

his handicraftsmen, being ill selected in France, proved inferior to their pretensions, and the work proceeded slowly. Worse still, the seed sown by his men, was, as it came, up trodden down by wild animals, or perished in the ground. Other mischances occurred; a mutinous spirit arose, and when this was severely checked by La Sale, his people desponded. Illness followed, under which 30 victims sank. The aborigines also manifested hostile intentions towards the luckless party, to whom they became all the more formidable as many of them rode bitted horses, and of course could not be followed across the prairies when their attacks were repulsed.

The country itself was agreeable enough, being free from bush, perfectly level, and well watered; the air was dry and pure, the temperature mild. But savage and venomous animals formed a considerable part of animated nature in this wilderness; including tiger-cats; caimans (alligators), rattlesnakes, &c.

La Sale, despairing of forming a proper settlement, set out in search of the Mississippi; wandering, for some months, in the direction of the Colorado. At one place, the party was assailed by the savages and several persons killed. *La Belle*, a vessel of 6 guns, the only one remaining to him, was wrecked, and the people in her drowned. A second exploration he made, was as bootless as the first. Of a score of men composing it, but eight returned. Meanwhile those left at the bay of St. Bernard (Matagorda, in Texas) were dwindling away from illness and privation. La Sale's case was bad indeed. He had intended to despatch the vessel lately lost to the French Antilles, for succour; and that obtained, she was afterwards to coast the Gulf seaboard in search of the Mississippian embouchure.

The means of effecting this being now lost, it was needful to look to other quarters for aid, as the provisions of the party were now almost all consumed. La Sale determined to seek assistance from France; but to make his situation known, it was needful to go to Canada. He was a man of decision, and he resolved to go thither himself. By this time his people were reduced from 80 to 37 men; twenty of whom he left at St. Louis, under M. le Barbier; and with the seventeen others he set out for the Illinois country in January 1687.