STORIES OF THE THREE AMERICAS. THEIR DISCOVERY AND SETTLEMENT

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Stories of the Three Americas. Their Discovery and Settlement by Eunice C. Corbett & Anna Content

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EUNICE C. CORBETT & ANNA CONTENT

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THEIR DISCOVERY AND SETTLEMENT.

BY

EUNICE C. CORBETT AND ANNA CONTENT.

I hear the tread of pioneers Of nations yet to be. The first low wash of waves, where soon Shall roll a human sea.

The radiments of empire here
Are plastic yet and warm:
The chaos of a mighty world
Is rounding into form!
- Whittien.

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THE STORY OF LEIF THE LUCKY

986 - 1009.

you look at the map of the world in your geographies, you will see an island just on the line between the eastern and western hemispheres. On your map of Europe you can see that it is quite a large island. Its name is Iceland, and you will learn from your geographies that this name well describes it, for it is covered with ice and snow during the greater part of the year. You will learn, too, that there

are enormous volcanoes on the island, that the people, though poor, are by no means ignorant, but have good schools and live in comfortable homes sheltered from the cold during the long winter, and that in the short summer they raise or m and vegetables, and these, with the abundance of fish which they obtain from the many bays and inlets of the sea on the island coast, give them plenty of food to live on. You will also read in your history that many years ago, the people of Iceland were more daring and full of adventure than they now are, and that they built large ships that sailed far over the sea and made discoveries in distant lands.

Perhaps you have read in your English histories, of the Sea-kings of the North, as they were called, pirate captains of large vessels, who invaded England at one time and made themselves very terrible to the people by their cruelties. Some of these pirate captains came from Denmark, the country which juts out into the water between the Baltic and the North Seas, others were from Norway; all of them belonged to the same race, and all were daring sailors, and fierce and cruel. A band of these sea voyagers from Norway first settled Iceland in the ninth century, and they brought thither loads of pine trees from the forests of Norway, and built more ships and larger ships, and sailed still further toward the west in search of more discoveries. One summer day, one of

these captains (called Eric the Red because of the color of his hair), when sailing west, came in sight of a large country all covered with grass. This was about the year 892. Captain Eric immediately claimed the country as belonging to him,—this was a way these captains had!-and he landed on it and gave it the name of Greenland. Then he went back to Iceland and persuaded a good many people to go with him and make homes in the new country. be sure, in spite of the green grass that covered its coasts during the summer time, it was a country of fogs, and of long winter days, but these people were used to cold weather and fogs in Iceland and Norway, and they built their homes in the new country cheerfally enough, and soon had there a thriving colony. After some years, stories came to them concerning a new land of trees, of fertile valleys and flower-covered hills, a land of summer days and sunny, cloudless skies. Why did they not all hasten to make their homes in this new, beautiful land? Well, we may suppose that many of them did not believe there was such a land, and others said "What if there is? we are well enough off here; why should we go journeying across the stormy seas again?" You see they had grown used to cold and fogs, and thought that the clear skies of the new land would make them homesick, as they probably would.

For the stories of a new land were true. In the year 986, a young man named Biorn, whose father, Herjulf, had settled in Greenland, set sail in a vessel to join him, but met strong winds from the north, which drove him upon the coast of a country to the south. This country had many small hills which were covered with a thick growth of forest trees. Biorn knew, from what his father had written him, that there were no forest trees in Greenland, and that its hills were high mountains, covered with snow; so he felt sure that this was no part of Greenland. And it was Greenland that he wanted to see, where his father and friends were, and so he took little notice of the fine trees of the new country. As soon as the winds would let him, he set sail again, and by aid of such charts as he may have had, and the north star when it could be seen—for the mariner's compass, that safe guide for sailors over the trackless seas, was not yet known—he at last reached the settlement

of his father and friends in Greenland. They were very glad to see him, we may suppose, and very much interested in the story that he had to tell of his delayed voyage. And though he did not want to see the forest country again, he said, being too well pleased to be in the company of his good friends in Greenland—there were others who were fired with ambition to visit the new lands, and explore their wonders for themselves. These carried back the story to

Iceland, and found there some who believed and some who doubted. And sailors said: "What does Leif the Lucky say about it? Leif is your man. If he will go in search of the new lands, we will go with him. It is safe sailing, we find, with Leif the Lucky!"

Leif the Lucky was the son of Eric the Red, who had discovered Greenland, and was therefore called Leif Erickson. He probably had red hair and a ruddy complexion as his father had, and we are told that he was "large and stout, and noble to see; a wise man also, and made to do all things." He



NORSE SEA-KING OF THE 11TH CENTURY.

feared no perils by land or sea. Perhaps it was of him that the old Norse ballad said;—

> "He scorns to rest 'neath the smoky rafter, He plows with his boat the roaring deep; The billows boil, and the storm howls after— But the tempest is only a thing of laughter— The sea-king loves it better than sleep!"