

Norsemen gave the name of Helluland, the Land of Flat Stones. Again they put to sea, and again, after two days with a north wind, they found land, this time covered with forest. To it they gave the name Markland, or Woodland, and an island off the coast, where they found a bear, they called Bear Isle. Two days from Markland they once more saw land, and doubling a cape, with the land on the starboard, they sailed along the coast, which they found a succession of barren stretches of sand. To this coast they gave the name of the Marvel Strands. It is, perhaps, to be identified with Nova Scotia. Beyond the strands the land was cut up by bays, and, anchoring in one of them, a Scotch man and woman, whom Karlsefni had on board as thralls, were sent to the south, with instructions to return at the end of three days and report what they had seen. At the end of the appointed time the messengers came back with bunches of grapes and ears of wheat, which they had found growing wild. They again set sail toward the south, and ran up into a fiord, at the mouth of which was an island, which they called Stream Isle, from the currents which swept around it. Upon the island so many birds nested that one could scarcely step without crushing the eggs. On the shores of the fiord, called by them Stream Fiord, they decided to settle, and unloaded their ships. "There were mountains there," says the Saga, "and it was fair round about to see." Where Stream Fiord really was is scarcely to be determined from the meagre details furnished by the Saga. It may have been on the coast of Maine or of Massachusetts.

In the account of the setting out of the expedition the only one of the party whose personality is described at all in detail is one Thorhall, who bore the additional title of "the huntsman." Thorhall had been for a long time in the service of Eirik as huntsman and house-steward. "He was a man," says the Saga, "of great stature, dark and uncanny. He was rather old, morose in disposition, melancholy, usually taciturn, double-dealing, foul-speaking, and ready to take the wrong side. He had associated himself little with the true faith since it came to Greenland. Thorhall was not very popular, although Eirik had long taken his advice. He was upon the ship with Thorvald, because he was well acquainted with the uninhabited parts of Greenland." Thorhall has evidently fared worse at the hands of the Sagateller than he deserves, and the reason is doubtless that he had refused to accept Christianity with the rest. That he was trustworthy is shown by the confidence reposed in him by Eirik, and by the fact that he was afterward entrusted with the command of a ship to go on an exploring expedition. In the description of him here given there is little to conform to one's ideal of a poet.

After the Norsemen had settled for the winter at Stream Fiord, they did nothing but explore the land. They found plenty of grass for their cattle, but a hard winter came on, for which they had made no provision, and food became scarce, and both hunting and fishing failed. Hoping to better their condition, they went over to the island opposite the fiord, with the expectation of there finding food of some kind; but they met with little success, although the cattle fared well. "Afterward," continues the Saga, "they called upon God to send them something for food; but the answer came not so quickly as they wished."

At this juncture Thorhall suddenly disappeared, and men were out three days looking for him. On the fourth day Karlsefni and Bjarni found him on a crag. He was gazing up into the air; eyes and mouth and nostrils were stretched wide open; he scratched and pinched himself, and recited something whose purport they could not catch. When they asked him why he was there, he replied, curtly, that it was no concern of theirs; that they need not be astonished, and that he had lived so long that there was no necessity for them to give him advice. They, however, induced him to return with them. A short time after, a whale of an unknown species drifted ashore, and the men cut it up and cooked it for food; but all except Thorhall were made ill by it. He evidently considered the whale a gift of the gods, for he exclaimed, "Is it not so that the Red-Bearded is mightier than your Christ? This I now have for the poem which I made about my patron, Thor. Seldom has he failed me." When his comrades heard this, however, they cast the whale meat away in horror, and, in the quaint words of the Saga, "turned for help to God's mercy." Their prayer seems to have been answered, for there was henceforth no lack of food until spring. On all sides they obtained plenty to eat: on the mainland by hunting, and on the sea by fishing.

After the winter was ended it was decided to continue their journey. Thorhall was to go north, and endeavour in that way to find Vinland, which, it seems, they considered not yet to have been discovered. Karlsefni, on the contrary, was to go further south, as it was thought that the further they went in that direction the more land they would find. Thorhall, accordingly, prepared to set out with a crew of nine men. One day when he was engaged in carrying water from the land to the ship, he stopped to drink, and recited this verse, which he doubtless composed on the spot:—

"Quoth they when hither I came,
Wielders they of the clashing weapons,
Here could I find drink of the best.
(Foul to speak of my folk little be seems me.)
Yet the god of the helmet becomes
Bearer of water-butts here.
It is truer I creep to the spring
Than wine o'er my beard has o'er trickled."

They afterward put to sea, but before they hoisted the sail Thorhall again recited a verse:—

Let us fare back again where
Live our own lands-men;
Let the sea falcons knowing
Seek the ship courses broad;
While, fear-shy, yet here bide
Warriors cooking the whale-steak,
Men they who lands here find
Meet to them on the Marvel Strands." *

* The requirements of the versification are that every couplet shall contain one set of alliteration and two sets of assonance. The alliterative set consists of the threefold use as initial either of the same consonant or of any vowel. The alliterative sound must occur but once in the first member of the couplet, and twice in the second member; the only requirement as to position being that the first word of the second line of the couplet must begin with it. Assonance consists in the repetition of a vowel or diphthong before the same consonant or consonantal combination. In the first set of assonance the assonant sound occurs in any word, but only once in the first member of the couplet, and in the first word of the second member. In the second set the assonant sound occurs in the last word of the couplet and in any pre-