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CANADA DURING THE VICTORIAN ERA

A SHORT HISTORICAL REVIEW IN TWO PARTS

PART I.

It was in the age of a great English queen that England first recognized the fact that her mission was on the ocean, and it was then that her enterprising sons first sought adventures in the mysterious West.

Spain and Portugal had won a colonial empire from which they drew great treasures, the gold and silver of Mexico and Peru, the silks and spices of the East, long before England had gained a foothold in the New World. Sebastian Cabot, it is true, had sailed along the shores of the northern continent even before Columbus touched the mainland of South America. Frobisher had ventured, many years later, among the icebergs and rocks of the North, and Raleigh and Gilbert had attempted to found a settlement in countries where, in the poetic language of those days, it was thought "men live after the manner of the golden age." By the close of the reign of Elizabeth, however, England did not own a single colony in the Western Hemisphere; but the brilliant successes of Drake and Hawkins in the Spanish seas stimulated the pride and enterprise of Englishmen, and from the moment the Armada was scattered by the winds of heaven, the maritime supremacy of Spain began to pass to the foe she at once feared and hated. Spain, Portugal, and Holland were soon left behind in the competition for maritime and colonial dominion, and the conflict was eventually fought out between France and England on the continent of America. Jacques Cartier had discovered at an early date* the great valley of the St. Lawrence, and gave France her claim to a vast territory. Several attempts were made to found settlements, but none succeeded until the first part of the seventeenth century. Both England and France entered about the same time on a career of colonization in North America. Champlain was already encamped with his little band of settlers on the picturesque heights of Quebec† when the Pilgrim Fathers landed on the rock-bound coast of New England. Then, for a century and a half, the

* In 1535; he reached Hochelaga, now Montreal, 2d October in that year. Charlevoix, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, i., 17-19.

† Champlain arrived at Quebec (Stadaconé) on the 3d July, 1608, and laid the foundations of the picturesque town. Charlevoix, i., 188.