

ACADIA.

THE CLASSIC LAND AS VIEWED BY A MODERN WRITER.

Longfellow never saw the Acadia of which he wrote. There is a letter in existence penned by the poet in which he declines visiting the romantic region of Grand Pré because he feared that by setting eyes on the locality the environs would dispel from his mind the tender limnings his glowing fancy had created. In this letter admission is also made that the material for the pathetic romance of "Evangeline," and the tragedy of Acadia around which it is woven, was chiefly furnished the Cambridge bard by Hawthorne. There are other facts not related in the books, proving that the author of the "Scarlet Letter" contemplated a prose romance upon the subject-matter of Longfellow's mellifluous measure, but that the very colour of it all so depressed and disheartened him that the project was abandoned. As splendid a creation as was Longfellow's, it is deplorable that the wizard pen of Hawthorne was turned from this task. The poet directs the eye and heart to but one spot, incident and time. The surpassing poetical recital confines historic and literary interest too closely. Had the tragic tale been alone told, or also told in Hawthorne's magic prose, how clear and bold all these noble mountains, vales, streams, and shores, and these wraithful presences of Indian, Englishman, Frenchman, Puritan, actors in countless peaceful and bloody prologues to American independence and civilization, would have been graven upon the tablets of history and the minds of men. For the real Acadia that was, and for more than 150 years before Liberty bell pealed at Philadelphia, it was the vast and endless battle-ground where the mightiest of European powers struggled for mastery over a new world.

I.

There are no histories in which can be chronologically followed the discovery of, and the struggles and changes within, the marvellously interesting region of old Acadia. This little section, that single state, another secluded province, this sea-beaten isle, that New England borough, all have their "histories." Brilliant adherents of the greatest two religious sects of Christendom have fought the battles anew, in type, with more than mortal rancour. Historical societies have interchanged dreams of dreamers and sketched and plodded in sumptuous persiflage. But this whole northeast coast which, from Portland, where Longfellow first drew breath and earliest sang, to Cape Breton island's Louisburg, where once, under the lilies of France, glowered the walls of the most massive fortress ever built on American soil, was for 200 years the battle-ground of two empires and the real birthplace of America's to-day, is historically all but lost in the somnolence of tradition. Every river flowing to the sea, every cove sheltered by headland and embowered in plenty, every sunny isle of the coastwise thousands, is a mute, unheeded shrine to that daring and sacrifice which make history and have made freemen. In these summer days these summer shores are gay with half a continent's pleasure troopers, who, for the dearth of history, are mindless of the myriad wraiths of fallen, and listless of the hoarse voices of the sea, in every sound of which are the ghostly tones of legions calling in vain to be heard. No so superlatively romantic and stirring a field awaits the great historian. No so barren a one confronts the writer of an hour. One must needs burrow long and deep in the olden manuscripts, the records of parliament and cabinets, and the scattered chronicles of adventurers and commanders, to reach the mere entrance of these splendid domains of historic quest. But when even that little is done, journeyings in and reveries on old Acadia are seasons of winsoneness and delight.

Old Acadia was variously called "L'Acadia," "Iacadia," "Acadie," "Accadia," "Acady" and Acadia. Its confines were expressly named by Henry IV. of France in his letters patent of No-

vember 3, 1603, to Sieur De Monts, whom he constituted lieutenant-general over the "country, territory, coasts and confines of Acadia, from the 40th to the 46th degree." Thus the original Acadia comprised the North American coast and "circumjacent territory and islands," to the mouth of the then unknown Hudson River to the eastern extremity of Cape Breton Island, just northeast of the peninsula of Nova Scotia. De Monts and Poutrincourt arrived at Le Have cape and bay May 6, 1604. Sailing around the western end of Nova Scotia, Port Royal (now Annapolis) was selected for the future residence of Poutrincourt, under grant from De Monts. The latter explored the Bay of Fundy, Passamaquoddy Bay and the River St. Croix, building cabins and fortifications on its islands, where he passed the winter of 1604-5. During the next spring and summer he explored the Penobscot, the Kennebec, Casco (Portland) Bay, Saco River, and the coasts of what is now Massachusetts to the shores of Cape Cod. Returning, he removed his stores from the St. Croix to Port Royal, where he made a settlement and constructed a fort, and in the autumn of 1605 he set sail for France with Poutrincourt to lay his discoveries before King Henry, leaving at Port Royal, Dupont, the intrepid Champlain, whose name is preserved by the lake of that name, and Chauvin, to further explore the country and perfect the settlement.

The voyages, discoveries and settlements by De Monts and the earlier discovery and possession of Canada by Cartier were the first under seal of European power on these shores, between Newfoundland and the Chesapeake; and from these came whatever rights France subsequently sought to maintain in America.

True, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who had obtained in 1578 a grant from Elizabeth, and who was driven to England by the violence of the sea in 1579, had finally reached Newfoundland in 1583, only to lose his ships and his own life off Sable Island on the return voyage; and under other patents from Elizabeth to the brave, brilliant and unfortunate Raleigh, half brother to Sir Humphrey Gilbert, there had been the exploration of Pamlico and Albemarle Sounds in 1584, the second exploration to Roanoke, in 1585, the third, of two parties, in 1586, and the fourth in 1587; but not until May 13, 1607, under patents from James I. to the London Company, was there made (at Jamestown, Va.) the first English settlement in America. Sir Humphrey Gilbert's death in 1583 had voided the patents of 1578. The debasement, conviction and attainder of Raleigh had annulled the Elizabethan grants of 1584. In strict truth, France, by formal entry and actual settlement, had acquired undoubted right of possession, and in 1604 owned, under her lieutenant-governor, De Monts, all of his discovered North America north of what had been already claimed by the more enterprising adventurers of the then prosperous and mighty Spain.

II.

Behind this dim time these splendid shores possessed romantic history. There seems to be growing conviction in the minds of those who delve among such fascinating lore that the ancient Norsemen were frequent visitors to these regions, and indeed to lands much further to the south. Discoveries at different points in Maine show that habitations of stone and brick were erected half a thousand years before the settlement by De Monts; and credible Scandinavian writers assert that the old stone mill now standing at Newport must have been built by Norsemen that long before English settlements of America. Undoubtedly, Biarne and his followers knew the coast of Maine well in the tenth century. There can hardly be question that the three adventurous sons of Eric explored it in the eleventh century. Gudrida, the fair bride of Thorfin, certainly followed her own glowing dreams, and accompanied her bold lord to the enchanting countless islands, coves and inlets of our northeast coast. Then there was the voyage of John and Sebastian Cabot, in 1497, in which many of the islands about Newfoundland were visited, and the entire American

coast, from Labrador to Florida, closely cruised and scanned. Jacques Cartier, the French navigator, under orders of Charles V. of France, sailed from St. Malo in the spring of 1534, touched Newfoundland, penetrated the St. Lawrence, discovered Canada, and took possession of the country in his king's name. Gosnold, an English navigator, visited Maine in 1602, and the next year Martin Pring, of Bristol, England, explored the Penobscot and other rivers and bays to the southwest, bringing (to England) "the most exact account of the coast that had ever come to hand." So, too, there is every reason to believe that fishermen of different European nations had, during the entire fifteenth century and for a long period earlier, cast their nets and lines from Cape Cod to Cape Bauld, precisely as they do to-day. Scavalet, an old French mariner and fisherman, had made more than forty voyages to the Bay of Canseau, which lies between Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island; and it is well established that the French Baron de Levy undertook to form a settlement on the shores of this bay in 1518. France, under the Marquis de la Roche, made Sable Island a penal colony in 1598; and there was record in 1578 that 100 Spanish, 50 or 60 Portuguese, 30 to 50 English, and fully 150 French sailors then annually came to our American and Canadian fishing-grounds of to-day to take cod and whale.

From the time of De Monts' discoveries and settlements in 1604, and the adventures of Weymouth along the Maine shores in 1605, the activity of the English and French for precedence and supremacy, not only in the territory and along the coasts of old Acadia, but along the entire American coast and the shores of the St. Lawrence, was continually increased. Grants, patents and privileges were continually issuing. The Virginia magistrates authorized Capt. Argal to expel the Acadian French at Port Royal. This was done in 1613. Possession of the whole New England coast-line, as well as of Canada, was wrenched back and forth by contending colonists until the treaty of St. Germain, in 1632, which again gave Acadia to the French, and reduced its confines to those of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and that part of Maine east of the Kennebec; though claim to the latter was always vigorously disputed with force of arms by its English colonists. Then came a quarter century of struggles between the Government of Massachusetts and the Maine colonies for absorption by the former and defence by the latter, interspersed by Indian wars, in which contending colonists made common cause. Protector Cromwell ordered the reduction of Acadia, under cover of an expedition against the Dutch in Manhadoes, and entirely subjugated it in 1654. Then the English held Acadia thirteen years, when it was resurrendered to the French under the treaty of Breda in 1667, without any specification as to boundaries. Its first active French governor was M. de Bourg, who was followed by Mons. Denys. Under the latter's administration the French built forts throughout Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and as far west as the Penobscot, and held possession until that brilliant buccancer and wrecker, under James II., Sir William Phips, recaptured it in 1690, on his way to his memorable defeat by the French at Quebec, whose consequent embarrassments to the New England colonies led to the first issuance of paper money in America in the form of "bills of credit" for £40,000, put in circulation the same year by the General Court of Massachusetts. At the treaty of Ryswick, in 1697, Acadia was again resigned to France, and the western boundary stoutly claimed as far as the Kennebec.

But in 1709-10 its final conquest occurred in the capture of Port Royal (now Annapolis), by the expedition from Boston, under General Nicholson, of Virginia, and his adjutant-general, Samuel Vetch, a noted figure in provincial trade and politics, who was appointed English governor of Nova Scotia, which now became the final Acadia of provincial and poetic history. From that day to this, it has remained a British possession.