

Now every one knows, that Henry vii. died in 1509. But we have records to determine when this voyage took place. It is first necessary to reflect, that neither Cabotto has left us any sort of account of it, nor have we any distinct relation of it in the writers of the times. But much information concerning it may be gathered, in the first place, from the afore-mentioned passage of Peter Martire, and also from a learned conversation that Ramusio relates he heard at a villa of the celebrated Fracastoro, from a Mantuan gentleman, a very great philosopher and mathematician, (1) who had conversed with Cabotto in Seville; and, lastly, from the history of Henry vii. King of England, written by Francis Bacon, of Verulam, (2) a writer, who, though distant from those times, was nevertheless a man too well informed not to trace events to their fountain head. Now all these writers attribute the navigation to the northern parts, not to Giovanni; but to Sebastian Cabotto. Moreover, the Mantuan gentleman, reporting the discourse which he held with him, relates that he said, that Giovanni, his father, died at the same time in which the news was received that Columbus had discovered the Indian coast. We must therefore say, that Giovanni died a little after the above mentioned patents were issued, and that Sebastian alone prepared himself for that voyage. The same gentleman, and also Peter Martire, assure us, that Sebastian was born in Venice, and not in England, as the authors of the history of voyages (3) have written; and that, when quite a boy, having learned the first elements of the sciences, he had been conducted to that island. The voyage for the discovery of new countries, as he himself relates, according to the Mantuan gentleman, took place in the summer of the said year 1496; and King Henry, for this purpose, armed two caravels. In this, however, there is some difference of account in the other writers; as Peter Martire says that Sebastian fitted out two ships at his own expence; Bacon relates that one ship was equipped by the King, and some London merchants added to it three small vessels, freighted with their merchandise. But such differences are of too little importance to dispute about them. In describing the voyage of Sebastian also, the said writers are not quite agreed. Bacon affirms, quoting the account which Cabotto himself gave of it at his return, who also shewed the map of his navigation, that, sailing betwixt north and west, he coasted the northern shore of the land of Labrador, even to the height of seventy-seven degrees and a half, always finding the sea free and open; but why and by which way he returned, he does not say. The Mantuan gentleman makes Cabotto say, that he sailed towards the north-west, thinking not to find land until Cathay, and from thence to steer to the East Indies; but being arrived at 56 degrees, and perceiving that the coast always inclined towards the east, he turned back; and, inclining towards the Equinoctial Line, he coasted the country which was afterwards called Florida, always in hopes of finding the passage to the East Indies, till the want of provisions might oblige him to return to England. These two relations have no other diversity betwixt them, but in the number of degrees to which Cabotto reached, which may be owing to a mistake crept into the one or the other. Peter Martire finally relates, and also says, that he heard from the same Sebastian, that he advanced so far towards the north, that they had many continual days without night; but finding the sea full of immense masses of ice, though it

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(1) Vieggi, t. i. p. 374. ed. Venez. 1606.

(2) Oper. vol. v. p. 229, edit. Amstelod. 1695.

(3) T. lviii. p. 257.