



MONTREAL



LET us look backward over a space of more than three and a half centuries—a long period in the civilized history of this country. Jacques Cartier, sailing from St. Malo in the spring of 1534, had steered for the coast of Newfoundland, had passed through the Straits of Belle Isle, and planted the emblem of Christianity on the Gaspé Cliffs; but pursuing his western course up the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the sight of Anticosti lying in his path, and the roar of the fierce autumnal storms sweeping over this island of desolation, proved too much for the Breton mariner, and he turned his prow eastward and returned to France. However the old longing to discover the road to Cathay re-asserted itself in the heart of the St. Malo sailor and on the 19th of May, 1535, he once more took the seaway and on the opening day of September the first white men to gaze upon the majestic, though gloomy, Saguenay, were Jacques Cartier and his followers. Still onward sailed the tiny French argonauts up the Channel, until they saw rising out of the restless waters the bold promontory which in after years conferred undying fame upon Frontenac, Wolfe, Montcalm and Montgomery. After some time spent with the friendly Indian Donnacona, and his band of swarthy tribesmen, Cartier with a little galleon of forty tons and two open boats, set sail up the green St. Lawrence, for Hochelaga, the site of the present city of Montreal, where he disembarked on the second of October. What a scene met the eyes of the explorer and his companions! Before them, already tinted with the leaves of the early Canadian fall, stood the mountain which confers upon Montreal so many natural advantages, and on the plateau below lay the populous Indian village, circled by luxuriant fields of corn.

Preceded by their savage guides the white strangers were escorted to the summit of the neighboring hill, from whence the travellers from beyond the seas looked down upon the magnificent panorama which presented itself to their enraptured gaze, and which today is the delight of tourists from every part of the globe. But altho' to Jacques Cartier belongs the credit of being the first white man to set foot on the Island of Montreal, yet it was not until 1642 that the Colony of Ville Marie was established with Paul de Chomedey Sieur Maisonneuve and his associate a few years later Marguerite Bourgeoys, to whom belong the credit of being the real founders of Montreal.

Maisonneuve the soldier, martial of figure and stern of will, formed a strong contrast to the gentle, yet none the less heroic Marguerite Bourgeoys, whose sole ambition was to convert to Christianity the red children of the forest as well as minister to their temporal wants. The Hospital of the Hotel Dieu stands today, on the eastern slope of Mount Royal, a monument to the courage and devotion of the sweet faced Sister of Charity.

Many a wild page of Canadian history has had its origin in and around old Ville Marie; and an ever-shifting panorama as the years roll on of Jesuit Priest, Coureur de bois, timid Huron and turbulent Iroquois passes before our mental eye. As we stand today on the summit of the Royal Mount, we can discern in the west a glimpse of Lachine Rapids on the shore of which La Salle, the discoverer of the Mississippi, once had his abode, and where doubtless he dreamt many dreams of giant rivers and mysterious seas far away toward the setting sun, and here too, where still can be seen the ruins of the explorer's home, is the spot where on the