

their successors, France was in a great measure indebted for the preservation and extension of its American colonies.

The first movement westward was through the region north of Lake Ontario, the hostility of the Indians of the Five Nations rendering progress by any other route impossible. An early visit of the priests to the Indians on Lake Huron, and the establishment of a mission among them, paved the way for advance in this direction, and thus the French gained access to Niagara and the upper lakes, and, eventually, a starting point for their expedition down the Mississippi River. The force of this expedition consisted of Marquette and Joliet,—the priest and the soldier,—and five other Frenchmen. On the 10th of June, 1673, they left the Fox River, which has its outlet in Green Bay, carried their canoes across the narrow portage which separates it from the Wisconsin, and started on their voyage, uncertain whether it would end on the Pacific coast or on the Atlantic. Reaching the Mississippi, they went boldly on their way, making friends of the savages who inhabited the country through which they passed, and continued until they reached a point at which they became satisfied that the river ran neither to the Pacific nor to the Atlantic in the neighborhood of Florida, but to the Gulf of Mexico. From this point they returned, and leaving the river some distance below the mouth of the Wisconsin, proceeded eastward until they reached the Illinois, which they ascended, and were conducted by friendly Indians to Lake Michigan.

In 1682, another party, under the leadership of La Salle, descended the Mississippi River by the way of the Illinois, and reached the Gulf of Mexico, whence the party returned to Quebec. Visiting France, La Salle induced the government to fit out a vessel that should proceed directly to the Gulf, and establish a colony in the regions to which he had given the name of Louisiana. He sailed beyond the outlet he sought, and was shipwrecked on the coast of the present State of Texas. There he built a fort from the materials of the wrecked vessel, and called the post St. Louis. The colony failed to maintain itself. La Salle was murdered by some of his companions, who themselves perished.

In 1698, an expedition on a large scale was sent out by the government, under the command of D'Iberville, who not only reached the great river, but in small boats ascended as far as the mouth of the Red River. He built a fort at Biloxi, on the bay of that name, and there he established his colony and the capital of Louisiana. The settlements in this region never prospered, in spite of a lavish expenditure of money by the government and by the trading companies to whom a monopoly of traffic was given. The emigrants sought for gold and silver, which were not to be found, and failed to reap the rich harvests that might have been gathered under a genial climate from a fertile