

Mord, a villain, the example of cunning, trickery and wrongdoing. A great part of the saga is taken up with the three cases and suits of the divorce, the death of Hoskuld, and the burning of Nial, given with great minuteness and care. The whole story is an ideal saga-plot, and appears to have been written by a lawyer, and according to internal evidence it was composed about 1250. It has been worked over by a later editor about 1300, who has inserted many spurious verses.

Perhaps no one could be found hardy enough to dispute the fact that Peringskiöld, in his edition of the *Heimskringla*, edited in 1697, interpolated eight chapters relating to the so-called Vinland voyages, which were afterwards discovered to have been taken from *Codex Flatoynensis*. It was this that Robertson, in his "History of America," relied upon as evidence of the Norse discovery of America, although he naively remarked, it "is a very rude, confused tale."* In America this has served more to spread the tale of this purported discovery than any other one source. It thereby gained a foothold in American history, and later compilers, for the most part, have received and adopted it without inquiry into the facts; just the same as other purported evidences have been added without critical inquiry.

DeCosta, although affirming that "those who imagine that these manuscripts have been tampered with and interpolated show that they have not the faintest conception of the state of the question,"† is forced to admit that Smith, in his "Dialogues,"‡ has suppressed the term "six," and substituted "by a number of days' sail unknown," in the "Landnama-bok" where it speaks of Ireland the Great lying opposite of Vinland, six days' sail west of Ireland.

Such manuscripts as have been preserved might tell a wondrous tale of changes and perversions should they fall under the eye of an expert, accustomed to detect, with such glosses as many an old writing has been subjected to. Until such detections have been made it is but just to receive them as they are, with such light as circumstances have surrounded them.

The sagas need not be solely depended upon to prove that the Norsemen were a hardy band of sea-rovers—or pirates, as they would have been designated had they lived in more modern times. Their roving propensities led them to the discovery of Iceland—as above intimated—in the year 850, and Greenland was first seen in 876, by Gunnbiörn, who had been driven out to sea by a storm, but a landing was not effected until about 986, when Erik the Red settled there. This Erik was born in Norway, but was banished from that country on account of the crime of murder. He retired to Iceland, where he was again

*Page 241.

†Pre-Columbian Discovery, p. 40.

‡Ibid., p. 161