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you to learn how his majesty here has won a part of Asia without a stroke of the sword. There is in this kingdom a Venetian fellow. Master John Caboto by name, of fine mind, greatly skilled in navigation, who, seeing that those most serene kings, first he of Portugal, and then the one of Spain, have occupied unknown islands, determined to make a like acquisition for his majesty aforesaid. And having obtained royal grants that he should have the usufruct of all that he should discover, provided that the ownership of the same is reserved to the crown, with a small ship and eighteen persons he committed himself to fortune; and having set out from Bristol, a western port of this kingdom, and passed the western limits of Hibernia, and then standing to the northward, keeping (after a few days) the north star on his right hand; and having wandered about considerably, at last he fell in with terra firma, where, having planted the royal banner and taken possession on behalf of this king, and taken certain tokens, he has returned thence. The said Master John, as being foreign born and poor, would not be believed if his comrades, who are almost all Englishmen from Bristol, did not testify that what he says is true. This Master John has the description of the world in a chart, and also in a solid globe, which he has made, and it shows where he landed, and that going toward the east he passed considerably beyond the country of the Tanais. And they say that it is a very good and temperate country, and they think that brazil wood and silks grow there; and they affirm that that sea is covered with fishes, which are caught not only with the net, but with baskets, a stone being tied to them in order that the baskets may sink in the water. And this I heard the said Master John relate, and aforesaid Englishmen, his comrades, say that they will bring so many fishes that this kingdom will no longer have need of Iceland, from which country there comes a very great store of fish which are called stock-fish. But Master John has set his mind on something greater; for he expects to go farther on toward the east (Levant) from that place already occupied, constantly hugging the shore, until he shall be over against an island, by him called Cipango, situated in the equinoctial region, where he thinks all the spices of the world, and also the precious stones, originate; and he says that in former times he was at Mecca, whither spices are brought by caravans from distant countries, and that those who brought them, on being asked where the said spices grow, answered that they do not know, but that other caravans come to their homes with this merchandise from distant countries, and these again say that they are brought to them from other remote regions. And he argues thus, that if the orientals affirmed to the southernners that these things come from a distance from them, and so from hand to hand, presupposing the roundness of the earth, it must be that the last ones get them at the north toward the west; and he said it in such a way, that, having nothing to gain or lose by it, I, too, believe it; and what is more, the king here, who is wise and not lavish, likewise puts some faith in him; for (ever) since his return he has made good provision for him, as the same Master John tells me. And it is said that in the sitting, his majesty aforesaid will fit out some ships, and will, besides, give him all



the convicts, and they will go to that country to make a colony, by means of which they hope to establish in London a greater storehouse of spices than there is in Alexandria; and the chief men of the enterprise are men of Bristol, great sailors, who, now that they know where to go, say that it is not a voyage of more than fifteen days, nor do they ever have storms after they get away from Hibernia. I have also talked with a Burgundian, a comrade of Master John's, who confirms everything, and wishes to return thither because the admiral (for so Master John already entitles himself) has given him an island; and he has given another one to a baiter of his from Castiglione-of-Cienna, and both of them regard themselves as counts; nor does my lord the admiral esteem himself anything less than a prince. I think that with this expedition there will go several poor Italian monks, who have all been promised bishoprics. And, as I have become a friend of the admiral's, if I wished to go thither I should get an archbishopric. But I have thought that the benefices which your excellency has in store for me are a surer thing; and, therefore, I beg that if these should fall vacant in my absence, you will cause possession to be given to me, taking measures to do this rather (especially) where it is needed, in order that they may not be taken from me by others, who, because they are present, can be more diligent than I, who, in this country, have been brought to the pass of eating ten or twelve dishes at every meal, and sitting at table three hours at a time twice a day, for the sake of your excellency, to whom I humbly commend myself. In certain English documents, too, mention is made of Cabot's voyage of 1497, and official recognition is given for his achievement. For example, on 10 August 1497, a royal grant of ten pounds was made "to him that founded the new isle"; and on 3 February 1498 supplementary letters patent were granted, authorizing John Cabot to requisition six ships for another voyage.

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