

Among the earlier discoverers, no name shines out with more brilliancy than that of the Chevalier La Salle. The story of his explorations can scarcely be equalled in romantic interest by any of the stirring tales of the Crusaders. Born of a proud and wealthy family in the north of France, he was destined for the service of the Church and of the Jesuit Order. But his restless spirit, fired with the love of adventure, broke away from the ecclesiastical restraints to confront the dangers of the New World, and to extend the empire of Louis XIV. From the best evidence accessible, it appears that he was the first white man that saw the Ohio River. At twenty-six years of age, we find him with a small party, near the western extremity of Lake Ontario, boldly entering the domain of the dreaded Iroquois, travelling southward and westward through the wintry wilderness until he reached a branch of the Ohio, probably the Alleghany. He followed it to the main stream, and descended that, until in the winter of 1669 and 1670 he reached the Falls of the Ohio, near the present site of Louisville. His companions refusing to go further, he returned to Quebec, and prepared for still greater undertakings.

In the mean time the Jesuit missionaries had been pushing their discoveries on the Northern Lake. In 1673 Joliet and Marquette started from Green Bay, dragging their canoes up the rapids of Fox River; crossed Lake Winnebago; found Indian guides to conduct them to the waters of the Wisconsin; descended that stream to the westward, and on the 16th of June reached the Mississippi near the spot where now stands the city of Prairie du Chien. To-morrow will be the two hundredth anniversary of that discovery. One hundred and thirty-two years before that time De Soto had seen the same river more than a thousand miles below; but during that interval it is not known that any white man had looked upon its waters.

Turning southward, these brave priests descended the great river, amid the awful solitudes. The stories of demons and monsters of the wilderness which abounded among the Indian tribes did not deter them from pushing their discoveries. They continued their journey southward to the mouth of the Arkansas River, telling as best they could the story of the Cross to the wild tribes along the shores. Returning from the Kaskaskias and travelling thence to Lake Michigan, they reached Green Bay at the end of September, 1673, having on their journey paddled their canoes more than twenty-five hundred miles. Marquette remained to establish missions among