

and the Western Continent which we now call *America*. From Norway to Iceland is double the distance that it is from the latter to the extreme southern cape of Greenland, or from the latter again to the most southern part of Labrador; whilst the distance between Greenland and the nearest point of Iceland, on the one hand, or the nearest part of Labrador, on the other, reduces still farther the proportion between the width of each of these two channels and that of the great ocean divide between Iceland and Norway. Was it probable, then—was it even possible, that these Icelandic Northmen could long continue cruising to and from their island home without becoming acquainted with the great continent which lay to the westward of them? Assuredly not! If accident had not revealed to them an early knowledge of this New World, they would certainly have soon discovered it in the regular course of designed exploration. It was accident, however, which brought about this revelation; and we have all the events connected with the discovery, recorded with all necessary particularity in the Icelandic Sagas, written soon after the events occurred, and when the traditions of them were still fresh in the memories of the living.

Our earliest information upon these points is derived from the so called *Saga of Erik the Red*, and is to this purport: Thorvald and his son Erik the Red were among the later arrivals of the original Icelandic colonists. We are curtly told that they 'removed to Iceland in consequence of murder.' There Erik married, and had a son called *Leif*, of whom we shall hear more by and by. Erik, it seems, became, on more than one occasion, unfortunate in his social relations. At length he got involved in an unusually troublesome quarrel with one Thorgerd, to whom he had lent his Seat-posts, and from whom he could not get them back again. A pretty general fray ensued, some of the neighbours taking sides with Erik and others

with Thorgerd. The upshot of this affair was, that Erik was declared outlawed. In disgust he got ready his ship and put out to sea, telling his friends he was going West, in search of a land which had been seen not long before by one Gunbjörn, Ulf Krage's son, when blown off to sea. He found the land which he sought, coasted down upon it southwardly and westwardly, giving names to many places, and remained there two winters; but in the third summer he returned to Iceland. Erik called the land which he had found *Greenland* (*Grœnland*), which name it has continued to bear to this day, much to the mystification of many people who have been unable to see its appropriateness; but Erik slyly observed: 'People will be attracted thither if the land has a good name.' He remained that winter in Iceland, but returned to Greenland the following summer, and commenced to colonize the land. 'This was fifteen winters before Christianity was established by law in Iceland,' says the *Saga*. Therefore, the final settlement of Erik and his followers in Greenland must have been in the year 985, Christianity having been established in Iceland in A.D. 1000.

Thus we find that in just 111 years from the arrival of the first Northmen in Iceland, their descendants had already discovered and commenced the colonization of Greenland. It seemed impossible that much more time could elapse before the great Western Continent became known to them. That knowledge came sooner even than could have been reasonably expected.

Among the Icelandic immigrants from Norway was Herjulf, who was a kinsman of the first of the Landnamsmen, Ingolf, already named. Herjulf and his wife Thorgerd had a son named Bjarni, who is described as 'a very hopeful man.' This Bjarni Herjulfson conceived, when young, a great desire to travel, which desire he to the full indulged when he came to mature years. He, in time, became possessed