

not have dropped three hundred and sixty miles, as Dr. Dawson has said and believed. It has been demonstrated¹ by $a + b$ that Cabot would have dropped one hundred and eighty-three miles only. And, consequently, (always as a logical inference from Dr. Dawson's theory, such as we find it explicitly stated in the said memoir), instead of making his landfall at Cape Breton, as our learned opponent asserts or asserted, Cabot would have made it just *one hundred and seventy-seven miles more to the northward*; that is to say, in Newfoundland, on the eastern shore of Cape Bauld.

So much for "incomparably the best thing ever written on the subject," and "the settlement of the long-disputed question of Cabot's landfall at Cape Breton," as Canadian savants declare.

That was four years ago. Dr. Dawson now holds and claims to have meant that in measuring the length of the line of divergence south of a due western course, "we must commence in the case of Cabot near the coast of Ireland, and in the case of Columbus at a considerable distance west of Gomera."² That is a new proposition altogether, and absolutely adverse to the very precise expressions employed by him in 1894. Under the circumstances, it is surprising that Dr. Dawson, as the expert writer that he is, should have written so clearly "If Columbus on a direct western course dropped 240 miles from Gomera," instead of writing as he does at this late hour, and again erroneously as we propose to show: "Columbus dropped 240 miles from the place where the westing of his compass reached one point," or "in 40° longitude," or "at a considerable distance west of Gomera."

Be that as it may, Dr. Dawson's new position is just as untenable as the first. It again rests upon an aggregation of bare hypotheses.³ He gratuitously assumes that the laws of secular motion of the curves of equal variation on the surface of the globe are sufficiently known to enable him to infer from the variations which Columbus experienced in 25° north latitude, the variations which Cabot experienced in 53° north latitude. He also takes for granted

¹ For a mathematical demonstration of the fallacy, see the *Nachrichten von der königl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, Philolog.-histor. Klasse, 1897, Heft 3, pp. 345-348.

² *The Voyages of the Cabots*. Roy. Soc. Can., Vol. III., Sec. II., 1897, p. 161.

³ "In a brief interview I had with Mr. Fox, I took occasion to express my conviction of the impossibility of arriving at any very definite conclusion, partly on account of the extremely scanty material as to facts and partly in consequence of the want of assistance derivable from purely theoretical grounds; the cause of the phenomenon of the secular change of the magnetic declination being quite unknown and the time comparatively short during which to trace the law of change as hitherto observed." Charles A. Schott, *An Inquiry into the Variation of the Compass*, Coast Survey Reports for 1880.