

“Two Frenchman”
by F. W. Hutchinson

Now, these men were not only very good, but they were also very brave. One was named Louis Joliet. He had been sent by the King of France to find a passage to the Pacific Ocean. The other was Father Marquette, a French priest, as brave as any soldier. Father Marquette had lived with the Indians many years. He knew their languages and all their customs. The Indians loved him and called him their friend.

Well, it was not an easy thing that these brave Frenchmen were trying to do. No white man had ever been in all this country before. It was much pleasanter staying in Quebec, the city which good Champlain, the Father of New France,

had founded; but, Joliet and good Father Marquette were not afraid of danger. They sailed down the St. Lawrence River into the Great Lakes, and then on and on and on, day after day, and day after day, until at last they reached Lake Michigan. This part of their journey must have been the most pleasant. The weather was warm, the Indians they met were friendly, and now and then they would come across some Frenchman who was living out in the wild country, trapping animals for their furs or trading with the Indians. Sometimes they would meet a good French priest, who had come this great way to teach the Indians about God.

At last, they left the last Frenchman and the last wooden cross and started down a narrow but beautiful river that

they believed flowed into the Mississippi. The little river was so choked with rice that grew wild along its banks that the boats found it hard to move. Their guides left them, and for a week they drifted slowly, slowly down the river, till, with cries of joy, they came to the Mississippi.

Now, this Mississippi River is the greatest river in America and in all the world. It was the same river that De Soto had found so many, many years before, when the Indians had told him that its name was the “Father of Waters.”

Whatever country owned the Mississippi River, the great river that flowed from little streams all the way down to where it emptied into the great, great sea, that country would own all the land along its banks, and so would be the greatest

country in America. This was why Joliet and Father Marquette wanted to sail all the way down the river, so that all the land on its banks might belong to France. Besides, they thought that perhaps it flowed into the Pacific Ocean. You see, Joliet and Father Marquette had no good maps, and they did not know, as you and I know, that the Mississippi River flowed not west into the Pacific Ocean, but south into the Gulf of Mexico.

When the two brave Frenchmen reached the Mississippi River, they were a little afraid of the Indians who lived along its banks. Perhaps these Indians would be their enemies and would kill them; so they no longer left their canoes at night and slept on the banks about a roaring campfire.