

André Richard, "Of what Occurred at Miscou", 1644 in In Reuben Gold Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relation and Allied Documents* vol. XXVIII (Cleveland, Burrows Brother Company, 1898), p.23-37.

#### OF WHAT OCCURRED AT MISCOU.

“ G O D continues his favors toward our poor *Savages*, -they now open their eyes; they desire Baptism and ask for Christian instruction. I have never seen them better disposed,” writes Father Richard. We have baptized 14 since my last letter-a family of eight persons; and six in the extremity of illness, who nearly all died shortly afterward. Among these. a young man, who was very intelligent, showed by his answers and his fervor that his was a soul destined for Heaven. As to the family, it was to have been baptized last year; but its head, whose name is Iariet, had been guilty of intemperance, and this occasioned the delay. His wife, however, feared that she might die in childbirth, -for she said that her time had long passed, and she was exceedingly ill-and desired Baptism before our departure. She obtained it, not only on account of her dangerous condition but also owing to her own merits, which cause her to pass with everyone for the most virtuous, the wisest, and most modest of all the Savage women. The administration of the rites was deferred until the Baptism of her husband. On the 30th of July, this favor was granted to him and to all his family. He was named Denis by Monsieur Prevost, Captain in the King’s navy, commanding the Ship St. Joseph; and his wife was named Marguerite. This good woman was not content to answer all questions with the devotion and sentiments with which the Holy Ghost inspired her, but she also assisted her husband, -she exhorted him and suggested to him the answers. They afterward received the Nuptial benediction, and were admitted to Our Lord’s table. On leaving it, Denis Iariet said to me: ‘ Now I will pray in earnest, and will be a good man. I regret my past life; I hate sin, and wish to lead a better life in future.’ Then, drawing out a quantity of Porcelain beads, he said:, I am sorry that I am so poor; I have neither Moose nor Beaver to present to those Gentlemen who so greatly obliged us at our Baptism. I wish that I had something by which I might acknowledge the kindness that we have received, but since I have nothing else, I shall be pleased if they will deign to accept this little present from me.’ We thanked him, and were satisfied with this manifestation of his good will. He therefore withdrew, quite content, and returned to Nepegigouit to continue the hunt for Beaver, and to help as much as he could in completing the building that Monsieur the Abbe of sainte Magdalene, and Messieurs the Associates for Miskou, have caused to be begun near us for him and for Joseph Nepsuget, who was baptized last year. They are on good terms with each other; they are good comrades, and hunt together in Summer and in Winter. They had much to suffer at the beginning of last Winter and God tried their constancy and courage. They had selected their hunting district very far within the forest, hoping there to meet better success. They had intended to lay in a supply of Salmon; but the frost forestalled them, and closed the rivers, which quickly reduced them to want. They subsisted as best they could until Advent, when they found themselves completely destitute of provisions. They searched and hunted everywhere without finding anything but a few Porcupines, and that very seldom. They were compelled to eat their dogs, their skins, and their shoes, and often passed several days without food. During that time, a strange thing happened to a young Frenchman who wintered with them. One day, when a dog had been

killed to save the lives of numerous persons who were starving, this boy, who was not satisfied with the little that they had given to him as to the others, seized the liver of the animal, that had been thrown away, and cooked and ate it. He was warned to leave that meat,- that it would do him harm, and make his skin fall off. He would not believe it, and continued his repast, but to his regret,- for it cost him his skin, which fell off in great flakes without any pain, so that in a short time his skin was entirely changed. The *Sauvages* know by experience this result on those who have eaten that meat.

This affliction however did not inspire our people with any distaste for prayer. On the contrary, they had recourse to it in their greatest weakness; and, as they told me, they arose therefrom less inconvenienced by hunger. They attributed the misfortune to their sins, and acknowledged that God punished them for their offenses. 'It is true,' said Joseph Nepsuget, 'that we have given God cause to be angry with us; but I, principally, have done so by my anger and impatience, and by my former drunkenness. He punishes us justly. Let us therefore have recourse to him; let us ask pardon of him. He will have pity on us; he is our Father. I will never offend him again; I will never allow myself to be overcome by anger or by liquor; I wish for the future to please God, and to be a good man.' After that, they began their prayers which they continued for a long time, and frequently recommenced. Finally, God had pity on them; and, after allowing them to suffer much through famine from the eighth of December to the sixth of January, he sent them an abundance of food, and three times as much as the other *Sauvages* had. In the first place, they killed a Moose with much difficulty, for they were extremely weak and could hardly stand. This food restored their strength and courage to some extent; so they took the field in all directions, and in a short time they filled their cabin with meat. They were not ungrateful, but thanked God for every animal that they killed, and at the end of the Winter they related everywhere the favors that God had conferred on them. Joseph came to us as soon as the ice had left the rivers free, and Denis came shortly afterward. They told us of their good and evil fortunes during the Winter, and of the care they had taken to pray to God, to observe the Sundays, and to remember what they had been taught. 'For my part,' said Denis Iariet, who was then a Catechu- men, 'I often found by experience that I derived no benefit and gained nothing by hunting on Sundays; but if, after having rested on that day, I went to hunt on the morrow, I never failed to be successful. Therefore I will never do anything to transgress that day.' It is consoling to see how careful these good people are to observe the Festivals and Sun- days. If they had no time to put their few household effects in order, and to prepare their provisions so that they might not be spoiled, still they did not venture to touch them, without previously ascertaining from us whether it was permitted to do so. In the same manner, I often observed that on Fridays and fast days they suffered much, rather than do anything contrary to abstinence on those days.

But we are human, and the strongest are not always sure to remain upright. This Joseph of whom we speak found means to procure a cask of wine; he gave himself up to intemperance, and afterward to disorder, and committed a scandalous sin. This is the evil that we have for a long time deplored here; and the lack of restraint on that pernicious traffic ruins everything, as we have frequently writ- ten to Your Reverence. They themselves say that they would all be Christians by this time, were it not for the liquor that is traded to them. When this poor man came to his senses, he was so ashamed that he did not dare to show himself; but, as his offense had been public, he also had to make public reparation.

This he willingly agreed to, on a Sunday morning in the Chapel, -in the presence of all, both French and *Sauvages*,- with great manifestations of sorrow. May God continue to grant him grace and to strengthen his courage.

As for the remainder of our *Sauvages*, they are very willing and well disposed. Many of them, although they are infidels, are anxious to procure Baptism for their sick; they promptly inform us as soon as they see anyone in danger, and beg us to go and baptize them. The principal men among them glory in calling and bringing the others to prayers, -they assemble, urge, and press them though most of them need no spur. Our Chapel is often too small to hold them all; the prayers have to be repeated at various times; and they show by their fervor and modesty that they relish them. In fact, since we have set their prayers to music they take a remarkable pleasure in attending them, and pride themselves on singing well. Some of them, in truth, have very fine voices; and those who have seen and have lived at Kebec, do not find our *Sauvages* less deserving of praise than the Montagnais. Two persons of rank among them came one day, when all the prayers were over, to ask that they be made to pray to God. 'And where were you,' they were asked, 'when the prayers were said? Why were you not there?', We knew nothing about it, 'they said;' we were at some distance, and heard nothing of them. Make us pray to God; we are sorry to have failed in that duty.' They had to be satisfied, and, when they had performed their devotions, they showed by deed and by word that they were pleased. But truly delightful it is to see, when we teach the Catechism to them, the care and the trouble that the parents take to make their children attentive, and to impress on their minds what by this means we teach them and the older ones. They will take before them their children whom they tenderly love, and have them make the Sign of the Cross; they will repeat to them what the Reverend Father says, and then enlarge upon the subject, and explain it in other words; they will exhort them to remember it well, and will not forget to instill into their souls a horror for sin. A band of *Sauvages*, of the chief men of Acadia, led by a brave Captain named Herout, passed here last Spring, on their way to war. They attended the prayers and the exhortations that we addressed to them in their language in the Chapel of this settlement, and were all delighted to hear things so beautiful and so new. 'A las!' said they, 'we have so long frequented the French settlements on our shores, and we have never been taught in that fashion. We know not what it is to pray, at least in our own language; our children are not taught as you teach them here.' At all events, they went away inclined to right sentiments, and perhaps this Divine seed will bear fruit in its time. On their return from war, a party of them passed by our House of Nepegigouit where they showed themselves as assiduous and as zealous for the prayers, as they had been at Miscou. They came to rejoice with our *Sauvages* at the brave exploits of the war that they had performed at Chichedek, in the Country of the Bersiamites, where they had killed seven *Sauvages* and taken thirteen or fourteen prisoners, most of whom were children. Those from the Bay here, who had gone before them with the same purpose of war, showed themselves much more reserved and never ventured to attack any Canoes that they met in that quarter, because they imagined, from their speech, that they prayed to God. But these others, who have less love for prayer and are not so well instructed, did not disturb themselves on that account. They threw themselves on the first prey that fell into their hands; they came back victorious, and desired by these massacres to allay the grief and sorrow of all the Country, which is afflicted by the death of many persons who have died during the past few years. They threw on the shore, at landing, the scalps of the poor massacred people, and at the same time spread joy throughout the cabins. The women vied with one another who should

first seize these Trophies, and who should sing and dance the best. Neither rain nor wind could stop them, from morning to night. It is strange that this constant and continued dancing and singing for several days did not tire or weary them. But a false alarm, and the rumor that the enemy had appeared, interrupted their rejoicing, threw them into fear and apprehension of falling into the hands of the Hiroquois, and made them think of flight. They all withdrew to Miskou, where for a long time they continued their baleful songs to the cadence of the waving scalps.

So much for our *Savages*. As for the French, Your Reverence is aware that we devote ourselves to those who winter in this settlement, and to several fishing ships that come here every year and spend the Summer on these Coasts; and I may say, to the glory of God, that this Mission supplies the spiritual needs not only of the latter but also of the former, and of the *Savages* of the Country. Sermons, and the teaching of Catechism; the frequent Confessions and Communions; the disputes and quarrels that have been settled and appeased,- even among the principal persons, who had gone so far as to challenge each other,-sufficiently show the importance of these excursions in which the *Savages* also have a share. For, as they readily remain near the ships, we cannot assist the one without also having the means of assisting the other. But liquor, which is here traded and sold with impunity, is the scourge of this region. When will Heaven furnish a remedy therefor, since we await it in vain from earth? It will be through the prayers of Your Reverence, to which I earnestly commend myself.