

all reasonable doubts as to the accuracy of details, there is strong probability in favour of the authenticity of the American Vinland of the Northmen.

The Colonisation of Greenland, however, rests on no probabilities of oral or written tradition, but is an indisputable historical fact. In A.D., 999, Leif Ericson, the son of its discoverer, made a voyage to Norway, at the time when Olaf Trygvesson, the Saint Olave of Norse hagiology, was introducing Christianity into Scandinavia. Under the influence of the royal missionary, Leif Ericson abandoned paganism; and carrying back with him to Greenland teachers of the new faith, it found a ready acceptance among the Arctic Colonists. Greenland remained in connection with the mother country till the middle of the twelfth century, when it attempted to throw off its allegiance to Magnus, King of Norway, but was reduced to submission by an expedition despatched for that purpose by Eric, King of Denmark, whose niece was wedded to the Norwegian King.

There were two Norse colonies, those of east and west Greenland. The colonists of the western coast appear to have been exterminated by the Esquimaux; but the fate of those of the eastern settlement was long a mystery on which the modern Dane and Norwegian speculated as one of the obscure marvels of their race's history. It is obvious from the early details of the colony that the shores of Greenland must have been accessible in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, to an extent wholly unknown in the experience of modern Arctic voyagers. In all probability the decay of the colonies is due to a considerable extent to climatic changes which had already, in the fourteenth century, begun to hem in the Greenland coasts with the icy barriers which for four centuries precluded all access to their inhospitable shores. But a great mortality among the voyagers trading between Norway and Greenland was occasioned in A.D., 1348, by a frightful plague known by the name of the *Black Death*; and it was long maintained that the whole Greenland colony had been exterminated by the same deadly scourge. Later accounts, however, still refer to the colonists; and the records of the reign of Queen Margaret—under whom the crowns of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway were united in 1397,—include references to the efforts then made to keep up the communication with Greenland. But political troubles at home speedily rendered the Queen indifferent to such remote dependencies. To all appearance, also, the Greenland coasts were being gradually hemmed in by