

# INTRODUCTION

BY REUBEN GOLD THWAITES

Doubtless Norse vikings, venturing far southward from outlying colonies in Iceland and Greenland, first coasted New France, and beached their sturdy ships on the shores of New England. But five centuries passed without result, and we cannot properly call them pioneers of American civilization. Columbus it was, who unlocked the eastern door of the New World. Five years later, John Cabot, in behalf of England, was sighting the gloomy headlands of Cape Breton. Cortereal appeared in the neighborhood, in 1501, seeking lands for the Portuguese crown. About this time, at intervals, there came to Newfoundland certain Norman, Breton, and Basque fishers, who, erecting little huts and drying-scaffolds along the rocky shore, sowed the first seed of that polyglot settlement of French, Portuguese, Spanish, and English which has come down to our day almost uninterruptedly. By 1511, these fishermen appear to have known the mainland to the west; for on the map of Sylvanus, in his edition of Ptolemy, that year, we find a delineation of the "Square Gulf," which answers to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. In 1520, Fagundus visited these waters for the Por-