

MATHIEU SAGEAN.

The following curious narrative is one of the survivals from the days of Louis XIV of France, that grand monarch who once ruled over Nebraska. At that time, when LaSalle, Tonty and all that adventurous crew of Frenchmen were going up and down unknown rivers in their canoes, the valley of the Missouri was as legitimate a subject for romance as the land of the Arabian Nights.

The manuscript, which I translate below, was found at Paris some forty years ago, and was published in New York by J. G. Shea. Only 100 copies were printed. Parkman gives the substance of it in an appendix to one of his books, but I have never seen the entire narrative in English. It is given here at the instigation of the State Historical Society people.

Sagean was one of that class of Canadian frontiersmen known as voyageurs or engagés. He turned up at Brest in the spring of 1701, with a tale of wonders which caused him to be brought to the notice of the intendant de la marine, M. Begon. Before this official he made the following statement, which M. Begon "verified as much as was possible" and forwarded to the court. He received in return orders to fit his friend out with a vessel and 20 men, to return and "reconnoître the land which he says he has discovered."

On the 30th of May, Sagean arrived at the French colony of Biloxi, near the mouth of the Mississippi, with an order on the commandant for the construction of 24 pirogues, which were to be armed with 100 Canadians and put under his command for a voyage of exploration. Here, however, he found a number of persons who had known him in former years, and were well aware that he had never been in the region described. So the commandant, M. de Sauvolle, while beginning work on the pirogues, wrote to M. de Pontchartrain that he had certainly been deceived.

This was in August; Sagean was urging a hasty departure, that he might not have to winter among the barbarous Illinois; but it is probable that he died shortly of the fevers that ravaged the unfortunate colony of Biloxi, for after this letter of August 4 "il n'en est plus question." The Relation of the Avantures and Voyages of Mathieu Sagean is as follows:

The said Sagean is son unto Jean Sagean, in the regiment of Carignan Salieres, and Marie Carraute, the father a native of Bordeaux and the mother of la Rochelle, Catholics, Apostolic and Roman. They were wed in Lisle de Monreal, distant from Québec about 60 leagues southwest, the said Sagean was there born at the village of la Chine who is 88 or 40 years of age,

who hath a little knowledge of reading, and of writing none.

About 20 years ago he departed from Monreal in a Bark canoe to follow the late Monsieur de la Sâle upon discoveries, after some courses of the Sieur de la Sâle he stopped with his troop in the land of the Illinois, a savage nation upon the bank of the Mississippi, which the Spanish have named El Rio de la Magdelaine, where he established the fort St. Louis upon an Islet adjacent unto the main land, with which it communicateth by means of a bridge which is withdrawn within the said fort, this fort built with the aid of the Sauvages, and the said Sieur de la Salle, having left the commandment thereof unto the Sieur de Tonty, he returned again into Canada with 19 men, and the French Recollet father, who left the rest of his crew to the number of 100 men, whereof the said Sagean was one.

Some time after, a desire took the said Sagean to go upon discovery, and having obtained permission thereunto of the said Sieur de Tonty, he took with him eleven other Frenchmen and two Mahegan Sauvages, who are also called Loups, that is Wolves, they took three Bark canoes to ascend the said river of Mississippi, whereon having made about 150 leagues they found a fall, which obliged them to make a portage of about six leagues, which being passed they embarked upon the same river which they ascended unto 40 leagues without finding any nation, and having stopped near a month and a half to hunt and try some new discoveries, they found a river at 14 leagues thence which ran to the south southwest, which made them suppose that it would flow into the South Sea, having its course altogether contrary to those that flow to the north sea, they resolved to navigate upon it, and to that end made the portage of the said road, in the course of which they met many lions, leopards and tigers which did them no harm, they entered with their canoe upon the said river, and after having made thereon about 150 leagues, they found the Acaaniba, a great nation which occupieth at least two hundred leagues of country, wherein they have several strongly fortified cities, earthworks, (villes fortifiées de fort, de terrasses) and quantity of villages whereof the houses were built of wood, and of bark, they have a king which sayeth himself descended from Montezuma, and who is ordinarily clothed with skins of men, which are common in that country. The multitude dress therein also. They are civilized (policéz) after their manner; they are Idolastres, and have Idols of frightful figure, and of an enormous bigness, which are in the King's palace; there are two among others,

whereof the one is the figure of a man armed with lances, arrows and quiver, having one foot on the earth and the other in the air with his hand upon the figure of a horse as meaning to mount him.

They say that this human statue is the representative of one of their Kings, which was one of the greatest conquerors of that country, and this statue hath in his mouth, as it were between his teeth, a precious stone of square form, and big as a bustard's egg which shineth, and lighteth the dark like a fire, he believeth that it is an Escarboncle; the other of these Idols is the statue of a woman whom he believeth to be an Empress or a Queen, mounted in saddle upon a figure of a horse, or Unicorn, having a horn of more than an arm's length in the midst of his forehead, and about this horse, or Unicorn, there are the figures of four great dogs, and that of another Unicorn with that of a man besides, which holdeth the said Unicorn enchained. All the figures are of fine gold, and massive, but very ill made, and unshapen, they have no pedestals, they are set as it were upon a stage that is also of gold, of thirty feet square for each of the said statues, between which is a way that leadeth unto the apartment of the King by a magnificent vestibule of more than 100 feet, where there are ornamented railings (des grilles de caracol.)

This is the abiding place of the King's guard, composed ordinarily of two hundred men. At the four corners of this vestibule are four little open stands, wherein is stationed the King's music, which is passing evil compared with that of Europe. All the peoples of this state come once in every month to pay the same worship to these Idols, having none at their own homes.

The King's palace is of very great extent, and his private apartment is 28 to 30 feet square and hath three stories (estages), the walls thereof 18 feet in height are of massive gold in slabs arranged one upon the other, and as it were very broad bricks bound together with clamps, and bars of the same material, the pavement of this apartment is also of very great bricks of massive gold in squares, the rest of this magnificent apartment is of timbers covered with wood, the King abideth therein alone, and none entereth there ever, save his wives, which he changeth every night, and she that hath had the honor to lie with him maketh ready his repast in her apartment and taketh it to him in his, and eateth with him, having none to serve them. He promised (permitted? promettois) the Frenchmen only to enter within his apartment, and was wont to see them with pleasure. These peoples do a great commerce of