The Dawn of Canadian History

by Stephen Leacock

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CHRONICLES OF CANADA

Edited by George M. Wrong and H. H. Langton

In thirty-two volumes

Part I

The First European Visitors

THE DAWN OF CANADIAN HISTORY

A Chronicle of Aboriginal Canada

By

STEPHEN LEACOCK

TORONTO, 1915

CONTENTS

I BEFORE THE DAWN II MAN IN AMERICA III THE ABORIGINES OF CANADA IV THE LEGEND OF THE NORSEMEN V THE BRISTOL VOYAGES VI FORERUNNERS OF JACQUES CARTIER BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

CHAPTER I

BEFORE THE DAWN

We always speak of Canada as a new country. In one sense, of course, this is true.

The settlement of Europeans on Canadian soil dates back only three hundred years. Civilization in Canada is but a thing of yesterday, and its written history, when placed beside the long millenniums of the recorded annals of European and Eastern peoples, seems but a little span.

But there is another sense in which the Dominion of Canada, or at least part of it, is perhaps the oldest country in the world. According to the Nebular Theory the whole of our planet was once a fiery molten mass gradually cooling and hardening itself into the globe we know. On its surface moved and swayed a liquid sea glowing with such a terrific heat that we can form no real idea of its intensity. As the mass cooled, vast layers of vapour, great beds of cloud, miles and miles in thickness, were formed and hung over the face of the globe, obscuring from its darkened surface the piercing beams of the sun. Slowly the earth cooled, until great masses of solid matter, rock as we call it, still penetrated with intense heat, rose to the surface of the boiling sea. Forces of inconceivable magnitude moved through the mass. The outer surface of the globe as it cooled ripped and shrivelled like a withering orange. Great ridges, the mountain chains of to-day, were furrowed on its skin. Here in the darkness of the prehistoric night there arose as the oldest part of the surface of the earth the great rock bed that lies in a huge crescent round the shores of Hudson Bay, from Labrador to the unknown wilderness of the barren lands of the Coppermine basin touching the Arctic sea. The wanderer who stands to-day in the desolate country of James Bay or Ungava is among the oldest monuments of the world. The rugged rock which here and there breaks through the thin soil of the infertile north has lain on the spot from the very dawn of time. Millions of years have probably elapsed since the cooling of the outer crust of the globe produced the solid basis of our continents.

The ancient formation which thus marks the beginnings of the solid surface of the globe is commonly called by geologists the Archaean rock, and the myriads of uncounted years during which it slowly took shape are called the Archaean age. But

the word 'Archaean' itself tells us nothing, being merely a Greek term meaning 'very old.' This Archaean or original rock must necessarily have extended all over the surface of our sphere as it cooled from its molten form and contracted into the earth on which we live. But in most places this rock lies deep under the waters of the oceans, or buried below the heaped up strata of the formations which the hand of time piled thickly upon it. Only here and there can it still be seen as surface rock or as rock that lies but a little distance below the soil. In Canada, more than anywhere else in the world, is this Archaean formation seen. On a geological map it is marked as extending all round the basin of Hudson Bay, from Labrador to the shores of the Arctic. It covers the whole of the country which we call New Ontario, and also the upper part of the province of Quebec. Outside of this territory there was at the dawn of time no other 'land' where North America now is, except a long island of rock that marks the backbone of what are now the Selkirk Mountains and a long ridge that is now the mountain chain of the Alleghanies beside the Atlantic slope.

Books on geology trace out for us the long successive periods during which the earth's surface was formed. Even in the Archaean age something in the form of life may have appeared. Perhaps vast masses of dank seaweed germinated as the earliest of plants in the steaming oceans. The water warred against the land, tearing and breaking at its rock formation and distributing it in new strata, each buried beneath the next and holding fast within it the fossilized remains that form the record of its history. Huge fern plants spread their giant fronds in the dank sunless atmospheres, to be buried later in vast beds of decaying vegetation that form the coal-fields of to-day.

Animal life began first, like the plants, in the bosom of the ocean. From the slimy depths of the water life crawled hideous to the land. Great reptiles dragged their sluggish length through the tangled vegetation of the jungle of giant ferns.

Through countless thousands of years, perhaps, this gradual process went on.

Nature, shifting its huge scenery, depressed the ocean beds and piled up the dry land of the continents. In place of the vast 'Continental Sea,' which once filled the interior of North America, there arose the great plateau or elevated plain that now runs from the Mackenzie basin to the Gulf of Mexico. Instead of the rushing waters of the inland sea, these waters have narrowed into great rivers—the Mackenzie, the Saskatchewan, the Mississippi—that swept the face of the plateau and wore down the surface of the rock and mountain slopes to spread their powdered fragments on the broad level soil of the prairies of the west. With each stage in the evolution of the land the forms of life appear to have reached a higher development. In place of the seaweed and the giant ferns of the dawn of time there arose the maples, the beeches, and other waving trees that we now see in the Canadian woods. The huge reptiles in the jungle of the Carboniferous era passed out of existence. In place of them came the birds, the mammals,—the varied types of animal life which we now know. Last in the scale of time and highest in point of evolution, there appeared man.

We must not speak of the continents as having been made once and for all in their present form. No doubt in the countless centuries of geological evolution various parts of the earth were alternately raised and depressed. Great forests grew, and by some convulsion were buried beneath the ocean, covered deep as they lay there with a sediment of earth and rock, and at length raised again as the waters retreated. The coal-beds of Cape Breton are the remains of a forest buried beneath the sea. Below the soil of Alberta is a vast jungle of vegetation, a dense mass of giant fern trees. The Great Lakes were once part of a much vaster body of water, far greater in extent than they now are. The ancient shore-line of Lake Superior may be traced five hundred feet above its present level.

In that early period the continents and islands which we now see wholly separated were joined together at various points. The British islands formed a connected part of Europe. The Thames and the Rhine were one and the same river, flowing towards

the Arctic ocean over a plain that is now the shallow sunken bed of the North Sea. It is probable that during the last great age, the Quaternary, as geologists call it, the upheaval of what is now the region of Siberia and Alaska, made a continuous chain of land from Asia to America. As the land was depressed again it left behind it the islands in the Bering Sea, like stepping-stones from shore to shore. In the same way, there was perhaps a solid causeway of land from Canada to Europe reaching out across the Northern Atlantic. Baffin Island and other islands of the Canadian North Sea, the great sub-continent of Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and the British Isles, all formed part of this continuous chain.

As the last of the great changes, there came the Ice Age, which profoundly affected the climate and soil of Canada, and, when the ice retreated, left its surface much as we see it now. During this period the whole of Canada from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains lay buried under a vast sheet of ice. Heaped up in immense masses over the frozen surface of the Hudson Bay country, the ice, from its own dead weight, slid sidewise to the south. As it went it ground down the surface of the land into deep furrows and channels; it cut into the solid rock like a moving plough, and carried with it enormous masses of loose stone and boulders which it threw broadcast over the face of the country. These stones and boulders were thus carried forty and fifty, and in some cases many hundred miles before they were finally loosed and dropped from the sheet of moving ice. In Ontario and Quebec and New England great stones of the glacial drift are found which weigh from one thousand to seven thousand tons. They are deposited in some cases on what is now the summit of hills and mountains, showing how deep the sheet of ice must have been that could thus cover the entire surface of the country, burying alike the valleys and the hills. The mass of ice that moved slowly, century by century, across the face of Southern Canada to New England is estimated to have been in places a mile thick. The limit to which it was carried went far south of the boundaries of Canada. The path of the glacial drift is traced by geologists as far down the Atlantic coast as the present site

of New York, and in the central plain of the continent it extended to what is now the state of Missouri.

Facts seem to support the theory that before the Great Ice Age the climate of the northern part of Canada was very different from what it is now. It is very probable that a warm if not a torrid climate extended for hundreds of miles northward of the now habitable limits of the Dominion. The frozen islands of the Arctic seas were once the seat of luxurious vegetation and teemed with life. On Bathurst Island, which lies in the latitude of 76 degrees, and is thus six hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle, there have been found the bones of huge lizards that could only have lived in the jungles of an almost tropical climate.

We cannot tell with any certainty just how and why these great changes came about. But geologists have connected them with the alternating rise and fall of the surface of the northern continent and its altitude at various times above the level of the sea. Thus it seems probable that the glacial period with the ice sheet of which we have spoken was brought about by a great elevation of the land, accompanied by a change to intense cold. This led to the formation of enormous masses of ice heaped up so high that they presently collapsed and moved of their own weight from the elevated land of the north where they had been formed. Later on, the northern continent subsided again and the ice sheet disappeared, but left behind it an entirely different level and a different climate from those of the earlier ages. The evidence of the later movements of the land surface, and its rise and fall after the close of the glacial epoch, may still easily be traced. At a certain time after the Ice Age, the surface sank so low that land which has since been lifted up again to a considerable height was once the beach of the ancient ocean. These beaches are readily distinguished by the great quantities of sea shells that lie about, often far distant from the present sea. Thus at Nachvak in Labrador there is a beach fifteen hundred feet above the ocean. Probably in this period after the Ice Age the shores of Eastern Canada had sunk so low that the St Lawrence was not a river at all, but a great gulf or arm of the sea. The

ancient shore can still be traced beside the mountain at Montreal and on the hillsides round Lake Ontario. Later on again the land rose, the ocean retreated, and the rushing waters from the shrunken lakes made their own path to the sea. In their foaming course to the lower level they tore out the great gorge of Niagara, and tossed and buffeted themselves over the unyielding ledges of Lachine.

Mighty forces such as these made and fashioned the continent on which we live.

CHAPTER II

MAN IN AMERICA

It was necessary to form some idea, if only in outline, of the magnitude and extent of the great geological changes of which we have just spoken, in order to judge properly the question of the antiquity and origin of man in America.

When the Europeans came to this continent at the end of the fifteenth century they found it already inhabited by races of men very different from themselves. These people, whom they took to calling 'Indians,' were spread out, though very thinly, from one end of the continent to the other. Who were these nations, and how was their presence to be accounted for?

To the first discoverers of America, or rather to the discoverers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Columbus and his successors), the origin of the Indians presented no difficulty. To them America was supposed to be simply an outlying part of Eastern Asia, which had been known by repute and by tradition for centuries past. Finding, therefore, the tropical islands of the Caribbean sea with a climate and plants and animals such as they imagined those of Asia and the Indian ocean to be, and inhabited by men of dusky colour and strange speech, they naturally thought the place to be part of Asia, or the Indies. The name 'Indians,' given to the aborigines of North America, records for us this historical misunderstanding.

But a new view became necessary after Balboa had crossed the isthmus of Panama

and looked out upon the endless waters of the Pacific, and after Magellan and his Spanish comrades had sailed round the foot of the continent, and then pressed on across the Pacific to the real Indies. It was now clear that America was a different region from Asia. Even then the old error died hard. Long after the Europeans realized that, at the south, America and Asia were separated by a great sea, they imagined that these continents were joined together at the north. The European ideas of distance and of the form of the globe were still confused and inexact. A party of early explorers in Virginia carried a letter of introduction with them from the King of England to the Khan of Tartary: they expected to find him at the head waters of the Chickahominy. Jacques Cartier, nearly half a century after Columbus, was expecting that the Gulf of St Lawrence would open out into a passage leading to China. But after the discovery of the North Pacific ocean and Bering Strait the idea that America was part of Asia, that the natives were 'Indians' in the old sense, was seen to be absurd. It was clear that America was, in a large sense, an island, an island cut off from every other continent. It then became necessary to find some explanation for the seemingly isolated position of a portion of mankind separated from their fellows by boundless oceans.

The earlier theories were certainly naive enough. Since no known human agency could have transported the Indians across the Atlantic or the Pacific, their presence in America was accounted for by certain of the old writers as a particular work of the devil. Thus Cotton Mather, the famous Puritan clergyman of early New England, maintained in all seriousness that the devil had inveigled the Indians to America to get them 'beyond the tinkle of the gospel bells.' Others thought that they were a washed-up remnant of the great flood. Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, wrote: 'From Adam and Noah that they spring, it is granted on all hands.' Even more fantastic views were advanced. As late as in 1828 a London clergyman wrote a book which he called 'A View of the American Indians,' which was intended to 'show them to be the descendants of the ten tribes of Israel.'

Even when such ideas as these were set aside, historians endeavoured to find evidence, or at least probability, of a migration of the Indians from the known continents across one or the other of the oceans. It must be admitted that, even if we supposed the form and extent of the continents to have been always the same as they are now, such a migration would have been entirely possible. It is quite likely that under the influence of exceptional weather—winds blowing week after week from the same point of the compass—even a primitive craft of prehistoric times might have been driven across the Atlantic or the Pacific, and might have landed its occupants still alive and well on the shores of America. To prove this we need only remember that history records many such voyages. It has often happened that Japanese junks have been blown clear across the Pacific. In 1833 a ship of this sort was driven in a great storm from Japan to the shores of the Queen Charlotte Islands off the coast of British Columbia. In the same way a fishing smack from Formosa, which lies off the east coast of China, was once carried in safety across the ocean to the Sandwich Islands. Similar long voyages have been made by the natives of the South Seas against their will, under the influence of strong and continuous winds, and in craft no better than their open canoes. Captain Beechey of the Royal Navy relates that in one of his voyages in the Pacific he picked up a canoe filled with natives from Tahiti who had been driven by a gale of westerly wind six hundred miles from their own island. It has happened, too, from time to time, since the discovery of America, that ships have been forcibly carried all the way across the Atlantic. A glance at the map of the world shows us that the eastern coast of Brazil juts out into the South Atlantic so far that it is only fifteen hundred miles distant from the similar projection of Africa towards the west. The direction of the trade winds in the South Atlantic is such that it has often been the practice of sailing vessels bound from England to South Africa to run clear across the ocean on a long stretch till within sight of the coast of Brazil before turning towards the Cape of Good Hope. All, however, that we can deduce from accidental voyages, like that of

the Spaniard, Alvarez de Cabral, across the ocean is that even if there had been no other way for mankind to reach America they could have landed there by ship from the Old World. In such a case, of course, the coming of man to the American continent would have been an extremely recent event in the long history of the world. It could not have occurred until mankind had progressed far enough to make vessels, or at least boats of a simple kind.

But there is evidence that man had appeared on the earth long before the shaping of the continents had taken place. Both in Europe and America the buried traces of primitive man are vast in antiquity, and carry us much further back in time than the final changes of earth and ocean which made the continents as they are; and, when we remember this, it is easy to see how mankind could have passed from Asia or Europe to America. The connection of the land surface of the globe was different in early times from what it is to-day. Even still, Siberia and Alaska are separated only by the narrow Bering Strait. From the shore of Asia the continent of North America is plainly visible; the islands which lie in and below the strait still look like stepping-stones from continent to continent. And, apart from this, it may well have been that farther south, where now is the Pacific ocean, there was formerly direct land connection between Southern Asia and South America. The continuous chain of islands that runs from the New Hebrides across the South Pacific to within two thousand four hundred miles of the coast of Chile is perhaps the remains of a sunken continent. In the most easterly of these, Easter Island, have been found ruined temples and remains of great earthworks on a scale so vast that to believe them the work of a small community of islanders is difficult. The fact that they bear some resemblance to the buildings and works of the ancient inhabitants of Chile and Peru has suggested that perhaps South America was once merely a part of a great Pacific continent. Or again, turning to the other side of the continent, it may be argued with some show of evidence that America and Africa were once connected by land, and that a sunken continent is to be traced between Brazil and the Guinea coast.

Nevertheless, it appears to be impossible to say whether or not an early branch of the human race ever 'migrated' to America. Conceivably the race may have originated there. Some authorities suppose that the evolution of mankind occurred at the same time and in the same fashion in two or more distinct quarters of the globe. Others again think that mankind evolved and spread over the surface of the world just as did the various kinds of plants and animals. Of course, the higher endowment of men enabled them to move with greater ease from place to place than could beings of lesser faculties. Most writers of to-day, however, consider this unlikely, and think it more probable that man originated first in some one region, and spread from it throughout the earth. But where this region was, they cannot tell. We always think of the races of Europe as having come westward from some original home in Asia. This is, of course, perfectly true, since nearly all the peoples of Europe can be traced by descent from the original stock of the Aryan family, which certainly made such a migration. But we know also that races of men were dwelling in Europe ages before the Aryan migration. What particular part of the globe was the first home of mankind is a question on which we can only speculate.

Of one thing we may be certain. If there was a migration, there must have been long ages of separation between mankind in America and mankind in the Old World; otherwise we should still find some trace of kinship in language which would join the natives of America to the great racial families of Europe, Asia, and Africa. But not the slightest vestige of such kinship has yet been found. Everybody knows in a general way how the prehistoric relationships among the peoples of Europe and Asia are still to be seen in the languages of to-day. The French and Italian languages are so alike that, if we did not know it already, we could easily guess for them a common origin. We speak of these languages, along with others, as Romance languages, to show that they are derived from Latin, in contrast with the closely related tongues of the English, Dutch, and German peoples, which came from another common stock, the Teutonic. But even the Teutonic and the Romance

languages are not entirely different. The similarity in both groups of old root words, like the numbers from one to ten, point again to a common origin still more remote. In this way we may trace a whole family of languages, and with it a kinship of descent, from Hindustan to Ireland. Similarly, another great group of tongues—Arabic, Hebrew, etc.—shows a branch of the human family spread out from Palestine and Egypt to Morocco.

Now when we come to inquire into the languages of the American Indians for evidence of their relationship to other peoples we are struck with this fact: we cannot connect the languages of America with those of any other part of the world. This is a very notable circumstance. The languages of Europe and Asia are, as it were, dovetailed together, and run far and wide into Africa. From Asia eastward, through the Malay tongues, a connection may be traced even with the speech of the Maori of New Zealand, and with that of the remotest islanders of the Pacific. But similar attempts to connect American languages with the outside world break down. There are found in North America, from the Arctic to Mexico, some fifty-five groups of languages still existing or recently extinct. Throughout these we may trace the same affinities and relationships that run through the languages of Europe and Asia. We can also easily connect the speech of the natives of North America with that of natives of Central and of South America. Even if we had not the similarities of physical appearance, of tribal customs, and of general manners to argue from, we should be able to say with certainty that the various families of American Indians all belonged to one race. The Eskimos of Northern Canada are not Indians, and are perhaps an exception; it is possible that a connection may be traced between them and the prehistoric cave-men of Northern Europe. But the Indians belong to one great race, and show no connection in language or customs with the outside world. They belong to the American continent, it has been said, as strictly as its opossums and its armadillos, its maize and its golden rod, or any other of its aboriginal animals and plants.

But, here again, we must not conclude too much from the fact that the languages of America have no relation to those of Europe and Asia. This does not show that men originated separately on this continent. For even in Europe and Asia, where no one supposes that different races sprung from wholly separate beginnings, we find languages isolated in the same way. The speech of the Basques in the Pyrenees has nothing in common with the European families of languages.

We may, however, regard the natives of America as an aboriginal race, if any portion of mankind can be viewed as such. So far as we know, they are not an offshoot, or a migration, from any people of what is called the Old World, although they are, like the people of the other continents, the descendants of a primitive human stock.

We may turn to geology to find how long mankind has lived on this continent. In a number of places in North and South America are found traces of human beings and their work so old that in comparison the beginning of the world's written history becomes a thing of yesterday. Perhaps there were men in Canada long before the shores of its lakes had assumed their present form; long before nature had begun to hollow out the great gorge of the Niagara river or to lay down the outline of the present Lake Ontario. Let us look at some of the notable evidence in respect to the age of man in America. In Nicaragua, in Central America, the imprints of human feet have been found, deeply buried over twenty feet below the present surface of the soil, under repeated deposits of volcanic rock. These impressions must have been made in soft muddy soil which was then covered by some geological convulsion occurring long ages ago. Even more striking discoveries have been made along the Pacific coast of South America. Near the mouth of the Esmeraldas river in Ecuador, over a stretch of some sixty miles, the surface soil of the coast covers a bed of marine clay. This clay is about eight feet thick. Underneath it is a stratum of sand and loam such as might once have itself been surface soil. In this lower bed there are found rude implements of stone, ornaments made of gold, and bits of broken pottery.

Again, if we turn to the northern part of the continent we find remains of the same kind, chipped implements of stone and broken fragments of quartz buried in the drift of the Mississippi and Missouri valleys. These have sometimes been found lying beside or under the bones of elephants and animals unknown in North America since the period of the Great Ice. Not many years ago, some men engaged in digging a well on a hillside that was once part of the beach of Lake Ontario, came across the remains of a primitive hearth buried under the accumulated soil. From its situation we can only conclude that the men who set together the stones of the hearth, and lighted on it their fires, did so when the vast wall of the northern glacier was only beginning to retreat, and long before the gorge of Niagara had begun to be furrowed out of the rock.

Many things point to the conclusion that there were men in North and South America during the remote changes of the Great Ice Age. But how far the antiquity of man on this continent reaches back into the preceding ages we cannot say.

CHAPTER III

THE ABORIGINES OF CANADA

Of the uncounted centuries of the history of the red man in America before the coming of the Europeans we know very little indeed. Very few of the tribes possessed even a primitive art of writing. It is true that the Aztecs of Mexico, and the ancient Toltecs who preceded them, understood how to write in pictures, and that, by this means, they preserved some record of their rulers and of the great events of their past. The same is true of the Mayas of Central America, whose ruined temples are still to be traced in the tangled forests of Yucatan and Guatemala. The ancient Peruvians also had a system, not exactly of writing, but of record by means of QUIPUS or twisted woollen cords of different colours: it is through such records that we have some knowledge of Peruvian history during about a hundred years

before the coming of the Spaniards, and some traditions reaching still further back. But nowhere was the art of writing sufficiently developed in America to give us a real history of the thoughts and deeds of its people before the arrival of Columbus.

This is especially true of those families of the great red race which inhabited what is now Canada. They spent a primitive existence, living thinly scattered along the sea-coast, and in the forests and open glades of the district of the Great Lakes, or wandering over the prairies of the west. In hardly any case had they any settled abode or fixed dwelling-places. The Iroquois and some Algonquins built Long Houses of wood and made stockade forts of heavy timber. But not even these tribes, who represented the furthest advance towards civilization among the savages of North America, made settlements in the real sense. They knew nothing of the use of the metals. Such poor weapons and tools as they had were made of stone, of wood, and of bone. It is true that ages ago prehistoric men had dug out copper from the mines that lie beside Lake Superior, for the traces of their operations there are still found. But the art of working metals probably progressed but a little way and then was lost,—overwhelmed perhaps in some ancient savage conquest. The Indians found by Cartier and Champlain knew nothing of the melting of metals for the manufacture of tools. Nor had they anything but the most elementary form of agriculture. They planted corn in the openings of the forest, but they did not fell trees to make a clearing or plough the ground. The harvest provided by nature and the products of the chase were their sole sources of supply, and in their search for this food so casually offered they moved to and fro in the depths of the forest or roved endlessly upon the plains. One great advance, and only one, they had been led to make. The waterways of North America are nature's highway through the forest. The bark canoe in which the Indians floated over the surface of the Canadian lakes and rivers is a marvel of construction and wonderfully adapted to its purpose: This was their great invention. In nearly all other respects the Indians of Canada had not emerged even from savagery to that stage half way to civilization which is called

barbarism.

These Canadian aborigines seem to have been few in number. It is probable that, when the continent was discovered, Canada, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, contained about 220,000 natives—about half as many people as are now found in Toronto. They were divided into tribes or clans, among which we may distinguish certain family groups spread out over great areas.

Most northerly of all was the great tribe of the Eskimos, who were found all the way from Greenland to Northern Siberia. The name Eskimo was not given by these people to themselves. It was used by the Abnaki Indians in describing to the whites the dwellers of the far north, and it means 'the people who eat raw meat.' The Eskimo called and still call themselves the Innuit, which means 'the people.'

The exact relation of the Eskimo to the other races of the continent is hard to define. From the fact that the race was found on both sides of the Bering Sea, and that its members have dark hair and dark eyes, it was often argued that they were akin to the Mongolians of China. This theory, however, is now abandoned. The resemblance in height and colour is only superficial, and a more careful view of the physical make-up of the Eskimo shows him to resemble the other races of America far more closely than he resembles those of Asia. A distinguished American historian, John Fiske, believed that the Eskimos are the last remnants of the ancient cave-men who in the Stone Age inhabited all the northern parts of Europe. Fiske's theory is that at this remote period continuous land stretched by way of Iceland and Greenland from Europe to America, and that by this means the race of cave-men was able to extend itself all the way from Norway and Sweden to the northern coasts of America. In support of this view he points to the strangely ingenious and artistic drawings of the Eskimos. These drawings are made on ivory and bone, and are so like the ancient bone-pictures found among the relics of the cave-men of Europe that they can scarcely be distinguished.

The theory is only a conjecture. It is certain that at one time the Eskimo race extended much farther south than it did when the white men came to America; in earlier days there were Eskimos far south of Hudson Bay, and perhaps even south of the Great Lakes.

As a result of their situation the Eskimos led a very different life from that of the Indians to the south. They must rely on fishing and hunting for food. In that almost treeless north they had no wood to build boats or houses, and no vegetables or plants to supply them either with food or with the materials of industry. But the very rigour of their surroundings called forth in them a marvellous ingenuity. They made boats of seal skins stretched tight over walrus bones, and clothes of furs and of the skins and feathers of birds. They built winter houses with great blocks of snow put together in the form of a bowl turned upside down. They heated their houses by burning blubber or fat in dish-like lamps chipped out of stones. They had, of course, no written literature. They were, however, not devoid of art. They had legends and folk-songs, handed down from generation to generation with the utmost accuracy. In the long night of the Arctic winter they gathered in their huts to hear strange monotonous singing by their bards: a kind of low chanting, very strange to European ears, and intended to imitate the sounds of nature, the murmur of running waters and the sobbing of the sea. The Eskimos believed in spirits and monsters whom they must appease with gifts and incantations. They thought that after death the soul either goes below the earth to a place always warm and comfortable, or that it is taken up into the cold forbidding brightness of the polar sky. When the aurora borealis, or Northern Lights, streamed across the heavens, the Eskimos thought it the gleam of the souls of the dead visible in their new home.

Farthest east of all the British North American Indians were the Beothuks. Their abode was chiefly Newfoundland, though they wandered also in the neighbourhood of the Strait of Belle Isle and along the north shore of the Gulf of St Lawrence. They were in the lowest stage of human existence and lived entirely by hunting and

fishing. Unlike the Eskimos they had no dogs, and so stern were the conditions of their life that they maintained with difficulty the fight against the rigour of nature. The early explorers found them on the rocky coasts of Belle Isle, wild and half clad. They smeared their bodies with red ochre, bright in colour, and this earned for them the name of Red Indians. From the first, they had no friendly relations with the Europeans who came to their shores, but lived in a state of perpetual war with them. The Newfoundland fishermen and settlers hunted down the Red Indians as if they were wild beasts, and killed them at sight. Now and again, a few members of this unhappy race were carried home to England to be exhibited at country fairs before a crowd of grinning yokels who paid a penny apiece to look at the 'wild men.'

Living on the mainland, next to the red men of Newfoundland lay the great race of the Algonquins, spread over a huge tract of country, from the Atlantic coast to the head of the Great Lakes, and even farther west. The Algonquins were divided into a great many tribes, some of whose names are still familiar among the Indians of to-day. The Micmacs of Nova Scotia, the Malecite of New Brunswick, the Naskapi of Quebec, the Chippewa of Ontario, and the Crees of the prairie, are of this stock. It is even held that the Algonquins are to be considered typical specimens of the American race. They were of fine stature, and in strength and muscular development were quite on a par with the races of the Old World. Their skin was copper-coloured, their lips and noses were thin, and their hair in nearly all cases was straight and black. When the Europeans first saw the Algonquins they had already made some advance towards industrial civilization. They built huts of woven boughs, and for defence sometimes surrounded a group of huts with a palisade of stakes set up on end. They had no agriculture in the true sense, but they cultivated Indian corn and pumpkins in the openings of the forests, and also the tobacco plant, with the virtues of which they were well acquainted. They made for themselves heavy and clumsy pottery and utensils of wood, they wove mats out of rushes for their houses, and they made clothes from the skin of the deer, and head-dresses from

the bright feathers of birds. Of the metals they knew, at the time of the discovery of America, hardly anything. They made some use of copper, which they chipped and hammered into rude tools and weapons. But they knew nothing of melting the metals, and their arrow-heads and spear-points were made, for the most part, not of metals, but of stone. Like other Indians, they showed great ingenuity in fashioning bark canoes of wonderful lightness.

We must remember, however, that with nearly all the aborigines of America, at least north of Mexico, the attempt to utilize the materials and forces supplied by nature had made only slight and painful progress. We are apt to think that it was the mere laziness of the Indians which prevented more rapid advance. It may be that we do not realize their difficulties. When the white men first came these rude peoples were so backward and so little trained in using their faculties that any advance towards art and industry was inevitably slow and difficult. This was also true, no doubt, of the peoples who, long centuries before, had been in the same degree of development in Europe, and had begun the intricate tasks which a growth towards civilization involved. The historian Robertson describes in a vivid passage the backward state of the savage tribes of America. 'The most simple operation,' he says, 'was to them an undertaking of immense difficulty and labour. To fell a tree with no other implements than hatchets of stone was employment for a month. ...Their operations in agriculture were equally slow and defective. In a country covered with woods of the hardest timber, the clearing of a small field destined for culture required the united efforts of a tribe, and was a work of much time and great toil.'

The religion of the Algonquin Indians seems to have been a rude nature worship. The Sun, as the great giver of warmth and light, was the object of their adoration; to a lesser degree, they looked upon fire as a superhuman thing, worthy of worship. The four winds of heaven, bringing storm and rain from the unknown boundaries of the world, were regarded as spirits. Each Indian clan or section of a tribe chose for its special devotion an animal, the name of which became the distinctive symbol of

the clan. This is what is meant by the 'totems' of the different branches of a tribe.

The Algonquins knew nothing of the art of writing, beyond rude pictures scratched or painted on wood. The Algonquin tribes, as we have seen, roamed far to the west. One branch frequented the upper Saskatchewan river. Here the ashes of the prairie fires discoloured their moccasins and turned them black, and, in consequence, they were called the Blackfeet Indians. Even when they moved to other parts of the country, the name was still applied to them.

Occupying the stretch of country to the south of the Algonquins was the famous race known as the Iroquoian Family. We generally read of the Hurons and the Iroquois as separate tribes. They really belonged, however, to one family, though during the period of Canadian history in which they were prominent they had become deadly enemies. When Cartier discovered the St Lawrence and made his way to the island of Montreal, Huron Indians inhabited all that part of the country. When Champlain came, two generations later, they had vanished from that region, but they still occupied a part of Ontario around Lake Simcoe and south and east of Georgian Bay. We always connect the name Iroquois with that part of the stock which included the allied Five Nations—the Mohawks, Onondagas, Senecas, Oneidas, and Cayugas,—and which occupied the country between the Hudson river and Lake Ontario. This proved to be the strongest strategical position in North America. It lies in the gap or break of the Alleghany ridge, the one place south of the St Lawrence where an easy and ready access is afforded from the sea-coast to the interior of the continent. Any one who casts a glance at the map of the present Eastern states will realize this, and will see why it is that New York, at the mouth of the Hudson, has become the greatest city of North America. Now, the same reason which has created New York gave to the position of the Five Nations its great importance in Canadian history. But in reality the racial stock of the Iroquois extended much farther than this, both west and south. It took in the well-known tribe of the Eries, and also the Indians of Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac. It included even the Tuscaroras of the

Roanoke in North Carolina, who afterwards moved north and changed the five nations into six.

The Iroquois were originally natives of the plain, connected very probably with the Dakotas of the west. But they moved eastwards from the Mississippi valley towards Niagara, conquering as they went. No other tribe could compare with them in either bravery or ferocity. They possessed in a high degree both the virtues and the vices of Indian character—the unflinching courage and the diabolical cruelty which have made the Indian an object of mingled admiration and contempt. In bodily strength and physical endurance they were unsurpassed. Even in modern days the enervating influence of civilization has not entirely removed the original vigour of the strain. During the American Civil War of fifty years ago the five companies of Iroquois Indians recruited in Canada and in the state of New York were superior in height and measurement to any other body of five hundred men in the northern armies.

When the Iroquoian Family migrated, the Hurons settled in the western peninsula of Ontario. The name of Lake Huron still recalls their abode. But a part of the race kept moving eastward. Before the coming of the whites, they had fought their way almost to the sea. But they were able to hold their new settlements only by hard fighting. The great stockade which Cartier saw at Hochelaga, with its palisades and fighting platforms, bore witness to the ferocity of the struggle. At that place Cartier and his companions were entertained with gruesome tales of Indian fighting and of wholesale massacres. Seventy years later, in Champlain's time, the Hochelaga stockade had vanished, and the Hurons had been driven back into the interior. But for nearly two centuries after Champlain the Iroquois retained their hold on the territory from Lake Ontario to the Hudson. The conquests and wars of extermination of these savages, and the terror which they inspired, have been summed up by General Francis Walker in the saying: 'They were the scourge of God upon the aborigines of the continent.'

The Iroquois were in some respects superior to most of the Indians of the continent. Though they had a limited agriculture, and though they made hardly any use of metals, they had advanced further in other directions than most savages. They built of logs, houses long enough to be divided into several compartments, with a family in each compartment. By setting a group of houses together, and surrounding them with a palisade of stakes and trees set on end, the settlement was turned into a kind of fort, and could bid defiance to the limited means of attack possessed by their enemies. Inside their houses they kept a good store of corn, pumpkins and dried meat, which belonged not to each man singly but to the whole group in common. This was the type of settlement seen at Quebec and at Hochelaga, and, later on, among the Five Nations. Indeed, the Five Nations gave to themselves the picturesque name of the Long House, for their confederation resembled, as it were, the long wooden houses that held the families together.

All this shows that the superiority of the Iroquois over their enemies lay in organization. In this they were superior even to their kinsmen the Hurons. All Indian tribes kept women in a condition which we should think degrading. The Indian women were drudges; they carried the burdens, and did the rude manual toil of the tribe. Among the Iroquois, however, women were not wholly despised; sometimes, if of forceful character, they had great influence in the councils of the tribe. Among the Hurons, on the other hand, women were treated with contempt or brutal indifference. The Huron woman, worn out with arduous toil, rapidly lost the brightness of her youth. At an age when the women of a higher culture are still at the height of their charm and attractiveness the woman of the Hurons had degenerated into a shrivelled hag, horrible to the eye and often despicable in character. The inborn gentleness of womanhood had been driven from her breast by ill-treatment. Not even the cruelest of the warriors surpassed the unhallowed fiendishness of the withered squaw in preparing the torments of the stake and in shrieking her toothless exultation beside the torture fire.

Where women are on such a footing as this it is always ill with the community at large. The Hurons were among the most despicable of the Indians in their manners. They were hideous gluttons, gorging themselves when occasion offered with the rapacity of vultures. Gambling and theft flourished among them. Except, indeed, for the tradition of courage in fight and of endurance under pain we can find scarcely anything in them to admire.

North and west from the Algonquins and Huron-Iroquois were the family of tribes belonging to the Athapascan stock. The general names of Chipewyan and Tinne are also applied to the same great branch of the Indian race. In a variety of groups and tribes, the Athapascans spread out from the Arctic to Mexico. Their name has since become connected with the geography of Canada alone, but in reality a number of the tribes of the plains, like the well-known Apaches, as well as the Hupas of California and the Navahos, belong to the Athapascans. In Canada, the Athapascans roamed over the country that lay between Hudson Bay and the Rocky Mountains. They were found in the basin of the Mackenzie river towards the Arctic sea, and along the valley of the Fraser to the valley of the Chilcotin. Their language was broken into a great number of dialects which differed so widely that only the kindred groups could understand one another's speech. But the same general resemblance ran through the various branches of the Athapascans. They were a tall, strong race, great in endurance, during their prime, though they had little of the peculiar stamina that makes for long life and vigorous old age. Their descendants of to-day still show the same facial characteristics—the low forehead with prominent ridge bones, and the eyes set somewhat obliquely so as to suggest, though probably without reason, a kinship with Oriental peoples.

The Athapascans stood low in the scale of civilization. Most of them lived in a prairie country where a luxuriant soil, not encumbered with trees, would have responded to the slightest labour. But the Athapascans, in Canada at least, knew nothing of agriculture. With alternations of starvation and rude plenty, they lived

upon the unaided bounty of tribes of the far north, degraded by want and indolence, were often addicted to cannibalism.

The Indians beyond the mountains, between the Rockies and the sea, were for the most part quite distinct from those of the plains. Some tribes of the Athapascans, as we have seen, penetrated into British Columbia, but the greater part of the natives in that region were of wholly different races. Of course, we know hardly anything of these Indians during the first two centuries of European settlement in America. Not until the eighteenth century, when Russian traders began to frequent the Pacific coast and the Spanish and English pushed their voyages into the North Pacific,—the Tlingit of the far north, the Salish, Tsimshian, Haida, Kwakiutl-Nootka and Kutenai. It is thought, however, that nearly all the Pacific Indians belong to one kindred stock. There are, it is true, many distinct languages between California and Alaska, but the physical appearance and characteristics of the natives show a similarity throughout.

The total number of the original Indian population of the continent can be a matter of conjecture only. There is every reason, however, to think that it was far less than the absurdly exaggerated figures given by early European writers. Whenever the first explorers found a considerable body of savages they concluded that the people they saw were only a fraction of some large nation. The result was that the Spaniards estimated the inhabitants of Peru at thirty millions. Las Casas, the Spanish historian, said that Hispaniola, the present Hayti, had a population of three millions; a more exact estimate, made about twenty years after the discovery of the island, brought the population down to fourteen thousand! In the same way Montezuma was said to have commanded three million Mexican warriors—an obvious absurdity. The early Jesuits reckoned the numbers of the Iroquois at about a hundred thousand; in reality there seem to have been, in the days of Wolfe and Montcalm, about twelve thousand. At the opening of the twentieth century there were in America north of Mexico about 403,000 Indians, of whom 108,000 were in Canada. Some writers go

so far as to say that the numbers of the natives were probably never much greater than they are to-day. But even if we accept the more general opinion that the Indian population has declined, there is no evidence to show that the population was ever more than a thin scattering of wanderers over the face of a vast country. Mooney estimates that at the coming of the white man there were only about 846,000 aborigines in the United States, 220,000 in British America, 72,000 in Alaska, and 10,000 in Greenland, a total native population of 1,148,000 from the Mississippi to the Atlantic.

The limited means of support possessed by the natives, their primitive agriculture, their habitual disinclination to settled life and industry, their constant wars and the epidemic diseases which, even as early as the time of Jacques Cartier, worked havoc among them, must always have prevented the growth of a numerous population. The explorer might wander for days in the depths of the American forest without encountering any trace of human life. The continent was, in truth, one vast silence, broken only by the roar of the waterfall or the cry of the beasts and birds of the forest.

CHAPTER IV

THE LEGEND OF THE NORSEMEN

There are many stories of the coming of white men to the coasts of America and of their settlements in America long before the voyage of Christopher Columbus. Even in the time of the Greeks and Romans there were traditions and legends of sailors who had gone out into the 'Sea of Darkness' beyond the Pillars of Hercules—the ancient name for the Strait of Gibraltar—and far to the west had found inhabited lands. Aristotle thought that there must be land out beyond the Atlantic, and Plato tells us that once upon a time a vast island lay off the coasts of Africa; he calls it Atlantis, and it was, he says, sunk below the sea by an earthquake. The Phoenicians

were wonderful sailors; their ships had gone out of the Mediterranean into the other sea, and had reached the British Isles, and in all probability they sailed as far west as the Canaries. We find, indeed, in classical literature many references to supposed islands and countries out beyond the Atlantic. The ancients called these places the Islands of the Blessed and the Fortunate Isles. It is, perhaps, not unnatural that in the earlier writers the existence of these remote and mysterious regions should be linked with the ideas of the Elysian Fields and of the abodes of the dead. But the later writers, such as Pliny, and Strabo, the geographer, talked of them as actual places, and tried to estimate how many Roman miles they must be distant from the coast of Spain.

There were similar legends among the Irish, legends preserved in written form at least five hundred years before Columbus. They recount wonderful voyages out into the Atlantic and the discovery of new land. But all these tales are mixed up with obvious fable, with accounts of places where there was never any illness or infirmity, and people lived for ever, and drank delicious wine and laughed all day, and we cannot certify to an atom of historic truth in them.

Still more interesting, if only for curiosity's sake, are weird stories that have been unearthed among the early records of the Chinese. These are older than the Irish legends, and date back to about the sixth century. According to the Chinese story, a certain Hoei-Sin sailed out into the Pacific until he was four thousand miles east of Japan. There he found a new continent, which the Chinese records called Fusang, because of a certain tree—the fusang tree,—out of the fibres of which the inhabitants made, not only clothes, but paper, and even food. Here was truly a land of wonders. There were strange animals with branching horns on their heads, there were men who could not speak Chinese but barked like dogs, and other men with bodies painted in strange colours. Some people have endeavoured to prove by these legends that the Chinese must have landed in British Columbia, or have seen moose or reindeer, since extinct, in the country far to the north. But the whole account is so

mixed up with the miraculous, and with descriptions of things which certainly never existed on the Pacific coast of America, that we can place no reliance whatever upon it.

The only importance that we can attach to such traditions of the discovery of unknown lands and peoples on a new continent is their bearing as a whole, their accumulated effect, on the likelihood of such discovery before the time of Columbus. They at least make us ready to attach due weight to the circumstantial and credible records of the voyages of the Norsemen. These stand upon ground altogether different from that of the dim and confused traditions of the classical writers and of the Irish and Chinese legends. In fact, many scholars are now convinced that the eastern coast of Canada was known and visited by the Norsemen five hundred years before Columbus.

From time immemorial the Norsemen were among the most daring and skilful mariners ever known. They built great wooden boats with tall, sweeping bows and sterns. These ships, though open and without decks, were yet stout and seaworthy. Their remains have been found, at times lying deeply buried under the sand and preserved almost intact. One such vessel, discovered on the shore of Denmark, measured 72 feet in length. Another Viking ship, which was dug up in Norway, and which is preserved in the museum at Christiania, was 78 feet long and 17 feet wide. One of the old Norse sagas, or stories, tells how King Olaf Tryggvesson built a ship, the keel of which, as it lay on the grass, was 74 ells long; in modern measure, it would be a vessel of about 942 tons burden. Even if we make allowance for the exaggeration or ignorance of the writer of the saga, there is still a vast contrast between this vessel and the little ship Centurion in which Anson sailed round the world.

It is needless, however, to prove that the Norsemen could have reached America in their ships. The voyages from Iceland to Greenland which we know they made

continually for four hundred years were just as arduous as a further voyage from Greenland to the coast of Canada.

The story of the Norsemen runs thus. Towards the end of the ninth century, or nearly two hundred years before the Norman conquest, there was a great exodus or outswarming of the Norsemen from their original home in Norway. A certain King Harold had succeeded in making himself supreme in Norway, and great numbers of the lesser chiefs or jarls preferred to seek new homes across the seas rather than submit to his rule. So they embarked with their seafaring followers—Vikings, as we still call them—often, indeed, with their wives and families, in great open ships, and sailed away, some to the coast of England, others to France, and others even to the Mediterranean, where they took service under the Byzantine emperors. But still others, loving the cold rough seas of the north, struck westward across the North Sea and beyond the coasts of Scotland till they reached Iceland. This was in the year 874. Here they made a settlement that presently grew to a population of fifty thousand people, having flocks and herds, solid houses of stone, and a fine trade in fish and oil with the countries of Northern Europe. These settlers in Iceland attained to a high standard of civilization. They had many books, and were fond of tales and stories, as are all these northern peoples who spend long winter evenings round the fireside. Some of the sagas, or stories, which they told were true accounts of the voyages and adventures of their forefathers; others were fanciful stories, like our modern romances, created by the imagination; others, again, were a mixture of the two. Thus it is sometimes hard to distinguish fact and fancy in these early tales of the Norsemen. We have, however, means of testing the stories. Among the books written in Iceland there was one called the 'National Name-Book,' in which all the names of the people were written down, with an account of their forefathers and of any notable things which they had done.

It is from this book and from the old sagas that we learn how the Norsemen came to the coast of America. It seems that about 900 a certain man called Gunnbjorn was

driven westward in a great storm and thrown on the rocky shore of an ice-bound country, where he spent the winter. Gunnbjorn reached home safely, and never tried again to find this new land; but, long after his death, the story that there was land farther west still lingered among the settlers in Iceland and the Orkneys, and in other homes of the Norsemen. Some time after Gunnbjorn's voyage it happened that a very bold and determined man called Eric the Red, who lived in the Orkneys, was made an outlaw for having killed several men in a quarrel. Eric fled westward over the seas about the year 980, and he came to a new country with great rocky bays and fjords as in Norway. There were no trees, but the slopes of the hillsides were bright with grass, so he called the country Greenland, as it is called to this day. Eric and his men lived in Greenland for three years, and the ruins of their rough stone houses are still to be seen, hard by one of the little Danish settlements of to-day. When Eric and his followers went back to Iceland they told of what they had seen, and soon he led a new expedition to Greenland. The adventurers went in twenty-five ships; more than half were lost on the way, but eleven ships landed safely and founded a colony in Greenland. Other settlers came, and this Greenland colony had at one time a population of about two thousand people. Its inhabitants embraced Christianity when their kinsfolk in other places did so, and the ruins of their stone churches still exist. The settlers raised cattle and sheep, and sent ox hides and seal skins and walrus ivory to Europe in trade for supplies. But as there was no timber in Greenland they could not build ships, and thus their communication with the outside world was more or less precarious. In spite of this, the colony lasted for about four hundred years. It seems to have come to an end at about the beginning of the fifteenth century. The scanty records of its history can be traced no later than the year 1409. What happened to terminate its existence is not known. Some writers, misled by the name 'Greenland,' have thought that there must have been a change of climate by which the country lost its original warmth and verdure and turned into an arctic region. There is no ground for this belief. The name 'Greenland' did not imply

a country of trees and luxuriant vegetation, but only referred to the bright carpet of grass still seen in the short Greenland summer in the warmer hollows of the hillsides. It may have been that the settlement, never strong in numbers, was overwhelmed by the Eskimos, who are known to have often attacked the colony: very likely, too, it suffered from the great plague, the Black Death, that swept over all Europe in the fourteenth century. Whatever the cause, the colony came to an end, and centuries elapsed before Greenland was again known to Europe.

This whole story of the Greenland settlement is historical fact which cannot be doubted. Partly by accident and partly by design, the Norsemen had been carried from Norway to the Orkneys and the Hebrides and Iceland, and from there to Greenland. This having happened, it was natural that their ships should go beyond Greenland itself. During the four hundred years in which the Norse ships went from Europe to Greenland, their navigators had neither chart nor compass, and they sailed huge open boats, carrying only a great square sail. It is evident that in stress of weather and in fog they must again and again have been driven past the foot of Greenland, and must have landed somewhere in what is now Labrador. It would be inconceivable that in four centuries of voyages this never happened. In most cases, no doubt, the storm-tossed and battered ships, like the fourteen vessels that Eric lost, were never heard of again. But in other cases survivors must have returned to Greenland or Iceland to tell of what they had seen.

This is exactly what happened to a bold sailor called Bjarne, the son of Herjulf, a few years after the Greenland colony was founded. In 986 he put out from Iceland to join his father, who was in Greenland, the purpose being that, after the good old Norse custom, they might drink their Christmas ale together. Neither Bjarne nor his men had ever sailed the Greenland sea before, but, like bold mariners, they relied upon their seafaring instinct to guide them to its coast. As Bjarne's ship was driven westward, great mists fell upon the face of the waters. There was neither sun nor stars, but day after day only the thick wet fog that clung to the cold surface of the

heaving sea. To-day travellers even on a palatial steamship, who spend a few hours shuddering in the chill grey fog of the North Atlantic, chafing at delay, may form some idea of voyages such as that of Bjarne Herjulf and his men. These Vikings went on undaunted towards the west. At last, after many days, they saw land, but when they drew near they saw that it was not a rugged treeless region, such as they knew Greenland to be, but a country covered with forests, a country of low coasts rising inland to small hills, and with no mountains in sight. Accordingly, Bjarne said that this was not Greenland, and he would not stop, but turned the vessel to the north. After two days they sighted land again, still on the left side, and again it was flat and thick with trees. The sea had fallen calm, and Bjarne's men desired to land and see this new country, and take wood and water into the ship. But Bjarne would not. So they held on their course, and presently a wind from the south-west carried them onward for three days and three nights. Then again they saw land, but this time it was high and mountainous, with great shining caps of snow. And again Bjarne said, 'This is not the land I seek.' They did not go ashore, but sailing close to the coast they presently found that the land was an island. When they stood out to sea again, the south wind rose to a gale that swept them towards the north, with sail reefed down and with their ship leaping through the foaming surges. Three days and nights they ran before the gale. On the fourth day land rose before them, and this time it was Greenland. There Bjarne found his father, and there, when not at sea, he settled for the rest of his days.

Such is the story of Bjarne Herjulf, as the Norsemen have it. To the unprejudiced mind there is every reason to believe that his voyage had carried him to America, to the coast of the Maritime Provinces, or of Newfoundland or Labrador. More than this one cannot say. True, it is hard to fit the 'two days' and the 'three days' of Bjarne's narrative into the sailing distances. But every one who has read any primitive literature, or even the Homeric poems, will remember how easily times and distances and numbers that are not exactly known are expressed in loose phrases

not to be taken as literal.

The news of Bjarne's voyage and of his discovery of land seems to have been carried presently to the Norsemen in Iceland and in Europe. In fact, Bjarne himself made a voyage to Norway, and, on account of what he had done, figured there as a person of some importance. But people blamed Bjarne because he had not landed on the new coasts, and had taken so little pains to find out more about the region of hills and forests which lay to the south and west of Greenland. Naturally others were tempted to follow the matter further. Among these was Leif, son of Eric the Red. Leif went to Greenland, found Bjarne, bought his ship, and manned it with a crew of thirty-five. Leif's father, Eric, now lived in Greenland, and Leif asked him to take command of the expedition. He thought, the saga says, that, since Eric had found Greenland, he would bring good luck to the new venture. For the time, Eric consented, but when all was ready, and he was riding down to the shore to embark, his horse stumbled and he fell from the saddle and hurt his foot. Eric took this as an omen of evil, and would not go; but Leif and his crew of thirty-five set sail towards the south-west. This was in the year 1000 A.D., or four hundred and ninety-two years before Columbus landed in the West Indies.

Leif and his men sailed on, the saga tells us, till they came to the last land which Bjarne had discovered. Here they cast anchor, lowered a boat, and rowed ashore. They found no grass, but only a great field of snow stretching from the sea to the mountains farther inland; and these mountains, too, glistened with snow. It seemed to the Norsemen a forbidding place, and Leif christened it Helluland, or the country of slate or flat stones. They did not linger, but sailed away at once. The description of the snow-covered hills, the great slabs of stone, and the desolate aspect of the coast conveys at least a very strong probability that the land was Labrador.

Leif and his men sailed away, and soon they discovered another land. The chronicle does not say how many days they were at sea, so that we cannot judge of the

distance of this new country from the Land of Stones. But evidently it was entirely different in aspect, and was situated in a warmer climate. The coast was low, there were broad beaches of white sand, and behind the beaches rose thick forests spreading over the country. Again the Norsemen landed. Because of the trees, they gave to this place the name of Markland, or the Country of Forests. Some writers have thought that Markland must have been Newfoundland, but the description also suggests Cape Breton or Nova Scotia. The coast of Newfoundland is, indeed, for the most part, bold, rugged, and inhospitable.

Leif put to sea once more. For two days the wind was from the north-east. Then again they reached land. This new region was the famous country which the Norsemen called Vineland, and of which every schoolboy has read. There has been so much dispute as to whether Vineland—this warm country where grapes grew wild—was Nova Scotia or New England, or some other region, that it is worth while to read the account of the Norse saga, literally translated:

They came to an island, which lay on the north side of the land, where they disembarked to wait for good weather. There was dew upon the grass; and having accidentally got some of the dew upon their hands and put it to their mouths, they thought that they had never tasted anything so sweet. Then they went on board and sailed into a sound that was between the island and a point that went out northwards from the land, and sailed westward past the point. There was very shallow water and ebb tide, so that their ship lay dry; and there was a long way between their ship and the water. They were so desirous to get to the land that they would not wait till their ship floated, but ran to the land, to a place where a river comes out of a lake. As soon as their ship was afloat they took the boats, rowed to the ship, towed her up the river, and from thence into the lake, where they cast anchor, carried their beds out of the ship, and set up their tents.

They resolved to put things in order for wintering there, and they erected a large

house. They did not want for salmon, in both the river and the lake; and they thought the salmon larger than any they had ever seen before. The country appeared to them to be of so good a kind that it would not be necessary to gather fodder for the cattle for winter. There was no frost in winter, and the grass was not much withered. Day and night were more equal than in Greenland and Iceland.

The chronicle goes on to tell how Leif and his men spent the winter in this place. They explored the country round their encampment. They found beautiful trees, trees big enough for use in building houses, something vastly important to men from Greenland, where no trees grow. Delighted with this, Leif and his men cut down some trees and loaded their ship with the timber. One day a sailor, whose home had been in a 'south country,' where he had seen wine made from grapes, and who was nicknamed the 'Turk,' found on the coast vines with grapes, growing wild. He brought his companions to the spot, and they gathered grapes sufficient to fill their ship's boat. It was on this account that Leif called the country 'Vineland.' They found patches of supposed corn which grew wild like the grapes and reseeded itself from year to year. It is striking that the Norse chronicle should name these simple things. Had it been a work of fancy, probably we should have heard, as in the Chinese legends, of strange demons and other amazing creatures. But we hear instead of the beautiful forest extending to the shore, the mountains in the background, the tangled vines, and the bright patches of wild grain of some kind ripening in the open glades-the very things which caught the eye of Cartier when, five centuries later, he first ascended the St Lawrence.

Where Vineland was we cannot tell. If the men really found wild grapes, and not some kind of cranberry, Vineland must have been in the region where grapes will grow. The vine grows as far north as Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton, and, of course, is found in plenty on the coasts of Nova Scotia and New England. The chronicle says that the winter days were longer in Vineland than in Greenland, and names the exact length of the shortest day. Unfortunately, however, the Norsemen

had no accurate system for measuring time; otherwise the length of the shortest winter day would enable us to know at what exact spot Leif's settlement was made.

Leif and his men stayed in Vineland all winter, and sailed home to Greenland in the spring (1001 A.D.). As they brought timber, much prized in the Greenland settlement, their voyage caused a great deal of talk. Naturally others wished to rival Leif. In the next few years several voyages to Vineland are briefly chronicled in the sagas.

First of all, Thorwald, Leif's brother, borrowed his ship, sailed away to Vineland with thirty men, and spent two winters there. During his first summer in Vineland, Thorwald sent some men in a boat westward along the coast. They found a beautiful country with thick woods reaching to the shore, and great stretches of white sand. They found a kind of barn made of wood, and were startled by this first indication of the presence of man. Thorwald had, indeed, startling adventures. In a great storm his ship was wrecked on the coast, and he and his men had to rebuild it. He selected for a settlement a point of land thickly covered with forest. Before the men had built their houses they fell in with some savages, whom they made prisoners. These savages had bows and arrows, and used what the Norsemen called 'skin boats.' One of the savages escaped and roused his tribe, and presently a great flock of canoes came out of a large bay, surrounded the Viking ship, and discharged a cloud of arrows. The Norsemen beat off the savages, but in the fight Thorwald received a mortal wound. As he lay dying he told his men to bury him there in Vineland, on the point where he had meant to build his home. This was done. Thorwald's men remained there for the winter. In the spring they returned to Greenland, with the sad news for Leif of his brother's death.

Other voyages followed. A certain Thorfinn Karlsevne even tried to found a permanent colony in Vineland. In the spring of 1007, he took there a hundred and sixty men, some women, and many cattle. He and his people remained in Vineland

for nearly four years. They traded with the savages, giving them cloth and trinkets for furs. Karlsevne's wife gave birth there to a son, who was christened Snorre, and who was perhaps the first white child born in America. The Vineland colony seems to have prospered well enough, but unfortunately quarrels broke out between the Norsemen and the savages, and so many of Karlsevne's people were killed that the remainder were glad to sail back to Greenland.

The Norse chronicles contain a further story of how one of Karlsevne's companions, Thorward, and his wife Freydis, who was a daughter of Eric the Red, made a voyage to Vineland. This expedition ended in tragedy. One night the Norsemen quarrelled in their winter quarters, there was a tumult and a massacre. Freydis herself killed five women with an axe, and the little colony was drenched in blood. The survivors returned to Greenland, but were shunned by all from that hour.

After this story we have no detailed accounts of voyages to Vineland. There are, however, references to it in Icelandic literature. There does not seem any ground to believe that the Norsemen succeeded in planting a lasting colony in Vineland. Some people have tried to claim that certain ancient ruins on the New England coast—an old stone mill at Newport, and so on—are evidences of such a settlement. But the claim has no sufficient proof behind it.

On the whole, however, there seems every ground to conclude that again and again the Norsemen landed on the Atlantic coast of America. We do not know where they made their winter quarters, nor does this matter. Very likely there were temporary settlements in both 'Markland,' with its thick woods bordering on the sea, and in other less promising regions. It should be added that some writers of authority refuse even to admit that the Norsemen reached America. Others, like Nansen, the famous Arctic explorer, while admitting the probability of the voyages, believe that the sagas are merely a sort of folklore, such as may be found in the primitive literature of all nations. On the other hand, John Fiske, the American historian, who devoted

much patient study to the question, was convinced that what is now the Canadian coast, with, probably, part of New England too, was discovered, visited, and thoroughly well known by the Norse inhabitants of Greenland. For several centuries they appear to have made summer voyages to and from this 'Vineland the Good' as they called it, and to have brought back timber and supplies not found in their own inhospitable country. It is quite possible that further investigation may throw new light on the Norse discoveries, and even that undeniable traces of the buildings or implements of the settlers in Vineland may be found. Meanwhile the subject, interesting though it is, remains shrouded in mystery.

CHAPTER V

THE BRISTOL VOYAGES

The discoveries of the Norsemen did not lead to the opening of America to the nations of Europe. For this the time was not yet ripe. As yet European nations were backward, not only in navigation, but in the industries and commerce which supply the real motive for occupying new lands. In the days of Eric the Red Europe was only beginning to emerge from a dark period. The might and splendour of the Roman Empire had vanished, and the great kingdoms which we know were still to rise.

All this changed in the five hundred years between the foundation of the Greenland colony and the voyage of Christopher Columbus. The discovery of America took place as a direct result of the advancing civilization and growing power of Europe. The event itself was, in a sense, due to pure accident. Columbus was seeking Asia when he found himself among the tropical islands of the West Indies. In another sense, however, the discovery marks in world history a necessary stage, for which the preceding centuries had already made the preparation. The story of the voyages of Columbus forms no part of our present narrative. But we cannot understand the

background that lies behind the history of Canada without knowing why such men as Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama and the Cabots began the work of discovery.

First, we have to realize the peculiar relations between Europe, ancient and mediaeval, and the great empires of Eastern Asia. The two civilizations had never been in direct contact. Yet in a sense they were always connected. The Greeks and the Romans had at least vague reports of peoples who lived on the far eastern confines of the world, beyond even the conquests of Alexander the Great in Hindustan. It is certain, too, that Europe and Asia had always traded with one another in a strange and unconscious fashion. The spices and silks of the unknown East passed westward from trader to trader, from caravan to caravan, until they reached the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and, at last, the Mediterranean. The journey was so slow, so tedious, the goods passed from hand to hand so often, that when the Phoenician, Greek, or Roman merchants bought them their origin had been forgotten. For century after century this trade continued. When Rome fell, other peoples of the Mediterranean continued the Eastern trade. Genoa and Venice rose to greatness by this trade. As wealth and culture revived after the Gothic conquest which overthrew Rome, the beautiful silks and the rare spices of the East were more and more prized in a world of increasing luxury. The Crusades rediscovered Egypt, Syria, and the East for Europe. Gold and jewels, diamond-hilted swords of Damascus steel, carved ivory, and priceless gems,—all the treasures which the warriors of the Cross brought home, helped to impress on the mind of Europe the surpassing riches of the East.

Gradually a new interest was added. As time went on doubts increased regarding the true shape of the earth. Early peoples had thought it a great flat expanse, with the blue sky propped over it like a dome or cover. This conception was giving way. The wise men who watched the sky at night, who saw the sweeping circles of the fixed stars and the wandering path of the strange luminous bodies called planets, began to

suspect a mighty secret,—that the observing eye saw only half the heavens, and that the course of the stars and the earth itself rounded out was below the darkness of the horizon. From this theory that the earth was a great sphere floating in space followed the most enthralling conclusions. If the earth was really a globe, it might be possible to go round it and to reappear on the farther side of the horizon. Then the East might be reached, not only across the deserts of Persia and Tartary, but also by striking out into the boundless ocean that lay beyond the Pillars of Hercules. For such an attempt an almost superhuman courage was required. No man might say what awful seas, what engulfing gloom, might lie across the familiar waters which washed the shores of Europe. The most fearless who, at evening, upon the cliffs of Spain or Portugal, watched black night settle upon the far-spreading waters of the Atlantic, might well turn shuddering from any attempt to sail into those unknown wastes.

It was the stern logic of events which compelled the enterprise. Barbarous Turks swept westward. Arabia, Syria, the Isles of Greece, and, at last, in 1453, Constantinople itself, fell into their hands. The Eastern Empire, the last survival of the Empire of the Romans, perished beneath the sword of Mahomet. Then the pathway by land to Asia, to the fabled empires of Cathay and Cipango, was blocked by the Turkish conquest. Commerce, however, remained alert and enterprising, and men's minds soon turned to the hopes of a western passage which should provide a new route to the Indies.

All the world knows the story of Christopher Columbus, his long years of hardship and discouragement; the supreme conviction which sustained him in his adversity; the final triumph which crowned his efforts. It is no detraction from the glory of Columbus to say that he was only one of many eager spirits occupied with new problems of discovery across the sea. Not the least of these were John and Sebastian Cabot, father and son. John Cabot, like Columbus, was a Genoese by birth; a long residence in Venice, however, earned for him in 1476 the citizenship of that republic. Like many in his time, he seems to have been both a scientific geographer

and a practical sea-captain. At one time he made charts and maps for his livelihood. Seized with the fever for discovery, he is said to have begged in vain from the sovereigns of Spain and Portugal for help in a voyage to the West. About the time of the great discovery of Columbus in 1492, John Cabot arrived in Bristol. It may be that he took part in some of the voyages of the Bristol merchants, before the achievements of Columbus began to startle the world.

At the close of the fifteenth century the town of Bristol enjoyed a pre-eminence which it has since lost. It stood second only to London as a British port. A group of wealthy merchants carried on from Bristol a lively trade with Iceland and the northern ports of Europe. The town was the chief centre for an important trade in codfish. Days of fasting were generally observed at that time; on these the eating of meat was forbidden by the church, and fish was consequently in great demand. The merchants of Bristol were keen traders, and were always seeking the further extension of their trade. Christopher Columbus himself is said to have made a voyage for the Bristol merchants to Iceland in 1477. There is even a tale that, before Columbus was known to fame, an expedition was equipped there in 1480 to seek the 'fabulous islands' of the Western Sea. Certain it is that the Spanish ambassador in England, whose business it was to keep his royal master informed of all that was being done by his rivals, wrote home in 1498: 'It is seven years since those of Bristol used to send out, every year, a fleet of two, three, or four caravels to go and search for the Isle of Brazil and the Seven Cities, according to the fancy of the Genoese.'

We can therefore realize that when Master John Cabot came among the merchants of this busy town with his plans he found a ready hearing. Cabot was soon brought to the notice of his august majesty Henry VII of England. The king had been shortsighted enough to reject overtures made to him by Bartholomew Columbus, brother of Christopher, and no doubt he regretted his mistake. Now he was eager enough to act as the patron of a new voyage. Accordingly, on March 5, 1496, he granted a royal licence in the form of what was called Letters Patent, authorizing

John Cabot and his sons Lewis, Sebastian and Sancius to make a voyage of discovery in the name of the king of England. The Cabots were to sail 'with five ships or vessels of whatever burden or quality soever they be, and with as many marines or men as they will have with them in the said ships upon their own proper costs and charges.' It will be seen that Henry VII, the most parsimonious of kings, had no mind to pay the expense of the voyage. The expedition was 'to seek out, discover and find whatsoever islands, countries, regions and provinces of the heathens or infidels, in whatever part of the world they be, which before this time have been unknown to all Christians.' It was to sail only 'to the seas of the east and west and north,' for the king did not wish to lay any claim to the lands discovered by the Spaniards and Portuguese. The discoverers, however, were to raise the English flag over any new lands that they found, to conquer and possess them, and to acquire 'for us dominion, title, and jurisdiction over those towns, castles, islands, and mainlands so discovered.' One-fifth of the profits from the anticipated voyages to the new land was to fall to the king, but the Cabots were to have a monopoly of trade, and Bristol was to enjoy the right of being the sole port of entry for the ships engaged in this trade.

Not until the next year, 1497, did John Cabot set out. Then he embarked from Bristol with a single ship, called in an old history the Matthew, and a crew of eighteen men. First, he sailed round the south of Ireland, and from there struck out westward into the unknown sea. The appliances of navigation were then very imperfect. Sailors could reckon the latitude by looking up at the North Star, and noting how high it was above the horizon. Since the North Star stands in the sky due north, and the axis on which the earth spins points always towards it, it will appear to an observer in the northern hemisphere to be as many degrees above the horizon as he himself is distant from the pole or top of the earth. The old navigators, therefore, could always tell how far north or south they were. Moreover, as long as the weather was clear they could, by this means, strike, at night at least, a course due

east or west. But when the weather was not favourable for observations they had to rely on the compass alone. Now the compass in actual fact does not always and everywhere point due north. It is subject to variation, and in different times and places points either considerably east of north or west of it. In the path where Cabot sailed, the compass pointed west of north; and hence, though he thought he was sailing straight west from Ireland, he was really pursuing a curved path bent round a little towards the south. This fact will become of importance when we consider where it was that Cabot landed. For finding distance east and west the navigators of the fifteenth century had no such appliances as our modern chronometer and instruments of observation. They could tell how far they had sailed only by 'dead reckoning'; this means that if their ship was going at such and such a speed, it was supposed to have made such and such a distance in a given time. But when ships were being driven to and fro, and buffeted by adverse winds, this reckoning became extremely uncertain.

John Cabot and his men mere tossed about considerably in their little ship. Though they seem to have set out early in May of 1497, it was not until June 24 that they sighted land. What the land was like, and what they thought of it, we know from letters written in England by various persons after their return. Thus we learn that it was a 'very good and temperate country,' and that 'Brazil wood and silks grow there.' 'The sea,' they reported, 'is covered with fishes, which are caught not only with the net, but with baskets, a stone being tied to them in order that the baskets may sink in the water.' Henceforth, it was said, England would have no more need to buy fish from Iceland, for the waters of the new land abounded in fish. Cabot and his men saw no savages, but they found proof that the land was inhabited. Here and there in the forest they saw trees which had been felled, and also snares of a rude kind set to catch game. They were enthusiastic over their success. They reported that the new land must certainly be connected with Cipango, from which all the spices and precious stones of the world originated. Only a scanty stock of provisions, they

declared, prevented them from sailing along the coast as far as Cathay and Cipango. As it was they planted on the land a great cross with the flag of England and also the banner of St Mark, the patron saint of Cabot's city of Venice.

The older histories used always to speak as if John Cabot had landed somewhere on the coast of Labrador, and had at best gone no farther south than Newfoundland. Even if this were the whole truth about the voyage, to Cabot and his men would belong the signal honour of having been the first Europeans, since the Norsemen, to set foot on the mainland of North America. Without doubt they were the first to unfurl the flag of England, and to erect the cross upon soil which afterwards became part of British North America. But this is not all. It is likely that Cabot reached a point far south of Labrador. His supposed sailing westward carried him in reality south of the latitude of Ireland. He makes no mention of the icebergs which any voyager must meet on the Labrador coast from June to August. His account of a temperate climate suitable for growing dye-wood, of forest trees, and of a country so fair that it seemed the gateway of the enchanted lands of the East, is quite unsuited to the bare and forbidding aspect of Labrador. Cape Breton island was probably the place of Cabot's landing. Its balmy summer climate, the abundant fish of its waters, fit in with Cabot's experiences. The evidence from maps, one of which was made by Cabot's son Sebastian, points also to Cape Breton as the first landing-place of English sailors in America.

There is no doubt of the stir made by Cabot's discovery on his safe return to England. He was in London by August of 1497, and he became at once the object of eager curiosity and interest. 'He is styled the Great Admiral,' wrote a Venetian resident in London, 'and vast honour is paid to him. He dresses in silk, and the English run after him like mad people.' The sunlight of royal favour broke over him in a flood: even Henry VII proved generous. The royal accounts show that, on August 10, 1497, the king gave ten pounds 'to him that found the new isle.' A few months later the king granted to his 'well-beloved John Cabot, of the parts of Venice,

an annuity of twenty pounds sterling,' to be paid out of the customs of the port of Bristol. The king, too, was lavish in his promises of help for a new expedition. Henry's imagination had evidently been fired with the idea of an Oriental empire. A contemporary writer tells us that Cabot was to have ten armed ships. At Cabot's request, the king conceded to him all the prisoners needed to man this fleet, saving only persons condemned for high treason. It is one of the ironies of history that on the first pages of its annals the beautiful new world is offered to the criminals of Europe.

During the winter that followed, John Cabot was the hero of the hour. Busy preparations went on for a new voyage. Letters patent were issued giving Cabot power to take any six ships that he liked from the ports of the kingdom, paying to their owners the same price only as if taken for the king's service. The 'Grand Admiral' became a person of high importance. On one friend he conferred the sovereignty of an island; to others he made lavish promises; certain poor friars who offered to embark on his coming voyage were to be bishops over the heathen of the new land. Even the merchants of London ventured to send out goods for trade, and brought to Cabot 'coarse cloth, caps, laces, points, and other trifles.'

The second expedition sailed from the port of Bristol in May of 1498. John Cabot and his son Sebastian were in command; of the younger brothers we hear no more. But the high hopes of the voyagers were doomed to disappointment. On arriving at the coast of America Cabot's ships seem first to have turned towards the north. The fatal idea, that the empires of Asia might be reached through the northern seas already asserted its sway. The search for a north-west passage, that will-o'-the-wisp of three centuries, had already begun. Many years later Sebastian Cabot related to a friend at Seville some details regarding this unfortunate attempt of his father to reach the spice islands of the East. The fleet, he said, with its three hundred men, first directed its course so far to the north that, even in the month of July, monstrous heaps of ice were found floating on the sea. 'There was,' so Sebastian told his friend,

'in a manner, continual daylight.' The forbidding aspect of the coast, the bitter cold of the northern seas, and the boundless extent of the silent drifting ice, chilled the hopes of the explorers. They turned towards the south. Day after day, week after week, they skirted the coast of North America. If we may believe Sebastian's friend, they reached a point as far south as Gibraltar in Europe. No more was there ice. The cold of Labrador changed to soft breezes from the sanded coast of Carolina and from the mild waters of the Gulf Stream. But of the fabled empires of Cathay and Cipango, and the 'towns and castles' over which the Great Admiral was to have dominion, they saw no trace. Reluctantly the expedition turned again towards Europe, and with its turning ends our knowledge of what happened on the voyage.

That the ships came home either as a fleet, or at least in part, we have certain proof. We know that John Cabot returned to Bristol, for the ancient accounts of the port show that he lived to draw at least one or two instalments of his pension. But the sunlight of royal favour no longer illumined his path. In the annals of English history the name of John Cabot is never found again.

The son Sebastian survived to continue a life of maritime adventure, to be counted one of the great sea-captains of the day, and to enjoy an honourable old age. In the year 1512 we hear of him in the service of Ferdinand of Spain. He seems to have won great renown as a maker of maps and charts. He still cherished the idea of reaching Asia by way of the northern seas of America. A north-west expedition with Sebastian in command had been decided upon, it is said, by Ferdinand, when the death of that illustrious sovereign prevented the realization of the project. After Ferdinand's death, Cabot fell out with the grandees of the Spanish court, left Madrid, and returned for some time to England. Some have it that he made a new voyage in the service of Henry VIII, and sailed through Hudson Strait, but this is probably only a confused reminiscence, handed down by hearsay, of the earlier voyages. Cabot served Spain again under Charles V, and made a voyage to Brazil and the La Plata river. He reappears later in England, and was made Inspector of the King's Ships by

Edward VI. He was a leading spirit of the Merchant Adventurers who, in Edward's reign, first opened up trade by sea with Russia.

The voyages of the Bristol traders and the enterprise of England by no means ended with the exploits of the Cabots. Though our ordinary history books tell us nothing more of English voyages until we come to the days of the great Elizabethan navigators, Drake, Frobisher, Hawkins, and to the planting of Virginia, as a matter of fact many voyages were made under Henry VII and Henry VIII. Both sovereigns seem to have been anxious to continue the exploration of the western seas, but they had not the good fortune again to secure such master-pilots as John and Sebastian Cabot.

In the first place, it seems that the fishermen of England, as well as those of the Breton coast, followed close in the track of the Cabots. As soon as the Atlantic passage to Newfoundland had been robbed of the terrors of the unknown, it was not regarded as difficult. With strong east winds a ship of the sixteenth century could make the run from Bristol or St Malo to the Grand Banks in less than twenty days. Once a ship was on the Banks, the fish were found in an abundance utterly unknown in European waters, and the ships usually returned home with great cargoes. During the early years of the sixteenth century English, French, and Portuguese fishermen went from Europe to the Banks in great numbers. They landed at various points in Newfoundland and Cape Breton, and became well acquainted with the outline of the coast. It was no surprise to Jacques Cartier, for instance, on his first voyage, to find a French fishing vessel lying off the north shore of the Gulf of St Lawrence. But these fishing crews thought nothing of exploration. The harvest of the sea was their sole care, and beyond landing to cure fish and to obtain wood and water they did nothing to claim or conquer the land.

There were, however, efforts from time to time to follow up the discoveries of the Cabots. The merchants of Bristol do not seem to have been disappointed with the

result of the Cabot enterprises, for as early as in 1501 they sent out a new expedition across the Atlantic. The sanction of the king was again invoked, and Henry VII granted letters patent to three men of Bristol—Richard Warde, Thomas Ashehurst, and John Thomas—to explore the western seas. These names have a homely English sound; but associated with them were three Portuguese—John Gonzales, and two men called Fernandez, all of the Azores, and probably of the class of master-pilots to which the Cabots and Columbus belonged. We know nothing of the results of the expedition, but it returned in safety in the same year, and the parsimonious king was moved to pay out five pounds from his treasury 'to the men of Bristol that found the isle.'

Francis Fernandez and John Gonzales remained in the English service and became subjects of King Henry. Again, in the summer of 1502, they were sent out on another voyage from Bristol. In September they brought their ships safely back, and, in proof of the strangeness of the new lands they carried home 'three men brought out of an Iland forre beyond Irelond, the which were clothed in Beestes Skynnes and ate raw fflesh and were rude in their demeanure as Beestes.' From this description (written in an old atlas of the time), it looks as if the Fernandez expedition had turned north from the Great Banks and visited the coast where the Eskimos were found, either in Labrador or Greenland. This time Henry VII gave Fernandez and Gonzales a pension of ten pounds each, and made them 'captains' of the New Found Land. A sum of twenty pounds was given to the merchants of Bristol who had accompanied them. We must remember that at this time the New Found Land was the general name used for all the northern coast of America.

There is evidence that a further expedition went out from Bristol in 1503, and still another in 1504. Fernandez and Gonzales, with two English associates, were again the leaders. They were to have a monopoly of trade for forty years, but were cautioned not to interfere with the territory of the king of Portugal. Of the fate of these enterprises nothing is known.

By the time of Henry VIII, who began to reign in 1509, the annual fishing fleet of the English which sailed to the American coast had become important. As early as in 1522, a royal ship of war was sent to the mouth of the English Channel to protect the 'coming home of the New Found Island's fleet.' Henry VIII and his minister, Cardinal Wolsey, were evidently anxious to go on with the work of the previous reign, and especially to enlist the wealthy merchants and trade companies of London in the cause of western exploration. In 1521 the cardinal proposed to the Livery Companies of London—the name given to the trade organizations of the merchants—that they should send out five ships on a voyage into the New Found Land. When the merchants seemed disinclined to make such a venture, the king 'spake sharply to the Mayor to see it put in execution to the best of his power.' But, even with this stimulus, several years passed before a London expedition was sent out. At last, in 1527, two little ships called the Samson and the Mary of Guildford set out from London with instructions to find their way to Cathay and the Indies by means of the passage to the north. The two ships left London on May 10, put into Plymouth, and finally sailed therefrom on June 10, 1527. They followed Cabot's track, striking westward from the coast of Ireland. For three weeks they kept together, making good progress across the Atlantic. Then in a great storm that arose the Samson was lost with all on board.

The Mary of Guildford pursued her way alone, and her crew had adventures strange even for those days. Her course, set well to the north, brought her into the drift ice and the giant icebergs which are carried down the coast of America at this season (for the month was July) from the polar seas. In fear of the moving ice, she turned to the south, the sailors watching eagerly for the land, and sounding as they went. Four days brought them to the coast of Labrador. They followed it southward for some days. Presently they entered an inlet where they found a good harbour, many small islands, and the mouth of a great river of fresh water. The region was a wilderness, its mountains and woods apparently untenanted by man. Near the shore they saw the

footmarks of divers great beasts, but, though they explored the country for about thirty miles, they saw neither men nor animals. At the end of July, they set sail again, and passed down the coast of Newfoundland to the harbour of St John's, already a well-known rendezvous. Here they found fourteen ships of the fishing fleet, mostly vessels from Normandy. From Newfoundland the Mary of Guildford pursued her way southward, and passed along the Atlantic coast of America. If she had had any one on board capable of accurate observation, even after the fashion of the time, or of making maps, the record of her voyage would have added much to the general knowledge of the continent. Unfortunately, the Italian pilot who directed the voyage was killed in a skirmish with Indians during a temporary landing. Some have thought that this pilot who perished on the Mary of Guildford may have been the great navigator Verrazano, of whom we shall presently speak.

The little vessel sailed down the coast to the islands of the West Indies. She reached Porto Rico in the middle of November, and from that island she made sail for the new Spanish settlements of San Domingo. Here, as she lay at her anchorage, the Mary of Guildford was fired upon by the Spanish fort which commanded the river mouth. At once she put out into the open sea, and, heading eastward across the Atlantic, she arrived safely at her port of London.

CHAPTER VI

FORERUNNERS OF JACQUES CARTIER

We have seen that after the return of the second expedition of the Cabots no voyages to the coasts of Canada of first-rate importance were made by the English. This does not mean, however, that nothing was done by other peoples to discover and explore the northern coasts of America. The Portuguese were the first after the Cabots to continue the search along the Canadian coast for the secret of the hidden East. At this time, we must remember, the Portuguese were one of the leading nations of

Europe, and they were specially interested in maritime enterprise. Thanks to Columbus, the Spaniards had, it is true, carried off the grand prize of discovery. But the Portuguese had rendered service not less useful. From their coasts, jutting far out into the Atlantic, they had sailed southward and eastward, and had added much to the knowledge of the globe. For generations, both before and after Columbus, the pilots and sailors of Portugal were among the most successful and daring in the world.

For nearly a hundred years before the discovery of America the Portuguese had been endeavouring to find an ocean route to the spice islands of the East and to the great Oriental empires which, tradition said, lay far off on a distant ocean, and which Marco Polo and other travellers had reached by years of painful land travel across the interior of Asia. Prince Henry of Portugal was busy with these tasks at the middle of the fifteenth century. Even before this, Portuguese sailors had found their way to the Madeiras and the Canary Islands, and to the Azores, which lie a thousand miles out in the Atlantic. But under the lead of Prince Henry they began to grope their way down the coast of Africa, braving the torrid heats and awful calms of that equatorial region, where the blazing sun, poised overhead in a cloudless sky, was reflected on the bosom of a stagnant and glistening ocean. It was their constant hope that at some point the land would be found to roll back and disclose an ocean pathway round Africa to the East, the goal of their desire. Year after year they advanced farther, until at last they achieved a momentous result. In 1487, Bartholomew Diaz sailed round the southern point of Africa, which received the significant name of the 'Cape of Good Hope,' and entered the Indian Ocean. Henceforth a water pathway to the Far East was possible. Following Diaz, Vasco da Gama, leaving Lisbon in 1497, sailed round the south of Africa, and, reaching the ports of Hindustan, made the maritime route to India a definite reality.

Thus at the moment when the Spaniards were taking possession of the western world the Portuguese were establishing their trade in the rediscovered East. The two

nations agreed to divide between them these worlds of the East and the West. They invoked the friendly offices of the Pope as mediator, and, henceforth, an imaginary line drawn down the Atlantic divided the realms. At first this arrangement seemed to give Spain all the new regions in America, but the line of division was set so far to the West that the discovery of Brazil, which juts out eastward into the Atlantic, gave the Portuguese a vast territory in South America. At the time of which we are now speaking, however, the Portuguese were intent upon their interests in the Orient. Their great aim was to pass beyond India, already reached by da Gama, to the further empires of China and Japan. Like other navigators of the time, they thought that these places might be reached not merely by southern but also by the northern seas. Hence it came about that the Portuguese, going far southward in Africa, went also far northward in America and sailed along the coast of Canada.

We find, in consequence, that when King Manoel of Portugal was fitting out a fleet of twenty ships for a new expedition under da Gama, which was to sail to the Indies by way of Africa, another Portuguese expedition, setting out with the same object, was sailing in the opposite direction. At its head was Gaspar Corte-Real, a nobleman of the Azores, who had followed with eager interest the discoveries of Columbus, Diaz, and da Gama. Corte-Real sailed from Lisbon in the summer of 1500 with a single ship. He touched at the Azores. It is possible that a second vessel joined him there, but this is not clear. From the Azores his path lay north and west, till presently he reached a land described as a 'cool region with great woods.' Corte-Real called it from its verdure 'the Green Land,' but the similarity of name with the place that we call Greenland is only an accident. In reality the Portuguese captain was on the coast of Newfoundland. He saw a number of natives. They appeared to the Portuguese a barbarous people, who dressed in skins, and lived in caves. They used bows and arrows, and had wooden spears, the points of which they hardened with fire.

Corte-Real directed his course northward, until he found himself off the coast of Greenland. He sailed for some distance along those rugged and forbidding shores, a

land of desolation, with jagged mountains and furrowed cliffs, wrapped in snow and ice. No trace of the lost civilization of the Norsemen met his eyes. The Portuguese pilot considered Greenland at its southern point to be an outstanding promontory of Asia, and he struggled hard to pass beyond it westward to a more favoured region. But his path was blocked by 'enormous masses of frozen snow floating on the sea, and moving under the influence of the waves.' It is clear that he was met not merely by the field ice of the Arctic ocean, but also by great icebergs moving slowly with the polar current. The narrative tells how Corte-Real's crew obtained fresh water from the icebergs. 'Owing to the heat of the sun, fresh and clear water is melted on the summits, and, descending by small channels formed by the water itself, it eats away the base where it falls. The boats were sent in, and in that way as much was taken as was needed.'

Corte-Real made his way as far as a place (which was in latitude 60 degrees) where the sea about him seemed a flowing stream of snow, and so he called it Rio Nevado, 'the river of snow.' Probably it was Hudson Strait.

Late in the same season, Corte-Real was back in Lisbon. He had discovered nothing of immediate profit to the crown of Portugal, but his survey of the coast of North America from Newfoundland to Hudson Strait seems to have strengthened the belief that the best route to India lay in this direction. In any case, on May 15, 1501, he was sent out again with three ships. This time the Portuguese discovered a region, so they said, which no one had before visited. The description indicates that they were on the coast of Nova Scotia and the adjacent part of New England. The land was wooded with fine straight timber, fit for the masts of ships, and 'when they landed they found delicious fruits of various kinds, and trees and pines of marvellous height and thickness.' They saw many natives, occupied in hunting and fishing. Following the custom of the time, they seized fifty or sixty natives, and crowded these unhappy captives into the holds of their ships, to carry home as evidence of the reality of their discoveries, and to be sold as slaves. These savages are described by those who saw

them in Portugal as of shapely form and gentle manner, though uncouth and even dirty in person. They wore otter skins, and their faces were marked with lines. The description would answer to any of the Algonquin tribes of the eastern coast. Among the natives seen on the coast there was a boy who had in his ears two silver rings of Venetian make. The circumstance led the Portuguese to suppose that they were on the coast of Asia, and that a European ship had recently visited the same spot. The true explanation, if the circumstance is correctly reported, would seem to be that the rings were relics of Cabot's voyages and of his trade in the trinkets supplied by the merchants.

Gaspar Corte-Real sent his consort ships home, promising to explore the coast further, and to return later in the season. The vessels duly reached Lisbon, bringing their captives and the news of the voyage. Corte-Real, however, never returned, nor is anything known of his fate.

When a year had passed with no news of Gaspar Corte-Real, his brother Miguel fitted out a new expedition of three ships and sailed westward in search of him. On reaching the coast of Newfoundland, the ships of Miguel Corte-Real separated in order to make a diligent search in all directions for the missing Gaspar. They followed the deep indentations of the island, noting its outstanding features. Here and there they fell in with the natives and traded with them, but they found nothing of value. To make matters worse, when the time came to assemble, as agreed, in the harbour of St John's, only two ships arrived at the rendezvous. That of Miguel was missing. After waiting some time the other vessels returned without him to Portugal.

Two Corte-Reals were now lost. King Manoel transferred the rights of Gaspar and Miguel to another brother, and in the ensuing years sent out several Portuguese expeditions to search for the lost leaders, but without success. The Portuguese gained only a knowledge of the abundance of fish in the region of the Newfoundland coast. This was important, and henceforth Portuguese ships joined with the

Normans, the Bretons, and the English in fishing on the Grand Banks. Of the Corte-Reals nothing more was ever heard.

The next great voyage of discovery was that of Juan Verrazano, some twenty years after the loss of the Corte-Reals. Like so many other pilots of his time, Verrazano was an Italian. He had wandered much about the world, had made his way to the East Indies by the new route that the Portuguese had opened, and had also, so it is said, been a member of a ship's company in one of the fishing voyages to Newfoundland now made in every season.

The name of Juan Verrazano has a peculiar significance in Canadian history. In more ways than one he was the forerunner of Jacques Cartier, 'the discoverer of Canada.' Not only did he sail along the coast of Canada, but did so in the service of the king of France, the first representative of those rising ambitions which were presently to result in the foundation of New France and the colonial empire of the Bourbon monarchy. Francis I, the French king, was a vigorous and ambitious prince. His exploits and rivalries occupy the foreground of European history in the earlier part of the sixteenth century. It was the object of Francis to continue the work of Louis XI by consolidating his people into a single powerful state. His marriage with the heiress of Brittany joined that independent duchy, rich at least in the seafaring bravery of its people, to the crown of France. But Francis aimed higher still. He wished to make himself the arbiter of Europe and the over-lord of the European kings. Having been defeated by the equally famous king of Spain, Charles V, in his effort to gain the position and title of Holy Roman Emperor and the leadership of Europe, he set himself to overthrow the rising greatness of Spain. The history of Europe for a quarter of a century turns upon the opposing ambitions of the two monarchs.

As a part of his great design, Francis I turned towards western discovery and exploration, in order to rival if possible the achievements of Columbus and Cortes

and to possess himself of territories abounding in gold and silver, in slaves and merchandise, like the islands of Cuba and San Domingo and the newly conquered empire of Montezuma, which Spain held. It was in this design that he sent out Juan Verrazano; in further pursuit of it he sent Jacques Cartier ten years later; and the result was that French dominion afterwards, prevailed in the valley of the St Lawrence and seeds were planted from which grew the present Dominion of Canada.

At the end of the year 1523 Juan Verrazano set out from the port of Dieppe with four ships. Beaten about by adverse storms, they put into harbour at Madeira, so badly strained by the rough weather that only a single seaworthy ship remained. In this, the Dauphine, Verrazano set forth on January 17, 1524, for his western discovery. The voyage was prosperous, except for one awful tempest in mid-Atlantic, 'as terrible,' wrote Verrazano, 'as ever any sailors suffered.' After seven weeks of westward sailing Verrazano sighted a coast 'never before seen of any man either ancient or modern.' This was the shore of North Carolina. From this point the French captain made his way northward, closely inspecting the coast, landing here and there, and taking note of the appearance, the resources, and the natives of the country. The voyage was chiefly along the coast of what is now the United States, and does not therefore immediately concern the present narrative. Verrazano's account of his discoveries, as he afterwards wrote it down, is full of picturesque interest, and may now be found translated into English in Hakluyt's Voyages. He tells of the savages who flocked to the low sandy shore to see the French ship riding at anchor. They wore skins about their loins and light feathers in their hair, and they were 'of colour russet, and not much unlike the Saracens.' Verrazano said that these Indians were of 'cheerful and steady look, not strong of body, yet sharp-witted, nimble, and exceeding great runners.' As he sailed northward he was struck with the wonderful vegetation of the American coast, the beautiful forest of pine and cypress and other trees, unknown to him, covered with tangled vines as prolific as the vines

of Lombardy. Verrazano's voyage and his landings can be traced all the way from Carolina to the northern part of New England. He noted the wonderful harbour at the mouth of the Hudson, skirted the coast eastward from that point, and then followed northward along the shores of Massachusetts and Maine. Beyond this Verrazano seems to have made no landings, but he followed the coast of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. He sailed, so he says, as far as fifty degrees north, or almost to the Strait of Belle Isle. Then he turned eastward, headed out into the great ocean, and reached France in safety. Unfortunately, Verrazano did not write a detailed account of that part of his voyage which related to Canadian waters. But there is no doubt that his glowing descriptions must have done much to stimulate the French to further effort. Unhappily, at the moment of his return, his royal master was deeply engaged in a disastrous invasion of Italy, where he shortly met the crushing defeat at Pavia (1525) which left him a captive in the hands of his Spanish rival. His absence crippled French enterprise, and Verrazano's explorations were not followed up till a change of fortune enabled Francis to send out the famous expedition of Jacques Cartier.

One other expedition to Canada deserves brief mention before we come to Cartier's crowning discovery of the St Lawrence river. This is the voyage of Stephen Gomez, who was sent out in the year 1524. by Charles V, the rival of Francis I. He spent about ten months on the voyage, following much the same course as Verrazano, but examining with far greater care the coast of Nova Scotia and the territory about the opening of the Gulf of St Lawrence. His course can be traced from the Penobscot river in Maine to the island of Cape Breton. He entered the Bay of Fundy, and probably went far enough to realize from its tides, rising sometimes to a height of sixty or seventy feet, that its farther end could not be free, and that it could not furnish an open passage to the Western Sea. Running north-east along the shore of Nova Scotia, Gomez sailed through the Gut of Canso, thus learning that Cape Breton was an island. He named it the Island of St John-or, rather, he transferred to

it this name, which the map-makers had already used. Hence it came about that the 'Island of St John' occasions great confusion in the early geography of Canada. The first map-makers who used it secured their information indirectly, we may suppose, from the Cabot voyages and the fishermen who frequented the coast. They marked it as an island lying in the 'Bay of the Bretons,' which had come to be the name for the open mouth of the Gulf of St Lawrence. Gomez, however, used the name for Cape Breton island. Later on, the name was applied to what is now Prince Edward Island. All this is only typical of the difficulties in understanding the accounts of the early voyages to America. Gomez duly returned to the port of Corunna in June 1525.

We may thus form some idea of the general position of American exploration and discovery at the time when Cartier made his momentous voyages. The maritime nations of Europe, in searching for a passage to the half-mythical empires of Asia, had stumbled on a great continent. At first they thought it Asia itself. Gradually they were realizing that this was not Asia, but an outlying land that lay between Europe and Asia and that must be passed by the navigator before Cathay and Cipango could rise upon the horizon. But the new continent was vast in extent. It blocked the westward path from pole to pole. With each voyage, too, the resources and the native beauty of the new land became more apparent. The luxuriant islands of the West Indies, and the Aztec empire of Mexico, were already bringing wealth and grandeur to the monarchy of Spain. South of Mexico it had been already found that the great barrier of the continent extended to the cold tempestuous seas of the Antarctic region. Magellan's voyage (1519-22) had proved indeed that by rounding South America the way was open to the spice islands of the east. But the route was infinitely long and arduous. The hope of a shorter passage by the north beckoned the explorer. Of this north country nothing but its coast was known as yet. Cabot and the fishermen had found a land of great forests, swept by the cold and leaden seas of the Arctic, and holding its secret clasped in the iron grip of the northern ice. The Corte-Reals, Verrazano, and Gomez had looked upon the endless panorama of the

Atlantic coast of North America—the glorious forests draped with tangled vines extending to the sanded beaches of the sea—the wide inlets round the mouths of mighty rivers moving silent and mysterious from the heart of the unknown continent. Here and there a painted savage showed the bright feathers of his headgear as he lurked in the trees of the forest or stood, in fearless curiosity, gazing from the shore at the white-winged ships of the strange visitants from the sky. But for the most part all, save the sounds of nature, was silence and mystery. The waves thundered upon the sanded beach of Carolina and lashed in foam about the rocks of the iron coasts of New England and the New Found Land. The forest mingled its murmurs with the waves, and, as the sun sank behind the unknown hills, wafted its perfume to the anchored ships that rode upon the placid bosom of the evening sea. And beyond all this was mystery—the mystery of the unknown East, the secret of the pathway that must lie somewhere hidden in the bays and inlets of the continent of silent beauty, and above all the mysterious sense of a great history still to come for this new land itself—a sense of the murmuring of many voices caught as the undertone of the rustling of the forest leaves, but rising at last to the mighty sound of the vast civilization that in the centuries to come should pour into the silent wildernesses of America.

To such a land—to such a mystery—sailed forth Jacques Cartier, discoverer of Canada.

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