

with the Cathay of Marco Polo—the great object of maritime adventure in those days. On application to Henry VII. he obtained letters patent sanctioning his undertaking; but the expense of the expedition was borne by the Cabots and their connections. And so, in the month of May, 1497, this daring navigator took his departure from the port of Bristol, and turned his prow to the north-west, to traverse stormy seas which were yet unfurrowed by European keel. It is uncertain whether his father accompanied him; but in contemporary and subsequent records, the whole glory of the enterprise is justly attributed to his son Sebastian. Nothing whatever is known of the voyage. No diary was kept on board, and the commander gave the world no account of what took place, beyond the bare results of the voyage. Few can both *do* great things and *describe* them adequately. Julius Cæsar is almost the only exception to this rule. Without any flourish of trumpets, these silent Englishmen sailed from Bristol, out into the unexplored wilds of the North Atlantic, never fancying that they were doing anything great. Yet the greatest and most momentous consequences flowed from this voyage of *The Matthew*. The continent of North America was discovered by Englishmen, and the claim to possession, which first discovery then established, kindled that passion for colonization which has since dotted the globe with English colonies, and fostered that swarming tendency, which has gone on, deepening and strengthening in the race ever since, and which was never so productive of momentous results as at the present hour. The honor of England was pledged to hold what the daring enterprise of her seamen had discovered. Had not Cabot led the way to the shores of Newfoundland, other European races might have monopolized these vast regions, and the English tongue would not have been spoken, from Atlantic to Pacific, as it is to-day. From the discovery of Newfoundland by Sebastian Cabot, all these great results have flowed.

It would be interesting if we could decide with certainty on what part of the coast of Newfoundland Cabot first landed. The common opinion is that the headland of Cape Bonavista was the portion of the coast first sighted by Cabot, and by him named in gratitude by the Italian designation of "Bona Vista," or happy sight; and that he called the whole country "Baccalaos," from the abundance of codfish, the native term for which is "baccalao." This account has been often repeated, in ordinary histories, but in

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