

EXPLORERS OF CANADA.

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"The New Fonde Londe quhar men goeth a-fishing" was seen first by John Cabot in 1497, according to written documents of that date, but the fishing grounds may have been known and utilized by the Basques¹ a good while before then. The merit of Cabot consists in the divulgence of his own discovery, whilst the Basques would keep it secret for themselves. The tablet placed June, 1897, at the entrance of the legislative building at Halifax describes the fact in the following terms: "John Cabot first planted the flags of England and Venice on the 24th June, 1497, on the northeastern seaboard of North America." This cannot be denied; nevertheless it cannot be called the discovery of Canada. We all agree that it was the first step towards the effective attempts of subsequent navigators. The committee who placed the tablet avoided misunderstandings by the expression "north eastern seaboard of North America," because the precise locality is a point in dispute—some believed it was Greenland, Newfoundland perhaps, or perchance Cape Breton—but it seems clear that Cabot did not know what kind of a country existed beyond the headlands he visited. The same uncertainty surrounds the voyage of his son, Sebastien, in the following year.

Gaspar de Cortereal sailed from Portugal in 1500 and struck Labrador. He entered the Gulf of St. Lawrence without making much of it. Of course he carried back with him a cargo of Indians and sold them into slavery.

The Normands kept several vessels fishing around Newfoundland and Magdalen Islands as early as 1504. Jean Denis, *alias* Rongnoust, of Honfleur, published a map of the coasts of Newfoundland and neighbouring places in 1506. One of the landing places on the great island was called after him. Lescarbot says that the Basques, the Normands and the Bretons were regularly visiting the banks for the purpose of fishing.

Thomas Aubert, of Dieppe, travelled through the Gulf in 1508. It is said in the "History of Dieppe" that one of his vessels was commanded by Jean Verazzano, and that it went eighty leagues in the Gulf.

¹ Compare Port-aux-Basques, note, p. 231 of this number.