

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.—Boundaries.

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, (1) 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

(1.) By the Julian Calendar, established by Julius Cæsar, 46 B.C., the months were reconstructed and the Roman year was regulated entirely by the sun, the lunar year being abolished. Thirty-one days were given to the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 8th, 10th and 12th months, and thirty days each to the remaining months except February, which, on every fourth year, received an intercalary day, made by the *Sexto Calendas Martius*, whence leap year came to be called *Bissextile*. As the Julian year had 365½ days, its length exceeded the true solar year by eleven minutes and fourteen seconds, so that in the course of centuries the equinox fell back several days. To correct this error, Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 reformed the calendar by suppressing ten days, restoring the equinox to 21st March. France, with other Roman Catholic countries, adopted the new style at once, and the 10th October, 1582, became the 20th October. Germany adopted it in 1700. By the Calendar Amendment Act, called also Lord Chesterfield's Act, passed by the British Parliament in 1751, it was decreed that the 3rd September, 1752, should be 14th September, 1752, the difference between the old and the new styles having increased, since 1582, by one day. The same statute decreed that the beginning of the new year should be 1st January instead of 25th March, beginning with 1753. The Julian calendar is still in use in Russia and in Greece.