

in the afternoon. This cape is one of the finest that exists in all the ocean and especially in the northern sea; and you should know that there are two large rocks a gunshot's length into the sea, and there they meet in a crescent on the south side, so that one might suppose that nature had set herself to build a port as safe and more beautiful than any which human skill could construct. A league and a half from there is a small town named Surfe, inhabited since a long time by the French. We began to make acquaintances there and received great courtesies from the inhabitants and were made very welcome.

"This place is the beginning of Canada, but we did not want to prolong our sojourn there, because we desired first to go and see the Sieur de Dongeon, who is Governor, and resides ordinarily at Brest, the principal town of the whole country, well provisioned, large and strongly fortified, peopled by about fifty thousand men, and furnished with all that is necessary to enrich a good-sized town; it is distant from Surfe about fifty leagues."

The rest of the letter is in the same fictitious strain. The principal towns of Canada are described as being "Brest, Hanguedo, Canada, Hochilaga, Foquelay, Turquas, Brinon, Bonara, Forniset, Grossot, and Horsago, Poquet, Tarat and Fongo, all large towns and well provided. . . . The rivers are Anacal, which is a great river; Saguenay, Bargat, Druce, and Boucone, the last of them being larger than the Seine, besides an infinity of other streams." The Sieur de Combes, if he was a person who ever existed, had obviously never been in Canada himself; his acquaintance with the country was limited to a sixteenth-century map. For the rest he drew on his imagination. The reasons for the publication of the letter are not difficult to find. There was evidently in 1608 some demand for information about Canada. Ten years before, the French Government had taken up the project of colonising New France, and people were talking about the new country. Under these circumstances, the letter of the Sieur de Combes was written evidently to sell as immigration literature.

Some one must have taken the Sieur de Combes's account of Brest *au grand sérieux*; for in the "Merchant's Map of Commerce," by Lewis Roberts, printed in 1638 (not the "Dictionary of Commerce," as the book is wrongly cited by Judge Prowse), Brest appears again. In his enumeration of the countries of America, Roberts says:

"The seventh is Terra Corterialis, on the south whereof runs that famous river of Canada, running nine hundred miles, and found navigable for eight hundred thereof. . . . The chief towns thereof are Brest, Cabomarso, and others of little note."

Cabomarso is plainly a cape named by the Portuguese; but Brest is the "principal town" of the Sieur de Combes.

The finishing touches were put on the myth by Mr. Samuel Robertson. Mr. Robertson lived at Sparr Point, on the Labrador coast, during the first half of the nineteenth century; and he posed as an authority on the traditions of the coast. In a paper read before the Geographical and Historical Society of Quebec in 1843, he gave a graphic picture of Brest in its palmy days. "I estimate," he said, "that at one time it contained 200 houses, beside stores, etc., and perhaps 1,000 inhabitants in the winter, which would be trebled during the summer. Brest was at the height of its prosperity about 1600. . . . After this the town began to decay, and towards the close of the century the name was changed to Bradore." In 1630, he goes on to relate, a grant *en seigneurie* of four leagues of the coast, embracing the town, was made to the Count de Courtemanche, who was married to a daughter of King Henry IV. of France. *Et voilà justement comme on écrit l'histoire.* There was a Sieur de Courtemanche who lived on the Labrador coast from 1702-1716, but he was not a count, nor did he hold any land in Labrador *en seigneurie*, and he was married at Levis to the daughter of a tan-