SECTION 2ND. FATHER ALLOUES ARRIVES AT THE VILLAGE OF THE ILLINOIS. DESCRIPTION OF THAT VILLAGE AND OF THE COUNTRY. THE FAITH IS PROCLAIMED TO ALL THE NATIONS.

Notwithstanding all the efforts that we made to hasten our journey, it was not until the 27th of April that I was able to arrive at Kachkachkia, the great village of the Iliinois. I entered, at once, the Cabin in which father marquette had lodged; and, the old men being assembled there with the entire population, I made known the reason for which I had come to them, — namely, to preach to them the true God, living and Immortal, and his only son Jesus Christ. They listened very attentively to my whole discourse and thanked me for the trouble that I was taking for their salvation.

I found this Village largely increased since a year ago. Formerly, it was Composed of but one nation, that of the Kachkachkia; at the present time, there are 8 tribes in it, the first having summoned the others, who inhabited the neighborhood of the river mississipi. One cannot well satisfy himself as to the number of people who Compose that village, They are housed in 351 cabins, which are easily counted, as most of them are situated upon the bank of the river.

The spot which they have Chosen for their abode [Page 159] is situated in latitude 40 degrees 41 minutes. On one Side of it is a long stretch of prairie, and on the other a multitude of swamps, which are [render the atmosphere] unhealthy and often Covered with fog, — giving Rise to much sickness, and to loud and frequent Peals of thunder; they delight, however, in this location, as they can easily espy from it their enemies.

These savages are naturally high-spirited, valorous, and daring. They wage war with 7 or 8 different nations, but do not use guns, finding them too cumbersome and slow. They carry them, nevertheless, when they march against nations who do not understand the use of them, to frighten them by the noise and put them to rout. Usually, they carry only the club, the bow, and a Quiverful of arrows, which they shoot with such skill and rapidity as scarcely to give time to those who have guns to Take Aim. They carry also a large shield, made of the skins of the wild bison, arrow-proof, and covering the whole Body.[25]
They have several wives, and are extremely jealous of them, leaving them on the least suspicion. Usually these latter conduct themselves well, and dress modestly; not so the men, who feel no shame at their nudity.

They live on indian corn and other fruits of the earth, which they cultivate, like the other savages, on the prairies. They eat 14 kinds of roots, which they find in the prairies; they made me eat some and I found them good and very sweet. They Gather from trees and plants 42 different kinds of fruits, all of which are excellent; and catch 25 sorts of fish — among them, the eel. They Hunt the roebuck, the bison, the Turkey, the Wildcat, a species of tiger, and other animals; they Reckon up 22 kinds of these, and some 40 kinds of game and birds. I have been told that, lower down the river, there are saline springs, and that they make salt from them; I have not yet seen the experiment tried. I am also assured that, not far from their village, there is slate-stone as fine as ours. I have seen in this country, as with the outaouacs, red Copper — which is found, as elsewhere, in little pieces, on the banks of the river. And, lastly, they assure me that there are here rocks with pitch, similar to those which I saw on the shores of lake st. Joseph. The savages Cut them, and find silver — like veins; they pulverize these and make of them a very fine red paint. They also come across other veins, from which the pitch oozes; this, when thrown into the fire, burns like ours.

This is all that I was able to observe in this country, in the short time that I lived in it. What follows is what I did for the Christian faith.

As I had but a short time to remain here, — having come only to acquire the information necessary for the establishment of a complete mission, — immediately applied myself to give all the instruction I could to these 8 different nations, to whom, by the grace of God I made myself sufficiently understood. I went, for that purpose, into the Cabin of the Chief of the nation that I wished to instruct; and, there making ready a small altar, using the ornaments of my portable Chapel, I exposed the Crucifix; when they had looked at it, I explained to them the mysteries of our holy faith. I could not have desired a larger audience, or closer attention. They carried to me their smaller children to be baptized, and brought me the older ones to be Instructed. They themselves repeated all the prayers that I taught them. In a word, after I had done the same for all the nations, I had recognized, as a result, the same number of peoples to whom nothing more remained [I saw that nothing was lacking to all these peoples] save careful Cultivation, for them to become good Christians. This is what we hope hereafter to effect at leisure.

I have made a beginning in This mission, by the baptism of 35 children, and one sick adult; this man died a short time afterward, as did one of his children, to go to take possession of paradise in the name of the whole nation.

And, in order to take possession also of all these peoples in the name of Jesus Christ, on the 3rd of may, the festival of the holy Cross, we planted in the middle of the village a Cross 35 feet in height, chanting the “ vexilla ” in the presence of a large number of illinois of all the nations. Of
these I can say in truth that they did not regard Jesus Christ Crucified as a folly, or a scandal; on the contrary, they assisted at that ceremony with great respect, and listened with admiration to all I had to say regarding that mystery. The children even came devoutly to kiss the Cross, while the grown-up people Earnestly entreated me to plant it there so firmly that it might never be in danger of falling.

The time of my departure having come, I bade Adieu to these peoples, and left them eagerly anticipating my return as soon as possible — an expectation all the more willingly encouraged by me, inasmuch as on the one Hand I have great reason [Page 165] for thanking God for the little crosses of which, in this voyage, he granted me a share; and because on the other I see the mission quite ready, and very promising. Doubtless, the devil will oppose himself to it, and perhaps will profit by the war which the Iroquois intend to make against the Illinois. I pray our Lord to avert it, lest beginnings so glorious may be entirely destroyed.

[Postscript by Dablon: “In the year after, 1678, father aloués set out on his return to that mission, to remain there two consecutive years, that he might thus work more effectively for the Conversion of those peoples. We have since learned that the Iroquois have made an incursion thus far, but that they were defeated by the Illinois. This will go far to foment war between these nations; and if God do not interpose, will do much injury to this mission. [Page 167]