

Louisiana in French Letters

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LOUISIANA IN FRENCH LETTERS

INTRODUCTION

The French have seen Louisiana in many different lights: as pictured in the accounts -- sometimes dry and matter-of-fact, sometimes brazenly mendacious -- of the early explorers; as an Eldorado which drew Parisian speculators to the bank-windows of the shrewd Scot, John Law; as a worthless stretch of marshy lands handed over to Spain, and then sold to the United States by Napoleon; as the gorgeous country of Meschacebé, peopled by Chateaubriand's Indians, birds, bears, and fragrant trees; as the home of French colonial memories, and the refuge of a serene and picturesque culture sought by a few modern travelers in the United States who refuse to be content with visiting New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Hollywood. Louisiana of these French records is the subject of this dissertation.

There is little to be added to the detailed, thorough, and well-documented histories of Louisiana which have already been written in French and English. Therefore, our chief purpose here was not geographical or historical but psychological and literary. It has been to discover how the French people knew or thought of the distant Empire given them in the New World by a few hardy explorers. What was their reaction to this fabulous new province across the Atlantic? Now and

then some even of the first of the missionaries or travelers in this strange land who recorded their experiences were found to be sensitive to the "picturesque" of the magnificent landscapes, the rivers, mountains, and boundless prairies -- although this sense of the "picturesque" as is well known, was not greatly developed in the seventeenth century, and the word itself had not yet been borrowed by the French from the Italians. These accounts of the first explorers show that they were inclined to consider the practical aspects of life. The things which interested them were the fruit and grain that the country produced, the animals (the delicacy of their flesh and the warmth of their furs), the gold and precious stones -- or even baser minerals -- that they hoped to find in Louisiana, their Eldorado.

Moreover, since the seventeenth century was traditionally more interested in human psychology than in external nature, the early French travelers in Louisiana concerned themselves more with the inhabitants of the country than with the scenery. A great deal of anthropological ("avant la lettre") information about the Indians is found here and there in the writings of the predecessors of Lafitau and Charlevoix. They describe the manners and customs of the savage tribes upon whom the French looked with a great deal of sympathy, their religion, food, war, and women. This branch of French writing, although seldom literary, already displayed a curious interest in the

primitive mode of savage life. In the exhaustive series of works which he has written on the subject,¹ M. Chinard has showed how the classical age of France, traditionally pictured as rational and dignified, could also appreciate primitivism, and dream of an Arcadian life nearer nature.

Her place in various French records of the seventeenth century already established, from the second quarter of the eighteenth century Louisiana becomes a subject of interest and importance to French literary artists. Writers of the first rank, Abbé Prévost, Chateaubriand, and others of repute, from Charlevoix to Paul Morand and André Demaison, accord Louisiana a place among the muses from distant lands which inspire French literature.

It should be made entirely clear at the outset what is meant by "Louisiana" and what by "French letters."

Louisiana is today one of the forty-eight states in the Union (admitted April 30, 1812). I am interested not only in the present state of Louisiana but in the vast region included in the Louisiana Purchase.

¹L'Exotisme américain dans la littérature française au XVIIe siècle, Paris, Hachette, 1911; L'Amérique et le Rêve exotique dans la littérature française au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle, Paris, Droz, 1934; L'Exotisme américain dans l'œuvre de Chateaubriand, Paris, Hachette, 1918.

Even the name, formerly written most often with two "Ns," has troubled etymologists. Some attribute the name to an ingenious association of the names of Louis XIV and Ann of Austria. M. le Baron Marc de Villiers in his scholarly work, La Louisiane. Histoire de son nom et de ses frontières successives, thinks such an explanation impossible, since Ann of Austria died in 1666, and would scarcely be remembered fifteen years later. The spelling of the name, as well as its origin, remained for a long time uncertain. Cavelier de La Salle wrote it "Louysiane;" to Father Hennepin it was first "Louisiane" and then "Louisiaene;" and finally, when the name was accepted by the Conseils du Roi, for about ten years it was spelled "Louizianne." It is, doubtless, to Cavelier de La Salle that Louisiana owes its present name. On April 9, 1682, when La Salle boldly claimed possession of this newly explored territory, he did so in the name of Louis XIV, King of France and Navarre, and called it "pays de la Louysiane." The choice of the name may have been due to a suggestion made by Abbé Bernou, who was one of La Salle's closest friends, as well as his scientific and geographical adviser.² Little is known of Abbé Bernou, except that he advised, encouraged and aided La Salle in his projects.

²Le Baron Marc de Villiers, La Louisiane. Histoire de son nom et de ses frontières successives. 1681-1819, p. 6.

The territory of Louisiana, as it was baptised by La Salle in March and April, 1682, included a large part of the present states of Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri. It did not include Mobile and the Pearl River. The faulty maps and strange geographical ideas of the day are responsible for the vague limitations assigned to the territory that Louis XIV accepted in 1684.

However, many of the French writers who mention Louisiana in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries have still vaguer conceptions of its geographical extent. Some of them include all the northwest and even Canada. It was not until 1701 that Louis XIV decided to make the colony of the lower Mississippi entirely independent of New France, or Canada. Even then the boundaries of Louisiana on the northwest and the western side were never clearly defined. Louisiana came to include the present states of Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma.

When Napoleon sold Louisiana to the United States, the American Government claimed (droits La Salle) the whole country drained by the rivers which flow into the Mississippi. This included even Montana and Wyoming. The area thus ceded by Napoleon to the United States included roughly more than 1,000,000 square miles. Not included in Louisiana were, how-

ever, the present states of Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, the Virginias, and Pennsylvania.

The expression "French Letters" was adopted in preference to "French Literature" for reasons which will soon be obvious. By "French Letters" is meant, first of all, the writings of Frenchmen, and not the books or articles written in Louisiana in the French language. The French literature of Louisiana has already been diligently analyzed and studied by Ruby Van Allen Caulfield in a Columbia University dissertation, and again very ably and thoroughly by Mr. Edward Laroque Tinker. That literature is, as a rule, more conspicuous for its good-will and its conscientious spirit and moral purpose than for its artistic value. The part which Louisiana has played in the vast chorus of literature written in French outside of France is disappointing and far inferior to the output of Belgium, French Switzerland, of French Canada.

The word "letters" is taken as wider than "literature" and narrower than "writings" (which would have included historical and geographical material). A purely historical study would have given more importance to archives, reports by governors, navy officers, and police officials who represented France in Louisiana. Those are impersonal documents which concern us only insofar as they provide us indirectly

with material on the opinion France formed of Louisiana.

On the other hand, very few of the French writings on Louisiana are worthy of an eminent place in French literature. In the works of men with little or no literary talent who wrote in French on Louisiana, I shall search for literary intentions or attempts at producing an artistic effect. If only a few of these writers are worthy of a distinguished rank in the roll call of literature, the others, who tried and often failed, have a claim to the attention of the literary historian. They provide the background and often the material for the happy few whom posterity has chosen to remember.³

³Since I shall several times judge writings on Louisiana from the "literary" point of view, and begrudge the title literature to much that was written, I shall evoke here the authority of the great master of French Literary History, Gustave Lanson. In an article on "La methode de l'histoire litteraire," Revue du Mois, 10 Octobre 1910, p.388, he wrote the following lines which I shall quote in their original clarity: "Le signe de l'oeuvre litteraire, c'est l'intention ou l'effet d'art, c'est la beaute ou la grace de la forme. Les écrits speciaux deviennent litteraires, par la vertu de la forme qui elargit ou qui prolonge leur puissance d'action. La litterature se compose de tous les ouvrages dont le sens et l'effet ne peuvent être pleinement revelés que par l'analyse esthetique de la forme.

Il résulte de là que dans l'immense amas de textes imprimés, ceux-la nous appartiennent spécialement qui, par le caractère de leur forme, ont la propriété de déterminer chez le lecteur des évocations imaginatives, des émotions esthétiques. C'est par là que notre étude ne se confond pas avec les autres études historiques."

It need hardly be added that those who best deserve a place in French Literature on Louisiana, are not necessarily those who depicted that country most accurately or those who actually saw it. Neither Abbé Prévost nor Chateaubriand depicted Louisiana as it really was, nor is it certain that even those writers who visited the southern banks of the Mississippi and therefore wrote from observation, have not been mistaken, hasty or rash in their conclusions. Literary history need not be indignant at this. It learned long ago to study writers, movements, and countries, not as they actually were, but as they appeared to a light-hearted posterity which preferred striking and mythical lies to stark and austere truth.

It does not follow, however, that only brilliant tellers of golden lies will be dealt with in the succeeding chapters. Doubtless, French boys and girls who shed tears over the mournful story of Des Grieux digging the grave of his inconstant mistress in the sand of Louisiana, or the generation that dreamt of Chateaubriand's majestic river and the love of some Atala, or took pity upon Celuta's utter devotion to her strange husband, cared little for the historical accuracy of the novels they were reading. But there is another branch of French Literature concerning Louisiana, which is not entirely devoid of beauty, although it clings

obstinately to the pursuit of some truth. The early pioneers and explorers of Louisiana, such as La Salle, Tonty, Joutel, courageous travelers like Charlevoix, and sympathetic historians like Le Page du Pratz, have deserved more than a mention in this labor of love for a great past.

The difficulty of the subject lies in the huge mass of confused material, which has accumulated during three centuries. A conscientious attempt has been made to include everything of importance concerning Louisiana in French literary works, but there must be sins of omission. An exhaustive inquiry into all the reviews and newspapers of France would, doubtless, have provided a few more details. Yet the general aim of the present study and the choice of material included, in spite of its limitations, will perhaps not be seriously questioned.

Some may conclude that this long and painstaking research has produced results disproportionately meager. This is true in a sense, since I have made no attempt to alter substantially the common view that Louisiana plays a comparatively small part in French exotic, imaginative, or philosophical literature. It is also true that the two great writers who introduced Louisiana in French literature, Abbé Prévost and Chateaubriand, have been so thoroughly and

excellently studied that there is little left to say about Manon Lescaut and Atala. But it is not a useless task in literary history to ascertain and to prove a negative proposition, as I have attempted to do. And should you not like to know whether Montesquieu or Voltaire was ever concerned with the French colony which bore the name of the "Grand Monarque"? And whether Rousseau or Abbé Raynal mentions it? Many such questions properly occur to students of literature and need patient, scientific treatment.

Perhaps I can pass on to the reader some measure of the stimulus and satisfaction which were mine in refusing to consider the close and concentrated study of a single limited period or a single minute aspect of French literature, and in choosing instead the delights of browsing through hundreds of volumes, by great, minor, or obscure writers; of living in their pages through a period of three hundred years; of traveling happily with them through two continents; and then, though keenly conscious of my imperfect knowledge, of attempting to imbue with life a subject which to me is teeming with vitality, for the very simple reason that it deals with that part of the United States which is my own "petite patrie."

A task such as this one could not have been undertaken and still less completed without the encouraging help of other workers and of helpful advisers and guides.

First of all, a subject such as this, which requires long and varied reading in several fields, naturally owes much to bibliographies, catalogues of libraries, and many existing monographs. I have resorted to the texts in every possible way, and have always tried to verify the information offered by preceding writers, and to examine their opinions critically and impartially before they were rejected or accepted. But I have also contracted an important debt to the very competent scholars who have covered the same ground in some cases: Professor Heinrich, Professor Atkinson, and above all Professor Gilbert Chinard, whose works on Franco-American relations have set a high standard of which I should like to be more worthy.

I have added a fairly extensive bibliography. In the preparation of this work I have used the facilities of the Louisiana State University Library in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; the Tulane University Library in New Orleans, Louisiana; the Columbia University Library; the New York Public Library; and the Bibliothèque Nationale. My sincere thanks are due to the members of their respective staffs.

A work of this kind, moreover, dealing as it does with little known material, requires a considerable number of

quotations. I chose to give some of these quotations in the French text whenever I wanted to emphasize their literary value, or to give a sample of the style of the writer under discussion. In all other cases, I translated the quotations into English, in the hope of making my work more accessible to English-speaking readers.

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY HISTORICAL AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

SUMMARY

The Spanish claims in America. Failure of Jean Ribaut's colony in Florida. French explorers in America in the seventeenth century: Cartier; Marquette and Joliet; La Salle's three expeditions; D'Iberville's two voyages to Louisiana. Documents published concerning seventeenth century explorers. Role of the Extraordinary Voyage in literature dealing with North America.

It was not France but Spain which early in the sixteenth century emerged as the first explorer, conqueror and colonizer of America.¹ Tales of the wealth of Mexico and Peru fired the imagination of Spanish adventurers, and their

¹The first European explorations in America were made by the French, according to the story told by the archeologist, Albert Porta and reported in the Bulletin de la Société des Professeurs français en Amérique, February 1922, pp. 7-23, in an article entitled: "La Part de la France dans la formation de l'Amérique." According to this legend, it appears that as early as the first century after Christ, the country which is today Louisiana, was visited by an inhabitant of the land which was not yet "la douce France." A Gallic colonist, Julius Sabinus, is supposed to have come with a few companions and settled on our shores in 78 A. D. He had revolted against the Emperor Vespasian, and had been sentenced to seven years' exile in Tullia Major (which would seem to mean our distant continent). Sabinus, so the tradition maintains, settled on the banks of a river, later named after him, the Sabine River, which divides Louisiana from Texas. This early explorer returned to Gaul after the death of Vespasian. The reader can decide for himself how much history there is in this story.

search for these untold riches led them to Florida and the present coast of Louisiana on the Gulf of Mexico. As the result of the explorations of Ponce de Leon, Narvaez, Cabeza de Vaca, Hernando de Soto, and Coronado, Spain claimed Florida, which was equivalent to the eastern half of the present United States, or the country from Mexico to Newfoundland. After several attempts at colonization, in 1558, 1559, and 1561, Philip decided that because of the undesirability of the location, Florida was not likely to be colonized by the French. However, in 1562 the unexpected happened. Under the inspiration of Admiral Coligny, Jean Ribaut, a Huguenot from Dieppe, founded a colony at the mouth of what is today the Saint John River, in Florida. He explored the country north of that spot and reached the present state of South Carolina, where he established the colony of Port Royal. Leaving thirty men behind him, Ribaut then returned to France. Want and deprivation drove the men left behind to cannibalism before they were rescued by an English vessel.² Ribaut returned in 1565 with more Huguenot colonists, but they were all murdered soon afterwards by the Catholic subjects of His Majesty, the King of Spain. Louisiana thus escaped for the first time the possibility of becoming a Protestant French colony, as it might have been if Ribaut's companions had

²Francis Parkman, Pioneers of France in the New World, p. 46.

walked west of Florida instead of north. It possibly escaped the same fate again when Louis XIV frowned upon settlements in the New World by the Huguenots banished after 1682.

France's role in the discovery and exploration of what is now the United States becomes predominant with the beginning of the seventeenth century. Of course, Canada had received much earlier the visits of hardy Frenchmen. The French led by the famous Jacques Cartier explored that northern part of the continent (the Saint Lawrence, in 1535) and soon after, the Great Lakes region. As early as 1610, the present state of Michigan was partly explored by French adventurers or missionaries. In 1634, Jean Nicolet penetrated as far as Wisconsin. Between 1670 and 1679, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana were visited by French missionary explorers, the most famous being the expedition of Marquette and Joliet, which first reached the Mississippi in 1673, and that of Robert Cavelier de La Salle.

In 1669, La Salle set out from Montreal in search of the Mississippi. It is possible that he may have reached the great river by way of the Illinois, as Abbé de Gallinée contended,³ but this point is open to discussion. This was La Salle's first expedition.

³ P. Margry, Mémoires et Documents, I, pp. 343-376, "Récit de l'Abbé de Gallinée."

In 1679, La Salle set out on his second great expedition. He reached the Illinois in January, 1680, was detained, left again on January 1, 1682, and reached the mouth of the Mississippi in April, 1682. He took possession for France in the name of his Majesty Louis XIV, "of this country of Louisiana, the seas, harbors, ports, bays, adjacent straits, and all the nations, people, provinces, cities, towns, villages, mines, minerals, fisheries, streams and rivers within the extent of the said Louisiana, from the mouth of the great river St. Louis, otherwise called the Ohio, - - - as also along the river Colbert, or Mississippi, and the rivers which discharge themselves thereinto, from its source beyond the country of the Nadouessiaux - - - as far as its mouth at the sea, or the Gulf of Mexico, and also to the mouth of the River of Palme - - -."⁴ That famous expedition is recorded in Membre's Journal, published in Le Clercq, and in part by Tonty. Some of La Salle's own letters were utilized by Abbe Bernou, who drew up a report in France, and perhaps by Hennepin also.

La Salle then went to France in 1683, where he prepared for a new attempt by sea. In 1684, he started with Beaujeu on his third and last expedition. After aimless wandering on

⁴Francis Parkman, La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West, p. 307.

the coast of Mexico, and vain searching for the mouth of the Mississippi, La Salle was killed, in 1687. Joutel, Jean Cavelier, and Father Anastaise Dousy, the survivors of that unfortunate expedition, have left accounts of varying merit concerning it.

In 1689, D'Iberville continued the task which La Salle's death had left incomplete. He undertook a second voyage in 1699, and reached the Natchez country. D'Iberville died in 1706 while preparing for his third expedition.

The history of the French explorers, missionaries, and colonists in seventeenth century America is a magnificent epic which has not yet been told nor worthily sung by French writers. The most reliable and the most readable among the numerous historical works devoted to that period is Parkman's series of volumes, especially his impartial and moving account of La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West. The enigmatic figure and tragic fate of La Salle have since inspired several biographers. Many details are still uncertain or open to question; the errors and faults of La Salle will always be appraised differently by different historians. But the main historical events appear clearly, and though opinions upon details may diverge, they agree on the courageous and

magnificent task accomplished by these hardy explorers between 1670 and 1700.

Those men of action, whether professional explorers, priests, or traders, were, however, more accustomed to handling the sword, or rather the axe, than the pen. Their canoes and their gunpowder, their peace pipe, or their breviary, mattered more to them than writing paper on which to record their deeds with accuracy. Their style has nothing of La Bruyère's artistic workmanship; it is undeniably remote from the splendid harmony and majesty of Bossuet.

Nevertheless, most of these early French adventurers, in the midst of terrible hardships and endless ordeals, realized the importance of the printed word. The greatness of their efforts would be wasted, so they felt, unless they recorded them for the king, the ministers at Versailles, and posterity. Propaganda then existed in fact, if not in word, for few moderns have been more expert at launching their opinion than Louis Hennepin. Hence there resulted many diverging accounts, founded on uncertain geography and assertions as vague as were the maps of those times.

Moreover, literary ownership was not then as clearly evolved a conception as it is today. A modern writer who borrows from his predecessors or his contemporaries at least tries to conceal his transgressions, but in the seventeenth century even Molière could unashamedly proclaim, "Je prends

mon bien ou je le trouve." Explorers in the wilds of America, many of whom had probably never heard of Molière, freely borrowed from each other, adorning the truth when it seemed too bare, and giving as their own whole passages stolen from each other or from some borrowed document.

Several modest and patient investigators who, by collecting, classifying, and publishing the documents left by seventeenth-century French explorers, have made it possible to form a clear idea of that moving chapter of Franco-American relations.⁵ Three or four are to be mentioned, as having provided the basis for this study.

Toward the middle of the last century, B. F. French undertook the publication of the Historical Collections of Louisiana. The first volume (1846) included English translations of several French documents of the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth century, three memoirs of La Salle,

⁵ No discussion of Franco-American relations would be complete without mention of the name Emile Lauvrière. His monumental Histoire de la Louisiane Française, 1673-1939, was published by the Louisiana State University Press at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1940. The point of view of the writer is that of a patriotic Frenchman deploring the mistakes committed by his countrymen in their American colony. The facts, however, are very accurately and conscientiously related, and the Archives of several French Ministries have been carefully explored by the author. The purpose and character of the book being purely historical, we found the emphasis of M. Emile Lauvrière's history fairly remote from our own subject.

and accounts by Tonty, Joutel, and Hennepin. A second volume (1850) added texts referring to the Spaniard De Soto in Florida, an English memoir by Daniel Coxe, and a translation of Marquette's and Joliet's account of 1673. The following parts refer to Bernard de la Harpe, Charlevoix, Jean Ribaut, Dumont, and Champigny. In B. F. French's work is found, in addition, a narration of D'Iberville's voyage made in 1698 (published in 1869), and a memoir addressed in 1697 to the Count de Pontchartrain, in Louisiana, by M. de Remonville (also published in 1869).

The collection of texts edited and published in English translations by John G. Shea is even more valuable. His Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley appeared in 1852, and contained the original narratives of Marquette, Allouez, Membre', Hennepin, and A. Douay. J. G. Shea also made available, in a fluent English translation, the useful account of Father Christian Le Clercq, a Recollet Missionary, whose work is entitled Premier Etablissement de la Foi dans la Nouvelle France, 1691. Shea's volume also includes Membre's Journal, which had first been printed in Le Clercq's account. In 1858, he published the original text of the Relation du Voyage of Cavalier de La Salle, written by the discoverer's brother, Abbe' Jean Cavalier. Shea used a manuscript loaned to him by the historian Francis Parkman. Shea, who was deeply interested in that period of French and American

history, published several other early accounts of Louisiana: Father Gravier's travel diary in Louisiana, written in 1700-1701 (published by Shea in 1859); the amusing and informative Relation du Voyage des Ursulines à la Nouvelle Orléans in 1727 (published also in 1859).

A third American scholar deserves the gratitude of modern historians for having made available in a convenient and methodical form the famous Lettres édifiantes des missions étrangères, which had such a profound influence upon French thought and curiosity in the eighteenth century. Reuben Gold Thwaites entitled that long series of valuable documents (in the original texts and with an English translation, notes, and maps), the Jesuit Relations.

Second to none of these historians, or "antiquarians", devoted to the early history of France in America is the Frenchman, Pierre Margry.⁶ At a time when few of his countrymen were interested in that period, Margry, an official and keeper of the archives in the French Navy Department, undertook patient investigations to exalt the glory of La Salle and his companions. He was fortunate in discovering many

⁶The most precise notice on Margry (1818-1894) is to be found in the Publications of the Louisiana Historical Society, Volume I, Part III, 1896, p. 1016. It is written by Dr. Gustave Devron. Another Louisianian, Bussiére Rouen, read a paper on Margry, on March 2, 1922, at the Athénée Louisianais and published it in April of the same year in the Louisiana Historical Quarterly, Volume 5, No. 2, pp. 192-200.

documents lost among the dusty shelves of French "notaires", more than four hundred pages of letters written by La Salle himself, and other accounts and reports of the same period. The publication of his six big volumes was made possible through the unflinching interest of Francis Parkman, and the assistance of the Congress of the United States.⁷ The work appeared in Paris between 1879 and 1888. The order adopted by the editor is not the best imaginable; he has grouped many smaller documents or "procès-verbaux" under misleading headings. His interpretation of the documents has, in several cases, been questioned, especially his contention that it was La Salle who first reached the Mississippi.⁸ It is none the less clear that the ensemble of documents, relations, diaries, and letters published by Margry constitutes the necessary solid foundation on which any modern work dealing with seventeenth-century Louisiana must be built.⁹

⁷Cf. Margry's preface to his first volume.

⁸J. G. Shea opposed it, calling it "P. Margry's La Salle Bubble." (Cf. United States Catholic Historical Magazine, 1891-1893, Volume 4, pp. 251-268). Many historians maintain the claim of Marquette to that discovery to be stronger and safer. Among this group are two French historians, Brucker and HARRISSE.

⁹For the detailed contents of Margry's volumes, consult the bibliography. A very useful bibliographical and critical appendix is to be found at the end of Joutel's Journal of La Salle's last Voyage, translated into English by H. Reed Stiles and published by McDonough at Albany, in 1906. The bibliographical appendix is by Applet P. C. Griffin.

When Cavalier de La Salle took possession of a vast empire in the New World in the name of the Sun King, neither Louisiana nor the Mississippi played an important part in the literature of the day. The cannibals which Montaigne had observed in Rouen and praised with a subtle and profound irony, were not from North America but from Brazil. And the Indians, whose cause he defended against the cruel avidity of Spanish conquerors in his humorous essay, Les Coches, were not those of the southern United States.

However, it was natural at a time when traveling was precarious, and tales flourished of golden treasures and primitive goodness to be found in distant lands, that readers and listeners should be fascinated by tales of travelers to far away lands more fascinating than familiar Europe. These curious and extraordinary voyages play an important role in the French literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Professor Lanson had pointed it out and Professor Atkinson¹⁰ has proved it conclusively. That popular branch of literature has satisfied sometimes cleverly, but more often

¹⁰G. Lanson, Revue des Cours et Conférences, 1907-1910.

G. Atkinson, The Extraordinary Voyage in French Literature before 1700; The Extraordinary Voyage in French Literature from 1700 to 1720; La Littérature géographique française de la Renaissance; Les Relations de voyages au XVII siècle et l'évolution des idées. Contribution à l'étude de la formation de l'esprit au XVIII siècle.

tediously and monotonously, several demands of the public: a demand for realistic (or supposedly realistic) details concerning navigation and geography, a taste for imaginary or fanciful fiction, and a passion for moral and didactic lessons disguised under tales of political utopias and ironic criticisms of the French monarchy. As is well known, most of these imaginary relations took advantage of French curiosity concerning distant lands, and utilized it to criticise their country in an indirect way. This type of novel, the account of the fantastic voyage, became conspicuously successful in the latter half of the seventeenth century, gradually replacing the heroic and précieux novel.

The diligent and exhaustive research of Professor Atkinson has established conclusively that very few of these extraordinary voyages borrowed anything from North America. Asia was then a more romantic land, as was the Austral Continent, which contemporary geographers supposed existed in the southern hemisphere as a necessary and symmetrical balance to the weight of the northern hemisphere.¹¹ Gabriel de Foigny and Denis Vairasse, probably the best known, and philosophically, the most important of these authors of imaginary utopias, both placed the adventures of their heroes

¹¹ A. Raimbaud, Le Continent austral: hypotheses et découvertes.

in the Austral land. The third famous extraordinary voyage which holds an eminent place in the history of free thought is: Voyages de Jacques Masse, published by Simon Tyssot in 1710. The hero might have landed on our shores, since he left for Martinique, and the author goes so far as to borrow a few details from the natural history of the islands. But the traveler's ship floundered off Cape Finisterre, and was taken to Portugal. Further adventures took him to the Cape of Good Hope. The literary discovery of America and Louisiana will have to be postponed until Manon Lescaut boards her unhappy vessel at Havre de Grace.

The other titles which can be gleaned from Professor Atkinson's bibliographies concern those parts of North America which are without the boundaries of Louisiana. Examples of these are: Laudonnière, L'Histoire de la Floride située en Indes, 1586; and Thomas de Bry, Merveilleux et estrange rapport, toutefois fidèle, des commodités qui se trouvent en Virginie, des naturels habitans d'icelle, laquelle a été nouvellement découverte, 1590. In the following century, Vincent le Blanc, a trader and traveler from Marseille, wrote (in collaboration with Pierre Bergeron), a curious work: Les Voyages fameux du Sieur Vincent le Blanc, 1648, the third part of which dealt with the Mediterranean and the two Americas. In none of these books is Louisiana mentioned, which in view of the fact that its name did not exist, and that it had hardly been explored,

is scarcely surprising. The first appearance of Louisiana in French Letters was to be through a narrower and more humble gate -- the records of a few courageous explorers who were to attempt to immortalize their deeds in writing. Their sympathy for the Indians will be less philosophical and more sincere than that of more utopian writers. Their geography will be less imaginary, having been acquired more painstakingly through "portages" from one water way to another, or in forests among herds of buffalo and numerous rattlesnakes.

CHAPTER II

JESUITS AND RECOLLECTS

SUMMARY

Marquette and Joliet's expedition. Value of Father Marquette's narrative. Louis Hennepin. His early life. Success of Hennepin's writings. Characteristics of his work. Hennepin's contribution to French Literature concerning Louisiana. Father Zenobe Membre. Accompanied La Salle on his second and third expeditions. Literary value of his written account. Father Christian Le Clercq.

The name of Father Marquette, a pioneer in the history of Christianity in America, remains associated with the northern part of the United States more than with Louisiana. It is clear, however, that the French missionary was the first to reach and to identify the Mississippi and to leave as well a description of the fauna of its valley.¹

Born in the north of France, at Laon (Aisne), in 1637, and inculcated with a spirit of ardent devotion to the Virgin, Marquette entered the society of Jesus at seventeen.

¹Information concerning Marquette is found in: (a) a narrative of his voyage to the Mississippi and the Arkansas as published by Thevenot in his Recueil de voyages, 1681, and reproduced in French's Historical Collections of Louisiana (New York, 1846); (b) the publication of Marquette's complete Journal (as prepared by Dablon in 1678) by J. G. Shea, Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley, 1853, and reprinted since; (c) the first volume of Margry's Memories et Documents; (d) Vol. LIX of Thwaites's Jesuit Relations. One may consult with pleasure and profit the volume of M. Charles de la Roncière, Au fil du Mississippi avec le Père Marquette, Paris, Bloud et Gay, 1935.

He soon felt attracted to the hard task of a missionary in remote lands. He reached Quebec, September 20, 1666, and as he traveled to Lake Superior, began at once the study of languages of the North American tribes. His memory is associated there with Sault Saint Mary and with Lapointe. It was at this time that Joliet was appointed to go on a mission with Father Marquette, their object being "to teach them (the savages) of our great God whom they have hitherto unknown."² Frontenac, the governor of New France, who was strongly prejudiced against the Jesuits, preferred that the glory of discovering the huge river of which the Indians spoke should be shared between the missionary priest and Joliet, a young Canadian from Quebec, whose parents had emigrated from La Rochelle.³

The two men, accompanied by five other pioneers, left May 17, 1673, in two canoes, proceeded to Green Bay, ascended the Fox River, reached the Wisconsin after a difficult portage, and then the Mississippi. They descended the river to the Arkansas, thus ascertaining both its navigability and its general direction. Father Marquette questioned the

²J. G. Shea, Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley, p. 14.

³Charles de la Roncière, Au fil du Mississippi avec le Père Marquette, p. 87.

Indians concerning the nearness of the sea. The following excerpt from his simple and naive account deserves quotation in his own language:

Nous entrons heureusement dans le Mississippi le 17 juin avec une joie que je ne peux pas expliquer... Nous suivons doucement son cours, qui va au Sud et au Sud-Est jusqu'aux 42 degres d'élévation. C'est ici que nous nous apercevons bien que tout a changé de face. Il n'y a presque plus de bois ni de montagnes. Les îles sont plus belles et couvertes de plus beaux arbres. Nous ne voyons que des chevreuils et des vaches, des outardes et des cygnes sans ailes, parce qu'ils quittent leurs plumes en ce pays. Nous recontrons de temps en temps des poissons monstrueux, un desquels donna si rudement contre notre canot que je crus que c'était un gros arbre qui l'allait mettre en pieces.⁴

This passage is one of the earliest examples of almost literary prose concerning the Mississippi Valley and the country which the eighteenth century was to call Louisiana. It is quite exceptional, however, and is much more carefully written and shows more poetic feeling than the rest of Marquette's diary. It is all the more interesting as it foreshadows modestly, not the utilitarian, psychological, or ethnographical kind of literature which Louisiana was to inspire for over a hundred years, but the poetical and picturesque interpretation which will flourish, somewhat paradoxically it seems, at a time when nature was beginning to be spoiled and to lose its original colors. It would perhaps

⁴R. G. Thwaites, *Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries*, Vol. CXXXVIII, p. 106.

not be too much to say, from this striking passage, that Marquette possessed some of the conscious -- too conscious -- qualities of Chateaubriand. The courageous priest entered into these new realms with a sense of wonder. The strange birds, the wild animals, and the vast forests must have struck his imagination with the charm of a vision of Paradise. Like Saint Francis of Assisi, he felt at home among those strange creatures. Perhaps obsessed by the monstrous gargoyles of the Cathedrals of the Ile de France, or the weird beasts often painted on the early maps, he depicts one of them as a monster raising its grey head and straight ears above the water.

No vain pride, however, entered the soul of Marquette and his companion; no acquisitive desire to take advantage of their discovery by surveying and exploiting the vast expanse of land for furs, hides or metals. The service of God and of their country filled their hearts with the pure joy with which a great cause rewards its workers. Dablon, who related Marquette's life and travels, emphasizes above all the piety and devotion of the missionary, his "angelic charity, his candid kindness, his continuous union with God."⁵

⁵
Ibid., p. 206.

The narrative of Father Marquette's first voyage, told how he and Joliet⁶⁻⁷ stopped and meditated upon the course they were to follow. They were undecided whether to descend the river further towards the south or to return to New France. In the naive joy of their discovery, the memory of the terrific hardships endured in canoeing day and night among unknown lands was forgotten. They ascertained that, without any doubt, the river flowed towards the Gulf of Mexico, and, in all simplicity, decided to return.

Marquette's simple narrative, expressed at times in faulty spelling and in a naive way is remarkably innocent of pompous declamation and boastful rhetoric. Its author makes no attempt to describe the Indians and their customs; he merely pities the savages to whom the truth of Christianity has not yet been revealed. However, the sheer simplicity of his story, as well as the maps which Joliet and Marquette drew on their return gives conclusive evidence of their discovery, and proves to posterity the validity of their modest and glorious claim. Not long afterwards, Marquette's failing health made a prompt return to New France imperative. On the fourth of December, 1674, they reached the Chicago River, and Marquette, being too weak to continue the march by land,

⁶⁻⁷On Joliet, consult: Ernest Gagnon, Louis Jolliet, découvreur de Mississippi et du pays des Illinois, premier de l'île d'Anticosti.

stopped with a few friendly Indians. He died there May 18, 1675.

Joliet, who in 1674 made the first map of the Mississippi drawn with the direct knowledge of the land, was rewarded, scarcely adequately, with an island in the Gulf of the Saint Lawrence, where he built a house for his family and his trade. He died late in the seventeenth century. His place in the literature of early Louisiana is not an important one, for while returning from his expedition to the Mississippi, he lost all his papers in the rapids of La Chine, above Montreal, and was therefore forced to be content with writing from memory a brief memorandum to be presented to Frontenac.⁸

The contrast is sharp between Marquette's holy figure and the humility with which his extraordinary expedition was conducted, and the florid and boasting accounts of another priest and explorer, Louis Hennepin. The latter is a Recollect, remembered for several books in which he popularized the name of Louisiana. Hennepin was in fact, the first to use in the title of a book the name given by La Salle to the vast colony he had discovered.

This was assuredly not a literary masterpiece, and the

⁸Two versions of this narrative are in Margry's first volume. Cf. also on Joliet, Margry's articles in Revue Canadienne, December, 1871, and January-March, 1872.

reputation of the author is far from being unblemished.⁹ Hennepin's account of what was happening in Louisiana does not reveal a very noble soul. His works were, nevertheless, skilfully advertised and widely read. Even today they provide some entertaining passages for bored modern readers. As for the unreliable Recollect, it is only too clear that he has borrowed or stolen from contemporary accounts.¹⁰ Yet he did more than any other writer of the seventeenth century to make Louisiana known to Europeans, to advertise the new land, and to lure to it the subjects of Louis XIV or of William III of Great Britian.

⁹The chief bibliographical data on Hennepin's works have been gathered by Victor Hugo Paltsits, and published in Thwaites's edition of A New Discovery, Chicago, 1903, p. XLIV. The introduction by Thwaites to the same volume contains the chief details of Hennepin's life and a just and shrewd appreciation of his works. The introduction by Grace Lee Nute to the Description of Louisiana, recently translated by Marion E. Cross, University of Minnesota Press, 1938, also deserves to be consulted. A Canadian writer, N. E. Dionne, has written a useful book entitled: Hennepin, ses voyages et ses oeuvres, Quebec 1897, but not without some inaccuracies. No writer of the group of French explorers demands more painstaking analysis of borrowings than Hennepin. The titles of his three ambitious volumes are given in the text.

¹⁰Hennepin's unreliability is proverbial and is amply proved by the excessive claims which he makes for himself throughout his work; it has been further demonstrated by every authority on the subject. See Hennepin and references to him in the bibliography.

In reality, Hennepin was not a Frenchman. He was born in Belgium in 1640, and was consequently a Spanish subject. Next to nothing is known of his childhood, but very early he must have felt both a strong urge for travel, and a desire for solitary and religious life. Strangely enough, this adventurer in the wilds of the Northwest and the prairies of so-called Louisiana is even credited with having written a Morale Pratique du Jansénisme.

I always found in myself a strong inclination to retire from the world and regulate my life according to the rules of pure and severe virtue; and in compliance with this humour, I entered the Franciscan order, desiring to confine myself to an austere way of living.

Thus Hennepin wrote in the first chapter of his A New Discovery.¹¹ He became a Recollect Franciscan at Bethune in 1660, thus entering a French ecclesiastical province, that of Saint Denis, later to be called the province of Saint Anthony of Padua.¹² Once he was ordained a priest, Louis traveled in Germany and Italy, and then became an army chaplain with the French in the War of the Netherlands (1673-74). His fondness for adventure was to carry him much

¹¹The quotations from this work are taken from the second London edition of 1698, as reprinted by R. G. Thwaites in 1903, 2 volumes.

¹²Hennepin also gave the same name to the falls he discovered on the upper Mississippi.

farther away.

"I was overjoyed," wrote Hennepin in the same first chapter of A New Discovery, "when I read in history of the travels and voyages of the fathers of my own order, who, indeed, were the first that undertook missions into any foreign country. And oftimes represented to myself, that there could be nothing greater or more glorious than to instruct the ignorant and barbarous, and lead them to the light of the gospel."

Very different from the courtly abbés of that period, he depicted himself as haunting taverns where sailors spoke of their adventures. It was quite heroic of him, as he pointed out, ". . . for the smoke of tobacco was offensive to me, and created pain in my stomach . . . But this occupation was so agreeable and engaging that I have spent whole days and nights at it without eating." His resolution to travel thus strengthened, he was overjoyed when he finally received the order to repair as a missionary to Canada.

He left in 1675, probably with two other Recollects who also have left their names in the early history of the Mississippi Valley: Christian Le Clercq and Zenobe Membre'. The trip was eventful if we may believe Hennepin's vivid and imaginative account of several fights with pirates from Turkey, Tunis and Algiers, and a battle between swordfish and whales which he beheld with "incredible delight".

In Canada, Hennepin first preached or otherwise fulfilled the duties of his ministry along the lower Saint Lawrence and Fort Frontenac (today near Kingston, Ontario).

In 1678, he joined La Salle's party, which was setting out on its famous voyage down the Mississippi and into the Gulf of Mexico. Here Hennepin's narratives, or rather, his narrative began, for he told the same adventures and events, differently seasoned, in his three volumes.¹³

Hennepin's history covers the years 1679-1680, when preparations for the great expedition were made. The Recollect was sent in advance to Fort Frontenac. The modest equipment which he carried is in striking contrast with his pompous style. It consisted of ". . . a portable chapel, one blanket, a mat of rushes, which was to serve for bed and quilt." La Salle was absent from the fort until July, 1679. His devoted lieutenant, Tonty, had little patience with Hennepin. He even threatened to destroy the notebooks kept by the missionary. But though he was doubtless right in suspecting the veracity of the friar's notes, in carrying out these threats the valiant man of action might have deprived posterity of one of its most interesting accounts of seventeenth century Louisiana.

The departure of La Salle's famous expedition took place late in 1679, not without grumbling, quarrels, and even desertion in the ranks of the exploring party. On

¹³ His A New Discovery includes a rapturous description of Niagara Falls and of the Great Lakes. (Chapter VII).

January 1, 1680, Hennepin and Father Membre^é exhorted the "grumblers" to turn over a new leaf and "continue firm in their duty." They reached Fort Crèvecoeur, where they had to wait for more supplies. Hennepin, suffering from an abscess on the mouth, tried to return to Canada, but could not prevail upon any of the other missionaries to take his place in a smaller expedition on which he was then dispatched.

Upon La Salle's order, Hennepin, Michel Ako, and another Frenchman named "le Picard" left the main party to descend the Illinois River and part of the Mississippi to survey that part of the country. They set out on their mission, but were soon taken prisoners by the Sioux. After suffering many hardships, they were finally rescued by the "coureur de bois" DuLuth, who had great influence with the Sioux. Hennepin was then received by the Jesuits at Green Bay. In the spring of 1681, his party reached Montreal. He describes himself as "lean, tired, and tanned, clothed in old garments, patched up with pieces of wild bull-skins." The following autumn he sailed for Europe, and in the solitude of the convent of his order at Saint-Germain-en-Laye wrote his first literary work.

The Description de la Louisiane, nouvellement découverte au sud ouest de la Nouvelle France, par ordre du roi, avec la carte du pays, les moeurs et la manière de

vivre des sauvages appeared early in 1683, "chez la veuve Sebastien Hure, rue Saint Jacques, pres Saint Severin." It was signed by "le R. P. Louis Hennepin, missionnaire recollet et notaire apostolique." The book had a great success, and also incurred the hostile criticism which success usually brings. It was reprinted in France in 1684, 1688, 1720; translated into Italian in 1686, 1691; into Dutch in 1688, into German in 1689, 1692; and into English in 1880, by John G. Shea, at New York.

Interest in the adventures of explorers and missionaries in North America was very keen in classical seventeenth-century France, which some historians say was interested only in France, the ancients, and the study of the human soul. The Jesuit Relations had been suppressed in 1673. Hennepin's book, appearing at the opportune moment, therefore profited by the interest which the absence of any other similar literature naturally stimulated. Miss Grace Lee Nute, in her interesting introduction to the recent American translation of the book,¹⁴ insists that Hennepin's book was, in fact, a broadside fired at the Jesuits in the constant war between that order and the Recollects. It seems indeed likely, as Miss Grace Lee Nute suggests, that

¹⁴ Hennepin's Description of Louisiana, University of Minnesota Press, 1938, Foreword by Grace Lee Nute, p. XIV.

Abbe' Bernou, a supporter of La Salle in France, helped Hennepin in the arrangement of his narrative. Bernou saw in the book, imperfect as it was, useful publicity for La Salle's achievements. He also cherished the hope that the new realm of Louisiana might be reserved to Recollect missionaries, and kept free of the Jesuits, who were all-powerful in Canada.

Hennepin, in the meantime, was not content with his success. In 1697, he published at Utrecht another volume, longer and more ambitious: Découverte d'un tres grand Pays, situé dans l'Amérique entre le Nouveau Mexique et la mer glaciale. He omits from his new book the most interesting part of his former volume, the anthropological account of the customs of the Indians. Instead, he adds a brazen dedication to the King of Great Britain, William III:

"Having lived eleven years¹⁵ in Northern America, I have had the opportunity to penetrate farther into that unknown continent than any before me; wherein I have discovered new countries, which may be justly called the Delights of the New World." He adds that his sole purpose is to ". . . serve as guide to your subjects, to carry into those regions the light of the gospel and the fame of your heroic virtues. My name would be blessed amongst those nations, who live without laws and religions . . . and they would have the happiness of being converted to the Christian faith, and the advantage of seeing at the same time their fierceness and rude manners softened and

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A voluntary mistake, for Hennepin lived six years in America.

civilized by the commerce of a polite and generous nation, ruled by the most Magnanimous King in the world."

Three pages of such bombastic flattery follow. Patriotic motives were not very powerful in that age, least of all in the heart of the Recollect Friar, for William III had been at war with France, Hennepin's first adopted country, from 1689 to 1697. As for La Salle, he is mentioned only indirectly in the preface as a gentleman who had formed great designs upon the mines of the country, and who died tragically. The author's devotion to his friends was apparently no stronger in him than his devotion to his country.

This second volume, which was reprinted seven times in French between 1698 and 1737, also enjoyed the following translations: four into Dutch, two into German, one into Spanish, and one into English, the last two being abridged. The success of the second volume was at least as great as that of the first volume, though the work was very inferior in merit. It borrowed more than freely from Le Clercq's Establissement de la Foi, which contained Membre's valuable account of La Salle's voyage of discovery. Hennepin went so far in identifying himself with his authority that he actually asserted that he had been to the Gulf of Mexico. He may even have finally believed his own lie, though he had stated the contrary in his former and more accurate book.

Rightfully did La Salle warn his friends in France of Hennepin's boasting:

One has to know him, for he will not fail to exaggerate everything; that is in his character; he wrote to me that he was almost burned, when he was not even in danger of it; but he thinks it is honorable to act this way, and he talks more in conformance with what he wishes than what he knows.¹⁶

Hennepin then seems to have run into difficulty with the French authorities and to have taken refuge in the protection of the Protestant King of England, on whom he was so ready to lavish flattery. In 1698, at Utrecht, Hennepin published a third volume: Nouveau Voyage d'un pays plus grand que l'Europe, avec les reflexions des entreprises du Sieur de La Salle sur les mines de Ste. Barbe. It had two editions each in French and German, and one in Dutch. The book was hastily and clumsily put together, with even greater borrowings from Le Clercq. On the strength of that publication, he asked his superiors to send him again to the New World. The King of France ordered the governor of Canada to have him arrested should he ever land there. It is probable that the once famous author died in obscurity some years later. The date and place are not known.

If Hennepin's volumes dealt only with what the author saw, he would not deserve much mention in the present study,

¹⁶ Margry, II, p. 259.

since he traveled only in Canada, and from Lake Superior and Lake Ontario to Lake Peoria (Fort Crèvecoeur). His explorations did not reach much farther south than the Illinois River, and his capture by the Sioux prevented his taking part in the descent of the Lower Mississippi to what is today called Louisiana.

Hennepin, however, popularized the name "Louisiana" through the publication of his first volume. His second volume gives a complete (if often unreliable) account of the course of the Mississippi, of the climate of the country, and of the customs of different tribes of Indians. Many of the passages written by Hennepin about the calumet, the buffalo, the flora of Louisiana, the superstitions of the natives, their religious or irreligious attitude, are typical of all French Literature of travelers in the seventeenth century.

Throughout his writings the reader is always conscious of the intruding personality of the Recollect Missionary, who certainly knew nothing of Pascal's precept that "le moi est haïssable". La Salle's merit suffers in comparison with his own: the daring plans, the original conception of the discovery of the Mississippi are presented as his own. Hennepin's competence, indeed, extended to the most varied realms; for according to him, he was an explorer, a priest, a leader, a diplomat with savages, a geographer, and even a

pioneer in the science of ethnology, for he asserted that the word "Canada" comes from the Spanish "Il capo di Nada"¹⁷ the name given by the Spaniards to that country which they had discovered first and abandoned because they thought it worthless. Indeed, little credence can be given to his boasting assertions. Even if contemporary evidence did not deny his claim to the discovery of the great River, the mere clumsiness of his lies, the insistence with which he hammers them into us, would point to an uneasiness in the man who knew that while the truth may be uttered once, a lie requires more insistent repetition. Several times in his A New Discovery he takes pains to assert: "I was the first European who discovered the course of the Meschasipi, and the delicious country about it, so all others have seen nothing but what I had seen before." Hennepin at least understood the greatness of the discovery of La Salle, and realized that posterity would consider that first descent of the mighty river a high claim to glory.

As a geographer, Hennepin had only vague conceptions. The map which he affixed to the original edition of the Description de la Louisiane is singularly blank as to what is to be found south of Fort Crèvecoeur. "La Louisiane" is

¹⁷ A New Discovery, Chapter XII. Hennepin, a Spanish subject, might at least have written "El cabo de".

printed there in capital letters, and the distance between the Illinois River and the Gulf of Mexico is about one third of what it should be. In his second volume, in which he assumes an even more boastful tone he asserts that he can solve the vexing question of the northwest passage to China and Japan. All efforts have failed before his, but "I know well what I say . . . By the help of my discovery, and the assistance of God, I doubt not to let all Europe see that a passage may still be found thither, and that an easy one too."¹⁸

His remarks on the climate of the part of the American continent, where he had actually traveled, are no less positive, and no more trustworthy. He asserts that the winter is no more severe in the Illinois country than in Provence. In the winter of 1679, the snow stayed on the ground for twenty days, but the Indians had never before experienced such a severe winter.¹⁹ Again, he maintains in his A New Discovery that "the hardest winter lasts not above two months in this charming country; so on the fifteenth of January there comes a sudden thaw which made the rivers navigable, and the weather so mild as it is in the middle of Spring."²⁰

¹⁸A New Discovery, Thwaites' Edition, I, p. 269.

¹⁹Description of Louisiana, Cross translation, p. 78.

²⁰A New Discovery, Thwaites' Edition, p. 170.

Hennepin's accounts are chiefly valuable, however, as early evidence of the wonder and envy with which the first European travelers looked at the valley of the Mississippi. Although the facts used by the author are often second-hand, he does record a wealth of information concerning Louisiana and its inhabitants during the seventeenth century.

The virtues of other missionaries whose names are associated with the discovery of the Mississippi Valley (from Father Marquette to Zenobe Membre' and Christian Le Clercq) may redeem the lack of Christian humility as well as other faults for which the Flemish Recollect, now honored as a pioneer and a hero in Minnesota, had been blamed.

Father Zenobe Membre' does not appear in too favorable a light in Hennepin's works. What is even more disconcerting, this faithful companion of La Salle has also been harshly treated by serious historians of the French explorations in America: Parkman, Shea, and even Thwaites. D'Iberville deals with him in a severe and unjust manner "as a liar who has disguised everything," merely because of his own discovery that he could not rely upon some geographical indications given by Membre'.

A recent exhaustive study by Father Habig, solidly based on documents, has, however, vindicated Membre's claims to fame.²¹ Thanks to Father Habig's work, Membre can now be given his proper place among seventeenth-century explorers and among French writers on Louisiana. Like Hennepin and Le Clercq, also Recollects, Membre came from the Spanish province of Artois, which France annexed in 1659. In June, 1675, he left with Hennepin, Le Clercq, and another missionary for New France. After a stay of some years in the region of the Great Lakes, he was sent to the country of the Illinois, where he observes the Indians of that region very carefully and tried to learn their dialect. He was rather critical of their many vices and faults. In 1680, his companion, Father Ribourde, was murdered by the Indians as he was saying his prayers in a solitary forest. Grief-stricken and disheartened, Father Membre then paddled up the Illinois River, and returned to Canada.

Upon his arrival, La Salle, who was preparing his second expedition, selected Membre as one of the twenty-three Frenchmen who were to accompany him. In 1682, they reached that part of the country occupied by tribes of the North. He was equally pleased with the Taensas tribes

²¹ Marion A. Habig, O.F.M., The Franciscan Père Marquette. A Critical Biography of Father Zenobe Membre, O.F.M., New York, 1934.

which he met farther south (in the present parish of Tensas, in the Louisiana of today). Father Membre' comments upon the much higher level of civilization to be found among the southern tribes of Indians, especially the Natchez. With the rest of La Salle's party, he reached the sea at the mouth of the Mississippi in April, 1682. His name is second on the "procès verbal" of the occupation of Louisiana which was drawn up by La Salle's notary. The return journey was a painful one for the Franciscan. He arrived in Quebec just in time to leave on a boat sailing for France. He reached France in the same year (1682) and in an official report written in 1683, was the first to make known there the course of the Mississippi. He retired quietly to his monastery in Flanders, not leaving France again until 1685.

At that time La Salle was organizing a new expedition in which he included three Sulpicians and three Franciscans. Zenobe Membre' was superior of the latter group. The story of the ill-fated voyage to the Gulf of Mexico, of the quarrel between La Salle and Beaujeu, does not have to be retold here. Misfortune and death hovered over the unhappy survivors at Fort Saint Louis in Texas. Membre's task was to console the sick and bury the dead. He tried to make life more pleasant for his weary companions, as Joutel's Journal relates, by planting a garden and growing vegetables for them. He even hunted buffaloes, and was more than once gravely injured by

the fierce animals, which, unless shot in the spine, are able to attack the hunter even when badly wounded. La Salle's tragic assassination occurred in 1687. Membré and several of the colonists left at Fort Saint Louis were murdered by the Karankawa Indians, probably in 1689.

Father Membré has left a journal of his expeditions from 1678 to 1682, published in Le Clercq's Etablissement de la foi (1691). Le Clercq gives the beginning only in an abridged form; he gives Membré's complete account only from the establishment at Fort Crèvecoeur, that is, from February, 1680. However, there are some omissions concerning the period from June, 1681, to November of that year. When he departed for Europe in 1682, the good Franciscan Father had left a copy of his journal in Quebec. It was later published by Father Le Clercq, in 1691. Father Membré's document, presented to his countrymen in 1683, is entitled: Relation de la découverte de l'embouchure de la rivière Mississippi. His claim to a modest niche among the French writers on Louisiana rests upon this account.

Comparative accuracy and reliability are the main qualities of Father Membré's writings, as far as both history and literature are concerned. He makes no attempt to adorn the truth; he never tries to give a preeminent place to his feats, nor does he let his own personality obtrude itself in the course of his narrative. His never-failing devotion

to La Salle, which he expresses very warmly more than once, is his greatest virtue.²² His tone throughout is grave and religious. He refrains from exalted flights of rhetoric even when his party reaches its long-desired goal, the Gulf of Mexico.

Father Membre' pays little attention to picturesque details or to the beauty of the virgin soil of America. Had not the Franciscan missionary to watch every stroke of his paddles, every move of the Indians, every plant he touched lest it be poisonous? What struck him most vividly in the Mississippi Valley was the fertility of the soil, the luxuriance of the flora, and the great number of fish in the lakes and rivers.

It is rather difficult to judge Father Membre's accounts of his experiences from a literary point of view, since there exists only alleged quotations from his work and the lengthy summary left by a fellow Franciscan. Piety was more conspicuous in the missionary than literary enthusiasm. He presents the few details that he gives concerning the Indians in a very dry and matter-of-fact way. His style is characterized by short, disconnected sentences, for Membre' tries in no way to make his account vivid or striking. The following lines, faithfully translated by J. C. Shea,

²² Membre' in Le Clercq's Etablissement, III, p. 157.

are a fair example of his prose:

The greater part of these tribes make their cabins of mats of flat rushes sewed together double. They are tall of stature, strong and robust, and good archers. They had as yet no firearms; we gave some to a few. They are wandering, idle, fearful and dissolute, almost without respect for their chiefs; irritable and thievish. . . . They are lewd, and even unnaturally so, having boys dressed as women, destined only for their infamous purposes. They are very superstitious, although they have no religious worship. They are, moreover, great gamblers like all the Indians in America that I am able to know.²³

It seems, however, that Membre' was keenly attracted by the territory of the Southern Mississippi. The Missionary, rarely sensitive to beauties of the country, goes so far as to use the adjective "beautiful" to describe the region around the Mississippi. The soil is good, he says, and "the banks full of canes until you reach the sea, except in fifteen or twenty places where there are very pretty hills, and spacious, convenient landing places. The inundation does not extend very far, and behind these drowned banks you see the finest country in the world."²⁴ This for a seventeenth century writer, was, indeed, the highest praise.

Even the Indians of Southern Louisiana are more handsome, civil, liberal, and of a gay humor in comparison with

²³ Le Clercq, First Establishment, New York, J. Shea, 1881, II, pp. 134-135.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 186-187.

the Illinois or with the Iroquois. The animals are not cruel or "formidable to man". The cattle are big and easy to domesticate. The trees are huge and well suited for shipbuilding; hemp is plentiful for making rope, and tar could be made remarkably near the sea.

As for religious matters, however, Membre' is not hopeful. He does not tell of wholesale conversions, such as the Jesuits were fond of reporting in their accounts. "These Indians are in a deplorable state of blindness, and there is little hope of ever converting them to the true faith."

Father Christian Le Clercq does not deserve an important place in this study, since he never saw Louisiana and never actually wrote about it himself. Born in Bapaume around 1641, he belonged to the same group of Recollects as Hennepin and Membre'. When he arrived in New France in 1673 and was given charge of the church of Gaspé, he took his work seriously, studying the language of the Gaspeians, and translating the Lord's Prayer in hieroglyphics to make it accessible to them.

Father Le Clercq returned to France in 1687, where he retired to a Franciscan Convent at Leus. In 1691, he published two books in Paris: Nouvelle Relation de la Gaspésie and Premier Etablissement de la Foi dans la Nouvelle

France. The first work, which concerns only Canada, is ascribed entirely to Le Clercq. The second one has a long sub-title, in which the name of Louisiana occurs. A map is included, advertised as "Carte générale de la Nouvelle France où est compris (sic) la Louisiane, Gaspésie et le nouveau Mexique, avec les îles Antilles." Apparently, the book had only a moderate success; it was not translated. The Journal des Savants for February, 1692, devoted a few words to it. Arnauld utilized it in his attack on the Jesuits in Morale Pratique des Jésuites.

It contained some violent attacks upon the Jesuits, and, therefore, they must have done all they could to suppress it or to disparage its contents. Charlevoix, early in the eighteenth century praised the book as "generally well written".

A great deal of the book is of dubious authorship. The names of many writers have been suggested,²⁵ (including Count Frontenac, Père Caron, Nicolas Denip and Father Leteune) as having collaborated or as having interpolated chapters, but without any definite proof. It is evident, however, that the whole of Chapter XV is a very partial attack on the Jesuits and their boastful accounts. The

²⁵ By Margry (following in that respect Anastase Douay and Hennepin) and by J. G. Shea.

author, writing in a much more vehement and sarcastic tone than Le Clercq, ridicules the Jesuit claims of wholesale conversions, of Indians who have become pious, of savage girls writing from the depths of the forests to the Ursuline Sisters, expressing their regrets because they are not able to go to confession every fortnight. Obviously, this is an echo of the attitude of the civil authorities of New France toward the Jesuits.

Although Le Clercq did not accompany La Salle on his expeditions to Louisiana, he has, in the second volume of his New Establishment, published long extracts from Membre's diary. In Chapter XXIV, he seems to have compiled the record of La Salle's adventures at St. Louis Bay. In Chapter XXV, he borrows again from Father Anastase Douay, who was an eye witness to the unfortunate ending of La Salle's expedition.

That account, quoted from Douay's diary, is fairly vivid and well told. The details and difficulties of La Salle's party are reported with humor; the account of La Salle's death, is deeply moving. However, the passage, extending over fifty pages, has little claim to an enviable place in literature of Louisiana. Joutel's account is both fuller and more impressive. On the whole, Le Clercq's lengthy volumes deserve to be remembered as the only source of both Membre's and Douay's records concerning Louisiana, and of La Salle's adventures in the Southern Mississippi Valley.

CHAPTER III

WARRIORS AND MEN OF ACTION

SUMMARY

Tonty, a daring seventeenth century adventurer in America. His ancestry and early life. His travels and experiences with La Salle and his party. Joias D'Iberville in Biloxi. Tonty's two memoirs. His place in French literature of Louisiana. Importance of Joutel's account of La Salle's last expedition. Jean Cavelier. Nicolas de La Salle. Mathieu Sagean.

It was natural for missionaries to keep a record of their experiences in the strange wilderness they were exploring, the inhabitants of which they were trying, with little immediate success, to convert to Christianity. Priests and dignitaries of the church are numerous in seventeenth century French literature, from none too humble Cardinal de Retz to Bossuet and Malebranche; but adventurers and warriors, unless they are Caesars or Napoleons are less prone to record the tales of their deeds. They leave it to poets or historians to transmit the memory of their greatness to posterity. It is to be regretted that Tonty's adventures inspired no poetic pen, for next to his chief, La Salle, and to the brilliant naval commander, D'Iberville, Tonty is probably the most daring and heroic figure in the epic of the French in America under Louis XIV. Because of his human understanding and his humble devotion both to his commander and to his

purpose, Tonty perhaps is a more appealing character than the proud and stern figure of La Salle. One of his American biographers ranks him among "the Titans who with courage and manly fortitude forever strive against the decrees of the Gods."¹ In simpler terms, the missionary St. Cosmo, who traveled under his escort in 1699, calls him "beloved by all the voyagers -- the man who best knows the country. He is loved and feared everywhere."

Yet little is known of this hero, since he hardly revealed enough of himself in his writings to justify his being included among the literary pioneers of Louisiana. Like a few other eminent figures of the seventeenth century, Tonty was an Italian who chose to adopt France as his country.² His father, a Neapolitan banker, had been forced to take refuge in Paris after an insurrection in his native city. He offered a plan of life insurance, the Tontine, to the shrewd Mazarin. It failed, and he was put into the Bastille. Nevertheless, his son, Henri, born in 1650, entered the

¹C. B. Reed, Masters of the Wilderness, p. 108.

²The most helpful general account of Tonty is to be found in the Parkman Club Papers, pp. 37-58. The author is Henry E. Legeer. See also Charles B. Reed, Masters of the Wilderness, pp. 95-139, and Edmund Robert Murphy, Henry de Tonty, Fur Trader of the Mississippi.

French Army, in which he proved a courageous soldier. In the battle of Lebisso, in Sicily, Tonty lost his hand. It was replaced by an iron hook. That iron hand, coupled with a will of steel, was soon to make him legendary among the natives of North America. In 1678, he was recommended to La Salle by the Prince of Conti, and at once he gained the lasting friendship and esteem of the great explorer. He sailed for Canada and was soon placed in command of Fort Crèvecoeur. One hardship followed another; his men deserted and he was wounded by the hostile Iroquois; yet his indomitable will never weakened. In 1681, he left with La Salle on his great voyage of exploration, reached the Mississippi, passed the mouth of the Missouri, and beheld the powerful river and the vast, strange country which it drained. In 1682, after crossing the marshy lakes of the south, and the blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico, they reached the Delta.

La Salle having become ill on the return trip, Tonty was the first to announce to Frontenac, in Quebec, the news of the momentous discovery of a vast country, which had been named Louisiana. He then founded the famous Fort St. Louis among the Illinois Indians, where he spent many years of his life. Meanwhile, La Salle returned to the Gulf of Mexico on his fatal expedition. Later, the loyal Tonty descended the river to join his chief and friend, hoping to find him

alive. After a futile search, he left a letter for him with an Indian chief,³ and returned to his fort, but came down the river again in 1689 to rescue the survivors of La Salle's party in Texas. This time he reached a spot a few miles from the place where La Salle had been murdered, and after innumerable perils, returned once more to his fort among the Illinois.

In 1700, Tonty went down to Biloxi to help the new French hero, D'Iberville. The one-armed man proved to be the most valiant fighter in the war against the Indians. In 1704, however, a vessel brought yellow fever to the colony, and Tonty, having nursed some of the sick, fell a prey to the disease. His remains lie in Old Biloxi, in that southern soil which he had been one of the first to explore and to assist in settling.

The main events of Tonty's career, and the heroic qualities of the man, are hardly adequately depicted in French writings concerning Louisiana. As for the few authentic pages left by Tonty, they are the terse reports of a military pen and betray their origin just as do the pious accounts of the missionaries. On the whole, however, Tonty's narrative is charming, simple, discreet, and unassuming.

³The Chief of the Bayagoulas who, strangely enough, fourteen years later, gave the letter to D'Iberville.

The style is sometimes arid, especially in his letters,⁴ which are, in fact, official reports to the French Navy Department on his fruitless expedition in quest of La Salle in 1686-1689. But to the modern reader the matter of fact directness of the soldier is a relief from the long and vague details found in the seventeenth century literature of travel.

Tonty was with La Salle during the years 1678-1683. He told the story of those five years in a memoir written in 1684. It was composed at Quebec, dated November 14, 1684, and is addressed to Abbe Renaudot, who had assisted Tonty. The text is given by Margry in the first volume of his Decouvertes et Etablissements, pp. 571-616.

Tonty then wrote a second memoir: Memoire envoye en 1693 sur la Recouverte du Mississippi par M. de La Salle en 1678, et depuis sa mort par le sieur de Tonty, which was not published until 1844 in an English translation.⁵ The French text was given by Margry in his Relations et Memoires inedites pour servir a l'histoire de la France dans les pays d'Outre Mer, pp. 1-36.

These two memoirs form the basis of a work published

⁴Published in Margry, III.

⁵In French's Historical Collections, I, pp. 53-83.

in 1697 which Tonty refused to acknowledge as his own: Dernières Découvertes dans l'Amérique septentrionale de N. de La Salle. It is much more literary in its style and presentation, and resembles in no way the restrained brevity of an officer's diary.⁶ This volume, pompous and often inaccurate, appeared in an English translation in 1698. A copy is in the Bibliotheque National in Paris. Tonty disavowed the latter work repeatedly, and attributed it, says Charlevoix,⁷ to some "Parisian adventurer" who wanted to make money by such spurious or exaggerated publication. Finally, a long and interesting letter by Tonty, written at Missilimakinac, July 23, 1682, was published in Habig's book

⁶The contrast between Tonty's own account and the spurious volume published in 1697 under his name is marked and suffices to disprove Tonty's authorship. The latter work was obviously done by a professional writer who is generalizing from second-hand material. It is less the account of a traveler than a vague dissertation on the religion of the savages, and their belief in metempsychosis. Here is a sample of that pompous author's style:

"On remarque dans les sauvages beaucoup de gravité et d'autorité, dans la femme beaucoup de souplesse et d'obéissance; et comme ils ne suivent en tout ce qu'ils font que leur instinct et leur sensualité, leur manière d'agir est toujours sans fard et sans affectation; et l'on peut dire que l'union conjugale entre eux est moins l'effet d'une véritable amitié que de cette inclination qui nous est commune avec les animaux."

Such an affected style and involved feeling for "bienseances" are far removed from Tonty's manner.

⁷Charlevoix, Histoire de la Nouvelle France, II, p. 200.

on Membre.⁸

The warrior, Tonty, always on the alert for the treacherous attempts of the Indians against the French explorers,⁹ nevertheless observed the country and its inhabitants as did any early traveler in the Mississippi Valley. The northern part of that country soon to be called Louisiana struck him with wonder and joy.

The country is as charming as can be; it is made up of endless plains adorned with clusters of trees; several unknown fruits grow there; one finds there the first wild buffaloes, called Sibola by the Spaniards.... The savages are very handsome. Their huts are made of woven rushes. They are the best runners in America.¹⁰

Farther south, the country becomes more marshy, and the paddling, obstructed by reeds and bushes, is often difficult. Yet, even there, Tonty is inclined to look on the bright side of things. His serene good temper is never disturbed or ruffled by minor unpleasant incidents of the trip. He writes

⁸Marion A. Habig, O.F.M., The Franciscan Père Marquette. A Critical Biography of Father Zenobe Membre, O.F.M., pp. 218-229.

⁹Tonty relates (Margy, I, p. 586) in the simplest style how an Indian drew near him on some friendly pretense, and stabbed him in the chest. Another one held a knife over his head, and from time to time, touched his hair as if to behead him. "The greatest hope I could cherish," writes Tonty, "was that they would break my head instead of burning me alive." Through his presence of mind and daring courage, he succeeded in intimidating them. He withdrew to tend his wound.

¹⁰Margry, I, p. 582.

that behind the screen of reeds and wild bushes which grow on the banks of "la Grande Rivière" there are beautiful trees, such as laurels and palms; and many others bearing fruit, such as the mulberry. Behind these, are meadows with wild beasts, some of which could be domesticated. "The land is marvelous," concludes Tonty, "and in some villages, the Indians' corn ripens in forty days."¹¹

Tonty seemed to possess that human quality of understanding which La Salle lacked. He displays it in his description of the Indian tribes and in his dealings with them. Several of these tribes, especially those in the southern part of the Mississippi Valley, win his praise, being, as he says, "fort honnêtes" or "fort civiles." Tonty's reception by the chief of the Taensas constitutes one of the narrative passages in the literature written by French travelers in Louisiana.¹² The details, the attitude of the Chief's attendants, the architecture of the hut and its furnishings, are described by Tonty with a keen eye for the concrete and a total absence of literary adornment. Tonty is not very curious about the Indians and their religion; he

¹¹Ibid., p. 612.

¹²Ibid., pp. 600-601.

does not try to analyze their psychology, he treats them as children, and yet as fellow-beings with a firmness tempered with gentleness and sympathy.

Tonty mentions discreetly the many hardships which La Salle's men endured. The descent of the Great River appears to him as a most natural and simple undertaking. For several days the travelers had nothing to eat but wild garlic. They happened to find the skin and four legs of a deer which wolves had just eaten. "We feasted upon that," says Tonty simply. A few rotten pumpkins was all they had to eat for the next few days.¹³ But Tonty's good temper never failed him. There were many deserters among their companions; even the missionaries could not conceal their discouragement. But their hardships were soon forgotten when better times came, and their hunting provided them plentifully with food.

The longest and fullest account of La Salle's last expedition to Louisiana was written by Henri Joutel. By no means a literary masterpiece, it is, however, not only

¹³ Ibid., pp. 589-590.

the most valuable historically,¹⁴ but distinctly the most readable of the chronicles concerning La Salle. Henri Joutel is very little known except through his work. He does not, like Hennepin, project an inflated ego into his records; neither is he, like Tonty a valiant fighter and leader of men; but his accounts have given him some fame as a chronicler, and his writings are often quoted today in histories of La Salle and other early discoverers in Louisiana.

Like not a few of the boldest explorers of the new world, Joutel came from the province of Normandy. He was born in Rouen, probably between 1643 and 1645. Joutel's father had been the gardener of La Salle's uncle. Joutel served in the army "for sixteen or seventeen years," as he writes in his Journal, and was, therefore, no longer a young man when he heard of La Salle's voyages and volunteered to take part in them.

Next to nothing is known of his training. He must have had a fair degree of education, for he writes with clarity, and seems to have earned the respect of his contemporaries. Although his military talents were evidently not comparable to those of Tonty, he apparently enjoyed

¹⁴ Such is the opinion of Margry, Lauvrière, Parkman and other historians.

La Salle's confidence, and was appointed by him the "Intendant" of the party. In this capacity he was in charge of all the administrative details, the supplies, and other practical matters. He seems to have been liked by everyone. His task was probably to temper the asperities of his chief, to alleviate the hardships, to provide for the comfort¹⁵ of the expedition, and to keep a faithful record of events.

It is clear from his Journal that Joutel was both discreet and modest. He was not ambitious, and does not seem to have sought or exercised authority. As long as La Salle lived, the figure and personality of the leader overshadowed that of his Norman compatriot. After the murder of La Salle, Joutel continued courageously the work of his chief, but committed the grave mistake of concealing La Salle's death from Tonty and their Canadian friends, thus condoning the deception practiced by his companion, the Abbe' Cavellier, a brother of the explorer.

After La Salle's death, Joutel returned to Quebec after a long and hazardous journey, then left America for good, apparently without regret. He settled in Rouen and

¹⁵Of course, "comfort" was conspicuously absent in the terrible hardships endured by these pioneers in unknown lands.

lived there quietly: "Heureux qui comme Ulysse a fait un beau voyage." He was still alive in 1728, for Charlevoix visited him.

Joutel apparently was appointed the official historian of La Salle's 1684-1687 expedition. At any rate, he considered himself as such from the first and tolerated no rival, for when he discovered one day, in the wilds of Texas, that Father Maximus had written memoirs in which he judged La Salle's conduct adversely, he seized and burned them.¹⁶ When he wrote his Journal, he discreetly censured other historians of the expedition, Le Clercq especially,¹⁷ who claimed to owe his information to Father Anastasius. Joutel contends, in a hardly convincing argument, that the Recollet Father was never seen taking notes on the expedition.¹⁸ Joutel himself took notes diligently. The beginning of his Journal is accurate, containing many dates. He lost some of his notes, and admits that he is less exact in the latter part of his writings.¹⁹ However, he never distorts

¹⁶Joutel's Journal, H. R. Stiles Edition, p. 112.

¹⁷In a note to his Journal, given in Margry, III, p. 110.

¹⁸In a note given in Margry, III, p. 190.

¹⁹Margry, III, p. 162.

the truth in the fashion of Father Hennepin.

Joutel's Journal was published long after the expedition (in 1713 to be precise), in the form of a resumé by M. de Michel, who claims to have "methodized" it, and advertises it in the quaint seventeenth century fashion: "Many adventures, most of which are tragic, will please the curious reader; and above all he will admire the protection of Divine Providence, in preserving that small company throughout those vast regions and among so many barbarous nations." In spite of those who call Joutel a dreamer or an impostor, Michel praises his Journal as a vindication of La Salle's character and enterprise. Joutel, however, complained to Charlevoix²⁰ that the publisher of his Journal was most unfaithful. To the modern reader this accusation seems true. Michel's summary is incomplete and inaccurate, as later research has proved. A geographer, Claude Delisle, made another summary of the same Journal in which he adds some details not given by Michel. Margry has consulted this unpublished second resumé. Moreover, Margry has published in the third volume of his Découvertes et Etablissements des français (pp. 89-533) a manuscript copy of Joutel's Journal.

²⁰Margry, I, Introduction, p. XX.

Unlike Tonty and the missionaries mentioned in this study, Joutel did not descend the Mississippi to its mouth, but arrived by sea on the expedition, during which La Salle and his naval commander, Beaujeu, quarreled continually, as they wandered about in the wild and marshy region around the Gulf of Mexico. Geography was not then a highly developed science, and these hardy explorers had learned neither to notice nor to record exact descriptions. Besides, traveling slowly, as they did, by canoe or by foot, they could not see as a whole the main features of a geographical region as modern observers do. Therefore, no accurate data concerning the regions explored, their soil, their appearance, their characteristics as distinct from those of adjacent but differing areas --- are found either in Joutel's record or in any other traveler's account of early America.

Joutel's aesthetic descriptions of the country are expressed in the same vague and general style which characterizes most of the accounts of other seventeenth century visitors to America. His diction being that of a good "intendant" and not of a poet, the region is repeatedly termed "fine" or "beautiful," especially where there are rivers, brooks and meadows which attract the attention of the observer. "De belles prairies, de belles futaies, de beaux ombrages" are his favorite expressions. Some of his

statements, however, are more precise. The following passages, in the conversational, flattering style of Joutel, are typical examples of his appreciation of nature:

Vers l'est et le sud-est, tirant vers la baie et la mer, le pays est fort beau, et il y a des agréments à la vue, c'est à dire qu'il ressemble à des terres peuplées, telles que l'on voit par exemple dans le pays de Caux, avec des gentilhommières et des bouquets de bois, notamment de chênes de plusieurs espèces. Les uns, toujours verts, ne quittent point leurs feuilles; les autres, comme les nôtres de France; . . . il y en a qui portent des noix de galle, mais menues et en quantité; ils portent aussi du gland; j'en ai mangé de fort doux.²¹

The practical-minded intendant has a keen eye for plants and for the products of the new country. Less enthusiastic about the wine of America than were the missionaries, he prefers to use grape juice in soup or in "ragouts."²² He admires the mulberry trees, noting to what profitable use they might be put in raising silk-worms. The blackberries seem sweeter to him than those he had eaten in Normandy. Sorrel, onions, and other vegetables

²¹Margry, III, p. 210. The chief source of information concerning Joutel's Journal is Margry's text as given in his Volume III. Occasionally, the English translation, published in London by A. Bell in 1714, which has been reproduced by Henry Reed Stiles, Joutel's Journal of La Salle's Last Voyage, 1906, will be quoted. There is practically no bibliography on Joutel.

²²Ibid., p. 211.

grow in this fertile soil. Joutel's painstaking Journal would furnish valuable information to anyone interested in American flora of two or three centuries ago. He mentions many flowers, paying much more attention to their leaves and stalks than to their fragrance or colors.²³ When the explorers stayed long enough in one place, Joutel tried his hand at gardening. His record of successes and failures is most amusing. Melons and pumpkins grew "à vue d'oeil," but were as quickly nibbled by rabbits; and the only pumpkin which he could save, hoping to use its seeds for the next year, was eaten by a larger animal, apparently a crocodile. Huge flies and rats devoured his carrots, celery, and asparagus. Animals of all kinds, according to the chronicler, were the deadliest foe of man in this virgin country.

Joutel devotes several pages to the fauna of southern part of the United States. In the salt water lakes, which he observed closely, he saw turbot asleep. Elsewhere, eels, oysters, trout, and other fish which he could not identify by name attracted his attention. Since he was in charge of the supplies for the explorers, Joutel

²³However, Joutel does notice that some of the Texas flowers being of different hues, "font un email très agréable quand elles sont fleuries." Margry, III, p. 213.

was naturally interested in devising culinary recipes. Eggs of tortoises served to season the sauces for their meals. They tasted rattlesnakes, and found their flesh fairly good. The animals which most interested French explorers in America were the buffaloes, which they hunted mercilessly.²⁴ Such tales of hunting and fishing which occur here and there in Joutel's lengthy Journal afford a temporary relief from the sad and tragic story which he relates. These patient French explorers tried in vain to find the mouth of the Great River where a few years earlier La Salle had proudly planted the arms of France. They wandered through the forests, at times crossing rivers and streams in which many of their boats were wrecked and a great part of their supplies lost. The men became discouraged, and ill feeling smouldered in their hearts. Several of them deserted, preferring the life of the savages to the prospect of the endless toil which their chief imposed upon them. But in spite of all these drawbacks, the courage of the leaders remained indomitable.

Though lacking in dramatic effect, the account of the wanderings of La Salle and his companions on the shores

²⁴ A vivid account of buffalo hunting is given by Joutel. Margry, III, pp. 197-200.

of the Gulf of Mexico is the most moving part of Joutel's Journal. Yet Joutel is not blind to his chief's faults. He admires La Salle as a leader with a purpose, but he does not approve of his severity towards his men, nor of the fits of sullen temper which he displayed as one misfortune after another baffled his efforts.

This excessive toil, writes Joutel, the poor sustenance which the laboring men received, and that often retrenched as a penalty for failure to do their duty; the uneasiness which M. de La Salle suffered upon seeing nothing succeed as he had hoped, an uneasiness to which he often gave vent in insults to his men, when there was little reason for it; all these things together afflicted very many so painfully that they visibly declined, and more than thirty died.²⁵

Hope of finding "the fatal river" soon dwindled among these men, who had little incentive in the hope of recognition by posterity, and who, unlike soldiers were not trained in discipline and obedience. The expedition culminated in several tragic events.

In January, 1687, La Salle left with a party of seventeen, including two of his nephews, Father Anastasius, the Abbé Cavelier, his brother, Duhaut, and others. Four men, led by Duhaut, went on a hunting trip and killed some oxen. La Salle sent his nephew, Moranget, with horses, to take the meat and dry it; and when Moranget, none too tact-

²⁵The translation of this quotation is borrowed from Stiles' edition, pp. 95-96.

ful, berated them for not having dried it sufficiently, Duhaut and two of his companions killed him.

When Moranget did not return, La Salle, accompanied by Father Anastasius, went to meet him. La Salle seemed anxious and oppressed by some gloomy foreboding:

When he came near the dwelling of the murderers, looking out sharply to discover something, he observed eagles fluttering about a spot, not far from them, which made him believe that they had found some carrion about the mansion, and he fired a shot, which was the signal of his death and forwarded it.²⁶

La Salle was questing one of the men, Larcheveque, concerning his nephew when Duhaut, the murderer, suddenly appeared and shot his leader through the head. The men spared Father Anastasius, who expected the same fate as he hastened back to tell the tragic tale to Joutel. The murderers then left the naked body of their victim among the bushes, where it was exposed to the wild beasts, and soon afterwards joined the rest of the party. Joutel expected to be killed also, especially since he felt it his duty to punish the murderers. According to his own explanation, however, he refrained from doing so upon the insistence of La Salle's brother, the priest, who contended that revenge should be left to God. Undoubtedly such behavior on the part of Abbé Cavelier and of Joutel

²⁶Stiles' translation, p. 134.

lacked courage and frankness.

Their roving life in the dismal company of the assassins makes interesting reading. They lose their way countless times in the boggy marshes, and even find again some of their former companions who had deserted them to adopt the ways of the Indians.²⁷ La Salle was so feared among the savages that they carefully concealed from them the knowledge of his death. The murderers quarrel among themselves and kill each other. Finally, however, Joutel and a few companions reach the river which had eluded La Salle's obstinate and ill-directed efforts. "It is a very fine river and deep," drily notes Joutel, "the breath of it about a quarter of a league and the stream very rapid." They go to Fort Louis of the Illinois where they meet Tonty in 1668. Not only do they conceal the news of La Salle's death from him, but Abbé Cavelier and Joutel, having borrowed a large sum of money, go up to Canada, and then to France, where they arrive in October, 1688.

²⁷One in particular, a native of Provence who wore no clothes, and had almost completely forgotten his native tongue.

Besides Father Douay and Joutel, La Salle's fruitless and tragic journey in search of the mouth of the Mississippi had another chronicler, the explorer's own brother, Jean Cavelier.

Jean Cavelier, however, has not left a glorious and heroic name such as his brother acquired by his indomitable will and his unity of purpose. Indeed, his attitude on more than one occasion was that of a man inspired by selfish greed rather than by piety or devotion to his country. His own narrative reveals very clearly his true character.

He was born in Rouen in 1636, just about the time that an illustrious son of that city was writing the heroic story of Le Cid. At the age of twenty-two, he entered the seminary of Saint Sulpice. At thirty he was sent to New France as a Sulpician priest, and was joined there by Robert, the next year, 1667. Little is known of Jean Cavelier's ecclesiastical tasks in Canada. From 1679 to 1683 he was again in France. When his then famous brother, who was preparing his last voyage to the Gulf of Mexico, asked for priests to go with him, Jean Cavelier was among the Sulpicians appointed by their superiors to accompany the explorer. After La Salle's death, Cavelier displayed unheroic tolerance towards the murderers. As has been seen, it was he who prevailed upon Joutel to leave the punishment to God.

and to escape with him to Illinois and then to Canada. He had nothing of the mystic, nor of a Saint Francis of Assisi, scornful of material benefits to be enjoyed in this world. For several years he tried repeatedly to obtain payment of large sums of money owed him by his brother, the explorer. The latter did not hesitate²⁸ to use the strongest terms in alluding to Jean Cavelier's "treachery." After La Salle's murder, the abbé's greed and cowardice deceived Tonty and prevented him from going to the rescue of the expedition left at Matagorda Bay. Jean Cavelier secured all the money he could from Tonty and returned to France, in 1683; but instead of going immediately to Paris to organize a new expedition to save the colonists in Texas, he wandered from Saumur to Mont Saint Michel and Rouen, apparently on a pilgrimage. Most likely he was attempting to collect money before the death of his brother became known.²⁹

When he finally reached the court, however, he did attempt to persuade the French to undertake a new expedition to Louisiana. Obviously his Memoir was written for that purpose. However, he failed in his efforts, and died in Rouen in 1722, a wealthy man at a time when many Frenchmen

²⁸See a letter written by Robert Cavelier to Thouret in 1680, published in Margry, II, p. 87.

²⁹Introduction by J. Delanglez to Cavelier's Journal, p. 33.

had lost fortunes in their hasty speculations on Louisiana's deceptive promises.

Abbé Jean Cavelier's sole literary work is a journal or rather a memoir relating his brother's and his own adventures in 1684-1687. The work has been studied and discussed by Father Delanglez, who has edited the manuscript in an impeccable manner.³⁰ Three versions of the manuscript exist:

First, a diary of the ill-fated expedition, or an account in the form of a diary, which, with its allegedly precise dates, was clearly used by the Abbé in order to make his account appear more authentic, though, as a matter of fact, it was written long after the events occurred. Furthermore, a close comparison with Joutel's more reliable Journal shows that Cavelier's dates are seldom accurate.

Second, a report was written for the minister, Seignelay, when Cavelier realized that his first account did not serve his purpose of persuading the French government to undertake a new expedition to Louisiana. This report was purchased in 1854 by Francis Parkman, and loaned by him to J. G. Shea. The latter published it in French

³⁰ In the Introduction quoted in the previous note.

in Albany, 1858.³¹

A copy made of that second report, shows that it is incomplete, since it does not include an account of La Salle's death in March 1687. However, a third text is in existence, a copy of which was made by Lahontan, and is found in the Archive General de Indias at Sevilla. Lahontan added a note in Spanish and two letters to this text. The third text, published from a photostatic copy in the Newsberry library in Chicago, is reproduced and translated into English in Father Delanglez's learned edition. It includes the end of Cavalier's narrative, omitted in the second text.

Cavalier gave the usual tempting reasons for sending a new expedition to the Mississippi Valley: the necessity of preventing the English from controlling the Colbert River, or the advisability of forestalling them; the desirability of conquering the Iroquois, France's constant and fiercest enemies, with the help of the Illinois and the Miamis, whom La Salle had united as his allies. The miserly and greedy character of the Sulpician priest appears again when he insists upon repayment of money he had

³¹ The title is: Relation du voyage entrepris par M. Robert Cavalier, sieur de La Salle, pour decouvrir dans le golfe du Mexique l'embouchure du fleuve Mississippi. This second text was published by Morisy, III, pp. 583-595.

personally expended in Louisiana.³²

Such a purpose, solely to advertise Louisiana, required a modification of the first version of Cavelier's journal which contained idyllic descriptions of the country, and of its trees and animals. Consequently, in order to draw a picture of the newly discovered land that would be more attractive to the French secretary of the Treasury, Seignelay, supposedly more interested in mines and treasures than in lovely landscapes, Jean Cavelier redrafted his first text. Father Delanglez says he "padded it with bucolic digressions, descriptions of a puerile nature, with tales of pearls and gold mines."³³

As literature, Cavelier's account is a dry and soulless record, vague in its descriptions, and devoid of the truthful and honest accent which is the charm of Tonty's and Joutel's narratives. Here is a sample of his style:

Crossing beautiful plains and prairies stretching as far as the eye could see, we found as many buffaloes and young turkeys as we wished. Never have there been seen better and so many different kinds of fruit,

³²The last part of Jean Cavelier's memoir as given in Margry, III, pp. 595-596, is a type of the most flattering hypocrisy employed in seventeenth century dedications to the King or to members of the nobility. Cavelier enumerates his enormous sacrifices to the general cause, appeals for financial help, and promises to pray God daily and celebrate masses for the welfare of his generous majesty.

³³Introduction quoted above, p. 25.

so many kinds of birds and four-legged animals With regard to the buffaloes, their meat is marvelous, their hide twice as big as that of our French oxen, and the wool with which their hide is covered is exceedingly fine and beautiful. In fine, we had all the pleasure and all the satisfaction imaginable seeing so many beautiful and curious things.³⁴

No sense of humor, no appreciation of the picturesque, enlivens the dull pages of Cavalier's narrative. A strange lack of feeling, even about the tragic death of his brother, or an inability to express it, characterizes his account. With a wealth of material to record during his perilous days in the wilds of Texas and his visits to many different tribes of Indians, he ignores the value of these experiences to an interested public, and merely praises certain tribes of Indians because they appeared "mieux policées," better civilized, than others. The more involved their ritual, the deeper their worship of their kings or chiefs, the more admirable they appeared to the subjects of Louis XIV.³⁵

³⁴Delanglez's edition and translation, p. 71.

³⁵The most amusing incident that Cavalier relates is of his arrival with his companions at a village of the Palomas Indians. Here, in their over-exuberant hospitality, the Indians bring to the Frenchmen "some fifty of the most beautiful girls of their village. We pointed to heaven, making signs that it was an execrable custom, but they thought we were speaking of the sun" The priest and his companions finally refuse, with great vehemence, what he calls "the persecutions of these prostitutes." Delanglez's edition and translation, p. 91.

Before considering the discoverer and father of Louisiana, himself, some very minor figures will be mentioned, on whom it will be needless to dwell at length, since their value as writers is of little significance. One of them is Nicolas de La Salle, a namesake but not a relative of the famous Norman. He was the son of a high official in the Navy Department who was "premier commis de la marine" under Colbert. From 1701 to 1709, he was commissioner in the French colony of Louisiana. At the request of the French authorities, he wrote an account which was to serve as a guide book for D'Iberville. The exact title of that account is: Récit de la découverte du Mississipi par M. de La Salle en 1682.³⁶

It is a dull and even childish piece of writing; Nicolas de La Salle is certainly not a lyrical author. The new land of Louisiana, the waters of the Mississippi, the forests and the prairies of the new world evoked no enthusiasm whatever in the mind of this French official, who accepted America and the French explorations as a matter of course. His facts are related in a clear but uninteresting manner; the size of the islands is carefully given; the names of the trees are often mentioned; and we

³⁶It is published in Margry, I, pp. 547-570.

are told whether it rained and whether the wind blew. The writer has little or no interest in the inhabitants nor in the scenery of the new world. His nearest approach to a literary note is probably to be found in such passages as these:

The country . . . is good, a little high, full of big trees, such as elms, peach trees, plum trees and mulberry trees. It is in March that it happened; the air was fragrant; the peach trees were in bloom.

Elsewhere, Nicolas de La Salle tells of finding a basket left by Indians who fled at his approach. In that basket he found "one fish, a man's foot and a child's hand, the whole being smoked." He utters not one word of horror or surprise, and likewise not one word of joy or pride when he mentions the planting of the French King's coat of arms at the mouth of the Great River. No classical writer was ever more impersonal.

The most unreliable seventeenth-century account is doubtless that of Mathier Saguean: Extrait de la relation des aventures de M. Saguean.³⁷ The author, who claims to have accompanied La Salle in 1679-1680, dictated his report from memory at Brest, France, in 1701. He asserts

³⁷Published by J. G. Shea, 1863, 32 pages.

that he traveled along the Missouri River and discovered mines of gold. The women of America, he notes in the condescending manner of a French connoisseur, were beautiful. As white as Europeans, their only imperfection was the excessive length of their ears, which they loaded with golden rings. Fish, fowl, and fruit were plentiful in that land of cockaigne. The king of these countries, burdened with great quantities of gold, distributed it lavishly to French visitors. All this is neither history nor literature. The French readers of Mathieu Sagean, if he had any, were wise enough to be suspicious of this new and inferior version of the Arabian Nights. In their own fairy tales, such as Ferrault was then writing, they found more sanity and verisimilitude.

CHAPTER IV

LA SALLE AND D'IBERVILLE

SUMMARY

Importance of La Salle in this study. His letters. Numerous biographies of La Salle in French and English. D'Iberville. His expeditions to America. Interest in his few remaining records.

In the history of Louisiana in the seventeenth century, one name overshadows all others---the name of Robert Cavalier de La Salle. All who left accounts of French expeditions refer to his leadership, and tell in various ways the story of his exploits, of his faults, and of his greatness.

A study of his own writings would, therefore, provide a fitting climax to this early phase of "Louisiana in French Letters." Unfortunately, most of La Salle's papers had been lost in 1680, when his fort was attacked, and after his tragic death in 1687, some others were burned by his brother to keep them from falling into the hands of the Indians. In fact, for many decades, it was thought that he had left no records in any form whatever.

It was not until the nineteenth century that Margry discovered several letters and reports buried in the archives of the French Navy Department or among the

dusty files of French notaries. Some can be traced back to La Salle's own pen; some were directly inspired by him. In Margry's first volume, for instance, besides several official reports, or "procès-verbaux," by La Salle, we find a document by Abbé Gallinée, who recorded in writing La Salle's notes on the manners of the Iroquois. The same volume contains a long official summary of La Salle's discoveries between 1679 and 1681 written by a friend of the explorer to whom La Salle had furnished the information. The second volume of Margry's Explorations which is devoted to La Salle, includes several letters, reports, and a long and valuable narrative of La Salle's expedition of 1680-1681.¹

From such meager documents, which perforce had no influence upon French literature and French opinion of the age, and from the scholarly studies of modern historians, which sift the truth from a two-century accumulation of legendary tales, it may be possible to discover La Salle's true figure and character.

That La Salle was solitary, distant, outwardly cold, and extremely reserved has been noted by all his

¹Only a few pages (pp. 17-23 and pp. 535-550) of Margry's third volume are by La Salle.

companions. Some of his biographers have called him haughty, proud, and morbidly secretive in his designs. Others have tried to explain his behavior on his lamentable Texas expedition by attributing it to some abnormal strain or lack of balance for which modern psychology would find a ready name.

It required but little imagination for modern writers to see in La Salle's solitary figure the mould of a romantic hero, bent on achieving his purpose, regardless of all obstacles, "une force qui va," as Victor Hugo's Hernani calls himself, or a lonely superman imprisoned in his greatness and misunderstood by the average man, like Vigny's Moïse, "puissant et solitaire." His latest American biographer, L. V. Jacks, depicts La Salle as "a bewitched master of an enchanted craft, holding steadfastly to a fated course, his eyes fast fixed on a hope-compelling mirage, his rigid hands grasping the helm that only Death could make him relinquish. . . . A shyness and solitude that brooded incessantly in his soul kept him at a distance in spirit from men. He had the intellect of a recluse and the genius of an Alexander or Cecil Rhodes. He lived in a curious communion with mighty thoughts; he desired to found empires."²

²L. V. Jacks, La Salle, p. 241.

La Salle's letters and reports reveal him as modest and shy as well as haughty. Pride, or "fierté," in his own achievement, he undoubtedly and rightly felt. The most personal note in his writings is that of the restrained anger and indignation caused by some of the vile accusations hurled at him. His enemies constantly accused him of seeking personal glory at the expense of the commercial profit which in itself seemed to them sufficient reason for colonial expeditions. They also blamed him for paying too little attention to the comfort of his followers and for exacting too strict obedience from them. True it is that La Salle was feared by his men as much as he was loved. Apparently, however, they were as difficult a troop to command as any modern battalion of the foreign legion, and the strictest discipline was necessary. "Cette facilité dont on dit que je manque est hors d'usage avec ces sortes de gens, qui sont le plupart libertins" observes La Salle in his restrained and noble language.³ Blasphemy, drunkenness, and lewdness were some of their lesser crimes. If the state of their health left much to be desired, explains

³Letter written from Fort Frontenac, August 22, 1682, published in Margry, II, p. 224.

La Salle elsewhere,⁴ it was due to their disobedience. Deeply religious by nature, La Salle was outraged by the immoral conduct of some of his followers. His letters, expressed in the dignified style which is characteristic of the writer, give us an idea of the type of men with whom the explorer had to deal. For instance, there was "le Sieur de la Sablonnière qui avait dissipé à Saint-Dominique la plupart de ses hordes à des divertissements indignes de sa naissance," and who proved lazy, lewd, and utterly unreliable;⁵ or his stubborn, disobedient soldiers, who were the rabble of the country and were far from being models of behavior for the Indian savages: "Les soldats, levés à Rochefort, ayant presque tous été pris à la porte des églises, où ils avaient guesé toute leur vie, étaient incapables de discipline."⁶

Dignity, reserve, and a lofty sense of honor impress the modern reader as the dominant characteristics of the great explorer. He never boasts of his undertakings nor of the vast results achieved. He sacrificed money, supplies, and ships for the King's cause; never did he ask for a reward. He cared not at all for material

⁴He is referring here to his companions in 1686, Margry, III, p. 539.

⁵La Salle's letter, April 19, in Margry, III, p. 543.

⁶Ibid., p. 539.

comforts: "Je n'ai eu ni habits ni cuisine qui ne ressentent plutôt la bassesse que le faste," he writes in 1680,⁷ n'ayant point d'autre attrait à la vie que je mène que celui de l'honneur, dont je crois ces sortes d'entreprises d'autant plus dignes qu'il y a plus de peril et de peine." This is the only passage in La Salle's writings in which he mentions in moving words the high purpose which kept his courage undaunted through so many hardships. As a rule, he is cautious of any exaggeration or over-statement. No flowery hyperbole mars the simplicity of his narrative. Yet under that shyness⁸ and dispassionate impersonality of style, there appears true greatness. The famous "procès-verbal" which La Salle's notary drew up on April 9, 1682,⁹ recalls the valor and bravery of his followers. After weeks of paddling their canoes down the mighty river, they reached blue water of the Gulf of Mexico. They had struggled against countless natural obstacles in the wilds of a strange continent inhabited

⁷Margry, II, p. 83. (The italics are La Salle's).

⁸In a touching passage published in Margry, II, p. 235, dated August 22, 1682, La Salle admits suffering from shyness: "Si je manque d'ouverture ou de caresses pour ceux que je fréquente, c'est uniquement par une timidité qui m'est naturelle, et qui m'a fait quitter plusieurs emplois où j'aurais pu réussir sans cela."

⁹Published in Margry, II, pp. 183 to 193.

by hostile savages, but forgetting their hardships, they stopped to dedicate the newly discovered country to their king. In a dignified ceremony marked by impressiveness, yet striking in its simplicity, La Salle gave Louisiana its name. Father Membre' chanted the Te Deum, the Exaudiat, the Domine Salvum fac Regem. The name of "Louis le Grand, Roi de France et de Navarre" was carved on a column as that of the new ruler of the vast country. The greatness displayed by these heroic men rightly justifies what a modern writer has said of Cavalier de La Salle: "Nietzsche a dit que souvent un grand homme n'est pas tout à fait un homme Un tel homme (La Salle) ajoute à notre idée de ce que peut l'homme."¹⁰

On the whole, La Salle appears in his writings as a noble figure of the seventeenth century, devoted to a great cause with a singleness of mind which sacrificed all personal interests or family ties to his self-imposed task. One of the most human and moving documents published by Margry¹¹ is a letter written by La Salle to his mother, from the port of La Rochelle, July 18, 1684. No

¹⁰A. Chevrillon in *Louisiane et Texas*, p. 31.

¹¹Margry, II, p. 470.

pretentiousness, no boasting, no melodramatic foreboding of death, but only deep, restrained emotion breathes in those lines through the distant and formal reserve which French people observed in their family relations in the Century of Descartes, of Port-Royal, and of Madame de Grignan. Cavalier addresses his mother as "Madame et très honorée mère" in this letter which announces his departure;

"We are all cherishing good hope for a happy success. We are not going by way of Canada but through the Gulf of Mexico. We passionately wish that the successful result of our enterprise may add to your happiness and alleviate your fears. I shall spare nothing, assuredly, to that effect. And I beg you to keep yourself in good health for our sake."

Cavalier de La Salle does not appear as a dreamer in these pages, although he has repeatedly been accused by historians of aiming too high. He accepted the fantastic tales of the Indians with a shrug of the shoulders. In spite of a modern historian's hostile allegations,¹² he was not seeking the merely material values of gold, furs and wealth. His leadership was of the practical order, enabling him to choose vantage points from which either to fight the Indians or to dominate them. He could be precise and practical when the occasion demanded,

¹²M. de Villiers in l'Expedition de La Salle dans le Golfe du Mexique.

and although he incurred debts for his enterprise, he knew how to send impressive official reports, full of facts and figures, showing how much agricultural and commercial profit could be drawn from a conquered and peaceful Louisiana.¹³

The most complete document he has left, and also the best from a literary point of view, is a memoir which he sent to Mgr. de Seignelay. It is not dated, but was written before his final voyage.¹⁴ After recalling in a restrained and dignified way what he has already accomplished in his Majesty's service, La Salle suggests a clear and comprehensive program for the future. The principal reasons why more strenuous efforts should be expended in the development of Louisiana are clearly stated in logical order: to spread the Christian religion; to extend the realm and glory of the King; to enrich France through all the products, no less abundant in the Mississippi Valley, which have made the English colonies rich. He then presents very logical answers to possible objections: the new colony will not injure the prospects

¹³See his Procès Verbal des travaux faits au Fort Frontenac, in Margry, II, pp. 10-19.

¹⁴Margry, III, pp. 17-28.

of Canada, being totally different in character; neither will it impoverish France by drawing too many immigrants. In this seventeenth-century document is found, indeed, clear foresight into the future.

In his dealings with the Indians, La Salle was evidently guided by clear understanding. The notes which he gave to Abbé de Gallinée show his shrewd analysis of their character, their customs, their religious conceptions, and their opinion of Europeans. Cavalier, never friendly with the Jesuits who claimed wholesale conversions of the Indians, contends that it was difficult to persuade the savages to adopt Christianity with any degree of sincerity. He seems to have been one of the seventeenth century explorers who knew best how to deal with the savage tribes. He learned their language, studied their psychology, and gained their love as well as their fear and respect. Distant and cold with his own countrymen, he knew how to win the Indians to his cause with presents. Through a remarkable gift of oratory in the Indian dialects, he succeeded in impressing them with respect for France and for her Great King. Two centuries before Lyautey and the French conquerors of North Africa, La Salle conceived the plan of training an army of native troops to fight the English and help France retain her young American colony.

In his attitude towards nature, Cavelier displays no deeper feeling than most of his contemporaries. Idyllic descriptions of the American landscape can scarcely be expected in the practical writings of a man of action. Neither does he expatiate on the charms of primitive life, as Rousseau subsequently does, nor on the magnificence of a moonlight night in the forests of the New World as Chateaubriand does a hundred years later. To the explorer leading a group of men who were forcing their way through the wilderness, forests were merely obstacles. Streams, on the other hand, were their allies. Therefore, it is not surprising that rivers provide the theme of La Salle's most enthusiastic expressions. The river of the Illinois is "as broad and deep as the Marne,"¹⁵ meandering among wide marshes, and the Mississippi, or the Colbert River as it was then called "flows between two ridges of mountains, winding like the river itself. Across, here and there, there are open spaces, semi-circular in shape, covered with grass and trees. Beyond the mountains, one discovers vast lands, not so fertile nor so beautiful as along the Illinois River. That great river is almost everywhere one or two leagues wide, and is cut by numerous islands, overgrown with entangled trees and vines, so that

¹⁵Margry, I, p. 463.

it is difficult to cut one's way across."¹⁶

La Salle, who had won fame as a persuasive orator among the Indians,¹⁷ was not a professional man of letters. At a time when French prose was developing along the lines of fine workmanship of a La Bruyère, La Salle still writes in the style of the early seventeenth century. His sentences are often long and involved: "quoique," "qui," "que," and the frequent use of present participles, make them heavy and ponderous.¹⁸

But though he lacks clarity in his descriptions, though he is dry in his "procès verbaux," or official

¹⁶Ibid., p. 479.

¹⁷Parkman, quoting French documents of the time, calls him "the greatest orator in North America." (La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West, p. 269).

¹⁸Here is an example of that style (Margry, II, pp. 50-51. Only one third of the sentence is quoted for it stretches or crawls over more than twenty lines: "Donc, quoique l'approche du printemps et des dégels augmentât beaucoup la difficulté des chemins par où il fallait passer, tout rompus de marais et traverse de rivières, sans parler de la longueur de ce voyage de près de cinq cents lieues en droite ligne, et du peril de rencontrer des sauvages de quatre ou cinq nations par où nous devons passer et l'armée même des Iroquois, que nous savions venir par la route que nous devons tenir, et qui, nous rencontrant la nuit dans le pays de leurs ennemis, ne manqueraient pas de nous charger avant de nous reconnaître, n'y ayant jamais eu de Français qui eussent entrepris de semblables marches"

reports, (one would hardly expect administrative style to be otherwise), La Salle often strikes a note of terse and concise vigor in his letters. These letters were scribbled in the forests while a thousand and one minor duties harrassed the explorer, who had to watch his men, supervise the building of camps or forts, and give orders for the next day's hunting. Yet they are never hurried; they never lose the fine and restrained dignity which has been pointed out in preceding pages. The Frenchman who has rediscovered and published La Salle's writings warmly praises the value of these original documents.

The many pages of La Salle's, (writes Margry in the Introduction to his first volume on page XXI), have retained a fragrance of wild places and borrow a sombre brightness, as it were, from the hardships endured by the explorer They are stamped with true greatness, and in more than one passage the breath of fine eloquence uplifts the soul of the reader.

France has paid her debt to La Salle in history and biography. Besides the volumes of important documents published by Margry, Gabriel Gravier wrote, in 1870, in eloquent praise of his compatriot.¹⁹ P. Chesnel followed in 1901 with a patient and favorable account of the great explorer. Charles de la Roncière summed up the career and achievements of La Salle in 1936. In 1937,

¹⁹For this volume, as well as the following ones, see the bibliography.

two hundred and fifty years after his death, André Chevrillon praised the French discoverer of Louisiana when a distinguished French Mission named after Cavalier de La Salle visited Louisiana and Texas in order to honor one of the most valiant sons of France. Only one French historian, Marc de Villiers, intent on paradox, or on far-fetched originality, has accumulated in a well-documented but partial work, objections and arguments designed to dim the glory of La Salle. Even more recently, however, an eminent French historian, Mr. Jaray, anxious to relate in an impartial and regretful way the epic of French Colonial undertakings in America, and their mournful failure, has written laudatory chapters on Cavalier in his book, l'Empire français d'Amérique. The inspirer and organizer of the Société France-Amérique, Mr. Jaray conceived, in 1937, the idea of a Franco-Canadian mission, designed to unite France and America. This mission was named after the seventeenth-century explorer.²⁰

American historians have been no less lavish in their praise and admiration. Francis Parkman, in an entire volume devoted to La Salle, weighs the faults and the virtues of the explorer, and praises his unrivaled

²⁰The volume Louisiane et Texas, is the faithful record of the French Mission.

greatness. In 1931, a biography of La Salle, by L. V. Jacks, accurate in the main facts, and romantically imaginative in its reconstruction of the past, attempted to revive the glory of La Salle for modern readers. In addition, a French novelist has taken La Salle's adventures as his theme for a novel of French exploration in America.²¹ As the states of Louisiana and Texas become older, richer, and prouder of their past, it is likely, and is to be hoped and desired, that their homage to the Frenchman who first divined their future greatness will become more ardent.

Among the renowned French explorers in the New World, the name of D'Iberville ranks high. In courage, daring, and vision he stands second to none except La Salle, and perhaps Tonty, in the list of heroic Frenchmen who tried, too soon or too hastily, to found an empire in America. Nevertheless, there is no more flagrant example of the injustice of the casual and thoughtless way in which posterity often relegates real heroes to oblivion than the lack of recognition granted

²¹M. Constantin-Weyer, Cavelier de La Salle.

alike by France, Canada, and Louisiana to D'Iberville. Today the states of Louisiana and Alabama remember Bienville, while they have well-nigh forgotten the more valorous part played by his short-lived brother, D'Iberville.

Two biographies, however, both by compatriots of D'Iberville, but both, it must be acknowledged, sketchy and inadequate, relate the story of his career and his feats of courage.²² Heroes, however, are not always writers, and documents concerning them are often insufficient, revealing little of the inner life of the man who must have breathed, felt, thought and lived under the man of action. Important information concerning D'Iberville is to be found in the fourth volume of Margry's Découvertes et Etablissements, a collection of reports, official letters, and military or naval orders published in 1880.²³

²²They are: Histoire du Chevalier D'Iberville by Abbé Desmazures, and Le Chevalier des Mers, Pierre Lemoyne D'Iberville by Pascal Potvin.

²³The parts of which D'Iberville is undeniably the author and on which this short commentary on the French Canadian hero are based are as follows: Letter of June 18, 1698, pp. 51-57; letter of June 18, 1698, pp. 58-62; letter of February 17, 1699, pp. 100-102; D'Iberville's diary during his first expedition, 1698-1699, pp. 131-211; his projects as exposed on August 11, 1699, pp. 328-332; his observations during his second expedition, 1699-1700, pp. 395-430; his diary of 1701-1702, pp. 503-525; and two memoirs dated 1702, pp. 580-584 and pp. 593-606.

Charles Lemoyne, while still a boy, left Dieppe, where his father was a modest innkeeper, and made his home in New France. He reared a family of thirteen or fourteen children, eleven of whom were boys. His sons distinguished themselves on land and sea. One of them, Pierre Lemoyne, fought against the English until the Peace of Ryswick, in 1697. After 1698, the King's ministers suggested to him that he undertake an expedition into the Gulf of Mexico. Three different expeditions were made by D'Iberville between December, 1698, and his premature death. He founded a fort in the bay of Biloxi, explored the lower Mississippi, and organized French trade with the tribes occupying what is today Louisiana and Alabama. In contrast with the snow-covered northern regions where his family had settled in Canada, he found the southern climate most delightful. The earth seemed more fertile, the trees larger, the game and fish more abundant, and the birds with their multicolored feathers, much more beautiful. He conceived the ambitious scheme of linking Louisiana to Canada, thus forming a vast empire in America for France; but on his return from France, where he had gone with the intention of converting the Court to his ideas, he became ill and was forced to stop in Cuba. He died there, in Havana, in 1706, at the age of forty-five.

The passages in which D'Iberville mentions the fertility of the south ("les plus belles terres que l'on puisse jamais voir") are not different from remarks by Joutel and other explorers on the same subject. D'Iberville, however, anxious to avoid exaggeration, is careful to name the different kinds of trees, the wild ducks, geese, and other forms of life, and does not hesitate to contradict earlier narratives when he finds them untrustworthy, as in the case of the spurious record published under the name of Tonty. Seeking to verify certain statements, D'Iberville visited the temple and the houses of the Natchez, and failed to discover there the precious stones, silver, and pearls which mendacious accounts had reported.

A fairly full description of the customs of the savages is attempted by the gallant conqueror, who aspired also to be a colonizer and the founder of permanent establishments. In March, 1699, D'Iberville visited the Bayogoulas and observed the interior of their houses, as well as the architecture, very closely. His account gives a detailed description of their beds, their earthenware, their dress, (or rather their lack of it), and also their burial places. His style, though dry, is clear and precise. His sentences, unlike the long, involved, and clumsy statements affected by Cavelier de La Salle, are short and clear-cut.

To modern readers, the most interesting record left by D'Iberville is probably the memoir in which he drew his plans for the colonization of the mouth of the Mississippi, in June, 1702. He describes the country with geographical accuracy; he examines the different tribes, their customs, and their psychology. He estimates the population of each tribe, and shows how France can best make use of the Indians. Urging that the district of the Mobile River be more thickly settled, because it will command the whole of the lower Mississippi Valley, he points out with great emphasis the cause of the weakness of all French undertakings in America: the small number of French emigrants. Hard-working, skilled laborers and farmers must be sent to the colonies, says he, and not merely rascals ("des gueux") or poor people who want to get rich quickly, and who refuse to settle down to work or to build permanent establishments.

Such views, as well as the military objectives mentioned by D'Iberville, who was an obstinate foe of the English, are set down with remarkable clarity and convincing emphasis. Unlike other ambitious colonists intent on receiving substantial grants from the King, D'Iberville does not overestimate the wealth of Louisiana nor the future of the country. He concludes with marked simplicity:

"I have said nothing in the present memoir which I did not know clearly, either directly or through persons whom I trust. Most of my proposals are based on reflections which I have made on the actual conditions in this land, and on what might be done."²⁴

Such modesty and competency met with approval at the court, and D'Iberville was entrusted with further development of French interests and enterprises in Louisiana until death ended his career. He is the one man who can lay a rival claim to Cavalier de La Salle's title of "Father of French Louisiana."

²⁴Margry, IV, p. 604.

CHAPTER V

MISSIONARIES AND URSULINES IN LOUISIANA.

SUMMARY

Importance of the Jesuit Relations. Father Jacques Gravier. Father Du Ru. Father Gabriel Marest. Father Du Poisson's two accounts. Father Mathurin le Petit's relation of the Natchez Massacre. Interest of other documents concerning Louisiana found in the Jesuit Relations. Arrival of six French Ursuline Sisters in New Orleans. Mother Tranchepain's account. Interest of Sister Marie-Madeleine Hachard's letters.

The priests and missionaries who first tried to spread the Christian faith in Louisiana were not scholars nor contemplative dreamers; they were worthy companions of heroes such as D'Iberville. Unable to depend upon the King or State for much-needed financial help, they had to appeal to the charitable impulses of the Catholic world. From this situation sprang the long series of Lettres édifiantes et curieuses écrites des missions étrangères or Jesuit Relations, as the current English title reads.

These letters, without claiming any particular literary merit, exerted wide influence.¹ Only a few, however, deal with Louisiana. They reveal, to a varying extent,

¹Professor Chinard has with infinite patience (for the Jesuit Relations embrace over seventy volumes), summed up in a few pages their philosophical message. Cf. L'Amerique et le reve exotique au dix-septieme et au dix-huitieme siecle, pp. 122-137.

the personality of their authors, who were mostly, though not solely, Jesuits. They were also Recollets, whose contribution has been considered earlier. There was at least one Sulpician--Jean Cavelier--who has received the scanty praise to which he is entitled. The remainder of these missionaries, as they appear in the Jesuit Relations, may now, for the sake of greater clarity, be grouped together and studied without regard to strict chronology.² Their reports on Louisiana, and sometimes their travels there, can be assigned to dates varying from the end of the seventeenth century to the middle of the eighteenth. By their trend of thought, however, as well as by their style, these missionaries are belated contemporaries of Louis XIV, and

²Two series of texts have been used: One is Lettres édifiantes et curieuses écrites de missions étrangères edited by the Père Querbeuf, New Edition, Paris, 1780. Volumes VI and VII concern North America; volumes VIII and IX South America. More recently and more conveniently, R. G. Thwaites has collected and published, in the original text and in an English translation, all the letters of the Jesuit Missionaries: The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, Cleveland, 1896-1900. Volumes LXV (J. Gravier, P. Marest), LXVI (J. Gravier), LXVIII (Le Petit), LXVII (Du Poisson, Nicolas de Beaubois), are especially important in dealing with the lower Mississippi Valley and Louisiana. Several letters or reports of Father Le Petit had been published separately, especially the letter relating the massacre of the Natchez. A Jesuit Father, C. de Rochemonteix, told in three volumes entitled, Les Jésuites de la Nouvelle France au XVIIe siècle, the story of Jesuit establishments and missions in New France. (1895). Finally a choice of extracts from Thwaites and Margry was given in French by Charles Upson Clark: Voyageurs, robes noires et coureurs de bois. (1934). About ten of these extracts concern Louisiana and are accompanied with some useful notes.

not of the Encyclopaedists nor of the adventurous creator of Manon Lescaut.

By the Jesuit Father Jacques Gravier, there are two documents, each over sixty-five pages long, which give some of the most valuable information available on Indian tribes at the time of D'Iberville's explorations. Both were published by J. M. Shea in the original French text in 1857 and 1859.³ The first report, a long letter written in February, 1694, and addressed to Father Bruyas, Father Gravier's superior, narrates the incidents of Gravier's successful mission among the Illinois in 1693-1694. The second one, addressed to Father J. de Lamber-ville, describes the different tribes encountered by the Jesuit Missionary as he voyaged down the Mississippi to D'Iberville's new fort, in 1700-1707.

A few interesting facts stand out in Gravier's account. This priest, who traveled extensively in the Mississippi Valley, was entirely unresponsive to its wealth of natural beauty. The practical difficulties of the journey evidently left him no leisure for the rapturous contemplation of nature:

³For the exact and somewhat long titles of these two Relations, see the bibliography. The second one will be found in Vol. LXV of Thwaites' publication.

Navigation on the Mississippi, writes Father Gravier, is a very long, tedious, and difficult enterprise, especially up stream, and most unpleasant on account of the mosquitoes and varieties of gnats and flies, of heavy rains, excessive heat, the nasty ("méchants") landings in mud, and the bad food.⁴

The only animal which aroused his interest is the crocodile. Gravier describes the reptile at length as "an animal the color of a toad and the shape of a lizard", and wonders how the Indians' arrows can ever pierce his scales. His two teeth "are more formidable than a bear's", he asserts; and concludes naively: "On watching him, and hearing him snap his teeth, one is frightened."

As one might expect, Father Gravier is a much closer observer of human beings than of scenery, which was very natural since his purpose was to save human souls. He compares the characteristics of the different tribes which he meets (Tamarouchas, Arkansas, Tounekas, Taensas, Natchez, Houmas), and distinguishes carefully among them. His letters must have been useful to the historians of the American Indian.

But Gravier's purpose was not to observe the savages in a disinterested way. He was a robust proselytizer, and displayed unusual energy at his task. Indian medicine men, fearing a rival, eye him askance; stubborn unbelievers reason with him. Upon one occasion he is violently ex-

⁴Relation of 1701, (Ed. J. M. Shea), p. 52.

pelled from a house where he insists upon baptizing a baby, all his arguments that a baby is a slave of the devil failing to convince the parents. Many scoff at his insistence that man has an immortal soul: man dies entirely, they say, for otherwise one would see resurrected beings walking about the earth.

The Jesuit Relations being a work of religious propaganda, had necessarily to tell of touching and sweeping results if they were to succeed in their avowed purpose of inspiring gifts. Father Gravier writes of gathering the converted Indians in the evenings, and explaining the catechism to them. The proudest hunters and the fiercest warriors would answer his questions like obedient children. He displays more literary art than usual in depicting some touching conversions, one of a girl whom her parents had compelled to marry against her will. This girl had an insuperable "aversion for all that was contrary to purity." Her husband understood her, and meekly submitted to their living together always as brother and sister. Another conversion was of a woman whose sorrow at the thought of Christ's crucifixion was such that she always wore a belt of thorns. She had an image of Jesus "in her apartment" (as the missionary speaks of her cabin, in his dignified, classical way), and used to weep for hours as she gazed at it.

Gravier mentions, in the account of his voyage down the Mississippi, Father Du Ru, also a Jesuit, who was with D'Iberville on his second voyage to Louisiana, in 1699. Du Ru returned to France in 1712 to conduct some negotiations concerning the privileges of his order in Louisiana. He remained there, dying at Rouen in 1741. While Du Ru is not among the missionaries represented in the Jesuit Relations, a fragment of his diary, published in 1925, ranks him among the literary writers on Louisiana.⁵ He was also the author of a Mémoire sur les Sauvages, which has completely disappeared.

Father Du Ru, fresh from his native Normandy, depicted Louisiana as an Arcadian land. His perceptions had not been blunted by painful wanderings in the country of the Hurons and the Illinois. His illusions concerning the Indians remained unshattered to the end of his short stay of three years. Some of his notations are unusual, and make for him a place among the predecessors of Chateaubriand.⁶

⁵Extrait d'un Journal de voyage en Louisiane du Père Paul du Ru (1700, publié par le Baron Marc de Villiers, 140 pages.

⁶He was not, however, one of Chateaubriand's sources for before M. de Villiers' recent publication, Du Ru's journal was unknown. The fragment of his recovered Journal was copied by the King's geographer, Claude Delisle (1644-1720), but was not widely reproduced.

Du Ru noted, for instance, that there are two streams in the Mississippi (a peculiarity which Chateaubriand later mentions), and that one can sail up stream easily by keeping to the banks of the river. "Sometimes", he says, "it seems as if there were one river going up and another going down." He also remarks, as the colorful painter of the prologue of Atala might have done: "The parrots are here in countless numbers and have wonderful feathers." And, more materially, he adds: "But they are very far from being as good to eat as they are beautiful to look at."

The missionary's naive remarks on the savages are even more interesting. He undoubtedly deserves a modest niche among the numerous idealists who, from Montesquieu to Rousseau, have praised the humane qualities of primitive races. To be true, they are too indolent even to catch fish in the Mississippi or to cultivate a vegetable garden. They are also superstitious; but those very superstitions, consisting merely of a vague worship of their dead, serve to bring about their conversion. Du Ru says that the Indians are sweet and meek creatures, among whom one feels entirely at home. The chief of the Natchez has a beautiful face, "like an ancient emperor". He is obeyed respectfully, and this obedience appealed to a

subject of Louis XIV. "We live with those savages as we do with brothers, and at nine in the evening I would rather be with them in their forest than in the Rue St. Jacques in Paris."

Father Du Ru had a somewhat peculiar way of interpreting the word "humanité", which is the chief quality he ascribes to the Indians. He tells of a storm which came up one day when he was among the Taensas, and how the thunder roared and the lightning flashed. In order to appease the wrath of their gods, the Indians threw four or five children into the fire, apparently as a matter of course. "That is sad," says Du Ru, "but if anything may make us feel better about it, it is the fact that those children had been baptized."

The next account left by French missionaries of their experiences in Louisiana is a brief letter by Father Gabriel Marest, dated November 9, 1712, and published in the sixth volume of Querbeuf's Lettres Edifiantes. The religious propaganda is much less noticeable in these few pages. Father Marest does not even try to depict the Indians of Louisiana as good potential Christians, nor does he consider the mere sacrament of baptism sufficient to assure them a safe entrance into Paradise. They appear, or pretend, to listen to our Christian preachings, says he, but forget them too easily. Among the Illinois, or

even farther north, the women seem to lend a readier ear to the truths of the gospel. Father Marest attributes their responsiveness to the fact that they are "oppressed and humiliated by work." He agrees with other missionaries, however, that this attitude is not found among the women farther down the Mississippi Valley. The "bienséances" of his prudent, ecclesiastical style are better when quoted in the French text:

"La, l'oisiveté qui règne parmi les personnes du sexe donne lieu aux plus affreux dérèglements, et les éloigne entièrement de la voie du salut."

The natives of the sparsely populated region, like Marot's famous Gascon servant, are "cowards, traitors, libertines, fickle, sly, born thieves, greedy and over fond of pleasure"--yet "au demeurant, les meilleurs fils du monde." The hopeless spiritual condition of the natives, however, does not affect Father Marest's sensitiveness to the natural beauty of the South--to the grandeur of its mighty "father of Waters".

The central theme of Father Marest's remarks is found in the first lines of his letter. It was that of not a few seventeenth-century travelers, with whom the philosophers of the eighteenth century later agree enthusiastically: "Nothing is more difficult than the conversion of these savages; we should first make men of them, and

only then undertake to convert them to Christianity."

In 1727, after the failure of Law's experiment,⁷ another missionary wrote two long accounts concerning Louisiana, which are not only rich in precise and valuable information, but almost masterpieces of prose in their own style. One of them was reproduced in the French literary periodical Mesures, in the summer of 1939,⁸ as the first example of American literature (written in French by a Frenchman) deserving the consideration of modern readers. The author, Père du Poisson, died tragically at the hands of the Indians during the famous massacre of the Natchez,⁹ in 1730.

Father du Poisson, of whom next to nothing is known, was undoubtedly a gifted writer, whose purpose, obviously a literary one, is innocent of self-aggrandizement. None of the pompous conceit of Father Hennepin mars his narrative. He does not claim for himself the honor of discovering a new country, nor of having converted numerous Indians to Christianity. His gift is that of the true

⁷Cf., infra, Part II, Chapter I.

⁸Mesures, special number of July-September, 1939, devoted to American literature.

⁹These two letters, one of ten and the other of thirty-five pages, were first published in Querbeuf's Lettres Edifiantes, Volume VI. Quotations here are from the English text given by Thwaites, LXVII of the Jesuit Relations.

story-teller; he relates his experiences with vividness and with "the eye on the object." The narrative is well organized, fluent, and skilfully varied in interest, the naïveté of the early travelers being replaced by an elaborate and flowing style. Several rhetorical passages, pretending that the letter is addressed to only one or two correspondents, and apologizing for its length and lack of interest, denote a subtle and conscious artist.

Modern lovers of the picturesque, or scholars intent on tracing the origins of responsiveness to nature, will be disappointed, however, by Du Poisson's account, for human beings are most interesting to the "poor Mississippian" as the missionary calls himself, than nature, on which he wastes few words:

I shall only tell you, he says, that the Mississippi presents nothing beautiful to the traveler, nothing exceptional save itself. Nothing mars it but the continuous forest on both sides, and the frightful solitude in which a person finds himself during the whole voyage.¹⁰

He then proceeds to relate his personal experiences. The usual ceremony of smoking the calumet is described with detailed accuracy. A shrewd psychologist, he was careful not to lavish gifts on the savages in vain: "I knew", he writes, "that when the savage gives, even without design, double must be returned to him, or he will probably be

¹⁰Letter to Père Patouillet, Thwaites, LXVII, p. 249.

displeased."¹¹ He, therefore, refused all their offers of dancing for him "without design", and consented to watch them only when he could not do otherwise. Then, after observing their endless dances, and admiring the uncanny precision with which they marked time, he finally rewarded them with a meal of corn of which he remarks:

"I never saw a meal eaten with worse manners or with better appetite."¹² But he promised himself not to provide such feasts too often, for he thought it would be unbecoming in a priest to attract converts through the promise of such material satisfactions. Father Du Poisson had few illusions concerning the generosity or the native goodness of man. "We have learned by experience," he asserts, "that the more we give the savages, the less cause have we to be satisfied with them, since gratitude is a virtue of which they have not the slightest idea."¹³

Equally shrewd, and more general in interest are his remarks concerning French Colonial policy. In common with clear-sighted observers of what France had accomplished overseas since Champlain and La Salle, the mission-

¹¹Ibid., p. 251.

¹²Ibid., p. 253.

¹³Ibid., pp. 254-255.

ary concluded that the failure of French colonization was due to the lack of well-organized emigration. Adventurers and speculators could not take the place of hard-working and courageous settlers. The French emigrants sent to Louisiana lacked the patience for such pioneer tasks as felling trees and burning cane brakes. "Ne reconnaissez-vous pas la les Français?" adds Father Du Poisson, a true Frenchman in his severe criticism of his compatriots.

The beginning of his second letter deserves to be quoted in the original French text:

Etes-vous curieux, mon cher ami, d'apprendre la chose du monde la moins curieuse, et qui coûte le plus d'apprendre par expérience; c'est la manière de voyager sur le Mississippi; ce que c'est que ce pays si vanté, si décrié tout à la fois en France, et quelle espèce de gens on y trouve? Je n'ai rien autre chose à vous mander à présent: si la relation, que je vais vous faire de notre voyage n'est pas intéressante, prenez-vous-en au pays; si elle est trop longue, prenez-vous en à l'envie que j'ai de m'entretenir avec vous.

The picturesque banks of the river, the bears drunk from eating grapes, the colorful and luxuriant flowers which were later to enchant Chateaubriand's imagination, do not claim Father Du Poisson's attention for a moment. Instead, he relates in facetious style, a detailed account of the hardships encountered by travelers in the country which Parisians, charmed by Law, had dreamed of as a radiant land of promise.

Branches projecting across the river almost cause the death of travelers in their frail pirogues. They

sail on, and are rewarded on their arrival at Cannes Bruléés, by a host who invites them to feast upon a carp weighing thirty-five pounds. They embark again, only to find the country flooded. Where to spend the night becomes a problem. Foundations of boughs must be constructed first, so that the mattresses will not sink into the mud. Over each mattress a large canvas must be spread. Sleeping under these canvases is like lying in tombs stifling with heat. And woe to him who does not spread his canvas properly, for mosquitoes will add their blood-thirsty attacks to his other discomforts.

Often no camping ground can be found, and therefore no place to "faire chaudière" or cook the meals. "On such days", says the writer, "we go to bed without supper; or rather, we have no supper, and we do not go to bed."¹⁴ The whole night is spent in watchful fear of the mosquitoes. To make things worse, there may come down the river an "embarras", or mass of floating trees which have been uprooted by the water. A Chateaubriand writing in the quiet security of his study may wonder at the poetic beauty of these floating islands. Good Father Du Poisson sees them with different eyes, and his French hatred of waste impels him to note: "Some of these floating piles of wood would furnish your good city of Tours with fuel

¹⁴Thwaites, LXVII, p. 289.

for three winters."¹⁵

During the endless voyage under the open sky, he complains, one cannot enjoy the least breath of air on account of the height of the trees and the density of their growth. In the midst of so much water there is not a drop to quench one's thirst except the muddy water of the river. But Father Du Foisson's irony rises to heights of biblical eloquence when he mentions the most disagreeable creature to be found in the South--the mosquito:

All other hardships would have been only a recreation had it not been for the tortures passing all belief, which he suffered from the cruel persecutions of the mosquito--tortures which no one in France could imagine unless he had experienced them. I believe the Egyptian plagues were not more cruel This little creature has caused more profanity since the French came to the Mississippi than men had been guilty of before that time in all the rest of the world.¹⁶

They sting in the morning, they sting at night, they disturb "the little nap at the foot of a tree" which one would feel inclined to enjoy after a frugal midday dinner. They are an ever-attacking host. The Indian, Chicagou, when he wishes to explain to his countrymen how thickly populated is the city of Paris, can only declare that there are as many men in the great village as there are mosquitoes in the forests of America.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 289.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 293.

Although he exaggerates half-playfully for the sake of literary effect, Father Du Poisson shows little Christian patience. Mosquitoes are to him a convincing refutation of the belief that all is for the best in the best of worlds. However, he now records an incident which seems planned to make him ashamed of his impatience. In a pirogue, ascending the river he sees one of those "young ladies taken from the hospitals of Paris, or from the Salpêtrière, or other places of equally good repute, who find that the laws of marriage are too severe, and the management of a house too irksome." In the midst of the mosquitoes, the heroine, as he calls the humble sister of Manon, "did nothing but chatter, laugh and sing." Such courage set the priest to reasoning: "If for a slight temporal good, if even for the purpose of crime, such a voyage is made, should it be dreaded by men set apart to work for the salvation of souls?"¹⁷

Thus wrote, in October, 1727, this gifted French missionary in Louisiana, a remote and not unworthy predecessor of many other travelers on the waters of the Mississippi. His realistic and truthful narrative is not embellished, it is true, with the splendors of Chateaubriand's vivid imagery, but Father Du Poisson is

¹⁷Ibid., p. 297.

a more genuine person than the pompous characters created by Chateaubriand. In that land where Manon was to expire dramatically after a life of fickleness, and where Atala was to die a romantic death, Father Du Poirson died, not from the much-dreaded mosquitoes, but at the hands of the murderous Natchez whom he had hoped to bring to eternal salvation.

The long letter sent from New Orleans on July 12, 1730, by Father Mathurin le Petit to d'Avaugour occupies an important place in Franco-American historical literature. Its description of the massacre of two hundred French settlers by the Natchez Indians, on October 28, 1729, has been often reproduced in separate editions. It is one of the fullest documents relating that bloody and tragic incident in the history of French colonization, on which Chateaubriand conceived the strange idea of writing an epic poem. In his letter, Le Petit describes the manners and religious customs of the tribe which more than all the others seems to have interested the French explorers, who comment on its orderly religious organization and the

pomp of its kingly government.¹⁸

Le Petit does not display the gifts of style nor the gusto in his narrative which are found in Du Poisson's writings. Obviously intended for wide reproduction in Europe, his letter is, however, a clear, well-composed, and elaborate document. Written eight months after the event which it records, it is a coherent and continuous narrative, omitting few details. His style is dignified; in describing the Natchez ceremonies, his words are chosen with so much care that even the gruesome details of their murders seem less horrible.

The first half of Father Le Petit's long account is devoted to a description of the Natchez tribe, "the only one in North America which appears to have any form of regular worship." Its worship of the sun, which all French travelers had remarked, is minutely depicted by him. Its ruler, who bears the title of "Brother of the Sun", is as despotic as the sun, which outshines other stars and planets. Though his closest friends (Father Du Poisson and Father Souel) had perished only a few months earlier in the bloody revolt, he records the details of the

¹⁸Le Petit's letter covers pp. 120-223 in Vol. LXVIII of Thwaites's Jesuit Relations, and pp. 1-78 of Querbeuf's Vol. VII. It has been published in a Recueil de voyages at Amsterdam, IX, as early as 1739, and often reprinted.

slaughter with impassive serenity. The French officers, and especially the local commander, whom Chateaubriand later holds responsible for the discontent of the Natchez, receive only praise from Le Petit.¹⁹

Several other documents relating to Louisiana deserve brief mention: two letters by Father Nicolas de Beaubois, superior of the Jesuit Mission then reestablished in New Orleans, dated 1726-1727,²⁰ tell how impatiently the people of Louisiana are awaiting the arrival of the Ursulines. There are also two letters by Father Vivier, or Du Vivier, dated 1750, from the country of the Illinois.²¹ The latter contain a very precise description of the mouth of the Mississippi, and a few details about the population of New Orleans. The missionary urges France to keep Louisiana, and in order to maintain her hold on Canada, to develop that part of the country occupied by the Illinois.

The France of 1750, more interested in l'Esprit

¹⁹ Another letter, a very short one written in Latin in 1736 by Father Le Petit, is also extant, but has no literary value and very little historical interest. It is given in Thwaites, LXVIII, pp. 308-311.

²⁰ Given in Thwaites, LXVII, pp. 264-275.

²¹ They will be found in Querbeuf's Lettres Edifiantes, VII, pp. 79-84 and pp. 85-106.

des Lois, in Voltaire and in Rousseau, failed to heed the belated advice. Consequently, in spite of the efforts of French missionaries and explorers, Louisiana was soon to be lost by France. But the Christian religion, which the missionaries had courageously preached, was to remain and to be spread, if not among the Indians, at least by the new settlers.

Since it is but natural that a new country should be first explored by males, women have scarcely been mentioned thus far in our account of the literary history of Louisiana in the French language. In common with all new colonies, Louisiana was confronted with the vital problem of the numerical inequality of the sexes, the males naturally predominating--a problem to which the sisters of Manon, following many a venerable precedent, served as the dubious solution resorted to by Louis XV's administration.

French settlers who were the parents of young daughters also faced a serious problem--the question of how to educate them and instill in them the right religious principles. It was in response to the educational needs of these settlers that there came to the colony that consecrated band who proved to be the first group of women to achieve renown in the history of Louisiana.

For about the time that Manon, the fickle mistress of an unbelievably constant chevalier, is to find her

grave in Louisiana, a group of French women were sent to New Orleans by the government of Louis XV. They were brave devoted, pious women who had joined the order of Saint Ursula, that saintly woman from Brittany, who, refusing to marry an English prince, set out for Rome with a group of eleven thousand virgins and was murdered in Germany. In 1726 six French Ursuline Sisters left for New Orleans. Their arrival is one of the important events in the history of the colony of Louisiana. It was indeed a happy solution of the problem of educating young women; the charitable and educational work accomplished by the Ursulines in New Orleans has been repeatedly praised by historians.

Thanks to two of them who recorded their experiences,²² the adventures of the Ursulines are known in greater detail than those of other travelers to Louisiana. At the head of the first group of Ursulines to reach New Orleans was Mère Marie St. Augustin de Tranchepain (also sometimes called Marie Tranchepain de St. Augustin), a

²² The Relation du Voyage des Ursulines, written by Mère St. Augustin de Tranchepain, has been published by J. M. Shea, N.Y., 1859. The record by Marie-Madeleine Hachard, consisting of five letters sent to her father, was printed in Rouen, in 1728, and reprinted by Paul Baudry in Rouen, in 1865. Gravier has commented on those letters. Agnes Repplier devoted a few lines to the Ursulines in a book about the most important Ursulines in Canada, entitled Mère Marie des Ursulines.

convert from the Huguenot heresy, who had been educated in the "grand monde".

The Mother Superior has left a graphic account of the dreaded trip across the Atlantic. As soon as they set sail, the ocean proved hostile, and "everyone paid some tribute to the sea." The storms would have frightened anyone but those daughters of Normandy, steadfast in their desire to serve God.

"Scarcely was the soup on the table when a violent jolt would upset it all over. Such petty accidents made us laugh in spite of sea-sickness ("le mal de coeur"), which is a violent disease and drives one to an extremity. . . . I was the one who was most afflicted. But this trial did not shake our adherence to our vocation. Our Lord mingles a 'je ne sais quoi' with our service to Him, so that suffering itself becomes sweet."²³

A welcome stop at Madeira brought the sisters some respite. Their experiences, which included a visit to the Portuguese Jesuit Fathers of the island, are amusingly described. They escaped the traditional baptism, a mock ceremony initiating each newcomer, by paying a small fee. "Since the weather is hot, the aspersion of a pail of water may not be unpleasant", comments the grave Mother. More ordeals were to come. The vessel stuck in sand at the St. Louis Bay, and no drinking water remained. The ship finally reached La Balize, and there a new trial

²³Relation of Marie St. Augustin, published by Shea, p. 11.

appeared--the mosquitoes, "whose sting causes almost unendurable pain. One is repaid, however, by the pleasure experienced in telling one's adventures and in thanking God." The welcome in New Orleans moved them to tears, and after the long voyage of no less than five months, they were happy to reach their destination and to begin their work.

The narrative of Mother St. Augustin de Tranchepain, while entertaining in its details, is of only moderate literary interest. On the contrary, the letters written by a young novice, Sister Marie-Madeleine Hachard, are delightfully fresh and naive. She manages to make an interesting story out of a long and tedious trip. Agnes Repplier says of her: "Her story is a riot of sound and color, of vivid descriptions and pure fun."²⁴ She had entrusted the care of her body and her soul to God. Hence every incident, no matter how formidable, finds her calm and patient. Her motives in going to the colony are patriotic as well as religious, and not unmixed with pride in her native city of Rouen, which gave birth to the early discoverers of Louisiana.

Her first two letters concern her trip from Rouen to the wonderful city of Paris, and from there to Lorient,

²⁴Agnes Repplier, Mère Marie des Ursulines, p. 70.

and the crossing of the Atlantic. In the second letter, sent from New Orleans October 27, 1727, she is already enthusiastic over Louisiana. The country, she is told, is four times as large as France. She finds the land rich and fertile, producing several crops a year. The climate is pleasant, although one is "nearer to the sun than in Rouen." A man who would work seriously for two days a week, could make enough food for his family throughout the year. "If the soil were cultivated, it would be the best in the world; but the country should be more thickly settled."

Sister Hachard disagrees with the local boast that New Orleans resembles Paris. However, Louisiana is a rich country, she admits. "There is as much magnificence and ceremony as there is in France; the elaborate gowns of cloth of gold and velvet are common, although three times more expensive than in Rouen; bread costs six cents ('sols') a pound, and eggs forty-five to fifty 'sols' a dozen." One eats pineapple, "the most excellent of all fruit," watermelons, melons, and sweet potatoes. Wild ducks, as well as every other kind of fowl and game are very cheap; but she adds modestly: "Nous n'en achetons guère, car nous ne voulons pas nous délicater." Oysters are plentiful, and some of the fish, though monstrous in size, are nevertheless tolerably good. One drinks choco-

late, milk and coffee. This land of Cockaigne would be an earthly paradise were it not for two drawbacks: the mosquitoes, and the vice, debauchery, and impiety of the inhabitants. "Women, unconcerned about their salvation, are not unconcerned with vain adornments. The luxury that reigns in this town is such that one has no means of discriminating: everything is equally magnificent Women wear white and red paint to conceal the wrinkles on their faces, and add beauty spots ("des mouches"); in a word, the devil rules over a vast empire in Louisiana."

The negroes amuse Marie Hachard. Two of her pupils are quite black. Speaking of them, she says: "If it were the fashion for colored women to put beauty spots on their faces, they would have to be white ones, and the effect would be rather droll." She does not seem to look upon slavery as an evil or unchristian institution. "When we arrived here," she relates "the Reverend Father Beaubois told us he had just lost nine negroes who had perished suddenly from the effects of a cold, northern wind. 'It is a loss of nine thousand francs', he added."

With such a modest and entertaining document the history of Louisiana in French letters, during the period of discovery and early colonization will close. It has considered several Frenchmen who between 1680 and 1715 explored the Mississippi Valley, observed the Indians,

the flora and the fauna of the country, attempted to achieve permanent control for France, and finally undertook to convert the population to Christianity. The next chapters will examine the part which Louisiana plays in French letters in the century of the Encyclopaedists and Philosophers.

PART II

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY AND HISTORICAL

SUMMARY

Results of French colonization in America during the seventeenth century. Louisiana's political history during the first years of the eighteenth century. New features of this period in French writings. Law's schemes. Reasons for France's failure in America. Louisiana given to Spain in 1763. Returned to France in 1800. Sold to the United States in 1803.

The exploration of the Mississippi Valley by subjects of Louis XIV, and the founding of a colony in the New World had had little echo in the literary milieux of Paris, where Boileau published his verses, and Bossuet preached the nothingness of all that is not God. French Letters were too self-centered, and too busy creating a new literature to take much interest in uncivilized countries thousands of miles away.

Nevertheless, French colonization in America during the seventeenth century had achieved stupendous results: the creation of a huge territorial empire, and the exploration of several formidable rivers, both achievements being characteristic of that greatness for which the age of Louis XIV is famous. The explorers who have been studied through their meager and imperfectly written records were impelled by a true spirit of adventure and not by greed.

More diplomatic than their English rivals, they knew how to ingratiate themselves with the Indians and to convert most of the so-called savage tribes into helpful allies.

And yet on the whole, the colonial empire proved a failure. Ambitious and imaginative schemes, such as La Salle's and D'Iberville's, in the hands of lesser men may be expected to fall short of realization. Indeed, the first years of the eighteenth century inaugurate a dismal period in the history of Louisiana.¹ Yellow fever afflicted the country in 1704, discouraging the few French pioneers. After 1707, the colony was in a miserable plight; there was a dearth of colonists, of oxen and horses, and of implements. At the same time, the rivalry of the English in South Carolina threatened the French settlers around Biloxi. The treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, made the grave mistake of not providing a link between Canada and Louisiana, and of sowing the seeds of future rivalry between the two parts of New France. In 1712, the King's Government leased the colony of the Mississippi to Crozat, a financier willing to assume the great risk involved. He failed in his rash schemes, and in 1717 renounced his monopoly. Louisiana was then handed over to the Compagnie

¹On the history of Louisiana consult: Gayerre, Histoire de la Louisiane and Alcee Fortier for the later period. Jaray's L'Empire francais d'Amerique is a systematic, clear and valuable presentation of the French point of view.

des Indes, whose policy, inspired by Law, was hardly more reasonable or successful.² A German historian who wrote of French colonization in Louisiana, Alexander Franz, took upon himself to use as an epigraph to his story of an honorable failure, Montaigne's severe judgment of his compatriots:

J'ai peur que nous n'ayons les yeux plus grands que le ventre, et plus de curiosite que nous n'avons de capacite; nous embrassons tout; mais nous n'etrangeons que du vent.³

New features distinguish the age which, heralded by Fenelon, Fontenelle, and others, opens with the long-awaited death of the great king. With the slow death of the classical ideal, the French people outgrew their complacent attitude and their lack of curiosity concerning other lands. The eighteenth century is to be cosmopolitan. Frenchmen discover England with its varied attractions: the Quakers, Newton, Shakespeare and Locke.⁴ Voltaire, after popularizing England,⁵ is soon to extend his curiosity to Prussia, Russia and even China. Montesquieu deems

²Cf., infra, Part II, Chapter III.

³Alexandre Franz, Die Kolonization de Mississippi bis zum Ausgange der franzoesischen Herrschaft. The quotation is from Montaigne's chapter on the "Cannibales."

⁴Cf., Paul Hazard, La Crise de la conscience europeenne, and Lanson's Edition of Voltaire's Lettres Philosophiques.

⁵Modern scholarship has showed that Voltaire had many predecessors in the discovery of England. Tavernier and Chardin had revealed Persia to the west; Lecompte and others had revealed China.

it wise to travel in Western and Central Europe before drawing up his *Esprit des Lois*. Persia, which he had not seen, attracts his fancy, at least as a setting for his satirical letters. The New World is not neglected in this general extension of French curiosity. The French try to understand the psychology of a Huron, and the mentality of the Puritan settlers in the United States.

With the development of cosmopolitanism and the slow growth of interest in the exotic, another current flows into the eighteenth century--an awakening interest in primitivism.⁶ Primitives and savages attract the attention of Fenelon, Diderot, Rousseau, and countless other writers. Professor Chinard has told how America, including Louisiana, eventually profited from the widespread interest in the primitives.⁷ Gradually the New World becomes in the eyes of France an earthly Paradise, where simplicity, love and justice reign supreme. It is here that Manon takes refuge, far from the heartless police who seek to imprison her. The excesses of civilization are not allowed to cramp young Chateaubriand's imaginative dreams of the forests of Louisiana.

⁶Many traces of primitivism are already to be found in the Jesuit Relations.

⁷Cf., more particularly, his preface, "Le Mirage américain", in Les Refugies Huguenots.

Moreover, the eighteenth century is traditionally regarded as the century in which historical curiosity first developed, and people began to wonder how the present evolved from the past. One of the objects of that curiosity is French colonization in America. The public is interested in Father Charlevoix's history of New France. La Salle, D'Iberville, and the early explorations of Louisiana arouse an interest which the age of Louis XIV, preoccupied with its own splendor, was incapable of feeling.

For a period of time, some incidents contribute to direct French curiosity to Louisiana more than to Canada. A Scotch speculator took things just where Crozat had left them and conceived the idea of interesting the French public in the Mississippi Valley by the most direct of all methods--the desire for wealth. As a result of this advertising the name of the great river discovered by Frenchmen suddenly haunts the golden dreams of every Parisian. Louisiana enjoys a brief vogue, soon to relapse into oblivion when the ruined and embittered speculators vent their anger on the colony and later without regret hand it over to the Spaniards.

Thus, the eighteenth-century thinkers, philosophers and historians, as well as the financiers and economists (the latter in a different way) failed to profit by the

errors of the seventeenth century in regard to French colonization. They were interested in foreign lands only so far as they helped them to understand and reform France. The steps that should have been taken in order to develop an empire in America for France, appear clear to modern historians.⁸ More autonomy should have been granted to the colony, in an age when to refer every decision to a king and a distant council required, not days, but months and years. A local legislature should have gradually been created. More emigrants should have been sent from the mother country, emigrants firmly resolved to devote themselves to agriculture. If tolerance, not yet accepted in France, could have been practised in the lands where Recollets and Jesuits were working to convert savages to the faith of Bossuet and Madame de Maintenon, Huguenot refugees, hard-working and enterprising such as they were, should have been allowed to settle in Louisiana or in other parts of America.

But for lack of enough foresight to meet the needs of the young colony the eighteenth century, after a short period marked by exaggerated and false hopes, proceeded to squander the beautiful legacy left them by La Salle and D'Iberville. The main bulk of French Literature remained

⁸J. Schlarman, From Quebec to New Orleans, and G. L. Jaray, L'Empire francais d'Amerique, having among others analyzed them.

strangely unconcerned with the fate or the condition of the distant colony on the Mississippi River. Even the travelers' reports about Louisiana proved, on the whole, less valuable from a literary point of view (being more administrative and prosaic in tone) than the accounts of early discoverers. The two most celebrated works destined to win for Louisiana the interest of the French public were written by an adventurous abbe and a Breton dreamer who had never visited the mouth of the Mississippi.

After the failure of Law's speculations, (1719), some new discoveries were made by French explorers, especially Benard de la Harpe, in the direction of the Arkansas River. In 1723, Louisiana returned to the Compagnie des Indes, and the French public lost its short-lived interest in the country of the Mississippi. In 1751, after the war of the Natchez, Louisiana was again under the jurisdiction of the King's government.

Several governors assumed authority in succession: Lamothe-Cadillac, Perrier, Bienville and Vaudreuil, with varying results upon the welfare of the colony. France remained indifferent, seemingly more interested in San Domingo and the West Indies than in the nascent city of New Orleans. About this time the clamor for reforms at home became audible and threatening. When the Encyclopedie began to appear (1751), the house was already on fire. Why

should the French concern themselves about Louisiana when there were more pressing problems nearer at hand? In 1763, Choiseul, through the treaty of Paris, gave Spain the land on the right bank of the Mississippi River. Spain accepted unenthusiastically and occupied the country against the wishes of its inhabitants.

During the American War of Independence, and the Revolution in France, many Frenchmen flocked to the shores of the New World, either to help the colonies in their rebellion against England, or to escape from the excesses of freedom in France. A number of them went to Louisiana. The character of that colony, with its qualities, or rather, its faults, as enumerated by historians, -- levity, love of pleasure and luxury, excessive elegance of the women, -- remained profoundly French during the thirty-seven years of Spanish rule.⁹ In 1800, Louisiana was returned to France. Bonaparte had intended to send an army to the colony, but changed his plans after the difficulties encountered at San Domingo, and finally, in May, 1803, sold the immense territory to the young American republic. The price agreed upon was eighty million francs. Sixteen

⁹A lively picture of eighteenth century Louisiana is given in G. Oudard, Vieille Amerique.

of the present states of the Union¹⁰ were, in whole or in part, included in the Louisiana Purchase. "Si je réglais mes conditions sur ce que ces vastes territoires vaudront aux Etats-Unis," said Napoleon, "les indemnités n'auraient point de bornes."¹¹

¹⁰The states of Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Mississippi, Nebraska, Oregon, Colorado, Dakota, Idaho, Utah, Montana, Washington and Wyoming. In 1812, the present state of Louisiana was admitted into the Union.

¹¹Quoted as the epigraph to Gayarre's *Histoire de la Louisiane*.

CHAPTER II

FRENCH TRAVELERS AND HISTORIANS IN LOUISIANA

THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

(1715-1735)

SUMMARY

Bacqueville de la Potherie, historian of Canada. Baron de Lahontan and Lafitau, partisans of good savage. Penicaut's memoir. Dominique Varlet. Le Maire's Memoir on Louisiana. Father Laval.

The famous novel of love and death which attracted the attention of the French public to Manon's grave in Louisiana appeared in 1731. Before that date, a number of travelers visited the mouth of the Mississippi, and colonists and explorers wrote about their adopted country. Their work must be considered briefly, emphasizing the literary and historical value of their picture of Louisiana.¹

¹The administrative documents to be found in the French Ministry of the Navy or Ministry of the Colonies, do not fall within the scope of this essay. P. Heinrich, in his thesis on La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes has used them. His book may be referred to for the purely historical aspect of the subject. Marc Villier's La Fondation de la Nouvelle Orleans is also useful and carefully documented.

Bacqueville de la Potherie is known as a historian of Canada. The son of a French settler in the island of Gadeloupe, himself an administrator in the French navy, he was sent to Canada, where he married a Canadian. His work, written about 1702, but not published until 1716, is an account of his travels in New France, entitled His toire de l'Amerique Septentrionale, which is the title given also to the subsequent edition (1722).

The work is in four volumes in the form of letters addressed to friends. It is dedicated to the Duke of Orleans, the Regent of France. La Potherie's avowed purpose is "d'instruire plutot que de plaire," and it must be admitted that he succeeded in his aim, for his books, though full of information, are dull and dry. Although he must have heard a great deal about Louisiana from the sons of Charles Le Moyne, whom he knew intimately, and although his keen interest in the Indians leads him to mention some of the tribes of the Mississippi Valley, La Potherie cannot be regarded as being directly connected with the literature of Louisiana. His chapter (XIII) on La Salle's explorations contains nothing original. La Potherie and Nicolas Perrot, the author of a

posthumous memoir on the savages,² from whom the Canadian writer borrowed much, belong to the history of New France or to that of anthropological science.³

The amusing dialogues of Baron de Lahontan also have Canada as a setting, and their author, a cynic whom life had repeatedly disappointed, never saw Louisiana. Nevertheless, his enthusiastic praise of the good savage influence those who saw in North America a Garden of Eden, and who held the civilization of the Old World responsible for the disappointments they had had.⁴

Lafitau also was an influential partisan of the savage. He did a great deal to inform the French public

²It is not known when Nicolas Perrot came to Canada. He was there continually, possibly from 1665 to 1669, first as an ordinary "coureur de bois," then as an interpreter and representative of the French with the Indians. He wrote his memoir, not for self-glorification, but to enlighten the intendant of Canada as to the real character of the Indian tribes which were friendly with the French or hostile to them. There exists but one copy of Perrot's memoir entitled: Memoir of the Manners, Customs and Religion of the Savages of North America. Edited and published (in French) for the first time, Leipzig and Paris, 1864, by the Reverend Jules Tailhan, S. J. It has been translated into English by Emma Helen Blair, and published in The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes, I, pp. 25-272.

³On Bacqueville de la Potherie, see Dictionary of Canadian Biography; also Edmond Roy's biographical account in Proceedings and Translations of the Royal Society of Canada, second series, III, p. 3-44.

⁴Lahontan, Nouveaux Voyages dans L'Amerique Septentrionale, 1703, and Dialogues curieux entre l'auteur et un sauvage de bon sens qui a voyage, 1703, reprinted by G. Chinard, 1931.

of the charms of the Indian civilization, and of the religious feelings of the Indian tribes of North America. His statements, though original, were not founded upon fact. He erroneously regarded the Indians as being very similar to the ancient peoples of Greece and Rome. His Moeurs des sauvages americains compares aux hommes des premiers tems, remains, however, one of the most interesting books to be found on America in the eighteenth century.

Joseph Francis Lafitau, born in 1671, was the son of a wealthy banker in Bordeaux. He became a Jesuit and went to Canada in 1712, where he stayed five years doing missionary work. His memory was full of recollections of Homer, Herodotus, Plutarch, and Pliny. He readily associated the half-nude Indians worshipping strange gods with the characters created by these ancient writers. The inhabitants of the wilds of America were thus placed on an exalted plane; the way was open for Rousseau's praise of the savages and Chateaubriand's vindication of the Natchez.

Although Lafitau never visited Louisiana, a few passages in his book deal with the southern Mississippi Valley. Not wary of generalizations, he maintains that the manners of the savages are similar all over the continent, (I, p. 25). In his second chapter ("Idee ou caractere des sauvages en general"), he devotes several pages to the Natchez, the perpetual fire burning in their temples,

their worship of the sun, which the Jesuit finds similar to the cult of the sun among the Parths. He adds similar details concerning the sun-cult of the Oumas.

Elsewhere (I, p. 595), he mentions those natives of Louisiana whom the French called "flat-heads," because their ideal of beauty, like that of some of the ancients, consisted of a flat forehead. In the second volume (p. 410) he describes the death rites among the Natchez. His information concerning Louisiana, probably taken from oral or written reports of the Jesuit Missionaries, is second-hand. For this reason, Father Lafitau deserves only a brief mention in our study. But since his work enjoyed considerable success, he probably did much to arouse the curiosity of French readers about America and Louisiana, the home of the Natchez.

Penicaut, unlike Lahontan and Lafitau, had been in Louisiana and had acquired through several years there, a direct knowledge of the country. He had sailed for the Mississippi Valley with D'Iberville in 1698, and worked with him in establishing the fort at Biloxi. He was a carpenter, and his memoir has little claim to literary fame. Penicaut left Louisiana in 1723. Having become blind in the same year, he wrote his memoir mainly as a presentation to his country in order to secure a pension.

Many details of Penicaut's memoir, Relation ou Annale de ce qui s'est passe a la Louisiane,⁵ concerning the early years in New Orleans, are historically interesting. Penicaut, an humble man, animated by no ambitious or enterprising designs, paid close attention, during the twenty-three years of his sojourn in Louisiana, to its Indian inhabitants and their customs. The Natchez especially impressed him. He found their country of unequalled natural beauty. He admired the splendid "growth of odoriferous trees" which adorned it, and its "cool and limpid streams." This famous tribe appeared to the French carpenter as highly civilized; the women were well-dressed, the men handsome, their language soft and well-modulated, and their habits surprisingly moderate. "However abundant provisions may be with them, they never eat to excess; but very improperly, they always eat with their fingers, although they have spoons made from the horns of the buffalo."⁶

Penicaut, who should be a good judge in such matters, praises the savage's method of building canoes. They set fire to the interior of a cypress tree, burn it off at the

⁵It is to be found in the Bibliotheque Nationale (M. S. francais, 14613) and has been published in B. F. French's Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida, New Series, p. 33-162.

⁶French, op. cit., p. 49.

desired length, then scrape the part remaining with large shells so as to polish it well. He also observes the religious customs of the Indians, especially those of the Taensas nation, neighbors of the Natchez, and describes a horrible human sacrifice which they performed to appease their gods when a fire was raging.

It is clear from this brief account, that Penicaut was interested in the inhabitants of the country and struck by its natural beauty. His records contain much useful data for historians.⁷

Before reaching the official historians of Louisiana, Benard de la Harpe and Charlevoix, a few more writers must be mentioned. Not having had the honor of being included in the Lettres Edifiantes of the missionaries, they are little known. These writers are modest ecclesiastics who, having seen Louisiana, are able to contribute little to our knowledge and impressions of the colony during the difficult years which followed the death of Louis XIV.

In 1711, a priest, Dominique Varlet (born in 1678) resigned his vicarage in Paris and applied at the Mission

⁷Marc de Villiers utilizes Penicaut's memoir with care and diffidence in Histoire de la Fondation de la Nouvelle Orleans, p. 23.

strangers to be sent to America. Remaining six years in Louisiana, he was entrusted with the care of an immense district where conversions were not easy. After returning to France, upon the failure of his health, he was ordered to Persia, where he met new difficulties. He died in Holland as bishop of Babylonia.

Varlet's writings have only recently been made public. M. Maxime Deloche published them in the Bulletin de la Société de Géographie, 1930, under the title of: "Un Missionnaire français en Amérique au XVIII^e siècle. Contribution à l'histoire de l'établissement des Français en Louisiane." A brief notice on Varlet in Moret's Universal Biography adds a little information concerning the priest. Varlet's writings consist of personal letters to his family, and for that reason are more truthful and less to be suspected than works of propaganda. They form a welcome contrast to Bernard de La Harpe's official volume concerning Louisiana. The style is simple and natural, and is free of the elaborate diction which marked some of the best among the Lettres Edifiantes.

Reaching Louisiana in 1713, Varlet was not overcome with love at first sight for the new land. Typically, he remarked in his first letter: "Le pays n'est point beau, car il n'est point défriché." He soon expressed his disappointment over the material possibilities of the country,

and advised his brother not to follow him. Fowl and fish, however, made life tolerable in winter. But in summer, he, too, like many explorers, complains of the mosquitoes.

The longer Varlet remains in the country, the more vehemently he grumbles of its defects: there is much fruit, but the quality is not good; the bananas and figs are mediocre, and the pineapple is dangerous. The bread is poor, and that matters a great deal to a Frenchman. It is certainly not an earthly paradise. "Rien moins que cela!" The country is too wild and uncultivated to have any beauty. "No milk, no butter, no cheese," says the pious man, as he repeatedly complains of the lack of proper food. Even at that early date, however, "la cuisine de la Louisiane" was acquiring a reputation. Varlet mentions such dishes as "squirrels mixed with fried chicken," and gravies made with bear oil." This "huile d'ours" he rates as the greatest blessing of the unfortunate land.

Varlet's interest in food and cooking may be condoned, for it was not possible to do much for the souls of the natives. A devout churchman, in speaking of the Indians, he expressed his despair over seeing so many souls "abandoned to their darkness." (letter of November 23, 1703). Missionaries were too scarce. Sent to the country of the Illinois and then to Canada to recruit more colleagues,

Varlet had little success. He returned to France, and from there set out for Persia. Much later, when Varlet, disappointed in his career, recalled his years as a missionary in Louisiana, he admitted that they had been hard and unsuccessful, but added: "Je regrette encore souvent les bois de l'Amerique."

Another French priest, Francis Le Maire, wrote, in 1717, a memoir on Louisiana, which was long unpublished. It appeared in September-November, 1899, in the Comptes-Rendus de l'Athenee Louisianais, New Orleans. His short account of thirty pages is of historical and geographical value. It affords useful information concerning the names of several Indian tribes, and the condition of the country at that time. New Orleans was then a mere settlement, and Le Maire bitterly opposed its selection as the new capital.

Having a keen geographical sense, he explains with accuracy what part the rivers should play in the colonization of Louisiana. He does not, however, waste his time or his adjectives in describing the beauty of the country. He dryly enumerates the products to be found there (oil, honey, silk, and wine) as well as six good reasons why the French should settle there in large numbers and without delay: to retain Canada, to resist the English, to

develop mines, to work the rich soil, to trade in hides, and to serve the Christian faith.

Le Maire is extremely discreet when he mentions the religion of the Indians. He is content in ascribing to them a Carthaginian origin, and in comparing their worship of the sun to that of Moloch. He entertains little hope of ever converting them, especially since Frenchmen give a poor example of piety, and have turned the colony into "une veritable Babylone."

Le Maire's matter-of-fact style and manner make his account one of the least literary that has been mentioned. In fact, his principal role in the history of Louisiana in French Letters is, according to M. Villiers, that of the prototype of the "aumonier" who, in Manon Lescaut, tragically announces the governor's decision to disconsolate Des Grieux.⁸

Contemporary with Le Maire, about 1720, another priest, Father Laval, a Jesuit scientist, undertook a voyage to Louisiana. He was entrusted by the Regent of

⁸M. Villiers' statement is open to criticism and will be discussed in the chapter on Manon Lescaut.

France with a scientific mission to the Gulf of Mexico. Indeed, Laval was highly qualified for his task, judging from the precise, technical details of his report and from his title: "Professeur royal de mathématique et maître hydrographe des officiers et gardes de la marine du port de Toulon." He stopped at Martinique and at Dauphine Island, and reached Louisiana in 1720. Father Laval's Voyage de la Louisiane fait par ordre du roi en l'année 1720, is a purely scientific work, including remarks concerning the appearance and character of the savages. Physics, astronomy, geography and hydrography are the priest's principal themes.

CHAPTER III

LOUISIANA IN FRENCH LETTERS FROM

LAW TO CHARLEVOIX

SUMMARY

Histories of Louisiana during the eighteenth century. Law's use of propaganda. Charles de Bonrepos. Vallette de Laudun. Dumont de Montigny's notes published by Le Mascrier. His poems published by M. de Villiers. Bernard de La Harpe's Journal. Histoire de la Nouvelle France by Charlevoix. Importance of this work.

Louisiana came into the limelight about 1720, when French speculators hoped to gain vast wealth from its mines, slaves, fruit, and tobacco. A number of travelers visited it about 1715-1722, and in some cases remained there and later wrote accounts of what they had seen. Needless to say, however, one cannot expect to find in these amateur efforts, the research, documentary labor, and objective presentation which is demanded of modern historians. These earlier writers risked the hazardous voyage to a fabulous New World; they observed the country; they attempted to foresee the future which its boundless possibilities suggested; and often, with a surprising degree of accuracy, they imparted their information and their opinions to their contemporaries. But since these free-lance historians were not professional writers, the value of their work is often purely documentary; one does not find in it the personal

point of view or the subjective arrangements which usually go by the name of literature.

Modern writers who have neglected the epic tale of the French explorations in America at the time of La Salle, Tonty, and D'Iberville have been attracted by the less heroic but more spectacular period of the Regency. The story of Louisiana during this period is well known. Charles Gayarre has told it with clarity although uninterestingly. G. Oudard, in Vieille Amerique, has recently drawn a vivid picture of the turbulent, reckless, and gay life of the Louisiana of the eighteenth century. A much more detailed and thorough study is that of a French professor, P. Heinrich, La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes, 1717-1731. Henri Gravier, a promising scholar who had been deeply attracted by that period of colonial history, wrote an interesting memoir, La Colonisation de la Louisiane a l'epoque de Law (1904), which he intended to expand, but death prevented the accomplishment of his aims. A well-documented American thesis, The Commerce of Louisiana during the French Regime, (1916, by H. Miller Surrey is also to be mentioned, although, since it concentrates on the commercial and economic history of Louisiana, its purpose is very different from ours.

Historians and financiers may discuss for many more years whether Law was a genius or an imposter. They agree, however, upon the extraordinary role which he played in the history of Louisiana. The famous Scot must have dreamt for many months of this colony on the great river which he had never visited, and perhaps by continually praising its fabulous possibilities to others, he finally came to believe in them himself. The financial wizard of the eighteenth century, Law has one undisputed merit--his realization of the value of propaganda, which would have caused even a modern press agent to look to his laurels. Because of him, Louisiana burst into newspaper print, into songs, and into would-be literary works, all designed to lure Frenchmen to the new Eldorado.¹

But Law's fabulous advertising proved a failure. He had been born too far from the Seine and the Loire to

¹Most of the newspaper articles and songs written at Law's instigation to advertise Louisiana, are quoted in P. Heinrich's La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes, 1717-1731. I shall add (in addition to the books discussed later in this chapter) a reference to an article in Le Nouveau Mercure, March 1717, pp. 128-143. The author pretends that a very interesting account of the country of the Mississippi fell into his hands "at just the right time. The public interest is so closely linked with the vast country in connection with the recent establishment of the Western Company, that I think it a timely present to the public to offer to them an accurate and faithful account of that wide continent." He goes on enumerating the advantages of Louisiana (climate, hunting, fishing, trees, jewels and especially favorable attitude of the savages toward Frenchmen).

realize that though Frenchmen might be willing to read about the huge Mississippi River and the mighty forests of Louisiana, they preferred their native soil. Acquiring wealth overnight in the Rue Quincampoix might appeal to them, but challenging the ocean and its storms to face the unknown hazards of a far, strange country was quite another story.

Law and his agents put forth their utmost efforts, not overlooking the value of literary propaganda of various kinds. As a result, Hennepin's works, which painted the Mississippi and its shores in such rosy hues, enjoyed a new vogue. A few hasty pamphlets were inspired by the financier, or by the wave of unrestrained enthusiasm for Louisiana.² They offered various subtle inducements, such as would be most likely to appeal to the French public. Mention was repeatedly made of the mines which Hennepin and Tonty (in the then popular account attributed to the latter) affirmed were to be found in the flourishing colony on the beautiful Mississippi. There must be gold in the new Eldorado, they said, and mountains of other precious metals; also "certain green stones, very hard and very fine,

² See Heinrich, op. cit.

similar to emerald," as the Nouveau Mercure for September, 1717 (p. 132), with perfidious prudence described them.

The fallacious accounts offered in Louisiana a veritable Paradise for gourmets. Rare game, fowl, huge bulls, "whose flesh is more delicate than beef in France," were included in the inducements. Pictures and stories of beautiful Indian women modestly spinning wool or kneeling languorously at the feet of flattered French colonists were designed to appeal to human vanity and to its propensity for romance. Still other pictures showed the Indians of the Mississippi rushing to the French missionaries for baptism.

Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, all this propaganda had little effect. The largest number of colonists who joined Law were German or German-Swiss for whom similar insidious literature had been prepared in German.³ In the times of his greatest power, Law had used other methods, even going so far as to order some husbands who did not live peaceably with their wives to emigrate to Louisiana. Parisian chansonniers seized the theme and used it in a song which is to be found in Raunie's Chansonnier

³H. Deiler has studied them extensively in the Settlement of the German Coast of Louisiana and the Creoles of German Descent.

français:⁴

O vous tous, messieurs les maris,
Si vos femmes ont des favoris,
Ne vous mettez martel en tete;
Vous aurez fort mechante fete.
Si vous vous en fachez, tant pis,
Vous irez a Mississippi.

And thus exhorting husbands to be more lenient with their wives or more fashionable, the song continued:

Il vaut mieux etre a la mode
Que de voir Mississippi.

But as the failure of Law's system became apparent, the songs of the day changed their themes, becoming ironical and bitter. Everything was becoming more expensive in Paris, while the speculators had ceased working in order to develop their remote Eldorado:

De Law le nouveau systeme
Fait rencherir le cafe;
Du sucre il en est de meme,
Le doux melange a cesse - - -
Toute l'annee est careme,
Tout n'est plus qu'austerite.⁵

There is little style and very little personal knowledge of the country in the propaganda concerning Louisiana. A representative sample is to be found in a little book of forty-six pages by Chevalier de Bonrepos, entitled: Description du Mississippi.

⁴Raunie, Chansonnier francais, III, pp. 22-24, quoted in Heinrich, op. cit.

⁵Raunie, op. cit., III, pp. 210-211.

It consists of letters to his "chere cousine," in which he praises the beautiful Mississippi River, its valley covered with walnut and chestnut trees, its fish, its crocodiles, and even its savages, who are described as picturesque people "feeding upon the blood of their enemies." Finally, he mentions the gold mines "which will make the Kingdom of France as wealthy as Peru." (p. 43). He urges Frenchmen to rush to New Orleans to settle where large stores import all the goods from Europe, and export the valuable products of the country.

As was to be expected, the colonists who were lured to Louisiana by promises of vast wealth were greatly disappointed. The governor, La Mothe Cadillac, who was one of the least enthusiastic, expressed himself thus: "The river (the Mississippi) is a torrent for six months, and for the rest of the year its waters are so low that canoes cannot even float." Again he wrote: "This colony is a monster which has neither head nor tail. All the accounts that have been written of it are mere fables."⁶

The grumbling governor was recalled and thrown into the Bastille. But discontent persisted, and Duclos, the "commissaire ordonnateur" of the colony, complained of another disappointment: the girls whom Law had sent from

⁶From a MS report quoted in Oudard and in Heinrich.

France were so ugly that the men refused to marry them. "In selecting those girls," he added, "a handsome face should count more than virtue."⁷ If the men found none to their taste among the Manons whom Law shipped to Louisiana, they did not hesitate to return to their savage companions.

Accounts such as Vallette de Laudun's Journal d'un voyage a la Louisiane fait en 1720,⁸ voice the disappointments of a colonist who actually went to Louisiana. It is written in a light and playful vein, and the author's wit is often ponderously heavy and his allusions unnecessarily risqué. After an endless voyage, he found Louisiana severely disappointing. The wooden houses are only one story in height; the fruit is never good; the only admirable thing which he sees is the fine, glossy sand of Dauphine Island: "One would at first take it to be gold powder in the country of Quicampoix," says the naval officer humorously. He thinks that the colonists should have cultivated the land instead of seeking gold. As for the women, they seem to become sterile as soon as they reach the colony. In explanation of this, he offers not

⁷This quotation from a report by Duclos is to be found in Gayarre's Histoire de la Louisiane, I, pp. 99-100.

⁸Published later in Paris, 1768.

the climate, but the numerous "galantries" which must have "worn them out" previously in Europe. In a word, his disappointment is complete. He was glad to return to France after a stay of sixty-five days in Louisiana.

Most of the travelers' accounts and histories written by colonists between the years 1715 and 1770 are tediously long and dull. But during this period, a new feature marks the authors--their scrupulous effort to observe historical accuracy. Generalizations are rare, and general ideas are even absent from most of them. The writers are attentive observers, who have tried to report nothing except what they have seen or heard and are not given to flights of fancy nor to aimless digressions.

Once more, it becomes necessary to assign to these historians a very humble place in literature. Nevertheless, their histories were read by some of their contemporaries, and sometimes, as in the case of Le Page du Pratz, by a fairly wide public. It is possible that they may have transmitted some knowledge of French Louisiana to other writers more gifted than they.

Dumont de Montigny, of whom very little is known, was born toward the end of the seventeenth century, and

and was still alive about 1750-1760. A cartographer and geometrician, he nevertheless conceived the idea of writing a long epic poem. A military officer in Louisiana for twenty-five years, he kept extensive notes on events in the colony during that time. He gave his notes to Le Mascrier, who, because he edited them, and perhaps rewrote them entirely, should be considered the real author of the Memoires Historiques sur la Louisiane.⁹

The work was intended to serve as a continuation of Joutel's Journal. However, the events recorded are much less tragic and moving than the accounts of La Salle's explorations and death, and the author, or authors, of the Memoires lack the charming simplicity of Joutel. Their complete subservience to the demands of accuracy, their evident determination to record nothing whatever except what Dumont had seen and noted, rob their work of interest.

The book may be readily summarized. The usual remarks are made concerning the climate of Louisiana, the heat, the mosquitoes, the sudden storms, and the danger of sunstrokes, and the usual comments on the Mississippi, which interests Dumont only from the point of view of

⁹The book was published in Paris in 1753, in 2 volumes. The title, ten lines long, adds: "composes sur les memoires de M. Dumont par M.L.L.M. (Le Mascrier)." An English translation is given in B. F. French, Historical Collections of Louisiana, Part V, pp. 1-126. Scanty biographical information concerning Dumont de Montigny is found in an article by Marc de Villiers, infra, Footnote 10.

an engineer concerned with floods and levees. He seems more interested in the flora and the fauna of Louisiana. In fact, he becomes almost lyrical in his praise of the delicious watermelons and the exotic flavor of sweet potatoes. Of the watermelons, he rhapsodizes: "It seems that one presses into one's mouth a sponge saturated with Alicante wine, for the juice is ruddy, and the taste most exquisite." Naturally, there is the inevitable discussion of the amphibious crocodile, and a long account of the savages which is very precise and accurate. Dumont refuses to accept legends or oral traditions, among them the story, repeated by all travelers, but denied by him, that there were a large number of hermaphrodites among the savages. He also denies the story of cannibals among the tribes in Louisiana. Completely devoid of mystical ideals, Dumont has no belief in primitivism, in the virtues of the savages, in America as a Garden of Eden--all ideas which later dominate the eighteenth century.

M. de Villiers has discovered and studied a poem by the same Dumont which must have been composed between 1728 and 1742. The title is prosaic enough: L'Etablissement de la Province de la Louisiane.¹⁰ This obscure pre-

¹⁰M. de Villiers' study was published in the Journal de la Societe des Americanistes de Paris in 1931.

decessor of Chateaubriand left his manuscript unpublished. It was found in the Bibliotheque de l'Arsenal in Paris and deals with the history of French colonization in the eighteenth century, describing the revolt of the Natchez and the manners of the savages.

The extracts quoted by M. de Villiers amply corroborate his criticisms. This didactic poem of 4692 lines is as bad as the worst poems of the unpoetical eighteenth century. "Le pauvre Dumont n'etait, hélas! Pas meme un rimeur de troisieme ordre," says M. de Villiers. His lines vary from eleven to fourteen syllables, among other "licences moins que poetiques," to quote M. de Villiers again. Poor Dumont realized his shortcomings and apologized for them in lines which will suffice as an example of his style:

Vu que, dans ce pays, le meilleur y manquant,
Je n'ai pu que fournir, en fait d'art poetique,
Que des vers de Pont-Neuf a la mode publique.

In Benard de la Harpe, we find a stylist of somewhat less mediocre abilities. Coming to Louisiana as a French officer in 1718, he played an important part in the history of the colony. He built a fort, explored the region near the Rio Grande, and was sent in 1722 to take possession of

the land on the Colorado River. He did not succeed because he lacked a sufficiently large armed force; nevertheless, he extended the limits of the colony, and his name should be remembered as that of one of the most enterprising explorers of the eighteenth century.

This man of action wanted also to be a writer. He kept, or planned to keep, a Journal historique de l'établissement de Français a la Louisiane¹¹ which covers the years 1698 to 1720. It has been suggested by M. de Villiers that this memoir was actually written, not by Benard de la Harpe, but by the Chevalier de Beaurain.¹² Once again it is impossible to decide how much of the memoir is the work of the explorer, and how much that of his collaborator, though its merit being little, it may be wiser not to try.

The Journal is a long, detailed history of Louisiana since D'Iberville. Facts and dates are recorded with great accuracy. The details are seldom picturesque or vivid, and the style seldom literary. The importance of the document is purely historical and to some extent ethnological.

¹¹Published in Paris and in New Orleans in 1831 only.

¹²The Chevalier de Beaurain, "geographe du roi," was born in 1696 and died in 1771. He served as a negotiator for Cardinal Fleury, and has left a military history of Flanders.

There are the usual remarks concerning the vegetables and fruit of Louisiana, and the rattlesnakes and crocodiles. Benard de la Harpe was favorably impressed by the country and praised it highly. He speaks of its charms in the following passage, quoted in French as a sample of his style:

Tout le fond de cette baie est le plus beau pays qu'on puisse souhaiter; ce ne sont que coteaux et prairies a perte de vue; on y voit de distance en distance des bois de haute futaie; la cote qui la termine est elevee de plus de vingt pieds. (p. 268).

In an appendix of eighteen pages, the writer discusses, rather disappointingly, the topic which puzzled many eighteenth-century observers: the origin of the American Indians. After a serious investigation, he accepts the theory which pictures the Indians as having come either from the mythical Atlantis or from Tartary. Some of his remarks concerning the worship of the sun among the Natchez, and their belief in the transmigration of souls are interesting from the anthropological point of view. In general, however, he draws no conclusions.

The famous Histoire de la Nouvelle France, by Charlevoix, did not appear until 1744.¹³ But since the

¹³Though Le Page du Pratz came to Louisiana in 1719, his Histoire de la Louisiane, which was not published until 1758, included events of the years 1720-50. He will be examined later.

part which concerns Louisiana is merely the appendix (letters written to the Duchess of Lesdiguières in 1720-1722), it legitimately belongs to the literary history before Manon Lescaut.

Charlevoix, born in Saint-Quentin in 1683, ranks among the best known of the Jesuit Fathers. He is the author of four monumental histories (of Japan, San Domingo, New France, and Paraguay) which had great influence during the eighteenth century. He was sent by the Regent to New France to visit the missions of Canada. In 1721, he traveled to the Great Lakes, and descended the Illinois and the Mississippi to the mouth of the latter, touching at New Orleans, and observing diligently all the region through which he passed. Embarking for San Domingo, he arrived there in 1722, and later returned to France.¹⁴

That portion of Father Charlevoix's work which concerns this subject is the Histoire et description generale de la Nouvelle France, avec le journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du Roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale, Paris, 1744. An English translation was published in Chicago by the Caxton Club, in 1923.

Charlevoix's first volume refers repeatedly to Florida

¹⁴Professor Chinard has indicated the interest and importance of Charlevoix in his work on L'Amérique et le rêve exotique dans la littérature française au XVII^e et XVIII^e siècle, pp. 333-338.

(which includes Louisiana). He recounts the adventures of Jean de Ribaut, and also mentions La Salle. The second volume gives full account of La Salle's explorations and the circumstances of his death. Charlevoix severely blames the French discoverers for obstinately seeking precious metals and valuable stones instead of seriously colonizing the Mississippi Valley. This volume relates the history of Louisiana to the year 1736. The third volume includes the customary dissertation on the origin of the American Indians, and the letters to the Duchess of Lesdiguieres, previously mentioned, which are a most interesting part of the work.

From a literary point of view, Charlevoix is important because his appreciation of the simple, primitive, and humane qualities of the savages preceded Rousseau's similar philosophy. Like Rousseau too, the Jesuit Father was peculiarly sensitive to nature, and found the charms of the wild countries which he visited particularly appealing. This strong feeling for nature appears in his Journal historique.¹⁵ The beauties of the country of the Natchez are depicted by the Jesuit traveler, in his letter XXX:

¹⁵M. Chinard, op. cit., p. 235 and p. 237, has quoted two of the most typical pages of Charlevoix.

Several little hills appear . . . and, when these are once passed we see, on all sides very large meadows separated from one another by small groves which produce a very fine effect.¹⁶

The metropolis of the whole country, in his opinion, should be Fort Rosalie, where all natural advantages would be combined. Like all French travelers, he was interested in the natives of the New World, especially in the Natchez Indians, whose comparatively high level of civilization marked them as exceptional among the North American natives. Their monotheistic worship of the sun seemed a ready preparation for an eventual conversion to Christianity. The status of women, however, was a great surprise to him. In some respects they were regarded by the men as their superiors. Unfaithful husbands were put to death, while wives could entertain as many gallants as they pleased without interference by the husbands.¹⁷ In a word, the European observers were amazed at finding in the submission of the men to the daughters of the sun, in the Natchez country, the same respectful obedience to women which so impresses modern French travelers in America.

Charlevoix presents interesting details concerning

¹⁶Charlevoix, Journal of a Voyage to North America, translated and published at Chicago, 1923, II, p. 236, letter KXX.

¹⁷Ibid., II, p. 248.

the recent founding of New Orleans: "This is the first city which one of the greatest rivers in the world has seen erected on its banks." Its present aspect, he concedes, is miserable (in 1722); the soil is full of water below the surface, but beautiful gardens could be built on both banks of the Mississippi,¹⁸ and legitimate hope can be entertained of creating there the future center of a large and rich colony.

In letter XXXII, Charlevoix again expresses his hope in the future of Louisiana. There are, it is true, too few missionaries, and Law's speculations have harmed the country, but it will revive and enjoy a new and more prosperous existence.

¹⁸Ibid., II, p. 280.

CHAPTER IV

MANON LESCAUT AND LOUISIANA

SUMMARY

Manon Lescaut's success. Prevost's life. Importance of the Louisiana setting in Manon Lescaut. Historical accuracy of the novel. Its English sources. Description of Louisiana in it. Their importance.

"There never was such a success of tears," wrote Michelet of the appearance of Manon Lescaut.¹ Both men and women--highborn ladies and chambermaids alike--wept over the pitiful death of the heroine in the sandy wilds of Louisiana. Perhaps no other French novel ever had so many readers as that brief story of two hundred pages.²

¹Michelet devoted eleven pages of his history of the Regency period to Manon Lescaut. Erroneously assigning to it the date of 1727, he cites it as proof of the corruption of the Church and the nobility in the early part of the eighteenth century. J. Michelet, Histoire de France, Paris, Edition Chamerot, XVI, La Regence, Chapter XIX on Manon Lescaut. The quotation given above occurs on page 340 of that volume.

²Evidence of the success of the novel does not have to be repeated here. H. Harrisse's book, l'Abbe Prevost, Histoire de sa vie et de ses oeuvres, pp. 57-59, contains the most important statements from writers of the eighteenth century. "In the spring of 1734, Les Memoires d'un homme de qualite, Cleveland, and Manon Lescaut were to be found in the hands of everyone," says Harrisse, p. 25; "the author enjoyed great social success, was received and congratulated everywhere," adds Harrisse, p. 27. The novel was forbidden by the court and seized, October 5, 1733. The curiosity thus aroused added to its success. Harrisse also mentions that the library of la Marquise de Pampadour included a copy of Manon Lescaut, *op. cit.*, p. 187. It added also that the catalogue of the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris gives 120 different editions or reprints of Manon Lescaut since 1733.

Critics and scholars have interpreted it in various and often conflicting ways. Both Voltaire, in le Temple du gout, 1733, and Rousseau, in his Confessions, Book VIII, 1750, have sung the praises of the author. Sainte-Beuve, Maupassant, and Anatole France have been attracted by the mysterious life of the none too pious abbe.³ Contemporary scholars have scanned archives, police reports, and memoirs in the hope of discovering the historical background of Prevost's novel and the identity of the characters.

Thus indirectly, since Manon's conversion, her tragic death, and her burial by her heart-broken lover all occur in the pathless regions of Louisiana, does the far-away colony share in the extraordinary vogue of Prevost's novel and become at last the "land of romance" which it has been ever since in men's imagination.

History and legend have been at work on Prevost's life. Like unfortunate des Grieux, he lacked will-power and moral instincts; like him, he was sensitive to feminine charm, and ever ready to execute his weaknesses by attribut-

³The essential quotations from Sainte-Beuve, Michelet, Maupassant, Anatole France, and others are gathered in the last two chapters of Eugene Lasserre, Manon Lescaut.

ing them to fate. H. HARRISSE, the scholar who has supplied the sources for all discussion concerning Prevost, has disentangled legend from fact in the picturesque life of the priest, soldier, lover, journalist, and novelist.⁴

Born in 1697, Antoine Prevost studied at Hesdin, in Artois, from 1711 to 1713. First, he was a novice with the Jesuits, then he broke with them to enter the army, in 1716. In 1720, he entered a Benedictine monastery, and after his noviciate was sent to the Abbey of Saint-Ouen, at Rouen, in 1722. It has been surmised that he wrote Manon while at Saint-Ouen, in 1722-1723,⁵ but the conjecture is based on very slight evidence.

After 1723, Prevost was sent to several Benedictine abbys, and finally, in 1728, to Saint-Germain-des-Prés. That same year, 1728, after fleeing from Saint-Germain-des-Prés, he published the first two volumes of his Memoires et Aventures d'un homme de qualite. He lived in England during 1728 and 1729, and later in Holland. In 1729, he published in Amsterdam the third and fourth volume of his long novel, and in 1731 a new novel, Le Philosophe anglais

⁴HARRISSE's volume contains over three hundred pages of documents on the author of Manon Lescaut.

⁵The conjecture was offered by Professor George Havens in: "The Date of Composition of Manon Lescaut," Modern Language Notes, March, 1918, pp. 150-154. It is not supported by documents, and does not seem to have been accepted by subsequent writers, Professor Paul Hazard and Mile Engel.

ou l'Histoire de M. Cleveland. The same year, 1731, the indefatigable writer added three volumes to his Memoires et Aventures d'un homme de qualite. All three were published in Amsterdam. Manon Lescaut, the seventh and last volume of that work, was thus printed and published in Holland early in 1731.⁶ In 1733, a French edition of Manon Lescaut appeared at Rouen. Its success was immediate. "On y court comme au feu," wrote a contemporary, Mathieu Marais.⁷

It does not seem possible to ascertain, from contemporary accounts which have come down to us, which parts of the famous novel impressed the readers most. The immorality of the characters and the rashness of their deeds,

⁶The best bibliographical information on the date of publication of Manon Lescaut is to be found in Silas Paul Jones, A List of French Prose Fiction from 1700 to 1750, p. 41. Jones quotes Tchermersine according to whom the first appearance of Manon was in Volume VII of Les Memoires et Aventures d'un homme de qualite, a copy of which is in the Bibliotheque de l'Arsenal in Paris.

⁷This quotation, and the details which precede it, are borrowed from the documents in HARRISSE'S book. They were recalled here in seeking an answer to the question: Where and how did Prevost secure his information on Louisiana between the years, 1718 (when New Orleans was founded), and 1731 (when Manon Lescaut was published)?

the combination of tenderness and violent passion in their love, the realistic picture of Paris, the tragic voyage to Havre and then to Louisiana, and the pathetic death of the heroine are the features which have attracted most attention from later commentators. During the eighteenth century, the critical remarks on Manon Lescaut, were very brief, and make no mention of the Louisiana setting in the final pages.⁸ Typical remarks are the announcements in two publications of the time. In 1731, La Bibliotheque francaise, published in Amsterdam, in announcing among the new books volumes V, VI, VII, of the Memoires et Aventures d'un homme de qualite, says:

Cet ouvrage est tres amusant et se fait lire avec plaisir, quoique le style ne soit pas egalement soutenu partout. On y trouve beaucoup de variete, une morale pure, des sentiments fort tendres et des aventures fort extraordinaires. On peut mettre dans ce rang . . . celles du Chevalier des Grieux, qui paraissaient incroyables.⁹

On October 3, 1733, when Manon Lescaut was published in the first separate edition in France, the following comment was made in the Journal de la Cour et de Paris:

⁸Grimm, in the second volume of his Correspondence litteraire, January, 1755, p. 468. La Barpe, Marmontel, and Raynal. The passages referred to are all gathered in E. Lasserre, Manon Lescaut, Chapter VII.

⁹The statement continues with a few lines praising the moral quality of the book. HARRISSE, op. cit., 167-168, gives the quotation in full.

Le heros est un escroc, l'heroine une catin, et cependant l'auteur trouve le secret d'interessier les honnetes gens pour eux. Cet homme peint a merveille; il est en prose ce que Voltaire est en vers.¹⁰

The first critic who clearly singled out the concluding passages of the novel, staged on the banks of the Mississippi, seems to have been Sainte-Beuve, in his famous comparison between Manon Lescaut and Atala.¹¹

Must it be concluded then that Manon Lescaut has done nothing for Louisiana, and that the few pages of the novel which mention New Orleans, life in the new colony, the savages, and the swampy wilds where Des Grieux seeks refuge made no impression on the French public? Obviously not. It cannot be proved that the denouement of the novel, and the passages dealing with Louisiana moved the readers more than the rest, as they probably did not, since feeling for the exotic was not very keen before the romantic period,¹² and would not have been aroused by Prevost's general descriptions, devoid of any picturesque local color. It is safe to assume, however, that since the voyage to Havre and from there to New Orleans, the lovers' arrival in the land of promise, and their subsequent misfortunes

¹⁰Ibid., p. 175.

¹¹Sainte-Beuve, Chateaubriand et son groupe litteraire, dixieme lecon. The most typical parts of Sainte-Beuve's criticism are quoted infra, p. 191.

¹²Professor Chinard's works show that there was curiosity and intellectual appreciation of the exotic but little real feeling for it.

in Louisiana are among the most striking and vivid scenes in the novel, these passages dealing with America must have met with no less enthusiastic response from the reading public of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than the rest of the novel received.

In the last century, Manon Lescaut has been called a realistic, or materialistic novel,¹³ and variously praised or blamed for its accuracy and its refusal to palliate human weaknesses. More recently, scholars have diligently explored the historical background of the novel. Their purpose has been to prove that it is a thinly disguised autobiography, or that Prevost borrowed many details not only from contemporary events, or "fait divers," but even from the writings of obscure predecessors.

Since the main interest in this connection being with the part played by Louisiana in Prevost's works, the autobiographical element in Manon Lescaut need not be of great concern. However, it is known that there is no trace of Prevost having followed a fickle woman to Louisiana.

¹³Especially by the critic who, on moral grounds attacked the book most violently: Barbey d'Aurevilly, in an article reprinted in Romanciers d'hier et d'avant-hier, and quoted in Lasserre, Manon Lescaut, p. 151.

Moreover, the assertions of several scholars who maintain that Manon Lescaut observes all the accuracy of the work of a professional historian pertain to this subject more directly.

The most sweeping claims of this character have been made by Baron Marc de Villiers in his well-documented work: Histoire de la fondation de la Nouvelle-Orleans, 1717-1722. Some striking coincidences have been pointed out by him, but the conclusions which he has drawn from them and the conjectures with which he supplements them are hardly justified.

Baron de Villiers based his belief in the historical accuracy of the book on the following premises: it was very difficult for Prevost to reach a suitable denouement in his novel;¹⁴ for if Des Grieux had abandoned Manon to her fate on the vessel which carried her to Louisiana, the author would have been unpopular with the more delicate and sensitive souls among his readers; and if the Chevalier had won Manon too soon and too easily, this solution would have hopelessly weakened the moving love story, for it would be difficult to picture such a woman as the heroine married

¹⁴ Has one any right to suppose that such a fertile mind was actually at a loss for a denouement, and that he had to borrow from contemporary events?

and living happily ever afterwards. Consequently, Prevost chose a flesh and blood Manon to provide him with the authentic adventures to record.

The coincidences discovered by M. de Villiers are the following:

1. The name "Tiberge" was also borne by Louis Tiberge, Abbe d'Andres, who became "directeur du seminaire de missions etrangeres," and died October 9, 1730. During his life-time he may have had some connection of an ecclesiastical nature with Louisiana.

2. "Des Grioux" also happens to be the name of the commander of the Comte de Toulouse, a ship which made a number of voyages from France to Louisiana, the last of which occurred in 1718.

3. In 1715, a former officer, a member of the lower ranks of the nobility, sailed to Louisiana under the assumed name of Avril de Varenne. He was accompanied by a woman named Froget, (or, at times, Quentin), who had left three children and a dubious past in France. On the voyage, Avril de la Varenne and his companion claimed that they were married, but once in Louisiana, the woman found another lover, Raujon, who occupied an important position in Crozat's company. After sending La Varenne away on an expedition, Raujon lived openly with the Froget woman.

4. The governor of Louisiana, La Mothe-Cadillac, in whom M. de Villiers sees the exact counterpart of the governor in the novel, sent reports to Paris announcing the arrival of the woman and her first companion, (on January 2, 1716), and complaining of her shameful alliance with Raujon.

Objections to the labeling of precise prototypes in real life to Prevost's characters and episodes are fairly easy to formulate:¹⁵

1. The voyage of La Varenne and the Froget woman to Louisiana took place in 1715. They left France on March 6th of that year, on the boat, La Dauphine, bound, not for New Orleans, but for Biloxi. Besides, New Orleans did not exist in 1715, and the concluding events of Manon Lescaut, if they are historically true, must have taken place in 1719-1720, for it was not until then that women were taken from the prisons and sent to Louisiana. The practice was discontinued in 1720.

2. The Froget woman, branded with a much more dishonorable criminal record than Manon, is an older woman than she, and the mother of three children.

¹⁵ Andre Beaunier in "La Veritable Manon," Revue des Deux Mondes, 1er Octobre 1918, has offered a few of these objections. I am supplementing them with my own.

3. Des Grieux is very unlike Avril de la Varenne, who is a lover apparently with so little jealousy that he shows a surprising readiness to surrender his mistress to another. Moreover, he is older by some years than Des Grieux, and is less sentimental and ardent than the Chevalier. Poetic license, of course, must be taken into consideration, but then the whole thesis of those who see in the novel a completely accurate utilization of historical sources is destroyed.

4. Between the career of La Mothe-Cadillac and that of the governor in Prevost's novels, there is little similarity. The former had no nephew, and the character of his son in no way resembles that of Synnelet. Moreover, since La Mothe-Cadillac was recalled in 1716, (before the foundation of New Orleans), and since the events related in Manon Lescaut must have taken place, as has been explained, three or four years later, he could not have served as the prototype of the governor in Manon Lescaut.

5. Coincidences prove very little. The name Des Grieux is not rare. A Charles Des Grieux, who was "Chevalier de Saint-Louis," has been discovered by Mlle. Engel.¹⁶

¹⁶Claire-Eliane Engel, "Des Grieux et Manon ont-ils existe?", Revue Hebdomadaire, October 3, 1936, p. 66. This article and the volume on the foundation of New Orleans, by Marc de Villiers, are the chief expression of the views that Prevost borrowed from reality in the Louisiana episode of his novel. Mlle. Engel is skeptical of the validity of Villiers' claims. So is Eugene Laserre, in his brief mention of the problem in his Manon Lescaut.

However, he was born in 1709 and died in 1723, at the age of fourteen. Another Des Grioux family lived in Normandy, near Lisieux. Prevost may have met a member of that family, Charles-Alexandre de Grioux, a Knight of Malta, who was born in 1691 and died in 1769.¹⁷

6. But the strongest argument against scholars who contend that the denouement of Manon Lescaut, and much of the plot, were taken from contemporary incidents is dictated by common sense and practical doubt. There is no proof that Prevost, in those tormented years from 1720 and 1731, when in the drama of life he himself played the various roles of monk, of journalist, of none too happy lover, of exile, and of author of ten or more hastily written volumes, there is no proof that he spent much time searching through documents or police reports such as modern scholars unearth today. There is no proof that he needed the real names of Des Grioux or Tiberge to give life to his characters. And even if he did borrow a few proper names from reality, or made use of "fait-divers" like the Froget-La Varenne affair, these relatively unimportant details would

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 67-73. Mlle. Engel has also discovered several persons named Tiberge or Des Grioux who lived after Prevost: a Tiberge family established itself in Martinique in 1780; a certain Des Grioux was a naval officer in 1756, and married a French creole in San Domingo. Such coincidences after the publication of the novel make one even more skeptical as to the value of similar coincidences before the novel was written.

affect the novel only superficially; for the fact remains that by the alchemy of his genius he turned the worthless dust which he may have borrowed into the gold of a priceless masterpiece. To him may be applied the touching compliment which Des Grieux pays Manon in their humble cabin in Louisiana: "Tu es un chimiste admirable; tu transformes tout en or."¹⁸ Though scholars and historians may strive to increase Prevost's glory by praising his accuracy in his use of facts and names borrowed from reality, in doing so they are perhaps belittling a virtue of a novelist--his imagination.

Another question has recently been asked: in view of the fact that Prevost was an avid reader of English literature, and that he did not hesitate, like most of his contemporaries, to borrow freely from foreign sources, is one not justified in suspecting that similar sources may be found in Manon Lescaut? In her interesting volume entitled Figures et aventuriers du XVIIIe siecle, Mlle Claire-Eliane Engel has pointed out some analogies between the hero of a famous play, Lillo's London Merchant and Prevost's Des Grieux. Lillo's hero, George Barnwell, was also drawn to crime by his love for a courtesan, and like Des Grieux,

¹⁸ I have taken the liberty of changing the article une, addressed to Manon, to the masculine form.

suffered accordingly. But when the play was performed in London, in June, 1731, Prevost had already left England; and though he might have heard of the play while in Holland, the point is most uncertain.

Mlle Engel also mentions an interesting woman writer of French origin, Penelope Aubin, who lived in London in 1720-1721, and published numerous sermons and novels, now buried in oblivion. In 1727, he brought out a book called The Illustrious French Lovers, a series of disconnected tales. Like the story of Manon Lescaut, these are supposedly related by the "homme de qualite." The most interesting passages of the book describe the passionate love of young Des Rouais for a lady known as "Mademoiselle Manon." Upon discovering a letter which informs him that Manon has been unfaithful to him, he addresses a sorrowful and angry farewell to "my faithless Manon," and several other letters which conclude with the words, "Adieu, cruel, ungrateful, sorrowful Manon."¹⁹ The resemblance to the frequent apostrophes of Des Grieux--"faithless and deceitful Manon! Fickle Manon!"--is obvious. Prevost has given wings to Penelope Aubin's halting lines.

¹⁹The quotations are from Mlle Engel's work, since Penelope Aubin's volume is not accessible in this country. The lines quoted occur in Mlle Engel's article in the Revue Hebdomadaire, October 3, 1936, p. 78, and in her book quoted above, pp. 184-185.

Do these instances serve as conclusive proof of Prevost's use of the source mentioned? Mlle Engel, who discovered the similarities, discusses them with prudence. The essentials of Prevost's novel are not found in Fenelope Aubin's book. She depicts no moving passion and presents no subtle and tragic delineation of character. Most important from the standpoint of this study, she describes no mournful voyage to Le Havre and Louisiana, no lamentable death in the sands of the Mississippi. Perhaps Prevost read her book and unconsciously retained a few sentences of her prose. An interesting circumstance is that Fenelope Aubin's novel is itself not original, but is a free adaptation of a French novel by R. Challes, Les Illustres Francaises.²⁰ If he read the later book, probably Prevost did not know that the writer was only rearranging a French original (since she was careful not to inform her readers of the fact). Perhaps, after all, the principal debt he owed to The Illustrious French Lovers, was his use of the name of Manon.²¹ And in this use of it, it appears, he endowed the name with a dignity it had previously never possessed, for according to Mlle Engel, it had been formerly

²⁰Les Illustres Francaises, by Challes, appeared in 1723, and was reprinted five times during the eighteenth century. Mlle Engel gives only very scant information concerning him in a footnote of her book, p. 184.

²¹In the original work by Challes, the name given to the heroine was merely "Mademoiselle du Fuits." cf., Claire-Eliane Engel, Figures et Aventuriers, p. 185.

borne by maid-servants, and not by tragic victims of love. Penelope Aubin deserves at least a share of the credit for the exaltation of "Manon," a name since their use of it made immortal by literature and music.²²

After studying the numerous references and allusions which modern scholars insist upon discovering in Manon Lescaut, one is inclined to turn back to the older critics, who were content to praise the book, not for its accurate documentation, but for its general significance and its deeper truths. Prevost's novel has been variously praised as a condensed masterpiece incorporating the best of classical tragedy in a familiar setting; as a realistic description of the Parisian underworld; as a romantic tale of passion in which the basest crimes are purified by an ardent love. However, it is, above all, a masterpiece of naturalness. "Le naturel" as Boileau would have called it,

²²It is well known that Massenet's Manon (first performed at the Opera Comique in Paris on January 19, 1884) has enjoyed a huge vogue, and has eclipsed other music written on the same subject: by Balfe, an Irish composer in 1836; by Halévy in 1830 for a ballet; by Auber in 1856; and by Puccini, nine years after Massenet.

The libretto of Massenet's opera, however, has, as a commentator puts it, "eliminated the ridiculous American finale of Prevost's story." Henry T. Finck, Massenet and his Operas, p. 138. Des Grieux in the final scene of the opera meets Manon on the road to Havre. She romantically dies in his arms.

is its supreme virtue. Most readers will agree with Sainte-Beuve's praise of Manon Lescaut, and consequently with the same critic's strictures in regard to Atala:

Dans cette incomparable et si naturelle Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut, ce qui est absent d'un bout à l'autre . . . c'est la poésie, c'est l'art: ce qui domine et anime tout, c'est la passion; . . . tout ce qui sort du coeur des personnages est direct, naturel, vif, court et brulant. Tout est en action.²³

The most accurate as well as the most enlightening research on the novel has been summed up by Pierre Heinrich in his thesis on L'Abbe Prevost et la Louisiane. Heinrich refrains from identifying Prevost's characters with names recovered from archives. He credits the novelist with enough invention to imagine what he had not experienced--the mournful voyage of Manon to Le Havre, her death, and the consequent desolation of her lover. He has also collected ample evidence to show that Prevost's accounts of the deportation of Manon to Louisiana and the adventures of the two lovers in New Orleans were not only true in a general way, but that they faithfully rendered the spirit of the reckless era of speculation which saw the rise and fall of Law's system and the founding of New Orleans.

The story of the removal of the women from the prisons

²³ Sainte-Beuve, Chateaubriand et son groupe litteraire, I, Chapter 10. For other references to Manon Lescaut in Sainte-Beuve, cf. the bibliography.

of Paris, of their lamentable journey to the port to await the ship which would bear them as exiles from France, of the severity of the guards, of the "saleté de linges et d'habits" of the captives, and of the many other hardships endured by them presents an accurate picture of the dreaded deportations to the Mississippi colony as revealed in all their sordid details in historical documents²⁴--a picture wholly transfigured by the magic of Prevost's art. For in the novel, this gloomy setting only serves to enhance the charms and the melancholy beauty of the woman whom Des Grieux deifies: "Cette figure capable de ramener l'univers à l'idolatrie."

The promise of freedom and the hope of an Eldorado with which they, as well as the French public, had been deceived, enabled the exiles to endure the hardships and discomfort of the long voyage with some degree of resignation. But though Prevost's hero has heard the florid tales of the New World, he does not paint the Mississippi colony in too rosy hues. His country will be, for him, the spot where his beloved dwells: "Vivre en Europe, vivre en Amerique, que m'importait-il en quel endroit vivre, si j'etais sur d'y etre heureux en y vivant avec ma maitresse?"

²⁴Pierre Heinrich quotes several similar examples from the archives of the Bastille. He shows the pity which the public felt for the women thus exiled. Op. cit., p. 35, 45.

And as for the savages, he has no fear of them, for they have not been corrupted by society and civilization.

Prevost had probably read many eulogistic accounts by the Jesuits of the simple and natural lives of the Indians.

"Ils ne troubleront point deux amants qu'ils verront vivre avec autant de simplicité qu'eux," he assures himself.

After two months' sailing, the lovers reach Louisiana, "le rivage desire." at this point in the story is found the first picture of Louisiana to appear in a French masterpiece--a picture which, in spite of restraint, is probably one of the truest that we have yet encountered in French literature on Louisiana:

Le pays ne nous offrit rien d'agréable a première vue. C'étaient des campagnes stériles et inhabitées, ou l'on voyait à peine quelques roseaux et quelques arbres dépouillés par le vent.

A few inhabitants came to greet the ship from the mother country. The town, however, was not yet in sight. (Prevost fails to mention the Mississippi, on which the boat should have been traveling from the sea northward). "Elle (the town) est cachée de ce côté-là par une petite colline."²⁵ Later when it becomes visible, Des Grieux

²⁵This detail and the adjective "sterile," given to a land which is far from barren, have been criticized by Professor G. Chinard, L'Exotisme américain dans la littérature française au XVII^e et au XVIII^e siècle, p. 302. This little hill, of course, never existed.

expresses his disappointment: "Ce qu'on nous avait vanté jusqu'alors comme une bonne ville n'était que l'assemblage de quelques pauvres cabanes."

The wretched aspect of the town is very accurately pictured, for Prevost's imagination had not been carried away by Law's propaganda. He had also probably read Father Charlevoix, who, in reply to some of the false impressions given of the young capital of Louisiana, had written in his Journal Historique, (IV, p. 430), in about 1719, the following realistic description: "Une centaine de baraques placees sans ordre, un grand magasin bati de bois, deux ou trois maisons qui ne pareraient pas un village de France."

Comfort, however, is not deemed by the two lovers as necessary to their happiness. Des Grieux's joy knows no bounds. He is happy because he will have no rivals in a country where there are no rich men who might tempt Manon with luxuries. A wise moralist who has experienced the dangers of wealth and ease, he explains to his mistress in an enraptured outburst:

C'est au Nouvel Orleans²⁶ qu'il faut venir quand on veut gouter les vraies douceurs de l'amour. C'est

²⁶Father Charlevoix has remarked in his letters on the anomaly of ascribing the feminine gender to New Orleans. The name of the town in France is masculine, derived from the Latin neuter aurelianum. The feminine was probably adopted through an analogy with "Nouvelle France."

ici qu'on s'aime sans interet, sans jalousie, sans inconstance. Nos compatriotes y viennent chercher de l'or; il ne s'imaginent pas que nous y avons trouve des tresors bien plus estimables.

Happiness and security fill the heart of Des Grieux with gratitude to God. Now he wants "Heaven to approve" his union with Manon. The American influence, even in a land far remote from the New England Puritans, has an uplifting effect on the two lovers,²⁷ which is even reflected in the more elevated style in which Des Grieux expresses himself.²⁸ For a while it looks as if the hero and the heroine are going "to live happily ever afterwards" on the banks of the Mississippi. However, fate has decreed otherwise. When the Chevalier confesses to the governor of the colony that he and Manon are not lawfully married, the governor's nephew, who desires the beautiful Manon for himself, quickly acts to forestall the contemplated marriage ceremony, and Des Grieux is forced to flee into the wilderness with his mistress.

²⁷"L'innocence de nos occupations, et la tranquillite ou nous etions continuellement, servaient a nous faire rappeler insensiblement les idees de religion." Owing to the lack of a standard edition, there are no references to pages in giving the quotations from Manon Lescaut, all of which are found in the last pages of the novel.

²⁸"En Amerique ou nous n'avons plus a menager les lois arbitraires du rang et de la bienséance . . . qui empeche que nous n'ennoblissions notre amour par des serments que la religion autorise?"

The brief descriptive touches which then sketch the scenery of Louisiana outside New Orleans are even more vague than those which have portrayed the city. Not one geographical location is included in the text. Neither the Mississippi river, so often described by travelers, nor the country of the Natchez is mentioned. Not even a tree nor a plant is described. The reader's entire attention is concentrated on Des Grieux's anguish upon finding his beloved mistress and himself in such a plight. Having acquired a few words in the tongue of the Indians, and a knowledge of several of their customs, he has some idea of the best way to approach them. He accordingly provides himself with "quelques liqueurs fortes," and with the hope of joining the British colonists "qui ont, comme nous, des établissements dans cette partie du Nouveau-Monde,"²⁹ set out upon the frightful journey across the vague expanse of land inhabited by the savages.

In the sandy desert, where "not even a tree stood to afford them shelter," Manon dies of exhaustion. After twenty-four hours of bitter weeping, Des Grieux digs her grave with his sword. Since there is no sand in this region, and only marshy swamps, Louisianians doubt that such a feat

²⁹Prevost's geography is here more than vague. Even Chateaubriand, a speedy traveler if we take his word for it, would not have easily reached the British settlements, starting from southern Louisiana!

was possible, even to a Frenchman driven by love. Our hero, says Professor Chinard, "far from having had to work hard to dig Manon's grave, would have been in great danger of disappearing into the swamp himself."³⁰ A short while later, the governor's nephew, grieved by the misfortune which had befallen his rival, had Manon's body removed to a more "respectable spot." Indeed, a legend of Louisiana points to an humble spot on the shores of Lake Ponchartrain³¹ as Manon's grave. Des Grieux recovers from his grief, and after spending a few weeks in New Orleans, where he holds a small position, waits for the vessel which is to take him back to France. Here he has resolved "de reparer, par une vie sage et reglee, le scandale de ma conduite."

The Chevalier, who had pursued a faithless mistress, is now pursued by a faithful friend. Tiberge, arriving in Louisiana after having escaped from a Spanish Corsair, is rewarded by the discovery that the seeds of virtue are fructifying in the heart of his friend, Des Grieux. They spend two more months in New Orleans and then sail for France, with no expression of regret for the exotic country

³⁰ Chinard, op. cit., p. 304.

³¹ According to a French critic, Andre Beaunier "La Veritable Manon Lescaut," Revue des Deux Mondes, 1er Octobre, 1918, p. 697. M. Beaunier adds: "Le tombeau de Manon ne prouve pas que cette folle ait existe."

which they are leaving.

Such is Prevost's Louisiana as portrayed in Manon Lescaut. The novel is not a romantic tale rich in local color. On the contrary, it affords only a few vague glimpses of New Orleans in its infancy, and almost no view of the country and its scenery. But those of us who know Louisiana agree that there is more realism in Prevost's dull gray picture of New Orleans than in the imaginative flights of many travelers inspired by exaggerated tales of the sunny South and the luxuriant Mississippi valley. And most critics since Sainte-Beuve (Bruntiere, Le Breton and Paul Hazard) have agreed that there is less conscious art, and more natural grandeur in the death of Manon in Louisiana than in Atala's moonlight burial. Moreover, it cannot be denied that in his few brief pages, Prevost has endowed Louisiana not only with a share in the immortal fame of his lovers, but with a lasting place in the memory of many a French reader.³⁴

³⁴ Prevost's interest in Louisiana was so general and so vague that he gave the French colony no further attention after writing his famous novel. In 1744, he published a book entitled: Voyage du Capitaine Robert Lade en differentes parties de l'Afrique, de l'Asie et de l'Amerique. That Robert Lade, who is supposed to have been a British sailor, never existed. He did not mention Louisiana in that work. (See Claire-Elaine Engel, Figures et aventuriers du XVIIIe siecle, p. 199-203) Louisiana has no place in the Histoire generale des voyages, often attributed to Prevost.

CHAPTER V

FRENCH TRAVELERS AND COLONISTS FROM

1735 TO THE REVOLUTION

SUMMARY

Little interest in Louisiana during the second half of the eighteenth century. Army officer's diary published by J. M. Shea. Le Page du Pratz's Histoire de la Louisiane. Chevalier de Champigny's two volumes. Chevalier de Pradel's account of life in Louisiana. Bossu's writings. Other interesting French visitors in America in the eighteenth century.

In many ways, the eighteenth century (especially the second half of the century) is the golden age of France-American relations. America, the home of primitive Indians, of free colonists where simplicity worthy of the ancients was the accepted order, became another Garden of Eden for many philosophers who had never seen its shores, and for a few travelers and emigres who visited it.

Yet, strangely enough, Louisiana's place (and Canada's too) in French Letters which express enthusiasm for America, is relatively unimportant. The popular interest in the western hemisphere limited itself to the thirteen colonies, or that part of America inhabited by descendants of the English and Dutch, which declared its independence from Great Britain in 1776. Louisiana was a colony, having be-

longed first to France, then to Spain; the bitter memories of Law's failure had not been forgotten; and worst of all, the colony was overflowing with slaves. Evidently this situation did not appeal to the French philosophers' love of freedom. A people living under such conditions could not lend itself to idealization as well as the moral Puritans, the courageous Quakers, or the Arcadian Virginians. Although French writers of 1735-1800 devote many volumes to the America of that period, Louisiana occupies but an humble place in these works.¹

Manon Lescaut marks the entrance of Louisiana into French literature. Its success does not seem to have prompted any imitators to use the same setting.² From 1733 to 1800, books about Louisiana or allusions to Louisiana are comparatively scarce, or of little interest. In the survey of that literature, it seems logical and natural to make two divisions:

¹For a list of these books, see Bernard Fay, L'Esprit Revolutionnaire en France et aux Etats-Unis a la fin du 18e siecle, and his Bibliographie Critique des ouvrages francais relatifs aux Etats-Unis. 1700-1800.

²As far as it can be judged from Silas Paul Jones's exhaustive bibliography, A List of French Prose Fiction from 1700 to 1750. One of the most amusing novels of the century, Les Aventures du Chevalier de Beauchene, by Le Sage, takes place in New France (among the Iroquois and Algonquin Indians) and on the West Indies Island (Jamaica) without mentioning Louisiana.

1. The writings of the travelers and colonists in Louisiana, which are usually precise records of facts or the minute treatment of a few points.

2. The allusions to Louisiana scattered through the writings of philosophers and encyclopaedists.

These two categories of writers, which will be examined in this chapter and in the following one, seem to illustrate a twofold tendency in the eighteenth century: close attention to facts and to historical accuracy, and respect for first hand experience on one side; and inclination toward generalization and often toward pompous and vague declamations on the other.

The first piece of writing discovered among the records left by visitors to the Louisiana of this period is a fairly insignificant diary, published by J. M. Shea in 1859. The manuscript was written in 1739 and 1740 by an anonymous officer in the army of M. de Nouaille (sic). Nothing is known of the author, who certainly does not deserve to be remembered by posterity for his literary skill. His writings are uninteresting, and his spelling, to say the least, is uncertain.³

³Journal de la guerre du Mississipi (sic) contre les chicachas en 1739 et finie en 1740, le premier d'avril par un officier de l'armee de m. de Nouaille.

This officer was sent as a member of an expedition against the Chicachas in 1739-1740. This expedition, which had been ordered by Bienville, adds little to his glory, for it ended in failure and cost the lives of many soldiers. The officer, an obedient soldier, never criticizes his superiors nor even discusses the purpose of the difficult war he was waging. He merely makes notes of the width of the rivers, of how many miles they walked, where they pitched their tents, and whether it rained or stormed. The Indians did not arouse his curiosity. He only complains that one must continually give them "eau de vie" and listen to their boring speeches, "des harangues ennuyeuses ou toute la nation assistait en dansant et chantant, ou pour mieux dire, braillant pour applaudir leurs discours."

French interest was declining at home. Too many pressing problems engrossed the attention of the court at Versailles: the treasury was depleted; the army was being defeated in the Seven Years' War; the Parliaments were being reformed; the Jesuits were being attacked violently;⁴ and

⁴A repercussion of the attacks against the Jesuits must be mentioned. In 1764, the Order was suppressed in France, and the Jesuits, therefore, were forced to give up their work in Louisiana, where they had done so much to colonize and civilize the country. They did not accept the unjust order without some struggle. The documents in which they justified themselves, and recounted their achievements in Louisiana, have been published by F. A. Carayon, Bannissement des Jésuites de la Louisiane. Relations et Lettres inédits. (Paris, 1865).

the philosophical movement was in full swing. It was in the midst of this universal lack of interest in Louisiana, that Le Page du Pratz published the fullest and most precise account of Louisiana's history ever printed in French up to that time: Histoire de la Louisiane. (3 volumes. 1st edition 1758).

Like Benard de la Harpe, Le Page du Pratz was among the few Frenchmen who, though lured to America by Law's advertising campaign, did not expect more of Louisiana than they found. He arrived in America late in 1718 or in January, 1719. In the place where the future metropolis of the South was to stand, he found only a few wretched huts covered with leaves. After working there very diligently for two years, he settled among the Natchez. His sojourn in Louisiana lasted sixteen years. It was not until twenty-three years after his return to France that, indignant over the indifference in regard to Louisiana, and the misrepresentations as well, he undertook to write the truth as he knew it. In his introduction, he presents himself as "a good patriot, anxious to redeem the wrong impressions about Louisiana."

His long chronicle contains a wealth of details, arranged in logical order, and told both concretely and impersonally. The author records his accurate observa-

tions on the geography of Louisiana, the climate, agriculture (his chief concern), the flowers, trees, seeds, animals, and medicinal herbs. Nor does he neglect the savages, their customs, their feasts, and their forms of worship. A useful index and detailed contents make his three volumes a handy encyclopedia of information concerning the soil, people and products of the Louisiana of his time.

Yet is it not excusable to expect a more personal touch from a direct observer of that fabulous region such as Le Page du Pratz had been? True, he was favorably impressed by Louisiana, and never criticized the climate as Frenchmen, inhabitants of a sweetly temperate zone, were prone to do. He found it, "not too hot in summer, not too cool in winter." The land, he says, is exceptionally fertile, the animals are edible, or in the case of domestic animals, useful. Even the much-dreaded "maringouins" failed to arouse his anger or impatience; he describes them with their "annoying buzzing" and their "unbearable itch," with serene detachment. But the human response to environment and to events for which the reader longs, is totally absent from his history.

The author's inquiries need not be summed up for they imply rather than reach any definite conclusion. The long

chapters in which he describes the seeds, herbs, trees and other plants of the Mississippi Valley belong to natural history more than to literature. A few amusing details show Le Page's special interest in medicinal herbs and medical recipes. On animals, he is equally well informed, though he says nothing which is not to be found in earlier descriptions. His account of the despotic organization of the Natchez and their worship of the sun is not different from those with which the writing of travelers and missionaries have made us familiar.⁵

Yet Le Page du Pratz was widely read in the eighteenth century. His Histoire de la Louisiane provides definite and reliable information for French scholars who wished to know more about the geography of Louisiana, its agriculture, and the prospects of success in this new country. He developed no thesis, supported no one-sided argument; he was not a missionary, and for that reason was not suspected by eighteenth-century atheistic philosophers; he was restrained, moderate, and sincerely loyal to the country where he had

⁵The most interesting passages as far as this study is concerned are those defining the geographical boundaries of Louisiana, I, p. 138; Le Page's opinion of negroes and slavery, I, p. 333; his description of vegetables, cereals, and sweet potatoes in Louisiana, II; his account of the origin of Baton Rouge, II, p. 267; and of the origin of the Natchez, II, p. 354. They are not being quoted to avoid repetition which might be tedious.

lived for sixteen years. In the years which followed, he received his reward. The Encyclopedie (in the article on Louisiana) quotes him as the best authority on Louisiana; and Chateaubriand reads his colorless histories to which he adds many picturesque details.

Until the War of Independence opened up a new era in American history, the fate of the Western Hemisphere was so closely bound up with events in Europe that countries were surrendered, sold, or acquired by mere treaties made by the European powers. When, after the Peace of Paris (1763), France's fate in America was sealed, and her colony of Louisiana became a possession of the Spanish, few Frenchmen among the statesmen or eminent men of letters of the time expressed any regret over the loss which France was then so lightheartedly accepting. Few, except the Abbe Raynal, even questioned France's right to cede a people who were thoroughly French to a foreign country without even consulting the victims of such a transaction.⁶

⁶The history of Louisiana under Spanish domination is told in Gayarre's Histoire de la Louisiane. A detailed account of Les Dernieres Annees de la Louisiane francaise is given by Marc de Villiers.

Among the men who had known Louisiana, and who uttered some words of protest, was the Chevalier de Champigny. He is known to us only through his works.

Champigny is the author of a volume of one hundred and forty-four pages, published at La Haye with neither date nor mention of the publisher. Its title is: Etat present de la Louisiane, avec toutes les particularites de cette province d'Amerique. It is a purely historical account of events in Louisiana. However, Champigny wrote also a more emotional account of the loss of Louisiana, in which he achieves somewhat more literary effects: La Louisiane ensanglantee. (London, 1773).⁷

The author had served in the French army in Louisiana. He loved the colony, and is outraged by its cession to the Spaniards. He writes during the Spanish regime, of which he disapproves passionately, and the leitmotif of his book (published in London) is that the English, whom he prefers to the Spanish, should own Louisiana, and that the inhabitants of that province, cruelly deserted by France, cherish only one dream--the hope of belonging to England. La Louisiane ensanglantee clearly seems to have been inspired by English authorities. Its interest for this study, how-

⁷B. F. French has given a translation of it in his Historical Memoirs from 1687 to 1700 (New York, 1853, Part V, pp. 127-234).

ever, lies in the similarity of Champigny's ideas to those which the more famous Abbe Raynal (perhaps also under British influence) had just expounded in his Histoire des deux Indes.⁸ Some points are also similar to Volney's account written several years later, concerning the failure of the French as colonists.

Two points are emphasized by Champigny: the first is the necessity of yielding the colony of Louisiana to the English because of the incapacity of the Spanish governors; the second is the inherent inability of the French to colonize. Frenchmen, he insists, are too impatient and too stubborn in their refusal to cultivate the land:

The Frenchman, quick to conceive and undertake, would have the execution and success keep pace with the vivacity of his character. Hence his inaptitude for founding colonies: hence his failure in the attempts made by his nation.⁹

Colonies, Champigny goes on to say, are like children: they require a progressive diet which will not hurry them into a premature development. But the French longed for the sudden prosperity to be attained by the discovery of precious metals, and scorned the slower rewards of agriculture. He concludes with several declamatory tirades in which he expresses pity for the Louisianians and admiration

⁸Cf. our next chapter.

⁹In B. F. French, op. cit., p. 138.

of their loyalty in clinging to France in spite of Spanish rule:

O virtue! O divine patriotism! Of what are we not capable when inflamed by the sacred fire! . . . Generous and compassionate hearts! Let us mingle our tears with those of the wretched widows and orphans, whom the virtuous men commended to us, as they died for their king. . . . Aid me to erect an altar to virtue: be the pillars of that I just erected: pour into cold and inanimate hearts the fire which inflames you and my feeble and powerful voice; and let the cry of persecuted innocence rouse the numbered arm of justice.¹⁰

Such an impassioned appeal to justice, and to the magical name of virtue, dear to the eighteenth century, reveals a contemporary of the "coeurs sensibles" so numerous in the years preceding the French Revolution. Champigny is, indeed, more declamatory than Le Page du Pratz, and certainly less reliable than his more classical predecessor.

Another officer less prone to ambitious declamations has left a detailed account of life in Louisiana: the Chevalier de Pradel. Even more than the chronicles of Le Page du Pratz, his work reveals the life of a colonist in Louisiana during the eighteenth century. An officer in the

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 232-233.

King's army, serving under Bienville, who did not act very fairly with him, Pradel settled in Louisiana and reared a family. Though not a witness of the Natchez Rebellion, he was near the scene, and relates it with no romantic idealization of the Indians, as Chateaubriand later does, but as a practical colonist who saw horrible massacres. Pradel was successful as a planter in Louisiana, and grew rich selling timber, indigo, and other products. He owned more than twenty slaves, and his home was a commodious mansion which he named 'Monplaisir.' He reared his children in Louisiana, but sent them to France to complete their education; and though he was, on the whole, prosperous and happy, he often longed for his country.

A native of the province of Limousin, Chevalier de Pradel wrote letters to his family in France giving many details concerning his health, his business, his home and his children. These letters were published recently with a biography of the French colonist. Though if judged by their literary qualities they scarcely deserve such an honor, as a historical document dealing with the life of a successful colonist in Louisiana, they are both interesting and revealing.¹¹

¹¹These letters are found in a biography written by Baillardel et Priculet: *Le Chevalier de Pradel, Vie d'un colon francais en Louisiane au XVIIIe siecle.*

Equally interesting and representative of the eighteenth century are the writings of another officer, Bossu, who visited Louisiana in 1750-1762, and again in 1769-1771. Bossu was a moralist, a pedantic but kind-hearted philosopher, and a very conceited individual. His accounts of his travels are replete with pompous speeches and secondhand ideas, as well as with borrowings from the accounts of predecessors. Nevertheless, they give the fullest, and at times, the most naively entertaining account of Louisiana between the history by Le Page du Pratz and the writings of the first years of the nineteenth century.

Bossu's works are in the form of letters addressed to the Marquis de l'estrade and to an officer, M. Douin.¹² The preliminary notice by the publisher of the *Nouveaux Voyages* introduces Bossu as "un vrai philosophe, un ami des hommes." The author, it is added, "crossed the barriers of a formidable ocean, in order to be useful to mankind His style is easy, clear, precise and full of strength where it should be." Such a tempting presenta-

¹²Since the French text of Bossu's first work was not available, the English translation was consulted: Travels through that part of North America formerly called Louisiana, translated by J. R. Forster (London, 1771) 2 volumes. This covers Bossu's travels of 1750-1762. His Nouveaux Voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale, 1777, includes his travels of 1769-1771.

tion makes the reader anxious to devour the work. Now and then he will be rewarded by a few flashes of unconscious humor.

Bossu was primarily interested in the agriculture, the animals, and the inhabitants (particularly the women) of Louisiana, and through his observations he arrived at moral and scientific conclusions which he wished to impart to his countrymen. He visited the greater part of the country, Mobile, New Orleans, the country of the Natchez, and that of the Arkansas. The latter almost adopted him as a member of their tribe. Having read about Louisiana before his own visit there, he rejects Hennepin's lies, and praises the veracity of Joutel, "the only officer who has left us an account which may be credited."¹³ Bossu moralizes on La Salle's faults, the haughtiness and severity which detracted from his greatness. In his discussion of the flora of the country, he is much less precise than Le Page du Pratz. His stories of the animals in Louisiana are designed to amuse and startle his French readers at home. He praises the wild bulls, fears the alligators, which threatened his life more than once, and tells of the skeletons of several elephants (reported to have come from Asia) which were found, in 1735, near the Ohio River. How-

¹³Bossu, Travels, I, Lettre IV.

ever, he disclaims any particular knowledge of natural history: "We must be content with admiring the works of the Creator without desiring to dive into his mysteries," he says, as he concludes his discussion of the American elephant.¹⁴

The country which he describes awakened in Bossu a certain feeling for the picturesque which would suggest a reaction in the spirit of the times (Rousseau, Watelet, Girardin) against the "jardins symetriques a la française." Here is a sample of his style and his descriptions of the landscape of the country of the Arkansas (in 1777):

Des allees semees d'un gazon frais, qui forment des berceaux couverts de vignes sauvages ou des lianes impenetrables aux rayons du soleil. Ici, ce sont des bouquets d'arbres fruitiers plantes ca et la par la nature, sur le penchant des collines, qui offrent une perspective mille fois plus gracieuse que les compartiments les plus symetrises.¹⁵

Bossu's remarks concerning the Indians fail to arouse the modern reader's interest. In writing of the Natchez, the wars, and the games of the Indians, he repeats the observations of his predecessors. He is not, however, an impersonal, unbiased observer. He is moved to some degree of enthusiasm in his praise of the simple, natural life led by the Indians.

¹⁴Travels, XXI, Lettre XI.

¹⁵Bossu, Nouveaux Voyages, p. 109.

Bossu lavishes praise on Creole women: "As to the fair sex, whose only art is that of pleasing, they are already born with that advantage here."¹⁶ The water of the Mississippi which is excellent adds another quality to their charms: it contributes to their fecundity.

Indian women are even more warmly admired: "It is a pleasure to watch these women fulfilling their tasks without uttering a word of complaint. Besides, they are very amiable, and show great affection for Frenchmen, whom they prefer to Spaniards."¹⁷ Even in childbirth they do not groan or complain. In addition these women are entirely faithful: they are never guilty of poisoning their husbands, as European women sometimes do.

Bossu is a strong advocate of the superiority of the savage life to ours. The Indians are happier than French peasants, who work hard and economize all their lives while the extravagance of large cities deprives them of their most needed nourishment (flour apparently), "pour la faire voler sur les tetes evaporees des coquettes et des petits Maitres."¹⁸

¹⁶ Bossu, Travels, I, Letter II.

¹⁷ Bossu, Nouveaux Voyages, p. 96.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 137.

Their simple remedies are superior to ours, since their only medicines are "diet, perspiration and sweating."¹⁹ Their methods of rearing their children, for example teaching them how to swim, are superior to our system of education. A kind Providence supplies all their simple needs. They have few vices and as Bossu puts it pedantically, if they drink coffee, for instance, it is "in order not to let the God Morpheus overcome them by surprise."

An advocate of primitivism, Bossu declaims against wealth, luxury, and corruption. Although his style is poor, he never doubted for a moment his literary qualifications. In concluding his Nouveaux Voyages, he mentions that while living in Louisiana he had composed a comedy in five acts: "The Jugglers or Indian Quacks." He adds: "It is an indirect criticism of the manners and customs of the people of the Old World, placed in opposition and sometimes in parallelism with those of the inhabitants of the New World."²⁰ The loss of that manuscript is not to be regretted for its theme had ceased to be original in 1771.

¹⁹The same suggestion had been presented earlier by Fenelon and Voltaire.

²⁰Bossu, Nouveaux Voyages, Lettre VII.

The most interesting and gifted of French travelers in America in the eighteenth century were not concerned with Louisiana. Only a small group, including Le Page du Pratz and Bossu, visited it at the time when charming writers like the Marquis de la Tour du Pin, epicures like Brillat-Savarin,²¹ famous wits like Chastellux, and glorious warriors like Rochambeau and Lafayette wrote their impressions of America.

Their America was limited to Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, Virginia and sometimes the Carolinas. It is not difficult, however, to imagine what the enthusiasts would have said of the South had they traveled there. They would have found the inhabitants living in more luxury than they had dreamed of finding in the New World, such as Creole women revelling in indolence, thinking only of dancing and other pleasures. They would have been shocked by slavery and would have cried out against it. And crowning all these defects in the material world, the eighteenth-century philosophers and emigres would have found in the spiritual realm the influence of Catholicism to a great extent in sway over the people of Louisiana. These travelers would have preferred Puritan, free and democratic New England. Had they

²¹Cf. F. Baldensperger, "Le Sejour de Brillat-Savarin aux Etats-Unis," Revue de Litterature Comparee, 1922, II, p. 94-95.

visited Louisiana and seen the prosperity that the French colonists, such as the Chevalier de Pradel enjoyed, they, doubtless would have exclaimed with Betti in Chamfort's Jeune Indienne:

Ah! fuyons ces gens-la. Tu viens de me parler
D'un pays plus heureux ou nous pouvons aller.
Ce pays ou les gens veulent qu'on soit utile
A leur societe.²²

Only in the early years of the next century, when Louisiana had been recovered by France, and then lost again, do we find Frenchmen attracted by the importance of that colony.²³

²²S. R. Chamfort, La Jeune Indienne (1764), Scene IV, p. 22.

²³The impressions of eighteenth-century travelers in America (that is, concerning the thirteen colonies) have been summed up and studied in three recent works: Charles H. Sherrill, French Memoirs of Eighteenth-Century America; James B. Perkins, France in the American Revolution; and S. Childs, French Refugee Life in the U. S. 1790-1800.

CHAPTER VI

LOUISIANA IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

SUMMARY

Interest of the eighteenth century in La Harpe's writings. Allusions to Louisiana made by Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau. France's interest in the thirteen colonies. Vergennes and Raynal, champions of Louisiana. References to Louisiana in the Encyclopedie. Corneille de Pauw. Marquis de Chastellux. Abbe Genty. Other French visitors to America at the end of the eighteenth century.

A survey of the huge mass of philosophical and historical writings of the eighteenth century will yield the same modest results as those shown in the study of the travelers and colonists of that period. The interest in America during the second half of the century is great. Louisiana's share in that interest remains fairly small. Eighteenth-century writers were not ardent lovers of nature, nor were they imperialistically minded advocates of French colonization. Therefore, the French colony of the Mississippi had little interest for them. The country discovered by La Salle, and badly served by Law's speculations, represented the past for them (La Harpe excepted), a legacy of the age of Louis XIV--that is, of an era of political tyranny. All their hopes were based on the future. They enthusiastically

hailed the new republic which thirteen courageous states were then developing in the New World, where they hoped to find a virgin field of labor in which to realize their bold and optimistic dreams of reforming the human race.

Among the writers of the eighteenth century who never came to Louisiana, La Harpe is the one who describes the colony with the greatest accuracy. His work, however, is impersonal, and like many similar encyclopedic writings of the same period, is compiled from many sources. Volume XIV of the Abrege de l'histoire generale des voyages (1780-1801) refers repeatedly to Florida and Louisiana. A geographical description of the country is followed by a resume of its history. Lafitau and Charlevoix, whose descriptions of the customs, religion and superstitions of the Indians are summed up in general terms, are La Harpe's principal sources. In the use of these sources, he remains coolly objective and detached. He repeats some of the tales told by travelers of the immorality of the Indians of Louisiana, (their "mollesse" and their "lubricite"), which he attributes to the southern climate.¹ He tells of their strange superstitions, their burial rites, and their games. Invariably uncritical, La Harpe and his collaborators are merely anxious to inform their readers and entertain them

¹La Harpe is probably influenced here by Montesquieu's famous theory on climate.

with all the unusual details connected with the customs of the savages. They do not idealize them as Rousseau did. La Harpe even expresses a vague regret for the colonies which France lost by the treaty of Paris:

We thought fit to insist on those establishments of French origin (in Canada and Louisiana), because it was important to inform our readers of what we have neglected and lost.²

Montesquieu was so widely read, and his influences so far reaching, that any writing which he might have devoted to Louisiana would be outstanding in eighteenth-century literature. It seems, however, that he was not particularly interested in the New World. Even Law's speculations and the failure of his ambitious schemes left him strangely unconcerned. In view of the fact that reflections on commerce, and the riches drawn from the colonies occupy a large part of his economic and moral chapters in L'Esprit des Lois,³ this attitude seems all the more strange.

Recent scholars have closely examined Montesquieu's sources. Like many other eighteenth-century writers, he quotes very frequently from the ancients. He also read

² Abrege de l'histoire generale des voyages, XIV, 1780, p. 14.

³ In Montesquieu's Pensees et Fragments inedits (Bordeaux 1899, Vol. 2, pp. 407-408), there is a passing allusion to the French trade with "the Mississippi."

travelers' accounts, and very probably Charlevoix's Histoire de la Nouvelle France (including the letters which refer to Louisiana), and some, at least, of the Jesuit Relations.⁴ The author of L'Esprit des Lois was, however, more directly concerned with European problems, even when describing Persian customs and harems.

Two passages in Montesquieu's L'Esprit des Lois refer to Louisiana. One is a reflection, to which Voltaire took exception, in Book V, Chapter XIII on Despotism: "When the savages of Louisiana want fruit, they cut down the tree at its base and gather the fruit. That is an example of despotic government." Louisiana here might represent any primitive country upon which nature has lavished her natural resources.

In Book XVIII, Montesquieu treats "des lois dans le rapport qu'elles ont avec la nature du terrain." The eighteenth chapter of that eighteenth book, disconnected in Montesquieu's usual fashion, deals with the Natchez, or "Natches", as Montesquieu spells their name. The source is

⁴Miss Muriel Dodds notes in Les Recits de voyage sources de l'Esprit des Lois (Paris, 1929), cf., Part I, Chapter 7, that Montesquieu was very little interested in America, but probably read Charlevoix. However, there is a recent catalogue of the Librairie Droz, Paris, 1940, Catalogue 38, No. 64, a copy of Joutel's famous Journal Historique which had belonged to Montesquieu.

the Lettres Edifiantes, "20e recueil", and particularly Father le Petit's account. The author of L'Esprit des Lois summarizes the social and political organization of that strange nation. He is struck by the fact that, unlike all other savages, the Natchez live under a despotic form of government.

It is probable also that Montesquieu read and heard about Louisiana while making a study of slavery. The fifteenth book of L'Esprit des Lois contains his famous biting remarks about that institution as it existed in Louisiana, and also in San Domingo and other West Indian islands.⁵

All travelers and missionaries in America had mentioned the existence of slavery; most of them had either quietly approved of it, or deplored it as an inevitable evil. Had not Bossuet justified it as permitted by the Holy Ghost?⁶ Father Charlevoix, whom Montesquieu read, blamed slavery as a colonial policy, on the grounds that it created a class of expatriated and miserable negroes. Yet in his Histoire du Paraguay, he saw in slavery a means used by God to

⁵ In Les Lettres Persanes (letters 75, 118, 120), Montesquieu had already attacked the institution of slavery in colonies.

⁶ Cf. on this subject Edward D. Seeber, Antislavery Opinion in France during the Second Half of the XVIIIth Century and Bossuet's unusual remark quoted on p. 15.

civilize the negroes.⁷ Montesquieu, more logical and more humane, openly attacked the slave trade as opposed to the nascent ideal of fraternity and to the economic interests of European nations.⁸ From that time on, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the negro problem, which included their customs, their social status, and sometimes the strange charms of "Magie Noire", as Paul Morand later calls it, was to become a familiar topic with many French writers who are concerned with Louisiana.

Modern interpreters of Voltaire refuse to accept Faguet's famous epigrammatic characterization of this philosopher as "un chaos d'idees claires." There is consistency in Voltaire's lack of interest in America and in the French colonies of the New World. There are, however, some contradictions found in a number of hasty pronouncements uttered by him at varied periods of his life. And perhaps that in-

⁷Ibid., p. 15. Seeber quotes Charlevoix's sentence which calls the submission of negroes the means of God used for the salvation of people born for slavery, thus rendered more docile to the teaching they receive, than if they had retained their freedom in a foreign country (from Histoire du Paraguay, 1757, II, pp. 190-181).

⁸Russell P. Jameson gives a very thorough and interesting treatment of the whole question in Montesquieu et l'esclavage.

consistency should not be condemned in a writer of so nervous a temperament as the so-called "sage" of Ferney.⁹

America holds a very minor place in Voltaire's all-embracing curiosity. China, to which he gives the place of honor in his Essai sur les Moeurs, was his favorite exotic country. America, a more recent discovery, is discussed only fairly briefly in Chapter CXLV and in those which follow. When Voltaire discussed the academic question dear to eighteenth-century reasoners: "Has the discovery of America benefited Europe?" he answered negatively. America, according to him, had ruined the Spaniards whom it had at first enriched, and had afflicted Europe with the dread disease which was a cause of suffering for Pangloss.¹⁰

Voltaire's irony was directed against the travelers who were fond of relating mendacious tales about America, and of speculating on the origin of the natives of the New World. In his long introduction to the Essai sur les Moeurs, he wrote four amusing pages entitled "De l'Amérique," in which he took Lafitau to task for his poor reasoning. Why

⁹Those inconsistencies have been pointed out in Professor Chinard's L'Exotisme américain au 17e et au 18e siècle, pp. 366-374. This seems to be the best study on the minor question of Voltaire and America.

¹⁰Montesquieu in Les Lettres Persanes (Letter 105) had touched upon the same subject.

should not men be found in America, since flies are abundant there? And should Americans be compared with the Greeks because they are scantily clothed, and because they consult oracles and are fond of dancing? Primitivism, or the idealization of savages, is not to Voltaire's taste.¹¹ He prefers civilized people to savages, and considers it the duty of Europeans to spread their civilization to the New World by peaceful means, as the Jesuits had done in Paraguay, and not by means of violence and destruction.¹²

Voltaire seems to have taken little interest in the Indians of Louisiana, their customs, and their religion. His preference is for the Peruvians, who, of all the primitive tribes, are the only ones whose religion, as Voltaire prudently puts it, "seems, at first sight, not to offend our reason."¹³ He quotes them again, and also the Mexicans, in the Dictionnaire Philosophique, under the title, Religion. He might as well have mentioned the Natchez, since they also worship one God, the Sun. All other Indian tribes, according to him, were sunk in a "stupidite barbare." The con-

¹¹Voltaire had already ridiculed primitivism in Le Mondain before he had ever heard of Rousseau.

¹²Cf. Chinard, op. cit., p. 369. Of course, contradictions are to be found in Voltaire, and the pages he devoted to Paraguay in Candide are none too flattering.

¹³Essai sur les Moeurs, chap. CXLVI.

ception of a creative God is deficient in them.¹⁴

For a man who wrote so much, Voltaire's allusions to Louisiana proper are comparatively few. One is to be found in his interesting Commentaire sur l'Esprit des Lois. He is shocked by Montesquieu's sarcastic definition of despotism, already quoted: "When the savages of Louisiana want fruit, they cut down the tree at its base and gather the fruit." He finds the source of the passage in the Lettres Edifiantes in which a Jesuit Missionary, Father Marest, had explained thus the absence of fruit trees near a certain village in Louisiana. Voltaire's lucid common sense rejoices in laughing both at Montesquieu and at the Jesuit:

Either the Jesuit who tells this imbecility is very credulous, or human nature among the Mississippians is not like human nature of the rest of the world. There is no savage so uncivilized ("sauvage si sauvage") that he does not realize that a felled apple tree bears no longer any apples. Moreover, there are no savages whatever for whom it would not be easier to gather the fruit than to cut down the tree. But the Jesuit Marest thought he was being witty.¹⁵

Voltaire, the greatest historian of his age, could

¹⁴Cf., Voltaire, Oeuvres, ed. Moland, XII, p. 395. The interest taken by Voltaire in the Indians was considerable. (Cf., L'Alzire, l'Ingenu, Histoire de Jenni), but, as I have stated, that interest does not include Louisiana.

¹⁵Oeuvres, ed. Moland, XXX, p. 423.

not but know the history of Louisiana, its discovery by the French explorers, and its fate under Louis XV. He does now, however, display much admiration for the colonial policies of the "Siccle de Louis XIV." In his history bearing that title, Voltaire does not even mention the discoveries of La Salle and D'Iberville, which in reality were a greater honor to Louis XIV than his religious policy or his Dutch and Spanish Wars. To Voltaire, apparently, those discoveries were conquests, or were inspired by the Catholic spirit of religious propaganda, that is to say, the spirit of fanaticism. And we have no right, according to him, to conquer or to christianize Americans who are often our equals: "L'Americain, farouche en sa simplicité,

Nous egale en courage et nous passé en bonté", says Alvarez in the first scene of Alzire.¹⁶

Moreover, Voltaire felt a bitter hostility to Canada, that "barren and frozen land,"¹⁷ and directed some of that hostility to the discoverers of Louisiana, whom he considered as Canadians. He laughed at "some Frenchmen from Canada," who traveled on the river Mississippi to Louisiana.

¹⁶Alzire (1736), Act I, Scene I. The action takes place in Lima, Peru.

¹⁷Essai sur les Moeurs, Chapter CLI, "Des Possessions des Français en Amérique." (Ed. Moland, XII).

"It is as if one wanted to go to Egypt via the Cape of Good Hope instead of taking the Damietta road."¹⁸ Law, "several of whose ideas were fruitful," then began to develop Louisiana. A colony was organized, a new town was planned--but on paper. The colonists died in misery, and the town never amounted to more than a few wretched houses. And Voltaire, always reluctant to let Europe scatter its energies on far-distant colonies, adds:

Maybe one day, if there are millions of inhabitants in excess in France, it will be advantageous to settle Louisiana. But it is more likely that it will have to be abandoned.¹⁹

Two other passages, from letters in which he expresses himself more freely, give a different picture of Voltaire's interest in Louisiana. He advises his correspondents to give up Canada for good, and concentrate on Louisiana, which is a more desirable country, for it will not only give the mother country valuable products, but can also be defended more easily against our enemies than New France could be against the English.

On May 5, 1758, Voltaire wrote to Tronchin from Les Delices:

¹⁸Ibid., same chapter.

¹⁹Ibid., same chapter. His prophecy, as he noted with complacency, was, indeed, soon fulfilled.

I wish that Canada, as well as the Reverend Jesuit Fathers of Quebec, were at the bottom of the frozen ocean, and that we had given our attention to Louisiana, to planting cocoa, indigo, tobacco, and mulberry trees, instead of paying four millions every year to our enemies, the English.²⁰

On October 3, 1760, again from Les Delices, he wrote to the Marquis de Chauvelin, and begged him to use his influence to rid France of Canada, for which it was not worth fighting. He added:

What terrible madness has made us neglect Louisiana to buy every year three million, five hundred thousand pounds of tobacco from our conquerors? It is not absurd that France should have spent so much money in America only to be last among the European nations there?²¹

It would be too much to say that Voltaire showed a particular fondness for Louisiana; for he felt attracted to it, not for itself, but in preference to Canada. That is typical of the man who loved the Chinese rather than the Jews, and generally speaking, concealed beneath his praise for one, hostility and ridicule for another. Raynal, a few years later, also praises Louisiana as opposed to Canada,

²⁰Ed. Moland, XXIX, p. 440. Again it must be remembered that Voltaire, on the other hand, loudly sang the praises of the colonizing Colbert.

²¹Ed. Moland, XLI, p. 3.

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²¹Ed. Moland, XII, p. 3.

thus prompting English propaganda,²² either consciously or disinterestedly, for England at the time rejoiced over France's abandonment of her northern colonies.

Diderot's role in French letters concerning Louisiana is indeed slight. The only worthwhile work in which this ebullient philosopher discusses primitive people is the famous and entertaining Supplement au Voyage de Bougainville. The inhabitants of Tahiti, he writes, lead a life which is both idyllic and sensual, primitive and sentimental; they are atheists yet moral. Those contradictory features in the Tahitians fill with delight the writer who is known as the man who asks of himself: "Est-il bon? Est-il mechant?" But Tahiti is far from the Mississippi Valley.²³

Elsewhere in his works, Diderot devotes a few hasty

²² The conjecture that Raynal, and perhaps Voltaire, promoted English and Protestant propaganda in advising the French to withdraw from Canada and to concentrate on Louisiana has been advanced by G. L. Jaray in L'Empire francais d'Amerique, p. 298.

²³ Cf. Professor Chinard's L'Exotisme americain au 17e et au 18e siecle, pp. 374-385, and his preface to the Supplement au Voyage de Bougainville by Diderot.

allusions to the natives of America.²⁴ He had probably read the Jesuit Relations and other travel books, such as Hennepin's or perhaps Joutel's.

Professor Chinard has entitled his chapter on J. J. Rousseau "Un continuateur de missionnaires." Rousseau had been a voracious reader during several periods of his life, and travel accounts assuredly did not escape him. The Histoire generale des voyages by Abbe Prevost, and the Abrege by La Herpe may have been repeatedly consulted by him, although it cannot be claimed with certainty²⁵ that this is true. However, the self-made philosopher himself, wrote in Emile: "I spent my life reading travel relations."²⁶ And banishing every book from Emile's room, he allows his discipline only one, Robinson Crusoe.

²⁴There is, for instance, a short and bitterly sarcastic essay entitled Le Caractere de l'homme sauvage in his fragments, Miscellanea litteraires, fragments echappes, Ed. Garnier, VI, pp. 454-457.

Cf. also a fragment called "Du gout antiphysique des Americains," which was a familiar development in travelers' accounts. Diderot offers several explanations for it. Ibid., VI, pp. 452-453.

²⁵Professor Chinard does not doubt it. See op. cit., p. 344.

²⁶Emile, Ed. Hachette of Rousseau's works, II, p. 423, Quoted by Chinard, op. cit., p. 347.

It cannot be said, however, that America played an important part in Rousseau's dreams of a primitive life in some land far from the wicked civilization of men.²⁷ Jean Jacques' Utopia remains obstinately vague, and purposely so, since vagueness aids his reverie. His reasoning is conjectural²⁸ and does not draw evidence or support from any French travelers to the Mississippi Valley. The most thorough recent studies of Rousseau's sources failed to disclose any precise reference to Louisiana in his works, or any reading of the missionaries or travelers' accounts of that part of the New World.²⁹

Once more as the philosophical literature of the eighteenth century from the Treaty of Paris (1763) to the

²⁷Such is the opinion of the eminent Rousseau specialist, Professor A. Schinz.

²⁸As Professor Horatio Smith writes in his chapter on Rousseau, Masters of French Literature, p. 191: "He is luxuriating in conjectures about primitive man not utterly remote from what now delights the frequenters of cinema, although the latter prefer their nature definitely more raw."

²⁹Cf., Professor Chinard's chapter in L'Exotisme Americain, pp. 341-365; and the detailed article by Jean Morel, which names Father Dutertre, the Spaniard, Coreal, and the Histoire generale des voyages among Rousseau's probable sources: "Les Sources du Discours de l'In-egalite," Annales Jean J. Rousseau, V, 1901, pp. 119-198.

American Revolution (1776) is considered, it confirms the statement already made: the American Colonies which revolted against England absorbed the entire interest and sympathy of French writers, who looked across the Atlantic to salute the young republic being gradually formed in the West. For Condorcet,³⁰ for example, America has nothing in common with Louisiana: it is a land of freedom, where the world will perhaps begin anew; where a new society will be built, not through a long process, as was European society, but through the development of a still higher civilization upon the foundation of a civilization already in existence. Such was, doubtless, the current view of writers such as Helvetius³¹ and D'Holbach, who were not particularly interested in Louisiana.

³⁰Cf., J. S. Schapiro, Condorcet and the Rise of Liberalism, chapter XII on the "Rediscovery of America." Condorcet's interest in America became very keen about 1786-1789, when he presided over the Societe des Amis des Noirs," founded by Brissot and wrote three memoirs entitled: Lettre d'un citoyen des Etats-Unis, 1788; Lettre d'un bourgeois de New Haven, 1783; and L'Influence de la Revolution de l'Amerique, 1786.

³¹In De l'Esprit, Chapter XV, Helvetius makes an allusion to the savages of New Orleans in the following passage: "Dans le Malabar, a Madagascar, si les femmes sont vraies c'est qu'elles y satisfont, sans scandale, toutes leurs fantaisies, qu'elles ont mille galants, et ne se determinent au choix d'un epoux au'apres des essais repetes. Il en est de meme des sauvages de la Nouvelle-Orleans, de ces peuples ou les parentes du grand soleil, les princesses du sang, peuvent, lorsqu'elles se degoutent de leurs maris, les repudier pour en epouser d'autres. En de tels pays on ne trouve point de femmes fausses, parce qu'elles n'ont aucun l'interet de l'etre."

Two writers alone, Vergennes and Raynal, who composed their work about 1770, raised their voices in defense of Louisiana, and uttered some words of regret for the colony which France had abandoned to Spain.

Vergennes, the famous minister of Louis XVI, who played an important role in diplomacy at the time of French intervention in the American War of Independence, wrote a Memoire historique et politique sur la Louisiane. It was published in 1802. Vergennes, who died in 1787, had written it in 1768. The book is an interesting political document, obviously biased, since its purpose is to blame and to attack the English, and to persuade the French to recover their lost colony.³² Its literary value is limited; the style is monotonous, and the details, as the author confesses, are uninteresting; but the development is logical and methodical, and the work presents the most eloquent apology for Louisiana which had yet appeared in French.

Vergennes does not dwell on sentimental regrets, nor on the lamentable situation of the French Creoles ceded to Spain by a treaty in the making of which they had no voice. He is more realistic and practical. He defines Louisiana

³²The quotations are from the original edition: Vergennes, Memoire historique et politique sur la Louisiane (followed by four memoirs on other countries), Paris, Le Petit, 1802.

geographically,³³ and then shows all the benefits which France could derive from such a vast colony. The population, he says, consists of five thousand Europeans, six thousand negroes and probably twenty-five thousand savages, from whom a powerful army could be formed.

Vergennes then discusses the English claims and rejects them as preposterous and groundless. He reminds the French of their great explorers such as La Salle and D'Iberville, who first discovered and colonized Louisiana, and emphasizes the special attachment of the Indians for the French. He acknowledges, however, that many mistakes have been made in the meantime. The choice of administrators was seldom wise; the French colonists were of too low a level, and were actuated chiefly by the desire for riches. He urges the French to profit by the example of the English, who encouraged rich citizens to emigrate to America, not because they were not wanted at home, but to advance the interests of their country for patriotic reasons. In following such an example, he insists, the French would be greatly rewarded. The climate of Louisiana is perfect. Vergennes becomes almost lyrical when he praises it. The

³³For him, Louisiana includes all the territory from the sources of the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico, all the country of the Illinois, Wabash, and Ohio, and below the Ohio River, and all the land between the Appalachians, Florida, and the Mississippi. (Cf. p. 33).

following quotation will serve as a sample of his eloquence in painting his rosy picture of a new Eden:

L'on n'y ressent jamais les chaleurs immoderées qui accablent les habitants des tropiques; ni les froids excessifs qu'éprouvent ceux du nord. Le soleil y répond avec plus de ménagement qu'ailleurs ses douces influences; un ciel presque toujours serein, des rosées, sources de fécondité pour la terre, n'assujettissent pas les habitants à se tenir en garde contre toutes leurs malignités; l'on n'y est point effrayé par les tremblements de terre et les ouragans qui désolent nos îles de l'Amérique; les épidémies destructrices n'y sont point connues, et les fortunes habitants de ce pays délicieux y atteignent la caducité sans y être amenés par ces degrés d'affaiblissement qui rendent l'existence plus cruelle que la mort même.³⁴

This picture is so tempting that one might suspect that perhaps Vergennes' story was amplified and his style improved when his memoir was published in 1802, at the time when it was thought that Napoleon wished to retain Louisiana and send colonists there.³⁵ The conclusion repeats the leitmotif of the memoir: Louisiana is "undeniably the most beautiful country in the world." However, because of the Revolution, Vergennes' efforts to regain possession of the lost colony were in vain. He died before Spain ceded Louisiana to France.

³⁴Vergennes, op. cit., pp. 139-140.

³⁵This conjecture might be confirmed by the introduction written by the publisher of the Memoir, in which he points out the advantages to France of possessing Louisiana, and insists that the memoir is by Vergennes, and was found among his papers. Doubts existed concerning his authorship, and may still exist.

The other champion of Louisiana, the Abbe Raynal,³⁶ is one of the most eloquent writers of the eighteenth century, though his literary reputation has been steadily declining. Born in 1713, and educated by the Jesuits, he became one of them, but broke with the Company of Jesuits in 1747 and espoused whole-heartedly the cause of philosophy. He knew Diderot, D'Holbach, and many of the Encyclopaedists, and fought with them against religious superstitions and the political organization of France of his day. His Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes (1770) was one of the most influential books of the century. Charlotte Corday, Chateaubriand, and Bonaparte were enthusiastic about it between 1790 and 1800. Posterity, however, has reversed their laudatory judgment. Sainte Beuve quotes it as "an excès rebutant" of a dangerous and wearisome type of philosophical history;³⁷ and a modern critic, who seems to go a little too far, rejects it as "the most badly composed and the most intolerable of all books."³⁸

³⁶Raynal's life and works have been exhaustively studied by A. Feugere, Un Précurseur de la Revolution: l'Abbe Raynal. Another French historian, E. Salone, has written on G. Raynal, historien du Canada. Professor Chinard discusses Raynal in L'Exotisme Americain au 17e et 18e siecle, pp. 389-398. The edition of Raynal's works used here is that of 1780.

³⁷Sainte-Beuve, Portraits Contemporains, IV, article on M. de Barante, 1843, p. 46

³⁸Raujon, quoted by A. Feugere, op. cit., p. 99.

The impossible task of analyzing Raynal's long and disconnected work need not be attempted here. Among many digressions and perhaps borrowings from Diderot and other collaborators, is found a pioneer attempt at economic history. According to him, history is shaped by economic forces. Therefore, the discovery of distant lands in the two Indies has had far reaching consequences affecting the welfare of mankind. Raynal attacks slavery, although he defends the interests of commerce, and had himself carried on some very successful financial speculations.

In his writings, Raynal is decidedly hostile to Canada, the country which his former friends, the Jesuits, were proud to have opened to the Catholic faith. He shows himself to be an anglophile, and almost alone among the philosophers of the period, he did not take sides with the Americans in their war of independence. He is more than resigned to the loss of Canada by France, giving as his reasons that the French colonists had not developed it adequately, that they had been lazy, and that their wives were "coquettes et galantes." Better, he says to abandon Canada to the Anglo-Americans, who have made their colonies "the promised land of conjugal love, that love so pure and so delightful for him who knows how to enjoy it."³⁹

³⁹Volume VIII, Chapter XV of the Histoire philosophique is devoted to the French in Canada. In words which, according to M. Salone may have inspired Longfellow to write Evangeline, Raynal praises the Acadians.

Raynal's tone changes when he mentions Louisiana. The first twelve parts of his book sixteen (volume 8) are devoted to the French explorations of the Mississippi. La Salle and D'Iberville are lauded for their accomplishments; Law's speculations, the climate of Louisiana, and in part seven, the character of the savages in Louisiana and the customs of the Natchez, are then discussed, Raynal condemns the French policy which brought about the failure of colonization in Louisiana. The church also receives a large share of the blame from the former abbe: "Those Frenchmen who did not humiliate themselves at the feet of a confessor, who did not go to mass, were condemned by the priests."⁴⁰ Huguenots should have been admitted, and encouraged to settle in Louisiana. Raynal places the blame for their exclusion upon the "tyran aveugle" who had decreed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and upon the "peuple imbecile et lache" who accepted it.

Finally, he discussed the cession of Louisiana to Spain. The king had no right thus to abandon his subjects against their will, he claims. In doing so, France committed not only a political mistake, but a crime against the Louisianians. In an eloquent and pompous imaginary, he pictures Louisiana complaining to the Mother Country:

⁴⁰Op. cit., VIII, livre 16, part IX, p. 185.

Que t'ai-je fait pour me livrer a un etranger? Ne suis-je sortie de ton sein? . . . N'ai-je pas combattu pour les droits et defendu le sol que tu m'avais donne? . . . Tu m'as engagee a mon insu par un marche dont le secret meme etait un tranison. Mere insensible, ingrante, as-tu pu rompre, contre le voeu de la nature, les noeuds qui m'attachaient a toi par ma naissance meme!⁴¹

If M. Salone's conjecture is correct, that eloquent appeal of Louisiana to the Mother Country moved Bonaparte so profoundly that it led him, while he was France's first Consul, to demand from Spain the cession of the colony which Louis XV and Choiseul had so light-heartedly abandoned.⁴²

When Raynal's work appeared, the eighteenth-century

⁴¹Op. cit., VIII, livre 16, Part X, p. 204.

⁴²Raynal who died in 1796, lived later in the Revolutionary period than most of the eighteenth-century philosophers. In his old age he offered prizes for literary achievement to the students of several provincial academies. One of the subjects used in the contests was the vexing problem: "Has Europe benefited from the discovery of America?" As he grew older and more eloquent, he became more interested in the young American republic, and warned the Americans against the baneful influence of riches. In 1787, he deplored his old age, which prevented his traveling to America, and idealized the victorious country of Washington and Jefferson in the same declamatory style in which he had wept over the loss of Louisiana: "Heroic country, my old age does not allow me to visit you . . . I shall die without having seen the sojourn of tolerance, of laws, of virtue and freedom." (passage quoted by Bernard Fay, L'Esprit revolutionnaire en France et aux Etats-Unis.)

philosophers, under the inspiring leadership of Diderot, had been collaborating for several years on the most ambitious instrument ever devised to enlighten mankind, the Encyclopedie. The first volume, as is well known, came out in 1751, the last in 1772, the additions and index in 1780.

In that universal encyclopaedia the part played by America is not very considerable. In the edition published at Berne and Lausanne, in Volume XX (1780), under the spelling "Louisiane," a few lines are devoted to Louisiana (XX, p. 419): "I shall only say a word about it," says the author of the article, D. J. (Chevalier de Jaucourt). Referring to Charlevoix as his main source, and expressing his suspicion of Hennepin's tales, he sees in the former French colony "one of the best lands of America." The article, which is brief and uninteresting, contains both geographical and historical data.

In the Supplement, 1776-1777, appears another article, "America," referring to Louisiana. The second part of that article, signed "E" (apparently for "Engel"), is more purely geographical, and discusses the geography of the New World with a great effort at precision and a commendable moderation in tone. A few sources which are quoted incidentally, refer to historians of Louisiana, the most accurate ones: Charlevoix, Le Page du Pratz, Dumont de Montigny.

The first part of that same article, signed, "D. P." is attributed to De Pauw. It is more historical in character than the second part and deals with North and South America without distinguishing between the two. Though De Pauw borrows his information from travelers' accounts, he criticizes them sharply. The tendency displayed in his comments is twofold: anti-clerical and anti-American. He deplores the fact that missionaries enlighten us so little and so unreliably concerning the Americas,--for instance, on the subject of their jugglers and medicine men,--and "reason in an imbecile way on the theology of those so-called priests."⁴³ Moreover, he reacts against any idealization of the primitive inhabitants of the country; the Indians, according to him, being lazy, indolent, and fond of drinking. The climate, he complains, is far from ideal, and the constant persecution by mosquitoes makes life unbearable. In a word, America, to him, is far from being the earthly paradise then hailed by some imaginative Frenchmen. It is neither the land of liberty nor of culture, as De Pauw indicates in the following passage:

⁴³ Encyclopedie, article "Amerique," Ed. Berne and Lausanne, 1780, II, p. 362.

Aujourd'hui meme il n'y a point dans tout le nouveau monde une peuplade americaine qui soit libre et qui pense a se faire instruire dans les lettres; car il ne faut point parler des Indiens de missions, puisque tout demontre qu'on en a fait plutot des esclaves fanatiques que des hommes.⁴⁴

Considerable information exists concerning the author. Corneille De Pauw is assuredly the least attractive writer on America encountered during the whole century. However, France must not be held responsible for a writer so totally devoid of charm. He was not a German, as Voltaire said (without disparaging intentions) in a letter to the Comte d'Argental, September 5, 1774, but a Dutchman. He was born in Amsterdam in 1739, studied in Germany, and became a small diplomatic representative of the Bishop of Liege at the court of Frederic II. In a letter to Frederic, written December 21, 1775, Voltaire praised him as "un tres habile homme" but a too systematic one. His ideas concerning the natives of America, though coarse and badly expressed, appealed to Voltaire. But when De Pauw wrote similar statements in order to explode the Chinese cult, Voltaire, who insisted upon idealizing the Chinese, became very angry. In a letter to

⁴⁴
Ibid., p. 359.

Voltaire⁴⁵ Frederic tried to excuse the Dutch Abbe. In 1768-1769, De Pauw published, in Berlin, his Recherches Philosophiques sur les Americains. This work was utilized by Raynal, and was widely read. No book more hostile to America has ever been published. Duhamel, whose Scenes de la Vie Future hurt the feelings of many American readers, had at least, traveled through part of the country which he criticized unfavorably, and in New Orleans, where he landed, was impressed by the imprint of French occupation. But De Pauw, living comfortably in Berlin, indulges in generalizations concerning a country which he had never seen. "The Conquest of the New World," he asserts at the outset of his writings, "so famous and so unjust, is the greatest misfortune that ever befell mankind."

The main reason for his bad-tempered judgment of America is quite apparent: his anticlericalism. Frenchmen learned to know, love, and idealize America through the letters of the missionaries to that country but De Pauw violently protests against what he terms the impostures of priests:

⁴⁵ Cf. Voltaire's letter to Frederic, Dec. 21, 1775 (Moland Edition, XLIX, p. 458), and Frederic's reply; and Voltaire's letter to the Comte d'Argental, Sept. 5, 1774, ibid., on De Pauw. There are a few lines on him in an article by Bernard Fay, "L'Amérique et l'esprit scientifique en France a la fin du 18e siecle," Revue de Litterature Comparee, 1923, IV, pp. 285-406.

On se croit transporté au centre des absurdités et des prodiges . . . Si ces hommes apostoliques, étourdis par le vestige de leur enthousiasme, ont si mal vu les choses, ils auraient dû, par respect pour la raison, s'abstenir de les décrire; on n'a pas exigé d'eux des relations où les miracles sont répandus avec tant de profusion, qu'on y distingue à peine deux ou trois faits qui peuvent être plus ou moins vraisemblables.⁴⁶

This is an example of De Pauw's usual tone and style. Lahontan and Charlevoix are mercilessly ridiculed by him. America is a barren, worthless country. No animals, not even the buffalo, were found there, asserts De Pauw, before animals were brought over from Europe. The inhabitants are cowards--in fact, "everything low and despicable." They eat other men, their captives among them, freely. The women, however, are somewhat better, for in Louisiana, when the savages plotted a wholesale murder of the French, the women warned the colonists of their impending fate.⁴⁷ Most of the men are hermaphrodites. Other details, even more crude, are unfit for repetition.⁴⁸ His opinion of Americans is

⁴⁶De Pauw, Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains, Paris, An III.

⁴⁷In the second part of his work (p. 381) De Pauw tells a story of a French prisoner's being eaten by the "Atacapas" of Louisiana.

⁴⁸A whole chapter, (III, Chapter V, pp. 179-183), entitled "De la tiédeur en amour de Américains," explains their inability to feel passion and love. Besides, "la nature n'a point donné aux femmes américaines les charmes de la beauté, (p. 183), boldly asserts De Pauw who has never set foot on American soil. Details of a delicate, or rather, indelicate, character seem to be an obsession with him.

that they are stupid and incapable of intellectual development. A whole chapter bears the title of "Du genie abruti des Americains."

This violent work of polemical partisanship need not be taken too seriously. De Pauw obviously rejects the whole American "mirage," including the myth of the good savage. He attacks the Rousseauistic doctrines with a violence which would have been startling had he been more authoritative. His information, however, is hasty and second-hand. He takes to pieces the missionaries' writings, accumulates much material, and re-assembles it in short, disconnected chapters. He has also read Charlevoix, Dumont de Montigny, Le Page du Pratz, and other historians of Louisiana, but only to find fault with them.

In reply to De Pauw's insults, contemporary Benedictine monk, Dom Pernety, wrote a vigorous defense of America. That defense, entitled Dissertation sur l'Amerique, is published in Volume III with De Pauw's reply to his critic. Dom Pernety, much more moderate in tone, and a much more pleasant writer than De Pauw, appeals to the knowledge born of experience. He has met many Frenchmen who have been in Louisiana and who declare the country "is among the most healthful, the most beautiful in the world. . . . They have even remained there, deploring that France abandoned them to

Spain."⁴⁹ De Pauw disregards such evidence. He devotes a chapter⁵⁰ to "Louisiana in Particular," declaring that all who have written about Louisiana, (Kennepin, Le Clerc, Tonty, Dumont), have contradicted themselves, and that the country is poor and sterile beyond all doubt. Besides, (and this is De Pauw's most cherished argument), "one must beware there of rattlesnakes, for although an incredible number of those serpents have been destroyed, the species is far from extinct, and there is always a great danger in walking at some distance from the houses."

The chief value of De Pauw's unpleasant dissertations is in serving as proof that the period of the greatest French idealization of America had come to an end. When the French Revolution breaks out, and when young Chateaubriand embarks for his discovery of the Northwest Passage, optimistic faith in the noble savages or in the Anglo-American colonists is distinctly on the wane. Fortunately for America, the French Revolutionary period brings to the United States, if not to Louisiana, a number of emigres and travelers who judge for themselves the extent of exaggeration found in

⁴⁹Recherches, III, p. 31.

⁵⁰Ibid., Chapter XVII of his reply to Dom Pernety, "De la Louisiane en particulier," III, pp. 254-257.

De Pauw's violent attacks.

On the eve of the French Revolution, Raynal and De Pauw, and even Condorcet, a man who was immensely superior to them, seem to represent the triumph of a new spirit in literature: the spirit of generalization and even of declamatory rhetoric, which had gradually eclipsed the prudence and modest courage of the forerunners of the philosophical spirit: Bayle and Fontenelle, and an empiricist such as Montesquieu.

Such generalities invade that part of French Literature which is devoted to America during the years 1786-1788. The Marquis of Chastellux, an exponent of this school, who died in 1793, at fifty-four years of age, had traveled in America, had seen Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New York. A former army officer, like Vauvenargues, he was adopted as a friend and colleague by the Encyclopaedists.⁵¹ His Voyage dans l'Amerique septentrionale dans les annees 1780, 1781 and 1782 does not concern Louisiana. Chastellux discusses the American people with sympathy, and appreciates

⁵¹ Chastellux has recently been studied exhaustively in a French thesis: Un philosophe cosmopolite du dix-huitieme siecle: Le Chevalier de Chastellux, Fanny Varnum, Paris, 1936.

their good qualities, even though he deplores their lack of fluency in conversation. In 1787, he published a more general work: Discours sur les avantages et les desavantages qui resultent pour l'Europe de la decouverte de l'Amerique.⁵² The subject which appealed to ambitious philosophers, was then in the air. Abbe Raynal had proposed the question to be discussed by competitors for a literary prize, for which he had provided the funds, at the Academy of Lyons. The award, however, was never made. Chastellux, who, unlike De Pauw, had some first-hand knowledge of America, expressed the opinion that the discovery of America was a great contribution to the commerce, the prosperity, and consequently to the civilization of Europe. He did not, however, discuss French trade with Louisiana nor the future of the former French colony in any particular way.

Abbe Genty, who was also inspired by the discussion proposed by Raynal, but who took an opposite view after presenting a wealth of sophisticated reasoning,⁵³ does not neglect Louisiana. But he condemns the Mississippi Colony, saying that it had brought nothing but misfortune to France,

⁵²Published in Paris, 1787, and in London.

⁵³Abbe Genty, L'Influence de la decouverte de l'Amerique sur le bonheur du genre humain, Paris, 1788.

and forgets to pity its inhabitants, who were abandoned by the Mother Country. Louisiana, he claims, "gave birth to Law's system, that eternal monument of national folly and collective intoxication."⁵⁴ If Louisiana and the Mississippi had never been discovered, France might have been spared that unfortunate financial venture. Carried away by his own eloquence, Genty adds, in the typical style of the period:

Et l'humanite n'aurait pas eu a pleurer la perte de tant d'infortunés, qui ont péri dans le Biloxi, victimes d'un aveugle avarice et de la crédulité publique. Voilà donc tous les avantages que nous avons tirés de la Louisiane: elle a produit les billets de banque et dévore les habitants que nous lui avons donnés. Il semble que toutes les illusions funestes, toutes les espèces de délire, aient été attachées à la découverte du nouveau monde.⁵⁵

Brief mention will be made of the work of J. Esprit Bonnet,⁵⁶ who, much more sympathetic in his attitude toward the New World, tried to describe the United States and to guide Europeans in their travels there. He had visited America himself, but had limited his travels and his interest to the American Republic. The only Southern States which he discusses are Maryland, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. For similar reasons, four travelers who visited

⁵⁵ Genty, op. cit., deuxième partie, p. 85.

⁵⁶ J. E. Bonnet, Les Etats-Unis de l'Amérique à la fin du dix-huitième siècle, Paris, 1795, 2 volumes.

America during the French Revolution are mentioned only in a negative manner: Moreau de Saint-Mery,⁵⁷ who was born in San Domingo, lived in the United States between 1793 and 1798. He became a friend of Talleyrand, and later a French ambassador; Talleyrand, himself, who was in the United States from April 1794 to June 1796, came here after two years in exile in England;⁵⁸ Colbert Maulevrier, who fought with Admiral de Grasse and came back to America as a refugee;⁵⁹ and the interesting La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, who visited Philadelphia, New York and Boston. He traveled as far south as Virginia, where he visited Williamsburg, Richmond, and Charleston.⁶⁰

The one subject at the time which aroused a keen interest in Louisiana among the French Revolutionary enthu-

⁵⁷ Moreau de Saint-Mery mentions Louisiana three times with the suggestion that France should occupy her former colony again, in his Voyage aux Etats-Unis de l'Amerique, 1793-1798.

⁵⁸ Cf. F. Baldensperger, "Le Sejour de Talleyrand aux Etats-Unis," Revue de Paris, 1924, volume 6, pp. 364-387.

⁵⁹ Comte de Colbert Maulevrier, Voyage dans l'interieur de Etats-Unis d'Amerique et du Canada (edited by G. Chinard, 1935). He traveled alone, judging the Indians and even the Indian women without any romantic enthusiasm. His trips were limited to the states of New York and Pennsylvania.

⁶⁰ His travels are told in eight volumes: Voyage dans les Etats-Unis d'Amerique fait en 1795, 1796 et 1797, par La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, Paris, An VIII, 8 volumes.

siasts was the subject of slavery. In 1787, a short novel, Paul et Virginie, had created in France a stir similar to that aroused by Mannon Lescaut's publication. The author, Bernardin de St. Pierre, born in Havre in 1737, had traveled to Martinique on his uncle's ship at the age of twelve. He had been brought up, as it were, on the Lettres edifiantes of the Jesuits,⁶¹ had dreamt of exotic travels, and became an indefatigable supporter of three great causes: religion, anti-slavery, and primitivism. Bernardin de Saint Pierre, however, liked the scenery of the West Indies, and of the Ile de France, near the coast of Africa, where his Virginie perished in a shipwreck. He never visited the United States, and thus left that virgin field of exotic description to a disciple greater than himself--Chateaubriand.

Another devoted friend of negro slaves was Brissot de Warville. In 1787, he published in London, in collaboration with Etienne Claviere, a general work entitled: De la France et des Etats-Unis ou de l'importance de la Revolution de l'Amerique pour le bonheur de la France. He emphasized all the advantages France would derive from trading with America, and stressed the value of cotton, as the principal

⁶¹The Jesuits' letters were read at meal times to the students of the Jesuit school at Caen, where Bernardin de St. Pierre was educated, as his biographers inform us.

sources of riches for the Southern States. In 1798, Warville, the great champion of freedom for the slaves, brought out a Memoire sur les noirs de l'Amerique septentrionale. He does not include Louisiana or Florida in his commentaries on the state of negroes in America. Having traveled no farther south than the thirteen states, he says himself: "I am not talking of these vast forests, of these inaccessible mountains, which are a part of the Southern States." However, he accuses the Southerners--that is, the Virginians--of selfishness for working their slaves hard while remaining idle themselves. He deplors the wretched state of poverty and abject "abrutissement" in which negroes are left in the South; and he prophesies that in less than twenty years slavery would disappear from the country.

Thus, with these disconnected and scattered discussions on slavery, on French colonists abandoned by the mother country, on strange animals, on agricultural products, and often on trade and commercial exchanges, ends the review of the allusions to Louisiana to be found in eighteenth-century literature. Montesquieu and Voltaire, even Raynal and the Encyclopedie, have been discussed in this study from a limited point of view. Nothing is useless, however, which

contributed most powerfully to the framing of our present ideology, and to the promotion of Franco-American relations.

PART III

CHAPTER I

AROUND THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE AND ATALA

SUMMARY

Characteristics of the period. A number of works dealing with Louisiana appearing in France between 1802 and 1804. General Milfort. Practical value of Eudry de Lozieres' work as propaganda. Dubroca. Berquin-Duvallon's disparaging remarks on the Louisiana Creoles. His poetic attempts. Alliot. Michaux. Beaujour. Barbe Marbois. Perrin du Lac. C. C. Robin. Volney's attitude toward the United States and French colonization in the New World.

Literary historians have often commented upon the uncertain character of French literary production between 1789 and 1815. Is it classical or romantic? Such is the question they ask about Chenier, Chateaubriand, and other outstanding writers of those years of political upheaval. Though Chateaubriand appeared as the fountain-head of romanticism during the first half of the nineteenth century, later historians now look upon him as being closely linked with the eighteenth century, and the heir of a classical tradition.¹

For obvious reasons, the conspicuous place which the author of Atala and Les Natchez gave to Louisiana supplies

¹See P. Moreau, *Le Classicisme des Romantiques*, and the series of studies undertaken under the direction of Professor Chinard on the classical elements in Chateaubriand's work and his indebtedness to Homer, Virgil and others.

the central theme for the study of this period. It is as impossible to fix the chronological limits of this study as it is to assign definite boundaries to the vague geographical entity called Louisiana. Atala appeared in 1801, and was altered repeatedly in the editions of 1804 and 1805. Louisiana also plays an important role in Les Natchez, published in 1826, and in that part of his Memoirs which Chateaubriand wrote during his stay in London (1822).

It would be impossible to isolate Chateaubriand from his contemporaries. The story of his borrowings from his predecessors (some French, many English travelers) is now well known. The atmosphere, political and literary, of France in 1800-1803 explains Chateaubriand's American background, and the skilful timing of the publication of Atala, between the treaty of San Ildefonso, which returned Louisiana to France, and the purchase of Louisiana by the United States. It is less well known that more than a half dozen French works devoted to Louisiana appeared about 1802-1804, their purpose being to enlighten the public on the colony which the French Consul had just recovered and was soon to give up again. Some consideration must be given to these writings prior to our study of Chateaubriand's Louisiana.

The sudden interest awakened by Louisiana in French writers, and consequently in the French reading public and

the rulers of France, is all the more striking since for nearly forty years Louisiana under Spanish control (1763 to 1801) had aroused neither the sympathy nor the curiosity of France. The Mother Country was so greatly occupied with the momentous events occurring within her own domain that the welfare of the colonies or former colonies, so dependent upon the outcome of the titanic struggle being waged on European battlefields, was for the time being relegated to a more propitious future. French travelers and emigres were more concerned, as has been shown, with the thirteen colonies, embodying, as they thought, the republican world of the future, than with the former French colonies, which represented the legacy of a forgotten past.²

The tone of their works dealing with Louisiana, the publication of which coincided with Bonaparte's renewed

²The only books which contain valuable information about the state of Louisiana under the Spanish regime are studies of modern historians of Louisiana like Gayarre, and others which draw from contemporary accounts, especially, J. A. Robertson, Louisiana under the Rule of Spain, France and the United States, 1763-1807, and Major A. Stoddard, Sketches, Historical and Descriptive, of Louisiana. A historical and geographical work, The Early Explorations of Louisiana, by Isaac J. Cox, traces the story of explorations of the territory of Louisiana between 1803 and 1807. The fifth volume of J. Pinkerton's General Collection of Voyages and Travels contains a translation from the Chevalier de Bourgoanne, Travels in Spain, (first published in 1797) in which Chapter VIII treats of Louisiana under Spanish rule, and describes and praises the former French Colony.

interest in the New World, is strikingly different from that of the philosophers of the eighteenth century. Ideological generalities on the benefits derived by the world at large from the discovery of America, mystical praises of the primitive Indians, pompous declarations of faith in the future of the New World and the future of the human race are now absent. Slavery itself is no longer branded as a shameful exploitation, as it had been by Montesquieu, Brissot and Condorcet. Indeed, after the massacres of the Revolution and San Domingo, it appears to a more conservative French generation as a reasonable and prudent institution. One feature is common to all of the new literature on Louisiana--that is, its cold, unresponsive and often severe attitude toward the Americans in general, and the creoles of Louisiana in particular. The material advantages to be derived by France from the possession of Louisiana are emphasized, while the duty of France toward her fellow human beings, whether white, black or red, in the Mississippi Valley is practically ignored.

General Milfort, "Tastanegy ou grand chef de guerre de la nation Creek, et general de brigade au service de la Republique francaise," was an interesting character. He published in the Year XI of the Republic, (1802), a volume of

memoirs recounting his sojourns in Louisiana and his experiences among the Indians.³ At the beginning of this book of three hundred thirty-two pages, he confesses having put it together in great haste, for he wished it to appear just before the expedition to Louisiana then being contemplated. It is an amusing document, for the author makes no effort to conceal his egotism. Throughout the narrative, the general and chief of the Indian warriors makes it plain that he alone is infallible; that he alone is competent to inform the French concerning Louisiana and the American savages; that he alone would be able to lead a victorious expedition in Louisiana and annihilate the Anglo-Americans, who are the targets of his most scornful remarks.

General Milfort's travels had taken place between 1775, when he landed in New London, and 1794. He tells of being adopted as a chief by the Creeks and of leading a party of savage warriors to a peaceful expedition in Louisiana in 1781. They visited Mobile, which he calls "a small earthly paradise," saying that "the inhabitants, while not rich, are perfectly happy; hunting and fishing are highly prosperous; fruit and vegetables are as good as in Europe."⁴ He next explored the

³Memoire ou coup d'oeil rapide sur mes differents voyages et mon sejour dans la nation Creek.

⁴Op. Cit., p. 56.

Pearl River, and the city of New Orleans, where he grieves to see the Spanish occupying a country in which the French should be established.

The general's geographical observations are none too reliable⁵ and his anthropological descriptions of the savages even more fanciful.⁶ The avowed purpose of the book is political and that constitutes its most interesting feature. General Milfort detests the Americans, for whom Lafayette and Rochambeau had conceived, in his opinion, an unreasonable enthusiasm. According to him, whoever owned the Mississippi and Louisiana would control the whole North American continent:

"If France allowed the Anglo-Americans to control that fine river, within fifty years they would dictate their laws to Europe."⁷ These former English colonies must, therefore, be checked, if their future designs against the peace of Europe⁸ are to be forestalled. The only reasonable course is

⁵On page 99, for instance, he asserts that fifty years previous to the time of which he wrote, the Mississippi was no wider than the Seine, but the river gradually ate up its banks, swallowed more and more land, and became broader almost "à vue d'oeil."

⁶The whole second part of his book is devoted to a description of the customs of the savages. His praise of the Creek Indians is unreserved.

⁷Op. Cit., pp. 81-82.

⁸"Qu'ils ont déjà l'indiscrétion de menacer de leur autorité future," says Milfort. (Page 76).

for France to send an expedition to Louisiana to unite the Indians in a confederacy controlled by the French, which will save America from the Americans. Needless to say, General Milfort, former war chief of the Creeks, would play an important role in this undertaking.

Baudry de Lozieres was also a French officer who served in Louisiana. He had reached the rank of "Colonel-Inspecteur de dragons," and later became historian of the French navy and colonies. He visited Louisiana in 1794-1798, and published his writings in 1802-1803 under the titles of Voyage a la Louisiane, (1802), and Second Voyage a la Louisiane, (1803).⁹

The author, writing soon after Louisiana had been returned to France by Spain, had a definite purpose which can best be defined as imperialistic. This diligent official of Napoleon wishes to persuade his master to develop Louisiana. He rather sweepingly defines the geographical boundaries of the prospective colony as including the whole country between the sources of the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico, the

⁹The quotations used here are from the copies of the Bibliotheque Nationale, under the call numbers 80LK .864 and 80LK .865, the second work being in two volumes.

territories watered by the Ohio and the Wabash, and even Mexico.¹⁰ His work, moreover, was designated to present information of practical value concerning everything that would-be colonists should know about Louisiana, including even the rules of hygiene to be followed by European settlers. It is more objective and less naively entertaining than General Milfort's recital of his adventures. Baudry de Lozieres ranks with Le Page du Pratz among the least interesting but most accurate and painstaking writers on Louisiana.

In several respects, he appears to be continuing the production of precise and technical information, inspired by the empirical spirit of the eighteenth century and undertaken by the Encyclopedie. Baudry repeats that he has no purpose except to be useful to his government and his countrymen, and to record what he, himself, has seen, heard, and observed. His writings are thus the antithesis of Atala and its colorful and fanciful pictures. In only one passage of his second volume, has Baudry de Lozieres allowed his imagination to soar. This flight of fancy is quoted in the original in order to show that, if it was prompted by a desire to emulate Chateaubriand, as indeed may be the case, it falls consider-

¹⁰ Baudry de Lozieres, Second Voyage, I, p. 22.

ably short of its mark:

Ces belles rives inondees sont chargees des plus belles forets. Rien n'occupe plus l'oeil et l'imagination que ces animaux qui s'elancent sur les arbres, et qui les parcourent successivement les uns apres les autres; ou avec la vitesse d'un oiseau, ou avec les anneaux mouvants des reptiles. Tantot l'on est egaye par la legerete des sauts rapides de l'ecureuil qui court sur les branches et qui joue librement avec ses semblables; tantot c'est le souple leopard qui poursuit sa proie jusque sur le sommet des arbres, avec les precautions du chat; tantot l'oeil est etonne des effets onduleux du gros serpent qui, sortant des marais, s'entortille autour des troncs pour parvenir au haut de l'arbre, et y seisir quelques gros oiseaux qu'il va glacer de ce magnetisme qui fait sa force la plus importante. Outre plusieurs animaux de ce genre, on voit aussi une foule innombrable d'oiseaux de toutes couleurs, de tous rangs et toutes grosseurs, qui se melent en voltigeant partout et qui achevent l'enchantement du tableau.¹¹

Baudry de Lozieres, whose temperament is that of a severe colonial administrator, is more at home in his concrete studies of the soil, its products, and its people. According to him, Louisiana is not only vast, but fertile. Her agricultural riches, such as vegetables, fruit of all kinds, sugar, indigo, and cotton are depicted. The Indians are not so warmly praised as the soil. Baudry de Lozieres would have been deeply hurt by Les Natchez if he could have read Chateaubriand's justification of the massacre of the French by the Indians. Having heard the story of that massacre from actual witnesses, Baudry de Lozieres relates the

¹¹Voyage a la Louisiane, pp. 160-161.

most gruesome details in showing the cruelty of the Natchez murderers. He tells of the great chief's counting the heads of French soldiers, dripping with blood; of pregnant women being ruthlessly killed; of corpses being thrown to the vultures. Though Baudry de Lozieres devotes a whole chapter of his work to describing in a methodical way the customs of the savages, he adds nothing new to the accounts already related by previous observers.

He is even harder on the negroes than on the Natchez and the Chactas Indians. He had been in San Domingo and pitied the French colonists murdered or ruined by the slaves in revolt. To them he dedicates his second volume.¹²

Louisiana could, if necessary, exist without slaves, he remarks, for the climate is suitable to European workers. But according to the cool-headed French official, who has renounced his revolutionary ideology, slavery is doubly justified because it is a means of populating a vast continent and because it spares the slaves the miseries to which they would have been subjected had they remained in Africa.

In his desire to encourage French settlers, Baudry de Lozieres is unlike many eighteenth-century writers, who had

¹²The dedication reads: "A tous les colons honnetes, victimes de la revolution des negrophiles." By negrophiles, he obviously means the negroes themselves encouraged by sentimental liberals.

opposed colonization, and ranks instead with colonial organizers of the great century of colonization, the nineteenth. He carefully classifies all the objections to emigration, and discusses them convincingly. He admits that Louisiana is often subject to floods, but claims that the climate is none the less healthful on that account, and that the floods add great fertility to the soil. Even mosquitoes, inveterate foes of the most patient Jesuit missionaries, serve a purpose: "Those tiny animals, feeding on that which would probably kill the human species, help to purify the air."¹³ If Law's colonists and several French administrators have been disappointed in Louisiana, the blame was theirs; a new regime will not repeat their faults.

Baudry de Lozieres, in his second work, adds more convincing, if less poetical, inducements than the enchanting descriptions of Chateaubriand. He draws up a methodical list of directions to be followed by French colonists in Louisiana. The style is more that of the Napoleonic Code than that of *Atala*. Some of this advice, however, which proves the diligent Frenchman a forerunner of modern health enthusiasts, is amusing: one must not bathe in the sea too much, he advises; he advocates frequent baths at home, but not long ones, "which relax the fibres of the body in a hot and humid climate;" and

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Voyage a la Louisiane, p. 343.

recommends moderate drinking. He adds three more suggestions, perhaps more typically French: practice perspiring, as the Indians do when they wish to rest, in a bath of steaming water boiled with some local herbs; reject the foolish idea that those who drink only water are in better health than those who do not, for wine is necessary in humid climates "parce qu'il remonte la fibre;" and as the prudent advocate of colonization puts it, be "tres circonspect sur l'article des femmes."¹⁴

Dubroca, who had visited Louisiana, published a short work on the subject in 1802, which can be examined even more briefly than Lozieres's. The title of his volume, L'Itineraire des francais dans la Louisiane, is but a feeble reminder of the famous Itineraire de Paris a Jerusalem, which Chateau-briand, with an incomparably greater talent and with such more accuracy, was to write a few years later. Dubroca's writings must have been hurriedly composed to please the ruler of France and to catch the public eye at a time when France again seemed inclined to play an active part in American history. Most of his information is derived from previous accounts of Louisiana by Charlevoix, Le Page du Pratz, and

¹⁴Second Voyage, II, p. 7.

perhaps Bossu.

Like Baudry de Lozieres' writings, and even more decidedly, Dubroca's work is one of propaganda. It has little literary or historical value, except that the author presents evidence of France's strong renewal of interest in Louisiana after the treaty of San Ildefonso, and of the new adventurous and imperialistic spirit displayed about 1802-1803 in French writings pertaining to Louisiana.¹⁵

Like Lozieres also, Dubroca stands in sharp contrast to the spirit of the eighteenth century, which had opposed colonization on humanitarian and economic grounds. He is convinced of the immense potential wealth of Louisiana. The climate is ideal, almost comparable to the temperate climate of France; every type of industry would prosper, and in its rich and virgin soil, agriculture would flourish. The Indians are fond of the French, and would welcome the colonists sent by a powerful and regenerated France. If the government will rectify the injustice of the original cession made by Louis XV, "French genius, directed and supported by the wisdom of the government, can accomplish in the New World all the

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Dubroca adds the inevitable account of savage manners and customs (religion, hunting, dressing etc.). The most interesting detail he gives is that, according to him, Indian babies are born white. Frequent ointments then make their skin reddish or "cuivres." This tanning hardens their skin and makes it better able to resist mosquito bites.

prodigies of civilization which make the French nation the most prosperous and the most industrious in Europe."¹⁶

Almost at the same time, in 1803, still another French writer published an important work of Louisiana, which held a decidedly eminent place in French book production, at the very time that Napoleon was to focus the attention of the whole world upon European battlefields and his imperial court. This writer, Berquin-Duvallon, seems to be more independent in his opinions than either Baudry de Lozieres or Dubroca. He does not echo official views nor attempt to cater to the Emperor's secret wishes. His long and detailed study concludes with the discouraging statement that Louisiana will always be more of a liability than an asset to the mother country, because three-fourths of the land is hopelessly barren or swampy. His own experience as a colonist having been so disappointing, he makes no attempt, in his honest account based on first-hand knowledge, to persuade others to follow in his footsteps.

Berquin-Duvallon's book is entitled: Vue de la colonie espagnole du Mississipi ou des provinces de Louisiane et Floride occidentales, en l'annee 1802, par un observateur resident sur les lieux. The author who had lived in Louisiana

¹⁶ Louis Dubroca, L'Itineraire des Francais à la Louisiane, p. 4.

for three years, wrote his study after the Spaniards had returned the colony to France. His purpose in writing is to draw a complete picture of the soil, climate, products, inhabitants, and prospects of Louisiana.

His opinions are generally inclined to be severe and unfavorable. He dwells on the unpleasant and unhealthy humidity of the climate, and on the poor quality of the soil. A feature worthy of note, since Berquin-Duvallon is an immediate contemporary of Chateaubriand's, is his description of the Mississippi as "a river, the true name of which is Messaschippi (sic) or Father of Waters."¹⁷ However, he lacks enthusiasm, even on the subject of the great river; for sailing is slow and unprofitable, either down to the sea or upstream, and especially so in the difficult harbor of New Orleans.

As it becomes less objective in purpose, and translates the author's personal impressions, the book grows more interesting. Berquin-Duvallon, who had lived in San Domingo as well as in Louisiana, holds no idealist views concerning the negroes, and is no sentimental friend of the rebels whom he has seen in cruel revolt. He observes the colored man of Louisiana and declares him to be "not irretrievably wicked,

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Berquin-Duvallon, op. cit., p. 8.

but lazy, immoral, and untruthful."¹⁸ Slavery is his natural state, and he will always gladly relapse into it, as a flock of sheep will return to their stables."¹⁹

Berquin-Duvallon, however, reserves the bitterest strokes of his pen for the white inhabitants of Louisiana, the Creoles. On that subject, his severity knows no bounds. They are lazy and uncultured, and a prey to all vices. Adjectives flow from his pen as he describes them in strong French terms of contemptuous invective:

Ils sont grossiers, envieux, intéressés, avares, prescriptueux, railleurs, insensibles, dissimulés, caustiques, habileurs, et par dessus tout cela, ignorants à vingt-quatre carats, et se complaisant dans leur ignorance au point d'aimer beaucoup mieux manier un fusil de chasse qu'une plume et pagayer dans une pirogue qu'approcher d'un bureau.²⁰

Unwilling to render anyone a service, they behaved most ungenerously toward the unhappy colonists who were compelled to flee from San Domingo (Berquin-Duvallon was evidently one of them). Their women have none of the accomplishments which are the "customary adornment of that sex," such as music, drawing, embroidery. Instead they have an inordinate love of debauching, and in winter, dance day and night, "if not gracefully,

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 262.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 261.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 205.

at any rate, with much ardor."²¹ Their only redeeming virtue is their fecundity: "After seven or eight years of married life, they have given birth to half a dozen children, if not more, and seem quite ready to reach the full dozen."²²

Berquin-Duvallon must have suffered personal disappointment during his three years' residence in Louisiana. Being intensely interested in literature, he was probably dissatisfied with the lack of culture in Louisiana. Repeatedly and harshly, he condemns the Louisianians for their neglect of reading, and for their total blindness to the charms of literature. Pathetically, he exclaims:

Ah! fuyez donc le sejour de la Louisiane, vous tous qu'enflamme la passion de l'etude et des belles lettres! L'air de cette region est mortel pour les Esus."²³

His lengthy writings, however, give little evidence of literary talent. His style is conventional and bombastic; his descriptions dry and lifeless. His caustic attacks on the creoles are perhaps the most successful of his efforts. In 1802, he published in Paris a collection of verse,²⁴ to

²¹ Ibid., p. 283.

²² Ibid., p. 284.

²³ Ibid., p. 207. Berquin-Duvallon has also made some remarks on the French language as it is spoken in Louisiana (p. 291 ff) which might interest philologists and historians of dialects.

²⁴ Berquin-Duvallon, Recueil de poesies d'un colon de Saint-Domingue.

be added, says the preface "to the mass of literary novelties which Paris offers annually to lovers of poetry." Two of these poems concern Louisiana. They are written in the worst pseudo-classical tradition of the eighteenth century, as two brief samples will sufficiently testify:

Fleuve majestueux, qui dans tes eaux profondes,
 Vois cent fleuves divers ensevelir leurs ondes,
 Et porter leur tribut;
 Qui, des glaces du nord jusqu'aux mers des Tropiques,
 Sous ton immense cours traverses l'Amérique,
 Mississippi, salut!²⁵

The thirty-fourth stanza of the same ode reads:

Louisiane, tu vois prospérer tes cultures;
 Ton commerce fleurit à l'abri des injures
 Du fier tyran des eaux;
 Et quand tout est en proie aux fureurs de la guerre,
 Sous un gouvernement généreux, tutélaire,
 Tu jouis du repos.

A similar attitude of severity toward the creoles of Louisiana, and of superciliousness toward the Americans, pervades most of the other more or less brief accounts of Louisiana left by writers of the first few years of the nineteenth century. France, after the excesses of the Terror, renounced her faith in democracy, and was not yet prepared

²⁵ Op. cit., the first ode, entitled: "Le Colon Voyageur." These lines sound like a rhetorical exercise, which presents Louisiana in a better light than Berquin-Duvallon's bitter and apparently more sincere remarks on the creoles in his prose work.

to look upon the United States, as Tocqueville was to do thirty years later, as the stage for the great democratic experiment of the world. Proud of her cultural heritage, which Chateaubriand and the romanticists were soon to enrich, she looked down upon both the Anglo-Americans and the creoles of Louisiana, as materialists who were unable to appreciate the part which literature and culture should occupy in their lives.

Among other accounts concerning Louisiana written or published during the years 1802-1804, is one left by Paul Alliot, a French physician of New Orleans, who was deported to France with his wife and children in March, 1803, and returned to New York April 6, 1804, by virtue of a permit from the French Government, which had recognized his innocence. His manuscript, entitled Historical and Political Reflexions on Louisiana, has been transcribed, edited, and translated by John A. Robertson.³⁶ That account, over one hundred pages long, is largely practical in character. The author, while traveling down the Mississippi River, had observed the trees, the fields and other natural scenery, more as a practically minded agricultural engineer than as a poet. His feeling for nature is not very keen, nor is he sufficiently

³⁶ Louisiana under the Rule of Spain, France and the United States. Social economic and political conditions as portrayed in hitherto unpublished accounts by Dr. P. Alliot and others.

articulate to describe what he had seen. Alliot seems to be more impartial than other French colonists and travelers of the same period in regard to the inhabitants of New Orleans. According to him, the Creoles, though lackadaisical, are not unwise in their attitude, since their fertile land does not require strenuous effort in its cultivation.²⁷

Dr. Alliot does not exaggerate their attachment to France: true, they are not satisfied with Spanish rule, but knowing what evils had befallen the French colonists in San Domingo through revolutionary ideas imparted by the mother country, they preferred to be governed by the Americans.²⁸

In 1803 (An XI), there also appeared in Paris a short volume of sixty-eight pages entitled: Memoire sur la Louisiane avec un vocabulaire et un abrege de la grammaire et des langues des sauvages. The author is N. Jacquemin,

²⁷ The impression that the Creoles are indolent, non-chalant, and inefficient seems already widespread among the French writers in Louisiana in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and will henceforth become a hackneyed topic repeated a propos of all persons born in "Creole lands," from Josephine de Beauharnais to Leconte de Lisle. In 1812, Major Amos Stoddard, writing his Sketches, Historical and Descriptive of Louisiana, expatiates upon it. He describes the Louisiana creoles as excessively fond of dancing and of social intercourse, but indolent and uncultured, and "behind other civilized nations in the arts and sciences, if not in the amenities of life." (p. 32).

²⁸

Alliot, in Robertson, op. cit., p. 54.

who had lived for twenty-two years in the French colonies (more particularly in Guiana) as a missionary. Although Jacquemin mentions his ecclesiastical quality of "vicaire apostolique," his interest is above all practical. He stresses the great commercial profit which France will derive from Louisiana, described as a fertile country with many wild and domestic animals, fruit trees, and silver mines. France, he adds, should develop the colony which she had wrongly abandoned. Three principles should be followed: first, populate the country and send skilled workmen from France; second, free the slaves who are over fifty years old and who deserve that favor; third, give a strong religious education to all the inhabitants.

F. A. Michaux published in Paris, in 1808, a work of greater importance which constitutes one of the valuable sources of information on America: Voyage à l'ouest des monts Alleghenys, dans les états de l'Ohio, du Kentucky et du Tennessee et retour à Charleston par les Hautes-Carolines. It is a well-documented and intelligent volume on the Middle West and the Middle South, as those parts of the Louisiana of which he wrote might be called today. Michaux's voyage was undertaken in the year 1802, under the auspices of the French minister, Chaptal. The writer's purpose is scientific and commercial, his chief interests being natural history and

agriculture. He avoids all prejudiced discussions concerning the Checoes of Louisiana, and the recent sale of Louisiana to the United States by Napoleon. On Louisiana proper, Michaux has little to say. He does, however, prophesy a brilliant future for New Orleans, since the states of the Middle West will develop and find in the former French city a natural outlet for their products.²⁹

In 1814, another Frenchman, the Chevalier Felix de Beaujour, published a study of nearly three hundred pages on the United States, entitled: Aperçu des Etats-Unis au commencement du XIXe siècle. His picture of America is supposed to embrace the first decade of the century (1800-1810), and to deal with the geography, the government, and the commerce of the young republic. Beaujour entertains few illusions concerning America and its future. He finds the physical aspect of the country uninteresting, the government weak and inefficient. The chevalier, who had been a

²⁹ F. A. Michaux, Voyage, p. 44. He is the son of André Michaux, who in 1804 had published his Travels into Kentucky made in 1793-1795. The older Michaux was a dry, precise botanist. F. A. Michaux is more interesting to the historian because of his visit to the Gallipolis and the Scioto. In his Chapter XII, he recounts his visit to the Wabash. He did not go further south and therefore, never visited New Orleans. His volume is not concerned with French colonization in Louisiana, but merely with its natural history and geography. The Travels of the two Michaux are conveniently reprinted in English in R. G. Thwaites, Early Western Travels, Cleveland, 1904, III.

member of the Tribunal under the First Consul's administration, scorns the American politicians, mere lawyers, "the kind of men least fit to govern, for they almost always have an erring mind and a blunted character."³⁰ In the opinion of this French subject of Napoleon's highly centralized empire, the states of the Union have too little unity, and will eventually seporate or need a dictator.

Beaujour does not lavish praise upon the inhabitants of America. The Indians, he contends, have been foolishly idealized by French writers, though a thousand vices eclipse their rare virtues. He regards the negroes as somewhat superior to the Indians.³¹ As for the whites, they are shamefully prejudiced against the French, and are scarcely better than the English, whom they closely resemble. They have no culture, for greed and avarice, their ruling passions, have robbed their lives of all charm. The men are tall and handsome, however, even though afflicted with "un esprit obtus."³² The women are lovely until they reach the age of twenty-five; and even after that fateful age, Beaujour grants--rather more generously than some modern French ob-

³⁰ Beaujour, Aperçu, p. 40.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 173-174.

³² Ibid., p. 154.

servers of America--that they remain "good and faithful wives, having few of their husbands' vices, and almost all of their virtues."

Several of the allusions contained in Beaujour's analysis of the United States concern Louisiana, especially the town of New Orleans, which the author had visited, its location, and its architecture. However, the writer shows little interest in the French influence in Louisiana, and no regret whatever for the sale of the huge territory to America. Since he is distinguished by no outstanding gift as a writer, he need not be discussed further.

For the same reason, merely a mention is made of a better known Histoire de la Louisiane by Barbe-Marbois, a former official of the Napoleonic regime, who enjoyed great social success in Philadelphia, where he married, and who had a share in the negotiations which resulted in the sale of Louisiana to the United States. His book, Histoire de la Louisiane et de la cession de cette colonie par la France aux Etats-Unis d'Amerique, is a useful historical compilation presenting many facts and figures; it owes much to previous histories of Louisiana. The description of the banks of the Mississippi, and more particularly of the difference between the left bank and the right bank, (p. 384), may be read in connection with Chateaubriand, who drew his information from the same French source, Father Charlevoix.

On the whole, this work on Louisiana, the last one inspired by the cession of the colony to Napoleon by the Spaniards, and its subsequent transference by Napoleon to the United States, has some documentary interest but slight literary value.

Two other travelers have left precise accounts of their visits to Louisiana and are to be considered before discussing the well-known philosophical writer, Volney and Chateaubriand. Perrin du Lac came to America in 1801-1803, and published his impressions and observations in Voyage dans les deux Louisianes et chez les nations sauvages du Missouri en 1801, 1802 et 1803. His remarks concerning the young American republic are interesting but lie outside the scope of this subject.³³ He then devotes about two hundred pages to "La Haute Louisiane" (the country around St. Louis), in which he mixes vague descriptions of trees, serpents, buffaloes ("les elephants de l'Amerique") and

³³Perrin du Lac left France on August 14, 1801, visited New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Gallipolis. Speaking of American women, he says: "Elles ont moins de defauts et plus de vertus que les hommes, . . . un air de langueur, une assez agreable tournure." Their beauty, however, fades too soon. (pp. 104, 107).

Indians with pompous social and philosophical generalizations. The conclusion of his study of the savages is that "man was made to live in society," but "in order to maintain a strong society, men must sacrifice a large share of their individual freedom. (p.355). "La Basse Louisiane" (or Louisiana properly speaking) hardly inspires him with more original or more lively remarks. "New Orleans does not deserve a favorable mention," he bluntly asserts (chapter XLIII, p.384). The town is uninteresting and the floods of the Mississippi make it still worse. The inhabitants are no better than the land. "Les creoles," as he puts it in his sharp and concise French, "se livrent au plaisir avec exces. Les femmes, la table et le jeu partagent tous leurs moments." (p.393). They do not even resist their taste for "les femmes de couleur, qui exigent moins de ces egards genants qui contrarient leur gout pour l'independance." (p.394). Perrin du Lac approves of slavery, saying that it is necessary in a warm climate. He mildly regrets that France had to sell the colony of Louisiana.

While most of the writers on Louisiana during the Napoleonic regime are conspicuous for their narrow but practical interest, showing no evidence of curiosity in regard to the earlier history of Louisiana, nor admiration for the magnificence of its landscape, C. C. Robin shows himself to have been a more attentive observer than some of his predecessors. His three volumes, entitled Voyage dans l'interieur

de la Louisiane, dans la Floride occidentale et dans les îles de la Martinique et de Saint-Domingue pendant les années 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805 et 1806, were published in Paris in 1807.

They reveal a traveler of good-will, who tries to find beauty and some good in the countries which he visits, and a philosophical mind with less penetration than excellence in its intentions.

Robin studied natural history during the French Revolution, and tried to discover the "links which bind man to nature, and man to man," as he announces in his preface. In 1802, he embarked at Nantes for Martinique, San Domingo and Louisiana, hoping to discover in those lands "une profusion de verites inconnues." His son who accompanied him died of yellow fever; the stoic father found comfort in his studies.

Chapter XXXIII of his second volume gives a detailed description of New Orleans, its surroundings, the produce of the lands, and the different trades of its inhabitants. Robin's remarks are candid, but neither deep nor original. He is well-disposed towards the Creoles, an exception in that respect among the travelers of the early nineteenth century, and, as a rule, entertains an optimistic view of human nature.³⁴ He adds to his notes an account of the discovery of Louisiana as

³⁴He notes that the "filles" sent by France to Louisiana at the time of Law, had become excellent "meres de famille." And he adds: "Il est donc vrai que l'espece humaine n'a pas recu dans son sein le penchant aux vices."

it was given by Hennepin and others, and the history of the colony in the eighteenth century. He concludes his second volume with a cogent appeal to Louisianians to retain the French language:

"Children of nature, love the rich variety of her gifts; and since man can modulate such diversified languages, enjoy those modulations."

The third volume of Robin's bulky work is devoted to a relation of his travels in western Louisiana, to the Opelousas and the Atakapas, and a memoir on the boundaries of Louisiana. It ends with a philosophical digression on the three states of man in America: savagery, the social state and slavery. Robin, unlike other French travelers of the same period, condemns slavery with moral indignation for both human and linguistic reasons.³⁵

The only writer of real eminence in that group of Frenchmen who suddenly created --- as well as satisfied --- the curiosity of their readers concerning Louisiana in the early years of the century, and the only one who has already

³⁵ He writes on page 192 that "les esclaves dégradent la belle langue française."

been very completely studied is Volney.³⁶

Because of his Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte, (1787), and especially his declamation on Les Ruines, (1791), Volney is often considered a forerunner of the romantics; his meditation on the wreckage of past empires and on the downfall of the great have, indeed, been echoed by Chateaubriand's Rene and Byron's Childe Harold. Nevertheless, to modern readers, that Frenchman, who was born in 1757, and died in the same year that Lamartine's Premieres Meditations were published in Paris, (1820), appears as a belated eighteenth-century ideologist. He had little patience with chimerical illusions, and when traveling in America, shrugged his shoulders scornfully at Rousseau's "good savage" and other idealizations of primitive life. His eye was keen and penetrating, his mind lucid and cold: to him also might have been addressed the accusation which Madame de Tencin once uttered as she pointed to Fontenelle's heart: "Mais c'est aussi de la cervelle que vous avez la."

Volney's visit to the United States was prompted by no such ambitious dreams as those which led Chateaubriand to seek the Northwest Passage, and to observe Indian life in all its primitive, untarnished beauty. In 1795, perhaps on the

³⁶ G. Chinard, Volney et l'Amerique, d'apres des documents inedits de sa correspondance avec Jefferson.

advice of the Directoire, the philosopher who had spent ten months in prison before the fall of Robespierre, left for America to observe French colonists there. On October 12, 1795, he reached Philadelphia, then swarming with French refugees from San Domingo and the mother country; he visited Jefferson at Monticello, stopped in Gallipolis, a French settlement on the Ohio; traveled down the Ohio, saw Louisville, in Kentucky, and some of the territory included under the vague name of Louisiana. Lacking the curiosity to travel far enough to see Louisiana proper, he went north, where he visited Boston. Later he wrote: "To see everything, I should also visit Quebec and New Orleans; but I am getting tired and sick; . . . my finances are getting tired too."³⁷

In 1798, Volney left for France, disappointed in the American climate, which he found too changing and too trying; by the lack of companionship of intelligent scientists; and by the French colonies he had visited. The causes of that disappointment, analyzed and systematized by Volney's philosophical mind, undoubtedly played a part in Napoleon's decision to abandon his ambitious schemes in Louisiana and sell the huge cumbersome territory to the United States.³⁸

³⁷ Letter of 12 floreal, an 5, quoted in Professor Chinard's Volney et l'Amerique, op. cit., p. 84.

³⁸ Cf. Chinard, op. cit., p. 130 sq.

The Tableau du climat et du sol des Etats-Unis appeared in Paris in 1803. A substantial portion of this book on America is the work of a cold and shrewd observer who examined the geology, the geography, and the climate of the country in a scientific manner. Volney was probably the first of all European observers to maintain that the Americans were not truly a young people, but the inheritors of a long past, with all its English, Dutch and other European traditions and prejudices. It is to be deplored that he did not analyze a similar French legacy in the inhabitants of French Louisiana.

However, Volney's visit to the French colonists in the Ohio Valley, and his resulting conclusions, were perhaps not without their effects upon history. He disapproved of Talleyrand's grandiose schemes for colonizing the middle-western part of America with French people. His arguments, unfavorable to the results and to the future prospects of French colonization in the New World, are those which Barbe-Marbois, and perhaps Volney himself, used to dissuade Napoleon from retaining and developing Louisiana. A Frenchman is too fond of Society, in Volney's opinion. He abhors silence and solitude. He discusses everything with his wife too much, at times even soliciting her advice, instead of merely allowing her to perform her household duties without interruption from him. "The more I think of it," says Volney, "the more convinced I am that the domestic silence in the Anglo-American household

is one of the most potent causes of their industrious labor."³⁹

To the above psychological reasons, Volney adds political ones, probably less open to disagreement. He advances two main reasons for his belief in the inadvisability of French colonization of North America: French colonies cannot be defended against the British navy; they are certain to antagonize the United States and thus draw them into alliance with the English against the French. This was Jefferson's conviction, and he may have expressed it to Volney, who then impressed it upon Napoleon. "If and when France occupies New Orleans," Jefferson wrote, April 18, 1802, to the American minister in Paris, "from that moment we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation."⁴⁰

Instead of trying to own and colonize Louisiana, as Talleyrand and Napoleon felt inclined to do at that time,⁴¹ Volney, a clear-sighted forerunner of some recent French views,

³⁹ Chinard, op. cit., p. 135.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 130.

⁴¹ It is very probable that Lucien Bonaparte, who was closely associated with Talleyrand, had then some influence over his illustrious brother, and encouraged the emperor to attempt an expedition to Louisiana. Lucien Bonaparte was ambassador to Spain from November, 1800, to January, 1802, then married against the Emperor's advice and had to live in Italy. In 1810, he attempted to go to America, and was taken prisoner by the English on the sea. Cf. F. Pietri, Lucien Bonaparte.

as expressed for instance in Louisiane et Texas, a volume published by France-Amerique in 1937, advised France to give up all political and territorial ambition in America, and to be content with her cultural influence there. His advice was undoubtedly sound, if less flattering to French pride and to French sentimental illusions concerning America than Chateaubriand's melancholy regrets. Volney, who had read Atala when he wrote his Tableau des Etats-Unis, scoffed at the savage girl converted to Christianity and at Chateaubriand's skilful timing of his religious publication. "Every road leads to Rome," said he, hinting that the author of Atala merely cherished the ambition to be Napoleon's ambassador to the Holy See.

CHAPTER II

ATALA

SUMMARY

The climax of French literature concerning Louisiana. Chateaubriand's sense of timing. The significance of his American experience. Order in which Chateaubriand's works influence the French public. Results of his sojourn in England. Sources of Atala. Its setting. Its flora and fauna. Louisiana today. Chateaubriand's accumulation of details in Atala. The characters in the novel. The author's attitude toward the Indians. Rene and Le Genie. Conclusion.

During this excursion through many volumes, pamphlets, and brochures in search of allusions to Louisiana in French writings, I have strayed more than once into by-paths of French literature, and among authors who seldom ranked among the great. Their sense of the picturesque was dull, their lack of skill in exotic description was marked, and even when the writers were evidently sincere in their attempts to leave adequate records, their remarks on the American savages suffered from monotonous repetition. Like the spiritually dull, of whom the Scriptures said: "Eyes have they, but they see not," they had seen nothing, and consequently had nothing to say.

Strangely enough, the French author who has no rival in the field of literature on Louisiana had probably never visited the country of the Illinois, or the plains watered by the Kentucky and the Tennessee, which were then part of Louisiana. His actual experiences in America contributed

much less to the writing of his epic, Les Natchez, and his epic novel, Atala, than did the abundance of material expertly culled from other writers and cleverly woven with the magic threads of his own imagination. Thus the fallacies of art prevailed once more over the dry facts of reality. Chateaubriand's tales did more to spread Louisiana's fame than all the reports of more authentic travelers put together. It matters little, after all, whether he did or did not reach the Mississippi Valley. Had he explored it, one may be sure that it would not have been because of any interest in land to be cultivated, crops to be sowed and gathered, or trade to be developed. Instead, he would have populated that colorful "desert" with creatures of his mind and heart, with feminine visions such as then haunted his romantic readers in Europe, with dreams of a love more passionate, more ardent and less prosaic than the romances found in French provinces or in Parisian salons.

It would be a mistake, however, to go to such extremes as to assert that Chateaubriand's picture of Louisiana presents a total departure from the spirit of his times. The previous chapter has showed that the years 1801-1804, which saw the first editions of Atala, were also marked by a wide interest in the far-away land of the Creoles. The Spanish promise to return Louisiana to France had been made in October, 1800. Lucien Bonaparte and Talleyrand openly favored the permanent

organization of the old colony, and, it will be remembered, Napoleon seemed inclined to agree with them. Chateaubriand could not help being aware of these designs. The Breton dreamer fancied himself throughout his life a keen observer of politics, a practical economist, and a "scientific" traveler, whether in the guise of an arctic explorer bent upon finding the Northwest Passage, or of an archaeologist proud of having "discovered" the exact location of ancient Sparta.¹ Whatever may be said in substantiation or disapproval of these claims, it cannot be doubted at any rate, that Chateaubriand possessed a most skilful sense of "timing." The appearance of the Genie du Christianisme at the very moment that the Concordat was signed is a case in point; and likewise it is significant that the first preface of Atala should have included the following passage, fraught with diplomatic implications: "If, by a scheme of far reaching policy, the French government were some day to ask England for the return of Canada, my description of New France would take on new interest."²

¹As late as 1824, he was made president of the Societe de Geographie and took his duties very seriously. The two sides of his nature - the imaginative and the practical - have been stressed by many critics, and with particular forcefulness by Hubert Gillot in his Chateaubriand: ses idées, son action, son oeuvre.

²This sentence disappeared from the preface of Atala in 1804 --- the year of the execution of the Duc d'Enghien and of Chateaubriand's break with Napoleon.

One may gather, therefore, that in at least one respect the American vein in Chateaubriand is not so very foreign to the spirit of a Baudry de Lozieres or a Dubroca. In a sense, he strove to give a meaning, une raison d'etre, to their uninspiring volumes. That he did not succeed, that the propaganda value of Atala was practically nil, was partly due, of course, to new and sudden turns in politics and the abandonment by Napoleon of his plans of colonization. In all fairness, however, it is highly doubtful that, in any case, the reading of this book could have prompted a single settler to cross the Atlantic. Chateaubriand's dazzling images destroyed, rather than advanced, any practical purpose that he might have hoped to attain. His readers heard no call to action. They were content to sit back and be charmed. The net result of his writings, exclusively artistic in their scope, was to lift Louisiana to the plane of higher literature. By an entirely new esthetic approach, by the harmonious rhythm of his prose, by his ornate similes, and by the noble simplicity of his heroes, Chateaubriand achieved for the Mississippi Valley the same dignified place which ancient Greece, with her Homeric characters, held in French memoris.

The youth who landed in Baltimore on July 10, 1791, from the brig "le Saint-Pierre, Capitaine Dujardin Pointe-deVin," was no Bossu or Le Page du Pratz. His was already a complex soul, obsessed from childhood with sentimental problems, furrowed by the early trials of the Revolution, torn between disillusionment and sturdy, juvenile hopes for the future --- his future. In the words of the best informed student of Chateaubriand in America:

A dreamer he was without doubt, but he was not a pale, inactive dreamer. . . . The young man who, tired of this world, found within himself enough energy to escape, enduring the privations and dangers of a long voyage in unknown lands, was not so profoundly affected as he, in all good faith, imagined himself to be, when he wrote *Rene*. Within himself, at least, there existed some illusions; pessimism had left some parts of his soul unblemished; decay had not touched the heart of the fruit.³

In America, the would-be disciple of Rousseau, then twenty-two years old, may not have found the expected answer to his queries concerning the value of democracy, the virtue of the Quakers, the natural goodness of the savage. By way of compensation, however, he found something far more precious: he discovered himself; that is, he discovered not only a new world --- a world of strange, exotic impressions --- but his own unique response to it. The significance of his American experience, and incidentally of his evocation of Louisiana,

³G. Chinard, L'Exotisme dans l'oeuvre de Chateaubriand, pp. 28-29.

lies less in what he actually saw than in what he dreamt, or imagined, or thought, both during his trip across the Atlantic and after it. And however exaggerated or even false his claims as an explorer may be, his visions are true, because he had them, because he came to believe in them, and because he succeeded in communicating his belief to his bewitched readers.

With this conclusion in mind, it is totally unnecessary to present a mere repetition of the actual circumstances of Chateaubriand's American trip. The controversy initiated by Joseph Bedier in a famous series of articles was, to all practical and present purposes, brought to a close with Professor Chinard's illuminating book L'Exotisme américain dans l'oeuvre de Chateaubriand.⁴ New documents may yet be discovered which would throw additional light on Chateaubriand's itinerary between early September, 1791, when his trail becomes very vague indeed, and December 10, when he sailed back to France. In the meantime, one may well be satisfied with the searching analysis and the wise conclusions of Professor Chinard. Between the detractors of Chateaubriand

⁴ An exhaustive bibliography of the whole controversy up to 1918 will be found in Professor Chinard's book. Some valuable additions to the knowledge of Chateaubriand and Louisiana have since been made by the Baron Marc de Villiers, in La Louisiane de Chateaubriand.

and his equally prejudiced advocates, he takes an intermediate stand. He convincingly shows that our traveler could neither have gone so far as he says he did, nor stayed so close to the shore as over-suspicious critics prefer to believe. That he reached Pittsburgh, then hardly more than an outpost of civilization, is barely possible. That he saw the Mississippi and traversed the Natchez country --- in other words, that he ever set foot in what was then called Louisiana⁵ --- is utterly incompatible with the length of his stay and with all that is known of the difficulties of transportation and the unsettled military situation at that time.

Indeed more important to this study than Chateaubriand's wanderings on American soil are his tribulations in Europe after his return, the slow elaboration of those of his works which deal with the New World in general and Louisiana in particular, and the environment, both moral and physical, in which they were conceived, matured, executed, and published. At this point there is again no denying that well-trodden ground is being traversed. From Joseph Bedier and Victor Giraud at the beginning of the present century to Professor

⁵It will be remembered in this connection that neither in his Memoires nor in his works of fiction does Chateaubriand discriminate between the Southern scenery and the Great Lakes, nor between the Natchez and other very different tribes. Of all the vague topographies of Louisiana, one of vaguest, his presents the modern reader with many puzzling problems. See his Memoires, infra, p. 30 and ff.

Chinard, many writers have delved into these matters and thoroughly expounded Chateaubriand's methods and practices as well as his debts to a host of more or less obscure predecessors. But though I cannot and do not expect to bring new information, perhaps I may at least hope to enliven a somewhat hackneyed subject by employing a different approach to some of its aspects.

At the outset it should be stated that it would be not only impractical but impossible to attempt to follow the order in which Chateaubriand's works concerning Louisiana were originally devised and written. This order could not be established very strictly, for this skillful man of letters not only used the same passages repeatedly in different writings, but kept some of his notes unpublished for years and then combined them with other pages in his Memoires or in his Voyage en Amerique. For instance, Chateaubriand's own assertion, in a well-known passage of the Memoires d'Outre Tombe (Volume II, p. 58), that he had the manuscript of *Atala* in his knapsack while fighting at Thionville, soon after his return from America with the army of the emigres, and that "his dutiful daughter," as he calls his heroine, intervened between him and the bullet which struck him, thus saving his life, must be taken with the proverbial grain of salt. This may have been true as a broad statement relating to a sheaf of notes which he was doubtless carrying with him at the time, some sort of formless

embryo from which his American writings, including Atala, were ultimately to evolve. It must be remembered, however, that the date of composition of les Natchez preceded, on the whole, that of Atala. Les Natchez, revised, was published only in 1826, and dates back to the period 1794-1800, whereas Atala, first published in 1801 and subsequently modified when it appeared with Le Genie du Christianisme in 1804, was written no earlier than the late nineties. Le Voyage en Amerique, partly drawn from notes which Chateaubriand left in London in 1800 with his manuscript of Les Natchez, waited for publication until 1827. As for the passages in the Memoires which deal with America, they were, according to Chateaubriand himself, written in London in 1822, but constitute to a large extent a revision of the Voyage en Amerique and were available to the public for the first time in 1848.

Such being the case, it is obvious that, even if to every page that Chateaubriand wrote concerning America there could be assigned the precise date of composition (and not merely of publication), this information would be less important to this study than to the biographer bent upon following closely his author's psychological evolution. For my purpose --- a survey of Louisiana as it is pictured in Chateaubriand's works --- logic imposes a different order, and that is the order in which Chateaubriand's works influenced the French public. Consequently, Atala, Le Genie du

Christianisme, Les Natchez, the Voyage en Amerique and the Memoires will be examined in that order.

Chateaubriand was a sick, forlorn and penniless young man when he reached the safety of the British shore on May 17, 1793. However, despite his harrowing experiences with the armees des Princes, despite his odyssey through Belgium, Guernesey and Jersey, still gloomier days were in store for him. To keep from starving, he earned a little money by doing translations. In the spring of 1795, at the end of all his resources, he accepted a position as professor of French in a little village in the county of Suffolk. After school hours, he gave private lessons to young girls in Beccles and Bungay. In the latter place, at a certain house in Bridge Street, he helped the black-eyed daughter of Reverend John Ives with her studies. Charlotte was only fifteen at the time. They fell in love, but alas: Chateaubriand has a wife in France. He was forced to give up Charlotte and return to London in 1797. Suffering from privation and longing for his country, Chateaubriand begins work on his Essai sur les Revolutions. One misfortune after another continued to befall him: his brother and Malesherbes killed on the gallows, his mother's death in 1789, and a few months later the death

of his sister, Mme de Farcy. "J'ai pleuré et j'ai cru," Chateaubriand wrote in explanation of his conversion at this time. Le Genie du Christianisme was the result. It was not published in London for in the Spring of 1800, Chateaubriand returned to France.

Yet, when all is said, Chateaubriand's sense of gratitude and of indebtedness to England always outweighed the bitterness of such memories. When, in 1826, he re-edited the Essai, stressing in self-reproach its one-sidedness and repudiating its utter pessimism, one of his many motives may have been to atone for its unfair picture of his true feelings as a refugee. England had been a haven, after all. Starvation in a London garret was preferable to Robespierre's jails. The gentle meadows of Beccles and Bungay had soothed his heart, had talked to him of peace and quiet, health and happiness. There he had been young. There he had loved. There he had hoped to dismiss from his mind all memories of his country and the horrors of the Revolution, as well as his wife in France whom he hardly knew. There, in other words, away from London and his fellow emigres, the unhappy "French teacher" had been on the verge of becoming a true Englishman.

The illusion, of course, was not to remain, but its influence upon Chateaubriand's mind and his works is far from lost. It is visible in the Essai sur les Revolutions, even in the language of the Essai, uncertain in places like that

of a resident abroad who finds too few opportunities for practicing his native tongue. In the words of M. Pierre Moreau: "That is what is touching in this book composed in his youth. It is the faltering speech of an exile, his awkward effort to decipher the new, unknown language of his people."⁶

The radical difference which sets Atala quite apart from all the previous French works on Louisiana can not be attributed merely to Chateaubriand's superior talent and his sense of the picturesque. Atala composed in England and with the help of English sources, appears as the climax of a tradition of descriptive literature which was English and not French.⁷ It is the work of a young emigre who, while dreaming of the American forests, has fallen in love with Charlotte Ives. It is also the work of a man who, as Professors Bedier and Chinard aptly pointed out, feels more at ease when he can begin, not with reality (in this case, his American impressions), but with some page written by an obscure predecessor, upon which he will pour the dazzling hues of his literary talent.

⁶Pierre Moreau, Chateaubriand, p. 51.

⁷The only French predecessor of Chateaubriand in the delineation of the picturesque was Bernardin de Saint Pierre, and Atala owes very little to the author of Paul et Virginie.

A Balzac or a Dickens seizes the substance of life at first hand. Not so with Chateaubriand. He combines, arranges, and transmutes. In truly classical manner --- even though the results may not be classical at all --- he considers imitation a legitimate process. Like La Fontaine, he would exclaim: "J'en prends qui sont du Nord et qui sont du Midi!" This last statement must be qualified, however, by the fact that living in England, having convenient access to English books, subject in many ways to British atmosphere and influences, conscious, too, (if one may add a note of cynicism), that English borrowings could not be traced too easily by envious critics, he did, in the case of Atala, rely upon the North much more heavily than upon the South.

This is not to say that French sources were cast aside altogether. Abbe Raynal, whom his father had worshipped, and the Lettres Edifiantes of the missionaries --- often quoted in Le Genie du Christianisme --- were used by Chateaubriand. So were, to a lesser extent, Father Charlevoix and Le Page du Pratz. As for Lafitau, who encouraged him in his tendency to look for similarities with the ancient Greeks and Romans in the Indians, it has been seen that he mentioned Louisiana and the Natchez nation only incidentally in his works.

On the whole, this is meager booty as compared with the wealth of British material which entered into the construction of Atala. Modern scholarship, from Joseph Bedier

to Professor Chinard, has fully enlightened us on this score.⁸ Never again, in fact, was Chateaubriand to draw so abundantly from English sources for his descriptions. More important still, in reading Bartram, Carver, Imlay, and Casteby, his main creditors, one easily discovers that Chateaubriand has caught the spirit of their works and thus introduced into the French literature concerning Louisiana two characteristics which until that time had been conspicuously absent: a keen appreciation of concrete details in describing flora and fauna, and a feeling for the picturesque in scenery, which he expressed in precise yet poetical language. Two quotations from Bartram's travels will suffice to illustrate this point. The traveler reaches a shady spot, under "majestic live oaks, glorious magnolias and the fragrant orange" and admired the "singular exhibition" of the short-lived ephemera:

⁸Professor Chinard has proved how much he borrowed from English travelers in Chapter VIII of his book on L'Exotisme americain dans l'oeuvre de Chateaubriand. Yet in all fairness to Chateaubriand, it must be remembered that, in his preface to the 1805 edition of *Atala*, Chateaubriand himself, stubbornly defending the "truthfulness" of his novel and the "most scrupulous accuracy" of his descriptions against skeptical critics, quoted Carver, Bartram, Imlay and Charlevoix - three Englishmen and one Frenchman - among his main authorities. This statement is not amplified, because, says he, "footnotes" would make the text too bulky. It remained for present day scholars to append the footnotes to the text with completeness. For further discussion of Chateaubriand's credibility, cf. infra., pp. 33 ff.

Solemnly and slowly moved onward, to the river's shore, the rustling clouds of the ephemera. How awful the procession! innumerable millions of winged beings, voluntarily verging on to destruction, to the brink of the grave, where they behold bands of their enemies with wide open jaws, ready to receive them. But as if insensible of their danger, gay and tranquil, each meets his beloved mate in the still air, inimitably bedecked in their new nuptial robes. What eye can trace them, in their varied wanton, amorous chases, bounding and fluttering on the odoriferous air! With what peace, love and joy do they end the last moments of their existence!⁹

The other is a brief passage describing the fragrant odor of the trees near Mobile:

Now I am come within the atmosphere of the Illicium groves, how reanimating is the fragrance! Every part of this plant above ground possesses an aromatic scent, but the large stillated pericarp is the most fragrant part of it, as warm and vivific as cloves or mace.¹⁰

Even in Gilbert Imlay, probably the most practical of the travelers who wrote about America in the English language, one meets with a wealth of details which, however precise, or perhaps because they are precise, serve to stimulate the imagination of the reader. It is easy to surmise what Chateaubriand's feelings must have been when, in his English exile, he read works written by previous travelers. On one hand,

⁹The Travels of William Bartram, New York, 1928, p. 88. The passages used here were not quoted by M. Chinard, but Chateaubriand must have read them even though he did not make use of them.

¹⁰
 Ibid., p. 351.

there were the French travelers in Louisiana, all of whom, even Charlevoix, the most gifted writer among them, were dry and colorless. Their preoccupation was, as far as one can generalize, typical of the French interests of that period: the potential wealth of the country, its crops, fruits, and animals; and the customs, behavior, and religious rites of the savages, as well as their attitude towards Europeans.

On the other hand, the English travelers were not colonists, warriors nor adventurers. Natural history was their main concern. They would walk miles to observe a new species of flower, or a strange animal, and then describe it minutely, with their interest centered upon the object, and not upon its practical utility to man. They would also interrupt their pursuits and the story of their travels to observe a beautiful storm, the color of some lovely rocks, or the exuberant vegetation of some savannah. In those exotic lands nature attracted them more than the inhabitants, their customs or their psychology. They were, in a word, more sensitive to nature and, even in their most accurate descriptions, more romantic than the French.

Chateaubriand was undoubtedly struck by the tone and style of these English travelers. It is most probably due to them, and to the influence of English life and literature in the last decade of the eighteenth century, that he developed,

if not a retrospective love for the exotic scenery of Louisiana and western America, at least, an ability to describe picturesque and exuberant nature with precision and charm; and because of his superior gifts, he immediately added beauty, glory, and romance to the data provided by his English predecessors.¹¹

When he prepared his manuscript of Les Natchez for publication, Chateaubriand was far removed from the English memories of Charlotte Ives and from the English travelers who had charmed him during his years as an emigre. Could this be the reason that he drew more extensively on French sources --- Charlevoix, Lafitau, and Le Page du Pratz --- and on classical epic poems? At any rate, it will be seen that his manner in the later work is less spontaneous, less concrete than in Atala, since he is more intent on describing the customs and psychology of the Indians and transfiguring the natural scenery of America into an epic background worthy of the ancients.

Although Chateaubriand, prior to his departure for

¹¹Bartram, however, holds an enviable place in the history of English literature. Mark van Doren, in the "Editor's note" to the 1928 edition of his Travels, quotes among his admirers and borrowers: Carlyle, Coleridge and Wordsworth. Op. cit., p. 5.

America, had read enthusiastic accounts of the freedom of the English colonists and the greatness and simplicity of Washington, it has been shown that, apart from the Letters Edifiantes, he knew very little about Louisiana, properly speaking, and the French explorers who preceded him. He does not seem to have read Joutel, nor Tonty, nor the other seventeenth-century writers. He did not, apparently, realize the tremendous obstacles which La Salle or D'Iberville had had to overcome; otherwise, he would not have remarked so casually that he himself had subsequently visited the Lower Mississippi and Florida. The young Breton who intended to discover the Northwest Passage had, as he tells us, pondered over maps with M. de Malesherbes,¹² but had not gathered data on the difficulties encountered by his predecessors in geographical discoveries.

The first sentence in Atala is an objective statement concerning the huge empire which France formerly possessed in North America, "from Labrador to the Floridas." An allusion to the French pioneers appears further on, in the same prologue to Atala: "After the discovery of the Meschacebe by Father Marquette and the unhappy La Salle . . ."

¹² Memoires d'Outre Tombe, I, passim, and Chinard, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

Strangely enough, in the earlier editions, Father Hennepin was mentioned instead of Marquette;¹³ between 1801 and 1804, Chateaubriand evidently must have heard of the dubiousness of the claims of Hennepin to the discovery of the Mississippi. In the epilogue of Atala, another sentence alludes to the banks of the Meschacebe, "which formerly constituted the southern barrier of New France." On the whole, Chateaubriand's imagination was not vividly aroused by the epic greatness of the first French explorers of the Mississippi, nor did he seem deeply moved by his country's loss of her vast territory. Is it because, for the creator of Atala and Celuta, to whom a story without a tender heroine was unthinkable, it was impossible to associate, even in epic poetry or fiction, a feminine companion with these solitary men, La Salle, Tonty, and Joutel? It is only in the concluding paragraph of Le Voyage en Amerique (1827) that he eloquently expresses his regret for France's loss of her North American colonies.

The setting of Atala has been left purposely vague by Chateaubriand. The name of Louisiana, "the sweet name of Louisiana," occurs twice in the prologue, and once more in the second paragraph of the episode of "Les Chasseurs."¹⁴

¹³See the note giving the original text, on p. 176 of Professor Chinard's edition of Atala, Paris, 1930.

¹⁴The name "Louisiana" occurs also once in the opening and again in the closing lines of Rene.

The novel opens with a magnificent description of the Mississippi, which is supposed to be not the lower Mississippi near its mouth in the Gulf of Mexico, but that portion of the river which flows through the Natchez region.¹⁵ Then Chactas and Rene travel up the river into the Ohio River, admiring as they go "the magnificent deserts of Kentucky." There Chactas tells his story. The events which he relates take place first somewhere in Florida (while Chactas is a captive tied to a tree). After his flight with Atala, they are seen near the Alleghanies and a branch of the Tennessee. Father Aubry's colony (in the part entitled "Les Laboueurs") is on "one of those ancient roads found near the mountains which separate Kentucky from the Floridas." The scene of the first paragraph of "Les Funerailles" is laid in the wilds of Kentucky on a clear moonlight night. The events related in the epilogue finally take place near the falls of Niagara.

From such rambling topographical references no accurate map of the setting of Atala could be drawn. The readers to whom geographical minutiae meant nothing received the impression that with the exception of the final events, this moving story of love and death took place in the vast, vague, and

¹⁵ As a quotation from an unpublished fragment of Chateaubriand's Memoires informs us. Chinard, op. cit., p. 72.

remote land of Louisiana, where Manon Lescaut had already met a tragic death. If the cynical French readers of 1801-1804, brought up in the sophisticated salons, were coldly convinced that one did not die of love in France, perhaps they imagined, at least, that in a distant and exotic country one might conceivably perish of excessive passion.

In his preface to the 1805 edition of Atala, Chateaubriand, though admitting that some of the criticisms directed against his novel were justified, shrewdly avoids saying: "What I say is true, because I have seen it," but declares: "I was accused of inventing extraordinary details, while I was merely recalling things well known to all travelers."¹⁶ Those who have visited Louisiana, he maintains, will bear witness to the veracity of his statements, and adds that when an English translation of Atala appeared in the United States, not a reader protested.

Admitting the weakness of his defense, one could nevertheless scarcely expect American readers of Philadelphia or Boston who themselves had never seen the Mississippi to question the credibility of a French writer who, instead of disparaging their country, described it as more beautiful than it was. Their testimony is not needed, however, for despite

¹⁶ Chateaubriand, Atala, Rene, Paris, 1930, Preface, p. 22.

the fact that Chateaubriand's claims are accepted today with less credulity than ever, it must be conceded that the most fantastic stories of the flora and fauna of Atala were not imaginary. Crocodiles, snakes, and herons were borrowed from Bartram, the botanist; green serpents were minutely described by the naturalist, Casteby; the blue heron really existed, as did the pink flamingoes, both described by Audubon. Hanging gardens of a variety of wisteria, and wild squash of various shapes had enraptured Bartram, who was impressed by the beauty of the magnolia, tall as a pyramid. The bears intoxicated with grapes, at which some critics had laughed skeptically, were borrowed by Chateaubriand from truthful Imlay; the black squirrel, the mocking bird, the green parrots with yellow heads are all real creatures observed by Casteby.¹⁷

Thus it happened that, having failed to see these strange animals and plants for himself, Chateaubriand did the next best thing: he recreated them in his imagination, sometimes even from the colored illustrations of an atlas or natural history. A typical example is the beautiful passage on Spanish moss which deserves to be quoted in the rhythmic French of the Original:

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Chinard, op. cit., p. 251, and pp. 255-260.

Presque tous les arbres de la Floride, en particulier le cedre et le chene vert, sont couverts d'une mousse blanche qui descend de leurs rameaux jusqu'a terre. Quand la nuit, au clair de la lune, vous apercevez sur la nudite d'une savane, une yeuse isolee revetue de cette draperie, vous croiriez voir un fantome, trainant apres lui ses longs voiles. La scene n'est pas moins pittoresque au jour; car une foule de papillons, de mouches brillantes, de colibris, de perruches vertes, de geais d'azur, vient s'accrocher a ces mousses, qui produisent alors l'effet d'une tapisserie en laine blanche, ou l'ouvrier europeen aurait brode des insectes et des oiseaux eclatants.¹⁸

Chateaubriand had probably never seen that "Spanish moss" which is found south of the thirty-fifth degree of latitude, for, as Professor Chinard has proved, he borrowed his facts from Bartram. Nevertheless, he accurately described the unique beauty of that luxuriant moss which adorns the trees of Florida and Louisiana as none of the French travelers who had beheld it had ever attempted to do.

It is all too obvious that Louisiana today is a far cry from the Louisiana of old. The visitor would look in vain for the colorful trees and birds and the fragrant flowers described by a voluptuous artist who painted, not in oils, but in words. On the banks of the Mississippi, the forests and jungles have been replaced by cotton or sugar can fields, and by factories or oil wells. Yet Louisiana remains a land of

¹⁸Chateaubriand, *Atala*. Rene, p. 67. The passage was longer in earlier editions, but shortened by Chateaubriand in later editions. The omissions are to be found in the Chinard edition, in the notes, p. 179.

romance, and many a present-day traveler, having fallen under the spell of its strange charm, finds within himself, emotions faintly reminiscent of Chateaubriand's enthusiasm. The author of the following passage, seated in a modern automobile, speeding along paved roads, was evidently experiencing a mood somewhat akin to that of Rene:

The car goes slowly through the village, climbs a hill, and is off into the country, down a long road between pine trees. The air is cold, and the scent of pine trees comes to you sharply. On and on goes the car; down through a "bottom" where oak trees grow, and where the water splashes about the wheels; up another hill, and there upon its crest you see the full moon, hanging low in the sky. From somewhere comes the long-drawnout hoot of an owl. Mile after mile unrolls before you, the light of the car shining on the trunks of trees, and along the fences as the road curves sharply.¹⁹

Even a critically-minded traveler, such as Andre Bellessort, who knew that Chateaubriand had not seen the Mississippi, insisted upon seeing it as he describes it:

When I went down towards Louisiana, I was thinking of "l'enchanteur." I knew that he had not been there, but Others have known America better than he; none has made us better feel its wild and ancient beauty.²⁰

A country which manages thus to retain its "soul" beneath the dull veneer of civilization may well have had,

¹⁹Lyle Saxon, Old Louisiana, p. 314.

²⁰A. Bellessort, "Chateaubriand en Amerique," Le Correspondant, Volume 278, 1920, p. 926.

at the close of the eighteenth century, some of the splendor that Chateaubriand lends it, and even more of it in the early part of the century, when the events recounted in Atala took place; and since the only available testimony, that of explorers and naturalists, weighs heavily in Chateaubriand's favor, perhaps the least that modern readers can do is to plead incompetence to judge him, and consequently withhold the charge of fabrication.

A far more justifiable cause for criticism is the illogical juxtaposition of details to be found in Atala. Individual details, however authentic, do not necessarily make for the veracity of the ensemble. This is especially true of Atala, in which Chateaubriand, the geographer, for poetical and architectural purposes, evidences such a willful disdain of geography. He repeatedly betrays or asserts his purpose of combination and calculation. He manipulates characters, scenery, and circumstances in order to put into his epic both the Mississippi River and Niagara Falls, hunters and cultivators, and all the interesting circumstances of the manners of the savages.²¹ A huge portion of the North American continent shrinks to the dimensions of a few landscapes perceptible to the naked eye. Such microcosmic

²¹Chinard's edition of Atala, pp. 10-11.

scenery, though gorgeous and exotic, is scarcely more real and convincing than the fictitious characters, the creations of Chateaubriand's imagination, who move across it. The tall cedars covered with Spanish moss, the fragrant shrubs, the brilliantly colored parrots and cardinal birds described in Atala remain throughout the novel mere stage properties. And yet, one wonders ---- must not there be a hidden spark of life in a book which delighted a public of yesteryear and once rang as true as a beautiful dream?

Of the characters in Atala, neither Chactas, nor Atala, nor the eloquent Father Aubry belongs to Louisiana. Chactas, though one of the Natchez, is far different from the worshippers of the sun described by all French travelers to the Natchez region. The daughter of Lopez might be claimed by Florida, since she accompanies the "Muscogulges" and the "Siminoles," as Chateaubriand spells the names of the tribes. Her character, "something virtuous and passionate," does not remind us of the savage women described by previous French explorers, not even of the Christianized Indian women held up as models to the Europeans in the Lettres Edifiantes. As for Father Aubry, he is a conventional idealization of some of the heroic missionaries who met death while working for Christianity in the American wilds. Chateaubriand knew of

Father Souel,²² a missionary who had actually perished in the Natchez revolt of 1729, and had probably read the accounts of the Natchez revolt given in the Jesuit Relations by Father Le Petit and others. None of the French missionaries, however, had been quite so grave and humorless as Chateaubriand's priest; none of them, not even Hennepin, the most fertile writer of them all, nor the enthusiastic humanist, Lahontan, had been so cultured as Father Aubry, who spends his leisure hours engraving quotations from Homer and the Song of Songs on the bark of oaks;²³ and none of them had been romantic enough, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,²⁴ to gaze at the clouds in the winter skies, and to listen to "the winds and the torrents roaring in the solitary plain."²⁵

Chateaubriand's attitude toward the Indians of Louisiana (and especially the Natchez, who were his favorite tribe) is more interesting. He is attracted to them and,

²²Chateaubriand, Rene, 1st and 3rd paragraphs. Father Souel is Rene's only companion.

²³Atala, p. 85: "En descendant la montagne, j'aperçus des chênes ou les Genies semblaient avoir dessiné des caracteres étrangers. L'hermite me dit qu'il les avait tracés lui-même, que d'étaient des vers d'un ancien poète appelé Homère, et quelques sentences d'un autre poète plus ancien encore, nommé Salomon"

²⁴The second paragraph in "Les Chasseurs" informs us indirectly that Chactas, born in 1672, tells his story in 1725 or 1726.

²⁵Atala, p. 84.

unlike most French colonists and travelers, approves of their bloody revolt and their massacre of the French.²⁶ But as soon as he discovers his vocation, that of the restorer of Christianity to French literature, he disagrees with Rousseau, and in his first preface to Atala, is careful to state clearly his attitude toward him:

Besides I am not, like Rousseau, an enthusiast in regard to the savages I do not believe "pure nature" to be the most beautiful thing in the world. I have always found it very ugly, whenever I had an opportunity to observe it²⁷

Atala is in some respects a didactic novel, devoted to praising a stable life of diligent agricultural labor as preferable to the nomadic life of Indian hunters. Chactas, however, who voices the author's moral message, chooses, as the Prologue informs us, to remain outside the pale of Christianity and of civilization. His creator does not censor him for his choice. Chateaubriand, the Christian philosopher, proclaims the superiority of civilization over the life led by the primitive tribes of America;²⁸ Chateaubriand, the poet, is attracted by the freedom and comparative

²⁶Cf. infra., p.

²⁷Atala, p. 9.

²⁸In the Voyage en Amerique, Chateaubriand advocates even more strongly, the advantages of civilization, just as Vigny (his disciple in that respect) also does in his poem La Sauvage.

solitude of savage life. To his pair of lovers in Atala, he attributes his own emotions - - - a romantic longing for death, and an unreserved devotion to love as the sole purpose of life. Once again, Chateaubriand has failed to create, for his characters are not authentic savages, but merely lay-figures dressed in the profundities of his own personality.

The customs depicted in Atala are aspects of savage life which had been recorded repeatedly by French and English travelers in Louisiana and other parts of America: the councils of old men, the jugglers, the treatment of captives, the war-songs, the games, the savages' weakness for whiskey, and other details concerning the daily lives of the natives. Such information regarding the savages hardly belongs to literature concerning Louisiana, since Chateaubriand does not try to distinguish the Indians of Louisiana from other tribes, but depicts all Indians as more or less alike.

Rene, also, that melancholy lamentation in a Louisiana setting (near the French colony in the Natchez County before the Natchez revolt), can scarcely be included in Louisiana literature, except for brief allusions in the first two pages. The Genie du Christianisme, published in 1802, relates an

episode concerning Louisiana negroes,²⁹ and quotes Father Charlevoix, the historian of New France and Louisiana, five or six times. It draws from the Lettres Edifiantes, a few volumes of which deal with Louisiana. In the fourth part of the fourth book, on Missions, the eighth chapter, which is devoted to the missions in New France, contains a passage in which Chateaubriand hints that while returning to France from Louisiana, he met a missionary from New Orleans who was returning to the Illinois country. The mention, however, is so vague and brief that it does not entitle the Genie to any special examination in this study.

It has been seen how, through his works of 1801-1804, and especially in Atala, Chateaubriand introduced into French literature that exotic American color which for two centuries had vainly tried to gain admittance. In the setting of his novel, and in his unforgettable picture of the Mississippi, Chateaubriand exhibited a new feeling for nature - - - a nature more immoderate and more luxuriant than any which Rousseau or Bernardin de Saint Pierre had yet described. Man and his wildest passions appear in their proportionate insignificance against the grandiose background of Louisiana

²⁹Genie, Part I, Book V, Chapter XIV.

jungles, and of the flora and fauna of the strange and untamed Meschacebe. In choosing as a setting the most striking natural feature of the New World, the Mississippi river, Chateaubriand provided French readers with that romantic escape which new literature required.

In that new and imposing setting, there emerges a new type of passion. No element of the bourgeois, the vulgar, or the sordid defiles the realm of Chateaubriand's tormented lovers. The solitude of the American prairie heightens the wildness and intensity of their emotions. "O Rene," exclaims Chactas, "if you fear love ("les troubles du coeur"), beware of solitude; great passions are solitary, and if they are transported to the desert, it is as if they are returned to their kingdom."³⁰ Such a sentimental appeal is enhanced by the religious motive employed by Chateaubriand. Christianity, and a vow misinterpreted by the daughter of the wilds, create the obstacle to the lovers' happiness. Atala seems even more voluptuous to Chactas because she remains mystically pure. On her death-bed, she resembles "la statue de la Virginite endormie."³¹

Thus, through the magic of his style, did Chateaubriand

³⁰ Atala, p. 72.

³¹ Ibid., p. 114.

present to the reading world the dignity, nobility, and exalted grandeur of the Mississippi Valley and the forests of Florida. In a passage of his preface to the 1804 edition of the Genie, which included Atala,³² the young author says: "The public should be grateful to a writer who endeavors to bring literature back to ce gout antique, too often forgotten nowadays." In Atala, and even more obviously in Les Natchez, Chateaubriand is, indeed, obsessed by classical reminiscences. That New World which serves as a setting for this story of eternal passion is also an old world. The Meschacebe, the forests, the animals, and "le rivage antique des mers" are as venerable as the world of Homer or of Sophocles.

³²Ibid., p. 11.

CHAPTER III

LOUISIANA IN CHATEAUBRIAND'S LES NATCHEZ AND IN LE VOYAGE EN AMERIQUE

SUMMARY

Appearance of Les Natchez in 1826, when interest in Louisiana had subsided. Composition, subject, and sources of the epic. Obvious short-comings. Louisiana as it appears in Les Natchez: geography and scenery, flora and fauna. Local color and its debatable accuracy. Customs of the Indians. Le Voyage en Amerique (1827): its scientific aspect and its geography. Chateaubriand's judgments on French colonization in Louisiana and Canada, and its regrettable failure.

After the years 1801-1804, while Atala was being enjoyed by innumerable readers, reprinted in France, translated in England and in America, and praised by critics,¹ Chateaubriand wisely refrained from jeopardizing his success by attempting to repeat it too soon. He could not help being aware of some

¹A few critical readers, such as Abbe Morellet, had taken exception to various faulty phrases, or to the expression of scarcely orthodox emotions. On Abbe Morellet and his criticism of Atala, see Sainte-Beuve, Chateaubriand et son groupe litteraire, Chapter IX, for a biting refutation of the aged and narrow-minded abbe's critique. I was unable to include in this study the welcome given Atala by French critics, because my studies in France were suddenly concluded by war conditions, and because the subject itself is too extensive. However, it seems most likely that critics could not have been vitally concerned with that aspect of Chateaubriand's influence which interests my subject --- that is, the effect of literature concerning Louisiana and the Louisiana Indians upon French readers between 1801 and 1825. Critics discussed the style and the Christian orthodoxy of the novel, but said little about the American scenery. It is well known that Atala had several new editions in 1801, and ten new ones subsequently, before Chateaubriand published his Oeuvres Completes, in 1824.

lack of variety in the sources of his inspiration, confined as they were to the struggle between love and religion; between christianity and the opposing forces of paganism, of the Moslem faith, and of the primitive superstitions of American Indians; and between natural life and civilization; struggles which, despite a certain evolution,² were to remain the psychological basis of most of his works. Like a plaintive minor chord, his melancholy boredom with life echoes through Rene and Les Natchez, L'Itineraire, and the Memoires. It is true that Chateaubriand's travels in the East, or the Mediterranean world,³ supply a new setting for his emotions. A moonlit landscape in Greece, in Spain, or in Palestine seemed different from the moonlight nights on the Mississippi. And yet there is no doubt that Chateaubriand had been powerfully impressed by his brief American travels, for even while observing the wonders of the East, he was pursued by memories of the real America which he had seen, as by views of the New World regions which he had never beheld. When traveling in Egypt, he sees the mouth of

²This evolution--away from natural life and toward civilization, away from the virgin desert and toward one peopled with memories of the past, away from the Mississippi and toward Spain--has been stressed by Professor Gustave Charlier in his book, Le Sentiment de la nature chez les Romantiques francais (1762-1830), pp. 192-242.

³In Les Aventures du dernier Abencerage (written in 1807, published in 1826) which takes place in Spain; in Les Martyrs (1809) and L'Itineraire (1811).

the Nile, and is "reminded" as it were, of the mouth of the Mississippi.⁴ And in referring to the author's second group of American works, revised for publication after 1820, Joseph Bedier said quite aptly:

The memories of those distant undertakings had penetrated deep into Chateaubriand's life, and thirty years later, amid the daily occupations of his career, a thousand involuntary recollections would suddenly conjure up to his eyes, nature in the New World.⁵

While Les Natchez, in 1826, no longer offered the charm of novelty which had been Atala's, it retained in some measure the power of moving Chateaubriand himself.

This work, Chateaubriand's second epic novel in a Louisiana setting, is of less importance than Atala, from the point of view of this subject. In the first place, the same preliminary remarks (offered in the chapter on Atala) on Chateaubriand's actual travels and his sources, as well as the same general conclusions, apply equally as consistently to Les Natchez. Furthermore, Les Natchez presents no information that was strikingly new concerning the Indians of the Mississippi Valley, or the vegetation and landscape of the southern United States. A third reason must be added: Les

⁵Bedier, Etudes Critiques, p. 129.

Natchez from the first was received with an obvious lack of enthusiasm by the French public. Many of the reviewers⁶ considered the epic still-born. It is a long and ambitious work which has never enjoyed much popularity. Jules Lemaitre, giving it a half-ironical summary in his book on Chateaubriand, says: "I believe Les Natchez is very little read, for reading it is no joy."

I shall not imitate Jules Lemaitre's severity, although the question may well be asked whether this unsuccessful attempt and "strategic mistake" by an otherwise shrewd and successful author such as Chateaubriand was did not disappoint some French readers and discourage their potential interest in literature concerning Louisiana.

After Napoleon's defeat and the return of the king, Chateaubriand, who had embarked upon a political career, interested himself only in political writings. In the meantime, new stars had risen in the literary sky: Lamartine, Vigny and Hugo in France, Byron and Walter Scott in England.

⁶Professor Chinard has quoted all the important contemporary reviews at the end of his scholarly edition of Les Natchez, which is henceforth the indispensable starting point for any further investigations concerning that book. Cf. also by the same author, L'Exotisme americain, op. cit., Chapters VI and VII.

Chateaubriand, anxious not to be forgotten in the new literary era, undertook to publish his Oeuvres Completes in Paris. Les Natchez and the author's account of his trip to America were the most conspicuous new features of the undertaking.

Les Natchez, however, was in fact a work of the late eighteenth century offered to the French public in 1826. A few notes taken in America in 1791 and lost during Chateaubriand's emigration, but recovered under strange circumstances after the fall of Napoleon, may have been the starting point of the book. Chateaubriand worked on that text, combining it with more mature material, and Les Natchez, published in 1826-1828,⁷ became volumes nineteen and twenty of his Oeuvres Completes.

It is needless to analyze the work in detail, for Chateaubriand's critics have done it most competently. Influenced by eighteenth-century ideas and by his travels, he chose as the subject of his epic "the natural man," or "the manners of the savages." Since the discovery of America was doubtless too formidable a subject, Chateaubriand chose what he believed to be the second best: the revolt of the

⁷The strange story of that manuscript has been told by V. Giraud, G. Charlier (in articles mentioned in the bibliography), and by G. Chinard in a substantial preface to his edition of Les Natchez, pp. 2-29.

Natchez against the French in 1729,⁸ which he interprets as a conspiracy of all the North American Indians against their conquerors "after an oppression of two centuries."⁹

The main details of the Natchez revolt (exalted to the noble dignity of a complicated war between men and gods, or demons), were borrowed by the author from two French sources: Charlevoix's account in the History of New France and Le Page du Pratz, who had witnessed the massacre. Chateaubriand added much to his authorities, magnifying a mere incident of French colonial history, and covering the whole subject with a veneer borrowed from the ancient poets. The same English travelers who had assisted him in describing the Mississippi Valley in Atala, especially Bartram and Carver, were utilized. His information on the customs of the savages and their similarity to Homeric or Virgilian heroes was drawn, to a large extent, from Lafitau.

The shortcomings of Les Natchez have also been discussed by numerous critics. Though all the exterior paraphernalia of a traditional epic are there: the "merveilleux," struggles between angels and demons; endless wars, generous feats of

⁸Chateaubriand gives, by mistake, the date of 1727 in his preface to the first edition of Atala.

⁹It has been pointed out that scarcely forty years (and not two centuries) had elapsed since the French had first "conquered" the Natchez region in Louisiana.

heroism, games, religious rites, and a journey to some inferno (for which the author has substituted in Les Natchez a trip to Paris and Versailles during the reign of Louis XIV); though no effort is spared to elevate the wars and the characters to an homeric stature, the wars seem merely a needless and unimpressive mass of horrors,¹⁰ and the characters more like puppets than the giants which the author evidently hoped to depict.

Moreover, the chief essential is lacking: the subject, a mere detail in French history, is not of sufficient importance to interest a wide circle of readers. There is too little action. The characters are unreal and difficult to visualize. Their inner conflicts are too far-fetched. They weep too much, and analyze their emotions and their sufferings in a stilted and artificial manner. The American atmosphere interferes with the reader's interest in them as human beings for local color, language, and striking details of costume are over-emphasized. Above all, the style seems affected and false. In only a few descriptive passages did Chateaubriand the painter and musician reveal himself. If it is true that greatness is inseparable from simplicity, then it is plain enough that Les Natchez cannot be called a great work.

¹⁰ M. Chinard has proved the influence of the terrifying novel on Les Natchez. Cf. his edition, Introduction, p. 64.

The redeeming features of the book are found in its autobiographical and psychological revelations. This would-be epic is the personal confession of the author, who expressed in it his hesitations between natural life and civilization, his dream of escape from society, cherished by Rousseau before him, and his realization that no one can truly escape from his past nor the prison of self. In his study of American exoticism, Professor Chinard has wisely chosen to emphasize this point of view. My interest in the work is less inclusive, for I merely wish to know the part which Louisiana plays in it, and how those hardy souls among the French public who had the perseverance to read it from cover to cover were affected by the Louisiana depicted there.

Epics, from the Odyssey to Fenelon's Telemaque, traditionally include descriptions of long wanderings over land and sea. Les Natchez is no exception. In Books VI and VII, the reader is taken during the tale of Chactas's adventures, to France; then, in Books VIII and IX, to the Esquimoos in Labrador; and later to the Sioux and the Illinois in America. The greater part of the scene, however, is laid in Louisiana, and more particularly in the Natchez country.

Chateaubriand is lavish in his geographical references, whenever he can rely upon some previous traveler such as

Charlevoix.¹¹ Lacking such information, he is guilty of confusing, if not the geographical data, at least, the location of the homes of the different tribes or Indian "nations."¹² Such minutiae matters mattered little to Chateaubriand's readers, who vaguely considered the North American continent as a huge ensemble. The map drawn by Le Page du Pratz in 1757, and included in his History of Louisiana,¹³ gave Chateaubriand the principal information necessary in locating Fort Rosalie and the Natchez region, south of Pointe Coupee, along the Mississippi. Chateaubriand never asserted that he had seen the mouth of the Mississippi, where La Salle had planted the coat of arms of the King of France. He did claim, however, in a skilfully --- and purposely vague fragment of the Memoires d'Outre Tombe,¹⁴ that he had visited the Natchez

 11 For example, in Book VIII (Chinard edition, p. 249), Chactas describes with precise details the rivers he successively crosses: the Missouri, Ohio, White River, Arkansas, etc.

12 Chateaubriand's Natchez communicate with the most surprising ease with the Canadians; Chactas goes to take lessons in the art of war from the Iroquois, thousands of miles away. (Book V, Chinard edition, p. 183).

13 That map is reproduced by G. Chinard in his edition of Les Natchez.

14 "When I touched the Natchez region in 1791, nothing was yet settled in that country. I did not know where to turn; I was half-tempted to go down to New Orleans But why should I have gone to the mouth of the Mississippi, when I wanted to explore the North? . . ." (Unpublished fragment from the Memoires, quoted in Bedier, op. cit., p. 153, and in Chinard, L'Exotisme Americain, p. 72.)

region. Once again, his Breton imagination impelled him, like the Provencal Tartarin, to believe that he had actually beheld the scenes of which he had only read.

Obviously, this procedure does not entail any degree of accuracy. The landscape in which the action takes place and the suggestiveness of the descriptions are of more importance than their geographical exactness. The first description of the scenery, presented in the opening page of Book I, is charming and poetical. Rene goes up the Meschacebe until he reaches the foot of the hills which mark the land of the children of the Sun. He leaps ashore, climbs the hills, and admires the peaceful Natchez village, shaded with magnolia and sassafras, where women, picking strawberries in the field, are frightened and flee at his coming.¹⁵ The sky, repeatedly mentioned in the book, is a deep blue, as becomes a southern climate where, in Chateaubriand's conception, dark clouds are unknown. The Meschacebe is usually in the background of those landscapes which are painted here and there. Chateaubriand speaks of its "rosy waves," as only one who had not actually observed the color of the big river would be guilty of describing it.¹⁶ The river is present in the first page, as

¹⁵Chinard edition, pp. 107-108.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 371.

in the last line of the epic, in which the author concludes his slow-moving story with these words: "May my tale have flowed like thy waters, O Meschacebe!"¹⁷

The scenery of Louisiana as depicted in Les Natchez is neither terrifying nor hostile to man. Idyllic and voluptuous, delicate and strangely exotic, would be the adjectives describing it most accurately. Trees are abundant in the luxuriant flora of Louisiana: maples, both male and female,¹⁸ oaks expanding their branches and concealing the beech and cypress trees, all alien to Europe. By borrowing exotic touches from the naturalists whom he had consulted, Chateaubriand pictures every detail of the flora of Louisiana in strange and unfamiliar aspects. For instance, he is inspired by Bartram to mention those peculiar exposed roots of the cypress trees known as "knees,"¹⁹ on which the trees, growing in the swamps, seem to float. The French reader must have been bewildered in these unusual forests, so different from the natural, yet orderly groves of Saint Germain or Fontainebleau. Everywhere water-plants grow luxuriantly, weeds flourish, vines entangle themselves about the trees and

¹⁷Ibid., p. 503.

¹⁸Ibid., pa. 152, and Professor Chinard's footnote. Red-blossomed maples (male) and white-blossomed maples (females) grow side by side, and seem to talk sweetly to each other when rocked by the breeze.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 298 and Chinard's note.

shrubs in a rank growth of tropical vegetation.

Flowers and fruit are even more frequently mentioned than trees. It would be tedious to list them all. Watermelons,²⁰ figs, strawberries, and may-apples are enumerated in the opening page of Les Natchez. Coffee grows in Chateaubriand's imaginary Louisiana: slaves gather what Chateaubriand calls the "cherry of coffee," (*la cerise du cafe*), and colored women spread "the precious stone" on hurdles. In the meanwhile, the owner of the plantation walks leisurely about under a grove of orange-trees and promises "love and rest" to his diligent slaves.²¹ Tulips, magnolias, roses, and gardenias fill the air with fragrance.

The fauna is none the less strange, none the less abundant, and, on the whole, surprisingly friendly to man. When an Indian family enjoys a little rest in the evening, our author depicts their highly civilized picnic among fragrant flowers and soothing music: "the monotonous song of the whip-poor-will, the buzzing of the humming bird, the whistle of the mocking-bird and the distant roaring of the crocodiles," composed the ineffable symphony of that banquet.²²

²⁰Most French travelers in Louisiana (Le Page du Pratz, Bossu, and others) had mentioned this exotic fruit, and found it beautiful as well as delicious.

²¹Les Natchez, p. 297.

²²Ibid., p. 134. All the details, as M. Chinard shows, are borrowed from Bartram and accumulated incongruously here in a few lines.

Buffaloes, tortoises, squirrels, parrots, doves, turkeys, frogs, and naturally, crocodiles and snakes, surround the diners.²³ But they do not inspire any fear in the hero, Rene, for he wanders among them as men did when "the sun of the golden age rose at the songs of herdsmen."²⁴

Such a Louisiana lays no claim to accurate local color. A striking instance of inaccuracy is the idyllic picture of the harvesting of "folleavoine" in Louisiana.²⁵ French travelers had repeatedly mentioned this cereal, explaining that it did not grow south of the Great Lakes --- but Chateaubriand ignores such information. A radiant moonlight marks the end of his harvest scene, as a priest addresses the moon in verse reminiscent of Ossian. But though the episode is incredible, these pages present some striking aspects of nature, and serve as a prelude to a voluptuous scene in which Mila swims like a languid siren in the river near the harvested fields. Certainly, the most appealing in literature, and especially in Chateaubriand, is not

²³See pp

²⁴Ibid., p. 129.

²⁵Thus called because it resembles oats in shape, although it has nothing in common with that cereal.

always the most truthful.

Next in importance to the American scenery in Chateaubriand's epic, rank the vague inhabitants of that country called Louisiana. The picture of the Indians is, in general, truthful. Although Chateaubriand, being no anthropologist, attributes to the Natchez many characteristics of northern tribes, and fails to emphasize the original features of their civilization: worship of the sun, despotism, hierarchy, strict organization, and set ritual, in other respects, however, he follows his sources (especially Charlevoix and Lahontan) with a degree of accuracy.²⁶ Adhering to his usual practice of including multitudinous details, he presents an idealized epitome of all the Indian customs described by explorers and missionaries.

Whatever truth there is in Les Natchez, of course, concerns only exterior traits. The psychology of these rebellious Indians, however, is open to discussion. Chateaubriand pictures them as cruel and barbarous, yet strangely delicate and refined. Their warriors, above all, Outougamiz, Rene's brother-in-law, are exceedingly lachrymose, to such

²⁶ Chinard, L'Exotisme americain, pp. 193-200.

an extent, in fact, as only readers of Rousseau and Lamartine could accept. A river of sentimental tears flows through Les Natchez as the Meschacebe flows through the scenery. If the modern reader can overlook their inconsistencies and their failure to lead useful lives, faults which they share with all of Chateaubriand's heroes, there will still remain such unconvincing psychological traits as their sentimentality and their too evident similarity to ancient mythical characters.

The author of Le Genie du Christianisme was ever a faithful admirer of pagan antiquity. When Celuta appears,²⁷ in Book I, "delicate as a palm tree, and frail as a reed, her hair adorned with fragrant flowers," Chateaubriand transfigures her into a Virgilian goddess: "So appeared Hero at the feasts of Alydos; so was Venus known, in the woods of Carthage, by her carriage and the odor of ambrosia which came from her hair."²⁸ When Rene sees Celuta, through branches in the forest, one is reminded, even before reading of his emotions, of Ulysses watching Nausicaa on the beach.²⁹

²⁷Les Natchez, p. 109.

²⁸Ibid., p. 110. The Virgilian source is given by Professor Chinard in a footnote.

²⁹Ibid., p. 151, and Note 2 on the allusion to the Odyssey.

If Chateaubriand intends to impart any definite message in his epic, it would seem to be his conviction that the greatest virtues of the ancient world --- simplicity, naive beauty, devotion to one's ancestors, and above all, friendship --- have taken refuge in America. A pompous invocation to friendship, which must be quoted in the pseudo-Virgilian style of the French original, will serve as one proof, among many, of his attitude:

Mere des actions sublimes! toi qui, depuis que la Grece n'est plus, as etabli ta demeure sur les tombeaux indiens, dans les solitudes du Nouveau-Monde! toi qui parmi ces deserts es pleine de grandeur parce que tu es pleine d'innocence! Amitie sainte!³⁰

So it is that, in Les Natchez even more than in Atala, Chateaubriand envelops the American mirage of the eighteenth century with a classical atmosphere. Happy and virtuous savages, in speech and manner resembling Homer's heroes, but living a more natural life; uncivilized, yet refined and generous in spirit, are depicted as the blessed inhabitants of a new Atlantis. To make the picture even more classic, the Indians, handsome as the Grecian champions of Olympic games, lived in a land whose ancient ruins, repeatedly described by Chateaubriand, spoke of a remote past. The mention of these ruins (the Scioto ruins) by Bartram and Inlay

³⁰Ibid., p. 299.

had made an early impression upon the young Breton explorer who was, a few years later, to visit Athens and Sparta. A landscape invested with mystery by a few broken columns surviving the wreckage of centuries³¹ had come to appeal to him more than a virgin land.

Attempting to observe Chateaubriand's Louisiana through the eyes of French readers of the last century, one sees a land of great natural beauty, a land, prodigal in its luxuriant vegetation, and teeming with animal life; a land where men live the happy lives of classical heroes, in which friendship, love, and courage flourish. Les Natchez, moreover, reveals easily enough several strata of thought in Chateaubriand's attitude toward the savages. After his return from England as an emigre, and especially as an honored statesman in Europe's most cultured capital, in 1825-1826, he rewrote part of Les Natchez. In this new version, one finds that in his desire to disclaim any sympathy for Rousseauistic doctrines, he justifies civilization as opposed to primitivistic dreams. It must be remarked, however, that the early text of the epic contained many an apology for primitive life which impresses the modern reader as fresher, more ardent, and perhaps more

³¹ Later on, in his Voyage en Amerique, Chateaubriand confessed that he had been mistaken in supposing the ruins of Alabama to be older than they were. Cf. Chinard, L'Exotisme, op. cit., p. 74.

sincere than Chateaubriand's mature attitude.³² Both primitive Indians and civilized French warriors display eminent virtues in his epic, but the primitives are superior because in being virtuous they are impelled, not by reason, but by a spontaneous instinct:

Comme un charmant olivier nourri parmi les ruisseaux
et les ombrages laisse tomber, sans s'en apercevoir, au
gre des brises, ses fruits murs sur les gazons fleuris;
ainsi l'enfant des forets americaines semait, au
souffle de l'amitie, ses vertus sur la terre, sans se
douter des merveilleux presents qu'il faisait aux
hommes.³³

Le Voyage en Amerique, which Chateaubriand published in his Coeuvres Completes in 1827, one year after Les Natchez, impresses the modern reader as one of the most lively of his works. In it the best qualities of Chateaubriand's masterpiece, Les Memoires d'Outre Tombe, are foreshadowed.³⁴ The

³²Books V and VI of Les Natchez are, as it were, a new version of the Extraordinary Voyage dear to the seventeenth century. The court of Versailles, the great king, his glorious galaxy of writers (Racine, La Bruyere, Fenelon), and even the famous Ninon de Lenclos, whom Chactas addresses as "Amante du plaisir" (p. 206) are depicted by the Indian hero who visited France, not in a satirical vein, but in a series of ingenious transpositions which make them appear slightly ridiculous.

³³Les Natchez, p. 302. That picture of primitive beauty is best rendered in French.

³⁴Special consideration need be devoted to Louisiana as it appears in the Memoires d'Outre Tombe since the essential portions of it which concern Louisiana in French letters are more or less identical with the corresponding passages of the Voyage en Amerique. In the first volume of the Memoires, written in London in 1822, according to Chateaubriand, contains the author's account of his trip to America in 1791, which has already been discussed. His visit to Washington, his travels to Niagara, and even the famous episode of the Indian girls whom he met in Florida, do not belong to this subject.

author's memories and opinions concerning America possess none of the burden of elaborate metaphors and far-fetched epithets which the epic style of Atala and even more of Les Natchez seem to necessitate; and because the style is more natural, the prose is more direct and vivid.

Two types of writing, strikingly different in content, are presented. Many passages seem almost scientific in character, reading like a precise and objective account of the geography, geology, and archeology of North America. In contrast to this feature is the ever-present egotism which permeates the work. The author, already over fifty years old when he wrote his memoirs, looks back with nostalgic longing toward his past. He is fond of lamenting his career as though he expects his complaints to find an echo throughout the whole world. Repeatedly, he interrupts the tale of his American adventures to bring up the question of what would have happened if he had been drowned while swimming during his Atlantic crossing; or in the Niagara Falls, where he once almost lost his life, or poisoned by a rattlesnake which almost bit him.³⁵

In other respects, the Voyage en Amerique is an

³⁵I shall quote Chateaubriand's Voyage en Amerique from Volume 6 of the Garnier edition of his works. The above references are to pp. 70-80.

erudite work. The preface is a "general history of travels," not only to the New World, but to the regions described by Homer, Plato, Strabo, and other Greek writers through the Middle Ages and the modern era. Among that glorious list of travelers, and historians of travels, Chateaubriand, with apparent modesty, claims a place:

I appear as the last historian of the peoples of the continent of Columbus, of those peoples whose race will soon vanish: I will say a few words on the future destinies of America, on that other people, inheritor of the unfortunate Indians.³⁶

In the subsequent account of his trip, the young Breton from Saint-Malo, who had hoped to discover the Northwest Passage, once more does not appear as a very precise geographer. Le Voyage quotes extensively from Charlevoix, and from a dozen English travelers; it borrows from Beltrami, an Italian traveler whose account had been published in 1824, and who, not a very trustworthy traveler himself, had borrowed from Carver. It mentions figures and distances in miles most copiously, but these are proof of a conscientious study of maps, not of actual travel. The Mississippi with "its turbid and tumultuous waters," the Ohio, and the Kentucky are mentioned. But Chateaubriand adds the disconcerting avowal that his own notes were mingled with translations from Bartram, and prudently confesses his inability to disentangle Bartram's

³⁶

Voyage en Amerique, op. cit., p. 42.

work from his own. The truth is that many pages of the Voyage, among those concerning Louisiana and Florida,³⁷ were borrowed unashamedly from Chateaubriand's English predecessors.

The passages dealing with Louisiana scenery, and with the flora and the fauna of the country described in Le Voyage need not detain us, since they are repetitions of passages already to be found in Atala or in Les Natchez. If they were quoted, it would be to illustrate Chateaubriand's new descriptive style. Twenty-four years after the Louisiana Purchase and thirty-five after his own hasty visit to the New World, the painter has become a past master in his art. His landscapes, however vaguely located, are more sober than the descriptions in his earlier American novels, less decorative and sonorous, more precise and more vivid. The details, though still lacking in realism possess a more authentic tone. Such is his picture of the landscape (p. 85) at the spot where the Ohio and the Kentucky rivers meet; such is also the description, bordering on the sensuous, of a clear brook in which a legion of golden fishes swim among crayfish (p. 94); such are his descriptions of the Mississippi and its banks, now hilly, now swampy, inhabited by buffaloes and water birds

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 92-93. Florida, or "les Florides," meant to Chateaubriand Florida, Alabama, Georgia, the Carolinas and Tennessee.

(p. 90). I shall limit myself to the following quotation, the description of a sunset, in which Chateaubriand's feeling for colors and for nuances reaches the consummate art of the Memoires d'Outre-Tombe:

Le soleil tomba derriere le rideau d'arbres de la plaine; a mesure qu'il descendait, les mouvements de l'ombre et de la lumiere repandaient quelque chose de magique sur le tableau; la un rayon se glissait a travers le dome d'une futaie et brillait comme une escarboucle enchassée dans le feuillage sombre; ici, la lumiere divergeait entre les troncs et les branches, et projetait sur les gazons, des colonnes croissantes et des treillages mobiles Les memes teintes se repetaient sans se confondre; le feu se detachait du feu, le jaune pale du jaune pale, le violet du violet; tout etait eclatant, tout etait enveloppe, penetre, sature de lumiere.³⁸

Such a gorgeous and luminous sunset might have been attributed to many other regions in the world; therefore it is to the honor and glory of Louisiana that Chateaubriand, chose it as the setting for one of his most glowing passages.

A final and interesting aspect of the Voyage en Amerique, is our author's decided change of opinion in the matter of colonial policies. Much time had elapsed and many momentous events had taken place since 1801, when he had expressed in Atala his hope that France would retain the territory of Louisiana just recovered from Spain. The former emigre himself had become an ambassador and a statesman,

³⁸Ibid., p. 95

versed in history and inured to hard realities. He had reflected on the short-lived conquests of the French in the New World and on the gloomy fact that French colonization in America had failed.

On the other hand, Chateaubriand was now willing to render homage to the hardy spirit of adventure of his countrymen, to their courage, even to their ability to win the support of the natives. Although the long chapter in the Voyage en Amerique which deals with the "Manners of the Savages"³⁹ is nothing but a well-organized summary, adding nothing to the interpretation of Chateaubriand's knowledge of the Indians, it is, nevertheless, of particular interest in that the author no longer presents himself as the champion of the Indians in revolt against the French. In 1827, he agrees unequivocally with the partisans of civilization and progress, and advises the government not to halt the inevitable expansion of steam navigation and the modern means of communication.⁴⁰ His comment on the special affection which the Indians have for the French is interesting: he attributes that attachment to "the gaiety of the French, their brilliant

³⁹That chapter covers pages 110 to 204, and examines the customs of the Indians concerning marriage, funerals, dances, feasts, medicine, their language, their calendar, war, religion, and government.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 41.

valor, their passion for hunting and even for wild life, as if advanced civilization were nearest of all to the natural condition."⁴¹

Such outstanding qualities, however, were far outweighed, in Chateaubriand's eyes, by stubborn individualism on the part of the French, by their consequent unwillingness to cooperate, and their inability to organize companies which would have seconded the heroic efforts of individual colonists. In France, says the introduction to the Voyage en Amerique,⁴² travelers have always been isolated independants. "Frenchmen have courage; courage deserves success, but does not suffice to secure it."

The last paragraph of the same work speculate on what might have happened if France had retained her American colonies. Would the liberation of the colonies have occurred sooner? Would the War of Independence have been fought? Would not New France be an independent, French-speaking empire? The American continent might have gained, he believed, by the success of French colonial efforts; certainly, France would not have lost. The great romantic individualist, who had fondly imagined Rene wandering among the Natchez, and Atala

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 89.

⁴² Ibid., p. 43.

buried in Louisiana, had become a grave political philosopher expressing his faith in the young American republic which had fallen heir to the vast territory of Louisiana. He utters nostalgic words of regret because of the small place which France and her language have retained in the Mississippi Valley, the beautiful and fertile land first opened to civilization by Marquette and La Salle. The final words of Le Voyage en Amerique will be a fitting conclusion to this study of Louisiana in the works of Chateaubriand, and in a century and a half of French literature:

Nous possedions au dela des mers de vastes contrees, qui pouvaient offrir un asile a l'excédent de notre population, un marche considerable a notre commerce, un aliment a notre marine; aujourd'hui, nous nous trouvons forces d'ensevelir dans nos prisons des coupables condamnés par les tribunaux, faute d'un coin de terre pour y déposer ces malheureux. Nous sommes exclus du nouvel univers, ou le genre humain recommence. Les langues anglaise et espagnole servent en Afrique, en Asie, dans les îles de la mer du Sud, sur le continent des deux Ameriques, a l'interpretation de la pensee de plusieurs millions d'hommes; et nous, desherites des conquêtes de notre courage et de notre genie, a peine entendons-nous parler dans quelques bourgades de la Louisiane et du Canada, sous une domination etrangere, la langue de Racine, de Colbert et de Louis XIV; elle n'y reste que comme un temoin des revers de notre fortune et des fautes de notre politique. ⁴³

⁴³ Ibid., p. 204. The passage, conspicuous for the vigor of its style is purposely quoted in the original French.

PART IV

THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

CHAPTER I

THE ROMANTIC PERIOD (1815-1848)

SUMMARY

New elements in "Louisiana in French Letters" after Chateaubriand. Divisions of the period. Montlezun. Beltrami and others. Lafayette in New Orleans. Achille Murat, a gifted writer. Theodore Pavie. Tocqueville and Beaumont in Louisiana. Michel Chevalier. Gaillardet. Tixier. Part played by Louisiana in the exotic literature of the romantic period.

With the end of the Napoleonic era and the definite Renunciation of all claims to Louisiana by the French, begins an altogether new phase of this study. Henceforth the name "Louisiana" will no longer embrace the whole territory of the southern Mississippi,¹ but will designate the state of Louisiana as it exists today as a part of the Union. At this period the states of New England and the Atlantic seaboard, later the Far West and California, Chicago and the Middle West, attract many more French travelers and arouse

¹In a few exceptional cases, however, some attention will be devoted to authors who vaguely include Louisiana in their general considerations of the South; to travelers whose geography or memory was a little uncertain, and who therefore do not clearly distinguish Louisiana from neighboring states; and to a few books dealing with Florida or Texas in terms which may be understood to apply to Louisiana as well.

much more European interest than Louisiana and the South. The deeds of the great French explorers of the seventeenth century are still too recent, or too closely linked with memories of failure and disappointment to be cherished with nostalgic fondness by Frenchmen of the nineteenth century. The imperialistic dreams of expansion in the Western hemisphere have been doomed by the naval defeats suffered under Napoleon; the colonizing genius of the French will, after a lull of a few years, discover and open new domains in Africa and Asia.

Even the French travelers who cross the Atlantic Ocean to visit the New World are moved by a spirit which is no longer that of eighteenth-century seekers of a land of freedom and equality. For them America ceases to be a lost Atlantis or a fabulous country where utopias have materialized. They are less prone to take extreme views on the Indians than were their forefathers. Even the scenery, at a time when exotic descriptions and search for the picturesque characterized French romantic literature, seems to leave most European visitors half indifferent. Few of them will write of America, and Louisiana, if they venture as far as the Gulf of Mexico, as a land of enchanting beauty.

Indeed, the romantic pilgrim, whether in quest of

passionate adventure or of spiritual peace, will seldom venture outside the boundaries of old Europe. There in the fogs of Great Britain, the forests of Germany, the mountains of Switzerland, and the sunny landscape of Italy and Greece, he will probe into the past to learn its secrets. Some traveler, once in a while, will be attracted by North Africa, or by the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. The fact remains that in the imagination and the dreams of French writers between 1815 and 1848, the Western hemisphere has lost the eminent place which it had occupied in the century of Manon Lescaut, Paul et Virginie, and Les Natchez. To Stendhal, Balzac and, later on, Baudelaire, America is the land of democratic vulgarity, where mammon is universally worshipped, either openly or veiled in Puritan hypocrisy: neither "l'amour-passion" nor disinterested poetry can flourish, according to those writers, in the country where their predecessors had located the tragic idylls of Manon and Atala. One romantic poet alone undertook to cross the Atlantic Ocean in search of a setting in harmony with his tormented soul. He was not a Frenchman, but an Austrian, Lenau. After a short stay, he sailed back to Europe, disappointed and embittered.

The authors who are included in the present chapter display, for the most part, very humble talents compared

with those of the more glorious names of their generation. They were pioneers in their way, who, refusing to follow the fashion of their times, chose as a setting for their works the American wilderness rather than the Bay of Naples, colorful Algiers, or romantic Scotland, celebrated by Ossian and the Waverley Novels.

Men and institutions, however, attract these writers more than the natural beauties of the New World. They find a keen intellectual pleasure in trying to understand America's democratic institutions, the intricacies of federalism combined with a powerful central government, the economic development of the country, the schools and the prisons. The Eastern States obviously provided more material of this kind than Louisiana; but the serious and puzzling question of slavery, and sometimes a nostalgic longing for a more aristocratic way of living, drove a few of them to the South and its metropolis, New Orleans.

Several difficulties face the student who examines the place occupied by Louisiana in French Letters in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first arises from the very large mass of material to be sifted,² for while all

²The most helpful study in existence is a bibliography by Frank Monaghan of French Travelers in the United States, 1765-1932. It lists over one thousand eight hundred entries, and while only a few of these concern Louisiana, the great number which must be examined makes it difficult to be exhaustive. Moreover, on account of conditions prevailing since 1939, some of this material is now inaccessible.

the accessible volumes should be examined, only a few deserve to be studied if one wishes to avoid compiling a dry catalogue of titles. The second difficulty arises from the necessity of distinguishing between works which may come under the title "French Letters" and material which consists of mere geographical guide-books, commercial or economic reports, or repetitions by some hurried traveler or journalist of what his predecessors had already written. A personal element naturally enters into such a choice-- a choice which has been made with a conscientious effort to gather only the relevant material, and to select with impartiality and discrimination from works of very unequal value to both the historian and the literary historian. The third difficulty is the task of classifying and arranging in chronological sequence the material produced during the long period of time from 1815 to 1941--material which includes both the accounts left by travelers and visitors to Louisiana, and the works of imaginative writers. Since the emphasis is placed on the French writers on Louisiana and not on the history of Louisiana, it has seemed best to follow the main divisions of French history in the nineteenth century: (1) the Restoration and the reign of Louis-Philippe; (2) the Second Empire and then the Third Republic from 1871 to 1900; (3) the twentieth century before and

after 1917, the date of America's entry into the first World War, which provoked a veritable avalanche of French books and articles on the United States.

The first name encountered among the contemporaries of Chateaubriand, who, after Waterloo, visited Louisiana, is that of an artist, Lesueur, whose work can hardly be included in this study. A recent volume by Mme. Adrien Loir has given us a few details concerning his career.³ He sailed for America in 1815. His numerous sketches of the country of the Ohio and the Mississippi, were made while on a mission in the United States. He lived for several years in Philadelphia, and visited the South. His drawings show some skill, and give a simple and purified version of the scenery which Chateaubriand had represented as luxuriant and colorful. His views of the town of Natchez, reproduced in Mme. Loir's volume, seem more akin to the classical illustrations of Lafitau, or even to Ingres' drawings than to the romantic brilliance of many painters of the period.⁴

³Mme. Adrien Loir, Charles Alexandre Lesueur, artiste et savant francais en Amerique de 1816 a 1839. See also Dr. E. T. Hamy in collection "Journal des Americanistes."

⁴Lesueur, born in 1778, is a contemporary of Ingres, born in 1780.

G. Montule, a Frenchman whose work, A Voyage to North America and the West Indies in 1817, is available only in an English translation, visited New Orleans in 1817. He noted little of interest in Louisiana, gave the traditional and commonplace description of the Mississippi, and mentioned with the usual traveler's fear "the size and number of serpents in Louisiana and the dangerous sting of rattle-snakes." Like many other visitors who have observed little, he gives a long account of Louisiana's history.

The Baron de Montlezun was a more precise observer, little inclined to idealize.⁵ An aristocrat and a royalist, he had no sympathy for the Americans. While in New York in 1816, he noted in his diary that they were uncultured and obsessed by the feeling of their inferiority in the presence of Europeans. Above all, they were pretentious and illogical, talking much of the rights of man and the rights of free people, while they were tolerating slavery and enjoying its benefits.

Montlezun traveled by sea from New York to New Orleans, and pointed out the numerous perils which attend such a

⁵ Baron de Montlezun, Voyage fait dans les années 1816 et 1817 de New York a la Nouvelle-Orleans et de l'Orenoque au Mississipi, par les petites et les grandes Antilles, 2 volumes. The same year, he published his Souvenirs des Antilles, in 2 more volumes. They do not concern Louisiana.

voyage. His description of the Mississippi, with its floating islands of trees, the alligators sleeping among them, is very picturesque. This is followed by a lengthy diatribe against mosquitoes, in which the annoyance that they caused him is described in seething though amusing language. His chapter on the inhabitants of Louisiana is one of the most amusingly hostile ever written:

Si l'on se fait une juste idee du caractere indompte des habitants, accoutumes a une independance a demi-sauvage, toujours prêts a enfreindre les usages les plus solidement etablis; - - - si l'on ajoute a cela leur immoralite, leurs penchants desordonnes, une sorte de fièvre ou de transport qui les rend insociables; - - - si l'on y joint une maniere de vivre a la flibustiere, etrangers a ces douceurs de la vie dont l'Europe offre une copieuse abondance, il resultera de ce tableau et de cet ensemble de faits notaires que la Louisiane est le dernier pays ou un homme bien ne et bien eleve puisse serieusement songer a fixer sa residence, et que c'est deja une grande folie que de la visiter.⁶

More details follow: the children are the complete rulers of their parents; the women are wildly immoral; the insolent luxury of colored women" is an insult to the white race; from the age of seven, girls dream of nothing but dancing; men are "short and given to anger, falsehood and mean vengeance," and are proud of their ignorance. In a word, Louisiana probably offered some charm during the French and Spanish rule; but to the faults which the inhabitants already had, the Americans have now added "Leur humeur morose,

⁶Ibid., I, p. 229. This quotation is given in French as a sample of his style.

leur fanatisme aveugle et leurs moeurs liberticides."

On January 2, 1817, the discontented traveler sails from Louisiana with joy, saying that the climate is unbearable, and the minds of the people are tainted with gangrene: "Only one more calamity could befall that cursed land: to fall under American control." After a few more such amenities, Montlezun generously hopes that his diary will warn other travelers against making the mistake which he had made in visiting Louisiana.

A brief anonymous volume, Notice sur l'etat actuel de la mission de la Louisiane, belongs to the same class of factual reports. It tells the story of the ecclesiastic mission of Father Dubourg in 1817. Finding it easier to convert the Indians than to persuade Europeans to live moral lives, he had founded colleges at Opelousas and New Orleans. In a short discussion of the Indians, the author praises their readiness to accept the Christian faith, but deplores their indolence and their fondness for "whiskey, a strong liqueur, made of gin, pepper, and cinnamon bark."

Beltrami, on the other hand, is neither accurate nor dry. He was an Italian writing a travel diary in French under the guise of letters to a Countess. Most of the letters describe the Mississippi, and the states of Ohio and Kentucky, the latter being "the Eden of the United States."

The manners of the Indians are carefully depicted. Only the eleventh and last letter in the volume, entitled La Decouverte des sources du Mississippi et de la Riviere sanglante, dated December 13, 1823, is devoted to Louisiana, properly speaking. Beltrami makes a few ironical allusions to the beautiful lies which have been told about that country. He describes the town of the Natchez and the rivers, and even attempts to depict the beauty of the banks of the Mississippi: "one of the largest, the most beautiful, and perhaps the most fertile valley in the world; - - - a thousand tributary rivers empty themselves into it as in a common center prepared by nature." The style remains equally as ambitious and vague throughout. Beltrami's comments on historical events prove hardly more commendable than his style. He attributes General Jackson's victory in the Battle of New Orleans to the desire of the soldiers to "please the lovely creole ladies." Yet in spite of his boasts of discoveries which leave the reader full of distrust, Beltrami may have actually seen the country which he describes. Nevertheless, he is far less colorful and less accurate than Chateaubriand, who had gazed upon Louisiana with only the eyes of his imagination, and had woven the

fabric of his dreams from the writings of English travelers.⁷

In 1825, a celebrated visitor, Lafayette, touring the United States which he had befriended so gallantly half a century earlier, arrived in Louisiana. He had been officially invited by Congress, and was welcomed everywhere. The mayor of New Orleans induced the much-feted Frenchman to visit New Orleans, then a city of forty thousand inhabitants.

A triumphal arch, bearing an inscription expressing the gratitude of the people, was erected in the Place d'Armes. The Cabildo was chosen as his place of residence, and the venerable chambers of that historic building, adorned with marble and crystal, were converted into sleeping quarters for him. The inhabitants of New Orleans displayed boundless enthusiasm for their guest, and the five days which he spent in their city were filled with lavish entertainment in his honor. The Marquis then visited Baton Rouge and Natchez. In the latter city he admired a pageant of children arranged

⁷All works by minor writers concerning America in which no mention is made of Louisiana are being omitted. For example, D. E. Warden, former American consul in Paris, published in France in 1820 (translated from the English) Une Description statistique, historique et politique des Etats-Unis de l'Amerique septentrionale. It is a systematic description of each state taken separately. Few of the Southern states are included.

to welcome him. No writer was present, however, to record any of those moving scenes of heart-felt enthusiasm. Lafayette himself, who lived in an age when some of the best writers of memoirs composed their masterpieces of personal confessions, never wrote the story of his life for posterity.⁸

Some literary merit is to be found in the writings of the most interesting Frenchman who visited and described the South in that period (1815-1848). Prince Achille Murat, the son of the celebrated King of Naples, came to the United States as an exile from France. Proudly signing his writings "Citizen of the United States," he devoted a share of his energy to the task of enlightening his countrymen concerning the true merits of his adopted country. His two works, Lettres sur les Etats-Unis and Esquisse morals et politique des Etats-Unis, should be ranked among the most charmingly

⁸His visit to America is told in an uninteresting, official way by his secretary, A. Levasseur, in Lafayette in Amerique en 1824 et 1825. His visit to New Orleans has been studied by James A. Kenschaw, in the Louisiana Historical Quarterly, April 1926, IX, No. 2, pp. 182-189. There exists a work in six volumes entitled Memoires, correspondance et manuscrits du General Lafayette. The first volume contains fragmentary memoirs by Lafayette covering the period anterior to 1780. The letters are disappointing for the literary historian. Two are dated from Louisiana in VI, pp. 199-203, one from New Orleans, April 15, 1825, and one from Natchez, April 22, 1825. In them, Lafayette says almost nothing about the land or the people of Louisiana.

natural books written by French visitors to our country.⁹

Murat decidedly belongs to the long tradition of writers who are more interested in institutions and mores than they are in the lines and colors of a landscape. In many of his comments, in which he refers to the United States as a whole, he praises the government and the constitution of the American Republic. These opinions, it is worth noting, he expresses some months before Toxqueville composed his exhaustive analysis. Everything in America, says this son of one of Napoleon's generals and kings, "is rational, and open to comprehension by the simplest mind. What alone surprises me is that the nations of Europe are not governed by the same principles. The chief virtue of the constitution, however, is not its intrinsic excellence; it lies in the spirit which made it possible -- that is, the ideal and practice of self-government. The mistake of many nations in Europe is that their rulers want to govern too much."¹⁰ Murat then gives an able summary of the institutions and manners of the Americans in the form of letters written to a friend in France. Though not blind to the faults of art and

⁹An interesting French traveler and writer, Victor Jacquemont, who came to the United States in 1826-1827, is omitted from this study because he does not seem to have visited Louisiana.

¹⁰Preface to Esquisse morale et politique des Etats-Unis. It appeared in America in an English translation in 1851, under the title America and the Americans.

literature in America, he endeavors to prove to Europeans that America is not a nation of merchants only, but that idealism in this country plays a no less important role than materialism.

Achille Murat's letters are dated from Florida, where he lived for nine years. It is, therefore, not surprising that they treat of problems which concern the South. In a penetrating and convincing way he explains that very important differences set the South apart from the rest of the country. These differences he enumerates as largely due to economic conditions arising from the agricultural character of the Southern States, as well as to particular traditions prevailing in the states which were formerly Spanish or French, and to slavery.¹¹ That Murat seems inclined to prefer the Southern States to the Eastern States is shown in his endeavor to remove the prejudice against the South which was current among pre-Revolutionary travelers as well as more recent ones. The following passage, which is being quoted as translated in the American edition, is characteristic of his views:

¹¹ See Lettres sur les Etats-Unis; the first letter, July, 1826, concerning general affairs, and the fourth letter, February, 1827, on slavery.

South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana constitute what are called the Southern States. - - - Although the character of the people varies much over such an extensive line of country, a southerly caste is observable. Frankness, generosity, hospitality, and the liberality of their opinions is proverbial, forming a perfect contrast to the Yankee character, by no means to the advantage of the latter. - - - Like many other things, slavery, when viewed from afar (from Europe) has quite another physiognomy from that which presents itself to us when viewed on the spot. My object, therefore, in writing on slavery, is by no means to defend it, but to rectify false notions, and afford a just idea of the condition of negroes in the above-mentioned states.¹²

The author continues with the description of a plantation in the South, and presents slavery as a necessary but temporary evil which will be abolished when free labor is cheaper than slave labor. Rash changes, he says, cannot be made without the gravest peril. Europeans, he adds, should be reminded also that negro slaves are probably happier than workmen in the manufacturing cities of England, and than most peasants all over Europe.¹³

Achille Murat discusses the character of the Indians in a chapter as free from sentimentality and rhetoric, and as delightfully refreshing, as are his remarks on slavery.

¹² Murat, America and the Americans, p. 17 and p. 67.

¹³ Ibid., Lettre Iv, p. 132. Later, when the question of slavery becomes a burning one, an American commentator from the North reproaches Murat for judging the South "as if he was a bigoted native instead of a stranger in the land," declaring his pro-slavery argument to sophistry. Henry T. Tuckerman.

He protests against Cooper's descriptions of the Indians, saying that this writer "has always wished to make gentlemen of them," and that he "has even endowed them with delicate sentiments toward the fair sex. The wife of an Indian, "says Murat, "is, on the contrary, his marketable animal, carries the burden of his baggage on her back, and is beaten by everybody, even by his children."¹⁴

Most of Achille Murat's work consists of general remarks and conclusions derived from his experiences in Florida and his travels in the South. Such abstract generalities cannot be localized geographically, but it has been assumed that they apply to Louisiana as well as to the rest of the South, as they were, no doubt, by Murat's French readers. Murat had, however, visited Louisiana, as can be inferred from several precise details in his second volume. In the last chapter he describes New Orleans. Here again, he is not concerned with the exotic scenery, nor the grandeur of the Mississippi, nor the fertility of the soil and the inconveniences of the climate. He is more interested in general remarks on the metropolis of the South. He finds little education among Louisianians, and little intellectual conversation. But, he adds, in his epigrammatic French style,

¹⁴ America and the Americans, Chapter LX, p. 212.

"si l'on ne cause pas, l'on mange, l'on jouit et fait l'amour." Then follows a minute description of one of the elaborate balls which struck the fancy of so many French travelers who visited New Orleans:

The free women of color alone are admitted to have the honor of dancing with their white masters, while men of color are strictly excluded. The whole forms a unique spectacle to behold: some hundreds of lovely, well-made, and well-dressed women of all castes, from cream-color to the most delicate white, united in these splendid saloons of luxury and dissipation -- in this Bablyon of the West.¹⁵

Through his familiarity with the country in which he lived for many years, Achille Murat stands out alone among the French visitors to the South during his century. What he had to say, however, about this country which he knew so well, was more lucid than picturesque and too far from the prevalent trends of romanticism in France to receive much attention.¹⁶

¹⁵Ibid., Lettre W, pp. 369-370. Achille Murat probably wrote more letters from America between 1830 and 1835. They seem, unfortunately, to have been lost.

¹⁶A work in two volumes, Lettres sur les États-Unis d'Amérique écrites en 1832 et 1833 et adressées à M. le Comte O'Mahony by Jacques Maximilien Benjamin Bins, Comte de Saint-Victor was published in 1835. A royalist and a Catholic above all, this French nobleman visited America with ardent prejudices against democracy and protestantism. It does not seem possible to tell from Count de Saint Victor's volumes whether he visited Louisiana. However, he does not fail to warn his readers against Chateaubriand's mendacious descriptions.

Theodore Pavie is, on the contrary, a true romanticist and the first author writing about America since Chateaubriand who shows an inclination to desert lucidity and simplicity for a declamatory and enraptured style. Later he was to study oriental languages, to be a disciple of Burnouf, and teach Sanscrit at the College de France. Coming to the United States at the romantic age of eighteen, and influenced by memories from Chateaubriand, he colored everything with his own high spirits. The record of his American experiences was published in 1833, in two volumes entitled: Souvenirs Atlantiques. Voyage aux Etats-Unis et au Canada.¹⁷

The first volume of this work is devoted to the young man's experiences in New York, Quebec, and Philadelphia, and to the expression of his enthusiasm for the natural beauties and the "virginal aspect" of America. In the second volume, Pavie tells how he reached the Mississippi, "majestically" depicted by Chateaubriand, and describes his sailing down the river on a boat laden with five hundred slaves. The beauty of the river beggars description, and after various exclamations Pavie refers his readers to the only adequate rendering of that Garden of Eden, the illustrations of Milton's Paradise Lost. In lyrical tones he then describes Louisiana:

¹⁷Theodore-Marie Pavie is not to be confused with Victor Pavie, Hugo's friend to whom the poet addressed many letters around 1830-1840.

Cette étincelante Louisiana, ou j'ai passé des jours trop doux pour les compter, ou j'ai laissé mes jeunes idées se naturaliser trop profondément peut-être pour mon bonheur! J'en fais l'aveu, la Louisiana est mon rêve de loisir.¹⁸

His descriptions of the natural scenery, impressing the reader as more bookish than real, savor a little too much of Chateaubriand,¹⁹ although Pavié had actually visited the country extensively. He devotes several pages to a description of Alexandria, Natchez, and the Red River; he makes observations about the Indians, and tells of a bear-hunting trip with native Louisianians. Everywhere, in spite of slavery, Pavié breathed the exhilarating air of liberty. In a final chapter²⁰ on New Orleans, Pavié makes an eloquent address to the great city of Louisiana recalling its limitations as well as its charms:

Oh! si le soleil voulait se contenter de jeter un rayon oblique sur cette belle Louisiana qu'il devore, et arrêter en mai sa course brûlante; si les marais aux bambous élégants gardaient pour leurs serpents, leurs cameleons, leurs crocodiles

¹⁸ Souvenirs Atlantiques, Chapter XVIII, p.

¹⁹ For example, in Volume II, p. 141: "Ce sont des torrents de fleurs qu'agite et balance la brise, des masses de corolles empourpées, des thyrses dorés à joncher des villes entières."

²⁰ Chapter XXIV; Chapters XVII and XVIII concern Louisiana more particularly, as well as Chapters XXX to XXXV.

et leurs tortues, ces mortelles exhalaisons d'aout, ces moustiques, fleau de la colonie; si le Meschacebe moins fier ne sortait point chaque printemps de ses limites, pour déposer avec les germes d'une végétation puissante ceux de fièvres plus puissantes encore, la Nouvelle Orleans serait peuplée comme une capitale d'Europe, riche autant qu'une cité de l'Inde, joyeuse comme une ville d'Italie, brillante comme une Orientale.²¹

The next writer encountered among French travelers in Louisiana during the reign of Louis-Philippe is probably the most famous and the most profound thinker who ever analyzed America and lucidly prophesied her future: Alexis de Tocqueville.

It does not fall within the scope of this subject to recount the career of that grave member of the French aristocracy, or to comment upon the merits of his political philosophy.²² The reader of De la Democratie en Amerique will,

²¹ Op. cit., II, pp. 291-292, quoted as a sample of his florid, romantic style. Elsewhere, p. 300, Pavie adds that crocodiles were actually seen in brooks and serpents sometimes entered shops in New Orleans.

²² J. P. Mayer's Prophet of the Mass Age. A Study of Alexis de Tocqueville, London, 1939, is the most recent work on Tocqueville, yet it is not the most penetrating or the informative. Comme disait Monsieur de Tocqueville by Antoine Redier, published in Paris in 1925; an essay by Harold Laski in the book entitled: "The Social and Political Ideas of some Representative Thinkers of the Victorian Age" by F.J.C. Hearnshaw, London, 1933; and an essay in French by Faguet in Politiques et Moralists, III, seemed to us the best comments on Tocqueville's philosophy. André Chevrillon, Fortunat Strowski, and Firmin Roz have published shorter studies on "Tocqueville et les Etats-Unis" in Cahiers de Politique Etrangere, Editions France-Amerique, Paris, 1936. The greatest help was derived from George Pierson's book quoted infra.

indeed, be disappointed if he expects to find any traces of keen interest either in Louisiana or in the explorers of that former French colony. Tocqueville's remarks about the Indians, towards whom he was very favorably disposed, indicate that he might have been influenced by Chateaubriand, although he imitates in no way the poetical and musical style of his predecessor. His conclusions regarding slavery are far-sighted, but their merit is due to Tocqueville's talent for philosophical generalizations and not to sentimental or realistic observations. Tocqueville was suspicious of all theories which explain a country by the racial origins of its inhabitants and by the climate. He spends little time describing the historical and geographical background of the United States. A general statement, such as his remark in the first chapter of De la Democratie en Amerique, is sufficient for him: "La vallee du Mississipi est, a tout prendre, la plus magnifique demeure que Dieu ait jamais preparee pour l'habitation de l'homme." In fact, until very recently, it might have been questioned whether Tocqueville had ever seen Louisiana and New Orleans while making his fruitful exploration of America in 1831-1832.

Much new light, however, was thrown on Tocqueville by an important study published by Professor George W. Pierson,

in 1938: Tocqueville and Beaumont in America.²⁵ Professor Pierson utilized for the first time several letters by Tocqueville, fourteen, small pocket diaries, and a great mass of subsidiary manuscript, all of which enabled him to reveal some of the secrets of Tocqueville's magnificent understanding of America. Besides possessing a lucid and profound intellect, the French historian was a keen observer of men and of places, as well as a tireless traveler eagerly asking questions and weighing the answers with critical insight.

It is well known that Tocqueville, at that time a young man of twenty-six years, came to the United States with one of his close friends, Gustave de Beaumont. The official purpose of his visit was to investigate the penitentiary system of America. Tocqueville, however, was not satisfied with visiting prisons and calling on magistrates. In a country with unlimited natural resources, with strong religious traditions, with no aristocracy, no extreme poverty, and a rising and growing plutocracy, he found much to learn. Yet he had no desire of presenting America to his countrymen in France as a model to be imitated, nor was he inclined to disparage and criticize all that did not resemble his native

²⁵The same author had already published a shorter article on "Alexis de Tocqueville in New Orleans, 1832," in the Franco-American Review, June 1936, I, No. 1, pp. 25-42.

land.

Although Tocqueville spent the most part of nine crowded months in the East, he realized that some direct observation of the South was necessary to a full understanding of the American Republic, and was therefore anxious to include a visit to New Orleans in his travels. In November, 1831, he and Beaumont set out for New Orleans, intending to spend two weeks there, but fate had decreed otherwise. They were shipwrecked at Wheeling, where stopped by the ice on the river at Louisville, and were delayed ten days at Memphis. In a fit of discouragement, they were planning to give up their visit to Louisiana, when a steamboat appeared, on December 25, and the captain offered to take them on board.²⁴

Traveling in the moonlight on the Mississippi was a wonderful experience until the boat touched bottom. Tocqueville, who in such a despairing situation displays his keen sense of humor and his delightful personality, describes it thus:

We prayed to the heavens which said not a word, then to the captain who sent us to the pilot. As for the latter, he received us like a potentate. After having blown a cloud of smoke in our faces,

²⁴Tocqueville's account of his experiences en route to Louisiana are to be found in G. W. Pierson, *op. cit.*, Part VIII, Chapter XLVII, entitled: "Vingt-quatre heures a la Nouvelle Orleans."

he observed peacefully that the sands of the Mississippi were like the French and would not stay a year in the same place. The comparison, you will admit, was insolent enough to be chastised, but he was on his own ground and we were on a ladder - - -.²⁵

At last on the first of January, 1832, "the sun rising in a brilliant tropical sky revealed to us New Orleans across the masts of a thousand ships." There remained only one day for the travelers to enjoy the celebrated pleasures of New Orleans, and two hours would be devoted to visiting the city and to examining its morals and its customs; then would follow a call on the French consul, and four hours of visits to important men. "Between these calls," adds the young magistrate, "we would insert visits to the most beautiful women solely for the purpose of resting ourselves, I swear." At seven in the evening they would go to the theatre, then to a ball. At midnight they were to return home to organize their notes. Their apparel was to be appropriate to such a varied schedule: "We put on a black tie for the members of the legislature, a white vest for the women, we took in our hands a little swagger stick to raise us into intimacy with the fashionable world, and highly contented with ourselves, we descended the stairs."²⁶

²⁵Translated by Paul Lambert White, who discovered the documents, and quoted by Pierson, op. cit., Chapter XVII, p. 619.

²⁶Op. cit., p. 620.

Unfortunately, the diary of our travelers was interrupted at this point, but some brief notes discovered by Pierson among Tocqueville's papers, give us an idea of his impressions of New Orleans. The houses struck him as examples of fine architecture; the streets he found muddy; and the population, though a very mixed one, resembled the French in their general appearance; the condition of the prisons filled him with disgust: "We saw there men thrown in pell-mell with swine, in the midst of excrement and filth; - - - criminals chained like wild beasts." And yet these prisons were for white men and not for slaves.

Tocqueville's visit to the French consul in New Orleans is told in a vivid and interesting manner. The travelers, bent on learning much in a little time, had some difficulty in keeping the conversation on New Orleans, because the consul, M. Guillemin, was anxious to hear about France. He had been living in New Orleans for fifteen years, and was still enthusiastic about its future possibilities as well as about those of Louisiana as a whole. Ten states of the Union, he said, would soon find their natural water-outlet through this city founded by the French over a century ago. The travelers listened attentively; and as Tocqueville writes in his notebook, "kept very quiet, the reason being that we were occupied in registering in our mind every one of his words. M. Guillemin,

moreover, had one of those egotistical intelligences which speaks but does not converse and finds pleasure in the sight of its own thoughts."²⁷

The Consul, however, assured them that the prosperity of Louisiana was in no way due to republican institutions, for the government was the worst possible, so bad and inefficient that things were allowed to "marcher toutes seules." His philosophical conclusions were:

In the present state of affairs, America, in order to prosper, does not need able leadership or deep-laid plans or great efforts, but only liberty and still more liberty. The reason for that is that no one has yet any interest in abusing that liberty.²⁸

Tocqueville and Beaumont then proceeded on their visits. They had seventy-one letters of recommendation, which they classified according to the merit of the person to whom they were addressed. For Tocqueville adds, doubtless with a smile: "We are among those who think that, no matter how hurried one is, one cannot sacrifice too much time in favor of logic." Alas! logic did not reign in New Orleans, where houses have numbers which do not run in sequence. They visited first a M. Mazureau, who had come to America from France in 1802. "The eagle of the New Orleans bar," he was

²⁷Ibid., p. 623.

²⁸Ibid., p. 624.

"receiving at that very moment (it was New Year's Day) the homage of his assembled posterity." The visitors, who subtly directed the conversation to the subject of slavery, were very much impressed with the fact that M. Mazureau had become convinced that slavery was necessary in that tropical climate where the whites cannot work in the fields efficiently enough to make a livelihood.

In his obstinate questioning of the prominent citizens of New Orleans, Tocqueville was apparently little concerned with the past, and little moved by the memories of the former French rulers of Louisiana. The gradual passage of eighteenth-century Louisiana from absolute government to self-government as an independent state of the Union, interested him above all else. Tocqueville noted, however, that in the patch-work of races which had settled in New Orleans and Louisiana, the French still dominated and set the style of everything.

The grave young French magistrate and his companion, Beaumont, spent the evening at the theatre as they had planned. The different shades of women's complexions, from white in the first row of the audience to black in the last stalls, amused them highly. The audience, as a whole, was "noisy, uproarious, turbulent, talkative - - -. We think ourselves in France."²⁹ At ten they left for a quadron ball. Tocque-

²⁹Ibid., p. 628.

ville, who, like Taine, was fond of observing reality in order to prove his theoretical views all the more conclusively, mentioned in his notebook that the "incredible laxity of morals" was another harmful consequence of slavery:

Strange sight: all the white, all the women colored, or at least of African blood. Single tie created by immorality between races. A sort of bazaar. The women vowed as it were by law to concubinage. Incredible laxity of morals. Mothers, young girls, children at the dance. - - - Why, of all European races, is the English race the one that has preserved its purity of blood and mingled least with the natives?³⁰

Tocqueville and Beaumont were so fascinated by their discovery of Louisiana as a strange world, entirely different from the North, and felt so enriched by their visit to New Orleans, that they altered their plans and remained three days instead of one. They saw the French Consul again, and tried to discover whether there was any economic rivalry between the French creoles and the Americans who had arrived more recently from the North. The Consul reassured them by his assertion that there was enough prosperity to satisfy everybody. They asked also why religion had so little hold on the souls of people in Louisiana, and were told that it was the fault of the bad priests sent from Europe. "We are inundated," said the Consul, "by Italians who have nothing in common with the population and whose morals are detestable."

³⁰Ibid., p. 629. In the following paragraph, Tocqueville answered his own question by reasons derived from the different ways in which Spanish and English had colonized the New World.

He thought church and state should be completely separated. As to the depraved state of morals, the French consul attributed it to the refusal of the whites to assimilate the mulattoes. Tocqueville must have been deeply impressed by the Consul's reasoning, which he reported in the following terms:

If, without giving the negro rights, it (the white aristocracy) had at least taken in those of the colored men whose birth and education most nearly approximated its own, the latter would infallibly have been attached to its cause, for they are in reality much closer to the whites than to the blacks. Only brute force would have remained for the negroes. By repelling the mulattoes, however, the white aristocracy gives the slaves, on the contrary, the only weapon they need to become free: Intelligence and leadership.³¹

As befits a true spiritual heir of Montesquieu, Tocqueville added a few notes in his travel diary on the powerful influence of climate upon the character of people. The French in Canada are a tranquil and religious people; the French in Louisiana are "restless, dissolute, and lax in all things. Between them are fifteen degrees of latitude."

On the second day of his stay in New Orleans, Tocqueville interviewed other lawyers, one of whom informed him that the jury system was a failure in Louisiana; but since it was in opposition to his pet theory, he could not believe such a disconcerting statement to be true. Another lawyer with whom he conversed enlightened him concerning the sorry state of

³¹Ibid., p. 631.

the local legislature in the following terms:

When the legislature is in session, it can be said that the whole body of legislation is jeopardized. Our houses are composed in large part of young lawyers, ignorant and fond of intrigue. - - - They make, unmake, slice and cut up at random.

But why don't noteworthy men reach the legislature? I doubt whether people would name them. Besides, little store is set by public office and the outstanding men don't solicit it.³²

It is not rash to assume that the information gathered in New Orleans, vividly present in Tocqueville's memory, might have contributed to the political philosopher's conclusion that democracy in America might make way for plutocracy, and that business and commerce, not politics, might attract the best elements in the country.

Tocqueville's three days in Louisiana, crowded with observations derived from his conversation with eminent citizens of New Orleans, proved a fruitful experience. Next he visited Mobile and Montgomery, and then traveled northward through Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia, a most difficult trip at the time. But as Professor Pierson concludes, he had really seen too little of the South. He has not observed life in the country, nor even visited a cotton plantation; consequently he generalized with much haste, and clung too persistently to his pre-conceived ideas. What he saw in Louisiana merely served to confirm conclusions al-

³²Ibid., p. 633.

ready formed in the Northeast. Nevertheless, his observations in Louisiana play an important part in the work which Tocqueville was to publish four years later, in 1835, a part which, if not obvious in its pages, is none the less a product of the experiences and reflections which led to the book.

It may be readily perceived that although Tocqueville's observations concerning the South--since they were not introduced in his celebrated masterpiece--exercised no influence upon American and European opinion, they are nevertheless far-reaching and throw much light on the subsequent history of Louisiana. Not to be classified as exotic and descriptive literature, they are penetrating analyses of politics and far-sighted visions of future developments. Of even more value is the charming picture, furnished by his diary, of Tocqueville as an inquisitive political thinker, as a young man full of eager understanding and subtle penetration. Thus, after receiving the visits of missionaries, explorers, and colonists and officials from France, not to mention the celebrated men of letters who, without having seen it had made the country famous, Louisiana had entertained one of France's foremost philosophers.

In the same year in which that epoch-making volume, De la Democratie en Amerique, appeared in Paris, 1835, Gustave de Beaumont, Tocqueville's alter ego, published a

a book on the same subject but of a different character: Marie ou l'esclavage aux Etats-Unis. Tableau de moeurs americaines. Gustave de Beaumont, who was only three years older than Tocqueville, had been his constant companion during their travels in the United States. Precise notes recorded by him would have enabled us to trace the sources of Tocqueville's observations, but he left no diary of his experiences. Beaumont, having been powerfully impressed by slavery in the Southern states, and the effects of slavery upon the customs, limited himself to a study of "les moeurs."

It is disappointing that Beaumont should have undertaken to present his opinions on such a serious subject in the form of a novel. His plot is banal and slow; his characters but pale shadows expressing their ideas and emotions in endless dialogues; his needlessly pompous style is monotonously exalted and stilted; and his message scarcely convincing. Chateaubriand's influence, and even that of Paul and Virginie, is felt. Once again, a writer who had actually seen the country which he describes, is less convincing than those who had merely imagined it with the help of travel diaries.

The subject of Beaumont's novel is fairly simple. The hero comes to Michigan from France in 1831. He meets a "solitaire," Ludonic, who tells the story of his life.

Ludonic had come to America to seek a virgin land and a new and purer society. He had a friend in Baltimore, Daniel Nelson. Nelson's daughter, who resembles Atala, seems to love Ludonic and yet to avoid him constantly. Finally, Nelson reveals the mystery. His children are from Louisiana, a land corrupted by slavery. A Spaniard who was in love with his wife, had spread the rumor that Nelson's wife was of remotely colored blood. Public opinion turned against Nelson and his family, so they left New Orleans for Baltimore. Marie, however, was not unaware of the stain on her mother's name and felt that she could only bring misfortune to a white man. Ludonic offered to marry her, in spite of her confession. He nobly disclaimed all prejudice, asking to take Marie to France to live. Her father, however, refused, saying that his children should not desert America, their Motherland. Poor Ludonic is left alone to wander romantically and plaintively among the Indians in the region of the Great Lakes.

There is much sincere feeling for the difficult problems caused by slavery and race-prejudice in America, as well as much precise knowledge and documentation in Beaumont's novel.³³ But the whole is very clumsily mingled with a most

³³The Appendix to Volume I on "the social and political condition of negroes" quotes the laws of Louisiana extensively.

undramatic plot, and romantic complaints on man's fate and human prejudices. Marie on the whole fails to convince, it fails to interest and fails to move. It was left to a story, not less romantic, but more skilfully told, and appearing at just the right time, Uncle Tom's Cabin, to utilize the rich sentimental possibilities of such a subject.³⁴

Michel Chevalier is, next to Tocqueville, probably the most famous French writer who visited and described the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century. This brilliant Saint-Simonian economist was only twenty-seven years old when he was sent to America by Thiers to study American railroads. He spent almost two years in the

³⁴At this point, mention may be made of a novel of the same type which appeared a few years later. It is a childish tale written by Pauline Guyot, and published under the name of Mme. Camille Lebrun: Amite et Devouement ou trois mois a la Louisiane, Tours, Pornin, 1845. The story takes place in Louisiana: two orphan girls travel on the Mississippi in a boat, and describe Louisiana as "le sejour le plus delieieux de l'univers." New Orleans has "un cachet tout particulier d'elegance et de symetrie." The descriptions seem to have been written by someone who had been in Louisiana or who knew the geography of the country with some accuracy. The plot is non-existent, and the novel itself intended for children with moral remarks about Indians, the beauty of savannahs, humming birds, orange groves, and God's Providence watching over well-behaved "jeunes filles."

New World--from December 1833 to October 1835--sending to the Journal des Debats a series of letters, subsequently published in book form: Lettre sur l'Amerique du Nord.

Chevalier's study of the American economic system was a thorough one. His point of view was broad, and he did not hesitate to propose the example of the American Republic for the rebuilding of France's economic structure, especially in the fields of banking and credit. Since Michel Chevalier was asking America for lessons in commercial technique, he was naturally more concerned with the industrial East than with the agricultural South. He distinguished sharply between two types of men--the Yankee and the Virginian. The Yankee alone is efficient, accurate, practical, controlling the commerce and business even in New Orleans, according to this young French observer. In a chapter on "Banking and Slavery," Chevalier prophetically points out the extreme gravity of the differences between the North and the South, and he condemns slavery as a great evil. Later he returns to the same subject, saying that slavery causes a moral and psychological difficulty which the French would probably have solved because they have more Christian charity than other races. But an Englishman, according to our author, cannot sympathize or mix with peoples of another race; and the Yankees, due to their English origins, have "become like Jews and have fallen

back under the law of Moses."

It is not possible to tell whether Michel Chevalier visited Louisiana or any of the southern states. He went to Mexico and Cuba, and probably stopped at New Orleans on the way, although there is nothing to prove it. He studied reports and documents on the South,³⁵ but this builder of a new industrial world was not attracted by the picturesque descriptions of the Mississippi nor by the memories of French attempts at colonizing Louisiana.

Frederic Gaillardet, better known as one of the many collaborateurs of Alexandre Dumas and who ended by fighting a duel with him, also belongs to that group of young Frenchmen, born in the early years of the century, whom a keen intellectual curiosity and a spirit of adventurous enterprise drove to America during the reign of Louis-Philippe. In 1837, he sailed for America and stayed there for over forty years only making occasional trips to France.

Gaillardet's first visit to Louisiana was in 1837. He wrote from there to two Parisian newspapers, La Presse and Le Journal des Debats, respectively controlled by two famous editors, Emile de Girardin and Armand Bertin. These letters, which were intended to form a counterpart to Tocqueville's analysis of American democracy, were not pub-

³⁵Note 46 in Volume II of his Lettres mentions the "Citizens Bank in Louisiana."

lished in book form until 1883, when they appeared posthumously under the title: L'Aristocratie en Amerique. After a varied journalistic career, Gaillardet died in 1882, the editor of Le Courier des Etats-Unis.

While Tocqueville and Chevalier had found much to praise in America, Gaillardet was severe in his criticism of American aristocracy and her democratic institutions. Needless to say, he does not reach their stature and despite his long acquaintance with the country, offered but superficial and loosely connected remarks on American life, manners and women. What he writes about Louisiana is particularly disappointing. He sailed up the Mississippi as far as the Ohio, visiting Louisiana and Texas. He vaguely regrets that France had given up Louisiana and the prospect of an empire in Texas. He described nothing and explained nothing.³⁶

One of the last French visitors to Louisiana during this period about whom there is any precise information has been only recently discovered, although his work was pub-

³⁶ Gaillardet's fifth chapter is entitled: "La Langue francaise a la Louisiane et au Canada." What he found most striking in Louisiana was the antagonism between the Creole and the Anglo-Saxon population. He made no attempt to analyze it.

lished in 1844.³⁷ Victor Tixier was born in Clermont-Ferrand in 1819. He studied medicine, became ill, and then decided to travel to the New World. He left for America in November 1839 with three friends, one of whom, James Trideau, was a native Louisianian who had been educated in Paris.³⁸ They reached New Orleans on January 27, 1840. They went up the Mississippi to visit plantations in Louisiana, Indian settlements in Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma.

The account of their experiences was recorded by Tixier with simplicity and charm. Though young and naive, they were neither conceited nor condescending in their judgment of Americans. Tixier found the inhabitants of Louisiana--and the Americans in general--a little "sans-gene." He observed the negroes very closely, and wisely concluded on the vexing problem of slavery: "Give the negro intelligence before giving him liberty, to prevent him from

³⁷Victor Tixier, Voyage aux Prairies Osages: Louisiane et Missouri (1839-1840), Paris, Roret, 1844. Travels on the Osage Prairies, edited by John Francis McDermott, translated by Albert J. Salvan, Norman, Oklahoma, 1940. Mr. Salvan has also published an article on the same traveler in the French Review, December, 1939, pp. 100-109.

³⁸Trideau subsequently settled in New Orleans as a doctor. He died there in 1887.

being ruined by freeing him too soon."³⁹ He traveled into Acadia, made a few precise observations about the fruit, trees, and the animals in the country, then took a steamboat to Saint Louis.⁴⁰ After interesting experiences among the Osages, he went to New York by way of Pittsburg and Philadelphia, and sailed for France in September, 1840. The most interesting part of Tixier's writings are his chapters on the Osage Indians. What he had to say about his visit to New Orleans and Louisiana is written with simplicity. Only every here and there are a few touches of romantic feeling and of literary effect.⁴¹ Tixier does not generalize nor propose general conclusions of political economy. He merely tells what a young Frenchman saw in Louisiana forty years after Atala.⁴²

³⁹Tixier's Travels, A.J. Salvan's translation, p. 50.

⁴⁰Tixier talked to a few Americans on board ship, trying to explain some of the French customs to them. He notes: "Americans always want to be right and accept no objections."

⁴¹Cf. A. J. Salvan, Loc. Cit., pp. 108-109.

⁴²Other travelers of secondary importance in this study may be mentioned here: Guillaume Tell Poussin, a descendant of the famous painter, came to America in 1815. His only book is a critical study of Tocqueville's Democratie en Amerique, entitled: Considerations sur le principe democratique qui l'union americaine, Paris, 1841. It does not concern Louisiana. P.L. Gessine, Journal de mer d'un voyage a la Nouvelle Orleans, 2 octobre 1841 au 21 fevrier 1842, Paris, 1842, is a traveler who suffered from sea-sickness, and many misfortunes. He blamed New Orleans for it: "Ville trompeuse en speculations commerciales, --ou les incendies, les duels, les assassinats et la mort repandent leurs affreux ravages." (p. 19) Other contemporary travel accounts by I. Lowenstern, Francis de Castelneau, B. A. Granier de Cassagnac have been studied by William Mercer Cook; they do not deal with Louisiana.

Allusions to Louisiana are rare in the works of the romantic prosewriters: George Sand, Balzac, Stendhal.⁴³ The France of Louis-Philippe was no longer mourning its defunct colonial empire in the New World; it was founding a new one nearer to its shores. Her literature was active in depicting the manners and spirit of the times, and wholly attracted by the social and political problems of France, or the realistic study of Parisian and provincial life. The development of remote Louisiana concerned her but little. The time of Chateaubriand's nostalgic dreams of lovers wandering in the moonlight among the forests and savannahs of the Mississippi Valley, seemed irretrievably past. The old "enchanteur," himself, was a solitary figure among his literary successors, who were gradually transferring romanti-

⁴³Stendhal mentions the United States and "the Yankees," usually, however, with bitter irony or contempt. According to him, love, "l'amour-passion", has no place in that country which worships business and money. Cf. De L'Amour, appendice, fragments, Numbers XL, LV, XCIV. If he had known more about the United States, Stendhal would obviously have preferred the South to the North. In De L'Amour, Chapter L, (L'Amour aux Etats-Unis), he declared dogmatically: "Il y a tant d'habitudes de raison aux Etats-Unis que la civilisation y a ete rendue impossible.--J'augure beaucoup mieux des Florides et de l'Amérique meridionale." He did not, however, develop the idea or mention Louisiana precisely, although he must have included it in "les Florides." In the same work, Chapter XXV, he quotes a traveler who explored the Missouri.

cism into energetic realism. He died a few months after the revolution of 1848, as if his well-orchestrated life could but end with the passing of the great romantic era.

Hardly less infrequent were allusions to Louisiana in the works of romantic poets. Lamartine's favorite land of escape was, as is well known, Italy or the Near East. The moonlight glittering on the Bay of Naples or the tall cedars of Lebanon were the settings of his sentimental or religious reveries, and not the banks of the Meschacebe and the luxuriant magnolias depicted by Chateaubriand. Even in the years of his inexhaustible prosewriting of the Cours familier, Lamartine does not seem to have been attracted by subjects connected with the New World.⁴⁴

Victor Hugo sang several hymns to the United States of Europe, but was seldom moved to sing of America. The young man who had proudly declared "Je veux etre Chateaubriand ou rien" turned to Spain and the Near East for the exotic luxury once discovered in the western hemisphere by the painter of Les Natchez. The explorations of America by the sixteenth and seventeenth century travelers are also omitted from the Legende des Siecles. Poem XXV in that huge epic, entitled Les Chutes-Fleuves et Poetes, describes the Niagra Falls in a cataract of thundering sounds but says nothing of the huge

⁴⁴The subject nearest to Louisiana treated by Lamartine was that of slavery and the injustice of the whites to the negroes, in a drama, entitled Toussaint Louverture. It was composed in 1839 and acted in 1850.

river of which Chateaubriand sang.

Nor has Alfred de Musset any place for the New World in his dreams and regrets. He who complained that he was "venu trop tard dans un monde trop vieux" did not turn to America for rejuvenation. Repeatedly, he lamented: "Tout est mort en Europe, --oui, tout, jusqu'à l'amour," and appealed for a rebirth, not to the country where fickle Manon had learned the virtue of fidelity, but to Greece and Italy.

Louisiana, however, remains linked in French Literature with the name of one great romantic poet, Alfred de Vigny. Though less attracted by exotic scenes and picturesque landscapes than his great contemporaries, Vigny was interested in America.⁴⁵ He was not an enthusiastic admirer of Chateaubriand,⁴⁶ yet he had read and remembered Atala. Etoa, the angel born of a tear shed by Christ, drawn by pity from paradise, wanders among the stars looking for a friendly, suffering planet. In a famous passage, which stands among the few pages which immortalize Louisiana in French Literature, Vigny compares the angel to the radiant humming-bird of the Louisiana forests:

⁴⁵Professor F. Baldensperger has studied that aspect of Vigny in an article, "Les Etats-Unis d'Amérique dans la vie et les idées d'Alfred de Vigny, Revue de Littérature Comparée, 1923, III, pp. 616-635.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 620.

Ansi, dans les forets de la Louisiane,
 Berce sous les bambous et la longue liane,
 Ayant rompu l'oeuf d'or par le soleil muri,
 Sort de son lit de fleurs l'eclatant colibri.

The details of the famous description have been traced easily enough to the Prologue of *Atala*, where the words, colibri, lianes, palmier, erable, alcee, cypres, jasmins, serpent-oiseleur, were found by Vigny. Needless to say, Vigny's evocation is even more unreal than Chateaubriand's.⁴⁷ Yet for the countless lovers of poetry who have memorized these lines, Louisiana harmoniously pronounced in five fluid syllables, is an enchanted land of luxuriant vegetation.

The humming bird of Louisiana is also a symbol for Vigny: it deserts the variegated hues and the tropical magnificence of the wild forests to seek refuge in a more moderate, and, as it were, more humane surrounding.

Mais les bois sont trop grands pour ses ailes naissantes,
 Et les fleurs du berceau de ces lieux sont absentes;
 Sur la verte savane il descend les chercher.

As Vigny's learned commentator expresses it: "Le romantique, Vigny, assignait des bornes aux aventures de sa reverie et de son exotisme, en laissant ainsi paraître, a son premier contact de poete avec la solitude.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 621. Professor Baldensperger aptly defines it as "L'Amerique de convention, riche de couleurs eclatantes, qui se voit transplantee en plein firmament de reves et de beatitudes."

En un appartement

Modeste, mais commode, ou pour tout ornement,
On voyait, reproduits dans une glace nette,
Washington d'une part, et de l'autre Lafayette,
Tous deux en pied, tous deux de leurs points opposés
Dominant tout le reste en bronze composés.

Invocations, enumerations, speeches, homeric similes follow through ten cantos, and descriptions of epic battles, such as:

Le lendemain, avant qu'aux rayons du soleil,
L'horizon vaporeux s'allumat de vermeil,
L'armée était debout, prête à gagner la plage --

We are mentioning Urbain David here because he presents himself in the opening lines of his epic as a bard "venu de l'antique Marseille."

CHAPTER II

THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

SUMMARY

Growth of industrial literature during the nineteenth century. J. J. Ampere's visit to America. Comettant's journalistic attempts. Les Emigres francais de la Louisiane. Two articles by Elisee Reclus in Revue des Deux Mondes. The Civil War in French writings. Alfred Assollant. E. Domenech. The prolific writer, Louis Xavier Eyma. Allusions to Louisiana by the French poets of this period. Historical studies of Louisiana. Leon Chotteau. Emile Malezieux. Members of the nobility who visit America in the nineteenth century. French travelers to the United States between 1869 and 1898 who did not visit Louisiana. Du Tonkin au Havre by Jean d'Albrey. Paul Bourget's Outre Mer.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, industrial literature, as Sainte-Beuve called it, blossoms under the utilitarian and pragmatic Second Empire, producing commercial and technical books and journalistic writing or travel books designated to satisfy superficial curiosity. With regard to the value of this literature of travel, the opinion of the most objective student cannot but be severe. There is probably no branch of literature in which so many platitudes of merely ephemeral interest are uttered and printed more often than in books and articles by travelers and reporters. Inaccuracy, superficiality, and unwarranted generalizations are among their common faults, even in this most scientifically-minded of all centuries, the nineteenth. It is worth noting, however, that in the eyes of many compe-

tent critics, the French tower far above other observers of the New World: Tocqueville, Michel Chevalier, Jules Euret, and Andre Siegfried among others, have studied and interpreted America with more penetration and more thoroughness than visitors from other European nations. As early as 1864, Henry T. Tuckermann, writing a study of foreign commentators on America, gave the first place to the French, and accredited their superiority to "the social character, the adaptive facility of the French, and their readier sympathy with the American character. "But this partial sympathy," he added, "does not altogether account for the French understanding America better: that is owing to a more liberal, a less prejudiced, a more chivalric spirit; to quicker sympathies, to more scientific proclivities, to greater candor and humanity among her thinkers."¹

The chronological division of this period includes the French writers between 1850 through the Civil War (1861-1865); then to the end of the Second Empire (1870) and the

¹ Henry T. Tuckermann, America and her Commentators, p. 153. Frank Monaghan in the introduction to his Bibliography, op. cit., also remarks on the superiority of French travelers, more curious than the English and "on the whole catching the perspective better."

remaining years of the nineteenth century. During this second half of the century, no traveler to the New World rivals Chateaubriand or Tocqueville, or Michel Chevalier, in importance. Most of them continue to be haunted by their great predecessors.

The first work on America to appear after the middle of the century bears a famous name, that of a writer who courted success several times but never quite succeeded in gaining it: J. J. Ampere. The son of the celebrated physicist had been to Greece, Italy, Egypt, the Scandinavian countries, Spain, Germany, England, and Turkey before coming to this country in 1851. Tocqueville's study of American democracy had inspired him with a desire to visit the New World. The two volumes which J. J. Ampere respectfully dedicated to Tocqueville, are not remarkable for their political philosophy. They give an accurate picture of America in the early fifties, and a well-informed discussion of American literature of the period, mentioning Longfellow, Washington Irving, Emerson and Audubon. The impressions recorded by Ampere, though often vivid and pleasant, lack the depth and originality of vision that alone might have given them an enduring value. Sainte-Beuve, who knew the author very well, is not too severe when he hints, with a subtle smile, at the main faults of the book: superficiality

and haste.²

Ampere left Europe in August, 1851. During the crossing, he sat at the same table with business men from New Orleans.³ His main interest, however, was not the South, but New England, New York and Philadelphia. On January 18, 1852, he reached New Orleans via Charleston and Alabama by rail and road, then traveled by boat down the Alabama River, and by steamer from Mobile to Lake Pontchartrain. The winter happened to be unusually cold, and the traveler expressed his disappointment to be finding snow and frost in Louisiana.

His impressions of New Orleans, however, soon became more favorable. After the restraint of the Northern United States, the bustle of the city and the gesticulations of the inhabitants amused him. One aspect of the survival of French traditions he enjoyed hugely--good cooking, accompanied by lively conversation during meals. The second

² Sainte-Beuve, Nouveaux Lundis, XIII, p. 249: "Cette Promenade en Amerique qu'il a racontee avec la meme rapidite et le meme entrain qu'il nuit a la faire. Pour lui, visiter les Etats-Unis, c'etait encore continuer l'entretien avec Tocqueville."

³ J. J. Ampere's work on America is entitled: Promenade en Amerique (Etats-Unis, Cuba, Mexique), 2 volumes. Only Chapters VIII and IX in Volume II refer to Louisiana and New Orleans.

object of his praise was, as usual, "la toilette et la tournure des femmes," in whom he appreciated a combination of Parisian and of Creole charm. He was invited to several balls and parties, praised the opera and the elegance of several "belles danseuses," lamented the gradual disappearance of the French language in New Orleans and the lack of true intellectual curiosity.

Though Ampere stayed eight days in New Orleans and Louisiana, he saw and recorded much less than Tocqueville had in his three full and hurried days. Two subjects are discussed in the thirty pages which he devotes to Louisiana-- the growth of sugar cane and the evils of slavery. In his opinion, the two are inseparably linked, for "sugar is the great enemy of the suppression of slavery."⁴ He hopes, however, that a more efficient organization of the sugar mills and the use of better machinery will gradually solve the problem. With mild eloquence, he revolts against the selfish reasoning of those who want to retain and perpetuate slavery, and censures his countryman, Achille Murat, whose sophistry had justified that monstrous injustice.

On January 26th, Ampere sailed down the Mississippi towards Havana. Only mildly impressed by the Meschacebe, his comments concerning it display no picturesque touches.

⁴Ibid., II, p. 137.

"It is one of the most respectable bodies of water of the universe, says Ampere."⁵ In 1852, the river and the country hardly recalled Chateaubriand's splendid descriptions. Ampere, however, pays a respectful tribute to the author of Atala and Les Natchez, whom he had known intimately, and concludes with the following comment: "The landscape is not beautiful, nor is it ugly either, but large and sad."⁶

Like Ampere, Xavier Marmier (1809-1892) traveled extensively, not only in America but in Switzerland, Holland, Germany, Sweden, Norway, and Russia. Although his Lettres sur l'Amérique are neither complimentary nor original, they do include Louisiana in their study of America. He tries to be impartial in his judgments but his European nature suffers many shocks from the lack of manners apparent in taciturn Americans. He is happy to get to Canada where he rejoices to hear French again, saying that his short stay in the United States had frozen his heart and his tongue. Later, when he goes down to Louisiana he is filled with nostalgic regrets: "It is sad to see the fertile land which is Louisiana and to think that this country belonged to us twice, and twice we abandoned it." As soon as he arrives, he is conscious of the friendliness of the Creoles, similar

⁵Ibid., II, p. 162.

⁶Ibid., II, p. 164.

to the hospitality of the Canadians. He is reminded of Buffon's comparison of the world to an incandescent globe which cools off at each end, saying that America is different for it has conserved its warmth of heart at its two extremities--in Louisiana and in Canada.

The same transitory interest displayed by Ampere and Marmier is to be found in other travelers during the Second Empire. Among these is Oscar Comettant. He traveled in America in 1852-1855, and according to the title of his book, spent three years in our country: Trois Ans aux Etats-Unis. Etude de moeurs et coutumes americaines. Several of his journalistic chapters might have been written by recent travelers, and their content copied by twentieth century reporters: "L'amour en Amerique, la blague en Amerique, et le confortable."

In his final chapter, Comettant sums up his remarks under the title of "Physionomie generale des Etats du Sud." In a few words, he describes the geography of the Southern states, and in a few more comments on slavery, saying that the negroes seem to be as well fed as workmen in France. The most striking features of New Orleans, in his opinion, were "the great beauty of Creole women and the fighting spirit of the men." Careful touches of his pen are employed in describing the dark eyes of Southern women "shaded

voluptuously by thick black lashes.--The Creole is more feminine than other women, in her body, in her movements and in her mind." Unfortunately, he must be truthful, and adds: "Her laxness is on the same level as her intelligence," and deplores the fact that the only care of these ladies is their skin.⁷

If Commettant's writings do not deserve a place of honor in literature concerning Louisiana, neither does the novel entitled, Les Emigres francais de la Louisiane, (1800-1804), published anonymously in 1853. The author was a German who lived in America for several years and was then a resident of Switzerland. Evidently, he had seen the country in which the events of his narrative are supposed to have taken place for the geographical information is accurate, and the life of the planters and the slaves is described with some appearance of truth, though with little display of skill. The attitude of the author toward the Creoles is severe; he condemns their illiteracy and their boastfulness. He describes New Orleans as a dirty city, and the scenery of the Mississippi Valley as desolate and uninspiring.

In the Revue des Deux Mondes for July 15 and August 1, 1859, two excellent geographical articles entitled, "Le Mississippi, Etudes et Souvenirs," by Elisee Reclus described the Mississippi for the French public. A comparison of these accurate descriptions with Chateaubriand's imaginary accounts gives an idea of the improvement in geographic and ethnical knowledge made in the span of fifty years. Reclus stresses the magnificent and awe-inspiring impression produced by the great river. He foresees the brilliant future of the harbor of the Crescent City which will serve the whole Mississippi Valley. Although his study stresses physical geography more than human geography, he succeeds in nullifying in a few words many hasty and slurring remarks made by his predecessors concerning the women of Louisiana. What others have called their "nonchalance," he asserts, conceals on the contrary a serene and modest but relentless activity.

The French accounts of the United States from the year 1860⁸ are all concerned with the problem of slavery and the

⁸Two of the most interesting Frenchmen of this period who traveled through Louisiana on their way to Texas, but failed to record their impressions of the region, are not included in this study. One is Etienne Cabet, who, in his Icarie--an anagram of "ca ira"--had previously presented a rosy picture of a new world built according to the principles of Rousseau's Contrat Social. His Icarie was published in 1846. In February, 1848, he left France for New Orleans, traversed Louisiana, and established his colony of equals in Texas. He later emigrated to Illinois and died there in 1856. The other is Victor Considerant. In 1849, accused of treason, he fled from France to Belgium, in 1852 he sailed for New York and from there to Texas. His two volumes, Au Texas, and Du Texas; are interesting as a history of French socialism.

Civil War. Already, in 1852, the critic, Emile Montegut had, in a discussion of Mrs. Beecher-Stowe's novel, pointed to the grave uneasiness which the moral problem of slavery was causing in the New World.⁹ Journalists and several prolific writers then multiplied studies of the negroes and the problem of slavery, making full use of the sentimental aspects and of the political implications of the tragic internal problem which was then rendering asunder the American Republic.

One of those producers of industrial literature was Alfred Assollant, a facile and witty journalist. He had begun his career as a "Normalien" and a professor. In 1858, he traveled in New York, Maryland, and Kentucky, and wrote three long short stories, Asacia, Les Butterfly, and Une Fantaisie Americaine. These stories, published in a book entitled, Scenes de la vie aux Etats-Unis, do not portray

⁹R. Montegut, "Le Roman abolitionniste aux Etats-Unis," Revue des Deux Mondes, October 1, 1852, pp. 155-185. Other articles followed in the same periodical which may be briefly mentioned by name since they do not concern Louisiana directly: Cuheval-Clarigny, December 1, 1865, December 1, 1860; Langel, November 1, 1861, October 15, 1863, July 1, 1864, December 15, 1864, April 15, 1865, July 15, 1865; T. Pavie, March 1, 1861, tells a very romantic tale, El Cachupin, of a Spanish couple seeking refuge in Louisiana, and of a slave woman's poisoning her master, their benefactor, when he no longer wants her as his mistress. Pavie's descriptions of that part of Louisiana which lies just across the Sabine River from Texas, are vivid and accurate; John Lemoine, November 1, 1856, discusses Mrs. Stowe's novel, Dred, le roman de la vie des noirs, saying that its only quality is its hatred of tyranny.

Louisiana nor any other portion of the extreme South. They enjoyed a great success at the time, but seem insignificant today, and certainly do not depict either a true or an interesting America.

Another prolific writer was a priest and missionary, E. Domenech, who spent several years in Texas and Mexico, and traveled in Louisiana as well as in the Middle West.¹⁰ His chief interest was in the Indians, whom he had studied with genuine understanding while he was trying to convert them. In his last volume, entitled Souvenirs d'Outre-Mer. Mes Missions au crepuscule de la vie, he devoted a few lines to the French market in New Orleans, and praised the picturesque charm of the motley crowd of races which one can observe there. The remainder of the volume is devoted to the author's experiences in Texas.

The most prolific writer of all, however, was Louis Xavier Eyma, born in Martinique in 1816, educated in Paris, and sent on a mission to his native island in 1846. He made repeated visits to New Orleans, where his father practiced law, and was in Louisiana in 1858, after having published three books on the United States. Two of these are Les Peaux Rouges and Les Peaux Noires. He continued his career as an

¹⁰ Cf. the five titles by this author in the bibliography. The first four appeared between 1857 and 1862 and the last one 1884.

inexhaustible writer, either under his own name or that of Adolphe Ricard, until his death in 1876.

Les Peaux Noires claims to be an impartial series of stories on the question of slavery and the colored people, and is a very humble predecessor of Paul Morand's Magie Noire. Eyma modestly asserts that "the misfortune of countries with slaves is never to have had their novelist," and he proceeds to be that novelist. Three years later, Eyma published his Excentricites Americaines (1860), a true example of industrial literature. The book, which does not treat particularly of Louisiana, is full of platitudes, often uncomplimentary to religion, women, and the press of the United States. Les Femmes du Nouveau Monde is similar in style and subject matter. Another volume, Scenes de moeurs et de voyages dans le nouveau monde, conjures up the memory of Chateaubriand, poet of the Natchez and of Louisiana, and then falls into easy and superficial discourse on such subjects as thieves in Louisiana, the shameful condition of the cemeteries in New Orleans, and the bayous of that region. Finally in 1876, that indefatigable author published a synthesis on La Vie aux Etats-Unis, in which he devotes several passages to his visit to the Natchez country. Expressing admiration for Chateaubriand's style, he remarks that the name of the great French writer is completely unknown in the town of Natchez:

Alas! whoever would take the illustrious writer's pages for his guide would not know if he were traveling in Celuta and Chactas's country, or in the steppes of Siberia.

In one passage he reminds the French that Louisiana is inhabited by one hundred fifty thousand people of French origin, who have given a distinctive charm to New Orleans. He deplures, however, the low level of French travel diaries in America, and also the prejudices of the French, whom he accuses of carrying their caustic wit and their fondness for pleasure wherever they go. The impartial critic may well wonder whether Eyma is qualified to criticize his predecessors. His books have certainly done little to give France an authentic picture of either the United States or of Louisiana.¹¹

¹¹ The reader expects much more from a serious observer such as Ernest Duvergier de Hauranne, whom Sainte-Beuve has compared with Tocqueville. His two volumes, entitled Huit Mois en Amerique, comprise one of the most reliable and lively accounts of America written in the last century. His experiences, however, were limited to New England, Canada, Maryland, Kentucky and Georgia. Other books written by French travelers in the United States at this time need only be mentioned because they do not concern Louisiana: Marc Gabriel Hurt-Binet, Neuf Mois aux Etats-Unis; Georges Fisch, Les Etats-Unis en 1861; Emile Jouveaux, L'Amerique actuelle; and Olympe Andouard, North America, Etats-Unis, Constitution, moeurs, usages, lois, institutions, sectes religieuses.

In view of such meager interest in Louisiana shown by French travelers of the Second Empire, it is not surprising that there should be very few allusions to the land of Manon Lescaut and of Atala in the French literature of the period. Exotic inspiration held as potent a fascination for the artists and writers of the sixties and seventies as it had held for the romantics.¹² Rimbaud and Gauguin fled their country and Western civilization. Pissarro was born in the island of Saint Thomas, one of the Antilles. But none of these painters and writers sought their inspiration in Louisiana. It seemed as if Chateaubriand, whom most of them continued to treat with reverence, was to retain the monopoly of that exotic vein.

Indeed, the history of Louisiana in French literature after 1848 would be one with the history of Chateaubriand's posthumous fame and influence. It would show the indirect links joining Flaubert, Baudelaire, Leconte de Lisle, and Heredia with the country of the Natchez. "Il est de fait," wrote Anatole France of Flaubert and his boast that he had red blood in his veins, "qu'il descendait des Natchez, mais c'etait par Chateaubriand."¹³ Baudelaire's vision of America

¹² Alone among the artists of that period, Degas, born in 1834, visited New Orleans during the Second Empire. He painted the famous "Cotton Market" in that city.

¹³ Anatole France, La Vie Litteraire, III, p. 303.

Edgar Allen Poe, Emerson and Longfellow.¹⁴ From the author of Evangeline, Louisiana's epic, he borrowed a poem, Le Calumet de la paix, a topic often mentioned by French travelers in Louisiana in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The poet of Les Fleurs du Mal was one of Chateaubriand's most ardent admirers. He heaped the most scornful insults on Villemain, because that critic failed to understand the greatness of Les Natchez. "C'est bien la jugeote d'un pedagogue, incapable d'apprécier le grand gentilhomme des decadences, qui veut retourner a la vie sauvage."¹⁵ In his Salon de 1859, in praising a picture by his idol, Delacroix, he finds in it "l'ampleur de touche et de sentiments que

¹⁴ One of Baudelaire's friends, Ernest Prarond, traveled in America in 1864 and sent his impressions in versified form to G. Le Vavas seur, another one of Baudelaire's friends. The brief volume of verse is entitled: Voyage en Amerique. He apparently did not visit the South. In the fourth section of his book, "L'Ouest," he celebrates the Mississippi in verse defective in rhythm and sense:

Le pere des fleuves
 Coule devant nous
 Il a vu des veuves
 Pleurer aux epreuves
 De rouges epoux
 Et des villes neuves
 S'elever en preuves
 De siecles plus doux

¹⁵ Baudelaire, Notes sur l'esprit et le style de M. Villemain," Ceuvres, Edition de la Pleiade, II, p. 587.

caracterisait la plume qui a écrit *Les Natchez*."¹⁶ On the whole, however, the alluring land of *L'Invitation au voyage* remained for Baudelaire either Holland or the picturesque harbor of Honfleur in Normandy, or "la languoureuse Asie et la brulante Afrique," and that combination of the two continents which he found in his "*Venus noire*."¹⁷

Leconte de Lisle is also the heir of romantic, exotic literature. A famous page in his *Discours on Victor Hugo*, delivered at the French Academy, recalls his ecstatic discovery, as a boy, of *Les Orientales*. A large part of his work consists of variations of exotic themes--the forest, savannahs and jungles of his native island. America seems to have haunted him less than Africa, India, and the North of Europe. The absence of a legendary past in America probably made the setting of the New World less poetical for him. His *Calumet du Sachem*, in *Poemes Tragiques* may, however, be considered as having been inspired by an American theme.

¹⁶ Baudelaire, "Curiosites esthetiques," *Oeuvres*, II, p. 241.

¹⁷ Baudelaire's biographers assert that Jeanne Duval was actually born in San Domingo. Baudelaire was profoundly interested in the North American savages as depicted by a contemporary painter, Catlin: "Les sauvages de Nord-Amerique que, meme dans leur etat de decheance, nous faisaient rever a l'art de Phidias et aux grandeurs homeriques," *Ibid.*, II, p. 255.

Exotic dreams which had remained important elements of French literature during the Second Empire, gradually lose their place after 1870-1880. The motto of the symbolist generation is "Partir," (in Mallarme's *Brise marine*, for instance), as it had been the nostalgic cry of Baudelaire's Voyage. But their dream of escape becomes more ambitious as well as more metaphysical. Their desire is not so much to escape to stranger lands (except in the case of Rimbaud) as to escape from man's fate and man's limitations. Probing the secrets of unknown, America does not profoundly interest the contemporaries of Anatole France and Mallarme. Since most of the books which mention Louisiana between 1870 and 1900 show no definite trend, it must suffice to group them as logically as possible.

The first group includes a few technical books written about America from various points of view--historical, geographical, commercial and scientific. History had made brilliant developments in France during the first half of the century. Thiers and Michelet had studied Law's financial system and French colonization during the Regency. The Goncourt brothers were soon to study the eighteenth century from an anecdotic angle. A few studies dealing with the early history of French colonization in Louisiana are undertaken in the latter part of the nineteenth century. None of them, however, arouse any sentimental regrets of Louisiana's

romantic past. The first task was to collect documents, and that task is fulfilled diligently by the archive-keeper, Margry.¹⁸

The few other historical studies of Louisiana which appear before the more systematic attempts of the twentieth century scholars consist of a volume on Law's System, by E. Levasseur, a French professor who tries to justify the famous speculator and to explain with sympathy the failure of his plans; and a general work in three volumes on La France et ses colonies by the same scholar, in which he gives a brief resume of the French control of Louisiana in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1887, Castonnet de Fosses published a very short account of La Louisiane sous la domination francaise; and at the dawn of the twentieth century, a scholar, G. Musset, printed in the Journal de la Societe des Americanistes de Paris an account of a trip to Louisiana made in 1720-1724 by an official of the Compagnie des Indes, giving the technical and ethnical details noted by an official.¹⁹

¹⁸The bibliography gives more details on Margry, who collected the documents which were discussed in the first chapters.

¹⁹For these volumes, see the Bibliography under E. Levasseur, Castonnet de Fosses and Franquet de Chaville, the latter being the name of the official of the Compagnie des Indes who stayed in Louisiana in 1720-1724.

Another Frenchman visited America in 1869 and again in 1878, and apparently traveled as far as New Orleans. His purpose was merely commercial, his aim being the development of better trade relations between France and the United States. This traveler, Leon Chotteau, wrote a little book, Mes Deux Campagnes aux Etats-Unis. 1873-1879, containing his essential remarks, which are of a purely commercial character. Emile Malezieux, an engineer, wrote a more interesting account of his visit to America, in 1870, Souvenirs d'une Mission aux Etats-Unis. A cultured man, rich in general ideas, like most of his countrymen, Malezieux saw a great deal of the country, including California. He commented with sympathetic understanding on the trains, cities, and customs of America. It is to be regretted that he did not venture farther south than Washington, Richmond and North Carolina. He is included in this review of French travelers because he devotes several pages to Chateaubriand's romantic picture of the Meschacebe. Malezieux saw the Mississippi at Rock Island, and commented with gentle irony on the colorful descriptions of Atala which had caused him to expect so much more than the reality. His imagination carried him beyond Atala to the early days of French colonization, and he is one of the few French visitors to the United States at the end of the nineteenth century who mentions with admiration the names of Marquette, Hennepin,

Joliet and La Salle. Recalling Chateaubriand's romantic picture of the Meschacebe, he laments:

J'esperais bien apercevoir quelque ile flottante de nenuphars et de pistias, puis des serpents verts, des herons bleus, des flamants roses, de jeunes crocodiles "s'embarquant pele-mele sur des vaisseaux de fleurs, et la colonie deployant du vent ses voiles d'or pour aller aborder dans quelque anse retiree du fleuve." Mais j'eus beau plonger des regards avides a travers les grandes mailles du pont que le train parcourait lentement, je n'avais sous les yeux qu'une large riviere, divisee en deux bras par une ile qui est plate et prosaiguement boisee comme les rives; -- ce que je vis ressemblait fort aux moins belles parties du cours de la Loire. Je n'entendis meme pas "le sourd mugissement des crocodiles dans les glaeuls." Sans nier enfin qu'il puisse y avoir dans le Mississippi (que j'ai revu plus tard a Saint-Louis) un genre particulier de grandeur solennelle--je dois dire que mon attente fut ici decue.²⁰

Several Frenchmen, members of the nobility, who found themselves without function in their own country, were attracted by democratic America. Louisiana and the aristocratic South failed, however, to attract them as much as the East and the far West. The first one of this group is Count Louis de Turenne, who traveled in the United States in 1875-1876, and summed up his impressions in Quatorze Mois dans l'Amerique du Nord. He appears as a vain and superficial observer whose

²⁰ Emile Malezieux, Souvenirs d'une Mission aux Etats-Unis, p. 85.

interests during a three weeks' visit to New Orleans, were limited to receptions in the fashionable clubs. He does, however, describe the huge alligators swarming in the bayous. His impressions of Louisiana were biased by the swindlers in a gambling house, to whom he had fallen an easy prey, and by the unruffled equanimity of the local police to whom he had appealed. Count de Turenne was not concerned with the development of the country, the character of the inhabitants, nor the exotic scenery.

Viscount Paul d'Abzac spent a much longer period of time in New Orleans, where he was French Consul in the late seventies. A very precise and technical observer of commercial developments, he had published a work entitled Enquete sur la navigation, l'immigration, et le commerce francais a la Nouvelle Orleans en 1876. His second work, Excursions en Louisiane, more literary in character, relates a few stories of Creoles and slaves in Louisiana, and aims, like the first, to discourage French emigration to Louisiana, unless the French immigrants are ready to endure the unpleasant climate and are provided with sufficient funds for their needs. Viscount d'Alzac reserves his warmest praise for the artistic and cultural qualities of the French elements in Louisiana, and also--unlike most of his compatriots--for the women. He is not concerned with their indolent charm,

but with their moral virtues, and their perfect obedience to their husbands:

Louisianians are devoted wives and affectionate mothers. One never hears them discuss modern themes about the rights of women. Faithful to the ancient monarchical and Catholic notion, the Creole wife merges herself, body and soul, in the personality of her husband, whose word is law.²¹

Viscount d'Haussonville wrote four hundred pages about his visit to America in 1883, but omitted the South from his wanderings. He stopped at Saint Louis for the sole purpose of admiring the Meschacebe. An obstinate admirer of Chateaubriand, Viscount d'Haussonville prefers to reread Atala, even if Chateaubriand's descriptions are inaccurate, and bemoans the natural beauty which industrial development has destroyed:

Alas! where is the Mississippi's blue jay? How wise he was to fly away! I see flowing at my feet only yellow, dirty water, between two muddy streets, bordered with factories.²²

It will suffice to mention only the titles of other accounts of French visitors to America between 1869 and 1898, none of whom visited the South or displayed any interest in Louisiana. In this lack of curiosity concerning a land still rich with French memories is seen the haste of most of these

²¹D'Abzac, Excursions en Louisiane, p. 3.

²²D'Haussonville, A Travers les Etats-Unis, p. 381.

travelers, and also the interest of the French public in New York, Chicago, and occasionally California. These travelers and writers are: I. Simonin, Le Monde americain, souvenir de mes voyages aux Etats-Unis, 1876; and a second volume by the same author, A Travers les Etats-Unis: de l'Atlantique au Pacifique, 1885; G. de Molinari, Lettres sur les Etats-Unis et le Canada, 1876;²³ Alexandre Clerc, Chez les Yankees, 1884; Claudio Jannet, Les Etats-Unis Contemporains, 1889;²⁴ Alexandre Clerc, Au Pays du petrole, 1889;²⁵ Adolphe de Bacourt, Souvenirs d'un diplomate, 1891;²⁶ B. Dureau, Les Etats-Unis en 1850, 1891; Henri Gaullieru, Etudes americaines, 1891; Leon F. Blouet, A Frenchman in America (published under the name of Max O'Rell), 1891; Emile

²³Molinari visited New Orleans, but recorded only a dull description of cotton growing and picking, and a few sentences about traffic congestion in the streets of New Orleans.

²⁴Jannet discusses in vague generalities the negro question and the misery of the South.

²⁵This is practically the same book as Chez les Yankees, except lengthened by an accumulation of more uncomplimentary remarks on America, e.g., "Everyone knows that in this country, stealing is considered a profession, which success makes legitimate. To succeed and make a fortune is a goal which excuses, justifies, and exalts all professions, even that of stealing." (p.99).

²⁶The author, a former French minister in Washington, compares the Yankees and the Southerners, and censures the latter for having borrowed all the worst features of French civilization--"nos penchants revolutionnaires."

Barbier, Voyage au pays du dollar, 1893; Philippe Deschamps, A Travers les Etats-Unis et la Canada, 1896; Dr. Lutaud, Aux Etats-Unis, 1797.

Two books deserve particular mention: one, by Jean d'Albrey, because the author is among the very rare travelers who ventured as far as Louisiana in the late nineteenth century; the other, by Paul Bourget, on account of the eminence of the author.

Jean d'Albrey, a former student of the Ecole polytechnique, traveled in Asia and returned to France by way of America. In his book, Du Tonkin au Havre, 1898, ten pages are devoted to Louisiana. The author, probably an engineer by profession, was disappointed with the trains in America and criticises them relentlessly. He traveled through Louisiana by train and sketched the scenery. Like many other foreign observers, he was unfavorably impressed by the Spanish moss which he saw hanging from the trees.²⁷ He described the marshy swamps and cotton fields as dreary and colorless. He found the French Quarter of New Orleans dirty, poorly constructed, and in some sections decrepit with age; even the sky seemed "fuliginous," and the weather damp. On the other hand, he was attracted by the modern American buildings and the large, bustling boulevards. His only real praise, however,

²⁷D'Albrey, Du Tonkin au Havre, p. 243: "There is nothing more hideous than this prodigious, parasitic growth produced by the humidity."

was for the French Opera, which he was happy to discover in this remote country. He found proof of France's "artistic preeminence" in the operas sung in the French language. He expressed regret concerning the sale of Louisiana by Bonaparte, or rather of the incompetence of the French colonial administration in the eighteenth century.

One of the vain regrets often uttered in the course of this study must be repeated here: it is to be deplored that one of the most sensitive and subtle books on America, Paul Bourget's Outre-Mer, does not include the South in its interpretation of the United States. In 1893, the author of Cruelle Enigme and Cosmopolis, the penetrating analyst of the Essais de psychologie contemporaine, undertook to visit the democracy which Tocqueville had dissected sixty years earlier. Bourget, who had already traveled in Italy, in Greece, and repeatedly in England, brought to America not only a much wider culture than most of his countrymen since Tocqueville, but also the ability to interpret a country through its scenery, its inhabitants, and its poets.²⁸

²⁸During his travels in England, Tennyson had helped him to depict the Isle of Wight; Thomas Moore, Ireland; Walter Scott, Scotland. On all these points, and on the biographical background of Bourget's trip to America, the learned study by Albert Feuillerat, Paul Bourget, Histoire d'un esprit sous la Troisieme Republique, offers invaluable information.

His main preoccupation, however, was not literary, but, like Tocqueville's political. Three distinct threats, looming like dark clouds upon the horizon, seemed to him ominous for the future of Europe: democracy, science, and the race question. The situation created by these problems were especially conspicuous in America. Hoping to allay his fears and forebodings for the future of France, Bourget crossed the Atlantic Ocean. He returned with some admiration for democracy in America, but convinced that the French solution, inherently different from the American solution, should be rooted in the past of France. In other words, America drew him nearer to the royalist creed.

Bourget had sailed for America with a nostalgic longing for Europe and for her past. In a foreword dedicated to James Gordon Bennett, who had suggested his trip, he confessed:

Many things in America are outrageous and displeasing. There one often regrets the agreeableness and slowness of Europe. At times, one has real nostalgia for a country with a historical background where there are the dead behind the living.

It would seem natural for such a mood to recall memories of the great Frenchmen who had been sent as courageous pioneers to the wilds of the Mississippi Valley; to attract him to the State which, alone of all the States in the Union, has a French past and a nostalgia, not seldom expressed, for "la vieille France." Instead, he traveled as far north as

Minneapolis, visited Chicago, observed "high life" in Newport, and discussed psychology at Harvard. In February, 1894, he went to Georgia and Florida for a few weeks of rest. "His life in this semi-tropical country was a delightful memory which remained with him for a long time," writes his biographer.²⁹ The only man who might have written a few moving pages on the survival of French customs in Louisiana, perhaps also on problems of race as that State offered to the clear-sighted observer in the nineties, did not visit Louisiana. Thus French literature concerning Louisiana was doomed to remain barren after Chateaubriand, and throughout the whole nineteenth century.

²⁹A. Feuillerat, op. cit., pp. 194-195.

CHAPTER III

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

SUMMARY

Louisiana's place in French Letters of the twentieth century. Scarcity of historical accounts in French concerning the United States published before 1917. Guenin's La Louisiane. Other histories of Louisiana. Travel books between 1900 and 1917 which do not concern Louisiana. Les Etats-Unis d'Amerique by Paul d'Estournelles de Constant. Jules Huret's impressions of the United States. Paul Adam. Change of the French attitude in regard to America after the war. Historical accounts of America by Frenchmen. Villes et Paysages d'Amerique by Jean Canu. Usonie by Jean Prevost. Duhamel. Luc Durtain. Paul Morand. Giradoux. Joseph Kessel. Jules Romsins. Andre Maurois. Emile Ripert. Andre Demaison. Frank L. Schoell. Oudard's Vieille Amerique. Sud by Pierre de Lanux. The French Mission's visit in March 1937. L'Empire francais d'Amerique by Gabriel-Louis Jaray. Dr. Rene Cruchet's sojourn in Louisiana. The importance of Emile Lauvriere's works. Madame Regine Hubert-Robert's Histoire merveilleuse de la Louisiane francaise.

In surveying the literature produced during the last forty years--1900-1940--included in this study, one discovers almost at once that the twentieth century did not really find itself until it was ten or fifteen years old. The first decade was, as far as French comments concerning America and Louisiana are concerned, a mere continuation of the writings of the late nineteenth century. Then, as a new literary and artistic generation gave an original impulse to French letters and fine arts, a new attitude developed in regard to America. Several eminent men of letters sailed for the New World, which had not been visited by a single French novelist

or poet of first order from the time of Chateaubriand to that of Loti. Since this new curiosity was greatly favored by political events, and was to a great extent a result of the first World War, the year 1917, the date of American intervention in the war may be used as the dividing line in the study of the twentieth century. There are few interesting mentions of Louisiana found in French letters from 1900 to 1917; but a much keener interest in the South and in Louisiana develops after that date.

The interest of the French in American history seems to have been surprisingly lacking, if it may be judged by the small number of historical accounts dealing with America which were published in France before 1917. A few volumes written between 1900 and the World War briefly mention Louisiana. These, however, do not deserve a detailed study, since they are not first hand accounts nor do they claim to be based on more than an elementary knowledge of the South. In this group, the only work devoted entirely to Louisiana is written primarily for children. This book, La Louisiane, by Eugene Guenin, is a summary of the history of Louisiana from its discovery by Cavalier de La Salle to the Louisiana Purchase. The book is neither scientific nor scholarly in its

presentation of facts and documents, nor literary in its style and purpose.

A few comments on negro education in Louisiana are found in a French thesis entitled, L'Education des negres aux Etats-Unis, by Kate Brousseau, "professeur de psychologie a l'Ecole Normale de Los Angeles."¹ Several histories of French colonization were written in the twentieth century after the French public had fully realized the importance of the Colonial Empire which the Third Republic had given them. These usually devote a chapter to French efforts in Louisiana, and explain, often with nostalgic regrets, the ultimate failure of France to retain her Mississippi Colony. In 1908, Paul Gaffarel, "doyen de la Faculte des Lettres d'Aix-Marseille," published a learned volume dealing with La Politique Coloniale en France de 1789 a 1830. While he regrets the sale of Louisiana to the United States by Bonaparte, and laments the loss thereby suffered by French culture and the French language on the North American continent, he blames the French people themselves and their

¹Pages 141-144 deal with Louisiana. The purpose of the book is to give statistics concerning the number of schools for negroes in each state, and other similar data. An excellent systematic study of the United States (soil, population, agriculture, universities, and commerce), by Pierre Leroy-Beaulieu, Les Etats-Unis au XXe siecle, Paris, Colin, 1904, is omitted from this study because the author is not concerned with Louisiana and mentions it only in the preface.

leaders for the irreparable blunder.² Charles de la Ronciere, the learned historian of the French navy and of French colonies, mentions the French epic in Louisiana in his book, Ce qu'ont fait en Amerique les Francais depuis sa decouverte jusqu'au percement de l'isthme de Panama; and in 1918, F. Renaut dealt with "La Question de la Louisiane, 1796-1806," in the Revue de l'histoire des colonies francaises in a detailed account of the political conditions prevailing in the colony while it was successively owned by the Spanish, the French and the Americans.

In the literature of travel in the United States written between 1900 and 1917, there are a number of works which deserve special consideration. The Abbe Felix Klein, a professor at the Catholic Institute in Paris, published three books dealing with the United States; Au Pays de la vie intense, L'Amerique de demain, and En Amerique a la fin de la guerre. Apparently, he did not visit Louisiana, and his remarks concerning the negro problem and the Catholic element in America include no reference to the South. Therese Vianzone, who published her Impressions d'une Francaise en Amerique, was content with visiting the larger cities of the East and Canada, and with praising Catholicism

²Gaffarel, op. cit., p. 186: "Si nous n'avons pas reussi, c'est nous seuls qui sommes responsables de ces essais malheureux. Nous avons ete punis la ou nous avions peche."

in America. Three brothers, Bournand, who entitled their book, Au Pays du Dollar, merely collected conventional observations on women's clubs, churches, commerce, and industry in the United States, and never visited the South. Professor Louis Cons, then a young man teaching in the United States, and until his recent death one of the outstanding French scholars in America, mentioned Louisiana briefly in a lucid analysis and interpretation of the United States, published in 1912, and entitled Les Etats-Unis de 1784 a 1912. In 1915, a journalist, Paul Reboux, published a diary of his trip to Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, and the southern United States under the title, Blancs et Noirs. Carnet de Voyage. He made no attempt to conceal his disappointment in Florida and Louisiana. He had expected to find in New Orleans an animated and happy city. Instead, he laments: "What impression of intense sadness--enormous stores, buildings made of brick having a scurvy appearance, trolley-car lines everywhere; rails everywhere, and everywhere trolley cars whose incessant noises and squeaking brakes deafen one by their tiring outcry. The streets are dirty and full of holes, the sidewalks are paved with large, uneven flag-stones. A London fog floats over the city."³

³ Reboux, op. cit., p. 264.

The last work of any importance on the United States published before America's entry into the war is by a political figure of some eminence, Paul d'Estournelles de Constant: Les Etats-Unis d'Amerique. The author, who was a senator and one of France's delegates to the Peace Conference at the Hague, had visited America for the first time in 1902. He relates his travels in the first half of the book, and discusses american problems--such as education, negroes and religion--in the second half. In a few indignant passages he laments the neglected condition in which France left her colony in Louisiana. Speaking of the commercial treaty by which Louisiana was sold to the American Republic, he makes the following comment:

I know of no other piece of barter so sordid and repulsive as this. --Louisiana should have been treated as a daughter to become a queen in marriage and not as a slave to be bartered.⁴

In 1917, the same author published a second edition of his book, in which he deplores in even more eloquent strains the inept policy which had cost France the loss of her colony. Almost alone among French travelers in America since Chateaubriand, he thought regretfully of La Salle and the valiant French heroes who had given up their lives to

⁴D'Estournelles de Constant, Les Etats-Unis d'Amerique, p. 148.

explore the Mississippi Valley and offer it to France.⁵ Yet this nostalgic regret for the fruitless endeavors of great Frenchmen did not blind Paul d'Estournelles to the wonderful advantages to be found in modern America. His book is one of the most favorable to the United States appearing in the early part of the century.

The difference between so-called creative writers and journalists or reporters was more marked in the early part of the twentieth century than it has been in recent years, when Maurois, Morand, Giraudoux, Duhamel, and Demaison have been journalists as well as novelists of high repute. The two most valuable accounts by French travelers in the United States produced during the first decade of the present century, were written by gifted journalists, one of whom was also a novelist and critic: Jules Huret and Paul Adam.

Jules Huret made a specialty of travel-books and of literary "enquetes," a favorite pastime of French newspapers

⁵D'Estournelles de Constant, Les Etats-Unis d'Amerique nouvelle edition revue, 1917, p. 141: "La Louisiane! Ce seul nom parle au coeur d'un Francais doucement et douloureusement: il symbolise tant de beaute de force d'ames, d'heroisme, tant de clairvoyance geniale, d'une part, et d'autre part, tant de laideur, tant d'ineptie, de faux esprit et de lachete; ---Je n'exagere pas: a la Nouvelle Orleans, j'ai vu La Salle; je n'ai pu retenir mes larmes en le trouvant vivant dans la memoire de Francais que je rencontrais---."

in the happy years when newspapers had no wars or rumors of war to report. His Enquete sur l'evolution litteraire, first written in the Echo de Paris in March-July, 1891, made him famous. Then he traveled extensively in Germany and Argentina, and in the United States. In 1904, he published two volumes on North America: the first is entitled De New York a la Nouvelle Orleans, and the second De San Francisco au Canada. These two books, written by an alert, intelligent Frenchman, have remained to this day among the truest and most accurate pictures of America in the early years of this century.

Like many Europeans who visit New York for the first time, Huret was dazed and dismayed by the noise and haste, and by the inhuman worship of work and efficiency. Upon leaving New York he decided to visit the South, and to plunge into the romantic and sentimental atmosphere of Louisiana before venturing into the West. Full of hopes and expectations, he left by train for Louisiana, "which appeared to me in the distance like an oasis in the rays of the sun." The memories of Atala pursued him, and upon reaching Louisiana, he expresses his joy in enthusiastic words reminiscent of Chateaubriand:

Here I am in Louisiana, the home of the mocking birds, of creeping vines, of beautiful oak trees, of the Mississippi, Father of the Waters, of bayous where crocodiles sleep, of sugar cane plantations, Louisiana, the home of snakes and flowers!⁶

Even the parasitic Spanish moss, hanging gracefully from the trees, which had been so displeasing to many other travelers, appealed to Huret. In Louisiana he found leisure, expressive and responsive faces, animated gestures, exuberant spirits, and all that he had failed to find in New York. The houses in New Orleans seemed to him the most attractive in America.⁷ He decided to prolong his stay in that charming city in order to observe it better. He described it as being like Spain, but less rugged, as voluptuous as Italy, but less wiry; a country made for playing truant and where one is astonished at the energy of the inhabitants.⁸ Indeed, his remarks show a less hasty and more understanding and penetrating judgment than those of most travelers since Tocqueville.

⁶Jules Huret, En Amerique, De New-York a la Nouvelle-Orleans, p. 330.

⁷Huret, op. cit., p. 334: "La Nouvelle Orleans, la plus jolie ville que j'aie jusqu'a present rencontree en Amerique." St. Charles Avenue is to him, "une sorte de Neuilly tropical."

⁸Ibid., p. 335.

Jules Huret's impression of New Orleans, which he visited at a time when he felt repelled by "the rigorous hypocrisy of New England" and the long, cold winter in the East, remained unchanged. He is among the few Frenchmen who found Louisiana more charming than California. At the end of his second volume, De San Francisco au Canada, he refers again to his pleasure in discovering New Orleans.⁹ Although his chapters on Louisiana are neither profound nor picturesque, they nevertheless present to French readers a favorable picture of Louisiana and New Orleans. Though Huret does not rise to the heights of political analysis nor of economic and anthropological discussion, he renders his impressions of New Orleans with liveliness and freshness. However, he does not fail to add to his naive description of a city so unique in many of its aspects, from its flowers and its women to its incomparable cooking, the inevitable chapter on the negro question, merely presenting the problem but offering no solution.

Paul Adam could be called a precursor of futurism. He found poetry and beauty in the machine, in commerce and finance, and welcomed the future with an indomitable energy

⁹Huret, op. cit., II, p. 519: "Non je n'oublierai jamais la joie douce qui m'inonde dès que j'eus mis le pied à la Nouvelle Orleans. Ce jour-la ma conscience s'agrandit de la perception nette du produit européen que je suis."

and an intelligent love of all that is pregnant with energy. In his Vues d'Amerique, he protested against the condescending attitude adopted by Europeans toward youthful America, and undertook to show that architecture and art are much better understood and more profoundly loved in the United States than is commonly believed.

The chapter which Paul Adam devotes to the South is brief, and his analysis of the character and the customs of the creoles is superficial. He had obviously passed through New Orleans somewhat hastily on his way to Cuba. However, he was struck by the colorful atmosphere of the city and by the talkative and gesticulating crowd, in contrast with the severe and puritanical aspect of Eastern cities. He perceives the survival in the old French and Spanish families of age-old hatreds, rivalries, and feuds, "traits of manners worthy of figuring in Stendhal's writings or in Casanova's memoirs." It is to be deplored that Paul Adam's trip was so hasty that he could not penetrate more deeply into the soul of Louisiana. Yet his talent, which was that of a naturalist and an epic novelist, prepared him better for an understanding of the industrial centers, and the architectural and engineering innovations of America, than for an appreciation of the more idyllic and nostalgic South.

The first World War brought about a re-discovery of America by European nations, especially by France. The attitude of French writers since Tocqueville had been somewhat patronizing and condescending toward the New World. The United States was not considered sufficiently picturesque for exotic novelists,¹⁰ nor sufficiently subtle to attract the psychological story-teller. As the nineteenth century declined and the twentieth opened, the political and economic organization of the country, the commerce and industry, the railways and oil-wells, or the inevitable Chicago stockyards, were the favorite themes of French books on America.

Europe suddenly discovered America as a country with a soul. For a few years, the words "American idealism" became the motto of many French journalists and travelers. French cities opened their "avenue du President Wilson." American history was included in the French curriculum of study; American literature was taught at the Sorbonne and in other French Universities. However, after 1925, the attitude changed. Among conservative French moralists, there was fear of excessive American influence. The whole

¹⁰ It is not surprising that Loti neglected America. Primitive and naive souls alone interested him. He devoted only a few pages to the United States in Quelques Aspects du vertige mondial. The chapter is entitled: "New York entrevue par un oriental tres vieux jeu."

subject, America as seen by the French between 1917 and the present day, presents sufficient variety to require several years of patient study.¹¹ I shall, therefore, devote my attention to the share that the South--and more particularly Louisiana--had in that new wave of French interest in America.¹²

In a survey of French literature dealing with the United States--and the South in particular--between 1917 and 1940, no chronological division seems to be justified. No clear evolution or trend is distinguishable in the French studies and interpretations of America during this period except an increasingly hostile reaction against the mechanical aspect of American life--and consequently against New York, Chicago and Hollywood--and a much more sympathetic interest in the South, which is considered more traditional and better balanced than the North. However, first a number of volumes will be examined which may be classified as historical and objective in character; a second group will include inter-

 11 A very helpful article by J. Simon, "L'Amérique telle que l'ont vue les romanciers français, 1917-1937," in Études anglaises, November, 1937, pp. 498-520; treats part of this subject. Some help has been drawn from it.

12 In the following pages, it would have been impossible to separate Louisiana completely from the other Southern States without observing an artificial distinction.

pretations of the United States by novelists and essayists who are not concerned with such objectivity of outlook.

After America's entry into the war in 1917, historical accounts of America, handbooks of American history, surveys of American life and customs written by journalists and travelers, and even scholarly works on American literature will be suddenly multiplied. Louisiana often receives a fair share of that increased interest in the United States.

Under the leadership of the French historian, Hanotaux, who had also been an eminent French Minister of Foreign Affairs, several French scholars, writers, and other intellectuals--many of them grouped around the Comite France-Amerique--undertook to acquire a broader and more accurate knowledge of America, and to disseminate this knowledge in France. They were interested in the past as well as in the present. Many more Frenchmen than ever before became interested in the history of French explorations in the Mississippi Valley, and in the present-day fostering of French culture in Louisiana.

In 1920, Hector Carneau brought out a new edition of his Histoire du Canada,¹³ prefaced by M. G. Hanotaux, in which he discussed France's colonial failure in the New

¹³The first volume had appeared in 1913; the second, with which we are concerned, in 1920.

World in the eighteenth century. In the first chapter of the second volume, the historian gives a clear and fair account of Law's system, and of the effects, both good and evil, which it had in Louisiana. In 1925, P. Belmont, "ancien President de la Commission des Affaires Etrangeres," published an extensive work on American foreign policy since 1778, entitled: La Politique des Etats-Unis et l'Europe, 1778-1919. He emphasized the momentous consequences of the Louisiana Purchase upon the diplomatic history of America. Bernard Fay, who was one of the French specialists on American affairs, does not take an active interest in the South in his works on America.¹⁴ Charles Cestre, professor of American Civilization at the Sorbonne, and a frequent visitor to American universities, also seems to have been much more familiar with the East and the Middle West than with the South. His comprehensive survey of the United States (geographical, political, economic, and cultural), Les Etats-Unis, devotes three pages to Louisiana. His attitude, although complimentary, does not sound very personal. His description of New Orleans is colorless.¹⁵ The same year,

¹⁴The first, L'Esprit revolutionnaire en France et aux Etats-Unis a la fin du XVIIIe siecle, was published in 1925, and the last, Civilisation Americaine, in 1939.

¹⁵"Ville si interessante par son parfum d'antiquite, par la douceur de ses moeurs egal a la douceur de son climat, par son gout de l'art et des choses de l'esprit," p. 159.

1927, Andre Siegfried completed the work which was hailed at once as the most lucid and comprehensive analysis of America appearing since Tocqueville: Les Etats-Unis d'aujourd'hui.¹⁶ Siegfried's book is not a record of things seen and heard in the United States, but a systematic analysis undertaken by an economist and moralist. Though the purpose of the author, who had visited the South as well as the rest of the United States, was not to trace the historical origins of the American nation, it is surprising, nevertheless, how little attention he devotes to the French element in America. He is struck with fear even more than with wonder by the gospel of efficiency and prosperity as practiced in the United States. As a European, he voices, in his final chapter, his misgivings and his "nostalgie d'une atmosphere menacee de disparaitre," his regret that the aristocratic sense of refinement and of individualism was disappearing in America.

M. Firmin Roz has been considered in France, along with the two writers last mentioned, as one of the most eminent specialists on America. The leit-motives of his works¹⁷ are "American energy" and "American idealism." The East and the West seem more familiar to him than the South.

¹⁶It was published in America under the title, America comes of Age.

¹⁷See the titles of his volumes in the bibliography.

I shall merely mention other books which hardly pertain to this subject: those of Edward Larocque Tinker, whose works, although he is a bilingual writer and the author of an exhaustive study on Les Ecrits de langue française en Louisiane au XIXe siècle, really belong to the literature of Louisiana; the Initiation a la vie aux Etats-Unis written by sixteen French writers and scholars, and published in 1931 under the auspices of the Comité France-Amerique; several informing but hasty accounts of America which leave Louisiana out of their consideration;¹⁸ and the very useful handbook of American History by Professor Freclin: Histoire des Etats-Unis.

Two volumes seem to stand out among the large number of general descriptions and interpretations of the United States published in France by men of a younger generation than that of Professors Cestre, Siegfried, and Roz. They may be chosen as samples of the best journalistic reporting and methodical study produced by the French. They are: Villes et Paysages d'Amerique, by Jean Canu, and Usonie,

¹⁸ Albert Tissandier, Six Mois aux Etats-Unis; Rene Puaux, Decouverte des Americains which devotes nine pages to New Orleans; Marcel Braunschvig, La Vie americaine et ses lecons; Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, L'Amerique chez elle; Marie Therese Gadala, Impressions d'Amerique; Emile Scrieber, L'Amerique reagit, (ten pages deal with New Orleans); Vladimir Pozner, Les Etats desunis. A thesis by Josaphat Benoit, L'Ame franco-americaine, includes an attempt at a psychological analysis of the Acadians as an element of the Franco-American ethnical group in the New World.

Esquisse de la Civilisation americaine, by Jean Prevost.

Villes et Paysages d'Amerique is a pleasant and vivid record of an automobile trip in the United States, undertaken by a young Frenchman and two of his friends. The author, an expert geographer, observes with a keen and penetrating eye the scenery of the different states of the Union. He does not look for strained or sensationally picturesque details; he avoids mistaking Harlem or Hollywood for America. He tries to depict with accuracy and restraint what he saw during a rapid trip around the country.

Three chapters are devoted to the South: one to Texas, one to New Orleans, and a third to "the old South." Louisiana's landscape is faithfully depicted, but without excessive enthusiasm or any vain declamation.¹⁹ The pages discussing Acadia, the Mississippi and New Orleans offer little more than the usual comments of a French traveler interested in a glorious and romantic French past, but disappointed in the lamentable condition of many of the former French buildings of Le Vieux Carre.

Usonie, by Jean Prevost, a gifted French writer of the younger generation, is one of the most solid pictures

¹⁷ "La veritable beaute de cette terre amphibie, sans cesse menacee par les suintements, les marees du golfe, les inondations du fleuve, ce sont ses arbres gorges d'eau, ses cypres et ses chenes," p. 292.

of America written by a European. It need not detain us here since the author apparently did not visit the South, and does not include any speculative consideration of that region in his attentive and sympathetic study of science and literature in America.

The roll-call of famous French writers who visited the United States and either wrote their impressions of the country or used it as a setting for episodes in their novels is an imposing one: Duhamel, Luc Durtain, Paul Morand, Giraudoux, Celine, Kessel, Jules Romains, and Andre Maurois. None of them, however, occupies an important place in the French literature concerning Louisiana. One has to look elsewhere, among a less brilliant group of writers, for the final rehabilitation of Louisiana in French Letters of the last twenty years.

The French novelists who discovered America after the first World War were attracted to it--even when, as in one or two famous cases, disappointment and repulsion followed the short-lived attraction--as a modern setting for their modernity. America beckoned to them as to a land of escape from war-ridden Europe, and as a land of rejuvenation for an ardent generation, grown tired of the intellectual sophisti-

cation and skepticism of the Old World. Though their work is often more than hasty journalism, it is--in the case of a Morand and a Maurois--superior journalism, executed with skill and humor.

The author of Sesnes de la Vie future, on his one and only trip to America, landed in New Orleans, and enjoyed the advantage of having as his guide, a cultured representative of Louisiana, Professor Lionel C. Durel.²⁰ He reached New Orleans embittered by the medical examination imposed on board the ship, and annoyed that a doctor, and future member of the French Academy, should have been treated as an ordinary mortal. He resolved to avenge himself by writing a revengeful best-seller. It is needless to emphasize the superficiality and the unfairness of the book, which Duhamel must long ago have regretted writing; nor is it necessary to point out the weakness of his fundamental assumption that America is the land of the machine, and is conquering Europe and corrupting her soul through her worship of the thing which she created. The events of 1940 have already proved that another country was to conquer and corrupt France, and that its salvation would one day lie in more American machinery and not less.

While he vituperated against American movies, banks, prohibition, and the worship of calories, Duhamel forgot to

²⁰In Chapter XI, he refers to him as Richard C. Durel.

look at the country which he had come to improve through his lectures. On board a steamer which sailed up the Mississippi, he failed to observe the trees, the birds, and the sky. In New Orleans where he could have discovered many remnants of French civilization, he found nothing to report. The separation of negroes from the whites on the streetcars and trains, however, stirred in him sincere but facile rhetorical indignation; and even his visit to the picturesque and melancholy cemetery in New Orleans inspired no more appropriate comment than a melodramatic paragraph accusing America of separating the races even in death.

Luc Durtain, like Duhamel, a doctor, and friend of suffering humanity, also came to the United States. His travel books on western Europe, Russia, and America are written in a less hasty style than most of the abundant literature of the nineteen twenties. Durtain was attracted by California. His Quarantieme Etage (1927) and Hollywood depasse (1928) offer a striking picture of American civilization on the West Coast. Like Duhamel, he concluded that the mechanical civilization of America is crushing the individual; and again like him, he reached this generalization after only a fragmentary acquaintance with the United States, and none at all of the South.

After a second tour of America, he discusses American

civilization with more fairness than previously. In Quelques Notes d'U. S. A. and Les Deux Faces de l'Amérique, a few allusions to New Orleans show that the author had traveled in the South. Like most Frenchmen in the late twenties, however, he was obsessed by the evils of prohibition, and talks of nothing else. In two novels dealing with the United States, Captain O. K. and Frank and Marjorie, he utilizes the relations of the whites and the negroes as picturesque themes for his novels.

Paul Morand is possibly the most indefatigable traveler of all the French writers of the post-war group. He had already traveled extensively when he visited America in 1925, crossing the country from New York to Vancouver with his accustomed speed. The book which he was then preparing, Rien que la Terre, 1926, does not mention the Southern States of the Union. Nor does his novel, Champions du Monde (1930), whose heroes are four students of Columbia University, or his clever guide-book, New York (1930).

Magie Noire, published in 1928, is considered by many critics one of the best of Morand's books. It represents the importance of African and American negroes in the comprehensive series of studies devoted by the author to the contemporary world. None of the action in Magie Noire actually takes place in Louisiana, although Morand

had visited the state, in 1927, (as the "avant-propos" informs us), as well as twenty-seven other "negro countries." These vivid and picturesque stories need no praise, and their relative truth is very striking. Several of the author's allusions prove that he was keenly interested in the Creole songs and traditions of Louisiana, as well as in the negro superstitions current in the South.²¹

Morand's only discussion of New Orleans is found in Air Indien, one of his works which is devoted to a description and analysis of the Pacific states of South America. Traveling by airplane, he visits Chile, Peru, and Ecuador, traverses Central America, and after flying over the Gulf of Mexico, hails the Mississippi as "le pere des eaux." The last chapter of the book is a brief and moving meditation on New Orleans and Manon Lescaut's grave. The first paragraph which presents with striking intensity the main features of Louisiana's landscape, is one of the most concise and graphic descriptions recorded by any of the French travelers:

²¹One of those stories is entitled Congo, Baton Rouge. It describes a successful negro artist in Paris, who, driven by superstitious fears, returns to her native land, Louisiana, and commits suicide by jumping in the Mississippi River, near Baton Rouge. Another story, Excelsior, relates the adventures of the Bloom family, which calls itself "Creole." According to Morand, this custom is traditional among the negroes of New Orleans who wish to be mistaken for whites. The action takes place in a town in Georgia called Excelsior, and then on a fashionable beach in Delaware, where the younger members of the Bloom family succeed in passing for white people until their skin betrays them by growing darker.

Les champs de coton brun et les roseaux de cannes a sucre alternent avec des steppes de palmiers nains dont les sabres en éventail me piquent aux jambes; les feuilles de maïs font un bruit de papier sec. Tout semble vieux ici; aux grands orages caraïbes a succède un air d'une finesse très ancienne. Ce ne sont plus des cadavres de chevaux qui bordent la route, mais des cadavres de Ford, aux toles tordues par les souffrances d'une trop longue vie, aux coussins troués, ou tout a peri, sauf les yeux clairs des phares. Ailleurs, les balles de coton cerclees de bandes de fer moisissent en plein vent. Les filets de peche sont déchirés, les negres ont l'air aussi les que les mules qu'ils montent sans etriers; de la pipe qu'ils fument il ne reste que le culot.²²

Then Morand, who often seems the most modern of all writers and the least concerned with memories of the past, recalls a sentence from the melancholy conclusion of Manon Lescaut--"Nous nous aimons au milieu d'une vaste plaine"-- and comments: "Ces mots de Des Grieux, ces simples mots m'ont toujours rempli d'une fatigue desesperée." He mentions the old French cemeteries "ou dorment depuis plus de deux siecles nos nobles, nos pretres, nos aventuriers, nos prostituees, parmi des esclaves africains," and, then by straining his imagination excessively, he even pictures the spot where "le pere La Salle disait sa messe, entoure de pirogues indiennes, ici, a quarante kilometres de la Nouvelle Orleans."²³

²²Morand, Air Indien, pp. 260-261.

²³Ibid., p. 261. Morand's memory failed him here, since La Salle was not a Jesuit father and never said mass twenty-five miles from New Orleans.

In a lyrical and touching invocation, Morand addresses Louisiana, and like Chateaubriand and Vigny, seems to delight in the harmonious syllables of a name dear to the French:

Terre de Louisiane, pour la seconde fois tu m'accueilles, et je retrouve ton visage desolé comme celui d'une jeune malade incurable. Louisiane, gehenne ensoleillée et inhabitable, qui tour à tour sus comblait de joie et broyait sous la déception la plus atroce ceux qui--- arrivaient ici à condamnés au "Misisipi."²⁴

Among the outcast women whose fate it was to be sent to Louisiana, he recalls Manon in one of the best passages inspired by Louisiana. Its subtle and restrained charm reminds the modern reader of Frevost's lucid and discreet prose:

Ce que Manon apportait ici, c'est la nostalgie du plaisir. Mais le plaisir mourut avec elle; l'air indien dessécha cette tendre semence de Paris et ce n'est qu'à Paris que les filles d'Amérique peuvent aujourd'hui encore en cueillir la fleur.

Je ne sais plus, Manon, où tu reposes, parmi tant de tertres qui gonflent à peine le sol coquiller, comme un corps d'enfant soulève les draps; tombeaux français du Mississipi, où filtre une eau déjà amère, qui a le goût des larmes.²⁵

Giraudoux's Amica America (1918), is a felicitous mixture of irony and enthusiasm which tells of the American's love for the heroic France of Verdun in 1917, and of the American "jeunes filles." The author, who was a student at

²⁴Ibid., p. 262.

²⁵Ibid., p. 265.

Harvard before the first World War, returned to the United States with a French military mission in 1917-1918, and who has visited America repeatedly since, seems to have been familiar only with the East and the West.²⁶ If he went as far as the southern Mississippi Valley, it must not have awakened in him memories of Manon and Atala, more passionate and less sophisticated than Giraudoux's numerous heroines.

In November 1918, Joseph Kessel visited America while an officer in the French army on his way to Siberia. He wrote of a flyer's romantic adventures in California.²⁷ Later he returned to Hollywood, only to be bitterly disappointed in that reputedly glamorous city. Celine, or his mouthpiece, Ferdinand, relates in the Voyage au bout de la nuit, how he was attracted to the United States through an American girl, Lola, whom he met in Paris during the war. His visit to New York is described with gusto.

Jules Romain's descriptions of America are also

²⁶ Les Aventures de Jerome Bardini contains a lovely description of Spring in New York. America is discussed adversely by the banker, Moise, in Eglantine. In L'Ecole des Indifferents, an American girl, Miss Spottiswood, explains her conception of France as opposed to America. One of the most recent novels by Giraudoux, Choix des Blues, takes place in California.

²⁷ Joseph Kessel, Dames de Californie, 1920; Hollywood, Ville mirage, 1936.

limited to New York and California.²⁸ Andre Maurois has been too much concerned with his study of changing America to devote his attention to secluded Louisiana. His Etats-Unis 39 implies that he lectured in Texas, but that he was too preoccupied with the ominous threat of war and of the American attitude toward European problems to think of the early French explorers of the Mississippi.

Among French travelers to America in the twentieth century, Emile Ripert is exceptional in that his impressions of the United States center around the South. The post-war period has been an era of travel, not only for French novelists but also for French university professors. M. Ripert, a professor of Provençal literature at the University of Aix, came to the United States in 1925-1926 on a lecture tour. A romantic from the south of France, he reached America full of reminiscences of Uncle Tom's Cabin and of Chateaubriand's prose epics. The sight of a modern "Uncle Tom" preparing his berth on the sleeping car and a son of Chaetas carrying his bags at the station naively thrills him. On his way to Louisiana, schoolboy memories of Chateaubriand haunt him:

²⁸ In Quand le Navire, Visite aux Americains, and Salsette decouvre l'Amérique.

Le fier Méschacebe roulait ses vastes ondes,
 Dont le bruit sourd montait dans le calme des airs,
 Et, se repercutant de deserts en deserts,
 expirait à travers la forêt solitaire.²⁹

M. Ripert, the first French poet who sings of Louisiana since Vigny, has written a moving poem on the French cemetery in New Orleans, where he deciphers the names of his countrymen on the tombstones:

D'ou sortent-ils? --De quel village
 Sont-ils venus vers cette plage,
 Ou l'on a vu tant de Manons
 Qui mouraient sans laisser de nous?

 Me voici, à la pointe extrême
 Du monde, où la France jadis
 A fait fleurir les fleurs de lis.³⁰

In another poem, United States, in which he honors the different states of the Union, Ripert expresses his sincere affection for Louisiana:

Mais parmi les Etats de l'immense domaine,
 Lorsque l'on a nommé le Vermont et le Maine,
 Qui tendent leurs coteaux français sur l'horizon,
 Ce qui met dans les cœurs un merveilleux frisson,
 Tout à coup, au milieu de la forêt austère
 Ou foisonnent, du Sud au Nord, sur cette terre,
 C'est de voir, pour les enchaîner à notre amour,
 S'enrouler autour d'eux, ainsi qu'une liane,
 La douce inflexion de ce nom: Louisiane.³¹

²⁹ Emile Ripert, Poemes d'Amerique, "L'Arrivee," p. 6.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 36-38. "Cimetiere à la Nouvelle Orleans."

³¹ Ibid., pp. 49-50. "United States."

Like Ripert, Andre Demaison also refused to yield his attention exclusively to the attractions of the New York skyscrapers, the Chicago stockyards and the Hollywood movie stars. He came to America in 1937 with a background and a purpose different from those of other Parisian and cosmopolitan French writers. He was known as a specialist of "Colonial literature" (in the French meaning of the word), and as an adventurous observer of the negroes and the animals in Africa. During his visit to the Southern United States, his interest continues to be centered upon the negroes and the animals, just as the main interest of French explorers from Cavelier de La Salle to Chatesubriand had been focused upon Indians and wild game. The book which Andre Demaison published in 1939, after his visit to the United States, has, however, other claims to our attention; for as in his previous books on Africa the author undertakes to bring a new point of view to French exotic literature, that is, to the outward differences which separate the southern United States from Europe, Demaison prefers the profound underlying similarities. For this reason, he refuses to be attracted by the striking and exceptional features of the soil, the vegetation, and the towns of the country which he is visiting. Instead, his interest is in animals, interpreted in a human way, and in the humble

people of peasant stock living near the soil and in close communion with the earth. The very title of the book in which he describes his automobile trip in America reveals his attitude: Terre d'Amerique.

Andre Demaison's itinerary is planned to avoid those places which a score of French writers had described over and over again.³² His careful planning, however, does not always protect him from rash conclusions.³³ "The French Kipling," as Demaison's admirers have called him, unearths the favorite topic of French travelers--serpents--and his experience as a spectator of a fight between kingsnakes and moccasins in Florida is described as a thrilling adventure. Then, with great lightness of heart, Demaison presumes to present a solution of the negro problem of the United States, which would simply consist of a wholesale emigration of fourteen million American colored people to Africa apparently without the consent of those most deeply concerned.

The importance of his hastily written work in this study is not in its literary value, but in the writer's

³²The reader is discreetly told in the first chapter, p. 13, that President Roosevelt congratulated the visitor on his itinerary.

³³There is the inevitable chapter which every French traveler of the stronger sex feels that he must devote to "La femme americaine," Chapter XXIX.

sympathetic interest in the South. His purpose from the outset was to discover "the aristocracy of America" in the lower Mississippi Valley, where a predominantly agricultural civilization enjoyed a harmonious adjustment between work and leisure. His arrival in New Orleans, his visit to the famous restaurants of the city in le Vieux Carre, are described with enthusiasm by a traveler who obviously enjoyed his trip. Like other French visitors, he is gravely concerned with the lack of unity among French-speaking people living abroad, and with the gradual disappearance of the French language, even among the Acadians of Louisiana. However, his marked preference for the study of animals and of negroes left him too little time to concentrate upon the whites, and, more particularly, French survivals in Louisiana.³⁴ His general definition of Louisiana may be

³⁴It is to be deplored that Demaison, a talented but very self-satisfied individual, allowed his objectionable personality to intrude continuously in his writings. With unforgivable and almost child-like vanity, he devotes several pages to an insignificant visit to the governor of Louisiana. He found no better way to impress this local politician with the proper respect for a French writer than to show his strength by tearing in his presence a pack of fifty-two cards, and adds: "I simply glory in the feeling that in a very unusual way, I have made a friend for our country and for French literature," p. 64. Just about the time that Demaison's book relating this incident was published, the politician whom he had thus won to the cause of French culture was compelled to leave the luxurious capital of Louisiana for an enforced residence in a Federal penitentiary.

rightly judged as too fragmentary:

Louisiana which was French in the course of the eighteenth century, is really a cocktail of Northern Africa, Madagascar, the Antilles, the Ivory Coast and Brazil, with puffs of wind and vegetation of the Cote d'Azur.

But though Terre d'Amerique cannot claim to be a great book on Louisiana, it nevertheless serves to mark a definite trend in French curiosity and interest in America--an effort to perceive and recall an element of the human, well-balanced and venerable in that country which had often been overlooked by European journalists.

Between 1925 and 1941, several works of Frenchmen revealed to the European public a true re-discovery of Louisiana. The number and quality of these stand in marked contrast with the superficiality of the French works on Louisiana published during the nineteenth century.

A French scholar, Frank L. Schoell, who after the first World War taught at Tulane University, in New Orleans, took a keen interest in the country in which he was called upon to live. Two subjects engrossed his attention: the negro problem and the question of the survival of the French language in Louisiana. His first book, entitled La Question des noirs aux Etats-Unis, appeared in 1923, and the second,

U. S. A. Du Cote des blancs et du cote des noirs,³⁵ in 1929.

In a third volume on La Langue francaise dans le monde, published in 1936, Professor Schoell returns to the question of the decline of the French language in the Bayous of Louisiana, and adds several pessimistic conclusions to the subject, which had already been studied in his second volume.

George Oudard's Vieille Amerique, which has been mentioned previously in the study of the eighteenth century, appeared in 1931. It endeavors to bring to the attention of the French people an aspect of America which they had long neglected--an aspect which was closely connected with an heroic if not ultimately successful, epic of French history--the colonization of Louisiana by the French. Oudard, lamenting France's loss of Louisiana says there is one place in this vast territory where France's efforts were crowned with success, and that is in New Orleans where the Vieux Carre and La Place d'Armes stand today in memory of French colonial days.

Pierre de Lanux, a French historian and man of letters

³⁵ In the first part of this book, Professor Schoell urges his compatriots to know America better, and not to limit themselves to New York, Niagara Falls, and Chicago. He contends that the agricultural South and Louisiana should also appeal to French travelers. Chapter VI, which had already been published in the Revue de Paris of January 15, 1925, is entitled "L'Agonie de francais en Louisiane."

long familiar with America and its history, undertook, in Sud, to claim for the Southern States of the Union a special place in the sympathy and affection of French readers. His book is largely devoted to incidents of the Civil War and to the Reconstruction era which followed. Lanux thinks that the victorious North treated the defeated South unfairly, and that it has required a half century for the South to recover from its defeat. Throughout the book an analogy is traced between the vanquished South and the south of France, which was crushed ruthlessly in the war of the Albigenses. Indeed, the volume is dedicated "to the memory of the southern French civilization shipwrecked in the thirteenth century." The merit of the book lies in the precise understanding and knowledge of the South acquired by the author through several visits, and in his skilful utilization of recent American historical works.³⁶ Among the states grouped under the general name of "the South," Lanux naturally reserves a place of honor for Louisiana, the state which more than all others appeals to the French. In

³⁶ Several American historians have recently pointed out the unfair treatment accorded the South by previous writers. These volumes are: An American Epoch. Southern Portraiture in the National Picture by Howard W. Odum; I'll take my stand, by Allen Tate, John Gould Fletcher, John Crowe Ransom, and others. M. de Lanux made use of them. A propos of the first, he quotes Walter Lippman's comment: "The adventure of American life lies today in the South."

his concluding chapter, he urges the French to take more interest in the southern United States, which since 1860 had suffered ordeals similar to those which France suffered after 1870, and which represent old and valuable cultural elements in the American Commonwealth.

A similar appeal echoes in other recent books on America.³⁷ The crowning achievement of the renewal of French interest in Louisiana was an official French Mission, named Cavalier de La Salle. The occasion was the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his death. Twenty-six eminent men composed this distinguished mission, representing several French Academies, universities and other institutions. In March, 1937, they sailed from Havre to New Orleans. Though several states were visited, Louisiana was their true objective; and the book which recorded the details of the trip and the eloquence of the tributes lavished upon each other by the French visitors and their hosts, is devoted mainly to past events connected with Louisiana.

This volume, entitled Louisiane et Texas, gives a

³⁷ One of the books omitted from this study because it is a German work enjoyed great success in the French translation, Psychanalyse de l'Amérique, by H. Von Keyserling. The English title is: America Set Free. New Orleans is enthusiastically described. The author says that "Southern gentlemen, as well as the corresponding feminine type, are the only examples of complete souls that America has produced." The North is urged to adopt some of the qualities of the South, where there is "the ideal type of democracy."

full account of the observations and experiences of the emissaries of French culture during their seven-day visit to New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and the Acadian country.³⁸

Their eyes were fixed upon the present, (several articles and volumes were the outcome of their visit), upon the past, especially upon the heroic epic of Cavalier de La Salle and D'Iberville, and upon the future. They emphasized France's desire to encourage and foster closer cultural relations with Louisiana, and her sincere attachment for the Creoles of Louisiana.

I shall mention the most important studies inspired by the Cavalier de La Salle Mission, several of which were first given as lectures in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Lafayette, three cities of Louisiana. They were reprinted in Louisiane et Texas, the most important record of the mission.³⁹ All of these studies, which are written with remarkable care, reach a high standard of excellence. In several of these eloquent essays, not only La Salle and D'Iberville, but also Abbe Prevost, Chateaubriand, Vigny, Tocqueville and other writers who somehow belong to the French literature of Louisiana, are praised. The preface

³⁹ Other records are a statue of La Salle given to the Capitol of Louisiana, maps of French explorations in the Mississippi Valley, medals of French explorers, and books given to colleges in Louisiana and Texas.

is by the French Academician, Gabriel Hanotaux. The President of the mission, M. Andre Chevrillon, a nephew of Taine, was another academician who had always been attracted to England and America.⁴⁰ A distinguished Canadian ecclesiastic, Msgr. Maurault, celebrated the share of the Sulpicians in the exploration of the Mississippi Valley; G. L. Jaray summed up D'Iberville's career; Professor Henri Peyre, in a brief and suggestive chapter, discussed "La Louisiane dans la litterature francaise;" six other essays, grouped under the general heading, "Le Present," recorded the impressions of Louisiana received by the hurried but sympathetic travelers. On the whole, in spite of the space devoted to the formulas of politeness inevitable under the circumstances attendant upon such a mission, the volume, Louisiane et Texas, occupies an important place in the French literature of Louisiana in our century.

The comprehensive history of L'Empire francais d'Amerique, published soon after the official French mission by its organizer, Gabriel-Louis Jaray, has already been dis-

⁴⁰Taine, who never came to America, wrote an amusing imaginary voyage in: Notes sur Paris: la vie et les opinions de Thomas Graindorge. It is an account of life in Paris by a man who made his fortune in America in oil and salted pork. Louisiana is mentioned in Chapter II, pp. 15-16, when Graindorge tells of a dinner table incident which occurred in Baton Rouge, and in Chapter IX, p. 96, when he recalls a hunt in a bayou near New Orleans with the first young American he had known. Taine must have been influenced by stories he had read in newspapers and periodicals of the time.

cussed and utilized in the early part of this study. It is based on a very sound knowledge of French explorations and colonization in North America. The author's main purpose is not to analyze or describe Louisiana or the Mississippi Valley, but to indicate the mistakes which eventually ruined French hopes in Louisiana.

About this time, Dr. Rene Cruchet, a physician, and president of the regional academy of Bordeaux, crossed the Atlantic with the avowed purpose of visiting Louisiana. The author brought with him an ardent love of his native city. He wished to prove that the majority of French people who emigrated to Canada and Louisiana in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came, not from Normandy and Brittany, but from that part of France which lies between the Loire and the Pyrenees.⁴¹ His chapter on New Orleans, "La Nouvelle Orleans la Creole" repeatedly expresses the author's disappointment over the decline of the French language in the chief metropolis of the South. His description of the scenery, his psychological analysis of the inhabitants of Louisiana, and his style are in no sense remarkable. He lavishes compliments on the French element

⁴¹ Dr. Rene Cruchet published his impressions of Louisiana first in the Revue Philomathique de Bordeaux et du Sud Ouest, January-March, 1937, and then in a volume entitled En Louisiane: Legends et realites.

in Louisiana and even on her politicians.⁴²

The name of Emile Lauvriere will be forever linked with that of Louisiana and Acadie. He has done more than anyone since Margry to collect and to place within the reader's reach a great number of documents relating to the colony and the people of Louisiana. A professor of English in a French Lycee, and the author of a literary study on Alfred de Vigny and a thesis on Edgar Allan Poe, he undertook to prepare an edition of Longfellow's Evangeline for French school children studying English. He became so engrossed in the tragic story of the Acadians that he ransacked archives to discover more about their origin, their migration, and their survival in the various regions in which they found refuge. In 1923, he published two learned volumes on La Tragedie d'un peuple. Histoire du peuple acadien. Two chapters in that exhaustive historical study tell of Louisiana.⁴³ They are largely composed of

⁴² Dr. Cruchet praises the magnificence of the Capitol at Baton Rouge, and admires the President of the State University (since convicted, under sensational circumstances which rocked the nation, of misappropriation of funds, and is still serving his term in prison), as a man with an "air distingue, au regard droit et reflechi."

⁴³ They are: Chapter XXI, Section 3 in Volume II, fourth part, pp. 205-220, and Chapter XXIII, Section I of Volume II, fifth part: "Le Renaissance en Louisiane."

statistics.⁴⁴ Professor Lauvriere's writings on that tragic chapter in the history of the eighteenth century are filled with subdued but genuine indignation.⁴⁵

Through his monumental history of the Acadian people, whom he had followed to Louisiana as well as to their other refuges in the Old and the New World, Professor Lauvriere became interested in the history of Louisiana, hardly less monumental and equally valuable. This interest resulted in a book, published by the Louisiana State University Press in 1940, and printed in France just before the German invasion: Histoire de la Louisiane francaise. 1673-1939.

Professor Lauvriere has attempted no original approach to the history of Louisiana, although he makes use of many documents from the French Colonial and Naval Archives. The interpretation of events and men is presented with great

⁴⁴ According to Professor Lauvriere's figures, there were four thousand Acadians in Louisiana at the time of the Louisiana purchase, and fifty thousand today. Lauvriere praises the astonishing "fecundity" and courage of the Acadians, as well as their "purete de moeurs" and "vertu" worthy of the ancient Romans.

⁴⁵ In 1924, Professor Lauvriere gave a summary of the history of the Acadians in the eighteenth century in the Revue de l'Histoire des Colonies francaises, IIIe trimestre, tome XVII, pp. 429-444, under the title: "Le Peuple acadien au XVIIIe siecle."

objectivity. M. Lauvriere is of the opinion that although Bienville enjoyed excessive fame, in reality he was a criminally deficient administrator but that many of the officials sent to Louisiana by France in the eighteenth century (especially among the military engineers), were, on the contrary, men of great competence and vision. His conclusions, however, are the same as those of Jéray and most other French historians of Louisiana: the loss of the colony was due to the lack of unity among the French, to the insufficient insistence on the agricultural development of the country, to the desire for wealth, to the reluctance of the bourgeois French to leave "la belle France" and emigrate to unknown lands, and finally to "the rank obstinacy of wanting to found a colony on the more or less sterile and unhealthy sand of a forbidding sea-coast, when there extended behind it the immense Mississippi basin with its inexhaustible agricultural and mineral resources."⁴⁶

Except in the "avant-propos" and in a few rare passages, Professor Lauvriere's history avoids general ideas. The bulk of his work is comprised of documents skilfully woven into a continuous narrative. By no means aspiring to be literary, its style is often colorless and monotonous. Nevertheless, it is not only the first history of Louisiana

⁴⁶Lauvriere, Histoire de la Louisiane, p. 7.

attempted by a Frenchman since the fall of Napoleon, but is among the best and most reliable in any language.⁴⁷

Doubtless many comments in French reviews and newspapers would have been devoted to this exhaustive history of Louisiana, had it not been for the tragic events of 1940, which have imposed upon France one of the most terrible ordeals in her history. No one can prophesy how long France may be doomed to that silent but heroic martyrdom which has temporarily silenced her voice. Her history, however, like the shorter and less glorious history of Louisiana and Acadia, has shown repeatedly that she can arise from the most tragic depths of humiliation and sorrow to loftier heights than she had ever before attained.

In the months following her defeat, many French refugees have brought the torch of French literature to the New World. Among these is Madame Regine Hubert-Robert, the author of travel books on various parts of the world. Her latest work, L'Histoire merveilleuse de la Louisiane française, was published in 1941 at La Maison Française in New York. The title is misleading, since the history of

⁴⁷A short article, "Explorateurs et pionniers français en Louisiane," read at a scholarly convention in New Orleans in December, 1939, and published in the French Review, 1940, pp. 365-372, must not be overlooked. The author, Marcel Morand, is a professor at Rice Institute, in Houston, Texas.

Louisiana in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even as told by the vivacious pen of Madame Hubert-Robert, does not read like a fairy tale. In fact, the book rests on a very solid basis of documents and represents very diligent research. The style is lively, varied, and entertaining. The paragraphs and the chapters are short, and the tone often familiar. Footnotes are not used, but the author has added a bibliography. The critical reader may feel skeptical of statements found in the author's imaginary dialogues, but since the book does not claim to be an historical work, it cannot in all fairness be judged as such. Moreover, though the author may give free rein to her imagination, she also displays a keen appreciation of concrete details, and knows the value of picturesque anecdotes. As a fairly reliable history of customs, this latest volume, one of the first literary presentations of the history of Louisiana attempted for the general public, deserves an enviable place in the long and revealing history of Louisiana in French Letters.

CONCLUSION

The history of Louisiana has been very colorful: the early period of French explorations and colonization with its subsequent disappointments, Law's speculations and failure, Spain's rule, and the interest taken by Napoleon in the country at the mouth of the Mississippi, mark the highlights in its progressive changes. Did these great historical events have any echo in French Letters? Such has been the theme of this inquiry.

In examining the scanty yet valuable records concerning Louisiana left by contemporaries of Louis XIV, no literary masterpiece was discovered. Nevertheless, this period, one of the great epics of American and French annals, offers keen historical interest and provides the literary historian with an indispensable background. After scanning rapidly the prenatal history of Louisiana, I examined how Louisiana was seen and described by the early northern explorers: Joliet, Marquette, and Hennepin. In his works, Louis Hennepin acquaints us with life in seventeenth-century Louisiana. He is not a cultured "honnête homme;" he certainly is not a great writer; his gifts are not the classical virtues of restraint and understatement. Yet his works have more literary qualities than more trustworthy travel diaries of French pioneers in Louisiana, simply because

Hennepin was not a conscientious explorer, and was not content with merely recording dry facts, dates, and geographical data in an objective way. In a second group was included those writers (often men of action holding a faltering pen) who gravitated around the bold and magnetic personality of La Salle, and who accompanied him: Zenobe Membre, Father Le Clercq, Abbe Jean Cavalier, Nicolas de La Salle, and above all Tonty and Joutel. Cavalier himself stands apart, self-revealed in letters and reports diligently rescued by nineteenth-century research. However, La Salle's place in French literature is not merely that of a writer of a few letters and documents concerning his daring explorations in North America. It is that of a clear-sighted forerunner of the greatest of later French colonists, of the one Frenchman in the century who conceived a coherent and bold colonial policy for French expeditions in the Mississippi Valley. The very name of Louisiana is his own gift to America and to France. If he failed through excessive ambition or a plan that was too rash for his times, La Salle has left a lofty example for posterity. None the less lofty is the example of the short-lived Canadian hero, D'Iberville, successor to Cavalier de La Salle's feats and fame. Yet the few records (rescued by Margry and other historians from the French Archives) which can be safely attributed to the hand of

D'Iberville can lay no claim to literary merit. They have little general interest, and are scarcely more than brief, matter-of-fact reports. Lastly, I considered from the double point of view of their value as literature and their merit as historical and psychological documents, those of the Jesuit Relations which deal more particularly with Louisiana, other accounts of several missionaries, and those of the Ursuline Sisters. These pioneers in Franco-American literature displayed admirable qualities of a daring spirit, obstinate courage, and subtle diplomacy. They deserve our pious respect.

In the second part, by following the allusions to Louisiana in French writings from Law's ill-fated experiment through the War of Independence and the French Revolution, some light has been thrown on the interest taken in Louisiana by the leading "philosophes" of the eighteenth century, as well as by some minor figures such as Raynal and Chastellux. That literature is rich and complex like the whole eighteenth century, the inheritor of a great past and an indefatigable pioneer in the bold task of preparing a new future for mankind. Several prosaic and empirical histories or accounts by travelers deal with Louisiana, its climate, agriculture, and commerce. Facts, however, do not satisfy eighteenth century philosophers. They derive theories from them, and

a propos of Louisiana, they discuss French colonization and the value of colonies, despotism among the savages, luxury, trade, and the advantages and disadvantages of the discovery of the New World. A mystical color even permeates the ideas of these philosophers who had rejected Christianity as an outworn creed. America becomes for them the abode of virtue, the shrine of a new faith, primitivism. Among the most important books of this period which discuss Louisiana is Charlevoix's Histoire de la Nouvelle France. In a few pages, thanks to his gift of a clear style, to his able utilization and presentation of material accumulated by other less skilful travelers, to his culture, and to his ideas, Charlevoix, whose works Chateaubriand will utilize later, did more than a score of second-rate writers such as Bonrepos, Bernard de la Harpe and others, to vindicate Louisiana after Law's failure and to popularize it among French readers. Such also was the service rendered to the French colony of the Mississippi by another ecclesiastic, less serene in his style, more passionate and tormented in his life, the creator of Manon Lescaut. A few pages of this celebrated French masterpiece are outstanding in this study for in utilizing the name of Louisiana in his novel, Prevost spread her fame to a wide public in France.

The American War of Independence and the French emi-

gration after 1790 begin a third period in the history of Louisiana in French Letters. After the First Consul had put an end to freedom and democracy in France, the French turn to the United States as a land of liberty. A number of books appear in the first years of the nineteenth century but the outburst of French curiosity and sympathy was short-lived. However, Bonaparte's interest in Louisiana was one of those chimerical dreams which the realistic conqueror deeply cherished. He had been a great reader of Raynal's Histoire des deux Indes, which advocated in eloquent terms French domination over Louisiana. Wisdom prevailed. In 1803, the treaty was signed which sold Louisiana for eighty millions to the government of the United States. "This accession of territory forever assures the stability of the United States," Napoleon remarked at the cession: "I have just given England a maritime rival who sooner or later will humble her pride."¹

The most important name in this part of this study, in fact, the most conspicuous figure in any history of French literature dealing with Louisiana, is that of Chateaubriand. It is well known that Chateaubriand had not actually seen Louisiana but he imagined it through other travelers' books,

¹Quoted in J. A. Robertson, Louisiana under the Rule of Spain, France, and the United States, 1765-1807, p. 1.

the illusion becoming stronger and stranger than the truth. The Louisiana which he depicted in Atala seemed true and real for him; it is the setting for his passionate story and the source of his harmonious descriptions. Through his literary discovery of the Meschacebe, of the Natchez, he adds a new realm to French exotic writings, to descriptive literature, and poetical prose. His American experiences have been so ably studied that it is hard to renovate the subject. I hope, however, that the close consideration of many of Chateaubriand's contemporaries who wrote about Louisiana in the early years of the nineteenth century, has enriched our knowledge of a great theme worthily treated by a gifted writer.

After Chateaubriand, Louisiana is no longer the subject of colorful, exotic tales. French visitors are attracted by her scenery, by the few remaining traces of French colonization, by her lovely representatives of the fair sex, and by her cuisine. After the Natchez and James Fenimore Cooper's novels, Indians no longer interest the French public. Slavery and the negro question become paramount with them. The end of the century is probably the most uninteresting period in any study of French literature dealing with the South. Other parts of the American Republic--the East and the West--attract Europeans. Nevertheless, there are some

great names among the Frenchmen who visited Louisiana during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1825, Lafayette was welcomed to New Orleans. Achille Murat and J. J. Ampère have left interesting accounts of their stay in Louisiana. Though brief, Tocqueville's visit to New Orleans was important. A journalist, Jules Huret, wrote a vivid account of his visit to the South, praising Louisiana's climate and people. During the years 1918-1940, a new era dawns for Louisiana in French Letters. A new generation of French travelers, eager to understand the South visits America. Among the most important names are those of Paul Morand, a keen observer of strange racial types; Georges Duhamel who landed in New Orleans and was touched by the traces of French civilization in that metropolis before he criticized "future life" as practiced by Americans in the North; Andre Demaison, who brought to Louisiana his penetrating knowledge of life in the wilds of Africa; and Emile Lauvrière, the foremost historian of Louisiana's great past.

Such apparently is the power of literature when written by men of great talent. No country of the Western Hemisphere, not even Peru and its fabulous treasures, Mexico and its interesting ruins, Canada and its French settlers, New York and its skyscrapers or the wide open plains of the Far West has fired the imagination of French readers so

powerfully as Louisiana, its river, its scenery, and its inhabitants, because no other part of America can boast of having attracted so many talented writers. I have tried to do justice to the literary value of the works of such writers as Charlevoix, Pere du Poisson, Raynal, Tocqueville, J. J. Ampere, Achille Murat, George Duhamel, Andre Demaison, Paul Morend and others. Among their bright glories, as well as those of Abbe Prevost and Chateaubriand, a number of obscure writers have been discussed, all of whom played a part, no matter how humble, in the French literary history of Louisiana. It was my desire to serve their memory and to place the greater names in a clearer light. At the same time, I hope that this lengthy journey through three centuries of French literature, has enriched Franco-American relations, and that it will serve to develop mutual understanding between France and Louisiana, as well as France and America in years to come.

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Part I of the bibliography groups in a single, continuous, alphabetical order the individual authors—missionaries, travelers, explorers, and the critical works referring to them. Under each of these names, a list of cross-references has been made to all critical and historical works concerning them which are mentioned in the bibliography.

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Moreover, since the seventeenth century was traditionally more interested in human psychology than in external nature, the early French travelers in Louisiana concerned themselves more with the inhabitants of the country than with the scenery. A great deal of anthropological ("avant la lettre") information about the Indians is found here and there in the writings of the predecessors of Lafitau and Charlevoix. They describe the manners and customs of the savage tribes upon whom the French looked with a great deal of sympathy, their religion, food, war, and women. This branch of French writing, although seldom literary, already displayed a curious interest in the

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