

Hist. Can. Congress

PAPER IV.—NOTE ON AN INCIDENT OF EARLY
CANADIAN HISTORY.

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(Read before the Society, Wednesday, 16th December, 1863.)

IN my opening address at the commencement of the present session, I spoke of the numerous discrepancies in the details of almost all events in Roman history, as they are handed down to us, and I expressed an opinion that the modern critics lay far too much stress upon these, as throwing a suspicion upon the general authenticity of the narrative. As an illustration of the very various versions, which may be given by different historians, of an event, the authenticity of which is, nevertheless, perfectly undoubted, I propose to call your attention to one of the earliest incidents in Canadian history, of which hardly any two authors give the same account, whilst we know all the circumstances connected with it upon the very best authority, that of the chief actor himself. The incident in question is Champlain's expedition in 1615, in which he first visited the great lakes, and by which civilized man became acquainted with what is now Upper Canada. The discovery led, indeed, to nothing at the time, as it was not till a full half-century afterwards that the French obtained any permanent footing in the upper country ; but it had, nevertheless, some very important consequences. It was in his company, on that occasion, that the Recollet Fathers first penetrated to the country of the Hurons, and paved the way for those missions whose fate forms such an interesting episode in our early annals ; and the unprovoked attack upon the Iroquois, which formed the excuse for the expedition, was the forerunner of those devastating Indian wars, which cramped the energies of the French colonists during more than a century, and engendered a hostility which was never thoroughly allayed, as long as their rule existed on this continent.