

forced into the service of favourite theories ; and many ingenious and extravagant antiquarian romances, adapted to the popular taste by this means, have been welcomed as invaluable contributions to history : though in reality as insubstantial as the dreams of Merlin or the legends of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Nevertheless one class of monumental indices of intercourse between the eastern and western hemispheres, long prior to the fifteenth century, is of an indisputable kind. The Royal society of Northern Antiquaries of Copenhagen has placed the evidence of this before the world, in the most accessible form in the *Grönlands Historiske Mindesmærker*, and the *Antiquitates Americanae, sive Scriptores Septentrionales rerum ante-Columbiarum in America*. The latter was issued from the Copenhagen press in 1837 ; and to this a supplement subsequently appeared, to the contents of which special reference will be made in discussing some of the supposed traces of the ante-Columbian colonisation of America. To those works, along with the correspondence and researches to which their preparation gave rise, is chiefly due the revived interest in the recovery of ancient traces of intercourse between the eastern and western hemisphere, which continued for some years to engross a large amount of interest among all classes in the United States.

From the literary memorials of the old Northmen thus restored to light, sufficient evidence has been disclosed to render highly credible, not only the discovery and colonisation of Greenland, by Eric the Red; a Norwegian colonist of Iceland,—apparently in the year 985,—but also the exploration of more southern lands, some of which must have formed part of the American continent. Of the authenticity of the manuscripts from whence those narratives are derived there is not the slightest room for question ; and the accounts which some of them furnish are so simple, natural and devoid of anything extravagant or improbable, that the internal evidence of genuineness is worthy of great consideration. The exuberant fancy which revels in the mythology and songs of the Northmen, would have constructed a very different tale had it been employed in the invention of a southern continent for the dreams of Icelandic and Greenland rovers. Some of the latter Sagas do, indeed, present so much resemblance in their tales of discovery, to those of older date, as to look like mere varied repetitions of the original narrative with a change of actors, such as might result from different versions of one account, transmitted for a time by oral tradition before being committed to writing. But, notwithstanding