

certain that the statements he made to his friend Frascatoro, at Seville, a few years after his return, are simple incredible, because they represent an extent of work and discovery which, within the time it was supposed to have been accomplished, was physically impossible.

As I have said before, I am glad to know that a celebration of the great event has been determined upon, and I trust that Mr. Howland (than whom no more patriotic and public spirited citizen could be found for carrying it to a successful issue) and those associated with him will have all the support and assistance which so important an undertaking will require.

R. WINTON.

Toronto, July 22nd, 1895.

#### NEWFOUNDLAND THE FIRST PLACE DISCOVERED BY THE CABOTS.

SIR,—The discovery of the West Indies by Columbus in 1492, and of Newfoundland by the Cabots in 1497, is detailed in almost every book written on America. In all the histories, it is said Newfoundland, *not Cape Breton*, was discovered by the Cabots on the 24th June, St. John the Baptist's Day, 1497. The discovery of America by the Scandinavians in the tenth century was thought not worthy of credence, but recent investigations by learned men and the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries' researches have led to the belief that America was visited by different nations at various times long before Columbus or the Cabots. There is a tradition that in the year 1170, on the death of the Welsh King, a dispute for the succession arose among his sons; that one of them, to get rid of the quarrel, sailed away with several ships and a number of people; they sailed westward till they discovered an unknown land. Here was left part of the people as a colony, while the rest returned to Wales, and after some time again sailed with recruits, but were never again heard of. A discovery on an island near the shores of Maine, U.S., gives additional plausibility to the theory that the coasts of North America were visited by the Northmen some centuries before the English, French, and Spaniards. In 1808, a gentleman in Bath, Maine, communicated to the Rev. Dr. Jenks, well-known as an accomplished Oriental scholar, a sketch of some singular characters found on the side of a ledge of granite rocks near the middle of a small island. At the annual meeting of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, in May, 1851, Dr. Jenks (with whom I was personally acquainted) made a statement respecting the characters referred to. Since that time an accurate transcript has been made of the inscription. The characters are eighteen in number, and Dr. Jenks has no doubt they are Runic in their origin. He says:—"It may possibly countenance the hypothesis, which has of late been entertained with so much approbation and interest by the Danish antiquarians, that America was visited by the Scandinavians, or Icelanders, long before Columbus or Cabot." Cabot called Newfoundland, as well as the American continent, *Baccalaos*, a Spanish word for codfish. The use of this word, *Baccalaos*, by Cabot, has given rise to much discussion amongst American scholars. It is well-known that the Basques, both Spanish and French, are not only great cod-fishers, but also great whalers; they were the first to capture whales and seals in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Port-aux-Basques was one of their ports on the west coast of Newfoundland. Sydney, C.B., called "Spanish Bay," was another of their ports. El Conde de Premio Real, the late learned Spanish Consul for Quebec, wrote a very interesting pamphlet on the Basques in North America. His view is the Basques fished in Newfoundland and the Gulf before Cabot's discovery, and the general use of the name "*Baccalaos*," so early applied to these countries, lends great weight to his argument.

In the *American Antiquarian* for June, 1889, is an account of an almost forgotten record of an Irish missionary named St. Brenden as the first preacher to Mexico more than 800 years before the voyages of Columbus or Cabot. There is a tradition that a Chinese Junk came to Alaska some hundreds of years before Columbus crossed the Atlantic. Some suppose that Alaska had been peopled from Japan, while others think the original inhabitants came from the interior of America.

Toronto, July 22nd, 1895

PHILIP TOCQUE.

#### OSSERVATORE ON THE WOMAN'S NATIONAL COUNCIL

SIR,—Your correspondent "Osservatore" seems to have forgotten the very obvious consideration, that they who undertake sharply to criticise any public movement, must expect to have their criticisms sharply criticized in turn. I notice that "O" (I use the initial letter only, for the sake of economy of space) objects to have her strictures on the Woman's National Council styled "an attack," though in the next line she characterizes as "a virulent attack," a reply which simply pointed out the irrelevance and unfairness of her objections, and the lack of generous sympathy implied in the gratuitous detraction of a body of women whose only object is the disinterested promotion of the well-being of their sex and country! I must say that I do not understand such fine distinctions, but will not waste time in discussing epithets. When I wrote my last letter, I did so under the impression that the attack (I really cannot find another suitable word) had proceeded from one of the sterner sex whose mental vision in such matters had possibly been impaired by some unfortunate domestic experience. It did not even occur to me as likely that any intelligent woman could write in a spirit so blindly unjust towards her sisters, and especially towards those high-minded and public-spirited women who have the strongest possible claims on her sympathy, esteem, and respect. I am sorry to see that her second letter is no improvement on the first. It repeats, in a still more flagrant form, two of the greatest sins of which a critic can be guilty, that of criticizing from obviously imperfect study, and that of attempting to discredit the subject of criticism by vague and irrelevant generalities and groundless insinuations, instead of discussing it fairly and squarely on its definite merits or demerits.

If "O" should consider this statement either "virulent" or "discourteous," I should like to suggest that she could scarcely have read even my letter without being aware that the efforts of the Council towards securing manual training for girls had nothing to do with *home* teaching, as she misrepresents it, but directed towards the much needed introduction into our public schools of instruction for girls in needle-work and other housewifely arts, the entire lack of which has long been felt by thoughtful women to be one of the greatest defects of our educational system, and which the agitation led by the Women's Council is likely soon to remedy. Similarly, she ought to have known that its action in regard to pure literature was not, as she puts it, prescribing to parents what mental food to give their children, but a consultation in regard to the best remedy for an evil of whose magnitude and effects few people are aware—the influx into our country of quantities of poisonous literature, so-called, frequently finding its way through the mails into the hands of children without the knowledge of their parents. If the Council can accomplish the task it has attempted in reference to even these two objects, it will be unquestionably a benefactor to Canada, and "O" must know full well that such things cannot be done without combination and preliminary conference.

Scarcely less unfair and ungenerous is her reference to the conclusion arrived at by the Council in continuing its original practice of opening its meetings with silent instead of audible prayer, as the most expedient method of invoking the Divine blessing, in the presence of religious differences and ecclesiastical complications of which all Canadians at the present juncture must be fully aware. Here again, had she read the clear statement of this matter, which appeared in the same issue with my letter, from the pen of a writer who was a strong advocate of the use of the Lord's Prayer, she could scarcely have thought it justifiable to quote with approval such sheer nonsense as the assertion that the Council "had negatived all the creeds of Christendom" in preferring to conduct its devotions in silence, after the manner of our Quaker brethren. Such language is not only insulting to the many earnest Christian women who, after much consideration, came to this conclusion, but it is a complete perversion of both fact and language.

The palpably offensive insinuation concerning talkers and workers does not need or deserve a reply; since "O" must know full well, if she cares to know, that among the leaders of the Women's Council are to be found some of the most indefatigable workers in the Dominion, whose work has been equally admirable whether done in their own households or outside of them, and who certainly do not need anonymous