Chapter 14

The Year 1712

M. de la Mothe de Cadillac arrives as Governor of Louisiana — M. de St. Denis sets out to ascend the Rivière Rouge — Strange experience the author had among the Colapissas — M. de St. Denis reaches the Nassitoches — His journey to Rivière du Nord — The Assinais described

OWARD THE beginning of this year, M. de la Mothe de Cadillac ¹ and M. Durigoüin arrived at Isle Dauphine, the first to serve as Governor-General of Louisiana and the second as director-general, their expenses paid by M. de Croisat,² to whom His Majesty had ceded the commerce of Louisiana. They came on the ship named Le Baron de la Fosse, of which M. de la Jonquières ³ was captain. On this ship, too, came M. Duclos as commissary-general.⁴ M. de la

¹ La Mothe-Cadillac was made governor of Louisiana on May 15, 1710, but did not arrive in the colony until June 5, 1713. (Surrey, Calendar of Manuscripts in Paris Archives, I, ix, and Rowland and Sanders, MPA, II, 162-63 and n. 1.) This caustic-tongued Gascon is better known nowadays for the automobile that bears his name and for the small post he founded on the strait (détroit) between Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie than he is for his six years as governor of all Louisiana under the proprietary government of Antoine Crozat. It is true that he did little in Louisiana that merits fame. Perhaps he was frustrated and sick. Certainly he was in a bad humor all the time. Cadillac is interesting in Louisiana chiefly for his dislike of the country and the people. Even after he was removed and sent back to France his pen and his tongue continued the attack on Louisiana—at the very time, too, when the Company of the West was advertising the colony as an earthly paradise—until he was thrown in the Bastille for a period of cooling. Both his letters and his reports from Louisiana are on a high level of the literature of invective.

² Antoine Crozat held a monopoly of Louisiana from 1715 till 1717.

³ Sometimes spelled Jonquieres.

⁴ From December 24, 1712, till November 12, 1716. (Surrey, Calendar of Manu-
Mothe brought his wife with him, his sons and his daughters, with their servants. There were also twenty-five Breton girls, who had come of their own accord, and, in addition, a great supply of munitions and food, together with a great deal of merchandise, which M. Durigoüin, who was in charge of it, ordered to be stored both in the warehouses of Isle Dauphine and in those at Mobile.

M. de la Mothe had M. de Croisat’s instructions to send detachments out both in the direction of the Spaniards, to sound them out over trade, and in the direction of the Illinois, to discover mines; and a few days after his arrival he sent M. de Jonquière, the captain of the ship, with M. Durigoüin, the director, to Vera Cruz among the Spaniards to trade the goods he had brought from France for livestock, which we badly needed. But the Governor of Vera Cruz would not even hear of any trade; he merely had M. de la Jonquière given some food supplies and some livestock, which he sent to his ship out at the roadstead, along with the order to set sail immediately and go home.

During this time M. de St. Denis, who was a very cou-

scripts in Paris Archives, I, x.) Duclos’ experience in Peru and in Caribbean ports supposedly had prepared him to foster Crozat’s trade with the Spaniards. Rowland and Sanders, MPA, II, 74–75 and note.

5 Cadillac gives twelve as the number of girls that he and his wife had attempted to chaperone on the way across. (Lamothe Cadillac to Pontchartrain, Oct. 26, 1713, in Rowland and Sanders, MPA, II, 184.) Bitterly he complains to the minister about the captain of the ship, the steward, and particularly about a half-pay captain named De Richebourg—all of whom had misbehaved either with or toward these girls, so that only three of the girls had found husbands between the arrival of the ship, on June 5, and October 26, 1713. One girl had died. Half-pay captain De Richebourg is accused, too, of corrupting Cadillac’s wife’s maid as well as the girls. (Ibid., II, 184–85 and Cadillac’s marginal notes.)

6 Given as Sieur Dirigoin in an abstract of a letter from Sieur Dirigoin to Antoine Crozat, late October, 1713 (in Rowland and Sanders, MPA, III, 174–78). The letter tells of Dirigoin’s inability to sell goods at Havana or Vera Cruz.

7 Louis Juchereau de St. Denis.