



A
CRITICAL EXAMINATION
OF THE
EVIDENCES ADDUCED
—TO—
ESTABLISH THE THEORY
OF THE
NORSE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA

—BY—
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PREFACE.

THE ensuing chapters were written for and appeared in the *American Antiquarian*. As will be observed, the design was to confine the line of argument to the statements of such books as had been recently published, that advocated the Norse discovery of America. It was deemed unnecessary to call particular attention to older works, because those more recent revamped former arguments and assertions contained in the previous publications, and had virtually supplanted them in the market. The value of the statements in previous publications should not be discredited or obliterated. If presented side by side with the line of thought adopted by those now occupying the field, a strange anomaly would appear. The inconsistencies of recent claimants would be forcibly illustrated.

To array the evidences of the one against the assumptions of the other—all advocating substantially the same theory—has not been attempted, because the subject has been treated with a due regard for the facts bearing on the case. If the design had been to place the advocates in an unenviable position, then the dissertation and notes to Samuel Laing's translation of Sturlasson's "*Heimskringla*" could, with propriety, be introduced. Although an avowed advocate of the Norse theory, Laing unsparingly points out certain inconsistencies in the Saga narratives. Such statements as grapes ripening in the springtime, and causing one to be drunken upon eating them; the growing of wheat and corn unplanted; the great number of eggs of the eider duck, etc., he boldly ascribes to "the fiction of some Saga maker". He has but little patience with those who would find evidences of Norse occupation in America, and declares they are poets and not antiquarians.

The so-called American evidences he regards as a hoax, and speaking of the Newport stone mill, says: "Those sly rogues of Americans dearly love a quiet hoax. With all gravity they address a solemn communication to the Royal Society of Northern Antiquarians at Copenhagen, respecting these interesting remains of 'a structure bearing an antique appearance,'—'a building possibly of the ante-Columbian times,'—'a relic, it may be, of the Northmen, the first discoverers of Vinland!'

* * * * It must be allowed that these Rhode Island wags have played off their joke with admirable dexterity." Relying on the Sagas alone, Laing would confine the discoveries to the coast of Labrador, "or some places north of the Gulf of St. Lawrence".

The eight chapters relating to the Norse discovery of America, which Peringskiöld inserted in his Swedish and Latin translation of the "*Heimskringla*", Laing reproduces in an appendix to the third volume. In one of the notes added to these extra chapters, he animadverts to the statement that Karlsefne had taken "cattle of all kind" to Vinland, and demonstrates that such could not be true; and further remarks: "It looks as if the Saga-relator was applying his ideas formed on Iceland, where cattle and food for them are not scarce, to a country by nature so totally different as Greenland, and that he did not know of the difference." This goes to confirm the position taken in the following pages.

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PRE-COLUMBIAN DISCOVERY OF AMERICA.

CHAPTER I.

A GENERAL REVIEW.

It is generally conceded that the greatest achievement recorded in the annals of history was the discovery of America by Columbus. It has been fraught with incalculable benefits to the human race. To the genius of Columbus must be ascribed all the honor and glory.

It is unnecessary in this place to narrate the great difficulties which Columbus was forced to surmount in order to accomplish his purpose. These have been so often set forth that all students of American history have become familiar with them. The world has deservedly accorded unbounded praise to the Genoese mariner, having called him the greatest of discoverers, and inscribed his name among the most illustrious of men.

Men being more or less inclined to theorize, and to a certain extent governed by race prejudice and religious rancor, it would not be surprising that there should be those who would attempt to pluck the laurel from the great explorer's brow. It is a shame that calumny and strong epithets should be resorted to in the discussion of a purely historical question. Upon the face of it there is a countenance of weakness in the cause of those who resort to such methods. Mere theories will arise and their associates will demand attention, however much facts may be distorted in order to substantiate their views. The weaker the cause the louder the contention.

There is quite an extensive literature relating to the so-called pre-Columbian discovery of America, and claims have been put forth in behalf of various persons more or less mythical. It would be a work of supererogation to enter into a discussion of all the views that have been proclaimed and the reasons therefor. When sifted none of them will bear a critical analysis, although documentary evidence is assumed to support ten or more of these hypotheses.

The one that takes rank in priority is that of Hoci-Shin, a Buddhist monk, who, in the year 499 A. D., returned from an extensive journey to the east and reported that he had visited a country lying about 6,600 miles to the east of Japan, and an

equal distance to the east of China. He called the country Tusango on account of many trees growing there that went by that name. It has been assumed that this country was Mexico and California. The Irish discovery appears to have been two fold. First, St. Patrick sent missionaries to the "Isles of America", which would place the date prior to 460 A. D., thus ante-dating the purported Chinese discovery ; and, second, at a time little previous to the Norse discovery or toward the close of the tenth century. Next in chronological order is the advent of the Norsemen in America, about 1000 A. D.

Some time previous to 1147 there set sail from Lisbon eight Arabian brothers called Maghrourins, who swore they would not return till they had penetrated to the farthest bounds of the Dark Sea. They came to an island inhabited by a people of lofty stature and a red skin.

Another story affirms that about the year 1169, Madoc, a son of Owen Gwywedd, prince of North Wales, left his country on account of disturbances, and determined to search out some unknown land and dwell there. With a few ships he embarked with his followers and for many months they sailed westward until they came to a large and fertile country, when they disembarked and permanently settled. After a time Madoc returned to Wales, where he fitted out ten ships and prevailed on a large number of his countrymen to return with him. Both Mexico and the Californias have been assigned as the place of this Welsh settlement.

The marvelous tales of the Venetian brothers, Nicolo and Antonio Zeno, date back to the year 1380. They established a monastery and church in Greenland. After the death of Nicolo the other remained for fourteen years in the service of the chieftan, Earl Tichmni. Antonio heard of a land, a thousand miles distant, populous and civilized, ruled by a king, and having Latin books in the library. Farther to the southwest was a more civilized region and temperate climate. Antonio set out in search of this land, but the voyage proved unsuccessful.

An obscure writer of the date of 1717 put forth the claim that, about the year 1464, John Vaz Casta Cortereal, a gentleman of the royal household of Portugal, explored the northern seas by order of Alphonso V, and discovered Terra de Bacalhaos or land of codfish, afterwards called New Foundland. The discovery by the Poles is placed in the year 1476; that by Martin Behaim in 1483 ; and that by Cousin of Dieppe in 1488.

These alleged discoveries have not been without their advocates. Any other purported discovery will gather to itself zealous defenders, however short may be the thread upon which the evidence depends. If it once gains a foothold, the most cogent of reasons and the most forcible of facts will fail to dislodge it. Even intelligent minds will be drawn into the maelstrom of error.

Closely related to the purported pre-Columbian discoveries are certain accounts of early travelers, who found the native Indian language to be Welsh and Highland Scotch. The evidence of this rests upon a more plausible basis than the former; and yet it would be difficult to find an anthropologist who accepted the story of Morgan Jones or the pleasant tale of Lord Monboddo. As no one has recently championed the latter, it will be only necessary now to turn the attention to the former.

Of all the theories propounded, the advocates of the Norse discovery have been the most pertinacious. They have been instant in season and out of season. Among those who have shoved themselves to the front, Mrs. M. A. Shipley, Professor R. B. Anderson and B. F. DeCosta may be considered to be the most conspicuous. Of these, the first is the most reckless in regard to statements, and the last named is the fairest and most judicious; whilst all of them are easily detected in trying to make out a case. Even questions not directly concerned in the presentation of the case have been dragged into the controversy. Christianity and the Christian Church have come in for a tirade of abuse.

"The Christian nature is undoubtedly the same all over the world: hypocritical, canting, secretive, avaricious, deeply designing and Machiavellian; each leader makes a tool and a dupe of his followers; congregations do their priests' or their ministers' bidding, and the whole society is permeated with their spirit and purpose."¹ "The North failed and sank into a decline through accepting Christianity."² "The Church has destroyed self-respect."³ "To tear down Christianity, under present conditions, is in no wise iconoclasm; neither will it leave a moral vacuum; the necessity is not even upon us of building up something else in its stead, for a structure has stood for ages, testified to by reliable history, which the Church and Christianity have obscured and hidden from the gaze."⁴

Not satisfied with this unprovoked invective against Christianity, we are also treated to an assault on Columbus, who is accused of being a thief, "ambitious and unscrupulous," "bigoted Roman," "Italian adventurer," "needy adventurer," etc. These epithets, which appear to be so savory to the author of *Icelandic Discoveries*, appear to have been inspired by Professor Anderson, who, quoting with approval from Goodrich, declares Columbus to have been "a fraud, mean, selfish, perfidious and cruel."⁵

Without a blush or qualification it is declared that Columbus "stole his information" concerning the Western Continent from the Norsemen;⁶ that he made a "secret" visit to Iceland;⁷ that

¹ Shipley's *Icelandic Discoveries*, p. 171. ² *Ibid.* p. 183. ³ *Ibid.* 188. ⁴ *Ibid.* 192

⁵ *America Not Discovered by Columbus*, p. 7.

⁶ *Icelandic Discoveries*, p. 9. ⁷ *Ibid.* p. 11.

his discovery was "bogus";¹ that the Norse "were the first Europeans who landed on American shores was pregnant with good to us; this made 'the name America the synonym of wealth, of adventure, of freedom', and not the false tidings borne by Columbus to Spain of a discovery of which he would have been incapable but for stolen information;"² "Columbus, the bigoted Roman Catholic adventurer, who fed his ambition and greed on the narratives of the Norse voyages to America, read secretly in Iceland, strove to give the New World the opposite tendency,—the downward tendency";³ Columbus, hearing of the Western World, "went to Iceland in order to pursue the investigations to which all this had given him a clue. After his visit to Iceland, he made out to find America, as any one else could have found it after obtaining definite directions;"⁴ he was guilty of "religious felony", and purloined the knowledge of a discovery of transcendent value made by men of a pagan race who were recently and very reluctantly converted to Christianity, for the purpose of securing princely honors and emoluments for himself, the greatest conceivable aggrandizement for the Church. Such an opportunity for universal dominion as could never, in the nature of things, occur again in the life of the world; and last and most important of all, for the purpose of making the New World, through its entire submission to the Holy See, the means of crushing out all tendencies to rebellion against the church that might possibly manifest themselves again in Europe."⁵

These severe and uncharitable views would prepare the reader for an estimate of the character of the Norse as given by the same pen, for it may be anticipated that one extreme follows another. If the character be exalted, then the literature created by that people must also be transcendent. "There was no stint of historical records in Iceland; its literature was as rich and varied as it was copious. The Latin lore (?) of the monks could in no sense be compared with it;"⁶ "free to think and to act, to follow their impulses, the dearest aim of the Norsemen was to cultivate character, to attain that degree of excellence which would make their life a joy to them; their heaven was only valuable to them as following upon a valuable life here on earth, and they were never disposed to resign this life for the sake of a future one; if they sought death, or met it bravely, it was for other reasons, not savoring of sickly renunciation. This aim of theirs to be great developed a heroic age; the warriors and the bards emulated each other;"⁷ the literature of Iceland was vast and "preserved in the retentive memories of its Scalds and saga men, the annals of what was in many respects an ideal civilization, describing the life of a race mentally and physically sound, whose thoughts, words and acts were strong and

¹ Icelandic Discoveries, p. 13. ² Ibid. p. 22. ³ Ibid. p. 34. ⁴ Ibid. 69. ⁵ Ibid. 105
⁶ Ibid. 43. ⁷ Ibid. p. 123.

vigorous." "To the supreme good fortune of future generations this was preserved where the Christian desecrators could not enter, it was safely guarded behind spiritual bolts and bars, in the faithful and reverent minds of the people, and long after, not much before the seventeenth century, when the nations of Europe, after the first decisive revolt, represented in the Reformation, had begun to recover from the asphyxia into which the unnatural and preposterous doctrines the Christian religion had thrown them, Icelandic history was made known to them, the revelation of a system of ethics, of a moral code, of political and social regulations and customs so unlike those which Christian Europe had adopted and lived after that it could not at first produce anything but astonishment and very partial understanding ;"¹ "the value of this literature, this history of the North, which from all accounts seems to be the only reliable history we have, is that it describes, with that graphic force, yielded by truth alone, a state of society founded on natural principles ;"² "the actual life in Iceland, the intellectual stature of its people, reveal to us undreamed-of possibilities. In casting off the incubus of the Church we do not enter unguardedly into vague and problematical conditions, but we resume conditions once found all-sufficient for human welfare, we will again lead the life of rational beings, and defamed reason will be our sure guide ;"³ "the evils that the American people are vainly trying to reform, disabled as they are by the paralyzing conviction that all human effort is well-nigh unavailing, are not manifestly derived from Norse ethics. These, on the contrary, have been the source of infinite good."⁴

The quotations thus given are not to be passed over slightly, as the ravings of a disordered mind, for they have not only been inspired by less irrational writers, but have been deemed important enough to be published both in England (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.) and America (John B. Alden.)

B. F. DeCosta writes: "We fable in a great measure when we speak of our Saxon inheritance; it is rather from the Northmen that we have derived our vital energy, our freedom of thought, and, in a measure we do not yet suspect, our strength of speech."⁵ Again, the same writer is moved to say: "The feature of the Icelandic sagas relating to America is plain. Their simple, unaffected statements, all uncolored either by personal vanity or national ambition, will more and more win the confidence of historians, who find in their statements, committed to writing, as all the testimony proves, in pre-Columbian times, convincing and unanswerable proof of the fact that Leif Ericson and other adventurers found America and visited New England

¹ Icelandic Discoveries, p. 165.

² Ibid. 168.

³ Ibid. 183.

⁴ Ibid. 123.

⁵ Ibid., p. 56.

during the times and under the circumstances described.”¹
 “Those who imagine that these manuscripts, while of pre-Columbian origin, have been tampered with and interpolated, show that they have not the faintest conception of the state of the question.”²

Prof. Anderson declares “it was the settlement of Iceland by the Norsemen, and the constant voyages between this island and Norway, that led to the discovery, first of Greenland and then of America; and it is due to the high intellectual standing and fine historical taste of the Icelanders that records of these voyages were kept, first to instruct Columbus how to find America and afterwards to solve for us the mysteries concerning the discovery of this continent”³

Passing over these statements, for the present, our attention is called to the confidence expressed in the universal belief in the Norse discovery. Without limitations or qualifications one writer boldly declares: “At the present time, historians agree with great unanimity that the continent of America was visited during the tenth and eleventh centuries by Icelanders resident in Greenland;”⁴ but elsewhere the same advocate speaks about “vindicating the Norsemen . . . who not only gave us the first knowledge possessed of the American continent, but to whom we are indebted for much beside that we esteem valuable.”⁵

Another author, whose writings are not less numerous, calls loudly and vehemently to have the truths established, because “it is necessary for the truth, as to the discovery of America, to be established *immediately*,” that the first duty is obviously to confirm the fact of the Norse discovery”, the history of which has been “so miraculously preserved in Iceland”, and furthermore “the single statement that the discovery of America by the Norsemen has never been conceded by the world to be a fact.”⁶

If we proceed upon the assumption that the Norsemen discovered America, that Vinland was in America, the sagas are “reliable history”, then it must be conceded there must be an agreement among those accepting this reliability, as to the location of Vinland or any other specified place. Not necessarily the exact spot should be singled out, but the opinions should conform to the relative position. But most unfortunately there is a wide divergence of opinion among historians.

Torfaeus, who awakened interest in the subject in 1705, was content to place the scene in America, without even attempting to name the localities. In 1755, Paul Henri Mallet, in his

1 Pre-Columbian Discovery of America, p. 59.

2 Ibid, p. 40.

3 America Not Discovered by Columbus, p. 55.

4 DeCosta, in the Popular Science Monthly, Nov. 1880, p. 35.

5 Pre-Columbian Discovery of America, Second Edition, p. 7.

6 Icelandic Discoveries, pp, 14, 194, 195.

"Histoire de Dannemarc", locates the scene in Labrador and Newfoundland. Robertson, in 1778, in his "History of America", although with misgivings thinks "that the situation of Newfoundland corresponds best with that of the country discovered by the Norwegians." M. C. Sprengel (1782), in his "Geschichte der Entdeckungen", thinks they went as far south as Carolina. In 1793, Munoz, in his "Historia del Nuevo Mundo", puts Vinland in Greenland. Barrow, in his "Voyages to the Arctic Regions" (1818), places Vinland in Labrador or Newfoundland. Hugh Murray, in "His Discoveries and Travels in North America", (1829), doubts the assigning of Vinland to America. Henry Wheaton (1831), in his "History of the Northmen", thought Vinland should be looked for in New England. Bancroft, the most eminent of American historians, in the original third edition (1840), of his history, says "Scandinavians may have reached the shores of Labrador; the soil of the United States has not one vestige of their presence." Wilson (1862), in his "Prehistoric Man," declares that Markland, "which, so far as the name or description can guide us, might be anywhere on the American coast," and that Nantucket is referred to is assumed, because they spoke of the dew upon the grass, because it tasted sweet. Foster, in his "Prehistoric Races of the United States" (1873), abruptly dismisses the subject, speaking of it as conjecture and no memorials having been left behind. Nadaillac (1882) speaks of the Norse discovery as "legends in which a little truth is mingled with much fiction." Weise, in his "Discoveries of America," (1884), believes the sea-rovers did not even pass Davis' Straits. The Massachusetts Historical Society (1887), through its committee, reports: "There is the same sort of reason for believing in the existence of Leif Ericson that there is for believing in the existence of Agamemnon—they are both traditions accepted by later writers; but there is no more reason for regarding as true the details related about his discoveries than there is for accepting as historic truth the narratives contained in the Homeric poems. It is antecedently probable that the Northmen discovered America in the early part of the eleventh century; and this discovery is confirmed by the same sort of historical tradition, not strong enough to be called evidence, upon which our belief in many of the accepted facts of history rests." It is certainly evident that Winsor, in his "Narrative and Critical History of America," does not depend upon the Norse discovery.

Following the account of the sagas, as given by the astute editors, it is discovered that the first land made by the Norse was Helluland, or Newfoundland. Farther to the south, they came upon a thickly-wooded country, which they termed Markland, or Nova Scotia. After a voyage to the south of several days, Cape Cod was reached. Vinland comprehends Martha's Vineyard and surrounding country. In arriving at these loca-

tions, in order that they might be corroborated, it is not necessary to point out the many "supposes" and adroit changes called forth by the text, in order to force it to say just what might be desired. Neither is it found advisable that the "simple and unaffected sagas," the "only reliable history" we have, should be allowed to speak for themselves, because a skilled interpreter can carefully interpolate and explain, whenever such may be deemed necessary, which is quite frequent. Nor has it been thought best to give a succinct account of the sagas by the advocates of the pre-Columbian theory, and a correct analysis of their contents, for undoubtedly such an exposure would not add to the lustre which it has been attempted to cast over them. De-spoiled of careful editing, the many *supposes* eliminated, the facts and contents made known, the record would present itself in an unenviable light.

It is not the advocating of a theory, the foisting of an idea, the building up of a clever hypothesis, that is to be desired. If the sagas give a simple, clear, convincing narrative of a voyage or voyages to the western world, and if those sagas have been written by men desiring to speak only the truth although, there might be a slight tendency to romancing, and the descriptions of places are accurate enough to be traced out, and if written before the discovery by Columbus, there can be but one result. It must then be admitted that the sea-rovers saw the New World. If so, what then?

This being true, there is no need to abuse Columbus and hold him up to the scorn of mankind. It will be unnecessary to traduce Christianity and hold up the ancient Norse as patterns of excellence, and as having enjoyed an ideal civilization. The distinguished authors who have expressed doubt and disbelief will be hoisted on their own petard.

It is not a subject for strong adjectives or loud declamation. The sagas should receive the same treatment as any other piece of writing that has been brought to light after having remained covered for ages. The facts they present should be accepted; the theories for what they are worth; the romancing rejected; the marvellous sifted, and the whole analysed.

It must not be assumed that it is here purposed to make an investigation into every line pointed out in these literary remains, for now we are interested only in their purported relation to the discovery of America. Nor is it to be presumed that a happy conclusion will be reached, for the confusion, as exhibited by the past, must be expected to be continued in the future. That same tendency to theorize, already referred to, and desire to be at variance with rugged facts, will still be the great companion of some—erratic, tempestuous, baneful.

CHAPTER II.

THE SAGAS.

It appears that Iceland had long been inhabited by a small colony of Irish monks, representing the Culdee form of the Christian religion. About 874 A. D. a stream of emigration set in, composed of Scandinavians, which continued for a period of sixty years, during which time some four thousand homesteads were established around the habitable fringe along the great bays and firths. The first authentic successful settlement was made under Ingolf, a Norwegian, who, after a fruitless attempt on the south coast in 870, established himself at Reikiavik in 874. This tide of emigration was caused by the changes introduced in Norway by Harald Haarfager, for such people as could not endure them left for other countries, particularly to the habitable coast districts of Iceland. In the immigrations into Iceland three distinct streams are traced. The first was that of four noblemen from Norway—Ingolf, Ketil Hæng, Skalla-Grim, and Thorolf, who, with their dependents, settled in the southwest from 870 to 890. The second was that of Aud, widow of Olaf the White, king of Dublin, who came from the Western Islands of Scotland, followed by a number of her kinsmen, many, like herself, being Christians, and settled the best land in the west, northwest and north, and there founded families that long swayed its destinies, which occurred between 890 and 900. The third was a few more newcomers direct from Norway, which took place between 900 and 930. These completed the settlement of the south, northeast and southeast. In 1100 the population numbered about 50,000 souls, quite a proportion of which was of Irish blood. The government at first, in the times of paganism, was hierarchic and aristocratic. Christianity was not formally introduced until the year 1002, or about one hundred and twenty-eight years after the first settlement and not even then without much opposition. Schools were then founded, and two bishoprics in Holar and Skalholt. Old Icelandic possesses only forty runic monuments, all of them practically worthless from a philological point of view, the oldest of which is an inscription on a church door, dating no farther back than the thirteenth century, and therefore later than some

of the manuscripts. Hence one author was moved to declare, "There are no runic inscriptions in Iceland."*

The most flourishing period of their literature and commerce was from the middle of the twelfth to the close of the thirteenth century, when, on account of domestic broils, Haco V. of Norway, in 1262, succeeded in reducing the whole island under his sway. From this time a declension began, which was not arrested until the outbreak of the Reformation, when the influence of the latter was felt in Iceland as early as 1540, but not established until 1551. Unfortunately its necessary complement—a social and political revolution—never came to Iceland.

Notwithstanding its boasted literature, Iceland has never produced a poet of the highest order. This has been accounted for on the assumption that their energy was lavished upon the saga, a prose epic. Their poems lack the qualities of high imagination, deep pathos, fresh love of nature, passionate dramatic power and noble simplicity of language, so characteristic of the Western Isles of Scotland.

The saga represents the real strength and power of Icelandic literature, some thirty-five or forty of which still remain, none of them dating earlier than the twelfth century.

The father of Icelandic history was Ari Frode, and nearly all that is now known of the heathen commonwealth may be traced to him. He secured and put in order the fragmentary traditions that had begun to die out. He fixed the style in which Icelandic history should be composed. Some of his writings have entirely disappeared, and those that remain are only preserved in the writings of later compilers. Ari was born in 1066 and died in the year 1148. The most eminent of Icelandic historians, and the most prominent man that country ever produced, was Snorri Sturlasson, born in 1178. Having married Herdis, a daughter of a rich priest living at Borg, he thereby laid the foundation of a large fortune. His methods of acquiring wealth are more than hinted at as not being legal. The promises he had made in Norway he did not trouble himself about fulfilling. He quarreled with his brother, his son, his nephew, his son-in-law, and his wife, and was continually in a broil. He wanted to marry Solveig, and promised to increase her wealth. He married, in 1224, Halveig, a widow, although his wife was still living. By the Thing he was appointed an expounder of the laws of Iceland, but disregarded the same laws when they affected himself. His quarrels and feuds affected the greater part of Iceland, and in 1232 broke out into civil war. This continued until about 1259, when his sons-in-law sent back his daughters, the cause of their quarrel being that their marriage portions were not paid. He was driven out of the country by his brother Sighvat, but returned in 1239. He quarreled with the sons of

*Vicary's "Saga Times," p. 163.

his wife Halveig about their mother's property. On the night of September 22d, 1241, he was assassinated by Gissur Thorvaldsson, accompanied by seventy men, all of whom had sworn to kill Snorri Sturlasson, his own friends and kinsmen being the murderers. In this atmosphere of strife he found time to write his history and traditions. The prominent features of his character were cunning, ambition and avarice, combined with want of courage and aversion to effort.

The first sagas were written down on separate scrolls in the generation succeeding that of Ari, or from about 1140 to 1220. Then they passed through different phases, edited and compounded from 1220 to 1260. After this they were padded and amplified (from 1260 to 1300), and during the fourteenth century were collected in large manuscripts. The sagas grew up in the milder days that immediately succeeded the change of faith, when the deeds of the principal families were still cherished, and their exploits narrated by the firesides during the long winters. At all feasts and gatherings there were those particularly adapted to the reciting of the occurrences of the past, and who wove their recitations into such a form as would most readily appeal to the imagination. Each reciter improvised his own comments and injected such statements as best suited his imagination. The artistic features of the story were carefully elaborated and the appropriate finishing touches supplied. The Irish characteristics greatly predominated in the sagas of the west. The best compositions belong to the west, and the name of nearly every classic writer belongs there—or in the place where there is the greatest admixture of Irish blood. But in all the Icelandic sagas there is the same keen grasp of character, the love of action, and that intense delight in blood, which almost assumes the garb of religious passion. The romancing spirit of the south had entered distant Iceland, and the fireside stories became impregnated more or less by its influence. Horn has very justly observed that "some of the sagas were doubtless originally based on facts, but the telling and retelling have changed them into pure myths."*

In speaking of "dreams of the Sagas," Vicary remarks: "The sagas are often so full of periphrase, and the figurative meaning so dark, and taken at so great a distance from its original sense that more thought must have been suggested to the mind than the skald had conceived. This, no doubt, led the imaginations of people in the saga time to dwell on the nature and importance of dreams, with the result that we have the stories, if not the histories, of the dreams of persons who lived eight or ten centuries since. Their strong points are that they are graphic and with decided color. . . . The real criticism is that the period of the sagas is short relatively, and, however

* Winsor's "Narrative and Critical History," Vol. I, p. 88.

wonderful for the time, their narration is more poetical than accurate; while, in comparison, the experience of common sense is long.”*

The sagas delight more or less in the improbable. The Ynglinga saga contains a description of King Jörund's custom of harrying the coasts of his neighbors. His son On pursued the same occupation. At the age of sixty the latter sacrificed his eldest son to Odin, who therefore extended his lease of life for another sixty years. He therefore sacrificed other sons, and for each son was granted ten more years of life, until he reached two hundred years, and would have offered up his remaining son had not his subjects interfered.

Accounts are also given of the *Bærsærk* (supposed to mean “bare-shirt,” and called in Icelandic *Ulfrehdin*, or wolf-skin); a class of men who fought without armor, and wearing only a shirt of skins, or at times naked. They were of unusual physical development and savagery, and were liable to a state of excitement in which they displayed superhuman strength, and they spared neither friend nor foe. They could swallow fire, go through it naked and fling their bodies on the edges of weapons without injury. They would perform prodigies of valor, would roar and howl like savage beasts, were the pests of society, but were occasionally useful for deeds of blood. In the *Kristnisaga*, that narrates the introduction of Christianity into Iceland, it is stated that there were two *Bærsærks*, who were brothers, and who were unusually savage; would howl like wolves, run with bare feet through the fire, and pretended that swords could not cut them. Bishop Fredrik, who had come to Iceland from North Germany, was a very holy and sensible man. He blessed the fire and the sword, with the result that the *Bærsærks* were burnt like other people; and when they fell upon the points of the swords, to their surprise, they were killed like other people under similar circumstances. It is also related that King Olav sent Tangbrand from Norway to Iceland to extend Christianity in the latter country. He was challenged to a duel by a fierce *Bærsærk*, who made the usual boast that he could pass harmless through fire and no sword could pierce his skin. Tangbrand suggested that he make his word good. The *Bærsærk* fell on his sword, and to the astonishment of all it penetrated him and he died in consequence. This was owing to the fact that Tangbrand had made a cross on the sword, which interfered with the protection afforded by the devil.

It was taught that after an attack of frenzy the superhuman spirit left the *Bærsærk*'s body, with the result that great exhaustion followed. In the *Eyrbyggjasaga*, an Icelander named Vernund obtained two *Bærsærks* of Swedish extraction, one called Halle and the other Leikner. They were larger and

*Saga Times, p. 16.

stronger than other men, and when not under the influence were tolerably tractable; but otherwise were dangerous, sparing neither friend nor foe, man, woman nor child; would howl like beasts, bite their shields, fall upon sharp weapons and eat fire. Before leaving for Iceland, they compelled Vernund to bind himself to supply them with everything they asked for, in return for their services. They came to Iceland the same year that Erik the Red sailed for Greenland. Soon after their arrival Halle demanded of Vernund to procure him a wife of good Icelandic family. Knowing that no respectable woman would desire such a husband, Vernund temporized with him, which Halle's impatient nature brooked only for a short time, and then gave Vernund sufficient cause to regret that he had brought them to Iceland. Knowing his brother Styr had a blood feud in which he wanted to take action he contrived to hand over to him the two Bærsærks, who proved of great service to him. Halle made love to Styr's daughter Asdis, who was a proud, strong and manlike woman. She entertained no thought of marrying a person of Halle's type. Styr strongly disapproved of the suit. Halle threatened to carry her off by force, when, in order to temporize with him, Styr promised he should marry her provided he and Leikner should make a road through the lava to Björnshavn, and build a fence between the lava and his lands, and also make an enclosure inside the lava. This work was at once performed by the exercise of unusual strength. When it was finished Asdis put on her best dress and met the Bærsærks on their return home, saying nothing to them, but simply walked by their side. They were in a state of great exhaustion as a consequence of the Bærsærkegang, or excitement, having just left them. Styr advised them to have a hot bath, which he heated to such a pitch that the Bærsærks burst the door open, when he speared them as they came out.

Sorcery and witchcraft are also important features in some of the narratives.

In treating of the sagas the extent of those forged must also be considered, and how far those remaining have been tampered with. Some of the Icelandic sagas are known to have been forged. They appear as early as the thirteenth century. All are quite poor, and appear to be wholly apocryphal or else worked up on hints given in genuine stories. Some of these apocryphal writings have been composed within the present century.

That some of the sagas have been worked over by later writers, and others interpolated, there is no room for doubt. As an instance of the former the Nialsaga may serve as an illustration. In style, contents, legal and historical weight, it is the foremost of all sagas. It deals especially with law, and contains the pith and the moral of all early Icelandic history. Its hero is Nial, a type of the good lawyer, placed in contrast with

Mord, a villain, the example of cunning, trickery and wrongdoing. A great part of the saga is taken up with the three cases and suits of the divorce, the death of Hoskuld. and the burning of Nial, given with great minuteness and care. The whole story is an ideal saga-plot, and appears to have been written by a lawyer, and according to internal evidence it was composed about 1250. It has been worked over by a later editor about 1300, who has inserted many spurious verses.

Perhaps no one could be found hardy enough to dispute the fact that Peringskiöld, in his edition of the *Heimskringla*, edited in 1697, interpolated eight chapters relating to the so-called Vinland voyages, which were afterwards discovered to have been taken from *Codex Flatoynensis*. It was this that Robertson, in his "History of America," relied upon as evidence of the Norse discovery of America, although he naively remarked, it "is a very rude, confused tale."* In America this has served more to spread the tale of this purported discovery than any other one source. It thereby gained a foothold in American history, and later compilers, for the most part, have received and adopted it without inquiry into the facts; just the same as other purported evidences have been added without critical inquiry.

DeCosta, although affirming that "those who imagine that these manuscripts have been tampered with and interpolated show that they have not the faintest conception of the state of the question,"† is forced to admit that Smith, in his "Dialogues,"‡ has suppressed the term "six," and substituted "by a number of days' sail unknown," in the "Landnama-bok" where it speaks of Ireland the Great lying opposite of Vinland, six days' sail west of Ireland.

Such manuscripts as have been preserved might tell a wondrous tale of changes and perversions should they fall under the eye of an expert, accustomed to detect, with such glosses as many an old writing has been subjected to. Until such detections have been made it is but just to receive them as they are, with such light as circumstances have surrounded them.

The sagas need not be solely depended upon to prove that the Norsemen were a hardy band of sea-rovers—or pirates, as they would have been designated had they lived in more modern times. Their roving propensities led them to the discovery of Iceland—as above intimated—in the year 850, and Greenland was first seen in 876, by Gunnbiorn, who had been driven out to sea by a storm, but a landing was not effected until about 986, when Erik the Red settled there. This Erik was born in Norway, but was banished from that country on account of the crime of murder. He retired to Iceland, where he was again

*Page 241.

†Pre-Columbian Discovery, p. 40.

‡Ibid., p. 161

outlawed on account of manslaughter. Having heard of the land to the west, he, with some of his followers, embarked for that region.

It required courage to sail in those days from Norway to Iceland, without a compass and in frail boats. Although Iceland is but six hundred miles distant from Norway and five hundred miles from the north of Scotland, yet often the voyage required months; nevertheless it was frequently undertaken with no other motive than that of restlessness. Greenland, two hundred and fifty miles distant from Iceland, was also reached, as is witnessed by the Norse remains still to be observed there.

The ships used by the Vikings have an especial interest. Descriptions are not only preserved, but their remains have been found. Owing to the sea-roving propensities and the great desire to pillage other lands, ship-building was regarded as an honorable handicraft, and a great amount of time and



A VIKING SHIP.

thought were given to the subject. Some of the results must be regarded as extraordinary. These vessels had a good bow, a clean run aft, and the midship section was like a duck's breast. Oars were used as well as sails. According to the saga of Olaf Tryggvesson, that king had a ship built that was long and broad, with huge sails and strongly timbered. It was called the Long Serpent, was shaped like a dragon, and had thirty-four benches for rowers. The head and arched tail were both gilt, and the bulwarks were as high as in sea-going ships. It was declared to have been the best and most costly of any ever built in Norway. Knud the Great had a dragon ship, with a dragon's head at the bow, and a dragon's tail at the stern. In the construction of these ancient vessels the rudder was placed aft, over the starboard side, and not in a line with the keel, and thus did not interfere with the dragon's tail. In the time of Erling Skakke, about 1100, two benches of rowers were intro-

duced. The vessels were built a little higher aft than amidships, in order to allow the man at the helm to see well forward. In a sea-fight the sterns of the ships were lashed together, so that no ship could be attacked singly, in consequence of which the fighting was hottest forward of the bows. The sides and rigging were decorated with shields. The sail used was square, made of woolen cloth, and often striped with broad rows of color. The mast was stepped in the best place for it, and as far forward as would admit of the sail doing its work.

Several years ago two ancient vessels were found in Denmark, embedded in the sand, one of which was seventy-two feet long and nine feet wide amidships, and the other forty-two feet long, containing two eight-sided spars, twenty-four feet long.

It must be accorded to the Vikings that they possessed some nautical skill, and to some extent could calculate the course of the sun and moon, with some knowledge of measuring time by the stars. Their methods were necessarily crude, and at times must have proved very faulty. As the mariner's compass was unknown in Europe till late in the twelfth century, it could not have been used among the Scandinavians until some time later.

CHAPTER III.

THE SAGAS AND AMERICA.

The manuscript in which are the narrations of the discovery of Vinland—or, as some would have it, America—is known as the *Codex Flatoyensis*, written about the year 1400; certainly not earlier than 1394, because annals are brought down to that time. The year when Leif Erikson is said to have discovered America is variously given; but from the various narrations the time may be approximately fixed at 1000. It would then appear that the event remained one solely of tradition for a period of four hundred years, kept alive by being repeated during the long winter nights by not less than twelve generations of men.

The *Codex Flatoyensis* was unknown until the seventeenth century, when it was found in the possession of John Finsson, who dwelt in Flatey, in Breidafirth, and who stated he had obtained it from his grandfather. It is claimed that the writing is the work of two priests, John Thordsson and Magnus Thorhallsson. It contains a large number of sagas, poems, and stories, thrown together in strange confusion and wholly without criticism. No other manuscript confuses things on so vast a scale. In this codex is the saga of Olaf Tryggvesson, wherein the voyages of Leif Erikson are described. The saga of Erik the Red, one of the chief narratives depended upon by the advocates of the Norse discovery, is in the same codex. The other principal saga on this subject is that of Thorfinn Karlsefne, which goes over the same ground covered by that of Erik the Red.

The accounts of these voyages as given in the originals, or even in the translations, are too numerous and prolix to be reproduced in this place. In order to present a clear understanding, an abstract of some of the sagas will be necessary.

According to the *Codex Flatoyensis*, one of Erik's companions was Heriult Bardson, who had a son Biarne. This Biarne was absent in Norway at the time his father went to Greenland with Erik. When he returned to Iceland he resolved to spend the following winter with his father, and to that end set sail for Greenland. As neither himself nor any of his companions had ever navigated these seas before, he became lost in the fog that had set in. When the weather cleared up they found them-

selves in sight of a strange land to larboard. They again sighted land after two days' sail; and three days still later they came in sight of land that proved to be an island. They bore away, and in three days' sailing reached Greenland. The news of this discovery having come to the ears of Leif, son of Erik the Red, he determined to explore this newly-found land; so he purchased Biarne's vessel, and, with thirty-two men, sailed in the direction that had been indicated. The first land sighted was that which Biarne had seen last, and here they landed and called it Helluland. To them it appeared to have no advantages, for in the up-country were large snowy mountains, and from there down to the sea was one field of snow. They then put to sea, and soon came to another land, which was flat and overgrown with wood. This they called Markland. They put to sea again, with the wind from the northeast, and after two days made land. They landed upon an island, where they found the dew upon the grass was sweeter than anything they had ever tasted. Next they sailed into a sound that was between the island and a ness that went out northward from the land, and sailed westward, and thence went on shore at a place where a river, issuing from a lake, fell into the sea. They brought their ship into the lake, and resolved to winter there; and for that purpose erected a large house on the shore. With them was a south countryman named Tyrker, who had a high forehead, sharp eyes, with a small face, and was little in size, and ugly. This man found grapes during the winter. With this they loaded their boat, and having loaded the vessel with wood, they returned to Greenland when spring arrived. The last land visited they called Vinland.

It will be observed that the narration of this, the first voyage of Leif, is exceedingly indefinite. To tell what land was referred to would be an utter impossibility. Practically there is no description of the coast. The time occupied in the voage between Greenland and the first point of landing is not given. The distance between Cape Farewell, the most southerly point of Greenland, and Newfoundland is about six hundred miles. According to the saga of Erik the Red twenty-five ships started for Greenland from Iceland, only fourteen of which reached that country; the rest were either lost or driven back. No account of the voyage out or the return is given in this expedition of Leif. Even if only the coast of Labrador was reached, there was enough there to be seen, with the experience of the voyage, to have aroused necessary recitations. One might as well search for Gulliver's Luggnagg. As to the matter of grapes, these Icelanders did not know what grapes were, for they had never seen a grape-vine. As to Tyrker, the very description of him indicates that it was a character thrown in to assist the tale. Calling the country Vinland, or Wine-land, was no proof of wine, for Erik the Red boasted that he so named Greenland

that the people would think it was a good land, and hence would have a desire to remove there. The sweet dew upon the grass and the frosts and snows are somewhat incongruous.

The saga contradicts its first narrative by affirming that Leif discovered Vinland the Good at the time King Olaf sent him to Greenland to proclaim Christianity, and during his passage from Iceland to Greenland.

After Leif's return his brother Thorwald, with thirty men, set out for Vinland. Nothing is related of the voyage until they came to the booths put up by Leif in Vinland. Here they wintered. When the spring opened Thorwald sent the long-boat westward along the coast. They found many islands, but no abode for man and beast, "but on an island far towards the west they found a corn barn, constructed of wood. They found no other traces of human work." The next spring the ship proceeded eastward and towards the north, when it was driven upon the land and broke the keel. While here they killed eight natives at one time. "Then a great drowsiness came upon them and they could not keep themselves awake, but all of them fell asleep. A sudden scream came to them, and they all awoke; and mixed with the scream they thought they heard the words: 'Awake, Thorwald, with all thy comrades, if ye will save thy lives. Go on board your ship as fast as you can, and leave this land without delay'." They were attacked by innumerable Skräellings, who succeeded in killing Thorwald with an arrow. The following spring they returned to Greenland.

In this narrative it will be noticed that they had no difficulty in finding the booths of Leif. Having found them, they went *westward* and came upon a "corn barn constructed of wood." Whence came this barn? Our ingenious annotators are ready with an answer: "A building of this character would point to Europeans, who, according to minor narratives, preceded the Icelanders to America."*

Thorstein, third son of Erik the Red, set out in the same ship for Vinland, to bring back his brother's body. He was accompanied by his wife Gudrid and twenty five men, but after being tossed about on the ocean the whole summer without knowing where they were, they finally landed in Greenland, in the western settlements. In the continuation of the story of Thorstein we have a narrative of the miraculous. Thorstein dies in the house of Thorstein Black. "Now Thorstein Erickson's illness increased upon him, and he died, which Gudrid, his wife, took with great grief. They were all in the room, and Gudrid had set herself upon a stool before the bench on which her husband Thorstein's body lay. Now Thorstein the Goodman took Gudrid from the stool in his arms, and set himself with her upon a

*Pre-Columbian Discovery, p. 108.

bench just opposite to Thorstein's body, and spoke much with her. He consoled her, and promised to go with her in summer to Eriksfiord, with her husband Thorstein's corpse, and those of his crew. 'And,' said he, 'I shall take with me many servants to console and assist.' She thanked him for this. Thorstein Ericson then raised himself up and said, 'Where is Gudrid?' And thrice he said this; but she was silent. Then she said to Thorstein the Goodman, 'Shall I give answer or not?' He told her not to answer. Then went Thorstein the Goodman across the room and sat down in a chair, and Gudrid set herself on his knee; and Thorstein the Goodman said, 'What wilt thou make known?' After awhile the corpse replies: 'I wish to tell Gudrid her fate beforehand, that she may be the better able to bear my death; for I have come to a blessed resting place. This I have now to tell thee, Gudrid, that thou wilt be married to an Iceland man, and ye will live long together, and from you will descend many men—brave, gallant and wise, and a well-pleasing race of posterity. Ye shall go from Greenland to Norway, and from thence to Iceland, where ye shall dwell. Long will ye live together, but thou will survive him; and then thou shalt go abroad, and so southward, and shall return to thy home in Iceland. And there must a church be built, and thou must remain there and be consecrated a nun, and there end thy days.' All of which came to pass. The face of the story shows it to be a monkish fiction.

The next voyage to Vinland was made by Thorfinn Karlsefne, a trader. In the summer of 1006 he fitted out his ship in Iceland for a voyage to Greenland, attended by Snorre Thorbrandson and a crew of forty men. At the same time another ship was fitted out for the same destination by Biarne Grimolfson and Thorhall Gamlason, also with a crew of forty men. In the autumn of the same year both ships arrived safely at Eriksfiord, in Greenland. Here Thorfinn fell in love with Gudrid, widow of Thorstein, and with Leif's consent married her that winter. In the spring of 1007 three ships were fitted out for an expedition to Vinland. Thorfinn fitted out his, and Biarne Grimolfson and Thorhall Gamlason put their ships into shape, and the third was commanded by Thorward, on board of which was an attache of Erik named Thorhall. As this voyage is recognized to have been the most important of all the Norse voyages to Vinland, and as the narrative is the most complete, it is here given in full. In order to be wholly impartial in this quotation, I have given it as found in De Costa's "Pre-Columbian Discovery."

"They sailed to the west district and thence to Biarney; hence they sailed south a night and a day. Then land was seen, and they launched a boat and explored the land; they found great flat stones, many of which were twelve ells broad. There were a great number of foxes there. They called the land

Helluland. Then they sailed a day and a night in a southerly course, and came to a land covered with woods, in which there were many wild animals. Beyond this land, to the southeast, lay an island, on which they slew a bear. They called the island Bear Island, and the land Markland. Thence they sailed long south by the land and came to a cape. The land lay on the right side of the ship, and there were long shores of sand. They came to land, and found on the cape the keel of a ship, from which they called the place Kiarlarness, and the shores Wonderstrand, because it seemed so long sailing by. Then the land became indented with coves, and they ran the ship into a bay, whither they directed their course. King Olat Tryggvesson had given Leif two Scots, a man named Haki and a woman named Hekia; they were swifter of foot than wild animals. These were in Karlsefne's ship. When they had passed beyond Wonderstrand, they put these Scots ashore, and told them to run over the land to the southwest three days, and discover the nature of the land, and then return. They had a kind of garment that they called *Kiafal*, that was so made that a hat was on top, and it was open at the sides, and no arms; fastened between the legs with a button and strap; otherwise they were naked. When they returned one had in his hand a bunch of grapes, and the other a spear of wheat. They went on board, and afterward the course was obstructed by another bay. Beyond this bay was an island, on each side of which was a rapid current, that they called the Isle of Currents. There was so great a number of eider ducks there that they could hardly step without treading on their eggs. They called this place Stream Bay. Here they brought their ships to land, and prepared to stay. They had with them all kinds of cattle. The situation of the place was pleasant, but they did not care for anything except to explore the land. Here they wintered without sufficient food. The next summer, failing to catch fish, they began to want food. Then Thorhall the hunter disappeared. They found Thorhall, whom they sought three days, on the top of a rock, where he lay breathing, blowing through his nose and mouth, and muttering. They asked why he had gone there. He replied that this was nothing that concerned them. They said that he should go home with them, which he did. Afterward a whale was cast ashore in that place; and they assembled and cut it up, not knowing what kind of a whale it was. They boiled it with water and ate it, and were taken sick. Then Thorhall said: 'Now you see that Thor is more prompt to give aid than your Christ. This was cast ashore as a reward for the hymn which I composed to my patron Thor, who rarely forsakes me.' When they knew this, they cast all the remains of the whale into the sea, and commended their affairs to God. After which the air became milder, and opportunities were given for fishing. From that time there was an abundance of

food; and there were beasts on the land, eggs in the island and fish in the sea.

"They say that Thorhall desired to go northward around Wonderstrand to explore Vinland, but Karlsefne wished to go along the shore south. Then Thorhall prepared himself at the island, but did not have more than nine men in his whole company, and all the others went in the company of Karlsefne. Thorhall sailed north to go around Wonderstrand and Kiarlarness, but when he wished to sail westward, they were met by a storm from the west and driven to Ireland, where they were beaten and made slaves. As merchants reported, there Thorhall died. It is said that Karlsefne, with Snorre and Bjarne and his comrades, sailed along the coast south. They sailed long until they came to a river flowing down from the land through a lake into the sea, where there were sandy shoals, where it was impossible to pass up, except with the highest tide. Karlsefne sailed up to the mouth of the river with his folk, and called the place Hop. Having come to the land, they saw that where it was low corn grew; and where it was higher, vines were found. Every river was full of fish. They dug pits where the land began, and where the land was higher; and when the tide went down there were sacred fish in the pits. There were a great number of all kinds of wild beasts in the woods. They stayed there half a month and enjoyed themselves, and did not notice anything; they had their cattle with them. Early one morning, when they looked around, they saw a great many skin boats, and poles were swung upon them, and it sounded like reeds shaken by the wind, and they pointed to the sun. Then said Karlsefne, 'What may this mean?' Snorre Thorbrandson replied, 'It may be that this is a sign of peace, so let us take a white shield and hold it toward them.' They did so. Thereupon they rowed toward them, wondering at them, and came to land. These people were swarthy and fierce, and had bushy hair upon their heads; they had very large eyes and broad cheeks. They staid there for a time, and gazed upon those they met, and afterward rowed away southward around the ness.

"Karlsefne and his people had made their houses above the lake, and some of their houses were near the lake, and others more distant. They wintered there, and there was no snow, and all their cattle fed themselves on the grass. But when spring came they saw, early one morning, that a number of canoes rowed from the south around the ness; so many, as if the sea were sown with coal; poles were also swung on each boat. Karlsefne and his people then raised up the shield, and when they came together they began to trade. These people would rather have red cloth; for this they offered skins and real furs. They would also buy swords and spears, but this Karlsefne and Snorre forbade. For a whole fur skin, the

Skrællings took a piece of red cloth a span long, and bound it round their heads. Thus went on their traffic for a time. Next the cloth began to be scarce with Karlsefne and his people, and they cut it up into small pieces, which were not wider than a finger's breadth, and yet the Skrællings gave just as much as before, and more. It happened that a bull which Karlsefne had ran out of the wood and roared aloud; this frightened the Skrællings, and they rushed to their canoes and rowed away toward the south. After that they were not seen for three whole weeks. But at the end of that time a great number of Skrællings' ships were seen coming from the south like a rushing torrent, all the poles turned from the sun, and they all yelled very loud. Then Karlsefne took a red shield and held it toward them. The Skrællings leaped out of their vessels, and after this they went against each other and fought. There was a hot shower of weapons, because the Skrællings had slings. Karlsefne's people saw that they raised upon a pole a very large ball, something like a sheep's paunch, and of a blue color; this they swung from the pole over Karlsefne's men upon the ground, and it made a great noise as it fell down. This caused great fear with Karlsefne and his men, so that they only thought of running away; and they retreated along the river, for it seemed to them that the Skrællings pressed them on all sides. They did not stop until they came to some rocks, where they made a bold stand. Freydis came out and saw that Karlsefne's people fell back, and she cried out, 'Why do you run, strong men as you are, before those miserable creatures whom I thought you would knock down like cattle? If I had arms, methinks I could fight better than you.' They gave no heed to her words. Freydis would go with them, but she was slower because she was pregnant; still she followed after them in the woods. She found a dead man in the woods; it was Thorbrand Snorreson, and there stood a flat stone stuck in his head; the sword lay naked by his side. This she took up and made ready to defend herself. Then came the Skrællings toward her; she drew out her breasts from under her clothes, and dashed them against the naked sword. By this the Skrællings became frightened, and ran off to their ships and rowed away. Karlsefne and his men then came up and praised her courage. Two men fell on Karlsefne's side, but a number of the Skrællings. Karlsefne's band was overmatched. Next they went home to their dwellings and bound up their wounds, and considered what crowd that was that pressed upon them from the land side. It now seemed to them that it could have hardly been real people from the ships, but that there must have been optical illusions. The Skrællings also found a dead man, and an axe lay by him; one of them took up the axe and cut wood with it, and then one after another did the same, and thought it was a fine thing and cut well. After that, one took it and cut at a stone, so that

the axe broke, and then they thought that the axe was of no use, because it would not cut a stone, and they cast it away. Karlsefne and his people now thought they saw that, although the land had many good qualities, they still would always be exposed to the fear of attacks from the original dwellers. They decided, therefore, to go away and to return to their own land. They sailed northward along the shore, and found five Skrælings, clad in skins, sleeping near the sea. They had with them vessels containing animal marrow mixed with blood. Karlsefne's people thought that these men had been banished from the land; they killed them. After that they came to a ness, and many wild beasts were there, and the ness was covered all over with dung from the beasts, which had lain there during the night. Now they came back to Straumfiord, and there was a plenty of everything that they wanted to have. [It is thus that some men say that Biarne and Gudrid stayed behind, and one hundred men with them, and did not go farther; but that Karlsefne and Snorre went southward, and forty men with them, and were no longer in Hop than barely two months, and the same summer came back.] Karlsefne then went with one ship to seek Thorhall the hunter, but the rest remained behind, and they sailed northward past Kiarlarness, and thence westward, and the land was upon their larboard hand. There were wild woods over all, as far as the eye could see, and scarcely any open places. When they had sailed long a river ran out of the land east and west. They sailed into the mouth of the river and lay by its bank.

"It chanced one morning that Karlsefne and his people saw opposite, in an open place in the woods, a speck which glittered in their sight, and they called out towards it, and it was a Uniped, which thereupon hurried down to the bank of the river where they lay. Thorwald Erikson stood at the helm, and the Uniped shot an arrow into his bowels. Thorwald drew out the arrow and said: 'It has killed me! To a rich land we have come, but hardly shall we enjoy any benefit from it.' Thorwald soon after died of his wound. Upon this the Uniped ran away to the northward. Karlsefne and his people went after him, and saw him now and then, and the last time they saw him he ran into a bay. They drew off to the northward, and saw the country of the Unipeds, but they would not then expose their men any longer. They looked upon the mountain range that was at Hop and that which they now found as all one, and it also appeared to be of equal length from Straumfiord to both places. The third winter they were in Straumfiord. They now became much divided by party feeling, and the women were the cause of it, for those who were unmarried would injure those who were married, and hence arose great disturbance. There was born the first autumn, Snorre, Karlsefne's son, and he was three years old when they went away. When they sailed from Vin-

land they had a south wind, and then came to Markland, and found there five Skrællings, and one was bearded; two were females and two were boys; they took the boys, but the others escaped, and the Skrællings sank down in the ground. These boys they took with them; they taught them the language, and they were baptized. They called their mother Vathelldi, and their father Uvæge. They said that two kings ruled over the Skrællings, and that one was named Avalldania, but the other Valldidia. They said that no houses were there. People lived in caves or in holes. They said there was a land on the other side, just opposite their country, where people lived who wore white clothes and carried poles before them, and to these were fastened flags; and they shouted loud, and the people think that this was White-man's land, or Great Ireland.

"Biarne Grimolfson was driven with his ship into the Irish ocean, and they came into a worm sea, and soon the ship began to sink under them. They had a boat which was smeared with sea oil, for the worms* do not attack that. They went into the boat, and then saw that it would not hold them all. Then said Biarne: 'As the boat will not hold more than half of our men, it is my counsel that lots should be drawn for those to go in the boat, for it shall not be according to rank.' This they all thought so generous an offer that no one would oppose it. They then did so, that lots were drawn, and it fell to Biarne to go in the boat, and the half of the men with him, for the boat had not room for more. But when they had gotten into the boat, an Icelandic man that was in the ship, and had come with Biarne from Iceland said: 'Dost thou mean, Biarne, to leave me here?' Biarne said: 'So it seems.' Then said the other: 'Very different was the promise to my father when I went with thee from Iceland, than thus to leave me, for thou said that we should both share the same fate.' Biarne said: 'It shall not be thus; go down into the boat, and I will go up into the ship, since I see that thou art so anxious to live.' Then Biarne went up into the ship and this man down into the boat, and after that they went on their voyage until they came to Dublin, in Ireland, and there told these things; but it is most people's belief that Biarne and his companions were lost in the worm sea, for nothing was heard of them after that time."†

Another account of this expedition differs somewhat from the one just given. According to the second, the expedition, carrying one hundred and forty men, first sailed to Westbygd and Biarney Isle. They left the latter place with a north wind, and after a day and a night came to Helluland. After another day

*It is but just here to remark that Vicary uses the word snakes, and says: "The story of Biarne sailing into a sea on the coast of Ireland so full of snakes that the ship sank, while half the people on board the ship were saved in a small boat, is not credible".—*Saga Times*, p. 204.

†Pp. 121-137.

and a nights' sail they reached Bear Island. Another sail, occupying the same length of time, brought them to Kiarlarness, and called the shore Wonderstrand; and here they put the two Scots—Hake and Hekia—and told them to run southward and explore the country. Three days later they returned with a vine and self-sown wheat. Thence the ships proceeded to Straumfiord, where they landed and prepared habitations, and here they wintered. They were in want of food, and failed to catch fish, as the winter was severe. They sailed over the island, hoping to obtain subsistence, but only found little better fare. They prayed to God to send food, without answer. Then Thorhall disappeared, but after three days was found by Karlsefne and Bjarne lying on top of a rock, and having asked him to go home with them he complied. After that a whale was cast up, and they partook of it, and all were made sick. Thorhall boasted the whale was given in answer to a hymn he had composed to Thor. When they heard this they would not partake any more, but threw what was left from the rock and committed themselves to God; then there was no lack of food. The company now parted, Thorhall, with nine men, going northward to explore Vinland, and Karlsefne, with the rest, went south. "Thereupon Thorhall sailed northward around Wonderstrand and Kiarlarness, but when they wished to cruise westward a storm came against them and drove them to Ireland, where they were beaten and made slaves. There Thorhall passed his life." Karlsefne and his party sailed south. "They sailed long until they came to a river which flowed from the land through a lake, and passed into the sea. Before the mouth of the river were great islands, and they were not able to enter the river except at the highest tide." They called the land Hop, and there found wild corn and vines. Here they spent the winter, when no snow fell. Here they caught the two Skrælling boys. Thence they went to Greenland and passed the winter with Leif Erikson.

In this second account the distance from Greenland to Vinland is definitely given as three days' sail. While the two accounts are substantially the same, yet there is some material difference. The winter they were pressed for food, the second account narrates, "they sailed over the island, hoping that they might find means of subsistence," while in the first this important event is entirely omitted. The battle with the Skrællings, the most striking of all the events in the three narratives, is entirely omitted in the second and differs materially in the third. That no snow should fall in the Eastern United States would be a remarkable event. A like occurrence is not mentioned since the landing of the Pilgrims. It must have been very striking even to a Norseman, and yet entirely omitted in the first and third narratives. The second account declares that Bjarne was carried into the Greenland Sea, where he came into the "worm

sea;" but does not state where the ship's crew landed, but allows us to suppose they landed in Greenland.

The third narrative does not mention Biarne and Thorhall, but says that Karlsefne was persuaded by Gudrid and others, and the expedition set out with sixty men and five women, with the agreement that all should share alike in what they gained. "They put to sea and came to Leif's houses safe and carried up their goods." Soon after a whale was driven ashore, and they had plenty of food. No account of its having made them sick is given. No account of their starving is given. The Skrællings came, and when they saw the milk and dairy products they would buy nothing else, and the trade was such that the Skrællings "carried away their winnings in their stomachs." When they became frightened at the bellowing of the bull they sought refuge in the houses, but were prevented entering by Karlsefne. The house was now strengthened for defense by building around it a strong fence. In the beginning of the following winter the Skrællings, in greater numbers, returned and threw their bundles over the fence, for which they received the same as before. While Gudrid sat in the door, "there came a shadow to the door, and a woman went in with a black kirtle on, rather short, with a snood around her head; clear, yellow hair; pale, with large eyes, so large that none ever saw such eyes in a human head. She went to where Gudrid was sitting, and said: 'What art thou called?' 'I am called Gudrid; and what art thou called?' 'I am called Gudrid,' said she. Then the good wife Gudrid put out her hand to her, that she might sit down beside her. At the same time Gudrid heard a great noise, and the woman had vanished." No one else saw this strange woman. At the same time one of Karlsefne's men killed one of the Skrællings. Soon after they had a battle, in which many of the Skrællings fell. Here Karlsefne stayed the whole winter, and in the spring returned to Greenland. In this narrative the third year of their stay is entirely omitted.

In addition to the above it should be remarked that the following items must appear to be conspicuous in the narratives of Karlsefne's expedition: *a.* There is that same indefiniteness about the coast and description of the land characteristic of all the other narratives, and which might apply almost as well to one country as another. It is an exhibition of fictitious land, intended to help out the picture which the reciter finds necessary to create, not intended to be located or regarded as veritable history. *b.* The number of men engaged in the expedition in one account is given at one hundred and forty, and in the third it is reduced to sixty. So the ships fall off from three to one. *c.* The time of sailing in the first narrative—not regarding the modern punctuation—is given at one day and a night to Helluland, the same to Markland; but the time to Wonderstrand is that "they

sailed long south by the land." In the second account the whole time occupied in sailing is but three days. The last version does not give the time, showing that the distance must have been considered to be insignificant. *d.* The first account declares that Thorwald Erikson was slain by an arrow shot by a Uniped. The same Codex Flatoyensis declares that Thorwald was killed by a Skrælling in a previous expedition. As both accounts give battles with the Skrællings, it is probable these stories were gradually evolved out and developed from the same source. *e.* The story of the Uniped, and the yellow-haired woman visiting Gudrid, belong to the mythological and miraculous. *f.* The account of the five Skrællings in Markland is very doubtful. The boys were seized and taken to Greenland, but the bearded man and two women sank into the earth and disappeared. The names of the boys' father and mother—Vathelldi, or Vethilde, and Uvæge—are decidedly Northern, while the kings' names—Avalldania and Valldidia, or Valdidida—are fragments of Northern names thrown together to constitute fictitious ones. Why these Skrællings should have white neighbors, who carried banners on sticks, must be left solely to the creative fancy of the reciter. That it was borrowed from the European nations no one would desire to question. The names of the Scots—Haki and Hekia—are by no means Gaelic, but are decidedly Scandinavian. *g.* The story makes the eider-duck lay eggs where, during the same week, the grapes ripen and intoxicate when fresh, and the wheat forms in the ear; an incongruity which could only happen among a people not familiar with the things treated. *h.* The story of the punishing of Thorhall the hunter for his impiety, and the rewarding of Karlsefne for throwing away the meat of the whale brought thither by the god Thor, indicates that the first legend had passed through monkish hands. It is exceedingly crude, and perhaps told to show the inferiority of the Norse god. *i.* The ship driven into Dublin, Ireland, with no account of the sail, proves that the story of Vinland is laid at no great distance from Ireland. But why they were driven upon the east instead of the west coast must remain an inexplicable mystery.

The next voyage in the series relied on to establish the Norse theory is the so-called narrative of Freydis, Helge and Finboge. It starts out by declaring "the conversation began again to turn upon a Vinland voyage, as the expedition was both gainful and honorable." In the summer of 1010 two brothers, Helge and Finboge arrived in Greenland from Norway. Freydis, she who had so successfully frightened the Skrællings in Vinland, proposed to these brothers that they should make a voyage to Vinland, and offered to go with them on condition that an equal share should be allowed her; which was agreed to. It was further agreed that each should have thirty fighting men, besides women. Freydis secretly brought away five more than the al-

lotted number. Having spent the winter in Vinland, Freydis prevailed upon her husband to slay Helge and Finboge, with all their men; the women with them she killed with her own hand. She returned to Greenland in the ship owned by the two brothers with all the goods the vessel could carry.

This story says nothing of the voyage from Greenland to Vinland, nor any account of the country; but apparently had no difficulty in finding the houses erected by Leif Erikson. They left Vinland in the spring, but what time is not stated, although the ship was made ready early in the spring. They "had a good voyage and the ship came early in the summer to Eriksfjord."

Human credulity, in many cases, can not be overtaxed. It has been gravely put forth* that in the year 1312 Bishop Arne, of Gardar, preached the crusades, not only in Iceland and Greenland, but also in America! That a ship arrived from Greenland in 1325, bringing "the tithes from the American colonies, consisting of one hundred and twenty-seven pounds of walrus-teeth, which were sold to Jean du Pre, a Flemish merchant, who paid for them twelve livres and fourteen sous." As the narrations do not record any permanent settlements in Vinland, just what particular object the worthy bishop hoped to obtain, it would be difficult to conjecture. The donation of two dollars and thirty-five cents' worth of walrus-teeth, and that given after a delay of thirteen years, would appear to be an ironical appreciation of the energies of the bishop. As the habitat of the walrus is confined to the northern circumpolar regions of the globe, and as the contribution consisted in the remains of this animal, it would be but fair to conclude that it was the principal product, and hence Vinland must be sought in the far north.'

Having presented the special character of the sagas, and given something of a detailed account, in the next place the general features must attract our attention.

As has already been observed, the evidence of the reputed Norse discovery of America rests solely on the statement of the Codex Flatoeyensis. A discovery so great would have found its way into the other sagas, and yet they are silent on the subject. In the Heimskringla, Snorri Sturlasson is made to say, "Leif also found Vinland the good." If Leif had made a discovery of a continent like that of America it is not probable that Snorri would have dismissed the subject in so abrupt a manner. He would have seized upon it, and magnified the achievement, and graced it with the power of his pen, as has been exhibited in his Edda. We would have been treated to other Thucydidean speeches, similar to those that mark his productions.

As a constant communication was kept up between Iceland

*John B. Shipley's "English Rediscovery of America," p. 6.

and Ireland, it would be but reasonable to infer that the national records of the Irish would contain some account of the important discovery. The Irish annals have been relied on so much to solve historical problems, and have been of untold advantage, yet they are entirely silent upon this subject; although the Irish character entered into the very life of the western sagamen.

Saxo-Grammaticus, the most celebrated of early Danish chroniclers, who, according to his own statement, derived his knowledge of the remoter period of Danish history from old songs, runic inscriptions and the historical narratives and traditions of the Icelanders, makes no mention of this story, although he lived as late as the year 1204.

Although the *Codex Flatoyensis* gives a graphic and terrible picture of shipwrecked colonists in Greenland, yet is utterly silent on what must have been the sufferings of Biarne Grimolfson and his companions when driven from the coast of America to Dublin. And yet that stormy passage of nearly three thousand miles was made as though it was but a pleasant day's sail.

The ease with which the houses of Leif in Vinland were found on each succeeding voyage must be a matter of surprise to every one who has read the narratives. The ships seem to have been attracted to the spot as readily as the needle points to the pole.

Why so much space in the sagas should be taken up with endless genealogies, and the discovery of a vast continent passed over without description—vague, it is true, is given, uncertain, indefinite—as to surface, coast line, climate, or the wonders in the wilderness, must serve to dumbfound even its most voluble advocates. The animal life that existed in the forests of Massachusetts, Maine and Connecticut did not call forth any notice. True, they saw a bear, but its color or size elicited no attention, though they must have seen the polar and the Norwegian bears. Can it be possible that they were so dumb to nature as to allow its wonders to escape their attention? Minute the sagas are in minor things, is it possible the greater things caused them not to wonder?

If they landed in Massachusetts, or on any part of the eastern coast, the advantage of the situation over that of Greenland or Iceland must have been so patent as to cause a wave of immigration to have set in as would have depopulated Greenland, materially have affected Iceland, and even felt in Norway.

Norway abandoned the Greenland settlement, but did not forget there was such a place. Vinland was forgotten and the Norse discovery was not resurrected until 1570, when Ortelius, cosmographer to Philip II. of Spain, resurrected it. If the Norse discovered America, and made one or more voyages to it, and then forgot that discovery, or hid the report, then it must be to them a shame which time will fail to eradicate. To claim that the Norsemen discovered America is an impeachment of their

intelligence. That there was a Leif Erikson, and that he was the son of Erik the Red, and made his home in Greenland, perhaps no one would desire to deny; that he came upon a land which he gave various names to, is not only possible but also probable. That the land he discovered was not so well situated or attractive as the home of Erik is proved from the fact that he abandoned his houses in Vinland and returned to his former home. All the facts in the case, would point to Western Greenland as the scene of the achievement of Leif Erikson. The Skrællings were Eskimos, as may be learned from the descriptions given: "These people were swarthy and fierce, and had bushy hair on their heads; they had very large eyes and broad cheeks." In 1342 the Eskimo so imperilled the western colonies of Greenland that they were abandoned. These settlements could not have been strong, and probably were made after the death of Leif.

How much dependence can be placed in certain statements must be left to conjecture. No reliance can be placed in the points of the compass, for with that instrument they had no acquaintance. It must be regarded as comparative, when the direction of the ship's sailing is given. In Leif's voyage the shortest day in Vinland was from "dagmaal til non," that is, from nine to three.

In the legends of Greenland and Iceland sufficient data had been preserved upon which such a narrative could be built as would tickle the ear of those whose ancestors were lauded. As has been seen, these narratives are crude and poorly constructed, but clearly represent the beginning of fiction, which might have been better adorned had they fallen into more competent hands.

The mighty ocean stretching out itself beyond the Pillars of Hercules, Ireland and the Western Isles, afforded food for the imaginations of men. The influence was felt by the sagamen, who pictured a body of land west of Ireland and within easy sail. Tales grew out of this pictured land, which have been preserved in their writings. One of these is the story of Gudleif Gudlaugson, preserved in the Eyrbyggja saga. Near the end of the reign of King Olaf, Gudleif went on a trading voyage to the west of Dublin. On his return to Iceland, sailing west from Ireland, he was driven far into the ocean by northeast winds. At length they saw land of great extent, and finding a good harbor they went on shore, where a number of men met them, and from their language took them to be Irish. Soon after many hundreds surrounded them, who seized Gudleif and his companions, bound and drove them inland, where they were brought before an assembly which decided what should be done with them. There was a division in the council; some were for killing them, and others were for reducing them to slavery. "While this was going on, they saw a great number of men riding towards them with a banner lifted up, whence they inferred that some great

man was among them. When the company drew near, they saw a man riding under the banner." To this man their case was referred. He commanded them to be brought to him, and addressed them in the Norse tongue. When he discovered they were Icelanders, he declared he was from Bogafjord, and made many inquiries concerning certain people. He refused to disclose his name, and, although the summer was nearly gone, he advised them to leave, and looked to the fitting out of their ship. Gudleif, with his companions, put to sea, and the same autumn reached Ireland, and passed the winter in Dublin.

According to the Landnamabok, Are Marson, about 928, was driven by a storm to White-man's land, which some call Ireland the Great, which lies in the western ocean, opposite Vinland, six days' sail west of Ireland. Here he was baptized, not allowed to leave, and was held in great honor.

In presenting these tales the reciters do not get rid of their conceptions of European customs. In the fabulous land, men continue to ride on horseback and follow banners. Even the Christian religion early reaches out its arm there; but what saint propagated the new doctrine deponeth saith not.

The idea of superstition must not be lost sight of in this discussion. It had a bearing on these narratives, as has already been intimated. In saga time it is impossible to draw a line between superstition and religion. Their superstitions were rude in shape and vigorous in imagery. The composers of the sagas, although supposed to be Christians, were swayed by the superstitions of their age. As an illustration of this fact, the following may be given from the saga of Thorfinn Karlsefne: There was a witch named Thorborg, who was called upon during a time of evil in Greenland. She was accorded the seat of honor, wore a blue cloak, laced in front and covered with precious stones. On her head was a black lambskin, trimmed with white cat's fur, while in her hand was a staff, the top of which was brass inlaid with precious stones. Around her waist was a belt, from which hung a bag containing materials for fire, and the articles used in sorcery. After making the witches' broth, some other woman must sing the witches' chant. The women of the house were placed around the caldron, and Gudrid sang so sweetly that the spirits revealed that as the winter passed away so would the bad times and the pestilence should decline. These superstitions gave a coloring to what was written; and the sagas bearing on the Norse discovery should be read in their entirety, and not solely that part relating directly on the subject.

CHAPTER IV.

NORSE REMAINS IN AMERICA.

The records concerning the Icelandic colony in Greenland are meager, uncertain and fragmentary. What finally became of the colony is unknown. Communication ceased with Greenland some time during the fifteenth century. However, it was not wholly forgotten. Many expeditions set out to undertake its rediscovery, which was not effected until 1721, when Hans Egede succeeded in re-opening communication; but he found no descendants of the Norsemen there.

Ancient ruins in Greenland do not appear to be either numerous or extensive. It is probable the colony never was a large one. Near Igaliko, which is situated on an isthmus formed by two fjords, there can be traced the walls of about seventeen dwellings, and opposite the Moravian settlement of Frederiksdal there have been found tombs containing wooden coffins, with skeletons wrapped in hairy cloth, and both pagan and Christian tomb-stones, with runic inscriptions.

With these evidences before them the Copenhagen antiquarians felt assured that remains of the Norsemen could also be found in the eastern part of the United States, and in order to establish their conclusions they sent out letters of inquiry to societies and individuals for information. Thus having been put on the trail the evidence was forthcoming. The Historical Society of Rhode Island was quick to respond, and procured such data as must have not only delighted but astonished the Copenhagen sages. The Dighton Rock Inscription, the Old Stone Mill at Newport and the Skeleton in Armor constitute the array of evidence. That these purported evidences had much to do with giving the exact location of the so-called Norse settlements there can be no question. The Icelandic manuscripts at once pointed to the exact spot where the Dighton Rock is placed. The inscription on the rock was carefully studied by the Danish antiquarians, from the lines and figures carefully drawn by the authority of the Rhode Island Society. The result of the labors of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Copenhagen was published in 1837, in a book entitled "*Antiquitates Americanæ*," to which a supplement was added in 1841. This work, with the American array of purported facts, gave zest to the subject of the Norse discovery. With confidence the route of the Norsemen along the shore of New Eng-

land and the positions they occupied were pointed out. So great was the elation of feeling that it could scarcely be confined within reasonable limits, and soon, under this inspiration, the Scandinavians penetrated into the southern portions of the United States. How much farther they would have gone it is impossible to say had not the tide been checked by a more sober and rational view of the American monuments.

With all the light that has been thrown upon the Dighton Rock, it would be reasonable to suppose that no one would desire to bring it forth as proof of the Norse expeditions. Certain subjects, similar to certain men, die hard. One man—Professor R. B. Anderson—thus announces his undying faith: “Until sufficient proof of some other origin of the Newport Tower and the Dighton Rock inscription are given, we shall persist in claiming them as relics of the Norsemen.”* In his chapter on Thorfinn Karlsefne he is moved to say: “In the next place, attention is invited to an inscription on a rock, situated on the right bank of the Taunton River, in Bristol County, Mass. It is familiarly called the Dighton Writing Rock Inscription. It stands in the very region which the Norsemen frequented. It is written in characters which the natives have never used nor sculptured. This inscription was copied by Dr. Danforth as early as 1680, by Cotton Mather in 1712; it was copied by Dr. Greenwood in 1730, by Stephen Sewall in 1768, by James Winthrop in 1788, and has been copied at least four times in the present century. The rock was seen and talked of by the first settlers in New England long before anything was said about the Norsemen discovering America before Columbus. Near the center of the inscription we read distinctly, in Roman characters, CXXXI, which is 151, the exact number of Thorfinn’s party. Then we find an N, a boat, and the Runic character for M, which may be interpreted, ‘N(or)se sea-faring M(en).’ Besides we have the word NAM—took (took possession), and the whole of Thorfinn’s name, with the exception of the first letter. Repeating these characters we have, ORFIN, CXXXI, N (picture of a boat), M, NAM, which has been interpreted by Prof. Rafn as follows: ‘Thorfinn, with one hundred and fifty-one Norse sea-faring men, took possession of this land (landnam).’ In the lower left corner of the inscription is a figure of a woman and a child, near the latter of which is the letter S, reminding us most forcibly of Gudrid and her son, Snorre. Upon the whole, the Dighton Writing Rock, if Prof. Rafn’s plates and interpretations can be relied upon, removes all doubt concerning the presence of Thorfinn, Karlsefne and the Norsemen at Taunton River, in the beginning of the eleventh century.”†

Prof. Anderson appears to be utterly oblivious to the fact that investigations have been made concerning this rock, since

*America Not Discovered by Columbus, p. 22.

†America Not Discovered by Columbus, pp. 82, 83.



DIGETON ROCK INSCRIPTION.

Prof. Rafn's opinions were published. It is but charitable to assume that Prof. Anderson never heard of the results of this inquiry, although they have repeatedly been published. It will be noticed that Prof. Anderson indirectly admits that if the Dighton Rock does not confirm the Norse discoveries, then there is doubt concerning the presence of Norsemen at Taunton river.

The more judicious and better informed De Costa, in his chapterless volume, entitled *Pre-Columbian Discoveries of America*, although, apparently he has exhausted the evidences bearing on his theme, devotes but little space in the body of his work to the American monument, but his references, where made, are mostly in the form of foot notes. In one of these notes, concerning Dighton Rock, he affirms that "whoever compares this inscription with those of undeniably Indian origin found elsewhere, cannot fail to be impressed with the similarity.

* * Just over these letters is a character, supposed to be Roman also, which may signify NA, or MA, the letter A being formed by the last branch of M. Now MA in Icelandic is used as an abbreviation of *Madr*, which signifies the original settler of a country."†

By competent observers the Dighton Rock has been described as a large angular block of greenstone trap, presenting a smooth inclined line of structure, or natural face towards the channel. It lies on a large flat in the bend of the river, and is exposed or laid bare at ebb-tide, but covered with several feet of water at the flow, submerging the rock, with its inscription. The action of the tide, thus diurnally assailing the inscription, which has continued for a great length of years, has tended to obliterate the traces of all pigments and stains, which the aborigines are known to have employed to eke out their rock-writings or drawings. The effect of disintegration from atmospheric causes have been probably less, under this action of the water, than is usual in dry situations. But as the tide deposits upon its surface a light marine scum, which necessarily renders any scientific examination of the inscription unsatisfactory without a thorough removal of all recremental or deposited matter.

Washington, who was well versed in Indian matters, on being shown a delineation of the rock, pronounced the drawings aboriginal. In 1839, Mr. Schoolcraft employed Ching Wauk, an intelligent Algonkin chief, well versed in Indian pictography, to decipher the inscription from the engravings of the rock that appeared in "*Antiquities Americanae*," one of which was made in 1790, and the other in 1830. Selecting the former he pronounced it Indian, that it related to two nations, and consisted of two parts. All the figures to the left of a line drawn through it which would not touch any part of the figures related

†*Pre-Columbian Discovery*; p. 66.

to the acts and exploits of the chief, represented by the key-figure, No 1, and all the devices to the right of it had reference to his enemies and their acts. There was nothing depicted in either of the figures to denote a foreigner. There was no figure of, or sign for, a gun, sword, axe, or other implement, such as were brought by white men beyond the sea.

One engraving, taken from Schoolcraft's "Indian Tribes," "presents unity of original drawing corresponding to the Indian system, which cannot fail to strike the observer. It is entirely Indian, and is executed in the symbolic character which the Algonkins call Kekeewin, *i. e.*, teachings. The fancied resemblances to old forms of the Roman letters or figures, which appear on the Copenhagen copies, wholly disappear. The only apparent exception to this remark is the upright rhomboidal figure resembling some forms of the ancient \diamond , but which appears to be an accidental resemblance. No trace appears, or could be found by the several searches of the assumed Runic letter Thor, which holds a place on former copies. Rock inscriptions of a similar character have within a few years been found in other parts of the country, which denote the prevalence of this system among the aboriginal tribes from the Atlantic to the Mississippi. It is more particularly an Algonkin trait, and the inscriptions are called by them Muzzinábiks, or rock-teaching, while the elements of the system itself are called, as above stated, Kekeewin and Kekeenowin."*

The great dissimilarity in the different delineations of the forms of the marks on the Dighton stone, in which no two would appear to be intended for the same design, must necessarily shake confidence in the possibility of assigning it to a positive significance in linguistics. In speaking of this rock, Dr. Wilson says: "At the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at Albany, in 1856, I had an opportunity of inspecting a cast of the Rock. No more confused and indistinct scrawl ever tried the eyes of antiquarian seer. Mine proved wholly unable to discern the invaluable holograph of the ancient Norse Columbus. Indeed, the indistinctness of the half-obliterated design, and the rough natural surface of the weathered rock on which the figures have been scratched with the imperfect tools of some Indian artist, abundantly account for the variations in successive copies, as well as for the fanciful additions which enthusiastic copyists have made out of its obscure lines."†

The question of the Runic letters found on the rock should not be passed lightly over. Prof. Rafn attempted to show that there were positively two or three of these characters on it. In the quotation from Schoolcraft, above given, it will be noticed that he expressly declares that "no trace appears, or could be

*See Schoolcraft's Dissertation in his "Indian Tribes," Vol. IV, p. 120.

†Prehistoric Man; p. 406.

found by the several searches, of the assumed Runic letter Thor, which holds a place on former copies." Now, whether or not Prof. Rafn found what he specially was in search of, or else some one purposely deceived him by injecting Runic characters into the copy, cannot be determined at this late date. Bitter experience has taught the antiquarian to weigh Runic well before arriving at a decision. As an illustration, the case of Prof. Finn Magnussen may be cited with profit. In the Swedish province of Bleking is a rock (called "Runamo") with a so-called Runic inscription relating to the battle between king Harold Hildetand, of Denmark, and the Swedish king Sigurd Ring, fought about the year 700 of our era. Under the auspices of the Royal Danish Academy of Science, in the year 1833, a committee of scientists were sent to visit the rock, and carefully investigate, and make a complete report in regard to it. Prof. Finn Magnussen, a member of the committee, in 1841, published an illustrated quarto work of 742 pages relating to the inscription, under the title *Runamo og Runerne*. The following is the rendering of the inscription :

"Hildekind occupied the empire
 Gard cut in (the runes)
 Ole gave oath (oath of allegiance)
 (May) Odin hallow the runes
 (May) Ring fall
 On this earth
 Alfs, love gods
 (Hate) Ole
 Odin and Freja
 And A-er's descendants
 (May) Destroy our enemies
 Grant Harold
 A great victory."

In 1842 and 1844, the eminent Danish archæologist, J. J. A. Worsæ, visited the *Runamo Rock*, and after having carefully examined it, came to the following conclusion : "There is no Runic inscription whatever on *Runamo Rock*, and that the marks considered as runes by Finn Magnussen are simply the natural cracks on the decayed surface of a trap dyke filling up a rent in a granitic formation." It is probable that there are some still living who will continue to believe that these natural markings are runes.

The discussion of the Dighton Rock cannot be more fitly closed than in the interesting summary made by Dr. Wilson :

"The history of this inscription is scarcely surpassed, in the interest it has excited or the novel phases it has exhibited at successive epochs of theoretical speculation, by any Perusinian, Eugubine, or Nilotic riddle. When the taste of American antiquaries inclined towards Phœnician relics, the Dighton inscription conformed to their opinions ; and with changing tastes it has proved equally compliant. In 1783, the Rev. Ezra Stiles, D. D., President of Yale College, when preaching before

the governor of the state of Connecticut, appealed to the Dighton Rock, graven, as he believed, in the old Punic or Phœnician character and language; in proof that the Indians were of the accursed seed of Canaan, and were to be displaced and rooted out by the European descendants of Japhet. 'The Phœnicians,' he affirms, 'charged the Dighton and other rocks in Narraganset Bay with Punic inscriptions remaining to this day, which last I myself have repeatedly seen and taken off at large, as did Prof. Sewell. He has lately transmitted a copy of this inscription to Mr. Gebelin, of the Parisian Academy of Sciences, who, comparing them with the Punic palæography, judges them to be Punic, and has interpreted them as denoting that the ancient Carthaginians once visited these distant regions' * * * Here, then, we perceive the very materials we stand in need of. Change but this Punic into a Runic inscription, and the winds of the north will fit the Scandinavian Icelanders far better than voyagers from the Mediterranean Sea * * * So early as 1680, Dr. Danforth executed what he characterized as a 'faithful and accurate representation of the inscription' on Dighton Rock. In 1712, the celebrated Cotton Mather procured drawings of the same, and transmitted them to the Secretary of the Royal Society of London, with a description, printed in the *Philosophical Transactions* for 1714, referring to it as 'an inscription in which are seven or eight lines, about seven or eight feet long, and about a foot wide, each of them engraven with unaccountable characters, *not like any known character.*' In 1730, Dr. Isaac Greenwood, Hollisian Professor at Cambridge, New England, communicated to the Society of Antiquaries of London a drawing of the same inscription, accompanied with a description which proves the great care with which his copy was executed. In 1768, Mr. Stephen Sewall, Professor of Oriental Languages at Cambridge, New England, took a careful copy, the size of the original, and deposited it in the Museum of Harvard University; and a transcript of this was forwarded to the Royal Society of London, six years later, by Mr. James Winthrop, Hollisian Professor of Mathematics. In 1786, the Rev. Michael Lort, D. D., one of the vice-presidents of the Society of Antiquaries of London, again brought the subject, with all its accumulated illustrations, before that society; and Col. Vallency undertook to prove that the inscription was neither Phœnician nor Punic, but Siberian. Subsequently, Judge Winthrop executed a drawing in 1788; and again we have others by Judge Baylies and Mr. Joseph Gooding in 1790, by Mr. Kendall in 1807, by Mr. Job Gardner in 1812, and finally, in 1830, by a commission appointed by the Rhode Island Historical Society, and communicated to the Antiquaries of Copenhagen with elaborate descriptions: which duly appear in their *Antiquitates Americane*, in proof of novel and very remarkable deductions. Surely no inscription, ancient or modern, not even the Behistun

cuneatics, or the trilingual Rosetta Stone, ever received more faithful study. After inspecting the rude scrawls of which it chiefly consists, it is pleasant to feel assured of this, at least : that when learned divines, professors and linguists thus perseveringly questioned this New England sphinx for upwards of a century and a half, we have good proof that no more valuable inscriptions have been allowed to perish unrecorded. But the most curious matter relating to this written rock is, that after being thus put to the question by learned inquisitors for a hundred and fifty years, it did at length yield a most surprising response.

The description given by Prof. Greenwood of his own process of copying, and by Prof. Winthrop of the method pursued by his colleague, Mr. Sewall—as well as the assiduity and zeal of other copyists—would, under all ordinary circumstances, have seemed to render any further reference to the stone itself superfluous. But no sooner do the Danish antiquaries write to their Rhode Island correspondents, with a hint of Leif Erikson and other old Norsemen's New England explorations than the Dighton Rock grows luminous; and the Rhode Island Commission sends a new drawing to Copenhagen, duly engraved, with all the others, in the *Antiquitates Americane*, from which the learned Danes, Finn Magnusen and Charles C. Rafn—as indeed the most unlearned of English or American readers may—discern the name of Thorfinn, with an exact, though by no means equally manifest enumeration of the associates who, according to the saga, accompanied Karlsefne's expedition to Vinland in A. D. 1007. The annals of antiquarian exploration record many marvellous disclosures, but few more surprising than this.”*

The Dighton Rock inscription having been so well received in Copenhagen, Dr. Webb, the Secretary of the Rhode Island Society, again essayed to enlighten the Danes, so sent them a drawing of the circular stone mill at Newport, along with some metallic implements found in conjunction with a skeleton at Fall River. These new evidences were published in the Supplement to *Antiquitates Americane*, which appeared in 1841. Much learning was employed to prove by analogies that these also were of Norse origin. That the Round Tower at Newport, Rhode Island, is of Scandinavian origin rests on no other foundation than that of bold assertion. And yet the idea has found its way into our school books, and a picture of it is given, in attestation of the early visit of the Icelanders. This structure, which has so forcibly been pressed into service to do duty in substantiating an unhappy theory, stands on an eminence in the center of the town of Newport, being about twenty-four feet high and twenty-three feet in diameter, circular in form. It

*Prehistoric Man, pp. 403-406.

rests upon eight piers, connected by arches; has four small windows, and, high up the wall, above the arches, was a small fire-place. The columns are about ten feet high; the height of the center of the arches from the ground is twelve feet six inches, and the foundation extends to the depth of four or five feet. The stones composing the structure are irregular in size and not placed in regular layers.

If this tower was standing when Rhode Island was first settled, it would have been a work of so great wonder as to have attracted general attention. Newport was founded in 1639, and



OLD STONE MILL

in none of the early documents is there any mention of the Old Mill. There was no tradition concerning it among the people, but was universally referred to as a *wind-mill*, showing for what purpose it had been used, and is positively known to have served during the eighteenth century, both as a mill and powder-house. It is first distinctly mentioned in the will of governor Benedict Arnold, of Newport, where it is called "my stone-built wind-mill." Had it been an ancient monument, Dr. Danforth, in 1680, or Cotton Mather, in 1712, would not have failed to mention it.

The first house in Newport was built by Nicholas Easton, but he makes no mention of the Old Stone Mill. In 1663, Peter Easton wrote, "this year we built the first wind-mill," and in 1675, he again wrote, "a storm blew down our wind-mill."

Benedict Arnold must have been a very popular man in Rhode Island, for he was several times governor, the last time from 1677 to 1678. He came from Providence to Newport in 1653. He built a house upon a lot of sixteen acres, the eastern part of

which includes the mill. Gov. Arnold died in 1678, aged sixty-three years. His will is dated December 20, 1677, in which he enjoins: "My body I desire and appoint to be buried at ye northeast corner of a parcel of ground containing three rods square, being of, and lying in, my land, in or near the line or path from my dwelling house, leading to my stone-built wind-mill, in ye town of Newport above mentioned." Edward Pelham, son-in-law of above, in his will dated May 21, 1741, in his bequest to his daughter, Hermæoine, says: "Also one other piece or parcel of land situated, lying and being in Newport aforesaid, containing eight acres or thereabouts, with an old stone wind-mill thereon standing, and being and commonly called and known by the name of the mill field, or upper field." In 1834, Joseph Mumford, then being eighty years old, stated that his father was born in 1699, and always spoke of the building as a powder-mill, and he himself remembered that in his boyhood, or about 1760, it was used as a hay mow. Another octogenarian, John Langley, remembered hearing his father say, that when he was a boy, which must have been early in the eighteenth century, he carried corn to the mill to be ground.

In these citations it will be observed that Arnold does not call it an "old" mill, but my "stone-built wind-mill." At the time that Pelham made his will the mill had been standing not less than sixty-five years, and hence he very properly designates it "an old stone wind-mill."

Besides the historical testimony there is the evidence derived from the mill itself. The composition of the mortar is shells, sand and gravel. In the year 1848 some mortar taken from an old stone house in Spring street, built by Henry Bull, in 1639, some from the tomb of Governor Arnold, and some from various other buildings, was compared with the mortar of the old mill, and proved to be identical in quality and character.

The object of constructing the mill on pillars was, that the wind having a free passage through, there was no eddy wind caused to make a back sail and thus lessen the power. The form is that of English mills of the same period. A similar mill was erected, in 1652, in Chesterton Parish, three miles from Leamington. Whether or not Arnold came from Leamington, it might be difficult to determine, yet, it is well known he had a farm which he called "Leamington Farm." Having come from England he was acquainted with the forms of mills then in use.

The poet has very fittingly spoken of the attempt to Norseize this mill in the following words:

"Alas! the antiquarian's dream is o'er,
Thou art an old stone wind-mill, nothing more!"

A skeleton discovered near Fall River, in 1831, has been impressed into the service of the Northmen. Had it been discov-

ered after the contents of Indian graves were fully known, it would have excited but little comment, and the knowledge of it would have been largely confined among archæologists. But its having been unearthed about the time when Norse remains were particularly searched out, it became at once either the skeleton of Thorwald Ericson, or else one of his companions, notwithstanding the fact that no implements peculiarly Norse were found in conjunction with it. The Danish authorities were very much interested in it, and chemical tests were brought forward to substantiate the claims made for it.

As might well be anticipated, Prof. R. B. Anderson seizes upon this skeleton as an evidence of his theory. Two pages of his book are devoted to it, under the caption "Thorvald Erikson." No doubt appears to rankle in his bosom. He introduces the subject by saying, "His (Thorwald's) death and burial also gains interest in another respect, for in the year 1831 there was found in the vicinity of Fall River, Massachusetts, *a skeleton in armor*, and many of the circumstances connected with it are so wonderful that it might indeed seem almost as though it were the skeleton of this very Thorwald Erikson!"*

Much having been written and said about this discovery, it finally caught the eye of Longfellow, who attempted to immortalize it in verse. From his notes, and the language employed, he seems to have no doubt that he is dealing with a veritable Viking. Undoubtedly the poet is an authority in the field he has chosen, but when he attempts "archæological rhythm," his words must be taken with allowance. He makes the skeleton say:

"I was a Viking old!
My deeds, though manifold,
No skald in song has told,
No saga taught thee!
Take heed, that in thy verse
Thou dost the tale rehearse,
Else dread a dead man's curse;
For this I sought thee."

"Far in the Northern Land,
By the wild Baltic's strand,
I, with my childish hand,
Tamed the gerfalcon;
And, with my skates fast bound,
Skimmed the half-frozen sound,
That the poor, whimpering hound
Trembled to walk on!"

This skeleton was destroyed by fire in 1843. The skull was of ordinary size, the forehead low, beginning to retreat at not more than an inch from the nose; the head conical, and larger behind the ears than in front. The bones of the feet were missing, but the hands and arms were small, and the body was apparently that of a person below the middle size. With it was found a piece of copper plate, rather thicker than sheathing copper, which had been suspended from the neck. Probably this was not its original position, for there were no marks on the breast of the green carbonate with which parts of the copper were covered. In shape it was like a carpenter's saw, but wanting serrated edges; it was ten inches in length, six or seven inches wide at the top, and four at the bottom; the lower part was broken, indicating it had been still longer. The edges were

*America Not Discovered by Columbus, p. 75.

smooth, and a hole was pierced in the top, by which it would appear to have been suspended to the body with a thong. Several arrow-heads of copper were also found, about an inch and a half long by an inch in breadth at the base, and having a hole in the center. They were flat, quite sharp, the sides concave, the base square, and of the same thickness of the breast-plate. Pieces of a shaft were also found. What caused particular interest was a belt, composed of parallel copper tubes, about one hundred in number, four inches in length, and of the thickness of an ordinary drawing pencil. These tubes were thin and exterior to others of wood, through each of which passed a leather thong and tied at the ends to a long thong encircling the body. This belt or thong was fastened under the left arm by tying the ends of the long string together, and passed round the breast and back a little below the shoulder-blades. The copper was much decayed, and in some places was gone; the thongs and wooden tubes were preserved. Nothing else was found but a piece of coarse cloth or matting a few inches square, of the thickness of sail-cloth. The flesh was preserved wherever any of the copper touched it.

Illustrative of this skeleton with its accompanying implements, Haven has cited a particular narration given in Brereton's *Brief and True Relation of the Discovery of the North Part of Virginia* (New England),* by Gosnold, in 1602. It is there stated that while they were at an island, which has since been identified, and lying off the coast nearest to Fall River, the natives came to them from the mainland, and the articles they brought are thus described: "They have great stores of copper, some very red and some of a paler color; none of them but have chains, ear-rings, or collars of this metal; they head some of the arrows herewith, much like our broad arrow-heads, very workmanly made. Their chains are many hollow pieces cemented together, each piece of the bigness of one of our reeds, a finger in length, ten or twelve of them together on a string, which they wear about their necks; these collars they wear about their bodies like bandeliers, a handful broad, all hollow pieces like the others, but somewhat shorter, four hundred pieces in a collar, very fine and evenly set together. Besides these, they have large drinking cups, made like skulls, and other thin plates of copper made much like our boar-spear blades, all which they so little esteem, as they offered their fairest collars or chains for a knife or such like trifle."*

The "Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science," for 1856, contains an account of alleged runic letters appearing on a ledge of hornblende, on the island of Monhegan, off the coast of Maine. Dr. A. E. Hamlin, of Bangor, who presented the paper, suggested that the inscrip-

*Archæology of the United States, p. 108.

tion is the work of "some illiterate Scandinavian, whose knowledge of the runic form was very imperfect." A copy of the inscription was forwarded to Copenhagen, but the Danish antiquaries gave no interpretation, but contented themselves by observing: "The Indians have, without doubt, profited in various ways by their intercourse with the Northmen, to whom they were probably indebted for much knowledge; and it is apparently to their instruction, acquired in this manner, that we owe several of their sculptures on the rocks which are met within their regions."

As Prof. Anderson does not vouch for the authenticity of this inscription, and as De Costa* thinks it may be classed with the "Runamo Rock," it is not necessary to pursue the investigation any further. The rejection of this evidence may be owing to the thoughtless suggestion of Dr. Hamlin that it was the work of "some illiterate Scandinavian." The term applied was too offensive. Had he declared that it was the work of "some intelligent Scandinavian, and the characters are undoubted runes," then Mohegan Rock would have occupied a conspicuous place alongside the Dighton Rock, the Round Tower and the Skeleton in Armor.

Human credulity might further be illustrated, in this matter, in the purported discovery of the site of the houses built by Lief Ericson. Up to date this may be recorded as the latest of the finds. So delighted were the advocates over this purported find that they presented to the discoverer a picture in colors of Lief's house in process of building, on the banks of Charles River, at flood-tide; surmounting an inscription, followed by the names of fifty-four Scandinavian societies, supported on one side by a figure of Lief, and on the other by an Indian maiden, with the surroundings of the New World; the whole set in a frame of pear-wood, elaborately carved in illustration of the Sagas and Scandinavian mythology. To use the language of this new discoverer, Prof. Horsford, the ship of the Norse adventurers "grounded in ebb-tide, on soft bottom, against Fort Point, opposite Noddle's Island (East Boston), as one sees on the pilot chart of Boston Harbor," and from this point, at flood-tide the ship floated off itself into "the ancient Boston Back Bay."† The houses he locates on the eastern slope of Mount Auburn. Accompanying the pamphlet is a map showing the exact course of Lief's ship. The discovery is based solely on the relation of the Vineland Sagas, which we have given in Chapter III. Our author boldly declares that he expected to find there sites, and had located them before he set out in the search for them. He found what he was looking for, and what he had determined on finding. Having found them, he looks into the past and goes into rhapsody and exclaims: "What a

*Pre-Columbian Discovery, p. 67.

†Horsford's "Norse Discovery of America," p. 13.

fortunate circumstance that there were so many of Norse blood and habits, residents, successively in the same houses.”* Very fortunate indeed! It has been of incalculable benefit to the whole Norse and English speaking race!

The author treats us to a picture of a tablet, preserved in the Museum of the Essex Institute at Salem, and declares his belief that it is to “be regarded as a pictorial record of the repairs of Thorwald’s ship at the extemporized ship yard on Cape Cod, in the year 1004. It exhibits the lines of skids and other conveniences for hauling up the vessel, to make the bottom accessible, and the old keel set upon the neck.”† This tablet is a piece of slate about four inches long, found in conjunction with a human skeleton, a brass shield, and what appeared to be a fragment of a sword—all taken from a grave on the north shore of Massachusetts Bay. There are no runes on the slate. The markings bear no resemblance to anything known. To say that it represents a ship being hauled up in order to perfect its keel is an exceedingly extravagant stretch of the imagination, to say the least.

Our author, in the last place, turns philologist and proves satisfactorily—to his own mind—that the word “America” is Norse. “The utterance of Norse forms of the name, as Eirikr, Ærekr, Eyrikur, suggests to a listener, *Erika*, which needs only the prefix *m*, one of the features of speech due to imperfect vocal development, remarked among American aboriginal races, and especially among the Indian tribes of the region of Norumbega (Vineland), to become *Em-erika*, or not remotely *America*, the name which the continent, as I conceive, has appropriately borne.”‡

This method of treating philology is enough to cause the bones of Sir William Jones to turn over in their grave. It appears to have been inspired by an article from the pen of Jules Marcou, published in the Smithsonian Report for 1888. This article attempts to prove that the word “America” is a name indigenous to the New World, and derived from a tribe of Indians called “Amerriques,” inhabiting the mountains Sierra Amerrique, which form the cordillera between Lake Nicaragua and the Mosquito coast, in the province of Chontales, Nicaragua.

Speaking of this article, Mr. Horsford says: “How the name America came to be adopted has been consummately treated by Professor Jules Marcon.”§ That the name America “perpetuates the claims of Erik as discoverer when he landed on Greenland in 982.”|| In other words, the name America is but another term for Erik the Red; that Erik the Red’s name has been perpetuated in a tribe of American Indians.

One cannot help but admire the ease with which all problems are solved! In order to sustain the Norse discovery of America, the Eskimo must be brought down from their high northern

*Horsford’s “Norse Discovery of America,” p. 15. †*Ibid*, p. 17. ‡*Ibid*, p. 29.
§*Ibid*, p. 27. ||*Ibid*, p. 28.

latitude to Cape Cod in Massachusetts, and a tribe of Indians dwelling in the mountains of Nicaragua must be transplanted to the same point, that due notice and reverence might be given to Leif Ericson! It is a beautiful theory! It is a transcendent fact! With the facts so clearly set forth and so satisfactorily proved, "it is necessary for the truth, as to the (Norse) discovery of America, to be established immediately."*

A candid view of the matter would lead an intelligent mind to the conclusion that the Norse advocates, in their great zeal, have trifled entirely too much with the subject, in placing stress on these so-called American evidences. However, they are acute enough to know that if the Norse had been in America, made settlements, and continued for a period of three hundred or more years, as has been claimed, corroborative proof would be forthcoming. Greenland affords it, and America must not be deficient. If it fails to yield evidence, then the whole theory must be changed. In lieu of better testimony, that which has been seized upon must continue to do service.

*Shipley's "Icelandic Discoverers," p. 14.

CHAPTER V.

ODDS AND ENDS.

Insuperable difficulties attend every step in the demands put forth by the Norse claimants. One asserts the Norse were the original discoverers and should immediately be recognized as such, while another admits there were prior discoveries of the continent. When the briefs of the claimants are compared, one with the other, contradictions and gross assumptions are seen to predominate. One will declare the Sagas to be simple and unaffected, and the only reliable histories the earth has fallen heir to, while another seeks to edit and twist them into the required shape—thus reminding one of the famous robber Procrustes.

Admitting that the Sagas teach all that is claimed for them, what advantage was it to the human race? Is it not a fact that the discovery amounted to nothing? Is it not also a fact that when Queen Margaret prohibited trade with Greenland, it would have stimulated commerce between that colony and the one in America? To offset the worthlessness of the alleged Norse discovery, it is asserted that without it Columbus would have known nothing of the New World. Even if this be admitted, then more is due to the Irish than to the Norse. De Costa declares that the Icelandic chronicles distinctly affirm that "half a century before the voyage of Erik, a great country was known at the west, being called Ireland the Great." It would seem that this country was first reached by the Irish, whose prior discovery was concealed by the Icelanders. The Irish had described it, evidently, as a land of verdure, while the Saga says that Erik applied the name of 'Greenland' to the part he visited, not from any particular fitness, but from motives of policy, saying that 'men would be persuaded to go to a land with so good a name.' Possibly the term 'Greenland' was originally applied to the whole of North America, as were often names that finally came to have a local meaning."* In the mutual admiration society the Irish should not be crowded out. Give them a chance. Let them help fight this battle as well as the battles of all countries except their own!

Unfortunately the reference to Ireland the Great involves us in another difficulty. In the above quotation De Costa would have us believe it was Greenland, while Prof. Rafn held it was

*Pre-Columbian Discovery, p. 33.

America.* This disagreement between the two editors would throw great doubt on the Norse theory. If Prof. Rafn is correct, then the Norse did not discover the continent, but took advantage of the achievement of the Irish. If we argue after the same methods, then the honor must be accorded to the Irish, while the Norse are shorn of all the glory there was in it.

Those who have presumed to edit the sagas must also edit the letter of Columbus, so as to make it appear that he was acquainted with the voyages of Erik, Leif and Thorfinn Karlsefne. Prof. R. B. Anderson teaches that Columbus obtained from the writings of Adam of Bremen the Norse discovery of America, and this information induced him to go to Iceland, where the "Icelanders must have told him, as they state in their Sagas, that far to the south of Vinland was Irland-it-Mikla, or Great Ireland; that this Great Ireland extended certainly as far south as the present Florida, and hence his shortest and most pleasant route would be to sail about due west from Spain."† DeCosta says that "Columbus knew of the westward voyages of the Icelanders is sufficiently evident. He clearly believed, as the Norsemen did, namely, that Greenland was an extension of Norway, and that Vinland lay contiguous, while what he desired was to reach the eastern coast of Asia."‡ Mrs. Shipley emphatically says: "The fact that the rumors of these vast discoveries in the west reached every seaport in Southern Europe, as well as the Eternal City; the fact that Gudrid, the wife of Karlsefne, visited Rome after her three years' sojourn in Vinland; the fact that she narrated these experiences at length to the holy fathers; the fact that Rome had appointed bishops to both Greenland and Vinland; the fact that Columbus, an Italian by birth, and naturally aware of these important events, went to Iceland in order to pursue the investigations, to which all this had given him the clue. After his visit to Iceland he made out to find America, as any one else could have found it, after obtaining definite directions."§

The following is quoted from Beamish: "Having had access to the archives of the island, and ample opportunity of conversing with the learned there through the medium of the Latin language, he might easily have obtained a complete knowledge of the discoveries of the Northmen—sufficient, at least, to confirm his belief in the existence of a western continent."||

Quotations to the same purport could be greatly extended, but these are sufficient. On what basis do these affirmations, declarations and assumptions rest? There is none other than the solitary letter of Columbus himself, which was preserved by his son. This vague letter the son cites in the biography of his father: "In the month of February, in the year 1477, I sailed

*Pre Columbian Discovery, p. 160.

†America Not Discovered by Columbus, pp. 13 15.

‡Pre-Columbian Discovery, p. 56.

§Icelandic Discoveries, p. 69.

||Ibid., 106.

one hundred leagues beyond the island of Tile, the southern portion of which is seventy-three degrees removed from the equinoctial, and not sixty-three, as some will have it; nor is it situated within the line which includes Ptolemy's west, but is much further to the westward; and to this island, which is as large as England, the English come with their wares, especially those from Bristol. And at the time I went thither the sea was not frozen, although the tides there are so great that in some places they rose twenty-six fathoms, and fell as much. It is, indeed, the fact that that Tile, of which Ptolemy makes mention, is situated where he describes it, and by the moderns this is called Frislanda."

If Tile is Iceland, and Columbus sailed one hundred leagues beyond, he must have entered Greenland a distance of not less than fifty miles. But of this there is no mention. Friesland is one of the most northern provinces of the Netherlands. He went farther north, and it is more than probable to the northern part of Norway. Having sailed west three hundred miles he covered half the distance to Iceland. But upon supposition he went to Iceland, what proof is there he saw the Sagas? The evidence of the sagas need not be rehearsed; for as has been seen the Codex Flatoeyensis was discovered in private hands and did not belong to the State. There is not a scintilla of evidence that this Codex, in 1477, was known beyond the actual limits of its possessor, or even that it had a possessor at that time. Even if the manuscripts were in the archives of the country, it is not at all likely that the attention of a stranger, more especially one speaking a foreign language, would be called to these fireside tales and legends.

As has been noticed, the assertion is made that Gudrid narrated her experiences to the holy fathers, and that rumors of these discoveries had reached every seaport in Southern Europe. The saga says she "went to the South." On this De Costa has an extended note. "It is understood she (Gudrid) went to Rome. It may be asked why she did not spread the news of her son's voyage in those parts of Europe whither she went, and make known the discovery of the New World. To this it may again be replied, that the Icelanders had no idea that they had found a New World, and did not appreciate the value of their geographical knowledge. Besides, there is nothing to prove that Gudrid and others who went to Europe at this period, did not make known the Icelandic discoveries. At that time no interest was taken in such subjects, and therefore we have little right to expect to find traces of discussion in relation to what, among a very small class, would be regarded, at the best, as a curious story."*

Columbus fitted himself thoroughly for the great undertak-

ing he was destined to perform. From his studies he arrived at the conclusion that the world was a sphere, but underestimated its size, while over-estimating the extent of Asia. He believed there was a western route to India, and determined to discover it. He first applied to the Senate of Genoa, his native city. His proposals were rejected. He next turned to John II of Portugal, but that monarch, through the advice of the Bishop of Ceuta, dealt treacherously with him. Upon discovering the dishonorable transaction, he secretly left Lisbon, and dispatched his brother, Bartholomew, to England with letters for Henry VII, to whom he had communicated his idea. He next proposed his plans to the Duke of Medina Sidonia, who deemed them impractical and visionary. He then presented his plans to the Duke of Medina Celi, who gave him great encouragement, entertained him for two years, and even determined to furnish him with three or four caravals; but was finally deterred through the belief that such an expedition should be under the patronage of a sovereign. He wrote to Isabella, and at her bidding Columbus repaired to the court at Córdoba. Here he was kindly received, but neither Isabella nor Ferdinand had time to listen to him, owing to the struggle then going on with the Moors. He followed the court to Salamanca, and after surmounting many difficulties obtained an audience with the king. The matter was referred to Fernando de Talavera, who, in 1487, summoned a junta mostly composed of ecclesiastics, prejudiced and loth to abandon their pretensions to knowledge, which decided that his project was vain and impractical and that the sovereigns should abandon it. After encountering many other discouragements, an agreement was entered into with the Spanish sovereigns, which was signed on April 17, 1492.

In presenting his plans and arguments before the different courts and those high in authority, not once did he allude to the discovery of Leif Ericson. When before the junta, Columbus presented his arguments, and the ecclesiastics overwhelmed him with biblical texts, there was a great opportunity to present the conclusive evidence of Lief's discovery, and the fact that the pope of Rome had appointed a bishop for Vinland. Most certainly would Columbus have thus availed himself, had he possessed the knowledge. Again, the fact of his route across the Atlantic cannot be reconciled with a previous knowledge of the one from Greenland to Vinland. His route would have borne greatly to the northwest.

Much irrelative matter has been dragged into the discussion by the Norse advocates. It should here be touched upon in order to show the true animus of these erratic theorists. It will be an illustration of their ability to weigh evidence in other matters as well as in that which they have particularly chosen.

The Norse character has been pompously set forth and its pagan ethics extolled. Great benefits would result in "accord-

ing to Iceland its full due, of emulating its freedom and enlightenment during the days when it was a flourishing republic, and before it became christianized.”* Norse ethics “have been the source of infinite good.”† The literature of Iceland presents “in many respects an ideal civilization.”‡ The Scandinavian North has “individually and collectively sustained the most brilliant role that has ever been acted in Europe, or in the world. * * * * The assumption of Christian humility and weakness so completely destroyed their ancient pride that they were not capable of reasserting themselves and gaining their former rank.”§ These exalted ideas are supposed to be culled from the sagas. If the sagas were actually silent as to the moral character of the people in pagan times, the red-handed Erik and the treacherous Freydis, who not only caused the death of so many innocent men, but with her own hand butchered five women, solely for the sake of gain, should put to shame such declarations. The sagas are not silent on the moral characteristics of the people, and whosoever reads the accounts therein contained must wonder if they had within them the divine image. The feuds of the Icelanders were notorious. The degree of a man’s civilization may be measured according to his ideas of woman. Saxo Grammaticus, the ablest of all the sagamen, says : “Thus you will see the worth of a woman’s word. They are chaff before the wind, and change like the billows of the sea. Who can rely on a woman’s heart that alters like a flower shedding its leaves, or as the seasons change, obliterating each other’s traces ?” In matters of marriage there was little love-making. The wishes of the women were seldom consulted, and they were disposed of to the best of advantage by their fathers or guardians. Even the very word (*brud-kaup*) means “wife-deal,” in the sense of a sale. On the marriage day it was bad taste not to be drunk and find a bed on the rushes on the floor. Solid drinking continued from Wednesday until Saturday. Polygamy was also practiced. Divorce was frequent. In the *Laxdaeler’s* saga—one of the complex sagas of West Iceland—examples are given showing on what slight grounds divorce could be obtained. Gudrun, in 989, at the age of fifteen, was married to the Thorwald of Garpsdolen. Because she was not consulted in regard to certain personal ornaments she formed an acquaintance with Thord Ingunsson, and through his advice she made her husband a shirt with a large opening in the neck. Now it was the law if a woman dressed as a man, or vice versa, it was a reasonable ground for a divorce. Thorwald wore the shirt, which was so low as to expose the nipples of his breast. A divorce was declared. This same Thorwald Ingunsson had a wife nicknamed *Brok Aude*, because she wore breeches like a man. So Thorwald declared himself divorced, and shortly after married Gudrun.

*Icelandic Discoverers, p. 183.

†Ibid., p. 192.

‡Ibid., p. 165.

§Ibid., p. 195.

The Vikings were lawless in a bad sense, and their expeditions by land and sea in quest of plunder were characterized by a bloodthirsty savagery of a vicious type. The women who accompanied these expeditions distinguished themselves by a fierce cruelty. They adopted a mode of life and a diet which suited few men, or even beasts of prey. The older the records the darker the picture. They ate nothing but raw cured meat and slept out of doors. The most atrocious cruelties were practiced by them, and they spared neither man, woman nor child. After awhile they applied a certain code of laws in which it was agreed that they should not plunder their own coasts or merchant-ships belonging to their countrymen, unless it was in a case of a family feud. They would start out in their piratical expeditions when the cuckoo was first heard and return as late as the autumnal storms. The Hebrides were a favorite cruising-ground. Their merciless ravages along the coasts of Scotland have been given by Skene* and need not be here repeated. Their irruption into Ireland has been frequently retold. In 794, when paganism must have been in its purity, they utterly laid waste the Western Isles of Scotland and plundered the church of Iona.* They were not finally expelled until the crushing defeat they suffered at the hands of the Scots, under Alexander III, at the battle of Largs, fought in 1263, when king Haco's broken army and fleet were forced to retire.

Recurring again to the sagas, we find the Volsungasaga—probably written in Iceland about the close of the thirteenth century—among many other things gives an extended account of king Atle and Gudrun, his wife, which is a story abounding in atrocities. Among other things the record tells that Gudrun cuts the throats of her own sons, then takes their skulls and fills them with wine mixed with their blood, and gives the same to Atle to drink. She also takes their hearts and covered the same with honey and gave it to her husband to eat. Not content with this atrocity she set fire to the hall and destroyed King Atle and his men. The records of history nowhere recite a crime so fearful as that practiced by the wife of King Atle. The sagas abound in stories of implacable hate, and thirst for revenge. A thirst for blood was an attribute of the people. A man was murdered in cold blood for a slight provocation. It was proper and fit to waylay or stab a foe in his bed, or burn him to death in his house. In the saga of Halfred it was related that Sokke, a Viking, burnt the house of Thorwald, a man living in Norway. The latter demanded to know why he was injured. Sokke replied that his intention was to burn him and his alive, and to annex his goods after Viking rules. According to the saga, this appears to have been a sufficient answer.

One of the principal amusements of this people was horse-

*Celtic, Scotland, Vol I, pp. 302, 311, 327, 339, 347; also Chronicles of the Picts and Scots, pp. 8, 9, 330, 361, 363. *Ibid., Vol. I, p. 304.

fighting. Horses were reared purposely for fighting, and foals having long teeth were specially selected. The places selected for such exhibitions were flat meadows, with some rising ground near, on which spectators, and in particular the women, could sit and see what passed. When the horses rose on their hind legs and began to bite, each trainer was allowed to use a staff to encourage his horse. Often bloody affrays grew out of these sports. In the *Njál* saga it is related that Starkad, who owned a good fighting-horse, had three quarrelsome sons. These sons challenged Gunnar to a horse fight in order to involve him in a bloody feud, which they accomplished. The *Grettí* and the *Vigaglúm* sagas give accounts of blood feuds growing out of horse fighting.

It is neither necessary nor pleasant to carry these citations any farther. Their natures were more savage than that of any North American Indian at the time of the discovery. Into this mass of savagery Christianity was introduced by two really pagan kings, who thought they had become Christians. They propagated it with a vengeance. Olav Tryggveson and Olav Haraldson, when kings of Norway, suppressed heathenism with a strong hand. They sought to convince the stiff-necked heathens by either cutting off their heads or gouging out their eyes, and both kings sowed priests broadcast over their dominions. Christianity had a long and patient struggle with these people. Their wild and barbarous natures were subdued. Their better natures have been called into activity. The Norwegians and Icelanders of to-day fare far better than their ancestors did in saga or pre-saga times. They pursue the paths of peace, cultivate knowledge and build up their homes with the reasonable assurance they will remain protected. Instead of gaining renown as a pirate, the Norseman becomes of great advantage in the progress of science and art.

The next and last point to be considered in these papers is the extravagant claim of our debt of gratitude to the Northmen. We have already quoted, in Chapter I, from DeCosta. It is here repeated: "In vindicating the Northmen we honor those who not only gave us the first knowledge possessed of the American continent, but to whom we are indebted for much beside that we esteem valuable. In reality, we fable in a great measure when we speak of our 'Saxon inheritance.' It is rather from the Northmen that we have derived our vital energy, our freedom of thought, and, in a measure we do not yet suspect, our strength of speech."* This was probably inspired by Samuel Lang, the translator of the *Heimskringla*. What he says is given at length by Prof. R. B. Anderson.† "All that men hope for of good government and future improvement in their physical and moral condition—all that civilized men enjoy

*Pre-Columbian Discovery, p. 7, taken from "Heimskringla," Vol. I, p. 7.

†America Not Discovered by Columbus, pp. 98-100.

at this day of civil, religious and political liberty—the British constitution, representative legislature, the trial by jury, security of property, freedom of mind and person, the influence of public opinion over the conduct of public affairs, the Reformation, the liberty of the press, the spirit of the age—all that is or has been of value to man in modern times as a member of society, either in Europe or in America, may be traced to the spark left burning upon our shores by the Norwegian barbarians.”* This is a most astonishing declaration to be made by a sane man. No one would make it who was acquainted with history, unless he had an utter disregard for the truth. Any man competent to trace “all that civilized men enjoy at this day of civil, religious and political liberty” to a “spark left burning” by a band of pirates, deserves to be classed as a greater discoverer than Christopher Columbus. The world, its teachings, the improvements and the civilization, prior to that time, outside of Scandinavia, is a blank so far as our present welfare is concerned! The struggle of the ages resulted in nothing. Mankind owes no debt of gratitude save to the spark left burning by a band of northern sea-rovers. It must have inspired Martin Luther, for the reformation was due to it. What is the proof of this extravagant claim? Exactly the same as the great bulk of declarations put forth in behalf of this Norse theory. Simply *Nothing*. There is not a single subject discussed during the last twenty-five years that so abounds in unwarranted assertions, unsupported declarations, and the making of mountains out of mole-hills, as this Norse business. But the zeal thrown into the subject seems to have made them blind to the facts and the teachings of history. If the same methods were resorted to in order to show the contrary on this subject, invective would be called forth and harsh epithets applied. The charge of being unscrupulous would be hurled without any qualification. It is not to be implied that the intent is here to cast opprobrious words upon the advocates; for it is fully recognized that their zeal has outstripped their judgement.

*No wonder the mandate has gone forth that “Americans are to put on the Norse armor and seal the glorious work for universal liberty that their ancestors have bequeathed to them!” Icelandic Discoverers, p. 57.

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