

mother. It may be concluded that the wife inquired about Hagar and Ishmael. But the architect took another view of the matter. He entered an action for damages against the doctor for breach of professional secrecy and in addition demands that he be struck off the doctor's eculapian roll. Society could not exist twenty-four hours if model husbands had their private affairs so divulged.

The English Embassy appears to be on the *qui vive*; it has superseded its French by English *domestiques*. No doubt some eel has been discovered under the rock. As a rule all Embassies ought to only have servants of their own nationality. The trial of Bismark—now in the corner for the second time—*versus* Anim, some years ago, proved what the intelligent foreigner, in the rôle of a servant, can do.

M. Faure is a capital president. After visiting all the hospitals he is now doing the museums and will doubtless finish by making pilgrimages to all the monuments. He will shame Parisians into following his example. There are thousands of citizens who have never put foot inside many public buildings as yet. They always intend doing so.

Z.

Letters to the Editor.

OUR QUADRI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION.

SIR,—May I be allowed a little space for reply to Mr. Howland's letter in your issue of the 12th inst.

To my mind Mr. Howland, with many others, has permitted himself to be led astray by the devious and doubtful suggestions of modern critics in relation to matters respecting which doubt would be quite impossible were it not necessary, from one motive or other, that some special theory should be cultivated—a feat which can only be accomplished by perversion or misrepresentation of the facts themselves. In saying this I do not wish to be understood as imputing any desire to mislead upon the part of the critics. I merely desire to express the opinion that, in too many instances, a theory being once formed the facts are innocently apt to be strained to conformity with the fancy. Of this we have innumerable instances in every department of literature, both sacred and profane, as well as in history, science and the arts. A striking instance was afforded only a few years ago in the erection upon the filled in area which formerly constituted what was called "the back bay," of Boston of a very imposing statue of Eric the Red, intended to commemorate the discovery by that celebrated adventurer (for what else can it commemorate?) of the junction of the tides of Massachusetts Bay with the muddy estuary of the Charles River.

I have no doubt whatever that Mr. Howland's acquaintance with the works of modern writers and essayists upon the subject under discussion is much more extensive than my own; still, I am not without a pretty intimate acquaintance with most of them, and I think I have seen copies of many of the maps to which he refers. Upon these latter, however, I place no reliance whatever for authoritative determination as to the exact locality of Cabot's landfall; no more, indeed, than I should be disposed to place upon a modern translation of the hieroglyphs of an Egyptian sarcophagus for the personal identification of its occupant. The Cabots were good sailors, and perhaps as good navigators as any of their cotemporaries; but their works show that they were not skilful cartographers,—an art but little practised at that period. Copies of their works which I have seen would apply as faithfully to the delineation of a stretch of coast line anywhere between the Straits of Belle Isle and Hamilton Inlet or any other point on the eastern coast of Labrador, or between Cape Bauld and Canada Bay or White Bay on the coast of Newfoundland, as well as they would to any part of the Cape Breton coast from Cape North to Bras d'Or Lake. Indeed, I may say that in the two latter cases the coast lines are so exactly alike, both in their compass bearings and their general configuration, as to make it difficult to determine to other from which, or to say which of the two the old maps were intended to represent. This opinion, which I have always held, has just been confirmed by a very critical writer in this month's issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, who says:—"Such scanty record was kept of Cabot's voyages in 1497-98 that we cannot tell what land the Cabots first saw—whether the bleak coast of Northern

Labrador or some point as far south as Cape Breton." This is the assurance of one of our modern critics, and I think it will be found to be the opinion expressed in the new history by Judge Prowse, a gentleman with whom I am well acquainted and whom I regard as one of the best informed authorities on this point to be found in North America or anywhere else.

Now, sir, the readiest and most practical method of determining this question is to drop the critics and let the discoverers speak for themselves. It is by the seals which they have attached to their work that we have to determine its authenticity. If Cleopatra's Needle, or the plinths and columns of Karnak or Dendera were inscribed with Greek or Roman characters instead of Egyptian hieroglyphs, we should ascribe these memorials to Roman or Grecian, rather than to Egyptian, handiwork. And so with the nomenclature still attaching to the localities under consideration. Cabot was a Venetian, and not a Breton or Norman, adventurer, and the names he applied to his discoveries would be Venetian or Latin and not French. To his first landfall he gave the name which would naturally occur to him and in his own language, viz.: "Prima Vista" or Bona Vista ("a *Caboto primum reperto*"). To the adjacent island he gave the name of Baccalaos, "from the vast quantity of fish with which the waters abounded" and with which they abound to this day. Close to these localities, and within five or six hours' sailing distance of them, is the harbor of St. John's, and between the two points are the two Bays of Trinity and Conception, which still retain the original designations which he no doubt gave them.

If, then, any portions of the coast of Cape Breton or Nova Scotia were distinguished by these appellations no doubt would be raised in my mind as to their identification with Cabot's first landfall. This is not the case, however; on the contrary, the names distinguishing the coasts of Cape Breton are purely French, and such as were originally attached to them by Breton adventurers by whom they were discovered and named at least seven years after Cabot's voyages. If Cape Breton had been discovered by Cabot, it would not have been distinguished by such names as Bras d'Or, Aspee, Cheticamp or Glace Bay; it would in all probability have been distinguished by the more representative and appropriate designations which he would have employed rather than those suggested by a few obscure and comparatively unknown Breton villages—of the existence of which he probably never heard.

I have not entered upon this discussion, Mr. Editor, with any disposition whatever to question the propriety of erecting anywhere, whether in Cape Breton or any other part of the Dominion, a substantial memorial in honour of Cabot and his associates. It is a work which should have been accomplished long ago. I simply desire to protest in the interest of exact historical facts—of the accuracy of which abundant evidence still exists—against any mistake being made which may tend to mislead or confound the future historian. That is a matter in regard to which we cannot be too careful. No erection of memorials, statues or other insignia, no matter where they may be set up, can be so effective in determining the exact locations of Cabot's exploits as will be the designations with which he himself endowed them. Cape Bonavista (Cabot's own *Prima Vista*) and Baccalaos Island, two of the most extreme eastern points of land upon the Atlantic coast of Newfoundland still retain their historic appellations, and still look out upon the ocean as they did when he first saw them and gave them their names; and St. John's will in all probability bear testimony to his heroism in the name with which he endowed it on that 24th day of June, three hundred and ninety-eight years ago, long after the memorials which may be set up and those who set them up have passed into that oblivion which time, "the consumer of all things," inexorably provides for humanity and its labours.

In another short article, which I hope you will do me the favour to publish, I think I shall be able to satisfy Mr. Howland and others that no reliability whatever can be placed upon Cabot's map, and but little upon many of his general representations as to the extent of his first Western voyage. One of his contemporaries has referred to him as "a great liar as well as a great navigator," and it is quite

*"Nicholl's Life of Cabot," p. 112. London: Sampson, Low & Co. 1869.