

374. It is probable that the Cabots discovered Canada and Newfoundland about the same time—June 24th, 1497. In his second voyage Sebastian Cabot sailed along 1,800 miles of the coast of North America, of which he was the first discoverer. Great Britain's claim to sovereignty afterwards rested on this right of first discovery. It was not until 1583 that Sir Humphrey Gilbert took possession of Newfoundland in the name of Queen Elizabeth. Various attempts to colonize the island were made by Sir George Calvert, Sir David Kirke and others, but none proved successful. The French long contended with England for possession of the island, but at length the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) ended the contest and the French renounced all territorial claims in Newfoundland. Unfortunately, they were granted on a part of the coast certain fishing privileges which have been a source of vexatious dispute ever since, being still unsettled. The policy of the British Government was to keep the island as a fishing station and prevent colonization. It was not recognized as a colony till 1729, and it was not until 1793 that a Supreme Court for the whole island was appointed. Not till 1820 could a house be built without the written permission of the Governor, or grant of land could be made. The progress of the colony during the last fifty years has been steady and substantial. Civilizing influences have been at work. An educational system has been established and of late considerably improved. Agriculture has been encouraged and manufactures of various kinds commenced. In 1858 the first Atlantic cable was landed on the shores of Trinity Bay, and in 1884 the first railway was opened. The geographical position of the island, as holding the key of the St. Lawrence, makes the possession of it essential to the rounding off of the Dominion of Canada. Though the bulk of the people have hitherto been opposed to union with Canada, yet there is reason to believe that there is a growing sentiment in favour of confederation, and that the hour is not distant when Britain's oldest colony will cast in its fortunes with those of the Dominion.

The trans-insular line above described, connecting the eastern, western and southern shores, as well as the principal settlements with the capital and with one another, possesses national importance. It will increase trade between Newfoundland and the Dominion, and so multiply the commercial links which already unite them, thus pioneering the way for that political union which both Imperial and Canadian statesmen consider desirable and inevitable. It is indeed difficult to over-rate the importance of a line which will