

REPORT

ON THE

CONSTITUTION OF CANADA.

CERTIFIED COPY of a Report of a Committee of the Honourable the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency the Governor General in Council on the 11th April, 1890.

The Committee of the Privy Council have had their attention called to a Circular Despatch of the 26th of March, 1888, and to Despatch (general) of the 18th of December, 1888, from the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, requesting that Your Excellency will at your earliest convenience give him the information therein requested for presentation to the House of Commons, respecting the Executive, etc., of the Dominion.

The Secretary of State, to whom the Despatches were referred, has caused to be prepared a paper herewith, giving a general view of the Constitution of the Dominion, including also a section devoted exclusively to the Constitution and powers of the Local or Provincial Governments, as well as to the Judiciary and Municipal system.

The Minister observes that introductory to the paper a few necessary historical notes have been given, touching the growth of Parliamentary institutions and Responsible Government in the several Provinces of Canada.

The Committee recommend that Your Excellency be pleased to forward a copy of this minute, together with the paper submitted to the Colonial Office, in answer to the circular despatch above mentioned.

All which is respectfully submitted,

JOHN J. MCGEE,
Clerk, Privy Council.

The Honourable
The Secretary of State.

THE CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT OF CANADA.

I.—HISTORY.

Canada is said to have been discovered in 1497 by John and Sebastian Cabot, under commission from King Henry VII. of England. In 1524, the coast from Carolina to Nova Scotia, and all the region lying beyond, was claimed by Jean Verazzani as possessions of Francis I. of France, under the name of "New France," a name which was afterwards applied to most of the territory claimed to belong to that nation in the New World. Ten years later Jacques Cartier, of St. Malo, explored the St. Lawrence, and, in the following year, took possession of certain territory in Canada, or New France, under authority from the French King. Nova Scotia was first colonized by the French in 1598. Canada proper remained under the sovereignty of France up to 1759, when, by force of arms, it passed to English rule; it was formally ceded to Great Britain under the Treaty of Paris, 1763. As early as 1758 representative institutions were granted to Nova Scotia, which then embraced New Brunswick also. In 1785 the latter was erected into a separate colony, with a representative assembly. In 1763, Prince Edward Island was annexed to Nova Scotia, but was constituted a separate colony with a Legislature in 1770. In 1791,