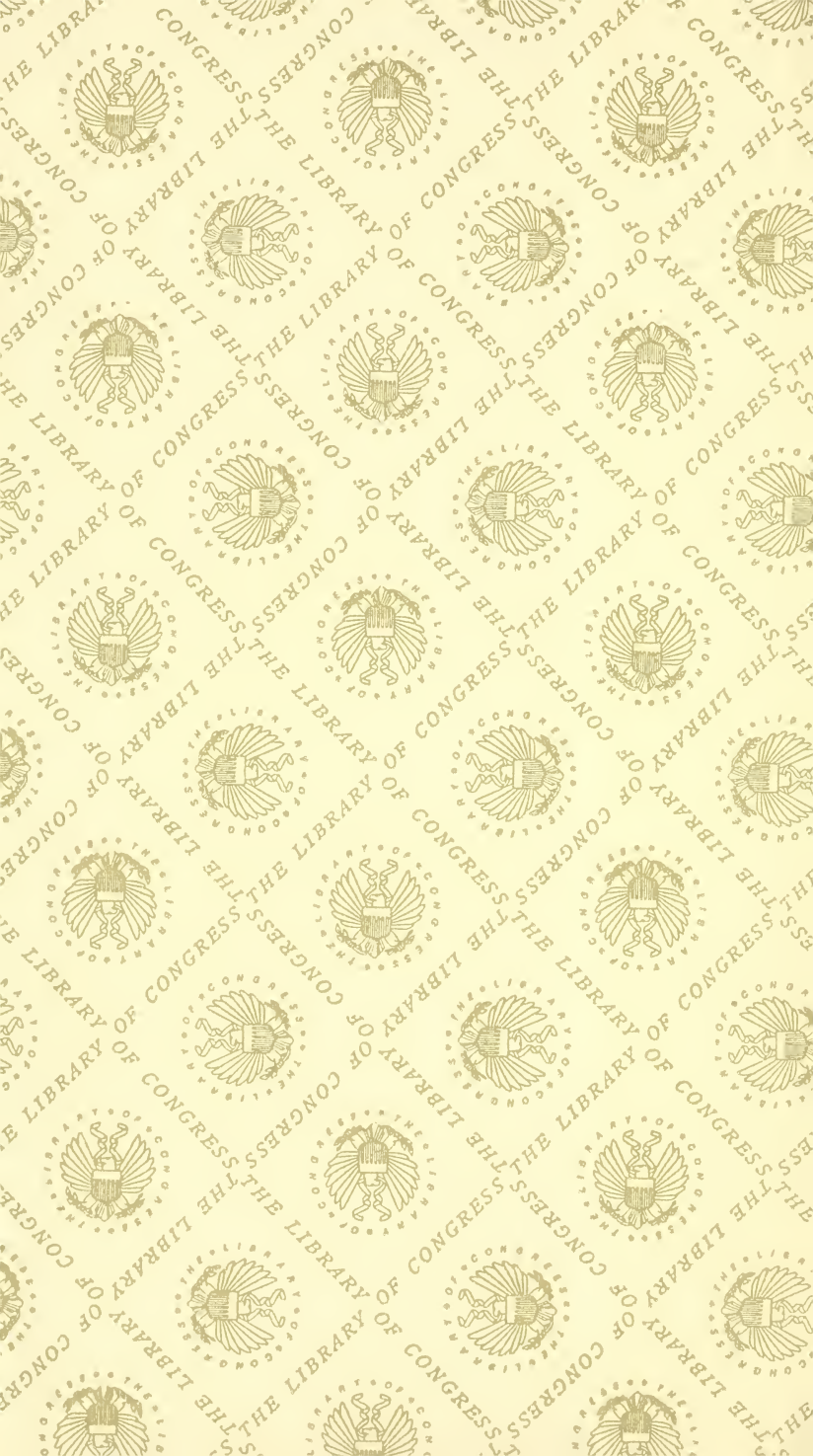


E 105

.R14





A M E R I C A

DISCOVERED

IN THE

T E N T H C E N T U R Y .

By CHARLES C. RAFN,

SECRETARY TO THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF NORTHERN ANTIQUARIES,
COPENHAGEN.

NEW YORK:

WILLIAM JACKSON, 102 BROADWAY.

MDCCCXXXVIII.

W. W. W. W.



11 14

NEW YORK :
PRINTED BY WILLIAM JACKSON.

INTRODUCTION.

THE ANTE-COLUMBIAN HISTORY OF AMERICA has of late, more than formerly, been favoured with public attention. Facts which shed an unexpected light on this remote period, formerly supposed to be wrapped in Cimmerian darkness, have been gathered from various sources. We have been repeatedly surprised by many a hint, nay more, by many an incontestable sign, presented to us, and now at length we rely with increased confidence on those researches whose object is to brighten up and illustrate the obscure recesses of antiquity.

The discovery of America in the tenth century may justly be considered as one of the very remarkable events in the history of the world; and discerning posterity will not refuse to the hardy Scandinavians who effected it, that place in the world's annals, to which their achievements have given them an irrefragable title. Here, however, nothing is to be expected beyond a concise and summary view of the ancient historical events which occurred in America proper, and of such notices respecting the geography, hydrography, and natural history of that part of the world, as are preserved in the ancient records of

Scandinavia, now published in the "ANTIQUITATES AMERICANÆ." In the remote age now alluded to, Greenland had a considerable European population, forming a distinct diocese. But the great mass of records which relate to this polar region of America, could not be noticed. It is to be remembered, that the discovery of Iceland about the middle of the ninth century, the settlement there made by Ingolf, in the year 874, and the subsequent complete colonization of the country, which, in the course of a century, was effected by some of the most powerful and wealthy families of the North, were occurrences preceding the discovery of America. But then the seas about Iceland having been navigated in all directions for a considerable time, Greenland could not remain undiscovered; and, glancing at the vast number of original records extant, relative to the history of the Icelandic settlement, and observing the stir and bustle which at that time agitated this remote island, the discovery of America will appear almost as an inevitable consequence of the natural course of things, or at least as an event easily accounted for.

The author of the following pages will with confidence abide the verdict of discerning readers, as to the question, whether the validity of the title be established by their contents.

AN ABSTRACT
OF THE
HISTORICAL EVIDENCE
CONTAINED IN THE
“ANTIQUITATES AMERICANÆ.”

BIARNE HERIULFSON'S VOYAGE IN THE
YEAR 986.

ERIC THE RED, in the spring of 986, emigrated from Iceland to Greenland, formed a settlement there, and fixed his residence at Brattalid in Ericsfiord. Among others who accompanied him was Heriulf Bardson, who established himself at Heriulfsnes. BIARNE, the son of the latter, was at that time absent on a trading voyage to Norway; but in the course of the summer returning to Eyrar, in Iceland, and finding that his father had taken his departure, this bold navigator resolved “still to spend the following winter, like all the preceding ones, with his father,” although neither he nor any of his people had ever navigated the Greenland sea. They set sail, but met with northerly winds and fogs, and, after many days sailing, knew not whither they had been carried. At length, when the weather again cleared up, they saw a land which was without mountains, overgrown with wood, and having many gentle elevations. As this land did not correspond to the descriptions of Greenland, they left it on the larboard hand, and continued sailing two days, when they saw another land which was flat, and overgrown with wood. From thence they stood out to sea, and sailed three days

with a S.W. wind, when they saw a third land, which was high and mountainous, and covered with icebergs (*glaciers*;) they coasted along the shore, and saw that it was an island. They did not go on shore, as Bjarne did not find the country to be inviting. Bearing away from this island, they stood out to sea with the same wind, and after four days sailing with fresh gales, they reached Heriulfsnes, in Greenland.

DISCOVERIES OF LEIF ERICSON, AND FIRST SETTLEMENT OF VINELAND.

Some time after this, probably in the year 994, Bjarne paid a visit to Eric, earl of Norway, and told him of his voyage, and of the unknown lands he had discovered. He was blamed by many for not having examined these countries more accurately. On his return to Greenland there was much talk about undertaking a voyage of discovery. LEIF, a son of Eric the Red, bought Bjarne's ship, and equipped it with a crew of thirty-five men, among whom was a German, of the name of TYRKER, who had long resided with his father, and who had been very fond of Leif in his childhood. In the year 1000 they commenced the projected voyage, and came first to the land which Bjarne had seen last. They cast anchor and went on shore. No grass was seen; but every where in this country were vast ice-mountains (*glaciers*,) and the intermediate space between these and the shore was, as it were, one uniform plain of slate (*hella*;) the country appearing to them destitute of good qualities, they called it HELLU-LAND. They put out to sea, and came to another land where they also went on shore. The country was level (*slètt*,) and covered with woods, and wheresoever they went, there were cliffs of white sand (*sand-ar hvítir*,) and a low coast (*ó-sæ-bratt*;) they called the country MARK-LAND (*Woodland*.) From

thence they again stood out to sea, with a N.E. wind, and continued sailing for two days, before they made land again. They then came to an island which lay to the eastward of the mainland, and entered a channel between this island and a promontory projecting in an easterly (and northerly) direction from the mainland. They sailed westward in waters where there was much ground left dry at ebb-tide. Afterwards they went on shore at a place where a river, issuing from a lake, fell into the sea. They brought their ship into the river, and from thence into the lake, where they cast anchor. Here they constructed some temporary log-huts; but, afterwards, when they had made up their mind to winter there, they built large houses, afterwards called LEIFS-BÚÐIR (*Leifsbooths.*) When the buildings were completed, Leif divided his people into two companies, who were by turns employed in keeping watch at the houses, and in making small excursions for the purpose of exploring the country in the vicinity: his instructions to them were, that they should not go to a greater distance than that they might return in the course of the same evening, and that they should not separate from one another. Leif took his turn also, joining the exploring party the one day, and remaining at the houses the other. It so happened that one day the German, Tyrker, was missing. Leif accordingly went out with twelve men in search of him, but they had not gone far from their houses, when they met him coming towards them. When Leif enquired why he had been so long absent, he at first answered in German, but they did not understand what he said. He then said to them in the Norse tongue: "I did not go much farther, yet I have a discovery to acquaint you with; I have found vines and grapes." He added, by way of confirmation, that he had been born in a country where there was plenty of vines. They had now two occupations, viz., to hew timber for loading the ship, and collect grapes; with these last they filled the ship's long

boat. Leif gave a name to the country, and called it VÍN-LAND (*Vineland*.) In the spring they sailed again from thence, and returned to Greenland.

THORWALD ERICSON'S EXPEDITION TO MORE SOUTHERN REGIONS.

Leif's Vineland voyage was now a subject of frequent conversation in Greenland, and his brother THORWALD was of opinion that the country had not been sufficiently explored. He accordingly borrowed Leif's ship, and, aided by his brother's counsel and directions, commenced a voyage in the year 1002. He arrived at Leifsbooths, in Vineland, where they spent the winter, he and his crew employing themselves in fishing. In the spring of 1003 Thorwald sent a party in the ship's long-boat on a voyage of discovery southwards. They found the country beautiful and well wooded, with but little space between the woods and the sea; there were likewise extensive ranges of white sand, and many islands and shallows. They found no traces of men having been there before them, excepting on an island lying to the westward, where they found a wooden shed. They did not return to Leifsbooths until the fall. In the following summer, 1004, Thorwald sailed eastward with the large ship, and then northward past a remarkable headland enclosing a bay, and which was opposite to another headland. They called it KIAL-AR-NES (*Keel Cape*.) From thence they sailed along the eastern coast of the land, into the nearest firths, to a promontory which there projected, and which was every where overgrown with wood. There Thorwald went ashore with all his companions. He was so pleased with this place, that he exclaimed: "This is beautiful! and here I should like well to fix my dwelling!" Afterwards,

when they were preparing to go on board, they observed on the sandy beach, within the promontory, three hillocks, and repairing thither, they found three canoes, under each of which were three Skrellings (Esquimaux;) they came to blows with the latter, and killed eight, but the ninth escaped with his canoe. Afterwards a countless number issued forth against them from the interior of the bay. They endeavoured to protect themselves by raising battle screens on the ship's side. The Skrellings continued shooting at them for a while, and then retired. Thorwald was wounded by an arrow under the arm, and finding that the wound was mortal, he said, "I now advise you to prepare for your departure as soon as possible, but me ye shall bring to the promontory, where I thought it good to dwell; it may be that it was a prophetic word that fell from my mouth about my abiding there for a season; there shall ye bury me, and plant a cross at my head, and another at my feet, and call the place KROSS-A-NES (*Crossness*) in all time coming." He died, and they did as he had ordered. Afterwards, they returned to their companions at Leifsbooths, and spent the winter there; but, in the spring of 1005, they sailed again to Greenland, having important intelligence to communicate to Leif.

UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT OF THORSTEIN ERICSON.

Thorstein, Eric's third son, had resolved to proceed to Vineland to fetch his brother's body. He fitted out the same ship, and selected twenty-five strong and able-bodied men for his crew: his wife Gudrida also went along with him. They were tossed about the ocean during the whole summer, and knew not whither they were driven; but at the close of the first week of winter they landed at Ly-

sufiord, in the western settlement of Greenland. There Thorstein died during the winter; and, in the spring, Gudrida returned again to Ericsfiord.

SETTLEMENT EFFECTED IN VINELAND, BY THORFINN.

In the following summer, 1006, there arrived in Greenland two ships from Iceland; the one was commanded by THORFINN, having the very significant surname of KARLSEFNE (i. e. one who promises or is destined to be an able or great man,) a wealthy and powerful man, of illustrious lineage, and sprung from Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Irish, and Scottish ancestors, some of whom were kings or of royal descent. He was accompanied by SNORRE THORBRANDSON, who was also a man of distinguished lineage. The other ship was commanded by BIARNE GRIMOLFSON, of Breidefiord, and THORHALL GAMLASON, of Austfiord. They kept the festival of Yule, or Christmas, at Brattalid. Thorfin became enamoured of Gudrida, and obtained the consent of her brother-in-law, Leif; and their marriage was celebrated in the course of the winter. On this, as on former occasions, the voyage to Vineland formed a favorite theme of conversation, and Thorfin was urged both by his wife and others to undertake such a voyage. It was accordingly resolved on. In the spring of 1007 Karlsefne and Snorre fitted out their ship, and Biarne and Thorhall likewise equipped theirs. A third ship (being that in which Gudrida's father, Thorbiörn, had formerly come to Greenland) was commanded by THORWARD, who was married to FREYDISA, a natural daughter of Eric the Red; and on board the ship was also a man of the name of THORHALL, who had long served Eric as huntsman in summer, and as house-steward in winter, and who had

much acquaintance with the uncolonized parts of Greenland. The whole expedition consisted of one hundred and sixty men; and they took with them all kinds of live stock, it being their intention to establish a colony, if possible. They sailed first to the Westerbygd, and afterwards to Biarney (*Disco*.) From thence they sailed in a southerly direction to HELLU-LAND, where they found many foxes; and again two days in a southerly direction to MARK-LAND, a country overgrown with wood, and plentifully stocked with animals. Leaving this, they continued in a S.W. direction for a long time, having the land to starboard, until they at length came to KIAL-AR-NES, where there were trackless deserts and long beaches and sands, called by them FURÐU-STRAND-IR. Passing these, they found the land indented by inlets. They had two Scots with them, HAKE and HEKIA, whom Leif had formerly received from the Norwegian king, Olaf Tryggvason, and who were very swift of foot. They put them on shore, recommending them to proceed in a S.W. direction, and explore the country. After the lapse of three days they returned, bringing with them some grapes and some ears of wheat, which grew wild in that region. They continued their course until they came to a place where a firth penetrated far into the country. Off the mouth of it was an island, past which there ran strong currents, which was also the case farther up the firth. On the island there were an immense number of eyderducks, so that it was scarcely possible to walk without treading on their eggs. They called the island STRAUM-EY (*Stream Isle*), and the firth, SRAUM-FIÖRÐR (*Stream Firth*.) They landed on the shore of this firth, and made preparations for their winter residence. The country was extremely beautiful. They confined their operations to exploring the country. Thorhall afterwards wished to proceed in a N. direction in quest of Vineland. Karlsefne chose rather to go to the S.W. Thorhall, and eight men with him,

quitted them, and sailed past Furdustrander and Kialarnes ; but they were driven by westerly gales to the coast of Ireland, where, according to the accounts of some traders, they were beaten and made slaves. Karlsefne, together with Snorre and Biarne, and the rest of the ships' companies, in all 131 (CXXXI) men, sailed southwards, and arrived at the place where a river falls into the sea from a lake. Opposite to the mouth of the river were large islands. They steered into the lake, and called the place HÓP (*i Hópe.*) On the low grounds they found fields of wheat growing wild, and on the rising ground, vines. While looking about one morning, they observed a great number of canoes. As they exhibited friendly signals, the canoes approached nearer to them, and the natives looked with astonishment at those they met there. These people were sallow, and ill-looking : had ugly heads of hair, large eyes, and broad cheeks. After they had gazed at them for awhile, they rowed away again to the S.W. past the cape. Karlsefne and his company had erected their dwelling houses a little above the bay, and there they spent the winter. No snow fell, and the cattle found their food in the open field. One morning early, in the beginning of 1008, they descried a number of canoes coming from the S. W. past the cape. Karlsefne having held up a white shield as a friendly signal, they drew nigh, and immediately commenced bartering. These people chose in preference red cloth, and gave furs and squirrel skins in exchange. They would fain also have bought swords and spears, but these Karlsefne and Snorre prohibited their people from selling. In exchange for a skin, entirely gray, the Skrellings took a piece of cloth of a span in breadth, and bound it round their heads. Their barter was carried on in this way for some time. The Northmen found that their cloth was beginning to grow scarce, whereupon they cut it up in smaller pieces, not broader than a finger's breadth ; yet the Skrellings gave as much for these smaller pieces as they had

formerly given for the larger ones, or even more. Karlsefne also caused the women to make and pour out milk soup, and the Skrellings relishing the taste of it, they desired to buy it in preference to every thing else ; so they wound up their traffic by carrying away their bargains in their stomachs. Whilst this trade was going on, it happened that a bull, which Karlsefne had brought along with him, came out of the wood and bellowed loudly. At this the Skrellings became terrified, rushed to their canoes, and rowed away southwards. About this time Gudrida, Karlsefne's wife, gave birth to a son, who received the name of SNORRE. In the beginning of the following winter the Skrellings came again in much greater numbers ; they showed symptoms of hostility, setting up loud yells. Karlsefne caused the red shield to be borne against them, whereupon they advanced against each other, and a battle commenced. There was a galling discharge of missiles. The Skrellings had a sort of war slings ; they elevated on a pole a tremendously large ball, almost the size of a sheep's stomach, and of a bluish colour ; this they swung from the pole upon land over Karlsefne's people, and it descended with a fearful crash. This struck terror into the Northmen, and they fled along the river. Freydisa came out, and seeing them flying, she exclaimed : " How can stout men like you fly from these miserable caitiffs, whom I thought you could knock down like cattle ! If I had only a weapon, I ween I could fight better than any of you !" They heeded not her words. She tried to keep pace with them, but the advanced state of her pregnancy retarded her : she however followed them into the wood. There she encountered a dead body : it was THORBRAND SNORRASON ; a flat stone was sticking fast in his head, and his naked sword lay by his side ; this she took up, and prepared to defend herself. She uncovered her bosom, and struck it with the naked sword. At this sight the Skrellings became terrified, and ran off to their canoes.

Karlsefne and the rest now came up to her, and praised her courage. They were now become aware that, although the country held out many advantages, still the life that they would have to lead here, would be one of constant alarm from the hostile attacks of the natives. They therefore made preparations for departure, with the resolution of returning to their own country. Sailing eastward, they arrived in Streamfirth. Karlsefne then took one of the ships, and sailed in quest of Thorhall, while the rest remained behind. They proceeded northwards round Kialarnes, and, after that, were carried to the north-west. The land lay to the larboard of them; there were thick forests in all directions, as far as they could see, with scarcely any open space. They considered the hills at Høpe, and those which they now saw, as forming part of one continued range. They spent the third winter at Streamfirth. Karlsefne's son, Snorre, was now three years of age. When they sailed from Vineland, they had southerly wind, and came to Markland, where they met with five Skrellings. They caught two of them (two boys,) whom they carried away with them, and taught them the Norse language, and baptized them. These children said that their mother was called VETHILLDI, and their father UVÆGE; they said that the Skrellings were ruled by chieftains (kings,) one of whom was called AVALLDAMON, and the other VALDIDIDA; that there were no houses in the country, but that the people dwelt in holes and caverns. Biarne Grimolfson was driven into the Irish Ocean, and came into waters that were so infested with worms that their ship was in consequence reduced to a sinking state. Some of the crew, however, were saved in the boat, as it had been smeared with seal-oil tar, which is a preventive against the attack of worms. Karlsefne continued his voyage to Greenland, and arrived at Eric'sfiord.

VOYAGE OF FREYDISA, HELGE AND FINNBOGE ; THORFINN SETTLES IN ICELAND.

During the same summer, 1011, there arrived in Greenland a ship from Norway, commanded by two brothers, from Austfiord in Iceland, HELGE and FINNBOGE, who passed the following winter in Greenland. FREYDISA went to them, and proposed a voyage to Vineland, on the condition that they should share equally with her in all the profits which the voyage might yield: to this they assented. Freydisa and these brothers entered into a mutual agreement that each party should have thirty able-bodied men on board their ship, besides women; but Freydisa immediately deviated from the agreement, and took with her five additional men, whom she concealed. In 1012 they arrived at Leifsbooths, where they spent the following winter. The conduct of Freydisa occasioned a coolness and distance between the parties; and by her subtle arts she ultimately prevailed on her husband to massacre the brothers and their followers. After the perpetration of this base deed, they, in the spring of 1013, returned to Greenland, where Thorfinn lay ready to sail for Norway, and was waiting for a fair wind: the ship he commanded was so richly laden, that it was generally admitted, that a more valuable cargo had never left Greenland. As soon as the wind became favourable he sailed to Norway, where he spent the following winter, and sold his goods. Next year, when he was ready to sail for Iceland, there came a German from Bremen, who wanted to buy a piece of wood from him: he gave for it half a marc of gold: it was the wood of the Mazer tree, from Vineland. Karlsefne went to Iceland, and, in the following year, 1015, he bought the Glaumbœ estate, in Skagefiord, in the northland quarter,

where he resided during the remainder of his life: his son Snorre, who had been born in America, was his successor on this estate. When the latter married, his mother made a pilgrimage to Rome, and afterwards returned to her son's house at Glaumbœ, where he had in the mean time ordered a church to be built. The mother lived long as a religious recluse. A numerous and illustrious race descended from Karlsefne, among whom may be mentioned the learned bishop Thorlak Runolfson, born in 1085, of Snorre's daughter, Halfrida, to whom we are principally indebted for the oldest ecclesiastical Code of Iceland, published in the year 1123; it is also probable that the accounts of the voyages here mentioned, were originally compiled by him.

A SURVEY OF THE PRECEDING EVIDENCE.

I.—GEOGRAPHY AND HYDROGRAPHY.

It is a fortunate circumstance that these ancient accounts have preserved not only *geographical*, but also *nautical*, and *astronomical facts*, that may serve in fixing the position of the lands and places named. The *nautical facts* are of special importance, although hitherto they have not been sufficiently attended to; these consist in statements of the course steered and the distance sailed in a day. From data in the Landnama and several other ancient Icelandic geographical works, we may gather, that the distance of a day's sailing was estimated at 27 to 30 geographical miles (German or Danish, of which fifteen are equal to a degree: each of these being, accordingly, equal to four English sea-miles.) From the island of HELLU-LAND, afterwards called little Helluland, Biarne sailed to Heriulfsnes (*Iki-geit*), in Greenland, with strong

south-westerly gales, in four days. The distance between that cape and *Newfoundland* is about one hundred and fifty miles, which will correspond, when we take into consideration the strong gales. In modern descriptions it is stated that this land partly consists of naked rocky flats, where no tree, nor even a shrub, can grow, and which are therefore usually called *Barrens*; thus answering completely to the *hell-ur* of the ancient Northmen, from which they named the country.

MARKLAND was situate to the south-west of Hellu-land, distant about three days' sail, or from eighty to ninety miles. Here then we have *Nova Scotia*, of which the descriptions given by later writers answer to that given by the ancient Northmen of Markland: "the land is low in general;" "the coast to the sea-ward being level and low, and the shores marked with white rocks;" "the land is low, with white sandy cliffs, particularly visible at sea," says the new 'North American Pilot,' by J. W. Norie, and another American sailor: "on the shore are some cliffs of exceedingly white sand." Here 'level' corresponds completely to the Icelandic 'slètt,' 'low to the sea-ward' to the short expression 'ó-sæ-bratt,' and 'white sandy cliffs' to the 'hvít-ir sand-ar' of the Northmen. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Lower Canada, situate more in-land, which probably may be considered as all belonging to the Markland of the Northmen, are almost everywhere covered with immense forests.

VINLAND was situate at the distance of two days' sail, consequently from fifty-four to sixty miles, in a south-westerly direction from Markland. The distance from Cape Sable to Cape Cod is stated in nautical works as being W. by S. about seventy leagues, that is, about two hundred miles. Biarne's description of the coast is very accurate, and in the island situate to the eastward, (between which and the promontory that stretches to eastward and northward Leif sailed) we recognize Nantucket.

The ancient Northmen found there many shallows (*grunn-sæfui mik-it*;) modern navigators make mention at the same place “of numerous reefs and other shoals,” and say “that the whole presents an aspect of drowned land.”

KIALARNES (from *kiölr*, a keel, and *nes*, a cape, most likely so named on account of its striking resemblance to the keel of a ship, particularly of one of the long ships of the ancient Northmen) must consequently be *Cape Cod*, the NAUSET of the Indians, which modern geographers have sometimes likened to a Horn, and sometimes to a Sickle, or Scythe. The ancient Northmen found here trackless deserts, (*ör-æfi*) and long narrow beaches and sand-hills, or sands (*strand-ir lángr-ar ok sand-ar*) of a very peculiar appearance, on which account they called them FURÐU-STRAND-IR (*Wonder-strands*, from *furð-a*, res miranda, and *strönd*, strand, beach.) Compare the description given of this Cape by a modern author, Hitchcock: “The *Dunes*, or *sand-hills*, which are often nearly or quite barren of vegetation, and of snowy whiteness, *forcibly attract the attention on account of their peculiarity*. As we approach the extremity of the Cape, the sand and barrenness increase; and in not a few places it would need only a party of Bedouin Arabs to cross the traveller’s path, to make him feel that he was in the depths of *an Arabian or Lybian desert*.” A remarkable natural phenomenon, which is observed there, has also most probably had a share in giving rise to that peculiar name. It is thus described by the same author: “In crossing *the sands* of the Cape, I noticed a *singular mirage* or deception. In Orleans, for instance, we seemed to be ascending at an angle of three or four degrees; nor was I convinced that such was not the case, until turning about I perceived that a similar ascent appeared in the road just passed over. I shall not attempt to explain this optical deception; but merely remark, that it is probably of the same kind as that observed by Humboldt on the Pampas of Venezuela; “all

around us, says he, the plains seemed to ascend towards the sky." Thus we observe that the appellation given by the ancient Northmen to the three strands, or tracts of coast, *Nauset Beach, Chatham Beach, and Monomoy Beach*, is remarkably appropriate.

The great *Gulf Stream*, as it is called, which issues from the Gulf of Mexico, and runs between Florida, Cuba, and the Bahama Isles, and so northwards in a direction parallel to the eastern coast of North America, and of which the channel, in ancient times, is said to have approached still nearer to the coast, occasions great currents precisely at this place, inasmuch as the peninsula of Barnstaple offers opposition to the stream, as it comes from the southward. The STRAUM-FIÖRÐR of the ancient Northmen is supposed to be *Buzzard's Bay*; and STRAUM-EY, *Martha's Vineyard*; although the accounts of the many eggs found there would seem more precisely to correspond to the island which lies off the entrance of Vineyard Sound, and which, to this day, is called *Egg Island*.

KROSS-A-NES, is probably *Gurnet Point*. It must have been somewhat to the northward of this, that Karlsefne landed, when he saw the mountain range, (*The Blue Hills*,) which he considered as forming part of the same range, that extends to the region, where we recognize the place named Hóp (*i Hóp-e.*)

The word HÓP, in Icelandic, may either denote a small recess, or bay, formed by a river from the interior, falling into an inlet from the sea, or the land bordering on such a bay. To this Mount Hope's Bay, or MONT HAUP'S Bay, as the Indians term it, corresponds, through which the Taunton River flows, and, by means of the very narrow, yet navigable, Pocasset River, meets the approaching water of the Ocean at its exit at Seaconnet. It was at this Hópe that Leifsbooths were situate; it was above it, and therefore most probably on the beautiful elevation

called afterwards by the Indians, MONT HAUP, that Thorfinn Karlsefne erected his dwelling-houses.

II.—CLIMATE AND SOIL.

Concerning the climate of the country, and the quality of the soil, and also concerning some of its productions, the ancient writings contain sundry illustrative remarks. The climate was so mild, that it appeared the cattle did not require winter fodder ; for there came no snow, and the grass was but slightly withered. Warden uses similar expressions respecting this region : “*La température est si douce que la végétation souffre rarement du froid ou de la sécheresse. On l'appelle le paradis de l'Amérique parce qu'elle l'emporte sur les autres lieux par sa situation, son sol et son climat.*” “An excursion from Taunton to Newport, Rhode Island, down Taunton River and Mount Hope Bay, conducts the traveller among scenery of great beauty and loveliness,” says Hitchcock ; and when he adds, “that the beautiful appearance of the country, and the interesting historical associations connected with that region, conspire to keep the attention alive, and to gratify the taste,” he will find that this last remark is applicable to times much more remote than he thought of, when he gave expression to the above sentiment.

A country of such a nature might well deserve the appellation of “THE GOOD,” which was the epithet the ancient Northmen bestowed on it ; especially as it yielded productions whereon they set a high value, and of which their colder native land was for the most part destitute

III.—PRODUCE AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Vines grew there spontaneously ; a circumstance which Adam of Bremen—a foreign writer of the same (that is of the eleventh) century—mentions that he had learned,

not from conjecture, but from authentic accounts furnished by Danes. As his authority on this occasion, he cites the Danish king, Sveyn Estrithson, a nephew of Canute the Great. It is well known that vines still grow in that region in great abundance.

Spontaneously growing wheat (sjálf-sán-ir hveiti-akrar.)

At the subsequent arrival of the Europeans, Maize, or Indian corn, as it is called, was found growing here; this the natives reaped without having sowed, and they preserved it in holes in the earth, as it constituted one of their most valuable articles of food. Honeydew was found on the island which lies off it, as is also still the case.

Mazer (mausur,) a species of wood of remarkable beauty, probably a species of the *Acer rubrum*, or *Acer saccharinum*, which grows here, and which is called "bird's eye," or "curled maple." Wood for building was also obtained here.

A great number of forest animals of all kinds. It is understood that the Indians chose this region in preference, for their abode, chiefly on account of the excellent hunting.

At present the forests are for the most part cut down, and the animals have withdrawn to the interior and woodland regions. From the natives the Northmen bought squirrel skins, and all kinds of peltries, which are still to be found in abundance in this district.

Eyderducks and other *birds* were found in great numbers on the adjacent islands, as is also at present the case, on which account some of them have the name of Egg Islands.

Every river was full of *fish*, among which are mentioned excellent *salmon*. On the coast was also caught a great quantity of fish. The Northmen dug ditches along the shore, within the high water-mark, and when the tide receded, they found *halibuts* in the ditches. On the coast they also caught *whales*, and among these the *reiðr* (*Balæna physalus*.) In the modern descriptions of this region

it is stated, that "all the rivers are full of fish;" and of the waters in that neighbourhood it is said, "il y a une grande abondance de poissons de presque toutes les espèces." Salmon may be mentioned as one of these. Not long ago, the whale fishery was, in that very region, an important branch of industry; especially for the inhabitants of the adjacent islands. Very possibly the adjacent Whale Rock has its name from the same circumstances.

IV.—ASTRONOMICAL EVIDENCE.

Besides the nautical and geographical statements, one of the most ancient writings has preserved an *astronomical* notice, where it was said, that here the days were of more equal length than in Iceland or Greenland; that, on the shortest day, the sun rose at half past seven o'clock, and set at half past four; which makes the shortest day nine hours. This astronomical observation gives for the place, latitude $41^{\circ} 24' 10''$. The latitude of Seaconnet Point, and of the southernmost promontory of the Island of Conannicut, is $41^{\circ} 26'$ north; and that of Point Judith, $41^{\circ} 23'$. These three headlands form the entrance boundaries of the modern Mount Hope Bay, which the ancients, according to the analogy of their language, no doubt, called *HÓPSVATN*. We thus see that this statement corresponds exactly with the other data, and indicates precisely the same region.

DISCOVERIES OF MORE SOUTHERN REGIONS.

The party sent by Thorwald Ericson in the year 1003, from Leifsbooths, to explore the southern coasts, employed from four to five months in the expedition; they therefore most likely examined the coasts of Connecticut and New York,—probably also those of New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. The description of this range of coast is accurate.

ARE MARSON'S SOJOURN IN GREAT IRELAND.

In those times the Esquimaux inhabited more southerly regions than they do at present. This is both evident from the ancient accounts, and seems besides to gain corroboration from ancient skeletons which have been dug up in regions even more southerly than those in question; a circumstance which, however, merits a more accurate examination. In the neighbourhood of Vineland, opposite the country inhabited by the Esquimaux, there dwelled, according to their reports, people who wore white dresses, and had poles borne before them, on which were fastened lappets, and who shouted with a loud voice. This country was supposed to be HVÍTRA-MANN-A-LAND, as it was called (*the Land of the White Men*), otherwise called ÍR-LAND IT MIKLA (*Great Ireland*), being probably that part of the coast of North America which extends southwards from Chesapeak Bay, including North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Among the Sha-

wanese Indians, who some years ago emigrated from Florida, and are now settled in Ohio, there is preserved a tradition which seems of importance here ; viz. that Florida was once inhabited by white people, who were in possession of iron implements. Judging from the ancient accounts, this must have been an Irish christian people, who, previous to the year 1000, were settled in this region. The powerful chieftain, ARE MARSON, of Reykianes, in Iceland, was, in the year 903, driven thither by storms, and there received baptism. The first author of this account was his contemporary, Rafa, surnamed the Limerick-trader, he having long resided at Limerick, in Ireland. The illustrious Icelandic sage, Are Frode, the first compiler of the Landnama, who was himself a descendant in the fourth degree from Are Marson, states on this subject, that his uncle, Thorkell Gellerson (whose testimony he on another occasion declares to be worthy of all credit) had been informed by Icelanders, who had their information from Thorfinn Sigurdson, Earl of Orkney, that Are had been recognized in Hvitramannaland, and could not get away from thence, but was there held in high respect. This statement therefore shows, that in those times there was an occasional intercourse between the western European countries (the Orkneys and Ireland,) and this part of America.

VOYAGES OF BIÖRN ASBRANDSON, AND GUDLEIF GUDLAUGSON.

It must have been in this same country that BIÖRN AS-BRANDSON, surnamed BREID-VÍK-ÍNGA-KAPPI, spent the latter part of his life. He had been adopted into the celebrated band of Jomsburg warriors, under Palnatoke, and

took part with them in the battle of Fyrisval, in Sweden. His illicit amatory connexion with Thurida of Frodo, in Iceland, a sister of the powerful Snorre Gode, drew upon him the enmity and persecution of the latter; in consequence of which, he found himself obliged to quit the country for ever, and, in the year 999, he set sail from Hraunhöfn, in Sniofelsnes, with a N. E. wind. GUDLEIF GUDLAUGSON, brother of Thorfinn, the ancestor of the celebrated historian, Snorre Sturluson, had made a trading voyage to Dublin; but when he left that place again, with the intention of sailing round Ireland, and returning to Iceland, he met with long continued north-easterly winds, which drove him far out of his course to the south-west, and late in the season he, along with his company, at last made land; the country was very extensive, but they knew not what country it was. On their landing, a crowd of the natives, amounting to several hundreds in number, came against them, overpowered, and bound them. They did not know any body in the crowd, but it seemed to them that their language resembled Irish. The natives now took counsel whether they should kill 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. He was the aforesaid Biörn Asbrandson. He caused Gudleif to be brought before him, and, addressing him in the Norse language, he asked him whence he came. As he replied that he was an Ice-lander, Biörn made many enquiries about his acquaintance in Iceland, particularly about his beloved Thurida, of Frodo, and about her son Kiartan, supposed to be his own son, and who at that time was the proprietor of the estate of Frodo. In the meantime, the natives becoming impatient, and demanding a decision, Biörn selected twelve

of his company as counsellors ; he took them aside, and some time after, he went towards 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 already far advanced, to depart immediately, because the natives were not to be depended on, 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 Thurida, and a sword for Kiartan, and told them to charge his friends and relations not to come over to him, as he was now become old, and might daily expect that old age would get the better of him ; that the country was large, having but few harbours, and that strangers must everywhere expect a hostile reception. They accordingly set sail again, and found their way back to Dublin, where they spent the winter ; but next summer they repaired to Iceland and delivered the presents ; and all were convinced that it was really Biörn Asbrandson whom they had met with in that country.

BISHOP ERIC'S VOYAGE TO VINELAND.

It may be considered as certain that the intercourse between Vineland and Greenland was maintained for a considerable period after this, although the scanty notices about Greenland contained in the ancient manuscripts do not furnish us with any satisfactory information on this head. It is however recorded, that the Greenland bishop, ERIC, impelled probably by a christian zeal either of converting the colonists, or of animating them to perseverance in the faith, went over to Vineland in the the year 1121. As we have no information of the result of his voyage, but

can merely gather from the above expression that he reached his destination, we must presume that he fixed his permanent residence in Vineland. His voyage, however, goes to corroborate the supposition of a lengthened intercourse having been kept up between the countries.

DISCOVERIES IN THE ARCTIC REGIONS OF AMERICA.

The next event in chronological order, of which accounts have been preserved in ancient records, is a voyage of discovery in the Arctic regions of America, performed during the year 1266, under the auspices of some clergymen of the bishopric of Garðar, in Greenland. The account of it is taken from a letter, addressed by a clergyman of the name of Halldor, to another clergyman, named Arnold, formerly established in Greenland, but who had then become chaplain to the Norwegian king, Magnus Lagabæter. At that time all men of any consequence in Greenland possessed large vessels, built for the purpose of being dispatched northwards, in hunting and fishing expeditions. The northern regions which they visited were called Norðr-set-ur; the chief stations were Greipar and Króks-fiarð-ar-heiði. The first of these stations is supposed to have been situate immediately to the southward of Disco; but that the ancient Northmen went much farther north on this coast may be inferred from a very remarkable runic stone, found in the year 1824, on the island of Kin-gik-tór-soak, lying in the latitude of 72° 55' N. The latter-mentioned station was to the north of the former. The object of the voyage is stated to have been, to explore regions lying more to the northward than those they had hitherto been accustomed to visit, con-

sequently lying farther north than KRÓKS-FIARÐ-AR-HEIÐI, where they had their summer quarters (*set-ur*), and which they were therefore regularly accustomed to visit. The following particulars are mentioned relating to this voyage of discovery. They sailed *out of* Króks-fiarð-ar-heiði; and, after that, encountered southerly winds, accompanied by thick weather, which obliged them to let the ship go before the wind. On the weather clearing up, they saw many islands, and all kinds of prey, both seals and whales, and a great many bears. They penetrated into the innermost part of the gulf, and had icebergs (*glaciers*) lying also to the southward as far as the eye could reach. They observed some vestiges indicating that the Skrellings had in former times inhabited these regions, but they could not land on account of the bears. They then put about and sailed back during three days; and, now again, they found traces of the Skrellings having been on some islands lying to the southward of a mountain, by them called Sniofell. After this (on St. James's day) they proceeded southwards, a great day's rowing. It froze during the night in those regions, but the sun was above the horizon both night and day; and when on the meridian, in the south, he was not higher than that when a man lay down across a six-oared boat, stretched out towards the gunwale, the shadow formed by the side of the boat nearest the sun reached his face: but at midnight the sun was as high as when it was (highest) in the north-west, in the Greenland colony. Afterwards they sailed back again to their home at Garðar. Króks-fiarð-ar-heiði, as we have observed above, had been for some time previous regularly visited by the Greenlanders. The name shows that the firth was surrounded by barren highlands (*heið-i*;) and the description of the voyage shows that it was a firth of considerable extent, in and through which there was room for several days' sail. It is stated, for instance, that they sailed *out of* this firth or sound into another sea,

and into the innermost part of a gulf, and that their returning voyage occupied several days. As to the two observations mentioned as having been taken on St. James's day, the first of them leads to no certain result, as we have no sure means of ascertaining the depth of the boat, or rather the relative depth of the man's position, as he lay across the boat, in reference to the height of the side of the same, so as to enable us to deduce the angle formed by the upper edge of the boat's side and the man's face, which is the angle measuring the sun's altitude at noon on St. James's day, or the 25th of July. If we assume, as we may do with probability, that it was somewhat less than 33° , and yet very near that measure, the place must have been situate near north latitude 75° . There seems no probability that it was a larger angle, and consequently that the place lay more to the southward. The result obtained from the other observation is however more satisfactory. In the thirteenth century, on the 25th of July,

the Sun's declination was $+ 17^\circ 54'$,

Inclination of the Ecliptic $23^\circ 32'$.

If we now assume that the colony, and particularly the episcopal seat of Garðar, was situate on the north side of Igaliko Firth, where the ruins of a large church and of many other buildings indicate the site of a principal settlement of the ancient colony, consequently, in $60^\circ 55'$ north lat., then, at the summer solstice, the height of the sun there, when in the north-west, was $= 3^\circ 40'$, equivalent to the midnight altitude of the sun on St. James's day in the parallel of $75^\circ 46'$, which falls a little to the [north of Barrow's Strait, being in the latitude of Wellington's Channel, or close to the northward of the same. The voyage of discovery undertaken by the Greenland clergymen was therefore carried to regions, which, in our days, have been more accurately explored, and their geographical position determined by Sir William Parry, Sir John

Ross and Capt. James Clark Ross, and other British navigators, in the no less daring and dangerous expeditions conducted by them.

NEWFOUNDLAND RE-DISCOVERED FROM ICELAND.

The discovery next recorded was made by the Iceland clergymen ADALBRAND and THORWALD HELGASON, well known in the history of Iceland as having been involved in the disputes at that time prevailing between the Norwegian king, Eric Priesthater, and the clergy, and which in Iceland were chiefly headed by the governor, Rafa Oddson, and Arne Thorlakson, bishop of Skalholt. Accounts drawn up by contemporaries contain merely the brief notice, that in the year 1285 the above-mentioned clergymen discovered a new land to the westward of Iceland, (*fundu nýja land.*) This land, to which by command of King Eric Priesthater a voyage was some years afterwards projected by Landa-Rolf, is supposed to have been *Newfoundland.*

A VOYAGE TO MARKLAND IN THE YEAR 1347.

The last piece of information respecting America, which our ancient manuscripts have preserved, refers to a voyage in the year 1347, from Greenland to MARK-LAND, performed in a vessel having a crew of seventeen men, being probably undertaken for the purpose of bringing home

building-timber and other supplies from that country. On the voyage homeward from Markland, the ship was driven out of her course by storms, and arrived with loss of anchors at Straumfiord, in the west of Iceland. From the accounts—scanty as they are, of this voyage, written by a contemporary nine years after the event, it would appear, that the intercourse between Greenland and America proper had been kept up to so late a date as the year above mentioned; for it is expressly said that the ship went to Markland, which is thus named as a country that in those days was still known and visited.

* * * * *

After having perused the authentic documents themselves, which are now accessible to all, every one will acknowledge the truth of the historical fact, that during the tenth and eleventh centuries, the ancient Northmen discovered and visited a great extent of the eastern coasts of North America; and will besides be led to the conviction, that during the centuries immediately following, the intercourse never was entirely discontinued. The main fact is certain and indisputable. On the other hand, there are in these as in all other ancient writings, certain portions of the narrative which are obscure, and which subsequent disquisitions and new interpretations may serve to clear up. On this account it seems of importance that the original sources of information should be published in the ancient language, so that every one may have it in his power to consult them, and to form his own judgment as to the accuracy of the interpretations given.

With regard to such traces of the residence and settlement of the ancient Northmen as, it is presumed, are still to be met with in Massachusetts and Rhode Island (the countries which formed the destination of their earliest American expeditions,) we shall content ourselves for the

present with referring to the hints, which are contained in the "ANTIQUITATES AMERICANÆ." This matter will continue to form a subject for the accurate investigation of the COMMITTEE of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries ON THE ANTE-COLUMBIAN HISTORY OF AMERICA; and the result of this investigation, together with such additional elucidations of the ancient manuscripts as we may have it in our power to furnish, shall be communicated in the ANNALS and MEMOIRS of the Society.



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing Agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: SEP 1997



PRESERVATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Twp., PA 16066
(412) 779-2111



WERT
BOOKBINDING
Granthville, Pa
May/June 1988

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 005 868 969 5

