

he adds that his statement is based upon "trustworthy reports of the Danes."

The great work of Professor Charles Christian Rafn, of Copenhagen, *Antiquitates Americanae*, published in 1837, first brought these Icelandic sagas prominently before modern scholars. Professor Rafn's work was most elaborate and thorough, and very little in the way of new material has been given us since his time, although his theories and the general subject of the Northmen's voyages and the whereabouts of Vinland have been discussed in numberless volumes during the fifty years since he wrote. Perhaps the most valuable work is that by Arthur Middleton Reeves, a young American scholar, whose untimely death in a recent railroad disaster is so deeply to be deplored. The title of Mr. Reeves's work is *The Finding of Wineland the Good: The History of the Icelandic Discovery of America*. (London, 1890). This work contains phototype plates of the original Icelandic vellums, English translations of the two sagas, and very thorough historical accounts and critical discussions. The present leaflet makes use of Mr. Reeves's translation. De Costa's *Pre-Columbian Discovery of America by the Northmen* and Slafter's *Voyages of the Northmen to America* are earlier works of high authority, going over the same ground and also containing translations of the sagas. Dr. Slafter's book has an added value from its critical accounts of all the important works on the subject which had appeared up to that time (1877). A completer bibliography, now accessible, is that by Justin Winsor, appended to his chapter on "Pre-Columbian Explorations" in the *Narrative and Critical History of America*, vol. i.

The best popular account of the Norsemen and their voyages is that by Mr. Fiske, in his *Discovery of America*, vol. i. chap. ii. Mr. Fiske is refreshingly sound and sane in his treatment of the whole subject, which with so many writers has been a field for the wildest speculations. He shows the absurdity of the earlier writers who used to associate the Old Mill at Newport and the inscriptions on the Dighton rock with the Northmen, and the slight grounds on which, at the present time, enthusiasts like Professor Horsford have attempted to determine details so exactly as to claim that Leif Erikson settled on the banks of Charles River. "On the whole," concludes Mr. Fiske, "we may say with some confidence that the place described by our chroniclers as Vinland was situated somewhere between Point Judith and Cape Breton; possibly we may narrow our limits, and say that it was somewhere between Cape Cod and Cape Ann. But the latter conclusion is much less secure than the former. In such a case as this, the more we narrow our limits, the greater our liability to error."

It should be said that many scholarly investigators hold that all the conditions of the descriptions of Vinland in the sagas are met by the shores of Labrador and Newfoundland, although the weight of opinion is in favor of the New England coast. The accounts themselves make any exact determination impossible; and no genuine Norse remains have ever been discovered in New England.

The claim that Columbus knew of these discoveries of the Northmen or that he was influenced by them has never been made out, and is quite improbable. He simply set out to find a western route to Asia. The course of his voyage was not such as he would have taken, had he had in mind the Vinland of the Northmen; and he made no mention of Vinland while exhausting every possible argument in favor of his expedition at the Spanish court. Had he known of it, he certainly would have mentioned it; for, as Colonel Higginson so well says (see his excellent chapter on the Northmen in his *Larger History of the United States*), for the purpose of his argument, "an ounce of Vinland would have been worth a pound of cosmography."