

his discovery was "bogus";¹ that the Norse "were the first Europeans who landed on American shores was pregnant with good to us ; this made 'the name America the synonym of wealth, of adventure, of freedom', and not the false tidings borne by Columbus to Spain of a discovery of which he would have been incapable but for stolen information;"² "Columbus, the bigoted Roman Catholic adventurer, who fed his ambition and greed on the narratives of the Norse voyages to America, read secretly in Iceland, strove to give the New World the opposite tendency,—the downward tendency";³ Columbus, hearing of the Western World, "went to Iceland in order to pursue the investigations to which all this had given him a clue. After his visit to Iceland, he made out to find America, as any one else could have found it after obtaining definite directions ;"⁴ he was guilty of "religious felony", and purloined the knowledge of a discovery of transcendent value made by men of a pagan race who were recently and very reluctantly converted to Christianity, for the purpose of securing princely honors and emoluments for himself, the greatest conceivable aggrandizement for the Church. Such an opportunity for universal dominion as could never, in the nature of things, occur again in the life of the world ; and last and most important of all, for the purpose of making the New World, through its entire submission to the Holy See, the means of crushing out all tendencies to rebellion against the church that might possibly manifest themselves again in Europe."⁵

These severe and uncharitable views would prepare the reader for an estimate of the character of the Norse as given by the same pen, for it may be anticipated that one extreme follows another. If the character be exalted, then the literature created by that people must also be transcendent. "There was no stint of historical records in Iceland ; its literature was as rich and varied as it was copious. The Latin lore (?) of the monks could in no sense be compared with it ;"⁶ "free to think and to act, to follow their impulses, the dearest aim of the Norsemen was to cultivate character, to attain that degree of excellence which would make their life a joy to them ; their heaven was only valuable to them as following upon a valuable life here on earth, and they were never disposed to resign this life for the sake of a future one ; if they sought death, or met it bravely, it was for other reasons, not savoring of sickly renunciation. This aim of theirs to be great developed a heroic age ; the warriors and the bards emulated each other ;"⁷ the literature of Iceland was vast and "preserved in the retentive memories of its Scalds and saga men, the annals of what was in many respects an ideal civilization, describing the life of a race mentally and physically sound, whose thoughts, words and acts were strong and

¹ *Icelandic Discoveries*, p. 13. ² *Ibid.* p. 22. ³ *Ibid.* p. 34. ⁴ *Ibid.* 60. ⁵ *Ibid.* 105
⁶ *Ibid.* 43. ⁷ *Ibid.* p. 123.