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EARLY DAYS OF WOODSTOCK.

W. O. RAYMOND.

No. 2.

The honour of the first attempt to establish a permanent settlement on the River St. John clearly belongs to the French, and their missionaries were also the first to teach Christianity to the natives. The Indians greeted the new comers in a very friendly manner, and were eager to barter their furs and peltry for the white man's wares. It is a remarkable fact that the friendly alliance so early formed between the French and the Indians of Acadia has never been broken.

Trade with the Indians had assumed considerable proportions even before the arrival of de Monts and Champlain. It may readily be imagined that the advent of European explorers and traders materially affected the manner of life of the Indians. Hitherto they had hunted the wild animals for their own living, but now the demand of the traders for furs and peltry stimulated enormously the pursuit of game. The keen eyed savages at once saw the advantages of the white man's implements and utensils. Steel knives, axes, iron pots and kettles, guns, powder and shot, blankets, glass beads, ornaments and trinkets, excited their curiosity and created a desire to have them for their own. Love of the white man's "fire-water." too, became a ruling passion, and the poor savages sometimes received a very poor compensation for all their toil and exposure. The arrival of a trading vessel at Menagoeche (the Indian name for St. John harbour) served to draw the Indians from far and near, and those living at Medoctec frequently went down the river to share in the general bartering and its accompanying revelry.

From time to time we have glimpses of the operations of the French and English traders. In 1611 a number of people from St. Malo established a trading post on an island a little below Oak Point, in the Long Reach, known as Isle Emenenic but now Caton's Island. The leader of this little colony was Captain Merveille of St. Malo. Small as it was, this settlement is of interest as being the first known European settlement with the Indians without paying tribute to him for the privilege. Three days before Biencourt's arrival Captain Merveille had gone up the river to trade with the Indians. On his return he was roughly used by Biencourt's men, and, but for the intercession of the priest, would have fared still worse. While on the island the missionary Biard celebrated mass. This was the first religious service on the St. John river of which we have any definite account.

In 1619 a party of missionaries, of the Order of St. Francis, came from Aquitaine to Acadia and established a mission on the St. John, which they maintained for about ten years. The headquarters of this mission was in all probability, at Medoctec. One of the missionaries, Father Bernardin, died of hunger and fatigue in the midst of the woods, while returning from Nepisiguit to Medoctec, a martyr to his charity and zeal.

The first attempt at English colonization in Acadia was that of Sir William Alexander in 1621. For several years Sir William contented himself with sending annually a ship to explore the coasts and trade with the na. tives. To that part of Acadia which is now the Province of New Brunswick, he gave the name of the Province of New Alexandria. The St. John river he called the Clyde, and it is likely his captains traded with the Indians who lived on the river.

Next there came Charles la Tour, who, about the year 1630, established the first European settlement at the mouth of the St. John and carried on a very extensive Indian trade. In 1645 his fort fell into the hands of his rival Charnisay, together with booty amounting in value to £10,000 sterling. As this had been accumulated by la Tour in traffic with the natives, we may form some idea of the value of the trade of the St. John river at this time.

The first English trading post of which we have any knowledge was established at the mouth of the Jemseg river in 1659 by Sir



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Thomas Temple, but with the treaty of Breda, in 1667, it passed into the hands of Pierre de Joibert, Sieur de Soulanges. An attempt was made by the French at this time to encourage the settlement of the country by parcelling out the land in large seiginories, extending along the river and embracing nearly all the territory on both sides as far up as the Grand Falls. Under Governor Villebon the headquarters of French power in Acadia was fixed, for a brief period, at the mouth of the River Nashwaak. Here in the upper angle, formed by the junction of that river with the St. John, Villebon built in 1692 a palisaded fort, 120 feet square with four bastions, on which he mounted eight

While Villebon was at the head of affairs, there occurred the most dreadful Indian war in all the annals of Acadia, known in history as "King William's war." It lasted with little intermission for ten years. All the tribes east of the Merrimac took part in it. including the Maliseets of the River St. John. Every English settlement in Maine, except Wells, York, Kittery and the Isle of Shoals was overrun, and a thousand white people killed or taken prisoners. During the continuance of the war the village of Medoctec was visited by the French leaders Villebon, Villieu and others. It was the rendezvous and point of departure of the Maliseet war parties.

It is difficult at this distant day to conceive the horrors of the savage warfare that prevailed at this time on the New England frontier. The Indians roamed over the country like wolves, and the white settlers never knew when their appalling war whoop would ring in their startled ears. Every farmer worked in his field with his musket near at hand and slept with it at his bedside. The close alliance of the French and Indians, and the fact that in several of their raids the savages were led by French officers, created a bitter hatred between the people of New England and the French, which lasted for several generations. In the course of this war quite a number of captives were brought by the Indians to Medoctec. They were doubtless the first English speaking people on the river. It was visited in the month of who set foot on the banks of the upper St. October, 1611, by Biencourt, the son of John. Among the captives at Medoctec in Poutrincourt, and among those of the party 1690, were James Alexander, John Eyles accompanying him was the Jesuit mission- and a young girl, whose name is unknown. ary, Pierre Biard. Poutrincourt claimed to John Gyles arrived at Medoctec about the be lord of Acadia, and all others, including | end of August, 1789. Soon after his arrival the St. Malo colony, were forbidden to trade | he paid a visit to the site of the future town of Woodstock. He describes this episode in the following words:-

"After some weeks had passed we left the village and went up St. John's river about ten miles to a branch called Medockscenecasis, where there was one Wigwam. At our arrival an old squaw saluted me with a yell, taking me by the hair and one hand, but I was so rude as to break her hold and to free myself. She gave me a filthy grin, and the Indians set up a laugh and so it passed over. Here we lived on fish, wild grapes, zoots, etc., which was hard living for me."

The roots used by the Indians for food still grow on the intervales and islands at Woodstock. Among them are the Apios tuberosa,, sometimes called ground nuts or Indian potatoes; the plant comes up late in the season, the roots grow in clusters and are very palatable, they formed one of the staple arcicles of food among the aboriginal tribes. Another root used for food was that of the yellow lily (Lilium Canadense) which is still very abundant on the intervales and islands. Another edible root was that of the Chaytonia Virginica or "Spring beauty."

Near the spot where stood the lone wigwam in 1989 there is today a town of 4000 people. The stream which Gyles calls Medockscenecasis is the Meduxnakik and the town is Woodstock. On the isladds and intervalus below the town, butter nuts and chermies, wild grapes and yellow lilies, grow as they grew in John Gyles' day, and generattons of boys have gathered them unmindful of that first of white boys who trod those intervales, a lonely Indian captive, more than two centuries ago.

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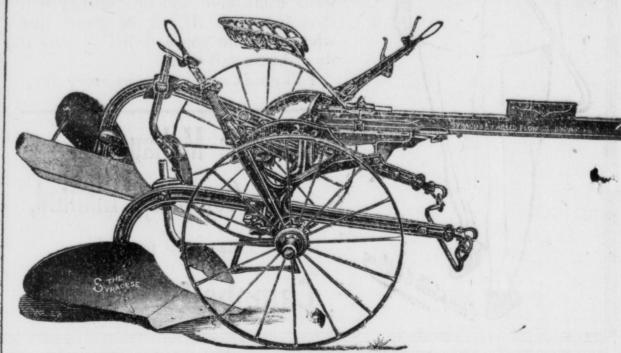
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