

they come to examine them, and consider their value overrated. But they were not written with any view of supplying documents for the history of a vast republic to whom Providence was to confide so much of this continent. As the Jesuit missionaries toiled fearlessly through the wilderness in the Indian canoe or by the Indian trail, their wildest fancy never studded the land with the thriving cities and busy agriculture of the future. They were zealous missionaries, full of their work, pious, often enthusiastic and sanguine, and they wrote not to leave data for historians, but simply to edify and interest the pious in France. Their Relations are the work of many hands, thrown together hastily by the Superior of the Mission, with no attempt at literary effect, but they bear the impress of honesty and of being printed as they were written. The missions embraced Canada and the whole frontier, from Maine to Lake Superior and Illinois; and the Relations give information as to the various tribes, their language, ideas, relations and annals for nearly half a century. When tested by other contemporaneous documents they bear scrutiny and afford us, to the extent of the information they give incidentally, excellent data; while it is almost impossible to read them without feeling a personal interest in the educated men who faced such perils for a noble cause, and who record their trials, hardships and the deaths of fellow laborers with such simplicity.

The general historians of our country have felt the influence and drawn from this source chapters full of eloquence and beauty: the latest historian of our own State has used them freely, and thus invested his narrative with an interest which previous writers on New York could not command.

But the Relations themselves acquire a new importance, and local history receives a valuable addition in works of which the present opens a new series. Here the long and patient re-