

INTRODUCTION

was long looked on as an unwelcome obstacle of unknown extent across the path of the Eastern trader. Farther and farther men ranged the coast, seeking into every bay and estuary, in the vain hope that the South Sea might open to their gaze. To southwards, Magellan found a strait, but the journey was long and dangerous, and open only to the ships of Spain. To northwards France took up the search, and it was in quest of the Orient that Jacques Cartier put out from St. Malo. For a moment Chaleur Bay seemed to him the strait of his dream, but soon he came to its end, "whereof we were much torn with grief," he says in his quaint old French. On his next voyage he went in vain up the St. Lawrence as far as Montreal; but the terrors of a Canadian winter, with its attendant scurvy, and the still greater horrors of the Wars of Religion, for the next half-century restricted the French to fishing voyages to Newfoundland and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. With the Peace of Vervins and the Edict of Nantes in 1598, France had rest from foreign and civil strife, and turned again to the nobler task of exploration. This was the quest to which the sea-captain of Brouage, Samuel de Champlain, gave the