

Molineaux gives no conception of the physical distribution of mountain and valley in this vast area, further than to bulk the great lakes into a single inland sea. The notion of an immense interior valley, corresponding in some extent to our Mississippi basin, which Mercator forty years before had divined, had not yet impressed the British mind. Mercator, indeed, had misconceived it, in that he joined the Mississippi and St. Lawrence basins together, by obliterating the divide between them. In this way he made his great continental river rise in Arizona and sweep north-east and join the great current speeding to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Here, then, in the adequate breadth of the continent, as Mercator and Molineaux drew it, is conclusive evidence that the royal giver of these vast areas had, or could have had, something like a proper notion of the extent of his munificent gifts. At the date of the last of these charters, in 1665, Cartier and his successors had for a hundred and thirty years been endeavoring to measure the breadth of the continent by the way of the St. Lawrence and the great lakes. They sought to prove by inland routes whether the estimated longitude of New Albion had been accurate or not. There had, it is true, been some vacillation of belief meanwhile. One thing had been accomplished to clarify the notions respecting these great interior spaces. The belief of Mercator had given way to the expectation of finding a large river, flowing in a southerly direction, whose springs were separated from those of the St. Lawrence by a dividing ridge. It was not yet determined where the outlet of this great river was. Was it on the Atlantic side of Florida, as a long stretch up the coast from the peninsula was at that time called? Was it in the Gulf of Mexico, identifying it with the stream in which De Soto had been buried? Was it in the Gulf of California, making it an extension of the Colorado River? Each of these views had its advocates among the French, who had already learned something of the upper reaches of