

I.—HISTORY OF CANADA.

Prepared under the direction of ARTHUR G. DOUGHTY, C.M.G., LL.D.,
Deputy Minister, Public Archives of Canada.



THE year 1608, Henry IV. being on the throne of France and James I. on that of England, may be regarded as the birth-year of Canada. The country and the name had been made known by the voyages of the Breton sea-captain, Jacques Cartier, of St. Malo, in the early half of the preceding century, and one or two ill-fated and wholly abortive attempts at settlement had subsequently been made; but in that year, under the leadership of Samuel de Champlain, of Brouages in Saintonge, a hold was taken of the soil that was not destined to be relaxed. It was but a slender colony that he planted under the shadow of the great rock of Quebec; but the germ of life was there, a life that for many years grew but feebly, that flickered at times as if on the point of extinction, but which, surviving all perils and difficulties, finally struck its roots deep and, gathering force, branched out into a numerous and vigorous people.



JACQUES CARTIER

The claim of France to the St. Lawrence country was held to have been established by the discoveries made in the name of the French King, Francis I. It seems to have been assumed that what was then called Acadia, which may be described roughly as the region of our present Maritime provinces, had also become French territory, notwithstanding the fact that Cape Breton had been discovered in 1497 by John Cabot, sailing under a commission from Henry VII. of England. During the five years preceding the arrival of Champlain's colony at Quebec, settlements had been attempted by the French at Port Royal (Annapolis) in Nova Scotia, and at the mouth of the St. Croix river, Champlain himself taking part in the expedition thither.

The main motive for the occupation of the country, so far as the individuals who took part in these enterprises—Champlain perhaps alone excepted—were concerned, was the command of the fur trade; though the royal commissions or patents under which they operated invariably contained stipulations for actual colonization and for missionary work among the Indians. These stipulations were more or less systematically evaded by a succession of associations or companies to whom privileges were granted. Of course there were difficulties in the way: the native Indians were very uncertain in their movements and dispositions,