Thorvaldsens Museums
ARKIV.

1838.04 #
79-80

According to the Ancient Icelandic Sagas preserved in the Danish libraries, and recently published by the Royal Society of Antiquaries at Copenhagen, Greenland was settled in the tenth century, by a company of emigrants from Iceland, under Eric the Red, who established himself at a place called Ericsfiord. Shortly afterwards, a son of one of the adventurers who accompanied Eric, was driven by a storm to the Southwest, and discovered land in that direction. The intelligence of this extraordinary event, on his return, excited the curiosity of his countrymen. Other adventurers followed in his steps, and among them two sons of Eric, — Leif and Thorwald, who made the first landing & settlement on the Coast of America, which they called Vinland.

Thorwald in a second voyage was mortally wounded by an arrow, in a conflict with the Natives. This disaster is supposed to have occurred near point Alderton in Boston Harbor, not far from the village of Hull. The ancient Saga represents Thorwald as

79

having been charmed with the beauty of this spot, and as having expressed a wish to make it his home. After receiving his wound, he believed that this wish had proceeded from a prophetic impulse; he gave his followers directions to bury him with the cross at the head & foot of his grave; & to call the promontory Krossaness, from this circumstance.

From this gallant Adventurer, according to the genealogical tables contained in the publication of the learned Society above alluded to, the celebrated Sculptor Thorwaldsen is descended. The following lament is supposed to be uttered by Thorwald, after receiving his death-wound. It embodies, with the sentiments ascribed to him by the Saga, an obscure vision of the future settlement and growth of the country, and of the glory to be reflected on his own family and name by his illustrious descendant.

Thorvaldsens Museums
ARKIV.

Thorwald's Lament.

Brothers, that fatal dart,
With aim too just, has flown;
It sinks in Thorwald's heart,
My course is done.

By Ericsfiord's roar,
'Twere sweeter could I rest;
The turf of Greenland's shore
Upon my breast.

But never more my boat
Shall cut the Northern seas,
Nor Thorwald's pennons float
On Iceland's breeze.

Eric, my sire, will pine
In vain for my return, —
Sister, no tear of thine
Will wet my urn.

Beyond the mighty wave,
Beneath a stranger sky,
With none to soothe or save,
Thorwald must die.

In my prophetic mind,
A vision went before;—
I said "a home I'll find
On this fair shore

A last long home I've met,
A rest that cannot wake,
A house nor storm shall threat,
Nor earthquake shake.

Wrapped in Your fluttering sheet,
Be this fair slope my bed;
The cross be at my feet,
And at my head.

Thor, at thy gloomy shrine,
In childhood did I bow,
Thy reign is past:— That sign
Must cheer me now.

The blood that from his veins
Bedewed Judea's ground,—
'Tis that must heal the pains
Of this sharp wound.

But Ye, my brothers, fly
Back to Your own loved shore,—
That happy home, which I
Shall see no more.

Fly, brothers, from the Strand;—
The hour is not yet come,
When pilgrims on this land,
Shall find a home.

But to my swimming eyes
They glance in doubtful haze;
Dim trains in vision rise
Of distant days.

On happier keels embarked,—
Not bolder,— o'er the main
They plough the path I marked,
Alas, in vain.

And ages farther still
My fading eye explores,
When swarming nations fill
These silent shores.

The cottage decks the vale,
With life the city rings,
And trade to every gale
Spreads her broad wings.

I die before the sight,
But when their hour is come,
Let one kind blessing light
On Thorwald's tomb.

Though earth my flesh consume,
My Name not all shall die,
Reviving it shall bloom
Eternally.

At some far distant day,
An Offspring of my Name,
Shall give to lifeless clay
Immortal fame

Heroes and sages gone
Shall start and breathe for Thee,
Giver of life to Stone
Perhaps to Me!

Here though my dust must lie,
Never to live again,
Thorwald shall live for aye,
In Thorwaldsen.

The Lament of Thorwald