

## BRITISH AMERICA.

### CHAPTER V.

#### HISTORY OF THE LOWER PROVINCES TILL THEIR SEPARATION IN 1784.

38. The territory now generally called the Lower Provinces of British America, including also part of Maine, was, till its cession to England, called the Province of *Acadia* or *Nouvelle France*. Its history dates from the commission of Henry VII. to the Cabots, to search for new countries, and occupy them in the name of England, March 5th, 1496. John Cabot and his three sons set sail, in the following May, in five ships, freighted by the merchants of London and Bristol, and reached a point on the Labrador or the New Brunswick coast, which they named *Prima Vista*. This point, which some suppose to be opposite Prince Edward Island, and others, with perhaps better reason, opposite Newfoundland, is the first point of the continent discovered by Europeans. Cabot afterwards visited the island opposite (Prince Edward Island or Newfoundland), carrying off a few of the natives, proceeded north to Lat. 67 deg. 30 m., and finding thus far no trace of a north west passage, turned his vessels south again, and had coasted as far as Florida, when a mutiny compelled his return home.

39. It may seem strange that England made no attempt to follow up her discoveries; but the Reformation was at this period engrossing all attention there. France, which was not so much engaged in that great conflict of principles, was therefore more at leisure to prosecute colonial enterprise. In 1518, the Baron de Lery attempted to settle Sable Island and Canso, but failed. In 1534, Jacques Cartier discovered the mouth of the Miramichi and the Bay of Chaleur, the latter of which he named from the great heat there at the time (midsummer): this was probably the first landing of any European on the shores of New Brunswick. Cartier set up the *fleur de lis*, in token of French sovereignty, at Point Gaspe, but made no attempt to settle. Seven years afterwards, however, the French began to fortify Cape Breton, and many adventurous Bretons and Normans repaired thither to secure a share of the large profits then to be made in the fish and fur trades. The attempts of Sir Humphrey Gilbert (commissioned by Queen Elizabeth in 1579) belong rather to the annals of Newfoundland than to those of Acadia; which latter country he was sailing for when he was wrecked. His brother, Sir John, settled at the mouth of the Kennebec in 1607, but died there, and the enterprise failed. In 1598, Henri IV., who encouraged French emigration to this Colony, sent the Marquis de la Roche with a number of convicts to settle it, but his attempts proved a miserable failure.

40. In 1604, a more systematic attempt was made, under the patronage of the same king by De Monts, a Huguenot, as were