

rative of his discovery, Yet it was a circumstance of no small importance, not merely as a matter of dry historical record, but as pregnant with the course of future events, that on that 24th of June, 1497, John Cabot took possession of the mouth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence for the English king, and set flying the red cross of St. George from the headland of Cape Breton. St. John's Day, June 24th. 1497, the date of Cabot's discovery, may fairly be taken as the true beginning of the history of Canada.

For what is the history of Canada? In its true scope I think it is to be regarded as the history of the series of European settlements attracted into the great northern estuary of the continent, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, spreading along its coasts and tributary waters, overflowing into the territories westward to the Pacific Ocean, and ultimately becoming grouped under the united government and common name of Canada. The history of Canada is the history of that Northern Mediterranean; of the various migrations and settlements; of rivalries and conflicts which attended its occupation by men springing from different European races; and of unification, first by conquest and cession, afterwards by the peaceful co-operative processes of time.

From the date of Cabot's discovery, European enterprise seems never to have quite lost its hold upon the new-found lands. Cabot brought home to England, whence the news spread over the maritime countries of Europe, glowing reports of the profusion of fish to be found in those western waters. The fact was recalled upon every subsequent map. An island or port upon the coast of Newfoundland, was, it is supposed, named by John or Sebastian Cabot, after the Baccalios fish well known to Basque and Breton fishermen. These sturdy mariners, attracted by the report, and already accustomed to extend their fishing ventures as far north as the

boisterous waters of Iceland, seem to have rapidly diverted their course westerly to the new fishing grounds beyond the Atlantic. The obscure enterprises of merchants and fishermen are not among the matters recorded in the histories of the period, which take little note of acts of daring or enterprise which were not performed under a royal warrant. Still, we meet with incidental traces of the presence of these continental fishermen. When Jacques Cartier made his voyage, under the auspices of the French crown, in 1535, his report refers to Cape Breton under the name of "the land of the Bretons." He also mentions the circumstance of meeting, on the coast of Newfoundland, certain shipping from La Rochelle. Both these references are recorded in a manner to indicate a certain notoriety in regard to the pre-existence of a Breton trade in that region. Recent patient explorers of sea-port records of the Norman and Breton ports, Honfleur, Rouen, and Dieppe, have brought to light the precise names of ships and ship owners that voyaged to Newfoundland waters, at least from the year 1506 onwards. Thus, the new-found land and the great estuary it guarded were never lost to European knowledge during the intervals between the English or Cabotian discoveries, in 1497 and 1498, and the voyages, under French auspices, of Verrazano, in 1524, and of Jacques Cartier, in 1535.

Verrazano's expedition merely followed the track of Sebastian Cabot up and down the Atlantic coast. Cartier took up the thread of exploration, under a commission from Francis the First of France. On his first voyage, in 1535, he traced the outlines of the Gulf of St. Lawrence to its north-western limit, rounding the island of Anticosti. A second voyage in the following year led him, (always in pursuit of the fleeting vision of a waterway to China), into the St. Lawrence itself, which mighty stream he followed still hopefully, until he left the