

Meanwhile, Cartier in vain extolled the country which he had discovered. His small returns, and the wretched condition to which his men had been reduced by cold and scurvy, persuaded most that it would never be of any use to France. Great stress was laid on the fact that he nowhere saw any appearance of mines; and then, even more than now, a strange land which produced neither gold nor silver was reckoned as nothing. Perhaps, too, Cartier discredited his relation by the tales with which he thought fit to embellish it;¹ but how return from an unknown land and relate no wonders of it! It is not worth while, they say, to go so far to see only what you may see everywhere.

1536.
Canada
neglected
by France.

Truly the condition of a voyager is very sad, when he does not return able to compensate by some solid advantage for the hardships and dangers which he has encountered. If he thinks fit to give a relation of his voyage, he finds all his readers on their guard; if he says any thing in the least extraordinary, he finds no credence. On the other hand, if a relation is utterly devoid of the marvellous, it lies unread; that is to say, we require a traveller to amuse us even at the expense of his reputation; we must read him with pleasure, and preserve the right to turn him into ridicule.

I do not know whether Jacques Cartier made all these reflections when he wrote his memoirs, but he introduces the marvellous of more than one type. Yet all is not so fabulous, that you do not catch some glimpses of the reality which his ignorance or want of attention have disfigured; and what he has related on the testimony of others is not always unfounded. This leads me to think that I shall be pardoned, if I stop to examine some points of history, which are not altogether unworthy of the curious.

Remarks on
some parts
of Cartier's
memoirs.

¹ This is unjust to Cartier; but own narrative, which is not liable to Charlevoix had never seen Cartier's the censures given.