

INTRODUCTORY.

tion ever attempted in the West was thus nominally consummated. In an old Spanish map of North America, the section now occupied by the states of Illinois and Wisconsin may still be seen figuring as a part of the Spanish possessions.

While their most Catholic majesties held the barren title to this rich region, they do not appear to have ever attempted its exploration, much less settlement; both of which enterprises were left to the French, who, having gained a considerable foothold in Canada, began to push out trading and missionary expeditions to the surrounding country, and who, following the lakes, reached these latitudes some years after the middle of the century succeeding that of De Soto's exploits. On the 6th of July, 1667, La Salle, who had obtained a patent for the exploration of the Ohio river, which was then believed to empty into the Gulf of California, in company with a body of seminarists of the order of St. Sulpice, from Montreal, bent upon the conversion of the western tribes, embarked upon the St. Lawrence and sailed up the river to Lake Ontario. The expedition landed on the banks of the Genesee, where a Jesuit had already established a mission of his order, and sought intelligence as to the object of their search, and guidance. An apparent unfriendliness, perhaps encouraged by the Jesuit, prevented any progress from this point, and the party, later, visited the Iroquois colony at the mouth of the Niagara river.

At this place it was learned that two Frenchmen had arrived at a neighboring village. On meeting these, one of whom was Louis Joliet, afterwards famous as a western explorer, the missionaries obtained a map of portions of the upper lake region, which he had visited in the interest of the Canadian authorities to explore the copper district of Lake Superior. They were also informed that the north-western Indians were in need of spiritual food, and concluded to journey in that direction; while La Salle took another route and reached the Ohio across country. The missionaries, on arriving among the Indians of whom Joliet had advised them, found the French Pere Marquette and his companion Dablon already on the ground. In the following year, La Salle, having explored the Ohio as far as the falls, where Louisville now stands, embarked on Lake Erie, and passed around through the Straits of Mackinaw into Lake Michigan. Reaching the head of navigation, this voyager crossed the country to the Illinois river, which he followed to its confluence with the Mississippi, descending the latter, it is said, to the 36th deg. of latitude.

During the year 1673, the upper Mississippi was first reached by Europeans, Joliet and Marquette achieving the discovery by an expedition through the country from Green Bay. On this trip the site of St. Louis was first visited. Returning to Canada in broken health, Pere Marquette remained until the following year, when he again set out on a missionary enterprise. Passing around the lakes, his party ascended the Chicago river, and here the health of the noble Christian priest was discovered to be in such a condition that his approaching dissolution became apparent.