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Christopher Columbus

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Select Letters of Christopher Columbus

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Select Letters of Christopher Columbus

*With Other Original Documents, Relating to
His Four Voyages to the New World*

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS
EDITED BY RICHARD HENRY MAJOR



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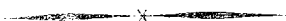
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ETC.

M.DCCC.XLVII.

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SELECT

LETTERS

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS,

WITH OTHER ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS,

RELATING TO HIS

FOUR VOYAGES

TO

THE NEW WORLD.

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY

R. H. MAJOR, ESQ.

OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

“ Tu spiegherai, Colombo, a un novo polo
Lontane sì le fortunate antenne,
Ch’a pena seguirà con gli occhi il volo
La Fama c’ha mille occhi e mille penne.
Canti ella Alcide e Bacco, e di te solo
Basti ai posteri tuoi ch’alquanto accenne ;
Chè quel poco darà lunga memoria
Di poema degnissima e d’istoria.
Tasso.—Gerusalemme Liberata.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY.

M.DCCC.XLVII.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

SHOULD the reader of the following highly interesting letters meet with some passages deficient in that ease of expression, or that connectedness of construction to which his ear and his taste are accustomed, he is requested to bear in mind that the originals are the compositions of men, who, though intelligent observers of the facts they describe, and strongly actuated by the feelings to which they give expression, were yet far from being accomplished masters of the use of the pen.

The Spanish scholar will readily perceive that the inaccuracies of the original, both in spelling and grammar, the frequent use of obsolete words, and the disjointed character of the sentences, must have rendered it a matter of no inconsiderable difficulty to avoid a certain harshness of style, in the endeavour to give a correct version of the author's meaning. In the execution of his task, however, the Editor has

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never hesitated to sacrifice ease to accuracy, where the two were incompatible with each other.

Since writing the following introduction to these letters, the Editor has seen those passages in *Kosmos* which refer to Columbus and to the antecedent voyages to the New World, and is happy to find the remarks of the illustrious Humboldt in this latter work in no way contradictory to the statements in the *Géographie du nouveau Continent*, to which the Editor has been indebted in the progress of the following pages.

R. H. M.

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IN introducing these letters for the first time to the English reader, it will perhaps be necessary to forewarn him that he is not to expect to find in them a detailed history of all the events that occurred in the four important voyages to which they refer. The inducement to translate them has been, that though falling far short of a complete history, they are yet filled with a most interesting series of incidents, described by the pens of those to whom these incidents occurred; while at the same time they present us, from Columbus's own mouth as it were, with a clear view of his opinions and conjectures upon many remarkable and important subjects; and of the magnanimity with which he endured an accumulated burthen of unmerited affliction.

The translated documents are seven in number. Five of them are letters from the hand of Columbus himself, describing respectively his first, third, and fourth voyages. Another, descriptive of the second voyage, is by Dr. Chanca, the physician to the fleet during that expedition; and the seventh document is an extract

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from the will of Diego Mendez, one of Columbus's officers during the fourth voyage, who gives a detailed account of many most interesting adventures undertaken by himself, but left undescribed by Columbus.

It will be requisite, however, for the satisfaction of the reader, to enter more minutely into the history of each of these documents individually.

The first and by far the most interesting of the letters is that addressed by Columbus from Lisbon, under date of the 14th of March, 1493, to Raphael Sanchez, treasurer to Ferdinand and Isabella, and describes the occurrences of his first great discovery. This letter, the only one of the number now published that has hitherto appeared in the English language, was translated very loosely and without comment in the *Edinburgh Review* for 1816.

It is not known whether the original, written by Columbus, in Spanish, be now in existence or not, but it is possible that it may still lie, like a diamond in the mine, in some unexplored Archivo in Spain.

On its first appearance, in 1493, the astonishing narrative it contained caused so much excitement as to occasion numerous editions to be issued in the same year from the various great printing cities of Europe. Those at present known are the following :—

“Epistola Christofori Colom : cui etas nostra multum debet: de insulis Indie supra Gangem nuper invētis. Ad quas perquirendas octavo antea mense auspiciis et

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ere invictissimorum Fernandi ac Helisabet Hispaniar^ū Regū missus fuerat; ad magnificum dñm Gabrielem Sanches; eorundem Serenissimorum Regum Tesaurariū missa: Qua' generosus ac litteratus vir Leander de Cosco ab Hispana idiomate in Latinū cōvertit; tertio Kalēn Maii m.c.c.c.c.xc.iii. Pontificatus Alexandri Sexti anno primo. Impressit Romæ Eucharius Argenteus anno dñi m.c.c.c.c.xc.iii." There are copies of this edition in the Grenville Library, British Museum; and in the libraries of Mr. James Lenox of New York and Mr. John Carter Brown, of Providence, Rhode Island.

"Epistola Christofori Colom: cui etas nostra multum debet: de Insulis Indie supra Gangem nuper invēitis. Ad quas perq̄rendas octavo antea mense auspiciis et ære invictissimorum Fernandi et Helisabet Hispaniæ Regū missus fuerat, ad magnificum dām Gabrielem Sanchis eorundē Serenissimorum Regum Tesaurariū missa: quā nobilis ac litteratus vir Leander de Cosco ab Hispano idiomate in Latinum cōvertit tertio kal's Maii. m.cccc.xciii. Pontificatus Alexandri Sexti Anno primo. Sine loco et anno." Four leaves and thirty-three lines in a full page.

Copies of this edition exist in the Grenville Library, British Museum; in the Royal Library, Munich; and in the libraries of Mr. James Lenox of New York, and Mr. John Carter Brown of Providence.

"Epistola Christofori Colum: cui etas nostra multū debet: de Insulis Indie supra Gangem nuper inventis. Ad quas perquirendas octavo antea mense auspiciis et ere invictissimi Fernandi Hispaniarum Regis missus

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fuerat: ad Magnificum dñm Raphaellem Sanxis: ejusdem serenissimi Regis Tēsaurariū missa: quam nobilis ac litteratus vir Aliander de Cosco ab Hispano ideomate in latinum convertit: tertio kal's Maii. m.cccc.xciii. Pontificatus Alexandri Sexti anno Primo. Sine loco et anno et typ. n." Four leaves, thirty-four lines in a full page.

Copies of this edition are in the Grenville Library, British Museum; the Royal Library of Munich; and in the libraries of Colonel Thomas Aspinwall, United States, Consul-General at London, and Mr. John Carter of Providence.

"De Insulis nuper inventis. Epistola Cristoferi Colom (cui etas nostra multū debet: de Insulis in Mari Indico nup' invētis. Ad quas perquirendas octavo antea mense: auspiciis et ere Invictissimi Fernandi Hispaniarum Regis missus fuerat) ad Magnificum dñm Raphalez Sanxis: ejusdē seremissimi Regis Thēsaurariū missa. Quam nobilis ac litterat' vir Aliander d' Cosco: ab Hispano Ydeomate in latinū convertit: tercio kl's Maii. m.cccc.xciii. Pontificatus Alexandri Sexti anno primo. 8vo. s. l. 1493." Six wood-cuts, one of them (the Oceanica Classis) repeated; nine leaves, twenty-seven words in a full page.

Copies of this edition are in the Grenville Library, British Museum; and in the library of Professor Libri.

Another edition, 4to., was printed at Paris (1493), the only known copy of which is in the library of Mr. J. C. Brown of Providence.

There was likewise another edition printed in Paris

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(1493), with a wood-cut on the title, one copy of which is in the Bodleian Library, and another in the University Library of Göttingen.

“Eyn schön hübsch lesen von etlichen insslen die do in kurtzen zyten funden synd durch de’ künig von Hispania, und sagt vō grossen wunderlichen dingen die in dē selbē insslen synd. Getruckt zu Strassburg uff gruneek vō meister Bartlomess Füstler ym jar m.cccc.xcvii. uff sant Jeronymus tag.” 4to. Seven leaves, thirty lines in a full page.

The only known copy is in the Grenville Library, British Museum.

“De insulis nuper inventis. Epistola Christoferi Colom (cui etas nostra multum debet: de insulis in mari Indico nuper inventis ad quas perquirendas octavo antea mense: auspiciis et ere invictissimi Ferdinandi Hispaniarū Regis missus fuerat) ad magnificū dominū Raphaelē Sanxis: ejusdem serenissimi Regis Thesaurarium missa: quam nobilis ac litteratus vir Aliander de Cosco: ab Hispano ideomate: in latinum convertit: tercio Kalendas Maii. m.cccc.xciii. Pontificatus Alexandri Sexti anno primo.” Seven leaves, twenty-eight lines in a full page. Four wood-cuts.

This book forms the sequel to “Verardus in laudem Ferdinandi Regis.”

There are copies of this edition in the Grenville library, British Museum; and in the libraries of Mr. John Carter Brown, Mr. James Lenox, Mr. Henry Stevens, and Mr. O. Rich. It is less rare than the others.

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Copies of another edition of the letter forming a sequel to *Verardus*, folio, printed in Basle, 1533, are in the British Museum, and in the libraries of Messrs. Brown and Lenox; but are of no remarkable rarity.

No sooner did this letter make its appearance in print, in the year 1493, than the narrative it contained was put forth in Italian ottava rima by Giuliano Dati, one of the most popular poets of the day, and there is reason to believe that it was sung about the streets to announce to the Italians the astounding news of the discovery of a new world. The only known copy of this curious and valuable poem has recently come into the possession of the British Museum. Whether regarded with reference to the bibliography of early works relating to America, or of the early poetry of Italy, this little work must be acknowledged to possess the highest interest.

It consists of four leaves, comprising a title page and sixty-eight stanzas. The title runs thus: “La lettera, dell’ isole che ha trovato nuovamente il re di Spagna.” End of the volume.—“Finita la Storia della inventione delle nuove isole dicanaria indiane tracte duna pistola di Christofano Colombo et per...Giuliano Dati tradocta. A di 26 doctubre 1493. Florentie.” On the title-page is an engraving representing the arrival of Columbus with his fleet at one of the newly discovered islands in the West Indies, with the king of Spain sitting enthroned in the foreground.

A copy of the poem is given as an appendix to this introduction.

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All the remaining documents are taken from Navarrete's "Coleccion de los viages y descubrimientos que hicieron por mar los Españoles desde fines del siglo 15." The second letter, which is written by Dr. Chanca, was copied by Navarrete (as he himself says at the end of the letter in his work) from a manuscript, in the possession of the Royal Academy of History at Madrid, written in the middle of the sixteenth century, and was amongst the collection of papers referring to the West Indies, collected by Father Antonio de Aspa, a monk of the order of St. Jerome, of the monastery of the Mejorada, near Olmedo.—This document was unpublished previous to Navarrete's compilation. A copy was taken from the original by Don Manuel Avella, and deposited in the collection of Don Juan Bautista Muñoz, and from that copy, after collation with the original manuscript, the transfer was made by Navarrete into his valuable work. This letter is followed by a Memorial respecting the second voyage, addressed to the sovereigns by Columbus, through the intervention of Antonio de Torres, governor of the city of Isabella. At the close of each chapter or item is affixed their highnesses' reply. The document was taken by Navarrete from the Archives of Seville.

The two letters next in order in the present translation, are from the hand of Columbus himself, and are descriptive of the events of the third voyage. The first, addressed to the sovereigns, was taken by Navarrete, under careful collation by himself and Muñoz, from a manuscript in the handwriting of the bishop Bartholomew de las Casas, found in the archives of

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the duke del Infantado. The second, addressed to the nurse of Prince John, is taken from a collection of manuscripts, relating to the West Indies, made by Muñoz, and deposited in the Real Academia de la Historia at Madrid. The text was collated by Navarrete, with a copy inserted in the *Codice Colombo Americano*, said to have been taken in the monastery of Santa Maria de las Cuevas in Seville.

The letter by Columbus, descriptive of his fourth voyage, was taken by Navarrete, from a manuscript in the king's private library at Madrid, written in the handwriting of the middle of the sixteenth century, and probably the same copy as that which Pinelo, at page 61 of his *Biblioteca Occidental*, 4to., 1629, describes as having been made by Don Lorenzo Ramirez de Prado, from an edition in 4to., which does not appear to be now in existence. It was translated into Italian, by Constanzo Baymera of Brescia, and published at Venice, in 1505, and had become extremely scarce, until republished, with some learned comments, by Morelli, the librarian of St. Mark's at Venice, in 1810.

That it had been printed in Spanish is asserted both by Pinelo and by Fernando Columbus.

It is presumed that the manuscript from which Navarrete made his copy was that made by Ramirez de Prado, because it had been removed to the king's library, from the Colegio Mayor de Cuenca, in Salamanca, where the papers of Ramirez had been deposited.

It is impossible to read, without the deepest sympathy, the occasional murmurings and half suppressed

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complaints which are uttered in the course of this touching letter. These murmurings and complaints were wrung from the manly spirit of Columbus by sickness and sorrow, and though reduced almost to the brink of despair by the injustice of the king, yet do we find nothing harsh or disrespectful in his language to the sovereign. A curious contrast is presented to us. The gift of a world could not move the monarch to gratitude; the infliction of chains, as a recompense for that gift, could not provoke the subject to disloyalty. The same great heart which through more than twenty wearisome years of disappointment and chagrin, gave him strength to beg and to buffet his way to glory, still taught him to bear with majestic meekness the conversion of that glory into unmerited shame.

Our list of translated documents concludes with an extract from the will of the brave and faithful Diego Mendez, without the aid of whose devoted and unflinching fidelity, Columbus must have inevitably perished, under the overwhelming disasters of his fourth voyage.

The will itself is deposited in the archives of the Duke of Veragua, the lineal descendant of Columbus; and the extract was made for Navarrete, by the canonigo Tomas Gonzalez, on the 25th March, 1825.

A series of documents so highly interesting both for originality and importance as those that have been here enumerated, might appear to need but few words either of introduction or recommendation, since the entire history of civilization presents us with no event,

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with the exception perhaps of the art of printing, so momentous as the discovery of the western world; and, independently of the lustre which the intrinsic importance of that event confers upon the discoverer, there is no individual who has rendered himself, on the score of personal character and conduct, more illustrious than Christopher Columbus. There have, nevertheless, not been wanting those, who, from various motives, and on grounds of various trustworthiness, have endeavoured to lessen his glory, by impeaching his claim to the priority of discovery, or by arguing that the discovery itself has proved a misfortune rather than advantage to the world at large. In order, therefore, to vindicate the value of the original documents here translated, it will not perhaps be deemed superfluous that allusion be made as briefly as possible to such pretensions to prior discovery as have been at different times put forth, that thus a fair estimate may be formed of the relative merits of each.

Various have been the absurdities set forth by speculative writers respecting the original colonization of the western hemisphere. Athanasius Kircher, in his *Prodromus Coptus and Ædipus Ægyptiacus*, gives the Egyptians the credit of colonizing America, as well as India, China, and Japan, grounding his argument upon the religious worship of the sun, moon, stars, and animals. Edward Brerewood, at pages 96 and 97 of his *Enquiries touching the Diversity of Languages*, contends that the Americans are the progeny of the Tartars. Marc Lescarbot, in his

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Histoire de la Nouvelle France, maintains that the Canaanites, when routed by Joshua, were driven into America by storms, and that Noah was born in America, and after the flood showed his descendants the way into their paternal country, and assigned to some of them their places of abode there. But Hornius, in his treatise *De originibus Americanis*, after touching upon the various conjectures here quoted, conceives that Paracelsus has reached the height of presumption and folly, when he states, that a second Adam and Eve were created for the peopling of the western world.

The first specific statement, however, of a supposed migration from the shores of the old world to those of the new, is that which the learned De Guignes presumes to be demonstrable, from the relation given by a Chinese historian, Li-Yen, who lived at the commencement of the seventh century. The said historian speaks of a country, named Fou-sang, more than forty thousand *li** to the east of China. He says that they who went thither started from the province of Lea-tong, situated to the north of Peking; that after having made twelve thousand *li*, they came to Japan; that travelling seven thousand *li* northward from that place, they arrived at the country of Ven-chin, and at five thousand *li* eastward of the latter, they found the country of Tahan, whence they journeyed to Fou-sang, which was twenty thousand *li* distant from Tahan. From this account De Guignes endeavours, by a long chain of argument, to prove that the Chinese

* The *li* is about one-tenth of the common league.

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had pushed their investigations into Jeso, Kamtschatka, and into that part of America which is situated opposite the most eastern coast of Asia.

This surmise of De Guignes has been answered by Klaproth, in a paper which appeared in the *Nouvelles Annales des Voyages*. His arguments go to show that the country named Fousang is Japan; and that the country of Tahan, situated to the west of Asiatic Vinland, can only be the island of Saghalian. Humboldt observes upon this subject that the number of horses, the practice of writing, and the manufacture of paper from the Fousang tree, mentioned in the account given by the Chinese historian, ought to have shown De Guignes that the country of which he spoke was not America.

The presumed discovery of America, which comes next in chronological rotation, is that by the Scandinavians, the earliest *printed allusion* to which occurs in Adam of Bremen's *Historia Ecclesiastica Ecclesiarum Hamburgensis et Bremensis*, published at Copenhagen, 1579, 4to. The Baron von Humboldt has asserted that the merit of first recognizing the discovery of America, by the northmen, *belongs indisputably* to Ortelius, who, in his *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, with unjust severity says, that Christopher Columbus had done nothing more than to place the new world in a permanently useful and commercial relationship with Europe. The ground upon which the priority is claimed for Ortelius, is that the first edition of his work came out in 1570, although the reference which Humboldt himself gives is to an

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edition of 1601, which was after the death of Ortelius, and the earlier editions do not contain the chapter on the Pacific Ocean, in which the passage occurs. It is true that in the *Bibliotheca Hulthemiana* the edition of 1601 is said to have been revised and augmented by Ortelius before his death in 1598, but, even if the assertion were made by Ortelius, and not by the editor of his work after his death, it still leaves perfectly unimpeached the claim of Adam of Bremen to having first mentioned the discovery in 1579. Abraham Mylius, in his *Treatise de Antiquitate Linguae Belgicae*, Leyden, 1611, makes all Americans to be sprung from Celts; stating that many Celtic words were to be found in use there; and with more reasonable showing affirms that the coast of Labrador was visited by wanderers from Iceland. Hugo Grotius, in his *Dissertatio de Origine Gentium Americanarum*, (Paris, 1642, 8vo.), follows Mylius, and states that America was colonized by a Norwegian race, who came thither from Iceland, through Greenland, and passed through North America down to the Isthmus.

The earliest *printed detail* of these discoveries is given by the Norwegian historian, Thormodus Torfæus, in a work entitled *Historia Vinlandiæ Antiquæ, ex Antiquitatibus Islandicis in lucem producta*, (Hannæ, 1705, 12mo.) But in the invaluable work by Professor Rafn, published in 1837 by the Danish Royal Society of Antiquaries, under the title of *Antiquitates Americanæ*, the manuscripts which record these discoveries are given at length in the original, accompanied by a Latin translation, and careful and

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learned geographical illustrations. The following is a summary of the principal events recorded, in this highly interesting volume, and the geographical inferences are those supplied by the professor himself.

One Eric Rauda, or Eric the Red, son of Thorwald, a Norwegian noble, having been condemned to a banishment of three years, for killing Eyolf his neighbour, emigrated in the spring of the year 986, to a country to the west of Iceland, which had been discovered a short time previously by a man named Gunbjorn. After two years absence, he returned to Iceland, and in order to hold out an inducement to colonization, named the newly discovered country, Greenland, intending by that name to express the richness of the woods and meadows with which it abounded. Amongst those who had accompanied Eric was a man named Heriulf Bardson, who established himself at Heriulfsnes. Biarne, the son of the latter, finding, on his return home from a trading voyage to Norway, that his father had quitted Iceland, resolved upon following him, though he, as well as those who had accompanied him, were quite unacquainted with the Greenland sea. Soon after leaving Iceland they met with northerly winds and fogs, and were carried they knew not whither: the weather clearing they found themselves near a flat woody country, which, not corresponding with the descriptions of Greenland, they left to larboard. After five days sailing with a south-west wind, they came to a mountainous country, covered with glaciers, which they found to be an island; but as its appearance was not inviting, they

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bore away from the island, and standing out to sea with the same wind, after four days sailing with fresh gales, they reached Heriulfsnes in Greenland.

Some time after this, in the year 1000, Lief, son of Eric the Red, equipped a ship with thirty-five men to make a voyage of discovery, with the view of examining the new found lands more accurately. They came to a land where no grass was to be seen, but everywhere there were vast glaciers, while the space intervening between these ice mountains and the shore appeared as one uninterrupted plain of slate. This country they named Helluland (*i. e.* Slate-land.) Thence they stood out to sea again, and reached a level wooded country, with cliffs of white sand. They called this country Markland (*i. e.* Woodland.) Again they put to sea, and after two days sail reached an island, to the eastward of the mainland, and passed through the strait between this island and the mainland. They sailed westward, and landed at a place where a river, issuing from a lake, fell into the sea. Here they wintered and built houses, which were afterwards called Leifsbuder (Leifsbooths.) During their stay, one of their number, named Tyrker, a German, happened to wander some distance from the settlement, and on his return reported that he had found vines and grapes. These proving to be plentiful, Lief named the country Vinland (Vineland), and in the ensuing spring returned to Greenland. In the year 1002, Thorwald, Lief's brother, being of opinion that the country had been too little explored, borrowed his brother's ship, and with the assistance of his

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advice and instructions, set out on a new voyage. They arrived at Leifsbooths, in Vinland, remained there for the winter, and, in the spring of 1003, Thorwald sent a party in the ship's long-boat on a voyage of discovery southwards. They found a beautiful and well-wooded country, with extensive ranges of white sand; but no traces of men, except a wooden shed which they found on an island lying to the westward. They returned to Leifsbooths in the autumn. In the summer of 1004, Thorwald sailed eastward and then northward, past a remarkable headland enclosing a bay, and which was opposite to another headland. They called it Kialarnes (Keel-Cape.) Continuing along the east coast, they reached a beautiful promontory, where they landed. Thorwald was so pleased with the place that he exclaimed, "Here is a beautiful spot, and here I should like well to fix my dwelling." He had scarcely spoken before they encountered some Skrellings (Esquimaux) with whom they fell to blows, and a sharp conflict ensuing, Thorwald received a mortal wound in his arm from an arrow. He died and was buried by his own instructions on the spot which had excited his admiring remark, the language of which appeared prophetic of a longer stay there than he had at first contemplated.

In the summer of 1006 two ships arrived in Greenland from Iceland, one commanded by Thorfinn Karlsfore and Snorre Thorbrandson, both men of illustrious lineage; the other by Biarne Grimolfson of Breidefiord, and Thorhall Gamlason of Austfiord; and in the spring of 1007 these two ships, together

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with a third (in which Thorbiorn, a relative of Eric's family, had formerly come to Greenland) set sail for Vinland.

They had in all one hundred and sixty men, and as they went with the intention of colonizing, they took with them a great variety and quantity of live stock. They sailed, first, to the Tresterbygd, and afterwards to Biarney (Disco); then to Helluland, where they found an abundance of foxes; and thence to Markland, which was overgrown with wood, and plentifully stocked with a variety of animals. Proceeding still in a south-westerly direction, with the land on the right, they came to a place where a frith penetrated far into the country; off the mouth of it was an island, on which they found an immense number of eyder-ducks, so that it was scarcely possible to walk without treading on their eggs. They called the island Straumey (Stream-Isle) from the strong current which ran past it, and the frith they called Straumfiordr (Stream-Firth). Here Thorhall and eight others left the party in quest of Vinland, but were driven by westerly gales to the coast of Iceland, where some say that they were beaten, and put into servitude. Karlsefne, however, with the remaining one hundred and fifty men, sailed southwards, and reached a place where a river falls into the sea from a lake; large islands were situated opposite the mouth of the river; passing these, they steered into the lake, and called the place Hóp. The low grounds were covered with wheat growing wild; and the rising ground with vines. Here they stayed till the beginning of the year 1008, when finding

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their lives in constant jeopardy from the hostile attacks of the natives, they quitted the place, and returned to Eric's fiord. In 1011 a ship arrived in Greenland, from Norway, commanded by two Icelandic brothers named Helge and Finnboge; to these men, Freydisa, a natural daughter of Eric the Red, proposed a voyage to Vinland, stipulating that they should share equally with her the profits of the voyage. To this they assented, and it was agreed that each party should have thirty able-bodied men on board the ship, besides women; but Freydisa secretly took with her five men in addition to that number. They reached Liefsbooths in 1012, and wintered there; when a discussion arising, Freydisa had the subtlety to prevail on her husband to massacre the brothers and their followers; after the perpetration of which base deed they returned to Greenland in the spring of 1013.

A numerous and illustrious race descended from Karlsefne, among whom may be mentioned the learned Bishop Thorlak Runolfson, to whom we are principally indebted for the oldest ecclesiastical code of Iceland, written in the year 1123. It is also probable that the accounts of the voyages were originally compiled by him.

It is fortunate that in these ancient accounts they have preserved the statement of the course steered and the distance sailed in a day. From various ancient Icelandic geographical works, it may be gathered that the distance of a day's sailing was estimated at from twenty-seven to thirty geographical

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miles—German or Danish—of which fifteen are equal to a degree, and are consequently equivalent to four English miles. From the island of Helluland, afterwards called Little Helluland, Biarne sailed to Herjulfónes (Ikigeit), in Greenland, with strong south-westerly winds, in four days. The distance between that cape and *Newfoundland* is about one hundred and fifty miles, which, if we allow for the strong south-westerly gales, will correspond with Biarne's voyage; while the well-known barrenness of the flats of Newfoundland corresponds with the Hellur, or slates which suggested the name the northmen gave to the island.

Markland being described as three days sail south-west of Helluland, appears to be Nova Scotia; and the low and level character of the country, covered with woods, tallies precisely with the descriptions of later writers.

Vinland was stated to be two days sail to the south-west of Markland, which would be from fifty-four to sixty miles. The distance from Cape Sable to Cape Cod is reckoned at about two hundred and ten English miles, which answers to about fifty-two Danish miles; and in the account given by Biarne of their finding many shallows off the island to the eastward, we recognize an accurate description of Nantucket, and Kialarnes must consequently be Cape Cod. The Straumfiördr of the northmen is supposed to be Buzzard's Bay, and Straumey, Martha's Vineyard, though the account of the many eggs found there, would seem to correspond more correctly with Egg Island, which lies off the entrance of Vineyard Sound.

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Krossanes is probably Gurnet Point. The Hóp answers to Mount Hope's Bay, through which the Taunton river flows, and it was here that the Leifs-booths were situated.

The ancient documents likewise make mention of a country called Huitramannaland (Whiteman's Land), otherwise Irland it Mikla (Great Ireland) supposed to be that part of the coast of North America, including North and South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. There is a tradition among the Shawanese Indians, who emigrated some years ago from Florida, and settled in Ohio, that Florida was once inhabited by white people, who possessed iron instruments. The powerful chieftain, Are Marson of Reykianes, in Iceland,—according to the account given by his contemporary Rafn, surnamed the Limerick-trader,—was driven to Huitramannaland by storms in 983, and was baptized there. Are Frode likewise (the first compiler of the Landnama, and a descendant in the fourth degree from Are Marson), states that his uncle, Thorkell Gellerson, had been informed by Icelanders that Are Marson had been recognized in Huitramannaland, and was held in high respect there. This statement therefore shows that there was an occasional intercourse in those days between the Orkneys and Iceland, and this part of America.

It is further recorded in the ancient MSS. that the Greenland bishop Eric went over to Vinland in the year 1121; but nothing more than the fact is stated, and it simply corroborates the supposition of intercourse between the countries. Again, in the year

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1266, a voyage of discovery to the Arctic regions of America, is said to have been performed, under the auspices of some clergymen of the bishopric of Gardar in Greenland; and from the recorded observations made by the explorers, would seem to have been carried to regions whose geographical position has been more accurately determined by our own navigators, Parry and the two Rosses. The next recorded discovery was made by Adalbrand and Thorwald Helgason, two Icelandic clergymen, in the year 1285. Contemporaneous accounts state that they discovered a new land to the westward of Iceland, supposed to have been Newfoundland. The last record preserved in the ancient Icelandic MSS. relates a voyage from Greenland to Markland, performed by a crew of seventeen men, in the year 1347. The account written by a contemporary, nine years after the event, induces the belief that intercourse between Greenland and America had been maintained as late as the period here mentioned, for it speaks of Markland as a country still known and visited in those days.

The obscurity of many portions of these narratives leaves much to be cleared up, with reference to this interesting subject; but their general truthfulness being corroborated by the traces of the residence and settlement of the ancient northmen exhibited in the inscriptions discovered in Kinkigtorsok, Greenland, and Massachusetts, no room is left for disputing the main fact of the discovery.

Between this period and the date of the first voyage of Columbus, the coast of America is reported to have