

in their conclusions. One had fancied the inscrutable river to flow southwest into the Gulf of California; and the other hoped in time to follow it to the Sea of Virginia,—somewhere on the seaboard of our present Southern Atlantic States. Thus it was that this undeveloped geography towards the south suggested possible contact with either Spaniard or English. This gave another reason for the ceremony we are soon to consider.

Towards the north it was evident the chances of an outlet to salt water were no better. The Saguenay had been tried in vain. No one had believed such an egress possible by the Ottawa since the time when Champlain was deceived by the mendacity of Vignan. Peré and Grosseilliers had failed to find a practicable northern route from Lake Superior.

Such had been the outcome, as has been said, of nearly a hundred and forty years of persistent effort, when the vigilant, keen, aspiring mind of the Intendant Talon — the ablest administrator that France ever sent to Canada — grasped the situation. For thirty-five years the monitions of Nicolet had waited for such a fertile mind. It was clear to Talon's conceptions that the great valley of the lakes was sure to France, through the possession of its natural waterways. Nature had rendered easily accessible, by a system of low dividing ridges, the vast adjacent valleys towards the north and the south, and Talon had the ambition to occupy them. It mattered little to