

CHAPTER III

The Jesuit Missions and Pioneer Christianity

THE extraordinary army of men who belonged in successive centuries to the Society of Jesus possess in their annals of mingled power and privation, of greatness and meanness, of fanaticism and finesse, no more interesting record than that embodied in those *Jesuit Relations* which are so eloquently descriptive of their prolonged effort to evangelize the savages of the one-time Canadian wilderness.

PIONEERS OF EMPIRE IN NEW FRANCE

Whatever story may yet leap to light for good or ill in the past pages of this great Order, nothing but honour surrounds the work of the Jesuit pioneers in British America. Armed with nothing but the crucifix and wrapped in a mantle of faith and Christian enthusiasm which made them dare everything and fear neither torture, nor privation, nor death, they tramped through the lonely aisles of the forest, wandered amid swamps and the haunts of wild beasts, lived in the smoke-blackened atmosphere of dirty huts, nursed and prayed with the ignorant and helpless victims of contagious disease, and preached to threatening tribes controlled by the ignorant "Medicine men" who saw their supremacy menaced by these new doctrines of peace and charity and good-will.

During the seventeenth century, while their fellow priests, with varying degrees of success and failure, of Christian work and secular negotiation, were extending the power of the Church of Rome in India and the Moluccas, in China and Japan, in Brazil and Paraguay, devoted missionaries of that remarkable organization were winning