



SEBASTIAN CABOT.

his agency, took the first step in the direction of that remarkable maritime enterprise which, in later centuries, was to be the admiration and envy of all other nations.

John Cabot was a Genoese by birth and a Venetian citizen by adoption, who came, probably during the last decade of the fifteenth century, to the historic town of Bristol, long famous in the story of English maritime adventure, and well described as "seeming to swim on the waters." The discovery of the islands now known as the "Antilles" by his great countryman impelled Cabot to seek English aid for a new venture to a mysterious west. He was confident he could find, by a more northerly route than that taken by Columbus, those rich Asiatic countries which were, for so many years—for more than a century after the voyages of Columbus and Cabot—the

great incentive to maritime adventure and exploration. Eventually he obtained from Henry VII. letters patent, under date of March 5th, 1496, granting to himself and his three sons, Lewis, Sebastian and Sancio, the right to navigate in any direction they pleased under the English flag, and "at their own cost and charges seek out and discover unknown lands," and to acquire for England the dominion over the countries so discovered. Early in the month of May, 1497, John Cabot sailed from Bristol in a ship called "The Matthew," and manned by English sailors. In all probability he was accompanied by Sebastian, then a young man of about 21 years of age, and who in later times,

through the credulity of his friends and his own garrulity and vanity, took that place in the estimation of the world which his father now rightly fills. Sometime towards the end of June they made a land-fall on the northeastern coast of North America—the exact site being still a matter of controversy.

John Cabot returned to Bristol with the news of his discovery, and was received with much honour. Henry VII., a parsimonious king, recognized the enterprise of the Italian navigator by giving a largesse of £10 "to him that founde the new Ile," a geographical designation showing the current belief of those times that such discoveries as Columbus's and Cabot's were islands or lands adjacent to the rich countries of Asia. A Venetian, Lorenzo Fasqualigo, wrote to his brothers at Venice: "A Venetian has come back and says he has discovered, 700