

THE LONDON BACKGROUND OF THE RADISSON PROBLEM¹

Something can be done toward illuminating the Radisson problem by approaching it from the angle of London and the conditions that obtained there in the years soon after the Restoration. For the purpose of testing the credibility of the last portion of Radisson's narrative, some sentences from it need to be analyzed.

I

A beginning may be made with the following: "But y^e Hollanders being come to y^e River of Thames had stopp'd y^e passage, soe wee lost that opportunity." Here Radisson speaks the truth, although at first sight it may not appear so. It is generally known that the Dutch were in the Thames in 1665. It is not so well known that on June 1, 1666, the Dutch fleet appeared off the North Foreland. George Monk, Duke of Albemarle, the English admiral, attacked. The North Foreland is the eastward projecting tip of the shire of Kent that guards the entrance to the Thames basin from the south. Major naval engagements took place in this theater of war on June 1, 2, and 3. Thus there was fighting at the very door of London. Naturally, then, Radisson is justified in writing: "So wee were put off till y^e next year." A short time later the ship in which he and his partner were to have gone out to Hudson Bay "was sent to Virginia and other places to know some news of y^e Barbadoes, and to be informed if that Island was not in danger."²

¹This article is based upon materials collected in 1934 while the writer was studying in London as a fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

²*Voyages of Peter Esprit Radisson*, 245 (Boston, 1885); C. S. S. Higham, *Development of the Leeward Islands, 1660-1688*, 44-49 (Cambridge, 1921).

The projected voyage of 1667 is thus referred to: "Wee lost our second voyage, for y^e order was given to late for y^e fitting another ship, which cost a great deale of money to noe purpose."³ Tardiness of naval authorities in giving the order condemned the two Frenchmen to wait a full year before they could make another trial. But why was the order to fit out the royal ship of this year given so belatedly? The answer to this question is to be sought in general English history at this time. The Dutch war was raging, money was both scarce and in great demand—for one thing, London had just been devastated by the great fire—and Parliament was inclined to be recalcitrant in the matter of granting supply.⁴ The London merchants could not lend Charles money; the scarcity of funds and the carping spirit of the late session of Parliament worked their effect; talk of making peace with the Dutch was heard. At this stage the cabinet undertook the fatuous policy of reducing expenditure by laying up the fleet. England, primarily a sea power, withdrew her armaments into quiet havens, and trusted for protection to her coast defenses. Thus economy destroyed Radisson's voyage of this year.

Returning again to Radisson's text:

The third yeare wee went out with a new company in 2 small vessells, my Brother in one & I in another, & wee went together 400 leagues from y^e North of Ireland, where a sudden great storme did rise & put us asunder. The sea was soe furious 6 or 7 houres after that it did almost overturne our ship, so that wee were forced to cut our masts rather then cutt our lives; but wee came back safe, God be thanked, and y^e other, I hope, is gone on his voyage, God be with him. I hope to embarke myselfe by y^e helpe of God this fourth yeare.⁵

Unquestionably the first sentence in this passage refers to the year 1668. Radisson's words "this fourth yeare" therefore apply to the twelvemonth period that, commencing in October, 1668, would end in October, 1669. Radis-

³ Radisson, *Voyages*, 245.

⁴ W. A. Shaw, ed., *Calendar of Treasury Books, 1667-1668*, xlv (London, 1905).

⁵ Radisson, *Voyages*, 245.

son's chronology of affairs in England must be based upon the fact that he and his partner arrived in England in or about October, 1665, and from this event Radisson consistently reckons forward. The voyage that he is hoping to make "this fourth year" is of course the one in which he actually departed from England in the early summer of 1669. He sailed in the "Wivenhoe" pink on its first journey toward Hudson Bay.

One single minute point requires explaining. Radisson writes that the gentleman who brought him and Groseilliers to England "was one of the Commissioners called Collo-nell George Carteret." In the seventeenth century "Carteret" and "Cartwright" were pronounced identically, and as we today pronounce the first of these names. Colonel George Cartwright was appointed a royal commissioner on April 23, 1664, at Westminster.⁶ This is the official to whom Radisson refers in the phrase quoted above. There was also a Sir George Carteret, with whom the explorers came into contact at Oxford.

This examination of Radisson's credibility redounds wholly to his favor. Concerning the events that occurred during his English residence, therefore, he is a reliable, accurate witness.

II

When did Radisson complete his manuscript? He himself does not date it, but from the evidence just presented it is to be inferred that the sentence "I hope to embarke my-selfe by y^e helpe of God this fourth year" gives a clue to the date when he finished writing his discourse. "This fourth year" means the period extending from October, 1668, to October, 1669. Now in order to arrive at Hudson Straits as early as possible after that icebound entry was open for navigation, it was necessary for a ship to leave

⁶ Radisson, *Voyages*, 244; *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, America and West Indies, 1661-1668*, no. 708 (London, 1880).

England about the first week in June. In 1668, for example, Radisson had sailed from the Thames basin early in June. The last possible date for him to pen the sentence quoted above would have been during the late spring of 1669. It is at this time, in my opinion, that he terminates his writing.

I arrived at this conclusion in November, 1934. In the December following, having made the acquaintance at London of Dr. Grace Lee Nute, I disclosed my results to her. The correctness of my thesis was confirmed, for Dr. Nute favored me with a view of a document that she had brought to light in the Hudson's Bay Company archives in London. I cite the evidence she has produced: "June 23, 1669. By money disbursed [by James Hayes] for translating a Booke of Radisons, £ 5."⁷ We are in a position, therefore, to discard as erroneous the theory concerning the date of the composition of Radisson's narrative advanced by its editor, Gideon D. Scull. He writes:

It is evident that the writer was busy on his voyage [from New England to London in 1665] preparing his narrative of travels for presentation to the King. Towards the conclusion of his manuscript he says: "We are now in y^e passage, and he y^t brought us . . . was taken by y^e Hollanders, and wee arrived in England in a very bad time for y^e plague and y^e warrs. Being at Oxford, wee went to Sir George Cartaret."⁸

Against this theory two objections can be urged. The error that Scull makes in his interpretation of the phrase "We are now in y^e passage" is little short of surprising when it is recalled that Scull was familiar with the uses of seventeenth century English. On this phrase Scull hangs his argument. In order to interpret this fragment correctly it must be read with reference to its context. Radisson has just been describing his relations with the New Englanders.

⁷ Ledger 1/101, folio 33, Hudson's Bay Company Archives. This excerpt is published by permission of the governor and committee of the Hudson's Bay Company.

⁸ Radisson, *Voyages*, 13.

He as much as says that he and his partner were no longer willing to trust them; consequently, the Frenchmen cross the ocean, bound for London and the court. "We are now in y^e passage," then, is as a matter of strict fact nothing more than an abrupt transitional sentence, employing that tense known to grammarians as the historical present and connecting the record of his fortunes in New England with the account of his arrival in England.

The other and more serious objection remains: even if Scull's theory were correct, it would only give a clue to the date of the completion of Radisson's narrative up to the time of the arrival of the two Frenchmen in England—that is, up to 1665. But it has just been pointed out that the last few pages of the narrative carry the story down to the late spring of 1669. Thus Scull would have to account for this composition in two parts and at two distinct periods, and give reasons therefor. He makes no attempt to do so.

III

Radisson and Groseilliers had departed from New England well armed with letters of introduction from the king's chief commissioner in the colonies, Colonel Richard Nicolls. The Frenchmen crossed the ocean with another royal commissioner, Colonel Cartwright, and eventually reached London. Radisson writes: "wee arrived in England in a very bad time for y^e plague and y^e warrs." War was declared on the Dutch on February 22, 1665. The plague made its appearance in the winter of 1664–65. In July, 1665, Charles, for health and safety, left London; by September the king and court were at Oxford, where Parliament was summoned to meet early in October. To Oxford, accordingly, Radisson and Groseilliers, doubtless still under Cartwright's wing, betook themselves. Radisson writes: "Being at Oxford, wee went to Sir George Carteret, who spoke to his Majestie, who gave us good hopes that wee should have a

ship ready for y^e next spring [*early in 1666*]." Charles II was sufficiently impressed with the Frenchmen's story to be willing to provide for the visitors out of the royal bounty: "y^e King did allow us 40 shillings a week for our maintenance, and wee had chambers in y^e Town by his order, where wee stayed 3 months."⁹ Fresh from the wilds of Canada, the adventurers were face to face with the supplest of courtiers and royalty itself.

Sir George Carteret was their intercessor at court; he arranged for the interview with the king. Carteret was a staunchly loyal supporter of the Stuarts. This baronet (*ca.* 1617–1679/80) was a leading courtier, holding many posts of profit and of honor after the Restoration. He was a privy councillor, treasurer of the navy (1660–67), vice-chamberlain of the royal household (1660–70), vice-treasurer (1667–73), and a commissioner of the board of trade (1668–72).¹⁰ His shadow fell on the American colonies: he had an equity in Carolina, of which he was a lord proprietor, and in New Jersey, too. He was financially interested in the African trade, and a successful slaving voyage by the Royal African Company meant money in his pocket. This was a breed of man who would listen closely to Radisson's story. In due course Carteret became a heavy shareholder in the Hudson's Bay Company.

Radisson's text continues: "Afterwards y^e King came to London and sent us to Windsor, where wee stayed the rest of y^e winter." The inner meaning of this sentence, at once understood by contemporaries, is that the king put the two voyagers under the protection of his cousin, Prince Rupert, who resided in luxurious but highly original bachelor quarters at Windsor Castle.¹¹ Prince Rupert was famous in

⁹ Radisson, *Voyages*, 244; *Dictionary of National Biography*, 10:94 (London, 1887).

¹⁰ G[eorge] E. C[okayne], *Complete Baronetage*, 2:233 (Exeter, 1902).

¹¹ Radisson, *Voyages*, 245; *Dictionary of National Biography*, 49:413 (London, 1897).

his own day equally for his exploits in love, war, and science. He was too poor to marry, because Charles's government was too hard-pressed to pay the pension, generous enough on paper, that the king had promised him in November, 1660. By 1665 Rupert, perhaps more than a little irked by financial straitness, was thinking of himself as a possible lord proprietor of the newly acquired island of Jamaica. Then arrived Radisson and Groseilliers, with their tales of fabulous fortunes to be made in trade with the Indians. Rupert's interest in sugar never came to anything, but that in furs was afterward to yield substantial returns in cash and fame. He was destined to become the first governor of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Rupert was with the king in Oxford when Radisson and Groseilliers were first presented to his majesty.¹² Thus he, probably, was one of the first in England to hear their full story. If Rupert had the wit to recognize a good business proposition in the making, so did his secretary, James Hayes. This gentleman was a native of the hamlet of Beckington near Frome in Somerset. He was sworn of the privy council—a circumstance that indicates his close relations with Charles II. Hayes seems always to have maintained his friendship and regard for Radisson and his interest in Radisson's scheme was strong from the first. He disbursed the money, a sum of five pounds, to pay for the translation of Radisson's book from French into English. His name appears in the charter of the Hudson's Bay Company as one of the original members. On June 28, 1670, not many weeks after the charter was signed by Charles, he made Hayes a knight.¹³ Sir James retained a financial interest in the Hudson's Bay Company until 1687. He

¹² T. Malthus, *Historical Memoires of the Life and Death of . . . Rupert, Prince Palatine of the Rhine*, 40 (London, 1683).

¹³ Samuel Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of England*, 1:188 (London, 1849); G. E. C., *Complete Peerage*, 5:241 (London, 1926); W. A. Shaw, *The Knights of England*, 2:244 (London, 1906).

died early in February, 1692/3. His trust in Radisson's scheme did not go unrewarded. On the incorporation of the Hudson's Bay Company, he became one of the original members of the "steering committee," as it were, which looked after the company's business affairs. From 1675 to 1685 he served as deputy governor; much of the time, therefore, he was second in command to his patron Prince Rupert, who remained governor till his death in 1682. After Rupert's death, James, Duke of York, was elected to the post of governor, and for a few years Sir James served under him.

The profits-hungry courtiers allowed no time to be wasted: they debated, discussed, and accepted the Frenchmen's proposals. At Windsor the two stayed with Rupert till spring came round. Then, according to Radisson, "Wee are sent for from that place, y^e season growing neare, and put into y^e hands of Sir Peter Colleton." The gentleman who took charge of the Frenchmen in the spring of 1666 was the son of Sir John Colleton. The baronet died during the summer of 1666, and Peter succeeded to one of the lord proprietorships in Carolina, to which in the year following he added an interest in the Bahamas. The Colletons, a numerous clan from Devonshire, were well connected, and their ample fortunes were broadly based on the sugar loaves of Barbados. Sir Peter served as governor of that island in 1673 and 1674.¹⁴

His mercantile connections were doubtless used by the little knot of men from whom the Hudson's Bay Company was to develop. "The ship was got ready something too late, and our master was not fit for such a *Designe*."¹⁵ Colleton's arrangements did not work out well. It is plain that preparations were tardy, and he must have picked out a sea captain who was accustomed to navigate the tropical

¹⁴ Radisson, *Voyages*, 245; G. E. C., *Complete Baronetage*, 3:161 (Exeter, 1903).

¹⁶ Radisson, *Voyages*, 245.

Caribbean waters. To navigate northern frigid seas, different technical problems have to be faced; the investors would have been better advised to call upon an experienced member of the Muscovy Company, which traded with the White Sea.

Prince Rupert, James Hayes, Sir George Carteret, and Sir Peter Colleton were Radisson's earliest reliable and influential London friends. They stand for the original social and economic nucleus of the Hudson's Bay Company, as anyone who is familiar with the names of the earliest shareholders from 1670 onward will recognize. Thus the Hudson's Bay Company is only the institutional projection of the little knot of friends that grew up round Radisson and Groseilliers.

IV

Is it possible to account for the composition of Radisson's discourse or narratives? Late in May, 1668, written instructions were prepared in great detail to guide the masters of the ships who were about to set sail from the Thames basin for Hudson Bay. These instructions were signed, on behalf of the financial backers of the investing group, by Prince Rupert, the Earl of Craven, the Duke of Albemarle, Carteret, Hayes, and Colleton.¹⁶

The following item appears in a London newsletter of June 9, 1668:

The design set on foot some months since by Prince Rupert, the Lord General [Monk], and several other undertakers, for the discovery of the North-West Passage, being now brought to maturity, two small ketches, the *Norwich* [*Nonsuch*] and the *Eaglet*, set sail this week to Breton's Bay [*Button's Bay?*].¹⁷

On this expedition, Radisson sailed in the "Eaglet" and Groseilliers in the "Nonsuch." The latter vessel, Captain

¹⁶ This document, edited by Dr. Nute from the original manuscript in the Public Record Office, appears *post*, p. 419-423.

¹⁷ *The Manuscripts of S. H. Le Fleming, Esq., of Rydal Hall*, 56 (Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Twelfth Report*, Appendix, part 7—London, 1890).

Zachary Gillam commander, succeeded in reaching Rupert's Land, where its party wintered on the east side of the bay in 1668-69. The "Eaglet," proving less seaworthy, was forced to turn back. Radisson had set forth with high hopes: almost exactly three months later to the day he set foot once more on English soil, when his ship, in a distressed condition, put in at Plymouth to refit. This was on August 5, 1668. Early in October, Hayes, Prince Rupert's secretary, wrote to the lords commissioners of the navy that he was ready, on behalf of his principals, to turn the king's ketch "Eaglet" over to the royal officials at Deptford. By this date, therefore, Radisson must have been once more in London.¹⁸

Thus for the first time since they had come to England, Radisson and Groseilliers were parted, and Radisson could look forward to an English winter without his familiar. He could expect to be thrown much on his own resources. A sociable man, and by now well connected in London and at court, he need not have anticipated a dull season in Restoration society. If he had any doubts how to employ his time, they must soon have been resolved, for, probably toward the end of the autumn, there arrived at London the personage who had just laid down the double responsibility of chief royal commissioner in America and of governor, on behalf of James, Duke of York, of that royal peer's propriety of New York province.

Colonel Richard Nicolls (1624-72) was no stranger to Radisson. The two gentlemen had become acquainted at Boston in May, 1665, when Nicolls was fresh from his triumph in effecting the conquest of New Amsterdam from the Dutch, and when Radisson and Groseilliers were still

¹⁸ *London Gazette*, August 10-13, 1668; State Papers, Domestic, Charles II, 247/126. On November 6, 1668, Radisson received £19/6s/6d from John Portman of the Hudson Bay financial group. This sum no doubt represents the explorer's weekly allowance for the period from the date he arrived at Plymouth to the day the payment was made, a matter of just three months.

smarting from the treatment that the Boston merchants had meted out to them. Nicolls, a man of broad vision, well understood the significance to the New York colony of Radisson's unrivaled knowledge of the interior fur trade, and he had done his best to persuade Radisson and Groseilliers to turn toward New York as a base for their operations. But Cartwright's representations had carried the day in this three-cornered debate in which the now repentant Bostonians, realizing too late the price of their cheese-paring policy toward the French fur traders, urgently besought them to settle down on Massachusetts Bay. In the event, the two comrades had chosen to try their luck in London.

The meeting of Nicolls and Radisson at London in the autumn or early winter of 1668 probably is the critical point that led to the composition of Radisson's discourse.¹⁹ Nicolls had certain specific interests; Radisson had certain special knowledge. Nicolls had a desire for information which could be satisfied at this time by no other man in England than Radisson. From this relationship of stimulus and response there probably arose a condition which prepared Radisson's mind to practice an art for him rather unusual, that of literary composition. We need not delay long in pointing out the nature of Radisson's special knowledge, or what he had to contribute. The quality of his geographical learning, based on wide experience in the American interior, placed his colleague Groseilliers and himself, while they were in England, in an unapproachable position as sources of information. Radisson's geographical information must have been accepted as essentially cor-

¹⁹ Nicolls' resignation from the governorship took effect in August, 1668. His successor, Francis Lovelace, was already on the ground, and had been collaborating with him in the work of administration. As Nicolls was eager to return home — he had already petitioned the king to send out a successor to relieve him — we may assume that he wasted no time once he was free of official duties, and that he arrived in London by November, 1668, at the latest. With the prompt departure of a vessel, and prosperous winds, he may even have been there somewhat earlier.

rect by his English contemporaries, otherwise they would never have invested money in the scheme he was promoting.

Why was Nicolls, of all persons known to Radisson, the one man who could have been primarily responsible for prompting his pen? The relevant facts emerge if one glances briefly at an account of Nicolls' career, especially his American career. He sprang from a family that was staunchly royalist. As early as 1643 he took command of a troop of horse against the parliamentary forces. He followed the Stuarts into exile, and served under the Duke of York in the French army. At the Restoration he retired with his patron to London, and was a courtier with the post of groom of the bedchamber to the Duke of York. In 1664 Charles made him chief of the commission of four men charged with the investigation of the thorny New England situation and also ordered him to capture New Amsterdam. The duke appointed him governor of the province that he was expected to acquire. All these responsibilities he discharged in an acceptable manner. Nicolls was well known at court; Charles II, writing a personal letter to his sister, the Duchess of Orleans, has this to say of him: "He that tooke it [*New Amsterdam*] and is now there, is Nicols my brothers servant who you know very well."²⁰ Nicolls' connection with the crown and the court was of the most intimate sort, and he was regarded as tried and tested in his loyalty to the Stuarts.

When Nicolls returned to London he resumed his old post and once more served the Duke of York as groom of the bedchamber. Thus there is every possibility that Nicolls and Radisson were thrown together more than once, since both were members of the court circle. The possibility is more than plausible, it is downright cogent, for it was Nicolls who had provided Radisson and Groseilliers with letters of introduction when they shook New England's

²⁰ *Dictionary of American Biography*, 13:515 (New York, 1934); Cyril H. Hartman, *Charles II and Madame*, 121 (London, 1934).

dust from their feet and set out, under Cartwright's friendly eye, for London. In a sense, then, Radisson was Nicolls' protégé. Would not the patron look up the adventurer in London, where the career he had helped to further was now well advanced? It is most likely. And would Radisson forget his earliest patron, now returned to court? It is rather improbable.

As governor of New York, Nicolls had many problems to deal with; these are a part of the general fabric of American colonial history of the time and need not be discussed here. But one problem must be considered, since it explains Nicolls' special interest in Radisson's geographical knowledge. This is the problem of the New York frontier. It has several aspects. How were the New York merchants (and, in the end, the London merchants) to be assured of the continuance in their hands of that fur trade which, as carried on previously under Dutch rule, had meant rich profits? How were the Iroquois to be brought to a state of dependence, or at least kept in good humor, toward their new overlords, the English? How were French intrusions on the interior borders of New York to be checked? What was the extent of the influence of the Iroquois over the interior lands? What were the present accomplishments and the potential future interests of the French officials at Quebec, with regard to expansion into the interior of North America? And, finally, what was that interior like, where few if any Englishmen had ever dared set foot? As governor of New York the practical problems of administration faced by Nicolls in the conduct of his office had brought him face to face with these and related questions.

On the eve of the conquest, Dutch relations with the Indians on the upper Hudson had been either neutral or friendly. When trouble arose in other quarters, the Dutch several times renewed their alliance with the Mohawk and other Iroquois tribes. Thus during the last period of

Stuyvesant's rule the troubles centering in Fort Orange led to no serious results; amicable relations were maintained with the confederacy of the Five Nations. The French had earlier attempted to establish fortified headquarters on Lake Onondaga; these they evacuated in 1658, after the Dutch, fearful lest the Iroquois fur trade be diverted to Montreal, had encouraged the Mohawk to put pressure on the Onondaga to turn against their French guests. Mohawk and Oneida forces combined in the years following to make life miserable for the French of the St. Lawrence Valley as well as for their Indian allies. During the consequent series of Iroquois excursions and alarms, there occurred the transition from Dutch to English rule. In 1664 Nicolls assumed power in place of Peter Stuyvesant.²¹

Nicolls at once informed himself concerning all urgent problems that demanded attention. He was scarcely warm in his new berth before the frontier issue forced itself upon him. He sent Cartwright to represent him at Albany, where a peace was signed with the Mohawk on September 24, 1664.²² It was well that Cartwright went, for the arrival at Quebec of Tracy in June, 1665, with a large contingent of soldiery boded ill for the Iroquois and the English who were ambitious to exert control over them. The French moved promptly. The Sieur de Courcelles set out in the dead of winter, in January, 1666, with a goodly force and finally reached what is now Schenectady, where to his disappointment he learned that the Mohawk were absent on the warpath against other enemies. He learned also that the English now ruled in the Hudson Valley.²³ Nicolls at New York town did not long remain unaware of this bold

²¹ A. C. Flick, ed., *History of the State of New York*, 1: 320, 2: 128-130 (New York, 1933). Radisson's part in the evacuation of 1658 is well known. See his *Voyages*, 123-131.

²² *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, America and West Indies, 1661-1668*, no. 806.

²³ G. M. Wrong, *Rise and Fall of New France*, 1: 373-380 (London, 1928).

incursion. His intelligence service supplied him with numerous details of the French invasion. Promptly he drew up a report based thereon, sending one copy to John Winthrop, Jr., the governor of Connecticut, and the other to Whitehall.²⁴

In June, 1666, Nicolls was anxiously watching the efforts of Winthrop to compose peace with the Indians who lived along the border of Connecticut. At the same time Tracy, the French leader, was making propositions at Quebec to the English of New York. He had under his command, he wrote, so many soldiers that now was the very time to destroy the Iroquois. He affirmed his benevolent attitude toward the English. On July 6, 1666, Nicolls learned that Tracy was on the march, bound on an expedition to chastise the Mohawk near Albany. Nicolls hoped that the Bostonians would aid him with men, so that a combined English force could cut off the French on their return.²⁵

It is not possible in this place to follow in detail the further story of French-English relations on the New York frontier during Nicolls' regime. The French side of the story may be followed in the standard histories of New France, and Nicolls' reactions may be studied in the interesting series of papers dealing with this matter that issued from him.²⁶ Enough has been said, however, to show the background of this border problem and to indicate that it was a living issue which faced Nicolls from the start of his

²⁴ A copy of the report that Nicolls sent to Winthrop is among the Boyle Papers, in the library of the Royal Society, London. With it is a covering letter from Winthrop to a member of the Royal Society which makes possible the attribution of the document to Nicolls. The copy sent to Whitehall is listed as number 1108 in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, 1661-1668*. The document has been printed by J. R. Brodhead, in his *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 3: 118 (Albany, 1853).

²⁵ *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, America and West Indies, 1661-1668*, nos. 1219, 1232.

²⁶ *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, America and West Indies, 1661-1668*, nos. 806, 1094, 1108, 1219, 1228, 1232, 1251, 1260, 1304, 1305, 1378, 1379, 1380, 1381, 1461, 1462, 1466, 1491, 1604, 1616, 1628, 1766, 1813.

administration. He bequeathed the problem, as a matter of fact, to his successor in office, Lovelace. It was no simple issue, for among the factors involved were the special role of the Mohawk in the Iroquois confederacy; the relations of the Iroquois as a whole toward the New England Indians, toward the French Indians, toward the French, and toward the English; the French claims to the Lake Champlain-Mohawk Valley-western New York sector of the frontier; and the control of the profitable fur trade with the interior farther west. Was this to be in French or in English hands? After broad experience with this frontier problem, then, Nicolls returned to London and — lucky man — found there the one person in England who could resolve his curiosity and furnish him with the desired economic and military information concerning the regions that lay beyond the New York settlements.

Nicolls probably prevailed upon Radisson to undertake the preparation of a discourse embodying part of his special knowledge. The probable time for the commencement of composition would be in the late autumn or early winter of 1668. The work — a winter's task at the least, for one like Radisson who was not practiced in literary arts — must have been completed, at the latest, by the end of the spring of 1669. He wrote, or perhaps dictated, in his own language, French. His manuscript was translated into English as early as June, 1669, for in that month, as has been noted, Prince Rupert's secretary paid five pounds to the anonymous translator. The manuscript which we possess has descended to us through Samuel Pepys, secretary of the navy office, and this circumstance is readily comprehensible, since Pepys and the proprietor of New York province, the Duke of York, lord high admiral, were in almost daily official contact. Nicolls was one of the duke's suite, utterly devoted to his master's interests, and, though the colonel never returned to New York, he never forgot that province or its

problems. In urging Radisson to turn penman, he would be counseling a labor plainly intended to benefit the duke as proprietor of New York.

The purpose of Radisson's discourse must have been in part to supply the exact knowledge upon which the authorities, charged with the responsibility of protecting New York's frontier, could base an intelligent and up-to-the-minute policy. According to this interpretation, *the first three narratives of Radisson's discourse are, in essence, documents concerned primarily with the problems of the New York frontier.* Two unifying threads run through page after page of Radisson's thought—information about the Iroquois, on whom the fate of the future English fur trade with the West really depended, and news concerning French accomplishments and movements in the interior.

Radisson's discourse must, therefore, be interpreted by us from the vantage points primarily of Albany and secondarily of London. Radisson devotes the equivalent of slightly less than sixty-one printed pages to his first voyage, "The Relation of my Voyage, being in Bondage in the Lands of the Irokoits, w^{ch} was the next yeare after my coming into Canada."²⁷ In this narrative Radisson describes the homeland of the Mohawk near Albany and the western New York lands of the Iroquois. He casually describes the Indian route via Lake George and Lake Champlain to the St. Lawrence, as well as other items too numerous to mention. In dealing with this geographical area he writes at length, because what he experienced there is of considerable utility for his London friends.

Then follows "The Second Voyage made in the Upper Country of the Iroquoits."²⁸ In this caption the emphasis should be placed on the word "Upper." Here he tells about lands that are much farther removed from Albany, but are nonetheless of significance because of English in-

²⁷ Radisson, *Voyages*, 25.

²⁸ Radisson, *Voyages*, 86.

terest in the western fur trade and of Iroquois influence there. This narrative is somewhat shorter than the first relation; it amounts to forty-eight printed pages.

Does the hypothesis give any help in interpreting the third relation? This is the narrative of such great interest to historians of the Middle West and Canada. In this relation, which bears the title "The Auxoticiat Voyage into the Great and filthy Lake of the Hurrons, Upper Sea of the East, and Bay of the North," Radisson deals with the upper lakes, the "Far West" of the time, and the approaches toward Hudson Bay from the south.²⁹ His theater of action is immensely wide, yet for this vast area he requires no more than thirty-seven and a half printed pages. To cover his largest topic, thus, he contents himself with writing the shortest of all four of his relations. His procedure is reasonable enough, however, for what practical interest could the English have in that remote interior of the upper lakes in 1668-69? And when were they likely to approach its borders? None could say at the time of Radisson's writing. Therefore Radisson's pen moved swiftly. He omitted mention of much that had no concrete utility for a governor of New York with a sharp eye cocked on Albany and the French rivals' fur trade. His text shows how his mind worked. At one point he starts out to describe the "Escotecke" nation, then draws himself up shortly with "I will not insist much upon their way of living, ffor of their ceremonys heere you will see a pattern." He is resolved to compress his account, and the very next sentence is an announcement to the reader to that effect: "In the last voyage that wee made I will lett you onely know what cours we runned in 3 years' time."³⁰ That is to say, he is not going to furnish a description of Indian sociology; instead he is going to confine himself strictly to a record of his wanderings in the interior.

²⁹ Radisson, *Voyages*, 134.

³⁰ Radisson, *Voyages*, 148.

Essentials, no trimmings! That was what was wanted, one infers, in 1668-69. A few pages farther on, however, the natural expansionist in Radisson comes to the fore: he describes the fine country where he and Groseilliers wintered, he tells of a beautiful lake, he writes enthusiastically about the fertility of those interior lands. He declares they can be cheaply conquered. This passage and the one which follows are, I think, significant. Radisson is eager to point out not only the fur trade advantages, but also the agricultural advantages of what is now the upper Midwest. He ends with a just remark: "It's true, I confesse, that the accesse is difficult" from Montreal and from Albany.³¹ The third voyage tells relatively little, compared to what Radisson could tell, because there is little to record either of French accomplishments or Iroquois influence in this far western theater. Thus it seems to conform to the fundamental logic of Radisson's literary purpose. What suited the desires of Nicolls and his friends has resulted in causing much work for historians who follow after. If there is a Radisson problem, let us blame not Radisson but Nicolls.

The third relation ends sharply and clearly with this caption: "The ende of the Auxotacicac voyage, w^{ch} is the third voyage."³² The relation which follows has no contemporary title. This is the voyage in which Radisson gives the impression to some modern readers that he actually reached Hudson Bay overland from the south. In any case, it is a fact that he did travel far and wide in the upper lakes country, and that he had the attainment of that important objective well to the fore in his mind. The fourth relation bridges the gap between the information Radisson is supplying to Nicolls about the New York frontier and that written out for his financial supporters who are, or may be, inquisitive concerning the nature of the lands bordering on Hudson Bay. He makes the point that "Those great lakes had not

³¹ Radisson, *Voyages*, 150, 151.

³² Radisson, *Voyages*, 172.

so soone comed to our [*French*] knowledge if it had not ben for those brutish people." ³³ Fear of the Iroquois had made Radisson and Groseilliers keep shy of this tribe; "two men had not found out y^e truth of these seas so cheape." Thus fear of the Iroquois was one cause leading to their distinguished discoveries.

Radisson rounds out his relation by telling how he and Groseilliers left New France in disgust and how they went to New England, where they met Cartwright and Nicolls. In this final portion he moves along so rapidly that it is entirely obvious he is writing for someone who already understands a good deal about his previous career. This circumstance explains, too, why he commences his discourse in an abrupt manner. He does not indulge in a long introduction explaining why he is writing this discourse, but plunges at once into his dramatic recital.

What of the significance of Radisson's discourse for his contemporaries? When the explorer finished writing his manuscript, Nicolls had the material to formulate an intelligent frontier policy for New York; the Duke of York knew more than ever before about the potential wealth of his province; and the Hudson's Bay Company capitalists were in a position to see, as in a sudden flash, how New France could be humbled by simultaneous pressure from an English fort on Hudson Bay on the north and from Albany on the south. Between the blades of these scissors, the fur trade and thus the life of New France could be cut to pieces. The French king's loss would be the English king's gain.

A fairly extensive acquaintance with the facts relating to the development of Anglo-American expansionist literature must be my authority for asserting that no piece of writing of this type simply appears without cause. There is always an explanation for the composition of an expansionist tract or discourse or narrative, and the explanation for its appear-

³³ Radisson, *Voyages*, 187.

ance is precise or not, in proportion to our knowledge of the economic and social background out of which the given piece of literature has arisen. To explain the preparation of Radisson's discourse, I have framed a hypothesis based upon such ascertained facts as are available. Our knowledge of the London milieu of Radisson's day is not as full as we should like to have it. A salutary spirit of caution therefore bids us consider this as a hypothesis and nothing more.

V

Those who may be tempted to consider this explanation as too daring, however, are invited to take into account a set of facts that seems to bear a close relation to this hypothesis. Daniel Denton was a colonial who interested himself in the prosperity of New York province. He went to London and in 1670 caused to be published there the first separate English account of that province, *A Brief Description of New York, Formerly Called New-Netherlands*. Denton had been granted lands by Nicolls in East Jersey, had served in the Hempstead Convention in February, 1665, and a short time later had been appointed a justice of the peace by the governor.³⁴ Useful for the present discussion are certain observations made by Denton in some prefatory remarks addressed "To the Reader."

"I Have here," he writes, "thorough [*sic*] the Instigation of divers Persons in ENGLAND, and elsewhere, presented you with a Brief but true Relation of a known unknown part of AMERICA." This colonial tells us, then, that the stimulus to write this book comes from "divers Persons" in England. The lord proprietor of New York, the Duke of York, was just at this juncture hard pressed for money. He wanted to encourage settlers to go, and merchants to send their ships, to his undeveloped province, in order that quitrents, dues, customs duties, a waxing fur trade, and a

³⁴ V. H. Paltsits, ed., *Minutes of the Executive Council of the Province of New York, 1668-1673*, 1: 132n. (Albany, 1910).

flourishing economic life generally would replenish the lean purse of his royal highness. Of all this Nicolls was well aware, and it may be assumed, with every feeling of confidence, that either James or Nicolls, his protégé, or both of them, persuaded Denton to do something which it was easy and profitable for him to do. Denton writes nothing but what he has himself seen — so he assures the reader. “For the unknown part, which is . . . some places lying to the Northward yet undiscovered by any ENGLISH . . . yet I shall not feed your expectation with any thing of that nature; but leave it till a better discovery shall make way for such a Relation.”³⁵

If those interested in New York had urged Denton to write an account of that province, is it not a fair inference that they could have followed a similar course with Radisson?³⁶ By the time Denton's tract was published in 1670, Radisson's completed discourse probably was safely put away for future reference among the Duke of York's business papers. What with Denton's tract, which strictly confined itself to “The known part which is either inhabited, or lieth near the Sea,” and Radisson's, which dealt at large

³⁵ Daniel Denton, *A Brief Description of New York*, sig. A³, recto, verso.

³⁶ Dr. Nute tells me that Groseilliers was considered by his contemporaries in England to be a better educated man than Radisson. There is some evidence that Groseilliers had been instructed, apparently, by the father of one of the nuns at Tours; he had also been with the Jesuits at Quebec and at Huronia. By contrast with his young partner, he was literary, for we know that he kept on at least one occasion a journal of his observations in the wilderness. Yet it was Radisson who actually composed the discourse which records their wanderings. When the explorers' London friends wanted information concerning America, Groseilliers was not present to furnish what was desired. Thus it was that upon Radisson's shoulders was placed the labor of writing out the record of their travels. It is possible to see in this circumstance a further, if incidental, argument against Scull's theory of composition in 1665. In bringing this study to a close, it is a pleasure to acknowledge my obligations to Dr. Nute. When she learned that I had been working on Radisson's discourse, considered as a piece of Anglo-American expansionist literature, she generously placed at my disposal various unpublished documents bearing on the problem and helped me in numerous other ways.

with those places lying to the "Northward" — concerning which Denton either did not know or would not tell — the Duke of York had reason to congratulate himself, so far as his American possessions were concerned, with the literary memorials of his vast propriety. Thus the economic needs of Anglo-American expansion had generated two important pieces of expansionist literature.

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