

CHAPTER I.

Discovery of Canada.—Early History.—Division into Upper and Lower Canada.—Acadia, Early Political Divisions.—Creation of the Dominion.—Representative Institutions and Responsible Government.—Governors General before Confederation.—Principal Events.

1. British North America was discovered by John and Sebastian Cabot, sailing under commission from King Henry VII. of England, in 1497, in which year they arrived off the coast either of Labrador or of Cape Breton, authorities differing. In 1517 Sebastian Cabot, the King's "Grand Pilot," discovered Hudson Bay.

2. Jean Verrazano, a Florentine navigator, under commission from Francis I. of France, sailed along the shores of North America from Florida to Cape Breton in 1524, and claimed the coast from Nova Scotia to Carolina and all the regions lying beyond as possessions of Francis I. of France, under the name of "New France."

The rival claims thus originated were the chief grounds for the long and bloody conflict which, later on, was waged between Great Britain and France for the possession of this continent and for the maritime supremacy that went with it.

3. Jacques Cartier, of St. Malo, France, landed on July 1st (new style) 1534, at the Port of Brest in Esquimaux Bay, well within the Straits of Belle Isle, there first touching Canadian soil. From that point, by devious wanderings along the North Shore, thence to Newfoundland, thence to the Magdalen Islands, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, and thence to Baie des Chaleurs, he pursued his exploratory cruise, which included three of the present provinces of Canada, reaching Gaspé Basin about the middle of the month. On the bold heights of the entrance of that picturesque sheet of water he planted the cross on the 24th July, and took formal possession of the country in the name of his Royal Master by attaching to the great emblem of Christianity a shield emblazoned with the *Fleurs de Lys*, and bearing the legend "*Vive le Roy de France.*"

This accomplished, he bent the sails of his two 60-ton vessels and sailed for France to give report of his adventures to a delighted sovereign and court.

Cartier returned in 1535 and completed the explorations of the previous year by going up the St. Lawrence River through the Saguenay, the Canada and the Hochelaga regions. In the course of this cruise he learned that the chief town of the central region, where the fresh water began, was called Canada, and in the *Bref récit de la Navigation faite en 1536-37 par Capt. Jacques Cartier* the name first appears as applied to the whole country as then known.*

* In the second map of Ortelius published about the year 1572, New France, Nova Francia, is thus divided:—*Canada*, a district on the St. Lawrence above the river Saguenay; *Chiloga* (Hochelaga), the angle between the Ottawa and the St. Lawrence rivers; *Saguenai*, a district below the river of that name; *Moscosta*, south of the St. Lawrence and east of the river Richelieu; *Arcadi*, west and south of Moscosta; *Norumbega*, name of New Brunswick; *Terra Corterealis*, Labrador—(*Parkman's Pioneers.*)