

CHAPTER VII

CANADIAN ARCTIC ARCHIPELAGO

THE areas of the arctic islands of Canada approximate a million square miles, nearly twice that of all other northern islands. In 1880 the British Government ceded to the Dominion all claims to English territory in polar waters to the north of the continent of North America. The limits fixed were between longitudes 60° and 140° W. and northward to the Pole. Canada has not confined itself to a theoretical sovereignty but has substantiated its claims by occupation and administration.¹

EXPLORATIONS

The basis of geographic knowledge of the principal islands south of the 75th parallel was laid by the voyage of William Parry, 1819-1820, in search of the Northwest Passage. Discovering Lancaster Sound, he sailed west through Barrow Strait and Melville Sound into M'Clure Strait, where he was turned back by impassable ice in 114° W., almost in sight of Beaufort Sea. Parry's most important discoveries to the north were the

¹ The northernmost islands are treated in Chapter VIII.