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RABELAIS AND GEOGRAPHICAL DISCOVERY.

II¹.

JACQUES CARTIER.

IN the summer or early autumn of 1545 Rabelais returned to the project which he had announced thirteen years before of conducting Pantagruel on a long sea-voyage. During this interval the interest of Frenchmen in maritime adventure had been sensibly quickened by the discovery of Canada. For it was the achievement of their own countryman, Jacques Cartier, the Breton pilot². On his first voyage (1534), starting from Saint-Malo, he had sailed through the strait of Belle Isle between Newfoundland and Labrador, and had reached, though without being aware of it, the mouth of the St Lawrence. On his second voyage (1535—36), after failing to find a passage to Cathay—for this was the primary object of his expedition—he sailed up the St Lawrence to Stadacone (Quebec) and Hochelaga (Montreal). When he returned to France (July, 1536) the second war with Charles V had broken out, and for the next four years Francis I was diverted from all thoughts of maritime enterprise. It was not till October, 1540, that he commissioned Cartier to organise a fresh expedition on a larger scale, with the object of establishing a French settlement in Canada. A little later, he appointed Jean-François de La Rocque, Seigneur de Roberval, to be lieutenant-general and chief captain of the enterprise. It was Roberval's task to furnish the artillery and the colonists, and as this took a considerable time, Cartier, who had the title of 'captain-general and master-pilot of the ships,' without waiting for his chief, put to sea with five ships on May 23, 1541. He returned in the

¹ Continued from Volume II, p. 25.

² The most recent work on Cartier is J. P. Baxter, *A Memoir of Jacques Cartier*, New York, 1906. See also Ch. de la Roncière, *Histoire de la marine française*, III, 307—333, Paris, 1906.

following year having established and afterwards abandoned a fort at Charlesbourg Royal, a little above Quebec. On his way home he met Roberval in a harbour of Newfoundland, and disobeyed his orders to go back with him to the St Lawrence. Deserted by his subordinate, Roberval applied himself with great energy to the settlement at Charlesbourg Royal, but after a terrible winter's experience Cartier was sent out again to bring him home (June, 1543). They reached France in the following February.

The initiative which Francis I had taken in the exploration and colonisation of Canada had stimulated his subjects to a corresponding activity. From 1540 to 1544 fishing-ships from various Norman and Breton ports sailed for Canada every year. In May, 1541, a Spanish spy reported to his government that in addition to Cartier's expedition ships were being fitted out or had already sailed from Dieppe, Harfleur, and Honfleur, from Morlaix, Quimper and Croisic¹. But in 1545 the interest in Canada began to slacken. Though the third war against the Emperor had been ended by the treaty of Crépy in the preceding September, France was now at war with England, and Jean Ango, the great ship-owner of Dieppe, who had hitherto been the guiding spirit of French maritime exploration, was devoting all his energies and money to the maintenance of the royal navy. However, in the early part of the year, the moment seemed still propitious for the publication of an account of Cartier's discoveries, and on February 28 a privilege was granted to Ponce Roffet and his brother-in-law Antoine Le Clerc for the publication of a book entitled *Brief recit et succincte narration, de la navigation faicte es ysles de Canada, Hochelaga et Saguenay, et autres, avec particulieres meurs, langaige, et cerimonies des habitans d'icelles: fort delectable a veoir*². It is a simple and modest narrative, occupying only forty-eight leaves, of Cartier's second voyage. Probably a printed account of the first voyage appeared about the same time, but no copy of it now exists. Indeed, when Raphael Du Petit Val published an account of this voyage at Rouen in 1598, he had to translate it from a *langue étrangère*. This was the Italian version which Ramusio had included in the third volume of his great collection of voyages (Venice, 1556), and which was probably translated from a printed text. Some forty years ago a MS. which bears evident traces of being Cartier's original account was discovered in the Bibliothèque Nationale, and

¹ Baxter, *op. cit.*, pp. 348 ff.

² The only known copy is in the British Museum. Tross discovered a second, but it was lost with the ship which was taking it to America. See H. Harris, *Bibliotheca Americana vetustissima*, for a facsimile of the title-page.

edited in 1867 by H. Michelant and A. Ramé under the title of *Relation originale du voyage de Jacques Cartier au Canada*. Cartier's third voyage and that of Roberval are represented only by fragmentary narratives in Hakluyt's *Voyages*¹.

It was, as I have said, in the summer or early autumn of 1545 that Rabelais reverted to the idea which he had foreshadowed at the close of the Second Book of making a long sea-voyage the framework of his narrative. We read in chapter xlix of the Third Book that Pantagruel, having agreed to accompany Panurge on a voyage to the 'Oracle of the Bottle,' assembled his followers at the port of Thalasse near Saint-Malo, and there made the necessary preparations². The Third Book was published early in 1546, and in the summer of 1547 Rabelais, who had made a hurried flight to Metz immediately after its publication, began his Fourth Book with an account of the voyage. In the first half of 1548 he published ten chapters with the fragment of an eleventh. In June of the same year we find him at Rome with Jean Du Bellay. He returned to France in July, 1550, and obtained a fresh privilege on August 6. We may therefore assume that at that date his Fourth Book was nearly ready for the press. But it did not appear till January, 1552, and internal evidence points to the fact that the later chapters—xlvi to lxxvii—were added during that interval.

In the first chapter we read that Pantagruel put to sea at the Port of Thalasse, and that he was accompanied by 'Xenomanes, the great traveller and traverser of perilous ways, who had been sent for by Panurge and had arrived certain days before.' This is followed in the complete edition of 1552 by the statement that 'Xenomanes had left with Gargantua, and marked out in his great and universal Hydrography the route which they were to take in their visit to the Oracle of the Holy Bottle Bacbuc.' Later on in the chapter we learn that the course of the ships was set by the principal pilot, and in the 1552 edition we are told that the pilot's name was Jamet Brayer. Now, as all students of Rabelais know, M. Lefranc, developing an idea first suggested by M. Margry in his *Navigations françaises*, has adduced several excellent reasons for identifying Jamet Brayer with Jacques Cartier, and Xenomanes with Jean Fonteneau, commonly called Jean Alfonse of Saintonge,

¹ For the first voyage Mr Baxter translates the *Relation originale*, for the second a MS. (No. 5589, one of three) in the Bibliothèque Nationale, as he found several errors and omissions in the *Brief recit*, including the omission of two whole chapters (xi and xii). He adds the fragments from Hakluyt.

² The privilege for the Third Book is dated September 19, 1545; the concluding chapters were probably written not long before this.

who accompanied Roberval to Canada as his pilot. That Xenomanes stands for Jean Alfonse there can I think be no reasonable doubt. We are told in III, xlix that Xenomanes 'had some small holding of the domain of Salmigondin in mesne-fee,' and all the commentators are agreed that Salmigondin stands for Saintonge. We also know that Jean Alfonse before he sailed on his last voyage, on the return from which he was attacked by the Spaniards and mortally wounded in the very port of La Rochelle (1544), had written a *Cosmographie* which was practically an Hydrography, and that it eventually came into the hands of the poet Mellin de Saint-Gelais, who secured it for the Royal Library. Rabelais, who was a friend of Saint-Gelais's, may well have heard of this circumstance. Moreover, the part played by Xenomanes in the voyage, and the air of authority with which he gives advice and explanation is in complete keeping with the reputation of Jean Alfonse as the most experienced French pilot of his day, who had sailed the seas, as he tells us in his *Cosmographie*, for forty-four years, and had explored the coasts of America from the Straits of Magellan in the south to Davis Strait in the north¹.

As regards the identification of Jamet Brayer with Jacques Cartier, there is more room for doubt, but M. Lefranc has considerably strengthened the case for it. He points out that Cartier, like Jean Alfonse, had the requisite experience for acting as pilot to Pantagruel on this particular route. He also lays stress on a statement made by one Jacques Doremot, who in a little volume on the antiquities of Saint-Malo, prints the following marginal note opposite a passage dealing with Cartier's discoveries: 'Rabelais vint apprendre de ce Cartier les termes de la marine et du pilotage à Saint-Malo pour en chamarrer ses bouffonnesques Lucianismes et impies épiqueurismes.' Doremot's book was not printed till 1628, and the writer was not born till from fifteen to twenty years after Rabelais's death. The statement therefore rests on tradition only, and without further support cannot be said to have much authority. But there are certain indications in Rabelais's book of a personal acquaintance with Saint-Malo, where Cartier lived till his death in 1557. In IV, lxvi Panurge, who is generally the mouth-piece of Rabelais's reminiscences, says that he had seen the islands of Sark and Herm between Brittany and England, from which we may reasonably infer that Rabelais visited them from Saint-Malo. Again in III, xxiv Panurge suggests that they should make a voyage to the

¹ See M. Georges Musset's introduction to his edition of the *Cosmographie* in the *Recueil de Voyages*, vol. xx, 1904.

Ogygian islands which 'are not far from the harbour of Saint Malo.' Lastly we find scattered up and down Rabelais's book various reminiscences of Brittany, shewing that he was acquainted with the country generally. The fact that no name is given to the pilot in the 1548 edition of the Fourth Book leads M. Lefranc to suppose that it was not till after this date that Rabelais became intimate with Cartier¹. If so, the intimacy cannot have begun till after Rabelais's return from Rome in the summer of 1550. Rabelais had then, it is true, his parish of Meudon to look after, but doubtless his parochial duties were not so exacting that they did not admit of an occasional holiday.

But the question whether Jamet Brayer is Jacques Cartier or not is comparatively unimportant in comparison with the undoubted fact that the influence of Cartier's voyages is plainly to be traced in Rabelais's narrative. In chapter xxx of the Fifth Book Cartier is mentioned without any disguise among the travellers whom Pantagruel and his company encountered in the country of Satin, and in the Fourth Book there are several reminiscences of his first and second voyage. Pantagruel sets sail, as Cartier did, from Saint-Malo. On the fourth day (according to the primitive edition), which was June 12, he meets with a merchant-vessel returning home, and learns that they are Frenchmen from Saintonge and that they came from Lantern-land. This agrees with the account of Cartier's first voyage, where we read that on June 12, off Labrador, 'we perceived a great ship which was from La Rochelle, which had passed the night seeking the harbour of Brest.' For Lantern-land, though it stands for other places as well, certainly stands for La Rochelle, where there was a Tower of the Lantern, besides two towers in the harbour.

In the partial edition of the Fourth Book, the first land at which the travellers touch is the Island of Ennasin (Noseless ones) or Alliances. 'The men and women,' we are told, 'are like the red-faced Poitevins, except that they all...have their nose in the shape of an ace of clubs; ...and all the people were kindred and related to one another².' M. Lefranc very ingeniously sees in this people a double reminiscence of Red Indians and Eskimos, the red skin pointing to the former and the abnormally flat nose to the latter. In his First Voyage Cartier, speaking of the inhabitants of Blanc Sablon on the coast of Labrador, says that 'they paint themselves with certain tawny colours.' These, Mr Baxter thinks, belonged to the tribe of the Beothics who inhabited

¹ *Les navigations de Pantagruel*, pp. 270-1.

² iv, ix (iv of 1548 edition).

Newfoundland in Cartier's day, but have since been utterly exterminated. They were probably, he adds, the same people whom John Cabot described as painting themselves with red ochre, and three of whom he brought to England. As for the trait recorded by Rabelais, that 'all the people were related to one another,' it exactly represents the condition of an Indian totem clan. There is, however, nothing either about this peculiarity or about Eskimos in the accounts of Cartier's voyages, so that if Rabelais is here recording actual experiences he must have got his information from oral sources—either from Cartier or, if he had not made his acquaintance when he wrote this chapter, from Jean Alfonse. For Jean Alfonse's home was at La Rochelle, and there seems good ground for suggesting that Rabelais had met him there in the Fontenay-le-Comte days, and he may have met him again during the interval between his return from Canada in the spring of 1543 and his departure on his last voyage in July, 1544.

From the Island of Ennasin the travellers sail to the Island of Cheli¹, and M. Lefranc suggests that there may be 'some relation between King Panigon's reception of the travellers and that of the Canadian chiefs who fill so large a place in the narrative of Cartier's second voyage.' I am prepared to go a step further, and to identify 'the good King Panigon' with Donnacona, the 'Agonhanna' or lord of Canada. For in the complete edition of the Fourth Book he is called 'King Saint Panigon,' and in a curious passage in chapter xxv of the Fifth Book, which only occurs in the MS. of the Bibliothèque Nationale, we are told that 'Panigon in his last days had retired to a hermitage in this Island' (the Island of Odes) 'and lived in great sanctity and the true Catholic Faith.' Now this forcibly reminds one of the fate of Donnacona, who was treacherously captured by Cartier's orders, carried off to France, and baptized at Saint-Malo, and who died in 'the true Catholic Faith' just before Cartier started on his third voyage in 1540². This resemblance between Donnacona and Panigon leads one the more readily to accept M. Lefranc's suggestion, and to see in Rabelais's words, 'Panigon voulut qu'elle [the queen] et toute sa suite baissassent Pantagruel et ses gens. Telle estoit la courtoisie et coutume du pays,' another reminiscence of Cartier's second voyage, in the narrative of which we read that Donnacona 'pria notre cappitaine luy bailler les bras pour les baiser et accoller qui est leur mode de faire chère en ladicte terre³.' The

¹ iv, x (v of 1548 edition).

² Hakluyt, viii, 263 and 145 (Discourse of Christopher Carleill).

³ Rabelais has doubtless also in his mind Erasmus's account of the similar custom in England.

expression 'faire chère' probably suggested to Rabelais the contempt which Brother John expressed for these ceremonies compared with the more substantial cheer of king Panigon's kitchen.

There is also, if I am not mistaken, another reminiscence of the Indians whom Cartier carried off to France. In IV, xlii we are told that the Queen of the Chitterlings in pursuance of the treaty with Pantagrue sent to Gargantua seventy-eight thousand royal Chitterlings 'under the conduct of the young Niphleseth, Infanta of the island. The noble Gargantua sent them as a present to the great King of Paris; but from change of air and also for want of mustard,...they nearly all died.' But 'the young Niphleseth was preserved and honourably treated; afterwards she was married in a high and wealthy position, and had several fine children, for which God be praised.' Does not this too recall the fate of Cartier's Indians, all of whom died with the exception of one little girl of ten years old¹.

After leaving the Island of Cheli Pantagrue came to that of Procuration, 'which is a country all blurred and blotted. I could make nothing of it. There we saw Pettifoggers and Catchpoles—folk with their hair on. They invited us neither to eat nor drink².' Here again there seems to be a reminiscence of Cartier's First Voyage. Between Chaleur Bay and Gaspé Bay they met with 'thick fogs and obscurity,' and of the people whom they encountered on the shore of Gaspé Bay, we are told that 'they are the poorest folk that there may be in the world,' and that 'they have their heads shorn close all about except a tuft on the top of the head which they tie like a horse's tail³.'

The 1548 edition of the Fourth Book ends abruptly with the fragment of a chapter which tells of the arrival of Pantagrue and his companions after the storm at the Island of the Macreons. Though I do not agree with M. Lefranc in thinking that the greater part of the Fourth Book was already written when this partial publication took place, it is probable that at any rate this particular episode was in a more or less finished state, and that therefore Rabelais was still under the influence of Cartier's voyages when he wrote it. The analogy which M. Lefranc points out between Rabelais's description of the spirit-haunted Island of the Macreons and that which André Thevet gives in his *Cosmographie Universelle* of the imaginary Island of Demons is very striking and interesting. For, as M. Lefranc says, in several maps of the sixteenth century an Isle of Demons figures off the coast of

¹ Hakluyt, *loc. cit.*

² IV, xii (vi of partial edition).

³ Baxter, pp. 108, 109.

Labrador¹, and its legend may well have been familiar to Rabelais. At the beginning of the seventeenth century we find the similar name of the Isle of Devils applied to the Bermudas. It is the name which they bear in the two accounts of the shipwreck of the *Sea Adventure*, by Silvester Jourdan and William Strachey respectively, which Shakespeare probably read before he wrote the *Tempest*².

Nearly all the foregoing instances have been taken from the partial edition of the Fourth Book, which Rabelais published in 1548. In the rest of the book, as it appeared in the complete edition of 1552, there are only slight traces of Cartier's influence. Canada indeed is mentioned by name, the Island of Medamothi, the account of which forms the second chapter of the 1552 edition, being compared with it for size; but I very much doubt whether, as M. Lefranc suggests, Medamothi stands for Newfoundland. For while Medamothi is described as a single island, Newfoundland is represented in all the maps which appeared about the time of Cartier's narratives, and which were based for these parts on his discoveries, as a group of islands, varying from nine in the Harleian Map to three in Descelier's Map of 1550. I think also that M. Lefranc exaggerates the realism in Rabelais's description of the *tarande* which Pantagruel bought from a Scythian merchant of the country of the Gelones (Siberia). It is true that the presence of such a merchant in the neighbourhood of Newfoundland agrees with the idea, which Cartier and Jean Alfonse had both formed, that Canada was 'an end of Asia,' but the description of the *tarande* is practically identical with that of the *Scytharum tarandrus* given by Pliny, and I doubt whether Rabelais knew that it fairly well represents a real animal, the reindeer.

There is another possible reminiscence of Cartier's voyages in the Fourth Book. May not the vocabulary of the language of the natives which appears at the end of the First and Second Voyages³ have suggested to Rabelais the *Briefve declaration d'aucunes dictiones plus obscures* which he appended to the Fourth Book?

In the episode of the Ringing Island which opens the Fifth Book, M. Lefranc finds another reminiscence. He suggests that the idea of

¹ In the map of 'Sebastian Cabot' (1544) it is placed near the Strait of Belle Isle. In Michael Lok's map (1582) it occupies much the same position. In the map from Peter Martyr's *De orbe novo*, published at Paris and dedicated to Hakluyt (1587), it is put several degrees further north.

² Jourdan's narrative is entitled *A Discovery of the Bermudas otherwise called the Isle of Devils*, 1610.

³ There is a similar vocabulary at the end of the French abridgment of Pigafetta's narrative of Magellan's voyages.

an island inhabited by birds who were once men is inspired by Cartier's First Voyage. There we read of three Islands of Birds; first, the Funk Islands to the East of Newfoundland, which were so full of *Apponatz* (great auks), *Godez* (guillemots or razorbills, or possibly both), and *Margaulx* (solan geese) 'that it seemed as if they had been stowed there¹'; secondly, Greenly Island off the coast of Labrador, which was inhabited by guillemots and puffins; thirdly, the Bird Rocks in the Gulf of St Lawrence, which were 'as full of birds as a field of grass,' and which Cartier named Isles des Margaulx. Now the termination of Margaulx is identical with that adopted by Rabelais for the *clergaulx*, *monagaulx* etc. of his Ringing Island. This may be a mere coincidence, but I am inclined to regard it as lending support to M. Lefranc's suggestion. Further support is to be found in the mention in chapter iii of Robert Valbringue, whom all the commentators agree to be Roberval. I may also note that this theory that the framework for the satire of the Ringing Island was suggested to Rabelais by Cartier's voyages agrees with a view which I put forward on other grounds in a former number of this *Review*, namely, that the episode was written in 1546². At the same time I still hold to the opinion that the main source of inspiration is the legend of St Brandan, in which an Island of Birds, who were formerly men, plays a prominent part³. Indeed one source may easily have suggested the other. For had Rabelais looked at a contemporary map, as, for instance, the great map made by Pierre Desceliers at Arques near Dieppe in 1546⁴, he would have seen the Isle aux Margaulx in the Gulf of St Lawrence, and the Isle of St Brandan almost due East of Cape Race.

I must reserve for discussion in another number the interesting question of Rabelais's views on the 'short and straight way to Cathay.'

ARTHUR TILLEY.

¹ *Arrimez*. Du Petit Val has *semés*, a translation of Ramusio's *seminati* (see Baxter, p. 77).

² II, 25 (October, 1906).

³ See my *François Rabelais*, p. 252.

⁴ Known as *La Mappemonde de Henri II*. It is reproduced by Jomard. St Brandan's Isle appears in the maps of Sebastian Cabot and Michael Lok, and in the Paris map dedicated to Hakluyt. Professor Egerton in the *Cambridge Modern History* (iv, 746) notes that in 1631 a grant of the island was gravely requested and as gravely made.