

The Discovery of America

Toulmin Smith

1842

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WHAT I exclaimed the doctor ; do you pretend to tell me that Columbus was not the discoverer of America ?

Undoubtedly, was the reply ; - I pretend to tell you that America was known to Europeans at least five hundred years before the time of Columbus's, or, more properly, Colon's alleged discovery.

The expression of Dr. Dubital's countenance, during this reply, was one of mingled surprise and incredulity. Being a man of travel, and possessing no small idea of the superiority of his own knowledge and opinion over that of all his neighbours, he was extremely unwilling, at any time, to discover, or even to have it hinted, that there was " any thing in heaven or earth which was not dreamed of in his philosophy."

After a moment's silence, he rejoined :—You do not speak seriously, Mr. Norset.

Indeed I do. Most soberly and seriously, I mean to announce to you the fact, of which, in truth, I am surprised that you should have hitherto been unaware, that America was discovered by the Northmen, at least five centuries before the date of Colon's voyage to this country.

Unaware ! yes, indeed, I was unaware of such a fact, as you are pleased to call it. A man can certainly never know all the strange theories and new-fangled notions in which some folks choose to wander now-a-days.

No theory, my dear doctor, nor new-fangled notion either; as I shall be able, very satisfactorily, to show you.

Do you then profess to assert,—to come plainly to the point,—that this town of Newport and State of Rhode Island were ever visited by Europeans before the time of Columbus, or Colon, if you will ?

There, doctor, you go a little too far. I find no mention made either of Newport or Rhode Island in the travels of Colon. A man may easily visit America, without ever seeing Rhode Island ; but, since you have thus put your question, I will answer, that I do pretend to assert, that, by a somewhat singular coincidence, perhaps, the very spot whereon chance has thrown you and me together, and whereon the town of Newport now stands, was actually visited by the Northmen, and that the country in its immediate vicinity was especially well known to them, five centuries anterior to the voyages of Colon.

Well, well, said the doctor, his expression of incredulity and wonder increasing at every word of this reply ; I know not what we shall hear next. We all know that Colon discovered America ; and I see not why any one should doubt the truth of his discoveries, or want to rob him of the credit of them, at this time of day.

Rob him of the credit of them ! doctor ; — no one wants to rob him of any credit that belongs to him. It is a mere question of fact.

Yes, I know it is a question of fact ; and every body knows the fact to be, that Colon discovered America in 1492, and that his was the first European foot that ever touched this soil.

Doctor, you must excuse me ; but just let me ask you how you know all this ?

Know it ! why, every one knows it ; history tells us so, to be sure.

Good ; — pray what history tells you so ?

Why, the History of America, and the History of Spain, and,—and,—surely, Mr. Norset, you don't mean seriously to doubt what every body knows.

Certainly not ; provided, always, that it be true ; but I must most seriously declare to you, doctor, that, by precisely the same means that you say you know that Colon discovered America in 1492, I know that BIARNI HERIULFSON discovered these very regions of America in which we now are in 985 [1]

Biarni Heriulfson ! 985 ! pray, sir, where did you learn all this ? I never heard of Biarni Heriulfson before.

Doctor, you must pardon me, but it is barely possible that you may never have heard of Biarni Heriulfson before, and that he yet may have existed. I fear we should never get on very fast, if every man were to refuse to believe every thing that he had not before known.

Be good enough to inform me who this Biarni Heriulfson was, then. I certainly shall be glad to hear something about the man who is to lay poor Colon on the shelf.

You lament over Colon's fading laurels, doctor ; I would recommend you to compose a dirge upon the occasion. As to Biarni Heriulfson, it would be too long a story to tell you, just now ; and besides, what would be the use of my giving you a history, unless you believe the sources of my information to be authentic ?

Ay, truly, and it will be hard to prove them so.

Not quite so difficult as you imagine. Let me attempt this. Suppose—

No supposition, I beg, sir ; pray confine yourself to facts. I said it was some strange theory, and methinks I was not far wrong, for you begin by a *supposition*.

Not so fast, doctor. Every proposition in Euclid is founded, in truth, upon a *supposition*. Certain points in a *supposed* case are proved, and then compared with the points of the particular case in the proposition. And so it must be done, more or less, in almost every argument. I beg, therefore, that you will allow me to proceed with my supposition. I assure you I will wander into no theoretic ground.

Let us hear your supposition, then, said the doctor, with something like a sneer.

Since the notion of a supposition appears to trouble you so much, doctor, I will even take a fact, though it will have precisely the same effect upon the argument. Doubtless you have heard of the previously unknown work of Epicurus, which has been recently published ?

His work, “ De Naturâ,” you mean: certainly I have. What has Epicurus, or his works, to do with Biarni Heriulfson, or any other discoverer of America ?

Just this much,—neither you, nor any body else, was aware that the work of Epicurus was in existence, or what were its contents ; and yet, when, after having lain under the ashes of Vesuvius for upwards of seventeen long centuries, it is at length brought to light, neither you, nor any one else, hesitates to receive it as authentic [2] It is very possible, then, that other manuscripts, of less antiquity, may have lain hidden for a length of time, owing to various circumstances, and may now, for the first time, be brought to light without any possible impeachment of their authenticity.

That sounds somewhat plausible, perhaps ; but it does not go far towards proving your point. I want to know how it is that this history you talk about has remained so long hidden and unknown.

Nay, doctor, you must pardon me ; it was yourself who stated that you had never heard of Biarni Heriulfson and of these discoveries. I mean only to say that they have not lain hidden. Whether they have been generally known or not is another question. It is not the fault of the histories, if, being published, they have not been read. I could name to you many printed books,—books which have been long printed, some of them upwards of two centuries,—in which the fact of America having been discovered long anterior to the voyages of Colon is mentioned. I certainly am surprised that none of these have ever fallen in your way.

No wonder at all, sir. They are evidently some obscure works. You mentioned that they had not been much read.

Excuse me ; I said it was not the fault of the books, if people would not read them ; which I said, because you stated that you had never read them. Do you consider the name of Torfœus [3] obscure, or that of Wormius, or of Adam of Bremen ; or, more recently, is the name of Malta Brun especially obscure, or even that of Pinkerton? These are some, among many, who have mentioned these discoveries.

Their allusions, then, are only indefinite and vague, and require some theory like yours to make them have any meaning.

Nay, how could they all have got their indefinite and vague notions ? You might say this of an obscure passage in some single ancient manuscript, perhaps, but not of a statement successively made in several ancient and modern works. You shall judge of their vagueness from the language of Pinkerton, which I copied out the other day on account of its subject, and believe I have got in my pocket-book. Speaking of the discovery of America, he says, “ The first discovery of America is generally ascribed to Christoval Colon, or, as commonly called, from the first Latin writings on the subject, Christopher Columbus. But, as it is now universally admitted that Greenland forms part of America, the discovery must of course be traced to the first visitation of Greenland by the Norwegians, in the year 982, which was followed, in the year 1003, by the discovery of Vinland, which seems to have been a part of Labrador, or of Newfoundland. The colony in Vinland was soon destroyed by intestine divisions ; but that in Greenland continued to flourish till maritime intercourse was impeded by the encroaching shoals of arctic ice.” And a little after, in his table of the early expeditions to America, he adds, “ 982, Greenland discovered by the Norwegians, who planted a colony. 1003, Vinland, that is, a part of Labrador or Newfoundland, visited by the Norwegians, and a small colony left, which, however, soon perished.” [4] Now there is nothing particularly vague here ; the statements are made as simple *matters of fact*, of which no one can doubt the truth ; and these passages must have been read by some thousands of people, for the edition from which I quote them is the *third* through which the work has passed.

Well, and is it Vinland that you pretend to say that the Northmen called America?

That is the name which they gave to a part of their discoveries in America, though Pinkerton, as also Malte Brun, assign it a wrong situation.

I thought there would be something wrong about it. Their tale then does not quite agree with your theory.

Their tale, doctor, if you will have it so, does agree with what you are pleased to call my theory, in the main facts. The situation of Vinland they certainly somewhat misplaced, but the cause of their error is very easily to be explained. This error is not very great, after all ; and, even if it were greater, still I presume you will not deny that Greenland, and Newfoundland, and Labrador, are at least as much parts of America as the West Indies are. If, therefore, Colon, visiting the latter, is said to have discovered America, surely the Northmen, visiting the former, may, with more propriety, be said to have been the discoverers of this vast continent.

Upon my word, Mr. Norset, you have a cunning way of getting out of all the difficulties ; but you have not quite escaped them yet. Pray, upon what authority does Pinkerton, or Malte Brun, state these facts ?

Why, doctor, I am free to confess that their authority was not derived from any original authentic documents ; — nay, be not in such a hurry to catch at my admission ; — I was going to say that their authority was not derived from any original authentic documents *any more* than your authority, Dr. Dubital, for the belief that Colon alone, and first, discovered America is derived from any original authentic documents.

What, sir, do you mean to say that I have no authority for believing that America was visited by Colon ?

I mean to say no such thing, sir. You have authority, and good authority, but you have no *original* authority. Your authority is derived from sources which, only at third or fourth rate, had any origin in the authentic documents relating to his voyages.

Well, sir, what of that ? you do not, surely, doubt the truth of the accounts on that score ?

Certainly not ; but, by precisely the same token, I must not allow you to doubt of the truth of the accounts given by Malte Brun and Pinkerton, of the discoveries of the Northmen, because their authority was not derived from reference to the original authentic documents relating those discoveries : their authority was derived from the history of TORFÆUS [Torfi], who derived his information, however, from these original authentic sources.

You talk a great deal about original authentic sources : pray, sir, what are they ? or, rather, what were they ? for I suspect you will tell us some plausible story about their former existence, but present loss.

Not so ; these ancient, authentic documents not only had a former existence, but have a present existence ; for I am happy to inform you that the parchment manuscripts which contain them are, at this moment, in a state of high preservation.

Really, sir, you seem determined to hedge me in on all sides ; and, of course, as you assert all this, I cannot tell whether it is so or not. It is a marvellous story, altogether. But, supposing all you say, or assume, to be correct, you cannot deny that the alleged facts, as to the early discoveries of the Northmen, are *generally* unknown. How do you account for this if they be true ?

That may seem, at first sight, a difficult question to answer ; but I do not think it really is so. Little attention was paid to literature at the time of these discoveries, and for several centuries later, except in the very land from which the discoverers came, namely Iceland. Iceland was little known to the rest of the world, and the records of these discoveries lay in the archives of that island. Besides the little intercourse had with Iceland by the rest of Europe, the language in which these records were written was unknown to those portions of Europe in which letters were subsequently chiefly cultivated. When, therefore, Colon made his voyages to America,—all the rest of Europe being ignorant of the former discoveries, and *his* appearing brilliant, owing to the enterprises which followed them,—enterprises which are to be attributed to the advance of Europe, in his age, so far beyond its condition in the tenth century, —the name of Colon was covered with glory. And you know, doctor when once a fixed idea has taken possession of men's minds, how hard it is to get rid of it, however false it may be.

A very tolerable explanation ; but I think it is strange nobody should have heard of these alleged discoveries before.

I must beg you to recollect that, as I have already shown you, it is not the fact that nobody has heard of them. Though they may not have been generally known, there was every means for their becoming known ; and if they have remained generally unknown, it is from the same cause that I have already mentioned,—that the fixed eye of prejudice can see nothing but its own idea, however contrary to truth that idea, as in this case, may be ; and however clearly the actual truth may, as has here also been the case, be presented to the view. Many works have been published, aye, even, as I have shown you, in our own language, in which the facts have been distinctly stated. You cannot be permitted to shut your eyes to this fact, though all who oppose the authenticity of these discoveries deliberately do so.

Here, then, there is a contradiction : you give reasons for the discoveries *not being known*, and yet assert that they *were known*.

Pray, distinguish the facts, doctor. They were known *in Iceland* ; but I have already given the reasons why, though known there, they should be unknown to the rest of Europe.

Then how came they ever to find their way into the works of Torfi, or Malte Brun, or Pinkerton ? And, having found their way into their works, how came they to remain any longer generally unknown ?

Both questions are easy to answer. The antiquities of the Northmen were studied by Torfi, who was himself one of that race, and who had access to the archives of Iceland. He therefore, like others in Iceland, was well acquainted with the facts. He published the account of them in a Latin book, in 1705, which was not, like ancient Icelandic parchments, inaccessible. Subsequent candid historians and geographers have learned the facts from him, and recorded them ; but, long ere his work was published, the idea of Colon's being the first discoverer of America had taken possession of men's minds, and all statements to the contrary have been unheeded and unnoticed, though often made. There has, moreover, been this disadvantage attending the case ; while all the narrative of Colon's adventures has been long before the world, and well known, merely the bare fact of the discoveries of the Northmen has been usually stated. It is only by the publication, in a familiar form, of the full details of these discoveries, that we can ever expect men's minds in general to be directed towards them, with an interest which will end in a conviction of their truth.

At this moment the door opened, when the doctor, whose brow had become somewhat troubled at the turn the argument had taken, rose from his seat, and thus addressed the gentleman who entered :

Well, Mr. Cassail, what think you ? Strange things we hear in these days. I begin to doubt whether you are yourself or not. Mr. Norset has been endeavouring to convince me that Colon was not the first discoverer of America.

Ha ! ha ! exclaimed Mr. Norset, you have lost a scene, Mr. Cassail. The doctor has been bewailing the fate of Christoval Colon. He seems desperately afraid that, if the credit of *Colon* is impaired, the history of the world will soon come to a *full stop*.

Upon my word, Mr. Norset, said the doctor, it is too bad, after trying to take away the credit of Colon, to utter now an execrable pun upon his name. You seem to take no little delight in depriving a great man of his honours.

There, doctor, I assure you, you completely mistake me. As Aristotle said of Plato, I honour Colon much, but I honour truth more. It is no little honour to Colon to have achieved what he did ; but I do maintain that he was not the first discoverer of America. He was the first of *his own age* who navigated the broad Atlantic, and that is no small honour ; and he established a connection between parts of America and Europe, which were before unknown to each other, which is a greater honour still ; but he was himself ignorant of his discoveries, and there can be little doubt that he had gained the chief confirmation of his idea of the existence of terra firma in the western ocean, during the visit which he is known to have made, before his western voyage, [5] to Iceland. I confess I have been a little amused at your zeal in behalf of Colon's sole credit as discoverer, and at your unwillingness to listen to, or admit, any thing which could possibly affect his credit, whatever foundation there might be for any such allegations. This circumstance may have made my language appear less respectful towards him than my feelings really are.

Well, sir, I am glad, however, you grant that some credit belongs to Colon ; but you have done little yet towards convincing me of the truth of your assertions. Pray, Mr. Cassall, have you heard anything of these discoveries of the Northmen ? And do you give any credit to what, with all deference to Mr. Norset, I must call such absurd nonsense ?

Why, yes, I have seen something about them in some of the periodicals ; but I confess I am not greatly inclined, from what I have seen there, to give much credit to the accounts.

I am not surprised to hear you say so, remarked Mr. Norset. It is not very probable that any one, from reading the notices of this subject in the periodicals, the greater portion of them at least, [6] would be able to form a very correct judgement on the matter. The reason is obvious. It is evident, to any person who has seen the original documents, that few, if any, of the writers of the reviews and notices in those periodicals have been at the pains to read those original documents, or the illustrations which accompany them. Nor, it must be confessed, is this much to be wondered at ; for, in these degenerate days of duodecimos and diamond editions, most persons turn in horror from the contemplation, much more perusal, of a ponderous quarto, especially when, as in this case, that quarto is in the Latin language.

What do you mean ? exclaimed the doctor : I thought you said that Malte Brun and Pinkerton never consulted the original documents, which they surely would have done, if a sight of them was to be obtained. You said, too, that these documents were in the Northern language, and lying in the archives of Iceland. What, then, is the meaning of your now talking about ponderous quartos in the Latin language ? These could not be inaccessible to any one who wished to get at a little knowledge.

Very true, doctor. It does not follow, however, that, because these documents were at one time lying in the archives of Iceland, and in the Northern language, they should lie there for ever, and remain for ever untranslated. The fact is this ; that these original documents have been recently published, with a Danish and Latin translation, together with some valuable literary illustrations—in the shape of extracts from contemporary Icelandic writers, particulars as to the manuscripts of these documents and as to various ancient inscriptions, and brief geographical notices,—under the auspices of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquarians of Copenhagen. [7] Thus is the mystery of the “ ponderous quarto ” expounded.

And this explains another mystery. I was wondering what could have caused notices of this subject to appear in the periodicals just now, when, by your own acknowledgment, the facts have been, hitherto, *generally* unknown.

You are right, doctor ; and as you are not so much terrified at the idea of a Latin quarto as most people, let me advise you to go to the volume in question for your information, and not to trust to any reviews. .

But how do you know that the reviewers have not read the book ?

By reference to the reviews themselves. They all bear evident marks of having been gleaned from the synopsis placed at the beginning of the work, and which is, I think unfortunately, in English. Remarks and objections are made, which could not possibly have been made, if each of the documents contained in the volume had been carefully perused, together with the illustrations added by C.C.RAFN, the learned and careful editor of the volume.

Come, said the doctor,—taking his seat, and drawing his chair closer to the table, some curiosity and interest having evidently at length become excited in his mind,—come, we are perhaps getting to something more tangible at last. Let us hear what this volume contains ; but, bear this in mind, Mr. Norset, I am not a whit the more convinced of the truth of the facts, because the Royal Society of Northern Antiquarians has published a volume. It would not be difficult to fabricate a set of documents, and put them forth in support of a fanciful theory.

Really, Dr. Dubital, I think it is hardly fair or candid to allow even the supposition to cross your mind, that a respectable society, like the Royal Society of Northern Antiquarians,—a society to which historical literature has been already much indebted,—should fabricate a set of documents in support of any theory ; or should even give the sanction of their name to the publication of any work or documents, the authenticity of which was not beyond a doubt.

This is all very well, said the doctor, but I will not trust to any Society, that all published under its auspices shall be authentic. If I am to believe any thing about this Northmen story, I must know something more satisfactory than this, in order to prove the authenticity of the documents which contain the information. I certainly shall else set it all down to the score of *theory*.

I must say, remarked Mr. Cassall, that it sounded rather too much like *theory* in the reviews which I have read.

Well, said Mr. Norset, we will leave the reviews to themselves for the present ; they are certainly of no authority whatever, in the matter. [8] And pray, doctor, what is it that will afford you any satisfaction, touching the matter in question ?

Suppose you first inform us what the documents are, of which you have said so much, and which are to establish the truth of these alleged discoveries of the Northmen. I presume you can tell me, shortly, what *kind* of documents they are.

This is no difficult matter, if by *documents* you mean—as the word in truth signifies—all the records which testify of these matters. The documents relating to this subject may be divided into two classes,—the one comprising manuscripts, or ancient copies of manuscripts, written within a short period after the occurrence of the facts which they relate ;—the other comprising monuments actually existing at this day in the countries visited, and which monuments were the work of the Northmen themselves.

Ha ! said the doctor, with a half sneer on his countenance ; monuments in the countries visited ! There are many of these in America, doubtless ?

There are, indeed, doctor.

Incredible and absurd “ Who ever heard of any monuments of the Northmen in America ?

You never have, doctor, that’s very evident ; and that is just all that your indignation proves. They do exist however,—of that there can be no doubt. What if I tell you that they exist in this very neighbourhood ; one of them within half a mile of the very house in which we sit ?

Why, I shall say that, if you do tell me so, it will be just of a piece with all the rest of the story that you have been now telling me.

Well, doctor, said Mr. Cassall, I am much of your opinion ; but, nevertheless, suppose we hear what Mr. Norset has to say upon this subject. I presume nobody would advance such an assertion, unless he imagined there were some grounds for believing it correct.

There seems little ground for this new assertion, answered the doctor, but we will hear what there is to be said upon the subject.

You are very condescending, Dr. Dubital, it must be allowed. We had better proceed, however, regularly in the matter, and take up the first class of documents in the first place.

With all my heart, sir. What proof can you bring of the authenticity of the ancient manuscripts of which you spoke ?

Just let me call your attention to one fact, doctor, before we enter on this proof. It may serve, added Mr. Norset, with a smile, to mollify your ideas of the excessive absurdity of the proposition as to the discovery of America by the Northmen. There is an atlas lying by your side, doctor. Have the goodness to open it at the map of the Atlantic ocean, or at the maps of the two hemispheres. Now, I wish you particularly to observe the distance between Norway and Iceland, and the distances between Iceland and Greenland, and Greenland and Newfoundland. You cannot of course fail to perceive that it is much more than twice the distance between Norway and Iceland, that it is between Iceland and Greenland ; and not far from twice the distance that it is between Greenland and Labrador, and thence on to Newfoundland.

Well, sir, I see that.

You will not, I presume, doctor, deny that Iceland was, in the NINTH century, viz, 861 and 875, discovered and settled by the Northmen ; this being a fact which is as well known to be

authentic as that Iceland exists,—and a fact which every body, having the slightest acquaintance with history ; well knows.

Certainly not ; but this does not prove that the Northmen discovered America in the *tenth* century.

True, but it proves sufficient for my purpose. It proves that they traversed the broad western ocean to a far greater extent westward of their native home in Norway, in order to reach Iceland, than it was necessary to traverse the same ocean, beyond that island, in order to reach Greenland,—which I shall show you that it is equally certain they colonized in the following century,—and so to reach the continent of North America. What say you, doctor ?

The doctor looked puzzled ; he had not expected to be so caught by self-evident facts before his own eyes. Mr. Cassall remarked,—Certainly these facts lessen the appearance of impossibility, or even of *improbability* in the proposition that America was discovered by the Northmen in the tenth century.

That is the very point I want to establish. It is so evident that the most sceptical cannot cavil at it. It is then, clear that there is nothing *improbable* in the account of the expeditions even to the more southern regions of America, all of which, excepting one, were made *from Greenland*, though by Norwegians, who had gone to Iceland, and thence to Greenland, for the sake of traffic. Thus Iceland was, you see, a kind of half-way house to the Northmen, for they stayed there 100 years before they went on to Greenland, and it was, comparatively, an easy matter for them to go onward from Greenland to Newfoundland, and thence to the more southern regions of the continent of North America. I have thus, then, shown that there is no *improbability* in the narratives contained in these documents,—which is an important point in proving their truths since, by destroying the *improbability*, it is shown that the probability of authenticity and truth exists, which is always an important step towards proving *actual* authenticity and truth. We will now, if the doctor pleases, proceed to show positively that the documents are authentic, and that the narratives are true.

Proceed, sir, said the doctor, shortly.

[1] EIREK THE RED was the actual discoverer of America, in 982.

[2] This curious and interesting work was published in 1818, (having been previously, *for the first time*, published in 1809,) under the following title : “ Epicurei Fragmenta Librorum II. et XII. de NATURA, in Voluminibus Papyraceis ex Herculano erutis reperta. Lipsiæ, 1818.”

[3] Torfœus’s *Grænlandia Antiqua*, Hafniæ, 1706, and *Historia Vinlandiæ antiqua*, seu partis Americæ Septemtrionalis, Hafniæ, 1705, &c. Wormiis published at Oxford in 1716, a Latin translation of an ancient Icelandic authentic work, in which Vinland is noticed. Mention will be made of Adam of Bremen in a subsequent page. Malte Brun and Pinkerton are too well known to need any reference to their works. It is proper that mention should be here made of the allusions to this subject in *Wheaton’s* “ History of the Northmen.” The author of that work alludes to the discovery of Vinland, &c. and gives a meagre outline, though somewhat more fully than Pinkerton, as quoted, of the expedition thither. He is also more correct in his localities than Malte Brun and Pinkerton. He does not, however, give the full particulars connected with the subject, nor, indeed, any of the details necessary to determining the *internal evidence*. *Henderson*, in his “ Journal of a Residence in Iceland,” alludes to the same facts, though very briefly. He uses the following language, “ The fact that America also was first discovered by the Icelanders, though less generally known, is perfectly well authenticated by the northern historians.” Like *Wheaton*, he also names Biarni Heriulfson as the discoverer of the regions above alluded to, (pp. 2 and 4,)—Eirek the Red being the actual discoverer of America,—although, like him also, he gives the

wrong date to the transaction. All these minute points, as to the differences in dates, &c. given by different authors, might be easily explained, could a lengthened disquisition on the subject be here given. It would be out of place, however ; and the narratives given in this volume are too clear and precise, and their authenticity and truth too well proved, to render any such disquisitions necessary. These allusions are only made to show how idle is the charge, so often ignorantly made, that the idea of the discovery of America by the North-men is a new fangled theory and notion.

- [4] Pinkerton's *Modern Geography*, 3rd edition, Vol. II. pp. 208 and 210. In the first volume of the same work, p. 342, occurs the following passage :— “ In this reign of Olaf I. Vinland, or Wineland, a more southern part of North America, was discovered by Biarni, and by Leif, son of Eric the Red, A. D. 1003. The little colony settled in Vinland about 1006, perished from intestine divisions. The country was so called from some wild grapes, or berries ; and is supposed,” &c. &c. Pinkerton had never seen the original authorities, and only drew information from Torfœus. Hence his errors of dates, &c. A note is added to the above passage, to the following effect : —“ It is singular enough, that, while the Welsh antiquaries deafen us with the imaginary discovery of America by Madoc, A.D. 1170, the Norwegians have been contented with a simple unpretending narration of the facts ;” — this *contrast* being obviously strong evidence of the *truth* of the latter accounts. Let it be remembered that Pinkerton's *Geography* was published upwards of *twenty-six years* before the work of the Northern Antiquarian Society.
- [5] Colon visited Iceland in 1477.
- [6] It is unnecessary here to specify any of the periodicals. It may be merely stated that the *least candid* review, as far as memory serves, is the article in the “ *Foreign Quarterly*.”
- [7] “ ANTIQUITATES AMERICANÆ : sive Scriptores Septentrionales Rerum Antiquariorum in America. Edidit Societas Regia Antiquariorum Septentrionalium. Hafniæ, 1837.”
- [8] It may be observed, once for all, that allusion is here made to the reviews simply for the purpose of answering, in the following pages, all the remarks and objections which have been made in them. This is necessary in order to establish the truth of the facts, since, upon those unacquainted with the real bearings of the question, these re- views may have had some influence. It has been the author's object, however, to answer all the objections, and meet all the difficulties, which can be raised, as well as those which have been raised. He has aimed also at explaining all allusions which might seem doubtful, or, in any way, give occasion to any appearance of obscurity.

The discovery of America by the Northmen in the tenth century. Comprising translations of all the most important original narratives of this event; together with a critical examination of their authenticity; to which is added, an examination of the comparative merits of the Northmen and Columbus (1842)

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