

# PART I.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE NORSE SEA-KINGS—EARLY NORSE NAVIGATORS—DISCOVERY OF ICELAND—  
DISCOVERY OF GREENLAND—THE GATE TO THE POLAR REGIONS.

THE navigators of Britain and America may be said, generally, to trace their descent from the Norsemen (North-men), who inhabited Scandinavia, an ill-defined region on the north-west shores of Europe, and including the regions now known as Denmark, and the southern coasts of Norway and Sweden. So rapidly did this robust race multiply and increase in their native provinces, that at a very early period their country became over-populated, and it became necessary for those of them who were not sufficiently provided for at home, to put forth in the vessels which necessity had early taught them to construct, and to roam the seas in search of a means of subsistence. This they generally succeeded in finding *in the shape of booty*, on the shores of some richer and less warlike country than their own. For centuries these ocean freebooters were the scourge and the terror of Western Europe. Brave, daring, brilliant in the rapidity with which they planned, and the skill with which they executed their piratical expeditions, the Norsemen—known later, some of them, as the Normans—soon enriched themselves with the spoils of every maritime country in Northern Europe. During the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, the seas swarmed with their terrible war-ships, and from one end of Europe to the other, they made the coasts of those countries, now the most powerful, a prey to their depredations. During the space of two hundred years, they almost incessantly ravaged England, and frequently subdued it. They invaded Scotland and Ireland, and made incursions on the coasts of Livonia, Courland, and Pomerania. They spread like a devouring flame over Lower Saxony, Friesland, Holland, Flanders, and the banks of the Rhine, as far as Mainz. They penetrated into the heart of France, having long before ravaged the coasts; they found their way inland, up the Somme, the Seine, the Loire, the Garonne, and the Rhone. Within the space of thirty years, they frequently pillaged and burned Paris,