

JEAN NICOLET, INTERPRETER AND VOYAGEUR IN CANADA.
1618-1642.¹

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF HENRI JOUAN,² BY GRACE
CLARK.

For some time, considerable attention has been directed in France toward Canada, concerning which, as we must admit indeed, but little thought was given until recently, when some travelers who are eminent publicists reminded us that there is across the Atlantic a country called "New France," where there lives a population of French origin; that this population, even while it accepts certain accomplished facts not to be recalled, still preserves a filial veneration for the motherland, notwithstanding its separation of more than a century, still retains the faith of its fathers, and still speaks their tongue, which it deems a point of honor to keep pure from all mixture with the language of the rulers whom the fate of arms has placed over it. Thanks to their energy,

¹ Previous to 1852, Jean Nicolet was unknown to history as the discoverer of the Northwest. In his *Discovery of the Mississippi*, published that year, John G. Shea identified the Men of the Sea, spoken of in the *Jesuit Relations*, as the Winnebagoes, or "Ouinipigou" of those days. In the *Relation* of 1640, Father Le Jeune outlines the extent of Nicolet's explorations; and Dr. Shea was enabled, because of this identification he had made, to point out in his volume the fact that Nicolet was beyond doubt the first white man to set foot within what are now the States of Michigan and Wisconsin. But Dr. Shea had not pushed his researches further than to be able to say that this remarkable tour into the unbroken wilderness of the Northwest was made "as early as 1639," afterwards placing it "in 1639." This conclusion was followed by Western historians until 1876, when Benjamin Sulte, of Ottawa, in his *Mélanges d'Histoire et de Littérature* (Ottawa, 1876, pp. 426, 436), showed that Nicolet's tour must have been made in 1634-5; M. Sulte's "supposition" being that "Nicolet left Allumette's island about

² Post-captain (retired), at the port of Cherbourg, France. The original article appeared in *Revue Manchoise*, 1st quarter, 1886. — ED.