

already well known at that time in maritime and colonial circles, did he not better fix the ideas of those whom he addressed than if he had given as his birthplace a small locality entirely unknown? This supposition is not too bold, it seems to me, for we see the same thing done every day. This fact led me to conduct researches in the neighborhood of Cherbourg, chiefly at Hainneville, five kilometers from Cherbourg, where, out of 1,050 inhabitants, one can count thirty-seven heads of families bearing the name of Nicolet. I had besides heard some old letters spoken of that existed still in that commune; letters written long ago by a person who had afterwards crossed the sea. I was not more fortunate at Hainneville than at Cherbourg; the registers of births, deaths, and marriages go back only to 1660, and among the numerous Nicolets and Delamers who figure there I found nothing bearing upon Jean or his parents. The different Nicolets whom I questioned — especially the more aged of them — could acquaint me with nothing more.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I had however a moment's hope. When I spoke of old letters I was told a story that had agitated all Hainneville nearly forty years before. At that time there was discovered in the study of a notary at Laval, a will left by one Nicollet who had quitted the country long ago: an inheritance of eighteen millions that had not been claimed, was in question. Had this Nicollet any connection with the Canadian? Some anecdotes told me at Cherbourg might have led me to believe it, but it was a mistake. A delegation of the Nicollets of Hainneville had repaired to Laval and to Rennes. One of the delegates was still living at Cherbourg. We were brought together and he told me that there was indeed a will and a valuable estate was to be inherited, but they had been obliged to admit that they had nothing to do with it. The testator was called Le Nicollais and was originally from another part of the country. I was ignorant of this when I presented myself at Hainneville; my questions caused the old story to be suddenly revived and at the same time excited a distrust towards me that people scarcely gave themselves the trouble to conceal. Evidently I had come for the millions; in vain I protested it was the first time I had heard them spoken of. I was not believed; I knew much more about it than I would say; I was simply an intriguer, a schemer for the inheritance. Some tried to cajole me by reminding me that they had been the first to give me information, that it was fair consequently that I should share with them. Others, more skeptical, but more kindly disposed, contented themselves with considering me an "innocent;" and