

not only amply fitted for their undertaking, but none have since had better opportunity for its prosecution. They were explorers, as well as priests. Bancroft was inexact when he said, in oft-quoted phrase, "Not a cape was turned, not a river entered, but a Jesuit led the way." The actual pioneers of New France were almost always *coureurs de bois*, in the prosecution of the fur trade; but *coureurs de bois*, for obvious reasons, seldom kept records, even when capable of doing so, and as a rule we learn of their previous appearance on the scene only through chance allusions in the *Relations*. The Jesuits performed a great service to mankind in publishing their annals, which are, for historian, geographer, and ethnologist, among our first and best authorities.

Many of the *Relations* were written in Indian camps, amid a chaos of distractions. Insects innumerable tormented the journalists, they were immersed in scenes of squalor and degradation, overcome by fatigue and lack of proper sustenance, often suffering from wounds and disease, maltreated in a hundred ways by hosts who, at times, might more properly be called jailers; and not seldom had savage superstition risen to such a height, that to be seen making a memorandum was certain to arouse the ferocious enmity of the band. It is not surprising that the composition of these journals of the Jesuits is sometimes crude; the wonder is, that they could be written at all. Nearly always the style is simple and direct. Never does the narrator descend to self-glorification, or dwell unnecessarily upon the details of his continual martyrdom; he never complains of his lot; but sets forth his experience in phrases the most matter-of-fact. His meaning is seldom obscure.