

## THE CABOTS AND THEIR VOYAGES.

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How often we find that genius receives its full recognition only after the lapse of many years, when the death-stilled pulse cannot quicken, even at the winding of Fame's far-reaching trumpet! The quadri-centennial celebration of the discovery of the mainland of America by John Cabot was but a tardy act of justice to the memory of the man to whom Great Britain is primarily indebted for her claims of sovereignty in the New World. Until recently not even a tablet<sup>1</sup> commemorated his name and deed; and almost nothing was definitely known of his life. Everything connected with his career has been associated with the greatest uncertainty and confusion, and it is only after much controversy that we are enabled to unravel some of the tangled threads in the many perplexing stories regarding this fifteenth century voyager.

For a long period it was assumed that John Cabot was a native of Venice, the town in which he spent some of the early years of his life. Recently, however, documents have been discovered which tend to show that he was a Genoese by birth, but that when young he had moved to the chief city of the Adriatic.

The first definite information we have of his life is the record in the Venetian archives that on March 28th, 1476, Joannes Caboto had been naturalized a citizen of Venice. Most of his spare hours were given to the study of cosmography and navigation, and at an early age he was filled with an intense desire to roam to distant lands, marvellous stories of which were on the tongue of every traveller. At one time he visited Mecca, and there heard many remarkable tales of travel and adventure from the Eastern merchants who flocked thither. Such recitals greatly increased his enthusiasm.

Some years previous to 1495, Cabot removed with his family to the old English town of Bristol, and became a British subject. This port was then famous for its maritime enterprise, and even at that period it had considerable trade with Iceland. Such a place was well in accord with his adventurous spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> At a meeting of the Royal Society of Canada, held in Halifax in June, 1897, a tablet was placed in the Province Building in commemoration of Cabot's discovery.