

has given his name, and which has long piqued the curiosity of our Frenchmen to reach it overland, to know its situation with regard to us, and of what sort are the tribes which inhabit it." Père Charles Albanel, the former missionary of Tadoussac, was chosen by the Intendant Talon to lead the expedition, and took with him M. de St. Simon and another Frenchman. From this point Albanel tells his own story.

They found the Indians at Tadoussac very unwilling to act as guides, but finally got away on the 21st August, 1671. On September 2nd they reached Lake St. John, and Albanel grows enthusiastic over the fertility of the land, the abundance of game, and the beauty of the scenery. More than twenty tribes used to gather here to trade with each other, till wasted by the omnipresent Iroquois and small-pox. On the 7th they reached the other end of the lake and met Mistassirinians, who told them that two ships had anchored in Hudson's Bay and opened trade. They also gave such an account of the troubled state of the country northward as discouraged Albanel's unwilling guides. These items of news caused the Father to send back to Quebec for passports and credentials, and to arrange for wintering where he was.

This winter was a time of trial as well as of enjoyment to the missionary. Indeed in his vocabulary the two words seem to have meant much the same thing, for he enlarges on the holy joys that are to be extracted from sufferings endured for the faith. The trials came, not from want of provisions, but from the bullying and insulting conduct of the Indian guides, who wished to disgust him with his enterprise. There were other more positive pleasures, too, in the visits of heathen families, who came from long distances to be taught and baptized. In the middle of April they moved on to the camp of a promising convert, at a place called Nataschegamiou, where further efforts were made to detain them. Spring opened during May, and they succeeded in getting free from their persecutors on the first of June 1672. On the 10th, after hard toil in rapids and on rough portages, they reached the watershed at Paslistaskau by ascending the river Nekoubau. "This (P—) is a little tongue of land about one *arpent* (say twelve rods) in width and two in length. The two ends of this point are terminated by two little lakes, from which flow two rivers. The one descends towards the east, and the other towards the north-west; one enters the sea at Tadoussac by the Saguenay, and the other Hudson's Bay, by way of Nemeskau, which is half way between the two seas.

Here they met some Mistassirinians who barred the way to them till they should arrange with "The old man Sesibahoura," who claimed control of the river. The "old man" and his tribe came, and after several days of pow-wowing and feasting Albanel had the satisfaction of baptizing all the infants and leaving the party in good humour on June 16th. Two days travel brought them to Lake Mistassini. His description of this lake can hardly be condensed without injury to its force.

"On the 18th," he says, "we entered this great Lake of the Mistassirinians, which they maintain to be so large that it requires twenty days of fine weather to make the circuit of it. This lake takes its name from the rocks with which it is filled, and which are of a prodigious size. There are a number of very beautiful islands; there is game and fish of every kind—moose, bears, caribou, porcupines, and there are plenty of beavers. We had already made six leagues between the islands which dot the lake, when I saw something like a height of land as far off as the eye could reach. I asked our people if that was the direction in which we should go? 'Be quiet,' said our guide, 'do not look at it if you do not wish to perish.' The Indians of all these regions imagine that whoever wishes to cross this lake should carefully restrain his curiosity from looking at the route—and especially the place where he is to land. His very glance, they say, causes agitation of the water, and brews storms which thrill the hardest with fear. On the 19th we arrived at Makouamitikac, that is to say, 'the bears' fishery.' It is a flat place, and the water is very shallow, but abounding with fish. The small sturgeon, the pike, and the white fish make it their resort. It is pleasant to see the bears walking by the water, and catching with their paws as they go along some fish or another. On the 22nd of June they left the lake and went to Oüetataskoüamiau. (These outrageous names are only introduced here because they may give some clue to the existing names, as Indian nomenclature seems fairly persistent. They hardly look quite so gruesome if we remember that the "ou" is the French expedient to give the sound of "w." We would spell this word, for instance, "Wetatasquamion.") This was a hard day's work. They had to leave the "great river" (name not given) on account of rapids, and take their way through little lakes and over seventeen portages. On the 23rd and 24th, they found a less mountainous country, where "the air was much milder, the plains beautiful, and the lands would produce freely if brought under cultivation (*si on les faisoit valoir*). This

country, the finest on our route, extended as far as Nemeskau, where we arrived on the 25th at noon. These three days' travel in a comparatively easy country might cover from sixty to eighty, or even one hundred, miles.

"Nemeskau is a great lake, ten days' journey in circumference, surrounded by high mountains from south to north, forming a semi-circle. We saw, at the entrance to the great river (Nemiskausipiou) which extends from east towards north-east, vast plains which reach to the foot of the mountains, forming the amphitheatre; and all these plains are so pleasantly cut up by water-stretches that it seems as if they were so many rivers, forming such a great number of islands that it is difficult to count them. We saw all these islands so covered with tracks of moose, beavers, deer, and porcupines, that it seemed to be their chief resort. Five large rivers discharge into this lake, which make the fish so abundant that they were the chief support of a large tribe of Indians who lived there eight or ten years ago. We saw the sad traces of their residence and the remains of a large log fort, which the Iroquois had built on an island commanding all the avenues of approach, and where they often committed murders." These Iroquois seem to have penetrated wherever their natural prey, the less warlike Indian, was to be found. In this case, however, they had thinned out the game too much by the sudden taking off of eighty or so at one time. The rest then left, and the human wolverines had deserted their den. They set out again and followed small lakes and portages to the north-east, to avoid a great north-westerly bend of the Nemiskausipiou, which they were to follow to the salt water. On the 26th they reached Tehepimont—"a very mountainous country"—and the next day passed the portages. This was the first place the mosquitoes troubled them, and they were kept awake all night attending to their smudges. They had hardly advanced a quarter of a league next morning, before they found, in a little creek to their left, two sloops of ten or twelve tons burthen with lateen sails and flying the English flag. About a gunshot further they found two deserted houses. They do not seem to have cared to meet the English, notwithstanding their passports, and went on for six leagues before camping. Here they found vast mud flats left by the tide, and were certain that they had reached Hudson's Bay, the object of their long search. This point appears from other statements to have been two leagues beyond the mouth of the river, though it is not put in so many words. All night they fired guns to let the natives know of their presence, and "amused themselves by looking at *cette si fameuse baie de Hutson*."

Albanel tells us further that the Nemiskausipiou is a mile and a-half wide, but not deep, and that the tide runs up twelve miles to the first fall. The current is so strong and its volume so great that the water in the river, and for some miles out to sea, remains fresh at high tide. Its total length from the lake is about two hundred and forty miles, and it is broken by eighteen rapids. The portages are long and difficult, ranging from three to twelve miles. He notices too the great distance to which the tide retires, leaving bare mud as far as the eye can reach. The river spreads over this so thinly in several channels as not to float even a canoe. There are several habitable islands between these channels. His observations made the latitude of the mouth of the river 50° north—longitude not given. There seem to have been plenty resident Indian tribes with abominable names. The father converted the chief of one of these families and christened him Ignaces. This was the result of several days of speech-making and exchanging presents in the usual manner. Game was also plentiful, and the reverend missionary is betrayed into repeating an egregious "hunter's yarn." "I say nothing of the abundance of game which is found here. In the Island of Oüabaskou it is so great—if we believe the Indians—that, in a place where the birds shed their feathers when moulting, the Indians and wild beasts who get into it (*qui s'y engagent*) are over their heads in feathers, and often lose themselves—unable to advance or retreat." "I say nothing!" Oh, Père Albanel. "I will say nothing, either," he proceeds quaintly, "of the variety and abundance of the fruits which grow here, because one should not come here to seek luxury and dainty eating (*la délicatesse et la friandise*)." (Fancy anyone going on such an excursion to pick berries!) "What I commonly saw were the small fruit called bleuets (blueberries), little red apples, little black pears (a sort of wild cherry, so called by the French Canadians) and plenty of gooseberries." These are the characteristic fruits of the north shore of the St. Lawrence below Quebec, and our northern Laurentian country generally.

Then he bursts out with an enthusiasm worthy of a Macoun: "They deceive themselves who believe this climate uninhabitable, whether from the great cold, the ice and snow, or the lack of wood fit for building and fuel. They have not seen these vast and thick forests, these beautiful plains and broad meadows which border the rivers in many places, covered with all sorts of herbage, adapted to the grazing of cattle. I can positively