

vanity made him ready to sanction a rival expedition, but only so long as no demands were made on the privy purse, and only on condition that he should receive a good share of any profits that might accrue. Letters patent, dated March 5th, 1496, were accordingly granted to Cabot and his sons permitting them to sail to any country or sea of the east, west and north, under the English flag, with five ships and any number of men — but all at their own expense — to look for lands which were unknown to Christians. They were to raise the Royal banner in any land they might discover, and to take possession and exercise jurisdiction in the name of the King of England. The patentees were given the exclusive right to visit the countries discovered and to trade with them. One-fifth of the net income from the expedition was reserved to the crown. The Cabots and their heirs were to have the lands they found and occupied in perpetuity as subjects and vassals of the King.

This was the substance of the Latin document under authority of which Cabot sailed, and whereby he received from his royal patron not one copper in assistance of an undertaking the praise of which was to echo down the centuries, coupled with denunciations of Henry's miserly aid.

In June, 1496, Columbus returned to Spain from his second voyage, bringing further reports of islands discovered. This increased Cabot's ardour. After some delay the English expedition was ready for sea ; and finally, about the end of May, 1497, Cabot sailed down the Bristol Channel and stood for the open sea. He was in command of a bit of a vessel, called the "Matthew," of about fifty tons, being only as large as a medium-sized schooner of the present day. It was a tiny craft to face the dangers of such a perilous voyage. The crew consisted of eighteen men.

The "Matthew," after passing Iceland, sailed northward, and then finally headed toward the west — that region upon which was then directed the gaze of the civilized world, and which was associated in every man's mind with no little superstitious dread.

Whether Sebastian accompanied his father on this voyage is not positively known ; but if he did he was too young to have taken any prominent part in the planning or direction of the expedition, and therefore the entire glory must be bestowed upon the elder Cabot.

The log-book of the "Matthew" is not believed to be in existence, and other sources of information are exceedingly meagre and confused ;