

& because that we shewed willing[ness] to die for their defence. So we desired to goe wth a company of theirs that was going to the nation of y^e starring haire^s.¹

after making nearly the entire circuit of Lake Huron, stopped with their Indian companions at the village of the latter—apparently on one of the Manitoulin islands. From here, they went on a neighboring visit to “the nation of ye stairing haire^s,”—the Ottawas, who were on the Great Manitoulin. Urged by visitors,—“ambassadors,” Radisson grandiloquently styles them,—from the “Pontonatenick,” or Pottawattomies, the travelers pushed westward through the straits of Mackinaw and visited these new friends, who were then located (see Butterfield’s *Nicolet*, p. 71) “upon the islands at the mouth of Green bay, and upon the main land to the southward, along the western shores of Lake Michigan.” They passed the winter of 1658–59 with the Pottawattomies,—thus being the first white men known to have set foot within what is now Wisconsin, after the advent of Nicolet in 1634. While with the Pottawattomies, they met with visitors from the Mascoutins, or the famous “Fire Nation,” whom Nicolet had discovered on the south side of Fox river, probably in what is now Green Lake county, Wis. (Butterfield, p. 66), twenty-five years before; and such was the stability of their habitation, Allouez (*Relation*, 1670, p. 99) found them in the same place, eleven years after Radisson’s voyage. In the spring of 1659, the Frenchmen passed up the Fox to visit the Mascoutins. The latter told them of the “Nadoneceronon” nation, or Sioux, their neighbors to the west; also of a wandering tribe, the Christinos, who lived on the shores of Hudson’s bay in the summer and in Wisconsin and along the south shore of Lake Superior in the winter.

They appear to have had excellent treatment at the hands of the Mascoutins; and it is undoubtedly to this period of the voyage, in the spring and early summer of 1659, that Radisson refers, when, upon his homeward journey down the Ottawa, he writes, by way of reminiscence, the words commencing with:—“We weare 4 moneths in our voyage without doeing any thing but goe from river to river.” In this paragraph,—apparently quite unconscious of the great historic importance of the discovery,—he alludes to the fact that his companion and himself accompanied some Indians “into ye great river,” which from his description was undoubtedly the Upper Mississippi. This discovery antedates that claimed for La Salle (C. W. Butterfield in *Mag. West. Hist.*, v., pp. 51, 721-724) by not less than eleven years, and that of Joliet and Marquette by fourteen years, and forms one of the most notable records of early American exploration. There can be no doubt that Radisson’s reference is to the Mississippi; and that the

¹ Ottawas, who at this time chiefly occupied the Grand Manitoulin. The Ottawas in the Huron village where the Frenchmen were quartered, were evidently few in number.—ED.