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ON THE EARLY DISCOVERIES OF THE FRENCH IN NORTH AMERICA.

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I do not design in the present paper to enter into any detail respecting the whole of the discoveries of the French in North America, but in presenting to the Institute a collection of tracings from old French maps, more peculiarly relating to Western Canada, I propose to offer some remarks in illustration of them.

A very exaggerated impression has gone abroad as to the extent and accuracy of the knowledge possessed by the French of the country which they occupied, and I have more than once seen it asserted in the public prints, that they knew more of the interior than we do even now, excepting in those parts which have been actually surveyed and laid out for settlement. It is not always easy to trace the origin of such popularly received opinions, which are repeated till they become accepted, without inquiry, as acknowledged facts; but, in the present instance, the impression seems to have arisen from a series of maps, possessed by the Library of Parliament, which have been copied from those which are preserved in the various archives in France. To speak of these maps, however, as surveys, as I have heard them described, is to do them by no means justice. They make no pretensions to any such accuracy. The great majority of them, except some plans of towns and particular localities in Lower Canada, are rough delineations of the country, either from the personal observation of the explorers,