

Most Eastern readers of Bancroft's first edition of his *History of the United States* saw with surprise that Wisconsin was crossed by Joliet and Marquette on their way to descend the Mississippi as early as 1673—more than two centuries ago. But some years since, in 1853, the Catholic champion, Dr. J. G. Shea, discovered in the *Jesuit Relation* for the year 1640 this passage, written by the Jesuit Father Le Jeune, from Quebec to France: "M. Nicolet, who has penetrated farthest into these most distant regions, has assured me that if he had pushed on three days longer on a great river which issues from the second lake of the Hurons (Lake Michigan) he would have found the sea. Now I strongly suspect this sea is on the north of Mexico, and that thereby we could have an entrance into Japan and China."

On the strength of this testimony, Parkman (*Jesuits in North America*, p. 166), wrote: "As early as 1639, Nicolet ascended the Green Bay of Michigan, and crossed the waters of the Mississippi."

The word Mississippi, meaning *great waters*, was ambiguous—and, though really denoting a river, might well be mistaken for a sea.

Thus thirty-four years—more than a generation—were at once added to the age of Wisconsin. \*Badgers now boasted that European feet had trod their soil, and floated on their waters, within nine years after the founding of Boston, which claims to be of all other cities most ancient, as well as honorable.

It has just come to light that they had better reason than they knew of for a greater boast than this. In the lowest deep a lower deep still opens. Father Le Jeune, it will be noticed, writing in 1640 regarding the explorations of M. Nicolet, gives no date. That that voyager had then just returned was a natural inference of Shea, Parkman and others, who thought his tidings too good not to be trumpeted through the world as if by telegraph.

But they were all mistaken. Nicolet's expedition to the Wisconsin River is now proved to have been in the year 1634. But how is this new antiquity proved? How are five years added at a stroke to the historic era of Wisconsin?

A record has been detected in the Canadian archives, by Ben-