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JOURNAL
OF A
VOYAGE^d
TO
NORTH-AMERICA.

Undertaken by ORDER of the

FRENCH KING.

CONTAINING

The GEOGRAPHICAL Description and Natural
History of that Country, particularly

CANADA.

TOGETHER WITH

An Account of the CUSTOMS, CHARACTER,
RELIGION, MANNERS and ~~TEMPERATIONS~~
of the original Inhabitants.

In a Series of Letters to the Duchess of LORRAINE.

Translated from the French of P. DE CHARLEVOIX.

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LETTER XX. *

Voyage to the Bay. Description of it, and of the Course thither. Irruption of the Spaniards into the Country of the Missouri Indians, and their Defeat. Dances of the Indians.

Michillimackinac, July 21, 1721.

Madam,

SINCE my last letter, I have made a voyage to the Bay, which is about four-score leagues distant from this post. I took the advantage for this purpose of going in company with Mon^r. Montigny, captain of a company of the troops which the king maintains in Canada, Knight of St. Lewis, and whose name is famous in the annals of the colony; but who is at least equally respected for his probity, and for his upright open deportment, and for his valour and military exploits.

We embarked the 2d of July in the afternoon, and for thirty leagues coasted along a neck of land which separates lake Michigan from lake Superior; in some places it is only a few leagues over, and it is scarce possible to see a more disagreeable country; but it is terminated by a beautiful river called La Manistie

Manistie, abounding in fish and especially sturgeon. A little farther inclining to the southwest, you come to a large gulph, in the entry of which are a number of islands, and which is called the gulph or bay of the *Noquets*. This is the name of an Indian nation, not very numerous, originally come from the coasts of lake Superior, and of which there remain only a few scattered families, who have no fixed residence.

The bay of the *Noquets* is separated from the great bay only by the islands of the *Poutewatamies*, which as I have already remarked, were the ancient residence of these Indians; most of them are extremely well wooded; but the only one that is now inhabited is neither the largest nor the best, and there remains a sorry village, where, in spite of all our endeavours, we were obliged to pass the night, as it was impossible to resist the pressing instances of the inhabitants. For there is not a nation in all Canada more sincerely attached to the French, than these Indians have been at all times.

On the sixth, we were stoppt almost the whole day, by contrary winds, but it growing calm in the evening, we embarked a little after sun-set, by the favour of a most beautiful moon-shine, and continued our voyage for four and twenty hours together, having made only a very small halt, whilst we were saying mass and at dinner. The sun was so burning hot, and the water of the bay so warm, that the gum of our canoe melted in several places. To complicate our misfortune, the place where we went ashore, was so much infested with what are called here *marigouins* and *bruleaus*, a species of very troublesome gnats, that we could not so much as
close

close our eyes, though we had not slept for two days; and as the weather was fine, and the moon shone bright, we set out again at three o'clock in the morning.

After we had advanced five or six leagues, we found ourselves a-breast of a little island, which lies near the western side of the bay, and which concealed from our view, the mouth of a river, on which stands the village of the Malhomines Indians, called by our French *Polles Avaines* or Wild Oat Indians, probably from their living chiefly on this sort of grain. The whole nation consists only of this village, and that too not very numerous. 'Tis really great pity, they being the finest and handsomest men in all Canada. They are even of a larger stature than the Poutewatomies. I have been assured that they had the same original and nearly the same languages with the Noquets, and the Indians at the Falls. But they add that they have likewise a language peculiar to themselves, which they never communicate. I have also been told several stories of them, as of a serpent which visits their village every year and is received with much ceremony, which makes me believe them a little addicted to witchcraft.

A little below the island the face of the country is entirely changed, and from being very wild, as it is as far as this place, it becomes the most delightful in the universe. It is even something more pleasing and chearful than the Narrows; but though it is every where covered with the finest trees, yet it is more sandy, and therefore less fertile. The Otchagra Indians, commonly called Stinkards, dwelt formerly on the shore of the Bay, and in a most charming situation; they were attacked here by
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the Illinois, who killed a great number of them; the rest of them took shelter on the river of the Outagamies, which falls into the bottom of the Bay.

Here they settled on the banks of a kind of lake. And I do not know whether it is not from their living on fish, with which the lake plentifully supplies them, that they had the name of Stinkards given them, there being nothing to be seen along the whole shore where their cabins were built, but stinking fish, with which the air was perfectly infected. It appears at least that this is the original of the name the other Indians had given them before us; and which has been communicated to the Bay, from which they have never gone to any considerable distance. Some time before they quitted their ancient post, they had a mind to revenge the check they had got from the Illinois; but this enterprize occasioned them a new disaster, from the effects of which they have never recovered themselves. Six hundred of their best warriors embarked, in order to go in quest of the enemy; but as they were crossing Lake Michigan, they were surprized by a furious tempest, in which they all perished to a man.

We have in the Bay, a fort erected on the western shore of the river of the Outagamies, and half a league from its mouth; before you arrive at it, you leave on your right a village of the Sakies. The Otchagras have lately settled themselves near us, and have built their cabins quite round the fort. The missionary who is lodged pretty near the commandant, is in hopes, that when he shall have learned their language, he may possibly find more docility amongst them, than amongst the Sakies.

Sakies, with whom his labours have been sufficiently unsuccessful. Both of them appear to be a very good sort of people and especially the former, whose greatest defect is, that they seem to be a little addicted to thieving. Their language is very different from that of all the rest, which makes me believe, that it holds no resemblance with any of those of Canada. Thus, they have always had more commerce or intercourse with the western nations, than with those with which we are acquainted.

The Sakies, though few in number, are divided into two factions, one of which is in the interest of the Outagamies, and the other in that of the Poutewatamies. Those of them who are settled in this post are mostly of the party of the latter, and consequently are friends to us. They received the new commandant with great demonstrations of joy: the moment they were informed of his approach, they drew up under arms on the shore, and as soon as he appeared, saluted him with a discharge of their muskets, which they accompanied with great shouts of joy. Afterwards four of their chief men waded into the river, till the water came up to their middle; advanced up to his canoe, and received him on a large robe, composed of several skins of roebucks well sewed together, whereof each of them held a corner. In this manner they carried him to his apartment, where they complimented him, and said a great many things extremely flattering.

Next day, the chiefs of the two nations paid me a visit; and one of the Otchagras shewed me a Catalonian pistol, a pair of Spanish shoes, and I do not know what drug, which appeared to me to be a sort of ointment. All this they had received
from

from one of the Aionez, and the following is the occasion, by means of which these things fell into the hands of this person.

About two years ago, some Spaniards, who had come, as they say, from New Mexico, with design to penetrate as far as the country of the Illinois, and to drive the French out of it, whom they saw with extreme regret approach so near the Missouri, descended this river and attacked two villages of the Ojotatas, a people in alliance with the Aionez, from whom it is pretended they draw their original. As these Indians had no fire-arms, and being besides surprized, the Spaniards easily succeeded in their enterprize, and made a great slaughter of them. A third village of the same nation, and at no great distance from the two others, making no doubt that the conquerors would pay them a visit, laid an ambuscade for them, into which the Spaniards blindly stumbled. Others say, that the Indians having learned that the Spaniards had almost all of them got drunk, and were sleeping in great security, fell upon them in the night; and it is certain they cut the throats of almost every one of them.

There were two chaplains in this party, one of whom was killed in the beginning of the affair, and the other saved himself amongst the Missourites who kept him prisoner, and from whom he made his escape in a very dexterous manner. He happened to have a very fine horse, and the Missourites delighting in beholding him perform feats of horsemanship, he took the advantage of their curiosity, in order to get out of their hands. One day as he was scampering about in their presence, he withdrew insensibly to a distance, when clapping spurs to his horse, he instantly disappeared. As they made no other

other prisoner but him, it is not yet exactly known neither from what part of New Mexico these Spaniards came, nor with what design: for what I first told you of the affair, was founded upon the reports of the Indians only, who perhaps had a mind to make their court to us by giving it to be understood, that they had done us a very material piece of service by this defeat.

All they brought me was the spoils of the chaplain who had been killed, and they found likewise a prayer-book, which I have not seen: this was probably his breviary. I bought the pistol: the shoes were good for nothing; and the Indian would by no means part with the ointment, having taken it into his head, that it was a sovereign remedy against all sorts of evils. I was curious to know how he intended to make use of it; he answered that it was sufficient to swallow a little of it, and let the disease be what it would the cure was immediate; he did not say however that he had as yet made trial of it, and I advised him against it. The Indians begin here to be very ignorant, and are very far from being so sensible or at least so communicative, as those who have more commerce with us.

The day following, the Sakies came in a considerable body to the missionary's house, where I lodged, and begged me to be present at a council they were going to hold. I consented, and when every one had taken his place, the chief laid a collar upon the ground before me, and the orator breaking silence, besought me, in the name of the whole body, to engage the King to take them under his protection, and to purify the air, which, said they, had been corrupted for some time past: which

appeared by the great number of sick they had in their villages, and to defend them against their enemies.

I answered, that the King was indeed very powerful, and perhaps more so than they thought; but that his power did not extend over the elements; and that when diseases or any other such accidents laid waste his provinces, he addressed himself, in order to cause them cease, to the Great Spirit who created the heaven and the earth, and who alone is the sovereign Lord of nature: that they should do the same, and that they would find themselves the better for it; but that in order to merit being heard, they must begin with acknowledging him, and with rendering him that worship and homage which he has a right to expect from all reasonable creatures: and that they could not do any thing better or more agreeable to the King, than to hearken to the Father whom his Majesty had sent them, and to his instructions; that he was a man beloved of heaven; that the manner in which he lived amongst them, could not fail to have caused them conceive a great esteem for him; and that his charity towards the sick and all such as had any need of his assistance, ought to have convinced them of that tender and sincere friendship he bore them: lastly, that I would by no means receive it, till after they had promised to behave themselves with regard to this missionary, in a quite different manner from what they had hitherto done, and henceforth to remove all cause of complaint against them, with respect to their indocility.

“ As to the protection of the King which you
 “ demand, and the request you have made me to
 “ engage him to undertake your defence against
 your

“ your enemies ; that great prince has already pre-
 “ vented your wishes, and has given sufficient or-
 “ ders on that head to Ononthio *, who is of him-
 “ self disposed to execute them with all the zeal
 “ and affection of a father †. This is what you
 “ need make no doubt of, if you pay a proper
 “ regard to the good qualities of the commandant
 “ he has sent you. It is not possible you should
 “ be ignorant, and you appear to me perfectly
 “ well satisfied that amongst all the French Cap-
 “ tains there are few equal to him in valour ; and
 “ you will have cause to love him still better than
 “ you now do.” This answer seemed to satisfy
 them, and they promised much more than I fear
 they will ever perform. Notwithstanding I took
 their collar, which the missionary flattered himself
 would be productive of some good effects.

On the afternoon of the following day the two *Dance*
 nations entertained us, one after another, with the *of the*
 dance of the Calumet, in a great esplanade facing *(the street)*
 the commandant's apartment. There was some
 little difference in the manner in which they per-
 formed this dance ; but this was very inconsiderable.
 It only gave me to understand, that these feasts
 vary considerably : thus it is impossible to give a
 description which may agree to all of them. The
 Ojélagras diversified somewhat more their enter-
 tainment, and shewed extraordinary agility, being
 better made as well as more graceful performers
 than the Sakies.

* This is the name which the Indians give to the governor
 general, it signifies *great mountain*, and is derived from the Che-
 valier Montagnay, who was the second governor of Canada.

† They always call the governors and the commandants their
 fathers.

This is properly a military festival, in which the warriors are the sole actors, and one would naturally conclude it had been instituted only to give them an opportunity of vaunting of their famous exploits. I am not the author of this opinion, which does not quadrate with the sentiments of those who maintain that the calumet derives its origin from caduceus of Mercury, and that on its first institution it was looked upon as a symbol of peace. All those whom I saw dancing, singing, and beating the drum and *chichikoué*, were young persons equipt as when they prepare to take the field; they had their faces painted with all sorts of colours, their heads were adorned with feathers, some of which they held in their hands by way of fans: and the calumet was also adorned with them and was set in the most conspicuous place: the orchestre and the dancers were placed quite round, the spectators being placed up and down in small bodies, the women apart from the men, all of them sitting on the ground, and adorned with their finest robes, which at a distance made a very pretty appearance.

Between the orchestre and the commandant who sat at the door of his own apartment, they had erected a post, to which at the end of each dance, a warrior came and gave a blow with his battle-ax; on this signal followed profound silence, when this man proclaimed some of his own valorous achievements; and receiving afterwards the applause of the company, he returned to his place, when the games began again. This lasted four hours two for each nation, and I confess I was far from being charmed with it, not only on account of the monotony and unpleasantness of the music, but also because the whole of the dances consisted
only

only of certain contortions of the body, which in appearance were expressive of nothing, and had nothing diverting.

The feast was made in honour of the new commandant; they however paid him none of those honours mentioned in some relations. They were neither seen to place him on a new mattress; nor to make him any present, at least as far as I know, nor did they place any feathers on his head, nor did I see them present him the calumet; and there were not any men entirely naked painted all over their bodies, adorned with feathers, and strings of wampum, and holding a calumet in their hands. Perhaps these two nations have not any such customs, or it may be, that Mons. de Montigny had exempted them from this part of the ceremony. I observed only from time to time all the spectators raising great cries by way of applauding the dancers, especially during the dance of the Orchagras, who in the opinion of the French bore away all the honour of the day.

I should probably have been more diverted by seeing the dance of the *Discovery*. This has more action than the former, and is much more expressive of the thing it is intended to represent. This is an image drawn to the life of all that passes in a warlike expedition; and as I have already observed, that the Indians generally think only of surprizing their enemies, it is no doubt for this reason, they have given this exercise the name of the *Discovery*.

Be this as it will, one man always dances singly in it, advancing at first slowly towards the middle

of the place, where he remains for some time motionless, after which he represents in order the departure of the warriors; their march encampments, the discovery of the enemy, the approach towards them, the halt as it were in order to draw breath, when all of a sudden he falls into such a fury as if he were going to kill all the world; when recovered from this trance, he seizes some person in the assembly as if he took him prisoner of war, seems to kill another, levels at a third, and lastly falls a running at full speed, when he stops and recovers himself; this represents a retreat which is at first precipitate, but afterwards more at leisure. He then expresses by different cries, the different agitations in which he was during his last campaign, and concludes with relating all the fine exploits he has performed in war.

When the dance of the Calumet has for its object, as is generally the case, the conclusion of a peace, or of some treaty of alliance against a common enemy, they engrave a serpent on the stalk of the pipe, and near it is placed a plate, on which are represented two men of the two confederate nations trampling upon an enemy, who is designed by the mark of his nation. Sometimes instead of the calumet they make use of a battle-ax. But when the subject of the treaty is only a simple alliance, they represent two men holding each other by one hand and bearing in the other a calumet of peace, and having each at his side the mark of his nation. In all these treaties they give mutual pledges, such as collars of porcelain or wampum, calumets, slaves: sometimes the hides of deer or elks well tawned, adorned with figures made of the hair of the porcupine; in which case, the above-mentioned circumstances are represented on

on these skins, whether with the hair of the porcupine or simple colours.

There are other dances which are more simple, or which seem to have no other view besides giving the warriors opportunity of relating their own exploits. This is what the Indians covet above all things, and in doing of which they are never wearied. He who gives the feast, causes invite the whole village by beat of drum; and it is in his cabin they assemble, if it be capable of containing all the guests. The warriors dance here by turns, afterwards they strike upon the post, silence is proclaimed, when they say any thing they have a mind, pausing from time to time in order to receive the congratulations of the spectators who are not sparing of incense. But if they perceive that any one boasts without grounds, any one is at liberty to take earth or ashes, and to smear his head all over or to do him any other affront they have a mind. The general way is to black his face, accosting him in these words, " This I do to conceal your shame; for " the first time you see the face of an enemy, you " will become as pale as ashes." Thus, it seems to be a received maxim amongst all nations, that the surest mark of a coward is boasting. He who has thus punished the recreant takes his place, and if he has the misfortune to fall into the same fault the other is sure to pay him back in kind. The greatest chiefs have no privilege above the common in this respect, and must take all without murmuring. This dance is always performed in the nighttime.

In the western parts they have another sort of **Buffalo** dance, which is called the **Buffalo** dance. The dancers form several circles within each other, and the

musick which is always composed of the drum and the chichikoué, is in the middle of the place. They take care never to separate those of the same family; they do not hold one another by the hand, and each carries his arms and buckler. The circles turn round different ways, and though there is much capering in which they spring to a great height, they are never out of time.

Some chief of a family presents his buckler at certain intervals: all of them strike upon it, and at each stroke he calls to remembrance some of his famous exploits: he afterwards cuts a bit of tobacco from a post to which they take care to tie a certain quantity, which he gives to one of his friends. If any one can prove he has performed more famous exploits than he, or that he has had any share in those of which he has been boasting, he has a right to take away the tobacco of which he has just made a present, and to give it to another. This dance is followed by a feast; but I do not well know whence it had the name it bears, if it does not come from the bucklers on which they strike, which are covered with buffaloes hides. There are some dances which are prescribed by their quacks for the cure of sick persons; but they are generally very lascivious. There are some of them calculated purely for amusement, and which have no relation to any thing. These are always in the form of a circle to the sound of the drum and chickikoué, and the women always apart from the men. These latter dance bearing their arms in their hands, and though they have no hold of one another, they never break the circle. As to what I mentioned of their never losing time, this ought to create no difficulty, the musick of the Indians consisting

consisting only of two or three notes, which are eternally repeated. On this account one is apt to grow extremely weary at those feasts after the first time, as they last a great while, and as you hear always the same thing over again.

As the nations in the neighbourhood of the Bay, if you except the Poutewatamies, are much more ignorant than the others, they are likewise much more addicted to all sorts of superstition. Their principal divinities are the sun and thunder, and they seem much more persuaded than the nations which we frequent more, that every species of animals has a genius that watches for their preservation. A French man having one day thrown away a mouse he had just taken, a little girl took it up to eat it; the father of the child who perceived it snatched it from her, and felt a care for the dead animal; and the French man asking him the reason of it: "It is", answered he, "in order to appease the genius of the mice, that they may not torment my child after she has eaten it." After which he restored the animal to the girl who eat it.

They have above all things a prodigious veneration for bears: when they happen to have killed one, they make a feast which is accompanied with very singular ceremonies. The head of the bear, after being painted with all sorts of colours, is set during the repast in a conspicuous place, where it receives the homage of all the guests, who celebrate in songs the praises of the animal, whilst they are tearing his body in pieces and regaling themselves with it. These Indians have not only like all the rest a custom of preparing themselves

themselves for great huntings by fasting, which the Outagamies carry as far as ten days running; but also whilst the hunters are in the field, they often oblige the children to fast, they observe the dreams they have during their fasts, and from them they draw good or evil omens, with respect to the success of the hunting. The intention of these fasts, is to appease the tutelary genii of the animals they are going to hunt; and they pretend that they make known in dreams, whether they are to oppose or to be propitious to the hunters.

The nation that has occasioned most discourse in these western parts, for the last twenty years, is that of the Outagamies. The natural ferocity of these Indians soured by the repeated ill treatment they have received and sometimes imprudently enough; and their alliance with the Iroquois, always disposed to stir up new enemies against us, have rendered them formidable. They have since become still more closely connected with the Sioux, a numerous nation, and who have insensibly become warlike; which union renders almost impracticable at present the navigation of the whole upper Mississippi. There is even very little security in sailing on the river Illinois, at least if you are not provided against a surprize to the great hurt of the trade between the two colonies.

I met at the Bay some Sioux, to whom I put many questions with respect to the countries lying to the west and north-west of Canada; and though I well know we are not to take in a literal sense all that the Indians tell us, yet by comparing what
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these told me with what I have heard several others say, I have good reason to think, that there are in this continent either Spanish or some other European colonies much more to the north, than what we know of New-Mexico and of California, and that after sailing up the Missouri as far as it is navigable, you come to a great river which runs westward, and discharges itself into the South-Sea. And even independent of this discovery, which I believe easier this way than towards the north, I cannot doubt on account of the proofs which I have received from several hands, and which sufficiently well agree, that by endeavouring to penetrate to the source of the Missouri, we should find sufficient to indemnify us for the expence and fatigue which such an enterprize must require.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R