

## THE JOURNEY OF MONCACHT-APÉ.

BY ANDREW MCFARLAND DAVIS.

IN the autumn of 1718 M. Le Page du Pratz landed in America. In company with about eight hundred others forwarded by the "Company of the West" he had come to this country to settle. He first located near New Orleans, where Bienville was then just starting a new settlement, but the situation of his grant proving unhealthy, he shortly afterwards moved up to Natchez. There he secured a farm, on which he spent eight of the sixteen years he was in this country. He had served in the army in Germany and had received a fair education. He was of a speculative turn of mind, fond of theorizing and always on the alert for information. While at Natchez he collected and transmitted to Paris no less than three hundred plants used by the Indians as remedies. He cultivated the friendship of his Indian neighbors and studied their habits and their language. In 1758 he published at Paris his "*Histoire de la Louisiane*," in which in addition to the personal experiences and observations there recorded he has treasured up much that he garnered from conversations with the old men of the tribes concerning the traditions of their origin, their religion and their forms of government.

The importance attached to one of these conversations by M. de Quatrefages, in an article in the *Revue d'Anthropologie*,<sup>1</sup> is the occasion of this paper. The story of Moncacht-Apé's journey across the continent and of his encounter with the bearded white men on the North Pacific Coast of this country, has, to all intents and purposes, slumbered in the pages of Le Page du Pratz until it was revived by de Quatrefages, who takes pride in the thought that he is, as he believes, the first to call attention to its importance.

To understand the merit of the arguments upon which he bases his faith in the story, it is essential that the whole of the story should be read, otherwise one can neither appreciate the importance attached to the verisimilitude of its style, nor measure the value of the coincidences between the statements of the Indian concerning this unknown region and the facts as revealed by Lewis and Clark and other subsequent explorers.

We turn therefore to the pages of Le Page du Pratz<sup>2</sup> and allow him to introduce the story in his own words:—

"When the Natchez came to the part of America in which I found them there were several tribes living on both sides of the Mississippi

<sup>1</sup> *Revue d'Anthropologie*. Tome 4me. 1881.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire de la Louisiane*, par M. LePage du Pratz, Paris, 1758, v. III., p. 87 et seq.

They called each other Red Men, and their origin is extremely difficult to discover, for they have not, like the Natchez, preserved their traditions nor have they arts and sciences like the Mexicans, from which one can draw inductions. The only thing to be learned from them is, what they invariably say, that they came from the North-West, and the spot that they point out with their fingers, no matter where they may be at the time, should be about fifty-five degrees of latitude. This meagre information not being satisfactory to me, I made inquiry, if among the neighboring tribes there was not some wise old man who could enlighten me further on this point. I was extremely rejoiced to learn that in the nation of the Yazoo, at a distance of forty leagues from Natchez, such an one could be found. His name was Moncacht-Apé. He was a man of courage and spirit. I can do no better than compare him to the early Greeks, who travelled among the Eastern people to examine the manners and customs of the different countries and then returned to communicate what they had learned to their countrymen. Not that Moncacht-Apé actually carried out such a project as this, but he conceived the idea and did what he could to carry it out. I took advantage of a visit that was paid me by this native of the Yazoo Nation, called by the French 'the interpreter' because he speaks so many Indian languages, but known among his own people, as I have already said, as Moncacht-Apé, which means 'one who kills difficulties or fatigue.' In fact, the travels of many years did not affect his physique. I begged him to repeat to me an account of his travels, omitting nothing. My proposition seemed to please him. I shall make our traveller speak in the first person, but I shall abridge his voyage to the Eastern Coast, because he speaks there largely of Canada which is very well known. I shall only report what there was in it of importance. He began as follows:—

"I had lost my wife, and the children that I had by her were dead before her, when I undertook my trip to the country where the sun rises. I left my village notwithstanding all my relations. I was to take counsel with the Chickasaws, our friends and neighbors. I remained some days to find out if they knew whence we all came, or at least, if they knew whence they themselves came: they who are our ancestors, since it is from them that the language of the people comes; but they could teach me nothing new. For this reason I resolved to go to the nations on the coast where the sun rises, to learn about them, and to know if their old language was the same. They taught me the route that I must take, in order to avoid the large villages of the whites for fear that they might be angry to see me—me a stranger. I reached the country of the Shawnees, the point where I was to take up the river Wabash (Ohio), and I followed it up nearly to its source which is in the country of the Iroquois, but I left them to the side of the cold [north] and I went into a village of the Abenaguais which was in my route. I remained there until the cold weather, which in this country is very severe and very long, was over. During this winter I gained the friendship of a man a little older than myself, who was equally fond of travelling. He promised to come with me and to conduct me, because he knew the way, to the Great Water which I wished to see since I had heard it talked about. As soon as the snows were melted and the weather settled, I started with him and we avoided the Indian settlements. We rested frequently on the way, because this country is full of stones which made our feet sore, especially mine, being unaccustomed to anything of the sort. After having travelled several days we saw the Great Water. When I saw it I was so content that I could not speak, and my eyes seemed to me to be too small to look at it at my ease, but night overtook us and we encamped near at hand, upon an elevation. The water was near but below us. The wind was high and

without doubt vexed the Great Water, for it made so much noise that I could not sleep. I feared that the blows that it gave would break down the height where we were, although it was of stone.

“The sun had not appeared when I rose to see the Great Water. I was much surprised to see that it was far away. I was a long time without speaking to my comrade, who thought from seeing me all the time looking about and not speaking that I had lost my wits. I could not understand how this could be. Finally, the wind having ceased, the sun arose. The Great Water was not so much disturbed as it was on the preceding night, and I saw with surprise that it returned towards us. I sprang up quickly and fled with all my strength. My comrade called out to me not to be afraid. I shouted to him, on my part, that the Great Water was coming towards us and that we should be drowned. He then reassured me, saying that the red men who had seen the Great Water had observed that it always advanced as much as it receded, but that it never came farther up on the earth at one time than another. When he had thus satisfied me we returned to the shore of the Great Water, and remained there until the middle of the day when I saw it, receding, go afar off. We left to go to sleep far off from the noise, which followed me everywhere, and even till evening I spoke of nothing else to my comrade. We arrived at the banks of a little river, where we lay down to rest, but I thought of it all the night. We retook the route that we had followed in going and arrived at his home, where they were glad to see us.

“This village is in the country at some distance from the Great Water whence we had come, and they had not seen it except between the lands where the great river of the country loses itself. In this region where they had seen it, it advances and recedes, but much less than in the place where we had seen it. These people believe that the Great Water over which the French come with their floating villages, which the winds move by puffing out the great sails which they bear, they believe, I say, that this Great Water was like several Great Waters that they have in their country which are surrounded with land and of which the water is good to drink, in place of which that where we were is salt and bitter. I know it because I put some of it in my mouth. Moreover the French say it takes more than two moons to come to our country, whereas the Great Waters of their country can be crossed in two or three, or at most in four days for the largest, and all that I have seen agrees with what the French have told me, that this water touches all lands and is as large as the earth.

“They listened to me with pleasure for a long time, and an old man who was there told me that he had been in a place where the great river of their country [St. Lawrence] precipitated itself from so high and with so much noise that it could be heard a half day's journey distant; that as I was curious, I should do well to see this place when the cold weather should be over. I resolved to go there. I told my comrade who had accompanied me to the Great Water, and he promised to go with me. I had in truth a great desire to see this place which seemed worthy to be seen. I passed the winter in this place and was very impatient because it was long. It is impossible to hunt except with rackets on the feet, to get accustomed to which caused me much trouble. This is unfortunate, for the country is good. Finally, the winter being over, the snow melted, the weather good, and our provisions prepared, we packed our bundles, and my comrade took a hatchet, with the use of which he was familiar. It was for the purpose of making me a dug-out, upon which, following the counsel that was given me, I should embark upon the river Ohio, as it is called in this country, the Wabash as we call it, and by this means I could return to my village more easily and in less time than

if I should return on foot. We departed then and travelled for several days before finding the great river of that country. We did not lack for meat on our route. There is an abundance of buffaloes and also of other game, but as these animals have a great deal of trouble to live while snow is on the ground they were not yet fat. When we had arrived upon the banks of this great river, we rested. The next day we travelled with the current of the water, for we were too high up for the place that we came to see. Following what had been told us, we could not be deceived in finding this water-fall, for one hears the noise from afar, as we discovered on our approach. We passed the night where the noise was already strong, but not enough to hinder us from sleeping. As soon as day broke we departed for this place of which all men speak with wonder. Fortunately an old man had induced us to take, before leaving the village, some buffalo's wool to put in our ears; without that we should truly have become deaf through the great noise made by this water in falling from so high. I had never been able to believe what the old man had told me, but when my eyes and my senses beheld, I thought he had not said enough for that which my eyes saw.

"This river does not fall. It is as if it were cast, the same as when an arrow falls to the ground. This sight made my hair stand on end and my flesh creep. Nevertheless, after having looked for a sufficiently long time, my heart which had been agitated became quiet. As soon as I perceived it was quiet I spoke to myself and said, 'What then! Am I not a man? What I see is natural, and other men have passed under this river. Why should not I pass there? It is true that only Frenchmen have passed there and that red men do not undertake the passage; but I, Moncacht-Apé, ought I to fear more than another man?' 'No,' said I, in a low tone, 'I ought not to fear.' I descended at once and passed under and came back. I passed extremely quick, for although I had buffalo's wool in my ears, the noise was so strong that I was giddy. I was not so much drenched as I had expected to be before I went in. After having examined the height of this fall, I believe that the Red men speak the truth when they assert that it is of the height of one hundred Red men who are rather taller than whites. We were detained so long looking at what I have narrated that we were compelled to camp for the night on the other side of a wood, which notwithstanding its thickness did not stop the noise of the waters, for we still heard it. It is true that our ears, although stopped up, were full of it, and for more than ten days after I still thought I heard it.

"The next day we took the shortest path for the Ohio River. When we reached there we followed down this river to a point where there was no more wood to prevent me from following its waters to the great river of our country, which passes very near here. This was the way that I wished to take, as I had been told it would take me to my village. When we were at the place where I ought to take the water, we cut down a tree of soft wood: we made in a short time my little dug-out. In truth it was not well finished, but as it was to descend with the current, it was better than a light one. My dug-out being made, I shaped a paddle. I also made a bark rope. We placed the dug-out in the water and fastened it with my bark rope; then we went hunting. We killed two buffaloes, the meat of which we smoked. My comrade took his share, and I placed the rest in the dug-out. We parted with hearts bound together like good friends who love one another. If he had been without a wife and children he would have joined me in my trip to the West of which I have spoken.

"I entered my dug-out and descended at my ease the Ohio River to our great river, which we call Meact-chact-sipi, without meeting any man in the Ohio River. I had not proceeded far in the Great River before

I met two pirogues full of Arkansas, who bore a calumet to the Illinois, who are their brothers. Thence I descended all the time even to our little river, which I entered, but except for one of our neighbors, whom I happily met, I never should have been able to ascend to our village. I saw with joy my relations, who were glad to see me in good health.

“Such was the narrative that Moncacht-Apé gave me of his journey to the East, where he learned nothing concerning the matters which he was investigating. It is true he had seen the ocean. He had seen it in a state of agitation. He had witnessed the ebb and flow of the tide. He had examined the famous falls at Niagara, and he could talk intelligently of them. All this could not fail to be satisfactory to a curious man, who had nothing else to do than travel for information, to do which he had but to make similar expeditions to that which he had made to the East.

“The failure of the steps taken by Moncacht-Apé during several years, far from extinguishing the desire that he had to learn, only excited him the more. Determined to attempt anything to dispel the ignorance in which he perceived that he was immersed, he persisted in the design of discovering the origin of his people; a design which demanded as much spirit as courage, and which would never have entered the brain of an ordinary man. He determined then to go from nation to nation until he should find himself in the country from which his ancestors emigrated, being persuaded that he could there learn many things which they had forgotten in their travels. He undertook the journey to the West, from which he did not return for five years. He gave me the following details the next day after he had repeated to me that of the East:—

“My preparations were made, and when the grain was ripe<sup>1</sup> I prepared some provisions for the journey, and I departed, following the high land in which we live [to the east of the river to the Wabash (Ohio)]. I followed the stream up for a quarter of a day above the place where it loses itself in the Great River [Mississippi], in order to be able to cross it without being carried into the other. When I saw that it was high enough, I made a raft of canes and a little bunch of canes which served me for a paddle. I thus crossed the Wabash [Ohio], and began my journey on the prairies, where the grass was but just beginning to spring up. The next day, towards the middle of the day, I found a small troop of buffaloes, which permitted me to approach so near to them that I killed a cow sufficiently fat. I took the tenderloin, the hump and the tongue, and left the rest for the wolves. I was heavily loaded, but I did not have far to go to reach the Tamaroas, one of the villages of the Illinois nation. When I was in this nation I rested a few days, preparing to continue my journey. After this little rest I pursued my way, mounting to the North, even to the Missouri. As soon as I was opposite this river, I prepared to cross the Great River [Mississippi] so as to arrive on the north of the Missouri. To effect this, I ascended sufficiently high and made a raft as I had done to cross the Wabash [Ohio]. I crossed the Great River [Mississippi] from East to West. When I was near the bank I permitted myself to drift with the current until I was at the sand point where the two rivers meet. In descending upon this point I found there some bustards, which had no fear of man. I killed one. As I went to pick it up I saw my raft, which I had abandoned because I had no further use for it. It had been drawn quietly down by the current along the shore, but when it reached the point where the two waters meet, they tossed it about and seemed to quarrel as to which should have it. I watched it as long as I could, for

<sup>1</sup>Probably when the corn was “in the roasting ear.”

I had never seen waters fight like that, as if each of them wished to have a part of it. Finally I lost sight of it. What seemed extraordinary to me and gave me great pleasure was to see the two waters mingle themselves together. Their difference is great, for the Great River [Mississippi] which I had just crossed, is very clear above the Missouri, although below it is muddy even to the Great Water [ocean]. This comes from the Missouri, whose waters are always muddy in all its course, which is very long. I saw also that these two waters flowed for a long distance, side by side, that on the West being muddy, and on the East the water is clear. I ascended the Missouri on the North bank, and I travelled several days before arriving at the Missouri nation, whom I had some difficulty to find. I remained there long enough not only to rest myself, but also to learn the language spoken a little further on. I was surfeited on my trip with the humps and tenderloins of buffaloes which I had killed. I never saw so many of these animals as in this country, where you can see prairies of the length of a day's journey and more covered with them. The Missouris live almost exclusively on meat, and they only use maize as a relief from buffalo and other game, of which they have great quantity. I passed the winter with them, during which so much snow fell that it covered the earth as deep as a man's waist.

“When the winter was over I resumed my journey and ascended the Missouri till I arrived at the nation of the West. [They are also called the Canzés]. There I gathered information of what I wanted to know so as to arrange for the future. They told me that to go to the country from whence we as well as they came would be very difficult, because the nations were far away from the Missouri. That also when I should have travelled about a month, it would be necessary for me to bear to my right, taking directly North, where I should find at several day's journeys another river which runs from the East to the West, consequently directly opposite to the Missouri. That I should follow this river until I should find the nation of the Otters, where I could rest myself and could learn more fully what was necessary, and perhaps find some persons who would accompany me. For the rest I could descend this river in a dug-out and travel a great distance without fatigue.

“With these instructions I continued my route, following constantly for one moon the Missouri, and although I had travelled sufficiently fast, I did not yet dare to take to the right as they had told me, because for many days I had seen mountains which I hesitated to pass for fear of wounding my feet. Nevertheless, it was necessary for me to come to a conclusion. Having taken this resolve for the next day, I determined to sleep where I was and made a fire. Shortly after, while watching the sun which had already gone considerably down, I saw some smoke at some distance off. I did not doubt that this was a party of hunters who proposed to pass the night in this place, and it entered my mind that they might belong to the Otters. I immediately left in order that I might be guided to them by the smoke while it was yet daylight. I joined them and they saw me with surprise. They were a party of thirty men and some women. Their language was unknown to me and we were only able to communicate by signs. Nevertheless, with the exception of their surprise, they received me well enough, and I remained three days with them. At the end of this time one of the wives told her husband that she believed herself ready for lying in. Upon that the others sent this man and his wife to the village, and told them to take me with them in order that I might travel by an easier road than that which I was on the point of taking.

“We ascended the Missouri still for nine short days, then we turned directly North and travelled for five days, at the end of which time

we found a river with clear and beautiful water. They called it "The Beautiful River." This man and his wife asked me by signs if I did not wish to bathe, as they did, because it was long since they had bathed. I told them in the same way that I also had great need of a bath, but that I was afraid of crocodiles. They made me understand that there were none here. Upon their assurance I bathed and did it with great pleasure in this beautiful water.

"We descended the Beautiful River during the rest of the day, till we arrived upon the banks of a stream which we recognized where this troop of hunters had concealed their dug-outs. My guide having drawn out his own, we three entered and descended to their village, where we did not arrive till night. I was as well received by this nation as if I had been one of them. During the journey I had picked up a few words of their language and I very soon learned it, because I was always with the old men who love to instruct the young, as the young love to be instructed and converse freely with each other. I have noted this generally in all the natives that I have seen. This nation was really the Otters whom I sought. As I was very well treated there I would willingly have made a longer stay, and it seemed to me that they also wished it. But my design occupied me always. I determined to leave with some of this people who were going to carry a calumet to a nation through which I must pass, who, being brothers of those whom I was about to quit, spoke the same language with some slight differences. I parted then with the Otters, and we descended the "Beautiful River" in a pirogue for eighteen days, putting on shore from time to time to hunt, and we did not want for game. I should have liked to push on further, following always the "Beautiful River," for I did not become fatigued in the pirogue, but it was necessary for me to yield to the reasons opposed to it. They told me that the heat was already great, that the grass was high and the serpents dangerous in this season, and that I might be bitten in going to the chase, and that moreover it was necessary that I should learn the language of the nation where I wished to go, which would be much easier when I should know that of the country where I was. I followed the advice that the old men of this nation gave me with the less hesitation that I saw that their hearts and their mouths spoke together. They loved me and I did not go to the chase except for amusement. During the winter that I passed with them, I set myself to work to learn the language of the people where I intended to go, because with it they assured me that I could make myself understood by all the people that I should find from that point to the "Great Water," which is at the West, the difference between their languages not being great.

"The warm weather was not yet entirely over when I got in a pirogue with plenty of breadstuffs<sup>1</sup> [*vianades en farine*] because these nations do not cultivate maize, although the soil seems very good. They cultivate only a little as a curiosity. I had in my pirogue only my provisions, a pot, a bowl and what I needed for my bed, and if I had had some Indian corn nothing would have been wanting. Thus, not being embarrassed with anything, I floated at my ease, and in a short time I arrived at a very small nation, who were surprised to see me arrive alone. This tribe wear long hair and look upon those who wear short as slaves, whose hair has been cut in order that they may be recognized. The chief of this tribe, who was on the bank of the river, said

<sup>1</sup> U. S. G. and G. Survey, Contributions to North American Ethnology, vol. I., 193. Tribes of Western Washington and Northeastern Oregon, by George Gibbs, M.D. The roots used [for food] are numerous; but the wappatu, or *sagittaria*, and the kamas are the principal.

brusquely to me: 'Who are you? Where do you come from? What do you want here with your short hair?' I said to him, 'I am Moncacht-Apé; I come from the nation of the Otters. I am in search of information, and I come to you for you to give it; my hair is short so that it may not bother me, but my courage is good. I do not come to ask food from you. I have enough to last me for some time, and when I shall have no more, my bow and my arrows will furnish me more than I need. During winter, like the bear, I seek a covert, and in summer I imitate the eagle, who moves about to satisfy his curiosity. Is it possible that a single man, who travels by daylight, makes you afraid?'

"He replied that although I might come from the nation of the Otters, he easily saw that I was not of them; but that I could remain since I was so courageous, adding that he could not understand how I spoke his language, which none of the people east of there understood. I told him that I had learned it of an old man called Salt Tear, and at the same time I re-embarked in order to go, because I disliked his conversation, but at the name of Salt Tear, who was one of his friends, he retained me, assuring me that I should confer a pleasure on him by remaining in his village as long as I was willing. I came ashore rather to learn what I could than to rest myself, for I was not satisfied with his talk. 'What,' said I to myself, 'when two bears meet they stop, rub nose against nose, mutter some sounds that they understand without doubt, and seem to caress each other, and here men speak rudely to each other.' Being then disembarked I told him that Salt Tear had charged me to see on his part an old man called "Big Roebuck." It was the father of him with whom I was talking. He had him called. The old man came, being led by the hand, for he could not see very well, and learning from what parts I had come, he received me as if I were his son, took me into his cabin and had all that was in my pirogue brought there. The next day he taught me those things that I wished to know, and assured me that all the nations on the shores of the Great Water would receive me well on telling them that I was the friend of Big Roebuck. I remained there only two days, during which he caused to be made some gruel from certain small grains, smaller than French peas, which are very good, which pleased me all the more that it was so long that I had eaten only meat. Having re-embarked in my pirogue, I descended the Beautiful River without stopping more than one day with each nation that I met on my way.

"The last of these nations is at a day's journey from the Great Water, and withdrawn from the river the journey of a man [about a league]. They remain in the woods to conceal themselves, they say, from the bearded men. I was received in this nation as if I had arrived in my family, and I had there good cheer of all sorts, for they have in this country an abundance of that grain of which Big Roebuck had made me a gruel, and although it springs up without being sowed, it is better than any grain that I have ever eaten. Some large blue birds come to eat this grain, but they kill them because they are very good. The water also furnishes this people with meat. There is an animal which comes ashore to eat grass, which has a head shaped like a young buffalo, but not of the same color. They eat also many fish from the Great Water, which are larger than our large brills and much better, as well as a great variety of shell-fish, amongst which some are very beautiful. But if they live well in this country it is necessary always to be on the watch against the bearded men, who do all that they can to carry away the young persons, for they never have taken any men, although they could have done so. They told me that these men were white, that they had long, black beards which fell upon their breasts, that they appeared to be short and thick, with large heads, which they



covered with cloth; that they always wore their clothes, even in the hottest weather; that their coats fell to the middle of the legs, which as well as the feet were covered with red or yellow cloth. For the rest they did not know of what their clothing was made, because they had never been able to kill one, their arms making a great noise and a great flame; that they nevertheless retire when they see more red men than their own numbers; that then they go aboard their pirogue [without doubt a barque] where there were sometimes thirty and even more. They added that these strangers came from where the sun sets to seek upon this coast a yellow and bad-smelling wood which dyes a beautiful yellow. That as they had observed that the bearded men came to carry off this wood each year when the cold weather had ceased, they had destroyed all these trees, following the advice of an old man, so that they came no more, because they found no more of this wood. In truth, the banks of the river, which were formerly covered, were then naked, and there remained of this wood in this country but a small quantity, only sufficient for the dyeing of the people themselves. Two nations, neighbors of each other and not far distant from the one where I was, could not imitate them in this step, because they had no other than this yellow wood, and the bearded men, having discovered this, went there every year, which inconvenienced these nations very much, as they did not dare go on the coast for fear of losing their young people. In order to drive them off thoroughly, they had invited all the neighboring tribes to rendezvous with them in arms towards the commencement of the following summer, at a given moon, and this time was near at hand. As I told them that I had seen fire-arms and was not afraid of them, these people invited me to go with them, saying that these two nations were on the route that I must take to go to the country from which we came, and for the rest there would be so many red men that they would easily destroy the bearded men, which would hinder others from coming. I replied that my heart found that it was good that I should go with them, and in acting thus I had a desire that I wished to satisfy. I was anxious to see these bearded men, who did not resemble French, English nor Spaniards, such as I had seen, all of whom trim their beards and are differently clothed. My cheerful assent created much pleasure among these tribes, who thought with reason that a man who had seen whites and many natives, ought to have more intelligence than those who had never left their homes and had only seen red men.

"I told Moncacht-Apé to take a rest until the next day. I gave him a glass of brandy and set to work as usual transcribing what he had told me. During the second night that Moncacht-Apé staid with me I recalled what the native had told me of the Great Water into which the Beautiful River discharges; I thought this sea of which he spoke might be the "Sea of the West," for which they have sought so long. Therefore I proposed to submit certain questions to him before he began his recital of his journey to the West. The next day, as he prepared to continue, I asked him what route he had followed with respect to the sun. When one travels in Europe one does not notice whether one goes North, South, East or West, because one follows roads which lead where you are going, without disturbing oneself with the bearing of the stars; but in the regions which are only sparsely inhabited it is necessary that the sun should serve as a guide, there being no other way; and the natives, through habit and necessity, observe closely the bearing of the sun in their travels. Thus I was assured of a reply on Moncacht-Apé's part.

"He answered, then, that in ascending the Missouri as far as the nation of that name he had travelled according to his idea between North and West; that from this nation to the Canzés he had travelled

to the North, and that after leaving the Canzés, in following the Missouri, he had always travelled between North and West, and that the Missouri went thus. That when he quitted the Missouri to go to the Beautiful River he had travelled direct to the North; that in descending the Beautiful River he had always travelled between North and West, even to the Great Water; that the Big Roebuck had told him that the Missouri and the Beautiful River had their courses always equally distant the one from the other. After having answered my questions, he continued the narrative of his travels in these terms:

“ ‘When the time was come, I left with the warriors, and we travelled five great days’ journeys. Being arrived we waited a long time for the bearded men, who came this year a little later than usual. While waiting I was shown the place where they put their large pirogue. It was between two cliffs which are sufficiently high and long, and are connected with the main land. Between them flows a little river bordered with the trees which furnish the yellow wood, but this river being too shallow to permit the entry of their large pirogues, they had a smaller one with which they went up. They told me that the bearded men would not mistrust anything, because the people all withdrew two days’ journey from the spot as soon as they perceived them coming on the Great Water, and did not appear again until they had left. That nevertheless they were always watched without the watchers being seen. After having instructed me in all these things, they held a council and were of opinion that they ought to conceal themselves behind these two cliffs, and when the bearded men should arrive, everybody should cry out and draw upon them to prevent them from landing. I had not spoken at first, but finally seeing how things were going, I told them that although I had not made war against the whites, I knew that they were brave and skillful, that although I did not know if these white men resembled the others, I nevertheless thought that they (the Indians) would not do much harm in the way they proposed to act; that by their plan, if they should secure three or four scalps, they would have accomplished a great deal; which would not be much honor for so many warriors, and they would be badly received on their return to their people, for it would be believed that they were afraid. I counselled them to place two men upon the two cliffs to watch the bearded men without their knowledge, and to warn us of their arrival; that time should then be given for them to come ashore to cut wood, and that when they were thus occupied a party of warriors should mount upon the cliffs, another should conceal itself in last year’s underbrush, and the rest openly attack. It cannot be doubted, I added, that there will not be many bearded men who will save themselves, but when they wish to regain their small pirogue, those concealed in the underbrush will kill many, and when they approach the large pirogue, those on the cliffs will do the same. All the warriors were of my opinion, and were very glad that I had been willing to come with them.

“ ‘We waited for the bearded men during seventeen days, at the end of which time they were seen to approach in two large pirogues. They placed themselves between the two cliffs, where they busied themselves in filling with fresh water, vessels of wood similar to those in which the French place the fire water. It was not until the fourth day that they went ashore to cut wood. The attack was carried out as I had advised, nevertheless they only killed eleven. I do not know why it is that red men who shoot so surely at game, aim so badly at their enemies. The rest of them gained their pirogues and fled upon the Great Water. where we followed them long with our eyes and finally lost sight of them. They were as much afraid of our numbers as we were of their fire-arms. We then went to examine the dead which remained with us. They were

much smaller than we were, and very white. They had large heads and bodies sufficiently large for their height. Their hair was only long in the middle of the head. They did not wear hats like you, but their heads were twisted around with cloth; their clothes were neither woollen nor bark [he would say silk] but something similar to your old shirts [without doubt cotton] very soft and of different colors. That which covered their limbs and their feet was of a single piece. I wished to try on one of these coverings, but my feet would not enter it. [The leggings were bottines which have the seam behind. Natives can not wear shoes and stockings, because their toes are spread so far apart.] All the tribes assembled in this place divided up their garments, their beads and their scalps. Of the eleven killed, two only had fire arms with powder and balls. Although I did not know as much about fire-arms as I do now, still, as I had seen some in Canada, I wished to try them, and found that they did not kill as far as yours. They were much heavier. The powder was mixed, coarse, medium and fine, but the coarse was in greater quantity.

“ See what I have observed concerning the bearded men, and in what way the natives relieved themselves of them. After this I thought only of continuing my journey. To accomplish this, leaving the red men to return to their homes, I joined those who lived further to the West on the coast, and we travelled always following at a short distance the coast line of the Great Water, which goes directly between North and West. When I reached the homes of this people I rested several days, during which I studied the way that remained for me to travel. I observed that the days were much longer than with us, and the nights very short. I wanted to know from them the reason, but they could not tell me. The old men advised me that it would be useless to undertake to go further. They said the coast still extended for a great distance to the North and West; that finally it turned short to the West, and finally it was cut through by the Great Water directly from North to South. One of them added that when young he had known a very old man who had seen this land [before the ocean had eaten its way through] which went a long distance, and that when the Great Waters were lowered [at low tide] there are rocks which show where this land was. Everyone turned me aside from undertaking this journey, because they assured me that the country was sterile and cold and consequently without inhabitants, and they counselled me to return to my own country.”

“ Moncacht-Apé returned home by the same route that he had taken in going, which he recounted to me in few words. After which I asked him if he could say how many days' journeys there were of actual travel; he told me that the Beautiful River being very swift and rapid he had descended very fast, and that in reducing this march to days' journeys by land, he counted to have journeyed in all thirty-six moons, that is to say during three years. It is true, as he admitted, that travelling through countries which to him were absolutely unknown, he had followed the sinuosities of the Missouri, and if he had to return to the same places he could shorten his path and would not travel more than thirty-two or thirty-three moons. It is true as he said that he travelled faster than red men ordinarily do, who generally make but six leagues a day when loaded with at least two hundred pounds burthen, but as Moncacht-Apé carried only one hundred pounds, or sometimes not more than sixty, he ought to have made often even nine or ten leagues. I know myself from experience in returning from my expedition to the interior, that not losing time in making investigations, my people, although loaded, made nearly ten leagues a day. Thus, in estimating his day's journeys at seven leagues' travel, he ought to have made, with

some certainty, at least eighteen hundred leagues. Thus I reason: He travelled about thirty-six moons, as many going as coming. It is necessary to deduct half this time for his return. At seven leagues a day there will remain three thousand, seven hundred and forty-eight leagues. I deduct again half for the detours that he was obliged to make, which were in great number, and I find still eighteen hundred and ninety leagues that there was from the Yazoo to the coast, which was at the mouth of the Beautiful River. He was five years making this journey to the West."

M. de Quatrefages was mistaken in supposing that he was the first to call attention to the ethnological value of this tale, for we find that the first volume of the transactions of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec<sup>1</sup> contains a paper by Andrew Stuart, Esq., which is entitled "Journey Across the Continent of North America, by an Indian Chief," etc., etc. Mr. Stuart evidently placed confidence in the story, for after giving a translation of it and reciting many things which subsequent explorations have proved to be true, he says: "None of these could have been known to the Indian chief, and the general tone and character of M. du Pratz's work excludes the idea of his having fabricated the story."<sup>2</sup>

Greenhow, in his History of Oregon,<sup>3</sup> quotes a version of the story with the following endorsement: "there is indeed, nothing about it which should induce us to reject it as false, except the part respecting the ships and white men." In the *Revue d'Anthropologie*, tome 4me, 1881, M. A. de Quatrefages,<sup>4</sup> in the article to which we have already alluded, reprints LePage's story in full, explains and elucidates the obscure portions with voluminous notes, cites a vast amount of testimony to show that the white men must have come from Lieou Tchou or some of the Eastern isles of Japan, and arrives at the conclusion that the journey of Moncacht-Apé was really accomplished, and that, prior to the time when the Europeans knew anything about that part of the shores of North America, the mouth of the Columbia River and the adjoining shores were known and frequented by this people.

Let us examine the story to see what are its elements of strength and

<sup>1</sup>Transactions of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, Quebec, 1829, Art. XI., vol. I., p. 198 et seq.

<sup>2</sup>As early as 1765 the discussion of this subject began, in a 4to. entitled "Memoires et Observations Geographiques," etc. Par Mr. \* \* \* (Samuel Engel). Lausanne, 1765. This was accompanied by a chart illustrating the theory of the author and showing Moncacht-Apé's journey.

<sup>3</sup>Greenhow's Oregon, Boston, 1844, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup>The reputation of M. de Quatrefages probably requires no endorsement in this country, but if any doubts exist as to the value of his opinions, such language as this, "M. de Quatrefages is acknowledged to be the most distinguished Anthropologist in France." used by Major Powell, in *Science*, vol. I., No. 10, p. 290, [633], will dispel them. See also [634] where Major Powell briefly alludes to the Moncacht-Apé story.

what its elements of weakness. We can at the same time, perhaps, determine whether there were any motives sufficient to induce a writer of that period to fabricate or embellish a production of this kind. We must bear in mind that LePage du Pratz was manifestly a theorist and an enthusiast. To him the romantic notion that this venerable red skin was hunting up a genealogical record, would be conspicuously apparent as the all-important factor of the journey, where the mention of such a motive might have been entirely overlooked by one not afflicted with the ethnological craze. But whatever the motive, was the journey a possibility? Could this solitary traveller have penetrated a region the secrets of which were only yielded to the bold assaults of Lewis and Clark in 1804? Cabeça de Vaca<sup>1</sup> with his three companions, tossed about from tribe to tribe, half-starved and terribly maltreated, was nine years in working his way across the arid deserts of New Mexico and Arizona, but he survived his terrible experiences and finally reached a place of safety under the Spanish flag on the Pacific slope. Col. Dodge, in "Our Wild Indians,"<sup>2</sup> tells of a native who travelled "on foot, generally alone, from the banks of the Mississippi to the mouth of the Columbia River, and who afterwards in repeated journeys crossed and re-crossed, North, South, East and West, the vast expanse of wilderness, until he seemed to know every stream and mountain of the whole great continent west of the Mississippi river." Capt. Marcy, in the "Prairie Traveller,"<sup>3</sup> tells of another "who had set his traps and spread his blanket upon the head-waters of the Missouri and Columbia, and his wanderings had led him South to the Colorado and the Gila, and thence to the shores of the Pacific." The physical possibility of the trip may therefore be accepted.

The geography of the lower Missouri, the character of the river, the tribes of Indians, the animals and the plants to be found there were known to LePage du Pratz. We find in his history an account of an expedition by Bourgmont through this country. Little or nothing could have been known, however, by him, concerning the habits or the modes of life of the Indians living near the source of the Missouri,<sup>4</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup>Relation of Alvar Nuñez Cabeça de Vaca, Translated by Buckingham Smith, N. Y., 1871.

<sup>2</sup>"Our Wild Indians," Col. Richard C. Dodge, Hartford, 1882, p. 554. I wish here to acknowledge the assistance rendered me by Mr. Lucien Carr, of the Peabody Museum, who kindly pointed out to me these instances of travel and endurance, and has otherwise materially helped me in this investigation.

<sup>3</sup>The Prairie Traveller, Capt. R. B. Marcy, N. Y., 1859, p. 188.

<sup>4</sup>Hennépin, while a captive among the Sioux, "saw Indians who came from about five hundred leagues to the West; they informed us that the Assenipovalacs were then only seven or eight days distant to the Northeast of us; all the other known tribes on the West and Northwest inhabit immense plains and prairies abounding in buffalo and peltries, where they are sometimes obliged to make fires with buffalo dung for want of wood." Hennépin's Louisiana, Shea, New York, 1880, p. 236.

existence even of the Columbia river had not been established. Whatever coincidences are found between the story and the facts which relate to the region West of the head-waters of the Missouri are therefore valuable as indications of the probable truth of the story. The astonishment of the savage at the absence of Indian corn, his yearning for it after his meat-diet, and the inadequacy of the bread-stuffs<sup>1</sup> furnished him as a substitute, are the natural experiences of a traveller over this waste. Of the grain used by Big Roebuck in his toothsome gruel we have no knowledge. It is not included in any list of the articles of food of these Indians in such a way as will enable us to identify it. There are, however, several varieties of wild peas in Oregon, which might make a good relish as a dinner vegetable, and it is not impossible that they may have been used in this manner in a limited way. We have no record of any Indians along the banks of the Columbia or its tributaries, who cut the hair of their slaves as a mark of indignity, but in his "Native Races of the Pacific,"<sup>2</sup> H. H. Bancroft tells us that "to cut the hair short is to the Nootka a disgrace," and in a note he quotes from Sproat's "Scenes and Studies of Savage Life," London, 1868, pp. 25-27, as follows: "The hair of the natives is never shaven from the head. It is black or dark brown, without gloss, coarse and lank, but not scanty, worn long. \* \* \* Slaves wear their hair short."<sup>3</sup> The abundant opportunity for personal observation which Sproat had during his residence on the Pacific Coast, makes this a valuable addition to the list of coincidences. The seal does not come on shore and browse on the grass, but the movements of the animal would suggest to one ignorant of its habits, that this was probably what it was doing; hence we have no difficulty in identifying the animal that furnished the "meat from the water" to the natives. While it required no great imagination to suggest as probable the abundance of fish and shell-fish which the savage mentions, the habitual use of seal's meat as food could not have been known to the Indian. Such knowledge was not, however, absolutely beyond LePage's power of acquisition at the time of the publication of his book.

To appreciate the ignorance, at this time, of the geographers concerning the region about the Columbia River, it is necessary to establish approximately the date of the interview between LePage du Pratz and Moncacht-Apé. Following the date of LePage's movements, this must have taken place about 1725. Moncacht-Apé was then an old man, and the journey was a story drawn from his memory. If we allow that

<sup>1</sup>For account of food used by Indians in Oregon, see Contributions to North American Ethnology, Art. by George Gibbs, M.D., vol. I., p. 193.

<sup>2</sup>Bancroft's Native Races, vol. I., p. 179. and note.

<sup>3</sup>Laftau, in vol. 2, p. 51, of his *Mœurs des Sauvages*, Paris, 1724, 4to, says that Mausolus, king of Caria, compelled the Lycians to cut their hair, which was then a mark of servitude, also that the hair is cut as a mark of servitude among the Caribs and the Indians of the South.

the trip took place about 1700, we shall not place it too early. We have no account of the landing of any white man on the Pacific coast North of 43° N. prior to that time. The only explorer said to have penetrated that region whose claims have in any way been recognized by posterity, is Fuca. His discovery, in 1592, of the straits which bear his name, is accepted by many as probable. If to this we should add the alleged discovery by Aguilar of a river in 45° N., as being possibly the mouth of the Columbia, the error in the location of which was due to the inadequate instruments and the inefficient methods of the times, we shall then have extended the area of actual knowledge of the day to include all that could possibly be claimed. All else was pure conjecture, and mere speculation. There were, however, among the Indians, rumors concerning a great sea to the West and a great river flowing into it, and stories about them were passed from mouth to mouth, treading closely upon facts and suggesting a foundation in knowledge. We cannot to-day strip the embellishments from the fundamental facts with certainty, but we can come nearer to it than ever before. Among these stories one finds place in the "Relation of 1666,"<sup>1</sup> where we are told that the "Sioux say that beyond the Karizi the earth is cut off and there is nothing but a salt lake."

Father Marquette, at the Mission of the "Outaouacs" in 1669, states in his Relation<sup>2</sup> that he was told of a "river at some distance to the West of his station, which flowed into the Sea of the West, at the mouth of which his informer had seen four canoes under sail."

Father Dablon, Superior of the same Mission, in his Relation<sup>3</sup> for the same year, gives other details of the river and sea, on which he was told "there was an ebb and flow of the tide."

Sagard-Théodat<sup>4</sup> gives some curious details of a tribe "to whom each year a certain people having no hair on head or chin, were wont to come by way of the sea in large ships. Their only purpose seemed to be that of traffic. They had tomahawks shaped like the tail of a partridge, stockings with shoes attached, which were supple as a glove, and many other things which they exchanged for peltries."

Purchas<sup>5</sup> tells of a "friend in Virginia to whom came rumors even there, from Indians to the Northwest, of the arrival on their coast of ships 'which he concluded to have come from Japan.'"

In his history of Carolana, published in 1722, Coxe<sup>6</sup> tells us of a yellow river called the Massorite, the most northerly branches of which "are

<sup>1</sup> Relation 1666-67, ch. XII., p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Relation 1669-70, Part III., ch. XI., p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Id., ch. X., p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Le grand voyage du pays des Hurons, F. Sagard Théodat, p. 74, Paris, 1632. New ed., Paris, 1865; and also, Histoire du Canada, Sagard Théodat, 1636; New ed., Paris, 1866, p. 227.

<sup>5</sup> Purchas his Pilgrimes, The Third part, London, 1625, p. 849.

<sup>6</sup> Description of Carolana, Daniel Coxe, London, 1722, p. 15.

interwoven with other branches which have a contrary course, proceeding to the West, and empty themselves into the South Sea.<sup>1</sup> The Indians affirm they see great ships sailing in that lake, twenty times bigger than their canoes."

An edition of the "Relations de la Louisiane"<sup>2</sup> [attributed to Chev. Tonti and by him repudiated], was published at Amsterdam in 1720. There is an introductory chapter in this edition from the pen of an officer, containing a description of the Missouri, in which the following statement occurs: "The savages with whom the banks of this river are thickly peopled, assert that it rises in a mountain, from the other side of which a torrent forms another great river which flows to the West and empties into a great lake which can only be, accepting the truth of the statement, the Sea of Japan."

We have in the foregoing, evidence of the character of information on this subject open to Moncacht-Apé as well as to LePage, at the date of the Indian's journey. There was no knowledge whatever of the Pacific coast or the character of its inhabitants, but there were rumors amongst the natives of the River, of the Ocean and even of visits from foreigners, whom the French Fathers identified with the Chinese or Japanese.

In proceeding to examine the question of motive, we must first call attention to a curious fact which seems to have been overlooked by those who have referred to this story in print.<sup>3</sup> During the time that LePage was at Natchez a French officer named Dumont was stationed in that vicinity. He met LePage and interchanged notes and observations with him. In 1753 he published a book on Louisiana which contained a digest of the Moncacht-Apé story, duly credited to LePage du Pratz as authority. This story, however, has an entirely different ending from the one already quoted, and its peculiarities justify its quotation.<sup>4</sup> It is as follows:

"I will finish what I have to say on Louisiana by some remarks sent me by a friend,<sup>5</sup> whom I have cited many times in these memoirs, concerning the situation of the Sea of the West and the means of arriving there by the river Missouri. I shall permit him to speak in this chapter.

"'An Indian,' said he, 'from the Yazoos, called Moncachtabé, whom the French call the interpreter because he speaks nearly all the Indian languages of North America, was brought to me as I requested. He had been described to me as a man remarkable for his long journeys. In fact he had made one of three years into Canada, and another in the

<sup>1</sup> The Pacific.

<sup>2</sup> Relations de la Louisiane, etc., par Chev. Tonti, Amsterdam, 1720.

<sup>3</sup> Except in the contemporaneous publication of Mr. Samuel Engel, "Memoires et observations Geographiques," etc. Lausanne, 1765.

<sup>4</sup> Memoires sur La Louisiane. composés sur les Memoires de M. Dumont, par M. L. L. M., vol. II., p. 246, et seq., Paris, 1753.

<sup>5</sup> LePage du Pratz.



opposite direction, and to the West-Northwest of America. I received him favorably at my house, where he lived some time, and I had the leisure to engage him in conversation concerning his travels. In one of these conversations that we had together, see what I learned of the journey that he made to the West-Northwest. He ascended the river St. Louis [Mississippi] to the Illinois. Thence, having crossed this river by swimming or on a raft, he began to travel on the North bank of the Missouri river, which *Sieur de Bourmont*, who ascended it to its source; calls eight hundred leagues in length from that point to where it empties into the St. Louis [Mississippi]. Following, then, the North bank of this river, *Moncachtabé* arrived at a nation which had been pointed out to him as the nearest to those whom he had left, and he made a sojourn there, as well to perfect himself in their language, which he knew already, as to learn that of the next nation in the direction which he wished to take, for in all these nations there is always some one who knows how to speak the language of the neighboring natives. He did this always in moving from one nation to another, which detained him a long time on his journey, which occupied five years. Finally, having arrived quite at the source of the Missouri river, pursuing constantly the West-Northwest direction, he visited many nations situated upon another river quite near to this last, but which had a course directly opposite, for he supposes that it flows from East to West into a sea whose name as well as that of the river the savage did not know. *Moncachtabé* nevertheless followed it for a long time, taking always the same route, but he was not able to reach its mouth, for the last native tribe where he was forced to terminate his journey was at war with another living between them and the sea. He wished very much to see it, but the open war between these nations prevented him. It was impossible for him to learn anything about it, because the few slaves that this tribe had captured from their enemies were too young to give him any information on the subject. Nevertheless, the hope of gaining perchance some knowledge in the end, determined him to live for a long period with this tribe. He was even desirous of going with his hosts to war, and when the winter was come, the season that the Indians choose ordinarily for their hunting and military expeditions, he joined the first party of this tribe which marched against the enemy. But the expedition was not fortunate; not only did they not capture a single slave, they even lost some of their own number. Thus it is that these first expeditions rarely succeed because the enemy are then upon their guard. *Moncachtabé* did not back out. He joined the second party of these savages, which returned to the war against this nation, and had more good fortune this time than the first. They defeated a party of the enemy and took four prisoners, three men and a woman of about thirty-two years of age, who, having been taken by our traveller, became in consequence his slave. These four prisoners were conducted in triumph by these savages to their village, to be there burned with ceremony, which was carried out with the three men. As for the woman *Moncachtabé* took her to his house, married her and treated her kindly, in the hope of drawing from her some light concerning what he wanted to know. In fact, after having stanchd her tears, this woman had the less trouble to reply to the numerous questions put to her by her husband and to satisfy his curiosity, because he showed so much friendship to her, and she knew that he was not a member of the tribe which was an enemy of her own. See what she taught him.

“The country where we live,” said she, “is only about two days’ journey from the Great Water [that is to say the Sea]. I went there about four years ago with many men and women from our village, to fish for those large shell fish which serve to make our ear-rings and

those large plaques which men wear at their breasts. While we were engaged in gathering them, there appeared upon the great water a large pirogue in which two or three trunks of trees were on end, from which hung something attached high up which was inflated. [One understands that this bad description can only mean a vessel with her sails]. Behind this great vessel,' continued she, 'we saw a smaller one. [It was a barge]. This vessel entered a large and beautiful river where they took in water, which they carried as well as wood to the large vessel. Those who were in the smaller vessel saw us, and it appeared that we mutually feared each other. For ourselves we retired under cover of a wood upon a height where it was easy for us to see them without being perceived ourselves. They were five days taking in wood and water, after which they all returned into the large vessel, without our being able to understand how they could raise the smaller vessel into the large one, because we were so far off. After that, having made to inflate that which was suspended high up in the great vessel, they were borne far off and disappeared from our sight as if they had entered into the water. As we had time during these five days that they were near us to examine them,' added this woman, 'we remarked that these men were smaller than ours; having a white skin; hair upon the chin, black and white; no hair but something round upon the head; they bore upon their shoulders garments which covered their bodies, upon the arms being passed through them, and these descended just to the calf of the leg. They had also leggings and shoes different from ours. Whatever we could do we were never able to count over seven in the small boat with a small boy, without any woman.' 'Such is in substance,' added my friend, 'the reply that the wife of Moncahtapé made to the questions of her husband,' and upon this recital I was very much tempted to believe that this Great Water, of which she speaks, might very well be the Sea of the West which we have sought for so long a time."

We have here an account which is relieved from much that is calculated to tax the credulity of the reader of to-day. We are not called upon to explain an annual visitation. We have no firearms and no powder with its large and small grains. The northwest coast, the Alaskan Peninsula and Behring's Straits are left out of this account. Who is responsible for the change? LePage's History was published in 1758. Dumont's "*Memoires sur la Louisiane*" came out in 1753. Prior to the publication of Dumont's work, LePage had contributed to the *Journal Economique* a series of articles which he terms in his preface an abridgment of his history. In Dumont's book there is abundant evidence of jealousy and hard feeling towards LePage. He alludes repeatedly to the articles in the *Journal Economique* and accuses the writer of borrowing his manuscript and appropriating his work. While repeatedly speaking of him as a friend, he charges him with blunders, inaccuracies and falsehood.<sup>2</sup> "His friend" had apparently furnished Dumont with the information he had gathered upon the subjects in which he was interested. These quotations were inserted in the *Memoires* with due acknowledgment only for the purpose, we should judge, of being attacked with argument or ridiculed with satire. We have no other

<sup>1</sup>Dumont's *Memoires*, vol. I, p. 113, and note.

<sup>2</sup>*Id.*, vol. III., p. 269.

clue to Dumont's identity than what is furnished in the book itself. His Memoires were edited by M. L. L. M., said to have been L'Abbé LeMascrier. They have been erroneously attributed by some to Butel Dumont,<sup>1</sup> a French lawyer and author born in 1725. As the author of these Memoires was in Louisiana in 1721,<sup>2</sup> it is of course out of the question that Butel Dumont could have written the book. The charge against LePage of plagiarism, which is made in this book, has been accepted by many as true, owing to the similarity of the contents of the two books, but a careful examination of them may prove that injustice has been done LePage du Pratz. His fantastic theories may invite attack, and he may record stories repeated to him by others which seem incredible, but when he confines himself to the description of what he himself saw, there is seldom room for criticism. On the other hand, when Dumont tells us that he saw a rattlesnake<sup>3</sup> twenty-two feet in length, and a frog<sup>4</sup> which weighed thirty-two pounds, we may well ask if it was in the region that we know as the Louisiana of that time.

About the same time that these books were published, a great war was going on among the cartographers, a review of which, although it may not enable us to reach an exact conclusion, will aid us in comprehending the relations of these two men and the extent to which partisan feelings might have been aroused in such a contest.

Joseph Nicolas De Lisle in 1752, and Philippe Buache in 1753, presented to the French Academy of Science, Memoires<sup>5</sup> accompanied by charts, the object of which was to reconcile the fabulous voyages of Admiral Fonté; Maldonado's mythical straits of Anian; the unknown Sea of the West, which occupied the whole or any part of the interior of our continent to suit the geographer's taste; and the alleged river of the West which was dotted in to suit the fancy of the engraver, with the then recent discovery of our coast by Behring. The French cartographers clung to Fonté and Maldonado with a pertinacity worthy of a better cause. Writers in Russia, Germany and England took up the fight, and articles were published in the scientific works of the day and in tracts specially devoted to the subject, in which these charts were ridiculed and unworthy motives were attributed to the geographers. "But within this century," says one of these tracts,<sup>6</sup> "the French

<sup>1</sup> Nouvelle Biographie Générale, see Butel-Dumont.

<sup>2</sup> Dumont's Memoires, Preface and v. II., p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Id., vol. I., p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> Id., vol. II., p. 267.

<sup>5</sup> DeLisle's Explication de la carte des Nouvelles decouvertes, etc., Paris, 1752. Buache's Considerations Geographiques, etc., Paris, 1753. I desire to acknowledge the assistance of Mr. Justin Winsor in looking up the cartography of the Sea of the West. He called my attention to these Memoires for which my thanks are especially due.

<sup>6</sup> Remarks in Support of the New Chart of North and South America. By T. Green, Esq., London, 1753, p. 22.

geographers have wholly omitted New Albion, and converted Port Sir Francis Drake into Port San Francisco, dishonoring the name of the knight and changing it into one of their spurious saints." Our two historians, who were then at work upon their books, were necessarily affected by this contest. To take sides with his countrymen would have cost LePage du Pratz his faith in Moncacht-Apé. To him the tale of the Indian, crossing the country in search of the home of his ancestors, was more in sympathy than were the wild conjectures about the sea in the heart of the continent. It must be borne in mind that the measure of the breadth of our continent from ocean to ocean had only been taken at Mexico. Every league that the explorers on the Missouri added to its width was a surprise. California<sup>1</sup> was an island on many charts for nearly two hundred years after an expedition sent out by Cortez had settled the fact that it was a peninsula. If the island theory had to be abandoned, then the next way to narrow the distance from shore to shore was by means of an inland sea. Fuca's inlet and Aguilar's alleged river were accepted as entrances to this theoretical sea. The tales of the Indians were believed to prove its existence. The most incredible thing to the French geographer of that day—the thing which he was least prepared to admit—was the broad stretch of land from Nova Scotia to Oregon. La Hontan, in 1705, published in his book a copy of an Indian map drawn on deer's skin, showing the Rocky Mountains and a river heading about where the Columbia heads and flowing indefinitely West. This chart is recognized by LePage<sup>2</sup> in the map which accompanied his history. Such a river might, perhaps, have been permitted to flow into the "Sea of the West," as the distance from its source to its mouth was absolutely an unknown quantity, but LePage was aware and admits the fact,<sup>3</sup> that belief in Moncacht-Apé's tale involved giving up this favorite speculation of the French geographers. He thus was compelled to take the opposite side in this controversy from that maintained by the "Premier Geographer of the King of France, and one of the most eminent Astronomers of the Academy of Science."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Remarks in Support of the New Chart of North and South America. By T. Green, Esq., London, 1753, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> LePage du Pratz. *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. III., pp. 138, 139, note. La Hontan's chart is there alluded to with the statement that this river must have been the one which Moncacht-Apé descended to the "Sea of the South or Pacific."

<sup>3</sup> *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. III., p. 138. Speaking of the Sea of the West of the cartographers, he says, "For my part I am strongly impelled to believe that it exists only in imagination." Same, p. 137: "I can not persuade myself otherwise than that he travelled upon the shores of the Sea of the South, of which the northern part may be called if you wish, the Sea of the West. Same, p. 139: "This beautiful river falls into the sea, at the west, . . . which by this account indicates only the Sea of the South or Pacific Ocean."

<sup>4</sup> Remarks in Support of the New Chart of North and South America. By T. Green, Esq., London, 1753, p. 46.

Dumont ranged himself with his countrymen. He had written to Buache<sup>1</sup> a letter in which he expressed opinions on the subject similar to those which may be found in his book. His opinion is also plainly shown in the following extract, taken from his book, which immediately follows the Indian's story:<sup>2</sup> "Whatever one may think of this narrative of Sieur LePage, which some perhaps will look upon less as a reality than as a bad copy of Robinson, it cannot possibly suffice to give more light to our geographers concerning the true position of the Sea of the West and the route to take to arrive there through North America. To make this more certain it is necessary to consult the new chart of North America recently made by Messrs. De Lisle and Buache." A change had come over the spirit of his dream since writing in his preface: "his (LePage's) reflections seem just; amongst others, those where he points out to us a route to find the Sea of the West by the river Missouri, based upon a description made to him by a Yazoo Indian known to the author."

We find no trace of a controversial spirit in LePage's book,<sup>3</sup> and yet we may rest assured that the influences which cost Dumont his belief in Moncacht-Apé's story would only fan the fires of faith with one of LePage's enthusiastic temperament.

Although Dumont claims in his preface to have known the Yazoo Indian, still he credits the story, as we have seen, to LePage, and there is enough of identity to assure the common origin of the two versions. Their differences, however, are so radical that they cannot be explained as the ordinary changes to which such stories are subject in passing from person to person. The ill-will that Dumont entertained toward LePage might perhaps have furnished an adequate motive for him to have altered or suppressed the story; but, in addition to the fact that Dumont's version is much the more credible of the two, it must be borne in mind that LePage had recently published a series of articles in the *Journal Economique* and it is presumable that he was on the spot, or where he could see Dumont's book when it should come out, and would therefore notice any changes in statements attributed to himself as authority. With LePage on the spot and with the pages of a periodical at his command, Dumont might venture to prod him with satire and comments, but would scarcely have dared to falsify him. It seems incredible that LePage should not have seen Dumont's book, but if he did so his failure to notice in his own work the references to himself with which Dumont's pages bristle, remains a mystery to puzzle us still.

<sup>1</sup> *Considérations Géographiques, etc., par Philippe Buache.* Paris 1753, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Dumont's *Memoires sur la Louisiane*, Paris, 1753, p. 246, et seq.

<sup>3</sup> Unless the following extract from the preface, referring to certain other Relations, may be considered as alluding to some individual, perhaps Dumont: "It is then absolutely necessary to destroy these false opinions occasioned by these untrue accounts, often full of malignity and nearly always of ignorance."

The review of this partisan controversy and the proof of its close connection with the Moncacht-Apé story has enabled us to see some of the sources of information which would inevitably have attracted the observation of a geographer during the interim between Moncacht-Apé's telling his story and LePage's publication of his history. That LePage's attention was attracted to the controversy of the cartographers we know,<sup>1</sup> because he tells us that the French charts show the possibility of the connection of the land at the North-west of America and the North-east of Asia, as suggested by the Indian. But these were not the only sources of information open to LePage in 1758 which have not been included in our review of the knowledge which he might have obtained at the date of the Indian's story. During the sixteen years which had passed between the return to Siberia of the Behring's Expedition in 1742<sup>2</sup> and the time of LePage's going to press, more or less of the information gathered by that expedition had been furnished to the public. The war of the geographers as to the authenticity of the Fonté and Maldonado forgeries necessarily attracted great attention to the reports of the men who accompanied Behring. Buache<sup>3</sup> in his *Memoire* to the Academy seeks to identify their land-falls with the Fou-Sang of the Chinese. Among other things recorded by the naturalists who accompanied the expedition, and published by Müller<sup>4</sup> in 1758, we find the facts that the coast Indians were in the habit of eating seals, and were observed to eat roots which they had dug out of the ground. It will thus be seen that information upon these two points had been in possession of European naturalists for at least fifteen years. It would not have been remarkable if during that time it had come to the ears of a man of LePage's<sup>5</sup> tastes, but on the other hand there had been no such publication of it as to justify us in saying that he must have seen it.

The knowledge of the coast-line discovered by Behring must have been brought to his attention by DeLisle and by Buache's charts, and as he was not hampered by the necessity of reconciling the actual discoveries with the hypothetical maps based upon the alleged voyages of Fonté and Maldonado, he would naturally have constructed a coast line which would approximate the real one. If the coast line of Siberia, explored

---

<sup>1</sup> LePage du Pratz, "*Histoire de la Louisiane*," Paris, 1758, vol. III., p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> Müller returned to St. Petersburg Feb. 15, 1743. See Müller's *Voyages Asia to America*, Jefferys' translation, p. 107.

<sup>3</sup> *Considérations Géographiques*, etc., P. Buache, Paris, 1753, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> See Jefferys' translation of Müller's *Voyages, Asia to America*, 1764, p. 90.

<sup>5</sup> That he was in such close contact with the savants of the period as to justify this belief, would appear from the fact that he says in his Preface, that he was urged by "the savants to reproduce his ethnological papers for the *Journal Economique* in book form."

by Behring in 1728; the strange coast opposite reached by Gwosdew,<sup>1</sup> the navigator, in 1730; the points on the American coast reached by Behring in 1741, and the general trend of the known coast below be plotted on a chart, the existence of the strait through which Behring twice sailed without seeing America will be inferred without hesitation. The Russians accepted this inference, and published a chart which was reproduced by Jefferys in 1764. This chart closely resembles the maps of to-day, and Moncacht-Apé's description may fairly be applied to it.<sup>2</sup>

Up to this point we have sought to analyze the sources of knowledge of the historian so as to know what weight the argument of coincidences was entitled to, and also to discover if there was aught in the story or in its relation to the controversies of the day to imperil the judgment of its writer. It remains for us to ask, what about the bearded men who came habitually to the coast with such regularity that their arrival could be predicted within a few days; whose purpose was simply to get a cargo of dye-wood and who had no expectation of traffic on these annual visits? If we admit this part of the story to be true we shall have no difficulty in accepting the learned argument of M. de Quatrefages to prove that the foreigners came from Lieou-Tchou or the Eastern Isles of Japan, but if we submit the tale to a careful scrutiny, it is not an easy one to believe. There is no sufficient evidence to justify the belief that the Japanese habitually made such venturesome voyages. We have both record and tradition of the arrival of Japanese vessels on our coast,<sup>3</sup> but they have always plainly been unwilling visitors. Even if the theory that the Chinese found their way from coast to island and from island to coast, until they reached the so-called land of Fou Sang<sup>4</sup> should be accepted, there is no evidence of habitual visitations. There is no known wood upon our coast of particular value as a dye-wood, and there is no part of the North Pacific coast where the extermination of a particular species of tree would leave the inhabitants without wood. The collection of a cargo of dye-wood in a country which has no valuable woods for that purpose, is not a sufficient reason for an annual visit, and if, correcting the story to make it more probable, we admit that the vessels came for purposes of trade as indicated in the Indian legends, then we must insist upon finding traces of that trade along the coast. A careful examination of the authorities does not disclose in the hands

<sup>1</sup> Voyages from Asia to America, Müller translated by Jefferys, London, 1764, p. 55. Green's "Remarks in support of the New Chart," London, 1753, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed this is just what LePage himself says of it, vol. III., 136: "The passage of the Russians from Asia to America where they landed, proves to us that the coast may run in a line conformable to Moncacht-Apé's story."

<sup>3</sup> Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, April 23, 1872. Paper on the likelihood of an admixture of Japanese blood on our North-West Coast, by Horace Davis.

<sup>4</sup> "Considérations Géographiques," etc., P. Buache, Paris, 1753, p. 11.

of the Indians evidence sufficient to prove the existence of such a trade. Bodega<sup>1</sup> in 1775, at Port Trinidad, found some iron among the Indians, but the chronicler of the expedition reports that what they chiefly valued in traffic "was iron and particularly knives or hoops of old barrels." Cook<sup>2</sup> found iron and brass among the Indians. Their tomahawks were made of stone. Their arrows were generally pointed with bone. They had chisels and knives of iron; the latter shaped like pruning-knives with the edge on the back. He also met one Indian who had two silver spoons, apparently of Spanish manufacture. And yet he says:<sup>3</sup> "We never observed the least signs of their having seen ships before, nor of their having traded with such people. Many circumstances seem to prove this almost beyond a doubt."

In addition to the foregoing evidences of some sort of traffic with outsiders on the part of the Indians on the Northwest coast, Greenhow<sup>4</sup> cites Friar Peñas's journal of a voyage of Juan Perez, and also quotes from the narrative of the expedition of Behring,<sup>5</sup> both of which expeditions, he says, found knives and articles of iron in the hands of the natives. But he concludes each account with the statement that they appeared never before to have held any intercourse with civilized people. The uniform testimony of the early voyagers to the existence of metallic ornaments and knives in the hands of the Indians, which had apparently been introduced from outside sources, can leave but little doubt of the fact. The negative testimony of Vancouver<sup>6</sup> as to the Indians at Trinidad, whom Bodega had found with both iron and copper, but who in 1798 had neither, must be accepted as proof only that the supply of these Indians was not constant, and that the amount owned by them must have been small. The unfamiliarity of the Indians with vessels and the irregularities of the stock of these metals, especially when taken in connection with the silver spoons, would point to some inland source of supply.

The first glance at the Japanese chart brought to Europe by Kaempfer, a copy of which is given in the DeLisle and Buache Memoires, showing as it does a familiarity with our coast at least as great as that shown in the original charts of these cartographers, would suggest that this was in itself a strong argument in favor of the annual visits of the Japanese vessels to this part of the world. The trouble with the chart, however, for this purpose is that it shows too much. The accuracy of the outlines of the Gulf of California and of the Gulf of Mexico could not have come from Japanese sources. The same authority that contributed these out-

---

<sup>1</sup> *Miscellanies of Daines Barrington*, London, 1775, pp. 488, 489.

<sup>2</sup> *Cook's Voyages*, London, 1784, pp. 267, 271, 279, 282, 311, 327, 330.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*, 1784, p. 331.

<sup>4</sup> *Greenhow's Oregon*, Boston 1844, p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*, 1844, p. 132.

<sup>6</sup> *Vancouver*, London, 1798, v. II., 243.



lines may have furnished, and probably did furnish, the knowledge and conjectures on which the line of our Northwest coast was assumed in this chart.

So far as the guns and the details with reference to the powder are concerned, the curious statements of Moncacht-Apé may at some future day, when we shall know more about the history of the Japanese and Chinese, have a greater value than they possess at present, as factors in unravelling this complicated question. All that we can now say is that we do not know enough about the weapons or the powder of these people, to make any use of the statements in our attempts to get at the facts of the story. Moncacht-Apé not only anticipated the knowledge of his own day, but also, as yet, of ours, for we have not learned enough about the matter to say whether he told the truth:

One word as to the route of the Indian, and we shall be prepared to draw our conclusions from this protracted discussion, having in our review touched upon the various points which we started to examine. Moncacht-Apé specifies that he kept up the North bank of the Missouri. Now if he continued on the North bank of the river to its source, his description of the way to reach the head-waters of the Columbia and of the general direction of that river from that point is irreconcilable with what we know of its course. On the other hand, if he went up the North Platte, which would agree with the general courses he gave, we should expect some record in the narrative, of his crossing the main river and taking up the tributary, for he spent the winter in the vicinity of the mouth of the Platte, and there could be no doubt that the Indians knew which was the main stream. Further he is particular in mentioning where he crossed the Ohio and the Mississippi rivers, which favors the conclusion that his course was, as he intimates, constantly on the North bank,<sup>1</sup> even at the expense of making his account a little foggy. We have seen that the story of the journey was not only a possibility, but we have occasional records of men whose habits of mind and body lead them to these solitary expeditions. It does not require that we should accept, nor need we reject the alleged motives of the expedition, but we may concede the probability that the outline of the tale came from the Indian's mouth. Dumont, who tells us that he knew him, had been stationed among the Yazooos<sup>2</sup> as well as at Natchez, and in his contempt for Le Page's speculations he would have been glad to denounce the story in more direct terms if he had not believed that there was some truth at its foundation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is but just to allude here to the fact that Charlevoix says, a few years after the savage's journey, "All these natives of whom I have been speaking (The Missouris and Canzes were included) dwell upon the Western bank of the Missouri." *Journal of a voyage to North America*. Translated from the French of P. de Charlevoix, Vol. II., London, 1761, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> Dumont's *Memoires*, &c., Paris, 1753, v. II., p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> This argument was anticipated by Mr. Samuel Engel, who says, "M. Dumont who has given another relation of Louisiana, in which he, or at

The isolation of a life at Natchez kept LePage's active brain at work upon the facts that he had accumulated concerning the migrations of the Indians and their forms of government. He framed theories and then propounded leading interrogatories which were better calculated, perhaps, than he thought to bring forth the answers that he wanted. The running commentaries by Dumont in his *Memoires* call attention to this weakness on the part of LePage, and the conclusion is irresistible that he colored the statements of the Indians, or the Indians cheerfully adapted their answers to his needs.

The argument of coincidence between what was stated by Moncacht-Apé concerning this unknown region and subsequent discoveries is very properly claimed by M. de Quatrefages as of great value. But if its application should show that there is no error of statement so long as the narrative deals with regions that were thoroughly explored; that it introduces statements concerning which we are incredulous or doubtful only when it arrives at a region about which nothing was then known; and that in some of the more fanciful portions of the tale we think that we can trace the reproduction of legends already familiar to us from the Relations; if these are the coincidences that our examination establishes, then our conclusion will be that the personality of LePage has materially affected the value of the story. To show that this is really so, it hardly needs that we should point to the wonderful truthfulness of the story so long as it is confined to the East and to the lower Missouri; to the accuracy with which the course of that river is given where it had been explored; to the fact that our first conflict with modern explorations comes at the point where the traveller treads on entirely new ground; to the strong family resemblance between the bearded men with their strange clothing, and Sagard Théodat's smooth-faced men with their leggings and shoes; to the extraordinary differences between the two endings, in which many of the additional materials found in the later publication correspond closely with new facts brought to the notice of European scientists by the Behring's Expedition.

As to the curious details concerning the guns and the powder, the only place to which we can look for their corroboration is the Orient. Should research fail to discover the use of similar weapons and materials there, it would stamp this part of the story as a fiction.

In examining the question of motive and responsibility we have learned enough of the cartographic controversy to see that not alone DeLisle and Buache on the one side and Green and Jefferys on the other, but that men from all parts of Europe drifted into that discussion.

---

least his editor, is often of a contrary opinion to M. LePage, far from contradicting this journey of Moncacht-Apé gives an extract from it in his work. Now M. Dumont has, they say, lived twenty-two years in this country. He would not have lost the opportunity to contradict M. LePage, if he had recounted a fable."

"*Memoires et Observations Geographiques, etc.* Par M. \* \* \* \*  
[Samuel Engel] Lausanne, 1765, p. 108.

We have seen that LePage and Dumont espoused opposite sides, and while we could not discover in the history signs of bad temper, we have found the memoirs bristling with ill will. Thus we have been able to show a motive for misrepresentation, and if we had concluded that the Dumont ending was a forgery, we should have had little doubt that the rancor that he showed was a sufficient explanation of it. The presence of the two men in France<sup>1</sup> at the time of the publication of the memoirs, and Dumont's bold charge of the authorship of the story on LePage has served to fix the responsibility for the two endings upon him. The fact that notwithstanding the ill-will that we have traced to Dumont, his version of the story is the more credible of the two adds emphasis to the conviction.

Finally, we fancy that we may be able to account, even for the change from the smooth-faced men of Sagard Théodat to the bearded men of the story by showing that such bearded men were alluded to in the publications of the period.

Spangberg<sup>2</sup> in 1739 saw on the northern isles of Japan, men of small stature "with pretty long hair all over their bodies, and the men of middle age had black, while the old men had grey beards." Ellis,<sup>3</sup> in 1748, says, describing the most recent voyage to Hudson's Bay in search of a northwest passage: "The southern Indians constantly affirm that a great ocean lies but a small distance from their country towards the Sun's setting, in which they have seen ships, and on board them men having large beards and wearing caps."

Buache<sup>4</sup> tells us that he had a letter written March 15, 1716, by M. Bobé Lazariste de Versailles, in which the statement is made that "in the land of the Sioux, at the head of the Mississippi there are always French traders; that they know that near the source of the river can be found in the high lands a river which leads to the Sea of the West; that the savages say that they have seen bearded men who have caps, and who collect gold dust on the edge of the Sea.<sup>5</sup> But it is a very long distance from their country, and they must pass through many tribes unknown to the French."

<sup>1</sup> Dumont's presence at this time may be inferred from the language of his preface. LePage returned in 1734. He published some of his articles in the *Journal Economique* in 1751. At least Müller quotes from one of them in the September number of that year.

<sup>2</sup> Jefferys' Translation, Müller's *Voyages Asia to America*, London, 1764, p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> Ellis's *Voyage to Hudson Bay*, London, 1748, p. 304.

<sup>4</sup> Buache, *Considérations Géographiques*, Paris, 1753, p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> This belief in the bearded men and also in the gold-bearing sands of the beaches of the Pacific finds occasional expression among these Hudson's Bay savages. In the *Recueil d'Arrests*, Amsterdam, 1720, there is a Relation by M. Jeremie, entitled "Relation de la Baie de Hudson," in which occurs this passage. "The savages say that after having travelled many months to the West-Southwest, they found the

We come then practically to the conclusion that there is nothing in the story to tax our credulity if we are not called upon to believe in the annual visits of the bearded men and the various doubtful incidents which their presence involves. We have not been able to trace to the historian a knowledge, or a possibility of knowledge of all the details of the Indian's story which subsequent discovery has verified, and this adds to the probability that the journey was actually accomplished, and the story of it related to Le Page du Pratz. We are not, however, able to relieve him from responsibility for the double endings, and although the general tone and character of his work justify the high esteem in which Mr. Stuart<sup>1</sup> held it, we are nevertheless forced to the unwilling conclusion that the original story of the savage suffered changes at his hands.

In conclusion we express the hope that the students who may hereafter have access to Oriental records, will bear in mind, that proof ought there to be found, if proof there be, of the habitual presence on our shores, at that period, of the bearded men,—a presence which we have seen indicated in tradition and story, but for which as yet we have found no other authority than the helpless wrecks which have been borne upon our coast by the Japanese current.

---

sea, on which they saw large canoes [these are ships] with men who had beards and caps, who collect gold upon the edge of the sea [that is to say at the mouth of the rivers],”—p. 12. On the 26<sup>th</sup> page of the same Relation there is another allusion to bearded men who build stone forts, &c.

<sup>1</sup>Transactions of the Quebec Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, Quebec, 1829, vol. I., p. 198.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.