

petition with rival foreign establishments, all initiated by governments, and hampered to the end by despotic control.

Armed with his *generous* commission from the thrifty king, in the early part of May, 1497 Cabot set sail from Bristol, with a company of eighteen to man his one small vessel. Its model, no doubt, was like that with which we were familiarized by the visit of the caravels in the summer of 1893, on their way to the Columbian Exhibition at Chicago. In that frail and perilous craft, John Cabot, probably accompanied by his son Sebastian, arrived at the northern extremity of Cape Breton on St. John's Day, the 24th of June, 1497. He must have laid a fairly direct course, with favorable winds, for he made the land in considerably less than two months, or not much over the average time of the north Atlantic voyage down to the middle of the eighteenth century. The records of John Cabot's expedition, derived at second hand, are obscure in description of localities and movements in a hitherto unknown region; but it is sufficiently clear that he led the way to the great northern estuary of the continent, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, about which and its tributary rivers so much history was thereafter to accumulate. His first landfall on the continent was on Cape Breton, where he planted the cross and the standard of the British king, Henry the Seventh, under whose commission he had sailed, with the flag of his own Venetian republic beneath it. He is reputed to have navigated northerly through the gulf, sighting Prince Edward Island, to which he gave its ancient name of St. John's Isle, and thence making his way out of the gulf by its northerly entrance, the Straits of Belle Isle, now constantly followed by Canadian shipping during the like summer months. Passing through that narrow strait, he would have had the Labrador coast on his left hand

and Newfoundland on his right. Either thence, or from Cape Breton direct, he shaped his return course for England, arriving after a brief absence of about three months.

Strong doubts have been thrown by Dr. E. E. Danson, in a learned and ingenious paper read before the Royal Society Canada (1894), upon this supposed extension of John Cabot's voyage into the Gulf. The identity of the discoverers of St. John's Isle with Prince Edward Island seems to be conclusively disproved. At the same time the learned writer establishes, critically and conclusively, the principal fact of Cabot's landfall in Cape Breton on the 24th June, 1497.

The English claim through John Cabot's discovery in 1497 was confirmed by a more extended voyage of his son Sabastian in the following year along the Atlantic coast, and was admitted on the face of the earliest Spanish maps of the world. On one prepared in 1500 by Juan de la Cosa, a companion of Columbus, what is now called Cape Breton is named *Cavo de Ynglaterra*, and along the coast appears the legend "*descubierta por Ingleses.*"

Edmund Burke stated in Parliament, during the debate over the American colonies, that the fact of Cabot's discovery was sufficiently certain "to establish a right to our settlements in North America." Five years before Cabot's discovery of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Columbus' discovery had been made known to the world. To the great adventure of Columbus, dazzling the mind of Europe with golden visions and the wealth of sunlit lands, priority of interest and renown will always attach. But it was an event only second to that in interest, and I believe one yet more auspicious to humanity, when John Cabot set the prow of his Bristol merchantman, bearing the flag of England, towards the dark waters and immeasurable forests of the north. Brief and obscure is the modest nar-