

H37

monopoly, and on the 5th of March, 1613, he and the Sieur l'Ange set sail off from France to make discoveries and to go a-fighting together if opportunity should occur.

A rapid passage enabled them to reach the Lachine Rapids on the 21st of May, and after explaining why he had not come out the year before as promised, he bought a couple of canoes, hired one Indian guide; and now begins the story proper.

Having only two canoes, he could take but four men, one of whom was Nicolas de Vignau, "the most impudent liar that had been heard of for a long time," who had lived with the Indians, knew their speech, and had been sent in previous years to spy out the country. This Vignau had returned to Paris in 1612, and told Champlain that he had seen the Northern Sea—that the Ottawa rose in a lake which had another outlet that way—and that in seventeen days you could go and return from Lachine to the Arctic Ocean. Not satisfied with this one enormous lie, he further said he had seen the wreckage of an English vessel which had been cast away there, from which eighty men had landed; that the Indians had killed them because they wished to take by force their maize and other provisions; that he had seen the heads of these English whom the Indians had scalped (as was their custom), and that they wished to show Champlain the scalps and to give him an English boy they had kept alive for the purpose.

Champlain seems to have had some doubts about the matter, for he says that though he was pleased at the prospect of finding so near what he had believed to be so far, he begged the man to tell the truth, for he was putting a rope round his neck if he was lying, though if he was telling the truth he might be sure of being well recompensed. But the fellow swore to it all and gave a written account of the country he had been through, so Champlain's doubts were dissipated, and he took the man to see Marshal de Brissac, President Jeannin, and other followers of the court; the rather because he understood that in 1610 and 11 the English under Hudson had passed through the straits in latitude 63°, and had wintered in 53°, and lost some vessels. So the dignitaries said he ought to go in person and see about it.

In going up the Ottawa nothing very remarkable happened for some days, but when they were fairly among the rapids of the Long Sapelt, "it was there," says our friend, "we had trouble. For we could not portage our craft because the woods were so dense, and the rapidity of the current so great; it makes a terrible noise and so much foam that you can't see the water, and it is so full of rocks and islets that we had to tow our craft, and I nearly lost my life as I was hauling mine along; it ran