

CHAPTER V.

THE FRENCH IN AMERICA.

FRANCE was not slow to profit by the discoveries of Columbus. As early as 1504 the fishermen of Normandy and Brittany began to ply their vocation on the banks of Newfoundland. A map of the Gulf of St. Lawrence was drawn by a Frenchman, in the year 1506. Two years later some Indians were taken to France; and in 1518 the attention of Francis I. was turned to the colonization of the New World. Five years afterward a voyage of discovery and exploration was planned, and JOHN VERRAZZANI, a native of Florence, was commissioned to conduct the expedition. The special object had in view was to discover a north-west passage to Asia.

In the month of January, 1524, Verrazzani left the shores of Europe. His fleet consisted at first of four vessels; but three of them were damaged in a storm, and the voyage was undertaken with a single ship, called the *Dolphin*. For fifty days, through the buffetings of tempestuous weather, the courageous mariner held on his course, and on the 7th day of March discovered the main land in the latitude of Wilmington. He first sailed southward a hundred and fifty miles in the hope of finding a harbor, but found none. Returning northward, he finally anchored somewhere along the low sandy beach which stretches between the mouth of Cape Fear River and Pamlico Sound. Here he began a traffic with the natives. The Indians of this neighborhood were found to be a gentle and timid sort of creatures, unsuspecting and confiding. A half-drowned sailor who was washed ashore by the surf was treated with great kindness, and as soon as opportunity offered, permitted to return to the ship.

After a few days the voyage was continued toward the north. The whole coast of New Jersey was explored, and the hills marked as containing minerals. The harbor of New York was entered, and its safe and spacious waters were noted with admiration. At Newport, Rhode Island, Verrazzani anchored for fifteen days, and a trade was again opened with the Indians. Before leaving the place the French sailors repaid the confidence of the natives by kidnapping a child and attempting to steal a defenceless Indian girl.

Sailing from Newport, Verrazzani continued his explorations north-

ward. The long and broken line of the New England coast was traced with considerable care. The Indians of the north were wary and suspicious. They would buy neither ornaments nor toys, but were eager to purchase knives and weapons of iron. Passing to the east of Nova Scotia, the bold navigator reached Newfoundland in the latter part of May. In July he returned to France and published an account, still extant, of his great discoveries. The name of New France was now given to the whole country whose sea-coast had been traced by the adventurous crew of the *Dolphin*.

Such was the distracted condition of France at this time, that another expedition was not planned for a period of ten years. In 1534, however, Chabot, admiral of the kingdom, selected JAMES CARTIER, a seaman of St. Malo, in Brittany, to make a new voyage to America. Two ships were fitted out for the enterprise, and after no more than twenty days of sailing under cloudless skies anchored on the 10th day of May off the coast of Newfoundland. Before the middle of July, Cartier had circumnavigated the island to the northward, crossed the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the south of Anticosti, and entered the Bay of Chaleurs. Not finding, as he had hoped, a passage out of this bay westward, he changed his course to the north again, and ascended the coast as far as Gaspé Bay. Here, upon a point of land, he set up a cross bearing a shield with the lily of France, and proclaimed the French king monarch of the country. Pressing his way still farther northward, and then westward, he entered the St. Lawrence, and ascended the broad estuary until the narrowing banks made him aware that he was in the mouth of a river. Cartier, thinking it impracticable to pass the winter in the New World, now turned his prows toward France, and in thirty days anchored his ships in the harbor of St. Malo.

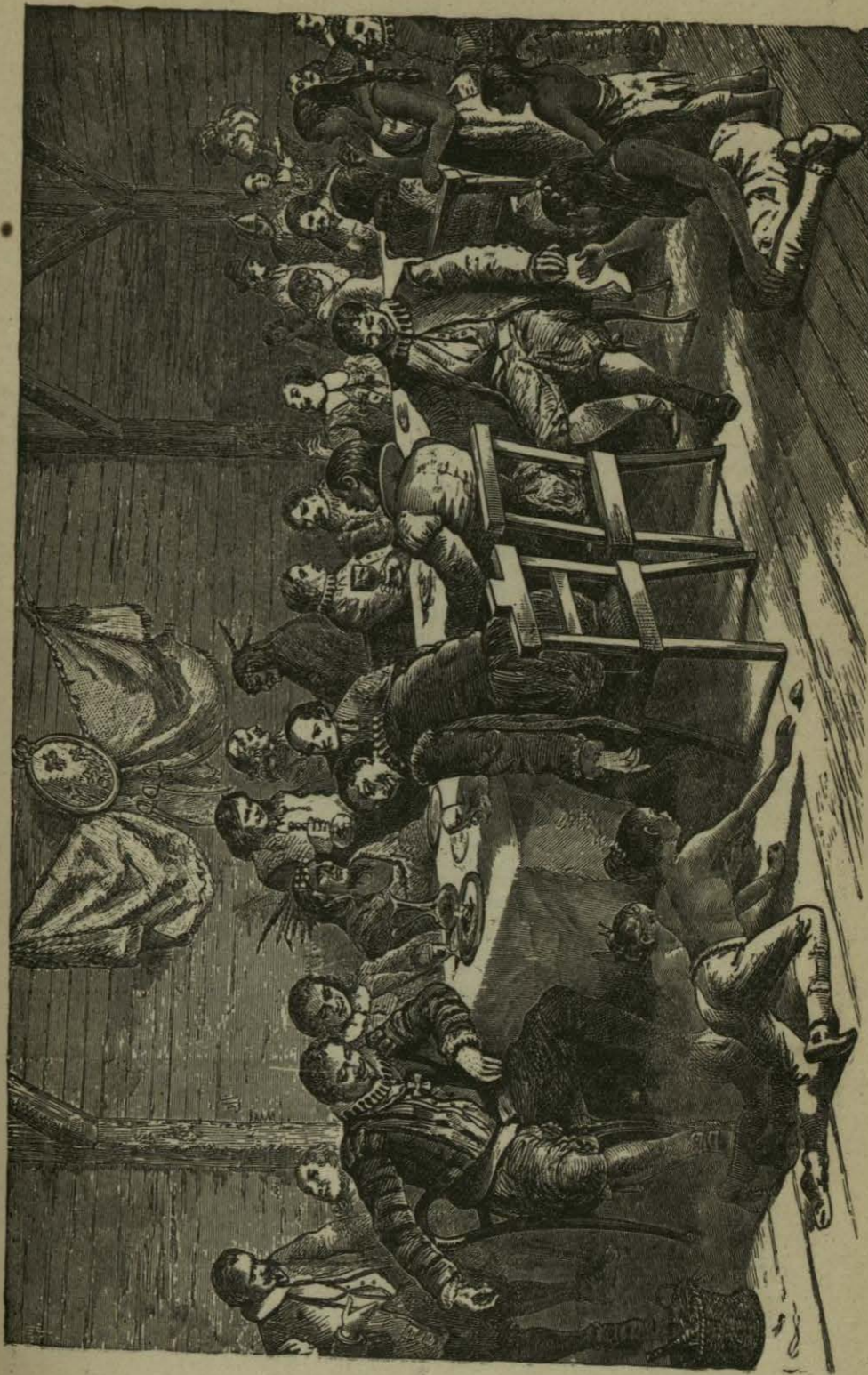
So great was the fame of Cartier's first voyage that another was planned immediately. Three good ships were provided, and quite a number of young noblemen joined the expedition. Colonization rather than discovery was now the inspiring motive. The sails were set by zealous and excited crews, and on the 19th of May the new voyage was begun. This time there was stormy weather, yet the passage to Newfoundland was made by the 10th of August. It was the day of St. Lawrence, and the name of that martyr was accordingly given to the gulf, and afterward to the noble stream which enters it from the west. Sailing northward around Anticosti, the expedition proceeded up the river to the island of Orleans, where the ships were moored in a place of safety. Two Indians whom Cartier had taken with him to France in the previous year now gave information that higher up the river there was an important

town on the island of Hochelaga. Proceeding thither in his boats, the French captain found it as the Indians had said. A beautiful village lay there at the foot of a high hill in the middle of the island. Climbing to the top of the hill, Cartier, as suggested by the scene around him, named the island and town Mont-Real. The country was declared to belong by right of discovery to the king of France; and then the boats dropped down the river to the ships. During this winter twenty-five of Cartier's men were swept off by the scurvy, a malady hitherto unknown in Europe.

With the opening of spring, preparations were made to return to France. The terrible winter had proved too much for French enthusiasm. The emblem of Catholicism, bearing the arms of France, was again planted in the soil of the New World, and the homeward voyage began; but before the ships had left their anchorage, the kindly king of the Hurons, who had treated Cartier with so much generosity, was decoyed on board and carried off to die. On the 6th day of July the fleet reached St. Malo in safety; but by the accounts which Cartier published on his return the French were greatly discouraged. Neither silver nor gold had been found on the banks of the St. Lawrence; and what was a new world good for that had not silver and gold?

Francis of La Roque, lord of ROBERVAL, in Picardy, was the next to undertake the colonization of the countries discovered by the French. This nobleman, four years after Cartier's return from his second voyage, was commissioned by the court of France to plant a colony on the St. Lawrence. The titles of viceroy and lieutenant-general of New France were conferred upon him, and much other vainglorious ceremony attended his preparations for departure. The man, however, who was chiefly relied on to give character and direction to the proposed colony was no other than James Cartier. He only seemed competent to conduct the enterprise with any promise of success. His name was accordingly added to the list, and he was honored with the office of chief pilot and captain-general of the expedition.

The next thing to be done was to find material for the colony. This was a difficult task. The French peasants and mechanics were not eager to embark for a country which promised nothing better than savages and snow. Cartier's honest narrative about the resources of New France had left no room for further dreaming. So the work of enlisting volunteers went on slowly, until the government adopted the plan of opening the prisons of the kingdom and giving freedom to whoever would join the expedition. There was a rush of robbers, swindlers and murderers, and the lists were immediately filled. Only counterfeiters and traitors were denied the privilege of gaining their liberty in the New World.



DINING-HALL OF THE FRENCH COLONISTS AT PORT ROYAL.

In the latter part of May, 1541, five ships, under the immediate command of Cartier, left France, and soon reached the St. Lawrence. The expedition proceeded up the river to the present site of Quebec, where a fort was erected and named Charlesbourg. Here the colonists passed the winter. Cartier, offended because of the subordinate position which he held, was sullen and gloomy, and made no effort to prosecute discoveries which could benefit no one but the ambitious Roberval. The two leaders never acted in concert; and when La Roque, in June of the following year, arrived with immigrants and supplies, Cartier secretly sailed away with his part of the squadron, and returned to Europe. Roberval was left in New France with three shiploads of criminals who could only be restrained by whipping and hanging. During the autumn some feeble efforts were made to discover a northern passage; the winter was long and severe, and spring was welcomed by the colonists chiefly for the opportunity which it gave them of returning to France. The enterprise undertaken with so much pomp had resulted in nothing. In the year 1549 Roberval, with a large company of emigrants, sailed on a second voyage, but the fleet was never heard of afterward.

A period of fifty years now elapsed before the French authorities again attempted to colonize America. Meanwhile, private enterprise and religious persecution had co-operated in an effort to accomplish in Florida and Carolina what the government had failed to accomplish on the St. Lawrence. About the middle of the sixteenth century Coligni, the Protestant admiral of France, formed the design of establishing in America a refuge for the persecuted Huguenots of his own country. In 1562 this liberal and influential minister obtained from the sovereign, Charles IX., the coveted privilege of planting a colony of Protestants in the New World. JOHN RIBAUT of Dieppe, a brave and experienced sailor, was selected to lead the Huguenots to the land of promise. Sailing in February, the company reached the coast of Florida at a point where three years later St. Augustine was founded. The River St. John's, called by the Spaniards the St. Matthew, was entered by the French and named the River of May. The vessels then continued northward along the coast until they came to the entrance of Port Royal; here it was determined to make the settlement. The colonists were landed on an island, and a stone engraved with the arms of their native land was set up to mark the place. A fort was erected, and in honor of Charles IX. named Carolina—a name which a century afterward was retained by the English and applied to the whole country from the Savannah River to the southern boundary of Virginia. In this fort Ribault left twenty-six men to keep possession, and then sailed back to France for additional

emigrants and stores. But civil war was now raging in the kingdom, and it was quite impossible to procure either supplies or colonists. No reinforcements were sent to Carolina, and in the following spring the men in the fort, discouraged with long waiting, grew mutinous, and killed their leader for attempting to control them. Then they constructed a rude brig and put to sea. After they had been driven about by the winds for a long time, they were picked up half starved by an English ship and carried to the coast of France.

Coligni did not yet despair of success in what he had undertaken. Two years after the first attempt another colony was planned, and LAUDONNIERE chosen leader. The character, however, of this second Protestant company was very bad. Many of them were abandoned men, of little industry and no prudence. The harbor of Port Royal was now shunned by the Huguenots, and a point on the River St. John's about fifteen miles west of where St. Augustine now stands was selected for the settlement. A fort was built here, and things were going well until a part of the colonists, under the pretext of escaping from famine, contrived to get away with two of the ships. Instead of returning to France, as they had promised, they began to practice piracy in the adjacent seas, until they were caught, brought back and justly hanged. The rest of the settlers, improvident and dissatisfied, were on the eve of breaking up the colony, when Ribault arrived with supplies of every sort, and restored order and content. It was at this time that the Spaniard Melendez, as already narrated, discovered the whereabouts of the Huguenots, and murdered the entire company.

It remained for DOMINIC DE GOURGES, a soldier of Gascony, to visit the Spaniards of St. Augustine with signal vengeance. This man fitted out three ships, mostly with his own means, and with only fifty daring seamen on board arrived in mid-winter on the coast of Florida. With this handful of soldiers he surprised successively three Spanish forts on the St. John's, and made prisoners of the inmates. Then, when he was unable to hold his position any longer, he hanged his leading captives to the branches of the trees, and put up this inscription to explain what he had done: "Not Spaniards, but murderers."

In the year 1598 the attention of the government of France was once more directed to the claims which French discovery had established in America. The MARQUIS OF LA ROCHE, a nobleman of influence and distinction, now obtained a commission authorizing him to found an empire in the New World. The prisons of France were again opened to furnish the emigrants, and the colony was soon made up. Crossing the Atlantic by the usual route, the vessels reached the coast of Nova Scotia, and

anchored at Sable Island. A more dismal place could not have been found between Labrador and Mexico; yet here, on this desolate island, La Roche left forty men to form a settlement, while he himself, under the pretext of procuring more men and supplies, returned to France. Shortly after his arrival in that country he died; and for seven dreary years the new French empire, composed of forty criminals, languished on Sable Island. Then they were mercifully picked up by some passing ships and carried back to France. Their punishment had been enough, and they were never remanded to prison.

But the time had now come when a colony of Frenchmen should actually be established in America. In the year 1603 the sovereignty of the country from the latitude of Philadelphia to one degree north of Montreal was granted to DE MONTS. The items of chief importance in the patent which he received from the king were a monopoly of the fur-trade of the new country and religious freedom for Huguenot immigrants. De Monts, with two shiploads of colonists, left France early in March of 1604, and after a pleasant voyage reached the Bay of Fundy. The summer was spent in making explorations and in trafficking with the natives. De Monts seems to have been uncertain as to where he should plant his colony; but while in this frame of mind, Poutrincourt, the captain of one of the ships, being greatly pleased with a harbor which he had discovered on the north-west coast of Nova Scotia, asked and obtained a grant of the same, together with some beautiful lands adjacent, and he and a part of the crew went on shore. De Monts, with the rest of the colony, crossed to the west side of the bay, and began to build a fort on an island at the mouth of the St. Croix River. But in the following spring they abandoned this place, and returned to the harbor which had been granted to Poutrincourt. Here, on the 14th day of November, 1605, the foundations of the first permanent French settlement in America were laid. The name of Port Royal was given to the harbor and the fort, and the whole country, including Nova Scotia, the surrounding islands and the main land as far south as the St. Croix River, was called ACADIA.

Two years before the settlement was made at Port Royal, SAMUEL CHAMPLAIN, one of the most eminent and soldierly men of his times, was commissioned by a company of Rouen merchants to explore the country of the St. Lawrence and establish a trading-post. The traders saw that a traffic in the furs which those regions so abundantly supplied was a surer road to riches than rambling about in search of gold and diamonds. Under this commission, Champlain crossed the ocean, entered the gulf, sailed up the river, and with remarkable prudence and good judgment selected the spot on which Quebec now stands as the site for a fort. In the

autumn of 1603, he returned to France, and published an interesting and faithful account of his expedition.

In the year 1608, Champlain again visited America, and on the 3d of July in that year the foundations of Quebec were laid. In the following year he and two other Frenchmen joined a company of Huron and Algonquin Indians who were at war with the Iroquois of New York. While marching with this party of warriors, he ascended the Sorel River until he came to the long, narrow lake which he was the first white man to look upon, and which has ever since borne the name of its discoverer.

Champlain was a religious enthusiast, and on that account the development of his colony was for some time hindered. In 1612 the Protestant party came into power in France, and the great Condé, the protector of the Protestants, became viceroy of the French empire in America. Now, for the third time, Champlain came to New France, and the success of the colony at Quebec was fully assured. Franciscan monks came over and began to preach among the Indians. These friars and the Protestants quarreled a good deal, and the settlement was much disturbed. A second time Champlain went with a war-party against the Iroquois. His company was defeated, he himself wounded and obliged to remain all winter among the Hurons; but in the summer of 1617 he returned to the colony, in 1620 began to build, and four years afterward completed, the strong fortress of St. Louis. When the heavy bastions of this castle appeared on the high cliff above the town and river, the permanence of the French settlements in the valley of the St. Lawrence was no longer doubtful. To Samuel Champlain, more than to any other man—more than to the French government itself—the success of the North American colonies of France must be attributed.

CHAPTER VI.

ENGLISH DISCOVERIES AND SETTLEMENTS.

NO day in the early history of the New World was more important than the 5th of May, 1496. On that day Henry VII., king of England, signed the commission of JOHN CABOT of Venice to make discoveries and explorations in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, to carry the English flag, and to take possession of all islands and continents which he might discover. Cabot was a brave, adventurous man who had been a

sailor from his boyhood, and was now a wealthy merchant of Bristol. The autumn and winter were spent in preparations for the voyage; five substantial ships were fitted, crews were enlisted, and everything made ready for the opening of the spring. In April the fleet left Bristol; and on the morning of the 24th of June, at a point about the middle of the eastern coast of Labrador, the gloomy shore was seen. This was the real discovery of the American continent. Fourteen months elapsed before Columbus reached the coast of Guiana, and more than two years before Ojeda and Vespucci came in sight of the main land of South America.

Cabot explored the shore-line of the country which he had discovered for several hundred miles. He supposed that the land was a part of the dominions of the Cham of Tartary; but finding no inhabitants, he went on shore, according to the terms of his commission, planted the flag of England, and took possession in the name of the English king. No man forgets his native land; by the side of the flag of his adopted country Cabot set up the banner of the *republic* of Venice—auspicious emblem of another flag which should one day float from sea to sea.

As soon as he had satisfied himself of the extent and character of the country which he had discovered, Cabot sailed for England. On the homeward voyage he twice saw on the right hand the coast of Newfoundland, but did not stop for further discovery. After an absence of but little more than three months, he reached Bristol, and was greeted with great enthusiasm. The town had holiday, the people were wild about the discoveries of their favorite admiral, and the whole kingdom took up the note of rejoicing. The Crown gave him money and encouragement, new crews were enlisted, new ships fitted out, and a new commission more liberal in its provisions than the first was signed in February of 1498. Strange as it may seem, after the date of this second patent the very name of John Cabot disappears from the annals of the times. Where the remainder of his life was passed and the circumstances of his death are involved in complete mystery.

But Sebastian, second son of John Cabot, inherited his father's plans and reputation, and to his father's genius added a greater genius of his own. He had already been to the New World on that first famous voyage, and now, when the opportunity offered to conduct a voyage of his own, he threw himself into the enterprise with all the fervor of youth. It is probable that the very fleet which had been equipped for his father was entrusted to Sebastian. At any rate, the latter found himself, in the spring of 1498, in command of a squadron of well-manned vessels and on his way to the new continent. The particular object had in view was