

his presence in traditionary and religious teachings found extant in Mexico by the Spaniards. A claim has been raised on behalf of a Portuguese discovery of Brazil early in the fifteenth century, the evidence for which has quite recently been assembled and argued with great zeal and ingenuity before the Royal Geographical Society, by an English scholar, Mr. H. G. Oldham, Cambridge lecturer on geography. Indeed, there is hardly a maritime nation of Europe, of that period, on behalf of which there has not been put forth a theory that some of its subjects did discover, or at least probably *might* have discovered America. But these obscure, traditional discoveries, if they took place, were utterly dissevered from the course of history. They possessed no more value or fruitfulness than the broken branches from West Indian trees, which, drifted by Atlantic currents upon the coasts of Spain or Iceland, may have supported the conjecture of a land beyond the sea. It was only from the recorded discoveries of Columbus and Cabot that historical results followed. It is only with them, therefore, that history has to do.

To no country did American discovery prove more important than to Great Britain, and nowhere did it ultimately work a greater revolution. In due time her peasantry and industries were to share the benefit of the rising wages. While the Spanish galleons were pouring great freights of precious metals into the lap of Europe, meantime the contagion of emulation spurred England's princes to ambition and her merchants to new enterprise; with those well-known results in the spread of the English language and race, of religious toleration and freedom of government, whose ultimate scope speculation hardly yet ventures to measure.

"Cosmography and the Art of Navigation," proudly writes the Elizabethan author of the *Voyages of Frobisher*

in 1578 "is now, in Her Majesty's reign, grown to his highest perfection." But in the time of King Henry VII., he states they were "very raw in England." Navigation, "then took (as it were), his beginning, (and ever since had had by little and little continual increase.)"

In this "raw" state of cosmography and the art of navigation in England, the nation was indebted to a foreigner for being enabled to claim a footing in the New World.

John Cabot, an Italian by birth, and a citizen of Venice, put the science and skill acquired as a native of the country which was then the western centre of the arts of commerce and civilization, and the leader in maritime enterprise, at the disposal of the nascent maritime power of the North. In the year 1496 proposals made by Cabot, then a resident of Bristol, one of the chief shipping ports of Britain, were acted upon by King Henry the VII., though in a manner marked by the King's accustomed financial prudence. A Royal Patent was granted to Cabot for the discovery—"at his own private cost and charge,"—of unknown lands in the Eastern, Western or Northern seas, with the right to occupy such territories, and have exclusive commerce with them, "paying to the king one-fifth part of all the profits." When Cabot obtained the Patent, he was probably in the position of an adventurer, richer in skill and conception than in purse. There is evidence that the funds he was to find for himself were furnished by substantial citizens of Bristol. The crew of eighteen was also chiefly English, and the ship, named the *Matthew*, no doubt also belonged to some of the substantial Bristol merchants.

Thus, at the outset of English occupation of the new continent in the west, there was impressed upon it that stamp of individual enterprise which continued to be its distinguishing character, and which predestined its ultimate triumph in the long com-