

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 *Gretti* and the *Vigaglum* 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."<sup>\*</sup> 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

<sup>\*</sup>Pre-Columbian Discovery, p. 7, taken from "Heimskringla," Vol. I, p. 7.  
<sup>†</sup>America Not Discovered by Columbus, pp. 98-100.