely. Maître Simonnet came every day to closet himself with his new associate. François Plet advanced eleven thousand livres, and promised more if the venture succeeded. Even Colbert's son-in-law, the Marquis de Seignelay, wanted to share in the expense of the expedition, and pledged a considerable sum. Then came the turn of Cavelier's relatives. To the letters in which he told them of the nobility which had been conferred upon him, he received replies that were "worth their weight in gold."

In the palace of the Prince de Conti, the Abbé Renaudot presented Robert to a tall thin and sunburned man wearing a rapier.

"A braggart," he thought. The man was called Henri de Tonti. Robert recalled the name. No doubt the man was a son of the Italian banker who, after having enriched the Royal treasury with his "tontine," had rotted away in a dungeon.

Tonti excused himself for not offering his right hand. Turning back the folds of his cloak, he disclosed his wrist, which ended in an iron hook. He had been thus mutilated by a grenade in the Sicilian wars under Messine. He recounted the adventure soberly, and observed that ever since then, driven into retreat, he had vainly sought a lieutenancy.

"Why does Monsieur de la Salle not take you with him?" suggested the Abbé. Cavelier realized that he must not refuse.

Father Hennepin, a Franciscan who begged barefooted in the streets of Paris, accepted the position of chaplain of the mission. He was a colossal and jovial Fleming whose piety was without gloom.

"Are you seeking martyrdom, Father?" Cavelier asked. The priest crossed his legs and thrust out his bare feet. A hearty laugh shook his chest, revealing, behind the gold of his beard, a set of strong, white teeth.

"I am not afraid of martyrdom," he replied, "but neither am I seeking it. I am sure that your savages are honest folk with whom there is some way of conciliation. God is sending me to baptize them, and not for them to torture me. They say they scalp their enemies. I ask you how they can grasp a shorn monk by the hair? That is a good joke, isn't it?"

His joviality pleased Cavelier, who did not like melancholy. He associated it with lack of energy. So he gladly accepted on recommendation from the jolly missionary another follower, the young La Motte de Lussières, who was filled with enthusiasm.

He decided to embark about the middle of July. In the meantime Tonti and La Motte were to set out to gather some thirty hardened soldiers, cheerful, robust and determined. They arranged to meet at La Rochelle on the tenth of July.

Before allowing them to set sail on the dazzling sea, the director of the port, Bellinzani, succeeded in exacting from Cavelier a sizeable toll.

CHAPTER EIGHT

La Salle and Tonti arrived at Frontenac with the Winter. The branches of fir trees were already sagging under the weight of snow. The forest, dark, brown and clear blue, was silhouetted against a yellowish sky. Small cakes of ice danced over the rapids. The Fort was a dark stain in the snow.

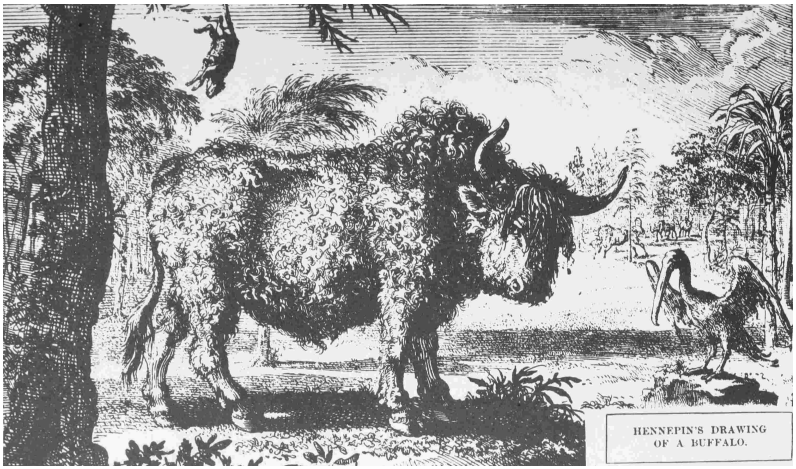
The sentinels gave the alarm. The palisades were lined with heads of the curious. As La Salle leaped from his canoe, he was recognized and the gate was thrown wide open.

Barking furiously, the dogs ran ahead of the men who were coming to welcome him. The sturdy figure of La Motte de Lussières detached itself from the group. His giant strides outstripped those of the three gray-robed priests, Hennepin, Buisset and De Ribourde, whose bare feet braved the knife-like cold.

Suddenly a bell tolled, the Fleur de Lys was raised to the top of the flagstaff. La Salle entered upon his governance.

He was given little time for repose. While still at the table heaped with moose meat, La Motte read his report. He had arrived at the Fort on the eighth of December. Voyage without important incidents. Nevertheless, a canoe had overturned and its cargo lost. Methodically he exhibited his note-book and read details of the loss, written in a large scrawling hand. For the rest, everything had gone well. He had taken command of the Fort and of its provisional government, in which he had been ably seconded by La Forest. Already the Indians were bringing a few beaver furs and numerous moose and deer skins.

Father Hennepin was prolix. His face ruddy and already tanned, he recounted how Monsieur de Frontenac had received him at his table. And his nine day retreat in the Franciscan monastery in Quebec. He had there found two Indians who had consented to take him in their canoe. From place to place, wherever he saw the smoke of a habitation above the verdure of the river banks, he had stopped to say mass on the little altar stone which he always carried. At Montreal his Indians had been lured away. He accused the Jesuit priests. Leaning back and smiling, his wrinkled face crowned by his white hair, Father de Ribourde gently urged him to a more charitable and Christian attitude toward the Society of Jesus.



HENNEPIN'S DRAWING OF A BUFFALO.
From a Drawing by Father Hennepin, one of La Salle's Companions.

La Salle's life was henceforth to become as rhythmical as one of the Canadian rivers—rapids, shallows, cataracts, shallows and again cataracts. It was all to pass quickly, too quickly. . . .

On snowy days, when the sky was darker than the earth, an Indian with a dog team and a cargo of furs would emerge from the forest of bowed branches. . . . Wigged clerks computed the value of the hides. The otters were not sufficiently golden, the beavers were too light, the marten too small. . . .

"Ugh! My white brother has no eyes," the Iroquois would reply. "My furs are *prime*. If my white brother does not want them the English huts are only five days' march from here. And their traders give more cloth and more fire-water. But can that weak brew of grain be compared with French liquor? . . . But still, Monseigneur Onontio has forbidden its sale to the Indians. . . ."

Here the expression of the Iroquois would become thoughtful. The narrow eyes would narrow still further. He would lean his head on his shoulder, then stretch out his long hand, poke the clerk's ribs and say gently, "My brother, listen. Quebec, where Onontio lives, is far away. The Great Father will never know that his little white son has given a drop of fire-water to his little red son. Ugh! What evil is there in drinking fire-water?"

A long dialogue would follow. Inflexible, but nevertheless laughing, the clerk would describe to the Iroquois the dangers of brandy. "So much the worse," would be the reply, "give me back the furs. I am going to the Yankees."

He would stretch his hand toward the bundle of furs, then willingly promise his white brother "to say nothing about the bottle." At a sign from the clerk two men would carry the bundle off to the warehouse. The savage would be given a hatchet of good French steel, a sharp knife, a few handsful of beads and some cloth, tobacco, a few ounces of powder, a few pounds of raisins and, last of all, lips confidentially compressed, head bent—"Here is the fire-water. Hide it and don't drink it before you are far away. Otherwise Tonti Iron Hand will break your teeth. . . ."

Or perhaps on winter evenings, alone in his chair before the roaring flames, Cavelier would warm his long legs and think of all he had learned from the Indians concerning the Colbert River. This Mississippi of the Indians—did it flow into the Gulf of Mexico or into the Pacific? That is what he wanted to know. From below would sound the annoying squeaks of violins and the pleasantly frightened cries of Iroquois squaws who were being teased under pretext of dancing. . . .

Spurred on by stern commands, the men built a store house at the fork of the river. On windy days the lake hurled its waves against the palisades.

But all this was not sufficient for the restless soul of Cavelier, and on the twenty-seventh of January, 1679, thirty heavily loaded men, on snowshoes, climbed the steep slope of the forest whose blue firs and gaunt oaks peacefully mocked the cataract. Father Hennepin, laughing and joking, his altar stone on his back, led the party as far as Cayuga Creek.

In the silence of the silver and quiescent Winter, axes resounded. The surly master-carpenter, in a gruff voice, divided the work. Before going in search of game, the Mohican hunters, with their bronzed hands, erected bark huts. They watched with curiosity the work of the white men, which they did not understand.

Squared trees were fashioned into a keel. Under Cavelier's direction the carpenter placed the first oak peg in the already bored hole and invited Father Hennepin to hammer it in. To mortify his soul the priest refused the honor. A sigh of regret accompanied the sacrifice. Watching from the corner of his eye, Cavelier smiled one of his rare smiles.

Sunny days brought silent and disgruntled Senecas over the luminous and cruel snow. In the hope of appeasing them, Tonti offered them brandy. One of them, in a drunken fury, threatened to scalp the broad-shouldered blacksmith. Laughing, the man in his leather apron defended himself with a

bar of red hot iron, and maliciously amused himself by scorching the Indian's fur robe. The savage, with leaps and shouts, waving in one hand a knife and in the other a hatchet, attempted to arouse his companions to slaughter. Father Hennepin, gathering his gray robe about his sturdy legs, was forced to hasten to the scene. His authoritative words, emphasized by his wide sleeves, calmed the enraged Indians. They withdrew silently.

Plump, copper colored, oblique eyed—inquisitive squaws came to watch the activities of the white men. One of them, lost in admiration, was fascinated by the blue eyes of a caulker. A few yards of cloth and some trinkets obtained for the amused man a few small favors and then a confidence. . . . the Senecas plotted to burn the boat.

On snowy nights, the men grumbled their complaints. The doubling of sentry duty, after the hours of work during the day, the misery of hunger, the poisoned words of a mutinous ring leader—paled their cheeks and hollowed their eyes.

Weeks of anguish passed. La Salle returned when the snow began to thaw. A Mohican made a path with his snowshoes for a sled drawn by tired and ruffled dogs. Robert had left his companions at Fort Conti, which Norman energy had just erected not far from Niagara. Proudly Tonti showed him, impatient on its ways, the completed hull of the boat.

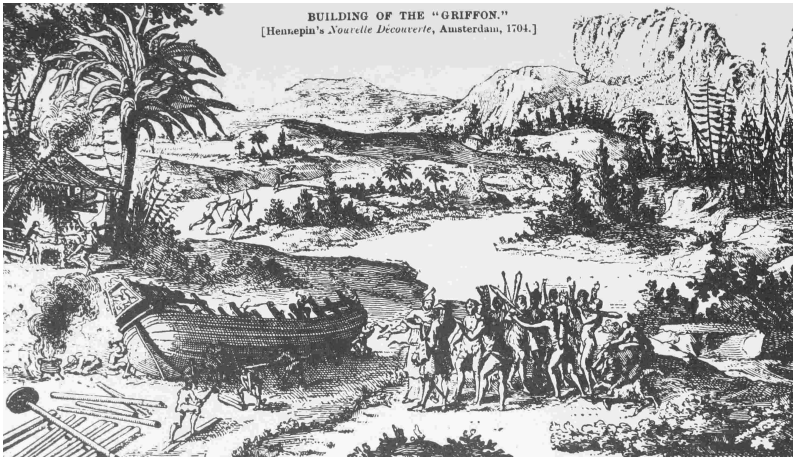
Father Hennepin's arms extended in the gesture of benediction. Suddenly forgetful of their fatigue, the crowd of workmen intoned the *Te Deum*. The Cannoneers fired one hundred and one cartridges. Drunk with fire-water, the Indians howled with joy and madness. The launched hull glided into the water.

Iroquois eyes, black gems, glowed with rage and disappointment. . . . Solidly anchored in a shallow part of the river, protected by five carronades from a deliberate incendiary, the boat was made ready. An artist with protruding eyes, crinkly hair and an aquiline nose, scorning the fury of the savages, patiently carved the Frontenac griffon on its prow.

After a brief consultation with Tonti, Cavelier profited by the first fine days to disappear once more.

On a scorching August evening he returned at the head of several canoes. His red mantle was acclaimed. After him debarked three

Franciscans: the gentle and jovial Father Watteau, who was to live at Niagara, the colossal and blond Father Zenobé Membré, and Father de Ribourde.



BUILDING OF THE "GRIFFON."
[Hennepin's *Nouvelle Découverte*, Amsterdam, 1704.

Eyes sunken and inflamed, lips parched, voice hoarse, La Salle confided to Tonti the disaster that had befallen him. Incited by the jealousy of several Montreal merchants, secretly upheld by the Intendant Duchesneau, his creditors had seized all his property. However, he had found in Frontenac the customary support. Skilled in untangling legal proceedings, Monsieur de Barrois had interceded in his favor with the judges and lawyers.

"What are you going to do?" Tonti asked eagerly. La Salle regarded him, astonished. Then, quite calmly—

"Why, continue—and succeed."

Nine days later, on the seventh of August, one hundred and one salvos saluted the departure of the *Griffon*. This was the name which, in honor of Frontenac, had been given the vessel.

Wind swelled the sails, which flapped at every change of helm. The hull heaved under the shock of the virgin waves of Lake Erie. The jib half concealed the setting sun.

At the "Detroit" the forest came down to meet them. Scarlet vines entwined russet plum trees, oaks of old gold and blood-red maples. In the

distance tall firs fringed the horizon with their gray-blue hem. Autumnal migrations of wild geese patterned geometric figures against the sky. At sight of the sails, frightened Indians abandoned their rustic encampment on the shore and fled into the woods. In the brilliance of an overhot morning, Lake Huron spread before them, molten under the sun.

Autumn winds changed that opulence into gray wilderness. Choppy waves lashed at the boat. In quest of deep water, a safer refuge from the tempest than a harbor treacherously spiked with unknown rocks, the *Griffon* danced over the foaming lake. Clearings swept by many rains, low wooded coasts, seemed ready to welcome the débris of a wreck. . . .

At length the wind died. Caught in a ray of sunlight, the Manitoulins, dark gray cameos against the azure immensity, were pointed out by the Mohicans.

A promontory crowned with oak, pines and firs, against which the surf was breaking, forced the pilot to shift the *Griffon's* course. The point passed, a high log house, a chapel and a dark palisade appeared. A Black Robe advanced to the water's edge. Arms were waved—a bell tolled.

In the deep and tranquil bay of Michillimackinac, paved with clear beaches, the *Griffon* was tied up to the very trees on the shore, and steadied by a deep sunk anchor.

The Jesuits of the Mission came toward the boat, leading a crowd of Hurons whose village smoke was seen not far off, beyond the white line of beached canoes turned upside down in Indian fashion. *Coureurs des bois*, almost as savage as the Hurons, followed. Their greeting was none too cordial.

Clad in scarlet and gold, La Salle disembarked to the salvos of his cannon, followed by Tonti and the Franciscans. The Jesuits led them toward the Chapel.

A new lake offered itself to their wondering eyes—Lake Michigan. Golden arrows of sunlight made it glitter and tremble gently.

The men sent ahead as scouts were awaiting La Salle at Green Bay. They showed him bundles of precious furs.

Behind them, silent, half nude, painted in ochre, the Pottawattamis marveled at the sails of the colossal *Griffon*. Their chief, his small black eyes drilled in a flat red face, grimaced a sincere welcome. He reminded the Norman of the pow-wow on Lake Ontario, where Frontenac had won the confidence of the Indian chiefs.

"Ugh, ugh!" he growled. "Onontio is a good chief. The Pottawattamis can scalp many enemies for him. They will carry their trophies to the young chief clad in red."

He was somewhat disconcerted when La Salle assured him that he had missions of peace in view, rather than plans for war. None the less he confirmed the assurance of his allegiance.

Laden with precious furs, the *Griffon* turned back to the east, manned by a single pilot and a few sailors.

Tonti tried to dissuade La Salle, but at his very first words he received a sharp and definite reply. Was it not wise to send to Montreal the wherewithal to satisfy the creditors? Tonti was insistent. But the frown that wrinkled Cavelier's brow became stern and menacing. Tonti held his peace, but his opinion was unchanged.

La Salle and his companions continued onward in their canoes, under a sky so low that it dragged its heavy ragged clouds down to the very crest of the waves. There were days without food. The men complained. Cavelier's heart hardened . . . he threatened them brutally. Tonti also was exasperated by the discontented men. He struck several in the mouth with his iron fist and broke many teeth. Father Hennepin was likewise severe, but Father de Ribourde, ill from hunger and fatigue, was near death. It was necessary to make infusions of hyacinth to keep him alive.

For days they were in the grip of hunger. Winds prevented the fish from biting. Antelope seemed to have deserted the lakeside forests. They were forced to fight with wolves for the possession of an aged moose carcass. But at length the Mohicans killed several bears and hunger was forgotten.

There was also the day when eleven resolute Frenchmen and three unarmed monks were threatened by several hundred Ottagamies. La Salle and Hennepin restrained the impetuous Tonti. Robert's firmness and a few calm words arrested the arrows ready for flight from bows already bent.

The savages immediately passed from extreme hatred to the most indiscreet friendliness. The voyagers were obliged to enter the bark wigwams and feast. . . . The young warriors danced to the rhythm of savage cries. The elders bombarded them with prolix eloquence. The women bore presents of precious furs.

With the first snow they found themselves among the Illinois, on the shores of the Chicago River. There La Salle laid the foundations for a fort.

They spent the first of January, 1680, at Lake Pimitoui (Peoria Lake) in the territory of the Peorias.

During the thaw, La Salle, accompanied by Father Hennepin, was on the Illinois River, pushing aside with his paddle the blocks of floating ice that threatened to crush the bark canoe. He was in search of a favorable site on which to construct a fort. . . .

A crest, naturally fortified by two deep ravines and a marsh, on the edge of the trembling foam, was thenceforward to bear the fortress of Crèvecoeur, the Fleur de Lys of France and the hopes of La Salle.

Beneath its oaken vaults could be heard the roaring voice of Tonti, scolding the men or the laughter and lamentations of Father Hennepin, who had no more wine with which to celebrate mass. Silent, somber, hollow eyed, staunch lover of endless adventure, Cavelier could be seen at evening pacing back and forth in the smoky light of a pine knot, his lips compressed and his brow furrowed.

Then one fine day, knowing that the *Griffon* was lost with no hope of its ever returning, he left Tonti in command of Fort Crèvecoeur and returned to Montreal to appease his creditors and to obtain new resources for the fulfillment of his dream.

Next there was the return in June. His second lieutenant, La Forest, who represented him on Belle Isle opposite Fort Frontenac, and some two score men accompanied him.

All the way from Frontenac to Michillimackinac they had been obliged to use the most subtle diplomacy to obtain even the scantiest provisions from the Indians. Who had gone that way? At night, lying in the open, wrapped in his beaver robe, a sleepless La Salle vainly questioned himself. Was it the Intendant Duchesneau, traders attached to the Jesuit missions, or

some unknown and jealous rival? It was an enigma whose solution seemed ever within reach, but which none the less he was unable to grasp completely.

Deep blue and brown, forest succeeded forest. Streams sang the same songs. Winds tossed up the same surf on the shores of the lakes. But near the Illinois it was already Autumn, wounding to blood color the foliage of maples.

There was the prairie, where innumerable bison pastured. Red waves! They assembled, jostled one another, separated, reassembled. They were a closely ranked and moving army. By what caprice did they suddenly become that straggling line which flowed away drop by drop?

There were coyotes, small prairie wolves which trotted with short steps. There were the geometric formations of wild geese, of swans and cranes passing overhead. At night the settling of prairie hens on the branches of willows.

And at last there was the rock of St. Louis where Tonti was waiting. Tonti? He was not there. The Fort? There was no more fort. Already underbrush was growing in the ashes. . . . Tonti? Tonti? Tonti? . . .

Shouts without echoes. Never had Cavelier felt so disheartened. It was with teeth clenched that he pushed on. . . . A curtain of trees screened the Indian village. . . . Desolation. There in the waste were fleeing wolves, heads turned, muzzles contracted, tails low. . . . Crows turning and turning, with their frightful caw—caw—caw. . . . There were whitened skulls, broken bones. . . .

Days in which the dismembered skeletons—vestige of Iroquois fury—were examined for traces of beloved friends. Nights without fire, mounting guard amid that ossuary, meditating vengeance. Where were the old Indian friendships? How far away were the days of joyous hunting on the edge of Iroquois villages! . . . How could they now persevere in the enterprise?

Farther along, Crèvecoeur—also in ruins. What traitorous hand had scrawled, in French, on a board—

"*We are all savages.*"

Still farther, the spot where the Iroquois had tortured, scalped, dismembered and eaten their prisoners. Hacked off heads of Illinois

warriors, deprived of hair, whose eyes had been plucked from the rotting flesh by ghoulish crows. . . . Women's thighs, partly roasted, still bearing the marks of savage teeth . . . and so many miserable corpses of children. . . .

One morning the Mississippi, burdened with floating ice, cut proudly through the snow-covered prairie. And there, at last, was Tonti!

It was a tragic story to which, biting his thin lips, La Salle listened that night. Desertion of the men, the murder of old Father de Ribourde by the Indians. Flight from the Iroquois, the scenes of battles wherein a dozen men, with clenched teeth, defended themselves against death. . . .

Nevertheless, there lay the goal. . . .

CHAPTER NINE

Too much adversity can only spur on real determination. Far from weakening, the soul of a man hardens under blows. . . .

Thus the month of August, 1681, was not yet ended before the bark canoes once again left Fort Niagara. Over the waters of Lake Ontario, twenty canoes bore twenty-four Frenchmen, eighteen Mohicans or Abenakis, and several Indian women and their children to gather the fire wood and cook the venison.

Again there was that same life—filled by day with the beat of waves against the canoes, by night with the melancholy cry of the whip-poor-will. A Mohican would rise to throw a few branches on the fire, and a sleepless La Salle would ask himself if at last, this time, he could vanquish his own fate.

Then the nights became colder and in the mornings the fallen leaves, still red, iced by the nocturnal hoar frost, crackled under foot.

The snows of December were falling before they rejoined Tonti, Father Zenobé Membré and their six canoes on the Chicago River.

Cavelier found Tonti's thin young face changed. His hair was graying, there was an ugly wrinkle on his forehead, his mouth had a wry smile. But the hard eyes retained their loyal gleam.

At the sight of his lieutenant, Cavelier thought of himself. He would have liked to see himself in some mirror—in calm water, for instance. But the rivers were frozen. His light baggage did not contain a glass. . . . His beard now hung, amber, upon his breast. He passed his hand over his face to feel its lines.

On the first of January, 1682, the sleds were ready. They were loaded with frozen meat, with arms, with birch-bark canoes, with implements, while one of them, La Salle's own sled, carried mysterious things, nailed in a box. There were no dogs for the sleds. Men of burden, they got used to the straps cutting into their flesh.

They wandered in a silence padded with white. The Illinois River, frozen solid, opened for them a cold road. The wind was biting. "And still,"

thought Cavelier, “at the end there will be sunshine.”

From under the ice they heard the rumble of submerged water. Once past the brilliant play of sunlight on the ice of Peoria Lake, they at last found running water, bearing toward the south the rush of broken ice.

Calm, barely swollen by the first thaw, the river wound cameo-like through the immobility of the leafless forest. A few buds had already opened —harbingers of Spring perfumes. Stags, stripped of their antlers, thinned by the Winter fast, watched the canoes pass with melancholy eyes.

In the mornings there were pink mists against a background of rare silver. The canoes penetrated them. For fear of collisions the paddlers called to one another. Their voices trembled mysteriously over the river.

The valley widened, joined an even wider one. There flowed the river Colbert, the Mississippi. Cavelier’s announcement was greeted by salutations to the Father of Waters, and in those last days of winter joy broke forth like midsummer fruit. . . .

The tumultuous current held back the waters of the Illinois. A flood was imminent. It was necessary to debark, and to haul on shore the canoes flecked with spray and foam.

La Salle, Tonti, Father Membré went to explore.

A barrier of drift ice dammed the Mississippi. The sharp edges reflected the sun’s rays in a variety of colors—pink, blue, green, orange, violet and yellow lights flashed over the water. The effect of gorgeous fireworks was intensified by the noise of ice blocks crashing against one another. Even the Norman’s impatience bowed before such splendor.

He watched long, lost in wonder, the luminous arrival of the ice cakes, the foaming gush of the waters, the vain anger of the river, and heard the resounding crash against the barrier. An ineffectual yet terrible force tossed the waves. Oily eddies swirled at hazard, and were submerged by the arrival of new cargoes of ice. The reeds along the shore disappeared slowly. Water covered the prairies, swallowed the willow groves, nibbled gently at the roots of the trees. The travelers were obliged to climb the side of a hill.

Then the dam broke, and a cataract swept through the breach. The ice blocks boomed a dolorous symphony. A prodigious chord resounded as they gave way, all together, letting themselves be borne at dizzying speed by the

river which, intoxicated with liberty, was also carrying off with joyous fury the treasures it had torn from its banks. Stretches of forest floated at its will. It amused itself with them for a moment, then tossed them with disdain back to the shore, like broken toys.

The canoes began again their tranquil course down a river whose first fury was spent. Spring was breaking on every side. A sky of clouds rent by the wind was reflected in blue and white. The forest was powdered with tender green. Flowers were unfolding timid petals. The cries of migratory birds filled the immense valley. Mosquitoes swarmed. At night coyotes barked on the hillsides. In the mornings bison descended in friendly pairs to the giant drinking trough.

And one evening they heard, to the right, the roar of another great river. Before the sun set behind the hills, the blue water of the Mississippi was paralleled by a furious muddy torrent, disdainful of joining at once the sovereign river. La Salle knew it to be the Missouri. Drawing away from the tumultuous waters, the canoes followed the left bank, pushed through the reeds and osier beds and moored, to the song of frogs. The smoke of their fire tarnished the leaves of an austere forest.

The dark river bore them along. They floated between woods whose white petals broke the black foliage of magnolia and tulip trees. The prows of their canoes struck against cat fish larger than those of Canada, blue monsters with popping eyes and prickly barbs on each side of enormous mouths, with fins in perpetual movement. . . .

They came in sight of an Indian village, deserted, but with an ample supply of corn. They took what they needed and left glittering baubles in exchange. . . .

Then, through swampy marshes, the Ohio spewed its calm waters, tinted by the rising sun with large patches of blood. They stopped for a day to hunt, but killed little game.

Low muddy banks invaded by thick canes prevented them from landing. With empty stomachs, lame shoulders and evil in their hearts, the men bent for two days and two nights over their paddles.

On the twenty-fourth of February, at night, famished, exhausted, resentful, they succeeded in landing at a spot covered with low underbrush.

The remainder of the provisions was eaten, and La Salle decided that at dawn the hunters should set forth in quest of game.

Twilight fell, lacquered with rose. The last light of day brought back the hunters bearing their kill. Turkey, deer, porcupine, were heaped on the ground. The cook began to dress them. The roll was called and it was discovered that Pierre Prudhomme was missing.

In consequence La Salle summoned the hunters. Two Abenakis claimed to have seen the fresh tracks of Indians. The shape of the moccasins differed, they said, from those worn by Northern tribes. It was possible that Prudhomme had fallen into their hands. One of the Mohicans expounded the probabilities of the hunter's death. Indifferent and cruel, he blinked his little black eyes. La Salle became enraged. . . .

Well before dawn the Norman, in a thundering voice, awoke the sleepers. He kicked the laggards into action, their hair tangled, their eyes swollen.

Tonti distributed the work. Accompanied by a band of workmen, he scaled a rock and with a stick traced the lines of a foundation. At his orders a gang of woodcutters fell to. Other workers hoisted the logs onto the rock, and the construction of a small fort was begun.

In the meantime La Salle set out with a band of Indian hunters. A Mohican famous for his tracking ability discovered Prudhomme's footprints, but lost the track on rocky ground.

For six consecutive days, animated by the determination of their leader, they recommenced their search. On the evening of the sixth day, Gabriel Minime and two Abenakis patrolling with him led in two Chickasaw Indians, half nude, painted in black and white, their heads covered with brilliant feathers.

As soon as the news reached Cavelier, he donned his scarlet mantle. Respectful and overawed, the two prisoners were brought before him. Silently, their heads nodding approval, they listened to the music of words which they understood not at all. They smiled when they were given trinkets and calico, a hatchet, a pipe of peace, and were sent back to their unknown village.

A few days later Cavelier saw them returning with several of their companions. They brought back a thinned, weary and discomfited Prudhomme, in no mood to tell how he had been lost nor how he had nearly

died of hunger and fatigue until the Chickasaws had found him sitting in despair at the foot of a tree. He nevertheless praised the hospitality he had received at the Indian camp.

The fort was finished that very day. In a cheerful mood, La Salle christened it Fort Prudhomme, and left the rescued man there in charge of a small garrison.

And again the marvelous voyage—it was as if they were entering the kingdom of Very Young Summer, adorned with ever virgin flowers. Luminous mists rose from the river, like hymns to the sun. To these men accustomed to the bare and stiff lines of northern countries, this dance of colored vapors, this ballet of illuminated air, took on a fabulous significance.

Cavelier, although he occasionally repeated to himself the *fuge sirenarum cantus*, surprised himself by stopping with a gesture of his hand the course of his twenty canoes. The entire flotilla drifted slowly, dragging behind it a graceful wake. Astonished eyes marveled at this unknown vegetation, daughter of the Sun. La Salle, recovering possession of himself, gave a command, and with a single rhythm all the paddles flayed at the same moment the waters of the Mississippi.

On the morning of the thirteenth of March, they were entirely enveloped by a rose colored, gauze-like mist. The horizon was invisible. They might have forgotten there were banks to this river had not the sound of an Indian drum and the piercing cries of a scalping dance resounded from the right.

Prudently La Salle gave the order to head for the left bank and to debark. Immediately, at Tonti's command, the men seized their axes and in less than an hour had erected a palisade. Above it floated the Fleur de Lys.

Almost at the same moment, as if to salute the colors of France, the sun tore away the veil of mist. The flag flapped noisily. Rays of light, innumerable arrows, spattered the river. French voices cried, "Vive le Roi." The drum, the barbaric dance, stopped as if the Indians had been struck by lightning.

Across the wide river they could see amazed warriors advancing to the shore. They were tiny in the distance. Nevertheless La Salle immediately donned his ceremonial robe. Draped in the magnificent cape, he seemed to be of gold and purple. His long beard, which for months he had let grow,

gave him an extraordinary majesty. Repulsing with a gesture the escort of his companions, he advanced toward the shore. There he stood for a long time, motionless, like a statue.

On the other side of the river, the savages shaded their eyes with their hands. They could be seen grouping together for a council. Painted in vivid colors, the feathered chief and two attendants advanced. They embarked in a canoe whose bow rose and balanced itself above the vain fury of the current. Reaching the shore, one of them waved a peace pipe and by gestures invited the Frenchmen to follow them.

Monsieur de Boisrondet went, escorted by two Abenakis. He returned several hours later, accompanied by six elders who discoursed in a sing-song language which no one could understand. They were given tobacco, cloth, and a few hatchets. By their gestures La Salle understood that they not only thanked him but wished him to pay them a visit.

Leaving a few men to guard the camp, the Norman ordered the canoes launched. At the Indian village, the Frenchmen's shoes were removed, and their legs anointed with bear grease. They were presented with several slaves and were feasted with venison, Indian corn, beans, and unknown fruits. The women were pleasant.

Twilight brought dances that were more voluptuous than warlike. The coppery bodies of the women swayed in rhythm to the supple evolutions of the young warriors. Mouths drooling, the old men nodded their heads in approbation. Old women stamped their feet the better to mark the cadence. Between dances, broiled meat was neatly served on pieces of fresh bark to both the guests and the dancers.

As the third day neared its close, La Salle and Tonti assembled their men and the Indian chiefs on the large open square in the center of the village. An astonished brown populace, the young warriors leaning on their lances, the women holding their larger children by the hand, their babies strapped to their shoulders, marveled at the costumes of the white men.

Clad in a rich chasuble, Father Zenobé Membré intoned the *Te Deum*. When he had finished, at La Salle's command a man began to dig in the earth. Two others carried a well made cross bearing an escutcheon with the arms of France. When it was planted, La Salle gave a signal and a cry of "Vive le Roi" arose, echoed by the discordant ou-ou-ou-i-i-i of the savages.

In the meantime, Father Membré, with apostolic zeal, had been explaining with many gestures the mysteries of the Christian faith. The Indians listened silently, approving without understanding. When he had finished, the missionary signaled for the children to approach, and he blessed them by laying his hand on their heads. Touched by so much unction, attracted by the mystery of the unknown, the chiefs made no objection when La Salle guided their hands in tracing a cross at the bottom of a parchment on which they rendered homage to His Majesty, Louis the Fourteenth, King of France and Navarre.

Two of the Arkansas chiefs willingly embarked with the white chief in the scarlet robe, to guide him several hundred leagues farther down the river, to the country of the Taensas.

The river became ever more astonishing. Along its banks grew gigantic water cypress whose wood, said the Arkansas, resisted decay. Waters broke away from the main current as if to seek repose and sleep in murky bayous covered with aquatic plants. Enormous frogs croaked from water lily pads. Alligators drifted slowly, like dead logs; others slept on the muddy banks. They caught several of them and the Indians showed them how to cook the tails, which they found excellent to eat.

Father Membré, who had taken upon himself the task of keeping a journal, marveled at the beasts. He could not bring himself to believe that such monsters as crocodiles could be born from eggs, just as if they had been simple chickens. But he saw for himself the actual hatching. In an outburst of faith he lauded the impenetrable designs of the Creator, and the explorers doffed their hats at his resounding phrases.

Tonti and Membré crossed the marshes, at La Salle's orders, in their birch canoes to seek the village of the Taensas. One of the Arkansas, bearing a peace pipe and a few presents, had preceded them to announce their coming. Crossing a lake of brilliant blue and a wood of tulip trees whose white petals bespangled the shadows, they arrived at a most astonishing Indian city.

Habituated as they were to the bark huts of the Canadian Indians and to the tents of bison skin of the prairie Nadouessioux, the size and building materials of the Taensa village surprised them. Large houses had been erected with well squared blocks made of a mixture of mud and straw, and were surmounted by high cane roofs, skillfully thatched. The voyagers thought of the Old World, but without a sigh. . . .

Then they noticed that these houses were systematically arranged. The geometrical design was perfect. The square that they formed was large and light, and in the middle of it were two large buildings. One of them was the residence of the king of the Taensas, and Tonti conceded that it merited the name of palace. They learned that the other building was the Temple of the Sun, which the people worshipped.

Half nude, the fine metal of their bodies shining with each movement of their muscles, a party of young men guided them. An escort bearing lances entwined with purple flowers preceded them to the door of the palace.

In a large room, which was at least forty feet long, the Indian King was seated on a couch of bear skins. At his side, bedecked with flowers, were three pleasant and smiling women. But the impassible monarch betrayed neither his curiosity nor his pleasure. On either side of him thirty elders, draped in white mantles, stood respectfully. As soon as Tonti and Father Membré appeared, the King made a sign. A woman took the peace pipe from his hands and gave it to the white men. The ritual of smoking was accomplished in silence.

Then Tonti arose and presented La Salle's gifts. The ingenuous laughter of the three queens rang out at sight of the transparent splendor of the beads and the brilliant hues of the cloth. The King passed and repassed his finger over the blade of a hatchet. He seemed to be delighted to find it so sharp. Father Membré noticed that at this moment the potentate glanced out of the corner of his eye at a panel decorated with human scalps.

With the aid of a Taensa interpreter who spoke something of the language of northern Indians, Tonti learned of the power of this people. Alone the Natchez, farther south, equalled them in war. The Taensa stroked with his hand the long black braids which hung on either side of his ears, while telling stories of warfare. . . .

He also told of his nation's customs. When a king died, first all his wives and then a hundred chosen victims were sacrificed in order that his spirit should be honorably attended. Tonti noticed with melancholy that the three queens were much younger than their royal husband, and he began sadly to imagine their charming throats under the sacrificial knife.

Rolling his eyes of blue enamel in a face bearded with gold, Father Membré swore to tear from such a horrible superstition a people which seemed to him already civilized. Nevertheless he did not refuse to accompany the high priest to the temple.

Grinning and horrible relics! Skeletons of defunct kings, dismembered by time but carefully reassembled, stood along the walls. At their feet, on a shelf, offerings of fruits testified to a touching cult. The high priest did not, however, allow the two Frenchmen time to meditate uselessly on the vanity of kings. He was already pointing out the three carved wooden eagles that with outspread wings seemed ready to fly towards the rising sun.

The length of a cornice was covered with the whitening skulls of slain enemies. On a block of water cypress was a giant tortoise shell holding lustral water. The braided hair of their victims decorated this pagan baptismal font. Two limping old men with wobbling heads tended the sacred fire. Pointing to a closed door guarded by two armed warriors, the Indian priest spoke of rich treasures, among which glistened the finest pearls of the Gulf.

The King himself deigned to accompany his visitors back to La Salle's camp. A master of ceremonies and six dignitaries preceded the monarch, who was draped in a white robe. His eagle feathers swayed gently in the breeze. Behind him a shield bearer carried a heavy copper shield on which the Sun, Father of Taensa Kings, spread his rays.

The King saluted La Salle courteously. But the observant Norman noticed the glance of cupidity with which he regarded the white men's possessions. So Cavelier judged it wise to break camp and prepare to leave just as soon as the visit was ended.

The two banks of the river unveiled their treasures. Even though it was only the twenty-third of March, laurels were in flower. The fruits of plum and peach trees were already forming. La Salle was impressed by the walnut trees, whose fruit was that of a Promised Land. . . . Palm trees gleamed against the underbrush.

That night the guides deserted, having attempted in vain to frighten the voyagers with stories of the innumerable dangers that would inevitably overtake them should they descend farther. According to the Indians, access to the Gulf was guarded from strangers by jealous spirits. White men, they said, had already ventured there and had perished miserably. Their dead chief had been buried in the very bed of the Mississippi. La Salle recognized the memory of Hernando de Soto. He shrugged his shoulders.

Seated on a knoll in the shadow of a laurel, he meditated long. Bright catalpas and black tulip trees made vaults along the river's edge. To the

north a nervously paddled canoe was carrying away the panic of his deserting guides. . . . Where lay Hernando de Soto? . . . Doubtless no prayers had been said for him. But what a death for a conqueror! Surely it is hard to be defeated by fate. But De Soto was, after all, a cruel Spaniard, pretentious and boastful. Had he not fallen victim to his own lack of diplomacy and to the mirage that he cherished? La Salle flattered himself that a firm and lucid will is sufficient to overcome Fate.

He ordered the flotilla onward, toward the goal. . . .

On the twenty-sixth of March they espied a canoe fleeing before them. Tonti gave chase. His energetic voice could be heard urging on the paddlers. La Salle saw him disappear around a bend of the river. They hurried to catch up with him.

Standing in his canoe, he was signaling to be cautious. La Salle's canoe joined his. Following the direction of his arm, Cavelier beheld, running along the shore, a large troop of armed savages. Prudently he led his band to the opposite bank.

The savages appeared to be undecided, whereupon Cavelier ordered Tonti to take them the pipe of peace. He returned soon afterwards with several Indians, one of whom spoke the language of northern tribes.

La Salle learned that they were Natchez, and that their chief invited them to accept his hospitality.

Several leagues from the river, on dry and salubrious land, arose the Indian city, very similar to that of the Taensas. The Natchez chief likewise maintained that he was a descendant of the Sun. However, the two peoples were irreconcilable enemies. Laughingly Father Membré remarked to La Salle that the dispute was no doubt a question of heritage.

Through his interpreter the Norman extolled the advantages of an alliance with the French. He distributed a few hatchets and some knives.

Advised by a messenger, the chief of an allied tribe came at dawn to offer the allegiance of the Koroas. He brought with him a calumet and provisions for an abundant feast. Talkative, he gladly chattered about the route. According to him the Ocean was no more than "a dozen days by canoe" distant. But they must beware of a ferociously savage people whom he called the Quinipissas.

La Salle decided to open in honor of the new allies a last bale of hatchets and knives. Voluble, in a sing-song language, the chief addressed his companions. The word Quinipissas returned again and again, like a refrain. When he had finished his harangue, he was acclaimed by his followers with a savage cry. In taking leave of the Norman, the Koroa assured him that he would free their path of encumbering tribes.

A majestic and wooded island of beautiful blue shadows divided the river. The sun sang symphonies of light unknown to northern countries. An extraordinarily blue sky dipped itself into dormant backwaters. In the wake of the sun, the Mississippi flowed like molten metal.

On the second of April the leading canoes espied some fishermen in the distance. No doubt they were the famous Quinipissas of whom the friendly chief had spoken. Two canoes paddled by Mohicans attempted to overtake them, but without success.

Almost immediately from behind the tall canes sounded the beating of a war drum and cries of war. Arrows were rained by invisible archers. The Frenchmen thereupon gained the middle of the river and continued on their way.

Towards evening they reached a silent village. They debarked. There was an odor of carnage. Flies hummed in swarms. There were still smoking ruins. La Salle inspected a cabin filled with rotting corpses. Terrible hatchet gashes . . . there could be no mistake. This was the work of the Koroas.

For the first time La Salle realized the horror of alliances.

In the cruel light could be seen the line of the river bed. If one approached them, vestiges of shadow, warmly odorous, clung to the banks. Unknown birds flashed through the obscurity of foliage, like sapphires or rubies. Under the cypress trees, the sky dissolved in the warm waters of the bayous. Alligators floated like rotten logs. . . . Then, on April the sixth, the river divided into three branches.

At dawn La Salle gave the order to reconnoitre these three channels. He himself guided a party of canoes to the right, while Tonti took the middle course and D'Autray the left.

All at once spray struck their faces. Tasting the water they found it already brackish. A great joy painfully welled up in their breasts, a thrill ran

down their spines. And suddenly, sonorous under the shock of a thousand waves, immense and without a sail, there was the Sea! April the seventh, 1682!

CHAPTER TEN

Taking possession! . . .

On a knoll clear of possible floods, a column carved of cypress, painted with the arms of France, was planted, with the inscription: "*Louys le Grand, Roy de France et de Navarre*." Also a cross which marked, in addition to the political, the religious possession. On the front of the column was a lead plate. One side read:

Ludovicus Magnus regnat
Nono Aprilis, 1682

the other:

> Robertus Cavelier cum domino de Tonty legato, R. P. Zenobio Membre recollecto et reginti gallis, primus hoc flumen inde ab Illinorum pago enavigavit ejusque ostium fecit pervium, nono Aprilis, anni 1682.

On all sides rose the somber and devouring grandeur of the virgin forest. What savages might be lurking in its shadows? But eyes hollowed, cheeks thinned beneath his yellow beard, torn feet in their worn sandals, Father Membré intoned the *Vexilla* and the *Domine salvum fac regem*. La Salle raised his arm from beneath his scarlet cape, and the cry arose, "Vive le Roi!"

Then, kneeling, Jacques de la Métairie, notary royal, scrawled the imperishable parchment. La Salle's hand trembled before he signed. In succession came the names of Father Membré, Henri de Tonti, François de Boisrondet, Jean Bourdon, sieur Dautray, Jacques Cauchin, Pierre Yon, Gilles Menneret, the surgeon Michel, Jean Mas, Jean de Signon, Nicolas de la Salle. The notary added his signature.

Without supplies! But near the mouth of the river one of the savages discovered a cache containing smoked meat, which they found to be tender. But after the surgeon Michel had for a long time contemplated a bone he announced gravely, "We have been eating human flesh!" They were overcome with nausea.

They set out to hunt alligators and to dig in the clearings the somewhat starchy roots which the Normans, because of their shape and in memory of their native land, baptized with the name of *Pommes de terre*.

Then came the long and difficult return. . . .

A battle with the Quinipissas, two of whose dead had been scalped by La Salle's Indians. This bloodshed formed a stream between two races. Disdainful of an easy conquest, Cavelier opposed both fusilade and fire.

Next the Koroas attacked them with fifteen hundred warriors. However, before starting the combat, the chief came to palaver. La Salle gave him the scalps of the vanquished Quinipissas. The old man put his finger to his nose and whined:

"Oh my brother, why should we fight one another in order to please a lot of young fools? The youth of today has no sense."

None the less the descendant of the Sun pressed Cavelier to resume his route to the north.

It was at Fort Prudhomme that the conqueror of the Mississippi fell gravely ill.

Forty days of illness can lead one to the very gates of death. One returns thin, the beard longer, the eyes too bright. But if the heart is still warm, it is the time for escape to new projects.

Thus still weak, but ready for new undertakings, La Salle arrived at Michillimackinac in that month of September when the trees are too rich. . . .

At the same time, on the Illinois River, workmen were being sent into the woods. The scolding voice of Tonti dominated the Autumn winds. Logs were accumulating, trenches were dug. When the first snow began to fall the palisades of Fort Saint Louis were erected.

In the meantime, enriched and in disgrace, Frontenac was sailing toward France. The elderly General de la Barre, his successor, received the visit of the Squires la Chesnaye and Le Bert, who came with shifty eyes bearing notes signed by La Salle. The former army officer immediately recalled that he held from His Majesty the right to seize and to give away lands according

to his own judgment, and the colony of the conqueror of the Mississippi was confiscated.

In the very same office where, long ago, Frontenac and Cavelier had concluded their association, Monsieur de la Barre signed the act which gave to himself half the revenues realized by Le Bert and La Chesnaye from the lands taken from La Salle.

Sadly, muskets under their arms, the garrison of Fort Frontenac, after having seen the old Major de la Forest weep, embarked in canoes to seek other posts.

In Paris, Monsieur de Frontenac calmed with difficulty a La Salle athirst for vengeance, to whom the clerks of the Ministry—as formerly those of Monsieur Colbert—refused audience with Monsieur de Seignelay.

But doors opened before the former Governor. Then, his hand on his hip, he suddenly became master of himself again; calm and slightly disdainful, La Salle was able to persuade the Minister.

Worriedly, his forehead resting on his hand, the Marquis de Seignelay listened to his account of years of patience, of scheming and of audacity.

Suddenly there rose before him the labors of La Chine, the rumble of cataracts, the magnificence of winter snows, and the resplendent play of summer over the waters of the Great Lakes. The valley of the Ohio burst through the walls of that room in Versailles, the paltry grandeurs of the All Powerful King were submerged by the Mississippi. . . . And suddenly the achievement of La Salle appeared to surpass time itself. . . .

Then the Norman disdainfully denied the accusations of Le Bert, La Chesnaye and the Marquis de la Barre, and those marionettes collapsed.

A silence fraught with majesty followed the conqueror's words. His forehead beaded with perspiration, the Minister at length raised his head.

"Your property will be returned to you, Monsieur de la Salle. But you have yet the greatest of all to colonize for the Kingdom—Louisiana! It belongs to you. . . ."

At La Rochelle, Captain de Beaujeu was outraged at submitting to the orders of an upstart noble. He dictated innumerable letters of protest against putting such fine ships as the frigates *Joly* and *Belle*, the transport *St.*

François and the tender *Aimable* under the command of a man who, in his judgment as a sailor and a gentleman, was no better than a landlubber. Burning with indignation he tore up the imperative replies of Monsieur de Seignelay.

Angrily tapping the pavement of the wharf with his cane, he supervised the arming of the squadron.

La Salle, meanwhile, had enlisted a hundred soldiers from among those who drag out a miserable existence of ingratitude and faded glory in the lowest sections of all great cities. Skilled and unskilled workmen; thirty nobles who had lost their fortunes; three Sulpician missionaries (among them being his brother, the Abbé Cavelier); three Franciscans—Father Membré, Father Douay, Father Le Clerc; the son of the family gardener likewise offered his services. There were the two brothers Duhaut, who were said to be bad characters. And Creval de Moranger, the nephew who resembled Cavelier.

Cavelier had scarcely embarked before he was surprised at the change in himself. Suddenly everything—friendship, glory, attainment, things which had made his life—became indifferent to him. He felt no desire, no pleasure, no pain. Nothing but fits of anger. He flew into a fury because Beaujeu wanted to touch at Madeira. He fumed at the sailors who in passing the tropics attempted to give his men the "baptism of the Line."

Beaujeu anchored his vessels in the blue shadows of the palms of Petit Goave. Fever overtook them. Phantoms of delirium guarded La Salle's couch. While he was ill Beaujeu permitted the *Saint François* to be pillaged by the Spaniards without going to its aid.

On the twenty-first of December, the rosy morning fog unfolded to disclose the bright azure of the Gulf of Mexico. It seemed as if all the waves were roaring together. Hands to their eyes, leaning against the rail, the men gazed eagerly at the promised Louisiana. Mauve and gold in the sunset, the fog closed down again.

Because of it the *Aimable*, commanded by D'Aigron, unfortunately grounded on a shallow bank beyond which the low forest resembled a frieze. They were forced to build a small fort on an unknown river.

On pestilential lands where fever was augmented by the sting of insects, Joutel's workmen erected a new Fort Saint Louis.

Where was Tonti and his Fort Saint Louis?

The sails of the *Joly* and the *Belle* disappeared forever on the treacherous horizon. . . .

There were two years of wandering, during which the fleshless men dragged themselves in quest of the Mississippi. Wooden crosses were erected in the savannas. . . .

January the twelfth, 1687—of the two hundred adventurers who had debarked at Matagorda Bay, only thirty-six men and women were left. Deserters roamed the swampy thickets. Heroic men, or imprudent, had fallen under savage arrows. The fevered had ended in delirium. Among the survivors a new thing had been born—Hatred.

Twenty of them remained in the fort under the command of Monsieur Le Barbier. The remaining sixteen accompanied the man who still looked so young, but whose hair was already whitening: the Abbé Cavelier, Moranger, the young Cavelier, Joutel, Father Douay, Duhaut the elder, Larchevêque, the surgeon Lanquetot, Talon, De Marle, Teissier, Ruter, Hiens, Barthélemy, the valet Sager and Nika the Indian.

They crossed beautiful prairies and through groves of walnut trees. In the blue shadows flashed axes which opened the road to a team of five horses. Beyond, they were forced to advance through swamps. Friendly savages brought them their daughters; La Salle sent them back loaded with presents.

On the twelfth of February a river was discovered so like his Norman rivers that Robert called it the Eure. Sadly he looked back upon that far away past, over twenty years before, when adventure had as yet only the promise of its ripe fruits. Today he found the taste singularly ashen. . . .

On the seventeenth the voyagers were without meat, and La Salle ordered a hunt. It was learned that Nika the Indian had killed two bison. Moranger and De Marle went off with a horse to bring back the carcasses. They arrived at the spot as Duhaut was smoking the thin strips of flesh over the amber and turquoise smoke. Moranger became furious at the sight of

Lanquetot and Hiens sucking marrow from the bones. Shaking his fist he warned them that they would not eat as much of the meat as they thought.

Duhaut seized a hatchet and hurled it at his head. Moranger fell dead. A speck of gray brain flowed in a stream of blood.

The three murderers deliberated around the fire, before the meat for which they had no longer any appetite. A buzzing swarm of flies, blue and green, hovered over the corpse. Heads together, pale, eyes distended, Duhaut, Lanquetot and Hiens felt a shiver run the length of their spines. Glacial sweat dampened their armpits.

Evening fell. The sky was a monstrous opal, above this tragedy. Hidden in the canes, the three murderers awaited the avenging arrival of La Salle.

They heard, along the trail, the crushing of plants. . . .

Brilliant against the foliage, still glorious despite its holes, appeared the red mantle with gold braid which was the uniform of the epic voyager.

They fired at it.

Cavelier de la Salle was no more than the lifeless thing which three demented men were stripping of its clothes. . . .

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *The French Adventurer--The Life and Exploits of Lasalle* by Maurice Constantin-Weyer]