

V.—*Cabot's Landfall and Chart : Some Criticisms Answered.*

By MOST REV. ARCHBISHOP O'BRIEN.

(Read 26th May, 1899.)

In the Presidential Address which I had the honour of delivering at the session of the Royal Society on June 24th, 1897, and which is inserted in the Transactions of that year, I advanced a new argument for locating the landfall, and broached a new theory regarding Cabot's Chart. In both cases I submitted proofs based on historic evidence as well as on recognized canons of interpretation.

Whilst some have found the proofs satisfactory, others have questioned their strength, and have refused to accept them as conclusive. This is not a cause for surprise or wonder. Minds are variously constituted : dearly hugged theories die hard ; and certain, often unconscious, prejudices are difficult to shake off. When the calendar was reformed by Gregory XIII, some nations could see in it only a cruel device to cheat them out of ten days of life. There were men, too, who saw its reasonableness, but preferred astronomic darkness to light from such a source. Small wonder that a geographical conclusion of mine, at variance with received ideas, should be looked at askance. In the end, however, it will prevail.

The objections by Dr. S. E. Dawson in his paper printed in the same volume of the Transactions as the address, are the only ones I shall now consider. They are the strongest that have fallen under my notice ; to rebut them will therefore suffice. These objections, chiefly found in Appendices E and F, may be reduced to three heads, viz :—

1. That the argument from a passage in Da Soncino's letter is valueless.
2. That the Gulf of St. Lawrence was unknown before Cartier's first voyage.
3. That Cavo de Inghlaterra on La Cosa's map is not Cape Chidley but Cape Race.

As briefly as possible each objection shall be answered, for notwithstanding Dr. Dawson's contention, I still maintain the question is to be decided by evidence, not by "conjectural lines" of variation of the compass, nor by loading the pages of the Transactions with maps and diagrams which have their use and value in many ways, but which, in deciding the site of the landfall, have only an "academic interest, and are not germane to the question." Evidence is to be sought in