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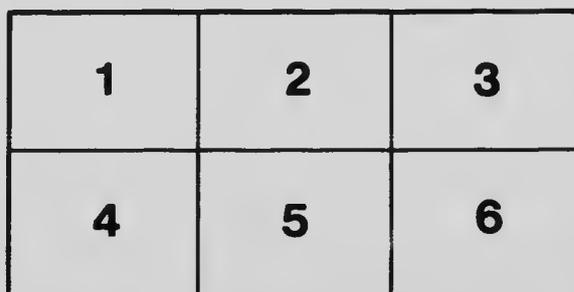
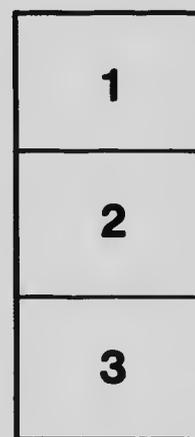
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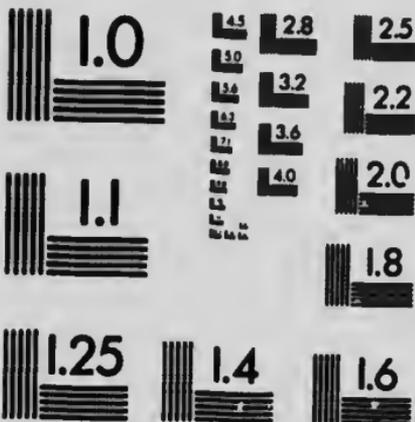
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FROM THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

SECOND SERIES--1905-1906

VOLUME XI

SECTION II

ENGLISH HISTORY, LITERATURE, ARCHÆOLOGY, ETC.

Brest on the Quebec Labrador

By SAMUEL EDWARD DAWSON, LITT.D., LAVAL

FOR SALE BY

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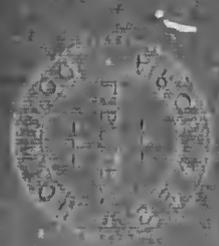
1905

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1905



I.—*Brest on the Quebec Labrador.*

By SAMUEL EDWARD DAWSON, Litt.D. (Laval).

(Read May 24, 1905.)

While engaged in the study of the history of exploration in Canada the writer's curiosity was aroused by an entry on p. 25 of HARRISSE'S "Notes pour servir à l'histoire, à la bibliographie etc., de la Nouvelle France," in which he gives the title, in full, of the letter which follows. Mr. HARRISSE adds this extract from Brunet as his only comment:

" Cette pièce rare est écrite de Brest en Canada, 13 Février, 1608 Vendue (annoncée sous la date de 1619) à la vente Coste et achetée pour une bibliothèque en Amérique." Much mythology has gathered round this locality and the writer felt that it was necessary to examine this little book. It was found in the Lenox Library, in New York, and by the permission of the courteous librarian it was examined in full

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With the compliments of the author.

No. 136 BAY STREET,
OTTAWA.

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1457

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1904



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This little volume seems to be unique. Mr. Eames (the learned librarian) freely gave the writer all the information within his reach concerning it. A copy had been made in manuscript for the Carter-Brown Library, a fact which demonstrates its rarity. No notice of the volume is to be found in Sabin's Dictionary, and no copy is recorded in the catalogue of the British Museum. Brunet had taken his description from the Coste sale catalogue, and, as HARRISSE appears to have copied Brunet, neither of them would seem to have seen it, and no record is known to exist of any other copy. On the fly-leaf of the book is a memorandum of Mr. Lenox, "Bought in Paris, at the La Coste Sale. No other copy as yet known, 1609 not 1619." Mr. Lenox paid fr. 1'5 for it, and the sale occurred in 1854.

Many interesting questions are suggested by this little tract, but it will be best first to submit to the reader the letter itself before making any remarks upon it. It may be observed, however, that Lyons was not connected with Canada like the seaboard cities of Normandy and Bretagne. One Jesuit "Relation," that of 1616 (Biard's) was printed in that city, but Leon Savine's imprint is not met with again, so far as the writer can learn.

1457

COPPIE D'VNE LETTRE ENVOYEE DE LA NOUVELLE
FRANCE, OV CANADA, PAR LE SIEUR DE COBE
GENTILHOMME POICTEUI. A VN SIEN AMY, &
&c. &c.

(See fac-simile title).



MONSIEUR,

Puis que le temps & la condition de ma fortune me retranchent les moyens de vous voir en presence, & que mô destin m'a relegué en ces terres estrangeres, ie tascheray à tout le moins de vous visiter à ceste fois par lettres, & de dresser mes vœux en France, pour y visiter mon ancienne patrie, mes parens, & ceux avec qui les premiers ans de ma jeunesse m'auoient fait contracter les nœuds d'vne estroiete amitié, où vous tenez des premiers rangs, comme celuy qui tourmente mon repos, & qui ni'empesche d'anerer mon affection en la douceur de nos conquestes, & de nos triomphes, que d'estre priué de la conuersation de mes amis, & me voir maintenant comme deshiré en autant de parcelles que mon amitié auoit d'obiects, & que ces obiects m'estoient agreables. Ie supportterois

4.

avec plus de patience cest exil volétaire, & la nouuenance des douceurs de l'Europe ne troubleroit pas si souuent mes intentions, les voyant maintenant changees au seiour peu agreable de ces terres farouches & inuulnibles: mais ie recognoy maintenant, aux despens de mô repos, que c'est que d'estre separé de ce qu'on aime, & de viure sous la rigueur d'vne absence si longue, & comme sans espoir d'en pouuoir iamais changer le destin. Mais quoy? c'est vn coup de ma legereté, & vn effect de ma ieunesse & puis que c'est moy qui en ay ietté la pierre, il faut que ie sois tout seul à en boire l'amertume. Tant y a que ie vous supplie de croire que i'ay basty vn autel en mon cœur, sur lequel ie sacrifie tous les iours des vœux & des benedictions à la memoire de vos merites, & fais encor viure en mon souuenir la douceur de nos anciennes caresses; &eroy que si ie n'eusse trouué ce remede pour flatter mes ressentimens, il estoit impossible que i'eusse peu viure dauantage parmi les espines que ces remords semoient sur toutes mes actiôs; mais en fin i'ay apprins à adoucir les pointes par ces moyens, & ces moyens me sont si agreables que i'y recueillis des roses & des fleurs ombragees de tant de contentement que i'en fais le paradis de mes delices, & les delices de ma vie.

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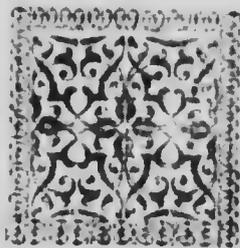
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COPPIE

D'VNE LETTRE

ENVOYEE DE LA
NOUVELLE FRANCE, OV
Canada, par le Sieur de Cōbes, Gen-
tilhomme Poicteuin, à vn sien amy.

*En laquelle sont briefuement descrites les
merueilles, excellences, & richesses du
pays, ensemble la façon & mœurs de
ceux qui l'habitent, la gloire des Fran-
çois, & l'esperance qu'il y a de rendre
l'Amérique Chrestienne.*



A L Y O N,

Par LEON SAVINE.

M. DCIX.

Auec Permission des Superieurs.



L'absence me seroit encore supportable si i'auois moyen de pouuoir au moins au bout de quelque temps sçauoir de vos nouvelles: mais depuis mô despart de France la fortune m'a este si contraire que ie n'en ay iamais sçeu receuoir, & ne puis aucunement sçauoir de vostre portement ni de vostre estat, sinon.

5.

par imagination, & ie sçay bien que ces imaginations me trompent; cela seroit vn nouveau charme pour rafraichir l'ardeur de mes desirs: mais puis que mon infortune le me desnie, si mettrayie encore ceste-cy aux champs sous la conduite du hazard, tant pour vous aduertir de l'estat de la nouvelle France, que pour vous prier de nous en faire tenir de l'ancienne, & si quelque bon vent la peut porter en vos mains, ic vous prie d'y remarquer les traicts de mon affection, & de prendre en gré ce peu que ie vous enuoye de ce qui se passe ça bas, attendant que les histoires en seront tracees au long pour vous en certifier avec plus l'assurance.

Vous devez donc sçauoir que depuis nostre depart de la Rochelle, qui fut le 13, d'Auril 1604, sous la conduite du Sieur de Bricant, autant experimété Capitaine tant sur mer que sur terre (comme les effects en ont fait paroistre la verité) qu'autre que ie sçache auoir cogneu tant par reputation qu'autrement, nous cinglames en haute mer, & flotrasmes avec vne bonnace assez favorable insques le vingtquatriesme dudit mois sur les deux heures apres midy, que nous trouuant pres les isles de Maida, enuirõ sous le 3. degré de lögitude, & le 24. de latitude, il se leua vn certain vent de Nordest assez violent & fascheux avec certains orages & tempeste, qui commencerent à escarter nos vaisseaux, & à faire sousleuer les ondes de telle furie que nous pensions entiere-ment estre tous perdus, & que nostre sort nous auoit là tous amenez à vn general naufrage: mais Dieu qui reseruoit nos

6.

vies à des occasions plus glorieuses, nous monstra qu'il en auoit autrement arresté au parquet de sa diuine Iustice, car apres que les vents & la tempeste eurent escumé leur malice enuiron deux heures durant, voilà que sur les quatre heurs de soir, ils calmerent entieremêt leurs agitations, & firent rasseoir les vagues: & alors nous commençames à descourir les Isles, & nous y retirasmes pour y reprendre haleine, & nous rafreschir trois jours durant, tant pour attendre quelques vns de nos vaisseaux qui estoient escartez, que pour rabiller deux de nos nauires qui s'ouuroient par les flancs à cause des grandes secousses qu'elles auoient soustenuës.

Après auoir donc demeuré là trois iours, nous leuâmes l'ancre vingthuitiesme sur les sept heures de matin, & donnant les voiles à fond nous dressâmes la poupe contre l'Isle verte, mais ainsi que nous nous apprions en approcher voilà qu'un vent de Nord après nous a fort furieusement contresoufflé un iour & demy nous jetta aux Açores, tout auprès nous rencontrâmes une flotte d'Espagnols, qui nous voulent empêcher le passage, mais après quelque legere charge nous passâmes outre.

Je vous descrirois par le menu la nature de ces Isles, leur situation & la maniere de viure de ceux qui les habitent, mais d'autant que je n'ai seulement entrepris pour ceste fois de vous aduertir de la nouuelle France, & de ce qui s'y passe, ie passeray outre, & n'en diray autre chose sinon que le climat est assez agréable, & que ce sont de fort belles Isles

7.

& bien peuplées, mais l'Espagnol en tient la plus grande partie. Je ne vous entretiendray donc daunantage sur ce sujet, sinon qu'après plusieurs rencontres, fortunes & perils (que ie laisse pour n'estre trop long) nous arrivâmes au Cap Bellile vingtseptiesme du mois d'Aoust de l'année 1605, environ les trois heures de soir: ce Cap est l'un des plus beaux qui soit en tout l'Océan, & specialement en la mer du Nord: & deussçavoir qu'il y a deux grandes roches qui s'auancent en la mer enuiron une arquebusade, & puis elles viennent à se ioindre en croissant du costé du midy, tellement qu'on diroit que la nature s'est estudiée d'y dresser un port, autant assuré, & plus beau que tous ceux que l'artifice humain sçauroit construire. A une lieue & demie de là y a une petite ville nommée Surfe, habitée dès long temps par les François, & commença à nous y entrecognoistre, de façon que nous y receumes de grands courtoisies d'eux, & y fusmes les tres-bien venus.

C'est le commencement de Canada, mais nous ne voulumes pas y faire grand sejour, parce que nous voulions tout de premier abord aller voir le sieur du Dongeon qui en est gouverneur, & se tient d'ordinaire à Brest, principale ville de tout le païs, bien munie, grande & fort peuplée d'environ cinquante mille hommes, et fournie de tout ce qui est nécessaire à l'enrichissement d'une bonne ville, distante de Surfe d'environ cinquante lieues.

Tout le long de nostre voyage auoit esté plus heureux que ce reste car ayant tendu la voile l'onzième

8.

de Decembre, ainsi que nous fusmes en pleine mer environ six lieues du bord, voilà un vent de Nord qui commença à nous contrarier, & nous

chargea de telle violence, qu'en moins de vingtquatre heures il nous eut ictez en la terre appellée des Baccalaos, tenuë partie par les Espagnols, partie par les habitants du país: mais la fortune nous fut si favorable, que nous fusmes poussez en vn petit destroit au recoing d'vne Isle sous des grands arbres qui ressemblent quasi des chesnes, mais ils ont la fucille comme des feuilles de choux, & port ent vn certain fruict quasi comme des oranges, qui est fort bon & delicat, avec vn goust fort delicieux & agreable. Estant là branlans à l'anchre quelques vns de nos gës portez par la curiosité de sçavoir qui estoient ceux qui habitoient ceste Isle, s'escarterent à trauers ces arbres, & cheminerent environ deux mille pas deuant que rien treuuer: puis ainsi qu'ils passoient outre ils virent de loing à trauers le bois quelques logettes couertes de feuillages, & autour quelques vns qui sembloient estre en armes, & faire la ronde autour de leurs cabanes. Nos gens s'arrestèrent vn peu pour voir leur maniere de faire, & n'eurent là gueres demeuré qu'ils virent venir deux grands hommes comme demy Geans, armez d'escailles de poissons, & portant chacun vne grosse massuë en la main, ferrees de gros clouds, pesantes d'environ chacune quatre vingt liures, & au premier abord commencerent à chamailler sur ces pauvres gens, & en terrassèrent en moins de rien dix ou douze, deuant qu'ils eussent loisir de se mettre en defence:

9.

mais eux frappant ie ne sçay quels bois dont ils faisoient vn tel tintamarre que toute la forest retentissoit, s'assemblent en vn gros iusques au nombre d'environ cinq cens hommes de deffence, & avec certaines arbalestes donnerent la chasse à ces monstres, qui neantmoins leur emporterent quelque butin, & s'enfuirent avec cela.

Nos gens voyant le peu d'adresse qu'auoient ces pauvres Barbares aux armes, prindrent plus de hardiesse, et se monstrant à eux tirèrent trois ou quatre coups de mousquetade, qui les estonnerent de telle façon qu'ils ne sçauoient où ils estoient, & s'en alloient tous mettre en fuite, n'eust esté que quelques vns des nostres s'auancerent & leur firent signe qu'ils ne craignissent rien, & qu'on ne leur feroit point de mal.

Sur ceste assurance ils s'assemblerent, & apres auoir long temps consulté ensemble, ils prindrent leur Roy qu'ils monterent sur vn petit chariot à quatre rouës, & les quatre plus apparens le trainât ils marcherent contre nos gens, leur faisant signe qu'ils quitassent les armes, & les mettant premierement bas, leur Roy vint embrasser le Sieur de Fougères, qui estoit le plus apparent des nostres, & luy dit par son truchemët que s'il vouloit demeurer en ce país-là il luy donneroit des moyens & des terres, & prenant vn grand collier de pierres precieuses qu'il portoit pëdu à son col il le luy dōna: & fut du depuis ledit collier

estimé à plus de cent cinquante mille escus. Puis apres auoir contemplé l'humeur & la façon des nostres, les voyat si adroits & de b grace au prix d'eux, ils demeurèrent

10.

comme ravis, & les vouloient adorer comme dieux, leur faisant signe que s'ils vouloient venir avec eux ils les constitueroient pour Rois Empereurs de toutes leurs terres, qui sont fort grandes & riches, mais les nostres leur faisant responce qu'ils n'estoient qu'hommes non plus que eux, & qu'il y auoit au Ciel vn Dieu immortel & tout-puissant qu'il le falloit tous adorer deuotement: ils se jetterent en terre à genoux trepignât de ioye, & tenant les yeux au Ciel ils se mirent à chanter certains Cantiques de ioye en leur lague, puis ainsi qu'vn certain vent leua deuers la marine, ils se mirent tous en fuite, & s'escarterent l'un deçà, l'autre delà, tellement qu'en moins de rien les nostres se trouuerent tous seuls, sans pouuoir scauoir la cause d'vne si soudaine fuite.

Après cela ils s'en reuindrēt aux nauires, & nous raconterent toutes choses que qu'ils auoient veu, & en demeurasmes tous estonnez, admiras en ce que la bonté de Dieu, & la grandeur de ses œures, ensemble la simplicité de ces peuples gens, qui les rend cent fois plus heureux en leur brutalité que nous ne sommes pas en toutes nos piaffes, & pompeuses mignardises.

Nous fusmes quasi sur le point à nous hazarder de nous saisir de ce pais, veu la facilité qui nous y abattoit la planche, & sembloit comme nous y appeller: mais ayant mis le fait en deliberation, & preuoyant les perils que nous y pourrions rencontrer, nous nous en deportames & remismes la partie à vne autre fois: tant y a que le pais est fort bon riche & plantureux, avec vne infinité de beaux fruicts,

[11.]

forcé pierreries, & [about last half of line missing, clipped by binder] qui le rendent fort opulent, & croy-ie que moins de cinq cens hommes s'en pourroient saisir, & y faire vne des belles conquestes qu'il est possible. Les François y regarderont, & tandis ie passeray outre au recit de nostre voyage.

Après nous estre là rafraichis vn iour & demy, nous leuasmes l'ancre, & prenant la route de l'Isle saint Laurent, nous fusmes encore contrariez, & nous falut encore prendre terre en vne petite isle appelée les Chasses, où nous demeurasmes quinze iours deuant que pouuoir tendre la voile, & trouuions de dans ceste dicte isle des petits grains de fin or parmy le sable, tellemēt qu'il y eut tel de nos gens qui en ramassa

plus de trente livres, avec force Coraux & Iayet, qui y croissent en grande abondance. Du dupuis reprenât nostre brisee nous fismes tant que le 5. de Novembre nous nous rendismes à Brest, où nous fusmes les tresbien venus, & receus avec telle magnificence & contentemât que nous eussions sceu desirer, tant du Sieur du Dongeon, que de tous les autres en general: puis apres nous estre là raffraichis quelque peu de tēps, nous fusmes employez aux guerres qu'ils y auoït cōtre ceux de Bofragara, de l'autre costé du fleue de Anacal qui partage leurs terres, mais auant que entrer plus auant au recit de ceste guerre, ie vous veus dire quelque chose de la situation du païs, & des mœurs de ces Nouveaux François.

Premierement vous deuez sçauoir que Canada est vn fort beau païs, grand & delieieux, confinant du costé de Septentrion au fleue de Anacal, du

[12.]

[*about first half of line missing, clipped by binder*] Ocean de Nord, du costé du soir aux môtagnes de Gales, & du Midy aux terres de Chilaga. Les principales villes sont Brest, Hanguedo, Canada, Hochilago, Foquelay, Turquas, Brinon, Bonara, Forniset, Grossot, du & Horsago, Poquet, Tarat, & Fo go, tout grosses villes & bien munies: les riuieres sont Anacal qui est vn grand ficuue, Saquenay, Bargat, Druce, & Boucorre dont la moindre est plus grosse que la Seine, sans vne infinité d'autres qu'il y a. Le Royaume de Canada peut estre enuiron de l'estenduë de trois cens lieuës de long, & de cent cinquante de large, d'assez bonne temperature, sinon qu'il est vn petit plus froid que la France, estant colloqué sous le 50. degré de latitude, & sous le 320. de longitude, bien fertile, plein, remply de toutes sortes d'arbres, sinõ qu'il ne s'y recueille point de vin, mais pour recōpense de cela il s'y trouue certaines pommes, grosses à merueille, & remplies d'vn certain suc qui est fort delicat, & enyure aussi bien que le vin, encore s'y trouue-il du vin, voire fort bon & delicat, qu'on y apporte de la Florida, qui est vn païs plus chaud, & où l'on en recueille à force: pour des bleds de toute sorte, le païs en est autant fertile que la France, & mesme d'vn certain froment, que nous appellons du Triue, qui est encore plus blanc que celui que vous auez en France, voire encor meilleur, & plus sauoureux, rendât vne farine fort douce, qui sent quasi comme la violette.

Il n'y faut labourer la terre qu'vne fois & puis semer: & vous puis assureur que d'vn boisseau de ce Triue on en recueillira plus de quarante cinq.

[13.]

sans qu'il s'y trouue aueune herbe, ni autre broillerie qui le gaste. Je ne vous scaurois descrire la fertilité du pais, tant du bled que toutes autres sortes de fruicts, & choses necessaires pour la vie l'hôme, toutes sortes de marchandises, drapperie, soye laine: & pour vous dire en vn mot, ie croy que c'est quelque terre de promission, & que la simplicité de ceux qui l'habitent y faict descendre la benediction du Ciel, car sans qu'ils ayent peine de se tuer de labeur, ni de tant trauailler pour viure cômme il faut faire là haut en vostre Europe, ils ont des biens en toute abondance.

Maintenant pour vous descrire le naturel de ceux qui l'habitent vous deuez scauoir que ce sont de fort beaux hommes, blancs comme neige, qui laissent croistre leurs cheueux iusque sur les rains tant hommes que femmes, avec vn grand front releué, les yeux ardans comme chandelles, grands de corps & bien proportionnez, les femmes tout de mesme sont fort belles & gracieuses, bien formées & delicates, tellement qu'avec leur façon d'habits qui est vn peu estrange, vous diriez que ce sont des Nymphes, ou quelques Deesses, fort douces & traitables, mais au parti delà qui se feront plustost massacher que de consentir à leur deshonneur, ni prendre la cognoissance d'autre que de leur mary. Quant au reste, pour leur façon de viure, il sont fort brutaux, mais ils commencent à se ciuiler, & à prendre noz mœurs, & noz deportemens, ils se laissent facilement instruire à la foy Chrestienne, sans se môtrer trop opiniastres à leur Paganisme, tellement que s'il descendoit ça bas des

[14.]

Predicateurs, ie croy qu'en peu de temps tout le pais se rendroit à la foy Chrestienne sans se faire autrement forcer, & mesme que par là le chemin seroit ouuert en tout le reste de l'Amérique pour y faire la conuersion des ames, qui est plus que toutes les terres qu'on scauroit iamais conuier.

Or vous deuez scauoir que nous tenons vne grande estendue de pais souz le nom des François & auons entrepris la conuersion des Atarques qui est vn des pais plus riches de toute la terre de Canada, & où il y a des minieres d'or & d'argent en grand abondance, qui sont fort riches & mesme tout le long des riuieres on trouue quelquefois cômme de petites cailloux d'or fin, foree pierreries, diamants, & autres richesses: Ce peuple là est cruel & belliqueux, tellement qu'il nous donne beaucoup de peine & aurions bon besoin d'auoir du secours de France, eomme ie croy que Monsieur du Dongeon en a escrit au Roy, & vous promets que si no

sonnes secourus nous en viendrons à bout, & ferons des choses dont la renommée en sera memorable à toute la postérité, & ferons que la gloire des François viura à jamais par toute l'Amerique.

Voilà succinctement ce que ie vous puis escrire pour maintenant, n'y ayant pas long temps que ie suis au pais pour en scauoir toutes les singularitez, & vous prieray de vous contenter de ce peu insque le temps & l'experience m'autont donné le moyen de vous en enuoyer dauantage, & vous descrire tout au long le merite d'une si belle conquete: car ie vous promets & vous assure que hors la France, Canada est vn des beaux & agreable

15.

pais que vous scauriez voir ni desirer, voire l'oseray-je preferer à la France en richesses & moyens, tant pour l'or, argent qu'autres choses necessaires à la vie, voire sans tant de peine & trauaux que vous en auez. Prenez donc ce peu de bonne part, Monsieur, comme de celuy qui est.

Vostre plus affectionné
seruiteur,

De Brest en Canada ce 13. Feurier, 1608.

DES COMBES.

PERMISSION.

Il est permis à Leon Saunie, Maistre Imprimeur, d'imprimer la presente Coppie de Lettre, Auec deffences à tous autres en tel cas requises. Faict ce 19 Feurier, 1609.

DE VILLARS.

(TRANSLATION.)

COPY OF A LETTER SENT FROM NEW FRANCE, OR CANADA, BY THE SIEUR DE COMBES, A GENTLEMAN OF POITOU, TO A FRIEND, IN WHICH ARE DESCRIBED BRIEFLY THE MARVELS, EXCELLENCE AND WEALTH OF THE COUNTRY, TOGETHER WITH THE APPEARANCE AND MANNERS OF THE INHABITANTS, THE GLORY OF THE FRENCH AND THE HOPE THERE IS OF CHRISTIANIZING AMERICA.

Sir,—Since want of time and the condition of my fortune debar me from the means of seeing you personally and that my destiny has relegated me to these foreign lands, I will try at least to visit you now by a letter, and to direct my thoughts to France in a visit to my

own country, my parents and those with whom during my early years I contracted the ties of a close friendship and among whom you stand the first rank, for I have always especially esteemed your worth. The only thorn which troubles my rest and prevents me from settling my inclinations in the satisfaction flowing from our conquests and triumphs is being deprived of the conversation of my friends and of being myself now, so to say, torn in as many parts as there are objects of affection, and that those objects are to me so dear. I would have remained with more patience this voluntary exile, and the remembrance of the charms of Europe would not so often trouble my resolution, were it not now that my circumstances are changed into an abode in these disagreeable, wild and uncivilized lands; but I am now realizing to myself what it is to be separated from those whom one loves and to endure the pain of such a long absence without hope even of seeing any change in my lot. But after all it is the result of my own inconstancy in youth, and, as I have thrown the die, I must alone meet the result. However that may be, I beg you to believe that I have erected an altar in my heart upon which I offer every day vows and benedictions in recollection of your worth and I cherish in my memory the pleasures of our former enjoyments. I think that if I had not found a remedy to alleviate my reminiscences I could not have endured the distress that these memories throw over all my energies; but, at present I have learned by this means to soften their pain, and these sorrows are so pleasant that I gather them as roses and flowers, overspiced with contentment so great that it creates for me a paradise of enjoyment and is the delight of my life. The sorrows of absence would yet be endurable if, after a certain length of time, I could secure news from you, but since my departure from France, my ill fortune has been such that I have been without any, and I can in no way learn how you are, nor the state of your affairs, except in imagination, I know very well that such imaginations are deceitful: That would afford a new charm to quicken the ardour of my desires, but since that my unfortunate situation forbids it, I leave the whole to chance and hazard, both in giving you a description of New France and in asking you to let us know what is going on in the old one, and as the fair wind carries my letter to you, I beg that you will recognize the mark of my affection and accept in good part what I say of events on this side, until history records, in detail, all those facts for your better information.

You must know then after our departure from Rochelle which was on April 13, 1604, under the direction of the Sieur de Bric

a man equally experienced as a captain on sea and on land (as the facts proved) as much so as any one I have ever known either by reputation or otherwise, we pursued our course on the high sea, with a fair wind until the 24th of the said month when, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, when we were near Maida Islands, about the 3rd degree of longitude and the 24th of latitude, there rose a North East wind very strong and vexatious with storm and tempest, separating our vessels and raising the sea with such fury that we thought we were lost and that our destiny was to be wrecked on the spot; but God, whose will was to reserve our lives for more glorious occasions, showed that He had ordered otherwise in His Divine Justice, because after wind and tempest had frothed out their malice during two hours, at four o'clock in the afternoon they ceased and the waves calmed down. Then we commenced to examine the Islands, and we took refuge there to recuperate and rest during three days, as well to wait for some of our vessels which had gone astray, as to repair two of them whose sides had been opened by the great strain they had sustained.

After three days at that place we raised anchor the 28th, at seven o'clock in the morning and, spreading all sails we steered away towards Isle Verde, but, just as we thought to approach it there came a North wind which, after blowing furiously against us for a day and a half, drove us to the Azores where in the immediate vicinity we met a fleet of Spanish vessels. They attempted to bar our passage, but after a few light attacks we passed along.

I would describe to you in detail the nature of those Islands, their situation, and the manner of life of the people, but, as I have only undertaken to tell you of New France and of what is going on there I will pass over the rest and will say nothing more than that the climate is fairly agreeable and that they are very fine Islands, well peopled, but of which Spain holds the greater part. I will not, therefore, say any more on this subject, except that after numerous encounters, fortunes and perils (not here related for the sake of brevity) we arrived at Cape Bellile the twenty-seventh of the month of August, of the year 1605, about three o'clock of 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 then 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 wish to prolong our sojourn there because we desired first to go and see Monsieur du Dongeon, who is governor, and resides ordinarily at the principal town of the whole country, well provisioned, largely 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.

Our voyage so far was more favourable than the sequel, for we sailed on the eleventh December, so soon as we were in the open sea about six leagues, a North wind arose which struck us with such violence that in less than twenty-four hours we were thrown on the coast called Baccanos, partly owned by the Spaniards, partly by the inhabitants of the country; but fortune was so favourable that we were pushed in a little strait in the corner of an island under great trees closely resembling oaks, except that their leaves are like cabbage leaves and they bear fruit similar to oranges, which is very good and delicious with a taste most delicious and agreeable. While we were there at anchor some of our men, animated by curiosity to know where the inhabitants of that island, roamed amongst the trees and woods about two miles before finding anything. Then, proceeding further they saw in the woods a few huts covered with foliage and in the vicinity some men who seemed to carry arms and were patrolling around the huts. Our folks stopped a moment in order to ascertain what they were doing. Soon after came to them two tall men, semi-giants, armed with scales of fishes and each carrying a big club in his hand bristling with big iron nails, and weighing about one hundred pounds. At the first approach they began to quarrel with these people and in less than no time threw ten or twelve of them on the ground before they had time to put themselves on their guard; which the people began to beat upon a sort of wood unknown to us and made such a noise that the whole forest resounded. Then, joining together in defence to the number of about five hundred, and with a sort of cross-bows gave chase to these monsters who, nevertheless, carried off some plunder in their flight.

Our men, seeing the awkwardness at arms of those poor Barbarians became more bold and, showing themselves to them, fired three or four discharges of musketry, which so surprised them that they did not know where they were and they were preparing to flee when some of our men advanced towards them and made signs to have no fear and that no harm would be done to any of them.

On this assurance they assembled, and, after a long deliberation, they placed their King on a small chariot with four wheels and the four most good looking drew it marching in the direction of our men, making signs to drop their arms. The arms being lowered the King kissed the *Sieur de Fongeres*, who was the most distinguished looking of our men, and told him through his interpreter that if they wished to remain in the country he would furnish them with subsistence and land, and, taking a great collar of precious stones that he wore around his neck, he gave it to the *Sieur de Fongeres*, and afterwards that same collar was estimated at more than one hundred and fifty thousand *écus* (\$55,000). Then, after having studied the disposition and appearance of our folks, and finding them so dexterous and gracious compared with themselves, the Barbarians remained enraptured and wanted to worship them like gods, making signs that if they wished to go with them they would be recognized as Kings and Emperors of all their lands which are very extensive and rich, but our people made reply that they were only human beings and no more than themselves, and that there was in Heaven an immortal and Almighty God and that they ought all to worship Him with devotion. Then they threw themselves on their knees, and, stamping with joy and keeping their eyes elevated to Heaven, they commenced to sing hymns of joy in their language. Then, as the wind rose, they ran away in all directions so that in less than no time our men were left alone without knowing the cause of such a sudden alarm.

After that our people returned to the vessels and told all they had seen and we remained surprised wondering at the mercy of God and the magnitude of His works, as well as the simplicity of the beings which renders them a hundred times more happy in their state than we are with all our pride and pomposity.

We were almost on the point of taking the risk of seizing the country, seeing the road open before us and almost inviting us to action; but after consultation, foreseeing the perils that we might meet with, we refrained and postponed the attempt to another time. Still the country is beautiful, rich, productive, with an infinite quantity of fine fruits, many precious stones and (about last half of line missing, clipped by binder) which make it very wealthy. I believe that less than five hundred men could get possession of it and thus make one of the best conquests possible. The French will consider this matter, and meantime I will proceed with the narrative of our voyage.

After resting for a day and a half, we raised anchor, and, taking the route of St. Lawrence Island we were again thwarted and had to land on a small Island called *Les Chasses*, where we remained a fort-

night before we could sail again. We found there small grains of pure gold mixed with the sand, so much that some of our men gathered more than thirty pounds of it, and plenty of coral and Iayet (which grow there in great abundance. Following again the same course we made so swift a course that on November 5 we arrived at a place where we received a hearty welcome with the most magnificent entertainment we could desire, both from the Sieur du Dongeon and from the other inhabitants. After resting for a short time we were employed in the war they were waging against the people of Bofragara, on the other side of the river Anacal which divides their lands; but not entering further upon an account of that war, I wish to say something of the situation of the country and the manners of these New Frenchmen.

Firstly, you must know that Canada is a very beautiful country, large and pleasant, bounded on the north by the river Anacal, on the east by the first half of line missing, clipped by binder Northern Ocean, on the west by sunset by the mountains of Gales and on the south by the territory of Chillaga. The principal towns are Brest, Hanguedo, Canada, Tilago, Foquelay, Turquas, Brinon, Bonara, Forniset, Grossot, and Sagogo, Poquet, Tarat and Fongo, all large towns, and well provided. The rivers are Anacal, which is a great river, Saguenay, Bargat, and Boucorre, the least of them being larger than the Seine, besides an infinity of other streams. The Kingdom of Canada is about three hundred leagues in length and one hundred and fifty broad, of a moderate enough temperature, except that it is a little colder than France, being placed under the 50th degree of latitude and 320th degree of longitude. It is very fertile, flat, full of all sorts of trees, except that it produces no wine, but in compensation there are certain apples, marvelous in size, big and full of a certain juice very delicate and which intoxicates as much as wine. There is, however, wine there, and very good and delicate, which is brought from Florida, a warmer country, where they produce much of it. As for wheat of all kinds the country is as fertile as France itself and there is a certain class of wheat named *blé de Canada* which is whiter than the French species, and better, more so, and yielding a very sweet flour with a smell nearly like the violet.

It is only necessary to plough the ground once and to sow the seed, and I can assure you that from a bushel of this Trive you will get more than forty-five fold without any admixture of grass or other weeds which spoil it. I cannot describe to you the fertility of the country in wheat, in other sorts of fruits and things necessary to mankind, as well as in all kinds of merchandise, drapery, silk and wool. To sum up in a word, I believe it is some promised land and that the

plicity of its inhabitants brings on it the benediction of Heaven because without excess of labour and without hard work to make a living, such as we do in Europe, they have all things in abundance.

Now to show you the nature of those who reside here you must know that they are very fine men, white as snow. They allow their hair to grow down to the waist, men or women, with high foreheads, the eyes burning like candles, tall in body and well proportioned. The women also are very beautiful and pleasing, well formed and delicate, so much that with the style of their dress, which is somewhat strange, they seem to be nymphs or goddesses. They are very gentle and tractable, but would rather be killed than consent to their dishonour and they only have connection with their husbands. As regards their manner of living in other respects they are brutish, but they are commencing to be civilized and to adopt our ways and deportment, they are easy to teach in the Christian Faith without showing much obstinacy in their paganism, so much so that if some preacher were to visit them I think that in a short time the whole of the Country would turn to the Christian Faith without much effort, and I think also by that means the road would be open over all America for the conquest of souls, which is more important than all the territories that can ever be conquered.

It should be known that we hold a large extent of country as Frenchmen and that we have undertaken the conquest of the Atares, which is one of the richest portions of Canada and where mines of gold and silver are in great abundance, and which are very rich. All along the river sides even are to be found something like small nuggets of fine gold, many precious stones, diamonds and other wealth. The people there are cruel and warlike and give us much trouble. We want badly some help from France, and I think Monsieur du Dougeon has written to the King to that effect, and I tell you that if we receive help we shall have the upper hand of them, and will perform such deeds that the memory will go down to posterity and the glory of Frenchmen will live for ever in all America.

This is briefly what I can write you for the present, as I have not been long enough in the country to know all its singularities, and I beg that you may be satisfied with this little until time and experience have furnished me the means to add to my information and enable me to describe to you at full length the merits of such a fine conquest. I promise and assure you that, France being excepted, Canada is one of the most beautiful and agreeable countries that you can either see or desire, and I would dare even to prefer it to France as

to riches and resources, both for gold and silver as well as for necessaries of life, and all that without so much pain and work as we have generally. . Please take this meagre budget of news in good Sir, as coming from

Your most affectionate servant,

DES COMBES

From Brest, in Canada, this 13th February, 1608.

PERMISSION.

Leon Savine, master printer, is allowed to print the present letter, with interdiction to any others in such case required.

Done this 19th February, 1609.

DE VILLAS

Critical remarks upon the Volume.

There can be no question of the genuineness of the book. The printing and paper prove that it was really issued about the time mentioned on the title page and the imprimatur is an additional guarantee. No one could dare in those days to trifle with an official license. The authenticity of the letter is another question; for there is no mention in any of the records of the persons named in it. Neither the words of the Sieur de Combes; nor the Commandant, the Sieur du Donjon; nor the Sieur de Fougères; nor the Sieur de Bricant can be found in the annals of this country; and yet the Sieur du Dongeon was a French officer and is represented as writing to the King for reinforcements. No trace of such correspondence exists in the voluminous records of the French Government, and the officers of the Canadian Archives have examined them carefully and have copied or calendared the most important.

The narrative of the voyage is plainly fabulous. Maida Island and Isle Verde are imaginary islands which existed solely in the mind of the author but the vessels took shelter there. The Azores have always been Portuguese and Portuguese was and is spoken there. As Portugal was under the power of Spain it is not surprising that they met a Spanish fleet, although no one who had been there would have divided the allegiance of the Azores group and said that most of them belonged to Spain.

to Spain. The Sieur de Combes sailed from La Rochelle, April 13, 1604, and on April 24, was at Isle Maida; but it was not until August 27 of the following year, 1605, that they reached Cape Bellile, yet the voyage was continuous, and even if 1605 be a misprint for 1604, the time is too long. Near Bellile they found a small town called Surfe, where they stayed some months. No one who had ever seen Belle-Isle could have given such a description of it, and the town of Surfe near it is a plain invention; but the Sieur de Combes sailed from thence on December 11 as easily as if Belle-Isle were an island in the tropics. By stress of weather the vessels were thrown upon Newfoundland (Baccalaos), where he found great trees resembling oaks, but with large leaves like cabbages and bearing delicious fruit like oranges, though it was mid-winter. He describes the natives and some giants armed with huge clubs and clad in armour of fish-scales, who were oppressing them. Finally, they sail for Brest, where they arrive on November 5, of necessity 1606, although the distance from Surfe was only fifty leagues.

Brest is declared to be the chief city of Canada and the residence of the Governor, the Sieur du Dongeon. There were other towns in Canada, among them "Canada and Hanguedo," which are Cartier's names; the others are invented. M. du Dongeon was then engaged in war with the people of Bofragara, who dwelt beyond the Anacal—fancy names also. Brest is described as a strongly fortified city of 50,000 inhabitants, well provided with everything; but wine has to be brought from Florida.

M. de Combes' account of Canada is exceedingly favourable. The fertility of the country is beyond description; not only in wheat, but in all sorts of fruit and all kinds of merchandise. It is a land favoured of Heaven where, with little work, all things but wine (including gold, silver and precious stones) are produced in abundance. The natives are white as snow—the men handsome, tall and well proportioned; the women very beautiful and attractive; and all are well disposed towards the Christian religion.

It is difficult even to guess at the object for which this most curious book was written. The descriptions of nautical matters prove that the author was not a sailor, and it is evident he was never on the coast of Canada. Some of the names of places are seraped up from maps and books of voyages, but most are purely inventions. There are passages which read like extracts from "Sinbad, the Sailor," and the yarn of this Canadian Sinbad, written in the year Champlain founded Quebec, must pique the curiosity of every Canadian. In fact, one is irresistibly reminded of Sinbad's voyages in reading this book. The

long sentimental introduction is artificial and like the prologues of similar imaginative stories seems inserted to give a colour of truth to a fictitious narrative.

Brest in Cartier's First Voyage.

It is well known to all students that, until very recent years the information existing concerning Cartier's first voyage was derived from Ramusio's narrative (in 1556) in Italian. Hakluyt's version was translated by Florio, from Italian into English (in 1589), and the French version was translated later from English or Italian and published by Petit Val at Rouen in 1598. From one of these sources all versions down to 1867 were drawn, and upon them all discussions were founded. All of them were in reality translations of translations, for they were founded on the Italian of Ramusio, and the French original of Ramusio had been lost.¹

In 1867 M. Michelant discovered and printed a manuscript in the Imperial Library at Paris, which was the "Relation Originale" of Cartier himself. Immediately the difficulties in the various versions began to disappear until the whole course of Cartier's voyage was clear. But the books and maps before 1867, and many of later date, contained the old errors — the natural result of double or treble translation — and added to errors in transcription and to glosses of the transcribers. Such error has led most writers astray as to the location of Cartier's Brest for both Hakluyt and Petit Val make Brest to be an Island called Blanc Sablon. It will be better to quote from Petit Val, whose Hakluyt's English version is to the same effect:—

"Blanc Sablon est un lieu ou n'y a aucun abry du Sud ny du Nord, mais vers le Sud-Surouest de la lieu, y a deux Isles l'une desquelles est appellee l'isle de Brest, et l'autre l'isle des Oiseaux."

That was the only information up to 1867; but the "Relation Originale" reads:—

"Blanc Sablon est une couche ou il n'y a point d'abry du Sud ny du Nord; Et y a au Sud Surouest d'icelle couche deux isles, dont l'une a nom l'isle de Bouays et l'autre l'isle des Ouaiseaulx."

The transcriber or translator has substituted the word Bois for Bouays (Bois). The Island is called Wood Island (Isle au Bois) to this day. The other island is now called Greenly Island (occasionally Green Island or Isle Verte), there can be no mistake about the location; the context is absolutely clear. This misconception has led most writers astray; a notable instance is in the fine chart made in 1784

¹ See Dawson, St. Lawrence Basin, p. 121.

French Government under the administration of the Marshal de Castries, in which we find, "I de Brest aujourd'hui I aux Bois." The compiler of this map used the Chart of Cook and Lane as a basis, and inserted what he conceived to be Cartier's names. French though he was, he has followed some absurdities of the versions then existing. Thus Cartier's *Hable de la Ballaine* was twisted into (English) Port of Balances and (French) Port des Balances. Cartier's *Hable de Buttes* became (English) Port of Gutte and (French) Port des Goutes. In like manner Cartier's Cap Delatte, named from a place in Bretagne, near St. Malo, was converted into Cape of Milke by Hakluyt, Cap de Laiet by Petit Val, and Cap de Lait is on the French chart, although the French word *latte* expressed the local appearance and is used in the Marine service. These are a few out of the many instances where writers upon the Cartier voyages have been led astray because of the loss for 300 years of Cartier's own narrative.

MYTHOLOGY OF LABRADOR.

Few Canadians have heard of a Brest in Canada, and yet when Cartier first arrived on the coast, in 1534, he found a fishing vessel from La Rochelle looking for it. She had sailed past it in the night and indeed the islands close in against the mainland, so that from the sea it is hard to distinguish them. Cartier knew the harbour and left his ships there from the 10th to the 13th of June to take in wood and water while he explored further in his boats. The name has disappeared for more than two hundred years but here in the *Sieur de Combes*'¹ letter, we have a choice bit of mythology wherewith to adorn the threshold of our history. Mexico has the fabled Seven Cities, the elusive object of Coronado's venturesome march; New England has the fabled city of Norumbega, on the Penobscot, where David Ingram saw, in 1568, a street three-fourths of a mile long of houses supported by pillars of silver and crystal, and where the women wore plates of gold like armour; and now our hitherto unknown admirer the *Sieur de Combes* has provided us with a mythical city of our own in our own province of Quebec, with 50,000 inhabitants and many other adornments of the imagination.

¹ The name is De Combes on the title page and Des Combes in the signature on the last page.

The fourth volume of the "Proceedings of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec," however, contains a paper by Mr. Robertson, read before the Society in 1841 by Dr. Morrin, which misled many succeeding writers. Mr. Robertson was a resident on the Labrador coast, at Sparr Point, a place not now in the "Admiralty Sailing Directions." His residence imparted a factitious value to his opinion; but the "traditions of the coast," of which his paper is an embodiment are for the most part as mythical as the *Sieur de Cuvier's* narrative. It could not well be otherwise; for to those isolated on the coast of Labrador no access to original authorities or records was possible and stories grew and changed as they passed by repetition; moreover, no real tradition from generation to generation was possible for there was no continuity of settlement.

Mr. Robertson held very positive opinions about the prior Basque discoveries. In his opinion, "One Labradore, a Basque vessel from the Kingdom of Navarre, in Spain, did penetrate through the straits of Belle-Isle as far as Labradore Bay some time about the middle of the 15th Century, and eventually the whole coast took its name from this bay and harbour." He fortifies this with the most groundless statement that: "In all the early voyages, as of Cabot, the Basques are always mentioned as met with; and the Basque names were found on the coast of Newfoundland, by Cabot on his first voyage, clear evidence of their prior acquaintance with the northern shore of America." Then passing to philology, he adds: "I shall say nothing of the vocabulary of Basque names found throughout the Gulf of St. Lawrence, of which Quebec and Canada are not the least remarkable." Not only Basques, but Irish, Welsh and Bretons, he thinks, antedated the French and this he illustrates by the fact that, "when Cartier was commissioned in 1532 to make discoveries in Canada he made application for pilots among the Bretons." He was apparently not aware that Cartier was himself a Breton and his expedition sailed from a Breton port.

Upon the subject of the Canadian Brest, moreover, the "tradition of the coast" is most seriously astray, for Brest and Bradore are not to be the same, whereas it is certain that they were different places. The "tradition" is that Brest was founded one hundred years before Quebec, and Mr. Robertson has no doubt of the fact because the reports he reports as existing indicate that there were, at least, two hundred houses, besides stores, built of wood, and that there was a population of at least one thousand in winter and doubtless thrice that in summer. The city was at the height of its prosperity about A.D. 1495, that is eight years before Quebec was founded. In support of this

cites Lewis Roberts' "Dictionary of Commerce, London, 1660," evidently at second hand, for the title and date are wrong. The work referred to is Lewis Roberts' "Merchants' Map of Commerce," etc., etc., London, 1638 — editions were published also in 1671, 1677 and 1700. The passage referred to when examined shows the ignorance then prevalent in England regarding Canada. It would be a waste of time to dwell upon it were it not that these errors have been very generally copied from book to book.

Roberts in his divisions of this continent makes Terra Corterialis "the seventh in number." "On the south of it is that famous river of Canada, rising out of the hill Hombuedo running nine hundred miles and found navigable for eight hundred thereof. The chief town thereof is Brest, Cabomarso and others of little note. The eighth division is Norumbega, and the chief town carrieth that name, in possession of the French. The ninth division is Nova Francia, discovered by Jacques Cartier in Anno 1534 inhabited, besides the natives, with some few Frenchmen. The chief towns are Canada, the next Sanguinai, scated both upon two rivers so called." This shows how little of an authority Roberts is. Brest, Cabomarso, Norumbega, Canada, and Sanguinai, the only towns he reports, are all imaginary. His description of the Newfoundland fisheries is better; but, as he supposed the island to have been discovered by the English, as late as 1527, he evidently knew very little about the subject.

Returning now to Mr. Robertson's "tradition of the coast" after stating that Brest was at the height of its prosperity about A.D. 1600, he says: "The first cause of decay was a grant *en seigneurie* of four leagues of coast each way, embracing the town, to a certain nobleman called Courtemanche who had married a daughter of Henry IV of France." Reserving this statement for subsequent consideration, I would only remark here that these extracts from Roberts' book and Mr. Robertson's "traditions" show how utterly unreliable both of them are on this subject and on kindred questions.

What Brest was.

It has not been sufficiently realized that Cartier's actual discoveries began with a harbour (not a town) known as Brest. He himself plainly indicated that by commencing and continuing to name the coast west of that point. Even Blanc Sablon was not named by Cartier. Both places are still in the old province of Quebec and had been frequented by Breton fishermen before Cartier, who, doubtless, named them at some time between 1504 and 1534 from places in their own country. Our present concern is, however, with Brest, and Cartier's original nar-

rative indicates its position. It was not an island; it was a *h* (Hable de Brest) and it was among islands (et est le dit Brestz en It was ten leagues west of Bradore bay and there were islands way along. Cartier went to the place to lay in wood and water he left his vessels there for a few days to refit while he ex along the coast westwards, and, while exploring, he found vessel from La Rochelle before spoken of. It is clear that was then no settlement anywhere upon the coast. The fishermen in the spring and went back as soon as they had completed their

It would be rash to assert a universal negative, but the has not been able to find any notice of Brest in the mass of a copied or calendared at Ottawa or referred to or quoted in any books of history. Jean Allefonce, in his "Routier," or course Belle-Isle to Quebec, passes the locality by without mention. Char does not mention it nor is there any reference to the place in any Jesuit Relations.

Later, in the collection of "Edits et Ordonnances," and grants and leases along the coast as far as Hamilton Inlet the Brest is not found, nor does it occur in Charlevoix. If there been a settlement there it could not fail to have been noticed in of these authorities.

In maps, however, the name occurs until comparatively recent Not in all, not even in most, but in some; as, for instance, the leyan, 1536; Desliens, 1541; the Cabot map, 1544; Bertius, Champlain, 1632; Sanson, 1636; Jaillot's Atlas, 1692; an English circa 1750; Cary, 1807, and in the last is the explanation, for "port" is in Old Fort harbour. The name is not always in the place. It is sometimes on the mainland, sometimes on an island sometimes outside the strait of Belle-isle; it even occurs as the of an entire district on the Labrador coast. From this we may conclude that it was a fishing post once much frequented, but in summer; as, for instance, was Rogneuse on Newfoundland — known to Cartier and which, even as early as 1508, was a station where the stages and shallops of the fishermen were left summer to summer. The name Brest was copied from map to as were the names of imaginary islands in the ocean.

The first voyages to Canada were by the strait of Belle-isle, return from his second expedition only did Carver use the so passage by Cabot strait, but, after it was once discovered, the route the north was only used by fishermen. The strait was a famous for whales, as the Basques, Spanish and French soon found out the whales followed down the cold Labrador current in great nu

and passed into the Gulf. But Champlain in all his voyages never sailed by that route. It was only when the Canadians began to establish fisheries along the coast that Labrador again appears in the records.

We must pass over the first grant—that of the seigniory of Mingan made to François Bissot in 1661—only remarking that no indication of any place called Brest appeared in the voluminous records of the long protracted lawsuit of the Labrador Company and the Province of Quebec, decided finally by the Privy Council within the last twenty years; although the whole locality was included in that grant. Had there been a town there it would have been known at Quebec and excepted from the grant. Jean Bourdon in 1657 went up the Labrador coast as far as lat. 55°, and Jolliet some twenty-five years later explored it; but neither mention any town or settlement. At last we come to the hero of Mr. Robertson's legend—the “Count de Courtemanche,” “Son-in-law of King Henry IV,” whose grant ruined the flourishing town of Brest about 1630—the scene of the exploits of the Sieur du Dongeon and the adventures of the Sieur de Combes. The facts concerning him are of record in the public archives of Canada.

Augustin Legardeur, Seigneur de Courtemanche, was born in Canada in 1663 and was grandson of René Legardeur de Tilly, an emigrant from Normandy. He married in 1688 Marguerite Vaudry, who died, and he married, secondly, in 1697, the widow of Pierre Gratien Martel de Brouage.¹ Her maiden name was Charlotte Charest. She was the daughter of Charest, a tanner, at Point Levis, who had married into the Bissot family. It is scarcely necessary to say that none of these people were in the remotest degree connected by marriage with Henry IV of France, although that sensible monarch issued a general permission to persons of noble birth to enter into trade in Canada without derogating from their status. Bissot caught seals at Mingan, Charest tanned leather at Point Levis, and Martel traded at Quebec—all sieurs with landed titles and the aristocratic particule *de*—respectable and most important people in Canada, but not “noble” in the usual sense of the word.

Legardeur de Courtemanche was a lieutenant in the troops of the Marine and had spent all the early part of his life in the west in the Indian wars where he acquired a considerable reputation as a leader. His marriage into the Bissot family drew him to the east and fixed his later career on the Labrador coast, along which stretched the enormous seigniory granted in 1661 to Bissot de la Rivière. In 1702, five years after his second marriage, he obtained a grant of fishing and trading rights from the Kegashka river to the Kesaskaskiou—the native name

¹ This name is spelled in various ways—often it is Berhouage.

for the present Hamilton river. It was a grant for ten years only in 1704, de Courtemanche set out to examine it. The details of his voyage are in his report, still extant in the archives of the Marine at Paris. The coast is described, harbour by harbour, from the Kennebec eastwards. He visited the very spot where the flourishing city of Brest is said to have been. The bay was capacious and the clustered islands abounded with game. On the shore of the bay was an establishment of Frenchmen and a fort, behind which there were hills and, a league distant, was the Esquimaux river. The place is identified by a dispute; it is what is now known as Old Fort Bay, the westernmost of Esquimaux bay. Courtemanche does not mention Brest — he entirely does not know of such a place. Nor does his narrative leave the impression of many people living there. He mentions none; but he speaks on the natural advantages of the situation, the capacity of the harbour and the abundance of game. He passed on eight leagues further north what he called la Baye des Espagnols, now Bradore bay, and there he built a post he called Fort Ponchartrain. This latter bay then was to be called Phelypeaux bay — both names from Louis and Jean Phelypeaux, Counts de Ponchartrain, who administered Colonial affairs in succession in France from 1690 to 1716.

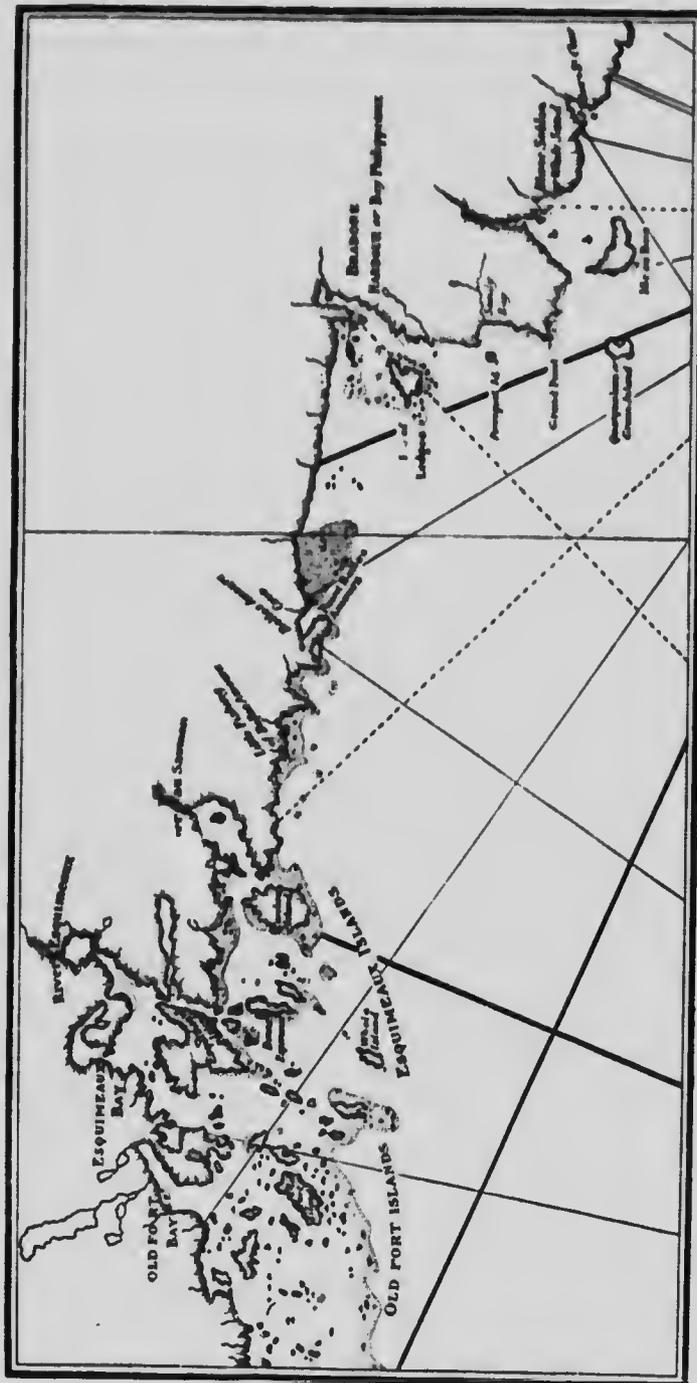
Fort Ponchartrain remained in the possession of the family until the time of the conquest. Courtemanche acted as a commander and kept order along the coast, which then began to be divided into grants for sedentary seal fisheries. He died about 1716 and the command was renewed to Madame de Courtemanche, her son and her three children. Her son (by her first marriage), Martel de Brouage, succeeded his step-father as magistrate on the coast. Much more could be said concerning this interesting family, but it would not bear upon the subject of this paper. We now know from Cartier in 1534 where Brest was and from Courtemanche we know that the oldest French post was in the same place — that is the present old Fort Bay.

The name Brest, as we have seen, faded off the coast at an early date — in fact it never was established. It was a harbour and a fishing post at first abandoned in winter, like all the posts on the Newfoundland coast. When or by whom a permanent post was established does not appear, but about the end of the seventeenth century the Esquimaux began a movement to the south and extended their migration until repulsed, as far as the Mingan islands. They annoyed the French men by destroying their stages and boats during the winter, so that a few men were left at places of much resort and they would naturally erect some sort of a fort or block-house. In that way the place was to be called "Vieux Fort." On d'Anville's map, 1746, it is named

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THE LABRADOR COAST.

From the boundary of the Province of Quebec at Blanc Sablon to Old Fort bay. the Brest Harbour of Cartier. Mainly from Cook and Lane's map.

"Ancien Etablissement." On the English maps it was called "Fort," the bay was "Old Fort Bay," and the island at the mouth of the bay "Old Fort Island." The post was not on the island but on the main shore. The error of placing it upon the island, as has been shown, would not have been detected but for the discovery of the "Relation Originale." The names still cling to the localities on the Admiralty charts of to-day Old Fort bay and Old Fort island are still laid down, though in the "Sailing Directions" little notice is given to the locality for other harbours along the coast have diminished its importance.

The range of coast called by Cartier "Toutes Isles" is a long archipelago of islands shutting in a broad bay into the head of which falls the Esquimaux river. The whole bay on the old maps was reckoned as one; but now it is reckoned as three. The easternmost is Bonne Esperance bay, shut in by an island of the same name; the middle is Esquimaux bay, where the Esquimaux river falls in. It is shut in by Esquimaux island, a large island opposite the mouth of the river. The westernmost is Old Fort bay and off its mouth lies Old Fort island. The accompanying map shows the main outlines of the coast. The locality is well within the western end of the strait of Belle-Isle. It is distant from Blanc Sablon about twenty-five miles in a direct line by sea.

Although the harbour of Bonne Esperance has now become the chief resort for vessels we have a volume by Mr. Stearns giving an excellent account of this place. In fact, Captain Jacques Cartier and Courtemanche and he are our chief authorities. It is a long history from 1534 to 1875, but the stern immobility of this iron-bound coast is not relaxed by the passing of centuries. Mr. Winfred Alden of Amherst (Mass.) College, visited the region in 1878, 1880 and 1881, making natural history collections, and he remained there one year. He stayed with a family which lived on Old Fort island in the summer and moved to winter quarters on the mainland to a house on the site of this very Brest or Old Fort which is the subject of our inquiries.

We need not dwell long on the peculiarities of the place. The Labrador coast was very curtly summarized by Cartier as "the gift of God gave to Cain." "If the land were as good as the harbour was thought, "it would be a good country, but there was not a corner of earth in the whole of it." The riches of that region are in the sea and from its depths generation after generation of hardy fishermen have fed the nations of western Europe, though with little profit to themselves. Old Fort bay, as will be seen on the map, runs up in

land in the shape of a bent arm. The water is deep and the land rises in steep rocky hills 400 to 500 feet high on the left or western side; but, on the eastern side, they are not higher than one hundred feet. The shelter is good; for Old Fort island at the mouth of the bay shuts it in. There are a large number of islands which render navigation intricate and Bonne Esperance harbour is easier of access.

Mr. Stearns was thus in the very centre of the traditions of the coast and he learned them from the residents. The fort or battery was supposed by many to have been on the west point at the entrance of the bay, but, though that might be, as a defence from the sea, the best place for a fort, no trace could be found of any fort having ever existed there. The residents stated that there had been ruins at a late date; while others were of the opinion the fort was further up the bay on the same side. It is most probable that the latter supposition is correct; for the fort would have been intended to protect the place from the Esquimaux and would have been near the sheltered spot where the boats were laid up for winter and the huts were doubtless built. The "traditions" placed the old settlement on the western shore just within the elbow. There, the residents asserted, ruins had existed down to a recent date; but there also the most diligent search could find no trace of them. Mr. Stearns found there, however, a natural basin showing signs of having been enlarged and deepened so as to make a sort of dock for small boats. What seemed to be an embankment could be seen and large stones apparently kept the earth in place. He inclines to the belief that this was the work of former settlers, although of ruins of houses or forts he could find no vestiges.

The chief facts accessible concerning the mythical city of Brest are now set forth. It may seem tedious to devote so much time to this subject but it is not unnecessary. Around such a letter as this of the *Sieur de Combes* a mass of conjecture will probably gather, and a new growth of mythology may be superadded at the sources of our history. The city of Brest on the strait of Belle-Isle can have been nothing but a fishing establishment like those usual on the coast; the city of Norumbega on the Penobscot, with its broad streets of houses pillared up with crystal and silver, was an encampment of Abenakis and the Seven Cities of Coronado's search were the dwellings of the Pueblo Indians now visited by curious travellers on the Topeka and Sante Fe railway. If, as Lord Bacon says, "a mixture of a lie doth always add pleasure," we have a new and abundant source of pleasure available in the story of the *Sieur de Combes*. The letter may be left to the writers of romances, but what the object of the publication could have been is by no means clear. It must be classed among works of the

imagination, of which others are known; for Canada, in those early days, impressed the minds of French writers more strongly than is generally supposed. Thus we find, in 1586, the scene of a tragedy laid in Canada. Its title is No. 6 in HARRISSE'S Notes as follows: "Acubar, ou la loyauté trahie. Tragédie tirée des amours de Pistion et de Fortunie en leur voyage de Canada, etc., etc."

Readers must not be surprised to learn that Fortunie was Infanta of Astracan and under the protection of the King of Canada. They are widely apart now, but then both places were supposed to be in Tartary.

The book is an evidence of an awakening interest in Canada, at that very time taking shape in Champlain's founding of Quebec. What is difficult to explain is its literary form. There must have been a demand for information about Canada to have called for a pamphlet like this.



