

While it is generally conceded that Frontenac was a wise and able Governor and possessed of remarkable tact in dealing with the Indians, it is at the same time alleged that he did not scruple to take advantage of the opportunities that came his way to engage in trade to repair his shattered fortunes. The member of Fenelon's Easter congregation, who resented the insinuations of the pulpit, was none other than *Sieur de la Salle*, the famous explorer, whose long cherished dream was the discovery of a western passage to China. He, like so many of the early adventurers to Canada, was born of wealthy parents and had received a good education. From his elder brother, a priest of *St. Sulpice*, who had preceded him to Canada, he had gathered much information of the new world. The priests of the Seminary of *St. Sulpice* were the feudal lords of *Montreal*, and in order to facilitate the growth of the settlement, they granted large tracts of land to intending settlers. In 1666 *La Salle* sailed to Canada and obtained from the Sulpicians a grant of land on the bank of the *St. Lawrence* at the place now known as *Lachine*. This he parcelled out among a number of settlers, reserving a considerable portion for himself. He soon mastered several Indian languages, preparatory to the great task he seems to have conceived shortly after his arrival in Canada, if, indeed, he had not entertained the idea before he sailed from France. Ever since the travels of *Marco Polo* in the thirteenth century the wealth of China had attracted the civilized world and it was still believed that a passage would yet be discovered across America that would afford a short route to that land of gold and spices.

La Salle had heard of the *Ohio River*, which he believed emptied into the *Gulf of California*, and which would thus solve the problem which had so long perplexed the adventurers in search of this western passage. To explore this river was now his one great object in life to which all his other enterprises were tributary. Such was his burning zeal that to his *Seigniory* was given in mockery the name of *China*, known in France as *La Chine*. Obtaining the consent of the Governor to pursue his explorations he sold his *Seigniory* at *La Chine*, purchased and equipped four canoes, and set out on his first expedition. I have dealt elsewhere* with the heroic efforts of *La Salle* to accomplish his end, and it is not to our present purpose to follow him through all his trying experiences. Suffice it to say, that by 1673, he had satisfied himself that the *Mississippi* flowed southward into the *Gulf of Mexico*, and would furnish a direct means of communication with the fertile plains of the interior of the continent, the hunting-grounds along the banks of its northern tributaries, and the shores of the upper lakes. *Frontenac*, the Governor at this

* *Martyrs of New France*, page 105