

Henry VII., who then reigned ; insomuch that all men, with great admiration, affirmed it to be a thing more divine than human to saile by the West into the East where spices grow, by a way that was never known before ; by his fame and report, there increaseth in my heart a great flame of desire to attempt some notable thing ; and understanding by reason of the sphere (globe), that if I should sail by way of north-west I should by a shorter tract come into India, I thereupon caused the king to be advertised of my device, who immediately commanded two caravels to be furnished with all things appertayning to the voyage, which was, as far as I remember, in the year 1496, in the beginning of summer ; I began therefore to sail toward the north-west, not thinking to find any other land than that of Cathay (China), and from thence to turn toward India ; but after certaine days, I found that the land ranne toward the north, which was to me a great displeasure. Nevertheless, sailing along by the coast to see if I could find any gulf that turned, I found the land still continued to the 56th degree under our pole. And seeing that there the coast turned to the east, despairing to find the passage, I turned back again, and sailed downe by the coast of that land toward the equinoctiall (ever with intent to find the said passage to India), and came to that part of this firm lande which is now called Florida, where my victuals failing, I departed from thence and returned into England, where I found great tumults among the people, and preparations for warres in Scotland, by reason whereof, there was no more consideration had to this voyage."

Leaving the English and the Scots to conduct their "warres" as best pleased them, Cabot accepted the invitation of the king of Spain, to repair to that country, and become "one of the council for the affairs of the New Indies." In the service of the king of Spain, Cabot made several voyages, and a number of discoveries, among which was that of the Rio de la Plata or River of Silver, which falls into the South Atlantic on the east coast of South America. In 1548, however, he returned to England, and was introduced to the young King Edward VI., who was so much delighted with the bearing and the conversation of the veteran voyager, that he created him, by patent, pilot-major, and settled on him a pension for life of 500 marks (£166, 13s. 4d.) per annum—a great sum in those days—"in consideration of the good and acceptable services done and to be done." "Never," says Sir John Barrow, "was a reward more deservedly bestowed. Placed at the head of the 'Society of Merchant Adventurers,' by his knowledge and experience, his zeal and penetration, he not only was the means of extending the foreign commerce of England, but of keeping alive that spirit of enterprise, which even in his lifetime was crowned with success, and which ultimately led to the most happy results for the nation that had so wisely and honourably enrolled this deserving foreigner in the list of her citizens."