

discovered America. He was the first navigator of whom we have any knowledge, who crossed the Atlantic, and it is both frivolous and unfair, to attempt, as some have done, to rob him of the honor which is his just due. True it is, that, after his first perilous voyage, he accidentally landed on one of the islands in the Gulf of Mexico, instead of upon the mainland, but it is equally true, that *he led the way—he was the pioneer of navigators across the Atlantic*. Others speedily followed, and among the first of these, was Americus Vesputius, a native of Florence, who obtained honors which properly belonged to Columbus. From him the continent received the name of America. In justice to Columbus it should have been called Columbia.

In May 1497, John Cabot, an experienced Venetian navigator, with his son Sebastian, sailed from Bristol with a commission from Henry VII, to take possession of "Heathen lands, unknown to Christians." The expedition consisted of five ships, fitted out at the cost and charges of the Cabots, and two caravels, victualled at the public expense, and freighted by merchants of Bristol and London, for the purpose of traffic. The whole company consisted of 300 men. Sailing westwardly, they discovered land, on the 24th of June 1497. The land which they discovered, is generally supposed to have been some portion of Nova Scotia. They afterwards discovered an island, which is supposed to have been that which now bears the name of Newfoundland. Thence they sailed westwardly, reached the continent, and then coasting northwardly, they arrived at the latitude of $67^{\circ} 30'$. They then altered their course and steered southwardly, as far as that tract of country which has since been called Florida. Their provisions failing, and a mutiny breaking out among the sailors, the Cabots returned, with the expedition to England.

Seventy-two years elapsed from the time when this voyage was performed, before the English made any attempt to follow up the advantages which Cabot's discoveries had secured, by actual settlement. This singular fact is accounted for by many unpropitious circumstances which attended the reigns of Henry VII., Henry VIII., Edward VI., and Mary. Under the reign of Elizabeth a spirit of enterprise was awakened, and public attention was once more directed to the New World. In 1579, Her Majesty granted to Sir Humphrey Gilbert, a patent for "discovering, occupying and peopling heathen and barbarous countries", which were not in possession of other Christian people. He set sail from Plymouth, in June 1583, with five ships, and 250 men; and, after a voyage of one month, arrived off the harbour of St John's, in Newfoundland. On the 5th of August, he took formal possession of the island. He returned to England without taking possession of any other part of America.