

THE OUTCOME OF THE CABOT QUATER-CENTENARY

It cannot be said that the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of the American continent by John Cabot was celebrated with as much enthusiasm as that of the West Indies by Columbus. A good test is the number of historical and literary productions published on those two occasions. For the achievement of the great Genoese, we know of six hundred and fifty books and pamphlets printed in 1891 and 1892, in nearly all the languages of Europe, in prose and verse. Concerning Cabot's discovery, we have heard of only two or three volumes, a dozen review and newspaper articles, three memoirs, an address, four speeches, two medleys of barefaced plagiarism, the one fabricated in Bristol, the other, quite recently, in London, and no poem at all. The indifference of the public, at home and abroad, was further shown by the utter failure of the subscription which Americans residing in England started for the purpose of arranging a plan whereby adequate notice might be taken of the event in Bristol. Yet John Cabot is certainly more to the people of England and of the United States than Christopher Columbus is in many respects, although he cannot be justly credited with greater forecast in the accomplishment of his famous deed.

Scanty as those publications may be, they nevertheless afford a certain interest. Three or four of them are curious on different accounts. One shows original investigations, and although based upon positive errors, with conclusions quite as erroneous, it does credit to its author. Another exhibits honest recantations, indicating that conscientious historians now generally adopt notions concerning the Cabots, particularly Sebastian, which a few years ago were almost hooted at. A third and fourth afford fair samples of the historical erudition of distinguished orators, lay and clerical. We only propose to examine the questions alleged to have been solved in all these Cabotian effusions, and especially the intrinsic worth of the statements brought forward to bolster delusions regarding the memorable transatlantic voyage of 1497.