

Jean Nicolet

By F. X. Garneau and J. B. Ferland, with notes by
Benjamin Sulte¹

[From the *Journal de Quebec*, April 20, 1854. This and the succeeding articles have been translated from the French by Hon. Horace Rublee.]

MR. EDITOR:—Your readers should thank Mr. Ferland for the publication of his *Notes on the Registers of Notre Dame of Quebec*. It diverts us from our political discussions, and carries us back towards the glorious times when our fathers were laying the foundations of a new empire. I shall nevertheless venture some remarks on the danger of exaggeration. These remarks came into my mind as I read what Mr. Ferland reports of Jean Nicolet,² a *coureur de bois*, and later an Indian interpreter. In his first function, Nicolet belonged to that class of men concerning whom the complaints of the chiefs of the colony were never exhausted. They were indeed of a kind *outside of law*, and irrepressible. They were encountered everywhere from Hudson's Bay to Lake Superior.

Mr. Shea, in his *History of the Discovery of the Mississippi*, has fallen into an error through preconceived ideas, though with a purpose very laudable, as I admit. It suffices

¹ This trio of antiquaries are confessedly among the ablest who have made investigations into the early history of New France; and this discussion by such distinguished writers regarding the primitive history of Wisconsin, well merits preservation in the *Collections* of our Society. Reference to it and to Mr. C. W. Butterfield's work on Nicolet, not then issued, but which subsequently appeared, is made in *Wis. Hist. Colls.* viii, p. 188. L. C. D.

² In Nicolet's time there were no *coueurs de bois*. It was only after 1667, or even 1670, that this class began to appear. Nicolet was directly under the orders of Champlain.—B. SULTE.