

# The Norse Discovery of America



## Book III

The Norsemen In America

# Chapter 1

## NORUMBEGA

The early discovery of this country by the Norsemen is of interest to every American. It is the first coming of Europeans to this continent. It is the first chapter of civilization in the Western world. It is also the first chapter of the history of the Christian Church in America; for Leif Erikson and his followers had been converted to Christianity and Leif was himself a missionary sent out by the king of Norway to preach the gospel of the Gallilean to the Norse colonists in Greenland.

Before the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock in 1620, the shores of North America had been visited by the so-called French voyageurs. Some of these explorers wrote accounts of their voyages, and in their narratives and on maps which they published there is frequent mention of the name Norumbega. The name is found with a variety of spellings, Norumbegue, Norumbergue, sometimes with the initial "n" omitted, Anorabegra, Anorumbega, etc. It is applied to a country, river and city located somewhere in the eastern part of the United States or Canada. It is said to have been discovered by Verrazzano, in 1524. The site of the city [295] was given on a map published at Antwerp in 1570. In 1604 Champlain ascended the Penobscot River in Maine, supposing that stream to be the Norumbega. But after going twenty-two leagues he discovered no indications of a city or of civilization except an old moss-grown cross in the woods. American historians have found much difficulty in identifying Norumbega. The fact is the statements of the various French authorities are conflicting. As stated, the first mention is by Verrazzano on his map published in Antwerp in 1524, and later, that is, in 1539, Parmentier found the name Norumbega, applied to a country lying southwest from, Cape Breton. Allefonsce, under Roberval, in 1543, determined the fact of there being two Cape Bretons, of which the more southern, referred to by Parmentier, was in the forty-third degree and identical with Cape Anne. Within the limit of this forty-third degree was a river, at the mouth of which, according to Allefonsce, were many rocks and islands; up which river, as Allefonsce estimated, fifteen leagues from the mouth was a city called Norumbegue. "There was," Allefonsce said, "a fine people at the city and they had furs of many animals and wore mantles of martin skins." Allefonsce was a pilot by profession and on him particularly rests the identity of one of the Cape Bretons which Cape Anne and the fact of there being a river with a city on its banks, both bearing the name Norumbega between Cape Anne and Cape Cod. Wytfliet, in 1597, in an augment to Ptolemy, says, "Norombega, a beautiful city and a grand river, are well-known." He gives on his map a picture of the settlement, or villa, [297] at the junction of two streams, one of which is called the Rio Grande. Thevet in his texts places Fort Norumbegue at the point where Wytfliet placed the city, that is, at the junction of two streams, and Thevet says "To the north of Virginia is Norumbega, which is well-known as a beautiful city and a great river. Still one can not find whence this name is derived, for the natives call it Agguncia. At the entrance of the river there is an island very convenient for the fishery." Thevet describes the fort as surrounded by fresh water and at the junction of two streams. The city of Norumbega on his map is lower down the river. The French, who occupied the fort, called the fort Norumbega. As stated, the identification of Norumbega has greatly puzzled American historians, and the country, river and city have from, time to

time been located at various points from Virginia to the St. Lawrence. Most authorities have referred Norumbega to New England, while Lok, in 1582, seems to have believed that the Penobscot in Maine formed its southern boundary. Before 1880 this view seems to have been very generally adopted by American scholars. Our poet, J. G. Whittier, made Norumbega the subject of one of his most beautiful poems.

In connection with the poem, the poet gives the following explanatory note, which well represents the concensus of opinion of American scholars before 1880: "Norembega, or Norimbegue, is the name given by early French fishermen and explorers to a fabulous country south of Cape Breton, first discovered by Verazzano in 1524. It was supposed to have a magnificent city of the [298] same name on a great river, probably the Penobscot. The site of this barbaric city is laid down on a map published at Antwerp in 1570. In 1604, Champlain sailed in search of the Northern Eldorado, twenty-two leagues up the Penobscot from the Isle Haute. He supposed the river to be that of Norembega, but wisely came to the conclusion that those travelers who told of the great city had never seen it. He saw no evidence of anything like civilization, but mentions the finding- of a cross, very old and mossy, in the woods."

In 1881 Arthur James Weise, of Troy, N. Y., published a work called "The Discovery of America to the Year 1525." In the closing pages of this work he takes up the subject of Norumbega, and arrives at the conclusion that the name is a contraction of the old French L'Anormeeberge (the grand scarp), and claims that the adjective "anormee" and the noun "berge" definitely describe the wall of rocks known as the Palisades, on the Hudson river, above New York city. Weise has no doubt that by the term Norumbega river the Hudson is meant, and that the country around the Palisades was called by the French explorers La Terre d'Anormeeberge, afterwards contracted and corrupted into Norumbega and its other variations heretofore named. In identifying the river called by one of the French writers Norombega, with the present Hudson, Weise lays great stress upon the statement by the same writer that the water of the river was salty to the height of forty leagues, and shows that the Hudson is brackish beyond the city of Poughkeepsie. According to Weise, the city of Norumbega[299] must have occupied the site of the present Albany, the capital of New York. Weise's arguments seemed so conclusive, particularly his interpretation of the name, that his view was very generally accepted by students of American history everywhere.

Passing on to the year 1890, we come to an entirely new theory. Before presenting this in detail it may interest my readers to learn a few facts leading up to it. In 1873 I suggested to the famous Norwegian violinist, Ole Bull, that Leif Erikson, the first white man who planted his feet on American soil, ought to be honored with a monument. Ole Bull accepted the suggestion with the greatest enthusiasm, and he and I together immediately prepared plans for its realization. During the spring of 1873 we arranged a number of entertainments in Wisconsin and Iowa, the proceeds of which made the nucleus of the Leif Erikson monument fund. At these entertainments Ole Bull played the violin and the writer sandwiched in short addresses to the audiences while the artist rested. Later, that same year, I accompanied Ole Bull to Norway, and there a series of entertainments were arranged for the same purpose. At one of these entertainments the distinguished

Norwegian poet, Bjornstjerne Bjornson, delivered an address. A sum of money was realized from the entertainments in Norway for the monument fund. A few years later Ole Bull made his American home in Cambridge, Mass.; there he was successful in organizing a committee for the purpose of carrying out our plans in regard to the Leif Erikson monument. The committee was a most brilliant one. [300]

In it were found James Russell Lowell, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Thomas S. Appleton, Prof. E. N. Horsford, the Governor of Massachusetts, the Mayor of Boston and many other distinguished people. Funds were rapidly raised, and America's most distinguished sculptress, Miss Anne Whitney (126), was engaged to produce in bronze a statue of Leif Erikson in heroic size. In due time the statue was completed and placed at the end of Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. The statue represents Leif Erickson as he discovers the first faint outlines of land far away on the horizon, and with his right hand he shades his eyes from the dazzling rays of the sun. The statue does not represent my idea of a long bearded and shaggy haired Norseman of the tenth century. Miss Whitney has made Leif smooth faced, with the general outlines of the Roman. She seems to have taken the splendid physique and features of Ole Bull for her model. But it is certainly a great work of art. No less authority than James Russell Lowell declared it to be the finest work of sculpture hitherto produced in America. A perfect replica, cast in the same mold as the original, was presented by a Milwaukee lady to the city of Milwaukee, where it can be seen by my readers. It stands on the lake front, a little north of the Chicago & Northwestern railway station, near the well-known Juneau monument.

It will be observed that Prof. Horsford was mentioned as one of the committee in Cambridge. Prof. Eben Norton [301] Horsford, born July 27th, 1818, was the son of a distinguished missionary among the Indians. The son, Eben., acquired from his father, who was thoroughly familiar with many Indian dialects, an extensive knowledge of Indian words. He studied science both in America and in Europe under Prof. Liebig, and became Professor of Science in Harvard University in 1847, a position which he filled with distinction for sixteen years. Fortune smiled on him. He became wealthy and was able to devote his time exclusively to scientific and literary pursuits. He was a large hearted man and gave generously of his wealth to educational institutions. Wellesley College is under great obligations to him.

The organization of the Leif Erickson committee in Cambridge attracted his attention to the subject of the Norse discovery of America. The result was that he practically abandoned his other studies and concentrated all his energies on investigations bearing on the Norse voyages to this country. He was particularly interested in locating the landfall of Leif Erikson and in identifying the country explored by him and his countrymen from the tenth to the fourteenth century. Some idea can be formed of Prof. Horsford's enthusiasm in this cause when we learn that he spent more than \$50,000 in making explorations, in publishing books and maps, and in building monuments and memorials in honor of the Norse discoverer. He was the orator at the unveiling of the Leif Erikson monument in Boston.

In 1890, Prof. Horsford presented an entirely new theory in regard to the perplexing question of Norumbega. [302]

In this year appeared his "Discovery of the Ancient City of Norumbega." In it he claims to have found the precise site of the ancient city, and locates it with absolute confidence on the Charles river, in Massachusetts, at its junction with Stony Brook, near Walton. He makes Norumbega identical with the Vinland of the Norseman, claiming that Norumbega is not derived from the old French *D'Anormee Berge*, but is a corruption of the old name *Norvegr* and that it has borne that name among the aborigines ever since the Norse explorers in the tenth and following centuries made their headquarters there. He takes Norumbega to be the name the French voyageurs did not bestow but found. So thoroughly convinced was Prof. Horsford of the correctness of his theory that he built on the site which he identified as Norumbega a costly tower in commemoration of the Norse discoverers and colonists. Prof. Horsford found at and around the junction of Stony Brook with Charles river evidences of a great industry involving, among other things, a graded area some four acres in extent, paved with field boulders. At the base of the bluffs along Stony Brook there are ditches or canals extending far into the country and above the ditches are walls made of boulders from three to five feet high. The existence of these works has long been known, but their origin has never been satisfactorily interpreted. It is certain that they existed before the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620. It is equally certain that they are the handiwork of man. They are too extensive to have been produced by the French or English explorers previous [303] to 1620. They can scarcely be ascribed to the aborigines, for they differ widely from any works known to have been constructed by the natives of this country. The old Norse sagas tell us that the Norseman carried timber from Vinland to Greenland and Prof. Horsford suggests that the canals were filled with water at high tide and that logs were floated down to where their ships lay in the Charles river. He supposes that the walls above the canals were constructed to protect the canals from being filled with debris from the bluffs. When the immediate shores of the river had been cleared of wood the shores of the tributaries flowing into the river became the field of activity and maple blocks were sent floating down the stream; and where the streams were remote from the bases of the slopes on either side the sources of water were at hand. Canals, or nearly level troughs, were dug to transport the logs to the streams and ultimately to the Charles. Dams and ponds were necessary at the mouths of the streams to prevent the blocks from going down the Charles without a convoy and out to sea to be lost. There is an admirable canal, walled on one side, extending for a thousand feet along the western bank of Stony Brook in the woods above the Tiverton railroad crossing, between Walton and Weston. The Cheesecake Brook is another and Cold Spring Brook another, and there is an interesting dry canal near Murray Street, not far from Newtonville. It may be seen from the railroad cars on the right, a little to the east of Eddy Street, approaching Boston. Prof. Horsford found throughout the basin of the Charles numerous [304] canals, ditches, deltas, boom-dams, ponds, fish-ways, forts, dwellings, walls, terraces of theatre and amphitheatre, and he insisted that there was not a square mile drained into the Charles River that lacked an incontestable monument of the presence of the Norsemen. I have myself gone over the most of this ground in company with Prof. Horsford and listened to his enthusiastic interpretations of these strange remains. It may seem as an undeserved dignity to speak of these ditches as canals, but

they are so named in the old deeds in Weston, and if you look at them on the left of the highway, between Sibley's and Weston, with the stone wall on either side, you will not wonder that the word canal, as well as ditch, should have suggested itself. They are so called on the published town maps of Millis and Holliston. Prof. Horsford, as indicated, bought a tract of land at the junction of Stony Brook with Charles River, consecrating it to the memory of the Norsemen, and set up in Weston, at the mouth of Stony Brook, a magnificent tower. Over the tablet, set in the wall of the tower, is poised the Icelandic falcon about to alight with a new world in his talons. On the tablet is given the following inscription:

A. D. 1000, A. D. 1889.

NORUMBEGA.

City--Country--Fort--River.

Norumbega--Nor'mbega.

Indian utterance of Norbega, the Ancient Form of Norvega,  
Norway, to which the Region of  
Vinland was Subject.

[305]City.

At and near Watertown,  
Where Remain To-day  
Docks, Wharfs, Walls, Dams, Basin.

Country:

Extending from Rhode Island to the St. Lawrence.  
First Seen by Bjarni Herjulfson, 985 A. D.  
Landfall of Leif Erikson on Cape Codd, 1000 A. D.  
Norse Canals, Dams, Walls, Pavements.  
Forts, Terraced Places of Assembly, Remain To-day.

Fort:

At Base of Tower and Region About  
Was Occupied by the Breton French in the 15th, 16th and  
17th Centuries.

River:

The Charles,  
Discovered by Leif Erikson 1000 A. D.  
Explored by Thorwald, Leif's Brother, 1003 A. D.

Colonized by Thorfinn Karlsefni 1007 A. D.  
First Bishop Erik Gnutson 1121 A. D.  
Industries for 350 Years.  
Masur-wood (Burrs), Fish, Furs, Agriculture.  
Latest Norse Ship Returned to Iceland in 1347.

Prof. Horsford mentioned as considerations that led to the erection of the tower:

"1. It will commemorate the discovery of Vinland and Norumbega in the forty-third degree, and the identification of Norumbega with Norway, the home country to which this region was once subject by right of discovery and colonization.

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"2. It will invite criticism, and so sift out any errors of interpretation into which, sharing the usual fortune of the pioneer, I may have been led.

"3. It will encourage archæological investigation in a fascinating and almost untrodden field, and be certain to contribute in the results of research and exploration, both in the study and the field, to the historical treasure of the commonwealth.

"4. It will help by reason of its mere presence, and by virtue of the veneration with which the tower will in time come to be regarded, to, bring acquiescence in the fruit of investigation, and so allay the blind skepticism, amounting practically to inverted ambition, that would deprive Massachusetts of the glory of holding the Landfall of Leif Erikson, and at the same time the seat of the earliest colony of Europeans in America."

In the old Norse sagas (histories) in which the Norse voyages to America are described, it is stated that when Leif Erikson came to Vinland he first sailed up a river, that the river then widened into a lake, that he crossed this lake and then sailed up another river as far as his ship could float. Such a description might doubtless apply to various points on the northeast coast, but it certainly applies well to the Charles river.

In 1887, at a scientific gathering in Cambridge, Prof. Horsford announced that he had studied the saga of Erik the Red and that he interpreted the brief but clear statement therein to refer to Leif's sailing across the mouth of Cape Cod Bay opening out northeast to the sea from the Race to the Gurnet; his coasting westerly along [307] the Gurnet from Scituate Beach past the Cohasset Rocks to Nantasket, his entrance into Boston harbor, his running aground on an ebb-tide off the site of Long Wharf, his floating on the returning flood up into the reach or strait of Charles river, on to the expansion of the back bay, and later winding through the salt meadow and marshes up the Charles, beyond the bay to the south end of Symond's Hill at the so called Gerry's Landing in Cambridge, near which he built his large house, as indicated in the details given concerning Leif, Thorwald and Thorfin Karlsefne in the sagas. At the same time Prof. Horsford stated that if any remains of Leif's house in Vinland should ever be found they would be located between Symond's Hill, the ancient bluff extending eastward some hundred yards from the Cambridge City

Hospital, and the angle of the Cambridge City Cemetery, about a quarter of a mile to the south. The place where Leif landed would be, Horsford insisted, the first place going up the Charles, where, landing on an even keel, permitting a plank to be run out to the shore was possible. It was the spot determined for Gerry's Landing, the great point in the earlier days of the colony for receiving goods from the sea and transporting them on wagons to the interior. Mr. Horsford made careful investigations in this vicinity and discovered in the turf a ridge, the outlines of which correspond with the outlines of an Icelandic house in the saga time. The old Norse house had a fire place in the centre of the floor and the smoke escaped through an opening in the roof. Prof. Horsford was so sure that this characteristic of the [308] house near Gerry's Landing would be found that he announced it to the workmen, who of course showed the greatest incredulity. He told them that if they would dig a trench along the middle of the house they would uncover a fire place. The turf and blown sand were a foot thick. He indicated the spot where the hearth would be found. His prediction was verified. An area of about four feet in diameter, covered by boulders, was exposed. Some were more fine grained and compact, preserving their original shape, but pitted at the surface as if they had been exposed to prolonged heat. Others were cracked into several pieces. Others still, being originally fissile gneiss finely stratified sand and argillaceous material, were resolved into different fragments like slate. One of the blocks that had preserved its general form, but with all its corners rounded, was observed to be of a dull red as if covered with reddish brown rouge. Horsford said: "If this redness is due to peroxide of iron I shall find the interior of a greenish shade due to the presence of mineral combinations with protoxide of iron." A lapidary cut the stone into thin slices. Horsford says: "As I expected, in the interior where, though heated, it had been protected from the air, the color was of a dull bottle green. The outer surface where it had been heated and exposed to the air was reddish brown. Charcoal was found, as might have been expected, at the border of the hearth."

Mr. Horsford found on the south side of the outline a marked depression, as if there had been a door. If there were door posts they should have had something to stand [309] on. On digging down a foot or more on either side of the door-way a boulder of two-thirds of a bushel basket capacity was found. The outline of the house of logs might have been expected to rest on stone as a protection against the decay of the logs. Such stone foundations were found in probing the ground with an iron rod at a depth of about one foot and were at various points uncovered. The whole outline of the house is a regular parallelogram. Prof. Horsford had this interesting place enclosed and suitably marked.

On the last night of the year 1892, Eben Norton Horsford called his daughter Cornelia to talk with her about the traces of the house built on the banks of the Charles River, both by Thorfin Karlsefni and Snorre Thorbrandson, two Icelanders who came from Greenland in three ships with 151 men and seven women and their live stock, intending to establish a colony in Vinland, in the year 1007. Prof. Horsford asked his daughter, "What will you find in Thorfin's house if I find a fire place in Leif's house? And if I found foundations of



walls at Leif's house, what will you find to correspond with that at Thorfin's house?" Then he instructed her to buy the land herself, and in the spring, when the frost was out of the ground, to get an iron rod and strike it into the earth to find the fire place, and afterwards to find the foundation walls in the same way; because he wanted her to have the pleasure of making a discovery herself. The next day, January 1st, 1893, our dear old Prof. Horsford died suddenly in his library. Miss Cornelia Horsford afterwards got her mother's permission to finish [310] and edit her father's unpublished works, and during the long days and evenings, while the ground was still covered with snow, she read all the books about the ancient Norsemen and their customs to learn what she might happen to find when the time came in the spring for her to look for the remains of Thorfin's long house on the bank of the river. On the 19th of April, when the frost was out of the ground, she began her search for the remains of the long house of Thorfin's party. It is no easy matter to find the foundations of a house after they have been buried several hundred years, even when they can be traced by ridges of earth. For an hour, she says, she watched the earth thrown up, and probed the ground in vain. At noon she went for Mr. Scorgie, who had made the search at Leif's house under her father's direction, and asked him to show her how to find the foundations and fire place of this house. He soon found them for her. The ring of the iron rod against the stone as he struck on the north wall was distinct and sharp, and in the afternoon he had outlined with the rod two walls about sixty-four feet long, having first found the end wall at the south. She was troubled by the fact that she found two fire places, but in examining the Yuglinga saga of Snore Sturlason, Chap. 14, she found that large buildings sometimes had more than one fire place. The stones which showed the action of heat were neatly laid together, with a few clam shells and oyster shells near by. She did not carry the excavations any further because her father did not wish to have the ridges destroyed by which he discovered the site of the house. [311] Near by, and yet undisturbed, there are traces of other houses.

In 1892 I visited Prof. Horsford and he took me first to the junction of Stony Brook with Charles River, and showed me the magnificent monument he there had erected. He pointed out to me the four acres of solid pavement and showed me the long stretches of canals and stone walls. Afterwards he took me down to Gerry's Landing and he made me discover the site of Leif Erikson's house myself. I left him and went to where I could see a ridge in the form of a parallelogram in the sod, and walked slowly over its four sides, Prof. Horsford in the meantime clapping his hands. The stone from the fire place he subsequently had cut into thin slices, and one of these he sent me as a present on Christmas, 1892, only a week before his death. Prof. Horsford had not the slightest doubt that he had identified and explained satisfactorily the Norumbega of the French voyageurs. He had the fullest faith that Norumbega was a corruption of the ancient name Norvegr, that this name had been given to the aborigines by the Norsemen and that the aborigines had handed it down from generation to generation and had spoken it to the French voyageurs. He made the most careful investigations and found that no house had been built near Gerry's Landing since 1620. He therefore became absolutely convinced that the outlines which he described must be referred back to the house built in this country in the tenth and eleventh centuries by Leif Erikson and the other Norse explorers.

Prof. Horsford was very anxious [312] to convince me that he was right and my readers are doubtless anxious to know my opinion about the matter. I am sorry that I am not able to express a conviction on the subject. Horsford's discoveries are most startling, but they seem to prove too much. I am hospitably disposed to the basin of the Charles River as the site of Vinland and the operations of the Norse discoverers. All the descriptions in the sagas apply remarkably well to the Charles River with its surrounding country, and it is more than probable that Leif Erikson trod the ground now occupied by Harvard university. The remains pointed out by Horsford, both those near Weston and those near Gerry's Landing, deserve to be carefully studied, and it is possible that a thorough investigation will confirm many of Horsford's conclusions.

## Chapter II

### NORSE VOYAGES IN THE 10<sup>TH</sup> & FOLLOWING CENTURIES

IF we go back to the middle of the ninth century we find what is now Norway divided into thirty odd districts, called fylkes, and governed by kinglets, or jarls. These rulers were elected and obtained their positions by the grace of the people in convention assembled. But about this time there appeared in Norway a man named Harald Fairhair, who with his prime minister, Guthorm, succeeded in subjugating all the kinglets in Norway, and united the various fylkes into one kingdom. The [313] last battle was a naval engagement at Hafursfjord, near Stavanger, in July, 872. In this battle the last of the kinglets was conquered, and Harald became monarch of all Norway. His usurpation of power created great dissatisfaction and resulted in a large emigration to France, to the British Isles, to the Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetland Isles, to the Fares and particularly to Iceland. Iceland had been discovered in 860, and had been visited several times by Norsemen between that time and 874, in which year the settlement of Iceland began. The flower of the Norwegian people emigrated, and it was not long before Iceland had a population of more than 50,000 souls. In Iceland a republic was organized which flourished for four hundred years; and it was during the time of the republic that the grand old poetic and historic literature of Iceland was produced.

Here it is proper to add that the Norsemen were the discoverers of pelagic navigation. Let me here state with all the emphasis that I am able to compress into so many words, that the navigation of the ocean was discovered by the old Norse Vikings. Before them, the only navigation known was coast navigation. The Norsemen were excellent ship-builders and knew how to calculate time by the sun, moon and stars, and into every history of the world, and into every encyclopedia I would have the fact conspicuously stated that pelagic navigation was discovered by the Norsemen.

Iceland became the hinge upon which the door swings which opened America to Europe. In the voyages between Norway and Iceland--a distance of about 800 [314] miles--the sailors would occasionally be overtaken by cloudy and stormy weather and drift beyond Iceland, and so they could not help finding their way by accident to Greenland and other countries to the west and southwest of Iceland. And so it happened that in the year 876 a Norwegian mariner, by name Gunbjorn, reported that he had seen land far to the west of Iceland.

If the reader will now go with me to the southwestern part of Norway, about the middle of the tenth century, we shall find living there in a district called Jader a man called Erik (often spelled Eirik) the Red. He was called the "Red" on account of his red hair and red beard and ruddy complexion. It also appears that he had a somewhat fiery and combative disposition. He now and then quarrelled with his neighbours, and on one occasion he had the misfortune of becoming guilty of manslaughter. For this reason he decided to emigrate from Norway, and he removed with his family to the western part of Iceland. But while he left his neighbors and the dust and sky of Jader behind him, he carried his fiery nature with him and it was not long before he got into trouble with his new

neighbors in Iceland. He therefore decided to emigrate from Iceland also and to go in search of the land seen nearly a hundred years before by Gunbjorn far to the west of Iceland. He left Iceland with a few companions in 982 and found an extensive country far to the west of Iceland. He remained there making explorations for three years and decided to found a colony there. He was anxious to give the country a name that might be attractive to settlers, and in discussing this [315] question with his companions, they agreed on naming the country Greenland, reasoning that no name would be better suited to attract immigrants.

Greenland belongs entirely to the Western Hemisphere and is accordingly a part of America. The discovery of Greenland was in fact the discovery of America, and Erik the Red was the first European who ever boomed real estate on the Western Continent, and he boomed it successfully. He succeeded in founding in Greenland a colony which flourished for several hundred years. The Icelandic sagas contain elaborate accounts of this colony and give us the names of a number of the bishops who resided there.

Erik the Red returned to Iceland in 985, and in 986 he, with a considerable number of followers, emigrated to Greenland. Among those who emigrated with Erik the Red was one Herjulf Bardson. Herjulf Bardson had a son, by name Bjarne. Bjarne was a viking merchant. He had a custom of spending one year with his father in Iceland and the next year abroad, acquiring fee and fame, that is, wealth and reputation. In 986 he chanced to be absent on a viking expedition and, on returning to Iceland in the summer, he learned that his father had emigrated with Erik the Red to Greenland. Desiring to spend the next winter with his father, as was his custom, he asked his sailors whether they would go with him. They all said they would. "But we have none of us ever been in the Greenland sea," said Bjarne. "We mind not that," said his men, "we are willing to go wherever you will lead." And so Bjarne and his men at [316] once set sail from Iceland. They were overtaken by foggy and stormy weather and sailed on and on, not knowing whither they were sailing. The fog and storm lasted for several weeks, then the sky cleared, the sun shone again, and lo behold they could see land in the distance! They saw that they were much too far south. The land, which was hilly and well wooded, did not correspond to the descriptions which they had received of Greenland. It was getting late in the season, so they did not go ashore, but proceeded northward. On their journey northward they discovered two other countries, but as neither of them could be Greenland they did not land. They hastened on until they finally reached Greenland in safety and happened to land near the colony founded by Erik the Red. We have no time to go into details, but it is evident that the first land seen by Bjarne, Herjulf's son, must have been some part of New England; the second land was probably Nova Scotia, and the third Newfoundland. And thus Bjarne, in the year 986, was the first pale-faced man whose eyes looked upon the American continent.

Erik the Red was the chief of the colony in Greenland. His family consisted of three sons, Leif, Thorvald and Thorstein, all bright, stalwart and enterprising young men.

In the year 1000, the same year as that in which Christianity was adopted as the religion

of Iceland, Leif Erikson chanced to be in Norway. Norway had just been converted to Christianity and the ruler at this time was the famous King Olaf Trygvason. Leif Erikson [317] met the king, and the king became very fond of him. He persuaded Leif to accept the Christian religion and be baptised. Then King Olaf sent for Leif and told him that he had a double mission for him. "In the first place," said King Olaf, "I want you to go, and look up those lands which were seen by Bjarne and secure more definite information about them, and in the second place, I want you to go as a missionary to Greenland and preach the gospel of the White Christ to the colonists there."

Leif agreed to carry out the king's wishes. In the summer of the year 1000 he set sail for the far West. He decided to investigate the lands seen by Bjarne before going to Greenland. On his way west, he first reached the land which Bjarne reported he had seen, that is, Newfoundland. He anchored his ship off the coast, went ashore, and, exploring the land somewhat, found that it was hilly and extensively covered with large, flat stones. He decided to name the country after its most conspicuous peculiarities, and called it Helluland (land of flat stones). Then he proceeded towards the southwest and reached the second land seen by Bjarne (that is, Nova Scotia), which he also explored somewhat, and found that it was a heavily wooded country. On account of the large forests he called it Markland (timberland). Then he sailed on to the first country seen by Bjarne, that is, some part of New England, and here, the saga tells us, he first entered a bay and then a river, then the river widened into a lake, which he crossed, then he entered a river on the other side of the lake and sailed up this river as far as it was deep enough for his viking [318] ship. As the reader will see, this can be applied to the Boston Harbor, to the Charles River between Boston and Cambridgeport, to the Back Bay between Boston and Cambridge and to the Charles River up as far as Gerry's Landing, near which our Professor Horsford. claimed to have found the site of Leif Erikson's house and fireplace.

After having landed, Leif Erikson and his party, thirty-one in number, pulled the vessel ashore and at once went to work to build a house for the winter. The party was divided into two groups to explore the country in different directions on alternate days. On one evening, when the exploring party returned to the camp, one man was missing. This was a German, by name Tyrker, who, though a prisoner of war, was Leif Erikson's special favorite. Leif Erikson became very much alarmed and anxious. He feared that Tyrker might have been slain by natives or devoured by wild beasts. Therefore with his men Leif immediately set out in search of Tyrker. But they had not gone far from the camp, when they met their missing fellow mate in a very excited state of mind. The cause of his excitement was the fact that he had found ripe wild-grapes. He had his arms full of grapes, and was devouring the fruit with all his might, and when spoken to by Leif Erikson, he only answered in his native tongue, "Weintrauben! Weintrauben!! Weintrauben!!!" He was born in a country where the grape grew, and, having been absent from Germany for many years, the finding of grapes in this western world overwhelmed him with delight. The [319] sagas tell us that grapes were found in great abundance on every hand, and from this circumstance Leif gave the country the name of Vinland, and history at the same time obtained the interesting fact that a German accompanied these daring Argonauts of the Christian era.

The sagas give very full and interesting accounts of the various products of Vinland and of the natives or aborigines with whom our Norse explorers came in contact. This part of the subject is fully treated in preceding chapters of this volume. What I desire particularly to emphasize at this point is the fact that Leif Erikson was the first European and the first Christian who planted his feet on American soil and, as such, he deserves a conspicuous place in the history of our country. He represents the first chapter of civilized and Christian history of America.

In the spring Leif Erikson loaded his vessel with as much timber as it would carry and, in obedience to the instructions of King Olaf, proceeded to Greenland to preach the gospel of the Gallilean to Erik the Red's colony there. He was successful, and had the good fortune to convert the whole colony to the Christian religion, except the aged Erik the Red. The latter stubbornly refused to be persuaded. He declared that his faith in Odin and Thor, and particularly in his own might and main, had been sufficient for him through his long life, and he would not forsake the Gods of his childhood in his old age. And so Erik the Red died as he had lived, a heathen.

In the Greenland colony there was much talk about[320] Vinland the Good, and it was the general opinion that the country had been far too little explored. It was therefore agreed in the year 1002 that Leif's brother, Thorwald, should make an expedition to Vinland. He set out with a good crew of men and reached Vinland in safety, where he occupied the house built by Leif two years before. He came into conflicts with the natives, and in one of these he lost his life, an arrow from one of the aborigines piercing his heart. His comrades buried him in Vinland, and Thorwald's was the first Christian grave made in this Western World. His grave was marked by two crosses, one at the head and one at the foot. Then the little band of Norsemen, having lost their leader, returned to Greenland.

Two years later, 1005, it was decided that the youngest brother, Thorstein, should proceed to Vinland, partly for the purpose of bringing back the body of his brother Thorwald. Thorstein's wife was Gudrid, a noble, refined, intelligent and enterprising woman, and an ornament to her sex. Gudrid went with her husband on this expedition, but the party did not reach Vinland. The weather was unfavorable and the vessel drifted far to the north. Thorstein was taken sick and died, and the widow, Gudrid, took the vessel back to Erik's fjord in Greenland.

Leif Erikson and his sister-in-law, Gudrid, lived at the farm Brattahlid in Greenland, and if the reader now will go with me to that northern country in the year 1006 we will find that there had just arrived in the colony a distinguished and wealthy man from Norway. His [321] name was Thorfin Karlsefni. He visited frequently at Brattahlid, and with each visit his admiration of Gudrid increased. The spark of love soon grew into an uncontrollable flame and he asked the young widow to become his wife. The matter was referred to Leif Erikson, who had the disposal of his sister-in-law, and he at once consented, and accordingly the nuptials of Gudrid and Thorfin were celebrated in grand style during the Christian holidays of the year 1006. The honeymoon was spent in Greenland, and I fancy that when the sun's rays began to warm the atmosphere the

following spring that the young couple took many a walk on the sea shore, and I take it also that much of their conversation turned on Vinland, the Good, and the prospects offered for founding a settlement in that beautiful and fertile country. Gudrid was a bright and enterprising young woman and, while there is no record of the fact, I can imagine that she looked smiling into Thorfin's face and talked to him somewhat in this fashion: "I wonder that you, Thorfin, with all your wealth and with all your splendid men should choose to live in this Godforsaken country instead of seeking out the famous Vinland and planting a colony there. Just think what an agreeable change it would be for all of us! Thick and leafy woods instead of these willow bushes that are good for nothing except to save our cattle from starvation when the hay crop gives out. Longer summers and shorter and less cold winters instead of the barren wastes of this country. Surely, I think this land was woefully misnamed when Erik the Red called it Greenland." [322]

Of course Gudrid pleaded as only a woman can plead, and Thorfin was persuaded. He resolved to plant a colony in Vinland, and in the summer of 1007 he organized a party of one hundred and fifty-one men and seven women, who sailed in three ships from Greenland to Vinland. That Thorfin and Gudrid intended to make a permanent settlement in Vinland is also, evident from the fact that they took cattle and sheep with them. The party reached Vinland in safety, and remained there three years, but the frequent conflicts with the aborigines made their life a very precarious one, and they finally decided to, abandon the colony, and return to Greenland. Powder and firearms had not yet been invented, and the superior intelligence of the Norsemen was not sufficient to protect them against the swarms of natives that surrounded them and were as well armed as the Norsemen. It is, however, to be recorded that during their stay in Vinland, Thorfin and Gudrid got a son. They named him Snorre. He was born in the summer of 1008, and was the first white and the first Christian child who saw the light of day in America.

The sagas--that is to, say, the histories--written in Iceland, describing these voyages of the Norsemen, give very full accounts of the daily life in the Vinland colony, of the explorations, of the natives of America, of the various kinds of products of the soil, of the climate, etc., and it is interesting to read these first recorded descriptions of a land that has since become so prominent in the history of the world, and which is now so dear to all of us who call it our home. [323]

The sagas tell of various other voyages to Vinland, particularly of one in the year 1011. In 1121 it is stated, in various places in the sagas, that a bishop named Erik Upse went to find Vinland. It is nowhere stated whether he actually reached Vinland or returned and we are simply left to conjecture as to the purpose and result of his journey. All we know with certainty is that he "started for Vinland." However, it is by no means likely that the church would send a bishop to Vinland before a colony was planted there. We know now by the manuscript reports shown among the Vatican Exhibits at the World's Fair, 1904, that the Catholic See of Greenland extended its jurisdiction over all the new discoveries of Lief and Thorvald, and Karlsefni. It was common for priests to accompany voyages, but bishops took charge of the Church interests of colonies and, therefore, by the sending of bishop Erik Upse to Vinland it is reasonably certain that a colony had been planted there and was maintained for several years. This inevitable conclusion is fortified, if not

confirmed, by references contained in official reports made by the bishops of Greenland to the Church at Rome.

The last expedition mentioned in the sagas was in 1347, 145 years before the rediscovery by Columbus. In that year it is stated that a vessel came from Markland (Nova Scotia) to Iceland with a cargo of wood. But this, as the reader will see, carries us down to a memorable period in European history. It brings us to the breaking out of the terrible black plague, or black death. The ravages of the black plague were so enormous, they [324] so much decimated the population of all European countries that much time was required for recuperation. It took more than one hundred years for Europe to recover sufficiently to be able to engage in new enterprises either at home or abroad. We can form some conception of the character of the black death when we learn that it reduced the population of Norway alone from 2,000,000 to 300,000. The black death has been handed down in tradition from generation to generation, even to the present time. The Norwegian peasants speak of it as an old hag marching through the country with a rake in one hand and a broom in the other. If she came to a valley in Norway where there were a few good people she used the rake and the virtuous would escape between the fingers of the rake. But when she found a valley where all the people were wicked she used the broom and did not leave a soul to tell the tale of what had happened. Some of the remote valleys thus swept clean have been rediscovered within the last century. The black death also visited Iceland and Greenland and committed similar depredations there. It is evident that this scourge left no surplus population for exploring and colonizing lands beyond the sea.

If the communication between the north of Europe and Greenland and Vinland could have been continued a hundred years longer, that is, until the middle of the fifteenth century, or until the countries had recuperated from the ravages of the black plague and until after the discovery of the compass and of powder and fire arms, then there is no doubt but that the Norse colonies would [325] have become permanent, and America would have become the scene of Norse settlements and Norse enterprises. The Norse language would have taken possession of this country from sea to sea and there is little doubt that his article of mine would have been written in the Norse tongue instead of in English. Meanwhile it is certain that Bjarne Herjulfson was the first European whose eyes beheld the American continent, that Leif Erikson was the first pale-faced man whose feet trod on American soil, that his brother Thorvald was the first Christian buried beneath our sod, that Thorfin Karlsefni was the first to attempt the planting of a colony on our shores, that the noble and intelligent Gudrid was the first white woman to honor America with her presence, and that Thorfin's and Gudrid's son Snorre was the first white child born in America.

In this connection it is interesting to note the fact that the first white man to visit the extreme western part of America was the Dane, Vitus Bering, after whom Bering Strait bears its name. Bering discovered the extreme western coast of this country in 1728. The Norwegian, Leif Erikson, stands at the rising, and the Dane, Vitus Bering, at the setting sun, and clasp the great American continent in their strong Scandinavian arms. The Swedes, too, should be remembered, for when this country was in the throes of the great



civil war, did not Sweden give us her great son, John Ericsson, who invented for us the Monitor?

"Truth crushed to earth will rise again." The facts of these Norse voyages have long lain darkened and hid [326] in old neglected libraries, and so truth may long lie unknown under the dust and rubbish of the ages; but it is like a ray of light from a star in some far-off region of the universe. After thousands of years that ray reaches some other heavenly body and gives it light.

## Chapter III

### COLUMBUS AND THE NORSEMEN

There is no direct evidence on this subject, that is to say, there is no statement either by Columbus or by any one of his contemporaries that he possessed any knowledge of Norse voyages to, the Western continent. But there is a considerable amount of indirect or circumstantial evidence, and it is believed that circumstantial evidence, when a sufficient number of strong links are found, is even more to be relied on than direct evidence. In weighing the circumstantial proofs to be presented I would request my reader not to judge these proofs singly, but rather united. One of the wires in the Brooklyn bridge would not carry a horse, but the thousands of wires twisted together form the strong cables that sustain the great bridge and all that immense traffic between New York and Brooklyn. Thus either one of the arguments which I propose to present, though the steel in it is of excellent quality, may not, when considered alone, be of sufficient strength; but when the various arguments are twisted together by the reader I trust they [327] will constitute for him a cable of evidence strong enough to unite the voyages of Columbus with those of the Norsemen.

1. It will be remembered that in the year 1007 Thorfin Karlsefni and his gifted wife, Gudrid, undertook to colonize Vinland; that the emigrants from Greenland, more than 150 in number, remained in Vinland for three years, but that on account of frequent conflicts with the aborigines, making life a very precarious one, the colonists decided to return to Greenland. Some years after their return to Greenland Thorfin Karlsefni died, and then it is related in the sagas that his widow, Gudrid, in accordance with a well established custom in the North, made a pilgrimage to Rome. The sagas emphasize the fact that she was well received in that ancient city and greatly admired for her intelligence, courtesy and dignified manners. Now, does any one of my readers regard it as probable, or even possible, that Gudrid could spend a day, or a week, or a month in Rome and not tell how she had crossed the unexplored Western ocean, called the Sea of Darkness, and that she had spent no less than three years in a land washed by the western waves? Reports of Greenland, Helluland, Markland and Vinland may have come to Rome through other channels, but Gudrid brought personal evidence.

2. I stated in the preceding chapter that Bishop Erik Upse went to find Vinland in the year 1121. At this time the Church in the north of Europe, including Iceland, Greenland and the countries beyond Greenland, was under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Lund, in [328] Southern Sweden. Rome had been visited by Gudrid and had received information concerning Vinland from another important source, which I shall mention later on, and the Vatican paid much attention to geographical discoveries, and took pains to collect all possible information. Every new discovery meant an enlargement of Christendom--a new field for the preaching of the gospel. I therefore think it highly probable that Bishop Erik set out for Vinland in obedience to instructions from, the Vatican through the Archbishop of Lund.

3. If you will take your 'cyclopedia and look up the name Adam Bremensis, or Adam of Bremen, you will find that this Adam ranks way up as one of the most distinguished writers in Europe in the eleventh century. Adam was superintendent or master of schools

in Bremen and a devoted student of history. Space does not permit me to give an extensive account of Adam's life and works. What I desire especially to call attention to here is the fact that he was deeply interested in the ecclesiastical history of the north of Europe, where the Christian religion had recently been introduced, in Denmark by St. Ansgar, in Norway by Olaf Trygvason, in Greenland by Leif Erikson, and he decided to write a book on the propagation of Christianity in the North. In order to equip himself properly for this work he visited Denmark. There he met the Danish king, Svend Estridson, a nephew of Canute the Great. King Svend was himself a very intelligent and scholarly man. "He knew the events of the barbarians by heart, as if they were written." That is to say, he was thoroughly familiar with the history [329] of the Norsemen. Adam not only received from the king a gracious and hospitable reception, but also an abundance of valuable information, and the king took pains to introduce him to the best-informed men near his court. On his return to Bremen, Adam wrote his book on the propagation of Christianity in the North of Europe, one of the best works on that subject extant. The volume consists of four books, the first three being devoted to a description of the introduction of Christianity in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, etc. But Adam, fearing that his readers might not be well up in the geography of the countries discussed, devotes the fourth book to a geographical description of the various lands in the North of Europe. In this book he first describes Denmark, then Sweden, then Norway, then Iceland, and then Greenland, and he gives a very satisfactory account of the climate, products and population of these countries. When he has described Iceland, he says that beyond Iceland is Greenland, and when he has completed his description of Greenland, he says, listen! "The same king (Svend Estridson) also informed me about the discovery of one more region in that ocean--a region named Vinland, because the grapes grow there spontaneously, producing the best of wine; and com, too, without being sown, grows there in abundance. This is no fabulous conjecture, but is based on positive statements of the Danes (*hæc comperimus non fabulosa opinione, sed certa relatione Danorum*)." This book, written in Latin by Adam of Bremen, was published between the years 1072 and 1076. I say published. Of course, printing was [330] not yet invented, but the book was published in the same manner as other books before the invention of the art of printing. The book was read by intelligent people throughout Europe, it being scattered in numerous manuscripts, and we find evidence of its being discussed in the twelfth century by Helmold, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by Albert of Stade and others, and in the beginning of the sixteenth century by Albert Krantz. Several manuscripts are now in existence, and since 1876 a new one has been found in Leyden and another in Vienna. The fact is that Adam's book was never forgotten between the time of its first publication and the introduction of printing. The biographers of Columbus inform us that he was deeply interested in geographical studies, that he searched with diligence every work within his reach, that in his study he was surrounded by the best historical and geographical works. Can the reader, therefore, for a moment doubt that one of the books read and studied by the distinguished Genoese navigator was this very book above described, and written by the great scholar, Adam of Bremen?

4. In my mind there is not a shadow of doubt that a copy of Adam of Bremen's work must have fallen into the hands of Christopher Columbus, and the reason for this conviction will appear in the next link in this remarkable chain of evidence. The life of Christopher

Columbus was written by his own son, Ferdinand, in a volume published in 1521, a book easily found in every well-stocked library. From this book we know positively that while the design of attempting the discovery [331] in the West was maturing in his mind, Columbus made a voyage to the North of Europe and visited Iceland. This was in February, 1477, and in his conversation in Iceland with the Bishop, and other learned men there, he must have been informed of the extraordinary fact that their countrymen had discovered Greenland, Helluland, Markland, and Vinland, beyond the western ocean, and that Vinland seemed to extend southward indefinitely. This was a circumstance not likely to rest quietly in the active and speculative mind of the great navigator. My readers will observe that when Columbus was in Iceland, in the year 1477, fifteen years before he rediscovered America, only 130 years had elapsed since the last Norse expedition to Vinland. There were undoubtedly people still living whose grandfathers had crossed the Atlantic, and it would be altogether unreasonable to suppose that he who was constantly talking about geography and navigation could possibly visit Iceland and hear nothing about the land in the West. In the volume by Ferdinand Columbus is quoted a letter received by Ferdinand, the son, from Christopher, the father, narrating that in February, 1477, he had sailed from Bristol, in England, to Iceland. In it he gives his son considerable information in regard to the extent, climate, tides, etc., of Iceland. But Ferdinand does not quote the whole letter. He ends the quotation by "etc." The "etc." may have related to private matters between father and son, and hence of no interest to the public, but the reader will admit the possibility of its containing information in regard to Norse voyages that the son did not think best to publish. [332]

5. If you will study the life of Columbus, you will find that he persistently maintained a firm conviction that there was land in the West. When, at the Rabida convent, he was forced to give the reasons for his conviction, he stated that he based this conviction, first, on the nature of things; second, on the reports of navigators; and third, on the authority of learned writers. The nature of things doubtless has reference to the rotundity of the earth. The reports of navigators may refer to information scattered throughout Europe concerning the Norse voyages, but more particularly to what Columbus gathered in conversation with people in Iceland. The authority of learned writers would seem to point directly to the work of Adam and Bremen, above described.

Columbus stated before he left Spain that he expected to find land soon after sailing about 700 leagues, hence he knew the breadth of the ocean, and must have had a pretty definite knowledge of the situation of Vinland. His biographers say that he underestimated the size of the earth, and hence guessed accurately the breadth of the ocean. May I ask, is it not equally logical when I say he knew the breadth of the ocean, and hence he underestimated the circumference of the earth? This reasoning will be plain when we consider that the Norsemen furnished no knowledge of the existence of the great Pacific ocean, and hence it was reasonable for Columbus to assume that the Vinland visited by the Norsemen was some part of Eastern Asia. The whole history of the rediscovery by Columbus proves that he must have possessed previous knowledge of America, and it [333] makes Columbus a greater man, in my estimation, that he formed his opinion in regard to land in the West by a chain of logical deductions based upon thorough study and research. It is to the credit of Columbus, I say, that he investigated the

nature of things; that he paid the closest attention to all reports of navigators, and that he diligently searched the learned writers, including Adam of Bremen. The fact that he was a great genius enabled him to, gather up all those scattered gleams of knowledge that fell without effect upon ordinary minds. With all the above means of knowledge at his command, we can understand how the theory in regard to land in the West was fixed in the mind of Columbus with singular firmness. We can understand how he never spoke in doubt or hesitation, but with as much certainty as if his eyes had already beheld the promised land. It would be absurd for him to hold such firm conviction on merely presumptive evidence, and such a view of Columbus can not be maintained without great damage to him. I hold that I am vindicating the great name of the Genoese navigator by insisting that he based his certainty upon equally certain facts, which he possessed the ability and patience to study out, and the keenness of intellect to put together, and this view gives historical importance to the discovery of America by the Norsemen. Care should always be taken to vindicate great names from accident. The life of Columbus furnishes us an example of what human genius and laudable enterprise can accomplish.

A farmer on the prairies of South Dakota needs water for his cattle. He proceeds to dig a well. When he has [334] penetrated seventy-five or a hundred feet into the earth, his pick and shovel come in contact with brick and mortar. He calls the attention of a physician, a clergyman and a lawyer in his neighborhood to this fact. Extensive excavations are undertaken, and lo and behold! an ancient city of the size of Chicago is exhumed. The farmer stumbled on this discovery. It was a mere accident. There was a man in America who was anxious to find the location of ancient Troy. He visited every library in Christendom, examined every volume and manuscript that contained any reference to Troy. Having gathered all the light furnished by the libraries, he said to himself, not unlike our dear Horsford, "If I now search in that particular locality in Asia Minor, I shall find the remains of ancient Troy." This was Henry Schlieman. Guided by all the light supplied to his intelligence, by all the libraries in Christendom, he proceeded to a certain locality in Asia Minor, and lo, and behold! he found in his excavations the remains of the famous Troy. The Columbus in whom you have been believing is like my South Dakota farmer. He stumbles upon America by mere chance and accident, but the Columbus whom I preach unto you with all the ardor and sincerity of my nature is like our Henry Schlieman. He rediscovered America after a systematic study of every avenue of information; and the visit of Gudrid to Rome, the sending of Erik Upse as a bishop to Vinland, the perusal of Adam of Bremen's book, and his own remarkable journey to Iceland in 1477 gave him a torch that lighted his pathway across the Sea of Darkness. [335]

Further investigations, particularly in the great Vatican library in Rome, has brought forth more evidence. Indeed, there are a number of other points bearing on Columbus' sources of knowledge which, I have not discussed. I have contented myself with giving the five strongest links in the chain of circumstantial evidence, and by these I hope to have made some converts among my readers. And while the knowledge of the discovery by the Norsemen, and of Columbus' relation thereto, lay for a long time hidden or neglected beneath the dust of unstudied libraries, let us take this lesson, that truth will conquer and that honor will at length be given to whom honor is due.

On my suggestion the Norsemen in America have adopted a Leif Erikson or Grape Festival, to be celebrated on the first Wednesday of October in each year. It is a festival to commemorate the first landing of white men upon our shores. It is a festival to commemorate the first chapter of Christian and civilized history in America. As Leif Erikson and his followers found grapes in abundance and called the country Vinland, so grapes are to be the chief emblem at these festivals. The tables are to be decorated with grape leaves and the guests are to feast on grapes. Many of these festivals have already been celebrated during the past seven years.

Let us remember Erik the Red, who founded a settlement in Greenland. Let us remember Bjarne Herjulfson, the first white man whose eyes beheld any part of the American continent. Let us remember Leif Erikson, the first white man and the first Christian who planted [336] his feet on American soil. Let us remember Thorwald Erikson, the first Christian buried beneath American sod. Let us remember Thorfin Karlsefni, the first white man who attempted to colonize America. Let us remember his wife Gudrid, the first white and Christian woman to visit our shores. And let us not forget her little son Snorre, the first white child to see the light of day on this continent. Let us recognize the Norsemen in their true capacity as navigators and discoverers, and as the first people to venture out upon the boundless ocean in ships. The Norsemen were the discoverers of pelagic navigation. It is my firm conviction that the more you study the history of the Norse voyages, the history of Columbus, and of the centuries between Leif Erikson and Columbus, the more you will become convinced that Columbus possessed knowledge of the Norse voyages. It certainly was the Norsemen who taught him pelagic navigation. When you rear a monument to Columbus, make the pedestal large enough to supply room for a description of his Norse forerunners. This will give the monument of Columbus a higher and more conspicuous position.

In the next chapter I shall attempt to show that America was visited by the Irish in the tenth and the eleventh centuries. I there propose to show that the subject of discovering in America can not be treated exhaustively without bringing back to the mind fond recollections of the Emerald Isle, which was at one time the school of Western Europe.

## **Chapter IV**

### **DISCOVERY OF AMERICA BY THE IRISH**

In the preceding chapter I intimated that the Irish have some claim to the honor of having discovered America before Columbus. It is a large subject, and all I am able to, do at this time is to give the particular facts and traditions, and some hints in regard to their proper interpretation. The name of St. Brendan (or Brandan, as it is sometimes written) is well known, at least it may be found in the larger cyclopedias. He was an Irish monk, famous for his voyages upon the sea to strange lands. The traditions handed down to us from the Middle Ages contain many legends in regard to him. He belongs to the sixth century after Christ, and hence to an age where fact and fiction are strangely mingled. His death is said to have occurred A. D. 577. Report has it that he went on a nine years' voyage, and visited unknown lands. These lands are described in the work "De Fortunatis Insulis," published in the eleventh century, in the Latin language, and translated into French about the year 1120. Versions of his voyages appeared also in German, English and Dutch. Popular tradition has identified the Fortunate Islands of St. Brendan with America, and given this Irish saint the credit of discovering the western continent.

According to one legend, St. Brendan, conducted by [338] an angel, descended to the lower world, where he witnessed the torments of the Devil and of the damned, and subsequently he came to, the Fortunate Islands, and finally he visited Paradise. At the end of the nine years he returned to Ireland, and gave an account of his adventures. The less superstitious interpreted St. Brendan's voyages as referring to existing countries, and I now hasten to declare it here as a fact that the reports concerning St. Brendan constituted one of the causes which led the Spanish and Portuguese to undertake voyages of discovery in the western ocean. Thus St. Brendan is one of the links in that chain of influences operating on the mind of the great Genoese navigator.

There is evolution in history, as well as in other things. The voyages of the Phœnicians and of the Greek Pytheas were germs that budded in the explorations of the Irish and of the Welsh, blossomed in the expeditions of the Norsemen, and culminated and bore fruit in the discovery of America by Columbus. The Phœnicians and Columbus are the two ends of the long chain of events in the opening of the new world to civilization. Columbus was a scholar, who studied industriously all books and manuscripts that contained any information about voyages and discoveries. His searching mind sought out the writings of Adam of Bremen and the works relating to St. Brendan. It is in this wise that we are able to explain the firm conviction that Columbus invariably expressed in his reference to land in the west. In that way we are able to account for the absolute certainty and singular firmness with which he talked of land across the [339] ocean, and thus, too, we can account for his accurate knowledge of the breadth of the ocean.

It is now my privilege to call the attention of my readers once more to the Icelandic sagas, and show from them corroborations of the above theory concerning the discovery of America by the Irish. There was a powerful chieftain in Iceland, by name Are Marson,

and the sagas tell us that in the year 983, that is, three years before Vinland was seen by Bjarne Herjulfson, he was driven to Great Ireland by storms, and was there baptized. The first author of this account was his contemporary, Rafn, surnamed the Limerick Trader, he having long resided in Limerick, Ireland. The illustrious Icelandic sagaman, Are the Wise, descendant in the fourth degree from Are Marson, states on this subject that his uncle, Thorkel Gellerson (whose testimony he on another occasion declares to be worthy of all credit), had been informed by Icelanders, who had their information from Thorfin Sigurdson, Earl of Orkney, that Are Marson had been recognized in Great Ireland, and could not get away from there, but was held there in great respect. This statement, therefore, shows that in those times (about the year 983) there was an occasional intercourse between the western part of Europe, that is to, say, the Orkneys and Ireland, and the Great Ireland or Whitemen's Land of America. The sagas from which we get our information about Leif Erikson expressly state that Great Ireland lies to the west in the sea, near Vinland the Good, six days' sail west from Ireland. Doubtless; the "VI" has arisen through some mistake or carelessness [340] of the transcriber of the original manuscript, which is now lost, and was erroneously written for XX, or XI, or perhaps XVI, which would correspond with the distance. Such a mistake might easily have been caused by a blot or defect in the manuscript.

It must have been in this same Great Ireland that Bjorn Asbrandson, surnamed the Champion of Breidavik, spent the latter part of his life. He had been adopted into the celebrated band of Jormsborg warriors, under Palnatoke. His relations with Thurid of Froda, in Iceland, a sister of the powerful official Snorre, drew upon him the enmity and persecution of the latter, in consequence of which he found himself obliged to quit Iceland forever, and in 999 he set sail with a northeast wind.

And now comes the most interesting part of this story. Gudleif Gudlaugson, the ancestor of the celebrated historian, Snorre Sturlason, had made a trading voyage to Dublin, in Ireland, but when he left that place again, with the intention of sailing around Ireland and returning to Iceland, he met with long-continued northeasterly winds, which drove him far to the southwest in the ocean, and late in the summer he and his company came at last to an extensive country, but they knew not what land it was. They went on shore, whereupon a crowd of the natives, several hundred in number, came against them and laid hands on them and bound them. They did not know to what race these people belonged, but it seemed to them that their language resembled Irish. The natives now took counsel whether they should kill [341] the strangers or make slaves of them. While they were deliberating, a large company approached, displaying a banner, close to which rode a man of distinguished appearance, who was far advanced in years and had gray hair. The matter under deliberation was referred to his decision, when to their astonishment it was discovered that he was none other than the above named Bjorn Asbrandson. He caused Gudleif to be brought before him, and addressing him in Icelandic, asked him whence he came. On Gudleif's reply that he was an Icelander, Bjorn made many inquiries about his acquaintances in Iceland, and particularly about his beloved Thurid of Froda and her son, Kjartan, supposed to be his own son, and who at that time was the proprietor of the estate of Froda. In the meantime, the natives becoming impatient and demanding a decision, Bjorn selected twelve of his company as counselors,



and took them aside with him, and some time afterward he went toward Gudleif and his companions, and told them that the natives had left the matter to his decision. He thereupon gave them their liberty, and advised them, although the summer was then far advanced, to depart immediately, because the natives were not to be depended upon and were difficult to deal with, and, moreover, conceived that an infringement on their laws had been committed to their disadvantage. He gave them a gold ring for Thurid and a sword for Kjartan, and told them to charge his friends and relations not to come over to him, as he had now become old and might daily expect that old age would get the better of him; that the country was large, having [342] but few harbors, and that strangers must everywhere expect a hostile reception. Gudleif and his company accordingly set sail again, and found their way back to Dublin, where they spent the winter; but the next summer they repaired to Iceland and delivered the presents, and everybody was convinced that it was really Bjorn Asbrandson, the Champion of Breidavik, that they had met with in this far-off country.

The date of Gudleif's voyage is the year 1029, and my readers may easily find the account in chapter 64 of the Eyrbyggja Saga. The portion of America here referred to is supposed to be situated south of the Chesapeake Bay, and includes North and South Carolina, Georgia and East Florida. In the saga of Thorfin Karlsefni, chapter 13, it is distinctly called "Irland-it-Milka;" that is, Great Ireland. The presumption is that the name Great Ireland arose from the fact that the inhabitants seemed to Gudlaugson's party to speak Irish; that the country presumably had been colonized by the Irish long before Gudlaugson's visit, and that they, coming from their own green island to a vast continent possessing many of the fertile qualities of their own native soil, found such an appellation natural and appropriate. I see nothing improbable in this conclusion; for the Irish, who visited and inhabited Iceland toward the close of the eighth century, to accomplish which they had to traverse a stormy ocean to the extent of eight hundred miles; who as early as 725 were found upon the Fareys (voyages between Ireland and Iceland in the tenth century were of ordinary occurrence)--a people so familiar[343]with the sea were certainly capable of making a voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. The geography of the western world, according to the old Norsemen, consisted of (1) Helluland (Newfoundland), (2) Markland (Nova Scotia), (3) Vinland (Massachusetts or some part of New England), and then (4) stretching far to the south of Vinland lay Whitemen's Land or Great Ireland.