

to discover a passage to the West, 'they would have closed the seas from Cape Finisterre to Iceland.'¹

In 1523 Francis I sent Giovanni da Verrazano, an Italian from Florence, to seek a passage to the East through these seas. Sailing westward from Madaga early in 1524, Verrazano reached the coast of Florida and proceeded northward as far as Newfoundland. Ten years later Francis despatched on a similar errand Jacques Cartier, a Breton sailor of St. Malo, who was born in 1491, and was thus forty-three years of age. As Cartier knew Portuguese, it is probable he had sailed to that country, if not to Brazil, and before being entrusted by King Francis with the important charge now conferred upon him, must have sailed to Newfoundland many times on fishing voyages. Cartier hoped by sailing through the Strait of Belle Isle, which was then called the Strait of Chateau Bay—a name that still persists—to discover farther west 'certain islands and countries where, it is said, there will be found great quantity of gold and other riches.'²

Setting sail from St. Malo with two ships on April 20, 1534, Cartier reached Brest, inside the Strait of Belle Isle, on June 10. This harbour was the terminus of the previous discoveries in that region. The gulf of St. Lawrence beyond was known simply as the Great Bay.

Passing down the west coast of Newfoundland and past Prince Edward Island, then considered to be part of the mainland, Cartier reached the Paie de Chaleur, which he was disappointed to discover was not a strait leading to the East. At Gaspé Bay he seized two Indians, whom he carried off with him to France. A mirage stopped him from sailing between Gaspé and the island of Anticosti, which he rounded at the eastern extremity, and on sighting the Labrador shore, Cartier gave to this portion of the gulf the name of St. Peter's Strait. As the season was now late, it was

¹ Ch. de La Roncière, *Histoire de la Marine française*, iii. 280 (Paris, 1909).

² Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS. 1r. 15028, No. 618.