

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

THE RADISSON MANUSCRIPT¹

The readers of *MINNESOTA HISTORY* may be interested in a short account of a recent visit which the writer paid to the Bodleian Library in Oxford to take a look at the Radisson manuscript. The officials in charge of the library were most courteous and produced the famous document without any especial letters of introduction.

The manuscript is bound in old vellum with no writing on either cover, inside or out. On the title page, however, written in bold hand, are these words: "A la plus grande Gloire de Dieu." Underneath this in smaller and different handwriting is the name or signature "M. S. Pepys." There is nothing else on the title page. The paper on which the text is written is thick and rather coarse in texture, of cream color and very well preserved. The text is written on both sides of the page. The pages are about nine inches wide by fourteen inches long. The handwriting is in a brownish-black ink, very easy and legible and very even—in fact it is quite evident from the careful spacing and regularity of the lines and borders that the manuscript must have been the work of some practiced amanuensis or copyist who either wrote from dictation or copied from some previous notes or from some existing French or English text. There are seven blank pages at the end. It is a matter of keen regret that the copyist did not use these blank pages to tell posterity a little more in detail just *where* Radisson went in his several "voyages."

There are several photostatic copies of this manuscript in America — one of which is owned by Mr. Arthur T. Adams of Minneapolis. Mr. Adams is making an exhaustive study

¹ This note was received by the editor in the form of a letter from Mr. Gale, dated November 12, 1926. *Ed.*

of the subject, and in the light of what he is doing, I forbear to make any further comments respecting the many peculiarities of the manuscript. What is much needed in my opinion is a more or less popular edition of Radisson, with some critical notes and explanations perhaps. Certainly Radisson's narrative is a most readable one, the equal, I was going to say, in interest to any story of pure adventure which we have. And of course for us of Minnesota — but I must not start any discussion. At any rate the Prince Society publication (1885) is practically the only publication of the *Voyages*, and it is one of the scarcest items in the whole list of Americana; in fact, not available at all to the general public.

While we are on this subject, may I be permitted to offer a suggestion of my own respecting the meaning of the word "Auxoticiat" in Radisson's heading of his famous third voyage: "*Now followeth the Auxoticiat Voyage into the Great and filthy Lake of the Hurrons, Upper Sea of the East, and Bay of the North.*" Have we not erred in trying to make an English word out of this hybrid? It is to be remembered that Radisson frequently refers to the Ottawa Indian nation or tribe under the name of "Otauack," sometimes spelled by him in the manuscript as "Ottauaks," "Octauac," "Octauacks," and "Octuack." (The Prince Society publication prints the *u* as an *n*, but in the original manuscript it is clearly *u*.) These people resided in Radisson's time around the upper end of Lake Huron and played an important part in the annals of the period. "The great flotillas coming down to Canada with furs were said to come from the Ottawa, while the region of the upper lakes was known as the Ottawa country." (Kellogg's *Early Narratives of the Northwest*, p. 36 n.) If, therefore, we cut this word "Auxoticiat" in two, between the *x* and the *o*, making two words of it, the first being the French preposition "aux," meaning in the French idiom "to the," or "at the," or sometimes simply "the," and the second part "oticiat" being an effort on the part of Radisson or the

copyist to write "Otauack," we get a result which means "to the Ottawa," or "at the Ottawa," or simply "the Ottawa," as described in Miss Kellogg's descriptive note. The heading, therefore, is to be read as if it were: "*Now followeth the Ottawa Voyage into the Great and filthy Lake of the Hurrons, Upper Sea of the East, and Bay of the North,*" which has common sense and is historically and geographically correct. The variation on the word at the end of the third voyage, "*The ende of the Auxotacicac voyage, w^{ch} is the third voyage,*" may be the result of another effort on the part of the copyist to write down or copy some strange word or words with which he was unfamiliar.

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THE STATE FAIR EXHIBIT

The exhibit of the Minnesota Historical Society at the annual state fair in September brought 1856 and 1926 face to face. It was installed at the south end of the building devoted to state department displays. Just outside the door the latest types of threshing machines, plows, road-graders, and ponderous trucks were in operation under the direction of leather-lunged demonstrators. Against the inside wall, forming the background of the historical exhibit, was a giant map in yellow and black, showing Minnesota's progress toward good roads. In the center of the great hall was a large exhibit of the Minnesota highway department showing in miniature the types of roads and the methods used in maintaining them. Near-by were the spaces occupied by the dairy and food commission, the department of agriculture, and the public health service, with their practical suggestions for better living conditions in 1926. Everything in the building bespoke the complexities of twentieth-century life save the quiet booth at the lower end.



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