

property to him who could take it. There seems little reason to doubt that the small but strong wooden vessels of the sea-kings sighted the shores of America and beached their prows on the coast of Canada. Iceland and the Faroe Islands, we know, were settled by the Norsemen in the ninth century. Eric the Red, of Norway, occupied the coast of Greenland in A. D. 986, and one of his colonists was a little later swept by stormy seas into sight of unknown lands to the south and west. Leif Ericson, in the year 1000, undertook the exploration of these strange new regions, and appears to have touched the continent where Labrador now is. Other points which he claims to have seen were called Helluland, Markland and Vinland. Whether these places were really the Island of Newfoundland, the coast of Nova Scotia, and the shores of Massachusetts, as is respectively alleged, will probably remain a hopelessly disputed point.

TALES OF VIKING HEROES

There are strong reasons for believing in some measure the truth of the Icelandic Sagas, from whence these traditions are derived, and it is probable that the songs which thus sing weird tales of Viking heroes upon the Atlantic shores of Canada and the United States have a firmer ground of fact to support their swelling words than has many an accepted event of old-time Eastern and European history. Still, so far as the world at large was concerned, nothing but faint rumours and mythical tales had resulted from these passing settlements upon the soil of America or sweeping glimpses of its lonely shores.

To really make this vast region known to humanity required a period of growing maritime commerce as well as of stirring adventure—a time when the Orient, with its wealth of mystery and romance, of silks and spices, of gold and silver and gems, was being brought closer to the eye and the mind of Europe. It