

**GUDRID THE FAIR: A
TALE OF THE DISCOVERY
OF AMERICA**

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Gudrid the Fair: A Tale of the Discovery of America by Maurice Hewlett

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MAURICE HEWLETT

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A Tale of the Discovery of America

BY
Henry
MAURICE HEWLETT

Author of

"The Forest Lovers," "The Life and Death of Richard Yea and Nay,"
"Love and Lucy," etc.



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PREFACE

THIS tale is founded upon two sagas, which have been translated literally and without attempt to accord their discrepancies by York Powell and Vigfussen in their invaluable *Origines Islandicæ*. As well as those versions I have had another authority to help me, in Laing's *Sea-Kings of Norway*. I have blent the two accounts into one, and put forward the result with this word of explanation, which I hope will justify me in the treatment I have given them.

I don't forget that a "saga" is history, and that these sagas in particular furnish an account of the first discovery of America, no less a thing. Nevertheless, while I have been scrupulous in leaving the related facts as I found them, I have not hesitated to dwell upon the humanity in the tales, and to develop that as seemed fitting. I don't think that I have put

anything into the relation which is not implied in the few words accorded me by the text. I believe that everything I give Gudrid and Freydis, Karlsefne and Leif and Eric Red to say or to do can be made out from hints, which I have made it my business to interpret. Character makes plot in life as well as in fiction, and a novelist is not worthy of his hire who can't weave a tale out of one or two people to whom he has been able to give life. All romantic invention proceeds from people or from atmosphere. Therefore, while I have shown, I hope, due respect to the exploration of America, I admit that my tale turns essentially upon the explorers of it. My business as a writer of tales has been to explore them rather than Wineland the Good. I have been more interested in Gudrid's husbands and babies than I had need to be as an historian. I am sure the tale is none the worse for it—and anyhow I can't help it. If I read of a woman called Gudrid, and a handsome woman at that, I am bound to know pretty soon what colour her hair was, and how she twisted it up. If I hear that she had three hus-

bands and outlived them all I cannot rest until I know how she liked them, how they treated her; what feelings she had, what feelings they had. So I get to know them as well as I know her—and so it goes on. Wineland does not fail of getting discovered, but meantime some new people have been born into the world who do the business of discovering while doing their own human business of love and marriage and childbirth.

All this, I say, is implicit in the saga-history. So it is, but it has to be looked for. The saga listeners, I gather, took character very much for granted, as probably Homer's audience did. Odysseus was full of wiles, Achilles was terrible, Paris "a woman-haunting cheat," Gunnar of Lithend a poet and born fighter, Nial a sage, and so on. The poet gave them more than that, of course. Poetry apart, he did not disdain psychology. There is plenty psychology in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*—less in the sagas, but still it is there. And when you come to know the persons of these great inventions there is as much psychology as any one can need, or