

## Champlain.

IN 1524, the King of France, Francis I., eager to share in the wealth of the wonderful New World, sent out the Florentine navigator, John Verrazzano, on a voyage of discovery. From that time, until the last journey of the sturdy Breton, Jacques Cartier, up the St. Lawrence, disaster alone seemed to attend every effort of the French to explore and colonize the shores of America.

In the years that followed France was steeped in blood and horrors, and none had thought for the new lands save the hardy sailors, who, in the cod-fisheries of Newfoundland and the fur-trade of the Gulf, had discovered an unfailing source of wealth.

At length all was changed. Henry of Navarre reigned in France, the peaceful arts stirred to life under the rugged soldier's rule, and his followers must find other vent for their energies than in war.

Out from among them stands one figure, whose name will always be linked with our past, who, if patient endeavour, dauntless courage, a wide outlook into the future, and an absolute disregard of personal interests, make a hero, was one indeed.

Samuel de Champlain, a man of good family, had fought for the king in Brittany, and with his occupation gone, betook himself to the West Indies, in order to bring back to his royal master a report of those regions, which were then jealously guarded by the Spaniards.

Everywhere Champlain made plans and sketches in his own fashion, independent of any rules of art, and the MS. record of it all in his own handwriting may yet be seen at Dieppe. He journeyed to the city of Mexico, and returned by way of Panama, where, more than two centuries and a half ago, his active brain conceived the idea of a ship canal across the isthmus, "by which," he says, "the voyage to the South Sea, would be shortened by more than fifteen hundred leagues."

On his return to France he found his life-work awaiting him. Aymar de Chastes, a brave soldier and devout churchman, longed to plant the Cross and *fleur-de-lis* in "New France," and to end his days there "in the service of God and his king." Henry IV. granted the desired patent, and De Chastes, knowing Champlain of old, offered him a post in the newly-formed company.

In 1603, Champlain and Pontgravé, a Breton merchant, also a member of the company, set out on a preliminary expedition. Reaching the Gulf of St. Lawrence they went up the silent river as far as Hochelaga, where, sixty-eight years before, Cartier had found a busy Huron settlement, and had named the mountain overlooking it Mount Royal.

All trace of the town had vanished, only a few wandering Algonquins were to be seen. The rapids of St. Louis proved impassable, and, Champlain at least disappointed, the voyagers returned to France to meet the news of De Chastes' death.

The enterprise was not, however, abandoned. The Sieur de Monts was appointed Lieutenant-General, with viceregal powers and a monopoly of the fur trade.

The first permanent settlement was made at Port Royal in Nova Scotia, and after three years of hardship it bade fair to become more than a mere trading post; men, such as Champlain and De Poutrincourt, were building up homes, cultivating the land, and looking hopefully to the future, when in 1607 came the news that the monopoly, upon which all depended, was withdrawn. The colonists regretfully returned to France, and though the after-story of Port Royal is a romance in itself, it is no longer interwoven with the fortunes of Champlain.

Undaunted by misfortune De Monts again sought and obtained a trade monopoly for a year, in order that he might once more fit out an expedition to New France.

Champlain was in Paris, longing to return to the land that had so fascinated him, to pierce to the depths of its forests and found there a colony at once Christian and French.

Wide and far-reaching were his views; a fortified post above Montreal, whence the waters of the interior might be traced to their sources and a Western route found to China; the fur-trade to be guarded by a fort at some commanding point, and made to yield a rich and permanent harvest; while—and this lay nearest to his heart—countless savages might thus be reached and redeemed. The spirit of the

crusader animated the soldier of fortune. Gladly he took command of one of De Monts' two ships and with Pontgravé in charge of the other, set forth on his task of exploration and settlement.

Reaching Tadoussac, Pontgravé remained there to trade, while Champlain held his way up the St. Lawrence to where, between the cliffs of Quebec and the river, lay a strand covered with trees. Here his men fell to work, and soon a pile of buildings rose, surrounded by a strong palisade and guarded by small cannon.

Later, Pontgravé sailed back to France, Champlain and twenty-eight men remaining to hold Quebec. During the long winter scurvy broke out, and by May only eight men remained alive—half of them being ill. On Pontgravé's return in the spring, Champlain determined to enter upon the long-delayed exploration by which he hoped to find a path to China.

Meanwhile the "White Chief's" aid was sought by the Hurons and Algonquins against the Iroquois, and the first step was taken in what was ever after the policy of France—a policy which endeavoured to unite the Indians against their common foe, and to render them year by year more dependent on the French, whose supremacy, it was hoped, would thus be gradually established.

In June, 1609, near the lake which bears his name, Champlain and his new allies defeated the Iroquois, who, despite their courage and fierceness, were for the moment paralyzed at the sight of the "iron-breasted" chief and his firearms.

In France, a few months later, Champlain saw his beloved master for the last time; soon after came tidings of Henry IV.'s death by the hand of Ravillac.

Sometimes in France, sometimes in Quebec, this born missionary and explorer was spending himself in seeking to regulate monopolies for which he cared nothing, and otherwise to strengthen and secure the prosperity of New France. It was not until 1613 that he could resume his explorations. He then made his way up the Ottawa as far as Musk Rat Lake, where he was received by the Indians as one from the clouds—how else could he, a white man, have crossed the woods and rapids?

With the spiritual wants of the Indians pressing heavily upon him, Champlain, in 1615, brought out with him four Récollet friars, burning with zeal for their conversion. One of these, Father Le Caron, taking twelve Frenchmen, went back with the Hurons to their own country, followed shortly after by Champlain. Up the Ottawa, along the Mattawan, across Lake Nipissing, down French River, he and his little band went, until he stood on the brink of the great Lake of the Hurons.

Soon he reached their settlement, with its rudely-cultivated fields and great bark lodges—all as Cartier had seen them at Montreal eighty years before. "The Great Chief" was welcomed in true Indian fashion; warmer still was the greeting of the friar Le Caron, as he came from the little bark lodge built for him by the Indians—already fitted up with an altar, the decorations for which the eager priest had brought through all the terrible journey. Here, surrounded by Champlain and his little band of countrymen, Father Le Caron celebrated the first mass in the country of the Hurons, and for the moment, at least, the priest and the devout soldier must have felt repaid for all they had undergone.

One object of Champlain's journey was to join the Hurons in what proved to be an unsuccessful expedition against the Iroquois. He found, to his cost, that obedience to orders was no part of Indian warfare.

The promised escort to Quebec not being forthcoming, Champlain was compelled to return to the Huron country, where the winter was spent in exploring and visiting the Indians with Father Le Caron. When, in the spring, he went down with a trading party, his people welcomed him as one risen from the dead, so little had they hoped for his return from the wilderness.

Henceforth, Champlain gave up the journeying so dear to his heart, and set himself to struggle with the difficulties of his position. Quebec was half trading factory, half mission post, merchants and friars alike were jealous of each other and of Champlain, who had all the responsibility and very little real authority. One domestic glimpse we have: in 1620, he brought with him to Quebec his young and beau-