



Kévin Bazot

TOCQUEVILLE

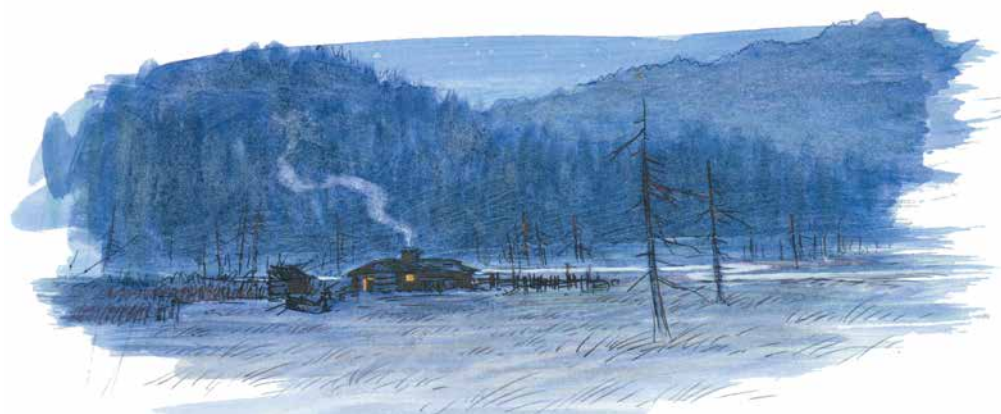
TOWARDS A NEW WORLD

casterman

Kévin Bazot

TOCQUEVILLE TOWARDS A NEW WORLD

freely adapted from *A Fortnight in the Wilderness*,
by Alexis de Tocqueville.



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If you would like more information about this title, please contact Nolwenn Lebreton: nolwenn.lebret@casterman.com

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NEW YORK,
SUMMER 1831

COME
ON GUSTAVE,
HURRY UP,
THE STAGECOACH
WON'T WAIT!



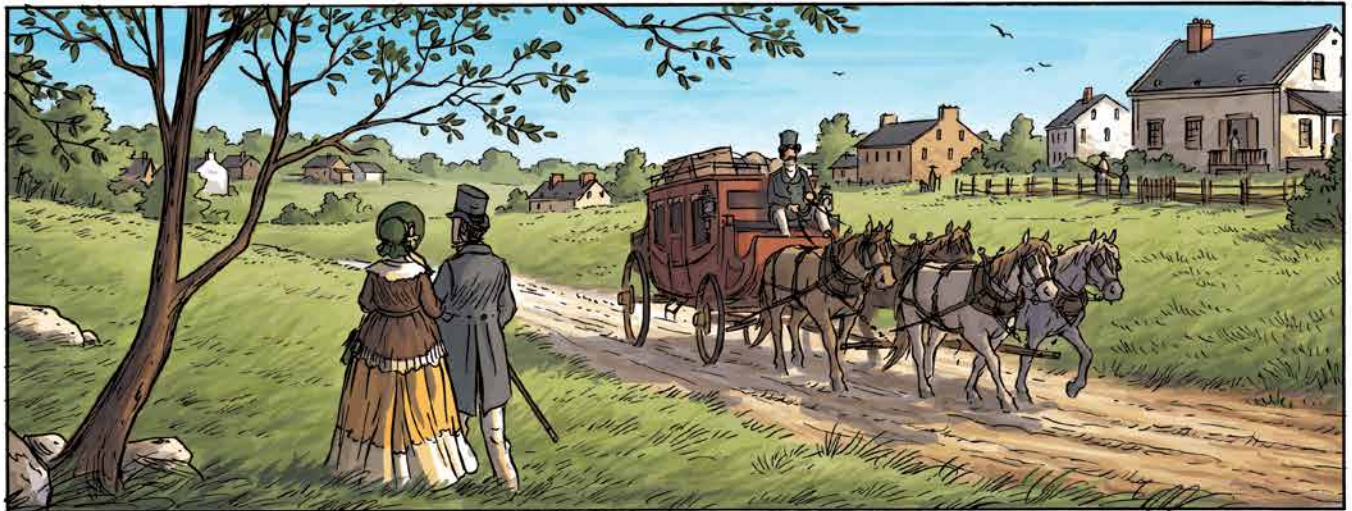
HUFF...PUFF...
I'M EXHAUSTED!

COME ON,
YOU CAN DO IT!
YOU SEEMED TO BE
IN BETTER SHAPE
A FEW YEARS AGO!

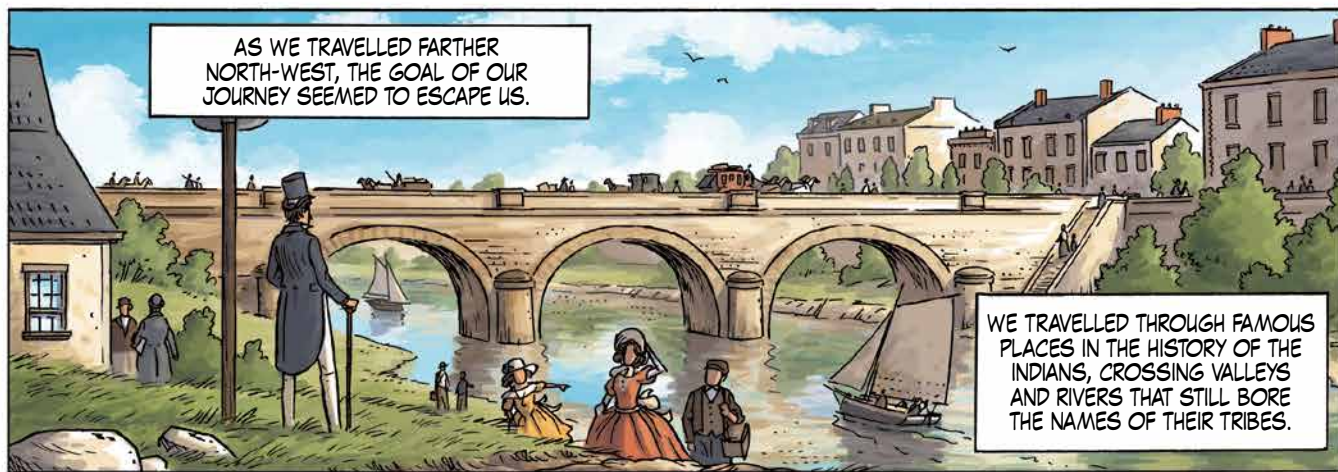


YES, BUT... RUNNING
LIKE THIS FROM THE
CRACK OF DAWN...
HUFF...WITHOUT ANY
BREAKFAST...

WE'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME
TO EAT ON THE WAY!
THINK ABOUT EVERYTHING
WE'RE GOING
TO DISCOVER!







AS WE TRAVELLED FARTHER NORTH-WEST, THE GOAL OF OUR JOURNEY SEEMED TO ESCAPE U.S.

WE TRAVELLED THROUGH FAMOUS PLACES IN THE HISTORY OF THE INDIANS, CROSSING VALLEYS AND RIVERS THAT STILL BORE THE NAMES OF THEIR TRIBES.

BUT EVERYWHERE, THE HUT OF THE SAVAGE HAD GIVEN WAY TO THE HOUSE OF THE CIVILIZED MAN...



THE WOODS HAD BEEN FELLED, THE WILDERNESS TOOK ON LIFE.



HERE IS WHERE I FELLED THE FIRST TREE OF THE FOREST...

JUST THERE, WHERE OUR BEAUTIFUL CHURCH STANDS.

AND THAT'S WHERE THE GREAT COUNCIL OF THE IROQUOIS CONFEDERATION USED TO BE HELD.

THE IROQUOIS?!

AND WHAT HAS BECOME OF THE INDIANS?

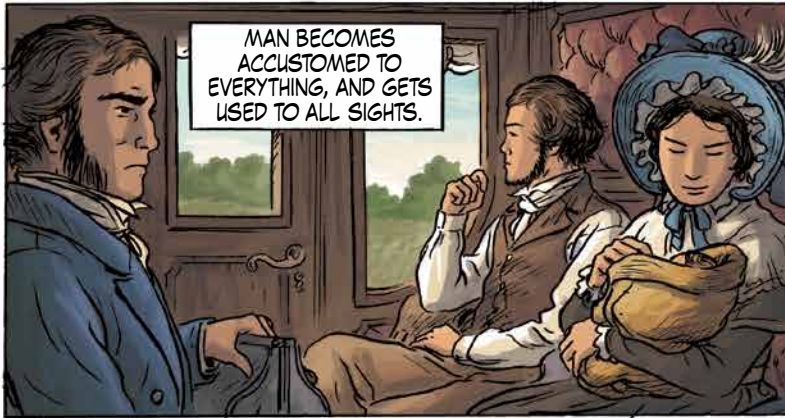


OH, THEY'RE SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE GREAT LAKES...

IT'S A DYING RACE, YOU KNOW...



THEY'RE NOT MADE FOR CIVILIZATION: IT KILLS THEM.

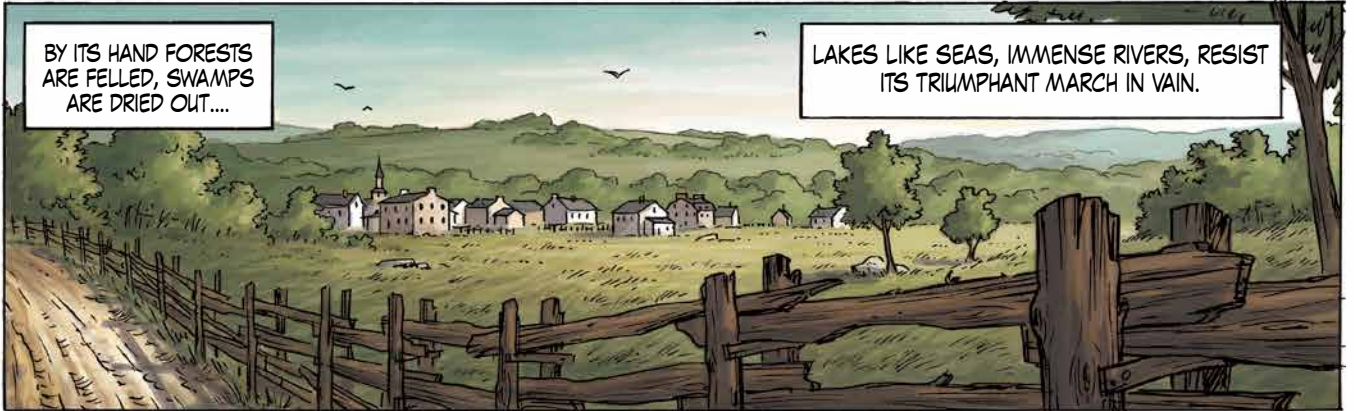


MAN BECOMES ACCUSTOMED TO EVERYTHING, AND GETS USED TO ALL SIGHTS.



ON THE SAME LAND, IN ITS PLACE, ANOTHER RACE EXPANDS AT AN EVEN MORE SURPRISING SPEED...

HERE, AN ANCIENT PEOPLE, THE FIRST AND LEGITIMATE MASTER OF THE AMERICAN CONTINENT, MELTS AWAY DAILY LIKE SNOW IN THE SUN, AND DISAPPEARS BEFORE OUR EYES FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH.



BY ITS HAND FORESTS ARE FELLED, SWAMPS ARE DRIED OUT....

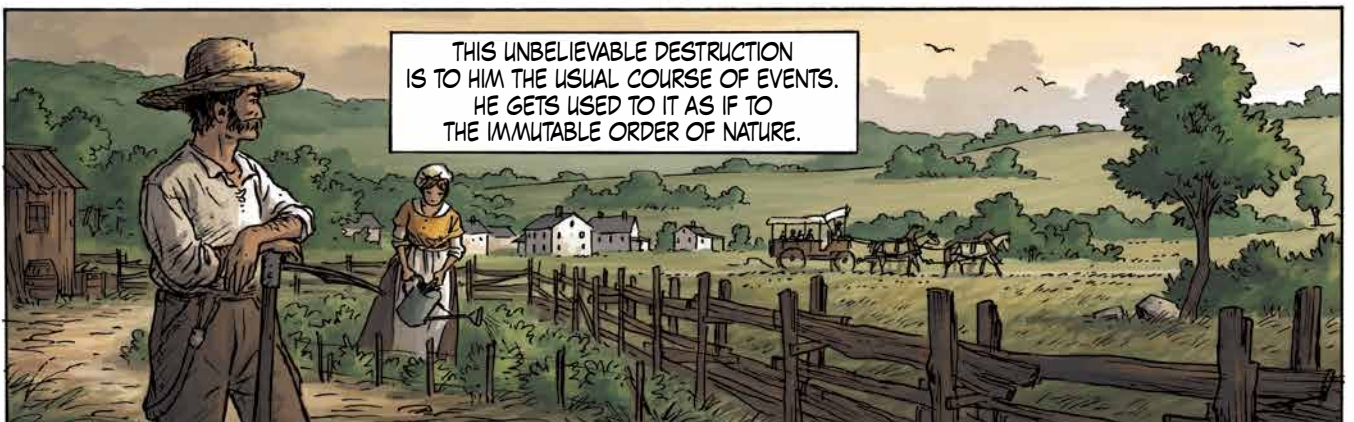
LAKES LIKE SEAS, IMMENSE RIVERS, RESIST ITS TRIUMPHANT MARCH IN VAIN.



THE WILDERNESS BECOMES VILLAGES, VILLAGES BECOME TOWNS.



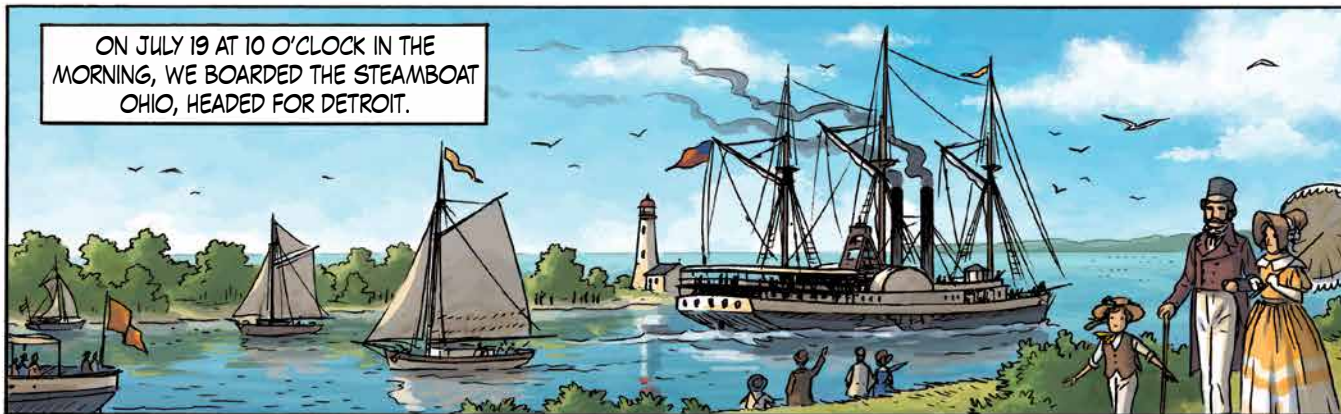
A DAILY WITNESS TO THESE MARVELS, THE AMERICAN IS UNPERTURBED.



THIS UNBELIEVABLE DESTRUCTION IS TO HIM THE USUAL COURSE OF EVENTS. HE GETS USED TO IT AS IF TO THE IMMUTABLE ORDER OF NATURE.

(...)

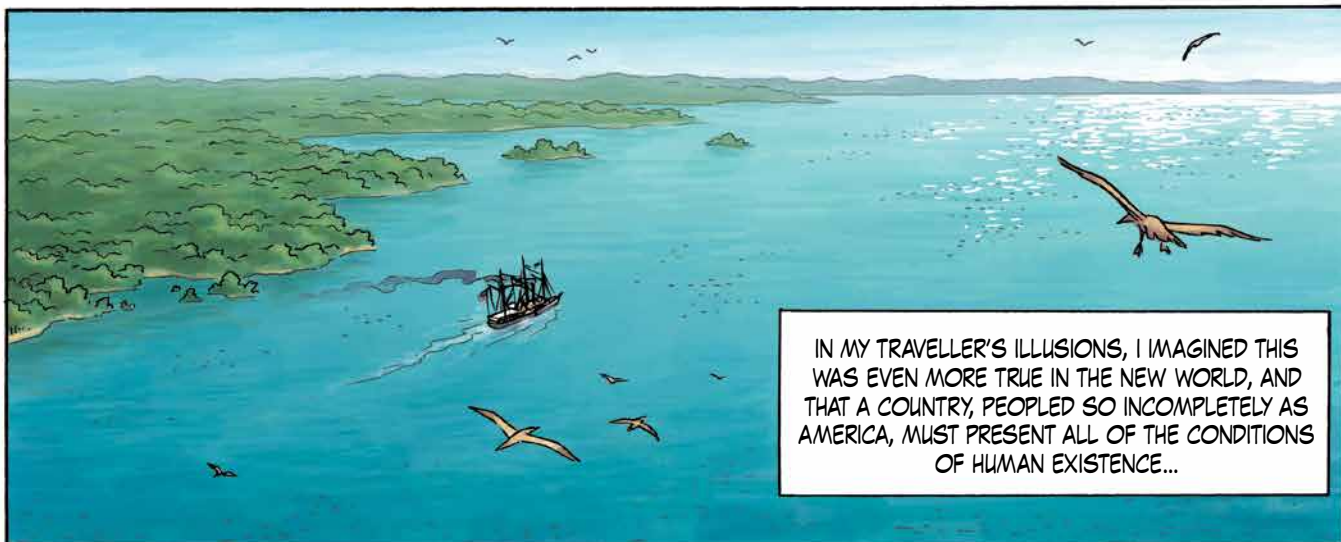
ON JULY 19 AT 10 O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING, WE BOARDED THE STEAMBOAT OHIO, HEADED FOR DETROIT.



A VERY STRONG BREEZE BLEW FROM THE NORTH-WEST GIVING THE WATERS OF LAKE ERIE THE AGITATED APPEARANCE OF OCEAN WAVES.



IN FRANCE, AND MORE GENERALLY IN THE OLD EUROPE, I'D NOTICED THAT THE EXTENT TO WHICH A PROVINCE OR TOWN WAS ISOLATED, ITS WEALTH OR ITS SIZE, HAD AN IMMENSE INFLUENCE ON THE IDEAS, THE MORALS, THE ENTIRE CIVILIZATION OF ITS INHABITANTS....OFTEN SEPARATING THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE SAME TERRITORY BY SEVERAL CENTURIES.

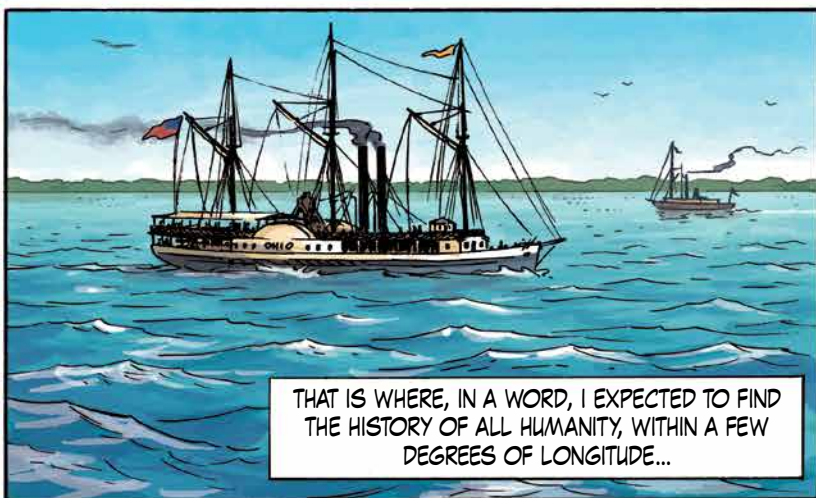


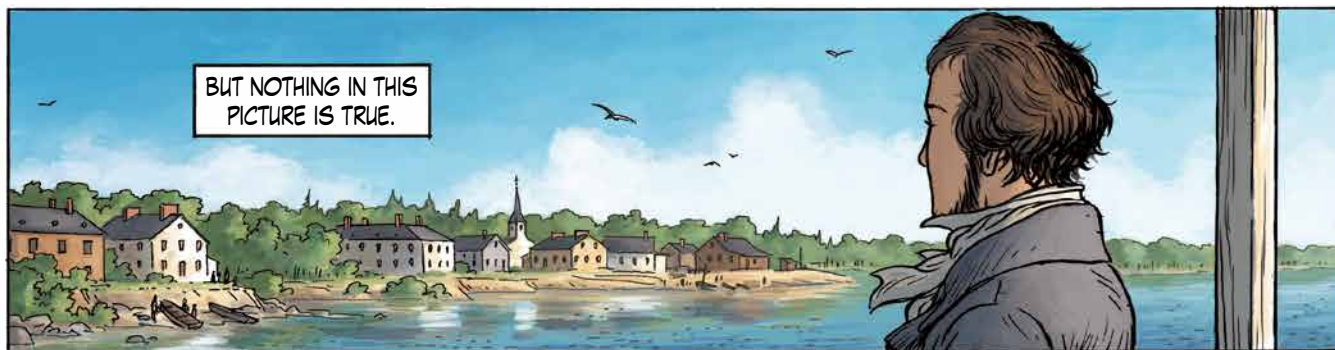
IN MY TRAVELLER'S ILLUSIONS, I IMAGINED THIS WAS EVEN MORE TRUE IN THE NEW WORLD, AND THAT A COUNTRY, PEOPLED SO INCOMPLETELY AS AMERICA, MUST PRESENT ALL OF THE CONDITIONS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE...

ACCORDING TO ME, THIS WAS THE ONLY COUNTRY WHERE YOU COULD SEE THE IMAGE OF SOCIETY ACROSS ALL AGES, FROM THE OPULENT, URBANE PATRICIEN TO THE SAVAGE OF THE WILDERNESS.



THAT IS WHERE, IN A WORD, I EXPECTED TO FIND THE HISTORY OF ALL HUMANITY, WITHIN A FEW DEGREES OF LONGITUDE...



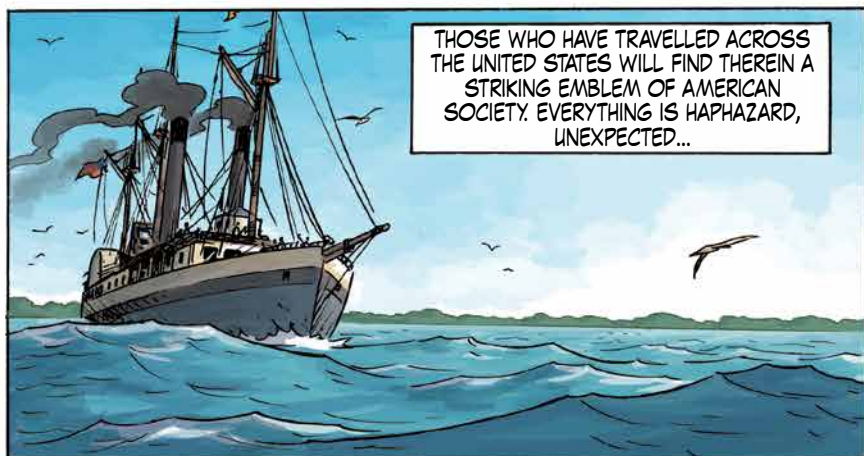


BUT NOTHING IN THIS
PICTURE IS TRUE.

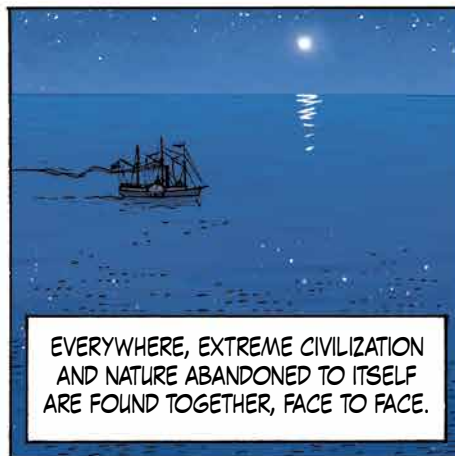


IN AMERICA,
THERE IS NO MID-WAY...

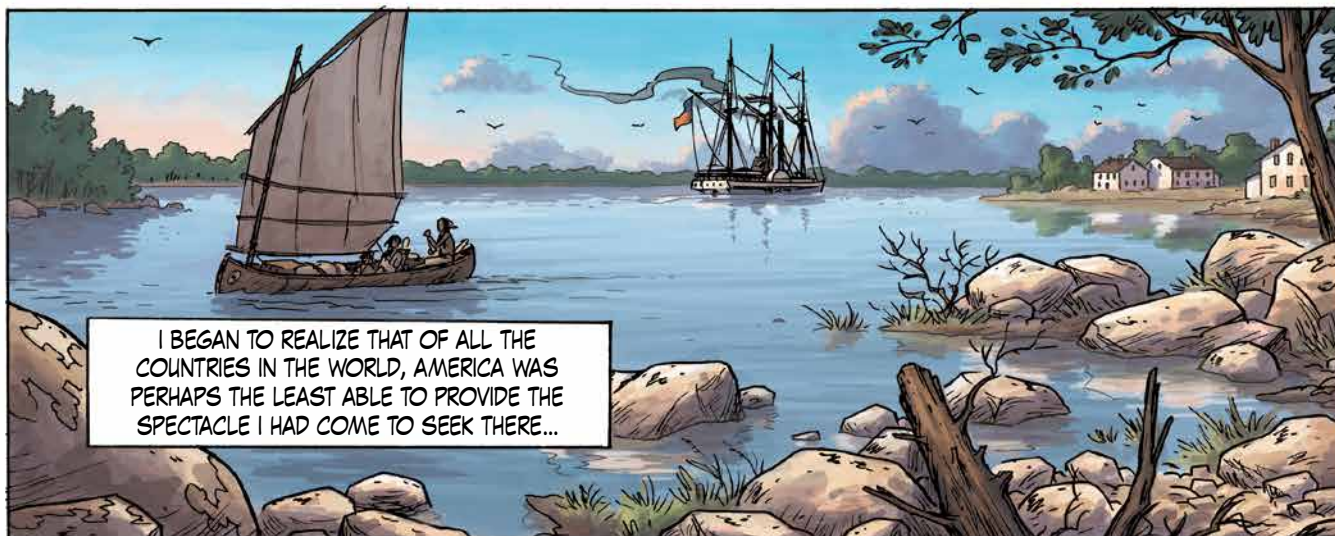
YOU GO WITHOUT TRANSITION FROM
THE WILDERNESS TO THE STREET OF A CITY. ON TURNING
FROM A WOODS YOU CAN SEE THE SPIRE OF A STEEPLE,
DAZZLING WHITE HOUSES, SHOPS, THE MOST PLEASANT
PICTURES OF CIVILIZED LIFE.



THOSE WHO HAVE TRAVELLED ACROSS
THE UNITED STATES WILL FIND THEREIN A
STRIKING EMBLEM OF AMERICAN
SOCIETY. EVERYTHING IS HAPHAZARD,
UNEXPECTED...



EVERYWHERE, EXTREME CIVILIZATION
AND NATURE ABANDONED TO ITSELF
ARE FOUND TOGETHER, FACE TO FACE.



I BEGAN TO REALIZE THAT OF ALL THE
COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD, AMERICA WAS
PERHAPS THE LEAST ABLE TO PROVIDE THE
SPECTACLE I HAD COME TO SEEK THERE...



THE FOLLOWING DAY AT THREE O'CLOCK, WE ARRIVED IN DETROIT, A SMALL TOWN OF TWO OR THREE THOUSAND INHABITANTS.



WE HAD CROSSED THE ENTIRE STATE OF NEW YORK AND STEAMED ONE HUNDRED LEAGUES ON LAKE ERIE; WE NOW TOUCHED ON THE LIMITS OF CIVILIZATION.

BUT WE STILL DID NOT KNOW WHICH COURSE TO TAKE, AND FINDING INFORMATION WAS NOT AS EASY AS YOU MIGHT BELIEVE.

TO CROSS ALMOST IMPENETRABLE FORESTS, TO BRAVE PESTILENTIAL MARSHES AND TO EXPOSE ONESELF TO THE DAMP AIR OF THE WOODS, THESE ARE EFFORTS WHICH AN AMERICAN EASILY CONCEIVES, IF A DIME IS TO BE GAINED.



BUT SHOULD YOU DO SO FROM CURIOSITY, SIMPLY TO ADMIRE GREAT TREES OR FIND SOLITUDE, THAT IS ENTIRELY BEYOND HIM...



IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND SOMEONE WHO COULD UNDERSTAND US...

YOU WANT TO SEE WOODS? GO STRAIGHT AHEAD AND YOU'LL FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR...

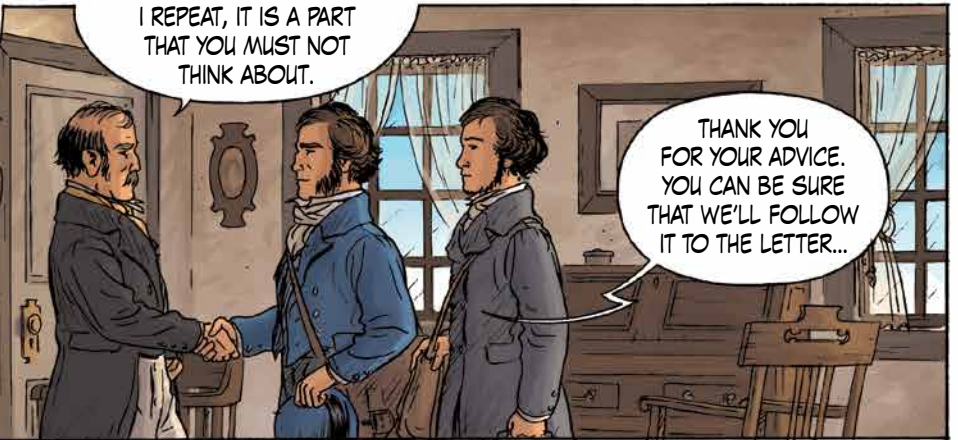
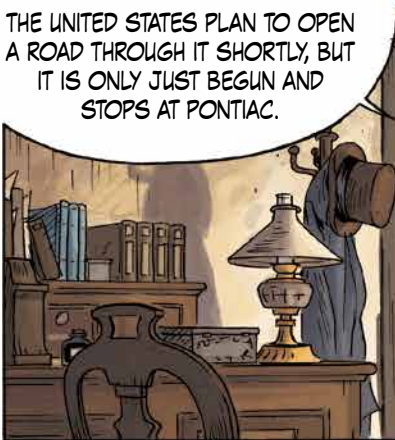
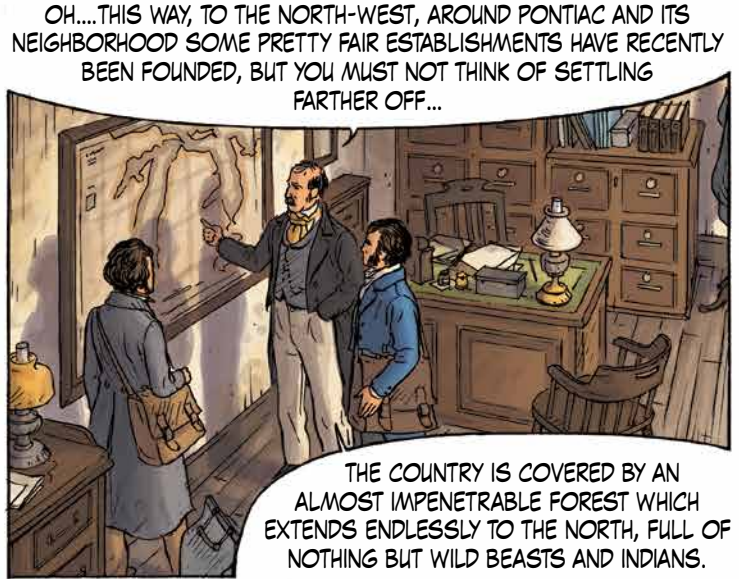
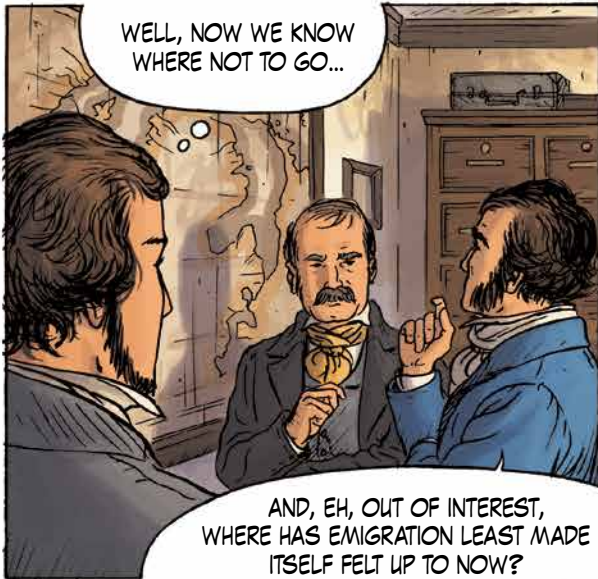
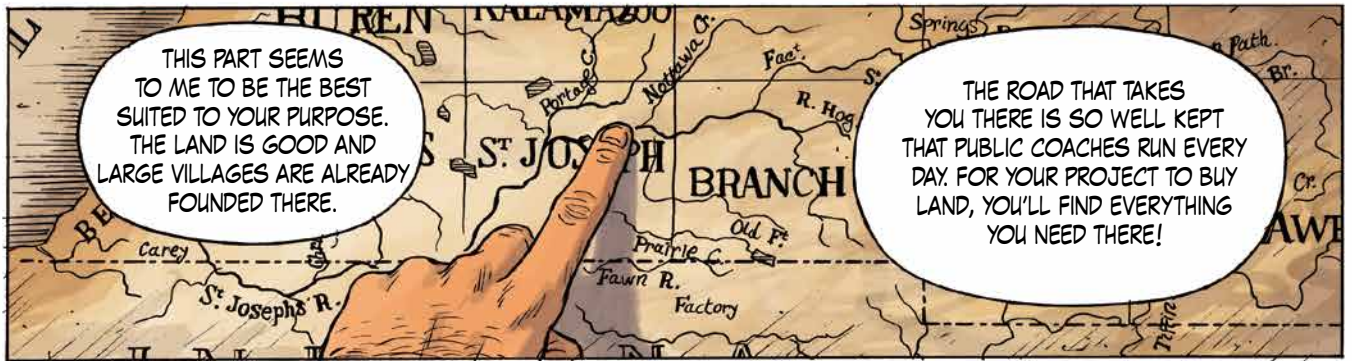
AS FOR THE INDIANS, YOU'LL SEE MORE THAN ENOUGH IN OUR STREETS, YOU WON'T NEED TO GO VERY FAR FOR THAT...



AT LEAST THOSE ONES ARE STARTING TO BECOME CIVILIZED AND HAVE A LESS SAVAGE APPEARANCE.

WE SOON SAW THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO GET THE TRUTH FROM THEM IN A STRAIGHTFORWARD MANNER. WE WOULD NEED TO MANOEUVRE...





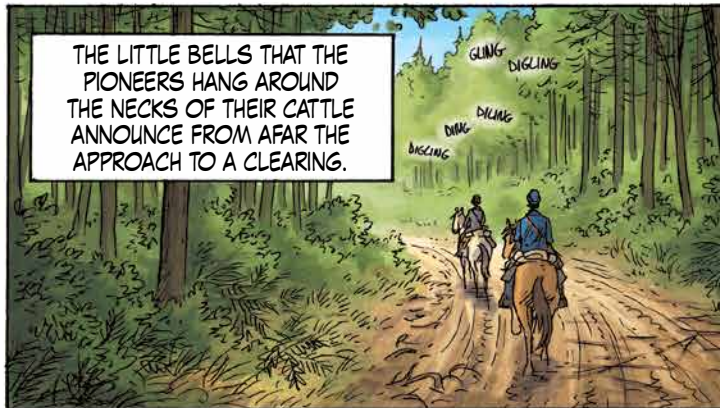
THE NEXT DAY, WE SPED OFF TO GET HORSES, SOME PROVISIONS AND GUNS, AND SET OFF, OUR HEARTS AS LIGHT AS IF WE HAD BEEN SKIPPING SCHOOL.



ONE MILE FROM THE TOWN,
THE ROAD ENTERS THE FOREST,
AND NEVER LEAVES IT.



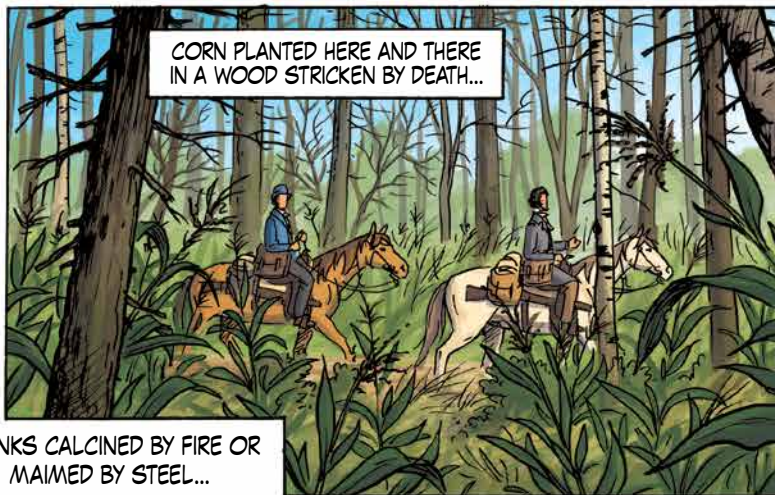
THE LITTLE BELLS THAT THE
PIONEERS HANG AROUND
THE NECKS OF THEIR CATTLE
ANNOUNCE FROM AFAR THE
APPROACH TO A CLEARING.



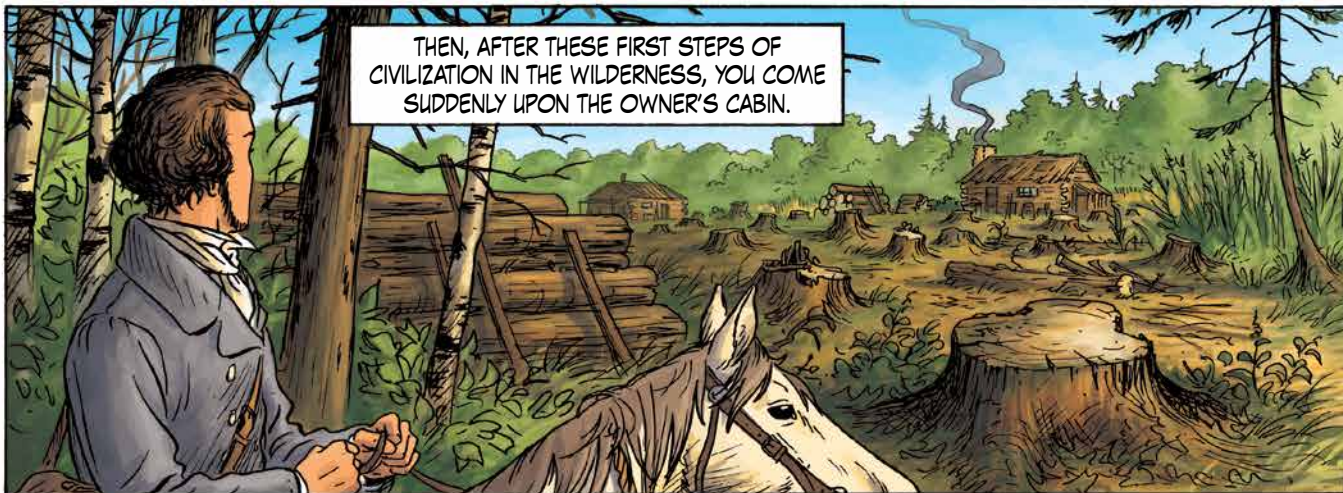
SOON YOU HEAR THE AXE THAT FELS THE TREES,
AND AS YOU PROCEED, TRACES OF DESTRUCTION
ANNOUNCE STILL MORE CLEARLY THE PRESENCE
OF MAN.



CORN PLANTED HERE AND THERE
IN A WOOD STRICKEN BY DEATH...



TRUNKS CALCINED BY FIRE OR
MAIMED BY STEEL...



THEN, AFTER THESE FIRST STEPS OF
CIVILIZATION IN THE WILDERNESS, YOU COME
SUDDENLY UPON THE OWNER'S CABIN.



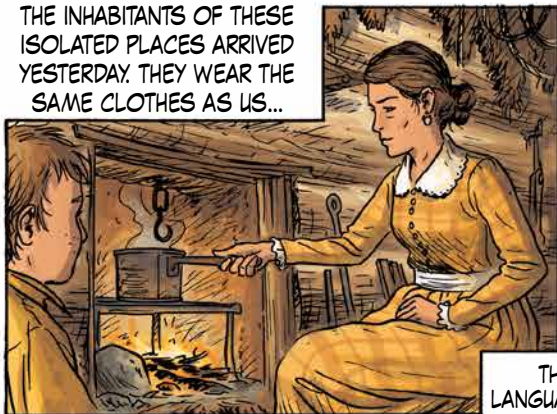
WE THOUGHT WE HAD FINALLY
REACHED THE DOOR OF THE
AMERICAN PEASANT...



HEEL!



THE INHABITANTS OF THESE ISOLATED PLACES ARRIVED YESTERDAY. THEY WEAR THE SAME CLOTHES AS US...



THEY SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF THE CITIES.



...BOOKS AND NEWSPAPERS LIE ON THEIR CRUDE TABLES.



THEY ARE THE SAME AS THOSE WE HAD LEFT IN THE STREETS OF NEW YORK: SAME SPIRIT, SAME HABITS, SAME PLEASURES.



AND WHERE ARE YOU GOING?



ERR, WELL...WE ARE GOING TO THE FRONTIER, TO THE NORTH-WEST.

OH, YOU'RE GOING TO SAGINAW?



SA...SAGINAW?