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THE GREAT NORTH-WEST OF CANADA.

See p. 8.

On the 20th April, 1534, Cartier sailed from the port of St. Malo, in France, on an exploring expedition to the shores of the New World, and in the following August he discovered the river St. Lawrence, which he ascended as far as Hochelaga. In 1603, Champlain was dispatched by a company of merchants in France to make a preliminary survey of the St. Lawrence with the view of opening up a trade along its banks, and to his energy and zeal Canada is indebted for its earliest settlements. In those days, however, the course of development and settlement was slow, and in 1634, over thirty years after Champlain's first visit to the St. Lawrence, the whole white population from Gaspé to Three Rivers, was hardly one hundred and fifty souls. The interior of the continent was yet to be explored. Champlain had previously ascended the Ottawa, and stood upon the shores of the Georgian Bay of Lake Huron, and he had received from western Indians numerous reports of distant inland regions, yet his knowledge of the great lakes in 1634 was exceedingly limited. He resolved to extend his explorations in the hope of establishing friendly relations with the powerful tribes living, as he was told, beyond the northern shores of Lake Huron. His imagination also was fired with the idea that by means of the great inland waters, of which he had but slight information, he might be able to discover a new highway to the East.

The dream of Champlain has now, after a period of nearly three centuries, become a reality, and the new highway to the East across the North American Continent is an accomplished fact. It is true that a great portion of the route is overland instead of being altogether the water-way Champlain dreamt of, and the iron horse forms a very important factor in traversing it, while the great inland lakes are relegated to a secondary place. Yet the dream of a route to the East by way of the St. Lawrence, which fired the imagination of the old French navigator three hundred years ago, is practically fulfilled. The man chosen by Champlain to explore the region beyond Lake Huron was John Nicollot, who was the first white man to visit Sault St. Marie and who afterwards discovered Lake Michigan and explored the shores and part of the interior of what is now known as the State of Wisconsin. To the efforts of the Jesuit missionaries, however, is due the early exploration of Lake Superior, and their map of that greatest of inland lakes, in 1671, is a monument of their hardihood and enterprise. To Robert Cavalier, better known by the designation of La Salle, who, like Champlain, was inspired by the thought of discovering a new route to the riches of China and Japan, is due the early exploration of a large portion of the country lying west and south-west of Lake Michigan, and Father Hennepin, his lieutenant, penetrated as far in a north-westerly direction as the Falls of St. Anthony near the present site of Minneapolis. This was in 1680, and about the same time another French explorer, named Du Lhut, having reached the head of Lake Superior, continued his exploration to the south-west of that point, and when near the Falls of St. Anthony met Hennepin and joined his party in their return journeys southward.