

permanent results yielded to the physical contemplation of the universe by the rediscovery of the same continent by Columbus at the close of the fifteenth century, was the necessary consequence of the uncivilized condition of the people, and the nature of the countries to which the early discoveries were limited. The Scandinavians were wholly unprepared, by previous scientific knowledge, for exploring the countries in which they settled, beyond what was absolutely necessary for the satisfaction of their immediate wants. Greenland and Iceland, which must be regarded as the actual mother countries of the new colonies, were regions in which man had to contend with all the hardships of an inhospitable climate. The wonderfully organized free state of Iceland, nevertheless, maintained its independence for three centuries and a half, until civil freedom was annihilated, and the country became subject to Hako VI., king of Norway. The flower of Icelandic literature, its historical records, and the collection of the Sagas and Eddas, appertain to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

It is a remarkable phenomenon in the history of the cultivation of nations, that when the safety of the national treasures of the most ancient records of Northern Europe was endangered at home by domestic disturbances, they should have been transported to Iceland, and have been there carefully preserved, and thus rescued for posterity. This rescue, the remote consequence of Ingolf's first colonization in Iceland, in the year 875, has proved, amid the vague and misty forms of Scandinavian myths and symbolical cosmogonies, an event of great importance in its influence on the poetic fancy of mankind. It was natural knowledge alone that acquired no enlargement. Icelandic travelers certainly occasionally visited the universities of Germany and Italy, but the discoveries of the Greenlanders in the south, and the inconsiderable intercourse maintained with Vinland, whose vegetation presented no remarkable physiognomical character, withdrew colonists and mariners so little from their European interests, that no knowledge of these newly-colonized countries seems to have been diffused among the cultivated nations of Southern Europe. It would even appear that no tidings of these regions reached the great Genoese navigator in Iceland. Iceland and Greenland had then been separated upward of two hundred years, since 1261, when the latter country had lost its republican form of government, and when, on its becoming a fief of the crown of Norway, all intercourse with foreigners and even with Iceland was interdicted to it. Christopher Colum-