

character. It was rather the necessity of discovering new countries for the many restless beings that could find no room in Norway. Furthermore, they were stimulated by a real interest for knowledge. Othar, who about 890 resided in England at Alfred's Court, set out on an errand of geographical investigation; or, as he says himself, "he felt an inspiration and a desire to learn, to know, and to demonstrate how far the land stretched towards the north, and if there were any regions inhabited by man northward beyond the desert waste." He lived in the northernmost part of Helgeland, probably at Bjarköi, and sailed round the North Cape and eastward, even to the White Sea.

Adam of Bremen relates of Harald Hårdråde, "the experienced king of the Northmen," that he undertook a voyage out into the sea towards the north and "explored the expanse of the northern ocean with his ships, but darkness spread over the verge where the world falls away, and he put about barely in time to escape being swallowed in the vast abyss." This was Ginnungagap, the abyss at the world's end. How far he went no one knows, but at all events he deserves recognition as one of the first of the polar navigators that were animated by pure love of knowledge. Naturally, these Northmen were not free from the superstitious ideas about the polar regions prevalent in their times. There, indeed, they placed their Ginnungagap, their Nivlheim, Helheim, and later on Trollebotn; but even these mythical and