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The Journey of Raymbault and Jogues to the Sault, 1641

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CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

DURING the early part of the seventeenth century the Huron mission was the centre for Western enterprise and discovery. This mission was founded in 1615 by the Recollect fathers, who in 1625 called Jesuit missionaries to their aid. During the occupation of New France by the English (1629–1632) this mission served as a refuge for the interpreters and adventurers scattered among the interior tribes, and after the reoccupation by the French (1632) was assigned to the exclusive care of the Jesuits. They maintained the mission with great effectiveness, until its disastrous overthrow at the hands of the Iroquois in 1649 and 1650. The Huron country was situated between Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe, along the Wye and Severn rivers, bordering on Matchedash and Nottawasaga bays, in the present province of Ontario. The Huron were docile and gentle, and village after village became the home of a "black-gown" missionary, and the site of a rude bark chapel. In 1639 a central station, named Ste. Marie, was established upon the Wye; this was a large, substantially built village surrounded by a moat whose outlines are visible to the present day. From Ste. Marie attempts were made to discover distant tribes and open the way for further missionary enterprises. As younger Jesuits sought the promising American field, plans were made to preach the gospel to the Algonquian tribes who surrounded the Huron on every side. Among those chosen for this new enterprise was Father Charles Raymbault, a Norman youth, who, after a novitiate at Rouen, arrived in Canada in the summer of 1637. Three years he tarried in the colony to make himself master of the Algonquian tongue, being stationed for a time at Quebec and

for a time at Three Rivers. Late in the autumn of 1640 he arrived at Huronia and was assigned to his field of labor among the Nipissing Indians, whose winter hunting-grounds lay adjacent to the villages of the Huron, the two tribes being on friendly terms. From one camp to another, throughout the cold of a Canadian winter, Father Raymbault wandered, willing to starve or freeze might he but snatch some souls from the gates of Hell. With the coming of the tardy spring, the Nipissing returned to their villages on the northern shore of Lake Nipissing, accompanied by their faithful missionary.

Meanwhile in the Huron mission was laboring Father Isaac Jogues, a friend and early comrade of Raymbault, who, originally from Orleans, had made his novitiate at Rouen and Paris. He had come to New France a year earlier than his colleague, and, assigned at once to Huronia, had greatly aided in the founding of Ste. Marie. After its completion he had attempted an unsuccessful mission to the Petun or Tobacco Huron, ancestors of the modern Wyandot Indians. Upon his return he found Raymbault en route to his sojourn among the Nipissing. The latter mission was terminated for the time by the resolve of that tribe to celebrate an elaborate ceremony known as the feast for the dead. Invitations had been sent throughout the Algonquian Northwest; and on the shore of Lake Huron, sixty miles northwest of the Huron villages, there assembled by the 1st of September, 1641, two thousand savages from the region of the upper lakes. Thither Father Raymbault came with his Nipissing, while from the Huron villages the other "black gowns" sought the concourse.

Under the vivid pen of the Jesuit historian the description of this festival reads like a page strayed from a Grecian epic —so mighty were the combats, so virile the games, so plaintive the chants, and so agile the dances of these barbarians. This is a picture of the primitive Indians, before the white man's fire-water and epidemics had enfeebled their bodies

and lowered their morals. Among their amusements we even find the greased pole of our own rude forefathers; and under the guise of mourning their dead they displayed many feats of valor and indulged in hearty feasts.

Among the participants in the festival were a tribe of Indians who had come from a distance of a hundred or more leagues and who reported themselves to be dwellers beside the great strait where the waters leap from the upper or "Superior" lake into the basin of Lake Huron. The Jesuit fathers, having eagerly made friends with these distant tribesmen, were invited to accompany them to their village, whereupon Raymbault and Jogues were chosen for the honor of the voyage. In the following pages the narrative of their journey is told—the first description of the Sault Ste. Marie and its aborigines, whose name yet remains as a memorial of the expedition.

After returning to Huronia Raymbault essayed a further mission to the Nipissing, but his enfeebled condition made rest imperative. Jogues begged to be allowed to accompany him to Quebec. There the invalid missionary passed away, October 22, 1642. For Jogues was reserved a martyr's fate and fame. Captured by the Iroquois on his return route to the Huron mission, he was tortured as a prisoner until rescued by the Dutch of Albany, who sent him back to France. Thence in June, 1644, he again sought Quebec, and was finally massacred by the Iroquois when he essayed a mission to their country. The portion of his biography which forms a part of the history of New York is set forth, in connection with portions of his narrative writings, in an earlier volume of this series, *Narratives of New Netherland*, pp. 235–263.

The following account of the discovery of Sault Ste. Marie in 1641 is taken from the second part of the *Jesuit Relation* of 1642, which was written from the country of the Huron by Father Jerome Lalemant. In all probability he had with

him, as he wrote, the original narratives of the discoverers themselves. Certainly the narrative must be regarded as first-hand material, since the writer was present both at the departure and at the return of Raymbault and Jogues, and heard their adventures from their own lips. The passage we here present is from Thwaites, *Jesuit Relations*, XXIII. 223–227.

THE JOURNEY OF RAYMBAULT AND JOGUES TO THE SAULT, 1641

In this gathering of so many assembled nations,[1] we strove to win the affections of the chief personages by means of feasts and presents. In consequence of this, the Pauoitigoueieuhak invited us to go and see them in their own country. (They are a nation of the Algonquin language, distant from the Hurons a hundred or a hundred and twenty leagues towards the west, whom we call the inhabitants of the Sault.)[2] We promised to pay them a visit, to see how they might be disposed, in order to labor for their conversion, especially as we learned that a more remote nation whom they call Pouteatami[3] had abandoned their own country and taken refuge with the inhabitants of the Sault, in order to remove from some other hostile nation who persecuted them with endless wars. We selected Father Charles Raymbaut to undertake this journey; and as, at the same time, some Hurons were to be of the party, Father Isaac Jogues was chosen, that he might deal with them.

They started from our house of Ste. Marie,[4] about the

[1] This refers to the feast for the dead described in the Introduction, *ante*.

[2] Pauoitigoueieuhak is one form of the native name of this tribe, and means "dwellers at the falls." The French translated this name into their own language and called the tribe Saulteurs (Sauteux). They are known to us as the Chippewa, one of the largest tribes of Algonquian stock. This tribe still dwells in northern Wisconsin and Minnesota, and in Ontario along the northern shore of Lake Superior.

[3] The Potawatomi in language and customs are nearly allied to the Chippewa. From their temporary refuge at Sault Ste. Marie they removed to the entrance of Green Bay, and gradually spread along the western shore of Lake Michigan, occupying the sites of Milwaukee and Chicago, and doubling around the southern end of Lake Michigan into northern Indiana and southwest Michigan. By successive cessions in the early nineteenth century they sold their lands and removed to Kansas and Oklahoma, where remnants of the tribe are now living.

[4] See Introduction, *ante*, for this mission village.

end of September, and after seventeen days of navigation on the great lake or fresh-water sea that bathes the land of the Hurons, they reached the Sault, where they found about two thousand souls, and obtained information about a great many other sedentary nations, who have never known Europeans and have never heard of God—among others, of a certain nation, the Nadouessis,[1] situated to the northwest or west of the Sault, eighteen days' journey farther away. The first nine days are occupied in crossing another great lake that commences above the Sault; during the last nine days one has to ascend a river that traverses those lands.[2] These peoples till the soil in the manner of our Hurons, and harvest Indian corn and tobacco. Their villages are larger, and in a better state of defense, owing to their continual wars with the Kiristinons, the Irinions, and other great nations who inhabit the same country.[3] Their language differs from the Algonquin and Huron tongues.

The captains of this nation of the Sault invited our Fathers to take up their abode among them. They were given to understand that this was not impossible, provided that they were well disposed to receive our instruction. After having held a council, they replied that they greatly desired that good fortune—that they would embrace us as their Brothers, and would profit by our words. But we need laborers for that purpose; we must first try to win the peoples that are nearest to us, and meanwhile pray Heaven to hasten the moment of their conversion.

Father Charles Raymbaut had no sooner returned from

[1] This was the Algonquian name for the Sioux Indians. It signified the "enemy," and indicates the hostile spirit that existed for generations between the Chippewa and the Sioux. The habitat of the latter was at the western end of Lake Superior, about the headwaters of the Mississippi, thence west to the Missouri, where several large branches of their tribe dwelt. They are still on reservations in the Dakotas along the tributaries of the Missouri.

[2] This is a description, from the reports of the Indians, of the route to the Sioux via Lake Superior, St. Louis River, and by various portages to the lakes of the upper Mississippi.

[3] Kiristinons (Christinaux) are the tribe now known as the Cree, a northern Algonquian people who roamed the plains north and west of Lake Superior to the shores of Lake Winnipeg and beyond. "Irinions" refers to the Illinois, then the largest tribe between the Ohio, the Mississippi, and Lake Michigan.

this journey to the Saut than he reëmbarked in another canoe, to seek the Nipissiriniens at their winter quarters and to continue instructing them. Father René Menard,[1] who had recently come to our assistance, went with him, for we deemed it advisable to retain Father Claude Pijart,[2] so as not to abandon entirely a number of other Algonquin bands who come here every year to winter with the Hurons.

The lake was so agitated, the winds so contrary, and the storms so great, that the canoe was compelled to put back to our port, whence it had started; and, as the ice formed immediately afterward, it rendered the voyage impossible. Father Charles Raymbaut thereupon fell seriously ill, and has not had one day's good health since.

A great many Algonquins landed at the same time near our house, with the intention of spending the winter here. God wished to give employment to the two Fathers who knew the Algonquin language, and who remained in health, so as thereby to save some souls that he had chosen for Heaven; for disease carried off several children, and I do not think that a single one of them died without having received baptism, whatever opposition the parents may often have shown thereto.

[1] René Ménard entered the Jesuit order in 1624 at the age of nineteen; sixteen years later he came to Quebec, and in 1641 was sent to the Huron country as a missionary for the Algonquian tribes. This was his first attempt to winter among the savages; the next spring, however, he and Pijart began a Nipissing mission that was maintained for eighteen months. Returning to Huronia, he labored there until the ruin of that mission. In 1660 he visited Lake Superior, and during the following summer, somewhere in the wilderness of northern Wisconsin, was lost in the woods and never found.

[2] Claude Pijart came to Canada three years before Ménard, was assigned to the Algonquian mission, became, in 1653, superior of his order, and acted as pastor for the town of Quebec, where he died November 16, 1680.