

Early in the eighteenth century, the Indians of the Northwest, as the Canadian Colonial Company were informed, were endeavoring to open commerce with the English on the lower Mississippi. Thus the directors of this company were led in 1701 to dispatch agents to Callières, the Canadian governor, in Montreal, with a plan to thwart this trade. This plan consisted in establishing posts at the mouth of the Ohio, on the Wisconsin, and farther up the Mississippi among the Sioux. It was argued, that if the Indians found in these places something to satisfy their needs, and the French whom they loved, they would abandon the thought of going among strangers. The necessity and usefulness of such establishments were clear to the governor, and though he felt forbidden by a royal order to license their organization, yet he declared some such measure to be urgently demanded, and the authorities in France were so informed.¹

They may have followed his advice. But there is reason to think that even before the opening of the eighteenth century, forts had been erected by the French, near Prairie du Chien.

Regarding an earlier post there, one of my authorities is La Potherie, who, before the year 1702, had completed a work in four volumes concerning New France. The portion concerning Canada he wrote first, and that from personal knowledge, and desired to penetrate six hundred leagues into the interior. "Lacking health and leisure for such an enterprise, he made the most careful inquiries," as the missionary Bobe, his contemporary, testifies "from the Indian chiefs who came from all quarters to Montreal to dispose of their furs, and was informed about whatever he relates with the utmost accuracy and thoroughness, by Nicholas Perrot, who, for more than forty years before, had been the principal actor in all that had taken place among the aborigines of the Far West."²

The narrative of La Potherie is that [in 1685³] the Mi-

¹ Margry, v., pp. 175, 362.

² La Potherie, iv., p. 268.

³ Tailhan, p. 303.