



# **Narrative and Critical History of America: French Explorations and Settlements in North America and Those of the Portuguese, Dutch, and Swedes 1500-1700**

*Various Authors*

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THE continents of the earth have two distinct types of form,—the one regular, symmetrical, triangular in outline; the other without these regularities of shape. To the first of these groups belong the continents of Africa and Australia of the Old World, and the two Americas of the New; to the second, the massive continent of Europe and Asia. Some have sought to reduce the continent of Asia to the same type as that of the other continents; but a glance at a map of the hemispheres will show how different is this Indo-European continent from the other land-masses. These general features of the continents are not only of scientific interest; they are of the utmost importance to the history of man's development upon these several lands. It is not without meaning, that, while man has existed for a great length of time upon all the continents, the only original civilizations that have been developed have been on the lands of the Indo-European continent. Working on several different lines of advance, several diverse races—Aryan, Semitic, Chinese, and perhaps others—have risen from the common plane of barbarism, and have created complicated social systems, languages, literatures, and arts; while on the four other continents, despite their great area, greater fertility, and wider range of physical conditions, no race has ever had a native development to be compared with that undergone by the several successful races of Asia and Europe. In this great Old-World continent there are many highly individualized areas, each separated from the rest of the continent by strong geographical barriers; it has a dozen or so of great peninsulas upon its seaboard, many great islands off its shores, and the interior of the land is divided into many separated regions by mountain ridges or by deserts. It is a land where man necessarily fell into variety, because of the isolation that the geography gave. If we look at the other continents,—namely, the Americas, Africa, and Australia,—we find that they want this varied and detailed structure. They each consist of a great triangular mass, with scanty subordinate divisions. In all of them put together there are not so many great peninsulas as there are in Europe. If we exclude those that are within the Arctic Circle, there are but few on the four regular continents, none of which compare in size or usefulness to man with the greater peninsulas of the Old World. The only one of value is that of Nova Scotia, in North America.

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