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Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato Scott
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Jowett Stevenson Dickens Plato Scott
Andersen Andersen Cervantes Burton Harte
London Descartes Wells Harte
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**The Adventures of the Chevalier
De La Salle and His Companions,
in Their Explorations of the
Prairies, Forests, Lakes, and
Rivers, of the New World, and
Their Interviews with the Savage
Tribes, Two Hundred Years Ago**

John S. C. (John Stevens Cabot) Abbott

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AMERICAN PIONEERS AND PATRIOTS.

THE ADVENTURES

OF THE

Chevalier De La Salle

AND HIS COMPANIONS,

IN THEIR EXPLORATIONS OF THE
PRAIRIES, FORESTS, LAKES, AND RIVERS, OF
THE NEW WORLD,
AND THEIR INTERVIEWS WITH THE SAVAGE
TRIBES,
TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

By

JOHN S. C. ABBOTT.

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TO

THE INHABITANTS OF THE GREAT VAL-
LEY OF THE WEST,
WHOSE MAGNIFICENT REALMS
LA SALLE AND HIS COMPANIONS WERE
THE FIRST TO EXPLORE,
THIS VOLUME
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED, BY

JOHN S. C. ABBOTT.

PREFACE.

There is no one of the Pioneers of this continent whose achievements equal those of the Chevalier Robert de la Salle. He passed over thousands of miles of lakes and rivers in the birch canoe. He traversed countless leagues of prairie and forest, on foot, guided by the moccasined Indian, threading trails which the white man's foot had never trod, and penetrating the villages and the wigwams of savages, where the white man's face had never been seen.

Fear was an emotion La Salle never experienced. His adventures were more wild and wondrous than almost any recorded in the tales of chivalry. As time is rapidly obliterating from our land the footprints of the savage, it is important that these records of his strange existence should be perpetuated.

Fortunately we have full and accurate accounts of these explorations, in the journals of Messrs. Marquette, Hennepin, and Joliet. We have still more minute narratives, in *Etablissement de la Foix*, par le P. Chretien Le Clercq, Paris 1691; *Dernieres Dècouvertes*, par le Chevalier de Tonti, Paris 1697; *Journal Historique*, par M. Joutel, Paris 1713.

For the incidents in the last fatal expedition, to establish a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi, and the wonderful land tour of more than two thousand miles from the sea-coast of Texas to Quebec, through the territories of hundreds of tribes, we have the narratives of Father Christian Le Clercq, the narrative of Father Anastasias Douay, and the minute and admirably written almost daily journal of Monsieur Joutel, in his *Dernier Voyage*. Both Douay and Joutel accompanied this expedition from its commencement to its close.

In these adventures the reader will find a more vivid description of the condition of this continent, and the character of its inhabitants two hundred years ago, than can be found anywhere else. Sir Walter Scott once remarked, that no one could take more pleasure in reading his romances, than he had taken in writing them. In this volume we have the romance of truth.

If the writer can judge of the pleasure of the reader, from the intense interest he has experienced in following these adventurers

through their perilous achievements, this narrative will prove to be one of extraordinary interest.

John S. C. Abbott.

Fair Haven, Connecticut.

Adventures of La Salle

and his companions.

CHAPTER I.

The Enterprise of James Marquette.

The Discovery of America. Explorations of the French in Canada. Ancestry of James Marquette. His noble character. Mission to Canada. Adventures with the Indians. Wild Character of the Region and the Tribes. Voyage to Lake Superior with the Nez-Percés. Mission at Green Bay. Search for the Mississippi. The Outfit. The Voyage through Green Bay. Fox River and the Illinois. Enters the Mississippi. Scenes Sublime and Beautiful. Adventures in an Indian Village.

Nearly three hundred and forty years ago, in April 1541, De Soto, in his adventurous march, discovered the majestic Mississippi, not far from the border of the State of Tennessee. No white man's eye had ever before beheld that flood whose banks are now inhabited by busy millions. The Indians informed him that all the region below consisted of dismal, endless, uninhabitable swamps. De Soto, world-weary and woe-stricken, died upon the banks of the river. In its fathomless depths his body found burial.

These cruel adventurers, insanely impelled in search of mines of gold, founded no settlements, and left behind them no traces of their passage, save that by their cruelties they had excited the implacable ire of the Indian against the white man. A hundred years of earth's many griefs lingered slowly away, while these vast solitudes were peopled only by wandering savage tribes whose record must forever remain unknown.

In the year 1641, some French envoys, from Canada, seeking to open friendly trade with the Indians for the purchase of furs, penetrated the northwest of our country as far as the Falls of St. Mary, near the outlet of Lake Superior. The most friendly relations existed between these Frenchmen and the Indians, wherever the tribes were encountered. This visit led to no settlement. The adventurous traders purchased many furs, with which they loaded their birch ca-

noes: established friendly relations with these distant Indians, and greatly extended the region from which furs were brought to their trading posts in Canada.

Eighteen more years passed away, over the silent and gloomy wilderness, when in 1659, a little band of these bold and hardy explorers, in their frail canoes, with Indian guides, paddled along the lonely, forest-fringed shores of Lake Ontario, ascended the Niagara River to the Falls, carried their canoes on their shoulders around the rapids, launched them again on Lake Erie, traversed that inland sea over two hundred and fifty miles, entered the magnificent Strait, passed through it to Lake St. Clair, crossed that lake, ascended the St. Clair River to Lake Huron, and traversing its whole length, a distance of three hundred miles, reached the Falls of St. Mary.

Here, at the distance of more than a thousand miles from the least vestiges of civilization, and surrounded by numerous and powerful bands of savages, these hardy men passed an inclement winter. Amidst rocks and gloomy pines they reared their hut. Game was abundant, fuel was at their door, the Indians were hospitable, and they wanted for nothing. One event only darkened these wintry months. The leader of the band became lost in the woods and perished.

In the spring the men returned rejoicingly to Canada, with their canoes laden with the richest furs. They also brought such reports of the docility and amiability of the Indians, as to inspire the Christians in Canada with the intense desire to establish missionary stations among them. Five years passed away, when Father Claude Allouez, with a small band of Christian heroes, penetrated these wilds to proclaim the glad tidings of the Gospel. Two years after, he was followed by Father James Marquette, a noble man, whose name will never die.

As the explorations of Marquette opened the way for the still more wonderful excursions of La Salle, I must here introduce a brief account of his adventures. There is something in blood. The Marquette family had been illustrious in France from time immemorial. Generation after generation, many of its members had obtained renown, not only for chivalric courage, but for every virtue which can adorn humanity. Their ancestral home was a massive feudal

castle on an eminence near the stately city of Leon. The armorial bearing of the family commemorates deeds of heroic enterprise five hundred years ago. They were generally earnest Christians.

James Marquette was born at the ancient seat of the family in the year 1637. His mother was a woman of fervent piety and of unusual strength and culture of mind. Her brother, John Baptiste de la Salle, was the founder of a system of Christian schools for the gratuitous education of the poor. Thousands were thus instructed long before the present system of public schools was introduced. It was to the instructions of his noble mother that James Marquette was indebted for his elevated Christian character, and for his self-sacrificing devotion to the interests of humanity, which have given his name celebrity through a large portion of the Christian world.

At the age of seventeen this noble young man, resisting all the brilliant allurements the world opened to one of his wealth and rank, consecrated himself to the service of religion by entering the ministry in the Catholic Church, in which he was born and educated, and by whose influences he was exclusively surrounded.

Two years were devoted to intense study. Then, for twelve years, he was employed in teaching and in many laborious and self-denying duties. As was natural, with a young man of his ardent nature and glowing spirit of enterprise, he was very desirous of conveying the glad tidings of the Gospel to those distant nations who had never even heard of the name of Jesus.

Canada and its savage tribes were then attracting much attention in France. Wonderful stories were told of the St. Lawrence River, and of the series of majestic lakes, spreading far away into the unknown interior, and whose shores were crowded with Indian tribes of strange aspect, language, and customs.

In the year 1666, Marquette set sail from France, On the 20th of September, he landed, on the banks of the St. Lawrence, at a little hamlet of French log-cabins and Indian wigwams, called Quebec. He was then but twenty-nine years of age. There was, at that time, another missionary, M. Allouez, on an exploring tour far away upon the majestic lakes of the interior. With adventurous footsteps he was traversing prairie solitudes and forest glooms, upon which no eye of civilized man had ever yet looked. His birch canoe, paddled

by Indian guides, glided over solitary waters hundreds of leagues beyond the remotest frontier stations.

There was quite an important trading-post at the mouth of Saguenay River. This was a remarkable stream, which entered the St. Lawrence about one hundred and twenty miles below Quebec. It came rushing down, from unknown regions of the north, with very rapid flood, entering the St. Lawrence at a point where that majestic river was eleven miles in width.

Here the French government had established one of the most important commercial and religious stations of that day. At certain seasons of the year it presented an extraordinary wild and picturesque aspect of busy life. There were countless Indian tribes, clustered in villages along the banks of the St. Lawrence, the Saguenay, and their tributary streams. In the early summer, the Indians came by hundreds, in fleets of canoes—men, women and children—to this great mart of traffic. They came in their gayest attire, reared their wigwams on the plain, kindled their fires, and engaged in all the barbaric sports of Indian gala days. The scene presented was so full of life and beauty, that the most skilful artist might despair of his ability to transfer it to the canvas.

Father Marquette took his station at this point. Here for twelve years he patiently labored, trying to teach the Indians the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Full of enthusiasm, and naturally endowed with a very enterprising spirit, his heart glowed with zeal as he listened to the narrative of Father Allouez, of populous tribes, far away on the majestic shores of Huron, Michigan, Superior. These tribes had never heard of the mission of the Son of God, to save a lost world. They had but very faint conceptions of the Heavenly Father. Marquette could not resist the impulse to carry the Gospel to these realms of darkness.

It is difficult for us now to form any adequate conception of the little hamlet, at the mouth of the Saguenay, where Marquette commenced his missionary labors. The log-cabins of the French, their store-house, and, most prominent of all, the cross-surmounted log chapel, were clustered together. At a little distance, on the plain, were hundreds of Indian wigwams. Bark canoes, light as bubbles, were seen gliding over the still waters, which were there expanded

into a beautiful bay. The glooms of the gigantic forest, spreading back to unexplored and unimagined depth, added to the sublimity of the scene.

There seemed to be no apprehension of hostility on either side. The intercourse between the two parties of civilized and uncivilized men was truly fraternal. The French conformed, as far as possible, to the modes of life of the Indians. They shared in their games, married the daughters of their chiefs, and in all points endeavored to identify the interests of the natives with their own.

M. Marquette had a remarkable facility in the acquisition of languages. There was a general resemblance in the language of all the tribes on the St. Lawrence. He could very soon speak fluently with all. Taking Indian guides with him, he commenced tours in various directions, paddled by Indians in the birch bark canoe. He visited tribe after tribe, met the chiefs at their council fires, slept in the wigwams, administered medicines to the sick, and, with zeal which no discouragement could chill, endeavored to point the living and the dying to that Saviour who taketh away the sins of the world.

After spending two years in these labors, he obtained an appointment to connect himself with a mission established nearly a thousand miles west, far away upon the shores of Lake Superior. On the 21st of April, 1668, he left Quebec for Montreal. The distance was one hundred and eighty miles up the river. The voyage was made in a birch canoe, with three boatmen to aid him in paddling it against the stream. They could proceed about thirty miles a day. The voyage occupied about a week. There were Indian villages on the banks where they occasionally slept. At other times they encamped in the forest, the night wind lulling them to sleep, as it sighed through the leafless branches, which the returning sun of spring had scarcely yet caused to bud.

At Montreal there was a little cluster of cabins and wigwams, presenting a very different aspect from the stately city which now adorns that site. After a short tarry there, waiting for a suitable guide, to traverse more than a thousand miles of almost pathless wilderness, a party of Nez-Percé Indians, from Lake Superior, came down the river in their canoes. With them Marquette embarked. It

was a wonderful voyage which this gentleman, from the refinement and culture of France, made alone with these savages.

They paddled up the Ottawa River a distance of nearly four hundred miles. Thence through a series of narrow streams and minor lakes, they entered Lake Nipissing. Descending the rapid flood of French River, through cheerless solitudes eighty miles in extent, they entered Georgian Bay. Crossing this vast sheet of water over an expanse of fifty miles, they saw the apparently boundless waves of Lake Huron opening before them. The northern shores of this inland sea they skirted, until they reached the river St. Mary, which connects Lake Superior with Lake Huron. Here two missionary stations were established.

One was near the entrance of the river into Lake Huron, about forty miles below the celebrated Falls of St. Mary. The other was at Green Bay, an immense lake in itself, jutting out from the north-western extremity of Lake Michigan. Father Marquette reared his log-cabin in the vicinity of a small Indian village, on the main land, just south of the island of Mackinaw. He named the station St. Ignatius. In this vast solitude this heroic man commenced his labors of love. There were about two thousand souls in the tribes immediately around him. With great docility they listened to his teachings, and were eager to be baptized as Christians. But the judicious father was in no haste thus to secure merely their nominal conversion. The dying, upon professions of penitence, he was ever ready to baptize, and to administer to them the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. With the rest he labored to root out all the remnants of their degrading superstitions, and to give them correct ideas of salvation through repentance, amendment, and trust in an atoning Saviour.

Gradually Marquette gathered around him a little band of loving disciples. For three years he labored with them cheerfully, joyously. His gentle and devoted spirit won, not merely the friendship of the Indians, but their ardent affections. He was just as safe among them as the most beloved father surrounded by his children. Three years this good man remained in these lonely wilds, peacefully and successfully teaching these benighted children of the forest. During all this time his mind had been much exercised with the thought of exploring the limitless and unknown regions south and west.

He had heard rumors of the Mississippi, the Father of Waters; and his devout mind peopled the vast realms through which it flowed with the lost children of God, whom he perhaps might reclaim, through the Gospel of Jesus, who had come from heaven for their redemption. The Governor of Canada was desirous, for more worldly reasons, of exploring these regions, where future empires might be reared.

Even the Indians knew but little respecting this great and distant river. There was much uncertainty whether it ran south, into the Gulf of Mexico, or west, emptying into the Gulf of California, which Spanish explorers had called the Red Sea, in consequence of its resemblance to that Asiatic sheet of water, or whether it turned easterly, entering the Atlantic Ocean somewhere near the Virginia coast.

In the spring of the year 1673, Governor Frontenac sent a French gentleman, M. Joliet, from Quebec, with five boatmen, to Point St. Ignatius, to take Father Marquette on board and set out to find and explore the downward course of this much talked of river. M. Joliet was admirably qualified for this responsible enterprise. He was a man of deep religious convictions, had spent several years among the Indians, was a very courteous man in all his intercourse with them, was thoroughly acquainted with their customs, and spoke several of their languages. As to courage, it was said that he absolutely feared nothing. The good father writes, in reference to his own appointment to this expedition:

"I was the more enraptured at this good news, as I saw my designs on the point of being accomplished, and myself in the happy necessity of exposing my life for the salvation of all these nations. Our joy at being chosen for this enterprise, sweetened the labor of paddling from morning till night. As we were going to seek unknown countries, we took all possible precautions, that if our enterprise were hazardous, it should not be foolhardy. For this reason we gathered all possible information from the Indians, who had frequented those parts. We even traced a map of all the new country, marking down the rivers on which we were to sail, the names of the nations through which we were to pass, and the course of the great river."

On the 13th of May, 1673, this little band, consisting of M. Joliet, Father Marquette, and five boatmen, in two birch canoes, commenced their adventurous voyage. They took with them some Indian corn and jerked meat; but they were to live mainly upon such food as they could obtain by the way. The immense sheet of water, at the northwestern extremity of Lake Michigan, called Green Bay, is one hundred miles long by twenty or thirty broad. The boatmen paddled their frail canoes along the western border of this lake until they reached its southern extremity, where they found a shallow river, flowing into it from the south, which they called Fox River. They could propel their canoes about thirty miles a day. Each night they selected some propitious spot for their encampment. Upon some dry and grassy mound they could speedily, with their axes, construct a hut which would protect them from the weather. Carefully smoothing down the floor, they spread over it their ample couch of furs. Fish could be taken in abundance. The forest was filled with game. An immense fire, blazing before the open side of the hut, gave warmth, and illumined the sublime scene with almost the brilliance of noon-day. There they joyously cooked their suppers, with appetites which rendered the feast more luxurious to them probably than any gourmand at Delmonico's ever enjoyed.

Each night Father Marquette held a religious service, which all reverently attended. Prayers were offered, and their hymns of Christian devotion floated sweetly through those sublime solitudes. The boatmen were men of a gentle race, who had been taught from infancy to revere the exercises of the church.

They came upon several Indian villages. But the natives were as friendly as brothers. Many of them had visited the station at St. Ignatius, and all of them had heard of Father Marquette and his labors of love. These children of the forest begged their revered friend to desist from his enterprise.

"There are," they said, "on the *great river*, bad Indians who will cut off your heads without any cause. There are fierce warriors who will try to seize you and make you slaves. There are enormous birds there, whose wings darken the air, and who can swallow you all, with your canoes, at a mouthful. And worst of all, there is a malig-

nant demon there who, if you escape all other dangers, will cause the waters to boil and whirl around you and devour you."

To all this, the good Marquette replied, "I thank you, dear friends, for your kind advice, but I cannot follow it. There are souls there, to save whom, the Son of God came to earth and died. Their salvation is at stake. I would joyfully lay down my life if I could guide them to the Saviour."

They found the navigation of Fox River impeded with many rapids. To surmount these it was necessary often to alight from their canoes, and, wading over the rough and sharp stones, to drag them up against the swift current. They were within the limits of the present State of Wisconsin, and found themselves in a region of lakes, sluggish streams, and marshes. But there were Indian trails, which had been trodden for uncounted generations, leading west. These they followed, often painfully carrying their canoes and their burdens on their shoulders, for many miles, from water to water, over what the Indians called the *Carrying Places*.

At length they entered a region of remarkable luxuriance, fertility, and beauty. There were crystal streams and charming lakes. Magnificent forests were interspersed with broad and green prairies. God seemed to have formed, in these remote realms, an Eden of surpassing loveliness for the abode of his children. Three tribes, in perfect harmony, occupied the region—the Miamis, Mascoutins, and Kickapoos. There was a large village with abundant corn-fields around. River and lake, forest and prairie were alike alive with game.

To their surprise they found that the French missionary, Father Allouez, had reached this distant spot, preaching the Gospel, eight years before. The Indians had received him with fraternal kindness. He had left in the centre of the village a cross, the emblem of the crucified Son of God.

"I found," Marquette writes, "that these good people had hung skins and belts and bows and arrows on the cross, an offering to the Great Spirit, to thank him because he had taken pity on them during the winter and had given them an abundant chase."

No white man had ever penetrated beyond this region. These simple, inoffensive people seemed greatly surprised that seven unarmed men should venture to press on to meet the unknown dangers of the wilderness beyond—wilds which their imaginations had peopled with all conceivable terrors.

On the 10th of June these heroic men resumed their journey. The kind Indians furnished them with two guides to lead them through the intricacies of the forest to a river, about ten miles distant, which they called Wisconsin, and which they said flowed westward into the Father of Waters. They soon reached this stream. The Indians helped them to carry their canoes and effects across the portage. "We were then left," writes Marquette, "alone in that unknown country, in the hand of God."

Our voyagers found the stream hard to navigate. It was full of sand-bars and shallows. There were many islands covered with the richest verdure. At times they came upon landscapes of enchanting beauty, with lawns and parks and lakes, as if arranged by the most careful hands of art.

After descending this stream about one hundred and twenty miles, they reached the mouth of the Wisconsin River, and saw the flood of the Mississippi rolling majestically before them. It was the 17th of June 1673, Father Marquette writes that, upon beholding the river, he experienced a joy which he could not express.

Easily they could be swept down by the rapid current into the sublime unexplored solitudes below. But to paddle back against the swift-rolling tide would try the muscles of the hardiest men. Still the voyagers pressed on. It was indeed a fairy scene which now opened before them. Here bold bluffs hundreds of feet high, jutted into the river. Here were crags of stupendous size and of every variety of form, often reminding one of Europe's most picturesque stream, where

"The castled crags of Drachenfels,
Frown o'er the wide and winding Rhine."

Again the prairie would spread out its ocean-like expanse, embellished with groves, garlanded with flowers of gorgeous colors waving in the summer breeze, checkered with sunshine and the shade of passing clouds, with roving herds of the stately buffalo and the graceful antelope. And again the gloomy forest would appear, extending over countless leagues, where bears, wolves, and panthers found a congenial home.

Having descended the river nearly two hundred miles they came to an Indian trail, leading back into the country. It was so well trodden as to give evidence that a powerful tribe was near. It speaks well for the Indians—for the reputation which they then enjoyed—that Marquette, with his French companion, M. Joliet, far away in the wilderness, seven hundred miles from any spot which a white man's foot had ever before trod, should not have hesitated alone to enter this trail in search of the habitations of this unknown tribe. They left all their companions, with the canoes, on the bank of the river.

"We cautioned them," writes Father Marquette, "strictly to beware of a surprise. Then M. Joliet and I undertook this rather hazardous discovery, for two single men, who thus put themselves at the discretion of an unknown and barbarous people."

These two bold adventurers followed the trail in silence for about six miles. They then saw, not far from them, upon a meadow on the banks of a small stream, a very picturesque group of wigwams, with all the accompaniments of loafing warriors, busy women, sporting children, and wolfish dogs, usually to be found in an Indian village. At the distance of about a mile and a half, upon a gentle eminence, there was another village of about equal size.

As the Indians had not yet caught sight of them, they fell upon their knees, and Father Marquette, in fervent prayer, commended themselves to God. They then gave a loud shout, to attract the attention of the Indians, and stepped out into open view. The whole community was instantly thrown into commotion, rushing from the wigwams, and gathering in apparently an anxious group.

After a brief conference they seemed to come to the conclusion that two unarmed men could not thus approach them, announcing their coming, with any hostile intent. Four of their aged men were

deputed to go forward and greet the strangers. They advanced with much dignity, not uttering a word, but waving, in their hands, the pipes of peace. As it afterwards appeared, they had often heard of the arrival of the French in Canada, of the wonderful articles which they brought for traffic, and of the missionaries, with their long black gowns. The name of Blackgowns was the one with which, in all the tribes, they designated these preachers of the Gospel. When they had come within a few paces of the strangers, they regarded them attentively and waited to be addressed. Both M. Joliet and Father Marquette understood that these ceremonies indicated friendship. Father Marquette broke the silence by inquiring

"To what nation do you belong?"

"We are Illinois," one of them replied, "and in token of peace we have brought you our pipes to smoke. We invite you to our village, where all are awaiting you with impatience."

The Frenchman and the four Indians walked together to the village. At the door of one of the largest wigwams, one of the ancients stood to receive them. According to their custom, on such occasions, he was entirely unclothed. This probably was the savage mode of indicating that there were no concealed weapons about the person. This man, with his hands raised toward the sun, which was shining brightly, said:

"How beautiful is the sun, O Frenchmen! when you come to visit us. All our people welcome you, and you shall enter all our cabins in peace."

He then led them into the wigwam. A large concourse remained outside in respectful silence. Only the principal men entered the wigwam. Mats were provided, for the guests, in the centre. The rest took seats around. The calumet of peace was passed. All in turn partook of the smoke of the weed which both the civilized and uncivilized man have prized so highly.

While thus employed, a messenger came in from the head chief, who resided in the village on the eminence to which we have alluded. He brought a message from the chief, inviting the strangers to his residence.