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THE FRENCH ON THE RIVER ST JOHN.

Discovery of the River.—Origin of its
Name.—Trade with Indians.—Coureurs de
Bois.—The brothers d'Amours.
(No. 15.)

On the 24th of June 1604 a little French ship of 150 tons burthen entered what is now the harbor of St. John. She was but a paltry craft measured by modern standards, smaller than many of our coasting schooners but she carried the germ of an empire for de Monts, Champlain and Poutrincourt the founders of New France were on her deck. In his journal Champlain speaks of the river emptying into the harbor as "the largest and deepest river we had yet seen, which we named the river St. John because it was on this Saint's day that we arrived there; by the savages it is called *Ouygondy*."

Prior to Champlain our knowledge of the existence of such a river as the St. John is based upon a few old maps and fragmentary notices to be found here and there in old French records. This much however appears certain, that the lower portion of the river was tolerably well known to the explorers and adventurers who in the latter part of the 16th and early part of the 17th century frequented the shores of the Bay of Fundy. The French at this time were an enterprising nation and at an early period asserted their claim to a large share of North Eastern America. The name *Noous Franciscus* (New France) appears on a map published at Basle as early as 1530. No attempt was made to form a permanent settlement in New France until the year 1598 when the Marquis de la Roche was commissioned by the French monarch, Lieutenant-General over the territory claimed by France. Among the localities specified in his commission is "la Riviere de la Grande Baie" which is manifestly our river St. John.

Champlain in his journal gives an accurate description of the river, which however he did not personally explore above Grand Bay, at the mouth of the Kennebecasis. He states that Ralleau the Secretary of de Monts went there some time after to see a savage named *Secondon* chief of the river, who reported that it was beautiful large and extensive, with many meadows and fine trees such as oaks, beeches, walnuts (butternuts) there were also wild grape vines. Ralleau learned that the Indians were accustomed to go by way of the St. John to Tadoussac on the great river St. Lawrence, making but a short portage on the journey.

It is evident that from time immemorial, the main route of travel of the Indians of Acadia in their intercourse with their brothers in Canada, was by way of the St. John river. After the French had established themselves on they St. Lawrence the used the same route of travel for communication between Quebec and their settlements in Acadia. The French speedily established friendly relations with the Indians which were greatly strengthened by the influence of the Jesuit and Recollet missionaries whose efforts to convert the savages met with much success. The early French explorers, however, had an eye to personal interest and were by no means slow to perceive the immense natural resources of Acadia, and to seize the opportunity of establishing an extensive and lucrative trade with the Indians. As early as 1635 deRagilly had established regulations to govern this trade, which were approved by the French King. Some idea of its magnitude may be gathered from the fact that Captain Hawkins of Boston, in 1643 captured, at the mouth of the river St. John, a pinnace belonging to Daulney Charnisay, laden with 400 moose and 400 beaver skins; and when two years later, Charnisay captured La Tour's fort the booty in furs, merchandise, stores, plat, jewels, etc., was valued at £10,000 sterling. All this property was supposed to have been accumulated through the traffic in furs and peltry with the Indians. Several of the governors of Acadia themselves took a hand in the business, enticed by the prospect of large gains. La Valliere, Perrot and others attempted to secure a monopoly of the trade, giving the Indians provisions, supplies, ornaments, etc., at an exorbitant rate and receiving valuable furs and peltry in return. The profits were so large that many of the younger French gentry were disposed to engage in business without leave or license.

Speaking of this period, Hannay writes in his history of Acadia, "There was a strong disposition on the part of many of the Acadians to become rangers of the woods (*coureurs de bois*) rather than cultivators of the soil. This was an evil that had reached enormous proportions in Canada and against which the most stringent laws had been enacted, the penalty for bushranging being no less than death."

Nevertheless the wild adventurous life of a *coursur de bois* possessed great attractions; the possible profits were great and the element of danger was in the eyes of many only an additional fascination. Among the young men of this adventurous class who came to Acadia about this time, were four brothers, sons of one Mathieu d'Amour, originally from Bretagne, but at that time a councillor of Quebec. In his, as in other noble families,

each son seems to have taken a surname after some estate of the family. They figure accordingly in Acadian history as Louis d'Amour de *Chaufour*, Mathieu d'Amour de *Freneuse*, Rene d'Amour de *Chignancourt* and Bernard d'Amour de *Plenne*. The four brothers received extensive grants of land upon the river St. John. To Bernard was granted the islands at the mouth of the Kennebecasis and the land adjacent on both sides; to Louis was given a grant of land at the mouth of the Jemseg; to Mathieu, a tract of land opposite the Oromocto on the east side of the St. John river; to Rene, the land bordering on both sides of the St. John from the Meductic village to the Grand Falls.

The French nobles and gentry at this time residing in Canada, were a constant source of anxiety to the governor. They were poor in purse and ill suited to the work of tilling the soil. Writing to the French ministry in 1786 the governor says of the Canadian noblesse: "They do not devote themselves to improving their land, they mix themselves up in trade and send their own children to trade for furs in the Indian villages and in the depths of the forest, in spite of the prohibition of his majesty." The brothers d'Amour were at one time arrested as *coureurs de bois* or outlaws of the bush, and Governor Denonville expressed a fear that all the sons of the Canadian nobility would turn bandits since they had no other way of living.

Baron la Houtan, who was in America from 1683 to 1694, referring to the brothers, Louis and Mathieu, says, "Two gentlemen of the name of Amour, of Quebec, have a settlement for beaver hunting on the river St. John, which is a very pleasant river, and adorned with fields that are very fertile in grain." It appears that the brothers manifested rather too independent a spirit to please the new Governor Villebon, who arrived from France in 1690, and soon afterwards established himself at the Jemseg fort, whence three years later he removed to a fort which he built at the mouth of the Nashwalk. Writing home to the French minister in 1795, he says of the brothers d'Amour, "They are four in number living on the St. John river . . . for ten or twelve years they have been here. They are disobedient and seditious, and require to be watched." On another occasion he says of them that though they have vast grants in the finest parts of the country they have hardly a place to lodge in. They carry on no tillage, keep no cattle, but live in trading with the Indians and debauch among them, making large profits thereby, but injuring the public good. In another statement he scornfully terms them the "pretended gentry"—*soi disants gentil hommes*. The following year he again writes the French minister, "I have no more reason, my lord, to be satisfied with the sieurs d'Amour than I previously had. The one who has come from France (Bernard) has not pleased me more than the others. Their minds are wholly spoiled by long licentiousness (or *lawlessness*) and the manners they have acquired among the Indians, and they must be watched closely as I had the honor to state to you last year."

The records of Acadian history at this period are so filled with intrigues, jealousies, misunderstandings, and conflicts of authority that even these positive statements of Villebon must be taken with due allowance. As regards the brothers, Louis and Mathieu, the statement that they had hardly a place to lodge in, and that they possessed no cattle, was untrue. The narrative of John Gyles shows that they not only had houses and cattle, but wives also, and his statement is confirmed by the census of 1686, which enumerates among the inhabitants of the St. John river, Le Sieur Louis d'Amour de *Chaufour*, aged 32 years, and Marguerite Guyon his wife, and Le Sieur Mathieu d'Amour de *Freneuse*, aged 28 years, and Louise Guyon his wife. The name of Rene d'Amour de *Chignancourt* also occurs, but there is no mention of a wife in his case and he was doubtless unmarried.

A more particular reference to Rene d'Amour and one or two other grantees on the upper St. John must be reserved for our next article.

W. O. RAYMOND.

Widely Known.

—Woodstock, N. B., has a Mock Parliament in which her cleverest public men take an active part. The subject discussed recently was a bill preventing the acceptance of a railway pass by members of the Commons, and after an interesting discussion the bill was "by a straight party vote" defeated on its second reading. A bill asking the Imperial Parliament to pass an Act to abolish our Senate was also defeated. Open discussion on these important topics will do a world of good.—*Canada Farmer's Sun*.

Mrs. Billus: John, I'm glad you've come. Here's the prospectus of a paper they're about to start, and I want a little money to help it along. It's called the *Coming Woman*, and—Mr. Billus: I haven't time now, Maria. Have just got a telegram from Aunt Rachel. She'll be at the station in half an hour with six trunks. The coming woman, Maria, has come, and I'm afraid she has come to stay.

K. D. C. is marked, prompt and lasting in its effects.

A Great Frenchman.

The death of M. Victor Duruy is deeply and universally regretted. After a tumultuous life as an educational reformer, he has died in his 83rd year, and leaves not an enemy behind. Even the Republicans forgot he was an Imperialist, and amongst the most faithful too; the Imperialists pardoned him for being a Liberal, and always on the war-path of progress. He was the most unassuming of men. He was the son of a Paris artizan, who earned his daily wages as a dyer, but managed to save from his humble earnings the means of helping the lad to educate himself. The deceased grappled resolutely with all the educational reforms. As Minister of Public Instruction under the second empire, he laid the foundations, sowed the seed, of all the educational reforms and innovations that France at present possesses, commencing with the primary school, so up to the university. He breathed life into the dried bones of public education. He grasped the democratic tendencies of the times. He died as he began life "a simpliste." He occupied, even when Minister and Grand Chancellor of the University of France, a modest apartment, on a fifth flat. Griegot ever did the same, and Jules Simon has never lived otherwise. But what a galaxy of intellect mounted the five flights of stairs to visit Duruy. The ex-empress Eugenie never omitted when passing through Paris to make that pilgrimage, for Duruy, perhaps, has been the only man that escaped unscathed, by the rectitude of his character and the patriotic motives of his life, from the ruins of the second empire. And when the war against Prussia was declared, the ex-minister, though aged nearly 60, became an humble volunteer, and marched as a private in the national guard. The number of educational works he wrote, or inspired, or edited, is quite of a Homer length. He was always clear. France has had more brilliant writers, but as an historian of the Romans, above all, he stated a case well, painted its features accurately, and passed upon events, sound common-sense judgments. He was an indefatigable worker; his brain-power was enormous, and never knew fatigue; 16 and 18 hours a day were his average of work. He only mistook that at 83 a man has not the physical, though possessing the mental robustness of half a century earlier. Member of all learned societies, holding all decorations, he requested to be buried quietly without honors or speeches. France will not forget him. He must graduate two years hence in his grave before he can be accorded the Pantheon.—*Paris Correspondence in The Week*.

South American wheat exports this crop year, it is said, may equal 70,000,000 or 75,000,000 bushels. About 57,000,000 bushels have gone forward from Argentina.

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RAILWAY TIME TABLE.

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11.32 A. M.—EXPRESS—Week days: For Houlton, McAdam Junction, St. Stephen, Fredericton, St. John, Vanceboro, Bangor, Boston, &c.
12.30 P. M.—MIXED—Week days: For Fredericton, &c., via Gibson Branch.
1.05 P. M.—EXPRESS—Week days: For Presque Isle, Edmundston, and all points North.
2.40 P. M.—MIXED—Week days: For Vanceboro, Montreal, etc.
8.00 P. M.—MIXED—Week days: For Houlton, McAdam Junction, St. Stephen, St. John, Bangor, Boston, &c.

ARRIVALS.

6.15 A. M.—MIXED—Except Monday, from St. John, St. Stephen, Vanceboro, Bangor, etc.
10.56 A. M.—MIXED—Week days: From Fredericton, &c., via Gibson Branch.
11.00 A. M.—From McAdam Junction, etc.
11.32 A. M.—EXPRESS—Week days: From Presque Isle, etc.
1.05 P. M.—EXPRESS—Week days: From St. John, St. Stephen, Bangor, Montreal, etc.
1.05 P. M.—MIXED—Week days: From Edmundston, Presque Isle, etc.

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