

#### DID CABOT RETURN FROM HIS SECOND VOYAGE?

This important question of maritime history acquires additional interest from a document recently discovered in the archives of Westminster Abbey.

It is well known that John Cabot, by virtue of letters patent granted to him and his three sons by Henry VII., equipped a small vessel, and with a crew of eighteen men, sailed from Bristol in the spring of 1497, to make discoveries "in whatever part of the world heretofore unknown to all Christians." He landed somewhere on the northeast coast of the new world, and returned home after an absence of only three months. That is the origin of the regal title of England to the greatest part of North America.

As John Cabot was believed to have discovered Cipango and the Kingdom of the Great Khan, he found no difficulty in obtaining letters patent for a second expedition. Early in May, 1498, the bold navigator sailed again westward, leading a small fleet of five ships. In July following, news was received in London that one of the vessels had been forced by stress of weather to put into Ireland. That is the last that was ever heard of John Cabot's second and last voyage.

He had a son, called Sebastian, who arrogated to himself the merit of the achievement and lived and prospered, in England as well as in Spain, to an extreme old age, upon this mendacious boast. Nay, during several centuries nearly every one believed that he had been the sole discoverer of Labrador, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Canada, although authentic documents tend to prove that he was not even on board when these discoveries were made.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the second voyage, historians, as a rule, positively asserted that it had also been accomplished by Sebastian Cabot. Thus Biddle taught that John Cabot died shortly after the patent of February 1498 had been issued, and, besides, that so far from being a seaman, he only "followed the trade of merchandise;" George Bancroft asserted that John Cabot had made no voyage whatever under the second charter; while Mr. D'Avezac maintained that Sebastian took the place of the patentee, apparently owing to the latter's "unexpected death."

<sup>1</sup> Warden's Accounts of the Drapers' Company of London, from March 1st to April 9th, 1521.