

for gauging their mental capacity and intellectual development, though this is a problem requiring wise caution in the attempt to solve it. The arts of the savage Haidas show how great may be the artistic development within certain narrow limits, perpetuating mimetic skill and an inherited conventional art through many generations, and yet accompanied by no corresponding traces of civilization in other directions. On the other hand, the marvellous earthworks which have been justly accepted as the true characteristics of the vanished race of the Ohio Valley perpetuate for us the perplexing evidence of a singular geometrical skill among a people with whom the metallurgic arts were in the very simplest elementary stage.

By these and the like means we recover glimpses of an ancient past for our New World, as for the Old. Prehistoric they are for us, though how old we cannot as yet pretend to guess; for, after all, antiquity is a very relative thing. The landing of Julius Cæsar is among the oldest of definite events for the British historian. For Rome it was a very late date; and as for Greece, Carthage, Phœnicia, or Egypt, their histories had already come to an end long before ours was thus beginning.

For our western world, even now anything dating before the landing of Columbus seems remote as the era of Menes to the Egyptologist; and yet for England that is the time of her Tudors, and already modern. But Greenland has disclosed in our own day the graven runic memorials which place beyond all question an older knowledge of America revealed to European explorers. During a recent visit to Copenhagen, I examined with peculiar interest the runic monuments recovered from Igalikko, Ikigeit, Kingiktorsok, and other settlements of the old Northmen of Greenland: memorials of Eric the

Red, the founder of the first colony of Northmen beyond the Atlantic about the year 1000; and of Liêt, his son, who, according to the old Eric saga, sailed southward in quest of other lands; for whose traces the antiquaries of Rhode Island and other New England States have searched with all becoming enthusiasm. The Dighton Rock is familiar now to all American antiquaries, for no Behistun cuneiforms, or trilateral Rosetta stone, ever received more faithful study. The more substantial Round Tower of Newport, Rhode Island, long furnished another well-accredited memorial of the exploration of New England by the Northmen of the eleventh century. Professor Rafn, and his brother antiquaries of Copenhagen, welcomed the dubious relics with undoubting faith, and their authentication of them in the *Antiquitates Americanae* gave them for a time a well-accredited guarantee of genuineness. But the runics of the Dighton Rock have vanished with the faith of their too-credulous interpreters; and as for the Newport Round Tower—one of the few genuine historical ruins of the New World, north of Mexico,—its chief associations are now with the venerable New England poet, so recently passed away from us in the ripe maturity of years and fame, who linked its ancient walls with more genuine Norse sentiment in his fine ballad of "The Skeleton in Armour."

The poet, William Morris, in his "Earthly Paradise," represents the later Vikings of the fourteenth century following the old leadings of Leif Ericson across the Atlantic in search of the earthly paradise:

"That desired gate  
To immortality and blessed rest  
Within the landless waters of the West."

The time chosen by the poet is that of England's Edward III., and still more, of England's Chaucer. But,