

trous Northmen, eager to see and possess territories entitled to such an enticing appellation, embarked in considerable numbers under the guidance of Eric Rauda, and were soon followed by many from Norway. Colonies were established, which continued in existence till the year 1418. At that time they were wholly destroyed by a pestilence which at that time ravaged Europe, called the *black death*, and by a hostile fleet, of what country, strange to say, is entirely unknown. In the year 1721, Greenland was again colonized from Denmark.

But during the period in which the Norwegians held possession of Greenland, a still more wonderful discovery is related to have taken place. In the year 1081, a Northman named Bjorn having been driven from his course when sailing to Greenland, came in sight of a level country covered with wood, far south west of his destination. He continued on his way to Greenland,—and on his arrival, engaged a party to accompany him on a voyage of adventure to the land which he had descried. A vessel being equipped, he set sail and in a short time came in sight of a rocky island which they named Helleland. Continuing on their course, they arrived a few days afterwards at a river, “on the banks of which were trees loaded with agreeable fruits. The temperature appeared delicious, the soil seemed fertile, and the river yielded abundance of fine salmon. Having reached the lake from which the river issued, our Greenlanders resolved to winter in the country. They found that, on the shortest day, the sun remained eight hours above the horizon— from which observation it results that they were not far from the forty-ninth degree of latitude.”

The country thus discovered, and which they named Vinland, or the *land of wine*, from the circumstance of their having found wild grapes growing there, is supposed to have been either part of the island of Newfoundland or of the continent of North America. Indeed if we place any credit in the authenticity of this discovery, we can only place this Vinland, lying as it did south west of Greenland, and in the forty-fifth degree of latitude, in the island we have mentioned, or the most adjacent part of the main land. The Scandinavian adventurers having established colonies in the country, are related to have carried on a profitable fur trade with a race of natives, whom they term *Skrælingues*, or dwarfs, who must have been the Northern Indians known by the name of Esquimaux. The account of this discovery is confirmed by the Zeni, two Venetians of noble birth, who in the year 1380 set out on a voyage

from the Feroe Islands to those countries which had before been visited by the Northmen. In their narrative they describe an island to which they gave the name of Estotiland, and a more western coast named Drocco, situated to the south of Greenland, and a thousand miles to the west of the Feroe Island. They do not pretend to the merit of having discovered these countries, but attribute it to some fishermen driven by a tempest upon the island called Estotiland. These shipwrecked mariners found there a town, with houses built of stone and inhabited by people who carried on a trade with Greenland. These appear to have been the descendants of the Northmen who had before landed here. “They were good seamen, although still unacquainted with the use of the compass. The Friesland fishermen being provided with this instrument, were entrusted by the king with the conduct of an expedition directed towards a country situated farther to the south, and called Drocco. They had the misfortune, however, to fall into the hands of a nation of cannibals. The Frieslanders were all eaten save one, whose life was spared on account of his dexterity in the art of fishing: the savages contended for the possession of so valuable a slave. Being handed over continually from one master to another, he had an opportunity of seeing the whole country. He affirmed that it was of unbounded extent, and in fact *a new world*. The savage natives wore no covering. They were engaged in continual contests among themselves, the conqueror always feasting on his vanquished foe. Farther to the south west were a people much more civilized, who were acquainted with the use of the precious metals, built large cities and temples, but nevertheless offered up human victims to their idols.”

The inhabitants of the country called Estotiland (no doubt the same as Vinland and a part of Newfoundland) were the descendants of the Norwegians who before settled there. The disappearance of these colonies at a later period is attributed to the same cause as the destruction of those in Greenland. The region which they named Drocco is supposed to have been PART OF NOVA SCOTIA or New England,—and the rich and more civilized people in the south were, by a parity of reasoning, the inhabitants of Mexico.

The continent of America, then, if this account be credited, was discovered nearly five centuries prior to the time of Columbus. There can be no doubt that this great navigator was acquainted with many floating relations of the discoveries of those Scandinavian adventurers.