

I.

We first notice a paper of Dr. Samuel Edward Dawson inserted in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*.¹ It is called in that country "an admirable monograph, incomparably the best thing ever written on the subject, and to the author of which we must all doff our caps." That paper is also represented, in certain academic quarters, "to have settled the long-disputed question of Cabot's landfall."²

The problem has been mooted by Dr. Dawson, we confess, with skill and an adequate knowledge of the subject. To us, personally, it is a positive relief to see at last a critic who answers facts, arguments and documents, not with shallow and puerile reasons, betraying an incredible ignorance of the matter, as is so often the case, but by resorting to objections which deserve to be seriously discussed, however croneous they may prove to be in important particulars.

Dr. Dawson is convinced that the landfall of John Cabot in 1497 is the easternmost point of Cape Breton; and he has endeavored to prove it by a theory of his own concerning the magnetic variations, at first as follows:

"If Columbus on a direct western course dropped two hundred and forty miles from Gomera his point of departure to his landfall in the Antilles in 1492 with a variation of one point west, it is altogether probable that John Cabot with a variation of a point and a half would have dropped, in 1497, three hundred and sixty miles to the south on his western course across the Atlantic; and, again, if John Cabot laid his course to the west by compass from latitude 53° north the variation, so much greater than that observed by Columbus, would have carried him clear of Cape Race and to the next probable landfall, Cape Breton."³

If language means anything, it is plain that, according to the above extract, Dr. Dawson's premises were Columbus's course from Gomera and Cabot's course from latitude 53° north. It likewise sets forth as the basis for measuring the length of the line of divergence the length of the course from Gomera to Guanahani. For what can be clearer than the phrase which we underscore? Nor is the wording corrected or contradicted anywhere in Dr. Dawson's memoir.

At the outset it must be said that even admitting, for the sake of argument, Dr. Dawson's hypothesis that John Cabot experienced a magnetic variation of a point and a half, he nevertheless would

¹ Vol. XII., Sec. II., 1894, and Vol. II., Sec. II., 1896.

² Dr. Harvey's remarks in *op. cit.*, 1896, Vol. II., Sec. II., p. 3.

³ *Op. cit.*, 1894, p. 58.