

THE BUILDING AND
VOYAGE OF THE GRIFFON
IN 1679.

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ON the seventh day of August, 1679, two centuries ago, a small vessel left her anchorage near the foot of Squaw Island, and ascended the strong rapids of the Niagara into Lake Erie. She was a peculiar craft, of foreign model, full rigged and equipped, having many of the appointments of a man-of-war. A battery of seven small cannon, with some musquetry, constituted her armament. A flag, bearing the device of an eagle, floated at her mast-head, and on her bow she bore a carved griffin, in honor of the arms of Count Frontenac, then Governor-General of Canada. By the aid of a strong northeast wind, she endeavored to pass up the channel between the bold bluff now crowned by the ruins of Fort Porter, and the rocky islet, since known by the name of Bird Island. Being unable to overcome the rapid current, a dozen men were landed on the sandy beach which bordered the eastern shore, and with tow

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The present month of August completes two hundred years since the *Griffon* sailed from the Niagara to the Upper Lakes. This has been, for that reason, considered the appropriate month for the appearance of this paper.—ED.

lines, drew her, by main force, up the stream. A group of swarthy Senecas watched her movements, shouting their admiration at the strange spectacle.

When the vessel had reached the lake, the men on shore embarked—the *Te Deum* was chanted by the grateful crew—their artillery and fire-arms were discharged—and the vessel, turning her prow toward the southwest, boldly ploughed, without chart or guide, the untried waters of the lake.*

That vessel was the *Griffon*, and her projector and builder the adventurous Cavelier de la Salle.

This distinguished explorer was born in Rouen, France, on the twenty-second day of November, 1643. Educated by the Jesuits, he became, for a short time, a member of their Order. He came to America in 1666, and soon after visited and descended the Ohio; and, as some claim, anticipated Jolliet and Marquette in the discovery of the Mississippi. His western explorations revealed the value and foreshadowed the growth of the fur trade, then dependent for transportation on the bark canoe, or the sluggish pirogue of the Indian. The discovery of an overland route to China, and the development of the copper mines of the Interior, were additional stimuli to draw him from the luxury and ease of Europe, to share in the hardships and privations of savage life among the lakes and rivers, forests and prairies of the Northwest. Fort Frontenac was chosen as the base of his operations; and he agreed to rebuild and maintain it at his own expense, provided the French government would grant him certain exclusive privileges. These were accorded in May, 1675.† He immediately took possession of the fort, the foundations of which had been laid by Count Frontenac two years before, and enlarged and strengthened its defences.

In 1678, a brigantine of ten tons had been built for the use

* Hennepin, *Louisiana*, p. 20. Hennepin, *Nouvelle Découverte*, p. 119. Margry, *Découvertes*, vol. i., p. 445.

† Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., pp. 333-437.

of the French on Lake Ontario.* To facilitate his enterprises further west, it became necessary for La Salle to build a larger vessel above the Cataract of Niagara.—He first dispatched a party of fifteen men by canoe to the Upper Lakes, with goods of the value of six or seven thousand francs. They had orders to establish friendly relations with the Indians; to collect provisions for the use of the contemplated expedition, and to gather furs for the return voyage.† He also sent carpenters and other artisans, under charge of the Sieur de la Motte, to build a fort at Niagara, and the vessel above the Falls.‡

The chief companions he selected to aid him in these undertakings, were the Chevalier Henry de Tonty, the Sieur la Motte de Lussière, and Father Louis Hennepin.

Tonty was a Neapolitan by birth. Having fled from the Revolution of Naples, he entered the French Marine in 1668, in which he served four years. Having lost his right hand at Vintimille by the bursting of a grenade, he supplied the deficiency by a metallic arrangement covered with a glove.|| This he used with marked effect in his encounters with the Indians, and thus obtained the sobriquet of the "Iron Hand." He joined La Salle in his last voyage from France, in July, 1678,** and faithfully adhered to the fortunes of his chief, until the death of the latter in 1687. He was distinguished for zeal, courage and capacity. He commanded the reinforcements which were brought from the West to aid De Nonville in his expedition against the Senecas, in 1687. He died at Fort St. Louis, on Mobile bay, towards the close of the year 1704. His father was the author of the financial scheme, called after him "Tontine," which was adopted in France, and subsequently introduced into America.††

La Motte de Lussière was a captain in the celebrated regi-

* Hennepin, N. D., p. 72.

† Hennepin, La., p. 10. Le Clerq, Etab. de la Foi, vol. ii., p. 141.

‡ Margry, Découv., vol. i., pp. 449, 575.

§ La Potherie, vol. ii., p. 144.

** Margry, Découv., vol. i., p. 449.

†† Margry, Mémoires Inédits, p. 3.

ment of *Carignan-salières*, and accompanied La Salle on his first visit to America.* He proved, in the sequel, unfaithful to his commander by adhering to his enemies.† After some experience he found himself unfitted to endure the hardships of the New World, and gladly returned to civilized life.‡

Louis Hennepin was a Flemish Recollect of the Franciscan Order, and came to America in 1675 with Bishop Laval. He established a Mission at Fort Frontenac, where he remained two and a half years. He then returned to Quebec, and after undergoing the necessary religious preparation, reascended the St. Lawrence to Fort Frontenac, and joined the expedition of La Salle. He was proud of his association with his distinguished chief, and devoted as much time to his service as he could well spare from the duties of his priestly office. He was ambitious and unscrupulous, and after the death of La Salle, endeavored to appropriate some of the honors which the latter had acquired by his celebrated discoveries in the West. He published two works, one of which is styled "Description de la Louisiane," printed in 1683, and the other "A New Discovery of a Very Vast Country, Situated in America, Between New Mexico and the Frozen Ocean," printed in 1698. The first is less in detail, but more reliable than the second. Its account of the building and voyage of the *Griffon*, is, for the most part, a bold plagiarism from the official record of that enterprise, which had been communicated, either by La Salle himself, or through his instrumentality, to the French Minister of the Marine, in 1682. Nearly all of Hennepin's account is a verbatim copy of that record; with here and there a slight variation, occasionally relieved by an original paragraph. Twenty-one out of thirty-two pages of his "Louisiane," relating to the *Griffon*, are copied almost literally from the official document above referred to, now deposited among the *Clair-*

* Hennepin, *La.*, p. 15.

† Margry, *Découv.*, vol. ii., p. 230.

‡ Margry, *Découv.*, vol. ii., p. 9; Hennepin, *N. D.*, p. 76.

ambault Collections, in the National Library of Paris.* His narrative requires close scrutiny, especially in those particulars in which he was neither actor nor eye-witness. He belonged to that class of writers, which is said to speak the truth by accident and to lie by inclination. La Salle calls him a great exaggerator, who wrote more in conformity with his wishes than his knowledge.†

The expedition sent forward from Fort Frontenac, was under the immediate charge of the Sieur de la Motte; who was accompanied by Hennepin and sixteen men. They embarked on the eighteenth of November, 1678, in the brigantine before mentioned.‡

The autumnal gales were then sweeping over the lake, and the cautious navigators, fearing to be driven on the south shore, avoided the usual course, and coasted timidly under shelter of the Canadian headlands. Having advanced as far west as the site of Toronto, they sought refuge from a storm in the mouth of the river Humber. Grounding three times at the entrance, they were forced to throw their ballast overboard and to land fourteen of their crew, before the vessel could be made to float. The inhabitants of an Iroquois village near by, called *Tai-ai-a-gon*, were greatly surprised at their strange visitors, and generously supplied them with provisions in their extremity. The vessel narrowly escaped being frozen in for the winter, and was only released by being cut out with axes.||

On the fifth of December the wind becoming favorable, they left for the south side of the lake, riding out a boisterous night about twelve miles from the mouth of the Niagara. On the sixth of December, St. Nicholas' day, they entered what Hennepin calls "the beautiful river Niagara, into which no bark similar to ours had ever sailed."** Religion and commerce had joined

* Compare Hennepin, *La.*, pp. 41-73, with Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., pp. 441-451.

† Margry, *Découv.*, vol. ii., p. 259.

‡ Hennepin, *La.*, p. 20. *Ib.* p. 21.

§ Le Clerq, *Etab. de la Foi*, vol. ii., p. 141.

** Hennepin, *N. D.*, pp. 74, 75.

in the enterprise. The noble Ambrosian hymn "*Te Deum Laudamus*," arose from the deck of the gallant bark, chanted by the crew in recognition of their escape from the perils of a wintry navigation, and of their safe arrival in so desirable and commodious a harbor. Near by their anchorage were a few cabins, temporarily occupied by the Senegas for shelter during their fishing season. Our voyagers were abundantly supplied by the natives with white-fish, three hundred of which they caught in a single cast of the net. Such unusual luck was ascribed to the auspicious arrival of "the great wooden canoe."*

A party was now organized for exploring the river above the Falls, in search of a suitable site for building the projected ship. On the seventh of December, Hennepin, with five companions, ascended two leagues in a bark canoe, as far as the Mountain Ridge. Here their progress was arrested by the rapids which rush with impetuous force from the gorge above; and they landed on the Canadian shore. Prosecuting their search on foot, they ascended what are now known as Queenston Heights, and followed the river for three leagues, until they reached the mouth of the Chippewa creek. This stream is described by Hennepin as emptying into the Niagara from the west, a league above the great Fall. Being unable to find any land suitable for their purpose, they encamped for the night, first clearing away a foot of snow, before their fire could be kindled.

On their return the next day, herds of deer and flocks of wild turkeys met them on the way, giving promise of abundant game for the subsistence of the party during their contemplated sojourn on the Niagara.†

On the eleventh of December, they celebrated the first mass ever said in the vicinity.

The next three days were passed at Niagara, the wind being too unfavorable for the bark to ascend the river.

* Hennepin, I. a., p. 23.

† Hennepin, N. D., p. 76.

On the fifteenth, Hennepin took the helm, and with the aid of three men towing on shore, reached the foot of the rapids, and moored the bark to the American shore, below the precipitous cliffs of the Mountain Ridge. They employed the seventeenth and the two following days in constructing a cabin on the site of Lewiston, to serve as a storehouse for the use of the expedition. They were obliged to thaw the frozen ground with boiling water, before the palisades could be driven.

On the twentieth, and the next three days, the ice came down the rapids with such force, and in such quantities, as to threaten the safety of their bark. To guard against the danger, the carpenters, under the direction of La Motte, made a capstan, with which they endeavored to draw the vessel into a ravine; but the strain on the cable broke it three times. They finally passed it around the hull, and succeeded, with ropes attached, in hauling her to a place of safety.*

A further advance by vessel or canoe having been checked by the rapids, a portage around the Falls must now be made. Hennepin's reconnoissance, as before seen, had proved the one on the Canadian side to be unsuitable. It now remained to explore the other. Before doing so, it became necessary to consult La Salle, who had not yet arrived from Fort Frontenac, and also to conciliate the neighboring Senecas. The preparations made by La Salle to build a fort at the mouth of the Niagara, and a vessel above the Falls, on the territory claimed by the Senecas, had aroused the jealousy of that proud people. Attempts had been made, with some success, to propitiate those residing in the small village on the western bank of the river near its mouth.† It was deemed expedient, however, to send an embassy to their capital beyond the Genesee, before proceeding with the enterprise; and to negotiate, with the usual presents, for the required permission.

* Hennepin, N. D., pp. 77, 78. Margry, Découv., vol. ii., p. 8.

† Hennepin, N. D., p. 78.

Hennepin, never idle, was busy in the construction of a bark chapel for Divine service, when La Motte invited him to join in the proposed embassy. As the friar had ingratiated himself with the Iroquois, and possessed some knowledge of their language; his co-operation was deemed important. At first he feigned reluctance to go, but finally consented.* Leaving a portion of their party at the foot of the Mountain Ridge, La Motte and Hennepin, with four French companions, left on Christmas day, 1678.

Thus, in mid-winter, with blankets, warm clothing and moccasins for protection, they boldly plunged into the depths of the cheerless forest. The distance to the Seneca village was estimated at thirty-two leagues, or about eighty miles. Five hundred pounds of merchandise for Indian presents, and some sacks of parched corn, were distributed among the party. Their provisions were increased on the way by an occasional deer, and a few black squirrels procured by the Indians. For five weary days they followed the Indian trail through the frost-bound wilderness; sleeping at night in the open air, without shelter, except what chance afforded.

On the last day of December, they reached Tagarondies, the great village of the Senecas, situated on what has since been known as Boughton Hill, near Victor, in Ontario county.†

They were received by the Senecas with marked consideration, and conducted to the cabin of their principal chief, where they became objects of curiosity to the women and children. The young men bathed their travel-worn feet, and anointed them with bear's oil. The next day, being the first of the year, Hennepin celebrated mass, and preached the mysteries of his faith to the mixed assembly of French and Indians.

Fathers Julien Garnier and Peter Raffeix, two Jesuit missionaries, were found residing in the village at the time of their visit. The former was the first Jesuit ordained in Can-

* Hennepin, N. D., p. 79. Margry, Découv., vol. i., p. 443.
† N. Y. His. Collections, second series, vol. ii., p. 170.

ada, and the last missionary of that Order among the Senecas.* He commenced his labors among the Oneidas in 1668, at the age of twenty-five, and in the same year visited the Onondagas and Cayugas. In 1669 he had charge of the Seneca mission of St. Michael, and the following year that of St. James. In 1671 he conducted the three missions among that people.† He died at Quebec in February, 1730, having devoted upwards of sixty years to his missionary work. He was acquainted with the Algonquin language, but better versed in Huron and Iroquois.‡ His companion, Raffeix, joined him in the Seneca country in 1672. He was chaplain in the expedition of Courcelles against the Mohawks, in 1666.¶ He was soon after chosen for missionary work among the Cayugas, and labored among them and the Senecas until 1680. The writer can find no later notice of him than 1703, at which time he was living at Quebec.**

After Hennepin had concluded his religious services, the grand council was convened. It was composed of forty-two of the elders among the Senecas. Their tall forms were completely enveloped in robes made from the skins of the beaver, wolf and black squirrel. With calumet in mouth, these grave councillors took their seats on their mats, with all the stateliness and dignity of Venetian senators.

At the opening of the council, La Motte, suspecting Father Garnier of hostility to La Salle, objected to his presence. At the request of the Senecas he withdrew. Hennepin, considering this as an affront to his cloth, retired with him. La Salle was ever suspicious of the Jesuits; believing them to be opposed to his enterprises, and inclined to influence the Indians against him.

The council was informed, through Brassart, the interpreter,

* Shea's Catholic Missions, 294, n.

† Jesuit Relations, Quebec, ed. 1668, p. 17; 1669, p. 12; 1670, pp. 69-78; 1671, p. 20; 1666, p. 9.

‡ Jesuit Rel., ed. 1666, p. 6. Parkman's Jesuits, p. 54.

¶ Ib., ed. 1666, p. 9.

** Shea's Catholic Missions, 294, n.

that the French had come to visit them on the part of Onnontio, their governor, and to smoke the calumet on their mats; that the Sieur de la Salle was about to build a great wooden canoe above the Falls, in which to bring merchandise from Europe by a more convenient route than the rapids of the Saint Lawrence; that by this means the French would be able to undersell the English of Boston, and the Dutch of New York.*

This speech was accompanied with four hundred pounds weight of presents, consisting of hatchets, knives, coats, and a large necklace of blue and white shells. Portions of these were handed over at the end of each proposition. This mode of treating with the Indians by bribing their chiefs, has, unfortunately, continued to the present day.

Among other inducements, La Motte promised to furnish, for the convenience of their whole nation, a gunsmith and blacksmith, to reside at the mouth of the Niagara, for the purpose of mending their guns and hatchets. Several coats and pieces of fine cloth, iron, and European merchandise of great rarity among the Indians, and of the value of four hundred francs, were added, as weighty reasons, to influence them in favor of the French. "The best arguments in the world," says Hennepin, "are not listened to by the natives, unless accompanied with presents."†

On the next day, the Senecas answered the speech of La Motte, sentence by sentence, and responded by presents. As aids to the memory, they used small wooden sticks which the speaker took up, one by one, as he replied, *seratim*, to the several points in the speech of the day previous. Belts of wampum, made of small shells strung on fine sinews, were presented after each speech, followed by the exclamation "*Ni-a-qua*," signifying approval, from the whole assembly. This, however,

* Alluding to the plan of La Salle to send merchandise to the Niagara by the way of the Mississippi and the lakes.

† Hennepin, N. D., p. 85.

proved an insincere response in the present instance; for La Motte, with his specious reasoning, made no impression on these shrewd children of the forest. They knew that the English and Dutch had greater facilities than the French for supplying them with merchandise, and could outbid the latter in trading for their furs. They received the offered presents with apparent acquiescence, and after the customary salutations, the council broke up. Before it ended, two prisoners of war, who had been taken near the borders of Virginia, were brought in; one of whom, out of compliment to their guests, was put to death with tortures, such as Indians only in their savage state can invent and inflict. The French, unable to bear the sight, and willing to testify their abhorrence of the cruelty, withdrew from the scene. So the embassy left for their quarters on the banks of the Niagara; which they reached on the fourteenth of January, 1679, thoroughly exhausted with their toilsome expedition. They were in some measure solaced on their arrival, with the abundance of white-fish, just then in season. The water in which they were boiled, thickened into jelly, reminded them of the savory soups to which they had been accustomed in their father-land.*

The side of the Niagara on which the vessel for use on the Upper Lakes could be most conveniently built, was as yet undetermined. The Canadian side had been examined, as already noticed, and found unsatisfactory.† Historians have widely differed, not only as to the one finally selected, but also as to the precise point where the keel of the historic bark was laid. The solution of these questions involves interesting topographical investigations.

Governor Cass, in his address before the Historical Society of Michigan, maintains that "the *Griffon* was launched at Erië."‡ Schoolcraft says, "near Buffalo."|| Bancroft, in the

* Hennepin, N. D. pp. 78-91.

† Hennepin, N. D., p. 75.

‡ Historical Discourse at Detroit, p. 14.

|| Tour to the Lakes, p. 33.

first edition of his History of the United States, says, "at the mouth of the Tonewanda creek."* Dr. Sparks, in his "Life of La Salle," says, "at Chippewa creek, on the Canadian side of the river;"† and his opinion was followed by Parkman in his Life of Pontiac,‡ and more recently by Doctor Abbott, in his "Adventures of La Salle."|| What is still more remarkable and inexcusable, the new History of the United States, bearing the endorsement of the late William Cullen Bryant, states that the *Griffon* was built at Fort Frontenac, which it locates on Lake Erie! Such is history.

In an article published August 22d, 1845, in the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, the writer claimed that the vessel was built at the mouth of the Cayuga creek.

Since that publication, Mr. Bancroft, in later editions of his History,** and Mr. Parkman, in his more recent works,†† have accepted Cayuga creek as the true site of the dock.

As some doubts, however, still exist, and erroneous locations continue to be repeated, the subject has been re-examined in the light of the evidence afforded by the valuable documents lately published by Mr. Margry, under the auspices of the American Congress, and with the aid of other historical material recently discovered.

The portage around the Falls, and the site of the dock, must, necessarily, have been on the same side of the river. The American portage would naturally be chosen as the shortest and most feasible route; its length being two and a half miles less than the Canadian, owing to the configuration of the river.

That the French actually used the American side during and subsequent to the building of the *Griffon*, clearly appears from the testimony of Hennepin and La Hontan.

In his notice of the point where the river issues from the

* History of the United States, vol. iii., p. 162.

† Life of La Salle, p. 21.

‡ Parkman's Life of Pontiac, first ed., p. 52.

§ Abbott's Adventures of La Salle, p. 98.

** Vol. iii., p. 162, sixteenth ed.

†† Discovery of the Great West, p. 133. Life of Pontiac, sixth ed., vol. i., p. 58.

mountain gorge between Lewiston and Queenston, Hennepin mentions a "great rock" which rose to a considerable height above the water, "three fathoms from the Canadian shore." Also, "three mountains" on the American side, "opposite the great rock."* In describing his return from his western discoveries, after the loss of the *Griffon*, Hennepin says, "we carried our canoe from the great Fall of Niagara to the foot of the three mountains, which are two leagues below, and opposite the great rock."† This locates the portage used by Hennepin, on the American side.

The Baron la Hontan, who visited the Falls in 1688, only nine years after the *Griffon* was built, says, in his "Voyages to North America," published in 1703, "I went up the Niagara three leagues from its mouth, to the end of navigation. We were obliged to carry our canoe from a league and a half below the Falls, to a half a league above them. We ascended the three mountains before finding the way smooth and level."‡ On the map which accompanies his travels, La Hontan places the "three mountains" unmistakably on the American side of the river, just south of the site of Lewiston.

From the preceding quotations, it is evident that the "great rock," is referred to as on the west or Canadian side, and the "three mountains" on the opposite or American side of the Niagara.

This "great rock" was long a conspicuous object near the shore; and can still be seen under the western end of the old Suspension bridge, the ruins of which now span the river at that point. Within the memory of the early settlers, boats could readily pass between the rock and the adjacent bank. The debris from the precipice above, thrown down in the construction of the bridge, has nearly filled the intervening space. Hennepin describes the rock as very high;|| but time, and the

* Hennepin, N. D., pp. 45, 77, 113, 452.

† Hennepin, N. D., p. 456.

‡ La Hontan's Voyages, Eng. ed., vol. i., p. 81.

|| Hennepin, N. D., p. 452.

action of the ever-flowing current, have reduced its dimensions, and settled it in its river bed. It still lifts its dark head above the surrounding waters, an abiding witness of the accuracy of this part of the Franciscan's narrative, and perpetuates his memory under the name of "Hennepin's Rock."

The "three mountains" on the American side can easily be recognized in the lofty ridge, composed of three terraces, caused by the geological formation of the bank, which rises four hundred feet above the surface of the river. The ravine into which the brigantine was drawn by La Motte, to protect it from the ice, as before stated, is plainly to be seen near the foot of the Mountain Ridge, on the American side of the river, a short distance above Lewiston. This ravine, in the absence of any on the Canadian side, proves the site of the palisaded storehouse, and the commencement of the portage, to have been on the eastern side.

The proofs establishing the particular *site* where the vessel was built, will now be considered. Hennepin describes the portage as passing over beautiful meadows, and through groves of scattered oaks and pine. "We went," says he, "two leagues above the great Fall of Niagara, and there built some stocks for the construction of the vessel needed for our voyage. We could not have chosen a more convenient place. It was near a river, which empties into the strait between Lake Erie and the great Fall."*

Two leagues above the Falls would be about five miles. At that distance we find the Cayuga creek, a stream which answers perfectly to Hennepin's description. Opposite its mouth, an island of the same name lies parallel with the shore, about a mile long, and two or three hundred yards wide. It is separated from the main-land by a narrow branch of the river, called by the early inhabitants, "Little Niagara;" wide and deep enough to float a vessel of the tonnage of the *Griffon*.

* Hennepin, N. D., p. 94.

Into this channel and opposite the middle of the island, the Cayuga creek empties. On the main shore, just above the mouth of the creek, and under shelter of the island, is a favorable site for a ship-yard. So eligible is the position, that it was selected by the United States government, in the early part of the present century, as a suitable point for building one or more vessels for the transportation of troops and supplies, to the western posts. For that reason it was known in early times, as the "old ship-yard;" and local traditions have been preserved in the memory of the early pioneers, of its anterior occupancy, for the same purpose, by the French.*

Investigation among the archives of the *Ministère de la Marine* in Paris, have brought to light the existence of three manuscript maps, nearly cotemporaneous with the construction of the *Griffon*. The first two were made by *Jean Baptiste Louis Franquelin*, Hydrographer to Louis XIV., and the predecessor of Louis Jolliet in that office.

The earliest of the three is a map of North America, purporting to have been "drawn in 1688, by order of the Governor and Intendant of New France, from sixteen years observations of the author." It is five feet long, and three feet wide. Lakes Ontario and Erie, with the adjacent country, are, for that early day, remarkably well delineated. The Niagara river and Falls are distinctly represented, with a portage road around the latter, on the American side. A fac-simile of that portion of the map which embraces the Niagara river, reproduced from a careful tracing over the original, is given on the following page.

Its most interesting feature is the design of a cabin, on the eastern side of the river, midway between the two lakes, with this inscription: "*Cabane où le Sr de la Salle a fait faire une barque.*" (Cabin where the Sieur de la Salle caused a bark to be built.)

* Marshall's Niagara Frontier, p. 39.

partly to cut off the Niagara river; but the inscription, indicating, as on the other maps, that the vessel was constructed on the eastern side of the river, was left untouched, and is as follows: "*Chantier de Sr de la Salle pour sa barq.*" (Stocks for the bark of the Sieur de la Salle.)

This dock was referred to by the Marquis Denonville in a *procès-verbal*, or act of taking possession of the territory of the Senecas in 1687; only eight years after the *Griffon* was built. He says: "La Salle built a bark two leagues above the great Fall of Niagara, which navigated Lakes Erie, Huron and Illinois (Michigan), *the stocks of which are still to be seen.*"* It will be noticed that Hennepin and Denonville agree in the distance of the dock above the Falls.

The proofs now exhibited remove all doubts as to the site where the *Griffon* was built. The mouth of the Cayuga creek is, unquestionably, the true locality. In commemoration of the event, the name, "La Salle," has appropriately been conferred on the neighboring village.

La Salle, who had remained at Fort Frontenac, for the purpose of procuring supplies and materials for the proposed vessel, embarked with his lieutenant, Tonty, on a brigantine of twenty tons, and sailed for Niagara, by the south shore of the lake.† When near the mouth of the Genesee river, he landed by canoe, and went to Tagarondies, which he had visited with the Sulpitians, Dollier and Gallinée, ten years before.‡ At a council, supplementary to the one just held by La Motte and Hennepin, he succeeded, by his personal address, in gaining what they had failed to obtain—the full assent of the Senecas to the execution of his enterprises.¶

Re-embarking in his vessel, he sailed westward toward Niagara. When about twenty-five miles east of that river—the wind having failed—he left the vessel, and, accompanied by

* N. Y. Col. Doc., vol. ix., p. 335.

† Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., p. 575.

‡ Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., p. 127.

¶ Hennepin, N. D., p. 111.

Tonty, pursued his way to Niagara by land. He left instructions with the pilot, that if the wind should blow from the northwest, he should steer for Niagara; and if from the southwest, he should seek shelter in the river of the Senecas.*

On the eighth of January, 1679, the pilot and crew, while waiting for a favorable breeze, left the vessel at anchor, to sleep on shore. The wind rose so suddenly, that they were unable to embark. The vessel dragged her anchor, struck on a rock, and became a total wreck.† This must have been at or near what is now known as Thirty-mile Point, being that distance east of Fort Niagara. By this misfortune, a large amount of material, designed for the construction of the *Griffon*, including several bark canoes, was lost. Nothing was saved but the anchors and cables. To replace the loss, much valuable time would now be required, in transporting provisions and supplies for the use of the men employed in the work.‡

La Salle and Tonty reached the mouth of the Niagara on the evening after they had left the vessel. The Indians residing on the western side of the river, answering their summons, ferried them over to the village in their wooden canoes, and hospitably received them into their cabins.¶ Nothing could be had for their refreshment, but the usual Indian diet of white-fish and corn soup. This seemed, to Tonty's palate, barbarous and unsavory. Nevertheless, hunger compelled him to partake of it, without the relish of bread, wine, pepper or salt. Such was the rough life of the French explorer; subsisting on game, fish, and Indian corn, and inadequately protected from the weather by rudely constructed cabins of bark.

At midnight, the restless La Salle set out by moonlight with Tonty, expecting to join La Motte in his cabin at the foot of the Mountain Ridge. They found he was still absent with

* Genesee river.

† Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., pp. 442, 576.

‡ Margry, *Découv.*, vol. ii., p. 229; Hennepin, *La.*, p. 41.

¶ Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., p. 576.

Hennepin, on their embassy to the Senecas. Leaving Tonty to await his return, La Salle proceeded the next day further up the river, in search of a site above the Falls, convenient for building the projected vessel. Having found one, he transferred to the location some of his men, for the purpose of constructing a dock, and beginning the work. Returning to Niagara, he waited impatiently for the arrival of La Motte and Hennepin. News reached him while there of the loss of his vessel on Lake Ontario; and he repaired at once to the wreck, in order to rescue what might be useful in the construction of the new bark.

On the twenty-second of January, La Salle, Hennepin and Tonty repaired to the site which the former had chosen for the dock.* On his way there, La Salle turned aside to view the great Cataract; the first engraved view and detailed description of which are given by his companion, Hennepin, in his "New Discovery." La Salle had passed within fifteen miles of it ten years before, as he was coasting by canoe along the southerly shore of Lake Ontario, but this was his first visit.†

Tonty was now given the command of the working party. A place was cleared for the stocks. The woods resounded with the strokes of the axe, that pioneer of western civilization. Oaks were felled, and converted into plank; and their branches fashioned into ribs and knees, to conform the ship to a shapely model.

On the twenty-sixth, the keel was laid; and everything being ready, La Salle sent the carpenter to invite Hennepin to strike the first blow for the commerce of the lakes. The modesty of the good father for once overcame his ambition, and he declined the proffered honor. La Salle then promised ten Louis d'or, to encourage the carpenter to hasten the work.‡

It now became necessary for La Salle to return to Fort

* Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., pp. 576, 577; Hennepin, *N. D.*, p. 96.

† Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., p. 139.

‡ Hennepin, *N. D.*, p. 95.

Frontenac, to obtain supplies for his proposed ship, and to appease the clamors of his importunate creditors. It was about the first of February, and the snow still lay deep in the leafless woods. His bark had been wrecked, and the lake was too treacherous for a wintry voyage by canoe or brigantine. Nothing, however, could repress his untiring energy. Setting out on snow-shoes, with only two men for his companions, and a dog to draw his baggage, he traversed the frozen route of over eighty leagues, to Fort Frontenac. He took no provisions but a bag of parched corn, and even that failed him before he reached his destination.* Hennepin and Tonty accompanied him as far as Niagara. While there, La Salle traced a fort, which, after the prince of that name, he called Fort Conty. In order to deceive the Senecas, he pretended it was for a building he had promised them for the blacksmith.

La Motte lost no time in commencing a house on the site, and fortifying it with palisades, for the protection of the party and the storage of their supplies.† Thus were laid the foundations of that renowned fortress, over which, after passing successively under French and English control, now floats the standard of the American Republic.

After La Salle's departure, Tonty and Hennepin returned to their duties at the ship-yard.‡ Two bark cabins, including a chapel for the special use of Hennepin, were built with the aid of the Indians. Divine worship was regularly observed; and on Sundays and fete days, the sombre woods were vocal with the Gregorian chants, sung by the devout Franciscans.

Fortunately they were not interrupted by the Senecas; most of their warriors being absent on an expedition beyond Lake Erie. The few that remained were less insolent through their weakness. However, they often visited the camp, and exhibited dissatisfaction at the progress of the work.

* Margry, *Découv.*, vol. I., pp. 442, 577. Hennepin, N. D. p. 27.

† Hennepin, *La.*, p. 30.

‡ Margry, *Découv.*, vol. I., 577.

One of them, feigning intoxication, attempted to kill La Forge, the blacksmith, who vigorously repulsed him with a hissing bar of red-hot iron. This, added to a reprimand from Hennepin, caused him to desist. The timely warning of a squaw, holding friendly relations with one of the workmen, prevented the destruction of the vessel; the Senecas having planned to burn it on the stocks. Only the strictest vigilance saved it from the torch.* So great was Tonty's fear that an attack would be made upon the camp, that he sent La Motte on a second visit to the Seneca village, to avert the design. He was not only successful in his mission, but secured, at the same time, much needed supplies of corn for Fort Frontenac, and for the party at work on the *Griffon*.†

While La Motte was absent on his mission, Tonty repaired to Niagara, and launched the brigantine, in order to save what he could from the unfortunate wreck. But a storm arose, and the wind and ice forced him to come to anchor. The cable parted, and, after encountering great peril and fatigue, he succeeded in reaching the mouth of the Niagara, without accomplishing his object. After the storm had subsided, he embarked, by canoe, to regain his lost anchor; and met La Motte on his return from the Senecas. Leaving the latter to fish up the anchor, Tonty returned to the dock.‡

The frequent alarms which they experienced, the fear that provisions would fail them by reason of the loss of the bark, and the refusal of the Senecas to sell them supplies, greatly discouraged the carpenters.|| They were otherwise demoralized by the attempted desertion of one of their number to the Dutch in New York. Hennepin assumes the credit of allaying these fears, and of stimulating the men to greater diligence, by his timely exhortations on Sundays and festivals, and assurances that their work would redound to the glory of God, and the

* Margry, vol. i., p. 443. Hennepin, N. D., p. 97.

† Margry, vol. i., p. 578. *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 3.

‡ Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., p. 577.

|| Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., p. 444.

welfare of the Christian colonies.* He made frequent trips to Niagara, carrying his portable chapel strapped to his shoulders; equally ready to discharge the functions of his holy calling, or to aid in the temporal work which La Salle had undertaken. The Senecas called him *Hochitagon*, signifying *bare-foot*, in allusion to the custom of his Order in wearing sandals.†

Two Indians, employed as hunters, supplied the party with venison and other game.‡ The work went on, and the winter wore away, without remarkable incident. Spring succeeded, and in the month of May the vessel was nearly ready for launching. Its formidable hull, looming up on the stocks, continued to excite the jealousy of the Senecas, and they again threatened to burn it. Fearing this, it was deemed advisable to launch it at once.¶ This was done with due formalities. A blessing was invoked according to the usage of the Roman Church—a salute was fired—the *Te Deum* was chanted, and the vessel safely floated in the Cayuga channel of the Niagara. She was named "LE GRIFFON," in compliment to Count Frontenac, on whose escutcheon two winged griffins were emblazoned as supporters. The Frenchmen cheered as the vessel entered the stream, and swung securely at her anchor. A party of stoical Iroquois, who were returning from the chase, could not repress their astonishment at the unusual spectacle. The skill of the Frenchmen, able to build such a moving fort, in so short a time, excited their admiration, and they called them *Ot-kon*, signifying, according to Hennepin, *penetrating minds*.** The Senecas willingly joined in celebrating the launch, freely partaking the brandy which was liberally distributed on the joyful occasion.

The overworked Frenchmen, released from their toil, and

* Hennepin, N. D., p. 95.

† Hennepin, N. D., p. 27.

‡ Hennepin, N. D., pp. 95, 98.

¶ Margry, Decouv., vol. i., p. 444.

** Margry, Decouv., vol. i., p. 444. *Ot-kon* is a Mohawk word, taken by Hennepin from Bruyas' Dictionary of that language. The corresponding word in Seneca is *Ot-goh*, and signifies supernatural beings or spirits. Bruyas' Mohawk Dictionary, p. 120.

relieved from their painful vigils, gladly exchanged their cheerless quarters on land, for the deck of the *Griffon*, where they swung their hammocks; secure, for the first time, from the jealous owners of the soil.*

While these events were transpiring under the supervision of Tonty, La Salle, whose duties detained him at Fort Frontenac, was harrassed by his creditors, clamorous for the payment of their dues. All his effects at Montreal and Quebec were attached, even to the bed of his secretary; notwithstanding his interest in Fort Frontenac, alone, was ample security for all his debts, without relying upon returns from his western venture. These hostile proceedings originated, in part, from jealousy of the man. They did not, however, modify his purpose, but stimulated him to prosecute his enterprise, regardless of the machinations of his enemies.†

The *Griffon* being safely moored in the river, and the time approaching for the commencement of her western voyage, Hennepin, in order to ascertain the feasibility of taking her up the Niagara into Lake Erie, was dispatched on a reconnoissance. Accompanied by a single Indian in a bark canoe, he twice poled up the rapids, as far as the lake; sounding their depth, and estimating their force. He reported that no difficulty existed in the undertaking, if the *Griffon* should be favored with a fresh north or northwest breeze.‡

Soon after the vessel was completed, she sailed up the eastern side of Grand Island, overcoming the current with her sails alone. She dropped anchor below Squaw Island, in ten feet water, two and a half miles from the lake, where she could ride secure in any weather.||

Hennepin now repaired to Fort Frontenac for the purpose of obtaining, from his brethren there, some companions to aid him in his proposed mission to the great West. Leaving the

* Hennepin, N. D., p. 100. Margry, Découv., vol. i., p. 444.

† Margry, Découv., vol. i., p. 443. Hennepin, N. D., pp. 101, 102.

‡ Hennepin, N. D., p. 102.

|| Hennepin, N. D., p. 103.

Griffon at her anchorage, he descended the river by canoe, with two assistants, as far as the landing just above the Falls. From thence they carried their canoe over the portage; and launching it again at the foot of the Mountain Ridge, proceeded to Lake Ontario. Here they found the brigantine which the *Sieur de la Forest* had brought from Fort Frontenac. After spending a few days at the mouth of the river in trading with the Indians, they sailed for the Fort. The sea-sickness of a party of squaws, who embarked with them to save a journey of forty leagues, by land, to their village, rendered the voyage quite disagreeable, particularly to Father Hennepin, who emphatically expresses himself quite disgusted with his fellow voyagers.*

After touching at the mouth of the Oswego river, where they traded with the Iroquois, exchanging brandy for furs (a proceeding strongly condemned by Hennepin), they crossed the lake and landed on Gull Island, called by Hennepin "*Goilans*," one of the group which lies off Point Traverse in the eastern end of Lake Ontario. This island was so named from the gulls that frequented it in great abundance. They deposited their eggs in the sand, and left them to be hatched by the sun. Hennepin states that he "gathered and carried away a large quantity, which relished well in omelette."†

On arriving at Fort Frontenac, Hennepin was welcomed by his Franciscan brethren. Two of the Order, Gabriel de la Ribourde and Zenobe Membre, were chosen to accompany him in the memorable voyage of the *Griffon*.‡

On the twenty-seventh of May, while the party were at Fort Frontenac, La Salle, in recognition of the services of the Franciscans, conveyed to the Order eighteen acres of land bordering on the lake near the Fort, and about one hundred in the adjacent forest. He also decreed, by virtue of his

* Hennepin, N. D., pp. 104, 105.

† Hennepin, N. D., p. 106.

‡ Hennepin, N. D., p. 107.

authority as governor and proprietor of the Fort, that no other Order should be established in its vicinity.

After visiting the neighboring Indians, the Franciscans embarked in the brigantine, for Niagara.* They landed first at the mouth of the Genesee river, where they traded with the Senecas; purchasing furs and supplies, with guns, knives, powder, lead and brandy; the latter being the most in demand. Hennepin secluded himself from these distractions, by retiring some distance in the woods; where he built a bark chapel for religious observances. While they were thus delayed, La Salle arrived at the end of eight days, on his way to the Seneca village. On reaching the latter, he made some presents to attach the Indians to his interest, and to counteract the prejudices which his enemies had secretly excited against him. These negotiations detained them so long, as to prevent their reaching Niagara before the thirtieth of June.

On the fourth of July,† Hennepin and Sergeant la Fleur set out on foot to rejoin the *Griffon*. They visited the great Cataract on their way, and stopped at the stocks where the vessel had been built, and which Hennepin locates at six leagues from Lake Ontario. While resting there, two young Indians seriously incommoded the fathers, by slyly appropriating all their provisions. Here they found an old bark canoe, much dilapidated, which they repaired as well as their conveniences allowed. In this, with extemporized paddles, they risked the voyage up the Niagara, and were cordially welcomed on board the *Griffon*, still swinging at her anchors, in the current below the rapids.‡ A party of Iroquois, returning with prisoners from a western foray, visited the ship on their way, and were struck with amazement that the material for her equipment, including such large anchors, could have been brought up the rapids of the St. Lawrence. "Gannoron!" they exclaimed, in

* Hennepin, N. D., pp. 108, 109, 110.

† Hennepin's N. D., p. 111. There is some confusion of dates in Hennepin's narrative, not reconcilable.

‡ Hennepin, N. D., p. 112.

their astonishment; an expression in their language for, "Wonderful."* Leaving instructions with the pilot, not to attempt the ascent of the river, Hennepin returned to Niagara on the sixteenth, and brought up the brigantine in which they had come from Fort Frontenac as far as the Great Rock; and anchored her at the foot of the Three Mountains.†

The munitions of war, provisions and rigging with which the brigantine was loaded, were now carried over the portage by the crew, aided by the Franciscans, involving many a weary and painful journey of two long leagues. Father Gabriel, sixty-four years old, went up and down the Three Mountains, three several times, with remarkable activity and endurance. It required four persons to carry the largest anchor; but a liberal distribution of brandy encouraged the men, and lightened their labor.‡

The transportation of their effects being thus accomplished, all repaired to the outlet of Lake Erie, and waited for the sailing of the *Griffon*. Hennepin took advantage of the delay, to make another visit to the Falls, in company with La Salle and Father Gabriel.¶ He was so charmed with the fine scenery, the abundant fishery, and the beauty of the river, that he proposed to La Salle to found a settlement on its borders. By this means, he claimed, the Indian trade could be monopolized, and at the same time the interests of religion be promoted.**

But La Salle was in debt; depending for the liquidation of his liabilities on the furs he expected to realize from the far West. This consideration, coupled with an intense desire to explore the interior of the continent, prevented his listening to the entreaties of Hennepin.

Everything being ready for the voyage, several fruitless at-

* This is not a Seneca, but a Mohawk word. It was evidently borrowed by Hennepin from Father Bruyas' manuscript Dictionary of the Mohawk Language, which the former consulted in America. The corresponding word in the Seneca dialect, is *Ga-no-sh*, which signifies literally, *difficult or extraordinary*. Bruyas' Radical Words of the Mohawk Language, p. 83.

† Hennepin, N. D., p. 113.

‡ Hennepin, N. D., p. 114.

¶ Hennepin, N. D., p. 116.

** Hennepin, N. D., p. 105.

tempts were made by the *Griffon* to ascend the rapids into Lake Erie. The winds were either adverse, or too light. While thus waiting, a part of the crew cleared some land on the Canadian shore, and sowed several varieties of garden seeds. "This," says Hennepin, "was done for the benefit of those who should be engaged in maintaining, over the portage, the communication between the vessels navigating the two lakes."* They discovered some wild *chervil*, and quantities of Spanish garlic, (*roscombolc*) growing there spontaneously.†

The crew had been reduced, by leaving Father Melithon and others at the stocks above the Falls. A portion of the remainder encamped on shore, to lighten the vessel in its attempts to stem the rapid current. Divine service was daily observed on board, and the preaching on Sundays and festivals could easily be heard by the men on shore.‡

On the twenty-second of July, Tonty was sent forward with five men, to join a company of fourteen, who had, some time before, been ordered by La Salle to rendezvous at the mouth of the Detroit river.¶

length the wished-for wind from the northeast arose; and the party, to the number of thirty-two souls, including the two Recollects who had recently joined them from Fort Frontenac, embarked; and, contrary to the predictions of the pilot, succeeded in ascending the rapids into the lake,** as heretofore described.

It was a moment of rejoicing and profound gratitude, religiously acknowledged by the happy voyagers, as the vessel floated on the bosom of what Hennepin styles, "the beautiful Lake Erie."

She now spread her sails to the auspicious breeze, and commenced her adventurous voyage. The vast inland seas

* Hennepin, N. D., p. 118.

† Judge Clinton says, that the *chervil* was probably the sweet cicely, and the *roscombolc* either the leek or garlic.

‡ Hennepin, N. D., p. 119.

¶ Margry, Découv., vol. ii., p. 578.

** Margry, vol. i., p. 445.

over which she was about to navigate, had never been explored, save by the canoe of the Indian, timidly coasting along their shores. Without chart to warn of hidden dangers, she boldly ploughed her way,—the humble pioneer of the vast fleets of our modern lake commerce.

A moonless night succeeded. They had been told that Lake Erie was full of shoals, fatal to navigation; so they cautiously felt their way, sounding as they went.*

A thick fog now settled on the lake. Suddenly, the sound of breakers was borne to the ears of the watchful crew, on the dark and murky night. All but La Salle were sure it was the noise of the waves, occasioned by a change of wind. But La Salle had seen the rude chart of Gallinée, made ten years before, containing a rough outline of the northern shore; showing Long Point, advancing southeastward across the pathway of the *Griffon*. Suspecting they were approaching this danger, he ordered the pilot to change the course to east-northeast. They proceeded in that direction, under a light breeze, for two or three hours; hearing the same noise, and sounding constantly, without finding bottom. An hour later, the depth suddenly diminished to three fathoms. All hands were aroused, and the course changed. At length the fog lifted, and Long Point lay directly before them. La Salle's conjectures proved correct. His caution and vigilance had saved his bark from probable wreck.† On the next day, they doubled the dangerous headland, which they named Saint Francis;‡ now known as Long Point.

At sunset, they had already sailed forty-five leagues from the outlet of the lake. After another anxious night, they reached the widest part of the lake; from the shores of which, on either hand, stretched interminable forests, unbroken by the faintest sign of civilization. Westward the course of Empire was now

* Hennepin, N. D., p. 121.

† Margry, *Decouv.*, vol. iii., p. 230.

‡ Hennepin, N. D., p. 122.

taking its way, under the flag of France, gallantly borne by her adventurous explorers, of which the projector and builder of the *Griffon* was the chief.

France was thus laying the foundations of her dominion over Canada, the Northwest and Louisiana; soon to be wrested from her by the more powerful grasp of England—the latter, in her turn, compelled to yield the fairest portion of her conquest to her rebellious colonies.

On the ninth, the winds being favorable, and the lake smooth, *Pointe au Pins* and *Pointe Pellée* were doubled, on the right; and on the tenth, early in the morning, passing between *Pointe Pellée* and the Bass Islands, they reached the mouth of the Detroit river.*

Here they found Tonty and his men, waiting for the ship. They had encamped on a narrow beach at the mouth of the strait, with the river in front and a marsh in the rear. A fresh northeast wind had, during the night, so suddenly raised the water at that end of the lake, that it surprised and threatened to overwhelm them, in their slumbers. At break of day, the *Griffon* appeared—a welcome sight. They signaled her with three columns of smoke. She came to anchor at the summons, and received them on board.

On the eleventh, she entered the river and sailed up between *Grosse Isle* and *Bois Black* islands. Hennepin was even more impressed with the beautiful scenery of this river, than by that of the Niagara. Following the official account, he describes the strait as thirty leagues long; bordered by low and level banks, and navigable throughout its entire length. That on either hand were vast prairies, extending back to hills covered with vines, fruit trees, thickets and tall forests, so distributed as to seem rather the work of art, than of nature. All kinds of game abounded, including many species new to the travelers. The awnings which covered the deck of the *Griffon*, were gar-

* Margry, Découv., vol. i., p. 445. Hennepin, N. D., 122.

† Margry, Découv., vol. i., p. 579.

nished with carcasses of deer, killed by the crew. Abundance of all kinds of timber, suitable for building purposes, was growing on shore; also fruit-bearing trees, including the walnut, the chestnut, plum and apple; together with wild vines, loaded with grapes, from which they made a little wine. "The inhabitants," says Hennepin, "who will have the good fortune, some day, to settle on this pleasant and fertile strait, will bless the memory of those who pioneered the way, and crossed Lake Erie by more than a hundred leagues of an untried navigation."*

Hennepin had failed to induce La Salle to found a colony on the banks of the Niagara. He now set forth the superior merits of the Detroit river for such an establishment, pressing its commercial advantages; while his real object, as avowed in his narrative, was to advance the interests of religion, under cover of secular considerations.† But he made no impression on the fixed purposes of La Salle, who resolutely pursued his way in the *Griffon*, intent on the accomplishment of the great enterprise he had inaugurated.

On the tenth of August, the festival of *Sainte Clare*, they entered and crossed the lake, which they named after that martyred saint. In attempting to pass from the lake into the river above, they encountered the same obstacles, which, after the lapse of two centuries, confront the mariners of the present day. It is a reproach to the enterprise of two powerful commercial nations, that they should suffer such a barrier to exist, for a single season, in the great highway between the East and the West. In describing it, Hennepin says: "We found the mouth of the St. Clair river divided into many narrow channels, full of sand-bars and shoals. After carefully sounding them all, we discovered a very fine one, two or three fathoms deep, and almost a league wide, throughout its entire length."‡

* Hennepin, N. D., 124. Margry, Découv., vol. i., p. 445.

† Hennepin, N. D., p. 105.

‡ Hennepin, N. D., p. 128. Margry, Découv., vol. i., p. 446. The figures in the text are greatly exaggerated. Neither of the channels through the St. Clair flats, are over half a mile wide, and their average depth is less than ten feet.

Contrary winds delayed their progress through the St. Clair river for several days. At length they were enabled to approach Lake Huron; but the violent current, increased by a northerly gale, prevented their advancing. The wind shifting to the south, they succeeded, with the aid of a dozen men towing on shore, as at the outlet of Lake Erie, in surmounting the rapids, which were pronounced by Hennepin almost as strong as those of the Niagara. They entered the lake on the twenty-third of August; the Franciscans chanting the *Te Deum* for the third time, and thanking the Almighty for their safe navigation thus far, and for the sight of the great bay of Lake Huron, on the eastern shores of which their brethren had established the earliest missions in North America, sixty-four years before.*

As soon as they entered the lake, a fresh wind drove them rapidly along its eastern shore until evening, when it changed violently to the southwest. The *Griffon* then tacked to the northwest, and, running on that course all night, crossed the great bay of "*Sakinam*" (Saginaw), thirty miles in width, and which penetrates twice that distance into the heart of the Michigan Peninsula. When morning came, they were running in sight of land, on a northwesterly course, parallel with the western coast. This continued until evening, when they were becalmed in two fathoms water, among the Thunder Bay Islands. They sought, under easy sail, for an anchorage, during a part of the next night; but, finding none satisfactory, and the wind increasing from the west, they steered north to gain an offing, sounding their way and waiting for the day. La Salle, having discovered evidences of negligence on the part of the pilot, took personal supervision of the lead during the remainder of the voyage.†

On the twenty-fifth, they were becalmed until noon; when, favored by a southerly wind, they steered northwest. Suddenly, the wind veered to the southwest. At midnight, they changed their course to the north, to avoid a cape, since known as Presque

* Hennepin, N. D., p. 129.

† Margry, Decouv., vol. 1., p. 447. Hennepin, N. D., p. 131.

Isle, which projected into the lake. Hardly had they doubled this, when a furious gale compelled them to beat to windward under main and foresail, and then to lie to until morning.*

On the twenty-sixth, the violence of the gale obliged them to send down their topmasts, to lash their yards to the deck, and drift at the mercy of the storm. At noon, the waves ran so high and the lake became so rough, as to compel them to stand in for the land.†

At this juncture, as related by Hennepin, La Salle entered the cabin in much alarm, exclaiming that he commended his enterprise to the Divine protection. "We had been accustomed," says Hennepin, "during the entire voyage, to fall on our knees morning and evening, to say our prayers publicly, and sing some hymns of the church. But the storm was now so violent, that we could not remain on deck. In this extremity, each one performed his devotions independently, as well as he could, except our pilot, who could never be persuaded to follow our example. He complained that the Sieur de la Salle had brought him thus far, to lose, in a fresh-water lake, the glory he had acquired in many successful voyages by sea."‡

In this fearful crisis, La Salle was induced, by the importunity of the Recollects, to make a special vow; and, taking Saint Anthony de Padua, the tutelary saint of the sailor, for his patron, he promised, that if God would deliver them from their present peril, the first chapel erected in Louisiana should be dedicated to the memory of that venerated saint. The vow seems to have met a response, for the wind slightly decreased. They were obliged, however, to lie to, drifting slowly all night, unable to find either anchorage or shelter.

On the twenty-seventh, they were driven northwesterly until evening; when, under favor of a light southerly breeze, they rounded Point St. Ignace, and anchored in the calm waters

* Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., p. 447.

† Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., p. 447.

‡ Hennepin, *N. D.*, p. 132.

of the bay of Missillimackinac, described as a sheltered harbor, protected, on all sides, except from the southeast.* Here our voyagers found a settlement, composed of Hurons (*Kiskakons*), Ottawas, and a few Frenchmen. A bark-covered chapel bore the emblem of the cross, erected over a mission planted by the Jesuits. Like a dim taper, it shone, with feeble light, in a vast wilderness of pagan darkness. Here it was that Marquette and Jolliet, priest and layman, organized, six years before, their memorable voyage down the Mississippi; and here the bones of the honored missionary found a grave, until rilled by some sacrilegious relic hunter. A few fragments that were spared, have been gathered and preserved with pious care, soon to be deposited under a monument, which will be visible far and wide, over land and water; and show, to coming generations, where the thrice-buried remains of the heroic Marquette have found a final resting place.

The safe arrival of the *Griffon* in this secure haven, was the occasion of great rejoicing to the weary voyagers. A salute was fired from her deck, and thrice responded to by the fire-arms of the Hurons on shore. Mass was gratefully celebrated by the Franciscans, in the chapel of the Ottawas. La Salle attended, robed in fine clothes, including a scarlet cloak bordered with gold lace; his arms being laid aside in the chapel, in charge of a sentinel. In the distance, the *Griffon* lay at anchor; presenting, with her fine equipment, an imposing appearance. More than a hundred bark canoes gathered around her, attracted by the novel spectacle.†

La Salle found, at Missillimackinac, a part of the fifteen men that he had sent forward from Fort Frontenac to trade with the Illinois Indians, and whom he supposed were already among the latter. They had listened to reports on the way, that the plans of La Salle were visionary, and that the *Griffon* would never reach Missillimackinac. La Salle seized four of the de-

* Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., p. 447.

† Hennepin, *N. D.*, p. 135. Margry, *Découv.*, vol. i., pp. 449, 579.

serters; and, learning that two more were at the Saut Sainte Marie, he despatched Tonty on the twenty-ninth of September, with six assistants, to arrest them.

As the season was rapidly passing away, he was unable to wait for Tonty's return, and gave orders for the departure of the *Griffon*. On the twelfth of September, five days before Tonty's return, she sailed out of the straits, into Lake Michigan, then named Illinois.* A prosperous run brought her to an island since called Washington Island, forty leagues from Missillimackinac, inhabited by the Pottawatamies. It is situated at the entrance of *La Grand Baie*, a name since corrupted into Green Bay. Some of the party were found there, who had been sent forward by La Salle to the Illinois, the year previous. They had collected a large quantity of furs, to the amount of 12,000 pounds, in anticipation of the arrival of the *Griffon*. Our navigators found secure shelter in a small bay, now known as Detroit harbor, on the southerly side of the island, where they rode out, at anchor, a violent storm of four days duration.†

As winter was now approaching, La Salle loaded the *Griffon* with the furs which had thus been collected; intending to send them to the storehouse he had built above the Falls; from thence to be transhipped to Fort Frontenac, in satisfaction of the claims of his creditors. His own purpose was to pursue his route, by canoe, to the head of Lake Michigan; and from thence to the country of the Illinois. Being unable to obtain more than four canoes, which were wholly insufficient to contain all the merchandise and the various articles destined for his southern enterprise, he was obliged to leave a portion of his goods in the *Griffon*, with directions to the pilot to deposit them at Missillimackinac, until the vessel should call for them, on her return voyage.‡

* Margry, vol. i., p. 450. Hennepin, La., p. 68. Hennepin, N. D., p. 140. Hennepin says, the *Griffon* left Missillimackinac on the second of September.

† Margry, Decouv., vol. i., p. 450. Hennepin, N. D., p. 140.

‡ Margry, Decouv., vol. i., p. 450.

The *Griffon* sailed for the Niagara on the eighteenth of September, but without La Salle; a fatal error, which probable caused the loss of the vessel, her cargo and crew. A favorable wind bore her from the harbor; and, with a single gun, she bid adieu to her enterprising builder, who never saw her again. She bore a cargo, valued, with the vessel, at fifty or sixty thousand francs, obtained at a great sacrifice of time and treasure. She was placed under the command of the pilot, Luc, assisted by a supercargo and five good sailors; with directions to call at Missillimackinac, and from thence proceed to the Niagara. Nothing more was heard of her. On the second day after she sailed, a storm arose which lasted five days. It was one of those destructive gales which usually prevail at that season over the northern lakes. She is reported to have been seen among the islands in the northerly end of Lake Michigan, two days after sailing, by some Pottawatamies, who advised the pilot to wait for more favorable weather. They last saw her half a league from the shore, helplessly driven by the storm upon a sandy bar, where she probably foundered; a total loss, with all on board.*

A hatchway, a cabin door, the truck of a flag-staff, a piece of rope, a pack of spoiled beaver skins, two pair of linen breeches torn and spoiled with tar, were subsequently found, and recognized as relics of the ill-fated ship.†

The day after she sailed, La Salle, with the Recollects and fourteen men, left in four bark canoes, laden with a forge and its appurtenances, carpenters', joiners', and sawyers' tools, with arms and merchandise, and pursued his way along the western shore of Lake Michigan, and entered the Illinois and Mississippi rivers, in the prosecution of his enterprise. After leaving Green Bay, he had hardly crossed half way from the island to the main shore, when the same storm in which the *Griffon* was wrecked, burst upon his party, in all its fury. They succeeded

* Hennepin, N. D., p. 142. Margry, Découv., vol. i., pp. 439, 451.

† Margry, Découv., vol. ii., p. 74.

in landing in a small sandy bay, where they were detained five days, waiting for the abatement of the tempest. In the meantime, La Salle was filled with anxious forebodings as to the safety of his vessel.* Many months elapsed before he heard of its loss. It was not the only disaster, but one of a series, which befell this enterprising explorer. Yet his iron will was not subdued, nor his impetuous ardor diminished.† He continued to prosecute his discoveries, under the most disheartening reverses, with a self-reliance and energy that never faltered. He was equal to every situation, whether sharing the luxuries of civilized life, or the privations of the wilderness; whether contending with the snows of a Canadian winter, or the burning heats of Texas; whether paddling his canoe along the northern lakes, or seeking, by sea, for the mouth of the Mississippi. His eventful life embodied the elements of a grand epic poem, full of romantic interest and graphic incident; alternating in success and failure, and culminating in a tragic death.

France and America, in friendly and honorable rivalry, are now seeking to do justice to his fame. The rehearsal of the story of the *Griffon*, the building of which, through his enterprise, was the earliest event of historical interest on the Niagara frontier, seems, on this bi-centennial anniversary, an appropriate tribute to his memory.

* Hempen, N. D., p. 144. Margry, Découv., vol. i., p. 451.