

time, that the garb of a religious order is not of itself a guarantee of a chronicler's truthfulness. If proof of this be desired it may be found in the well-known case of Hennepin, who, although he wore the frock and cowl of St. Francis, has been deservedly pilloried by Kingsford as "one of the most shameless liars to be met with in literature."*

But, admitting freely the high character of the Jesuit chroniclers, one is still forced to examine the circumstances under which the *Rélations* were written and published; their object, and, finally, the attitude of the writers towards the men and measures of their time. The *Rélations* were, as is well-known, written under the greatest difficulties. "Jotted down hastily," writes Le Jeune, "now in one place, now in another; sometimes on water, sometimes on land."† Suffocated by smoke within the narrow confines of an Indian hovel, or more often out in the depths of the forest by the light of the moon and stars, the missionaries sought to record the doings of the day. It is little wonder, then, that many of the narratives are incoherent; that repetitions are frequent, and that there is often a lack of arrangement or even of sequence in the presentation of events.

Again, it is well to remember that the *Rélations* were written consciously. They were prepared by the writers knowing that they were to be published, and they were published primarily with the object of securing moral and financial support for the North American missions from the people of France. The opinion expressed by Kingsford that "no newspaper correspondent ever made greater efforts favourably to represent the cause he was advertising",‡ seems to do the missionaries a gross and gratuitous injustice; at the same time the knowledge of the end which the writings were to serve cannot have been without its effect on the Jesuit's mind and, hence, without influence on his work.

What is even more pertinent in this regard, the *Rélations* were consciously edited and re-edited before they reached the

*Kingsford, *History of Canada*, I, 376, note.

†Le Jeune, *Relation of*, 1636.

‡Kingsford, *op. et loc. cit.*