

tides behind him, and his adventurous keel confronted the impassable barrier of the Lachine Rapids. His journey was not without reward. Cabot had brought back from his voyage the tale of a lonely land wherein he had encountered no inhabitants, although he had picked up some scanty traces of unseen, perhaps extinct, humanity. Cartier, on the other hand, discovered, on the smiling banks of the beautiful St. Lawrence, a country known to the natives, as it has ever since been known to the world, under the sonorous and pleasantly suggestive name of Canada. The meaning of the word Canada,—“Place of habitations,”—describes an inhabited country. While the mysterious volume of the great river maintained the tradition of a possible passage to the Orient, this “inhabited country” offered to European enterprise that additional link of interest, trade—the great bond of national intercourse and travel. Having in view the little note made of other than royal enterprises, the silence of history does not disturb the probability that the valuable and abundant peltries at once attracted shipping into the St. Lawrence waters; hence, that from Cartier’s discovery forward the French language continued to be heard at intervals by the inhabitants between Tadoussac and Quebec. Through trading visits, if not by establishments, the white race kept a footing, preparing the way for the regular colonization which was to begin under the command of the great Champlain more than a hundred years after the first discovery of the inland Mediterranean.

Champlain set out on his voyage in 1603, commissioned by the French king to establish posts and settlements, not apparently in the future Nouvelle France alone, but at such localities as he might select upon the unappropriated new continent.

At that moment the fruits to England of Cabot’s discovery seemed to be on the point of being lost. Let it

be remembered that to that date, the first years of the seventeenth century, perhaps had had some transient fishing stages erected here and there upon the coast of Newfoundland. These were flittings, obscure and unrecorded, of French traders in and out of the River St. Lawrence. No European settlement or post existed from Florida to Labrador. Could we see reenacted before us in a visible drama the history of four fateful centuries, we should follow with breathless interest those colonial voyages of Champlain. His white sails move from harbor to harbor, like a winged spirit of destiny; now turning northwards to the Gulf, now hovering along the coast southwards as far as the neighborhood of Newport. A vast and vacant continent lies open to him. Where will he plant the lilies of France, bearing with them the shadow of the old régime, its withering reign and its exclusive religion? We watch him enter the lonely waters of Massachusetts Bay. The future sites of Boston and the other Puritan settlements, untenanted and unchosen, invite him. His foot seems to hesitate over Plymouth Rock. We recollect, as we watch, that the event of 1760 was prepared by the wear and tear of the persistent Puritan attacks issuing from Boston and Connecticut, the repeated sieges of Louisburg, the frontier warfare by Lake Champlain. We reckon the lavish Provincial contributions of men and money to campaign after campaign, culminating in that of 1759. We can hardly forbear to speculate upon the changed consequences had the Massachusetts Company found no footing north of Virginia, and had New France in consequence commenced with no eastern frontier between the St. Lawrence and the Atlantic Ocean.

Fate, however, had another history in store for these regions, and for the course of humanity. Not Boston Bay, but Quebec, with Nova Scotia, the gatepost of the St. Lawrence, was chosen