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Adventures of Nicolas Perrot, 1665-1670

by Charles Claude Le Roy de La Potherie

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INTRODUCTION

THE year 1665 is marked by the re-establishment of the profitable fur trade of New France with the Northwest, which (as we have seen in the introduction to Radisson's *Journal, ante*) had been almost destroyed by the raids of the hostile Iroquois. The king in that summer sent his famous Carignan regiment, 1400 strong, to subdue the hostile bands and protect the pathways of commerce. Therefore a great flotilla from the Upper Country appeared upon the St. Lawrence, bringing hundreds of tribesmen to exchange their furs for the iron implements and weapons of the French, and for the much-prized blankets and silver ornaments offered by the white traders. After the great fair at Montreal had been held, and promises had been made that the Iroquois should be subdued, the great fleet of canoes prepared to return to the Upper Country, and with them went such adventurous Frenchmen as the love of gain or the lure of the unknown tempted to endure the hardships of wilderness life. Among these rangers of the woods was Nicolas Perrot, who began a life among the Indians that was destined to continue for thirty-five years and make him one of the most influential and best-informed men of his time on Indian habits and history.

Perrot had but just attained his majority when he set forth on his eventful voyage. The date of his arrival in New France is not known, but at the time of his departure he had acquired the Algonquian language and was versed in the art of winning the red men's good-will. The *Jesuit Relation* for 1665 speaks of a "Frenchman who went up the year before." This may possibly have been Perrot, but his

first recorded voyage is narrated below, when he sought the Potawatomi tribesmen at Green Bay. His address and influence soon secured this important nation for the French alliance, whereupon Perrot visited the other tribes in this locality, winning alliances, good-will, and a vast influence over all the Western aborigines.

The descriptions of his adventures, although not presented in chronological form, appear to have covered the first five years (1665–1670) of Perrot's life in the Western country. In 1670 he visited the colony once more, where the governor asked him to remain in order to form part of the escort of Sieur de St. Lusson, who was preparing to go the next spring to take formal possession of all the Northwest. The record of the expedition forms a later division of this volume.

After the Sault Ste. Marie pageant of 1671 we hear no more of Perrot's activities until 1683, when he was sent to Wisconsin as accredited government agent. The following year he led a large detachment of Indian warriors from the banks of the Mississippi to reinforce Governor La Barre's unfortunate expedition into the Iroquois country. He returned to the Northwest in the spring of 1685 as commissioned commandant for Green Bay and all its dependencies, built several posts on the Mississippi, discovered the presence of lead in southwestern Wisconsin, and finally, in 1689, at Fort St. Antoine upon Lake Pepin, took possession for King Louis of all the upper Mississippi region and the country of the Sioux. It was in this period that he presented to the mission at Green Bay the beautiful silver ostensorium, the oldest relic of French occupation in the West, now in the possession of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

It was at the Green Bay mission that a great disaster overtook Perrot's fortunes, for while he was absent on Denonville's military campaign of 1687, the mission house in which $40,000 worth of his furs was stored was burned by hostile

tribesmen and the means of settling with his creditors was lost.

After the departure of Denonville and the return to Canada of Count de Frontenac, in 1689, Perrot was again employed as government agent among the Northwestern tribes, whose languages and alliances he so well understood. In spite, however, of his ascendancy over these fierce warriors he was, in 1695, in great danger of being burned by the Miami, and was rescued just in time by the Foxes, who had always been his friends. He later directed his efforts toward adjusting local quarrels and rendering the Upper Country safe for traders and travellers, until the edict of 1696 recalled all commandants from the Northwest and overthrew the labor of years.

Once more, in 1701, the services of Perrot were utilized as interpreter at the great peace conference held at Montreal between the Iroquois and the nations of the upper lakes. The declining years of his life seem to have been passed at Montreal, where he was occupied in writing his *Mémoire sur les Mœurs, Coustumes et Relligion des Sauvages de l'Amérique Septentrionale,* and where he died in 1718.

His *Mémoire* remained in manuscript until 1864, when it was edited by Rev. Jules Tailhan and published at Paris. An English translation appears in E. H. Blair, *Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi and Region of the Great Lakes* (Cleveland, 1911), I. 25–272.

In addition to this *Mémoire* Perrot apparently kept journals of his adventures and experiences that have disappeared, but were extensively used by early Canadian historians. The one who most freely owns his debt to information from Perrot is La Potherie.

Charles Claude le Roy, sieur Bacqueville de la Potherie, was a West Indian Creole, who had influential connections at the court of Louis XIV., and received official appointments therefrom. In 1697 he was sent with the French fleet to

Hudson Bay, and on that voyage met Canadian adventurers and heroes, notably Iberville and his brothers. The succeeding year he was appointed to an important post in Canada, and arrived just in time to meet the great governor Frontenac before his death. La Potherie spent about five years in the colony, and was present in person at the great peace treaty of 1701, where all the tribes from the North and West gathered to negotiate and exchange prisoners with the Iroquois. At that assembly La Potherie and Perrot are known to have met, and without doubt the former secured from the latter both the narrative of his adventures and such notes and diaries as Perrot could furnish for the history La Potherie proposed to write. To the completion of this work Perrot's material contributed largely. The volumes appeared at Paris in 1716 under the title *Histoire de l'Amérique Septentrionale.* It acquired some measure of popularity and subsequent editions appeared in 1722 and 1753. Of the four small volumes, the second and third appear to be almost wholly reproductions of the lost journals of Nicolas Perrot, and give much fuller descriptions of his relations to the Western Indians and life among them than may be found in Perrot's own *Mémoire.* Miss Blair has incorporated an English translation of these two volumes of La Potherie in her *Indian Tribes,* as above cited. We have chosen for reproduction (with permission of the publishers, the Arthur H. Clark Company) the selection from volume I., pp. 307–339, which recounts Perrot's first years in Wisconsin, and describes the tribes as he saw them before they had been changed by the influence of white men.

ADVENTURES OF NICOLAS PERROT, BY LA POTHERIE, 1665–1670

CHAPTER VIII

. . . ALL the Outaouak peoples[1] were in alarm. While we were waging war with the Iroquois, those tribes who dwelt about Lake Huron fled for refuge to Chagoüamikon,[2] which is on Lake Superior; they came down to Montreal only when they wished to sell their peltries, and then, trembling. The trade was not yet opened with the Outaouaks. The name of the French people gradually became known in that region, and some of the French made their way into those places where they believed that they could make some profit; it was a Peru for them.[3] The savages could not understand why these men came so far to search for their worn-out beaver robes;[4] meanwhile they admired all the wares brought to them by the French, which they regarded as extremely precious. The knives, the hatchets, the iron weapons above all, could not be sufficiently praised; and the guns so astonished them that they declared that there was a spirit within the gun, which caused the loud noise made when it was fired. It is a fact that an Esquimau from Cape Digue,[5] at 60° latitude, in the strait of Hudson Bay, displayed so

[1] As explained in note 1 on p. 36, *ante*, the Ottawa were a specific tribe of Algonquian stock; but the term here employed, "all the Outouak peoples," refers to the several Algonquian tribes that dwelt in the Upper Country, such as the Ottawa, Chippewa, Potawatomi, Menominee, Foxes, Sauk, Mascoutin, etc.

[2] Now called Chequamegon Bay, on the northern shore of Wisconsin.

[3] A reference to the immense treasure and profit secured by the Spanish from the native empire of Peru.

[4] The beaver pelts most desired by the traders were those that had been worn by the Indians, since the oil they used upon their persons rendered the furs more supple and valuable.

[5] This illustration of Esquimaux life at Cape Diggs (Digue) on Hudson Strait was derived from La Potherie's personal experience. See Introduction, *ante*.

much surprise to me when he saw a *gode*[1] suddenly fall, covered with blood, as the result of a gunshot, that he stood motionless with the wonder caused by a thing which seemed to him so extraordinary. The Frenchmen who traded with the Canadian tribes were often amused at seeing those people in raptures of this sort. The savages often took them [the Frenchmen] for spirits and gods; if any tribe had some Frenchmen among them, that was sufficient to make them feel safe from any injuries by their neighbors; and the French became mediators in all their quarrels. The detailed conversations which I have had with many voyageurs in those countries have supplied me with material for my accounts of those peoples; all that they have told me about them has so uniformly agreed that I have felt obliged to give the public some idea of that vast region.

Sieur Perot has best known those peoples; the governors-general of Canada have always employed him in all their schemes; and his acquaintance with the savage tongues, his experience, and his mental ability have enabled him to make discoveries which gave opportunity to Monsieur de la Salle to push forward all those explorations in which he achieved so great success. It was through his agency that the Mississippi became known.[2] He rendered very important services to the colony, made known the glory of the king among those peoples, and induced them to form an alliance with us. On one occasion, among the Pouteouatemis, he was regarded as a god. Curiosity induced him to form the acquaintance of this nation, who dwelt at the foot of the Bay of Puans. They had heard of the French, and their desire to become acquainted with them in order to secure the trade with them had induced these savages to go down to Montreal, under the guidance of a wandering Outaouak who was glad to conduct them thither.[3] The French had been described

[1] *Gode* is a sea-bird, probably the murre or awk, common in the North Atlantic and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

[2] Perrot probably saw the Mississippi before La Salle had done so; whether he had made it known before the voyage of Jolliet and Marquette in 1673 is questionable.

[3] Perrot would seem to imply that he was the first Frenchman the Potawatomi had ever seen. Either he was ignorant of the visit of Radisson and Grosseilliers and other early adventurers, or he purposely magnifies his own discoveries.

to them as covered with hair (the savages have no beards), and they believed that we were of a different species from other men. They were astonished to see that we were made like themselves, and regarded it as a present that the sky and the spirits had made them in permitting one of the celestial beings to enter their land. The old men solemnly smoked a calumet[1] and came into his presence, offering it to him as homage that they rendered to him.

After he had smoked the calumet, it was presented by the chief to his tribesmen, who all offered it in turn to one another, blowing from their mouths the tobacco-smoke over him as if it were incense. They said to him: "Thou art one of the chief spirits, since thou usest iron; it is for thee to rule and protect all men. Praised be the Sun, who has instructed thee and sent thee to our country." They adored him as a god; they took his knives and hatchets and incensed them with the tobacco-smoke from their mouths; and they presented to him so many kinds of food that he could not taste them all. "It is a spirit," they said; "these provisions that he has not tasted are not worthy of his lips." When he left the room, they insisted on carrying him upon their shoulders; the way over which he passed was made clear; they did [not] dare look in his face; and the women and children watched him from a distance. "He is a spirit," they said; "let us show our affection for him, and he will have pity on us." The savage who had introduced him to this tribe was, in acknowledgment thereof, treated as a captain. Perot was careful not to receive all these acts of adoration, although, it is true, he accepted these honors so far as the interests of religion were not concerned. He told them that he was not what they thought, but only a Frenchman; that the real Spirit who had made all had given to the French the knowledge of iron, and the ability to handle it as if it were paste. He said that that Spirit, desiring to show his pity for his creatures, had permitted the French nation to settle in their country in order to remove them from the

[1] The calumet was the sacred pipe of the Indians and was used in all forms of worship and negotiation. The word is supposed to be derived from the Norman-French "chalumet," meaning a reed. The heads of the calumets are made of pipestone, the stems of hollow wood, with fantastic decorations.

blindness in which they had dwelt, as they had not known the true God, the author of nature, whom the French adored; that, when they had established a friendship with the French, they would receive from the latter all possible assistance; and that he had come to facilitate acquaintance between them by the discoveries of the various tribes which he was making. And, as the beaver was valued by his people, he wished to ascertain whether there were not a good opportunity for them to carry on trade therein.

At that time there was war between that tribe and their neighbors, the Malhominis.[1] The latter, while hunting with the Outagamis, had by mistake slain a Pouteouatemi, who was on his way to the Outagamis.[2] The Pouteouatemis, incensed at this affront, deliberately tomahawked a Malhomini who was among the Puans.[3] In the Pouteouatemi village there were only women and old men, as the young men had gone for the first time to trade at Montreal; and there was reason to fear that the Malhominis would profit by that mischance. Perot, who was desirous of making their acquaintance, offered to mediate a peace between them. When he had arrived within half a league of the village, he sent a man to tell them that a Frenchman was coming to visit them; this news caused universal joy. All the youths came at once to meet him, bearing their weapons and their warlike adornments, all marching in file, with frightful contortions and yells; this was the most honorable reception

[1] The Menominee (Malhominis) were an important tribe of Algonquian people, who have, so far as known, always dwelt in Wisconsin. When first noticed they appear to have lived on the shore of Lake Superior, whence they passed southward to the northwest shore of Green Bay. Their name was derived from the wild rice which was plentiful in their habitat and formed one of their standard articles of food. They still live in Wisconsin, either on the Keshena reservation or on farms that have been allotted to them. Many tribal members have made great progress toward civilized life.

[2] Outagami was the aboriginal name for the tribe called by the French *les Reynards*, by the English the Foxes. They were recent comers in Wisconsin, having been driven thither by Iroquois enmity. A valiant tribe, devoted to their own customs, they became to New France a great source of danger in the eighteenth century through a series of disastrous wars. In the course of these they removed their habitat to the Mississippi and later to Iowa, where a portion of the tribe still dwells.

[3] The Winnebago, for whom see p. 16, note 1, *ante*.

that they thought it possible to give him. He was not uneasy, but fired a gun in the air as far away as he could see them; this noise, which seemed to them so extraordinary, caused them to halt suddenly, gazing at the sun in most ludicrous attitudes. After he had made them understand that he had come not to disturb their repose, but to form an alliance with them, they approached him with many gesticulations. The calumet was presented to him; and, when he was ready to proceed to the village, one of the savages stooped down in order to carry Perot upon his shoulders; but his interpreter assured them that he had refused such honors among many tribes. He was escorted with assiduous attentions; they vied with one another in clearing the path, and in breaking off the branches of trees which hung in the way. The women and children, who had heard "the spirit" (for thus they call a gun), had fled into the woods. The men assembled in the cabin of the leading war chief, where they danced the calumet to the sound of the drum. He had them all assemble next day, and made them a speech in nearly these words:

Men, the true Spirit who has created all men desires to put an end to your miseries. Your ancestors would not listen to him; they always followed natural impulses alone, without remembering that they had their being from him. He created them to live in peace with their fellow-men. He does not like war or disunion; he desires that men, to whom he has given reason, should remember that they all are brothers, and that they have only one God, who has formed them to do only his will. He has given them dominion over the animals, and at the same time has forbidden them to make any attacks on one another. He has given the Frenchmen iron, in order to distribute it among those peoples who have not the use of it, if they are willing to live as men, and not as beasts. He is angry that you are at war with the Pouteouatemis; even though it seemed that they had a right to avenge themselves on your young man who was among the Puans, God is nevertheless offended at them, for he forbids vengeance, and commands union and peace. The sun has never been very bright on your horizon; you have always been wrapped in the shadows of a dark and miserable existence, never having enjoyed the true light of day, as the French do. Here is a gun, which I place before you to defend you from those who may attack you; if you have enemies, it will cause them

terror. Here is a porcelain collar,[1] by which I bind you to my body; what will you have to fear, if you unite yourselves to us, who make guns and hatchets, and who knead iron as you do pitch? I have united myself with the Pouteouatemis, on whom you are planning to make war. I have come to embrace all the men whom Onontio,[2] the chief of all the French who have settled in this country, has told me to join together, in order to take them under his protection. Would you refuse his support, and kill one another when he desires to establish peace between you? The Pouteouatemis are expecting many articles suited to war from the hands of Onontio. You have been so evenly matched [with them; but now] would you abandon your families to the mercy of their [fire] arms, and be at war with them against the will of the French? I come to make the discovery of [new] tribes, only to return here with my brothers,[3] who will come with me among those people who are willing to unite themselves to us. Could you hunt in peace if we give [weapons of] iron to those who furnish us beaver-skins? You are angry against the Pouteouatemis, whom you regard as your enemies, but they are in much greater number than you; and I am much afraid that the prairie people[4] will at the same time form a league against you.

The father of the Malhomini who had been murdered by the Pouteouatemis arose and took the collar that Perot had given him; he lighted his calumet, and presented it to him, and then gave it to the chief and all who were present, who smoked it in turn; then he began to sing, holding the calumet in one hand, and the collar in the other. He went out of the cabin while he sang, and, presenting the calumet and collar toward the sun, he walked sometimes backwards, sometimes forward; he made the circuit of his own cabin, went past a great number of those in the village, and finally returned to that of the chief. There he declared that he attached himself wholly to the French; that he believed in the living Spirit, who had, in behalf of all the spirits, domination over all other men who were inferior to him; that all

[1] A belt of wampum, called by the French *porcelaine*.

[2] *Onontio* was the title given by the tribesmen to the governor of New France; sometimes this term was used to refer to the king, who was called the "Great Onontio." The governor at this time was Daniel de Remy, sieur de Courcelles.

[3] Brothers is used figuratively, denoting other Frenchmen.

[4] Probably the Mascoutin, for whom see note 2 on p. 45, *ante*.

his tribe had the same sentiments; and that they asked only the protection of the French, from whom they hoped for life and for obtaining all that is necessary to man.

The Pouteouatemis were very impatient to learn the fate of their people who had gone trading to Montreal; they feared that the French might treat them badly, or that they would be defeated by the Iroquois. Accordingly, they had recourse to Perot's guide, who was a master juggler. That false prophet built himself a little tower of poles, and therein chanted several songs, through which he invoked all the infernal spirits to tell him where the Pouteouatemis were. The reply was that they were at the Oulamanistik River,[1] which is three days' journey from their village; that they had been well received by the French; and that they were bringing a large supply of merchandise. This oracle would have been believed if Perot, who knew that his interpreter had played the juggler, had not declared that he was a liar. The latter came to Perot, and heaped upon him loud reproaches, complaining that he did not at all realize what hardships his interpreter had encountered in this voyage, and that it was Perot's fault that he had not been recompensed for his prediction. The old men begged that Perot himself would relieve them from their anxiety. After telling them that such knowledge belonged only to God, he made a calculation, from the day of their departure, of the stay that they would probably make at Montreal, and of the time when their return might be expected; and determined very nearly the time when they could reach home. Fifteen days later, a man fishing for sturgeon came to the village in great fright, to warn them that he had seen a canoe, from which several gunshots had proceeded; this was enough to make them believe that the Iroquois were coming against them. Disorder prevailed throughout the village; they were ready to flee into the woods or to shut themselves into their fort. There was no probability that these were Iroquois, who usually make their attacks by stealth; Perot conjectured that they were probably their own men, who were thus displaying their joy as they came near the village. In fact, a young man

[1] Manistique River, a tributary of Green Bay in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

who had been sent out as a scout came back, in breathless haste, and reported that it was their own people who were returning. If their terror had caused general consternation, this good news caused no less joy throughout the village. Two chiefs, who had seen Perot blow into his gun at the time of the first alarm, came to let him know of the arrival of their people, and begged him always to consult his gun. All were eager to receive the fleet. As they approached, the new-comers discharged a salvo of musketry, followed by shouts and yells, and continued their firing as they came toward the village. When they were two or three hundred paces from the shore, the chief rose in his canoe and harangued the old men who stood at the water's edge; he gave an account of the favorable reception which had been accorded them at Montreal. An old man informed them, meanwhile praising the sky and the sun who had thus favored them, that there was a Frenchman in the village who had protected them in several times of danger; at this, the Pouteouatemis suddenly flung themselves into the water, to show their joy at so pleasing an occurrence. They had taken pleasure in painting themselves in a very peculiar manner; and the French garments, which had been intended to make them more comfortable, disfigured them in a ludicrous fashion. They carried Perot with them, whether or no he would, in a scarlet blanket (Monsieur de la Salle was also honored with a like triumph at Huron Island), and made him go around the fort, while they marched in double files in front and behind him, with guns over their shoulders, often firing volleys. This cortège arrived at the cabin of the chief who had led the band, where all the old men were assembled; and a great feast of sturgeon was served. This chief then related a more detailed account of his voyage, and gave a very correct idea of French usages. He described how the trade was carried on; he spoke with enthusiasm of what he had seen in the houses, especially of the cooking; and he did not forget to exalt Onontio, who had called them his children and had regaled them with bread, prunes, and raisins, which seemed to them great delicacies.

Chapter IX.

Those peoples were so delighted with the alliance that they had just made that they sent deputies in every direction to inform the Islinois, Miamis, Outagamis, Maskoutechs, and Kikabous that they had been at Montreal, whence they had brought much merchandise; they besought those tribes to visit them and bring them beavers. Those tribes were too far away to profit by this at first; only the Outagamis came to establish themselves for the winter at a place thirty leagues from the bay,[1] in order to share in the benefit of the goods which they could obtain from the Pouteouatemis. Their hope that some Frenchmen would come from Chagouamikon induced them to accumulate as many beavers as possible. The Pouteouatemis took the southern part of the bay, the Sakis[2] the northern; the Puans, as they could not fish, had gone into the woods to live on deer and bears. When the Outagamis had formed a village of more than six hundred cabins, they sent to the Sakis, at the beginning of spring, to let them know of the new establishment that they had formed. The latter sent them some chiefs, with presents, to ask them to remain in this new settlement; they were accompanied by some Frenchmen. They found a large village, but destitute of everything. Those people had only five or six hatchets, which had no edge, and they used these, by turns, for cutting their wood; they had hardly one knife or one bodkin to a cabin, and cut their meat with the stones which they used for arrows; and they scaled their fish with mussel-shells. Want rendered them so hideous that they aroused compassion. Although their bodies were large,

[1] This was probably the village where the Jesuit missionaries first found the Outagami or Foxes. Its exact location is not known, but it is believed to have been on Wolf River, somewhere in Waupaca or Outagami County, Wisconsin.

[2] The Sauk tribe was closely allied to the Foxes, but preserved a separate tribal existence until about 1733, when the two united and have since been known as Sauk and Foxes. The chief Sauk village was first at Green Bay, then on the Wisconsin near the present Sauk City, thence removed to the mouth of Rock River. The Sauk war under the chief Black Hawk occurred in 1832; at its close the tribe was removed beyond the Mississippi.

they seemed deformed in shape; they had very disagreeable faces, brutish voices, and evil aspects. They were continually begging from our Frenchmen who went among them, for those savages imagined that whatever their visitors possessed ought to be given to them gratis; everything aroused their desires, and yet they had few beavers to sell. The French thought it prudent to leave to the Sakis for the winter the trade in peltries with the Outagamis, as they could carry it on with the former more quietly in the autumn.

All the tribes at the bay went to their villages after the winter, to sow their grain. A dispute occurred between two Frenchmen and an old man, who was one of the leading men among the Pouteouatemis; the former demanded payment for the goods, but he did not show much inclination to pay; sharp words arose on both sides, and they came to blows. The Frenchmen were vigorously attacked by the savages, and a third man came to the aid of his comrades. The confusion increased; that Frenchman tore the pendants from the ears of a savage, and gave him a blow in the belly which felled him so rudely that with difficulty could he rise again. At the same time the Frenchman received a blow from a war-club on his head, which caused him to fall motionless. There were great disputes among the savages in regard to the Frenchman who had just been wounded, who had rendered many services to the village. There were three families interested in this contention—those of the Red Carp, of the Black Carp, and of the Bear.[1] The head of the Bear family—an intimate friend of the Frenchman, and whose son-in-law was the chief of the Sakis—seized a hatchet and declared that he would perish with the Frenchman, whom the people of the Red Carp had slain. The Saki chief, hearing the voice of his father-in-law, called his own men to arms; the Bear family did the same; and the wounded Frenchman began to recover consciousness. He calmed the Sakis, who were greatly enraged; but the savage who had

[1] Indian clans were designated by some natural object, usually some animal. The clan was an intermediate organization between the single family and the tribe; it took its inheritance through the mother, and persons of the same clan were not permitted to marry. The animal or tutelary being was worshipped in common by all the group.

maltreated him was compelled to abandon the village. These same Frenchmen's lives were in danger on still another occasion. One of them, who was amusing himself with some arrows, told a Saki who was bathing at the water's edge to ward off the shaft that he was going to let fly at him. The savage, who held a small piece of cloth, told him to shoot; but he was not adroit enough to avoid the arrow, which wounded him in the shoulder. He immediately called out that the Frenchman had slain him; but another Frenchman hastened to the savage, made him enter his cabin, and drew out the arrow. He was pacified by giving him a knife, a little vermilion to paint his face, and a piece of tobacco. This present was effectual; for when, at the Saki's cry, several of his comrades came, ready to avenge him on the spot, the wounded man cried, "What are you about? I am healed. Metaminens" (which means "little Indian corn"—this name they had given to the Frenchman, who was Perot himself) "has tied my hands by this ointment which you see upon my wound, and I have no more anger," at the same time showing the present that Perot had given him. This presence of mind checked the disturbance that was about to arise.

The Miamis, the Maskoutechs, the Kikabous, and fifteen cabins of Islinois came toward the bay in the following summer, and made their clearings thirty miles away, beside the Outagamis, toward the south. These peoples, for whom the Iroquois were looking, had gone southward along the Mississippi after the combat which I have mentioned.[1] Before that flight, they had seen knives and hatchets in the hands of the Hurons who had had dealings with the French, which induced them to associate themselves with the tribes who already had some union with us. They are very sportive when among their own people, but grave before strangers; well built; lacking in intelligence, and dull of apprehension; easily persuaded; vain in language and behavior, and extremely selfish. They consider themselves much braver than their neighbors; they are great liars, employing every kind of baseness to accomplish their ends; but they are industrious, indefatigable, and excellent pedestrians. For this

[1] This refers to a prehistoric enmity between the Winnebago and Illinois described by La Potherie in an earlier chapter.

last reason, they are called Metousceprinioueks, which in their language means "Walkers."

After they had planted their fields in this new settlement, they went to hunt cattle. They wished to entertain the people at the bay; so they sent envoys to ask the Pouteouatemis to visit them, and to bring the Frenchmen, if they were still with them. But those savages were careful not to let their guests know how desirous their neighbors were to become acquainted with the French; so they went away without telling the latter, and came back at the end of a fortnight, loaded with meat and grease. With them were some of those new settlers, who were greatly surprised to see the French—whom they reproached for not having come to visit them with the Pouteouatemis. The French saw plainly that the latter were jealous, and they recognized the importance of becoming acquainted with those peoples, who had come to the bay on purpose to trade more conveniently with us. The Pouteouatemis, when they saw that the French desired to go away with a Miami and a Maskoutech, made representations to them that there were no beavers among those people—who, moreover, were very boorish—and even that they were in great danger of being plundered. The French took their departure, notwithstanding these tales, and in five days reached the vicinity of the village.[1] The Maskoutech sent ahead the Miami, who had a gun, with orders to fire it when he arrived there; the report of the gun was heard soon afterward. Hardly had they reached the shore when a venerable old man appeared, and a woman carrying a bag in which was a clay pot filled with cornmeal porridge. More than two hundred stout young men came upon the scene; their hair was adorned with headdresses of various sorts, and their bodies were covered with tattooing in black, representing many kinds of figures; they carried arrows and war-clubs, and wore girdles and leggings of braided work. The old man held in his hand a calumet of red stone, with a long stick at the end; this was ornamented in its whole length with the heads of birds, flame-colored, and had in the middle a bunch of feathers colored a bright red, which resembled a great fan.

[1] This village site has been identified near the town of Berlin, Wisconsin, on the upper Fox River.

As soon as he espied the leader of the Frenchmen, he presented to him the calumet, on the side next to the sun; and uttered words which were apparently addressed to all the spirits whom those peoples adore. The old man held it sometimes toward the east, and sometimes toward the west; then toward the sun; now he would stick the end in the ground and then he would turn the calumet around him, looking at it as if he were trying to point out the whole earth, with expressions which gave the Frenchman to understand that he had compassion on all men. Then he rubbed with his hands Perot's head, back, legs, and feet, and sometimes his own body. This welcome lasted a long time, during which the old man made a harangue, after the fashion of a prayer, all to assure the Frenchman of the joy which all in the village felt at his arrival.

One of the men spread upon the grass a large painted ox-skin,[1] the hair on which was as soft as silk, on which he and his comrade were made to sit. The old man struck two pieces of wood together, to obtain fire from it; but as it was wet he could not light it. The Frenchman drew forth his own fire-steel, and immediately made fire with tinder. The old man uttered loud exclamations about the iron, which seemed to him a spirit; the calumet was lighted, and each man smoked; then they must eat porridge and dried meat, and suck the juice of the green corn. Again the calumet was filled, and those who smoked blew the tobacco-smoke into the Frenchman's face, as the greatest honor that they could render him; he saw himself smoked like meat, but said not a word. This ceremony ended, a skin was spread for the Frenchman's comrade. The savages thought that it was their duty to carry the French guests; but the latter informed the Maskoutechs that, as they could shape the iron, they had strength to walk, so they were left at liberty. On the way, they rested again, and the same honors were paid to him as at the first meeting. Continuing their route, they halted near a high hill, at the summit of which was the village; they made their fourth halt here, and the ceremonies were repeated. The great chief of the Miamis came to meet them, at the head of more than three thousand men, accom-

[1] A buffalo robe; the French called buffaloes oxen or wild cattle.

panied by the chiefs of other tribes who formed part of the village. Each of these chiefs had a calumet, as handsome as that of the old man; they were entirely naked, wearing only shoes, which were artistically embroidered like buskins; they sang, as they approached, the calumet song, which they uttered in cadence. When they reached the Frenchmen, they continued their songs, meanwhile bending their knees, in turn, almost to the ground. They presented the calumet to the sun, with the same genuflexions, and then they came back to the principal Frenchman, with many gesticulations. Some played upon instruments the calumet songs, and others sang them, holding the calumet in the mouth without lighting it. A war chief raised Perot upon his shoulders, and, accompanied by all the musicians, conducted him to the village. The Muskoutech who had been his guide offered him to the Miamis, to be lodged among them; they very amiably declined, being unwilling to deprive the Maskoutechs of the pleasure of possessing a Frenchman who had consented to come under their auspices. At last he was taken to the cabin of the chief of the Maskoutechs; as he entered, the lighted calumet was presented to him, which he smoked; and fifty guardsmen were provided for him, who prevented the crowd from annoying him. A grand repast was served, the various courses of which reminded one of feeding-troughs rather than dishes; the food was seasoned with the fat of the wild ox. The guards took good care that provisions should be brought often, for they profited thereby.

On the next day, the Frenchman gave them, as presents, a gun and a kettle; and made them the following speech, which was suited to their character:

> Men, I admire your youths; although they have since their birth seen only shadows, they seem to me as fine-looking as those who are born in regions where the sun always displays his glory. I would not have believed that the earth, the mother of all men, could have furnished you the means of subsistence when you did not possess the light of the Frenchman, who supplies its influences to many peoples; I believe that you will become another nation when you become acquainted with him. I am the dawn of that light, which is beginning to appear in your lands, as it were, that which precedes the sun, who will soon shine brightly and will cause you to be born again, as if in another land, where you will find,

more easily and in greater abundance, all that can be necessary to man. I see this fine village filled with young men, who are, I am sure, as courageous as they are well built; and who will, without doubt, not fear their enemies if they carry French weapons. It is for these young men that I leave my gun, which they must regard as the pledge of my esteem for their valor; they must use it if they are attacked. It will also be more satisfactory in hunting cattle and other animals than are all the arrows that you use. To you who are old men I leave my kettle; I carry it everywhere without fear of breaking it. You will cook in it the meat that your young men bring from the chase, and the food which you offer to the Frenchmen who come to visit you.

He tossed a dozen awls and knives to the women, and said to them: "Throw aside your bone bodkins; these French awls will be much easier to use. These knives will be more useful to you in killing beavers and in cutting your meat than are the pieces of stone that you use." Then, throwing to them some rassade:[1] "See; these will better adorn your children and girls than do their usual ornaments." The Miamis said, by way of excuse for not having any beaver-skins, that they had until then roasted those animals.

That alliance began, therefore, through the agency of Sieur Perot. A week later the savages made a solemn feast, to thank the sun for having conducted him to their village. In the cabin of the great chief of the Miamis an altar had been erected, on which he had caused to be placed a Pindi-ikosan. This is a warrior's pouch, filled with medicinal herbs wrapped in the skins of animals, the rarest that they can find; it usually contains all that inspires their dreams.[2] Perot, who did not approve this altar, told the great chief that he adored a God who forbade him to eat things sacrificed to evil spirits or to the skins of animals. They were greatly surprised at this, and asked if he would eat provided they shut up their Manitous;[3] this he consented to do. The chief begged Perot to consecrate him to his Spirit, whom he

[1] A French term for the ordinary round beads of glass or porcelain, which soon superseded the Indians' bone and shell ornaments.

[2] The common "medicine-bag" of the North American Indian, containing objects of his veneration, is well described by Perrot.

[3] Manitou was the Algonquian term for spirit; in this instance it was applied to the medicine-bag which was supposed to be the abode of the personal god of each owner.

would thenceforth acknowledge; he said that he would prefer that Spirit to his own, who had not taught them to make hatchets, kettles, and all else that men need; and he hoped that by adoring him they would obtain all the knowledge that the French had. This chief governed his people as a sort of sovereign; he had his guards, and whatever he said or ordered was regarded as law.[1]

The Pouteouatemis, jealous that the French had found the way to the Miamis, secretly sent a slave to the latter, who said many unkind things about the French; he said that the Pouteouatemis held them in the utmost contempt, and regarded them as dogs. The French, who had heard all these abusive remarks, put him into a condition where he could say no more outrageous things; the Miamis regarded the spectacle with great tranquillity. When it was time to return to the bay, the chiefs sent all their young men to escort the Frenchmen thither, and made them many presents. The Pouteouatemis, having learned of the Frenchman's arrival, came to assure him of the interest they felt in his safe return, and were very impatient to know whether the tribes from whom he had come had treated him well. But when they heard the reproaches which he uttered for their sending a slave who had said most ungenerous things regarding the French nation, they attempted to make an explanation of their conduct, but fully justified the poor opinion which he already had of them. The savages have this characteristic, that they find a way to free themselves from blame in any evil undertaking, or to make it succeed without seeming to have taken part in it.

Chapter X.

It was for the interest of the Pouteouatemis to keep on good terms with the French; and they had been too well received at Montreal not to return thither. Indeed, after having presented to Perot a bag of Indian corn, that he might, they said, "eat and swallow the suspicion that he

[1] The position of a chief among the Miami was unusually prominent for North American Indians. The Jesuit missionaries represent the great Miami chief as having more influence and being attended with more guards and surrounded with more ceremony than the chief of any other tribe in the Northwest.

felt toward them," and five beaver robes to serve as an emetic for the ill-will and vengeance which he might retain in his heart, they sent some of their people on a journey to Montreal. When they came in sight of Michilimakinak, which then was frequented only by them and the Iroquois, they perceived smoke. While they were trying to ascertain what this meant, they encountered two Iroquois, and saw another canoe off shore. Each party was alarmed at the other; as for the Iroquois, they took to flight, while the Pouteouatemis, plying their paddles against contrary winds, fled to their own village; they felt an extraordinary anxiety, for they knew not what measures to take for protection against the Iroquois. All the peoples of the bay experienced the same perplexity. Their terror was greatly increased when, a fortnight later, they saw large fires on the other shore of the bay, and heard many gun-shots. As a climax to their fears, the scouts whom they had sent out brought back the news that they had seen at night many canoes made in Iroquois fashion, in one of which was a gun, and a blanket of Iroquois material; and some men, who were sleeping by a fire. All those canoes came in sight the next morning, and each one fled, at the top of his speed, into the forest; only the most courageous took the risk of awaiting, with resolute air, the Iroquois in their fort, where they had good firearms. As we were at peace with the Iroquois, some of the bolder spirits among our Frenchmen offered to go to meet that so-called army, in order to learn the motive which could have impelled them to come to wage war against the allies of Onontio. They were greatly surprised to find that it was a fleet of Outaouaks, who had come to trade; these people had, while travelling across the country, built some canoes which resembled those of the Iroquois. The men whom the Pouteouatemis had seen at Michilimakinak were really Iroquois; but they had feared falling into the hands of the Pouteouatemis quite as much as the latter had feared them. The Iroquois, while fleeing, fell into an ambuscade of forty Sauteurs, who carried them away to the Sauteur village; they had come from a raid against the Chaouanons[1] near Carolina, and had brought

[1] *Chaouanon* was the French word for the Shawnee, an important Algonquian tribe, whose name means "Southerners." When first known to whites

with them a captive from that tribe, whom they were going to burn. The Sauteurs set him at liberty, and enabled him to return to the bay by entrusting him to the Sakis. This man gave them marvellous notions of the South Sea, from which his village was distant only five days' journey—near a great river which, coming from the Islinois, discharges its waters into that sea. The tribes of the bay sent him home with much merchandise, urging him to persuade his tribesmen to come and visit them.

These peoples held several councils, to deliberate whether they should go down to Montreal; they hesitated at first, because they had so few beavers. As the savages give everything to their mouths, they preferred to devote themselves to hunting such wild beasts as could furnish subsistence for their families, rather than seek beavers, of which there were not enough; they preferred the needs of life to those of the state. Nevertheless, they reflected that if they allowed the Frenchmen to go away without themselves going down to trade, it might happen that the latter would thereafter attach themselves to some other tribes; or, if they should afterward go to Montreal, the governor would feel resentment against them because they had not escorted these Frenchmen thither. They decided that they would go with the Frenchmen; preparations for this were accordingly made, and a solemn feast was held; and on the eve of their departure a volley of musketry was fired in the village. Three men sang incessantly, all night long, in a cabin, invoking their spirits from time to time. They began with the song of Michabous;[1] then they came to that of the god of lakes, rivers, and forests, begging the winds, the thunder, the storms, and the tempests to be favorable to them during the voyage. The next day, the crier went through the village, inviting the men to the cabin where the feast was to be prepared. They found no difficulty in going thither, each furnished

they were residing in Tennessee on the Cumberland River. Later they gathered in southern Ohio, where they formed the most intractable barrier to American advance. Tecumseh was a Shawnee chief, and his tribe opposed the Americans until the close of the War of 1812. They were removed, first to Missouri, later to Oklahoma.

[1] "Michabous" is one form of the name of the Great Spirit, which all Indian tribesmen invoke as their highest deity.

with his Ouragan and Mikouen.[1] The three musicians of the previous night began to sing; one was placed at the entrance of the cabin, another in the middle, and the third at its end; they were armed with quivers, bows, and arrows, and their faces and entire bodies were blackened with coal. While the people sat in this assembly, in the utmost quiet, twenty young men—entirely naked, elaborately painted, and wearing girdles of otter-skin, to which were attached the skins of crows, with their plumage, and gourds—lifted from the fires ten great kettles; then the singing ceased. The first of these actors next sang his war-song, keeping time with it in a dance from one end to the other of the cabin, while all the savages cried in deep guttural tones, "Hay, hay!" When the musician ended, all the others uttered a loud yell, in which their voices gradually died away, much as a loud noise disappears among the mountains. Then the second and the third musicians repeated, in turn, the same performance; and, in a word, nearly all the savages did the same, in alternation—each singing his own song, but no one venturing to repeat that of another, unless he were willing deliberately to offend the one who had composed the song, or unless the latter were dead (in order to exalt, as it were, the dead man's name by appropriating his song). During this, their looks were accompanied with gestures and violent movements; and some of them took hatchets, with which they pretended to strike the women and children who were watching them. Some took firebrands, which they tossed about everywhere; others filled their dishes with red-hot coals, which they threw at each other. It is difficult to make the reader understand the details of feasts of this sort, unless he has himself seen them. I was present at a like entertainment among the Iroquois at the Sault of Montreal,[2] and it seemed as if I were in the midst of hell. After most of those who had been invited to this pleasant festival had sung, the chief of the

[1] Dish and spoon; it was customary for each guest at the feast to come provided with his own utensils.

[2] A mission colony of Iroquois was established at Sault St. Louis or the village of Caughnawaga, on the south bank of the St. Lawrence not far from Montreal. La Potherie is comparing Perrot's account of the feast among the Miami with one he has himself witnessed.

feast, who had given the dance, sang a second time; and he said at the end of his song (which he improvised) that he was going to Montreal with the Frenchmen, and was on that account offering these prayers to their God, entreating him to be propitious to him on the voyage, and to render him acceptable to the French nation. The young men who had taken off the kettles took all the dishes, which they filled with food, while the three chanters repeated their first songs, not finishing their concert until everything had been eaten —a feat which did not take long to accomplish. An old man arose and congratulated, in the most affable manner, the chief of the feast on the project which he had formed, and encouraged the young men to follow him. All those who wished to go on the voyage laid down a stick; there were enough people to man thirty canoes. At the Sault,[1] they joined seventy other canoes, of various tribes, all of whom formed a single fleet.

[1] Sault Ste. Marie.