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EARLY CANADIAN INDUSTRY.

Three hundred and twenty-seven years ago, Jacques Cartier, of St. Malo, discovered the St. Lawrence,* sailed up its mighty stream for several hundred miles, formed alliances with the Indians, built a fort, and wintered in the country. In 1540, the colonization of the newly discovered "Canada" was commenced under the auspices of Roberval, the first Viceroy, and an attempt made to establish a traffic in furs with the natives, but in consequence of the loss of Roberval and some of his companions at sea in 1549, and European distractions arising from the wars between France, Spain and Austria, no further effort was made for nearly half a century to colonize the valley of the St. Lawrence. In 1581, a trade with Canada began to spring into activity, and in 1591 a fleet of ships was fitted out by the adventurous inhabitants of St. Malo, to engage in the Canada trade, and chiefly to procure the teeth of the walrus, which at that time was common in the estuary and gulf of the St. Lawrence.

In 1603, a company of adventurers, headed by M. de Chauvin, Lieutenant General of Canada and Acadia, received a royal charter from Henry IV. of France, and established a regular system of trade in the colony. Ten years later, Champlain obtained a commission authorizing him to seize every vessel not holding a license he should find trafficking in furs between Quebec and the upper part of the St. Lawrence. In 1628, the celebrated but unscrupulous Cardinal de Richelieu organized the "Company of One Hundred Partners," and conceded to its members in perpetuity the Vice-Royalty of New France and Florida, thus establishing a commercial regime in Canada, whose influence soon extended far and wide among the Indian races of the valley of the St. Lawrence.

The "Company of One Hundred Partners" was dissolved by Louis XIV in 1663, who resumed the jurisdiction over the country which for 35 years had been under the rule of a trading association.

Scarcely, however, had a year elapsed, when, by a royal edict dated 1664, Canada was once more handed over to the short-lived commercial bondage of the "West India Company," but, in 1666, free trade with the Aborigines was again declared,

* In 1503, one Thomas Aubert made a voyage from Dieppe to Newfoundland, and sailed up the estuary of the St. Lawrence.

subject to certain restrictions and reservations. The Company was permitted to retain the right to one-fourth of all the beaver skins, and one-tenth of the elk hides exported, besides the traffic which belonged to Tadoussac at the mouth of the Saguenay. For these privileges the Company paid 48,950 livres, or about 10,000 dollars, a livre being worth at that period about one English shilling. Thus far the efforts made by the French to colonize Canada and open a trade with the different Indian nations inhabiting the vast extent of country drained by the St. Lawrence, had not been productive of much public or private good, and was marked by a succession of individual disasters, which damped the ardour even of the most courageous and enterprising merchants of that day.

Lake Superior was visited, in 1659, by two traders, who joined some roving bands of Algonquins and passed the winter in that region. In 1660 they returned to Quebec, escorted by sixty Algonquin canoes laden with furs.

In the autumn of 1678, La Salle, armed with a royal commission, commenced the construction of a fort at Niagara, and during the winter he laid the keel of a vessel intended for the navigation of the upper lakes, about six miles above the stupendous cataract. The first Upper Canadian ship (for in those days it was worthy of that designation) was launched in the summer of the following year, and, to the unbounded astonishment and alarm of the savage Iroquois and Eries who peopled either shore, it sailed through Lake Erie, through Lake Huron, and finally reached Lake Michigan. The "Griffon," as the vessel was called, met with an untimely fate on the return; she was wrecked before she reached the Niagara river, and with her rich cargo of furs sank beneath the waves of the inland sea whose solitudes she was the first to invade. Not two centuries (183 years) after the lonely "Griffon" had penetrated through the Upper Canadian lakes, the commerce of the region tributary to them was more than sufficient to employ nearly two thousand steamers and sailing vessels, exceeding half a million tons burthen and costing fifteen millions of dollars.*

Subsequently to the extinction of the West India Company, the trade in peltries was free for a time, with the exception of beaver and elk skins, for which monopoly 70,000 francs a year was paid by the lessees, until it became the property of a French Society called the "Company of Canada." After

* The Marquis de Dononville, in a proclamation respecting the taking of the post, Niagara, in 1687, states that the stocks on which La Salle built his "bark" were still seen above the great lake, and that his "quarters" were burned in 1675 by the Senecas. He also states that the Sieur de la Salle navigated Lake Erie, Huron and Illinois (Michigan) for several years.