

the Jesuits that we owe the great body of our information concerning the frontiers of New France in the seventeenth century. It was their duty annually to transmit to their superior in Quebec, or Montreal, a written journal of their doings; it was also their duty to pay occasional visits to their superior, and to go into retreat at the central house of the Canadian mission. Annually, between 1632 and 1673, the superior made up a narrative, or *Relation*, of the most important events which had occurred in the several missionary districts under his charge, sometimes using the exact words of the missionaries, and sometimes with considerable editorial skill summarizing the individual journals in a general account, based in part upon the oral reports of visiting fathers. This annual *Relation*, which in bibliographies occasionally bears the name of the superior, and at other times of the missionary chiefly contributing to it, was forwarded to the provincial of the order in France, and, after careful scrutiny and re-editing, published by him in a series of duodecimo volumes, known collectively as *The Jesuit Relations*.

The authors of the journals which formed the basis of the *Relations* were for the most part men of trained intellect, acute observers, and practised in the art of keeping records of their experiences. They had left the most highly civilized country of their times, to plunge at once into the heart of the American wilderness, and attempt to win to the Christian faith the fiercest savages known to history. To gain these savages, it was first necessary to know them intimately,—their speech, their habits, their manner of thought, their strong points and their weak. These first students of the North American Indian were