



CHAPTER I.

MONTREAL UNDER FRENCH RULE

PRIOR to the year 1535 the history of Montreal is but largely conjecture. The chief cause of its first settlement was, no doubt, the wonderful fertility of the island, together with its position as regards the waterways of the country; to the east being a broad, safe river leading to the great gulf; while to the west, there was spread out like a fan thousands of miles of more or less navigable water-courses that permitted the canoes of the Indians to penetrate into the interior in all directions.

The discovery of Newfoundland by Cabot, in 1497, was the first of a series of explorations that finally brought Jacques Cartier up the St. Lawrence. A native of St. Malo, he had been for some time engaged in the cod fisheries of Newfoundland, and had taken the lead in exploring the coasts of the then mysterious continent of the western hemisphere. Having received a commission from Francis I, of France, in 1534, he sailed up the St. Lawrence as far as Gaspé, but returned to France the same year. The following year, however, a better equipped expedition took him to Quebec, then called Stadacona, where he left his ships and proceeded up the river in smaller boats, and arrived off Hochelaga (as Montreal was then called) on the 3rd October, 1535.

The reports that he had heard at Quebec of a large In-



Early Indian Life.