

GREAT EPOCHS IN
AMERICAN HISTORY:
DESCRIBED BY FAMOUS WRITERS
FROM COLUMBUS TO WILSON.

VOL. 1.

VOYAGES OF DISCOVER AND EARLY
EXPLORATIONS: A.D. 1000 - 1682.

By

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Preface

In these ten volumes the aim has been to present striking accounts of ten great epochs in the history of the United States, from the landing of Columbus to the building of the Panama Canal. In large part, events composing each epoch are described by men who participated in them, or were personal eye-witnesses of them.

Columbus, for example, described his own first voyage; Washington, the defeat of Braddock; Gen. "Sam" Houston the battle of San Jacinto; General Robert E. Lee, the capture of John Brown at Harper's Ferry; Murat Halstead, the nomination of Lincoln; Jefferson Davis, the evacuation of Richmond, and his own arrest in Georgia by Federal troops; Mrs. James Chesnut, wife of the Confederate general, the firing on Fort Sumter; Edmund Clarence Stedman, the retreat from Bull Run; Gen. James Longstreet, Pickett's charge at Gettysburg; General Sheridan, Sheridan's ride to Winchester; James G. Blaine, the funeral of Lincoln; Cyrus W. Field, the laying of the Atlantic cable; Horace White, the great Chicago fire; William Jennings Bryan, the first Bryan campaign;

Admiral Dewey, the battle of Manila Bay, and Admiral Peary, the finding of the North Pole.

These accounts are often supplemented by passages from the writings of historians and biographers, including George Bancroft, Washington Irving, Francis Parkman, Richard Hildreth, William E.H. Lecky, James Schouler, and John Fiske; or from those of statesmen, journalists and publicists, among them, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Thomas H. Benton, Robert Toombs, Horace Greeley, "Bull Run" Russell, Carl Schurz, and Theodore Roosevelt.

The tables of contents prefixt to the several volumes, or the index appended to the last, will show how wide is the range of topics. The events described have been of vital, and often of transcendant, importance to this country and Europe. The writers will be found interesting as authorities, and are often supremely competent, alike as authorities and writers. The work is believed to present American history in a form that will appeal to readers for its authenticity and its novelty.

Francis W. Halsey.

Introduction

Voyages of Discovery and Early Explorations.

Schoolboys have been taught from their earliest years that Columbus discovered America. Few events in prehistoric times seem more probable now than that Columbus was not the first to discover it. The importance of his achievement over that of others lay in his own faith in his success, in his definiteness of purpose, and in the fact that he awakened in Europe an interest in the discovery that led to further explorations, disclosing a new continent and ending in permanent settlements.

The earliest voyages to America, made probably from Asia, led to settlements, but they remained unknown ever afterward to all save the settlers themselves, while those from Europe led to settlements that were either soon abandoned or otherwise came to nought. Wandering Tatar, Chinese, Japanese, Malay, or Polynesian sailors who drifted, intentionally or accidentally, to the Pacific coast in some unrecorded and prehistoric past, and from whom the men we call our aborigines probably are descended, sent back to Asia no tidings of what they had found.

Their discovery, in so far as it concerned the people of the Old World, remained as if it had never been.

The hardy Northmen of the Viking age, who, like John Smith, six hundred years afterward, found in Vinland "a pleasant land to see," understood so little of the importance of what they had found, that, by the next century, their discovery had virtually been forgotten in all Scandinavia. It seems never to have become known anywhere else in Europe. Indeed, had the Northmen made it known to other Europeans, it is quite unlikely that any active interest would have been taken in it. Europe in the year 1000 was self-centered. She had troubles enough to absorb all her energies. Ambition for the expansion of her territory, for trade with peoples beyond the great waters, nowhere existed. Most European states were engaged in a grim struggle to hold what they had—to hold it from the aggressions of their neighbors, to hold it against the rising power of Islam.

Columbus did not know he had discovered the continent we call America. He died in the belief that he had found unknown parts of Asia; that he had discovered a shorter and safer route for trade with the East, and that he had given new proof of the assertions made by astronomers that the earth is round. The men who immediately followed him—Vespucius and the Cabots—believed only that they had confirmed and extended his discovery. Cabot first found the mainland of North America, Vespucius the mainland of South America, but neither knew he had found a new continent. Each saw

only coast lines; made landings, it is true; saw and conversed with natives, and Vespuccius fought with natives; but of the existence of a new world, having continents comparable to Europe, Asia, or Africa, with an ocean on both sides of them, neither ever so much as dreamed.

Under the splendid inspiration of Prince Henry the Navigator, an inspiration that remained potent throughout Portugal long after his death, Bartholomew Dias, five years before Columbus made his voyage to America, rounded the Cape of Good Hope, actually sailed into the Indian Ocean, and was pressing on toward India when his crew, from exhaustion, refused to go farther, and he was forced to return home. Vasco da Gama, ten years later (1497), following the route of Dias, actually reached India and thus demonstrated that, instead of going overland by caravan, India could be reached by sailing around two-thirds of Africa.

Spanish and Portuguese navigators—Columbus, Da Gama, Dias—alike sought a new and shorter route for trade with the Far East—one, moreover, that would not be molested by the advancing and aggressive Turks. Columbus believed, and so believed Spain and Portugal, that he had found a shorter route than the one Diaz and Da Gama found. Disputes arose between the rival powers as to titles and benefits from the discoveries, and it was because of these that Pope Alexander VI issued his famous Bull, dividing between the two all lands discovered by the navigators, an act which, in our time, has

become a curious anomaly, since later proof of the existence of continents between the Atlantic and Pacific made the Pope's decree virtually a partitioning of all America between two favored countries as sole beneficiaries.

Da Gama returned from India laden with Eastern treasure. Columbus returned from America poorer than when he sailed from the port of Palos. Columbus was believed to have found Asia, but he brought home, after several voyages, none of the wealth of Asia. Hence those fierce storms that beat about his head, leading to his imprisonment and to his death in Valladolid, a broken-hearted man.

The Spanish explorers who in the next century followed Columbus, came to America in pursuit of silver and gold. Rich stores had already been found by their countrymen in Mexico and the Peruvian Andes. In meetings with Indians farther north wearing ornaments of gold, the new explorers became convinced that mineral wealth also existed in the lands now called the United States, and especially in the fabled "Seven Cities of Cibola," in the Southwest. Out of this belief came the bold enterprises of Ponce de Leon, De Vaca, Coronado and De Soto, while out of the Spanish successes in finding gold in America came the first known voyage into New York Harbor, that of Verazzano, the Italian in French service, who was seeking Spanish vessels returning richly laden.

Of the French and English explorers of later years—Cartier, Champlain, Marquette, Hudson,

Drake—who came to Cape Breton, the St. Lawrence, Hudson, and Mississippi valleys, the California coast—the motives were different. These came to fish for cod, to explore the country, to plant the banners of the Sun King and Queen Bess over new territories, to convert the Indians, to find a northwest passage—that problem of the navigators which baffled them all until 1854—362 years after the landing of Columbus—when an English ship, under Sir Robert McClure, sailed from Bering Sea to Davis Strait, and thus proved that America, North and South, was an island.

Spaniards, however, had dreamed of a northwest passage before any of these. When Magellan passed through the strait that bears his name, and his ship completed the first circumnavigation of the globe, men began first to see that America was no part of Asia. In further proof they sought to find a passage into the Pacific from the north, as a complement to Magellan's passage from the south. Such an attempt was first made by the Spaniards under Vasquez d' Ayllon, four years after the voyage of Magellan; that is, in 1524. Ayllon was hoping to find this passage when he put in at Hampton Roads, just as Hudson hoped to find it, eighty-five years afterward, when he entered the harbor of New York—Hudson, who in a later voyage, sought it once more in Hudson Bay, and perished miserably there, set adrift in an open boat and abandoned by his own mutinous sailors.

F.W.H.

VOYAGES OF DISCOVERY AND EARLY EXPLORATIONS 1000 A.D.—1682

DISCOVERIES BEFORE COLUMBUS

Men from Asia and from Norway. By Justin Winsor*

There is not a race of eastern Asia—Siberian, Tatar, Chinese, Japanese, Malay, with the Polynesians—which has not been claimed as discoverers, intending or accidental, of American shores, or as progenitors, more or less perfect or remote, of American peoples; and there is no good reason why any one of them may not have done all that is claimed. The historical evidence, however, is not such as is based on documentary proofs of indisputable character, and the recitals advanced are often far from precise enough to be convincing in details, if their general authenticity is allowed.

** From an article by Mr. Winsor in "The Narrative and Critical History of America," of which he was editor. By arrangement with the publishers, Houghton, Mifflin Co., Copyright 1889. For a long period Mr. Winsor was librarian of Harvard University. He wrote "From Cartier to Frontenac," "Christopher Columbus," "The Mississippi Basin," and made other important contributions to American history.*

Nevertheless, it is much more than barely probable that the ice of Bering Straits or the line of the Aleutian Islands was the pathway of successive immigrations, on occasions perhaps far apart, or maybe near together; and there is hardly a stronger demonstration of such a connection between the two continents than the physical resemblances of the peoples now living on the opposite sides of the Pacific Ocean in these upper latitudes, with the similarity of the flora which environs them on either shore.

It is quite as conceivable that the great northern current, setting east athwart the Pacific, should from time to time have carried along disabled vessels, and stranded them on the shores of California and farther north leading to the infusion of Asiatic blood among whatever there may have been antecedent or autochthonous in the coast peoples. It is certainly in this way possible that the Chinese or Japanese may have helped populate the western slopes of the American continent. There is no improbability even of the Malays of southeastern Asia extending step by step to the Polynesian Islands, and among them and beyond them, till the shores of a new world finally received the impress of their footsteps and of their ethnic characteristics. We may very likely recognize not proofs, but indications, along the shores of South America, that its original people constituted such a stock or were increased by it.

As respects the possible early connections of America on the side of Europe, there is an equally

extensive array of claims, and they have been set forth, first and last, with more persistency than effect.

Leaving the old world by the northern passage, Iceland lies at the threshold of America. It is nearer to Greenland than to Norway, and Greenland is but one of the large islands into which the arctic currents divide the North American continent. Thither, to Iceland, if we identify the localities in Geoffrey of Monmouth, King Arthur sailed as early as the beginning of the sixth century, and overcame whatever inhabitants he may have found there. Here, too, an occasional wandering pirate or adventurous Dane had glimpsed the coast. Thither, among others, came the Irish, and in the ninth century we find Irish monks and a small colony of their countrymen in possession. Thither the Gulf Stream carries the southern driftwood, suggesting sunnier lands to whatever race had been allured or driven to its shelter. Here Columbus, when, as he tells us, he visited the island in 1477, found no ice. So that, if we may place reliance on the appreciable change of climate by the precession of the equinoxes, a thousand years ago and more, when the Norwegians crossed from Scandinavia and found these Christian Irish there, the island was not the forbidding spot that it seems with the lapse of centuries to be becoming.

It was in A.D. 875 that Ingolf, a jarl of Norway, came to Iceland with Norse settlers. They built their habitation at first where a pleasant headland seemed attractive, the present Ingolfshofdi, and later

founded Reikjavik, where the signs directed them; for certain carved posts, which they had thrown overboard as they approached the island, were found to have drifted to that spot. The Christian Irish preferred to leave their asylum rather than consort with the newcomers, and so the island was left to be occupied by successive immigrations of the Norse, which their king could not prevent. In the end, and within half a century, a hardy little republic—as for a while it was—of near 70,000 inhabitants, was established almost under the arctic circle.

The very next year (A.D. 876) after Ingolf had come to Iceland, a sea-rover, Gunnbiorn, driven in his ship westerly, sighted a strange land, and the report that he made was not forgotten. Fifty years later, more or less, for we must treat the dates of the Icelandic sagas with some reservation, we learn that a wind-tossed vessel was thrown upon a coast far away, which was called Iceland the Great. Then, again, we read of a young Norwegian, Eric the Red, not apparently averse to a brawl, who killed his man in Norway and fled to Iceland, where he kept his dubious character; and again outraging the laws, he was sent into temporary banishment—this time in a ship which he fitted out for discovery; and so he sailed away in the direction of Gunnbiorn's land, and found it. He whiled away three years on its coast, and as soon as he was allowed, ventured back with the tidings. While, to propitiate intending settlers, he said he had been to Greenland, and so the land got a sunny name.

The next year, which seems to have been A.D. 985, he started on his return with 35 ships, but only fourteen of them reached the land. Whenever there was a habitable fiord, a settlement grew up, and the stream of immigrants was for a while constant and considerable. Just at the end of the century (A.D. 999) Lief, a son of Eric, sailed back to Norway, and found the country in the early fervor of a new religion; for King Olaf Tryggvesson had embraced Christianity, and was imposing it on his people. Leif accepted the new faith, and a priest was assigned to him to take back to Greenland; and thus Christianity was introduced into arctic America. So they began to build churches in Greenland, the considerable ruins of one of which stands to this day. The winning of Iceland to the Church was accomplished at the same time.

In the next year after the second voyage of Eric the Red, one of the ships which were sailing from Iceland to the new settlement, was driven far off her course, according to the sagas, and Bjarni Herjulfson, who commanded the vessel, reported that he had come upon a land, away to the southwest, where the coast country was level; and he added that when he turned north it took him nine days to reach Greenland. Fourteen years later than this voyage of Bjarni, which was said to have been in A.D. 986—that is, in the year 1000 or thereabouts—Lief, the same who had brought the Christian priest to Greenland, taking with him 35 companions, sailed from Greenland in quest of the land seen by Bjarni,

which Lief first found, where a barren shore stretched back to ice-covered mountains, and, because of the stones there, he called the region Helluland. Proceeding farther south, he found a sandy shore, with a level forest country back of it, and because of the woods it was named Markland. Two days later they came upon other land, and tasting the dew upon the grass they found it sweet. Farther south and westerly they went, and going up a river, came into an expanse of water, where on the shores they built huts to lodge in for the winter, and sent out exploring parties. In one of these Tyrker, a native of a part of Europe where grapes grew, found vines hung with their fruit, which induced Lief to call the country Vinland.

Attempts have been made to identify these various regions by the inexact accounts of the direction of their sailing, by the very general descriptions of the country, by the number of days occupied in going from one point to another, with the uncertainty if the ship sailed at night, and by the length of the shortest day in Vinland—the last a statement that might help us, if it could be interpreted with a reasonable concurrence of opinion, and if it were not confused with other inexplicable statements. The next year Lief's brother, Thorwald, went to Vinland with a single ship, and passed three winters there, making explorations meanwhile, south and north. Thorfinn Karlsefne, arriving in Greenland in A.D. 1006, married a courageous widow named Gudrid, who induced him to sail with his ships to Vinland

and make there a permanent settlement, taking with him livestock and other necessaries for colonization. Their first winter in the place was a severe one; but Gudrid gave birth to a son, Snorre, from whom it is claimed Thorwaldsen, the Danish sculptor, was descended. The next season they removed to the spot where Leif had wintered, and called the bay Hop. Having spent a third winter in the country, Karlsefne, with a part of the colony, returned to Greenland.

The saga then goes on to say that trading voyages to the settlement which had been formed by Karlsefne now became frequent, and that the chief lading of the return voyages was timber, which was much needed in Greenland. A bishop of Greenland, Eric Upsi, is also said to have gone to Vinland in A.D. 1121. In 1347 the last ship of which we have any record in these sagas went to Vinland after timber. After this all is oblivion.

There are in all these narratives many details beyond this outline, and those who have sought to identify localities have made the most they could of the mention of a rock here or a bluff there, of an island where they killed a bear, of others where they found eggs, of a headland where they buried a leader who had been killed, of a cape shaped like a keel, of broadfaced natives who offered furs for red cloths, of beaches where they hauled up their ships, and of tides that were strong; but the more these details are scanned in the different sagas, the more they confuse the investigator, and the more successive relators try to enlighten us the more our doubts are

strengthened, till we end with the conviction that all attempts at consistent unravelment leave nothing but a vague sense of something somewhere done.

How the Norwegians Came to Vinland*

Lief invited his father, Eric, to become the leader of the expedition, but Eric declined, saying that he was then stricken in years, and adding that he was less able to endure the exposure of sea life than he had been. Lief replied that he would, nevertheless, be the one who would be most apt to bring good luck, and Eric yielded to Lief's solicitation, and rode from home when they were ready to sail.

They put the ship in order; and, when they were ready, they sailed out to sea, and found first that land which Bjarni and his shipmates found last. They sailed up to the land and cast anchor, and launched a boat and went ashore, and saw no grass

** From "The Saga of Eric the Red," as given in the "Old South Leaflets." Two different versions of this saga exist, the first written by Hauk Erlendsson between 1305 and 1334; the second by Jon Thordharson, about 1387. Both are believed to have been based on writings that had come down from the time of the explorations.*

Confirmation of the truth of the Norwegian discovery is given in a book by Adam of Bremen, who visited Den-

there. Great ice mountains lay inland back from the sea, and it was as a [table-land of] flat rock all the way from the sea to the ice mountains; and the country seemed to them to be entirely devoid of good qualities. Then said Lief, "It has not come to pass with us in regard to this land as with Biarni, that we have not gone upon it. To this country I will now give a name, and call it Helluland," They returned to the ship, put out to sea, and found a second land.

They sailed again to the land, and came to anchor, and launched the boat, and went ashore. This was a level wooded land; and there were broad stretches of white sand where they went, and the land was level by the sea. Then said Lief, "This land shall have a name after its nature; and we will call it Markland." They returned to the ship forthwith, and sailed away upon the main with northeast winds, and were out two "doegr" before they sighted land. They sailed toward this land, and came to an island which lay to the northward off the land. There they went ashore and looked about them, the weather being fine, and they observed that there was dew

mark between 1047 and 1073, and makes reference to Norwegian colonies founded in Iceland and Greenland and in another country which was "called Vinland on account of the wild grapes that grow there." Mention is also made by this writer of corn as growing in Vinland without cultivation. He declares his statements to be based on "trustworthy reports of the Danes." John Fiske thought Vinland lay somewhere between Point Judith and Cape Breton.

upon the grass, and it so happened that they touched the dew with their hands, and touched their hands to their mouths, and it seemed to them that they had never before tasted anything so sweet as this.

A cargo sufficient for the ship was cut, and when the spring came they made their ship ready, and sailed away; and from its products Lief gave the land a name, and called it Wineland. They sailed out to sea, and had fair winds until they sighted Greenland and the fells below the glaciers. Then one of the men spoke up and said, "Why do you steer the ship so much into the wind?" Lief answers: "I have my mind upon my steering, but on other matters as well. Do ye not see anything out of the common?" They replied that they saw nothing strange. "I do not know," says Lief, "whether it is a ship or a skerry that I see." Now they saw it, and said that it must be a skerry; but he was so much keener of sight than they that he was able to discern men upon the skerry. "I think it best to tack," says Lief, "so that we may draw near to them, that we may be able to render them assistance if they should stand in need of it; and, if they should not be peaceable disposed, we shall still have better command of the situation than they."

They approached the skerry, and, lowering their sail, cast anchor, and launched a second small boat, which they had brought with them. Tyrker inquired who was the leader of the party. He replied that his name was Thori, and that he was a Norseman; "but what is thy name?" Lief gave his name. "Art thou a son of Eric the Red of Brattahlid?" says he. Lief re