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Expedition to the Mississippi River by Way of the Gulf of Mexico: An Account of the Interrogation of the two Canadians who are Soldiers in the Company of Feuguerolles and their Responses, Brest, February 14, 1698

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etation, animal life, and native inhabitants. It provides a graphic picture of the Texas wilderness and the earliest cultural contacts between Indian tribes and their first European visitors.

The complete report appears to have been discovered by a French historian, Jean Boudriot, in the French naval archives at Rochefort. In mid-1974 he sent a photocopy of the manuscript to an American friend and colleague, T. M. Hamilton, who was involved in research into early French trade with the North American Indians. Hamilton in turn sent the manuscript to me because of my prior experience translating seventeenth-century French manuscripts. In 1975-76 I prepared a draft translation but carried the project no further at that time because of other research priorities. Since my retirement in 1982, I have been able to complete this project. As far as we know the complete report has never been published, and it is accordingly with an understandable pride of priority that we present it here.

R. T. Huntington
July 1985

EXPEDITION TO THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER BY WAY OF THE GULF OF MEXICO

AN ACCOUNT OF THE INTERROGATION
OF THE TWO CANADIANS WHO ARE SOLDIERS
IN THE COMPANY OF FEUGEROLLES
AND THEIR RESPONSES
BREST, FEBRUARY 14, 1698

translated by R. T. Huntington

Questions concerning the Account forwarded by Monseigneur de Pontchartrain

These soldiers are two brothers, Pierre and Jean Baptiste Talon, born in Quebec in New France, sons of Lucien Talon, a timber worker, and his wife Isabelle (both now deceased) who were inhabitants of that place. As boys the two brothers left Canada with their father and mother to return to France; they were then quite young and are unable to state precisely

when this took place. They state though that it was shortly before La Salle departed on his last expedition to Louisiana; for, after coming ashore at La Rochelle and traveling to Paris, they were engaged by La Salle, together with their parents, two younger brothers, and two sisters, to accompany La Salle on that voyage. They all accordingly returned to La Rochelle where they embarked with him, without having remained in France longer than perhaps two months.

La Salle had three vessels: the *Joly* of about 50 guns, on which he himself sailed; the *L'Aimable*, about 20 guns, which carried the Talon brothers and their family; and a third vessel whose name the brothers do not recall.

Question 1: How many people landed with La Salle?

Reply: About three hundred, including three friars of the order of St. Francis; two priests, one of whom was a brother of La Salle; and nine women. They came ashore at the Bay of the Holy Spirit, or of the Ascension, in the Gulf of Mexico, because the *L'Aimable* grounded there and was wrecked, just a cannon-shot from shore. From what they heard, the mishap resulted from the pilot's error. Had it not been for this accident, La Salle had intended to sail further in search of the mouth of the Mississippi. He sent back to France only the *Joly*, with its crew; the vessel's captain, M. de Beaujeu, set sail soon after unloading was completed. La Salle retained the third vessel, but so little care was taken that it too was wrecked in the bay.

Question 2: The nature of the country where they landed; whether there was a river there; if so, its width and depth at its mouth; whether there are any lakes; and whether the country consists of prairies or mountains.

Reply: The country is flat, of a pleasing aspect, diversified with woods and prairies or savannahs, and appears quite fertile. There was a river emptying into the bay, but they knew neither its length nor its name. It was about a long pistol-shot in width, and five to six fathoms deep at its mouth.

La Salle took his entire party up this river, using for this purpose some natives' canoes that he found there as well as the ships' boats. At a point about twelve leagues from the mouth of the river they built houses of earth and wood, some five or six in number, to house the party; but they provided no defensive work other than a battery of eight cannon, which

created fear and terror in the hearts of the natives whenever they were fired, since they had never before heard anything of the sort.

The party remained at this settlement for about a year, or until the time of La Salle's death, which will be related later. During this time La Salle was exploring the country ahead of them with detachments of twenty-five to fifty men armed with muskets, pistols, and sabers or swords. Each man carried his own supply of powder and ball. They lived on the abundance of game that they hunted; wild cattle [translator's note: bison], deer, and other wild animals of which the region is full—the forests as well as the plains—as well as on all sorts of wild fowl, principally the cock of India [translator's note: wild turkey], partridge, parrakeets, ducks, bustards, doves, and snipe. There are also a prodigious quantity of small birds of various species, all very good to eat, as well as herons and swans in large numbers in the rivers and ponds. Also there are many eagles, crows, and other birds of prey, and in particular one species of bird that is completely blood-red in color. Lions, tigers, bears, and wolves are also to be found.

La Salle's hunters discovered the mouth of another splendid river that emptied into the bay, while they were pursuing bison along the latter's shore. The river is about a musket-shot wide, and about fifteen or twenty fathoms deep at its mouth. Even at a distance of some twenty leagues above its mouth it appears to extend much further into the interior of the country. The river is bordered by forests of very large trees; as was the case with all the others, the river was full of alligators or crocodiles. La Salle named it the "Riviere des Cannes" (River of Canes), as much from the quantity of fine reeds or canes, from which the Indians make their arrows, as from the number of ducks. [Translator's note: This is a pun on the French words "canne" (reed) and "cane" (duck).]

In the whole region are a number of lakes and ponds, some fresh and some brackish, and many small rivers and large streams, for the most part full of fish; they are also full of crocodiles, for which one must keep alert. One must also take care to avoid the fury of the bison; when one has been wounded, several will pursue the hunters, and even keep an obstinate watch at the foot of the trees that hunters often find it necessary to climb to escape them. The beasts try to uproot the trees with their hooves, right up to the moment that they receive the death wound. Their meat is very tasty, but the animals are quite different from those of Europe in that they are much heavier and have a large hump on their shoulders. The head and

eyes are much larger in proportion to their bodies, and instead of hair their hide is covered with a kind of wool, that can be spun. This wool is longer on the head than elsewhere, giving them a shaggy head of hair that nearly conceals their eyes. Their horns are smaller than those of European cattle, and very sharp, while their tails are quite short. Males as well as females are reddish-black in color. The natives tan their hides as we do chamois, and render them as soft as woven cloth.

Forests and woods are composed of oak, walnut, pine, and several other types, some of them of extremely large size, of unknown species. There are fleecy squirrels in these trees, particularly in the pines. The rivers are bordered by palms and mulberry trees, which bear fruit profusely.

Question 3: In advancing into the interior, what sort of country was found?

Reply: Everywhere flat and diversified, as has been said, composed of forests, woods, and prairies, and in brief the most beautiful in the world, laced with several large streams or small rivers, some of which are deep enough to carry boats. All this country has a very mild climate, hardly ever too hot or too cold, with a winter that is quite brief; as a result, the natives generally live to an advanced age, and are nearly always in an excellent state of health. They also have a marvelous knowledge of the virtues of the different herbs and plants that abound in the region. They easily cure their own ailments, and treat their wounds themselves. There are no doctors as such; their old men generally apply their own remedies with good results. The Talon brothers state that during their entire time there, some six or seven years, they saw none of the natives die of illness.

Question 4: Did they find any natives there, and did they have any communication with them?

Reply: All the region is peopled with natives, who are divided into small tribes, each having its own name as well as its own language, which differs from that of the others. The Talon brothers were in communication with two of these tribes in particular; Pierre Talon with the Ceni, the mildest and best-disposed of all the tribes of which they had knowledge; they are about one hundred leagues inland. These Ceni have their own village, where they live by families in wooden houses thatched with hay. La Salle became friendly with them, sent Pierre Talon to them to try to learn their language. This he did perfectly, living with them for a period of

five or six years, until the Spanish took him away, as will be related later. But he has now almost completely forgotten this language, having lived for about ten years among the Spanish in Mexico, where they took him, and where he learned Spanish.

Jean Baptiste Talon, the younger of the two brothers, together with two still younger brothers and a sister, lived for a like number of years, and indeed even longer, with the Clamcoet tribe. These are a people much more cruel and barbarous than the Ceni, and indeed than any other of the native tribes. They live along the seashore, with no villages or fixed dwellings, roaming continuously, and living on game and fish. They make camp wherever the night finds them, in rude shelters improvised on the spot from two forked poles and a ridgepole that they cover with bison hides prepared for the purpose, and which they wrap themselves in during the day. They share this custom with the other nomadic tribes of the region; this includes all the tribes between the seashore and the village of the Ceni. These latter [the Ceni], on the contrary, cultivate the land, raising Indian corn, or maize. They also grow beans and squash of various types, as well as other kinds of vegetables and root plants whose names the Talon brothers do not know. They grow tobacco, but only a small amount, and that solely for their own use. They also raise horses, which they scarcely use for other purposes than to carry meat on their hunting trips; this, because the hunters have to travel a considerable distance when hunting bison. These are very wary and avoid human settlements, so that they are not to be found within a distance of fifteen or twenty leagues from the villages. It has been noted that these bison have so keen a sense of smell that they can scent hunters from some distance when they are approached from upwind, with the result that they take flight. To come near enough to them for a kill it is necessary to approach from downwind. When finally a hunter has succeeded in killing one bison in a herd, either by arrows or by a gunshot, all the others crowd around it, their attention fastened on the victim, so that one may easily kill several others before the herd takes flight. The Ceni tribe, which incidentally is one of the largest, numbers about a thousand persons.

About twelve leagues from the Ceni, advancing inland, is another village, that of the Ayenni. Pierre Talon was also acquainted with this tribe and had some contact with them. The Ayenni are an ally of the Ceni, having the same language and mode of living, but are fewer in number.

Talon heard from them that further inland there are several villages belonging to other tribes. The Talon brothers have no knowledge of any tribe larger than the Ceni, but Pierre Talon heard that there is another and considerably larger tribe called the Canotins, which has no fixed point of habitation, and which continually wages war against the Ceni.

All the tribes that live along the seashore, and indeed as far inland as the Ceni, are extremely barbarous and cruel, and cannot be trusted except under the most favorable conditions, and when one has a stronger force than theirs. Those tribes that live further inland, and thus closer to the Ceni, are more humane and even helpful; they are easy to contact, and display hospitality to Europeans who become lost while hunting or otherwise.

These various tribes are frequently at war with each other, as will be noted further on; they have no weapons other than bows and arrows (which have, instead of iron arrowheads, points made from a kind of flint, sharpened, or from fish bones or fish teeth) and war clubs, since the use of iron is unknown. But their arrows are never poisoned, as are those of the Caribs and other savage peoples of the Antilles.

All these tribes follow the custom of going at the break of dawn each morning to the nearest stream and diving into the water; they almost never fail to do this, whatever the time of year, even when the stream is ice-covered. It often happens that they have to break a hole through the ice so that they can jump into the water. They run at top speed while going to the stream and returning, after which they place themselves in front of a great fire that has been prepared for this purpose. They wipe and shake their arms, legs, and thighs for some time, until they are quite dry, after which they wrap themselves in bison hides prepared like chamois leather, which they use as a robe, and then walk for a space of time. They claim that doing this gives them strength and makes them supple and agile in running. The men are very regular in observing this custom without missing a day, when they have the opportunity to do so. The women are not so exact in the practice. They all swim like fish, both men and women.

The Talon brothers were required to do just as the natives themselves did; they are extremely demanding that others follow their practices, and even copy them in detail, and they often tried to convince the Talon brothers and other young Frenchmen to become pagans like themselves. They never, however, prevented them from praying, but amused them-

selves by moving their lips in imitation, or even spending hours just holding one or another of the books that the Clamcoet had found at the French settlement, after they had massacred them (as will be related later), and making faces as though they were reading. The natives are extremely clownish and fond of ridicule; gay, and addicted to inebriety (for they prepare drinks that go to their head, almost as wine does); they dance and sing, though very crudely, having for instruments only a specially-made notched stick that they rub with another stick, and gourds filled with small pebbles or grains of corn. One of their drinks is made from a red bean that they first chew, and then mix with water. They believe that its use makes them more limber, and lighter in running; as a result they drink so much of it that they vomit it up: drinking and vomiting, alternately by turns. They make still another beverage from leaves, whose name the Talon brothers do not know. They boil these leaves in water, churning it or beating it like chocolate, so that it becomes quite foamy. They drink it while it is very hot, using it principally after they have walked a great deal.

Question 5: Have these natives given any indication of mines of any type?

Reply: The natives have no knowledge of mines nor of minerals; they have no esteem for gold or silver coins, preferring pins, needles, and bits of glass or trade beads. Pierre Talon noted this while he was with the Ceni; some fifty or sixty *louis d'or* were brought in, that La Salle had with him when he was killed, some six leagues or thereabout from their village, as will be related later. The Indians held these coins in little regard, and willingly gave one and even two *louis* for a pin, a needle, a small knife, or some other trifle, so that one of the French prisoners, Pierre Meunier, a Parisian, had no trouble acquiring them. He took them with him when he was taken to Mexico, together with young Talon, and gave them to the Vice-roy. The Talon brothers saw no mines, nor had they any knowledge of them, until they were in Mexico, where mines are by no means lacking, as will be recounted later; but these mines all belong to the Spanish.

Question 6: What goods and products does the region provide?

Reply: In describing the nature of the country mention has already been made of some of its natural products: walnuts, mulberries, etc., to which may be added both red and white grapes; there are many grapevines in the forests whose root-stocks are much larger in size than those of Europe,

and whose vines climb high up on most of the trees. The grapes though are sour, since they are wild and uncultivated. In addition to the usual sorts of nuts there are some very large ones; there are also hazelnuts in quantity, and a fruit that is called a fig, but is not like the European fig; it is much more like a banana.

Hedge-mulberries are plentiful; these are very good to eat. On these as well as on the grapes feed many species of small birds that are themselves very tasty. There are also several other types of fruits of which the Talon brothers knew neither the names nor the characteristic. One of these in particular is very refreshing; it is shaped like an egg, and grows on spiny bushes. The Spanish, who esteem it highly, name it "Tonne."

All this region produced Indian corn or maize, yams, gourds, pumpkins, and beans of several types. La Salle had these sown and cultivated at his settlement, having brought the seeds from the village of the Ceni. The land here appears, everywhere, suitable for growing all sorts of grains and vegetables, if they should be planted, even though it does not rain much in this region.

There are many bees in the plains, which make their honey in the grasses and in the trees. But the natives do not raise them, contenting themselves with eating the wild honey that they find. One might also raise tobacco here, since the Ceni cultivate it, though only in small quantities and for their own use. There is also pimienta or red pepper in quantity, very small in size and quite strong, but the natives make no use of it.

The Talon brothers also speak of a type of strongly-flavored root which is commonly found throughout the region and is, apparently, ginger. The natives believe that this root has the virtue of making their hair grow, and with this in mind they rub it into their hair, after chewing it. The Talons believe that there is also cotton growing there, but they cannot well explain this.

It is probable that one can also find tortoise-shell, since there is an abundance of tortoises of all types, large and small, both aquatic and land varieties, whose flesh is quite tasty.

The natives have nothing to offer in trade other than bison hides and deerskins, which they prepare like chamois skin, and render as supple as cloth, even though as we have noted earlier the bison in this region are much larger than European cattle. There will soon be numbers of wild or feral pigs in this area, the French having let some loose, which had already

multiplied marvelously when the Talons left. The natives do not eat them, calling them the "Frenchmen's dogs," which they have imagined to be the case because they themselves have no dogs other than wolves, which they capture when quite young, tame, and train for hunting. The common barnyard fowl which the French raised at their settlement escaped to the woods after the massacre, and must have multiplied. The natives do not have the same aversion to these fowl that they have for the pigs; they eat them and find them very good.

There would be no lack of milk, if one were to take the trouble to tame the cow bison, which are in abundance; the natives do not choose to do this, contenting themselves, whenever they kill one, with sucking out all the milk it contains.

From what the Talon brothers report, though somewhat confusedly, one can infer that salt is available; they state that the French collected a type of white sand, along the ocean shore and the borders of the salt ponds, which they boiled in water until it became of the consistency of salt. This they used for seasoning soups and meats. The natives make little use of salt at all, and then only for preserving meat, which they dry in the sun after cutting it in very thin slices.

Question 7: To what place did La Salle lead them?

Reply: The explorations of La Salle did not extend further than the village of the Ceni, which, as has been stated, is about one hundred leagues inland, since he was killed on the second expedition that he undertook to that area with the intention of penetrating further. His death occurred at a point about six leagues from the village, and before he had reached there. He was killed by a Basque named Duhau, by a gunshot in the head. Duhau killed him in revenge for the death of his elder brother, whom, he had been told, La Salle had killed on his first expedition to explore the region, immediately after he had landed. The elder Duhau brother had accompanied La Salle, together with a number of other men, but had never returned; he was not the only one who perished, since the greater part of those who were with La Salle on that expedition, as well as on others that he made later, suffered the same fate. For on these trips of two or three months, and even on one trip of six months without returning to the settlement, he never brought back but about half of the men who set out with him. Some became lost, and died in the forests from fatigue, or were

killed by the savage Clamcoet with whom they fought, while others deserted to live among the natives, by whom they were well received.

Question 8: An account of the events attending the death of La Salle.

Reply: The younger of the Duhau brothers, having resolved to kill La Salle, took advantage of La Salle's having sent him as one of six men in a hunting party (they were then, as has been stated, about six leagues from the village of the Ceni) to plot against him. But among the five others in the party he found only one, an Englishman named James, who would fall in with his plan. This forced them to kill the four others while they slept. One of the four was an Indian named Nica, a good hunter, whom La Salle had brought with him from Canada; another, a servant of La Salle's named Sagé. The other two were Frenchmen whose names Pierre Talon, who relates these events, does not recall. Young Talon had been with La Salle since his arrival, having been brought on the expedition with the intention of being left with the Ceni, to learn their language.

La Salle, impatient that the hunters had not returned, went ahead towards the area to which he had directed them, which was not far distant, to try to find out the reason for their delay in returning. He was accompanied only by a Franciscan friar. Duhau and James, anticipating that La Salle would do just this, placed themselves in ambush at two points along the route, so that if one should fail, the other would succeed in their plan. Duhau, firing first, killed La Salle on the spot by putting a ball through his forehead. He then returned with James to rejoin the main party as though they had done nothing.

Duhau told the brother of the man he had just killed, who was a fine priest, and the latter's nephew, a young lad of ten or twelve years, what he had done to avenge, as he said, the death of his brother. He told them that they were free to go wherever they wished, since he could never thereafter look at them without pain. With that the griefstricken uncle and nephew left, together with the friar who had been a witness to the murder and two or three other friends of theirs, all Frenchmen, whose names Talon does not recall. They went past the village of the Ceni, where they left Pierre Talon, in accordance with La Salle's intention. They then set out to make their way through the forest and the uncharted wilderness in an attempt to reach Canada overland, having guns and ammunition for hunting, and preferring to expose themselves to all the perils that they might encounter,

and place themselves at the mercy of the savage tribes through whose territories they had to pass, rather than to remain under the authority of Duhau. For Duhau had assumed command of the eighteen or twenty men who remained of the unfortunate party, though he did not enjoy for very long the leadership that he had assumed after his crime; a dispute broke out between the two conspirators and two or three days later James killed him with a pistol shot. James then took over command, but the jealousy of the other members of the party brought him the same fate as Duhau's; some days afterwards he was killed by a French sailor named Rutre. He in his turn was killed by a surgeon, also a Frenchman. This surgeon, fearing that he might suffer the same fate, took refuge with a native tribe, the Toho, close neighbors of the Ceni, who received him well because he brought with him his musket and ammunition. Not long afterwards the natives took him with them in a war against another tribe, the Paouïtes or Temerlouans. They took with them also Pierre Talon. The surgeon was killed in this fight, having fallen behind when the Toho took flight, as the natives never fail to do when they find the enemy on guard and prepared to meet them. As these people are very agile and are swift runners, the surgeon was unable to keep up with the Toho, and accordingly fell behind and was killed. Young Talon would have suffered the same fate, had he not been mounted on a horse belonging to the surgeon who had turned the horse over to him before going into the fight to be better able to fire his musket.

Pierre Talon returned to the village of the Ceni, where he remained for the following five or six years, until the arrival of the Spanish who carried him back to Mexico, as will later be related. Pierre Talon has not heard anything since that time as to the fate of La Salle's brother, his nephew, or any of the others who accompanied them.

Question 9: The more important occurrences up to this time.

Reply: Whatever could be said on this question would be merely a useless repetition of what has been said and what can be said later on. We will accordingly proceed to the next question.

Question 10: The part played by each of the persons who were with La Salle at the time of his death.

Reply: We have mentioned the fate of several of those who were in La

Salle's company when he died, and who in turn perished, in part by killing each other. The remainder dispersed, and fled away among the natives, except for those who followed La Salle's brother and his nephew. In addition, a young Frenchman named Pierre Meunier withdrew with the Ceni, where he lived in company with Pierre Talon, and in the same manner, until they were taken by the Spanish, as will be related further on.

As for those who remained at the settlement at the time La Salle set out on the trip on which he was killed, one of these, Jean Baptiste Talon, reports that they numbered no more than twenty or twenty-five persons, including the women, a priest, and two Franciscan friars. Almost all of these were massacred by the Clamcoet, who attacked them because La Salle on his arrival had summarily seized their boats in order to move upriver and establish his settlement. Even though peace had been made with this tribe, they had no sooner learned of La Salle's death and the resulting dissension among his people than, by the greatest treason in the world, they made a surprise attack on the settlement. Believing the Clamcoet to be friendly, the camp's inhabitants were not on the alert, so that the savages had little difficulty in slaughtering all but a very few: Jean Baptiste Talon, two of his younger brothers, Robert and Lucien, their older sister, Marie Magdaléne, and one other, a Parisian named Eustache Bréman, said to be a relative of theirs. They were saved by some of the native women, who, touched by their tender ages, carried them on their backs to their huts. This, while their men slaughtered the rest, and after the Talon children had seen their mother killed before their eyes. As for the Talons' father, he had become lost in the woods some time previously while on a hunting trip with La Salle, and no one ever learned how he perished. Their other sister had died of illness at the settlement.

Moved by tenderness at the sight of an infant at her mother's breast, the native women also saved in the same manner the wife of the French officer who commanded the settlement in La Salle's absence, and who was also killed in the massacre. But the natives, on returning to their homes after the slaughter, first killed the mother and then the baby, holding it by its feet and dashing it against a tree. The men did not however harm the Talons or Eustache Bréman, who were reared and cherished by the native women who had rescued them as though they were their own children. They remained with the Indians some six or seven years, living their manner of life, until the Spanish came up from Mexico to take them away, as will be described later.

Question 11: What they did, in detail.

Reply: The Talon brothers have already related some of their specific experiences; how, when they fell into the hands of the natives, they were first of all marked on the face, hands, arms, and several other parts of the body just as the natives themselves were, with various bizarre black markings. These are made using willow charcoal, powdered and stirred into water, that is introduced beneath the skin through cuts that are made with very sharp thorns, in an extremely painful process. The charcoal and water mixes with the blood that oozes from the cuts to form marks and characters that remain permanently visible, in spite of a hundred attempts by the Spanish to remove them.

The natives took their captives on the hunt and on the war trail, after having taught them to use the bow and to run as they did; the natives run so swiftly that there is no galloping horse, no matter how fast, that they cannot follow and eventually tire out. The brothers went quite naked, as the others did, and each morning at dawn they would plunge into the nearest stream, regardless of the season. The captives ate, as the natives did, meat from the hunt, either fresh or sun-dried, but more usually half raw. The only meals that horrified the captives were those of human flesh, for these natives are all cannibals, but only with respect to their native enemies. They never wished to eat any of the French that they had killed because, as they said, "they did not eat them." Jean Baptiste Talon states that at one point he went nearly three days without food because during this time they offered him only the flesh of the Ayenni that they had killed in a war raid that will be described later.

Pierre Talon, the elder of the two brothers, had been left with the Ceni, as has been noted; he remained the whole time with their chief, who appeared to have no authority over the other natives except when waging war. Even this authority was so limited that each warrior could leave the battle and return home whenever the spirit moved him, without asking the chief's leave. They made war without observing any sort of order or discipline, but only through surprise and without exposing themselves too much to danger. They never attack except at night or at the earliest point of dawn, when they believe their enemy to be deep in sleep. But when they are able to surprise and slay some of their foes they rip off the scalp with the hair attached, afterwards carefully drying it and filling it with hay. Each warrior keeps his own scalps as trophies; they are hung on sticks

from the ridgepoles of their lodges. After returning from a successful war trip they carry these scalps in the hand and display them, raising them high in the air with much ostentation and ceremony, while they dance, as is their custom, singing songs that they make up to celebrate their victories. The brave with the most scalps is the most highly regarded, and their entire glory rests in their deeds.

The chief of the Ceni had an elderly father, who also carried the title of chief. They dwelt together, but it was clear that all the authority rested in the son; the father being well on in years and evidently having passed on to his son all the honor of command. They lived in an admirable harmony. For the rest, the Talons state that these savage people always treated them with the greatest humanity conceivable, and that they were never maltreated with blows or otherwise; on the contrary, their captors showed them tenderness and affection, and seemed to be upset when anyone annoyed them, and even took their part on some occasions against their own children.

Question 12: In what manner they fell into the hands of the Spanish.

Reply: The Spanish in Mexico, having been informed of La Salle's arrival, and of his plan to establish the French in Louisiana, decided to block his plan, and for this purpose they sent three expeditions into the region, although to do so they had to pass through a distant and unknown land where, from what the Talons recall having heard them say, they had never previously been. The first expedition consisted of some five hundred mounted men, armed with musketoons or small escopettes, pistols, and swords, and all wearing coats of mail made of iron wire formed into nets of very small mesh, which protected them from the effects of the natives' arrows. But, as it was not until long after the massacre of the French that they came into the area, they found only two of those who had become scattered after La Salle's death; these were two Frenchmen with native tribes that were nearer to the Mexican border than the tribes that we have spoken of. One of these two was a young man from Bayonne named L'Archevêque, who appeared to be of good family, and well educated; the other a sailor named Grollet. The Spanish took both men back to Mexico, where the Talon brothers saw them, as they will relate later.

On the second expedition, the Spanish force did not number over two hundred men; they had reduced their strength after learning from

L'Archevêque and Grollet that disaster had overtaken the French, and that only a few remained who had escaped the many perils that they had encountered and were now dispersed among the native tribes. Now, with the intention of placing even this miserable remainder of the French expedition in their power, they penetrated much further upcountry than on their first expedition.

Having learned from some natives that the Spanish were approaching in search of them, and fearing their cruelty, Pierre Talon and Meunier sought to avoid them by escaping further into the country, from tribe to tribe. But while on the way they met the Spanish, who forced them to guide the expedition to the village of the Ceni, so that they could find out if there were any other survivors. Having found none, they remained there for several days, and finding the Ceni more tractable and in some ways of milder temper than the other tribes, they left with them three Spanish Franciscan friars, with some soldiers to guard them. They built a dwelling for them in the village, and left clothing, meal, and other provisions, which were in ample supply since the expedition had over four hundred horses, and those which were not needed for the mounted force carried baggage and provisions.

During the time that Talon and Meunier were with them the friars were busy making up a glossary of native words, in order to learn the language of the Ceni, utilizing Talon and Meunier as interpreters through the aid of the captain and the lieutenant of the Spanish force, who spoke good French. Several times the two Frenchmen heard the Spanish officers say that they would like to remain in that country, which belonged to them and not to the French. They heard the same comment later from the Viceroy of Mexico.

When Pierre Talon found that the Spanish treated them very humanely, he told them that he still had three brothers and a sister, in addition to several other French, with the Clamcoet, so that he might have the consolation of seeing them removed with him and returned among Christians. This indeed occurred; the Spanish went there and brought away his sister and the two brothers, Robert and Lucien. The third brother, Jean Baptiste Talon, and Eustache Bréman remained with the tribe—how, Pierre Talon did not know—until about a year later when a third Spanish expedition of about two hundred and fifty men came in search of them and took them back to Mexico. The natives let them go with regret, and only

because it was clear that the Spanish were in a position to take them by force should they refuse to release them. On the other hand, the Spanish did not want to create enmity in the hearts of the natives, since they intended to establish settlements in the region, and they offered a horse in exchange for each of the French. But when it came to the exchange for Talon's sister, the eldest of the children, who was quite a bit older than the boys and was fully grown, the natives demanded two horses in exchange. At this point the bargaining became heated, and the Spanish resorted to the use of arms, with the result that two or three natives were felled by gun shots. The others fled, being extremely fearful of firearms; eventually they yielded up the girl for one horse, as they had done with her brothers. But, to appease the natives the Spanish gave them some tobacco, which they prize so highly that there is nothing they will not do to get it. On the Spanish side one horse was wounded by the natives' arrows, which they discharged in large numbers but with no effect on the Spanish because of their coats of mail.

The simple natives feared not only the noise of firearms, but even the sound of drums. When the Clamcoet, outraged that La Salle had seized their canoes by force, assembled with the intention of destroying the French force, they were so terror-stricken by the rattle of the drums that were beaten as the French prepared for defense that they all took to flight. After that time they became somewhat more accustomed to the sounds of battle, and instead of fleeing precipitously in terror they were content to throw themselves flat on the ground as soon as they heard the first shot from cannon or musket, in the belief that this would keep them from being hit.

They displayed such regret at being separated from the brothers and the sister of Jean Baptiste Talon that he, remaining still for a time with them, reports that they all wept plentifully at their departure, and mourned them for a month—especially for the younger boys for whom they had formed a stronger and more tender attachment than for the older ones.

The natives wept no less when Jean Baptiste Talon and Eustache Bréman were taken from them, and privately urged Talon to miss no opportunity to desert the Spanish and return to them as soon as he could, with a number of horses. This he promised, without however having any intention of keeping his word, since he much preferred to be among Christians than to remain with these savage peoples.

On the second Spanish expedition, and their first penetration as far as the Clamcoet, they picked up also an Italian whom they found there, whose name the Talons do not recall. He would never admit to having been a member of La Salle's party, though the Talon brothers believe that he was, and claimed to have come to the region by land from Canada, which is impossible to believe.

Question 13: What they saw in New Spain, and in the lands they passed through on their way there, going into this question with them in as much detail as possible.

Reply: After the Talons and their companions had been taken by the Spanish, as has been related, before arriving in New Spain they went through a huge country quite similar to the one they had just left. The whole region was inhabited by natives, who were divided into small tribes, each with its own name and language. They frequently make war among themselves, but always by surprise and without forewarning. For this reason it is essential for Europeans who wish to settle there to keep always on the alert, and to put no trust in the natives, who are by nature as ready to break a peace as to make it.

All their dialects are rendered even more difficult to learn by not being in any way related to the languages of Europe. On the other hand, their manner of living is uniform enough; they live for the most part as nomads and hunters, taking thought only for what is necessary to sustain life. They go naked; they have no personal possessions; and they do not know the use of any sort of bread or even of cassava. They live on flesh, fish, and fruits, with no preparation or special care other than simply roasting or boiling, and this only half done.

After journey by horse of two months or more the party came to a native village only a quarter league from some Spanish settlements. The Indians here have been to some degree Christianized, and live on quite good terms with the Spanish. The Talons do not recall either the name of the village or that of the tribe living there, having merely passed through, but they remember that it did not contain over three hundred people. It was from there that they had their first view of high mountains, which form as it were a natural boundary between the region inhabited by natives and the country settled by the Spanish. Several of these mountains are extremely high, and a few are covered with snow almost the entire year, although snow never falls on the plains where it is always, for the

most part, quite warm. On the slopes of the mountains toward the south this snow provided a refreshing coolness for the Spanish, who have it brought from the mountains for cool drinks. Among these mountains there are some that continually vomit flames from their summits.

Leaving this area, our travelers came to a Spanish village named Caouil, where they remained for about a month. The inhabitants of this village, which has only about twenty houses, live much as in Europe, cultivating the land, which produces good wheat and corn. They also make sugar.

From this village they traveled six days more by horse, passing many other Spanish villages which were located at a distance of one or two leagues from each other. They arrived at the town of San Luis de Potosi, which is of good size and handsome, about like La Rochelle. The town is the seat of a bishop, but it is not fortified, and has no surrounding wall. It has a large population of wealthy Spanish, who manage the gold and silver mines which are not far distant. The Talon brothers did not have an opportunity to see these mines, since they merely remained in the town overnight while passing through.

From there they continued on their journey until they reached Mexico City, the capital of the country and seat of the Archbishop, where the Spanish Viceroy has his residence. They found the city very large and beautiful; they heard from the Spanish indeed that it was quite as large as Madrid. The houses are very well constructed; all are of the same height and quite high, with flat roofs, so that one might without difficulty go from one end of the street to the other, on the roofs of the buildings. Coaches are numerous; the Viceroy has ten of them for his own use as well as for his household. He alone may have his coaches drawn by six horses or mules within the city; all others are permitted to use only two or four, unless they are traveling in the countryside. Other than the Viceroy, there are scarcely any who are permitted to have teams of horses, though these are not lacking in the country. Except for a few ranking noblemen private citizens are allowed to use only teams of mules.

The city is heavily populated, but with many more of native origin (that is, of Indian extraction) than of Spanish blood. These native Mexicans are not permitted to own arms, and as a result they are unfamiliar with their use; instead, they fight each other with stones. This precaution is taken because of their large numbers and their tendency to revolt, since they tolerate the Spanish yoke only with reluctance. An uprising took place in

1692, in which though armed only with rocks they inspired such fear in the hearts of the Spanish that they all fled. The Viceroy himself escaped through a palace window together with his wife, and took refuge with the Archbishop. On this occasion the Archbishop went in a religious procession through all the streets, carrying a monstrance and followed by his priests, but the rioters pelted them with rocks and were not at all quieted down by the procession. The leaders of the uprising awarded themselves all the titles and dignities that the Spanish possessed, from the highest to the lowest. They would have used the Viceroy very badly had they found him; they set fire to the palace and reduced it to ashes, and would have committed even further disorders had not the Count of Santiago, a ranking Creole nobleman—that is to say, born in Mexico but of Spanish blood—quelled the revolt the next day. Although he had assembled what he could of armed troops, he used only persuasion, since he placed strong trust in the minds and feelings of these Indians. At length, after they had been dispersed and those who had come from the countryside had returned to their homes, the Viceroy mobilized some of his mounted troops and made examples of several of the foremost rebels, inflicting very severe punishment on them. It is to be noted that the Creoles have scarcely less inclination to revolt than do the descendants of the Indians, because the Spanish, distrustful of them, deprive them of all their civil and military offices and responsibilities.

These descendants of the Indians are still so much inclined to idolatry that although they have been converted to Christianity there are still some who secretly worship carved idols that represent various types of animals of bizarre and extraordinary appearance. This creates more than a little trouble for the Spanish friars, who are trying to abolish completely these superstitions.

During their long stay in Mexico City, the Talons saw large amounts of gold and silver in ingots and bars arriving from all directions, from San Luis de Potosi as well as from the mines in the vicinity of Mexico City, the nearest of which is a dozen leagues distant. Much also comes from a region that the Spanish call Sonora, which, from what they heard, lies two hundred leagues distant. Another area that the Spanish occupy, Paral, is said to be three hundred leagues from Mexico, but the Talons could not say whether it has mines. The Indians in the vicinity of Paral are continuously at war with the Spanish, stealing their horses and mules, which they eat.

Mexico has a very moderate and healthy climate and is very fertile, producing all manner of crops, those of Europe as well as of the Indies. Most types of animal life are also found there, both terrestrial and aquatic, as well as birds and fowl. The Spanish settlers are courteous and civil, and the natives in the vicinity, who have been converted to Christianity and civilized, are industrious. Together with blacks, mulattos, and mestizos (of the latter two groups there are many in Mexico) they provide all the labor in that country, in the mines as well as working the land, while the Spanish live in excessive ease and indolence; they are neither trained as fighters nor are they well armed or equipped.

Neither Mexico City nor San Luis de Potosi is defended by any type of fortification. The same holds true for all of the other cities in the country except for Vera Cruz, which lies eighty leagues distant from Mexico City. Vera Cruz is the port for Mexico, where the Spanish fleet takes on its cargoes of gold, silver, and products from all over Mexico. Vera Cruz is surrounded by eight small forts, carrying four, six, and three cannon; it is defended on the seaward flank by a very large fort which is built in the water, a cannon-shot from the city itself. This fort has at least a hundred "canon de la ville" [fortress pieces: tr.] of which most are of bronze. The galleon fleet anchors in the protection of this fort, en route to Porto Bello or Cartagena to load gold, silver, and products from Peru.

The Talon brothers also visited another city, La Puebla, which is some twenty leagues from Mexico City in the direction of Vera Cruz. La Puebla is the seat of a bishop; it is about half the size of Mexico City, and has a great number of coaches. There are several other cities in this region and in the entire country, which are not so large as these, as well as a number of fine towns whose houses all have red tile roofs.

Throughout this country are very poisonous snakes and scorpions, and among the snakes one type in particular that is named the rattlesnake, because it actually has rattles on its tail which can be heard as they are shaken when anyone approaches. These are among the most poisonous; they always crawl on the ground, never climbing trees as do some other types of snakes that are found here.

The Talon brothers could not state exactly how far it was from the village of the Ceni to Mexico City, but from the length of time that it took them to make the journey one may judge that the distance is quite great. It is also true, and should be considered, that they were traveling in

a large party through an unknown country without a marked trail, where almost every day they found streams that had to be forded, so that under these conditions they did not make long daily marches. But they asserted that by sea it is three hundred leagues from the bay where La Salle landed to Vera Cruz.

The two Frenchmen previously mentioned, L'Archevêque and Grollet, were sent to Madrid with the fleet, and were held there in prison for about six months before being returned to Mexico, where the Talon brothers saw them. They were then set free, according to the Spanish, but were sent to a region some four or five hundred leagues from there, called New Mexico, where the Spanish wished to settle. The Spanish sent them there, the Talons believe, in order to be rid of them because they were grown men of strong spirit—particularly L'Archevêque—and the Spanish were mistrustful that they would carry back quite complete reports of the country to France. This was something that the Spanish were very fearful of, and there was nothing that they would not do to prevent it. It was evidently this same mistrust that led them to imprison also the Italian who was mentioned earlier in one of the forts at Vera Cruz, where the Talon brothers saw him, and where he died later on.

The Spanish did not have the same mistrust of the Talon family; the Viceroy took them into his household—the four brothers and the sister—at an early age and brought them up and educated them in Spanish ways during the period of nine or ten years that they lived in his palace. They were treated with humanity and consideration, and were considered as a part of his household staff, and as having been naturalized. As evidence of the truth of this, when Pierre and Jean Baptiste and their brother Lucien reached an age at which they could bear arms the Viceroy sent all three of them to Vera Cruz, to serve as soldiers on one of the five ships of war that formed the fleet of Barloutente. And, when the Viceroy was replaced shortly afterwards by another envoy from Spain, he sailed with this same fleet on his return to Europe, taking with him the fourth Talon brother, Robert, and their sister, Marie Magdalène. These others should be in Spain at the present, if God has preserved them. And, to state the facts as they are, the three Talons were so accustomed to life with the Spanish that in the year preceding this account, when they were taken prisoner by M. Desaugiers, captain of the King's vessel that captured the ship on which the three brothers were soldiers, they were extremely unhappy over this

turn of events and lived only in the hope of being able to go to Spain, on their return, to rejoin their brother and sister there, from whom the separation has been felt very keenly. However, the Sieur de Bossieux required the two older brothers to join the company of marine soldiers of Feuguerolles, of which he was lieutenant; the younger boy was placed in domestic service, because he was found to be too young to serve as a soldier.

Question 14: Request particular details on the Mississippi, and (several words illegible) the place where it debouches into the sea.

Reply: Since La Salle was killed before he had an opportunity to discover the mouth of the Mississippi, which he had been seeking, the Talon brothers are unable to say whether this river is among those that they saw after his death, while they were among the savages. But Jean Baptiste Talon reports that soon after the murder and the ensuing massacre of the remaining French at their settlement, the Clamcoet, with whom he then was, turned their attention to their old enemies the Ceni, since they had no more French to fight. In order to surprise the Ceni in their village they left the vicinity of the French settlement, embarking in their canoes, to go according to their custom to find some withdrawn and secluded area where they could leave their old people, women, and children while they were occupied on their war expedition. Sailing along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico they passed the Riviere des Cannes, which was described earlier. At length they halted, and entered the mouth of a large river lying distant from the Riviere des Cannes toward the south of the Gulf by about as much as the distance from the Riviere des Cannes to the bay where La Salle landed. They found this area well suited to their purpose, by reason of the natural shelter provided by mountains of sand and the forests that surround the two mouths of this river, as well as by the abundance of fish, bison, wild turkey, ducks, and many other types of game and fowl. Numerous kinds of fruits are also to be found in the vicinity.

The natives left there their old people, women, and children, and also the four Talon children, as well as Eustache Bréman. This group stayed in that area some five or six weeks, until the return of their warriors. These had been victorious; not against the Ceni, their original target, but against the Ayenni, neighbors and allies of the Ceni. They brought back fifty or sixty scalps and thirty or forty slaves, some of whom were killed and eaten at a cannibal feast, and a number of horses. These facts are confirmed by

Pierre Talon, who was at the time with the Ceni, and who remembers very clearly the attack by the Clamcoet. Word of the attack was brought to the Ceni by an Ayenni woman who escaped from her captors while they were taking her away as one of their slaves. The woman said that the Ayenni, who had not learned of the massacre of the French, believed that some French were in the attacking party, because of a number of gunshots fired at them that had completely terrified them. But she learned what had happened from the chief of the Ceni and also from the four French who were there: Pierre Talon, Pierre Meunier, the French seaman, Rutre, and a Provençal whose name Talon has forgotten; that beyond question it was the Clamcoet themselves who had fired the shots, using firearms that they had found loaded in the French settlement at the time of the massacre. She thereafter returned to her tribe, to correct their misapprehension that Frenchmen had been in the war party with the Clamcoet.

Returning to the question of this river, Jean Baptiste Talon adds that it is a fine river, very wide—more than two musket shots, indeed—and quite deep, and that it empties into the sea by two mouths. It appears to be very long; it is a tidal river, with a distinct ebb and flow. He did not know whether this was indeed the Mississippi, never having heard it named, but it has much the appearance of being that river. Along its borders and in the vicinity are many palms as well as pines.

Question 15: Did they cross any other rivers while going to Mexico; what was their width and depth?

Reply: The Talons in going from the natives' region to Mexico crossed rivers and streams almost every day during the march. For the most part these were small, and many of them could be crossed by fording; whenever deep streams were encountered, as a number were, they were narrow enough that the Spanish had only to fell some trees on each side, which fell over each other and provided a makeshift bridge. Some of the trees were remarkably tall and extremely thick in foliage. The horses crossed the streams by swimming.

Question 16: The type of people found in the region, and if it seems to them that the region might provide some commerce.

Reply: This question has been answered in part by some of the replies that have been made to preceding questions. All the various tribes of na-

tives that inhabit this region follow a quite similar way of life; they all resemble each other so much that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish them except from their different dialects and from the different regions that are inhabited by those tribes that live in villages. As for the tribes that have no fixed habitations, and who roam the country continually, making camp wherever they find themselves, as has been previously described, these tribes claim no specific territory; the migrant nations frequently exchange areas among themselves. Disputes never arise over territorial rights, since they have no concepts of land ownership, boundaries, or disputes over these. Everything that the land, sea, and air produce is common to all, and belongs without dispute to the first one who takes possession of it.

As far as trade with the natives is concerned, nothing appeared to the Talons to be more simple, since they came willingly into contact with Europeans, whom they called the Suns of the Sun; like this heavenly body and the moon, Europeans pass with them for divinities. Without however making of them a specific religious cult, they cannot help but have some veneration for them. La Salle would never have been at war with the Clamcoet had he not upon his arrival seized their ceremonial dugout canoes and refused to give them some small trifle that they had asked for in return for the canoes and for some other services that they were then providing him. For nothing is more easily done than to gain their friendship; a hatchet, a knife, a pair of scissors, a pin, a needle, a necklace or bracelet of glass or trade beads, or some other such trinket, is usually the price of this friendship. They are passionately fond of all sorts of such small hardware items and trifles that they might find useful or ornamental. But equally as much as they give freely of what they have, so do they dislike to be turned away or refused. They are not aggressive or over-demanding, but they never forget a slight or an injury. For this reason when they have once been offended it is always necessary to be wary of them, regardless of whatever peace may have been made, whether from strength or weakness, since they hold to no code of honor in their revenge. But one need not be fearful, whatever their numbers; they never dare a direct attack against Europeans armed with muskets or other firearms. Only a surprise attack need be feared, for which reason the Spanish all wear coats of mail when they go among them.

In addition to giving inexpensive presents, there is one infallible way for

Europeans to cement the friendship of those tribes with whom an alliance would most further the Europeans' purpose. This is to take part with them in the wars that they carry on with each other, since they believe themselves invincible when they join with Europeans, whose presence creates terror and disorder among their enemies, through the sheer noise as well as the effect of their firearms. For they know nothing of the use of firearms, and would have continued to consider them as incredible wonders, if the French had maintained more of a mystery about them. The natives would have considered the French themselves as marvelous and invincible beings if only the French had not been so wasteful with their own people's lives, and if they had taken more precautions to preserve their people, as the Spanish do so well. For it is quite evident that these native peoples had never seen Europeans before La Salle came to their country.

All these savages are of an incredible simplicity; credulous, and grateful for any kindness done to them, so that nothing is easier than to impose on them. Several examples were given by the Talons to illustrate this point.

The savage Clamcoet tribe would undoubtedly have abused their sister, who had reached maturity and was quite pretty and well-proportioned; they had in fact come in force for this purpose when her brothers thought of a plan to save her honor. Eustache Bréman, of whom mention has been made earlier, convinced them that if they offered violence to her her God would certainly make them all die. The ruse succeeded; it indicates a disposition in these people to fear God, if they are given knowledge of Him.

Again, the Italian who was previously mentioned had lived for a long time among the Clamcoet and had learned their language perfectly. But a time finally came when he displeased them in some manner, so that they decided to kill him. He escaped death by means of a trick that illustrates both the subtlety of his character and the credulity of the savages. He told these simple people that they would be killing a man who carried them all in his heart, because he loved them so dearly, and that if they doubted this, he would let them see it for themselves on the following morning, if they would spare him for that space of time. He said that he would then show them his heart, opened up so that each could see himself in it. The natives accordingly spared his life until the next day, when they came in a group in the early morning to see the result of his promise or, should he not fulfill it, to kill him.

The Italian had meanwhile glued to his skin, over his heart, a pocket

mirror, with the result that the natives, who had never seen a mirror, were completely taken by the trick. Calling each of them to him in turn he said, "Here is my heart, opened up. Look! Do you not see yourself here?"

And each of course saw himself in the mirror. They were totally awestruck and spared his life. Jean Baptiste Talon heard the Clamcoet relate the account as a marvel that they could not understand. And Pierre Talon confirms it, having heard it from the Italian himself, when they were in Mexico, as a ruse that he had thought up to save his life, in a situation that could not have held more peril for him.

Nor is there need for a break with these natives over their wives or daughters, since they are not at all jealous in such matters, and do not feel bound by any ideas of honor regarding their women. They barter their favors freely, and are not at all annoyed or upset that they have relations with Europeans. Some of the men of La Salle's company, in fact, took native wives; among them the French seaman, Rutre, who has previously been mentioned, changed from one woman to another seven or eight times, and left two children by one of these women. In this as in other matters he followed the custom of these natives who, although they have only one wife at a time, change wives whenever they wish, which is to say, frequently. Some of the women accompany their men into battle, but limit their efforts to carrying from the battlefield the bodies of the enemy dead, for a community feast on their return to their village.

Relationships among natives of the same tribe are remarkably free from discord; they never break into violent quarrels, and never strike one another. This is primarily true of the men, for the women often have their own petty arguments, in which however their men never take a part. They have no system of justice or punishment; they help each other according to the needs of the moment, and successful hunters willingly share the results of the chase with their less fortunate neighbors. It does not appear that they have any religious ideas or principles, though one might infer that they have some confused impression of the immortality of their souls from the ceremonies that they observe on the burial of their dead. After wrapping the corpse in the bison-skin robe that he wore while living, they bury him with his war club, bow and arrows, a quantity of dried meat, corn, and vegetables, and some bits of a certain wood that they use instead of flint for making fires, so that the deceased will have them available, as they put it, when he awakes. [Note: A partly legible marginal note

indicates that the wood is used for a fire drill, to produce fire by friction.]

Jean Baptiste Talon states that the Clamcoet tribe's mourning practice on the death of a family member is to paint the entire body with charcoal made from walnut wood, ground to a paste in water. All the family wail regularly, at a set hour, morning and evening, for an extended period of time; just how long he could not say.

Pierre Talon reports that he saw a ceremony among the Ceni, which contains an element of sacrifice; for when they have killed a bison, deer, or any other animal, they neither eat it nor allow it to be cooked until the oldest of them has pattered off in a very low voice several words that Talon could not understand, and has thrown a bit of the meat into the fire. Only after this has taken place do they either boil or roast and eat the meat.

Among these people none are seen who are not well formed, of either sex; if a woman bears a baby that is deformed she buries it alive as soon as it is born. They even extend this inhuman practice to the children that they may be carrying when their men abandon them and take other wives, as often happens.

The women give birth to their young as animals do, in the bushes and even out in the open fields, alone and without assistance, regardless of the weather. They clean themselves and their newborn babies in the nearest stream or in the sea; after the baby's birth, if it is without defect and meets their approval, they mark it by incising the baby's tender skin, as has been described earlier. They marked in the same manner the Talon brothers and the French children who remained with them. If a child cries very much during this ordeal they form a low opinion of its courage, and love it less. For this reason they are fond of pins and needles, above all other items; even though they have no clothing to fasten together, and do not know how to sew, they find needles better than thorns and use them instead for making these cuts.

These people are generally quite strong and husky, and well fitted for all types of hard work. It has already been mentioned that their old men take care of the ill and injured, and attend to their wounds. They do this without thought of payment, and with so much success that a native who has a curable ill never dies under their treatment. In addition to their wide knowledge of plants and herbs, which we have already noted, they practice bloodletting and utilize suction. To draw blood they use small combs made from a species of large rat which is found in their region. With this

comb they scrape off the outer skin, just at the point where the patient felt pain. When they want to cure a headache they pierce the skin at several points, according to the pain. They suck out the blood, which flows with a very strong force. And these practices are successful.

The Ceni eat corn kernels roasted; they also make a corn flour and several types of gruel. At intervals all of the elders of the village assemble at the chief's lodge, where they confer on sundry matters. At these times the chief serves each of them a large pot of very thin corn gruel, which they drink. The chief also presents them with bows and arrows, made by a tribe that lives somewhat upcountry from the Ceni. These bows are made of a more handsome wood than that of their own bows, extremely tough and hard, and a mixture of red and yellow in color.

They handle the bow with admirable accuracy, and know the vulnerable shoulder spot on a bison so well that only rarely do they miss a shot. Use of the bow is the first lesson that is taught to the children, who practice with it constantly, from the time that they have the minimum of strength that is needed to shoot small birds, using a small bow.

These Indians kill not only bison, deer, and all other sorts of animals as well as birds with the bow and arrow, but also fish, in the streams and in the sea. They use for this purpose larger bows and arrows than usual. They also have numerous other devices for fishing, including nets. They also fish with a hook and line, and although they do not bait the hook they adjust so adroitly sharpened pieces of wood with lures that they achieve the same result. They harpoon the largest fish with a harpoon attached to a long line, which they release when the fish has been wounded. At the end of the line is attached a sort of buoy made of wood, which floats and enables them to find it. They have also numerous other very ingenious methods of catching fish.

Almost all of these people speak from deep in the throat, which renders their dialects difficult to learn. That of the Ceni is one of the least disagreeably rough, since they speak with fewer "throated" sounds than the other tribes. As has been noted, they are also the mildest and most civilized of the tribes.

The natives listened with docility to the Spanish friars who were among them and, having learned their language, commenced preaching to them. They also freely allowed the friars to baptize their children. This Jean Baptiste Talon himself saw, having remained in this region for a long period

after his brother's departure, and having passed through the village of the Ceni with the Spanish, who took him back with them on their third expedition, as we have noted. (It is to be feared that the Spanish have warned these simple and unlearned people against the French, in order to make us odious to them.)

All these savage peoples are generally great gesticulators when talking; they have a marvelous talent for making themselves understood, and for communicating their thoughts to others, by means of signs. This talent is common to all of these different tribes, so that when they meet or visit one another they can make themselves understood by sign language, however diverse their tongues may be.

Question 17: Had they seen the Spanish mines, the places where they are found, and how to reach them?

Reply: They have seen only those of Tescoupe and Patchougue; the first lies twelve leagues, and the other twenty leagues, from Mexico City. But they well know that there are many others. It would be quite simple to go there by land, following the same route that they used, and which the Spanish improved on their three expeditions. Other land routes could also be devised without difficulty, since the country is everywhere level and easy to travel in. The Talons state that two of the Ceni accompanied the Spanish as far as Mexico on their return from their second expedition, and then returned to their village; these two might still be living, or have transmitted to their descendants as is their custom the knowledge of this route and of the landmarks that they noted along the way. There are in addition many horses among the Ceni and other tribes of the region, who breed them; these horses can easily be obtained in barter for axes, knives, and other knicknacks. The Talons have often seen a horse traded for a single axe, or for one knife. From the manner in which the Talons give this account it appears that they would have little trouble in finding ways to accomplish this project, if they could locate the tribes with whom they stayed; they still recall enough of their languages to be able to make themselves understood and to understand the natives. They state, moreover, that they could make themselves understood not only by the tribes with whom they stayed but also by any other tribes whatever, through use of the sign language that they had learned.

They state further that neither Mexico City nor San Luis de Potosi, nor

any of the cities in the country, have any defense or fortification inland from the coast, where Vera Cruz is located, which as has been mentioned is the only fortified city. These facts, joined to the weakness of the Spanish in these regions, who are neither trained as soldiers nor well armed, would facilitate our entry there.

TRIBES KNOWN TO THE TALONS IN THE LOUISIANA REGION

the *Clamcoet* who live along the shore, and scarcely ever leave it.
the *Temerlouan* a bit further inland.

These two tribes are fierce and warlike, and made war on M. de La Salle because he had taken their canoes for his own service.

the *Toho* still a little further inland.

the *Ceni* even further inland.

the *Ayenni* yet a bit further inland.

These three tribes are milder and more sociable. The first-named is a nomadic tribe, like the Clamcoet and Temerouan; the two others have villages and cultivate the land.

the *Amalcham* another wandering tribe.

the *Canotin* another nomadic tribe, always at war with the others; it is one of the most cruel and warlike of these tribes.

the *Paouites* another nomadic tribe, but less ill-disposed.

the *Choman* another tribe, that frequently visits the Ceni and other tribes, making war against none. The Choman are neighbors of the Spanish, but in another area than that through which the Talons passed. Some of them even speak Spanish.

There are in addition a multitude of other tribes that fill the region, but whose names the Talons do not know.

A brief summary of some native words that the Talons recall is included here, solely to give some small idea of their idioms.

CLAMCOET LANGUAGE

Fire	<i>Cohoille</i>
Sun	<i>Colone</i>
Wood	<i>Cohal</i>
Water	<i>Comcom</i>
the Sea	<i>Comcomdem</i> (i.e., salt water)
a Man	<i>Techoyou</i>
his Wife	<i>Achade</i>
a Boy	<i>Colohs</i>
a Bow	<i>Crouin</i>
an Arrow	<i>Demo</i>
a Hut	<i>Caham</i>
a Cooking Pot	<i>Coco</i>
Tobacco	<i>Cahé</i>
a Bull	<i>Tech</i>
a Cow	<i>Tech-nen</i>
a Calf	<i>Coeho</i>
a Stag or Roebuck	<i>Tecomand-sen</i>
a Knife	<i>Béquecomb</i>
an Eagle	<i>Balséhé</i>
another ordinary bird	<i>Tecoisen</i>
a European long coat	<i>Alamea</i>
a Sabre	<i>Techbeillé</i>
Good, or something good	<i>Couin-baha</i>
Large	<i>Counin</i>
The Spanish	They are called <i>Cahamqueamy</i> , that is, the Land People, because they came to them by land.
The French	They are called <i>Calbasses</i> , which means 'people from the sea.'
a Horse	<i>Cavonaium</i> . All the native tribes generally use this term.
a Wolf	(Both the wild and the tame ones, which serve as dogs) <i>Quez</i> .
a Pig	<i>Quez calbasses</i> , or 'dogs of the French.'

LANGUAGE OF THE CENI AND THE AYENNI, A MUCH EASIER
LANGUAGE THAN THAT OF THE CLAMCOET

Water	<i>Coko</i>	
a Bull	<i>Tenaha</i>	
a Woman	<i>Senatu</i>	
Fat (noun)	<i>Assayo</i>	
Good, or something good	<i>Couhin anhat</i>	
Bad	<i>Abana</i>	
A European whether French or Spanish, without making a distinction	<i>yaye cha</i>	

[End of Manuscript]

AFTERWORD

ON THE THIRTIETH OF MAY, 1688, deep in the still wild vastness of southern Texas, a Mexican expedition under the command of Alonso De León came upon an Indian *ranchería* where three hundred natives, standing in crisp military formations, were drawn up around the lodge of their leader. Inside, beyond the buffalo skins that covered its walls, the lodge held wonders which De León, though he had come here in pursuit of vague rumors, really had not expected to find. Finely decorated, with three cushioned leather chairs opposite the door, the house soon was bristling with natives. Some fanned their leader with plumes; others cleansed him of sweat and spread aromatic scents through the air. Kneeling before the chief, and ever watchful of the small Spanish party, the Indians made it clear that he was almost a god to them — and any attempt to injure him, or perhaps even to coerce him, would meet quick and probably fatal resistance.

What was odd in all this — and already hinted at in the rumors De León had heard — was that the leader was not an Indian at all. His first words to the Spaniards — “*Yo francés*” (“I French”) — made it clear that he was a Frenchman, the very first Frenchman, in fact, that the Spaniards had been

able to locate during their several recent expeditions in search of the colony established somewhere on the Gulf Coast by René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, at the start of his final, abortive attempt to explore the Mississippi. Three years had passed since La Salle had landed, early in 1685, on Matagorda Bay—and of the nearly three hundred men, women, and children in his party, this was the first direct proof the Spaniards had found that their much-asserted rights to the whole Gulf region had been so boldly violated. And by this point, since La Salle and almost all of his followers were dead—of sickness, Indian attack, accident, and murder—the proof hardly meant much anymore.

Although the point has never been conclusively established, the leader of the *ranchería* discovered by De León must have been a deserter from La Salle's company. There were many who ran away, and most of them (if they did not simply perish unnoticed somewhere in the bush) wound up with one of the Indian tribes in the area. This man, "painted like the Indians, old and naked," could not give a very good account of himself—or of his past, recent or remote. He said his name was "Francisco," then said it was "Yan Jarri," garbled Spanish for "Jean Géry." He claimed to be a native of New France, but much of what he claimed at this time or later was rather confused, if not outrightly misleading, so that one is often at a loss in trying to follow his story. Not the least of the problems stems from the verbal difficulties inherent to the exchange between Géry and De León. The Spanish captain, who first conversed with Géry in "Castillian," soon noticed from the gist of one of the latter's remarks that he must have acquired the local native tongue—something De León might have surmised before this, one notes, merely by virtue of the man's evident control over so large a group of Indians. In any event, De León soon began using one of his own native guides as an interpreter, either directly or through yet another native among Géry's retinue. By this means, he told Géry that he wanted him to go back with the Spaniards to the Rio Grande, where there was another Spaniard who, fluent in French, could make the exchange somewhat more immediate. Although at first Géry's followers were very agitated at the mere thought of his leaving, eventually they let him comply with De León's wish—thus effectually delivering himself up, at least for a time, unto the powers of New Spain.

It was along such linguistic borders, and across such yawning cultural

gaps, that a good deal of the earliest American writing came into being. At the center of it, too, there often stand figures not unlike Géry: displaced, often disoriented figures whose experience—were we to find it in avowedly fictional plots—simply would not inspire belief. Yet there they stand, individuals for whom what seem to us the simplest questions must have invoked a whole series of metaphysical worries. Since by habit we are likely to regard so many issues only within the limits of arbitrary cultural bounds—just as we tend to regard movement within a speeding train, say, only in relation to the seemingly fixed walls of the car—the experience of those who have jumped off into the blur of space outside our discourse is as lost to our comprehension as their mere physical shape is to our vision. Who, precisely, was Jean Géry? Jumping from La Salle’s fated company into the wilds of Texas, who had he become?

There we must let Géry, like the true prototype of Mr. Kurtz, rest. What ultimately became of him is unknown, but in what can be glimpsed of him in the Spanish records may be traced this wider pattern in American experience and American writing, a pattern which indeed makes our earliest literature seem strikingly modern in its refusal to specify final truths, as in its loosened outline, its pain of spirit, and its woe. The acid which eventually was to corrode European literary forms, and destroy the mythology they served, was produced in the colonization of America. Relativism was born where the Old World, touching the New, was lacerated into the pain of self-knowledge.

But Géry also has another, much more particular relevance to what we have read. He was not the sole survivor of La Salle’s last voyage, if in fact he had been a member of the expedition at all; of the almost three hundred who sailed on it, not quite a dozen-and-a-half made it out alive. In the year following Géry’s discovery and virtual arrest, De León found, again in Texas—Géry serving now as his forced guide and translator, and still given to his slippery games—“two Frenchmen . . . naked except for an antelope’s skin, and with their faces, breasts, and arms painted like the Indians. . . .” One of these men, Jean L’Archevêque of Bayonne, had been in on the plot to murder La Salle, although in the end he did not take part in the actual ambush or the subsequent disfigurement of the corpse. The other man, Jacques Grollet, a native of La Rochelle, had deserted La Salle’s colony a year before the murder, only to return after that event, take up

with L'Archevêque, and then go away again — with his new companion — to live once more among the natives. Their desertion at this point saved the two from an awful fate: soon other natives, tricking the colonists at Matagorda Bay into a false sense of security, massacred all the adults, saving only a few young children whom they led away as captives. But the two men, lucky in this sense, were unlucky in others. By no means worshipped by the natives around them, as Géry seems to have been by his followers, L'Archevêque and Grollet soon were getting desperate about their prospects in the wilderness. Not trusting the Indians, they did not trust the Spaniards either, but at last they forced themselves to write a message to De León, with red ochre, on an old drawing, sending it through the wilds by Indian runners — a message in which they implored the Spanish leader, whatever he might do with them afterwards, at least to come rescue them: "I do not know what sort of people you are," L'Archevêque wrote in his portion of the letter. "We are French. We are among the savages. We would like very much to be among Christians such as we are. We know well that you are Spaniards. We do not know whether you will attack us." And so on, to end with a polite but — here in the desert — oddly misplaced conventionality: "Sir, I am your very humble and obedient servant." Is it the hovering image of the author's tattooed face that causes the dissonance?

Ironically, the red ochre the Frenchmen used was so faint that their message seems to have been overlooked as the Spaniards glanced over the old drawing on the parchment sheet, which the Indians faithfully delivered. With its orderly syntax and its passional depths ("We are sorely grieved," runs another of the sentences, "to be among beasts like these who believe neither in God nor in anything"), the document thus fell not on deaf ears so much as blind eyes. It was by other means entirely that De León sought out L'Archevêque and Grollet and took them, as they had feared he might, into custody. The two were to languish for several years in a prison in Spain; only on promising to return to Mexico (where the rival government of France could not debrief them) were they set free. Both soon took ship and, arriving in New Spain, joined an expedition heading north into New Mexico. Grollet (now known as "Gurule") became a settler at Bernalillo, where he married and had a family. L'Archevêque ("Juan de Archibeque"), at first a soldier, eventually became a wealthy trader in Santa Fe, where he acquired enough influence that, in

1719, he took as his second wife the daughter of the *alcalde* [mayor] there. Riding this crest of good fortune, he set out the next year as the interpreter on an expedition designed to flush out from the lands to the east a party of French intruders rumored to be stirring up trouble among the Pawnee. Two months after leaving Santa Fe, the Spanish party made contact with some Pawnee envoys; through them, by means of messages written in French, Archibeque tried without success to communicate with a French leader mentioned by the natives. Then, early on the morning of August sixteenth, as they were saddling their horses, the Spaniards were brutally attacked by a group of Pawnee, perhaps under orders from the French—if Frenchmen there really were within five hundred miles of the site. Almost all of the forty-one Spaniards, and several of their own Indian accomplices, were murdered in the attack, among them Archibeque. His old identity thus was his fatal flaw, and there was more than a little poetic justice in the way his end echoed that visited on La Salle thirty-five years before: if only the errant Frenchman, who seems to have forgotten much during his long residence in Santa Fe, had forgotten how to speak French!

Another of the survivors of the La Salle expedition, who in fact was to be with L'Archevêque and Grollet for a time in New Mexico, was Pierre Meunier ("Pedro Muñi"), a Parisian youth who was only fifteen when he first embarked in 1684. His youth apparently drew him to La Salle's attention, since—and in this La Salle was conforming to a broad pattern among American explorers—the commander wanted recruits who were malleable enough that they could be left among the Indians in order to learn their tongues. This had been Meunier's task early in the life of the colony in Texas; subsequently he was back with La Salle, and in fact accompanied him on his last foray into the bush, during which the murder took place. When La Salle's brother, Jean Cavalier, was gathering the survivors of the bloodbath which ensued and setting off to lead them overland to Illinois—without, it might be noted, touching base with the thereby abandoned colonists at Matagorda—Meunier fell ill and thus had to remain behind, with another French youth for company, among the natives. De León, learning of their presence in the wilderness during his 1690 expedition, sent after them, and soon he had both of them in his hands—even though these younger Frenchmen, more fearful of the Spaniards than of the Indians, had no real wish to be rescued and did their best (unlike L'Archevêque and Grollet) to resist their forcible return to civilization.

The other youth retaken with Meunier was named Pierre Talon (“Pedro Talo”), and with his story we may return to more essential matters here. Although he too had been brought along on the voyage in order to live among the natives and thus become a translator for La Salle, unlike Meunier he was not all alone in America. His whole family, consisting of his parents, three brothers, and two sisters, had embarked at La Rochelle with La Salle, apparently in the hope that they would be able, once on the Mississippi, to establish their own small colony there. Just before the voyage in 1684, they had returned to France from Quebec, where they had been living for a number of years, at least the four older children having been born and baptized there.

At the time Pierre Talon was found by De León’s party in 1690, his parents had both been dead for several years: Lucien, the father, who had been a timber worker in Canada, went off with La Salle on a hunting trip in Texas one day and got lost in the woods, never to return or be heard from; Isabelle, the mother, was among those murdered, before her children’s eyes, during the massacre at the French colony following La Salle’s death in 1687. One daughter, Marie Elizabeth, already had died there, of disease; this left, besides Pierre (who at the time of the massacre was perhaps three hundred miles inland, living with the Ceni Indians, part of the Caddo or Hasinai confederacy), Marie Magdalène, Jean Baptiste, Lucien, and Robert. Along with Eustache Bréman, to whom they may have been related and who was likewise just a child, only these colonists escaped the massacre at Matagorda Bay. They did so only because some Indian women among the tribe which attacked the settlement — which was the Clamcoet or Karankawa, a coastal group of considerably less sophistication than the Ceni — took pity on them and hurried them off to their own village, where soon the young French children were adopted into the tribe, to be much cared for and, once freed by the Spaniards, to be much lamented, even openly cried for by their erstwhile hosts, neighbors, and foster parents.

It is the story of this group of survivors which is told in the “Interrogation” here translated from the French original. All that need be added is a bit of clarification as to certain events spoken of, as well as a slight series of comments on the future careers of the Talons, insofar as these are known.

Pierre and Jean Baptiste, the two oldest of the Talon sons (Marie Magdalène was the oldest of them all), had arrived in France early in 1697 after the Spanish ship on which they were sailing from Mexico to Spain

was taken in the Caribbean by a French naval vessel. Although their brother Lucien also was on the same Spanish ship, and thus was taken with Jean Baptiste and Pierre, Marie Magdalène and young Robert were together on a different Spanish ship which escaped capture, and they were thus in Spain when the interrogation of their brothers was conducted. All of them were accompanying back to the Old World the widow of the previous Viceroy of New Spain (here the interrogation is almost certainly in error), in whose household, along with young Bréman, they had been placed as domestic servants following their rescue. That rescue had occurred in 1690: after Pierre was taken with Meunier, he quickly overcame his fear of the Spaniards who had tracked him down, and thus willingly told De León of the presence of Jean Baptiste, Marie Magdalène, Robert, Lucien, and Bréman farther south, among the coastal tribes. While he does not specify in the interrogation how he knew they were there (or even alive), it is likely that he had had at least indirect contact with them during the time he had spent in the interior (about three years, unless like Meunier, as the interrogation at one point suggests, he already had lived among the Ceni, prior to 1687, in order to learn their language). De León quickly pursued this information and, within a month of the time he had found Pierre (which was in May of 1690), he had located Marie Magdalène and Robert, and then Lucien, having to pay ransom to the reluctant natives—and then fight with them, killing or at least wounding two or three—in order to secure the Talons' custody. At this point De León certainly knew that Jean Baptiste was still among the natives somewhere in the region, along with Bréman, but it was not until the next year, 1691, that Domingo Terán de los Ríos, leader of a new expedition, located both of the youths, bringing them back to Mexico in 1692 and thus reuniting the family for the first time in five years or more. As the Spaniards tried relentlessly to remove the tattoos from all over the bodies of the children, and thus reclaim them for the non-Indian world, the children themselves set about—for a second time, now in Mexico City—picking up the markings of an alien culture.

From 1692 to 1696, the children lived with the Viceroy. The three older boys, Pierre, Jean Baptiste, and Lucien, eventually were enlisted in the marine service at Vera Cruz, while Marie Magdalène, now an attendant of the Viceroy's wife, remained in Mexico City with Robert. They must have retained warm feelings for each other: following their capture in 1697

by the French, the three young soldiers felt considerable anxiety over the fate of the others; and even after they were returned to their homeland of France, they wanted to be sent off to Spain so that the family once more might be together. Marie Magdalène, as it happened, made it to France herself in 1698, marrying a young Parisian, Pierre Simon, that year, having a child by him in 1699, and apparently moving back to what was in essence her birthplace if not her home—Quebec—where, at Charlesbourg, in 1719, her son Pierre was to be married. Of Lucien, who on his arrival in France was deemed too young to be in the army and thus was put into domestic service at Oleron, no more than this little is known. Robert, around 1720, seems to have been settled at Mobile, where the French designs on the Gulf Coast had been renewed by Pierre Le Moynes d'Iberville in the late 1690s. A carpenter by trade, Robert was married and had two children, both born at Mobile, and in the 1721 census there was listed as owning—one wishes that his experience had had richer fruit—seven slaves, five black and two Indian. How long he already had been in Louisiana, or how long he subsequently was to remain, is not clear.

With Pierre and Jean Baptiste the later records are somewhat fuller. Count Louis de Pontchartrain, French minister of the marine, and the official thus responsible for their interrogation in 1698, attempted to arrange for them to sail later that year with Iberville. They remained for the time being, however, in France, now listed as soldiers in one of two companies of Canadian recruits, which were to be sent on the second Iberville expedition in 1699. Early the following year, the two thus were at Biloxi, and later at Ft. Maurepas, listed as privates. In 1704, writing to Jean Cavelier, La Salle's brother, regarding the possibility that more survivors of the 1684-87 venture might still be among the natives in Texas, Iberville (then in France) noted that the Talon brothers had served with him for two years before they were taken prisoner by the Portuguese, while at sea, and that they still (in 1704) were in prison in Portugal. Some ten years later, in 1714, presumably having been in the vicinity of Mobile Bay for some time, the Talons—and here there is some confusion as to their Christian names, with Robert mentioned by some sources as one of the two—joined the expedition of Louis Juchereau de St. Denis to the Rio Grande. Attempting to set up a trade route between Mobile and northern Mexico, St. Denis was a man precisely cut out for the territory he was, with the

help of the Talons, covering: for once on Spanish land he quickly acclimated himself to Spanish ways, marrying there and remaining in Texas while the Talons, having served him as translators (and, by virtue of their still-tattooed faces, as welcomed guides among the natives), went back to Louisiana. Aside from some hints about an earlier expedition, on their own, across the same territory, this is all that is known of their later lives. They do not appear on the census documents which mention their brother Robert, so we may be justified—by a stretch of the imagination wholly in keeping with their careers—envisioning them now as adrift in some other far reach of space, without a home except for the immaterial one suggested by their extraordinary talent for survival.

Wayne Franklin

A Note on Sources

The best guide to La Salle's last expedition is Robert S. Weddle's *Wilderness Manhunt: The Spanish Search for La Salle* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), which gives the stories of the Talons, of L'Archevêque and Grollet, and of "Jean Géry." Unfortunately, Weddle's lack of access to the then-unknown full text of the Talon interrogation kept him from presenting as detailed an account of their experience as he otherwise might have given. Some of Weddle's Spanish sources are translated in Walter J. O'Donnell's "La Salle's Occupation of Texas," *Mid-America* 18 (1936), 96–124.