

PREFACE TO VOL. XV

Following is a synopsis of the documents contained in this volume:

XXX. The first section of the *Relation* of 1638, by Le Jeune, was given in Vol. XIV.; Le Mercier's report upon the Hurons, concluding the document, is given in the present volume. Le Mercier recounts the persecutions suffered by the missionaries in 1637. The plague that had ravaged some Huron villages increased with the coming of summer, until it swept over the entire nation. The ignorant savages ascribe their sufferings to the machinations of the missionaries—regarding the pictures of Christ and the Virgin Mary, used in the religious ceremonies, as the source of some wicked spell cast upon the people. Some of the baptized natives die from the epidemic, which again arouses the old fear that baptism causes death. The cabin doors are closed upon the priests; and one war chief, seeing them at his door, "threatened to split their heads if they went any farther."

According to savage custom, a general council is held at Angoutenc to consider the state of the country, and its relations to the missionaries, who are expected to be present thereat. The presiding chief invites "his nephews, the French," to speak; they do so, explaining the reasons for their entering the Huron country, stating that they visit the sick only