THE STORY OF NORTH AMERICAN DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION

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The Story of North American Discovery and Exploration

Biographies, Historical Documents, Journals & Letters of the Greatest Explorers of North America

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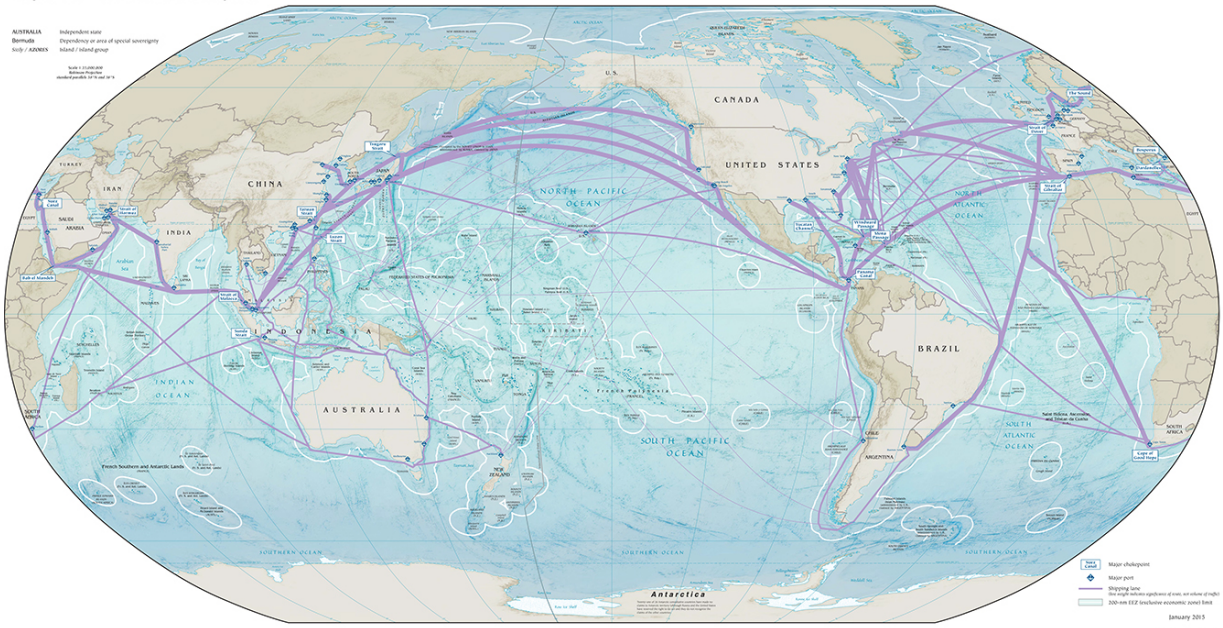

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Eric the Red and the Northmen

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Introduction

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The important documents from Norse sources that may be classed as “Original Narratives of Early American History” are the Icelandic sagas (prose narratives) that tell of the voyages of Northmen to Vinland. There are two sagas that deal mainly with these voyages, while in other Icelandic sagas and annals there are a number of references to Vinland and adjacent regions. These two sagas are the “Saga of Eric the Red” and another, which, for the lack of a better name, we may call the “Vinland History of the Flat Island Book,” but which might well bear the same name as the other. This last history is composed of two disjointed accounts found in a fine vellum manuscript known as the Flat Island Book (Flateyjar-bok), so-called because it was long owned by a family that lived on Flat Island in Broad Firth, on the northwestern coast of Iceland. Bishop Brynjolf, an enthusiastic collector, got possession of this vellum, “the most extensive and most perfect of Icelandic manuscripts,” and sent it, in 1662, with other vellums, as a gift to King Frederick III. of Denmark, where it still is one of the great treasures of the Royal Library.

On account of the beauty of the Flat Island vellum, and the number of sagas that it contained (when printed it made 1700 octavo pages), it early attracted the attention of Old Norse collectors and scholars, and hence the narrative relating to Vinland that it contained came to be better known than the vellum called Hauk’s Book, containing the “Saga of Eric the Red,” and was the only account of Vinland that received any particular attention from the scholars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries The Flat Island Book narrative was also given first place in Rafn’s *Antiquitates Americanæ* (Copenhagen, 1837). This

ponderous volume contained all the original sources, but it has given rise to much needless controversy on the Norse voyages, for many of the author's conclusions were soon found to be untenable. He failed to winnow the sound historical material from that which was unsubstantiated or improbable. And so far as the original sources are concerned, it was particularly unfortunate that he followed in the footsteps of seventeenth and eighteenth century scholars and gave precedence to the Flat Island Book narrative. In various important respects this saga does not agree with the account given in the "Saga of Eric the Red," which modern scholarship has pronounced the better and more reliable version, for reasons that we shall consider later.

The Flat Island Book consists of transcripts of various sagas made by the Icelandic priests Jon Thordsson and Magnus Thorhallsson. Very little of their lives is known, but there is evidence to show that the most important portion of the copying was completed about 1380. There is, however, no information concerning the original from which the transcripts were made. From internal evidence, however, Dr. Storm of the University of Christiania thinks that this original account was a late production, possibly of the fourteenth century.[1] It is, moreover, evident that this original account was quite different from the one from which the existing "Saga of Eric the Red" was made, so that we have two distinct accounts of the same set of events, both separately derived from oral tradition, a fact which, on account of the lack of harmony in details, has been the source of much confusion, but which nevertheless gives strong testimony concerning the verity of the Vinland tradition in its general outlines.

The saga which has best stood the test of modern criticism, namely the "Saga of Eric the Red," has beyond this fact the additional advantage of having come down to us in two different vellums. The one is found in Hauk's Book,

No. 544 of the Arne-Magnæan Collection in Copenhagen, and the other is in No. 557 of the same collection. These two narratives (in vellums 544 and 557) tell the same story. They are so closely allied that the translation which appears in this volume has been made from a collation of both texts, that of Hauk's Book (544) having been more closely followed.[2] The Hauk's Book text is clearly legible; No. 557 is not in such good condition.

Many facts in the life of Hauk Erlendsson, who with the assistance of two secretaries made Hauk's Book, are known. He was in 1294 made a "lawman" in Iceland, and died in Norway in 1334. There are reasons for believing that the vellum bearing his name was written a number of years before his death, probably during the period 1310-1320. Hauk was particularly interested in the "Saga of Eric the Red," as he was descended from Thorfinn Karlsefni, the principal character of the saga, a fact that perhaps lends a certain authority to this version as against that of the Flat Island Book. Hauk brings the genealogical data of the saga down to his own time, which is not done in No. 557, one fact among others which shows that 557 is not a copy of 544.

The early history of AM. 557 is not known. The orthography and hand indicate that it was made later than Hauk's Book, probably in the early part of the fifteenth century. Vigfusson considered it a better text than the Hauk's Book version, though rougher and less carefully written.[3] Other critics (Jonsson and Gering) consider 544 the safer text.

In regard to the date of composition of the archetype, it may be remarked that both 544 and 557 speak of Bishop Brand "the Elder," which presupposes a knowledge of the second Bishop Brand, whose accession occurred in 1263. Before this date, therefore, the originals used in making 544 and 557 could not have been written. But this mention of Bishop Brand "the Elder" does not, we think, give an adequate basis for fixing the date of the *composition* of the

saga, as Dr. Storm believes, who places it somewhere between 1263 and 1300, with an inclination toward the earlier date. Dr. Finnur Jonsson,[4] who accepts Dr. Storm's opinion in other respects, says on this point: "The classic form of the saga and its vivid and excellent tradition surely carry it back to about 1200.... To assume that the saga was first written down about 1270 or after, I consider to be almost an impossibility." Nor does this conservative opinion by Dr. Jonsson preclude the possibility, or even probability, that written accounts of the Vinland voyages existed before this date. John Fiske's[5] well-considered opinion of this same saga (544 and 557) has weight: "Its general accuracy in the statement and grouping of so many remote details is proof that its statements were controlled by an exceedingly strong and steady tradition, — altogether too strong and steady, in my opinion, to have been maintained simply by word of mouth." And Vigfusson,[6] in speaking of the sagas in general, says: "We believe that when once the first saga was written down, the others were in quick succession committed to parchment, some still keeping their original form through a succession of copies, others changed. The saga time was short and transitory, as has been the case with the highest literary periods of every nation, whether we look at the age of Pericles in Athens, or of our own Elizabeth in England, and that which was not written down quickly, in due time, was lost and forgotten forever."

The absence of contemporary record has caused some American historians to view the narratives of the Vinland voyages as ordinary hearsay. But it is important to remember that before the age of writing in Iceland there was a saga-telling age, a most remarkable period of intellectual activity, by means of which the deeds and events of the seething life of the heroic age were carried over into the age of writing.[7] The general trustworthiness of this saga-telling period has been attested in numerous ways from foreign records. Thus Snorri Sturlason's "The Sagas of

the Kings of Norway," one of the great history books of the world, written in Iceland in the thirteenth century, was based primarily on early tradition, brought over the sea to Iceland. Yet the exactness of its descriptions and the reliability of its statements have been verified in countless cases by modern Norwegian historians.[8]

With reference to the Vinland voyages, there is proof of an unusually strong tradition in the fact that it has come down from two sources, the only case of such a phenomenon among the Icelandic sagas proper. It does not invalidate the general truth of the tradition that these two sources clash in various matters. These disagreements are not so serious but that fair-minded American scholars have found it "easy to believe that the narratives contained in the sagas are true in their general outlines and important features." It lies within the province of Old Norse scholarship to determine which of the two Vinland sagas has the better literary and historical antecedents. After this point has been established, the truthfulness and credibility of the selected narrative in its details must be maintained on the internal evidence in conjunction with the geographical and other data of early America. And here American scholarship may legitimately speak.

These sagas have in recent years been subjected, especially by Dr. Gustav Storm of Christiania,[9] to most searching textual and historical criticism, and the result has been that the simpler narrative of Hauk's Book and AM. 557 is pronounced the more reliable account.[10] In respect to literary quality, it has the characteristics of the Icelandic sagas proper, as distinguished from the later sagas by well-known literary men like Snorri. Where it grazes facts of Northern history it is equally strong. Thus, there is serious question as to the first sighting of land by Biarni Herjulfson, who is mentioned only in the Flat Island narrative, and nowhere else in the rich genealogical literature of Iceland, although his alleged father was an important man, of whom

there are reliable accounts. On the other hand, the record of the “Saga of Eric the Red,” giving the priority of discovery to Leif Ericson, can be collaterally confirmed.[11] The whole account of Biarni seems suspicious, and the main facts, viewed with reference to Leif’s discovery, run counter to Northern chronology and history. There are, however, two incidental touches in the Flat Island Book narrative, which are absent from the other saga, namely, the observation concerning the length of the day in Vinland, and the reference to finding “three skin-canoes, with three men under each.” The improbabilities of the Flat Island Book saga are easily detected, if one uses as a guide the simpler narrative of the “Saga of Eric the Red,” the only doubtful part of which is the “uniped” episode, a touch of mediaeval superstition so palpable as not to be deceptive.

Aside from such things as picking grapes in the spring, sipping sweet dew from the grass, and the presence of an apparition, the Flat Island Book account, when read by itself, with no attempt to make it harmonize with the statements of the “Saga of Eric the Red” or other facts of Scandinavian history, is a sufficiently straightforward narrative. The difficulty begins when it is placed in juxtaposition to these facts and statements. It should not be and need not be discarded, but in giving an account of the Vinland voyages it must be used with circumspection. From an historical standpoint it must occupy a subordinate place. If Rafn in his *Antiquitates Americanæ* had given emphatic precedence to the saga as found in Hauk’s Book and AM. 557, had left to American scholars the Dighton Rock and the Newport Tower, and had not been so confident in the matter of identifying the exact localities that the explorers visited, he might have carried conviction, instead of bringing confusion, to American scholars.

The general results of the work of the Norwegian scholar Dr. Storm, together with a unique presentation of the original narratives, are accessible in *The Finding of Wineland*

(London, 1890 and 1895), by an American scholar, the late Arthur Middleton Reeves. This work contains a lucid account of the important investigations on the subject, photographs of all the vellum pages that give the various narratives, a printed text accompanying these, page by page and line by line, and also translations into English. There is one phase of the subject that this work does not discuss: the identifications of the regions visited by the Northmen. Dr. Storm, however, has gone into this subject, and is convinced that Helluland, Markland, and Vinland of the sagas, are Labrador, Newfoundland, and Nova Scotia.[12] The sailing directions in the "Saga of Eric the Red" are given with surprising detail. These, with other observations, seem to fit Nova Scotia remarkably well. Only one thing appears to speak against Storm's view, and that is the *abundance* of grapes to which the Flat Island Book account testifies. But coupled with this testimony are statements (to say nothing of the unreliability of this saga in other respects) that indicate that the Icelandic narrators had come to believe that grapes were gathered in the spring, thus invalidating the testimony as to abundance.

Whether the savages that the sagas describe were Indians or Eskimos is a question of some interest. John Fiske[13] believes that the explorers came in contact with American Indians; Vigfusson, on the other hand, believes that the sagas describe Eskimos. Here, however, the American has the better right to an opinion.

On this point, it is of importance to call attention to the fact that the Norse colonists in Greenland found no natives there, only vestiges of them. They were at that time farther north in Greenland; the colonists came in contact with them much later, — too late to admit of descriptions of them in any of the classical Icelandic sagas, in which the Greenland colonists play no inconspicuous part. Ari, the great authority on early Norse history, speaking of the Greenland colonists, says in his *Libellus Islandorum*:[14] "They found there men's

habitations both east and west in the land [*i.e.*, in both the Eastern and Western settlements] both broken cayaks and stone-smithery, whereby it may be seen that the same kind of folk had been there as they which inhabited Vinland, and whom the men of Greenland [*i.e.*, the explorers] called Skrellings."

A sort of negative corroboration of this is offered by a work of high rank, the famous *Speculum Regale*, written in Old Norse in Norway in the middle of the thirteenth century. It contains much trustworthy information on Greenland; it tells, "with bald common sense," of such characteristic things as glaciers and northern lights, discusses the question as to whether Greenland is an island or a peninsula, tells of exports and imports, the climate, the means of subsistence, and especially the fauna, *but not one word concerning any natives*. Moreover Ivar Bardsen's account of Greenland, which is entirely trustworthy, gives a distinct impression that the colonists did not come into conflict with the Eskimos until the fourteenth century.

There is consequently no valid reason for doubting that the savages described in the sagas were natives of Vinland and Markland. But whether it can ever be satisfactorily demonstrated that the Norse explorers came in contact with Algonquin, Micmac, or Beothuk Indians, and just where they landed, are not matters of essential importance. The incontrovertible facts of the various Norse expeditions are that Leif Ericson and Thorfinn Karlsefni are as surely historical characters as Christopher Columbus, that they visited, in the early part of the eleventh century, some part of North America where the grape grew, and that in that region the colonists found savages, whose hostility upset their plans of permanent settlement.

According to the usually accepted chronology, Leif's voyage from Norway to Greenland (during which voyage he found Vinland) was made in the year 1000, and Karlsefni's attempt at colonization within the decade following. On the

basis of genealogical records (so often treacherous) some doubt has recently been cast on this chronology by Vigfusson, in *Origines Islandicae* (1905). Vigfusson died in 1889, sixteen years before the publication of this work. He had no opportunity to consider the investigations of Dr. Storm, who accepts without question the first decade of the eleventh century for the Vinland voyages. Nor do Storm's evidences and arguments on this point appear in the work as published. Therefore we are obliged to say of Vigfusson's observations on the chronology of the Vinland voyages, that they stand as question-marks which call for confirmation.

We are surprised, moreover, to find that *Origines Islandicae* prints the Flat Island Book story first, apparently on account of the belief that this story contains the "truer account of the first sighting of the American continent" by Biarni Herjulfson.[15] It is impossible to believe that this would have been done, if the editors (Vigfusson and Powell) had known the results of Dr. Storm's work, which is not mentioned. There is, furthermore, no attempt in the *Origines Islandicae* to refute or explain away an opinion on AM. 557 expressed by the same authorities, in 1879,[16] to the effect that "it is free from grave errors of fact which disfigure the latter [the Flat Island Book saga]." We are almost forced to the conclusion that a hand less cunning than Vigfusson's has had to do with the unfinished section of the work.

In regard to the extract from Adam of Bremen, which we print, it should be observed that its only importance lies in the fact that it corroborates the Icelandic tradition of a land called Vinland, where there were grapes and "unsown grain," and thus serves to strengthen faith in the trustworthiness of the saga narrative. The annals and papal letters that follow need no further discussion, we think, than that contained in the annotations.

Besides the texts in Icelandic, already described, by Rafn, Reeves, Vigfusson and Powell, and Storm, it may be

mentioned that the Flat Island text is given in Vol. I. of *Flateyjar-bok*, ed. Vigfusson and Unger, Christiania, 1860. There are translations of both texts in Beamish, *Discovery of North America by the Northmen* (London, 1841), in Slafter, *Voyages of the Northmen* (Boston, 1877), and in De Costa, *Pre-Columbian Discovery of America by the Northmen* (Albany, 1901). But most of these are confused in arrangement, and the best is that by the late Mr. Reeves, which by the kind consent of his representatives we are permitted to use in this volume.

JULIUS E. OLSON.

[1] *Eiriks Saga Raudha* (Copenhagen, 1891), p. xv.

[2] A translation, with the title "The Story of Thorfinn Carlsemne," based on AM. 557, may be found in *Origines Islandicae*, II. 610.

[3] *Origines Islandicae*, II. 590.

[4] *Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie* (Copenhagen, 1901), II. 648.

[5] *The Discovery of America*, p. 212.

[6] Prolegomena, *Sturlunga Saga*, p. lxix.

[7] Snorri, the Icelandic historian, says that "it was more than 240 years from the settlement of Iceland (about 870) before sagas began to be written" and that "Ari (1067-1148) was the first man who wrote in the vernacular stories of things old and new."

[8] "Among the mediaeval literatures of Europe, that of Iceland is unrivalled in the profusion of detail with which the facts of ordinary life are recorded, and the clearness with which the individual character of numberless real persons stands out from the historic background.... The Icelanders of the Saga-age were not a secluded self-centred race; they were untiring in their desire to learn all that could be known of the lands round about them, and it is to their zeal for this knowledge, their sound historical sense, and their trained memories, that we owe much information regarding the British Isles themselves from the ninth to the thirteenth century. The contact of the Scandinavian peoples with the English race on the one hand, and the Gaelic on the other, has been an important factor in the subsequent history of Britain; and this is naturally a subject on which the Icelandic evidence is of the highest value." Prefatory Note to *Origines Islandicae*.

[9] *Studies on the Vinland Voyages* (Copenhagen, 1889) and *Eiriks Saga Raudha* (Copenhagen, 1891).

[10] Of the same opinion are Professor Hugo Gering of Kiel, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, XXIV. (1892), and Professor Finnur Jonsson of Copenhagen, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie*, II. 646.

[11] The Kristni-Saga, which tells of the conversion of Iceland, says: "That summer [1000] King Olaf [of Norway] went out of the country to Wendland in the south, and he sent Leif Eric's son to Greenland to preach the faith there. It was then that Leif discovered Vinland the Good. He also discovered a crew on the wreck of a ship out in the deep sea, and so he got the name of Leif the Lucky." For passages from other sagas that corroborate Leif's discovery on his voyage from Norway to Greenland (*i.e.*, in the year that Olaf Tryggvason fell, namely, 1000), see Reeves, *The Finding of Wineland the Good* (London, 1895), pp. 7-18.

[12] See, in support of Storm, Juul Dieserud's paper, "Norse Discoveries in America," *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*, Feb., 1901.

[13] *Discovery of America*, p. 182.

[14] See *Origines Islandicae*, I. 294.

[15] In other respects the editors speak highly of the saga as found in Hauk's Book and AM. 557: "This saga has never been so well known as the other, though it is probably of even higher value. Unlike the other, it has the form and style of one of the 'Islendinga Sogor' [the Icelandic sagas proper]; its phrasing is broken, its dialogue is excellent, it contains situations of great pathos, such as the beautiful incident at the end of Bearne's self-sacrifice, and scenes of high interest, such as that of the Sibyl's prophesying in Greenland...." II. 591.

[16] *Icelandic Prose Reader* (where AM. 557 is printed), notes, p. 377.

The Saga of Eric the Red

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Also Called The Saga Of ThorfinnKarlsefni[1]

The Saga of Eric the Red, also called the Saga of Thorfinn Karlsefni and Snorri Thorbrandsson.[2] — Olaf was the name of a warrior-king, who was called Olaf the White. He was the son of King Ingiald, Helgi's son, the son of Olaf, Gudraud's son, son of Halfdan Whiteleg, king of the Uplands-men.[3] Olaf engaged in a Western freebooting expedition and captured Dublin in Ireland and the Shire of Dublin, over which he became king.[4] He married Aud the Wealthy, daughter of Ketil Flatnose, son of Biorn Buna, a famous man of Norway. Their son was called Thorstein the Red. Olaf was killed in battle in Ireland, and Aud and Thorstein went then to the Hebrides; there Thorstein married Thurid, daughter of Eyvind Easterling, sister of Helgi the Lean; they had many children. Thorstein became a warrior-king, and entered into fellowship with Earl Sigurd the Mighty, son of Eystein the Rattler. They conquered Caithness and Sutherland, Ross and Moray, and more than the half of Scotland. Over these Thorstein became king, ere he was betrayed by the Scots, and was slain there in battle. Aud was at Caithness when she heard of Thorstein's death; she thereupon caused a ship to be secretly built in the forest, and when she was ready, she sailed out to the Orkneys. There she bestowed Groa, Thorstein the Red's daughter, in marriage; she was the mother of Grelad, whom Earl Thorfinn, Skull-cleaver, married. After this Aud set out to seek Iceland, and had on board her ship twenty freemen. Aud arrived in Iceland, and passed the first winter at Biarnarhöfn with her brother, Biorn. And afterwards took possession of all the Dale country between Dögurdar river and Skraumuhlaups river.

She lived at Hvamm, and held her orisons at Krossholar, where she caused crosses to be erected, for she had been baptized and was a devout believer. With her there came out [to Iceland] many distinguished men, who had been captured in the Western freebooting expedition, and were called slaves. Vifil was the name of one of these: he was a highborn man, who had been taken captive in the Western sea, and was called a slave, before Aud freed him; now when Aud gave homesteads to the members of her crew, Vifil asked wherefore she gave him no homestead as to the other men. Aud replied, that this should make no difference to him, saying, that he would be regarded as a distinguished man wherever he was. She gave him Vifilsdal, and there he dwelt. He married a woman whose name was...;[5] their sons were Thorbiorn and Thorgeir. They were men of promise, and grew up with their father.[6]

Eric the Red finds Greenland. — There was a man named Thorvald; he was a son of Asvald, Ulf's son, Eyxna-Thori's son. His son's name was Eric. He and his father went from Jaederen[7] to Iceland, on account of manslaughter, and settled on Hornstrandir, and dwelt at Drangar. There Thorvald died, and Eric then married Thorhild, a daughter of Jorund, Atli's son, and Thorbiorg the Ship-chested, who had been married before to Thorbiorn of the Haukadal family. Eric then removed from the North, and cleared land in Haukadal, and dwelt at Ericsstadir by Vatnshorn. Then Eric's thralls caused a land-slide on Valthiof's farm, Valthiofsstadir. Eyiolf the Foul, Valthiof's kinsman, slew the thralls near Skeidsbrekkur above Vatnshorn. For this Eric killed Eyiolf the Foul, and he also killed Duelling-Hrafn, at Leikskalar. Geirstein and Odd of Jorva, Eyiolf's kinsmen, conducted the prosecution for the slaying of their kinsmen, and Eric was, in consequence, banished from Haukadal. He then took possession of Brokey and Eyxney, and dwelt at Tradir on Sudrey, the first winter. It was at this time that he loaned Thorgest his outer daïs-boards;[8] Eric afterwards went to

Eyxney, and dwelt at Ericsstad. He then demanded his outer daïs-boards, but did not obtain them. Eric then carried the outer daïs-boards away from Breidabolstad, and Thorgest gave chase. They came to blows a short distance from the farm of Drangar. There two of Thorgest's sons were killed and certain other men besides. After this each of them retained a considerable body of men with him at his home. Styr gave Eric his support, as did also Eyiolf of Sviney, Thorbiorn, Vifil's son, and the sons of Thorbrand of Alptafirth; while Thorgest was backed by the sons of Thord the Yeller, and Thorgeir of Hitardal, Aslak of Langadal and his son, Illugi. Eric and his people were condemned to outlawry at Thorsness-thing. He equipped his ship for a voyage, in Ericsvag; while Eyiolf concealed him in Dimunarvag, when Thorgest and his people were searching for him among the islands. He said to them, that it was his intention to go in search of that land which Gunnbiorn, son of Ulf the Crow, saw when he was driven out of his course, westward across the main, and discovered Gunnbiorns-skerries.[9] He told them that he would return again to his friends, if he should succeed in finding that country. Thorbiorn, and Eyiolf, and Styr accompanied Eric out beyond the islands, and they parted with the greatest friendliness; Eric said to them that he would render them similar aid, so far as it might lie within his power, if they should ever stand in need of his help. Eric sailed out to sea from Snaefells-iokul, and arrived at that ice-mountain which is called Blacksark. Thence he sailed to the southward, that he might ascertain whether there was habitable country in that direction. He passed the first winter at Ericsey, near the middle of the Western Settlement.[10] In the following spring he proceeded to Ericsfirth, and selected a site there for his homestead. That summer he explored the western uninhabited region, remaining there for a long time, and assigning many local names there. The second winter he spent at Ericsholms beyond Hvarfsgnipa. But the third

summer he sailed northward to Snaefell,[11] and into Hrafnsfirth. He believed then that he had reached the head of Ericsfirth; he turned back then, and remained the third winter at Ericsey at the mouth of Ericsfirth. The following summer he sailed to Iceland, and landed in Breidafirth. He remained that winter with Ingolf at Holmlatr. In the spring he and Thorgest fought together, and Eric was defeated; after this a reconciliation was effected between them. That summer Eric set out to colonize the land which he had discovered, and which he called Greenland, because, he said, men would be the more readily persuaded thither if the land had a good name.[12]

Concerning Thorbiorn. — Thorgeir, Vifil's son, married, and took to wife Arnora, daughter of Einar of Laugarbrekka, Sigmund's son, son of Ketil Thistil, who settled Thistilsfirth. Einar had another daughter named Hallveig; she was married to Thorbiorn, Vifil's son, who got with her Laugarbrekkaland on Hellisvellir. Thorbiorn moved thither, and became a very distinguished man. He was an excellent husbandman, and had a great estate. Gudrid was the name of Thorbiorn's daughter. She was the most beautiful of her sex, and in every respect a very superior woman. There dwelt at Arnarstapi a man named Orm, whose wife's name was Halldis. Orm was a good husbandman, and a great friend of Thorbiorn, and Gudrid lived with him for a long time as a foster-daughter. There was a man named Thorgeir, who lived at Thorgeirsfell; he was very wealthy and had been manumitted; he had a son named Einar, who was a handsome, well-bred man, and very showy in his dress. Einar was engaged in trading-voyages from one country to the other, and had prospered in this. He always spent his winters alternately either in Iceland or in Norway.

Now it is to be told, that one autumn, when Einar was in Iceland, he went with his wares out along Snaefellsness, with the intention of selling them. He came to Arnarstapi, and Orm invited him to remain with him, and Einar accepted

this invitation, for there was a strong friendship [between Orm and himself]. Einar's wares were carried into a store-house, where he unpacked them, and displayed them to Orm and the men of his household, and asked Orm to take such of them as he liked. Orm accepted this offer, and said that Einar was a good merchant, and was greatly favored by fortune. Now, while they were busied about the wares, a woman passed before the door of the store-house. Einar inquired of Orm: "Who was that handsome woman who passed before the door? I have never seen her here before." Orm replies: "That, is Gudrid, my foster-child, the daughter of Thorbiorn of Laugarbrekka." "She must be a good match," said Einar; "has she had any suitors?" Orm replies: "In good sooth she has been courted, friend, nor is she easily to be won, for it is believed that both she and her father will be very particular in their choice of a husband." "Be that as it may," quoth Einar, "she is a woman to whom I mean to pay my addresses, and I would have thee present this matter to her father in my behalf, and use every exertion to bring it to a favorable issue, and I shall reward thee to the full of my friendship, if I am successful. It may be that Thorbiorn will regard the connection as being to our mutual advantage, for [while] he is a most honorable man and has a goodly home, his personal effects, I am told, are somewhat on the wane; but neither I nor my father are lacking in lands or chattels, and Thorbiorn would be greatly aided thereby, if this match should be brought about." "Surely I believe myself to be thy friend," replies Orm, "and yet I am by no means disposed to act in this matter, for Thorbiorn hath a very haughty spirit, and is moreover a most ambitious man." Einar replied that he wished for nought else than that his suit should be broached; Orm replied, that he should have his will. Einar fared again to the South until he reached his home. Sometime after this, Thorbiorn had an autumn feast, as was his custom, for he was a man of high position. Hither came Orm of Arnarstapi,

and many other of Thorbiorn’s friends. Orm came to speech with Thorbiorn, and said, that Einar of Thorgeirsfell had visited him not long before, and that he was become a very promising man. Orm now makes known the proposal of marriage in Einar’s behalf, and added that for some persons and for some reasons it might be regarded as a very appropriate match: “thou mayest greatly strengthen thyself thereby, master, by reason of the property.” Thorbiorn answers: “Little did I expect to hear such words from thee, that I should marry my daughter to the son of a thrall; and that, because it seems to thee that my means are diminishing, wherefore she shall not remain longer with thee since thou deemest so mean a match as this suitable for her.” Orm afterward returned to his home, and all of the invited guests to their respective households, while Gudrid remained behind with her father, and tarried at home that winter. But in the spring Thorbiorn gave an entertainment to his friends, to which many came, and it was a noble feast, and at the banquet Thorbiorn called for silence, and spoke: “Here have I passed a goodly lifetime, and have experienced the good-will of men toward me, and their affection; and, methinks, our relations together have been pleasant; but now I begin to find myself in straitened circumstances, although my estate has hitherto been accounted a respectable one. Now will I rather abandon my farming, than lose my honor, and rather leave the country, than bring disgrace upon my family; wherefore I have now concluded to put that promise to the test, which my friend Eric the Red made, when we parted company in Breidafirth. It is my present design to go to Greenland this summer, if matters fare as I wish.” The folk were greatly astonished at this plan of Thorbiorn’s, for he was blessed with many friends, but they were convinced that he was so firmly fixed in his purpose, that it would not avail to endeavor to dissuade him from it. Thorbiorn bestowed gifts upon his guests, after which the feast came to an end, and the folk

returned to their homes. Thorbiorn sells his lands and buys a ship, which was laid up at the mouth of Hraunhöfn. Thirty persons joined him in the voyage; among these were Orm of Arnarstapi, and his wife, and other of Thorbiorn's friends, who would not part from him. Then they put to sea. When they sailed the weather was favorable, but after they came out upon the high-seas the fair wind failed, and there came great gales, and they lost their way, and had a very tedious voyage that summer. Then illness appeared among their people, and Orm and his wife Halldis died, and the half of their company. The sea began to run high, and they had a very wearisome and wretched voyage in many ways, but arrived, nevertheless, at Heriolfsness in Greenland, on the very eve of winter.[13] At Heriolfsness lived a man named Thorkel. He was a man of ability and an excellent husbandman. He received Thorbiorn and all of his ship's company, and entertained them well during the winter. At that time there was a season of great dearth in Greenland; those who had been at the fisheries had had poor hauls, and some had not returned. There was a certain woman there in the settlement, whose name was Thorbiorg. She was a prophetess, and was called Little Sibyl. She had had nine sisters, all of whom were prophetesses, but she was the only one left alive. It was Thorbiorg's custom in the winters, to go to entertainments, and she was especially sought after at the homes of those who were curious to know their fate, or what manner of season might be in store for them; and inasmuch as Thorkel was the chief yeoman in the neighborhood, it was thought to devolve upon him to find out when the evil time, which was upon them, would cease. Thorkel invited the prophetess to his home, and careful preparations were made for her reception, according to the custom which prevailed, when women of her kind were to be entertained. A high seat was prepared for her, in which a cushion filled with poultry feathers was placed. When she came in the evening, with the man who had been sent to

meet her, she was clad in a dark-blue cloak, fastened with a strap, and set with stones quite down to the hem. She wore glass beads around her neck, and upon her head a black lamb-skin hood, lined with white cat-skin. In her hands she carried a staff, upon which there was a knob, which was ornamented with brass, and set with stones up about the knob. Circling her waist she wore a girdle of touch-wood, and attached to it a great skin pouch, in which she kept the charms which she used when she was practising her sorcery. She wore upon her feet shaggy calf-skin shoes, with long, tough latchets, upon the ends of which there were large brass buttons. She had cat-skin gloves upon her hands, which were white inside and lined with fur. When she entered, all of the folk felt it to be their duty to offer her becoming greetings. She received the salutations of each individual according as he pleased her. Yeoman Thorkel took the sibyl by the hand, and led her to the seat which had been made ready for her. Thorkel bade her run her eyes over man and beast and home. She had little to say concerning all these. The tables were brought forth in the evening, and it remains to be told what manner of food was prepared for the prophetess. A porridge of goat’s beestings was made for her, and for meat there were dressed the hearts of every kind of beast, which could be obtained there. She had a brass spoon, and a knife with a handle of walrus tusk, with a double hasp of brass around the haft, and from this the point was broken. And when the tables were removed, Yeoman Thorkel approaches Thorbiorg, and asks how she is pleased with the home, and the character of the folk, and how speedily she would be likely to become aware of that concerning which he had questioned her, and which the people were anxious to know. She replied that she could not give an opinion in this matter before the morrow, after that she had slept there through the night. And on the morrow, when the day was far spent, such preparations were made as were necessary to enable her to accomplish