

They now encamped on the site occupied by the present village of Port Maitland, but at the end of fifteen days deemed it prudent to change their quarters. They retired about a mile and a half into the woods, and here, on the margin of a small stream, threw up a large hut, which they loop-holed, as a precautionary measure against attacks. One end of this building was reserved for a chapel, where Father Dollier celebrated Mass three times a week, and was consoled with the reflection that he was the first priest who ever offered up the Holy Sacrifice on the shores of Lake Erie. He tells us that the members of his party regularly assisted at Mass, and often went to confession and Holy Communion. On Sunday and festivals, High Mass was chanted and a sermon delivered. Every night and morning they had prayers in common, and sometimes during the day joined in pious exercises. Fortunately for them, the winter was comparatively mild. "If our winter was as severe," they write, "as it was at Montreal, especially in the month of February, 1670*, we would all have perished with the cold. Our axes were almost useless, so that if the wood, which we collected for our fires, was frozen as hard as it ordinarily is at Montreal, we would not be able to split it."

They remained here five months and eleven days, and before their departure planted on Passion Sunday a huge cross, and, after the example of Jacques Cartier, took possession of the country in the name of Louis the Fourteenth, whose arms they attached to the religious emblem. They also fastened to it the following inscription: "We, the undersigned, certify to having affixed on the shores of Lake Erie the arms of the King of France, with this inscription:—'In the year of Grace, 1669, Clement the IX., occupying the chair of St. Peter, and Louis the XIV., King of France, M. de Courcelles, being Governor of New France, and M. Talon, Intendant for the King; there arrived in this place two missionaries of the Seminary of Montreal, accompanied by seven other Frenchmen, who were the first of all Europeans to winter on this coast, which they have taken possession of, as of a land unoccupied, in the name of their King, by the affixing of his arms which they have attached to the foot of this cross. As a guarantee of good faith, we have put our names to this certificate.

"FRANCIS DOLLIER,

"Pretre du diocese de Nantes, en Bretagne.

"DE GALINEE,

Diacre du diocese de Rennes, en Bretagne.

The next day, the Feast of the Annunciation, they resumed their voyage, and after a stormy time landed on Pelee Island, worn out with exhaustion.† As they were greatly fatigued, they left their canoes at the edge of the water, and retired to rest. A storm swept the lake during the night, and carried off some of their canoes. Fortunately, one of the party awoke and aroused the others. When they had saved what they could, they found that the canoe containing their sounding lead, trinkets for the Indians, and their portable chapel, was lost. This was, for them, a serious disaster, for without the gifts they were carrying, they could do nothing among the tribes; moreover, Father de Casson could no longer say Mass, so they determined to go back to Montreal and from there begin anew their journey.

*The winter of 1670 was the most severe ever experienced in Canada. In the letters of Marie de l'Incarnation, we read that in the month of June ice still was found on the pond of the convent garden, and that their trees and berry bushes were killed with the cold.

†The place of their landing is marked on Galinee's map, and was probably on or near Point Pelee.