

lish merchants ; and the specimens of gold, carried home by Columbus, excited an ardent desire of prosecuting this discovery. The adventurous spirit of John Cabot was heightened by the ardour of his son Sebastian, who, though young, was ambitious, and, at the same time, well versed in every science, subservient to a mathematical knowledge of the earth, and to navigation. 1495.

With these incitements to the meditated enterprise, he communicated to the king his project, which was favourably received. A commission was accordingly, on the fifth of March, granted to him and his three sons,¹ giving them liberty to sail to all parts of the east, west, and north, under the royal banners and ensigns, to discover countries of the heathen, unknown to Christians ; to set up the king's banners there ; to occupy and possess, as his subjects, such places as they could subdue ; giving them the rule and jurisdiction of the same, to be holden on condition of paying to the king one fifth part of all their gains.² Commission to the Cabots.

1496.

While Columbus was successfully establishing the foundations of Spanish grandeur in the New World, his enemies were assiduously labouring to deprive him of his merited honour and emoluments. The calamities, arising from a long voyage and an unhealthful climate, were represented as the effects

¹ The style of the commission is, "*Jobanni Cabotto, Civi Venetiarum, ac Ludovico, Sebastiano, et Sancto, Filiis dicti Johannis*" &c. It is dated the 5th of March in the eleventh year of the reign of Henry VII. Henry was crowned Oct. 30, 1485. If *that* year be reckoned the *first* of his reign, this commission is rightly placed by Hakluyt, Robertson, and others, in 1495 ; but, if the first year of his reign be reckoned from 1486, the commission must be placed, where Rymer and some others have placed it, in 1496.

² Hakluyt, iii. 4, 5, 7 ; where may be seen the Letters Patent ; as also in Rymer's *Fœdera*, xii. 595 ; and in Chalmers' *Annals*, i. 7. Chalmers says, it is the oldest American State Paper of England. See also Purchas, i. 718. Life of Columbus, c. lxiii. P. Martyr, 46. Belknap Biog. i. 149, 150. Robertson, book ix. 16. Forster's *Voyages*, 266.