

the manitou, that is, the wonderful man; they come, they escort him, they carry all his baggage. He was clothed in a large garment of China damask strewn with flowers and birds of various colors. As soon as he came in sight all the women and children fled, seeing a man carry thunder in both hands. They called thus the two pistols he was holding. The news of his coming spread immediately to the surrounding places; four or five thousand men assembled. Each of the chiefs gave him a banquet and at one of them at least one hundred and twenty beavers were served. Peace was concluded . . . .”

The Chinese costume that Nicolet wore in his first interview with the “People of the Sea” indicates that he expected to see some mandarin come to meet him, to whom rumor might have announced his arrival. As was ascertained later, the so-called Asiatics were no other than the redskins since known as the Dakotas and the Sioux.<sup>1</sup>

Nicolet had arrived at something like 400 leagues from Quebec; it was then that he became acquainted with the Mississippi, if not *de visu* at least by hearsay. Crossing the portage which separates the Fox from the Wisconsin river and descending the latter, he proceeded as far as its confluence with the Mississippi, being thus the first Frenchman to greet the “Great Water.”<sup>2</sup> Or indeed, when, having returned to Quebec, he asserted that if he had sailed three days longer upon a great river, he would have found the sea.<sup>3</sup> Was this great river of which he spoke the Mississippi or merely the Wisconsin river whose course would have conducted him to the Mississippi?<sup>4</sup> Under the influence of preconceived ideas,

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<sup>1</sup> The Sioux are a branch of the Dacotah family.—Ed.

<sup>2</sup> The traditional translation of “Mississippi” by “Father of Waters” is erroneous; the true meaning is the “Great Water,” the “Great River,” from the Algonquin words *Missi* “great,” *Sepe* “water,” “river.” (C. W. Butterfield, *loc. cit.*)—H. J.

<sup>3</sup> *Relation of 1640.*—H. J.

<sup>4</sup> It is abundantly proven in Butterfield’s *Discovery of the Northwest*, p. 67, et seq., that Nicolet did not discover the Wisconsin river, but only proceeded as far up the Fox as the village of the Mascoutins,—probably in what is now Green Lake county, Wis.—and then departed southward, for the Illinois country.—Ed.