

# Dakota Farmers Leader.

A Faithful LEADER in the Cause of Economy and Reform, the Defender of Truth and Justice, the Foe of Fraud and Corruption.

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\$1.00 PER ANNUM

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## The Leader.

### The Ancient Norsemen.

The recent celebration of the fourth centenary of the discovery of America lends additional interest to the memory of the bold Norse navigators who nearly four hundred years before the birth of Columbus not only discovered America, but actually settled in Iceland and Greenland. As early as 870, voyages were made by the Norsemen from their own rugged coast to the shores of our continent. Their visits, however, were so transient, that for many years the benefit of the discovery was lost both to them and the civilized world. Nevertheless they left their impress upon civilization, and it is probable that Columbus himself must have heard of those old northern tales, told from father to son, of how Eric the Red, journeying westward many days, had planted a colony in that land beyond the sea; of how Leif, his son, inheriting his father's venturesome spirit, continued to voyage until he came to an island which he named Helluland (Flatstone land), supposed to be Newfoundland; next to Markland (Wood Land), supposed to be Nova Scotia; then to Vinland (Vine land), supposed to be the coast of New England, the mild country where grapes were growing, and where the hillsides were covered with flowers. It seems certain that some of the ancient Sagas were translated into French, and thence found their way into Italy, the land of culture and progress at that time. It would not be safe to say that Columbus did not pore over some of those ancient translations, whether he got his original idea from them or not. What we can be sure of, is that a "History of the Westward Voyages of Eric Sanderson" was published in Italy prior to the fifteenth century. Leaving to Columbus the merit of an original conception, we may still believe that he was encouraged in his task by a sight of some of these works.

Probably no race has contributed more to the picturesqueness and romance of history than those magnificent old warriors of the north, the Vikings. Their undaunted bravery, their superb physical development, their love of conquest, and their brilliant daring made them both respected and feared even by the Romans, who permitted them, for the most part, to dwell in peace in their rugged strongholds and settle undisturbed in the lands of Gaul and Britain, which were theirs by sheer force of arms.

From its earliest history, the life of this northern race was distinguished by a degree of civilization far in advance of the other nations of Europe, excepting always the Byzantine empire, which retained a meretricious refinement until the fall of Constantinople before the Turks. The Norsemen were neither savage nor barbarians in the common acceptance of the term: their laws, customs, training, their methods of warfare by land and sea, the trappings and equipments of their ships and armies, showing remarkable intelligence and considerable technical knowledge in the art of government and warcraft. Their early literature, the Eddas and the Sagas, is full of wild and thrilling tales of fierce battles, stormy voyages, and glowing descriptions of the splendor of their armor, and the magnificence of their vessels. Gold was everywhere in abundance with these people; yet its use, although lavish, was marked by both taste and discretion.

But the profuse ornamentation of their war implements never detracted from their usefulness. It is only in recent years that even a fair degree of knowledge of the lives and habits of these Norsemen has been unfolded to us. We pause in astonishment before the evidences of their taste and skill as revealed in the fine collection in the museums of Copenhagen, Stockholm, Christiana, Bergen, Lund, and Goteborg. Their weapons and coats of mail give ample proof that they excelled in iron and steel working. Some of the beautifully damascened swords—to use a technical term—dating as far back as the early part of the Christian era, demonstrate that the art was practiced among them long before its introduction into the rest of Europe. The remnants of clothing beautifully embroidered in gold and silver, show their deftness in weaving. Large cups, urns, and other vessels, wrought in pure silver and gold, testify to the sumptuous taste—though our connoisseurs would doubtless regard it as at least semi-barbaric—of those early times. The proof of their knowledge of the arts of writing and gilding, and the specimens of delicately intricate repousse work in iron, bronze, gold and silver, are astonishing. Twenty centuries have not been able to tarnish the splendor of these treasures. Among other objects which awaken keen admiration, are glass vessels, exquisitely painted in patterns, unrivalled even in the museums of Italy and Russia.

If we are to credit their poems and romances, the Norsemen were noted for

their muscular strength, their intrepidity, their great love of the sea, and their passion for conquest. The men were giants in stature and superbly developed. They were commonly fair-haired and blue-eyed, with massive and handsome features. The women were beautiful, strong, healthy, and virtuous. The young girls lived a retired, industrious life, employing their time in weaving, embroidery, and the cares of the household. The married women were held in great respect and esteem. The wife was the companion and helpmate of her husband, and at liberty to join in all his pursuits. In many instances, she accompanied him on hunting expeditions and on the field of battle.

The Norsemen were almost unknown to other European nations until the eighth century. Prior to that time their battles had been chiefly between the rival tribes of their own race, and neighboring people as well, along the shores of the Baltic, the coasts of the islands and even as far south as lower France and Spain. With time however, came the desire for larger possessions and wider conquests. They invaded Germany, Gaul, and Brittany. As warriors they were almost indomitable, rarely meeting with repulse or defeat. Later on they led their victorious hosts to Spain, the Mediterranean, to Italy, Sicily, Greece, the Black Sea, Palestine, and even to Africa. They were undisputed masters of their portion of the sea for over twelve hundred years.

The situation of their country and their natural passion for the ocean led them to prefer naval warfare. Their knowledge of nautical matters was at all times far ahead of their contemporaries, and the approach of Norse fleets struck terror to the hearts of the boldest opponents. Their vessels were of great size, considering the period, and fitted out on a scale of unparalleled magnificence. In shape they were low and cut far down amidships, rising almost to a point at the prow and stern, which were usually ornamented by huge golden dragons, or other emblematic devices, often measured as much as twelve feet in length and three feet across. Every part of the vessel was lavishly ornamented with gold and silver traceries, wrought iron and carved woodwork. In calm weather the vessel was propelled by oars, the largest ships requiring about thirty oarsmen, the longest of these oars, so far as is known today, measured twenty-six feet. The Norsemen prided themselves on the beauty of their sails, which were woven of wool and gorgeously embroidered with mythological figures in silver and gold. They were square in shape, and usually bright-colored, often striped in blue, scarlet, and green, but sometimes entirely white. Strangely enough, many of their vessels were ironclad, and consequently able to resist the weightiest missiles of the enemy. Their battles were undertaken with the greatest care and foresight. Aside from their desperate courage, which was always an important element in the contest of those days, they managed their attacks, and when necessary, their retreats, with consummate strategic skill. They were that compound of the soldier and sailor, which in themselves and their descendants has made northern Europe the controlling power of the Eastern world—From Demorest's Family Magazine for March.

The slave owners rather than give up their negro power resolved on revolution. The republicans of Kansas backed by the late Jay Gould's Santa Fe railroad power determined to create revolution and disaster rather than surrender legislative power of the state into the hands of the people. Through fraudulent certificates of election enough republicans were returned to constitute a majority of one in the lower house. The Santa Fe railroad, which has run the state for years has placed its corrupt power at the back of the republican house and forced the issue, which means that there will be no laws passed by the present legislature to stop the railroad corruption which has dominated every branch of the past republican state management. The republicans rather than surrender the railroad power in the state determined to disrupt the legislature and invite a bloody revolution. It's the slave power over again. The Governor is a populist, the senate has a populist majority, and enough populists were fairly elected to have a majority of the house. There are some 20,000 old soldiers in Kansas who stood by the populist ticket. Had the Governor called these men he would have found a small army of men who know how to obey orders. The Governor will have time by and by to punish treason.

Don't forget that the present republican legislature is not hampered by obstruction, and nearly half of the great temperance party wanted free whisky. The LEADER expected to see the News get up on its hind legs and howl, but it didn't. The News howled lots before election but since there has been a stillness around the editorial ink mill that is alarming.

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