

intelligence. That there was a Leif Erikson, and that he was the son of Erik the Red, and made his home in Greenland, perhaps no one would desire to deny; that he came upon a land which he gave various names to, is not only possible but also probable. That the land he discovered was not so well situated or attractive as the home of Erik is proved from the fact that he abandoned his houses in Vinland and returned to his former home. All the facts in the case would point to Western Greenland as the scene of the achievement of Leif Erikson. The Skrællings were Eskimos, as may be learned from the descriptions given: "These people were swarthy and fierce, and had bushy hair on their heads; they had very large eyes and broad cheeks." In 1342 the Eskimo so imperilled the western colonies of Greenland that they were abandoned. These settlements could not have been strong, and probably were made after the death of Leif.

How much dependence can be placed in certain statements must be left to conjecture. No reliance can be placed in the points of the compass, for with that instrument they had no acquaintance. It must be regarded as comparative, when the direction of the ship's sailing is given. In Leif's voyage the shortest day in Vinland was from "dagmaal til non," that is, from nine to three.

In the legends of Greenland and Iceland sufficient data had been preserved upon which such a narrative could be built as would tickle the ear of those whose ancestors were lauded. As has been seen, these narratives are crude and poorly constructed, but clearly represent the beginning of fiction, which might have been better adorned had they fallen into more competent hands.

The mighty ocean stretching out itself beyond the Pillars of Hercules, Ireland and the Western Isles, afforded food for the imaginations of men. The influence was felt by the sagamen, who pictured a body of land west of Ireland and within easy sail. Tales grew out of this pictured land, which have been preserved in their writings. One of these is the story of Gudleif Gudlaugson, preserved in the Eyrbyggja saga. Near the end of the reign of King Olaf, Gudleif went on a trading voyage to the west of Dublin. On his return to Iceland, sailing west from Ireland, he was driven far into the ocean by northeast winds. At length they saw land of great extent, and finding a good harbor they went on shore, where a number of men met them, and from their language took them to be Irish. Soon after many hundreds surrounded them, who seized Gudleif and his companions, bound and drove them inland, where they were brought before an assembly which decided what should be done with them. There was a division in the council; some were for killing them, and others were for reducing them to slavery. "While this was going on, they saw a great number of men riding towards them with a banner lifted up, whence they inferred that some great