

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.