

BRIEF HISTORY OF CANADA.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

An Unknown Land.—Four hundred years ago the territory now forming the Dominion of Canada was one vast wilderness. Save the wild animals that roamed through the forests its only inhabitants then were Indians scattered thinly over the country. To the ancestors of the Canadian people, most of whom lived in the British Isles and in France, the very existence of America at that time was unknown.

The Northmen.—The Northmen from Norway and Denmark did indeed visit Canada nine hundred years ago. While some of these roving pirates were wresting portions of England from our Saxon forefathers, others, sailing north-westerly into Arctic waters, established a colony in Greenland. One of them, Biorn by name, on his way to this new colony, was carried far away by a north-east wind to this new world of ours. Then about the time that the famous Canute the Dane began his rule over England, Leif, son of Eirik the Red, sailed to this western land and explored its coasts. To several places here he gave names—Hellu-land (the stony land), Mark-land (the forest land), and Vin-land (the vine land), supposed to be the countries now called Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Massachusetts.

The Northmen, however, made no long stay here. The fact of their visit, if it was ever known at all in Southern Europe, was five hundred years later wholly forgotten.