Great Epochs in American History

(Vol. 1&2)

Various Authors

Great Epochs in American History (Vol. 1&2)

Voyages of Discovery; Early Explorations & Planting of the First Colonies (1000 A.D.–1733)

e-artnow, 2021
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EAN: 4064066387730

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INTRODUCTION

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(*Voyages of Discovery and Early Explorations.*)

Schoolboys have been taught from their earliest years that Columbus discovered America. Few events in prehistoric times seem more probable now than that Columbus was not the first to discover it. The importance of his achievement over that of others lay in his own faith in his success, in his definiteness of purpose, and in the fact that he awakened in Europe an interest in the discovery that led to further explorations, disclosing a new continent and ending in permanent settlements.

The earliest voyages to America, made probably from Asia, led to settlements, but they remained unknown ever afterward to all save the settlers themselves, while those from Europe led to settlements that were either soon abandoned or otherwise came to nought. Wandering Tatar, Chinese, Japanese, Malay, or Polynesian sailors who drifted, intentionally or accidentally, to the Pacific coast in some unrecorded and prehistoric past, and from whom the men we call our aborigines probably are descended, sent back to Asia no tidings of what they had found. Their discovery, in so far as it concerned the people of the Old World, remained as if it had never been.

The hardy Northmen of the Viking age, who, like John Smith, six hundred years afterward, found in Vinland "a pleasant land to see," understood so little of the importance of what they had found, that, by the next century, their discovery had virtually been forgotten in all Scandinavia. It

seems never to have become known anywhere else in Europe. Indeed, had the Northmen made it known to other Europeans, it is quite unlikely that any active interest would have been taken in it. Europe in the year 1000 was self-centered. She had troubles enough to absorb all her energies. Ambition for the expansion of her territory, for trade with peoples beyond the great waters, nowhere existed. Most European states were engaged in a grim struggle to hold what they had—to hold it from the aggressions of their neighbors, to hold it against the rising power of Islam.

Columbus did not know he had discovered the continent we call America. He died in the belief that he had found unknown parts of Asia; that he had discovered a shorter and safer route for trade with the East, and that he had given new proof of the assertions made by astronomers that the earth is round. The men who immediately followed him—Vespucius and the Cabots—believed only that they had confirmed and extended his discovery. Cabot first found the mainland of North America, Vespucius the mainland of South America, but neither knew he had found a new continent. Each saw only coast lines; made landings, it is true; saw and conversed with natives, and Vespucius fought with natives; but of the existence of a new world, having continents comparable to Europe, Asia, or Africa, with an ocean on both sides of them, neither ever so much as dreamed.

Under the splendid inspiration of Prince Henry the Navigator, an inspiration that remained potent throughout Portugal long after his death, Bartholomew Dias, five years before Columbus made his voyage to America, rounded the Cape of Good Hope, actually sailed into the Indian Ocean, and was pressing on toward India when his crew, from

exhaustion, refused to go farther, and he was forced to return home. Vasco da Gama, ten years later (1497), following the route of Dias, actually reached India and thus demonstrated that, instead of going overland by caravan, India could be reached by sailing around two-thirds of Africa.

Spanish and Portuguese navigators—Columbus, Da Gama, Dias—alike sought a new and shorter route for trade with the Far East—one, moreover, that would not be molested by the advancing and aggressive Turks. Columbus believed, and so believed Spain and Portugal, that he had found a shorter route than the one Diaz and Da Gama found. Disputes arose between the rival powers as to titles and benefits from the discoveries, and it was because of these that Pope Alexander VI issued his famous Bull, dividing between the two all lands discovered by the navigators, an act which, in our time, has become a curious anomaly, since later proof of the existence of continents between the Atlantic and Pacific made the Pope's decree virtually a partitioning of all America between two favored countries as sole beneficiaries.

Da Gama returned from India laden with Eastern treasure. Columbus returned from America poorer than when he sailed from the port of Palos. Columbus was believed to have found Asia, but he brought home, after several voyages, none of the wealth of Asia. Hence those fierce storms that beat about his head, leading to his imprisonment and to his death in Valladolid, a broken-hearted man.

The Spanish explorers who in the next century followed Columbus, came to America in pursuit of silver and gold. Rich stores had already been found by their countrymen in Mexico and the Peruvian Andes. In meetings with Indians farther north wearing ornaments of gold, the new explorers

became convinced that mineral wealth also existed in the lands now called the United States, and especially in the fabled "Seven Cities of Cibola," in the Southwest. Out of this belief came the bold enterprises of Ponce de Leon, De Vaca, Coronado and De Soto, while out of the Spanish successes in finding gold in America came the first known voyage into New York Harbor, that of Verazzano, the Italian in French service, who was seeking Spanish vessels returning richly laden.

Of the French and English explorers of later years—Cartier, Champlain, Marquette, Hudson, Drake—who came to Cape Breton, the St. Lawrence, Hudson, and Mississippi valleys, the California coast—the motives were different. These came to fish for cod, to explore the country, to plant the banners of the Sun King and Queen Bess over new territories, to convert the Indians, to find a northwest passage—that problem of the navigators which baffled them all until 1854—362 years after the landing of Columbus—when an English ship, under Sir Robert McClure, sailed from Bering Sea to Davis Strait, and thus proved that America, North and South, was an island.

Spaniards, however, had dreamed of a northwest passage before any of these. When Magellan passed through the strait that bears his name, and his ship completed the first circumnavigation of the globe, men began first to see that America was no part of Asia. In further proof they sought to find a passage into the Pacific from the north, as a complement to Magellan's passage from the south. Such an attempt was first made by the Spaniards under Vasquez d'Ayllon, four years after the voyage of Magellan; that is, in 1524. Ayllon was hoping to find this passage when he put in at Hampton Roads, just as Hudson hoped to find it, eighty-five years afterward, when

he entered the harbor of New York—Hudson, who in a later voyage, sought it once more in Hudson Bay, and perished miserably there, set adrift in an open boat and abandoned by his own mutinous sailors.

F.W.H.

VOYAGES OF DISCOVERY AND EARLY EXPLORATIONS

1000 A.D.—1682

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DISCOVERIES BEFORE COLUMBUS

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I

THE MEN FROM ASIA AND FROM NORWAY[1]

BY JUSTIN WINSOR

There is not a race of eastern Asia—Siberian, Tatar, Chinese, Japanese, Malay, with the Polynesians—which has not been claimed as discoverers, intending or accidental, of American shores, or as progenitors, more or less perfect or remote, of American peoples; and there is no good reason why any one of them may not have done all that is claimed. The historical evidence, however, is not such as is based on documentary proofs of indisputable character, and the recitals advanced are often far from precise enough to be convincing in details, if their general authenticity is allowed.

Nevertheless, it is much more than barely probable that the ice of Bering Straits or the line of the Aleutian Islands was the pathway of successive immigrations, on occasions perhaps far apart, or maybe near together; and there is hardly a stronger demonstration of such a connection between the two continents than the physical resemblances of the peoples now living on the opposite sides of the Pacific Ocean in these upper latitudes, with the similarity of the flora which environs them on either shore.

It is quite as conceivable that the great northern current, setting east athwart the Pacific, should from time to time have carried along disabled vessels, and stranded them on the shores of California and farther north leading to the

infusion of Asiatic blood among whatever there may have been antecedent or autochthonous in the coast peoples. It is certainly in this way possible that the Chinese or Japanese may have helped populate the western slopes of the American continent. There is no improbability even of the Malays of southeastern Asia extending step by step to the Polynesian Islands, and among them and beyond them, till the shores of a new world finally received the impress of their footsteps and of their ethnic characteristics. We may very likely recognize not proofs, but indications, along the shores of South America, that its original people constituted such a stock or were increased by it.

As respects the possible early connections of America on the side of Europe, there is an equally extensive array of claims, and they have been set forth, first and last, with more persistency than effect. …

Leaving the old world by the northern passage, Iceland lies at the threshold of America. It is nearer to Greenland than to Norway, and Greenland is but one of the large islands into which the arctic currents divide the North American continent. Thither, to Iceland, if we identify the localities in Geoffrey of Monmouth, King Arthur sailed as early as the beginning of the sixth century, and overcame whatever inhabitants he may have found there. Here, too, an occasional wandering pirate or adventurous Dane had glimpsed the coast. Thither, among others, came the Irish, and in the ninth century we find Irish monks and a small colony of their countrymen in possession. Thither the Gulf Stream carries the southern driftwood, suggesting sunnier lands to whatever race had been allured or driven to its shelter. Here Columbus, when, as he tells us, he visited the island in 1477, found no ice. So that, if we may place reliance on the appreciable change of climate by the

precession of the equinoxes, a thousand years ago and more, when the Norwegians crossed from Scandinavia and found these Christian Irish there, the island was not the forbidding spot that it seems with the lapse of centuries to be becoming.

It was in A.D. 875 that Ingolf, a jarl of Norway, came to Iceland with Norse settlers. They built their habitation at first where a pleasant headland seemed attractive, the present Ingolfshofdi, and later founded Reikjavik, where the signs directed them; for certain carved posts, which they had thrown overboard as they approached the island, were found to have drifted to that spot. The Christian Irish preferred to leave their asylum rather than consort with the newcomers, and so the island was left to be occupied by successive immigrations of the Norse, which their king could not prevent. In the end, and within half a century, a hardy little republic—as for a while it was—of near 70,000 inhabitants, was established almost under the arctic circle.

The very next year (A.D. 876) after Ingolf had come to Iceland, a sea-rover, Gunnbiorn, driven in his ship westerly, sighted a strange land, and the report that he made was not forgotten. Fifty years later, more or less, for we must treat the dates of the Icelandic sagas with some reservation, we learn that a wind-tossed vessel was thrown upon a coast far away, which was called Iceland the Great. Then, again, we read of a young Norwegian, Eric the Red, not apparently averse to a brawl, who killed his man in Norway and fled to Iceland, where he kept his dubious character; and again outraging the laws, he was sent into temporary banishment —this time in a ship which he fitted out for discovery; and so he sailed away in the direction of Gunnbiorn's land, and found it. He whiled away three years on its coast, and as soon as he was allowed, ventured back with the tidings.

While, to propitiate intending settlers, he said he had been to Greenland, and so the land got a sunny name.

The next year, which seems to have been A.D. 985, he started on his return with 35 ships, but only fourteen of them reached the land. Whenever there was a habitable fiord, a settlement grew up, and the stream of immigrants was for a while constant and considerable. Just at the end of the century (A.D. 999) Lief, a son of Eric, sailed back to Norway, and found the country in the early fervor of a new religion; for King Olaf Tryggvesson had embraced Christianity, and was imposing it on his people. Leif accepted the new faith, and a priest was assigned to him to take back to Greenland; and thus Christianity was introduced into arctic America. So they began to build churches in Greenland, the considerable ruins of one of which stands to this day. The winning of Iceland to the Church was accomplished at the same time.…

In the next year after the second voyage of Eric the Red, one of the ships which were sailing from Iceland to the new settlement, was driven far off her course, according to the sagas, and Bjarni Herjulfson, who commanded the vessel, reported that he had come upon a land, away to the southwest, where the coast country was level; and he added that when he turned north it took him nine days to reach Greenland. Fourteen years later than this voyage of Bjarni, which was said to have been in A.D. 986—that is, in the year 1000 or thereabouts—Lief, the same who had brought the Christian priest to Greenland, taking with him 35 companions, sailed from Greenland in quest of the land seen by Bjarni, which Lief first found, where a barren shore stretched back to ice-covered mountains, and, because of the stones there, he called the region Helluland. Proceeding farther south, he found a sandy shore, with a level forest

country back of it, and because of the woods it was named Markland. Two days later they came upon other land, and tasting the dew upon the grass they found it sweet. Farther south and westerly they went, and going up a river, came into an expanse of water, where on the shores they built huts to lodge in for the winter, and sent out exploring parties. In one of these Tyrker, a native of a part of Europe where grapes grew, found vines hung with their fruit, which induced Lief to call the country Vinland.

Attempts have been made to identify these various regions by the inexact accounts of the direction of their sailing, by the very general descriptions of the country, by the number of days occupied in going from one point to another, with the uncertainty if the ship sailed at night, and by the length of the shortest day in Vinland—the last a statement that might help us, if it could be interpreted with a reasonable concurrence of opinion, and if it were not confused with other inexplicable statements. The next year Lief's brother, Thorwald, went to Vinland with a single ship, and passed three winters there, making explorations meanwhile, south and north. Thorfinn Karlsefne, arriving in Greenland in A.D. 1006, married a courageous widow named Gudrid, who induced him to sail with his ships to Vinland and make there a permanent settlement, taking with him livestock and other necessaries for colonization. Their first winter in the place was a severe one; but Gudrid gave birth to a son, Snorre, from whom it is claimed Thorwaldsen, the Danish sculptor, was descended. The next season they removed to the spot where Leif had wintered, and called the bay Hop. Having spent a third winter in the country, Karlsefne, with a part of the colony, returned to Greenland.

The saga then goes on to say that trading voyages to the settlement which had been formed by Karlsefne now became frequent, and that the chief lading of the return voyages was timber, which was much needed in Greenland. A bishop of Greenland, Eric Upsi, is also said to have gone to Vinland in A.D. 1121. In 1347 the last ship of which we have any record in these sagas went to Vinland after timber. After this all is oblivion.

There are in all these narratives many details beyond this outline, and those who have sought to identify localities have made the most they could of the mention of a rock here or a bluff there, of an island where they killed a bear, of others where they found eggs, of a headland where they buried a leader who had been killed, of a cape shaped like a keel, of broadfaced natives who offered furs for red cloths, of beaches where they hauled up their ships, and of tides that were strong; but the more these details are scanned in the different sagas, the more they confuse the investigator, and the more successive relators try to enlighten us the more our doubts are strengthened, till we end with the conviction that all attempts at consistent unravelment leave nothing but a vague sense of something somewhere done.

II

HOW THE NORWEGIANS CAME TO VINLAND[1]

(1000 A.D.)

Lief invited his father, Eric, to become the leader of the expedition, but Eric declined, saying that he was then stricken in years, and adding that he was less able to endure the exposure of sea life than he had been. Lief

replied that he would, nevertheless, be the one who would be most apt to bring good luck, and Eric yielded to Lief's solicitation, and rode from home when they were ready to sail.

They put the ship in order; and, when they were ready, they sailed out to sea, and found first that land which Bjarni and his shipmates found last. They sailed up to the land and cast anchor, and launched a boat and went ashore, and saw no grass there. Great ice mountains lay inland back from the sea, and it was as a [table-land of] flat rock all the way from the sea to the ice mountains; and the country seemed to them to be entirely devoid of good qualities. Then said Lief, "It has not come to pass with us in regard to this land as with Biarni, that we have not gone upon it. To this country I will now give a name, and call it Helluland," They returned to the ship, put out to sea, and found a second land.

They sailed again to the land, and came to anchor, and launched the boat, and went ashore. This was a level wooded land; and there were broad stretches of white sand where they went, and the land was level by the sea. Then said Lief, "This land shall have a name after its nature; and we will call it Markland." They returned to the ship forthwith, and sailed away upon the main with northeast winds, and were out two "doegr" before they sighted land. They sailed toward this land, and came to an island which lay to the northward off the land. There they went ashore and looked about them, the weather being fine, and they observed that there was dew upon the grass, and it so happened that they touched the dew with their hands, and touched their hands to their mouths, and it seemed to them that they had never before tasted anything so sweet as this.…

A cargo sufficient for the ship was cut, and when the spring came they made their ship ready, and sailed away;

and from its products Lief gave the land a name, and called it Wineland. They sailed out to sea, and had fair winds until they sighted Greenland and the fells below the glaciers. Then one of the men spoke up and said, "Why do you steer the ship so much into the wind?" Lief answers: "I have my mind upon my steering, but on other matters as well. Do ye not see anything out of the common?" They replied that they saw nothing strange. "I do not know," says Lief, "whether it is a ship or a skerry that I see." Now they saw it, and said that it must be a skerry; but he was so much keener of sight than they that he was able to discern men upon the skerry. "I think it best to tack," says Lief, "so that we may draw near to them, that we may be able to render them assistance if they should stand in need of it; and, if they should not be peaceable disposed, we shall still have better command of the situation than they."

They approached the skerry, and, lowering their sail, cast anchor, and launched a second small boat, which they had brought with them. Tyrker inquired who was the leader of the party. He replied that his name was Thori, and that he was a Norseman; "but what is thy name?" Lief gave his name. "Art thou a son of Eric the Red of Brattahlid?" says he. Lief responded that he was. "It is now my wish," says Lief, "to take you all into my ship, and likewise so much of your possessions as the ship will hold." This offer was accepted, and [with their ship] thus laden they held away to Ericsfirth, and sailed until they arrived at Brattahlid. Having discharged the cargo, Lief invited Thori, with his wife, Gudrid, and three others, to make their home with him, and procured quarters for the other members of the crew, both for his own and Thori's men. Lief rescued fifteen persons from the skerry. He was afterward called Lief the Lucky. Lief had now a goodly store both of property and honor. There

was serious illness that winter in Thori's party, and Thori and a great number of his people died. Eric the Red also died that winter. There was now much talk about Lief's Wineland journey; and his brother, Thorvald, held that the country had not been sufficiently explored. Thereupon Lief said to Thorvald, "If it be thy will, brother, thou mayest go to Wineland with my ship; but I wish the ship first to fetch the wood which Thori had upon the skerry." And so it was done.

Now Thorvald, with the advice of his brother, Lief, prepared to make this voyage with thirty men. They put their ship in order, and sailed out to sea; and there is no account of their voyage before their arrival at Liefs-booths in Wineland. They laid up their ship there, and remained there quietly during the winter, supplying themselves with food by fishing. In the spring, however, Thorvald said that they should put their ship in order, and that a few men should take the after-boat, and proceed along the western coast, and explore [the region] thereabouts during the summer. They found it a fair, well-wooded country. It was but a short distance from the woods to the sea, and [there were] white sands, as well as great numbers of islands and shallows. They found neither dwelling of man nor lair of beast; but in one of the westerly islands they found a wooden building for the shelter of grain. They found no other trace of human handiwork; and they turned back, and arrived at Liefs-booths in the autumn.

The following summer Thorvald set out toward the east with the ship, and along the northern coast. They were met by a high wind off a certain promontory, and were driven ashore there, and damaged the keel of their ship, and were compelled to remain there for a long time and repair the injury to their vessel. Then said Thorvald to his companions, "I propose that we raise the keel upon this cape, and call it

Keelness"; and so they did. Then they sailed away to the eastward off the land and into the mouth of the adjoining firth and to a headland, which projected into the sea there, and which was entirely covered with woods. They found an anchorage for their ship, and put out the gangway to the land; and Thorvald and all of his companions went ashore. "It is a fair region here," said he; "and here I should like to make my home."

They then returned to the ship, and discovered on the sands, in beyond the headland, three mounds: they went up to these, and saw that they were three skin canoes with three men under each. They thereupon divided their party, and succeeded in seizing all the men but one, who escaped with his canoe. They killed the eight men, and then ascended the headland again, and looked about them, and discovered within the firth certain hillocks, which they concluded must be habitations. They were then so overpowered with sleep that they could not keep awake, and all fell into a [heavy] slumber from which they were awakened by the sound of a cry uttered above them; and the words of the cry were these: "Awake, Thorvald, thou and all thy company, if thou wouldst save thy life; and board thy ship with all thy men, and sail with all speed from the land!" A countless number of skin canoes then advanced toward them from the inner part of the firth, whereupon Thorvald ex-claimed, "We must put out the war-boards on both sides of the ship, and defend ourselves to the best of our ability, but offer little attack." This they did; and the Skrellings, after they had shot at them for a time, fled precipitately, each as best he could. Thorvald then inquired of his men whether any of them had been wounded, and they informed him that no one of them had received a wound. "I have been wounded in my arm-pit," says he. "An arrow flew in between

the gunwale and the shield, below my arm. Here is the shaft, and it will bring me to my end. I counsel you now to retrace your way with the utmost speed. But me ye shall convey to that headland which seemed to me to offer so pleasant a dwelling-place: thus it may be fulfilled that the truth sprang to my lips when I exprest the wish to abide there for a time. Ye shall bury me there, and place a cross at my head, and another at my feet, and call it Crossness forever after." At that time Christianity had obtained in Greenland: Eric the Red died, however, before [the introduction of] Christianity.

Thorvald died; and, when they had carried out his injunctions, they took their departure, and rejoined their companions, and they told each other of the experiences which had befallen them. They remained there during the winter, and gathered grapes and wood with which to freight the ship. In the following spring they returned to Greenland, and arrived with their ship in Ericsfirth, where they were able to recount great tidings to Lief.…

There was now much talk anew about a Wineland voyage, for this was reckoned both a profitable and an honorable enterprise. The same summer that Karlsefni arrived from Wineland a ship from Norway arrived in Greenland. This ship was commanded by two brothers, Helgi and Finnbogi, who passed the winter in Greenland. They were descended from an Icelandic family of the East-firths. It is now to be added that Freydis, Eric's daughter, set out from her home at Gardar, and waited upon the brothers, Helgi and Finnbogi, and invited them to sail with their vessel to Wineland, and to share with her equally all of the good things which they might succeed in obtaining there. To this they agreed, and she departed thence to visit her brother Lief, and ask him to give her the house which he had caused

to be erected in Wineland; but he made her the same answer [as that which he had given Karlsefni], saying that he would lend the house, but not give it. It was stipulated between Karlsefni and Freydis that each should have on shipboard thirty able-bodied men, besides the women; but Freydis immediately violated this compact by concealing five men more [than this number], and this the brothers did not discover before they arrived in Wineland. They now put out to sea, having agreed beforehand that they would sail in company, if possible, and, altho they were not far apart from each other, the brothers arrived somewhat in advance, and carried their belongings up to Lief's house.

III

THE FIRST CHILD OF EUROPEAN RACE BORN IN AMERICA[1]

(About 1000 A.D.)

One summer a ship came from Norway to Greenland. The skipper's name was Thorfinn Karlsefni, and he was the son of Thord, called "Horsehead," and a grandson of Snorri. Thorfinn Karlsefni, who was a very wealthy man, passed the winter there in Greenland, with Lief Ericsson. He very soon set his heart upon a maiden called Gudrid, and sought her hand in marriage.

That same winter a new discussion arose concerning a Wineland voyage. The people urged Rarlsefni to make the bold venture, so he determined to undertake the voyage, and gathered a company of sixty men and five women. He entered into an agreement with his shipmates that they should each share equally in all the spoils. They took with

them all kinds of cattle, as they intended to settle the country if they could. Karlsefni asked Lief for his house in Wineland. Lief replied that he would lend it but not give it.

They sailed out to sea with the ship, and arrived safe and sound at Lief's booths, and carried their hammocks ashore there. They were soon provided with an abundant supply of food, for a whale of good size and quality was driven ashore, and they secured it. Their cattle were turned out upon the land. Karlsefni ordered trees to be felled; for he needed timber wherewith to load his ships. They gathered some of all the products of the land—grapes, all kinds of game, fish, and other good things.

In the summer after the first winter the Skrellings[2] were discovered. A great throng of men came forth from the woods; the cattle were close by and the bull began to bellow and roar with a great noise. At this the Skrellings were frightened and ran away with their packs, wherein were gray furs, sables, and all kinds of skins. They fled toward Karlsefni's dwelling and tried to get into the house, but Karlsefni caused the doors to be defended. Neither people could understand the other's language. The Skrellings put down their packs, then opened them and offered their wares in exchange for weapons, but Karlsefni forbade his men to sell their weapons. He bade the women to carry out milk to the Skrellings; as soon as these people had tasted the milk, they wanted to buy it and nothing else.

Now it is to be told that Karlsefni caused a strong wooden palisade to be constructed and set up around the house. It was at this time that a baby boy was born to Gudrid and Karlsefni, and he was called Snorri. In the early part of the second winter the Skrellings came to them again in greater numbers than before, and brought with them the same kind of wares to exchange. Then said Karlsefni to the women,

"Do ye carry out now the same thing which proved so profitable before, and nothing else." The Skrellings seemed contented at first, but soon after, while Gudrid was sitting in the doorway beside the cradle of her infant son, Snorri, she heard a great crash made by one of the Skrellings who had tried to seize a man's weapons. One of Karlsefni's followers killed him for it. "Now we must needs take counsel together," said Karlsefni, "for I believe they will visit us a third time in greater numbers. Let us now adopt this plan: when the tribe approaches from the forest, ten of our number shall go out upon the cape in front of our houses and show themselves there, while the remainder of our company shall go into the woods back of our houses and hew a clearing for our cattle. Then we will take our bull and let him go in advance of us to meet the enemy." The next time the Skrellings came they found Karlsefni's men ready and fled helter-skelter into the woods. Karlsefni and his party remained there throughout the winter, but in the spring Karlsefni announced that he did not intend to remain there longer, for he wished to return with his wife and son to Greenland. They now made ready for the voyage and carried away with them much in vines and grapes and skins.

IV

OTHER PRE-COLUMBIAN VOYAGES[1]

BY HENRY WHEATON

No subsequent traces of the Norman colony in America are to be found until the year 1059, when it is said that an Irish or Saxon priest, named Jon or John, who had preached for some time as a missionary in Iceland, went to Vinland, for

the purpose of converting the colonists to Christianity, where he was murdered by the heathens. A bishop of Greenland, named Erik, afterward (A.D. 1121) undertook the same voyage, for the same purpose, but with what success is uncertain. The authenticity of the Icelandic accounts of the discovery and settlement of Vinland were recognized in Denmark shortly after this period by King Svend Estrithson, or Sweno II, in a conversation which Adam of Bremen had with this monarch. But no further mention is made of them in the national annals, and it may appear doubtful what degree of credit is due to the relations of the Venetian navigators, the two brothers Zeni, who are said to have sailed in the latter part of the fourteenth century, in the service of a Norman prince of the Orcades, to the coasts of New England, Carolina, and even Mexico, or at least to have collected authentic accounts of voyages as far west and south as these countries. The land diseovered and peopled by the Norwegians is called by Antonio Zeni, Estotoland, and he states, among other particulars, that the princes of the country still had in their possession Latin books, which they did not understand, and which were probably those left by the bishop Erik during his mission.

Supposing these latter discoveries to be authentic, they could hardly have escaped the attention of Columbus, who had himself navigated in the arctic seas, but whose mind dwelt with such intense fondness upon his favorite idea of finding a passage to the East Indies, across the western ocean, that he might have neglected these indications of the existence of another continent in the direction pursued by the Venetian adventurers.

At all events, there is not the silghtest reason to believe that the illustrious Genoese was acquainted with the discovery of North America by the Normans five centuries

before his time, however well authenticated that fact now appears to be by the Icelandic records to which we have referred. The colony established by them probably perished in the same manner with the ancient establishments in Greenland. Some faint traces of its existence may, perhaps, be found in the relations of the Jesuit missionaries respecting a native tribe in the district of Gaspe, at the mouth of the St. Lawrence, who are said to have attained a certain degree of civilization, to have worshiped the sun, and observed the position of the stars. Others revered the symbol of the cross before the arrival of the French missionaries, which, according to their tradition, had been taught them by a venerable person who cured, by this means, a terrible epidemic which raged among them.

THE DISCOVERY BY COLUMBUS

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(1492)

I

AS DESCRIBED BY WASHINGTON IRVING[1]

It was early in the morning of Friday, the 3d of August, 1492, that Columbus set sail from the bar of Saltes, a small island formed by the rivers Odiel and Tinto, in front of Palos, steering for the Canary Islands, from whence he intended to strike due west. As a guide by which to sail, he had the conjectural map or chart sent him by Paolo Toscanelli, of Florence. In this it is supposed the coasts of Europe and Africa, from the south of Ireland to the end of Guinea, were delineated as immediately opposite to the extremity of Asia, while the great island of Cipango, described by Marco Polo, lay between them, 1,500 miles from the Asiatic coast. At this island Columbus expected first to arrive.…

On losing sight of this last trace of land, the hearts of the crews failed them, for they seemed to have taken leave of the world. Behind them was everything dear to the heart of man—country, family, friends, life itself; before them everything was chaos, mystery, and peril. In the perturbation of the moment they despaired of ever more seeing their homes. Many of the rugged seamen shed tears, and some broke into loud lamentations. Columbus tried in every way to soothe their distress, describing the splendid countries to which he expected to conduct them, promising them land, riches, and everything that could arouse their

cupidity or inflame their imaginations; nor were these promises made for purposes of deception, for he certainly believed he should realize them all.

He now gave orders to the commanders of the other vessels, in case they should be separated by any accident, to continue directly westward; but that, after sailing 700 leagues, they should lay by from midnight until daylight, as at about that distance he confidently expected to find land. Foreseeing that the vague terrors already awakened among the seamen would increase with the space which intervened between them and their homes, he commenced a stratagem which he continued throughout the voyage. This was to keep two reckonings, one private, in which the true way of the ship was noted, and which he retained in secret for his own government; the other public, for general inspection, in which a number of leagues was daily subtracted from the sailing of the ships so as to keep the crews in ignorance of the real distance they had advanced….

On the 13th of September, in the evening, Columbus, for the first time, noticed the variation of the needle, a phenomenon which had never before been remarked. He at first made no mention of it, lest his people should be alarmed; but it soon attracted the attention of the pilots, and filled them with consternation. It seemed as if the very laws of nature were changing as they advanced, and that they were entering another world, subject to unknown influences. They apprehended that the compass was about to lose its mysterious virtues, and, without this guide, what was to become of them in a vast and trackless ocean? Columbus tasked his science and ingenuity for reasons with which to allay their terrors. He told them that the direction of the needle was not to the polar star, but to some fixt and