

precious metals, they appear to have discovered considerable lead deposits in what is now southeastern Missouri;<sup>1</sup> and no doubt the English traders, who seriously encroached on the French domain, and the wandering *coureurs des bois* had more or less traffic with the Indians for ore, to meet both present needs and home demand.

In 1715, La Mothe Cadillac, governor of Louisiana, and founder of Detroit, went up to the Illinois country in search of reputed silver mines, but carried back only lead ore "from the mines which were shown him fourteen miles west of the river."<sup>2</sup>

Crozat resigned his monopoly to John Law's Company of the West, chartered September 6, 1717; and two years later Louisiana—to which the Illinois country had now become attached—entered upon the brief period of "boom" which was inaugurated by that ill-timed enterprise.

In 1719 there arrived in the Illinois, Philippe François de Renault, newly appointed "director-general of the mines of the Royal India Company in Illinois."<sup>3</sup> He dispatched prospecting parties to various points on both sides of the Mississippi River; and during the four years he spent in the district, discovered lead mines on the Meramec River and north of what is now Potosi, in Missouri; while M. de la Motte found paying leads on the St. François River, also in Missouri. July 21, 1722, one Le Gardeur de l'Isle writes from Fort Chartres, near Kaskaskia, that he was in command of a detachment of twelve soldiers to accompany M. de Renault to the Illinois River, to look after some alleged copper and coal mines, and found what he claimed to be silver and gold.<sup>4</sup> No doubt these deposits were but lead and coal, for the French explorers were prone to deceive

<sup>1</sup> Wallace, *Illinois and Louisiana under French Rule* (Cincinnati, 1893), pp. 239, 240.

<sup>2</sup> Winsor, *Narr. and Crit. Hist. of Amer.*, v., p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> The term Illinois then applied to a large district, lying on the Mississippi and centering at the mouth of the Illinois River: practically all of the present state of that name, and the eastern half of Missouri and Iowa.

<sup>4</sup> Letter of E. B. Washburne to Chicago Hist. Soc., in *Chicago Times*, Dec. 18, 1880.