

ter that probably came with the advent of Christianity into Scandinavia. Certainly the use of the symbols 𐌹, 𐌺, and 𐌻 for XIX shows the Latin influence. There may also be considerable doubt whether the symbol 𐌶 was in use as early as the year 1362.

JOHN M. ARMSTRONG, M. D.

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

### THE CLIMAX FIRE STEEL

In the March issue of this publication Mr. M. M. Quaife has an article on the distribution of fire steels among the Indians. This leads him to a brief discussion of a fire steel found near Climax, Minnesota, on the bank of the Red River. He mentions that I, in my book concerning the Kensington stone, have included this find among several other ancient implements unearthed in Minnesota as corroborative proofs of the authenticity of the Kensington inscription. He concludes, however, that the "chance discovery of a fire steel near Climax in 1871 sheds no conceivable light on this interesting question." The reason for this conclusion, he asserts, is that "Mr. Holand evidently overlooked . . . the use of fire steels in the Indian trade."<sup>1</sup>

This is incorrect. I have mentioned the use of fire steels among Indians in many of my writings, and I did not suppress it in the book which Mr. Quaife refers to for his information. On page 177, in immediate connection with my discussion of the Climax fire steel, I say:

Fire-steels were early introduced among the Indians and specimens may be seen in museums. These fire-steels were very crudely made and quite small, usually permitting only two fingers of the hand to be inserted within the fire-steel. The Climax fire-steel is quite different in size, style, and material from the Indian fire-steels.<sup>2</sup>

The overlooking is therefore not mine but Mr. Quaife's.

The reason I attach any significance to the Climax fire

<sup>1</sup> Quaife, "A Footnote on Fire Steels," *ante*, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Hjalmar R. Holand, *The Kensington Stone*, 177 (Ephraim, Wisconsin, 1932).

steel is mentioned in the last sentence of the above quotation: "The Climax fire-steel is quite different in size, shape and material," that is, in metallurgical composition. Inasmuch as it is so different, it is worthy of scientific attention. I have made numerous inspections and inquiries in many museums between the Mississippi River and the Atlantic, and I have failed to find any Indian or pioneer fire steels of this type.

But Mr. Quaife quite properly states that "the argument from negative evidence . . . is valid only when one explores all possible sources of information." In order to explore all possible sources of information, I went abroad in 1928 and visited a large number of museums in England, France, the Netherlands, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries. Somewhere in one of these countries the museums ought to reveal other fire steels of the same type, unless the Climax fire steel were a freak. My search was not in vain. In one country, but only in one, I found a museum containing a large quantity of fire steels of exactly the same type as the Climax specimen. This was the university museum in Oslo. In order that there should be no doubt about this fact, I asked the museum to give me a written statement. Here it is:

Upon request . . . I will state that the fire-steel which carries the same mark in its entire form with the spiral ends is of exactly the same type as the fire-steels which in great numbers have been found in Norwegian graves from the Viking Age. . . .

[Signed] EIVIND S. ENGELSTAD<sup>3</sup>

Inasmuch as the Climax fire steel is of the Norwegian type which goes way back to the Viking Age, there remain only two reasonable explanations of its presence here. It was either brought over by one of the first settlers in the

<sup>3</sup> Holand, *Kensington Stone*, 176. The Norwegian text of Dr. Engelstad's statement is as follows: "Paa Opfordring skal jeg faa meddele at det ildstaal some berer samme merke ved hele sin form med de spiralop-rullede ender er av ganske samme type som de ildstaal der i mengdevis er funnet i norske graver fra vikingetiden."

Climax area, or it was left by some Norwegian explorer who penetrated to the Red River before this region was settled. In any case it is not an Indian or a French fire steel.

The first alternative is impossible because it was found by the first settler in the Climax vicinity, deep in the soil, and before the land was plowed.<sup>4</sup> There remains the second alternative—that it was brought in by an early explorer. This explorer must have left it there a very long time ago, because it was found two feet down in the ground in a layer of charcoal and ashes. This implies that it was lost while a fire was being made, and it would presumably take many hundred years for two feet of soil to accumulate above the fire steel. We know of only one party of Norwegian explorers who are reported to have visited this part of America hundreds of years ago. They were the explorers mentioned on the Kensington stone as having visited this region in 1362. They must have carried just such fire steels as this, and their route lay right past the spot where the fire steel was found. The only logical conclusion, therefore, is that this fire steel is a memento of the explorers who penetrated into the present state of Minnesota in 1362.

All the facts mentioned above concerning this fire steel, including the statement from the Oslo University museum that the Climax fire steel is of exactly the same type in all details as those in use in Norway in the Middle Ages, are mentioned in my book on the Kensington stone, to which Mr. Quaife refers for his information. But for some reason Mr. Quaife does not allude to them. He gives the reader the impression that there is nothing peculiar about this fire steel—that it is merely an Indian fire steel. Why were the facts in the case suppressed?

HJALMAR R. HOLAND

EPHRAIM, WISCONSIN

<sup>4</sup> See affidavits concerning the discovery of the fire steel in Holand, *Kensington Stone*, 167, 168.



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