

*History of Iceland*

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# ICELAND;

OR THE

## JOURNAL OF A RESIDENCE

IN THAT ISLAND,

DURING THE YEARS 1814 AND 1815.

CONTAINING

OBSERVATIONS ON THE NATURAL PHENOMENA,  
HISTORY, LITERATURE, AND ANTIQUITIES OF THE ISLAND; AND  
THE RELIGION, CHARACTER, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS  
OF ITS INHABITANTS.

WITH AN

*INTRODUCTION AND APPENDIX.*

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# ICELAND.

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## CHAP. X.

*Journey through the Sysseis of Borgarfjord, Myrar, Hnappadal, and Snæfellsness—Innraholm—Leyrá—Printing Office—Hvitárvellir—Staffholt—Hot Springs—Sheep-pens—Volcano of Western Skardsheidi—Caves of Hytardal—Stadarhraun—Domestic Worship—Ale-wells—Elldborg, or Fortress of Fire—Stadarstad—Hot Spring of Lysuhol—Buda Volcano—Stapper—Ascent of Snæfell Yökul.*

HAVING been convinced, from the facilities afforded me for ascertaining the scarcity of Bibles among the inhabitants, in the course of my journey last autumn, that the most effectual way to ensure the speedy distribution of the sacred Oracles, was to visit the different officers, both civil and ecclesiastical, and with them concert plans

adapted to the local circumstances of their respective districts, I resolved to traverse, this summer (1815), such parts of the island as I had not yet visited ; and, accordingly, about the beginning of May, I began to make preparations for my journey. It is true, the mountains were still covered with snow, and the roads wet, and almost impassable ; and all my Icelandic friends endeavoured to persuade me that it was a month too early ; but as I was heartily wearied of the long confinement, and it was necessary for me to be back at *Reykjavik* by the end of June, I determined to set off, and proceed by slow stages towards the west.

It was a matter, however, of no small difficulty to obtain horses. As noticed in the foregoing chapter, the horses of burthen in Iceland are not taken into the house, or fed with hay, during the winter, but are left to shift for themselves by scraping away the snow, and picking up any scanty remains of vegetation, or frequenting the beach at low water, and eating the sea-weed that is cast ashore. It follows, of course, that they are half starved, and are generally unfit for service before the middle of June. After having agreed with a young man from the north country to proceed with me, and provide me with horses, I had the disappointment to find that it was not in his power to stand to the agreement, owing to the leanness of the animals ; and I must have been detained some weeks, had not the Chief Justice Stephensen been kind enough

to furnish me with horses from his estate on the opposite side of the bay.

On the 16th of May, having packed up all my baggage, provided myself with letters from Bishop Vidalin to the different Deans and others of the clergy that lay in my way, and commended myself to the special guidance and protection of Him in whose service I was engaged, I left *Reykjavik* about ten o'clock, in a six-oared boat, which I had engaged to convey me across the bay. Leaving the small islands in the vicinity of the town, we soon came to the point of *Kialar-ness*, which here juts out from the base of *Mount Esian*, and is remarkable for the remains of a Hof, or idolatrous temple, erected towards the close of the ninth century, and the farm of *Esiu-berg*, where the first church was built by Örlyg Rapson, a convert of Patrick, bishop of the Hebrides, and dedicated to St. Columbus, the apostle of the Picts. \*

We now entered the *Whale Frith*, and had the wind almost directly a-head; yet, by hard pulling, the boatmen managed to row the boat a considerable way up the south side of the bay, when, setting the sail, we steered directly across, and a little past two o'clock landed at *Innraholm*, the estate of the Chief Justice, where, agreeably to the kind orders of that gentleman, I was received with every mark of attention by his

\* Olafsen and Povelsen, p. 75.



steward, and the necessary arrangements were made for the prosecution of my journey.

The farm is very pleasantly situated on a gently rising ground, on the north side of the bay, and separated by a narrow tract of morass from the base of *Akkrafiall*, a mountain about 1500 feet in height, whose sides present a fine display of the numerous horizontal strata of which it is composed. In some places the debris covers a considerable extent of surface, but at others the beds are seen to a great depth. The appearance of the farm is vastly superior to that of the generality of Icelandic *bæar*. Next to the beach, on two small eminences, are houses of unhewn stone, for drying the fish in, and preserving the fishing implements; a little to the right stands the church, a small but convenient place of worship. The dwelling-house is neatly constructed of wood, but surrounded with earthen walls, except in front, where there are three doors, two of which open into separate rooms, while that in the middle ushers you into the common passage, from which entrances are made into the different apartments. The first room a stranger is shewn into exhibits a choice library, containing many of the more important works on law, philosophy, theology, language, &c. The other rooms are neatly finished, and furnished with stoves, an article of luxury scarcely ever to be seen at an Icelandic farm. Behind the principal building are several out-houses for the ser-

vants, with stables, barns, &c. In front is a garden, defended by a high earthen wall, which was just begun to be dug; and another, at that time preparing for potatoes, is situated at the west end of the house. The *tun* is of considerable extent, and is almost entirely free from knolls, with a good exposure; yet the verdure had scarcely begun to appear. I was not a little interested to fall in here with a water-mill, of a very simple construction; being driven by a horizontal wheel, the axle of which runs through the mill-stones, and without the aid of any other machinery performs the work.

Both the steward and his wife were unremitting in their attentions, and did every thing in their power to render my stay comfortable.

May 17. Sending on the baggage-horses round the east end of the mountain, the steward and I rode round the other end to *Gardè*, where we met with a hearty welcome from the clergyman. His parishioners are in general very poor, being chiefly dependent on the fishery, and though a great desire prevails among them to obtain copies of the Scriptures, there are few whose circumstances admit of their purchasing them. Having refreshed ourselves with a draught of excellent cream, the clergyman had the kindness to accompany us a considerable way to the west of the parsonage, through a number of dangerous bogs, which we should have found it impossible to cross, had it not been for his guidance, and the *klaki*, or frost,

which still existed at no great depth. At the termination of this morass, we came to a high wall of trap rock, in many places not exceeding ten feet in breadth, having the sea on the one hand, and a low wet tract on the other. The road ran along the summit of the wall for some time, which gave us ample time to admire the barrier that has thus been thrown up against the fury of the waves. Passing some fishermen's huts, which were rudely constructed on the barren rocks, we came to a fine level tract, alternately presenting a surface of sand and coarse grass, over which we advanced with great celerity, but it was not long before we were again stopped in our career by swamps, that continued with little intermission for nearly two hours.

It was our intention to have rode across the inlet of the sea, called *Leiru-vog*, but we came too late for the ebb, and were obliged to ride a long way to the eastward; and, after crossing the *Laxá* and *Leyrá*, we came, about two o'clock, to the farm which takes its name from the latter river, and is in the possession of Mr. Scheving, the Sysselman of *Borgarfjord*. The houses pretty much resemble those of *Innraholm*, and were built by the Chief Justice when living at this place. The pavement consists of stones formed by the depositions of a hot spring in the vicinity, and are many of them very beautiful, exhibiting curious petrifications of shrubs, mosses, &c. There is also a

church at this farm, of a better appearance than many in the neighbouring parishes.

We were here provided with an excellent dinner of boiled mutton and pan-cakes, served up by Mrs. Scheving, who is sister to Mr. Stephensen; and after coffee, I exchanged guides, the Sysselman engaging to conduct me himself to the residence of the Amptman, where I intended stopping all night. At a short distance to the north-west, he pointed out to me the farm of *Leyrárgördum*, the site of the only printing-office on the island, but which is at present without employment, owing chiefly to prejudices conceived by the Icelanders against the publications which issued from it some years ago. Nor were these prejudices entirely without foundation; for many of the writings in question had but too glaring a tendency to introduce the illumination of the German school, and the attacks made on certain classes of the inhabitants were too pointed and violent not to excite indignation.

To the north-east of *Leyrá* stretches a range of high and numerous peaked mountains called *Eastern Skardsheidi*, over which the common road lies; but the quantity of snow still found in the passes was so great, that the Sysselman did not deem it advisable to attempt them. We therefore proceeded along the base of the mountains, which here assume a very bold and majestic appearance; several horizontal strata of rock overhanging the long slope of debris, which

covers more than two-thirds of their sides. In a short time we turned round the foot of *Hafnarfiall*, when we fell in with a pretty considerable wood, consisting principally of birch trees, through which we passed a little way, and then descended to the eastern shore of the *Borgarfjord*, a large and beautiful bay, from which the Syssel takes its name.

As it was low water, we shortened the distance by crossing several small inlets; and riding along the beach, we advanced with a quicker pace than if we had taken the way through the wood. We next encountered a tract of swampy ground, which occasioned us some little difficulty; and after crossing the *Andakylsá*, and passing the church and farm of *Hvaneyri*, we descended into the plains of *Hvitárvöllum*, which afford excellent pasturage, and a great quantity of hay, and arrived about eleven o'clock at the farm of the same name, the abode of Amptman Stephensen. This gentleman I had seen in the autumn at *Reykjavik*; and in consequence of the conversation we then had about the circulation of the Scriptures, he had written an official letter to all his Sysselmenn in conjunction with the Deans, ordering an inquiry to be instituted relative to the want of copies, and a report to be given of the number of those who were able and inclined to purchase, as also of such as required to be furnished gratuitously. He now received me in the most distinguished manner, and, with his lady and the whole of the

family, was assiduous in providing for the comfort of the wearied traveller. After supping on excellent roast beef, a dish very uncommon in Iceland, accompanied with good Port wine, I retired to sleep, which I greatly enjoyed, having been much fatigued by the ride of the preceding day, which could not be less than thirty-six miles.

Next morning, after partaking of a cold breakfast and coffee, I took leave of the interesting family at *Hvitárvöllum*, and proceeded to the deanery of *Staffholt*. In this excursion I had the honour to be accompanied by the Amptman himself, and one of his sons, the Sysselman, and the clergyman of *Hest* with his son. A little to the north of the Amptman's we crossed the *Grimská*, which, by mistake, is placed on the maps to the south of that farm, and after riding over the marshes, we came to the banks of the *Hvitá*, a deep and broad river, which takes its rise partly from the deserts in the interior, and partly from the ice-mountains on the northern boundary of the Syssel, and falls into the *Borgarfjord*, a few miles below this place. It has three ferries, and is sometimes fordable at other places. At one of these a very singular case happened last summer, as the people were riding to church. The horse of one of the peasants taking fright, when about the deepest part of the river, his rider was thrown into the water, and as he was at a great distance from either bank, and being, besides, ignorant of the art of

swimming, the spectators gave him up for lost. Happening, however, to get on his back, and extending his hands and feet, he kept his head above water, and was carried gently down by the stream: his companions riding along the banks, and talking with him all the while, till, after having floated near a mile, he was cast on a small sand-bank, from which, with little difficulty, he reached the shore.

On our arrival at the Ferry, I was somewhat alarmed at the leaky state of the boat, which we had to bale without intermission, in order to keep ourselves above water. In the course of an hour we reached *Staffholt*, where I was made cordially welcome by the Dean, the Reverend Peter Peterson. The parsonage is situated on a rising ground on the east side of the river *Nordurá*, and commands a noble prospect of the eastern and western *Skardsheidi* mountains, the remarkable cone of *Baula*, with two inferior ones, called by the Amptman, the “daughter” and “grand-daughter,” and the fine serpentine windings of the river a little above its confluence with the *Hvitá*. The bleakness of the surrounding rocks was greatly enlivened by the number of swans that were swimming and singing melodiously in the river, and the clouds of steam ascending from the hot springs about two miles to the north of the farm.

On the departure of the Amptman and the rest of the company, the Dean entered into a most lively and interesting conversation with me

relative to the Icelandic Scriptures, Bible Societies, the state of religion in different parts of the world, &c. when he produced the letters which he received from his clergy respecting the wants of their parishioners. The perusal of these documents convinced me of the vehement desire manifested by the people to obtain copies ; while I as evidently perceived, that a great number must remain destitute of them, except furnished with them on the same terms with the salvation of the Gospel itself—“ without money, and without price.”

After arranging this matter, we took a ride to the hot springs, which are situate in front of a range of rocks strongly impregnated with iron. They are six in number, but none of them is of any considerable size. All of them boil with violence, and one or two erupt the water at irregular intervals to the height of a foot. Fine incrustations are formed on the wood, bones, &c. which lie within the reach of the water, but, what is not a little remarkable, I did not meet with the least appearance of its having affected the grass, which grows in great luxuriance on the banks of the small steaming rivulet that flows a considerable way into the plain. As we returned, the Dean pointed out to me a bed of lignite, or the mineralized wood, to which the Icelanders give the name of *Surturbrand*, and which is found in great abundance in the west of Iceland. It is situated in the cliffs, a little to the north of the parsonage, about two feet above the ordina-



ry brink of the *Nordurá*. The vein runs almost horizontally, is three inches in thickness, and covered with an eighteen feet bed of yellow argillaceous tuffa, above which is a hard compact rock, containing numerous crystallizations of quartz. The surturbrand is only visible to the length of thirty feet, the debris of tuffa having been washed away at this place by an extraordinary swell in the river.

At an early hour on the 19th, I ordered my horses to be got ready, and, before setting off, I had the pleasure to find, that the Dean and his son had resolved to proceed with me all the way to the next station, which lies about thirty miles distant from *Staffholt*. I was the happier at this, as I found the Dean a very conversible man, and eagerly desirous of discussing topics of a religious nature. Quitting his hospitable roof, we descended into the plain through which the *Nordurá* pursues its winding course; and proceeding about three miles along its eastern margin, we came to a ford, where, although there was a strong current, we crossed it without much difficulty. The road now lay in a westerly direction across a number of very irregular heights, in some places covered with stunted birches, and in others consisting of bleak and barren rocks, the fragments of which were intermixed with abundance of zeolite. Leaving this, we came to the entrance of a pass in the western *Skardsheidi*, where we stopped some time in order to rest our horses, and refresh them with a little hay, which

we procured from the last habitation in the tract.

In the mean time, the Dean took me to an immense ravine, formed by the waters of the *Gliufrá*, into which, on a certain day in autumn, all the sheep are collected that have been feeding at large on the mountains during the summer. The place is called *Klofahammars-rettar*, or the “Pens of the Cloven precipice.” An order being sent from the constable of the district, the peasants collect from their respective farms, and, under the direction of one of their number, chosen on the occasion, and to whom they give the title of “King,” they proceed to the mountains, where they pitch their tents in a convenient place, and go, two in company, in search of the sheep, according to the orders of their sovereign. Having spent several days in this manner, and collected the sheep, they lift their tents, and drive the whole flock down to this place, when they are confined in the large pen, which is defended, on the one side, by the river, and on the other, by a high range of perpendicular cliffs; so that there is no possibility of their making their escape. As each farmer has his particular mark on the ear of his sheep, they are easily separated, and confined in smaller pens, called *Dilkar*, which are built of lava, and lie scattered along the south side of the river. What with the bleating of perhaps 1500 sheep, the noise made by the peasants in proving their property, and the appearance of the pens and tents which crowd the valley—this

desert tract assumes, on such occasions, a most lively aspect, and furnishes a temporary relief from the silent monotony of Icelandic life.

The *heidi*, or mountain-road, lying along the sides of several gulleys, at a short distance from the *Gliufrá*, was by no means so steep as I had apprehended. The principal difficulty we had to surmount, consisted in traversing prodigious masses of snow, which at certain places were scarcely of sufficient solidity to admit of our riding on them, and were the more dangerous, from their concealing in their interior small lakes, and rivers, into which we might have been plunged in a moment, and from which there was scarcely any possibility of extrication.

Having reached the middle of the pass in safety, we found ourselves in the immediate vicinity of the extinguished volcano of *Western Skardsheidi*. It is situated at the south end of *Långárdal*, and a little to the west of the small lake, whence the water from that dale divides, and is discharged, partly through the channel of the *Långá*, and partly through that of the *Gliufrá*. We had here to cross a tract of very rough lava; for, notwithstanding all that has been done to throw it up on both sides so as to form a kind of path-way, large angular masses still remain, which prove no less trying to the patience of the traveller, than hostile to the feet and shoes of his horses.

We now came to seven remarkable spiracles or chimnies, five of which are situated on the

east, and two on the west side of the road. The former are small, not exceeding 40 feet in perpendicular height, and measuring from 150 to 200 feet in circumference around their base. They are complete cones, and have been hollow within for some time after the eruption, but the cinders, and other rejectamenta, having mouldered with age into the craters, they are, in a great measure filled up, though, at the same time, they exhibit ample proof of their circular formation. The lava on the outside of these spiracles is mostly of a red colour, strongly vitrified, light, and broken into small fragments.

After we had ascended each of the cones in succession, and admired the regular uniformity of their structure, we returned to our horses, and, proceeding a little on to the west, arrived at the base of the other two chimnies, which, from their magnitude, and every other attendant circumstance, evidently appear to have been the principal craters of the volcano. The more easterly may be about 300 feet high, and is double as much around the base. Its ascent was attended with much fatigue, as our feet always sunk in the scoriæ or drosses, and these being set in motion by our weight, we often slid down again to a considerable distance before we stopped. The drosses are small, of a red colour, and very friable. On gaining the summit, the crater instantly opened upon us, situated exactly in the centre, and bearing the most perfect resemblance to an inverted cone. It appeared to be

about 200 feet in diameter from brim to brim, but not exceeding 60 feet in depth. Its sides were for the most part covered with snow, and a small hole filled with water appeared at the bottom. The brim is several feet lower towards the east; and from this place a small valley or channel, nearly of the same depth with the crater, stretches due east towards the five minor chimnies above described; which, as they all lie in the same direct line, have visibly originated in the torrent of lava poured down through this valley. On meeting with some obstruction, it has collected and formed a caldron or furnace, which, being augmented by fresh matter from the main source, has ultimately given way on the opposite side, and the lava continuing to flow, has successively thrown up the cones till it reached the fifth and smallest in the row. The heights on both sides of the valley consist of the same red scoriæ with those covering the exterior of the crater, and are sharpened towards the summit. From this crater, the lava has flowed which covers the tract to the north and east.

At a short distance farther west lies the primary chimney, or volcanic cone, at least 550 feet high, and exceeding 1800 feet in circumference around its base. The crater is proportionably large, being not less than 400 feet in diameter at the mouth, and exceeding 150 feet in depth. At the bottom were two pools filled with clear water, but of what depth I could not determine, as the snow about the sides of the

crater prevented all access to them. This huge furnace opens into a small dale like the former, but it only proceeds a short way in an easterly direction, when it turns all at once to the south and south-west; and through this channel an immense stream of burning matter has rushed towards the south, where the declivitous tendency of the ground has allowed it a free descent into a fine valley, afterwards called *Hraundal* or Lava Valley, where it has flowed with great velocity and force, and been thrown up in the most singular and capricious forms. Filling the greater part of this long valley, it has continued its course into the plains, which it has inundated to a great extent, carrying destruction to every thing it attacked in its progress.

It was impossible for me to survey the scene that presented itself from the summit of this cone, without, in some measure, realising in my imagination the awful period of its activity:—the convulsive throes of the ground; the belching of the flames; the thunders of the eruption; the splashing of liquid fire; and the broad streams of devouring lava spreading themselves across the valley. As I revolved these things in my mind, I felt powerfully convinced, that in the following sublime specimens of prophetic poetry, the sacred writers have borrowed their imagery from the tremendous phenomena of a volcanic eruption: “For, behold the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the

earth. And the mountains shall be *molten* under him, and the vallies shall be cleft, *as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place.*” “Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might *flow down* at thy presence. As when *the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil*, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence. When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, *the mountains flowed down at thy presence.*” Micah i, 3, 4. Isaiah lxiv. 1, 3. See also Nahum i. 5, 6.

Returning to the Dean, whose corpulency prevented him, much against his inclination, from accompanying us, we again mounted our steeds, and skirted the western margin of the lava, till we arrived at a narrow gulley, which it has almost completely filled, when we were obliged to ascend a steep and rugged hill of brown tuffa, from the summit of which we had a commanding view of a vast assemblage of similar hills, originally produced, and afterwards convulsed by the agency of subterraneous fires.

We now descended from the mountains through *Hraundal*, where we observed a number of beautiful and singularly grotesque domes of lava which have been thrown up during the progress of the fiery torrent; and proceeded towards the west, along the base of several bold

and precipitous mountains, on the opposite side of which we fell in with *Griotárdals-hraun*, another stream of lava of an extensive spread. It proceeds from a volcano of the same name, a little to the west of the *Skarðsheidi* mountains, the crater of which resembles those above described, but is much larger, and surrounded by a high perpendicular wall, exhibiting towards the south a lateral opening where the lava has had its egress. The stream is about six miles in length, and in some places three in breadth. Our path ran across it in a winding direction, now level and smooth, and now obstructed by massy crusts that have been scattered about on the bursting of the domes. The principal difficulty, however, was presented by the *Griotá*, the waters of which are incessantly washing down large pieces of lava into the fording place, where the river falls with great violence, so that it is hardly possible for the horses to keep their feet in crossing.

About eight o'clock in the evening, we arrived at the church and parsonage of *Stadarhraun*, where I got my tent pitched as expeditiously as possible, in order to afford us a shelter from the cold, the mercury in Fahrenheit having fallen to 29°. The houses are entirely surrounded by lava except in front, and the greensward forming the *tun* is separated from the same substance only by the depth of a few inches. The clergyman, Sira Daniel Jonson, I found to be a true Nathaniel, whose whole deportment evinced an eminent de-



gree of simplicity and godly sincerity. He expressed, in very warm terms, the satisfaction he felt at our visit, and did all that lay in his power to provide for our accommodation.

As I had been advised by the Amptman and others to spend the Sabbath at this place ; and feeling the more inclined to do so from the consideration of the sterling worth of the incumbent, I went on the 20th, in company with him and the Dean, to pay a visit to *Hytardal*, where the latter gentleman had some business to transact. It was not long before we encountered a stream of lava that has been poured down upon the low country from the volcano of *Hytardal*, situated a short way back from the upper end of the valley. To the left we had a long range of mountains, near the termination of which projects the curious looking rocky hill in which the celebrated Grettir found an asylum. The place is called *Grettis-bæli*, is viewed as inaccessible by the present race of men, and commands an extensive view of the adjacent plains. At the distance of about four miles up the valley we came to the church of *Hytardal*, a place of considerable note in the ancient annals of the country, on account of the rich and noble families who had it in possession. In the thirteenth century it was erected into an abbey, which however soon lost its importance, and was gradually deserted. It is still among the better livings, and one of those, the grant of which the King of Denmark reserves in his own power. The

church is small, but in good order, and possesses several ornaments which have been made over to it in times of popery, such as priestly vestments, images of John the Baptist, the Virgin Mary, &c. The walls of the church were formerly remarkable for the ancient figures that were hewn in them ; but they are all effaced, with the exception of a huge female face, said to represent Hyt, the protectress of the valley.

We were kindly entertained by the clergyman, who, with all the company, took the most lively interest in the accounts I gave them of the progress of true religion, and the triumphs of the Bible over the pride and enmity of the abettors of infidelity. After we had spent an hour or two in this manner, we went to survey some of the natural curiosities of the valley. The first we visited was a remarkably excavated hill of tuffa, several of the veins of which are so soft, that they admit of being cut with a knife. The place is called *Nafna-klettur*, from the circumstance of its being full of names engraven in the rock by such as have visited it. We next repaired to *Husafell*, a rugged volcanic mountain, consisting of a sandy kind of tuffa and lava, strangely intermixed with one another, near the summit of which we entered a cave, consisting of spacious vaults, evidently formed by volcanic agency, the surface exhibiting a curious incrustation, which I take to have been produced by the dripping of water through the tuffa, till gradually hardened by the air. The cave is forty-one

feet in length, by twenty-five in breadth ; and the vaults are about fourteen feet in height. On being informed that it is used as a sheep-pen, and is on that account termed the *Fiárhellir*, I was reminded of the “ sheep-cotes ” of the cave in the wilderness of Engedi, where David cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe, 1 Sam. xxiv. 3.

Close behind this cave is another, called *Saung-hellir*, or “ The Singing Cave ”—not so much, I should suppose, from any remarkable echo observable in it, as from the custom of a psalm being always sung by those who visit it. It runs upwards into the mountain, and is about twenty-four feet in length, by twelve in width. When we had all got up into it, we prevailed on the Dean, who has a very powerful voice, to raise a psalm, which he did, and was immediately joined by the other two clergymen. It had a most solemn effect ; and while they were singing, the train of my meditation led me to those times in which the fearers of God were obliged to flee from the fury of their ruthless persecutors, and hide themselves “ in dens and caves of the earth ; ” and, when debarred the use of public worship, they caused similar caves to resound with the high praises of the Redeemer.

The *Hundahellir* is near the parsonage, and is said to connect with a vast cavern, which stretches the whole way west to the *Snæfell Yökul*, but the roof not being more than two feet high, it is impossible to enter it with any degree of ease. The idea of the long cavern has most probably

originated with the fabulous account of Bárdr, the *ás*, or god of the Yökul, and the supposed connection between him and Hyt, the mistress of this valley : but when we reflect, that a regular chain of volcanic cones stretches from *Baula*, near the upper end of *Borgarfjord* Syssel, along the centre of the promontory of *Snæfellsness*, till terminated by the Yökul, which is itself a notable volcano, it will not appear at all improbable, that there does exist some subterraneous line of communication between them.

After dining at the parsonage, we accompanied the Dean along the base of the mountains on the east side of the valley, till reaching their termination, when we bade each other an affectionate farewell, and I returned with my new host to *Stadarhraun*. Having been quitted by five noisy eagles, which kept soaring at a considerable height directly over head, and which we supposed to be on the watch for some lambs that were grazing in the vicinity, Sira Daniel and I entered into an animated conversation about the all-important concerns of religion ; and the longer we were together, the more I felt attached to him, and became more and more convinced of the genuineness of his piety, and the purity of his motives as a minister of the gospel of Christ. He has the care of two parishes, in one of which were only *two* copies of the Bible among *fourteen* families. Though there were two copies in his own family, two more had been subscribed for, besides several New Testaments. A poor wo-

man, who was ignorant of her husband's having made application for a copy, came, after the list had been sent in to the Dean, and with many tears lamented her dilatoriness, and the guilt she had contracted in neglecting to avail herself of the golden opportunity ;—but what was her joy on being informed that a copy had been secured for her !

May 21st, Lord's Day. The great bulk of the population being absent at the fishing-places, there was no public worship at *Stadarhraun* : yet I was in no ordinary degree interested by witnessing the piety and devotion manifested by the clergyman and his family, eight in number, in the exercise of their domestic worship. We assembled round the altar, which was extremely simple, consisting merely of a coarse wooden table, when several appropriate psalms were sung in a very lively manner, after which a solemn and impressive prayer was offered up, the females, meanwhile, placing their hands flat on their faces, so as entirely to cover their eyes. The clergyman now read an excellent sermon on Regeneration, from Vidalin's collection, which is in great repute over the whole island, and has, perhaps, more than any thing else, contributed to perpetuate a clear and distinct knowledge of the fundamental principles of Christianity among the natives. The service concluded with singing and prayer ; after which, the members of the family gave each other the primitive kiss, and I could discover, from the joy that beamed in eve-

ry eye, the actual increase of happiness derived from their renewed approach to the Fountain of Bliss.

Towards evening the clergyman of *Hytardal* came to conduct me to *Hytarness*, agreeably to a promise he had made me the preceding day. Close to the river *Quarná*, at the margin of the lava which fills the greater part of the valley, we came to a small mineral spring, which was discovered some years ago by the clergyman of *Stadarhraun*. The soil appeared to be highly impregnated with iron, and the water which, in the well, was covered with a light blue slime, possessed a considerable degree of acidity. A bottle of this water, which was brought home by Sir George Mackenzie, has been chemically examined by Dr. Thomson, who ascribes its peculiarities entirely to the portion of carbonate of lime which it contains. \*

In the "Royal Mirror," a curious Norwegian work, supposed to have been written before the close of the twelfth century, express mention is made of a celebrated mineral spring in this valley; but whether it was situated at this spot, or higher up, cannot now be determined. The author mentions three things as remarkable about the water. When drunk in a considerable quantity it inebriates; if the well be covered with a roof, the water leaves the place, and springs up somewhere else in the vicinity; and,

\* Travels in Iceland, 2d Edit. p. 391.

lastly, though it possesses the above quality when drank at the well, on being carried away, it loses its efficacy, and becomes like other water.\* Many such springs exist on both sides of the promontory. They are called by the natives *Ölkelldar* or Ale Wells, from their taste, and the effects of the water when taken fasting. The most remarkable are those of *Raudamel*, *Stadardstad*, *Budum*, *Frodar-heidè*, *Olufsvik*, *Hrisakot*, and *Eydum*. It is but seldom they are used, however powerful their medicinal virtues; nor were it indeed advisable for the natives to use them without proper medical directions.

Leaving the lava of *Hytardal*, we soon encountered that of *Barnaborg*, which has issued from three stupendous chimneys that have been thrown up in the middle of the plain, and present a very bold and rugged appearance. The lava seems to have run with great fury, and to have been suddenly cooled; for it is extremely rough, and it was not without imminent danger that we crossed it. About eight o'clock in the evening we arrived at *Hylárness*, and were kindly received by the clergyman and his chaplain, both of whom expressed in very strong terms, their gratitude for the provision that had been made for the spiritual wants of their parishioners.

Next day, about noon, I prosecuted my journey towards the west, accompanied by the two clergymen just mentioned, and the minister of

\* *Kongs-skugg-sio*, p. 163, 164. Soroe, 1768, 4to.

*Stadarhraun*, who, to use his own words, found it impossible to tear himself away from me. The morasses in front of the mountains being almost impassable, I resolved to avail myself of low water, and pass the *Lánga-fiörar*, or sands, between the mouth of *Hnappadal* and *Stadarstad*, the next station on the road. On our arrival at the beach, however, we had the disappointment to find that we had made a wrong calculation, and were obliged to stay at a neighbouring farm till the following ebb.

At the distance of about two miles due north, and completely surrounded with lava, rose the grand circular crater of *Elldborg*, which is not only remarkable on account of its singular configuration, but also because it stands quite insulated in the middle of an extensive plain, which it has almost entirely deluged with lava.

Having got the baggage taken off our horses, we set out on foot across the lava, in order to inspect more closely this curious production of nature. The walk proved very rough, and sometimes dangerous, owing to the sharp and cavernous nature of the lava. Several of the largest caves are used for sheep-pens, it being a fact that, when left to follow their own inclination, the sheep repair to them in preference to those constructed by man. On our arrival at the base of the volcano, we could not sufficiently admire the regularity with which it rose by a gradual acclivity till within about eighty feet of the summit, when the heath and every vestige of



vegetation ceased, and a wall of dark vitrified lava rose at once in nearly a perpendicular direction, and terminated in a rough and irregular top. From the perfect resemblance of this wall to an immense artificial fortification, it has obtained the name of *Elldborg*, or “The Fortress of Fire.” After having rested ourselves a little at the foot of the rampart, we began to scale it, an undertaking which we found attended with no small difficulty, the lava in many places being smooth as glass, and in others broken into minute fragments, which gave way on our stepping upon them, and often compelled us to renew our toil. At length, after several respites, we ultimately reached the summit, when we were not a little alarmed to find that we were only separated from a tremendous abyss by a dome of lava, in many places not exceeding six inches in thickness, extremely loose in its contexture, and mouldering with age into the crater, which opened like an immense basin directly before us. It is not an entire circle, but somewhat oval, its longitude stretching from E. S. E. to W. N. W. The interior of the wall is in general more perpendicular than the exterior, especially on the east side, where it consists of rugged cliffs, among which a number of ravens annually build their nests. Having encompassed the summit with a measuring-line, and found its circumference to be somewhat more than 1800 feet, we descended into the crater itself, by means of a rude defile on the south-east side, where the



Designed by A. H. W.

VIEW OF GETTYSBURG FROM THE SOUTH;

Engraved by R. Wood Esq.



wall consisted entirely of thin flat plates of lava, the surface of which was cracked or broken into numerous pieces, and exhibited a strong tendency towards basaltic conformation. When at the bottom, we had a most august view of the clouds, passing in rapid succession across the heavens, which were circumscribed by the lofty walls of the volcano, towering to the height of near 200 feet above us. From about half that height the sides begin to slope, and are covered with slags, except on the west side, where there is a good deal of coarse grass, and much angelica. The crater terminates in a small aperture, situated exactly in the centre, and marking the ancient source of devastation and ruin. It is nearly filled with slags, and all around lie a number of large calcined stones, which, towards the end of the eruption, the fire has not been able to throw over the walls of the crater.

From the summit we had an extensive view of the vast plain which the lava has inundated, and higher up the opposite valley, several red volcanic cones presented themselves, which have also poured forth streams of melted substances, the largest of which are those situate in the vicinity of *Raudamel*. At a short distance from the eastern base of the mount, several small conical hills have been formed during the eruption, but they present nothing worthy of remark, their surface being entirely covered with drosses and slags. The view of *Elldborg* was taken from the farm of *Snorrastad*, at the south-

ern extremity of the lava. The mist, in which the mountains on both sides of *Hnappadal* were enveloped, prevented their crowding into the prospect, which I was informed, would have been greatly improved by their romantic appearance.

Towards evening it grew very cold, the mercury having fallen below the point of congelation. At eight o'clock I took leave of the clergymen of *Stadarhraun* and *Hytárnness*, while the chaplain of the latter place proceeded with me across the sands, from which the sea had again receded. Crossing alternately the projecting streams of lava, and the inlets of the sea which run up between them, we advanced at a noble rate; it being necessary to keep our horses every now and then at the gallop, in order to escape being overtaken by the tide, before we reached the land. At one time, we were nearly two miles from the shore; and, I must confess, I felt rather uneasy, while my companion was relating the number of travellers who had lost their lives, in consequence of their having been unexpectedly surrounded by the sea. The cold wind from the mountains on the right, rendered the ride uncomfortable; otherwise, it was as good travelling as by day, every thing, even at midnight, appearing plain around us. About three o'clock in the morning, the immense snow and ice mountain, called *Snæfell Yökul*, came into view; at first rather dimly seen, and communicating a dunnish hue to the surrounding atmosphere; but in a

short time it began to assume a more lively aspect, and continued to brighten, till the sun was fully risen, when it shone forth in all its splendour, glistening with a dazzling lustre as it received his beams, and towering to an elevation of near five thousand feet above the level of the sea.

On reaching the end of the sands, we entered an extensive plain, marshy in front of the mountains, but dry and sandy towards the sea, and here and there adorned with a few hamlets; crossing which, we barely gained the embouchure of two rivers in time to ford them, as the tide was now flowing into them with great rapidity. At half past five o'clock, we arrived at the church and parsonage of *Stadarstad*. The incumbent, Sira Gudmundr Jonson, though about sixty years of age, was already up, and giving orders to his servants about their daily tasks. He received me with every mark of attention, and, after having assisted me in pitching my tent, and ordered some refreshment from the house, he left me to enjoy the repose I so much required, after a long and hard ride.

The living of *Stadarstad* is considered to be one of the best on the island, and can only be conferred by the special sanction of his Danish Majesty. The church, parsonage, out-houses, and adjoining grounds, all wear a superior appearance. Sira Gudmundr himself, possesses more information on general subjects, than is commonly to be met with among the Icelandic

clergy, and seems to excel in his knowledge of the true principles of Scripture interpretation. He was long Secretary to the late Bishop Finnson, and Dean of *Arness*, and received this living, in consideration of his learning and abilities. He still retains the title of Dean, though the functions of that office in the Syssel of *Snafellness* be exercised by another clergyman, who lives on the opposite side of the peninsula. The accounts I gave him of the Bible Society, created much interest; and we spent the most of the afternoon in conversation on this subject, and others of a religious nature. He had distributed twenty copies of the New Testament of 1807 in his parishes, but he did not believe there existed more than three whole Bibles among a population of four hundred souls.

On the 24th, with a fine clear atmosphere, and much warmer than I had found it since leaving *Reykjavik*, I continued my route along the south side of the mountains which divide the peninsula, accompanied by the Dean, whose conversation I found highly entertaining and instructive. The road was excellent, lying through a tract, which at some former period has evidently been covered by the sea.

At the distance of four miles to the west of *Stadarstad*, near the base of the high pyramidic mountain *Lysuhyrna*, we visited the hot spring of *Lysuhol*, which is situated in the centre of a circular mound of no great height, but of considerable circumference, and consisting of incrust-

ations, formed by the calcareous depositions of the spring. There is nothing remarkable about the spring itself, the water not being hotter than 90° of Fahrenheit; but many of the petrifications of mosses, roots, and grasses, found in the vicinity, are extremely beautiful. Among other specimens which I carried away with me, was a noble imitation of a castle, consisting of numerous towers, and divided into several irregular horizontal strata, which produce a very fine effect. These petrifications are not confined to the present spring, but extend to a great distance between it and the mountains, where a multiplicity of decayed mounds present themselves, so that the tract must at some former period have abounded in hot springs. A little to the west of the pyramid just mentioned, a stream of lava has descended into the plain; but the quantity poured down in this direction has not been great, as it is only spread over a small surface, and does not rise to any height.

The road now lay along the beach, over a fine sand, which is terminated by the *Buda* lava, at the eastern extremity of which we came to the factory of *Budastad*, at present occupied by Mr. Gudmundson, who transacts business at this station for Mr. Clausen of Copenhagen. Its situation is very grotesque, being almost entirely surrounded by cracked and rugged blisters of lava, with here and there a small sward of grass, to enliven the sombreness of the scenery. We spent about an hour with Mr. Gudmundson, by whom



we were kindly entertained, and then entered the lava, which is very dangerous, owing to the chasms and rents which incessantly run across the path, and the gloomy caverns that present themselves on either side.

The volcano itself, known by the name of *Buda-Klettur*, is situated exactly in the middle of the plain, which it has filled with melted substances, and wears a red conical appearance, resembling other volcanic heights that are to be met with in great abundance in Iceland. As the road lay past its northern base, we stepped off, and ascended it in order to survey its structure. It has originally consisted of immense walls of lava, similar to the ramparts of *Elldborg*, but of much greater circumference, as the cone is also considerably higher than that remarkable volcano. Towards the conclusion of the eruption, however, part of the walls have fallen in, and now a double crater presents itself, instead of the original one, which is still distinctly marked by the outer rampart. A considerable part of the interior is overgrown either with grass or moss, but the summits and exterior are covered with cinders. Some of these contain beautiful specimens of volcanic glass, very much resembling diamonds.

On descending from the volcano, we entered a cavern close to the road, and advanced about thirty yards, in a direct line towards the crater; but the light failing us, we returned. At the mouth it was rather low, owing to the quantity

of frozen snow in the bottom, but farther in, the roof, which exhibited a fine display of volcanic stalactites, was about ten feet above the surface of the snow, the depth of which we could not ascertain.

Having again mounted our horses, we pursued our journey across the lava, the inequalities of which retarded us not a little in our progress; however, in the course of an hour and a half, we reached its western margin, and, much to our satisfaction, exchanged it for a fine sandy plain to the south of the tracts called *Arabia* and *Hraunland*, which continued the whole way, till we gained the base of the *Yökul*, and began to ascend the stupendous cliffs that line the coast from thence to *Stappen*, and are known by the name of *Sölva-hammar*. They consist, for the most part, of basaltiform lava; are about fifty or sixty feet high, and quite perpendicular; and the road lies at times so near the brink of the precipices, that it is not without great danger the traveller proceeds. Descending by a very precipitous path into a fissure formed by a stream from the mountain, the sides of which exhibited abundance of tuffa, and crossing three streams of lava, which have descended from the *Yökul*, we reached *Stappen*, a mercantile station belonging to Mr. Hialltalin, by whom I was received in the most polite and hospitable manner.

The object of my visit to this harbour, was to ascertain how the copies of the Scriptures had been disposed of which had been sent thither

last year; and it gave me great satisfaction to find Mr. Hialltalin warmly attached to the cause, and that he had done every thing that lay in his power to promote the design of the Bible Society. A considerable number of copies had been sold during the winter, notwithstanding the little traffic that is carried on in Iceland at that season of the year; and the orders he had since received, exceeded the remaining number of copies. After settling the measures it would still be necessary to adopt in order to secure a complete supply for the inhabitants of this district, I took a walk with the Dean, and Mr. Hialltalin, junior, to view the beautiful pillars and stacks of basaltic rock, with which the cliffs are adorned a little to the south of the harbour. They are exhibited with much accuracy in the representations given in Sir George Mackenzie's travels; and some of them present grottoes, scarcely inferior to that of Fingal in the Western Isles of Scotland. The coincidence too of the names, *Staffa*, and *Stapi*, is not unworthy of notice, as it seems to warrant the conclusion, that they have been imposed by the same people. They literally signify a perpendicular rock, and from them our English word *steep* is evidently derived.

At *Stappen* I was as comfortably lodged, and as well entertained as I could have been in Copenhagen; though my kind host regretted the absence of his lady, who had spent the winter in Denmark, and was not yet returned. Besides the dwelling house, which is built of wood, and



Engraved by Robert Adams

VIEW OF THE COAST NEAR STAPPEN,

Engraved by Robert Adams



well furnished, there are several warehouses attached to it; and, upon the contiguous rocks, lie scattered a number of huts, which are inhabited by fishermen.

On awakening the following morning, I obtained, through the windows of my apartment, a noble view of that magnificent work of God, the stupendous *Snæfell-Yökul*, which gives name to the Syssel, and terminates the long range of mountains that stretch forward and divide the peninsula into two equal parts. I had often admired the majesty of its appearance during my stay at *Reykjavik*; but now it beetled almost directly over head. Every surrounding object seemed swallowed up by its immensity; and as the atmosphere was pure and serene, I felt the resolution powerfully confirmed, which I had formed the preceding evening, of ascending the *Yökul* from this place. To this I was the more easily determined, as it could be accomplished without any loss of time in the prosecution of my grand object; it being necessary for me, at all events, to spend the 25th at *Stappen*, in order to fit my horses for encountering the rough lavas of next day's journey.

There was something so animating and enticing in the idea of the expedition, that the aged Dean himself would certainly have accompanied me, had it not been impossible for him to protract his stay. His place was supplied by Mr. Hialltalin, junior, who also procured three men to attend us, not so much as guides, for

none of them, nor indeed any body about the place, had ever been higher than the line of perpetual snow, but to carry our provisions, and a few supernumerary articles of clothing, and to assist us in case of danger.

When our design was made known to the people about the place, they shook their heads, and maintained that it was impossible to gain the summit; while some of them seemed to look upon the attempt as an act of presumptuous temerity. They regard the mountain with a kind of superstitious veneration; and find it difficult to divest their minds of the idea, that it is still haunted by Bárdr, the tutelary divinity of the Yökul, who will not fail to avenge himself on all that have the audacity to defile, with mortal breath, the pure and ethereal atmosphere of his lofty abode.

After partaking of an excellent breakfast, and having completely equipped ourselves for the journey, we set out from *Stappen* at eight o'clock, the thermometer shewing  $52^{\circ}$  in the shade. Our way lay nearly due north-east, along the base of *Stappafjall*, an irregular mountain, which projects from the south side of the Yökul, and consists for the most part of tuffa and columnar lava. Numerous caverns with which it is perforated, combine with these appearances to determine its volcanic origin. On our right we had a stream of lava, which we crossed repeatedly, and proceeded up the long gulley, down which it has flowed from the Yökul. Following this track,

and surmounting alternate masses of snow and rough knobby lavas, we came, about ten o'clock, to the last black spot we could discover, a huge piece of lava, on which we rested ourselves for about a quarter of an hour, in order to gain strength for the remaining and more arduous part of our excursion.

What had greatly incommoded us hitherto was the extreme softness of the snow. We sunk in it past the knees; and though Mr. H. and I walked in the prints made by the three men, we found it nearly as fatiguing as if we had made a track each for himself. The mercury had now risen to  $57^{\circ}$ ; and the elevation we had gained was still considerably below the Yökul-hâls, or the ridge which connects the mountain with the main body of the peninsula.

We again renewed our ascent. The surface of the snow began to get more indurated, and though we still sunk too much to admit of our walking with ease, this inconvenience was in some measure counterbalanced by the gentleness with which the mountain rose before us. In the course of half an hour, however, the ascent became more acclivitous, and ultimately got so steep, that we were obliged to climb it in a zig-zag direction, and found it impossible to advance more than thirty or forty paces at a time, without throwing ourselves down on the snow, in order to refresh ourselves by a temporary respite. What is very remarkable, though we always felt so fatigued that we supposed a consi-



derable time would be required to render us vigorous again, we had not lain more than three minutes when we found ourselves as fresh and lively as ever. We now found the black silk handkerchiefs we had taken with us very useful, as the rays of the sun, reflected from the minute crystals of ice on the crust of the snow, proved extremely annoying, and must certainly have been hurtful to the organs of sight had we not used this precaution.

For some time we completely lost sight of the superior regions of the Yökul; but as we continued our progress, the most easterly peak came at length in view, and appeared to be at no great elevation above us. It was not, however, till after we had repeatedly renewed our toil, that we reached its southern base, about one o'clock. This peak is called the *Thrihyrning*, from the three minor peaks into which it is divided; and which consist of masses of congealed snow, supported by beautiful massive pillars of ice in front, which wear a brilliant green hue, and reflect the beams of the sun in the most vivid manner. We here halted near half an hour, and partook of some refreshment, after which we pursued our route towards the middle and highest peak.

The ascent now became much easier, owing to the consistence of the crust, and the more gentle rise of the mountain. The air increased in purity, and the heat sensibly declined. At the *Thrihyrning*, the mercury had fallen to  $36^{\circ}$ ; and a little farther up, it stood at  $33^{\circ}$ , though

there was a piercing sun, and little or no wind was perceptible. What not a little disconcerted us during this stage of our progress, was the appearance of mist gathering round the Yökul, at a considerable distance below us, which we were afraid would increase, and not only confine our prospect, but render our descent both difficult and dangerous.

We now began also to anticipate the dangerous rents and chasms in the snow, so pathetically described by former travellers ; but were no less surprised than pleased to meet with only a single fissure, which did not appear to run to any great depth, and was only about four inches in breadth. Their absence, however, may be accounted for from the earliness of the season ; the winter snows with which they had been drifted up remaining undissolved, and no fresh disruptions from the precipitation of the masses of snow having yet taken place. For this reason, the ascent of the Yökul must always be easier the earlier it is undertaken ; though in this case the danger must be greater, as many of the old chasms may only have been partially drifted over, and, ere the traveller is aware, he may sink through a deceitful surface into an immense unfathomed abyss.

About *three* o'clock, we ultimately succeeded in reaching the base of the highest peak, when all at once a most tremendous precipice appeared at our feet, exceeding 2000 feet of nearly perpendicular depth, and displaying, in various

parts of the profound valley of snow into which it opened, long and broad fissures running parallel with its sides. Near the middle of this awful depth we espied a huge circular aperture, the sides of which were lined with green ice, and which seemed to have been formed by a cascade, poured down from some part of the snow-bank on which we stood, though we could not discover any marks of water. This wonderful chasm ran down from between the middle and most westerly peaks, and appeared to descend to near the northern base of the mountain. Skirting the brink of the frozen precipice, we ascended the north side of the peak, but, after climbing within three or four yards of its summit, we were debarred all further progress by a perpendicular wall of icy pillars, resembling those already described, and completely surrounding the summit, which we could reach with great ease with the end of the poles, or long walking staves in our hands.

We here formed a seat with our poles in the snow, and sat down to partake of a cold dinner, which tasted still colder from the ideas suggested by the scene around us, and the actual increase of cold in the atmosphere, the mercury having sunk to  $29^{\circ}$ . The mist that had partially encompassed the Yökul during our ascent, now completely encircled it, and prevented us from surveying the low coasts and harbours around the base of the mountain. The prospect was, nevertheless, noble and commanding. The moun-

tains of the peninsula rose into view through the surrounding fog; the whole length of the bay of *Faxeifjord* was distinctly visible to our right, together with the Eastern and Western *Skardsheidi* mountains, *Akkrafiell*, and part of the mountains in *Gullbringe Syssel*. *Geitland's Yökul*, *Skialldbreid*, and the mountains about *Hekla*, crowded into view from the east; while, from the termination of the range of mountains that divides the peninsula, stretched the *Breidafjord*, studded with an innumerable multitude of singular-looking islands. The mountains of *Bardastrand* and *Isafjord* bounded the prospect towards the north, among which the *Gláma* and *Drángá Yökuls* shone with great splendour. The view to the west was only confined by our limited powers of vision, and certainly extended beyond half the intervening distance between Iceland and Greenland. What added to the interest excited by so extensive a prospect, was the beautiful girdle of clouds which surrounded the Yökul, at least 3000 feet below us. The atmospheric fluid felt uncommonly pure; and the pleasurable sensations produced by the reflection that we had attained the object of our enterprize, in spite even of our own misgivings, tended, in no small degree, to cheer and exhilarate our minds.

On surveying such an immense snow mountain, it is impossible not to feel the force of the Scripture appeal: "Will the snow of Lebanon fail from the rock of the field? or the inundat-

ing cold flowing waters be exhausted?" Jerem. xviii. 14. Much less can HE fail who is the ancient of days, and the rock of ages, the fountain of living waters, and the God of all comfort and consolation. Every sublunary object must undergo vicissitude and decay; the whole of the mundane system shall one day present a scene of universal ruin: but "HE remaineth the same, and HIS years shall have no end," Psalm cii. 27.

Having examined the compass, and found it exactly to correspond with the sun, we began to retrace our steps, which, from their depth, were plain before us, so that there was no danger of losing our way. We found the descent extremely easy; and in little more than three hours from our leaving the summit of the Yökul, we again found ourselves at *Stappen*, where we were welcomed by the inhabitants; but it was not till the following morning that the common people would believe the protestations of our attendants that we had actually reached the middle peak.

SNAE PJEET, YÖKUTL, AS SEEN FROM THE SEA,



Engraved by Robert Fisher.



## CHAP. XI.

*Journey through the SysseL of Snæfellsness continued—Volcanic Remains—Ingialldshvol—Ennit—Olafsvik—Bulandshöfði—Grundarfjord—Mode of Interment—Runic Epitaphs—Berserkia Lava and Cairn—Stickesholm—Thorsness—Temple of Thor—Mode of Sacrificing, and Origin of Toasts—Helgafell—Thingvalla—Stone of Sacrifice—Ancient and Modern Hospitality of the Icelanders—Discovery of Greenland—Snoksdal.*

I LEFT *Stappen* on the 26th, accompanied by Mr. Hialltalin, and proceeded round the Yökul, across some of the highest lavas to be met with on the island. The stage might be about twenty-four miles, yet we had scarcely any thing but lava the whole day. At a short distance from *Stappen* we encountered two streams, the one of which has run above the other, and consists of a very compact lava, which assumes in some places a prismatic form, and displays on its surface a number of beautiful white specks, resembling the finest embroidery. On striking it



with a hammer, it gives a sound like metal. To our left we had the *Lon-dráugar*, two curious-looking natural obelisks, of a prodigious height, that of the highest being not less than 240 feet. They are of no great diameter, and stand almost close together. Numerous red conical hills line the coast around the Yökul. Several of them are of considerable magnitude, and must owe their origin to the breaking forth of fire from the subterraneous caverns, which, with great probability, are supposed to stretch from under the sea to the centre of the Yökul. What tends strongly to confirm this hypothesis, is the fact, that notwithstanding the immense quantity of snow that must annually be melted by the heat of the sun, no river of any size is found to flow from the Yökul.

The peninsula here terminates in a point called *Öndverdtness*, on both sides of which are several fishing-places, which are very conveniently situated, as the sea abounds with great plenty of fish at this place. \*

At seven in the evening we arrived at the farm of *Ingialldshvol*, which is occupied by Mr. Scheving, the administrator of the royal domains in this part of the island. We did not find him at home, but his wife and two daughters received us in the most courteous manner, and in-

\* Sometimes an immense number of whales enter the *Breidafjord*. About three years ago upwards of 1600 were driven on its southern shores.

stantly served up a dram of Jamaica rum and coffee. It was interesting to observe the degree of taste with which the houses, originally of Icelandic construction, had been improved; and the manners of the family, though strictly national, seemed not a little raised above the common standard. The church at this place is next, in point of size, to the edifices at *Holum* and *Reykjavik*. It is constructed of wood, but begins to fall into decay for want of a new coating of tar. The *tun* is also very extensive, and entirely free from knolls, a thing rather uncommon in Iceland. Before retiring to rest, I had a visit from the clergyman, who informed me, that in the two parishes forming his charge are nearly 1000 souls, a disproportion which arises from the number of fishing hamlets, whose inhabitants depend entirely on the produce of the sea. They are in general very poor; and, from every account, it would appear, that, in point of moral character, they are far behind those who confine their attention to the management of their flocks. Being often prevented from going to sea by the prevalence of stormy weather, they contract a habit of idleness, in the train of which, drunkenness, impurity, and other vices, but too commonly follow. These evils have of late increased to such a degree in the Syssel of *Snæfellsness*, that those in power found themselves obliged to interfere, and call the offenders to account; but connivance, partiality, and the want of cordial and persevering co-opera-

tion, have rendered the measures abortive that were designed to effect a reformation of manners. Upwards of thirty Bibles, and a number of New Testaments had been sold at this place.

On the 27th, I again set out from *Ingialldshvol* in company with the two daughters of the administrator, the clergyman, and Mr. Hialltalin, who would not leave me till we reached *Olafsvik*. The ladies, dressed in their Sunday habit, were lifted on their ponies, and galloped away, apparently as little intimidated as the ladies in the neighbourhood of the Don. Their saddles were surrounded by a strong rim behind, over which hung an elegant coverlet, exhibiting some fine specimens of embroidery. The road was at first rather boggy, but we soon gained the sand which forms the beach, and advanced with considerable speed till we reached the base of a huge projecting mountain called *Ennit*, when we were obliged to alight, and suffer our horses to find the road as well as they could, across the large stones that have been dislodged on the beach.

The pass at this place is justly considered to be one of the most dangerous in Iceland. The mountain is about 2500 feet in height, presenting the most rugged and frightful appearance imaginable in front, and seems to be extremely irregular in its formation. Its principal ingredient is a brown tuffa, alternating with different kinds of lava, sandstone, and clay. The sea having eat away a considerable part of its base,

numerous holes and caverns present themselves ; and its sides being perpendicular, there is no possibility of passing it except at low water, and even then the sea only recedes to a short distance ; so that though the traveller keeps close to the water, he still runs great risk of being crushed to atoms by the stones falling from the mountain. Numbers have actually lost their lives here ; and many of the natives prefer a long circuitous route along the south side of the peninsula to this short but difficult pass. It was not without impressions of terror that I ventured below the beetling cliffs, many of which appeared to be almost entirely disengaged from the mountain ; and my anxiety was greatly increased on witnessing the stones that had tumbled down during the ebb. However, as the ladies proceeded without intimidation, it would have argued a great want of fortitude not to have followed.

About noon we reached *Olafsvik*, a factory belonging to Mr. Clausen, and were hospitably entertained by his factor. It consists of two very respectable dwelling-houses, several warehouses, and a number of small Icelandic hamlets that lie at different distances behind the place. I here fell in with the Dean of the Syssel, the very Reverend Mr. Thorgrimson, who had proceeded this length on a visitation. It was with much regret I learned this circumstance, as I had laid my account with spending the Lord's day at his place, and hearing him preach.

He is considered to be one of the more able preachers in the island, and is one of the few who deliver their discourses from memory:—it being almost universally the custom with the clergy to read their sermons, which deprives them of that life and energy which generally accompany the address of an unshackled speaker. My regret was augmented the longer I was in his company; for I found him to be a truly serious man, sedate and deliberate in his turn of mind, of considerable learning, and possessing sound ideas on the grand fundamental articles of the Christian faith. What he said was always well weighed, and expressed in the most appropriate words. He soon took an opportunity of expressing his approbation of the exertions now making for the dissemination of the Holy Scriptures, and his gratitude for what had been done for the inhabitants of his Deanery in particular. It was entirely out of his power to return with me, as he had an appointment for the following day; but he had the kindness to accompany me about four miles along the coast to the fishing village of *Völlum*, where we parted, after mutually wishing each other the divine blessing and protection.

I now rode on with the clergyman of *Ingiállshool* to a rich farm called *Máfahlid*, the proprietor of which shewed every disposition to serve me, and ordered one of his sons to proceed with me as far as *Grundarfjord*, where I intended stopping all night. From the fine road along

the beach which I travelled with ease and pleasure, I had soon to mount the horrid pass of *Bulandshöfdi*, which, in point of difficulty and danger may almost vie with that of *Ennit*. The mountain is nearly 2000 feet high : its front presents several horizontal strata of tuffa and vertical pillars of basaltic rock to the depth of about 200 feet, when a bed of debris commences, and falls with a rapid descent to the brink of the lofty precipices which gird the sea at the base of the mountain.

The only road which it is possible to pass lies up across this debris, and rises at the highest to nearly 1000 feet above the level of the sea, which dashes with tremendous roar almost directly below the traveller. The road itself we found in some places invisible ; recent depositions of gravel from the impending rocks having obliterated it, and every step the horses took threatened with us inevitable destruction, as they had no secure footing, and there was no manner of barrier to prevent us from rolling into the abyss. Our principal difficulty, however, was occasioned by a deep indentation cut by the mountain torrent, which was nearly full of frozen snow, in crossing which, one of the baggage-horses missed a foot, and sliding down upon the ice, I must have given him up for lost, had he not gained a heap of debris, which held him with difficulty till he was caught by the servant, and drawn up again into the path. On proceeding along this dangerous route, most of the Icelanders walk behind their horses, holding them by the

tails, and taking care not to look down into the sea.

Having gained the summit of the pass, we again began to descend on the other side, admiring the grandeur of the mountain scenery which here presented itself to our view. Directly before us lay the Coffin and Sugar-loaf, so called from their striking resemblance to these objects, and to our right projected a number of bold and precipitous mountains, whose curiously diversified forms seemed to mock the works of art, and whose sides wore evident marks of primitive formation; for how much soever they were divided, the sites of the horizontal beds, of which they are composed, exactly corresponded to each other.

At nine o'clock in the evening I arrived at *Grundarfjord*,\* which lies at the termination of a small bay of the same name, and is built on a high bank of gravel that has been thrown up by the sea. It is inhabited by Mr. Helagson, the factor of Mr. Clausen, a native Icelandic, who, in spite of his connections with foreigners, retains both in his person and family the genuine simplicity of the native character, and possesses in no ordinary degree that hospitable disposition by which his countrymen are so generally distinguished. He had already received two tra-

\* The Danes call this place and the bay *Grönnefjord*, or the Green Frith: whereas the Icelandic appellation literally signifies the Shallow Frith, and is derived from the banks which abound in it.

vellers, yet he made me as welcome as if I had been the only person that had visited the place in the course of half a century.

Owing to the stony nature of the ground, I had some difficulty in getting my tent pitched; and in the course of the night it was nearly blown down, by sudden and violent squalls from the adjacent mountains. About five in the morning, I was alarmed by a noise louder than thunder, which seemed to be close to the tent; and on drawing aside the curtain, I found that a disruption had taken place in the face of a mountain at no great distance. The air was nearly darkened with the quantity of dust that was borne upwards by the wind, and immense masses of rock were hurled down, tearing the ground as they rolled along, and, giving a fresh impulse to the rocks and gravel that had already fallen, the whole rushed down with amazing velocity into the plain.

The 28th being the Lord's day, I rode with Mr. Helagson to the church of *Setberg*, which lies on the east side of the bay, and is the residence of the Dean. I was here received by one of his daughters, who instantly presented me with coffee, and the chaplain, a son of the aged minister of *Thingvalla*, bade me welcome to the place. Before the commencement of public worship some time was taken up with a funeral. It is the custom in Iceland to remove the corpse as soon as possible to church, where it is suffered to remain till the day of interment. When a



person happens to die in the vicinity of the church, he is wrapped in wadmél, and placed on a bench beside the altar, till a coffin can be got ready:—a custom of very ancient date, as traces of it are to be met with in the Eyrbyggja Saga, about the time Christianity was introduced into the island.\* It would also appear from the same Saga, that it was customary in those days to place the coffin on a sledge drawn by oxen; but as this mode of conveyance is entirely out of use at the present day, the Icelanders now carry it on horseback, as the Jews did the body of Amaziah. “And they brought him on horses: and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David.” 2 Kings xiv. 20. In the winter season, interments are attended with considerable difficulty; as it takes three or four people a whole day to dig a grave, owing to the depth of the frost. In many parts of the island, where the people are at a distance from any church, they preserve the corpse the whole winter in a cellar, and inter it the following spring.

The funeral service begins with a psalm, which is sung while the procession advances towards the grave; the men having their heads uncovered, and the females covering their faces almost entirely with their handkerchiefs. After the coffin has been deposited in the grave, the priest throws three shovels full of earth upon it, re-

\* Cap. 57. and 63.

peating the words : “ From dust thou art taken ; to dust thou shalt return ; and from the dust shalt thou rise again at the last day.” While the grave is filling, the company sing a psalm or two suited to the occasion. One of the servants belonging to the farm whence the corpse had been brought, entered the grave after a small portion of earth had been thrown in, and continued to tramp it down with his feet :—an action that naturally produced a very abhorrent feeling in my mind, and added to the common but perhaps unjust prejudice that is entertained against those whose lot it is to perform the last offices of humanity. The females knelt, in the mean time, on the surrounding graves ; and when all was finished, the father of the deceased threw himself prostrate on the grave, and continued in that posture for the space of eight or ten minutes ; but whether his prayer regarded the soul of the departed, or the important uses to be made of this solemn event by the living, was more than I could determine.

The discourse of the chaplain, which turned on a future state of retribution, was plain and edifying ; and the sacramental table was crowded with communicants, who appeared to be deeply affected by the solemn exercise in which they were engaged.

On my return from church, it began to blow with such violence that I was obliged to take down my tent, and lodge with Mr. Helgason.

In the evening I received a visit from the Sysselman, who gave me an account of the steps that had been taken for facilitating the distribution of the Scriptures, and he assured me that nothing should be left undone that might carry the views of the Society into effect.

Monday, the 29th, I bade farewell to my kind entertainers at *Grundarfjord*, and prosecuted my journey towards the east, under the guidance of the Sysselman. On passing *Selberg* we were joined by the chaplain, and rode on to *Hallbiarnareyri*, the former dwelling of the Sysselman, where we were treated with coffee by the present occupant of the farm. While my two companions were shoeing one of their horses, a task that all the Icelanders are capable of performing, and which none of them thinks beneath his dignity, I copied and deciphered two Runic epitaphs that were lying at the door. They are inscribed on stones of light brown basalt, which are supposed to have been taken from a mountain at a short distance to the eastward, as it abounds with the same kind of basaltic pillars. The largest is hexagonal, and measures exactly two Danish ells in length, by seven inches at the greatest diameter. It is broken near the middle, which has caused a rasure in the inscription, but the remainder of the name leads to the discovery of the defective letters :

XΦR XNIFOR I 1YΦRΦOR PNMARΦΦAΓΓIR  
 AP BIFIB PIRIR YΦR

*Her hviler Fridgerdur Gunnarsdottir  
 og bidid fyrir mer.*

“ Here rests Fridgerdur Gunnar’s daughter ; and pray for me.”

The other basalt is heptagonal, six inches in diameter, and an ell and a half in length. The inscription is shorter, and the name appears to be foreign :

XΦR XNIFOR YARPRΦIA PΦIRY

*Her hviler Marfreda Feirm.*

“ Here rests Marfreda Feirm.”

The former of these inscriptions sufficiently indicates that it was made before the Reformation, about which time a church that formerly stood here was razed ; and the church-yard having disappeared, the stones remained concealed till last summer, when they were discovered by the peasant, as he was taking up part of the burying-ground in order to enlarge his garden.

It still remains to be decided by antiquaries, why so few Runic inscriptions are found in Iceland, whereas they are widely spread over Scandinavia, from which that Island received its inhabitants. The frequent mention of runes in

the more ancient or poetic Edda, shews that they were familiarly known in that island, at least before the eleventh century. They also occur in several of the Sagas, though not in connection with the interment of the dead ; yet not above eight or ten epitaphs have hitherto been discovered, and of these the greater number are of recent date.

The two gentlemen accompanied me to the termination of the *Kolgrafsfiord*, where we overtook the man that had the care of my baggage-horses, and I proceeded with him up a short, but very steep mountain-road, called *Tröllaháls*, or the Giant's Neck, descending from which we entered a pretty extensive valley, ornamented with a few cottages, and divided towards the east by the *Hraunfiord*, which derives its name from the circumstance of its having been almost entirely crossed by a stream of lava that has only left a small strait on the north side, through which the sea ebbs and flows. The blackness of the lava was finely contrasted by the prodigious number of swans that were swimming in the bay. The lava itself wears a very rugged and melancholy appearance, and the path across it is extremely rough and annoying to travellers. About the middle of the tract my horse threw me, and my feet getting entangled in the stirrups, I every moment expected he would have trampled upon me, but in the good providence of God I escaped unhurt.

We next entered a tract of red volcanic cinders, and skirted the base of a large conical hill of the same colour. Several more cones were visible to the right, the direction in which the stream of lava has descended from the original crater, which I could plainly descry among the mountains. Passing a solitary farm near the margin of the lava, we encountered the famous arm called the *Berserkia lava*, from the path and fence that were laid across it by two Swedes of gigantic prowess, towards the close of the tenth century.\* When we had gained the highest

\* The narrative of the circumstances connected with this singular transaction is preserved in *Eyrbyggja Saga*, the substance of which has lately been given to the British public by Walter Scott, Esq. As it will convey to the reader a fair specimen of the Sagas, I shall here insert his translation, only taking the liberty to alter a phrase or two, in order to render it more conformable to the original.

“ While Vermund Miofi, of *Biarnarhafn*, a harbour in the vicinity, spent a winter with Count Hacon, at that time regent of Norway, there happened to be at the court two of those remarkable champions, called Berserkir, men who, by moral or physical excitation of some kind or other, were wont to work themselves into a state of phrensy, during which they achieved deeds passing human strength, and rushed, without sense of danger, or feeling of pain, upon every species of danger that could be opposed to them. Vermund contracted a sort of friendship with these champions, who, unless when seized with their fits of fury, were not altogether discourteous or evil disposed. But as any contradiction was apt to excite their stormy passions, their company could not be called very safe or commodious. Vermund, however, who now desired to return to Iceland, conceived that the support of the two Berserkir would be of the greatest advantage to him, as they would

part of the lava, I obtained a view of the fences running completely across it ; and in some places apparently of considerable height. The path itself is the best I have seen through any lava in

enable him to control his brother, who had acted unjustly towards him in regard to his patrimony ; and, therefore, when, at his departure, Count Hacon, according to custom, offered him any reasonable boon which he might require, he prayed that he would permit these two champions to accompany him to his native country. The Count assented, but not without shewing him the danger of his request. “ Though they have rendered me obedient service,” said Hacon, “ they will be reluctant and disobedient stipendiaries to a person of meaner station.” Vermund, however, grasped at the permission of the Count, though reluctantly granted, and was profuse in promises to Halli and Leikner, providing they would accompany him to Iceland. They frankly objected the poverty of the country, yet agreed to go thither, apprising their conductor at the same time, that their friendship would not endure long, if he refused them any boon which it was in his power to grant, and which they might choose to demand. Having finally agreed, they set sail for Iceland, but Vermund soon found reason to repent of his choice, and began to think of transferring his troublesome and ungovernable satellites to his brother Arngrim, who was surnamed Styr, on account of his fierce and quarrelsome disposition. It was no easy matter, however, to prevail upon Styr to accept of the patronage of the Berserkir. In vain Vermund protested that he gifted him with two such champions as would enable him to become an easy victor in every quarrel he might engage in ; and that he designed this present as a gage of their fraternal union. Styr expressed his happiness at the prospect of their becoming better friends ; but intimated, that he had heard enough of the disposition of these foreign warriors to satisfy him, that they would be rather embarrassing than useful dependents, and was fully determined never to admit them within his family. Vermund was, therefore, obliged to change his tone ; to acknowledge the dread in which he stood

Iceland. Its formation has certainly been accompanied with immense labour ; and little short of what we fancy the strength of a giant would be required to move many of the masses of lava

of the Berserkir, and request his brother's advice and assistance to rid him of them. "That," answered Styr, "is a different proposal. I could never have accepted them as a pledge of favour or friendship ; but, to relieve thee from danger and difficulty, I am content to encumber myself with the charge of thine associates." The next point was to reconcile the Berserkir, (who might resent being transferred, like bondmen, from the one brother to the other,) to this change of masters. The warlike and fierce disposition of Styr, seemed, however, so much more suitable to their own than that of Vermund, that they speedily acquiesced ; and accompanying their new patron upon a nocturnal expedition, evinced their strength in breaking to pieces a strong wooden frame or bed, in which his enemy had taken refuge, so that Styr had an opportunity of slaying him.

"The presumption of Halli, however, soon discomposed their union. The champion cast the eyes of affection on Asdisa, the daughter of his patron, a young, haughty, fiery, and robust damsel, well qualified to captivate the heart of a Berserk. He formally announced to Styr, that he demanded her hand in marriage ; that a refusal would be a breach of their friendship ; but that if he would accept of his alliance, he and his brother would render him the most powerful man in Iceland. At this unexpected proposal, Styr for a time remained silent, considering how best he might evade the presumptuous demand of this frantic champion ; and at length observed, that the friends of his family must be consulted upon his daughter's establishment. "Three days space," answered Halli, "will suffice for that purpose ; and be mindful that our friendship depends on thine answer." Next morning, Styr rode to *Helgafell*, to consult the experience of the Pontiff Snorro. When Snorro learned that he came to ask advice, "Let us ascend," he said, "the sacred mount, for such counsels as are taken on that holy spot



that have been raised to either side. About the middle of the tract we descended into a deep glen, where we found the *Berserkia-dis*, or the cairn beneath which the Berserkir lie interred.

rarely prove unpropitious." They remained in deep conference on the mount of Thor until evening, nor did any one know the purpose which they agitated; but what followed sufficiently shews the nature of the counsels suggested upon the holy ground. Styr, so soon as he returned home, announced to Halli his expectation, that since he could not redeem his bride by payment of a sum of money as was usual, he should substitute in lieu thereof, according to ancient right and custom, the performance of some unusual and difficult task. "And what shall that task be?" demanded the suitor.—"Thou shalt form," said Styr, "a path across the lava to *Biarnarhafn*, and a fence between my pasture-grounds and those of my neighbours; also, thou shalt construct a house on this side of the lava for the reception of my flocks, and these tasks accomplished, thou shalt have Asdisa to wife."—"Though unaccustomed to such servile toil," replied the Berserk, "I accept of the terms thou hast offered." And by the assistance of his brother, he accomplished the path required, a work of the most stupendous masculine labour, and erected the bound-fence, which may be seen at this day; and while they were labouring at the stable for the flocks, Styr caused his servants to construct a subterranean bath, so contrived, that it could on a sudden be deluged with boiling water, and heated to a suffocating degree.

"The stipulated task being ended, the champions returned to the dwelling of Styr. They were extremely exhausted, as was common with persons of their condition, whose profuse expenditure of strength and spirits induced a proportional degree of relaxation after severe labour. They, therefore, gladly accepted Styr's proposal, that they should occupy the newly-constructed bath. When they had entered, their insidious patron caused the trap-door to be lockaded, and a newly stripped bullock's skin to be laid on the stair, and then proceeded to pour in scalding water through a window above the stove, so

It is situated on the north side of the road, and may be about twenty feet in length, six in breadth, and four in height. It consists of larger stones towards the base; but the superior regions are made up of small stones that have been thrown upon it, from time to time, by those that have passed this way. This custom, which obtains at this day in the north of Scotland, in Sweden, and many other countries, is found to have prevailed in the time of Herodotus; and some learned men are of opinion, that an allusion is made to it by Job, when speaking of the גדיש *Gadish*, or tumulus, of the wicked. “ And every man

that the bath was heated to an intolerable pitch. The unfortunate Berserkir endeavoured to break out, and Halli succeeded in forcing the door, but his feet being entangled in the slippery hide, he was stabbed by Styr ere he could make any defence: his brother attempting the entrance, was forced back headlong into the bath, and thus both perished. Styr caused their bodies to be interred in a glen in the lava, close to the road, and of such depth that nothing but the sky was visible from its recesses. Then Styr composed this song concerning his exploit :

“ Synduz mer, sem myndi,  
Moteflendr Spiota ;  
Ala ekki dælir,  
El-herdendum verda.  
Uggi ek eigi Seggia  
Ofrgang við mik strangan :  
Nu hefir bilgröndudr branda,  
Berserkium stad merktan.

*These champions from beyond the main,  
Of Iceland's sons I deem'd the bane,  
Nor fear'd I to endure the harm  
And frantic fury of their arm ;  
But, conqueror, gave this valley's gloom  
To be the grim Berserkir's tomb.”*

Eyrbyggja Saga, caps. xxv. and xxviii. and Illustrations of Northern Antiquities, p. 489—492.

shall draw out (the stone he hath taken with him on purpose, and throw it) after him, as there were innumerable before him." Job xxi. 33.

At the termination of the lava, my guide pointed out to me the cottage of *Hraun*, which was inhabited by *Styr*, and several other places mentioned in the *Saga*. He had the story completely by heart, and finding that I took some degree of interest in the scenery, he proceeded to relate the different circumstances, in a strain of eloquence that perfectly astonished me; nor is it easy to say when his national enthusiasm might have been arrested, had we not arrived at the farm of *Kongsbacka*, where I pitched my tent under the lee of the house, and was kindly treated by the inhabitants.

Early in the morning of the 30th, I set off for the factory of *Stickesholm*, to reach which it was necessary for me to turn a number of small bays and creeks, which protrude between that place and the rest of the peninsula. The intervening grounds form the small peninsula of *Thorsness*, famous for its having been dedicated to *Thor*, the Scandinavian deity, and the cruel rites of a bloody superstition, which continued to be practised here until the introduction of Christianity.

It was taken possession of in the year 883, by *Thorolf*, surnamed *Mostrarskegg*, from his prodigious beard, a Norwegian magnate of distinguished liberality, who kept the temple of *Thor*

on the island of *Mostur*, to whose service he was zealously addicted. Having incurred the resentment of Haralld, King of Norway, by harbouring a nobleman who had been exiled by that prince, he resolved to emigrate to Iceland; but, previous to his departure, he deemed it advisable to consult the oracle of Thor, as to the eligibility of his proceeding to that island, or reconciling himself with the King. In order to render the Thunderer propitious, Thorolf offered an immense sacrifice, and received a response, authorising his change of habitation. He now prepared for his voyage, and took with him, not only the most of his effects, but also the temple of Thor, and the very earth on which the altar of that idol had been erected. On his arrival in the *Faxafjord*, he cast the posts of the throne, which had stood in the temple, and on one of which the image of Thor was sculptured, into the sea, and, following them round the promontory of *Snafellsness*, he entered the opposite bay, to which, from its extreme breadth, he gave the name of *Breidafjord*.

The posts having drifted to the southern shores of the bay, were cast up near this place, where Thorolf landed, and proceeded immediately to take formal possession of the coast, which was done, according to a custom prevalent in those days, by walking with a burning firebrand in his hand, round the lands he intended to occupy, and marking their boundaries by setting fire to

the grass.\* He then built a large house near the shores of *Hofsvog*, or the Temple Bay, and raised a spacious temple (*hof*) to Thor, having a door on each side, and towards the inner end were erected the principal posts before mentioned, in which the *regin-naglar*, or nails of the divinity, were fixed. Within these pillars was a sacred asylum, with an altar in the middle, on which was placed a solid ring of silver, two ounces in weight, to be used in the administration of oaths, and worn by the chief in all the public meetings of the people. There was also placed beside the altar, the bason for receiving the blood of the sacrifices (*hlautbolli*), with the instrument of sprinkling (*hlauttein*); and around it stood, in separate niches, the several idols worshipped by the Scandinavians. On the establishment of this temple, a decree was issued by Thorolf, that every one should pay a certain tribute to the temple, to enable him to procure the sacrifices, and maintain the necessary rites of worship. †

\* The same custom obtained in the western islands of Scotland till the end of the seventeenth century. See Martin's *Western Islands*, p. 117, London, 1716, 8vo.

† The following description of the nature of Scandinavian idolatry, from the pen of Snorro Sturluson, will not only remind the reader of 1 Corinth. viii. and x. 14—33. but shew him the origin of health-drinking as it is still practised in different countries of Europe:

“ Sigurd, Earl of Lada, was the greatest idolater, as his father Hacon had been before him, and most strenuously kept up all the sacrificial feasts in *Thrændalag*, in the capacity of the King's vicegerent. It was an ancient custom, when sacri-

The site of the temple is still shewn, close to the hamlet *Hofstad*, on the west side of the peninsula.

About noon I arrived at the western base of

sifice was to be offered, that the whole community assembled at the temple, and brought with them whatever they needed during the feast. It was also particularly ordained that every man should have ale in his possession. On such occasions, they not only killed all kinds of small cattle, but also horses, and all the blood obtained by this means was called *hlaut*; the vessels containing it were called *hlautbollar*, and the instruments of aspersion, *hlautteinar*. With these they sprinkled all the supporters of the idols, and the walls of the temple both externally and internally, as also the people that were assembled, with the blood of the sacrifices; but the flesh was boiled and used for food. In the middle of the floor of the temple was a fire, over which kettles were suspended, and full cups were borne round the fire to the guests. It was the office of the pontiff, or the master of the feast, to bless the cup and all the meat offered in sacrifice. The first bumper (Icel. *full*, a full cup) was drunk to *Odin*, for victory in battle, and the prosperity of his government; the second and third were drunk to *Njord* and *Frey*, for peace and good seasons; after which many drank *Braga-full*, or the toast of the mighty heroes who had fallen in battle. They also drank a bumper in memory of such of their deceased relations as had distinguished themselves by some great action; to this toast they gave the name of *minni*." *Saga Haconar Goda*, cap. xvi.

On the introduction of Christianity into the north, the names of *Odin*, *Frey*, &c. were laid aside, and the health of *Christ* and the saints was drunk by the new converts—a custom which was long kept up in these parts of Europe. We are told by *Snorro*, that when King *Svein* gave a splendid feast to the *Jomsvikinga* chiefs, previous to his ascension to the throne, he first of all drank a cup to the memory of his father; after which he proposed the health of *Christ*, (*Crists-minni*), which they all drank; then the health of *St. Michael*, &c. *Saga af Olafi Tryggvassyni*, cap. 39.

*Helgafell*, \* a low mountain, consisting of trapp, or an irregular kind of basalt, perpendicular on the north and east sides, but accessible from the west and south, where it is for the most part covered with grass. To this mountain Thorolf attached such a peculiar degree of sanctity, that he not only gave it the name of the Holy Mount, by way of distinction, but enacted a law, that no person should presume to look towards it without having previously performed an ablution; nor was any animal to be killed upon it under penalty of death. He also regarded it as the hill of immortality, and entertained the belief that he should dwell there in a future life, along with all his relations who inhabited *Thorsness*.

Leaving the baggage-horses to bait a little at the foot of the mountain, I rode on to the church and parsonage of *Helgafell*, where I was received by the chaplain, in whose house I found one of the best libraries that I recollect having seen in the hands of any private clergyman on the island. He had but lately come to this place, and was busy fitting up his furniture. The rector himself is almost superannuated, though by no means an old man. His name is Sæmund Holm, the author of the very inaccurate account of the last volcanic eruption. The present church of *Helgafell* owes its erection to his mechanical ge-

\* This is the mountain which Mr. Hooker confounds with the *Helgafell*, near *Hafnarford*, in the *Gullbringe Syssel*. The same mistake is found in the note to the abstract of the *Eyrbyggja Saga*, in the *Illustrations of Northern Antiquities*, p. 478.

nius ; all the carpenter-work having been accomplished with his own hands. On taking down the old building, he discovered in the altar-piece a *paxspialld*, or thin flat stone, with an Anglo-Saxon inscription upon it ; but as no copy was taken of it, the stone was either broken to pieces or lost, so that no farther account can now be obtained of it.

*Helgafell* was the abode of Snorro Goda, priest of *Thor*, and one of the most powerful chiefs in the west of Iceland. The *Eyrbyggia Saga* is almost wholly taken up with a detail of his intrigues, his prosecutions, and his cruelties. One of the first churches was built here on the public adoption of the Christian religion ; and about the year 1183, the monastery of Flatey was transferred to this place, and became one of the richest in Iceland, possessing no less than ninety-six farms at the time of the Reformation, when it was secularized, and the lands added to the Danish crown, under the designation of *Arnarstapaumbod*. \*

*Stickesholm* I found situated on the west side of a narrow sound, by which it is separated from a small island, presenting the same columnar appearances with *Helgafell*. It consists of two merchants' houses, with the warehouses belonging to them, and the dwelling-house of Mr. Hialltalin, the surgeon of the district. The prin-

\* " The lands in Zetland, which formerly belonged to the bishop, and which were transferred to the crown, are also called *umboth* lands." Edmonstone's *Zetland*, vol. i. p. 164, note. Edin. 1809 8vo.



incipal merchant is Mr. Benedictson, a native Icelander, who has distinguished himself from all the other merchants on the island by his literary pursuits, and especially by his attachment to northern antiquities, with which he possesses a very intimate acquaintance. His collection of Icelandic MSS. is considerable. He possesses several copies of the more important sagas, which he is comparing together, and writing out a fair copy of the text, accompanied with the most established readings. His zeal for the transmission of these ancient documents to posterity, has induced him to form the resolution of bequeathing the collection to his eldest son, with the stipulation, that it be bequeathed again by him in the same manner, so as to form the perpetual property of the family.

On entering his shop, I was happy to recognise a number of Bibles and New Testaments advantageously exposed for sale. A quantity of copies had been gratuitously distributed, and received with great thankfulness ; and Mr. B. expected that the sale at the ensuing summer-market would be considerable, as the greatest want of the Scriptures prevailed in the district. By Mr. and Madame Benedictson, as also by Mr. and Madame Hialltalin, I was treated in the most polite and hospitable manner. Indeed, the two families seemed to vie with one another which of them should be most unremitting in their attentions.

After having settled my business with Mr. Benedictson, I was accompanied by the surgeon to the cottage of *Thingvalla*, for the purpose of

surveying one of the principal places of sacrifice on the island. Thorolf had no sooner built the *hof* to Thor, than he instituted a provincial assembly for the administration of justice, and fixed the place of meeting on a small tongue of land which juts out from the peninsula. This spot was also held in such sanctity, that it was forbid to shed blood on it; nor were the people allowed to ease nature within its precincts, but were obliged to repair to a distant rock appointed for the purpose. In a skirmish, however, that took place after the death of Thorolf, about the holy ground, it was defiled with human blood, and pronounced unfit for being any longer the place of a court. The forum was accordingly removed to *Thingvalla*, where a number of important regulations were made for the preservation of public and social order.

It was some time before we could find the place. A little to the south of the cottage we fell in with an immense number of small square heights, which are evidently the ruins of the booths used by the people at the public assembly. We here instituted a strict search after the *Blot-steinn*, or Stone of Sacrifice, on which human victims were immolated to Thor; but sought in vain in the immediate vicinity of the booths, none of the stones in that quarter answering to the description which had been given of it. At last we descried a large stone in the middle of a morass at some distance, which, though rough and unshapen, was determined to be the identical "Stone of Fear," by the "hor-

rid circle of Brumo" in the centre of which it is situate. The stones which form this circular range appear also to be of a considerable size; but as they are now almost entirely covered by the morass, it is impossible to ascertain their depth except by digging. The circle itself is about twelve yards in diameter, and the stones are situated at short distances from each other. The *Blot-steinn* is of an oblong shape, with a sharp summit, on which the backs of the victims were broken that were offered as expiatory sacrifices, in order to appease the wrath of the offended deity, and purge the community from the obnoxiousness of guilt. Within the circle, called, in Icelandic, *domhringr*, \* sat the judges, before whom the accused, with their advocates and witnesses, were convened, while the spectators crowded around the outside of the range in order to hear the trial. The remains of these forensic and sacrificial circles are still found in great abundance throughout Scandinavia; and it is more than probable that many of the ranges of stones discovered in different parts of Great Britain, especially Scotland, were used for similar purposes, and owe their existence to the Picts, or the intercourse which, in ancient times, was maintained between the northern nations and the coasts of our island.

On the 1st of June I again left *Stickesholm*, and retraced my steps to *Helgafell*, whence I proceeded in nearly a southerly direction to the

\* *Domhringr*, doom's-ring, the ring or circle of judgment.

farm of *Drápuhlid*, which lies at the base of the mountain of the same name, famous for the number of curious minerals with which it abounds. From this farm the road lay nearly due east, across a number of low barren hills, among the gravel of which I discovered abundance of chalcedony and jasper; quitting which, I descended by the end of *Ulfarsfell* to the shores of the *Alftafjord*, or Swan Frith, and passed close to the tumulus of Arnkell, the celebrated rival of Snorro Goda. In the Saga, he is exhibited as a model of civil virtues, and in every respect the reverse of the pontiff of *Helgafell*, to whose cruel and intriguing disposition he ultimately fell a victim. It being low water, I saved a ride of more than two miles, by crossing the bay, which was nearly covered with swans; and after skirting the base of the mountains on its eastern side for the space of an hour, I arrived about eight in the evening at the church of *Narfeyri*, where I had my tent pitched just in time to escape a heavy rain, which continued without intermission the whole of the night.

I had scarcely got dressed the following morning, when the farmer made his appearance at the tent-door, and presented me with some excellent eider-duck eggs, my cheerful acceptance of which appeared to give him great satisfaction. He seemed also much pleased on my telling him that he must certainly be a descendant of Geirrid—a matron who lived in the vicinity soon after the occupation of the island, and was pos-

sessed of so hospitable a disposition, that she caused her habitation to be erected on the road, so that every traveller was obliged to pass through it, and invited to take some refreshment at a table which she always kept covered on purpose. \* Two or three examples of a similar nature are recorded in the Sagas, which prove that the hospitality so highly celebrated in the *Hâvamâl*, † was not a poetic fiction, but a virtue of high repute, and in common practice among the ancient inhabitants of the north.

From *Narfeyri* I rode in an easterly direction across a low tract which is called *Skogarstrand*, from the excellent wood which abounded here in former times, but of which scarcely a vestige remains at the present day. It was my intention to have proceeded as far as *Snoksdal*, but the badness of the weather compelled me, before I got half way, to take shelter at the church of *Breidabolstad*, where I spent the remainder of the day in a very agreeable manner with the Rev. Mr. Hialltalin, formerly of *Saurbær*, of whom Sir George Mackenzie has given so favourable a description in his Travels. He possesses a good turn for sacred poetry, and has written a considerable number of theological works, which are still lying by him in manuscript, there not being any opportunity of publishing them. Of these, the most important is a translation of Bastholm's Jewish History, which would be read with avidity, could it only

\* Eyrbyggja-Saga, cap. viii.

† Stroph. 2, 3, 4.

be put into the hands of the natives. Mr. H. is now advancing in years, and with a large family of children combines but a small living; yet he seems uncommonly lively and cheerful in his disposition. At the door of the church, which is extremely small, and in a bad state of repair, I observed a stone of basalt, with an inscription partly Runic and partly Latin; but the letters were so defaced that it was wholly illegible. It bears the date of 1681.

It was from a small island in the vicinity of this place that Eirik the Red set sail, in the year 983, in quest of a continent to the west of Iceland, of which he had received some obscure notice, and, after a short navigation, he discovered Greenland, where he remained three years, exploring the coasts, and giving names to the different places which he visited. The accounts he gave of it on his return had such an effect on his countrymen, that not fewer than five and twenty vessels were fitted out for the new continent, of which, however, only fourteen reached the land, the rest having either been lost at sea, or driven back to Iceland. \*

The morning of the 3d prognosticating better weather, I recommenced my journey, but had made but little progress when it again began to rain, which rendered the ride very uncomfortable. The outline of the mountains which stretch in an easterly direction from the Yökul, now disappeared, and gave way to a long ex-

\* Landnâmabok, Part 2. cap. xiv. Eyrbyggja Saga, cap. 24.

tent of rocky country, many parts of which exhibited the remains of ancient lavas; while, on the other hand, the *Breidafjord*, dividing and opening into the *Hvamsfjord* and *Gilsfjord*, and the intervening mountains, presented a very bold and picturesque scenery.

Having descended to the shores of the *Hvamsfjord*, the road, which had been very stony, greatly improved; and became still better, after I had passed the stone which forms the boundary between the syssels of *Dala* and *Snafellsness*. At a short distance from the beach, my guide pointed out to me the site of the *Irar-Budar*, or Irish Booths, which were occupied in former times by traders from the north of Ireland. As a mercantile station, this was certainly one of the most central and convenient that could be selected; but the shallowness of the bay is supposed to have been the reason why it was abandoned. Many other places on the coasts of Iceland are still known by the same name, which proves that at one period a considerable trade must have been carried on between the two islands. After having crossed with much difficulty a number of deep pools (Ice. *pollar*) that were filling by the tide, I reached the first houses in *Dala Syssel*, and, proceeding over the end of a projecting mountain, arrived about six o'clock in the evening at *Snoksdal*, the abode of a rich peasant, from whom I obtained permission to pitch my tent on a beautiful green spot between the houses and the church. Though

somewhat slow in his movements, he possessed no small share of dignified manners, and was assiduous in his endeavours to administer to my comfort during my stay at his farm. He was the only peasant that I could not, by any means, prevail on to accept of payment for his services.

The 4th of June, being the Lord's day, I had an opportunity of attending worship at this place. The congregation was pretty numerous, and manifested much seriousness and piety in the exercises of devotion. The prayers and discourse too of the chaplain savoured of a deeper sense of religion than any I had yet heard on the island. Instead of a few general petitions, pronounced in a cold and uninteresting manner, he offered up a prayer, in which a full and explicit confession was made of sin; its forgiveness implored, in virtue of the atonement of the Mediator; and a full supply of those blessings supplicated, of which himself and his hearers stood in need. The Psalms were taken from the old Psalm-book; and while the congregation sung an Icelandic translation of one of the early confessions, I almost fancied myself in some Christian church of the fourth or fifth century; or in one of the Syrian churches in India, so interestingly described by the late Dr. Buchanan in his *Christian Researches*.



## CHAP. XII.

*Journey through the Sysseis of Dala, Bardastrand, and Isafjord—Hvam—Svinadal—Saubæarsveit—Kampur—Domestic Scene—Reykiaholar—Hot Springs—Breidafjord and its Islands—Eider Ducks—Flatey—Hergisley—Effects of Drunkenness—Briámslæk—Bildudal—Hrafseyri—Foxes—Thingeyri—Holtt—Return—Superstition—Vatneyri—Saudlauksdal—Eggert Olafsen—Bardastrand—Sturturbrand—Gilsfjord—Raudsey—Skard—Basaltic Pillars near Budardal.*

IN the forenoon of Monday, the 5th of June, I got the farmer of *Snoksdal* to accompany me to *Hiardarholtt*, the residence of the Dean, in our way to which we had to pass two formidable rivers, *Haukadalsá* and *Laxá*, both of which had been unfordable for several days, and we found the latter still swelled, and rolling along with great rapidity. At a short distance from *Snoksdal*, we passed to the right of *Kvennabrecka*, the birth-place of the learned antiquary, Arna Magnæus, who was very industrious in collect-

ing the ancient Icelandic MSS., and bequeathed to the University Library of Copenhagen, what of his own private library escaped the flames which consumed his house in the year 1728. It is from these MSS. that the critical edition of the Edda, and editions of the more important Sagas are publishing by a committee of learned gentlemen in Copenhagen, acting as trustees of the legacy.

I had now to cross several of the long dales which give the name to the Syssel, most of which produce excellent pasturage; and the low hills by which they are separated from each other are overgrown for the most part with coarse grass, heath, or stunted birch. It was pleasing to see the flocks of sheep and lambs that were scattered about in every direction; though, at the same time, the agreeable sensation was in some measure diminished by the reflection that numbers of the lambs were dying from the intensity of the cold. I was informed, that, at an average, the mortality this season amounted to nine or ten on every farm: a loss of a very serious nature to an Icelandic peasant.

The Dean I found to be an aged man of seventy-seven. He expressed great satisfaction at the new supply of Bibles that had been provided for his countrymen. His investigation had just been completed, from which it appeared that the greatest want of the inspired volume existed in the Dales. Having given him an order on Mr. Benedictson of *Stickesholm* for the requisite num-

ber of copies, and partaken of some refreshment, I pursued my journey across the hills and dales that stretch forward and terminate in the eastern shore of the *Hvamsfiord*; which bay I skirted for some time, till reaching its termination, I struck off to the church of *Hvam*, from which it takes its name, where I arrived about six in the evening.

*Hvam* is most agreeably situated on the east side of a short, but beautiful and fertile valley, surrounded on every side, excepting the south, by high precipitous mountains, some of which furnish specimens of long four-sided needles of obsidian, surturbrand, and various minerals of volcanic formation. It was first taken possession of by Audur the Rich, widow of a noted pirate king called Oleif the White, who, after having made the conquest of Dublin, was proclaimed King of that part of Ireland; but his kingdom was of short duration, as he soon afterwards fell in battle. His queen was obliged to make her escape into Scotland; but not deeming herself safe in that country, she caused a vessel to be built privately in one of the forests of Caithness, and proceeded by way of the Orkney and Faroe Islands to Iceland, with twenty free men in her train. Establishing herself at this place, she soon rendered herself conspicuous by her profession of the Christian religion, and chose, as the place of her devotions, a bold and precipitous rock in the front of the mountain, where, at a distance from the bustle of human affairs,

and commanding a majestic view of the works of God, she caused a cross to be erected, and adored that Redeemer into whose name she had been baptised. From this circumstance, the rock obtained the name of *Krossholum*, which it still retains. On the re-establishment of idolatry in these parts after her death, a place of heathen worship was erected upon the rock,\* and it was held in such repute that the superstitious multitude regarded it as the gate of the invisible world. †

*Hvam* is also famous as the birth place of Snorro Sturluson, the celebrated northern historian. It was long occupied by a succession of mighty chiefs, the relics of whose authority are still visible in an octagonal mound, called the *Lögretta*, where they were accustomed to administer justice among their dependants.

The incumbent, Sira Jon Gislason, received me in the kindest manner; and I soon recognised in him a deep sense of religion, and a spirit and manners truly apostolic. We spent the remainder of the evening in religious conversation, in which he took the most lively interest. Indeed, I anticipated this immediately on en-

\* The ancient Scandinavians had two different kinds of places appropriated to the worship of their idols; the one open and unroofed, with a huge stone in the middle, to which they gave the name of *Hörg*: the other, properly a temple, and designated by the appellation of *Hof*. It was the former that was raised on *Krossholum*.

† Landnâm, Part II. caps. xv. and xvi.

tering his room, as the Bible he had just been reading was still lying on the table.

As it was necessary for me to have an interview with the Sysselman, I purposed to travel the following day along the base of the mountains on the north side of the bay ; but learning from my host that he was absent, I resolved to visit him on my return, and directed my course into a wild mountainous region through the valley of *Svinadal*, a little to the east of *Hvam*. The mountains on either side are of an ordinary height, but very irregularly formed, and presented evident marks of the successive revolutions to which they had been subjected. Large masses of lava, that had fallen down from their original beds, lay scattered about on both sides of the valley ; and, at one place, I fell in with several fragments of *surturbrand*, but the ravine through which they had been washed, being still full of snow, it was impossible to discover its site.

That the heat which once raged in this tract is not yet altogether extinguished, is plainly discoverable from the hot springs in the mouth of the valley ; and the white incrustations that present themselves in various places, prove the existence of numerous springs in former times. We had here to cross a river repeatedly by means of snow bridges, many of which were of no great thickness. The quantity of snow we encountered in our descent was immense. It never melts, but accumulates from year to year ; and there is

every reason to suppose that it will ultimately become a Yökul.

Leaving this cold and cheerless tract, we entered a valley that strikes off from its termination in a westerly direction; at first narrow, rocky, and sterile, but gradually opening into an extensive marshy plain, the farms of which collectively assume the name of *Saurbæar-sveit*. From the isthmus to the north of this plain, a central chain of mountains extend through the whole of the north-west peninsula, and shooting forward collateral branches from its sides, it receives a number of large bays from the circumjacent ocean. The road lies across these mountains; but though the season was considerably advanced, the quantity of snow that filled their gulleys rendered them absolutely impenetrable, so that I was obliged to abandon the idea of reaching the most distant Syssels by that route. By the advice of my kind friend, who had accompanied me from *Hvam*, I left my horses and the greater part of my baggage at the farm of *Hvol*, the peasant to whom it belongs engaging to proceed with me as far as *Reykianess*, from which place I was to make the tour of the islands in the *Breidafjord*.

About eleven o'clock at night I set off with my conductor, a middle-aged man, of a good natural understanding, and clear and serious views of divine truth, in order to reach a difficult pass at the base of the mountains before the return of the tide in the *Gilsfjord*. This bay runs far

up into the peninsula, but is of no great breadth. It is bounded by precipitous mountains on either side, from which numerous disruptions are incessantly taking place, so that the road is neither safe nor easy. At two o'clock we gained the end of the bay, where we found two small solitary cottages, one of which belongs to *Dala*, and the other to *Bardastrand* Syssel. Here winter still maintained his benumbing sway. The most of the ground was covered with snow, and only a few patches of vegetation appeared in the immediate vicinity of the houses. The mercury stood two degrees below the freezing point.

Passing the church of *Garpsdal*, we pursued our course to the eastern shore of *Kroksfiord*, which was strewed with beautiful chalcedonies, zeolites, and green jaspers; and at a short distance in the bay, rose several small islands whose sides displayed superb basaltine appearances. We next crossed a tract of white schistiform stones, which seemed to owe their formation to the depositions of hot springs; and arrived about six in the morning at the small farm of *Kampur*, where I resolved to enjoy a few hours sleep.

Having left my tent and bedding at *Hvol*, I was now under the necessity of choosing an Icelandic bed, which, I must confess, I did not like, on more accounts than one; but as my fatigue was excessive, I was the more easily reconciled to my situation. I was shewn into an out-house, while the mistress of the farm made up a bed for

me in the sleeping apartment, to which I soon repaired, through a dark passage, from which a few steps led me into my chamber. The most of the family being still in bed, raised themselves nearly erect, naked as they were, to behold the early and strange visitor. Though almost suffocated for want of air, I should soon have fallen asleep, had it not been for an universal scratching that took place in all the beds in the room, which greatly excited my fears, notwithstanding the new and cleanly appearance of the wadmél on which I lay. At one period of the operation, the noise was, seriously speaking, paramount to that made by a groom in combing down his horses. Ultimately, however, every disagreeable emotion was stilled by the balmy power of sleep, and I enjoyed, for five hours, the soundest repose I ever had in my life.

Both the peasant and his wife were uncommonly frank and loquacious. They had numerous questions to put to me about England, and the situation of our farmers, which it required no small ingenuity to answer consistently with truth, and yet so as not to make my entertainers feel the vast inferiority of their own circumstances. I generally availed myself of the introduction of this topic, which often happened during my peregrinations in Iceland, to remark, that to creatures of a day, any difference of external condition is but of small moment; and that the grand point is to enjoy an interest in the Divine favour, and an assured hope, found-



ed on a sense of that interest, that when this short and uncertain life terminates, we shall receive an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away. Such observations were always well received, and seldom failed to elicit corresponding sentiments. I could not but notice the manner in which my hostess spake of her children. On my inquiring how many she had, her reply was, "I have four. Two of them are here with us, and the other two are with God. It is best with those that are with him; and my chief concern about the two that remain is, that they may reach heaven in safety." Being the first foreigner the family had ever seen, they were much struck with my appearance, and put me down for a *Höfdingi*, or chief; though, in my native country, I should rather, from the appearance of my dress, have passed for a pedlar. They had no copy of the Bible, but rejoiced in the prospect of soon obtaining one.

From *Kampur* the road led us round the two bays, *Kroksfjord* and *Berufjord*, leaving the latter of which, we had to ascend a very rocky and uneven tract on the east side of the *Reykianess* mountains, which has evidently been subject to volcanic agency, though, from the smooth and rounded appearance of many of the stones, I could not but conclude that it has subsequently been covered with water. About five o'clock in the afternoon, I came to the farm of *Reykiaholar*, where I was kindly received by Madame

Thoroddson, who could not sufficiently express her regret at the absence of her husband, as he might have enjoyed the benefit of my company, and rendered my stay more agreeable than, she was afraid, would now be the case. My principal object in visiting this promontory was to form the acquaintance of Sira Paul Hiálmanson, to whom I had a letter of introduction from the Bishop. This clergyman was formerly Rector of the *Holum* school, and is considered to be one of the best scholars, and most consistent official characters on the island. I was sorry to learn that he was from home, and was not expected to return for some days; however, a letter, which I have since received from him, not only corroborates the above account of his character, but expresses, in unequivocal terms, the warm interest he takes in the cause of religion, and his cordial approbation of the steps that had been taken to supply his countrymen with the words of eternal life.

In point of situation, I much doubt whether *Reykiaholar* have its equal in Iceland. It stands on a rising ground, at the distance of half a mile from the boldly projecting mountains of *Reykianess*, and about the same distance from the ness itself. Directly in front is the spacious *Breidafjord*, with its numerous and strikingly picturesque islands; to the left is the *Gilsfjord*, beyond which a prodigious break in the mountains of Dala Syssel, called *Skards-Klofning*, presents itself to the view; while, towards the west, a num-

ber of grand promontories, stretching forward from the main body of the peninsula, recede in beautiful perspective, until they are lost in the distance. What greatly adds to the beauty of the prospect is the numerous columns of steam which are unremittingly ascending from the hot springs scattered around the farm. Many of these springs boil with great violence. The largest is called *Krablanda*, and has formerly been remarkable on account of its eruptions; but the bason has been so completely filled up with stones, that it cannot now throw its water to a greater height than three or four feet. Like most of the spouting fountains, it ejects for the space of five minutes, and intermits for nearly the same space of time, yet boiling violently during the interval. The grass lands about the farm are very extensive, but differ much in quality; the lower part being greatly disfigured with knolls, and blown up by the wind.

Owing to stormy weather, I was under the necessity of remaining at *Reykiaholar* till the morning of the 9th, when, with much difficulty, I procured four men and two women to row me over to the island of *Ílaley*, about twenty miles distant from the promontory of *Reykianess*. As the weather was fine, I had a most agreeable passage among the innumerable small islands that cover this part of the bay, most of which appear to have been thrown up by submarine volcanoes, and many of them rest on superb perpendicular pillars of basaltic rock. The theo-

ry of the volcanic origin of these islands is corroborated by the numerous hot springs which exist not only on many of the holms themselves, but also in the sea around them. At the fishing station, *Oddbiarnar-sker*, there is a hot-spring considerably within high-water mark, and another nearer the holm, which is so hot that eggs may be boiled in it. These springs are of great use to the fishermen, as they supply them with plenty of fresh water, which is otherwise not to be found in the neighbourhood. Near *Sandey* is another curious spring in the middle of a rock, which is visible at low water, boiling with violence, and splashing its contents around the basin. It possesses the power of incrustation, and the margin is entirely covered with a white crust. \*

Most of the islands are covered with grass, which is made into hay at the proper season by the inhabitants; but they are chiefly valuable on account of the immense flocks of sea-fowl by which they are frequented. As I passed through between them, my ears were stunned with the cries of the sea-parrots and crees, the latter of which abounded in such numbers, that they completely covered the surface of the water, and on rising, almost darkened the atmosphere.

When about half way to *Flatey*, we landed on a small holm, in order to give the people some respite, when I had an opportunity of witnessing

\* Olafsen og Povelsen, pp. 387, 388.

the surprising tameness of the eider-ducks, whose nests lay scattered in great profusion about my feet. On approaching them, the drake always took the alarm, and plunged with great precipitancy into the water; but the duck generally kept sitting on her nest, or merely flew to the distance of a yard or two, and on my attempting to touch the eggs, returned in a rage, and, with very significant signs, gave me to understand, that nature had invested her with an undisputed right to the property. Many of them suffered me to stroke them, and could only be thrust with violence from the nest. In some parts of Iceland, especially at *Videy*, the eider-ducks build their nests on the roofs of the houses, and become quite familiar with the inhabitants. The nests are constructed of sea-weeds, and lined with the finest down, plucked from the breast of the fowls. As soon as the natives observe that the first eggs are laid, they remove them, robbing the nest at the same time of the down; and this cruel experiment they repeat a second or third time; but it is generally found, that if they are robbed more than twice, they begin to desert the place, and if pillaged oftener, they quit it entirely.

A few days after the young ducks leave the egg, they proceed to the water, under the guidance of their dam, who swims with them on her back to some distance, when, making a sudden dive, she abandons them to themselves, and, re-appearing, tempts them to swim towards her, so

that on the first trial they commonly become expert swimmers. When the breeding season is over, they generally stand out to sea ; yet numbers are seen the whole winter frequenting the creeks and bays about the coast. The eggs furnish excellent food to the inhabitants, and the down sells high to the merchant, by whom it is sent to different parts of the continent, where it is used for beds.

The sea-parrots dig holes in the sand, like rabbits, and build their nests at the depth of two or three yards below the surface of the ground. They are caught by means of a hook fastened to the end of a stick ; and, what is singular, when one is dragged out, his companions take hold of him, and endeavour to retain him, by which means they are often caught to the number of three or four at a time.

About six o'clock in the evening, I landed on the island of *Flatey*, famous for the valuable book of annals, called the *Codex Flateyensis*, which was presented by Jon Torfason, one of the inhabitants of the place, to Bishop Svenson, by whom it was sent to *Copenhagen*, where it still exists in the royal library. The island is only about a mile in circumference ; yet it is better inhabited than many of the contiguous islands, and has a good church, and a mercantile establishment of some importance. The clergyman, Sira Thomas, is obliged to follow the original employment of Zebedee's children, and is particularly dexterous in catching seals. His official duties

are perhaps the most perilous, as well as the most laborious, of any in the Icelandic church : as he has two parishes, one of which comprehends the islanders, and the other lies on the mainland, at the distance of ten or twelve miles from *Flatey*. Scarcely a winter passes in which his life is not in danger, owing to the difficulties connected with the passage of the different sounds on the ice. Yet for all this service, he is only rewarded with a miserable pittance, and is obliged to devote the most of his time to the fishing, in order to provide for the maintenance of his family.

The copies of the Scriptures that had been forwarded to this harbour had all been disposed of, owing to the zeal and activity of the Sysselman, who had taken them along with him for distribution at the different courts which he had held during the summer circuit. As the farmers must all attend these courts, a more convenient and expeditious mode of circulation could not have been adopted.

Having rested about three hours on *Flatey*, I again embarked for the mainland in the boat of the clergyman of *Briámslæk*, who is obliged to act the part of ferryman between the two places. The evening was clear and serene, and it was long before the sun withdrew behind the high mountains of *Bardastrand*. About three o'clock in the morning we arrived at *Hergilsey*, a beautiful basaltic island, covered with rich grass, and inhabited by several peasants. We

put in here for the purpose of resting the women that had plied at the oar, and proceeded to one of the houses, where the clergyman assured me of a welcome reception, although the whole family were now immersed in sleep. His prediction was soon accomplished, one of the women having wakened the landlady, who instantly provided us with plenty of eider-duck eggs and coffee. Of this latter article rather too liberal a use is made in the west of Iceland; for instead of ordinary cups, the inhabitants use large basons, which not only occasions a great waste of coffee and sugar, but proves very prejudicial to the health, as such quantities cannot but relax and enervate the system. This island is frequented by the eider-duck in such numbers, that I had great difficulty, in walking about on the heights, to avoid trampling on their nests. The columns of basalt are most stately on the north side; and, being irregularly broken, they present to the eye of the imagination some of the most striking resemblances of oriental ruins that can possibly be conceived.

One of the passengers having drunk too much spiritous liquor at the factory, we had been under the necessity of leaving him in the boat to the care of his servant, who was perfectly sober; but, what was our surprise, when we returned from the farm, to find that during our absence the servant had availed himself of his master's indisposition, and applied very freely to a brandy jar that had been left in the boat,



the consequence of which was, that on attempting to leave it, he had plunged into the sea, and his master being incapable of rendering him any assistance, he must instantly have been drowned, had we not arrived the moment we did. Having got him up again into the boat, the Icelanders were determined to set off with him, but on my assuring them he would die of cold, they agreed to leave him on the island, and carried him on a barrow to the farm. Hospitality was now succeeded by compassion ; the patient had his wet clothes taken off, and was put into a warm bed, and every thing was done that could contribute to his restoration ; but the shock he had received was too severe for his weak habit of body, and he expired in less than two days. What a confirmation, even in a temporal point of view, of that Scripture, which saith, “ The wages of sin is death ! ” He had travelled over the most of the continent of Europe, made a voyage or two to the East Indies, and weathered the storms of more than fourscore years ; and now at last, on his native shores, he dies like a “ fool for want of wisdom.”

Drinking is certainly a vice by no means common among the natives of Iceland. Neither their means nor their opportunities admit of their indulging in it to the same extent with the inhabitants of other countries ; yet it cannot be denied, that the factories sometimes present scenes of drunkenness, when the peasants repair

thither for the purposes of trade; though even then it is not so much the quantity of liquor they drink, as their being unaccustomed to the use of it, that occasions this temporary derangement.

From *Hergilsey* we had a pleasant row of about five hours to *Briámslæk*, on the opposite coast of *Bardastrand*, where I was hospitably entertained at the clergyman's, and had the pleasure of meeting my friends the Messrs. Hialltalins, on their return from a visit to *Bildudal*. My route now lay west along the coast, many parts of which display immense walls of basaltic configuration, running like artificial divisions to the length of several miles. The mountains exhibit some very extensive strata of the same kind of rock, with different other beds, all laid with the most perfect regularity.

About noon I stopped at the farm of *Hammar*, where the aged and respectable Sysselman, Mr. Scheving, lives, with whom I had some interesting conversation; and after coffee I pursued my journey up the desolate *Morárdal*, from which I commenced the ascent of *Forsheiði*, a very high and acclivitous mountain-road, so called from the cataracts and cascades that abound on both sides of the mountain. Those on the north side are peculiarly beautiful; the river *Forsá* having forced its way through beds of columnar rock, numerous turrets and spires present themselves amidst the clouds of mist

arising from the water-falls. Directly above us,  
as we ascended,

————— “ the mountain’s head  
Stupendous rose ; crags, bare and bleachen, spread  
In wild confusion—fearful to the eye—  
In barren greatness, while the vallies lie  
Crouching beneath, in their brown vesture clad,  
And silent all.” \*

The passage of the mountain was attended with considerable difficulty, from its steepness on both sides, and the prodigious wreaths of snow over which I had to ride, and which in many places were so extremely soft that I was obliged to walk, as they could scarcely support the horses.

Descending to the termination of the *Forsfiord*, which is only a branch or arm of the extensive *Arnarfiord*, I skirted its western shore along the base of a beetling and precipitous mountain-range, till I reached the latter bay, when the road winded round some bold promontories, and about seven in the evening I arrived at the mercantile station of *Bildudal*, which consists of the most respectable looking houses I recollect having seen on the island. They were built by the late Mr. Thorlacius, and are executed in a manner highly honourable to his taste, and the enterprising spirit

\* Cottle’s Messiah.

with which he was animated. I here met with the kindest reception from his widow, whom I found still much cast down, after her late severe bereavement, and was much pressed to stay till Monday; but having previously been informed of the difficulty which often attends the passage of the *Arnarfiord*, I resolved to avail myself of the continuance of calm weather, and proceeded the same evening across the bay. The boat was exceedingly leaky, so that, while the men rowed, I was obliged every now and then to bale the water out of it; and as the bay was at least nine miles in breadth, we should have been exposed to great danger had we been overtaken by a sudden squall of wind.

On leaving *Bildudal*, I had quitted a house distinguished for hospitality, in which I might have expected every thing that could in any way contribute to my comfort and refreshment; and now entering the syssel of *Isafiord*, the most northerly on the island, I landed at a place entirely unknown to me, and where it was very problematical what kind of reception I should meet with. However, my favourable prepossession of the hospitable disposition of the Icelanders in general encouraged me to proceed. At eleven o'clock I arrived at the church and parsonage of *Hrafnseyri*, where I was agreeably surprised to find the following Latin inscription above the door of the dwelling-house:

“ INTRANTIBUS SIT HAS DOMUS PAX  
ET QUIES, AT EXEUNTIBUS SALUS.”

The flow of good spirits, however, which this animating inscription excited was in a great measure damped by the distressed state of the family; the clergyman having been nearly killed by a disruption from a neighbouring mountain having overtaken him while climbing in search of a fox's den, and, carrying him along with it, he was left half buried in the midst of the debris. Had not one of his servants accidentally discovered the spot where he lay, he must have perished in this condition. His head and face were much fractured, and his limbs sadly mangled; however, by the great attention of his family, together with the best mode of cure they could adopt, he was again in a fair way of recovery.

The foxes are very numerous in Iceland, and commit great depredations among the sheep. They are of two kinds; the one white, and the other of a variegated brown colour. They attack the strongest wethers, and when they cannot kill them instantly, they take them by the wool, and suffer themselves to be dragged till the sheep get tired, when they seize them by the throat, and drink their blood. It is no uncommon thing for a peasant to lose twenty or thirty sheep in this way in the course of the year. They are besieged in their dens, shot, and caught in traps; yet it is found impossible wholly to exterminate them. When the fox happens to be caught by the foot in a gin, he gnaws off his leg without scruple, and then

limps away to his den. That he possesses his proverbial cunning also on this island is obvious, from what is related by the inhabitants. On discovering a flock of sea-gulls sitting about the shore, he approaches them backwards, with his tail raised so as to resemble one of themselves; and as it is commonly white, and he advances with slow steps, they seldom discover the intrigue until he has reached them, when he is sure to seize one of them for his prey. In the winter he scrapes up the snow to the windward, and blinds them, so that they are completely taken at unawares.

Though I cannot vouch for the truth of the following story, yet as it obtains general belief in Iceland, I cannot avoid inserting it in this place. In the vicinity of the North Cape, where the precipices are almost entirely covered with various species of sea-fowl, the foxes proceed on their predatory expeditions in company, and previous to the commencement of their operations, they hold a kind of mock-fight upon the rocks, in order to determine their relative strength. When this has been fairly ascertained, they advance to the brink of the precipice, and taking each other by the tail, the weakest descends first, while the strongest, forming the last in the row, suspends the whole number till the foremost has reached their prey. A signal is then given, on which the uppermost fox pulls with all his might, and the rest assist him as well as they can with their feet against the rocks. In

this way they proceed from rock to rock, until they have provided themselves with a sufficient supply.

June 11. My having crossed the *Arnarfiord* last night was most fortunate, as a violent storm commenced early this morning, and lasted several days. There was no service at this place, owing to the indisposition of the clergyman; but as I was informed there would be sermon at *Sand*, a church on the north side of the *Hrafnsheidi* mountains, I resolved to proceed to that place, and was accompanied by a young man, whose conversation proved in the highest degree interesting and agreeable. He had never been at any school, yet he had read the whole of the Greek Testament, several books of the Iliad, and a number of the Latin classics. We had also a robust female in our train, to assist us in case any of the horses should sink in the snow. The *heidi* was short, but exceedingly steep, and being almost entirely covered with snow, in which were large and deep rents, we had considerable difficulty in crossing it.

On our arrival at the first house in the parish of *Sand*, we were informed that there was no worship at the church; and as I found the clergyman's house much out of my way, I pursued my course to the southern shore of the *Dyrafjord*. It gave me pleasure, however, to be informed that the minister, though blind with age, is not destitute of spiritual sight, but a







Engraved by L. Scott F. de la

VIEW OF DYRAFIORD.

lover of divine truth, and a serious and exemplary character.

Crossing the east end of *Sandfell*, a small insulated mountain, abounding with zeolite, chalcidony, and jasper, I arrived about noon, at the mercantile establishment of *Thingeyri*, which is very agreeably situated on the east side of a low point of land that juts out into the bay, and defends the harbour against the western surge. The bay is so narrow at this place that a person may call across it; yet it runs up to such a distance among the mountains, that it would require a whole day to ride round it. The houses belonging to the factory are in good condition; and a fine green park immediately behind them, adds greatly to the beauty of the place, and is finely contrasted with the gloom of the adjacent mountains. I was here invited to take up my lodgings with Mr. Steenbach, a native of Norway, and factor for Mr. Henkel of Copenhagen, from whom I met with every possible attention, and in whose house I found a large collection of choice books, the greater part of which were on subjects of natural history.

The following morning I crossed the *Dyrafjord*, and landing at the farm of *Gimlafell*, I obtained a guide to conduct me over the mountains to the next bay. The *heidi* or mountain road was the easiest of any I had passed in Iceland, and introduced me in the course of three hours into the extensive and beautiful plains of *Önundarfjord*, consisting in some places of a fine

alluvial soil, but abounding chiefly in marshes, which produce an uncommon quantity of hay. The mountains on either side of the bay present one of the most romantic and irregular scenes imaginable. They are every now and then transversed by deep vallies, which give the most of them an insulated and pyramidal form; and their strata, forty or fifty in number, are piled one above another in the most perfect order. Similar geologic appearances pervade the whole of the north-western peninsula, though not in the same grand and interesting style as in the neighbourhood of this bay. The name of *Vestfiordar*, or the Western Friths, is very appropriately given to this part of the island, for it consists entirely of bays, separated from each other by ridges of bold projecting mountains, and resembles nothing more exactly than the shape of the human hand. \*

After passing some dangerous morasses, I arrived at the parsonage of *Hollt*, reckoned one of the best livings in the west of Iceland, where I met with the most polite and cordial reception from Sira Thorvaldr Bödvarson, and was immediately introduced into his study, which I found well stocked with books in different departments

\* In conversation one day with a Dutch Captain, who had long frequented the western friths, he presented me in a moment with a chart of them, by laying his hand flat on the table, and traced the navigation from the *Faxafjord* round his thumb into the *Breidafjord*, then past his-foremost finger into *Tálknafjord*, &c. till he had got round the principal bays.

of science. On the table lay the Vicar of Wakefield, together with a Danish and English Lexicon, a proof that my host was pursuing the study of the English language. He is a learned man, and a good poet, but excels in sacred poetry; many beautiful specimens of which are in the hands of his countrymen. He has translated a number of Gellert's poems, and several of Pope's. The Messiah, in particular, is well executed, an autographical copy of which I have in my possession.

My object in penetrating into the syssel of *Isafiord* was to pay a visit to the Dean, and make the necessary arrangements with him for the distribution of the Scriptures; but on my arrival at *Hollt*, I was disappointed to find, that, owing to the immense quantity of snow with which the mountains to the north of the *Önundarfjord* were covered, it was absolutely impossible to cross them, though now about the middle of June. The only means, therefore, in my power of making provision for supplying the inhabitants of these distant regions, was to settle the business with the Sysselman who lives at *Hiardarholtt*, at a short distance to the west of *Hollt*. I accordingly rode on to that place in the afternoon, accompanied by Sira Thorvaldr, and was happy to find the Sysselman, Mr Ebenezer Thorsteinson, enter cordially into the plan, and willing to do his utmost to promote its execution. We were hospitably entertained at his house, and returned in the evening to *Hollt*.

The inhabitants of this part of Iceland being almost entirely excluded from intercourse with foreigners, retain perhaps more of the original Scandinavian customs than those of the other parts. They are not only more tenacious of the traditions which have been delivered to them by their ancestors, but they apply themselves with greater diligence to the transcription of the written or printed sagas, the greater part of which many of them have learned by heart, and they are almost all capable of expatiating on the excellence or turpitude of the leading actions in the story. What particularly struck me, was the long patriarchal beard which distinguishes the *Önundarfirdingar*; and I am certain that if I had fallen in with them in any part of the continent of Europe, and it had not been for the fairness of their hair, I should have taken them for Polish Jews.

Close behind *Hjardardal* I was surprised to find a pretty extensive tract of lava, as it has been asserted that no such substance existed in the vicinity of the western friths. It appears to be very ancient; exhibits both the porous and more compact lavas; is for the most part overgrown with moss or grass; and has visibly descended from a cavity in the mountain by which the west side of the dale is defended. I was told by the Sysselman, that an extensive layer of *surturbrand* had lately been discovered in the same mountain, but, being extremely difficult of

access, he was afraid it would not be possible to turn it to any account.

On the 13th of June I again left the parsonage of *Hollt*, where I had experienced every possible attention, and commenced my return towards the south. Sira Thorvaldr and the Sysselman had the kindness to accompany me to *Thingeyri*, where I drank a cup of coffee with Mr. Steenbach, and then proceeded with a guide to *Brecka*, the abode of the constable, from whom I obtained horses across the mountains. While waiting for the horses, I engaged in a very interesting religious conversation with the female part of the family, (the males being all out at the fishing,) among whom I was happy to find two or three who seemed to have just ideas of evangelical truth, and a deep and lively concern about eternal things.

The mountain-road I found much more dangerous than on my passage north, especially a steep precipice on the south side of the mountain, below which is a profound chasm, called *Mann-tappa-gil*, where, as the name indicates, numbers have lost their lives: Here I myself had a very narrow escape; for as we crossed a sloping bed of ice, directly above the chasm, my horse fell with me, yet endeavoured to save himself by allowing the hinder part of his body to swing downwards, and sprawling with his fore feet in order to stop his progress. After sliding down with me to the distance of five or six yards, and only a few moments appeared to separate me from eternity, I providentially succeeded in extricating my feet.

from the stirrups, and, making a sudden leap, reached a part of the ice, partially covered with snow, where I was enabled to retain my hold. The poor horse, after sliding a few yards further, also stopped, but being unable to raise himself, he kept a firm hold of the ice with his forefeet, trembling violently at the danger to which, by a natural instinct, he knew he was exposed. In this situation he remained till the guide and I got some ropes tied round his head, when, sensible of our aid, he immediately rose, and by a few daring leaps ultimately reached the snow.

We now proceeded on our descent, which was still attended with danger, owing to the great tenuity of the snow-bridges over which we had to ride, and which concealed from our view the large cataracts we could distinctly hear roaring below us. About midnight we reached the parsonage of *Hrafnseyri*, where I met with the same kind treatment I had experienced on my way north.

On putting into the bay the following morning, I could not but remark that the people turned the boat the contrary way to what I expected they would have done, from the position in which she lay; when I was informed that the Icelanders universally turn the boat with the sun,—a custom which, my informer observed, had most probably its origin in superstition. That he was in the right I was afterwards more fully convinced on discovering, when I witnessed, on one occasion, the celebration of the Lord's

Supper, that when the communicants rose from the railing of the altar where they had knelt, such of them as were stationed on the left side of the altar, wheeled round to the right, whereas it would have been more natural for them to have turned about to the left. This incident would, in all probability, have escaped my notice, had it not been for some young people who were not initiated into this mechanical movement, and were about to leave the altar in the natural way, when they were ordered back again, and taught how to perform the evolution. In like manner, when a funeral procession leaves the church, it must always go round the north side, even supposing the grave to be on the south side of the burying-ground. \*

\* About a hundred years ago the same superstitious custom of making a turn sun-ways was in common practice among the inhabitants of the western islands of Scotland. "The natives of Colonsay are accustomed, after their arrival in Oronsay isle, to *make a tour sun-ways* about the church before they enter upon any kind of business."—"Some of the poorer sort of people in these islands retain the custom of performing these rounds *sun-ways*, about the persons of their benefactors three times, when they bless them, and wish good success to all their enterprizes. Some are very careful, *when they set out to sea, that the boat be first rowed about sun-ways*; and if this be neglected, they are afraid their voyage may prove unfortunate." See Martin's Description of the Western Islands of Scotland, pp. 248, 118. See also pp. 7, 16, 20, 119, 140, 242, 277. Dr. Edmondstone informs us, that the Zetland fishermen, to this day, deem it unsafe to turn their boat but with the sun, vol. ii. p. 73. Similar superstitious ideas obtain in the north of Europe, and may be traced to the ancient Grecian superstition,



In the course of two hours I again found myself on the south side of the *Arnarfiord*; and after partaking of an excellent breakfast, provided me by Mrs. Thorlacius, I left *Bildudal*, and proceeded across a number of desolate mountains, for the most part covered with snow, so that at times the guide and I had to lead our horses for miles together. Such places as were free from the snow exhibited nothing but lavas of different ages and forms, the greatest quantity of which appeared to have its source in the irregular cone of *Granafell*, situate about the centre of the mountain-ridge which divides the *Arnar* from the *Tálknafjord*. That the subterraneous fire in this ridge is not yet extinguished, though its eruptions must have taken place many ages antecedent to the original discovery of Iceland, is clear from the hot springs that still exist on the northern shore of the last mentioned bay. The volumes of steam rising from these springs afforded a fine contrast to the bleakness and gloom of the surrounding mountains.

Having descended to the termination of the *Tálknafjord*, where I fell in with a few poor-

according to which the left-hand side was accounted unlucky, and of evil omen. It is also worthy of notice, that the Jews gave to the evil spirit, or angel of death, the name of *Sammaél*, which is of like import with the Hebrew word denoting the left hand. In the Bible itself we find an important distinction made between the right hand and the left; and the Preacher says expressly, that "a wise man's heart is at his right hand, but a fool's heart at his left." *Eccles. x. 2.*

looking hamlets, I had to ascend a very steep and precipitous mountain on the opposite side, and again got involved in a desolate tract, which continued till I reached the bay of *St. Patrick*, about six o'clock in the evening. This bay is defended on both sides by high and precipitous mountains: those on the south side present a number of bold promontories, jutting forward, but diminishing in size as they recede, till at last they are lost in the Atlantic.

After riding a short way along the beach in a westerly direction, I arrived at the establishment of *Vatneyri*, situated on the east side of a small tongue of low land which here projects into the bay, and affords a safe and excellent harbour. The trade carried on here is considerable, and is in the hands of Mr. Clausen, whose factor shewed me every attention in his power. *Vatneyri* is also the residence of the Sysselman, Mr. Gudbrand Jonson, whom I was disappointed not to find at home; but it gave me pleasure to be informed by the factor, that more than half the number of the copies of the Scriptures sent to this harbour had already been brought into circulation, and that most of the remaining copies were bespoken.

As I found it was possible to reach the Dean's the same evening, I determined to continue my journey, and was rowed across the *Patriaiford* by the factor and one of his men. Owing to a heavy swell from the ocean, we found great difficulty in landing, and were obliged to await the alter-

nation of the waves, which took place in the following order : First, three heavy surges, threatening to swallow all before them, broke with a tremendous dash upon the rocks ; these were followed by six smaller ones, which just afforded us time to land ; after which the three large waves again broke, and so on in regular succession. It now began to rain, and as no horse was to be had in the vicinity, I was under the necessity of walking to *Saudlauksdal*, which proved very fatiguing, on account of the fine yellow sand that covers the entrance of the valley, in which at times I sank to the knees. On my arrival at the parsonage, I was kindly received by the Dean, Sira Jon Ormson, and his family, and after drinking coffee, retired to rest about two o'clock in the morning.

This dale is celebrated for its richness in botanical productions, and affords excellent pasture to a numerous flock of sheep. The *tun* is also very productive, and a lake in the middle of the dale abounds in trout. What rendered *Saudlauksdal*, however, peculiarly interesting to me, was its having been the abode of the learned Icelander, Eggert Olafsen, who, at an early period of life, turned his attention to the natural history of his native island ; and after finishing his academical studies at the University of Copenhagen, repeatedly made the tour of the island, both alone, and in company with Biarne Paulsen, his countryman and fellow-student. The result of their mutual researches and ob-

servations was published at Copenhagen, 1772, in two volumes, 4to, under the superintendence of Mr. Olafsen. On his return to Iceland, he received the appointment of lawyer, and took up his residence at this place. From his biography, it would appear that the most of his time had been devoted to the study of natural philosophy; but about four years before his death, he received strong convictions of the insufficiency of the appearances of nature, to satisfy the human mind respecting its dearest and most important concerns; and addicted himself to the study of revealed religion, especially the New Testament, in the reading of which he took great delight. In a poem, written by him about this time, (for he was one of the best poets Iceland has produced these two last centuries,) he strikingly depicts his feelings on this subject; laments his having been duped by the illusions of science; praises the Father of Lights, for the revelation of his will contained in the scriptures of truth, and avows his determination to spend the remainder of his days in the service and fear of God. This excellent man lost his life in the year 1767, when crossing the *Breidafjord* in an overloaded boat, on which occasion his wife also, and all who were in the boat perished. \*

The Sysselman having arrived during the night, I spent the most of the 15th in conversation with him and the Dean about the distribu-

\* Æfe Eggerts Olafssonar, Hrappsey, 1784. 8vo.

tion of the Icelandic Scriptures, and other subjects of mutual interest. About five in the afternoon, I set off from *Saudlauksdal*, accompanied by the son of the Dean, and pursued my course along the southern shore of the *Patriksfiord*, where, now and then, large insulated masses of ancient lava presented themselves to view. Near the end of the bay, we had to skirt the base of a high and beetling mountain, from which a prodigious quantity of large stones had but lately fallen, so that the pathway was nearly blocked up, and the danger from fresh disruptions was by no means small. We now commenced our ascent of the mountain-road, which wore a very craggy and menacing aspect,

—————“ and still at every fall,  
Down the steep windings of the channel'd rock,  
Remurmuring, rushed the congregated floods  
With hoarser inundation.”

The cataracts were in many places of superior grandeur, especially one near the embouchure of the river, where the size of the unbroken sheet of water, twenty feet in breadth by thirty in height; the rapidity of the current; the clouds of mist and foam; and the tremendous dash of the liquid element, all combined to produce a very powerful and sublime effect. The surrounding tract was entirely divested of vegetation; and, as we ascended, it got more rocky and uneven, presenting on the general surface alternate beds of snow and basaltiform cellular lava. A little

after midnight we gained the summit of the pass, which might have an elevation of nearly 3000 feet above the level of the sea. The prospect was extensive and very romantic, yet wild and barren in the extreme. The sun was hid from our view by the promontories towards the north, but the whole horizon in that direction appeared in a blaze, and we were scarcely sensible of any difference between day and night.

Descending from the mountains, we passed through a pretty extensive tract of underwood, and entered a beautiful, inhabited district in front of the *Bardastrand* precipices, in which the projecting promontories terminate along the northern shore of the *Breidafjord*. The sea has evidently at a remote period washed the base of these precipices; but, having gradually receded, beautiful alluvial plains have been formed, the greatest part of which is now covered with grass. The farms lay scattered under the lee of the mountains; numerous flocks of sheep were enjoying their nightly repose; the night was tranquil and serene; the speckled *Breidafjord* lay before us in all its wide expanse; while the snow-capped mountains of *Snæfellsness*, receding in beautiful perspective from the royal *Yökul*, reflected a golden splendour on the surrounding atmosphere.

To the east of the tabular mountain *Hagafjall*, we passed *Haga*, one of the finest farms in Iceland. In point of situation, extent, and the richness of its vegetation, it is only surpassed by

few. Here even a foreigner might enjoy a kind of earthly paradise ; yet, strange to tell, though its present occupant, who is a native Icelander, might have spent his days on this spot in tranquillity and ease, he has lately abandoned his retreat, and involved himself in all the cares and anxieties of trade. Having slept a few hours at *Hammar*, I proceeded on to *Briámslæk*, where I immediately ordered a boat to be got ready to carry me over to *Flatey*. As it was some hours, however, before the people could be collected, I repaired, during the interval, to a ravine in the mountain behind the parsonage, which exhibits one of the most interesting displays of *surturbrand* to be met with on the island.

Compared with others in the vicinity, the mountain is but of inconsiderable height, not appearing to rise to an elevation of more than 600 feet. A torrent from the rising hills behind has cut its way through the different horizontal strata of which it is composed, so that a cleft presents itself between forty and fifty yards in depth. The east side of this cleft is entirely covered with debris, except at some particular spots, where rugged masses of a yellowish tuffa tower above the surface ; but the west side is more perpendicular, and consists of ten or twelve strata of *surturbrand*, lava, basalt, tuffa, and indurated clay, successively piled above each other. The *surturbrand* is undermost, and occupies four layers which are separated from each other by inter-

mediate beds of soft sand-stone or clay. These layers are of unequal thickness, from a foot and a half to three feet, and run to the length of about thirty yards, when they disappear in the debris. They differ also in quality: the two lowest exhibiting the most perfect specimens of mineralized wood, free from all foreign admixture, of a jet black; and such pieces as have been exposed to the sun shine with great lustre, and are very splintery in their fracture. The numerous knots, roots, &c. and the annual circles observable in the ends of the trunks or branches, removed every doubt of the vegetable origin of this curious substance. The only changes it has undergone are induration and compression; having been impregnated with bituminous sap, and flattened by the enormous weight of the superincumbent rocks. Some few branches stretch at times across the bed, but in general they all lie parallel with one another, and are frequently pressed together, so as to form a solid mass. The third stratum is not so pure, being mixed with a considerable portion of ferruginous matter; grey externally, but black in the fracture, has no lustre, and is much heavier than the former, yet possesses evident traits of its vegetable character. The fourth or uppermost stratum consists of what the Icelanders call *steinbrand*, or coal, from which it differs only in the absence of the gloss, and its containing a quantity of earthy matter. It still retains some faint marks of wood.

Remarkable as the appearance of this rock-wood undoubtedly is, a still more surprising phe-



nomenon makes its appearance between the second and third strata, viz. a bed of dark grey schistus, about four inches in thickness, that admits of being divided into numerous thin plates, many of which possess the tenuity of the finest writing paper, and discover on both sides the most beautiful and accurate impressions of *leaves*, with all their ramifications of nerves, ribs, and fibres, in the best state of preservation. The whole of the schistose body is, in fact, nothing but an accumulation of leaves closely pressed together, and partially interlaid with a fine alluvial clay. It is also worthy of notice, that when you separate any of the leaves from the mass, they are uniformly of a greyish or brown colour on the surface; and black on the opposite side. Most of those on the specimens now before me are of the common poplar, (*populus tremula*,) and some of them, in the judgment of an eminent botanical gentleman, \* appear to be of the *populus takkahaka*. A few birch and willow leaves are also observable, but very small in size: whereas many of the poplar leaves are upwards of three inches in breadth.

It would appear from the accounts of Olafsen and Pøvelsen, † as also from those of Olavius, ‡ that a bed of *surturbrand* extends through the whole of the north-western peninsula. In *Dala* syssel it is found in *Svinadal* and *Gnipufell*; at *Bar-mahlid*, *Briámslæk*, *Hammur*, *Raudasand*, and in

\* Professor Hornemann of Copenhagen.

† Reise p. 414.

‡ Oeconomisk Reise, pp. 787, 752.

*Forsdal* in the syssel of *Bardastrand*; but in still greater abundance in *Isafjord's* syssel, viz. in the mountains *Stigahlid*, *Grænahlid*, *Straumneshlid*, *Skorar*, and *Sandvik*. It has also been met with in *Bæarfell*, *Margretarfell*, *Steckiarmo*, *Torfvasfell*, *Lægrihvam*, and *Thrudardal* on the east side of the peninsula. It is chiefly used by the natives for the smithy, but as it is very hard and susceptible of a high polish, they also make tables of it, and other ornamental articles of household furniture. It is only, however, in the damp houses of the Icelanders, that such specimens can be preserved, as they crack and split when exposed to the heat of the fire or the sun.

Scouting the idea of a subterranean forest as too absurd to merit the slightest consideration, there are only three ways in which we can suppose the *surturbrand* to have originated. *First*, Large forests may have existed in this quarter of the island at a remote period, and may have been overturned and entombed during some of the volcanic revolutions of subsequent date. *Secondly*, It may be the remains of drift-timber, conveyed hither from the Missouri and other rivers in North America, or from the northern coasts of Siberia. Or, *lastly*, It may have grown in a former world, \* and been reduced to its present

\* Lest this expression should offend any of my readers, I beg it to be understood in the sense of ὁ τότε κόσμος of Peter, 2 Epist. iii. 6. though Gen. x. 25. renders it extremely probable, that besides what took place at the deluge, our globe was subjected to another important revolution in the days of Peleg: for it is worthy of observation that the verb פָּלַג *phalag*, properly signifies to *disrupt*; to *sever* or *divide with violence*.

state in one of the great catastrophes which have so materially changed the surface of the earth.

The name and black carbonated appearance of the fossil, together with the circumstance that lava is always found in greater or less quantities in the vicinity of the strata which it forms, would almost seem to favour the first of these suppositions; but it is self-evident, that had the wood ever been in actual contact with lava, it must either have been entirely consumed, or, if the fiery torrent had lost too much of its heat to produce that effect, it must, nevertheless, have thrown the trees about in the wildest disorder, and could never have left them in the regular longitudinal position they at present occupy. This regularity of position, which obtains throughout the whole extent of the strata, presents an insuperable argument against the *surturbrand's* having been reduced to its present state by the operation of fire, though it cannot be denied that this element has subsequently effected, in part, at least, the disposition of the substances that rest above it. Even the second conjecture of Von Troil,\* that the trees were originally

\* Letters on Iceland, p. 44. Eng. Trans. 2d Edit. As it may interest the reader to peruse Professor Bergman's description of the specimens sent him by Von Troil, I shall insert it at this place. "The slate which you have brought from Iceland splits into thin plates, that discover many sorts of impressions, particularly of leaves; the colour is black, and it is exactly of the same nature as the common aluminous slate. The two pieces of *surturbrand*, or fossil wood, which you brought

overturned by an earthquake, and afterwards interred by a shower of hot ashes from a volcano, is irreconcilable with the fact above stated.

We must, therefore, have recourse to water, as the agent by which the principal disposition of the *surturbrand* has been effected. The idea of its having originally been drift-timber forcibly suggests itself; when we reflect, that those parts of Iceland in which it is most abundant, are the very tracts where the greatest quantity of timber is annually thrown up from the sea. Nor can the height to which the stratum of *surturbrand* rises, form any objection to this hypothesis, as ancient drift-timber has been found partially interred at the distance of 3000 feet from the beach.\* The leaves found at *Briámslæk* are confessedly unique, as nothing similar occurs, in conjunction with the brand, elsewhere on the island. No poplar ever grew here within the memory of man; and were it certain that some of the leaves are of the

with you, bear evident marks of a vegetable composition; and I may almost affirm, with perfect certainty, that the largest is a kind of *pinus abies*; on the outside are barks and branches, and in the inside all the rings of the sap appear; the lesser is a piece of rind without wood; both are black, quite soft, easily take fire, and flame in burning. After the flame is extinguished, one hundred parts afford forty-two parts of coals, which, after being only calcined, yield two parts of yellowish brown earth, that is attracted by the magnet, and partly dissolves with acids; it makes some effervescence with borax and fusible urinous salt; the *sal sodæ* also causes a little ebullition at first, but does not entirely dissolve it." Ibid. p. 355.

\* Olavius ut sup. p. 46.

*populus takkamahaka*, an ancient communication might be traced between this island and the opposite coasts of America.

However, as the *surturbrand* is found in such immense quantities, and where it makes its appearance on one side of a mountain, it uniformly occurs, nearly about the same level, on the opposite side; as these mountains are of the more regular kind, consisting of numerous horizontal strata; and as, in many instances, fifteen or twenty of these strata are piled above the bed of mineralised wood, the theory will be freest from embarrassment that refers its entombment to one or other of those dreadful elemental conflicts to which the terraqueous globe has repeatedly been subjected. It formed perhaps part of the forests that grew on the sunk continent that now supports the Atlantic, and which on the submersion of that continent, must have been completely overturned, and carried in various directions, according to the motion of the currents. This hypothesis is corroborated by the fact, that the bed of *surturbrand* in the west of Iceland, runs uniformly in the direction of N. E. by N. N. E.; and however broken and separated by the intervening bays and vallies, forms one continued stratum in the crust of the earth.\* That it is found to dip in some places more than others, is a necessary consequence of the earthquakes and volcanic derangements of subse-

\* Olavius ut sup. Pp. 599, 600.

quent date. The occurrence of trees, and other vegetables in coal formations, is well known to miners, and all who possess any acquaintance with geology; and it certainly deserves consideration, that *surturbrand* occurs in the coal-mines of *Faroe*, embedded in a yellowish alluvial formation resembling the tuffas or puzzuolana of Iceland.\*

To return from this geologic digression. After partaking of an excellent dinner at *Briámslæk* we put to sea; and as the weather was uncommonly fine, we had a pleasant passage to *Flatey*, where we arrived at six o'clock. I here engaged the boat belonging to the clergyman, who accompanied me himself to the *Svefneyar*, or the Islands of Sleep, where it was my intention to have enjoyed a portion of that blessing; but, on our arrival, I had the disappointment to find that all the men were absent at the fishing; and the distance to the next islands was too great for the females to venture alone; so that I must have been considerably retarded in my journey, had it not been for the kindness of Sira Thomas, who undertook to row me himself with a fresh set of female rowers, provided I would give up my night's rest, as he was obliged to be back on *Flatey* by Saturday evening.

Fatigued as I was, I willingly submitted to the further privation of sleep, with the view of getting once more on *terra firma*, before any

\* Olavius ut sup. p. 599.

change took place in the weather. We accordingly lost no time in refreshing ourselves with eider-duck eggs, and cream, and again embarked about nine o'clock; but we had not proceeded far, when we were alarmed to find, that the person from the *Svefneyar*, who had undertaken to be our pilot, was ignorant of the sounds through which we had to pass, and no person in the boat had ever been that way before. What greatly increased our alarm was the suspicion of concealed rocks, which, as the water was falling, exposed us to great danger.

About midnight, when we had cleared all the small islands, and were about to enter the mouth of the *Gilsfjord*, the mountains at the termination of the bay began to get shrouded in clouds, and in less than half an hour it began to blow violently from the N. E. We had also to row against a furious current, and the boat being diminutive in size, every wave threatened to swallow us up; we were at times completely covered with spray; both the courage and strength of the females failed; and we had more than once the immediate prospect of a watery grave.

However, by the kind providence of God, we were preserved in safety, and at three o'clock in the morning we landed on *Raudsey*, a small island, on which we found a solitary, but superior farm, the proprietor of which gave us the most welcome reception. As we were starving with cold, the simple shelter of a house proved no ordinary comfort; but we had scarcely sat

down in the room, ere the landlady made her appearance with large bowls of coffee, which she presented in the most courteous manner. An excellent bed was immediately prepared for me, where I enjoyed six hours refreshing sleep; and after breakfasting on eggs and boiled rice, the peasant put me ashore on the mainland a little below *Skard*, to which I instantly repaired.

*Skard* is inhabited by the Sysselman, Mr. Skule Magnusson, to visit whom was the object of my return to this part of *Dala Syssel*. It is situated at the foot of a low mountain, which terminates the bold range of mountains that extend southwards along the coast, and commands an extensive view of the *Breidafjord*, and its islands, with the majestic mountains on both sides. Owing, however, to the height of an adjoining mountain, there are five or six weeks in winter during which its inhabitants never behold the sun.

Mr. Magnusson was not expected home till evening; but I was politely received by his lady, and provided with the needful refreshments. During the interval, I made an excursion of about five miles to the church and parsonage of *Ballarå*, where I spent the afternoon in a very interesting manner with the clergyman, whom I found to be an enlightened and judicious man, a friend of the plain unsophisticated sense of Scripture, and consequently an opposer of the boasted illumination of some modern theologians. In the evening he accompanied me back to *Skard*, where we found the Sys-



selman, who had just arrived, a frank, polite, and downright Icelfander, with more of the appearance of a magistrate than any Sheriff I have met with on the island.

The 18th, being the Lord's day, I stopped with the hospitable family at *Skard*. As there was no public service, the Sysselman collected the whole of his family about eleven o'clock, and went through the exercises of domestic worship with a life and energy that I have scarcely seen equalled by any of the Icelandic clergy. What an influence the example of such a man must have in forming the manners of the inhabitants, and confirming them in those habits of devotion by which the nation has long been distinguished, and which still obtain in such parts of the island as remain free from the contamination of foreign licentiousness!

On the morning of the 19th I again left *Skard*, and proceeded up the gulley, from which it takes its name, where nothing remarkable occurred, excepting a large cairn, marking the grave of a female who lived in the vicinity, about the time of the introduction of Christianity into the island, but who was so inimical to its tenets, and so grossly addicted to her heathen superstitions, that, when dying, she gave strict orders to her friends, to bury her here, that her manes might not be disturbed by the church bells of *Skard* and *Budardal*, either of which places lies at an equal distance from the cairn.

Passing a little to the right of *Budardal*, where the late learned Magnus Ketilson lived, and where he successfully attempted several branches of agriculture, I came again to the shore of the *Gilsfjord*, which I skirted for some time, admiring the numerous horizontal strata that presented themselves to my view in the face of the adjacent mountains, and especially the grand colonnades of basaltic rock which lined the beach. One spot in particular created uncommon interest. The columns were perfectly perpendicular, from thirty to forty feet in height, and from a foot and a half to two feet in diameter. Most of them were five and seven-sided, and the articulations were in many places of considerable length. A little farther on, I fell in with a bed of *surturbrand*, visible to the length of twenty yards, but, dipping rapidly towards the north, it is soon lost in the sand along the beach. This declination struck me the more, as that of the *surturbrand* at *Briâmslek* was towards the south; but I soon perceived that it must have been occasioned by the revolution to which the *Breidafjord*, that lies between them, owed its existence. The stratum of pure *surturbrand* at this place, does not exceed three inches in thickness. It is embedded in a yellow argillaceous sand which meets the beach below; and, at the height of two feet above the brand, it is relieved by a two-inch thick bed of schistose *steinbrand*; this gives way to four feet of tuffa, above which lies a thick

stratum of lava, the uppermost substance in the tract.

After riding along a very stony road in front of the mountains, I recognised the district of *Saurbæ*, and proceeded across the marshes to the farm of *Hvol*, where I had left my horses on the 6th instant. It gave me no small joy to find that they were completely recruited, and fit for the remaining part of my tour.

## CHAP. XIII.

*Journey into Stranda Syssel and return to Reykiavik—Gilsfiord—Steindalsheidi—Fell—Paradise—Drift Timber—Stad—Interesting Interview with the Dean—Bitruháls—Hollta-vördu-heidi—View of the Sun at Midnight—Mount Baula—Reykiadal—Reykhollt—Snorro Sturluson's Bath—Biographical Sketch of Snorro—Hot Springs of Reykiadal—Saurbæ—Hebrew Scholar—Hvalfiord—Kiosar Syssel—Reykiavik.*

HAVING rested about five hours at *Hvol*, I got the peasant to proceed with me unto *Stranda Syssel*, which lies on the east or opposite side of the peninsula. For the first three hours we pursued the same road I had formerly taken along the southern shore of the *Gilsfiord*; and though it was now the 19th of June, I could discover no improvement in the season; the wreaths of snow appeared to possess their former bulk, and the frost and N. E. wind were equally keen. On turning the end of the bay, we struck off, through a narrow pass, into *Steindals-heidi*, where we had much difficulty in passing the snows, and evad-

ing the tremendous chasms which every now and then projected across the path. The mountains on both sides were of an ordinary height, and partially covered with grass, but the extreme coldness of the winds, which almost incessantly blow from the N. E. prevents vegetation from attaining any degree of maturity.

About six o'clock on the morning of the 20th, we reached a more auspicious region; the parish of *Fell*, consisting of a number of fruitful dales, which run up between the mountains, from the termination of the narrow but beautiful bay of *Kollafjord*. At *Fell* there is a small church, in which I was rather surprised to find a large wooden image of St. Olaf, King of Norway, which is said to have been drifted up here by the sea, and most likely belonged to some of the earlier navigators, who did not judge it safe to venture on the tempestuous ocean, without a representation of their tutelary saint.

Having slept a few hours in the farm-house, I proceeded along the northern shore of the *Kollafjord*, which is lined at various places with curious walls of basaltic rock, and came in the course of an hour to *Steingrimsfjord*, the largest bay on the east side of the peninsula. It is upwards of twenty miles in length, and about ten at its greatest breadth, and has been navigated in former times, by the Spaniards and Irish, the ruins of whose houses are still to be seen. Strange as it may appear to the inhabitants of warmer climes, and a more grateful soil, even the most

distant districts of the comparatively barren Iceland are not without their *Paradise*; there being a place of that name on the north side of the bay. So true it is, that

—— “ Still, even here, content can spread a charm,  
 Redress the clime, and all its rage disarm.  
 Though poor the peasant's hut, his feasts though small,  
 He sees his little lot, the lot of all ;  
 Sees no contiguous palace rear its head,  
 To shame the meanness of his humble shed ;  
 No costly lord the sumptuous banquet deal,  
 To make him loathe his *poor* and scanty meal ;  
 But calm, and bred in ignorance and toil,  
 Each wish contracting, fits him to the soil.”

As I passed over the extensive plains, between the bay and the mountains, I came up to a fine large tent, which I supposed to be inhabited by a person of consequence, but after exchanging some vain guesses on the subject with my guide, we examined it, and were equally surprised and amused to find it occupied by a *cow*. The poor animal had hurt her leg, and there being no carts in use, it was impossible to convey her home to the farm. She was now nearly recovered, and on my return the following day, had actually been removed by the peasant.

Many of the plains in this quarter are suffered to lie waste, but would furnish excellent farm lands were they to undergo cultivation. Several of the farm-houses wear a very superior appearance, especially those of *Heydalsá* and *Vidar-*

*dalsá*, which may partly be accounted for by the great abundance of drift-timber with which the shores of this bay are covered. Each farm has its division of the beach, and at stated periods the wood is removed to a sufficient distance from the water. The advantages resulting from this produce of the sea in some measure compensate for the want of native forests, and are fully appreciated by the Icelanders; so that many of the coast-places sell high, and are often held in possession, or rented by persons who live on the opposite side of the island. Besides using the wood for their own private purposes, the inhabitants of this syssel fabricate all kinds of small cooper-work during the winter, and thus provide themselves with a new species of barter against the summer.

In the course of the day I had several rivers to ford, but the coldness of the atmosphere preventing the snows on the mountains from melting, I got over them all without much difficulty. Towards evening the ride began to prove very fatiguing, owing to the inequalities of the road, and my having been deceived as to the distance, not supposing *Stad*, the limit of my journey, to be more than two-thirds of the way. Having crossed a rugged and stony tract, which juts out into the bay, I again reached its southern shore, and entering the fine valley in which it terminates, I rode on with increased speed to the parsonage, which I reached about nine o'clock. It is very agreeably situated on the north side of

the valley, near a considerable river, which here empties itself into the bay. The valley itself appeared to be rich in grass; and there was more vegetation on the surrounding mountains than I should have supposed from their northerly situation.

From the different accounts that had been given me of the Dean, Sira Hiallte Jonson, I was led to form a very high idea of his character, but on becoming personally acquainted with him, my expectations were not only met but greatly exceeded. His external appearance was in no respect different from that of the neighbouring peasants, as I took him at an unawares, repairing one of his fences; but I soon found in him, not only the kind, hospitable, and unassuming Icelander, but the consistent Christian, and the enlightened, zealous, and indefatigable servant of Jesus Christ. His learning is that of the *Skalholt* school, increased by private application, and the improvement of his time since leaving that seminary, in studying the Scriptures, the ways and operations of providence, and the different phenomena of mind and matter, as discoverable within the sphere he occupies. His theological system is that of Luther, to which he has undeviatingly adhered, notwithstanding the manifold temptations which the scepticism and infidelity of modern times have thrown in his way. The duties of the Dean's office are chiefly confined to the secular part of the ecclesiastical state in Iceland; but



Sira Hiallte, though strictly conscientious in his discharge of this part of his office, views it merely as the subordinate and less important part. His primary concern is the advancement of the spiritual and eternal welfare of the clergy and people committed to his charge, which he seeks by every means in his power—preaching the word in season and out of season, charging, admonishing, rebuking, &c. He also undertakes long journies, for the purpose of catechising youth, and inspecting the state of his parishes, and maintains in his own family habits of piety and religion.

The *Stad* family forms almost a congregation of itself, consisting of not fewer than twenty-eight persons, to provide for whom requires no small share of prudent economy. It is worthy of notice, that Mrs. Jonson derives her descent from one of the kings of Ireland, through the line of a family which settled here at an early period of Icelandic history. In no part of the world do we find a people more tenacious of genealogical descent than the natives of this distant island; nor is there perhaps a people that have it more in their power to ascertain its degrees with accuracy, as they have always been animated by a spirit of literary research, and are in possession of a number of written monuments which enter into the minutest detail of the family transactions of their ancestors.

On the 21st I was under the necessity of bidding adieu to the interesting and pious family at

*Stad*, after partaking of an excellent breakfast provided me by Mrs. Jonson. The Dean himself, and one of his sons, did me the honour to accompany me two days' journey to the southward. The good man entered with his whole soul into the plan of the Bible Society, and hailed the present opening of Divine Providence as the dawn of a glorious day to the Icelandic church.

We arrived at *Fell* about seven o'clock in the evening, where I had my tent pitched; and set off the following morning across the steep mountain road of *Bitruháls*, on the west side of which the valley is situated that contains the *Mokollshaugar*, a number of banks and rising grounds, famous for the excellent porcelain earth with which they abound.\* As we proceeded up the ascent we were much retarded by a lake, which was entirely covered with ice and snow, and the ice being in many places rotten beneath, the horses had nearly sunk into the water. On reaching the summit, we were gratified with an extensive and interesting prospect. Directly before us, to the south-east, lay the long *Hofs-Yökul*, which was relieved on the south by the vast ice-mountains to the west of *Bláfell*, and on the north by the mountains in *Hunavatns-Syssel*, which project in a northerly direction between the *Skaga* and *Hrutafjords*. Turning towards the north, we had a fine view of the bold promontory

\* Mohr. p. 288.

ries of *Stranda Sysse*, above which towered the *Dránga* and *Glâma* ice-mountains, the only masses of the kind in that quarter of the island. They are not so high as the other ice mountains, but exhibit the same marks of volcanization.\*

Descending from the mountains, we came to the northern shore of the *Bitrufjord*, a beautiful frith, which runs about twelve miles into the country, but, excepting at the mouth, it does not exceed a mile in breadth. As there was no ferry for the accommodation of travellers, we were obliged to ride round the bay, which added several miles to our journey; however, the weather being uncommonly fine, and our conversation increasing in interest the longer it was continued, we were altogether unconscious of the length of the road. After crossing the mountain of *Stickuhâls*, we arrived at the western shore of the extensive *Hrutafjord*, which we skirted, following its numerous sinuosities, and passing now and then a solitary farm, till about midnight, when we reached *Bæ*, the abode of the Sysselman, Mr. Jonson, who, with his family, was still on foot, and received us in the most courteous and hospitable manner.

The 23d, at noon, I tore myself away from the excellent Dean, who intended to spend the rest of the day in catechising, and proceeded with the Sysselman to the termination of the

\* Olafsen og Povelsen, p. 405.

*Hrutafjord*, where he engaged a young man to guide me through the desert tract which occupies the intermediate space between the north country and the syssel of *Borgarfjord* in the south. The road is known by the name of *Hollta-vördu-heidi* ; and after leaving the river which empties itself into the bay, and here runs in a deep and confined channel, it stretches across an immense number of small heights partially covered with moss, and bearing every character of volcanic origin.

We set out for the mountains about seven o'clock in the evening, and continued gradually to ascend till near twelve at night, when I was favoured with the most novel and interesting midnight scene I ever witnessed: the sun remaining as if stationary a little above the horizon for about half an hour, when he again commenced his ascent, and pursued his steady, un-deviating course, through the northern hemisphere.

At first I was afraid I should have been denied this gratification ; for, after lingering for a long time above the high mountains in the remote tracts of *Stranda* Syssel, he at last dipped behind them, but as I rode on, and still gained a higher part of the desert, I was agreeably surprised to observe the shadow of my horse on the height before me, and, turning round, I found that the sun had again left the mountains, and now appeared almost close to the surface of the ocean. Not being certain whether he might

not have dipped during his absence, I kept my eye steadily fixed upon him, when I found that he still continued to decline, but when within a very little of the horizon, he remained in the same degree of altitude, only going forwards, and, as mentioned above, again began his ascent in the course of half an hour.

Though my curiosity had already been highly gratified in contemplating the multiplicity of surprising phenomena which this island presents to the view of the traveller, I felt myself compelled to assign the prospect now before me an important place in my assemblage of wonders. Close by, towards the west, lay the *Trölla-kyrkja*, or “Giant’s Church,” an ancient volcano, the walls of whose crater rose in a very fantastic manner into the atmosphere, while the lower regions were entirely covered with snow; to the south and east stretched an immense impenetrable waste, enlivened on the one hand by a number of lakes, and in the distance by vast ice-mountains, whose glassy surface, receiving the rays of the midnight sun, communicated a golden tinge to the surrounding atmosphere; while, towards the north, the long bay of *Hrutafjord* gradually opened into the ocean. Here the king of day, like a vast globe of fire, stretched his sceptre over the realms of night—divested indeed of his splendour, but more interesting, because more subject to view. The singing of swans on the neighbouring lakes added

to the novelty of the scene, and called forth ascriptions of praise to Him whose "works are all made in wisdom," and tend in one way or another to magnify his glory, and advance the general welfare of created being.

As I continued my journey, the train of my meditation fell upon that sublime passage in the prophet Isaiah, where, describing in prophetic anticipation the future prosperity of the church, he declares, "*Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for Jehovah shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.*" Isaiah, ix. 20. In the spectacle I had just beheld, the prophetic image itself was fully unfolded to my view; and the contemplation of the universality and perpetuity of Divine Light, in connection with the means at present so effectively used for its diffusion throughout the world, animated me to devote myself afresh to the work of the Lord, and, in reliance on grace from above, to contribute, to the utmost of my power, towards the impartation of that light to every human soul.

The tract now began to slope towards the south country; and, after crossing a stream of lava, we descended to the banks of the *Nordurá*, which we forded repeatedly, now riding on the right, and now on the left side of the river. About seven in the morning we reached the farm of *Hvam*, in *Nordurárdal*, where I pitched my tent, and slept till noon; when finding it

still too early to re-load my horses, I resolved to ascend Mount *Baula*, a singular cone in the vicinity, which is at least 3000 feet in height, and is visible from many distant parts of the island. It forms the southern boundary of a vast oval valley, or crater, containing several other cones of a smaller size, the red appearance of which, and the general aspect of the surrounding tract, leave no room to doubt of their having been produced by volcanic agency.

On reaching the base of *Baula*, I was surprised to find the whole of its lower regions consisted of a singular kind of white-coloured basalt, none of which lay in their original bed, but were scattered about, and piled one above another in the wildest disorder. They are, for the most part, five and seven-sided; some have three, and a few nine sides; and measure from three to seven feet in length, by five and nine inches in diameter. I here scrambled for more than an hour among these broken pillars, not without considerable danger, from their loose state, and the excessive steepness of the mountain; and the longer I continued among them, the more my curiosity was excited, to investigate the region from which they had been precipitated. However, before I had reached the elevation of 1200 feet, the mountain got shrouded in mist; it began to blow and rain with considerable violence; and a regard for my own safety and comfort, not any tincture of the superstition that had all the

while assailed the mind of my attendant,\* prompted me to descend as quickly as possible, and seek for shelter in the tranquillity of the neighbouring vale. Two basaltic pillars from this mountain, which were afterwards conveyed to me by the peasant of Hvam, I forwarded to Scotland, where I intended to have submitted them to chemical examination; but on my arrival, I was sorry to find they had both been taken out of the box, and not so much as a single specimen left to serve the purpose I had in view in sending them home. Olafsen and Povelsen call the Baula stone, *Saxum Thophaceum albidem columnare sive Basaltiforme*, and regard it as the production of boiling water, to which they ascribe the origination of all the white-coloured mountains in Iceland.† It is much to be regretted that *Mount Baula* was not examined by Sir George Mackenzie and his party, when they were in the vicinity, as it is incontestibly the most remarkable mountain on the island, and

\* The ideas which the natives entertain of this mountain, are accurately depicted by Mr. Hooker: “The mountain, also, called *Boula*, from its great height and conical figure, formed a prominent feature in the scene: it is likewise deserving of notice, on account of the vulgar idea, that there is on its summit, (which, by the bye, has proved inaccessible to all who have attempted to reach it) an entrance to a rich and beautiful country; a country constantly green, and abounding in trees, inhabited by a dwarfish race of men, whose sole employment is the care of their fine flocks of sheep.” *Tour in Iceland*, vol. i. p. 299.

† *Reise*, p. 138.



might have furnished them with some new and curious facts in geological science.

The *Baula* basalt is chiefly used for tombstones, to which it is naturally adapted, without the assistance of art. That it was applied to this purpose, so early as the eleventh century, appears from the specimen at *Borg* in the *Sysel* of *Myrar*, containing an epitaph on *Kiartan Olafson*, who was assassinated in *Svinadal*, in the year 1004. As it is the most ancient Runic inscription found in Iceland, I will here insert a copy of it, taken from the xvii. table of *Olafsen og Povelsen* :—

HER LIGR HALR KARTAN,

“ Here lies the brave *Kiartan*.”

The last character is composed of the Runic letters signifying “*Olafson*.” The smaller characters at the end are no longer legible, but are supposed to have signified, *Feck kif af sári deidi*, “*Died of a wound inflicted in strife ;*” or *Fyrisvik af sári deydi*, “*Died of a treacherous wound.*”\*

About five o'clock I again struck my tent, and proceeded under the guidance of the peasant across the hills that lie to the south-east of *Hvam*. They are very stony, of no great height, and are regularly intersected by long parallel dales, and the whole tract indicates the opera-

\* *Reise*, p. 254.

tions of the sea at some former period. Having crossed the *Thverá*, a fine salmon river, which falls into the *Hvitá*, a little farther down, I gained a beautiful birch wood, which extended over a considerable flat, and on which my eye rested with considerable delight, not having seen a shrub for several weeks. In the evening I pitched my tent in the plain before the church and farm of *Nordtunga*, and made a delicious supper on fresh salmon, which was kindly sent me by the widow who occupies the farm.

Next day I rode on to *Sidumula*, where I expected to find the Sysselman, Mr Otteson, but on my arrival I was informed of his having gone with his lady to *Hvitárvellir*. My disappointment, however, was in some measure retrieved by my falling in with the clergyman, Sira Hiörtr Jonson of *Gilsbacka*, who had the kindness to accompany me to *Reykhollt*, the ancient residence of the great northern Herodotus, Snorro Sturluson. Having crossed the *Hvitá*, and struggled through a number of dangerous bogs, we entered *Reykiadal*, or the "Valley of Smoke," justly so named from the numerous columns of vapour which its hot springs incessantly send forth into the atmosphere.

*Reykhollt* is at present occupied by Sira Eggert Jonson, the Dean of *Borgarfjord* Syssel. He was also absent on our arrival, but we were made welcome by the female part of the family, and on the arrival of my baggage, I had my tent

pitched on the summit of the *virki*, \* a circular mound of earth, forming the most eminent remains of the fortification, which, in former times, surrounded the farm. On his removing to this place, Snorro Sturluson not only repaired and enlarged the buildings, but inclosed the whole with a high and strong wall as a defence against the attacks of his enemies: for in spite of the excellent regulations which existed during the Icelandic republic for securing individual safety, the intestine broils of the different chieftains, in which Snorro, in his time, had an eminent share, exposed the leading men to the rage and wantonness of the contending parties. The extent of the wall may yet be traced, but it is no where so conspicuous as here, where a watch-tower seems to have stood, and through which a subterraneous passage has communicated with the *Snorra-laug*, or “Snorro’s Bath,” situated directly at its base.

This bath, which has survived the ravages of nearly 600 years, without requiring any reparation, is doubtless, next to the *Heimskringla*, the proudest specimen of Snorro’s ingenuity, and forms a nobler monument than any which the most zealous of his admirers could have erected to his memory. It is perfectly circular in form, about fifteen feet in diameter, and is constructed

\* Hence Southwark, Icel. *Sudvirki*, the southern fortification constructed by the Danes in the days of Ethelred, and so called because it lay on the *south* side of the Thames.

of hewn stones which fit each other in the most exact manner, and have been joined together by a fine cement of bolus, and other matter found in the neighbourhood. The floor is paved with the same kind of tophaceous stone which composes the wall, and a stone bench, capable of containing upwards of thirty persons, surrounds the inside of the bath. The water is supplied from a hot spouting fountain, called *Scribla*, which is situated about 500 feet in a northerly direction, in a hot morass, where numerous boiling springs make their appearance. It is conveyed by means of a subterraneous aqueduct, constructed of stones, which are cemented together in the same way as those which form the bath. In the year 1733, this conduit was deranged by an earthquake, and again repaired by the Reverend Dean Finn Jonson, afterwards bishop of *Skalholt*; \* but it has since been broken at different places. On reaching the bason, the hot water is admitted through a small aperture, and when a sufficient quantity has been received, the orifice is closed up with a stone, and the water runs in its common channel down the valley. There is another opening at the bottom of the bason through which the water is suffered to run out, and the bath is by this means rendered perfectly clean.

In most of the descriptions we have of this famous bath, it has been affirmed, that a supply of cold water is likewise brought to the bason for

\* See *Heimskringla*, vol. i, p. xxxi. of the Preface.

the purpose of reducing the temperature ; but the statement is inaccurate, as there does not exist any cold water in the vicinity, nor can any other be obtained for economical or domestic purposes than what is brought from the hot springs. \* Those who avail themselves of it have to wait till the water in the bason has sufficiently cooled, when they descend by a flight of steps, and may have any depth they choose, not exceeding four feet. As the floor recedes from the centre it gradually becomes shallower, and close to the bench it is not deeper than to admit of children standing in it. In former times, it was customary for the whole family, without distinction of age or sex, to go to the bath together, and in some parts of the island it is practised at this day.

Owing to the infrequency of its use, I found *Snorra-laug* rather in a neglected state ; the water was muddy, and a quantity of soil had collected at the bottom. Having intimated a wish to bathe in it, the plug was taken out of the draining hole, and the current of hot water from *Scribla* was suffered to flow freely through it the whole of the night, so that on the morning of the 26th, before dressing, I stepped down to it from my tent, and had an opportunity of enjoying and appreciating to the full the beneficial luxury of the *laug*.

\* “ In propinquo nulla exstet frigida, unde in *Reikholto* nulla bibitur, nullaque ad usum domesticum et œconomicum, quam hæcce adhibetur aqua.” Ibid. p. xxx.

Besides the bath, the *Lögrétta*, situated nearly in front of the parsonage, and the *Sturlunga-reitur*, a part of the church-yard, where the family of the historian is supposed to have been interred, tend to keep up his memory at *Reykhollt*.

Snorro Sturluson, certainly one of the most powerful and celebrated chiefs ever Iceland produced, was born, as has already been noticed in the preceding chapter, at *Hvam*, on the *Hvamsfjord*, in the year 1178. At three years of age, he was sent to *Oddè*, where he received an excellent education from Jon Loptson, a very rich and learned chief, and grandson of Sæmund Frode. Having access to the MSS. and other antiquities belonging to the family, it was doubtless here that he laid the foundation of his Eddaic mythology, and cultivated the historical and poetic arts; his proficiency in which afterwards procured him such a high degree of literary fame. On the death of his tutor in 1197, he left *Oddè*, and married the daughter of a rich priest who lived at *Borg*, on the western shore of the *Borgafjord*, by which match he added no less than 4000 rix-dollars to the small property of 160, which was all that had been left him by his father. In the course of a few years, he not only succeeded to the inheritance of *Borg*, but obtained possession of *Reykhollt*, *Bessastad*, and several other considerable farms; and ultimately became so powerful, that he sometimes made his appearance at the national as-

sembly with eight or nine hundred men in his train. His learning and abilities also raised him to the office of *Lögsögumadur*, or Supreme Magistrate, which office he sustained at two different periods.

But the celebrity of Snorro Sturluson was not confined to Iceland. A poem which he composed in praise of Hacon Galin, a powerful Norwegian Iarl, not only procured him the favour of that prince, but paved the way for a visit to that part of the continent, about the year 1218, where he was well received by Skule Iarl, and other noble families, whose exploits had been the subject of his Scaldic muse. He was here raised to the dignity of *Drottseti*, or Lord High Marshal, with which office was afterwards combined that of Lord Lieutenant; and, in return, he engaged to effect the reduction of his native island, under the power of the Iarl, by the mere force of his own private influence. The only apology that can be made for this traitorous conduct is, that Snorro was induced to make the proposition to prevent the island from being invaded by a military force, as he saw the Iarl was determined on its subjugation. The private feuds in which he got involved after his return, prevented him from carrying his design, if it really was sincere, into effect. These feuds, kindled for the most part, by his own turbulence, ambition, and avarice, at length completely turned the tide of his fortune, and he was not only chased from the most of his estates, but obliged

to flee for refuge to Norway, where he was but coolly received; and though he was afterwards created Earl, he found his safety so much at stake, that he again set sail for Iceland, in the year 1239, contrary to the express orders of his former patron, and took up his abode at *Reykhollt*, where he was assassinated on the night of the 22d of September 1241, in the 63d year of his age. His murderer, Gissur Thorvaldson, formerly his son-in-law, had received orders from Hacon, King of Norway, to bring Snorro over as a prisoner; and if this could not be effected, to take away his life: but having an eye to his estates, he resolved at once to adopt the latter measure. It is not unworthy of notice, that though Snorro was deeply skilled in the antiquities of his country, he was not able to decipher a letter written to him in a peculiar Runic character, the same night in which he was murdered, and which was designed to apprise him of the impending danger.

The *Heimskringla*, or Chronicle of the Kings of Norway, for which we are indebted to the pen of Snorro, is a master-piece of historical composition, and not only embraces the internal affairs of the Scandinavian kingdoms, but throws much light on the political state of the rest of Europe, especially that of the British islands. It was first published, with a Latin translation, by Peringskiold, in two folio volumes, Stockholm, 1697; but the Copenhagen edition of 1777, 1778, 1783, and 1813, in four volumes folio, with



a Danish and Latin version, is vastly superior. There is also every reason to conclude, that our historian collected and arranged the mythological fables and poetic phrases, of which the more recent or prosaic Edda is chiefly composed; as it is certain he is the author of the *Háttalykill*, or *Clavis Metrica*, which contains specimens of Scandinavian poetry in a hundred different kinds of verse, most of which appear to have been invented by Snorro himself.

In a clear day, and calm weather, the view from *Reykhollt* is rendered peculiarly interesting by the prodigious clouds of vapour which ascend from various parts of the “Valley of Smoke;” and which, at first sight, would almost lead a stranger to conclude, that a volcanic eruption had actually commenced in the vicinity. As the Dean was not expected home before evening, Mr. Jonson and I made a short excursion in the valley, for the purpose of surveying the springs.

We first visited the *Sturlu-reykia-hverar*, situated close to a farm of the same name, about two miles below *Reykhollt*. The principal spring is remarkable for its three apertures, the lowest of which serves as a conduit for the boiling water, while the two that are situate a little higher up answer the purpose of steam-pipes, through which the vapour makes its escape during the discharge of the water. This, of all the springs I have met with in Iceland, most resembles a steam-engine. When an eruption is over, it in-

termits, and the water sinks out of sight for the space of about fifteen seconds; after which, the engine is again set in motion, the steam rushes out of the two apertures with a loud hissing noise, and a considerable quantity of water is discharged. It is seldom the eruption continues longer than a minute. The water is received about ten yards farther down into a circular bason, which is both used as a bath, and a watering-place for the cattle in winter. The other subordinate springs, especially that called *Hunda-hver*, appear to be connected with the one just described; but, excepting a few incrustations, they present no phenomena worthy of notice.

Our attention was next attracted by a vapour bath, resembling that near *Reykiahlid*,\* a low building constructed over the stream of boiling water before it reaches the reservoir of the principal spring, from which it is separated by a thin floor, so that the heat in the inside is 62° of Fahrenheit, though the door remain unshut. The passage forming the entrance is not only long, but extremely low and confined, so that we were obliged to creep into it. We found a quantity of clothes hung up in it to dry, the only purpose for which it is used, except when frequented for the cure of diseases.

We now proceeded to the *Tungu-hverar*, which lie at the distance of a mile farther down, on the same side of the valley; and as the wind blew

\* See Vol. i. p. 165.

the smoke directly upon us, it was not without some danger that we approached them. Having cautiously leaped over a rivulet of boiling water, I took my station in front of the springs; but ere I was aware, I was nearly suffocated with hot and dense vapours, which so closely surrounded me, that I could neither see my companion, nor how to make my escape from the spot on which I stood. At the distance of only a few yards before me roared not fewer than sixteen boiling cauldrons, the contents of which, raised in broken columns of various heights, were splashed about the margins, and ran with great impetuosity in numberless streamlets down the precipice on which the springs are situate. What augmented the irksomeness of my situation was the partial darkness in which the whole tract was enveloped, so that it was impossible for me to form any distinct idea of the terrifying operations that were going on before me. After the wind had somewhat abated, the vapours began to ascend more perpendicularly, and I again discovered Mr. Jonson, who was in no small degree concerned about my safety.

Having re-crossed the scalding rivulet, and joined my companion, we ascended the eminence, on the east side of which the kettles are situate, where we supposed it would be possible to have taken a full view of them, but the steam being blown down upon them by the wind, they were almost entirely eclipsed, and we had no opportunity of contemplating the beautiful

alternations so minutely described by Sir George Mackenzie and other travellers. The whole of the eminence consists of several layers of red, blue and white bolus, which is so soft that a pole may be thrust into it with ease, and so hot, that it is impossible to hold one's hand more than an inch or two beneath the surface. In the vicinity of the springs the bolus has been considerably hardened by the action of the hot water, and appears to be forming into jasper.

After examining a number of boiling springs on the opposite side of the valley, some of which erupt the water with considerable violence; we repaired to the *Ar-hver*, or "River Spring," so called because it is situated in the middle of the river which divides the valley. Here, on the summit of a small rock about eight or ten feet in height, are three orifices full of boiling water, two of which project the water with violence into the air, and send forth such a quantity of steam as nearly to cover the river, though it be of considerable breadth. We endeavoured to measure the depth of the holes, but owing to their irregularity the plummet could not sink farther than twenty feet. Singular as the situation and appearance of this spring is, the traveller is still more surprised to observe from a line of steam rising from the surface of the river, that a vein of boiling water forces its way through the very bed into the cold stream; but, indeed, the whole valley seems to be transversed in various direc-

tions by subterranean excavations, the water in which is heated by some common conflagration.

On the 27th, after having made the necessary arrangements with the Dean relative to the circulation of the Scriptures, I took leave of the family at *Reykhollt*, where I had been treated with distinguished kindness, and prosecuted my journey, accompanied by the Dean and his two eldest sons, from whose society, however, I could profit but little, owing to the violent wind and rain, which continued almost the whole of the day. Passing the mouth of *Lund-Reykiadal*, and fording the *Grimsá*, a fine salmon river, we had to encounter a rugged mountain-pass, on the other side of which we entered the beautiful valley of *Skorradal*; and, after scrambling through a number of dangerous bogs, reached the margin of a spacious lake, which we found almost surrounded with a fine wood of birch.

The road now lay up a steep pass on the north side of the Eastern *Skardsheidi*, where the mountains wore every appearance of having been terribly convulsed by fire, and brought us, in the course of two hours, into *Svinadal*—a long but narrow valley, abounding in excellent hay, and divided by a long lake, which supplies the inhabitants with plenty of trout.

About six o'clock in the evening we reached the church and parsonage of *Saurbæ*, on the northern shore of the *Hvalsfiord*, where we were made cordially welcome by the incumbent, an aged man of seventy-four. To whatever part of

this surprising island the traveller may turn, he is sure to meet with some phenomenon or other, either of a physical or moral nature. Here, at a small farm capable only of affording pasture to a few sheep and cattle, and with a stipend of about thirty rix-dollars *per annum*, I was not a little astonished to find a man who had read more of his Hebrew Bible than hundreds of the more opulent clergy in Great Britain. Nor is it less surprising, that he had already gained his sixtieth year ere he entertained any idea of studying the original language of the Old Testament. He was induced to commence this study with the view of satisfying his own mind in regard to the true sense of Scripture, being convinced, that this was the only way in which he could determine whether the translation given in the Icelandic, or that contained in the Danish Bible, was the most consonant to the original. Having, through the kindness of Bishop Vidalin, been provided with a small Hebrew Grammar, the excellent large-lettered edition of the Hebrew Bible by Opitius, and Simonis Hebrew Lexicon, he applied with ardour to his task, and was able in a short time to read the historical books with ease. The psalms next claimed his attention; and he is now able, with the assistance of the lexicon, to resolve even the most intricate parts of the Hebrew text to his own satisfaction and edification. He has also written out beautiful alphabets of the Syriac and Arabic languages, and composed a pretty extensive glossary in La-

tin, Icelandic, English, French, and German. As he hears with difficulty, it was impossible for me to converse much with him; but he soon took occasion to express his happiness at the supply of Bibles that had been sent to his countrymen, and rejoiced to hear of the progress of true religion in different parts of the world.

Finding that my host had determined to proceed to *Reykjavik* the following day, I did not leave *Saurbæ* so early as I intended, but waited till the afternoon, when, taking an affectionate farewell of the Dean of *Borgarfjord* and his two sons, we set out along the shores of the *Hvalfjord*, or Whale Frith, where I had often occasion to admire the wild grandeur of the mountain scenery; the precipices sometimes rising abruptly, and broken into a thousand curious shapes, sometimes receding with a more gentle acclivity, and presenting a fine exhibition of the numerous rocky beds of which they are composed.

At the termination of the bay, we had to cross a rapid river close to a beautiful cascade, where the water is emptied into an unfathomable abyss. On the east side of the cascade is a vast excavation in the breccia rock, on the inner wall of which is a number of names that have been written by such as have passed this way.

The road now lay along the face of a precipitous mountain, and was in several places entirely effaced by recent depositions from the impending cliffs. We next proceeded up *Reinaval-*

*la-háls*, a very steep and difficult pass; having reached the summit of which, we came to a singular looking and insulated mountain of tuffa, called *Sandfell*, past the southern base of which ran the *Laxá*, famous for the excellent salmon with which it abounds. Owing to the declivity of the ground, the stream is rather rapid at the fording place; and its passage is rendered still more dangerous by the number of stones which lie concealed at the bottom. It was here that Oddur Gottshalkson, the first translator of the New Testament into Icelandic, lost his life in the year 1556.

The neighbouring parishes of *Reinavellir* and *Medalfell* form the best district of the *Kiosar*, or "Choice" Syssel; and, in addition to the advantages of the salmon-fishery, possess excellent pasture grounds, which are defended on every side by a number of high mountains. Of these, the *Irarfell*, or Irish Mountain, assumes a very peculiar figure, receding to a considerable distance in a direct line, its different horizontal strata retaining at the same time the most perfect regularity of position, till it reaches the grand chain that runs to the east of Mount *Esian*, when a beautiful angle is formed by their junction. These circumstances, combined with the snow-capped summits of the mountains, the noble and rugged precipices which are displayed on their sides, and the numerous cataracts that dash with a deafening roar among the



rocks, render the scenery the most romantic imaginable.

I now encountered the last, but at the same time the steepest mountain-pass on my journey. It is very appropriately called *Stigna-skard*, from the number of turns and windings by which it must be climbed, and is divided by a rapid torrent, which the traveller is every now and then obliged to pass. About midnight we gained the summit of the ridge, where we must have commanded a very extensive prospect, had it not been for the hazy state of the atmosphere. Descending over the eastern base of *Skálafjall*, we soon reached *Mossfell*, and, pursuing our course without making any halt, we arrived in *Reykjavik* about three o'clock in the morning of the 29th of June, within a single day of the period I had fixed before setting out on my journey.

## CHAP. XIV.

*Handels-tid, or Period of Traffic—Mode of Travelling to Market—Exports and Imports—History of Icelandic Commerce—Benevolence of the British Government—Order in Council—The interest kept up by the National Assembly—Its Abolition—Formation of the Icelandic Bible Society—Letter from its Secretary—Ditto from Bishop Vidalin—Salmon Fishery.*

TOWARDS the end of June the Icelander begins to make the necessary preparations for his journey to the factory, or mercantile establishment, at which he is accustomed to trade. By this time the horses of burden are again fit for use; the sheep have had the woollen fleece torn off their backs;\* the roads are passable; and, till the setting in of the hay harvest, no particular branch of rustic labour calls for the presence of

\* In Iceland the sheep are not shorn as with us, but are suffered to go out till the wool begins to fall off, when they are gathered into a pen, and it is literally torn off with the hand. By this means much of the wool is lost, and what remains in the fields is very seldom picked up, even by the shepherds.

the peasants. To accommodate them, factories are established by the Danish merchants at different distances around the coast, whither the majority repair; but as there is seldom more than one mercantile house at each station, many of the Icelanders prefer a journey across the deserts in the interior to *Reykjavik*, where, from the number of houses, there is a kind of competition, and, at all events, they have here the liberty of choice, which, in their estimation, is a matter of no small importance. The prices are generally fixed by the merchants before-hand; yet, in order to obtain a full cargo, they sometimes depart from the rule, and raise the prices towards the end of the market.

It is the duty of the Landfoged and Sysselman to examine all the weights and measures in the shops, before the summer traffic commences, and, should any be found defective, the owner is liable to a fine. Both weights and measures are according to the Danish standard.

On setting out for the trading station, the Icelanders load their horses exactly in the manner described at the beginning of this journal; and such of them as visit the south, generally proceed thither in companies; so that about this time it is no uncommon thing for travellers to meet with caravans consisting of sixty or seventy horses in the deserts of the interior. As they pass along, they amuse themselves by relating the incidents of the preceding winter, or take occasion, from local monuments, to repeat

and comment on the stories of ancient times. When they reach the vicinity of *Reykjavik*, they do not proceed instantly with their goods to the market, but encamp on the green spots to the east of the town, where I have more than once fancied myself among “the travelling companies of Dedanim,” Isaiah xxi. 13. Sometimes upwards of an hundred tents, and several hundred horses may be seen here at the same time. Those belonging to the same farm or neighbourhood always pitch their tents close together, and surround them with the baggage to prevent the wind from penetrating below the wadmél which forms the covering of the tent. Their object in not proceeding at once to the market, is to prevent the merchants from gaining an undue advantage over them, by getting possession of their goods before they have had time to ascertain the prices. They therefore leave all to the care of their servants at a sufficient distance, and ride into the town alone, when they go to the different shops, and, after having made the necessary inquiries, agree with the merchant who offers them the best terms, or shews himself the most friendly and obliging in his behaviour. It is to be observed, however, that this custom is chiefly confined to such peasants as come from a distance, and are independent of the merchants; the great majority stand on the debtor side of the shop-books, and are kept in a kind of slavery the whole of their lives. Indeed, it appears to be a fundamental

principle of the Icelandic trade, to keep up a number of out-standing debts, in order to secure the future commodities of the individuals on whom they are chargeable. Should any of them be detected in dealing with another merchant, he is instantly threatened with prosecution.

The principal exports are fish, salted mutton, oil, tallow, wool, and woollen stuffs, skins, feathers, and sulphur. The chief articles of import, are rye, barley, oat-meal, pease, bread, potatoes, rum, brandy, wine, coffee, tea, sugar, tobacco, salt, wood, iron, flax, lines, hooks, indigo, cotton and silk-handkerchiefs, &c. The use of tobacco and coffee, as articles of luxury, has of late increased in a degree very disproportioned to the circumstances of the natives. They seldom smoke tobacco, but are excessively fond of chewing it, and prefer it as a present to any thing that might be offered them.

For some time after the occupation of the island by the Norwegians, the inhabitants carried on their own trade, not only with Norway, to which country, for the sake of family connexions, they often repaired; but also with the British Islands, and different parts of the Continent. Yet even during the earlier periods of the Icelandic Republic, considerable mercantile expeditions were fitted out from Scotland and Ireland; and the merchants of these countries, and those of the Hanseatic towns, were allowed the privilege of a free trade, after the incorporation of the island with Norway. Certain duties were

imposed on every foreign vessel that arrived for the purposes of commerce ; and, with a view to preserve order and regularity, certain harbours were assigned to the different traders. Towards the close of the fifteenth century, serious disputes arose between the Danish and English Courts relative to the Icelandic trade, the consequence of which was, that all English vessels were prohibited from entering the ports of Iceland. The commerce of the island was now monopolized by the Hanseatic merchants, who retained it, almost exclusively, till the year 1602 ; when, in consequence of the grievous complaints of oppression made by the inhabitants, they were deprived of their privilege, but still continued to keep up their connexions, in a clandestine manner, till a royal edict of 1616, ordered their ware-houses to be razed, and the wood to be appropriated to the reparation of the poorer churches. \*

In 1602, the trade was rented by his Danish Majesty to certain merchants in Copenhagen, Malmö, and Elsinore, for twelve years, on condition of their paying 16 rix-dollars for each harbour. This grant was renewed with some trivial alterations in 1614 ; and the trade remained in the hands of the company till 1662, when it was rented to four principal agents for the sum of 4000 rix-dollars, for the period of twenty years. At the expiration of this period, differ-

\* Philosophische Schilderung der gegenwärtigen Verfassung von Island, Pp. 233, 224, 225. Altona, 1786, 8vo.

ent modifications took place with respect to the prices of goods, but these alterations were most frequently to the prejudice of the natives. \* In 1706 the trade was rented to separate merchants, for 20,190 rix-dollars annually, from 1706 to 1724; and from that year to 1733, from 20,000 to 20,300 rix-dollars were given for it. The monopoly again fell into the hands of a private company, who for the ten following years paid only 8000 rix-dollars for their privilege; but it was purchased in 1743 for double that sum by a company of flax-merchants, who oppressed the natives to such a degree, that they ultimately forfeited their privilege in the year 1759. From 1759 to 1764, the trade was carried on for the account of the crown, when it was again rented for ten years to the General Merchants' Company, for the sum of 7000 rix-dollars. It now came once more into the hands of the crown, by which it was retained till the year 1788, when, to the no small joy of the Icelanders, it was made free to all the subjects of his Danish Majesty's dominions. †

Previous to this period, the natives were in a state of absolute slavery to foreign merchants. They were prohibited, under pain of whipping and slavery, from repairing to any other mercantile station than that in the district to which

\* Philosophische Schilderung der gegenwärtigen Verfassung von Island, Pp 232, 233.

† Stephensen's Island i det Attende Aarhundrede, Pp. 301, —305.

they belonged ; and if they chanced to come there after the ship had completed her cargo, they were obliged to sell their goods for a mere trifle, and consequently were unable to purchase such articles of foreign produce as they wanted for domestic purposes.\* It is chiefly to these circumstances that we are to ascribe the comparative want of spirit, inactivity, and poverty, which characterize the present race of Icelanders. Under the iron yoke of oppression, the nobler features of the human mind contract and decay ; the spirit of enterprize is damped ; and a degree of constitutional apathy and indolence necessarily ensues.

On the breaking out of the war between Great Britain and Denmark in the year 1807, the Icelanders were greatly apprehensive of absolute starvation, from the want of those necessary supplies which they were accustomed to receive from the mother country ; and of these the privation of none was more dreaded than that of hooks and fishing-lines, without which they could not avail themselves of the stores of provision which abound in the surrounding ocean. Owing, however, to the humane and benevolent interposition of Sir Joseph Banks, licenses were granted by his Majesty's government, to Danish vessels to proceed to Iceland, under the condition of their touching at the port of Leith, both when outward-bound and on their passage

\* Stephensen's *Island i det Attende Aarhundrede*, p. 306.



home. By this arrangement the inhabitants were again regularly supplied; and though the act of piracy, committed by a Captain Gilpin in 1808, who robbed the public treasury of at least 30,000 rix-dollars, as well as the usurpation of Jörgensen the following year, necessarily tended to excite fresh alarms in their mind, yet they were soon relieved by an order, issued by the British Cabinet, prohibiting all acts of hostility against Iceland and the rest of the Danish colonies in the Arctic Seas, and taking the inhabitants and their property under the special protection of Great Britain. The following copy of the order, which I have extracted from the London Gazette, deserves to be inserted in this place, as a monument of the sympathy felt by his Majesty's Ministers for the destitute and defenceless inhabitants of that remote island:—

“ At the COURT at the QUEEN'S PALACE, the  
7th February 1810.

PRESENT,

“The KING'S Most Excellent Majesty, in Council.

“ Whereas it has been humbly represented to his Majesty, that the islands of Faroe and Iceland, and also certain settlements on the coast of Greenland, parts of the dominions of Denmark, have, since the commencement of the war between Great Britain and Denmark, been deprived of all intercourse with Denmark; and that the inhabitants of those islands and settlements

are, in consequence of the want of their accustomed supplies, reduced to extreme misery, being without many of the necessaries, and most of the conveniencies of life :

“ His Majesty, being moved by compassion for the sufferings of these defenceless people, has, by and with the advice of his Privy Council, thought fit to declare his royal will and pleasure, and it is hereby declared and ordered, that the said islands of Faroe and Iceland, and the settlements on the coast of Greenland, and the inhabitants thereof, and the property therein, shall be exempted from the attack and hostility of his Majesty’s forces and subjects ; and that the ships belonging to inhabitants of such islands and settlements, and all goods, being of the growth, produce, and manufacture of the said islands and settlements, on board the ships belonging to such inhabitants engaged in a direct trade between such islands and settlements respectively, and the ports of London or Leith, shall not be liable to seizure and confiscation as prize :

“ His Majesty is farther pleased to order, with the advice aforesaid, that the people of all the said islands and settlements be considered, when resident in his Majesty’s dominions, as Stranger Friends, under the safeguard of his Majesty’s royal peace, and entitled to the protection of the laws of the realm, and in no case treated as alien enemies.

“ His Majesty is further pleased to order, with the advice aforesaid, that the ships of the United

Kingdom, navigated according to law, be permitted to repair to the said islands and settlements, and to trade with the inhabitants thereof.

“ And his Majesty is further pleased to order, with the advice aforesaid, that all his Majesty’s cruisers, and all other his subjects, be inhibited from committing any act of depredation or violence against the persons, ships, and goods of any of the inhabitants of the said islands and settlements, and against any property in the said islands and settlements respectively.

“ And the Honourable the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty’s Treasury, his Majesty’s principal Secretaries of State, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, and the Judge of the High Court of Admiralty, and the Judges of the Vice-Courts of Admiralty, are to take the necessary measures herein, as to them shall respectively appertain.”

(Signed) “ W. FAWKENER.”

Being thus secured under the protection of Great Britain, the trade was carried on without interruption; and, besides the regular traders from Denmark, several British and American vessels visited Iceland during the war, and two mercantile houses in Liverpool formed proper commercial establishments at *Reykjavik*, where they kept factors for superintending their business. Though some few additional articles of luxury were introduced, yet the natives were, on the whole, considerably benefited by the trade with England, as our countrymen under-

sold the Danish merchants, and imported a greater quantity of potatoes and other useful articles than what they had been in the habit of receiving from the mother country.

In an agreement entered into with the Danish authorities in Iceland, it was stipulated, that for the accommodation of such of the subjects of Great Britain as might have formed establishments on the island, they should be allowed to carry on this trade till the expiration of one year after an official account of the restoration of peace between the two countries should arrive in Iceland. This accordingly took place in 1815; since which period only one of the Liverpool houses has availed itself of the new regulation issued by the Court of Denmark, which allows British ships to proceed to Iceland, on condition of their procuring a special license for that purpose from Copenhagen. As the sum demanded for such a license is considered to be too high, in proportion to the probable advantages which might result from a commercial enterprize of this nature, it is supposed that all intercourse between Great Britain and Iceland will speedily be brought to a close.

But, to return to the period of traffic. Ever since the abolition of the *Althing*, or National Assembly, in the year 1800, the annual fair at *Reykjavik* presents the only opportunity the natives now enjoy of meeting with one another, or transacting any business of mutual or public concern. But it furnishes only a poor substitute for that interesting occasion. As long as

they continued to assemble at *Thingvalla*,\* the Icelanders maintained a spirit of liberty and national independence; and though subjected, during the later periods of their history, to the sceptre of a foreign monarch, yet that sceptre has been swayed over them with so much mildness, that it was impossible for them to be conscious of any deterioration in their condition as the result of this change. They delighted to visit a spot where the wisdom and eloquence of their ancestors had long been illustriously displayed; where their admirable constitution had been established, their laws framed, their magistrates elected, and all the various concerns of the nation finally adjusted. The contemplation of the natural scenery too by which they were surrounded, was calculated to revive in their remembrance the characters and events of other days; while, at the same time, they had an opportunity afforded them of conversing together about the occurrences of the preceding winter, and of confirming those habits of friendship and intimacy which had been formed among them. In a word, the period of concourse at *Thingvalla* formed a grand annual festival; and, when it is considered that the sober dispositions of the Icelanders, and the remoteness of the place where they met, proved effectually preventive of the riot and licentiousness which too frequently characterize public meetings in other countries of Europe, it is impossible not to feel in-

\* See p. 33.

dignant at that policy which abolished an institution of such high antiquity, and which furnished so innocent a source of gratification to every uncontaminated Icelandic mind.

How different the scene presented in the streets of *Reykjavik*! There being no inns for their accommodation, and their tents being at some distance, you see the few natives who frequent the place, lounging about the corners of the houses, or visiting one or another of the factors, by whom they are regarded with disdain; and the only attention they receive is for the sake of the gain expected to accrue from their transactions as customers. They feel themselves to be strangers, and dejection and disappointment are marked in every countenance. I never recollect to have mentioned this subject to an Icelander who did not keenly reprobate the innovation; and, their sorrow on account of it, is only equalled by the indignation produced by the reflection that the change was effected by one of their own countrymen.

One of the principal objects of my visit to Iceland, and of the different journies which I undertook through the several districts, was to impress the minds of the natives with a sense of the importance of forming a Bible Society for their own island; the object of which should be to provide its population with a constant supply of the Holy Scriptures in their vernacular language. It gave me pleasure to find that the proposal met with the cordial approbation of all to whom I communicated it, and they were of

opinion that the period of traffic would be the most convenient time for carrying my purpose into effect. I therefore brought the matter formally before the bishop on my return to *Reykjavik*, when I received the assurances of his patronage; and the rest of the public authorities, at the same time, promised their countenance and support.

Accordingly, on the 10th of July, at the annual meeting of the Diocesan Synod, which was held in the Cathedral, a sermon was preached on the subject by the Reverend A. Helgason, in which he forcibly set forth the importance and utility of Bible Societies, expatiated with much feeling on the vast operations of the British and Foreign Bible Society in particular, and the plenitude of success with which these operations had been crowned; gave a brief view of its exertions in behalf of Iceland; and concluded by exhorting the Synod to co-operate in this common and glorious cause, and embrace the present opportunity of founding a similar institution for the island of Iceland.

After service, the Synod proceeded to the discussion of their usual business, and, in the afternoon, adjourned to the Episcopal Hall, when the Archdeacon, and the Dean of *Odde*, were deputed to call at my lodging, and conduct me to the meeting. It was cause of universal regret that the Bishop was not able to be present, having been taken ill the preceding evening. Besides the assistance of the Archdeacon, and the Deans of *Odde*, *Hruna*, and *Reykhollt*, the meeting

was favoured with that of the acting governor, Justiciary Einarson, and Mr. Thorsteinson, member of the Court of Exchequer in Copenhagen. The nature and object of Bible Societies having been distinctly stated, and the promise of pecuniary aid from the British and Foreign Bible Society having been given to the meeting, it was unanimously resolved that a society should be formed; but, on deliberation, it appeared most eligible, in consideration of the absence of many of the natives, whose approbation and support were considered to be absolutely necessary to the success of the plan, that the meeting should only lay the foundation of the Society, and postpone its full organization till next meeting of Synod; and that an invitation to all the inhabitants of Iceland, to come forward in aid of the institution, should be drawn up, and signed by the principal civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and circulated, before the winter set in, throughout the island. The following is the translation of a copy of the minutes taken on the occasion:

“ On the 10th of July 1815, a meeting was held at *Reykjavik* by the undersigned, for the purpose of establishing a Bible Society for this island, on the same principles with similar institutions in different parts of the world: when it was resolved, that such a Society be formed, having for its grand object to provide against any future want of Bibles in the vernacular language, and to promote their circulation throughout the



country, according as circumstances may require. But, owing to the absence of several of the principal persons on the island, it was judged necessary to postpone the establishment of the laws of the society till the 9th of July 1816; and the members then associated, authorised the Right Reverend G. Vidalin, the very Reverend the Archdeacon M. Magnusson, the Reverend Arna Helgason, rector of the Cathedral, Isl. Einarson, Justiciary and Assessor of the High Court, B. Thorarinson, Assessor of the High Court, and S. Thorgrimson, Royal Treasurer, to invite the leading people on the island to a meeting on the above mentioned day, for the purpose of fixing the constitution of the society, and determining other matters connected with its operations.

“ In the meantime, the members of the Society then present, pledged themselves to contribute annually to the funds of the Society as follows :

	Rix-Bank Dollars.	
Geir Vidalin, Bishop of Iceland, <i>Reykiavik</i> ,	20	Silver Value.
M. Magnusson, Archdeacon, <i>Gardè</i> ,	6	_____
A. Helgason, Rector of the Cathedral,	3	_____
Isl. Einarson, Justiciary, <i>Brecka</i> ,	5	_____
S. Thorgrimson, Treasurer, <i>Reykiavik</i> ,	10	_____
Steingrimur Jonson, Dean, <i>Oddè</i> ,	4	_____
T. Jonson, Dean, <i>Hruna</i> ,	4	Nom. Value.
Eggert, Dean, <i>Reykhollt</i> ,	3	Silver Value.
B. Thorarinson, Assessor,	3	_____
Jon Jonson, Lector, <i>Lambhus</i> ,	4	_____
B. Sivertson, Rector of <i>Hollt</i> ,	2	_____

	Rix-Bank Dollars.	
J. Jonson, Rector of <i>Klaustrholum</i>	-	3 Nom. Value.
Gestr Thorlakson, Rector of <i>Moum</i>	-	1 _____
Helgi Biarnason, Rector of <i>Meynavötn</i> ,	-	2 _____
Ingemundr Gunnarson, Rector of <i>Kaldadaness</i>	3	_____
F. Thorarinson, Rector of <i>Breidabolstad</i> ,	-	2 Silver Value.
H. Jonson, Rector of <i>Gardè on Akkranness</i> ,	2	_____
Magnus Arnason, Rector of <i>Thingeyra Cloister</i> ,	2	_____
Guttormr Paulson, Rector of <i>Holmum</i>	-	3 _____

“The Royal Treasurer, Mr. Thorgrimson, was chosen by the meeting to receive these sums, (to be paid before the term of Michaelmas next,) and to keep the same till required by the Society.”

Thus, in the good providence of God, the preliminary steps were taken for the establishment of an institution, which, by his blessing, may be instrumental in perpetuating the treasures of Revelation to numerous Icelandic generations yet unborn. The young tree is planted, indeed, in rather an unpromising soil, and must be exposed to the vicissitudes of an unstable and refractory climate: yet fostered by the care, and watered with the dews of Heaven, it will grow and prosper, till its branches extend to every corner of the island, that all the inhabitants may stretch forth their hand, and take of its fruit, and eat, and live for ever! Much, however, will depend upon the liberality and assistance of similar, but more affluent institutions; and next to the friendly aid of the Danish Bible Society, with which, by various civil ties, the members of the Icelandic establishment must

necessarily consider themselves more closely connected, their expectations will be turned to the British and Foreign Bible Society, whose bounty the inhabitants of Iceland have already reaped in so eminent a degree.

On information being received by the Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society, of the formation of the Bible Society in Iceland, the sum of £.300 Sterling was voted by that body, to aid the funds of this infant institution; and the following is a letter of thanks from its Secretary, addressed to the Committee of the Parent Society in London:—

“ REYKIAVIK, *March 2, 1817.*

“ We gratefully adore the kind Providence of God, who, in withholding from us some portion of earthly good, has yet, with a bountiful hand, dispensed to us his blessings. Among these we acknowledge, as by far the most excellent, the gift of his divine religion, which enables us, at once, to supply the want of temporal comforts, and to provide for our eternal welfare. And you, our kind helpers, who, by your example and benefactions, have caused the streams of life to flow among us, not only more freely than heretofore, but with a perpetual current, we regard, on this account, as the delegates of Divine Providence, and shall highly esteem you as long as the Divine Word is in honour among us; as long as the eternal welfare of our souls is dear to us.

“ You have sent to us the treasures of our divine religion. The Rev. Ebenezer Henderson, who came among us, authorised by you, has largely distributed these excellent gifts of your bounty. He has, moreover, induced us to consult our own welfare more diligently than in time past in this important respect, by establishing a Bible Society in our own island.

“ On our part, we gladly obeyed the suggestion, fearing only that our circumstances may not prove equal to this pious undertaking; but here again you come to our aid, tendering, in a letter to our President, Bishop Vidalin, the large sum of £.300, for the supply of our spiritual need. Words are wanting to express our gratitude for this act of munificence, whether we consider the greatness of the gift, the pious intention which dictated it, or the end which it is destined to serve.

“ Indeed we are unable to thank you as we ought; and can only entreat the Bounteous Giver of all Good to bestow upon you a recompense worthy of your piety. May he graciously prosper your excellent intentions, and so aid us in our design, that you may never have cause to regret your liberality! May the knowledge and obedience of his divine religion daily increase, and be confirmed among us, by which we may approve ourselves more and more to you our benefactors! This prayer, the pious effusion of our hearts, will be heard, we trust, on high!

“ It is due to you, to whose aid and example

we are indebted for the whole, that we inform you of what has hitherto been done among us ; and, in the first place, (as we are persuaded nothing will rejoice your hearts more than the success of your own labours,) we may inform you, that we have framed our rules, and appointed officers for the management of our business, on the model of your august Society. We have elected for President, our Bishop, the Right Rev. Geir Vidalin ; for Vice-President, Isl. Einarson, Counsellor of Justice ; our Treasurer is S. Thorgrimson, Receiver-General of the island ; and our Secretary, Pastor A. Helgason. The chief person in each district, assisted by the clergy under him, has the care of our affairs within his province.

“ We have given a general invitation, by circular letters, to all the inhabitants of our island to join in this momentous work ; and we heartily rejoice, and are sure you will rejoice with us, in the good disposition which is every where manifested ; insomuch, that not only poor fathers of families, but even male and female servants come forward with their little contributions. We cannot as yet say what is the amount subscribed ; the extent of our island, the almost impassable state of the roads, and, above all, the inclemency of the climate, in the winter season, obstructing the means of conveyance. We trust, however, through Divine assistance, that even among us, there will appear, in due season, some fruit of your labours ; that even in this world,

you will be blessed with this recompence, in part of your piety, while the fulness of reward is reserved for you in eternal life.

“ Farewell our benefactors, we pray most fervently to Almighty God to bless you.”

“ Subscribed by order of the Bible Society in Iceland, by

“ A. HELGASON.”

A letter was at the same time received from the Right Reverend President, which, as it contains his own individual testimony to the utility of the institution, I shall insert at this place :

“ *Reykjavik, Sept. 4, 1817.*

“ I have received, most worthy Sir, with the greatest joy, the letter you have sent me, together with a Report, which gives an account of the flourishing state, and wonderful progress of your Bible Society ; for which I most earnestly request you to return, in my name, the fullest thanks to that excellent institution.

“ The most high and gracious God grant that it may continue daily to bring forth abundant and delightful fruits, which are none other than the knowledge of the divine word, and of the duties it enjoins us, as well as the advancement of the happiness of the human race, which depends thereon.

“ The present state of our Bible Society, which is formed after the model of yours, has been lately communicated to you, in a letter from

the Secretary, the Rev. Mr. Helgason, to which I hesitate not to refer you.

“ Farewell ye benefactors of the human race, on whom our heavenly Father will confer, in his own time, a reward commensurate with your exertions.

“ Farewell also, most worthy Sir ; and favour our Society, which delights to rank itself among your offspring, with the continuance of your condescending regard and patronage.

(Signed)      GEIR VIDALIN,

“ *President of the Bible Society in Iceland.*”

As the inhabitants of Iceland are not in any immediate want of a new edition of the Holy Scriptures, though, from the constant use they are making of the copies which they have recently received, there is every reason to believe it will not be long ere it will be called for, the attention of the Committee of the Icelandic Bible Society is, in the first instance, directed to a proper revisal of their present translation, which is universally allowed to labour under very considerable imperfections. The Bishop has already prepared some of the Gospels ; the revision of the Acts has been undertaken by Justiciary Einarson ; and several of the Epistles are in a state of forwardness by Steingrim Jonson, Guttorm Paulson, and other individuals distinguished for a critical knowledge of the original.

It must certainly prove in a high degree gratifying to all the friends of the Bible Society to learn, that to no quarter of the globe could their exertions have been directed with a greater probability of success than to Iceland, as the inhabitants of that remote island were evidently prepared by the Spirit of God for the reception of his blessed word; and to no instance within the vast compass of the Society's operations can the observation of the Apostle with more justice be applied: "The administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God, while, by the experiment of this ministration, they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." 2 Cor. ix. 12—15.

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The only other incident worthy of notice, as happening about this time, is the taking of the salmon in the *Hellará*, or Salmon River, a few miles to the east of *Reykjavik*. Having been apprised that the quantity of salmon caught at this place is sometimes immense, I accompanied my friend Mr. Hodgson to the spot. As we rode along, we overtook numbers of Danes and



Icelanders of both sexes, and many of them accompanied by their children, all repairing to the river; on our arrival at which, we found a great concourse assembled to witness the sport, or assist in taking the fish. The *Hellará*, as its name imports, is very cavernous: a stream of lava having been poured down the gulley through which it runs; and in these caverns the salmon find admirable strongholds in which to secure themselves against their pursuers. Before the proper season they are only partially caught by means of large wooden boxes placed in front of the small water-falls; but, on this occasion, one of the branches of the river, which divides into two arms a little above this spot, is dammed up, and the whole quantity of water is diverted into the other channel some hours before the catch begins. The other branch, which contains the salmon, is then drained as much as possible, by some stones being taken out of the barrier by which it had been dammed up.

On a signal being given by the proprietor, a number of men rushed into the water that remained, with a large net, and coming directly down upon the salmon, caught a great quantity at the first draught. This operation was repeated till all the salmon were taken. The whole number taken in the course of five hours amounted to upwards of nineteen hundred. Sometimes nearly three thousand are taken in this way in a single forenoon. The greater number of those caught

on this occasion were small, but some of them weighed twenty-five pounds. In the river *Hvitá*, in *Borgarfjord*, salmon are sometimes taken which weigh forty pounds. That river, and many others in Iceland, which abound in this excellent fish, are divided among the neighbouring peasants; but the *Hellará* belongs to his Danish Majesty, and is at present rented by Mr. Scheele, one of the Danish residents in *Reykjavik*.

## CHAP. XV.

*Almannagiá—Armannsfell—Skjaldbreid Volcano—Kaldidal—Husafell—Sagacity of the Mouse—Gilsbacka—The remarkable Cavern of Surtshellir described—Arnarvatn—Desert—Bewildered in a Fog—Hot Springs of Hveravellir described—Blöndudal—The Rustic Astronomer—Factory of Skagastrand.*

IT being still necessary for me to visit some of the clergy, and others in the north of Iceland, I set out once more from *Reykjavik*, on Tuesday the 18th of July, in company with Messrs. Thomson and Brorson, two gentlemen from *Holstein*, who intended to explore some remarkable spots in the interior. The first day's journey lay across the same lonely tract I passed last year, till we arrived at the western shore of the *Thingvallavatn*, when we turned into the *Almannagiá*, and pitched our tents in the middle of the fissure, a little to the north of the site of the booth in which Snorro Goda lived during his stay at the Althing. It lies on the north side of the small opening that

leads out of the fissure, and commands a fine view of the fissure itself, the river *Öxará*, the *Lögberg*, and the church and parsonage of *Thingvalla*.

Next morning we left *Thingvalla*, from which we had been richly supplied with trout and cream, and proceeded in a northerly direction across the lava, which everywhere exhibited tremendous parallel rents, and prevented us from advancing with that celerity we could have wished. At the termination of the *Almannagiá*, we arrived at the base of *Armannsfell*, a huge mountain of tuffa, which has also been rent from its foundations at the period of the sinking of the valley, and consists for the most part of the wildest precipices, which overhang the road in rather an alarming manner. Having skirted for some time the immense stream of lava that has been poured down in this direction from Mount *Skialldbreid*, we came to the beautiful plain of *Hofmannafiot*, which is covered with rich grass, and where the original occupiers of the tract are said to have held their feats of athletic prowess amid hundreds of spectators.

We had now to climb a very steep and narrow pass, having a conical mountain of small basaltic lava on our right, and several irregular tuffa hills on the left; and after descending into an extensive sandy plain, in which lay a large lake of white water, we came to the western margin of the lava, on the opposite side of which rose the volcano *Skialldbreid*, or "Broad Shield," so called

from its striking resemblance to that ancient weapon of defence. It may be about 3000 feet of perpendicular height, yet rises with so gradual an ascent, that, were it not for its lavas, a carriage might proceed up its surface with the utmost ease. Its base describes a circle of at least thirty miles. The crater, at its summit, is distinctly visible; and all around its sides, and across the surrounding plains, nothing is visible but the lava which it has poured forth in every direction.

Passing to the west of the volcano, we arrived about three in the afternoon at a small grassy spot, where we were in expectation of getting something for our horses, but the caravans that had recently passed this way had eaten it completely bare: however, as we had a long stony desert before us, it was necessary to unload the horses for a few hours at this place. At six o'clock we recommenced our journey, pursuing the road, called *Kaldidals-vegur*, which at first we found pretty good, owing to a little soil that has gathered in the course of time among the ancient lavas, but it soon began to deteriorate, and at last got so stony that we were obliged to walk at a slow pace. The *Kaldidal* itself we found perfectly to answer to its name.\* On every hand we were surrounded by mountains of perpetual snow and ice; the road lay at times across immense heaps of snow, and not a patch of ve-

\* The Cold Dale.

getation was perceptible in any direction. Had it not been for the fineness of the weather, the ride must have been absolutely intolerable.

Advancing to the right of the ancient volcano, but now an ice-mountain, called *Ok*, we came in contact with the *Geitland's Yökul*, or the southwest division of the long chain of snow and ice mountains described in the former part of the journal, when we had an opportunity of admiring some of the beautiful glaciers which flow down from its upper regions into the subjacent plains. Near its termination, the *Yökul* embraces the base of a whitish mountain, resembling the mountain of *Drâpuhlid*, and most probably of the same formation. About three o'clock in the morning we arrived at the banks of the *Geitlandsá*, whose waters are of a whitish muddy colour, and give the name to the noble *Hvitá*, which flows with such majesty through the syssel of *Borgarfjord*. After skirting its southern margin for the space of an hour, during which time we crossed an ancient stream of lava, partially covered with birch, we came to a good-looking farm, called *Husafell*, beside which we pitched our tents, and instantly retired to rest. The distance from *Thingvalla* to this place is upwards of forty miles.

There is nothing about *Husafell* deserving of notice except its mouse, the history of which has rendered it more famous than other parts of the island where the same zoological phenomenon has presented itself. This animal, which is supposed by *Olafsen* and *Povelsen* to be a variation

of the wood, or economical mouse, displays a surprising degree of sagacity, both in conveying home its provisions, and the manner in which it stocks them in the magazine appropriated for that purpose. In a country, says Mr. Pennant, \* where berries are but thinly dispersed, these little animals are obliged to cross rivers to make their distant forages. In their return with the booty to their magazines, they are obliged to re-pass the stream ; of which Mr. Olafsen (Olafsen and Povelsen) gives the following account : “ The party, which consists of from six to ten, select a flat piece of dried cow-dung, on which they place the berries on a heap in the middle ; then, by their united force, bring it to the water’s edge, and, after launching it, embark, and place themselves round the heap, with their heads joined over it, and their backs to the water, their tails pendent in the stream, serving the purpose of rudders.” Mr. Hooker † ridicules the idea of any such process, and tells us, that every sensible Icelander laughs at the account as fabulous ; but the individuals he alludes to must have been possessed of an equal degree of incredulity with himself ; and every considerate naturalist will rather be disposed, with our celebrated zoologist, ‡ to reason analogically from the well-known sagacity of the beaver and squirrel, than deny the probability of the case.

\* Introd. to Arctic Zoology, p. lxx.

† Tour in Iceland.

‡ Ibid.

Having been apprised of the doubts that were entertained on this subject, before setting out on my second excursion, I made a point of inquiring at different individuals as to the reality of the account, and I am happy in being able to say, that it is now established as an important fact in natural history, by the testimony of two eye-witnesses of unquestionable veracity, the clergyman of *Briámslæk*, and Madame Benedictson of *Stickesholm*; both of whom assured me that they had seen the expedition performed repeatedly. Madame B. in particular, recollected having spent a whole afternoon, in her younger days, at the margin of a small lake on which these skilful navigators had embarked, and amused herself and her companions by driving them away from the sides of the lake as they approached them. I was also informed that they make use of dried mushrooms as sacks, in which they convey their provisions to the river, and thence to their homes. Nor is the structure of their nests less remarkable. From the surface of the ground a long passage runs into the earth, similar to that of the Icelandic houses, and terminates in a large and deep hole, intended to receive any water that may find its way through the passage, and serving at the same time as a place for their dung. About two-thirds of the passage in, two diagonal roads lead to their sleeping apartment and the magazine, which they always contrive to keep free from wet.



About three o'clock in the afternoon of the 20th, we again struck our tents; but previous to our setting off, we stepped up to the farm, in order to pay for the milk we had drunk, when we received the following pious and uncommon answer from the mistress: "No, I will not take any thing for it; for we receive it from God for nothing."

Allowing our baggage to proceed into the desert, we struck off in a westerly direction to *Gilsbacka*, where I had some business to transact with the clergyman, Sira Hiortr Jonson. The lava in front of *Husafell* we found so rugged and uneven, that it was with the utmost difficulty we could get our horses across it; but what rendered it peculiarly dangerous was, that the rents and chasms were, for the most part, covered with willows, the branches of which had grown together, so as to hide the fissures from our view, though many of them were only a few inches from the track. After crossing the *Geitlandsá* and *Nordlingafliot*, a little above their confluence, when the joint stream assumes the name of the *Hvitá*, we encountered another stream of lava, called, from its colour, the Grey Lava, (*Grá Hraun*,) which we found, if possible, still more cavernous and distorted. On our arrival at *Gilsbacka*, we were kindly received by Mr. Jonson and his wife, and provided with the usual refreshments. The church, houses, and farm are in good order, and form altogether a very agreeable place of residence.

We again left *Gilsbacka* a little before midnight, accompanied by the clergyman, and pursued our course in an easterly direction, occasionally skirting the Grey Lava, and crossing its projecting arms; till, passing the two last farms, we recrossed the *Nordlingafliot*, and entered the extensive desert known by the name of *Arnarvatnsheidi*. About two o'clock we overtook our men, at a small green spot called *Hellisfitiar*, just as they were about to unload the horses, and proceeded, without delay, to pitch our tents, which, with much difficulty, we effected on a dome of lava!

Having slept a few hours at this place, we set out on foot to explore the remarkable cavern of *Surtshellir*, which lay at the distance of a quarter of a mile due east from the site of our tents. The whole tract presented nothing to the view but the most irregular lava imaginable, now lying in compact and level masses, and now distorted and broken in a thousand pieces. The fiery torrent has evidently originated in *Bald Yökul*, and after flowing past the long projecting point of *Eiriksgnypa*, it has spread to the extent of more than four miles, deranged the course of the *Nordlingafliot*, filled every corner of the valley, and risen to a considerable height on the sides of the adjoining mountains.

A small path made by those whose curiosity prompts them to visit the cavern, directed us to the spot, where we found a *varde*, or heap of stones, on an elevated part of the lava, serving

the purpose of a mark. On our arrival at this place, we descended into a large chasm, which has been formed by the falling in of the crust of lava; and direct before us, towards the south, yawned the gloomy abode of darkness, measuring about 40 feet in height, by 50 in breadth; which dimensions it retains for more than two-thirds of its length, which has been ascertained by ad-measurement to be 5034 feet. All round the entrance were large heaps of stones which have fallen down from the roof; scrambling over which we came to a large heap of congealed snow, and descended to the margin of a long pool of water, the bottom of which consisted of ice; but as the water was excessively cold, and would have taken us past the middle, we returned in the hopes of being able to discover a more convenient aperture. We had only proceeded a short way across the lava, when we came to another vast chasm, formed in like manner by the falling in of the roof; but as the walls were nearly 30 feet of perpendicular height, and we had no ropes with us, we saw no possibility of descending, and therefore advanced still further in search of a third. After spending an hour in fruitless pursuit, we retraced our steps to the second opening, when one of our party, more adventurous than the rest, succeeded in getting down, and was followed by all of us, except the clergyman, who being rather corpulent, durst not make the attempt. However, as he was equally desirous of seeing the curiosities of the

cavern, he returned to the first aperture, and resolved to ford the deep water, notwithstanding his being the shortest of any of us. Solicitous, if possible, to save him this trouble, we entered that part of the cave from the inner end, and fortunately discovered a crust of lava running longitudinally along the right-hand side, which was just broad enough for our friend to walk upon, while he suspended himself in a great measure, by the knobby and stalactitic lavas above.

One of our servants, who had followed us to the spot, could not on any account be prevailed on to accompany us into the cavern. His mind was evidently tinctured with the same superstition to which the cavern owes its name. It formed one article of the ancient Scandinavian creed, that at the close of the present system of things, *Surtur*, the black prince of the regions of fire, should proceed from the south, and set the world on flames ; \* and the original inhabitants of Iceland having fallen in with this cavern, and contemplated the awful marks of conflagration with which it is surrounded, have conceived the idea that a more proper abode could not be assigned to the genius of fire.

We now lighted our torches, and entered the cavern, which was also filled, at this place, to a considerable height with snow ; beyond

\* See the *Völuspâ* and the *Dæmisaga*, concerning *Ragnaröckr* in Snorro's *Edda*.

which we fell in with a rugged tract of large angular pieces of lava that had fallen from the vault, so that we were in constant danger of cutting ourselves, or falling into the holes of water that lay between them. Nor were we without apprehensions lest fresh masses should have dislodged themselves from the roof, and crushed us to atoms.

The darkness here became so great, that with all the light afforded us by two large torches, we were still prevented from surveying so distinctly as we could have wished, the beautiful black volcanic stalactites with which the high and spacious vault was hung, or the sides of the cave, run into vitrified horizontal stripes, that appear to have been formed by the flowing of the stream of melted stones, while its exterior parts have been cooled by their exposure to the atmosphere. After contemplating these curious productions of nature, and just as we were on the point of prosecuting our subterraneous journey, we discovered a large excavation situated at some height on our right, which, with some difficulty we reached, and entered; but, after advancing about 80 feet, the roof got so low that we could no longer walk with any degree of ease, so that we returned, and entering a still smaller subdivision, arrived again by an easy route at the main cavern.

Almost exactly facing us, on the opposite side, we descried the entrance to two other subterraneous passages of an immense size, which

we instantly recognized as the asylum to which numerous banditti resorted in former times, and of which mention is made in the ancient historical monuments of the island.\* Descending into the cavern, we began to scale the rampart, which is about ten feet of perpendicular height from the bottom of the cave, and succeeded in entering the excavation behind it; but we had not proceeded many steps when we were arrested by a long stone wall, about three feet high, visibly made by the hand of man. It had a small door or entrance about the middle, through which we passed, after having surveyed a large circular heap of decayed bones, mostly of sheep and oxen, but also some of horses, which the robbers had killed for their subsistence. Within the inclosure was a room or apartment, about thirty feet in length, by fifteen in breadth, the floor of which was strewed with the finest volcanic sand, and is supposed to have supplied the place of beds. From this we penetrated about forty yards; but finding that our farther progress must have been purchased by wading in cold water past the knees, we returned to the entrance. The whole length of this cave is about three hundred feet; its height at the entrance, and a considerable way in, is about eighteen feet; and its breadth twenty-four. The vault is hung with still more beautiful stalactites than that of the main cavern, and as they are

\* See Sturlunga, book v, chap. 46.

more strongly vitrified, they reflect the light in a very splendid manner.

Having seen all that appeared worthy of observation here, we again descended from the rampart, and pursued our course into the profound chasm which still opened in darkness before us. We were again incommoded by heaps of stones, many of which appeared to be of recent deposition; but after having surmounted this difficulty, a still more formidable obstacle presented itself; a long tract of water, through which it was absolutely necessary for us to wade, if we would gain the inner end of the cave. It took us up to the knees, and at first seemed rather alarming, as we apprehended deep holes, into which we might precipitate ourselves ere we were aware; but we soon found that the bottom was perfectly sound, consisting of smooth ice of amazing thickness, over which we advanced with uncommon velocity. The only thing of a disagreeable nature was the coldness of the water. Towards the termination of the ice, a large fragment of lava now and then obstructed our passage, and obliged us to seek an oblique road; and in the course of a quarter of an hour from our leaving the rampart, we arrived at a third opening in the roof, the light admitted through which we could discover at a great distance. The cave opens at this aperture into two divisions, which are separated from each other by a narrow partition of lava; and at the opposite end of the aperture, which is nearly half full of

stones, two large holes present themselves; but that to the left does not run farther than twenty feet, whereas the other is the continuation of the grand cavern. We had no sooner left the light of day than we came to another pool of water, through which we had to wade, but found it less deep than the two former ones, taking us only mid-leg. Exchanging this for a rough stony tract, which gave place to a fine floor of even lava, and after we had walked a long way without meeting any interruption, we could once more discover a small glimmering of light descending through the last window or aperture in the roof of the cave. This opening we found much smaller than any of the preceding; and, what afforded us no small joy, was the discovery that the surface of the ground was attainable without the least difficulty by its northern side, as by this means we might save ourselves the trouble of returning by the mouth of the cave.

We now entered the aperture at the opposite end, and almost instantaneously found ourselves enveloped in thicker darkness than ever, but met with neither water nor stones. The floor was covered with a thick coating of ice, and dipped so rapidly, that, finding it impossible to keep our feet, we sat down, and slid forward by our own weight. On holding the torches close to the ice, we could discover its thickness to seven or eight feet, clear as crystal. It was not long till we reached a spot, the grandeur of



which amply rewarded all our toil; and would have done so, though we had travelled an hundred times the distance to see it. The roof and sides of the cave were decorated with the most superb icicles, crystallized in every possible form, many of which rivalled in minuteness the finest zeolites; while, from the icy floor, rose pillars of the same substance, assuming all the curious and phantastic shapes imaginable, mocking the proudest specimens of art, and counterfeiting many well-known objects of animated nature. Many of them were upwards of four feet high, generally sharpened at the extremity, and about two feet in thickness. A more brilliant scene perhaps never presented itself to the human eye, nor was it easy for us to divest ourselves of the idea that we actually beheld one of the fairy scenes depicted in eastern fable. The light of the torches rendered it peculiarly enchanting.

Quitting this exquisite spot, we passed along the side of a double layer of ice, which was quite smooth; but being exceedingly sharp at the edge, we were frequently in danger of cutting ourselves upon it. We next encountered a miry part of the cavern, which was more solid, however, than we at first expected; and as it was even, and gradually sloped downwards, we advanced with considerable speed, till, all at once, we discovered the pyramid of lava mentioned by Olafsen and Povelsen, \* on which we still found

\* Reise igiennem Island. p. 251.

one of the two silver coins deposited here by these gentlemen in the year 1753. As it was the Danish ten skilling piece that was amissing, and not the half-crown, it was clear it had not been stolen, but had fallen down among the stones of which the pyramid is composed. On the upper side of the half crown, which we found lying on the surface of a flat piece of lava, serving as a pedestal for the top-stone of the pyramid, was a signature in red wax, representing two dogs attacking a hedge-hog, with the superscription *INDARNO*, in capital letters. The solitary letter at the foot was somewhat effaced, so that we could not discern whether it was a *B* or an *E*, but, in either case, it was the initial of one of the Christian names of the travellers above mentioned. The impressions in wax on the stone itself were so defaced as to be illegible. Having impressed our signatures in like manner with wax on two Danish rixorts, and two six-skilling-pieces, we deposited them beside the half-crown, and repaired such parts of the monument as had fallen down. At the foot of the pyramid lay still part of the piece of birch wood mentioned by Olafsen and Povelsen. It was quite humid, yet did not appear to have undergone any material alteration since their time, for it still required a little pressure to crumble it to dust.

A considerable way without the pyramid the cavern begins to contract; and after walking about 400 feet further, we came to the inner

end, where the marks of two subdivisions appeared, but they were entirely filled up with large pieces of lava, part of which has fallen from the roof, and the rest seems to be the lava in its original bed, but cracked and disjointed by its exposure to the atmosphere.

As we had now fully gratified our curiosity, we returned to the last aperture in the vault, through which we again reached the surface of the earth, after having spent upwards of four hours under ground ; but found ourselves almost suffocated with heat, on so sudden a transition from the cold and dark cavern to open day, where the rays of the sun were very strongly reflected from the vitrified lava, and volcanic sand around us. It was almost the same as if we had suddenly exchanged a Greenland winter for an African summer. On looking across the lava, in the direction of the cave, it was evident, that it stretched to the base of an adjoining mountain, called *Struttur*, where the lava, having been prevented from advancing, has been dammed up and cooled, while the fresh currents from the volcano have pursued their course down the valley to the river *Hvitâ*.

On the morning of the 22d, we pursued our journey into the desert. The road lay at first across the western border of the stream of lava ; leaving which, we entered an extensive tract of the same substance, the deposition of which is in all probability coeval with the island itself ; and, as the ground continued gradually to ascend,

and the atmosphere was perfectly clear, we ultimately obtained a very commanding prospect of the western parts of Iceland. One of the principal inconveniences to which travellers are exposed in passing through the deserts is the want of water. As the day was hot, our bottles soon got exhausted; and we were obliged to travel several hours before we again fell in with a stream. About two o'clock we reached the large lake *Arnarvatn*, from which the desert derives its name. It branches out into a great many arms, which extend in every direction, so that there is no part of the surrounding country from which the whole lake may be seen at one view. Near its eastern extremity we were shewn a small house, which is annually repaired by those who come hither from the south country to fish on the lake, and is said to have been originally built by the famous champion *Grettir*, on which account it still bears the name of *Grettis-skauli*.

At the termination of the desert of *Arnarvatnsheidi*, we came to the "Twelve Wards," or pillars, where the huge waste, known by the name of *Stori Sandur*, begins, which is supposed to be the highest mountain-road of any on the island. According to an observation made with the barometer in 1792, it was found to be about 2212 feet above the level of the sea.\* As it was the object of my companions, in pursuing this route,

\* Mr. Paulsen's MS. ut sup. § 17.

to visit the remarkable hot springs of *Hveravellir*, which, according to the maps, lay only a little to the right, I resolved to proceed with them in that direction. Deceived partly by the maps, and partly by what we conceived to be columns of steam, we struck off from the road, and entered a region that had in all probability never been trod before by the foot of man. We had not advanced far, when we almost began to repent of our having taken this route, as nothing appeared, as far as the eye could reach, but a desert of sand and stones, or Alpine mountains of ever-during snow. We literally entered "a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought, and of the shadow of death; a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt." Jer. ii. 6.

Our men, who had all along been averse to the expedition, now began to be loud in their complaints, and depicted to us, in very pathetic language, the inevitable starvation of our horses, and the risk we should run of losing our lives by the hands of robbers, with whom they apprehended some part of this remote desert might be infested. Foreigners in general ridicule the idea of there being any people of this description in the interior, and my own favourable ideas of the character of the Icelanders prevented me from entertaining any fears on the subject; but the Chief-Justice has since told me, he certainly would not have ventured to travel through many parts that I did without pistols; and the merchants have sometimes traded with people, who, both from

their appearance, and the nature of their traffic, excited strong suspicions of their being inhabitants of the desert.

About seven o'clock in the evening, we descried some beautiful green plains at the base of the ice mountains. However, the discovery created as much alarm in the minds of our servants as it afforded joy to us, for they were now sure that we would fall in with robbers, and it was not long ere they pointed out to us a number of horses feeding close to the Yökul, which at first rather shook our confidence, and inclined us to listen with some degree of attention to the proposed method of defence; but a single glance through a spy-glass converted the horses into large stones, that had been thrown down from some neighbouring volcano; and we hastened forward to the plains, to which we gave the name of *Yökuls-vellir*, and encamped in front of a small eminence, richly covered with willows, angelica, and a great variety of other botanical productions, on which our horses feasted with great avidity.

The following morning we renewed our lonesome journey, and proceeded in nearly an easterly direction towards the northern termination of the Yökul: but, after ascending a very hilly tract, and just as we approached the base of the ice, we were forced, by some deep, but dry, channels, to strike off to the left, when we almost instantly found ourselves surrounded by a number of small hills, the conical form of which bespoke their volcanic origin, though they appear-

ed to be much older than a stream of lava which runs down from the *Yökul* on the right, but soon stops, presenting, at its termination, a nearly perpendicular wall of more than forty feet in height. We had scarcely begun to make our observations on the geologic phenomena around us, when, to our no small concern, we got enveloped in mist, which closed thicker and thicker on every side, till at last we could scarcely see the last horse in our train. We now depended on the compass, but, on taking it out of our luggage-chest, we were astonished to find it refuse to lend us any assistance. It kept shaking and dipping towards the face, and appeared to be more strongly attracted downwards than to any of the points; so great must have been the predominance of iron matter among the volcanic substances in the vicinity. We had no alternative left, but to follow, as well as we could, the direction we had originally pursued, and passed over immense masses of ice, in which we discovered numerous chasms of invisible depth.

After winding round the base of several hills that were partially covered with snow, and traversing wide gulleys whose surface was covered with comminuted lava, we fell in with a very ancient and extensive torrent of lava that appeared to have its origin in some part of the northern extremity of the *Yökul*. Proceeding up a gulley between the lava, and a snow-mountain to our right, we entertained some hopes of extricating ourselves by this route; but being suddenly fa-

voured with a temporary dispersion of the mist, we had the mortification to find that all further progress was obstructed by an immense Alpine barrier which presented itself directly before us. Retracing our steps, we at last resolved to cross the lava, which we found in a state of great decomposition, and, after scrambling over it for some hours, without any further prospect of success, it appeared most advisable to follow its course, as by this means we might be conducted again into the low country. During our progress we observed several curious volcanic chimnies, but the critical nature of our situation had damped all desire of examining them. Following the rapid descent of the lava, we had the inexpressible satisfaction, about seven o'clock in the evening, of seeing the mist disperse, and an almost unbounded view presented itself across the desert plains in the interior. We now made all haste to leave these inhospitable mountain regions; and, about ten o'clock, we encamped on the banks of a small river, the name of which (*Thegiandisá*, the Quiet River,) called to my recollection the words of the Psalmist: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside *the still waters.*" Psalm xxiii. 2.

On the 24th we proceeded along the base of the low mountains on the east side of *Bald Yökul*, and arrived about noon at *Hveravellir*, or "the Plains of the Hot Springs," one of the most interesting spots in Iceland. They are si-



tuated at the northern termination of the extensive tract of lava called the *Kjal-hraun*, about half way between the snow-mountains, and the two insulated mountains of *Dufufell* and *Grufufell*. On approaching the place, it was not without sensations of awe that we beheld the columns of smoke that were issuing from almost innumerable apertures in the surface of the ground, and heard the thundering noise attending its escape. Pitching our tents in a small but fertile gulley close to the principal springs, we devoted the remainder of the day to the contemplation of the remarkable phenomena around us.

The tract, which slopes rapidly towards the east, has been originally a morass, but by the incessant accumulation of depositions from the springs, its surface has gradually been petrified ; yet it is still in many places so soft that it requires great caution to avoid plunging into a mire of boiling clay. The space occupied by the depositions measures about 300 feet from east to west, and 344 from north to south. Within this surface are eight primary apertures, filled with boiling water, the four easterly of which do not eject their contents, but remain in a state of constant and violent ebullition. The largest of them exhibits a beautiful oval bason, which opens into several holes at the bottom, and presents to the view some brilliant but inaccessible incrustations.

The more remarkable springs are situate a little farther towards the west, and are from

Sketched by J. Brandon



Engraved by W. D. Linn's Lith.

HOT SPRINGS OF EVERETT, ILL.



twelve to eighteen feet distant from each other. The largest consists of an irregular aperture, full of beautiful light blue water, which now and then breaks forth in partial jets. A few feet further north lies a small jetter, by which the water is thrown up to the height of about three feet; and at the distance of twelve feet due south-east from this fountain, is situate a fine circular bason, the borders of which exhibit the most beautiful yellow sulphureous depositions. It narrows gradually into a small pipe in the centre, whence jets issue at irregular intervals to the height of six or eight feet. Within the circumference of the bason is a subordinate aperture, but we did not observe it emit either water or steam. The principal spring is the most easterly of the four, and consists of a bason about three feet in depth, perfectly circular, and terminating in a cylindrical pipe through which the water is erupted, with a thundering noise, and accompanied with an immense quantity of steam, to varied heights, of from six to eighteen feet. The incrustations of this fountain are peculiarly beautiful, exhibiting on their surface the most delicate efflorescence, and they appear to be of a siliceous nature. The site of the springs itself is covered with a whitish shining substance, which, at a little distance, one would take to be ice; but being constantly in a state of humidity, no perfect specimen of it can be obtained.

The most surprising phenomenon, however, exhibited at this place, is a circular mount of in-

durated bolus, about four feet in height, from an aperture on the west side of which a great quantity of steam makes its escape with a noise louder than that of the most tremendous cataract. The current of steam issues forth with such force, that any stones you may throw into the aperture are instantly ejected to a considerable height. On thrusting a pole down the hole, we observed a very considerable increase both in the quantity of steam emitted, and the noise accompanying its escape. This mount is called *Ausrholinn*, or “the Roaring Mount,” from the circumstance just described.

On our arrival at *Hveravellir*, a violent south wind prevented our seeing the operations of the springs to advantage; but, in the evening, the storm ceased, and we were favoured with a scene more brilliant and interesting than any ever exhibited on a birth-day festivity. From an elevated part of the adjoining lava we had a grand view of the tract, and could not sufficiently admire the connection and regularity observable in the bursts of steam and jets of water that continued to ascend into the atmosphere the whole of the evening. The order they maintained can only be compared to that observed in the firing of the different companies of a regiment drawn up in order of battle. The play commenced on a signal being given by the Roaring Mount, which was instantaneously followed by an eruption of the largest jetting fountain at the opposite end of the tract, on which the turn went to

the rest, vast columns of steam bursting from the surface of the general mound, while the jets rose and fell in irregular beauty. Having continued to play in this manner for the space of four minutes and a half, the springs abated for nearly two minutes, when the Roaring Mount renewed the signal, and the explosions took place as before.

The following morning, on leaving my tent, I was surprised to find a remarkable change in the appearance and phenomena of the Grand Jetter. Instead of being full of water, and jetting at intervals, as it had done the preceding evening, the bason was completely empty, but a column of spray continued to be thrown up without intermission to the height of twelve feet, accompanied with clouds of steam, and a loud thundering noise, resembling that of the Roaring Mount, which had considerably abated in its fury. The spring continued in this state for more than three hours, when the bason again began to fill, and ultimately the same play began that we had witnessed before, only there was a remarkable diminution in the quantity of steam emitted from the mount; but as the storm had again commenced, its abatement may have been occasioned by this, and not by any change or derangement in the mechanism of the springs.

Besides the steaming apertures just described, numerous rents and chasms appear in the lava towards the south for more than a mile, through which clouds of steam unremittingly make their

escape, and many of them are so hot that it is impossible to approach within some yards of them. As we walked over these solfatarras, whose spiracles were scattered with such profusion around us, one of our party had nearly sunk through the crust, which, in many places, is very thin; and the accident, which proved rather alarming, was of some use to us, as it taught us the necessity of being more cautious in selecting our steps in future.

In the middle of this burning tract, which may with strict propriety be termed the *Campi Phlegrei* of Iceland, is a large surface covered with the depositions of ancient springs, that appear to have been of enormous magnitude, especially one which exhibits the remains of a mount twice the size in circumference of that of the *Geyser*, near *Haukadal*, in the southern quarter of the island. On the rising grounds to the east of the springs are numerous beds of blue, red, and yellow bolus, together with a multiplicity of minor apertures filled with boiling water; and even in the gulley, where we pitched our tents, the bolus was so hot, that on taking up our poles the ends of them could not be touched. It is likely we should not have slept with the composure we did, had we been sensible that we were so near the devouring element, to whose agency the operations going on around us were to be ascribed.

At the north end of the tract are still to be seen the remains of a den that has been inhabit-

ed by robbers within the last thirty years. It consists of a natural rent in a bubble of the lava, which has been so artificially closed up with broken fragments of the same substance, that no person could have supposed it to be any thing else than a common grotto in the lava. It is very conveniently situated for cooking victuals, as there is a large boiling kettle at the distance of only a few yards. When Olafsen and Povelsen visited the place, they erected a pyramid about half way between this den and the Roaring Mount; but it has been entirely demolished by the robbers, who, in all probability, regarded it as too conspicuous a beacon to be allowed to stand in the vicinity of their haunt. Whether the one we erected close to the Mount will prove more durable, time must shew.

On the 25th we had such a storm from the south, that it was in vain to think of travelling before noon. The wind blew in violent gusts from the gulleys in the lava; and the extensive flat country between us and the north, seemed entirely filled with clouds of sand, affording some faint idea of an Arabian simoom. About twelve o'clock the storm began to abate, and my companions pursued their course towards the south country, while I directed mine towards the north. The road lay for some hours across fields of sand and gravel, till I arrived at the vast commons belonging to the inhabitants of *Hunavatns-Syssel*, where numerous flocks and herds were feeding in every direction. On either hand were large



fens, where I observed plenty of swans nursing their young ones, over which they manifested a particular care, and hurried them away as soon as they heard the noise of the horses. At this time the young swans were still without feathers, and could only escape by the nimble use of their legs. One that I caught had nearly died of fright, and endeavoured as much as possible to hide its head amongst the grass, but on my setting it at liberty, it ran with great velocity towards a lake, where the rest of the family were swimming in safety. After crossing the river *Beliandi*, I arrived in a short time at the western bank of the majestic *Blanda*, whose waters rolled heavily along to the main; and what excited no small degree of interest, was the distance to which the two rivers flowed after their junction in the same channel, ere they were actually *blended* together. The water of the former is black, whereas that of the latter, coming from *Arnarsfell Yökul*, possesses the same whiteness with the other *Yökul* rivers in Iceland. The *Yökul* river maintained its superiority for more than three miles, when, arriving at a small cataract, the waters are completely mingled by the fall, and the river then assumes a darker hue than it presented before.

Having skirted the *Blanda* for upwards of four hours, I came at last to the ford called *Blönduvad*, where its waters are spread over the surface of nearly half a mile, and divided into numerous streams, none of which was of any considerable

depth, except one, which nearly reached the backs of the horses. It is frequently unfordable at this place, in which case travellers must proceed a long way down to the inhabited part of the country, where several good ferries are to be met with. The road now lay across a long dreary moor, till I came to the entrance of *Blöndu-dal*, the sight of which, at first, inspired me with the hope that I was not far from the habitations of men, and that my day's journey would soon end; but I had still to submit to a tedious ride of three hours, before I could find a pass into the valley, so great is its steepness on both sides. Before arriving at the first farms, I could faintly discover the *Blöndu-gil*, a narrow precipitous channel through which the collected body of water is poured with a tremendous roar into the valley. A little past midnight I pitched my tent close to the farm of *Bolstad*, while my mind was penetrated with feelings that can only be experienced by those who have spent several days in barren and inhospitable deserts.

Next day I prosecuted my journey down *Blöndu-dal*, which terminated, in the course of some hours, in *Lánga-dal*, or the Long Valley, in which I found some of the best looking farms I have seen in Iceland. It is clothed with rich grass, amongst which I observed a vast proportion of wild clover; the meadows are well watered, and afford plenty of hay, and the mountains yield excellent pasture for the sheep. The farms of *Holltastad* and *Geitaskard*, particularly struck me

as possessing a very superior appearance, the latter of which owes its present form to the skill and diligence of the excellent Justiciary Einarson, who dwelt here when Sysselman of the district.

After pitching my tent in the evening, and just as I had begun to fill up my journal, the arrival of a large caravan was announced, two of the conductors of which came to pay me a visit, and seemed wonderfully gratified with the sight of an Englishman, there never having been any of my countrymen in this quarter before. One of them was a goldsmith, well known in Iceland for the neatness and perfection of his workmanship, which almost rivals that of the best artists in Copenhagen, though he has never learned the trade, or been out of his native island. He has also made a watch without any assistance. The other I took at first to be of a dull and stupid turn of mind, but we had not conversed many minutes when he began to expatiate on a plurality of worlds, with an eloquence and exactitude that perfectly astonished me. “There is, for instance, *Jupiter* and *Saturn*, and——” forgetting, and placing his hand on his forehead, “and——the planet lately discovered by Dr. Herschel in London. They must be inhabited; they are of the same nature with our earth; they are not globes of fire.” Though disappointed in his expectations of obtaining absolute certainty from me on the subject, he was pleased to find that I agreed with him as to its extreme probability, and regretted much that it was not in his power to visit the

Doctor, as he had many questions to propose to him on this and similar topics.

Leaving *Lánga-dal* on the 27th, I proceeded round the end of the mountains to *Höskuldstad*, where I met with a hearty reception from the Dean of *Hunavatns* syssel, an aged man, who has filled this office for thirty years, takes a lively interest in the spread of the Gospel, and could not sufficiently express his gratitude for the good done to the parishes within his jurisdiction by their having been put in possession of the word of life. All the copies that had come to the neighbouring factory had instantly been disposed of; and, in some of the dales, every house had been provided with the treasure. In the evening, I rode with the Dean to *Skagastrand*, where I experienced the most hospitable treatment from Mr. Schram, to whose exertions the Society is indebted for the speedy distribution of the Scriptures in this quarter of Iceland.

The factory consists of two dwelling-houses, a shop, and three or four warehouses, and is pleasantly situated at the northern termination of a small creek, formed by the projection of a ridge of irregular columnar rocks, the continuation of which is visible at a short distance in the sea, where they assume more of a basaltic appearance. From the top of the rocks, you have a fine prospect of the spacious gulf, which, further up, opens into the *Huna*, *Mid*, and *Hruta* Fiords, on the opposite coasts of which rise the bold promontories and snow-capped mountains

in *Stranda* syssel, receding in irregular perspective till they are terminated by the North Cape. Behind the factory is the high mountain of *Spákonufell*, the summit of which bears a striking resemblance to the walls of a fort, and to both sides stretch a range of lower mountains, which are broken every now and then by intervening vallies. Near *Höskuldstad* is a most beautiful display of basaltic rocks; some of which still occupy their original positions, and others are thrown down, and lie scattered about in every direction.



Designed by Capri's Engraver.

EXHIBITION OF BASKETS NEAR FÖSKELIDSTAAD.

Engraved by W. Woodcut.



## CHAP. XVI.

*Leave Skagastrand—Hvam—Valley of Skaga-  
fiord—Drângey—Glaumbæ—Mælifell—Ho-  
lum—Church of Urdir—Intelligent Peasant—  
Mödrufell—Sira Jon Jonson—His excellent  
character—Forms a Tract Society—Return  
through the Desert—Yfri Reykium—Alftavatn  
—Hot Springs of Reykium—Earthquakes—  
Sulphur Mountain, and Springs of Krisuvik—  
Leave Iceland—Arrive in Copenhagen.*

ON the 28th of July I again left *Skagastrand*, and pursued my course up a valley called *Halla-dal*, at the upper end of which I came to *Thverâ*, a small but neat farm belonging to Mr. Schram, where I was treated with coffee, after which I entered a mountainous desert which lasted for several hours. About seven in the evening I descended into the Outer *Laxárdal*, and took up my abode for the night at the parsonage of *Hvam*, the occupant of which, Sira Vigfus Eirikson, expressed the greatest joy at seeing me, and did every thing in his power to accommodate me during my stay. He is a young man of consi-



derable abilities, and actuated by a sincere desire to do good to the souls of his fellow men. It has long been his wish, and that of many of his brethren, that an annual meeting were held in the north of Iceland, to consist of such of the clergy as approved of it, for the purpose of encouraging each other in the work of the Lord. Situated as the clergy in Iceland are,—cut off from all communication with each other, they feel little or no community of interest; the great object is apt to dwindle away even where it has once been in sight; and a deplorable apathy, if not actual apostacy ensues. Were they, on the other hand, to assemble once or twice in the year, in order to hear some of their number deliver a discourse on the duties, difficulties, encouragements, &c. of the pastoral office, it would naturally tend to stimulate them to exertion, keep alive in their minds a sense of the awful responsibility attaching to the charge they have undertaken, and produce the best effects on their respective congregations. It gave me pleasure to learn that the Dean was extremely favourable to the measure; and there is little reason to doubt, that, were the matter fairly represented to their superiors, they would obtain liberty to carry their wishes into effect.

At noon the following day I set out with Sira Vigfus for the nunnery of *Reinastad*, where he intended to preach the following day. The road lay for the most part across the two mountainous tracts of *Laxárdals-heidi* and *Gaungu-skard*, to

the south of *Tindastol*, a large mountain, the sides of which display numerous strata, piled one above another, in the most regular manner. Having reached the summit of the tract, we had a fine view of the extensive valley of *Skagafjord*, one of the most fertile and populous districts in Iceland. The valley is divided by the *Herads-vötn*, or the river described in the account of my former journey to the north, as the formidable *Yökulsá*, which takes its rise in the *Arnarfell* *Yökul*. Before reaching this part of the country it receives a number of tributary streams, which swell it to a prodigious size ; and, before falling into the bay from which the valley derives its name, it divides into two branches, leaving a beautiful island, called *Hegraness*, in the middle. Numerous mountains of a grand and lofty appearance bound the valley on either side, but are intersected in various places by subordinate vallies, which open into that of *Skagafjord*. The coast looks rugged and precipitous, and the bay itself presents to the view a number of lofty islands. The largest of these is *Drángey*, the sides of which are quite perpendicular, and rise to the height of nearly six hundred feet above the level of the water. Its extent is estimated at 2400 feet ; and, on account of the richness of its grass, and the immense number of sea-fowl which are caught there annually, it is reckoned the most productive of any spot of the same size about the island.

On the 30th, which was the Lord's Day, Sira Vigfus preached and administered the sacrament, both at *Reinastad*, and the neighbouring church of *Glaumbæ*. The congregations were large, especially at the latter place, where the church was quite crowded. His sermons, which were animated and faithful, seemed to make a deep impression on the hearers, and a great majority of them were bathed in tears while he dwelt upon the love of God to our sinful world. The inhabitants of this tract manifested the strongest desire to obtain copies of the Holy Scriptures, of which the greatest want prevailed among them. In the whole parish of *Glaumbæ* I was concerned to find only *three* Bibles among the population of *fifty* families.

After the conclusion of the service, I proceeded up the west side of the valley, which chiefly consists of meadow land, to *Mælifell*, the abode of Sira Jon Conradson, Dean of the Syssel of *Skagafjord*, whom I found sincerely desirous of promoting the best interests of his countrymen, and happy at the provision which had been made for the supply of their spiritual wants. His attention is much bent on the intellectual improvement of the young people within his deanery; and it forms one of the more prominent features in his official visits, to examine into the degree of their progress in the acquirement of religious knowledge. The anticipation of distributing the Scriptures among them the following season afforded him great delight.

Next morning, after maturing a plan for supplying the poor with copies of the Scriptures, I left *Mælifell*, accompanied by the Dean, and, passing the hot springs of *Reykium*, which did not present any appearance particularly worthy of notice, directed my course to the ferry of *Grund*, where I crossed the river without any difficulty. At first sight I took the ferryman for an Italian, as he was more swarthy than any Icelander I had seen ; but on inquiry I found that he was a native of this district, but had served both in the Danish and Austrian armies, and borne his part in two engagements against Napoleon. An invincible attachment to his native soil prompted him to relinquish all the advantages which were offered him in more favoured climes ; and the attention paid him by his countrymen, who listen most eagerly to the minutest circumstances of his story, affords him a source of gratification which he could not have expected among strangers. Crossing a number of dangerous bogs, we came to *Flygamire*, the ancient residence of Gissor Jarl, a name celebrated in Norwegian history, and the place where the northern consistory continued to be held till the removal of the Bishop from *Holum*. I here parted with the Dean, and obtaining a fresh guide, proceeded on to *Holum*, where I arrived about two o'clock in the morning.

On the 3d of August I again took leave of the kind family at *Holum*, and crossing the *âs*, or low mountainous tract between that place and

*Kolbeinsdal*, I descended into this valley, where I obtained a guide to conduct me across the mountain-road of *Heliadalsheidi*, the ascent of which I found very steep, though not so difficult as that farther south, which I had to cross the preceding year. The rocks on both sides of the pass wore a very broken and rugged appearance; and many of the adjacent mountains presented a bold and precipitous front, regularly divided into a number of horizontal strata. The rain, which had commenced after we began to ascend, continued to increase as we advanced, till we had almost gained the summit of the pass, when it began to snow, and, in the course of a short time the tops of the mountains were entirely white.

Having arrived at the most elevated part of the tract, the extensive valley of *Svarfadardal* opened on our view; and the appearance of the mountains, intersected by the adjacent breaks and vallies was very noble and commanding. About eight o'clock in the evening we arrived at the farm and church of *Urdir*, where, as it was impossible to pitch my tent, on account of the storm, the peasant persuaded me to lodge all night in the church. On my remarking to him, that in my native country it was not reckoned any honour to sleep in church, he very smartly replied, that it was deemed equally disgraceful among them to do so in the day-time; but he was certain there could be no harm in sleeping there during the night. I now took possession

of the place, which I was happy to find was in a good state of repair, and entirely free from draught ; and proceeded without delay to fit up my bed, which could only be accomplished by tying the one end of my hammock to the railing which surrounded the altar, and the other to a pillar supporting the pulpit in the middle of the church. \* I here enjoyed as comfortable a night's rest as ever I did in my life ; and, in the morning, I could not help reflecting on the very different feelings with which I was penetrated in my boyish days, when I could not have gone near a church, or passed through a church-yard in the dark, for any possible consideration.

Of the intelligence and general information of the peasant, I was furnished with a most surprising proof the following morning. Finding that he took a very lively interest in the success of the British and Foreign Bible Society, I gave him a brief view of the extent of its operations ; and, among other documents which I read to him, was the very interesting letter addressed by the King of Persia to Sir Gore Ouseley, relative

\* The reader will doubtless smile, when he reflects, that the altar being at the end, and the pulpit in the middle of the church, the whole length of the edifice is little more than twice that of my hammock ; but if he should ever pass Kingsland toll-bar, near London, he will find a chapel belonging to the Establishment; situated on the west side of the road, which is precisely of the same dimensions.

to the new version of the Persian New Testament. \* Having mentioned that it was dated in the year 1229, a little boy, who was standing beside us, observed, that “it must be a very old letter.” “No, my lad,” replied the peasant, turning to him, “you must recollect that letter is not written according to our computation ; it is dated agreeably to the *Hegirah*.”

After making an excellent breakfast on boiled rice and milk, I prosecuted my journey down the valley, in the course of which I had to cross a pretty considerable river by which it is divided, and afterwards one of a still larger size, which flows into it from *Skidudal*. Having reached a beautiful green spot near the northern bank of the river *Hörgá*, I pitched my tent there for the night ; and on the morning of the 5th I paid a visit to my good friends at *Mödruvalla Abbey*, *Akur-eyri*, and *Hrafnagil*, and proceeded to the parsonage of *Mödrufell*, where I received a most cordial welcome from the worthy incumbent, Sira Jon Jonson.

I had seen this excellent clergyman at *Akur-eyri* in 1814 ; but his extreme modesty, and the shortness of our interview, rendered it impossible for me to form any adequate idea of his character or abilities. From the manner, however, in which he adverted to the extension of the kingdom of Christ, and the anxiety which he

\* See Eleventh Report, App. p. 128.

discovered about the advancement of vital piety among his countrymen, I could easily perceive that he was actuated by a very different spirit from that by which the great majority of professing Christians are influenced; and encouraged him to carry into effect a plan which he had formed with a view to the circulation of religious tracts throughout the island. In the course of the winter I received two very interesting letters from him, informing me that he had followed my advice, and had succeeded in the formation of an Icelandic Tract Society, to which he had obtained upwards of three hundred subscribers; and that the plan was patronized by Conferenceraad Thorarinson, the deputy-governor of the north\*. He was waiting with impatience for my arrival; and we now spent two days together in the most interesting and agreeable manner. I found in him a man of sterling piety, apostolic simplicity, and anxious solicitude about the welfare of his fellow-men, and possessed of scriptural and comprehensive views of divine things. His acquirements as a scholar are very considerable, and have, together with the consistency of his character, procured for him the regard and esteem of his su-

\* To encourage the Icelandic Society, the sum of L. 10 was voted them by the Religious Tract Society in London; and they have already put into circulation, or are engaged in printing, not fewer than *twelve* different tracts, most of which are translations of the tracts published by that Society, and very extensively circulated throughout Great Britain. (1818.)



periors, and, indeed, of all who are acquainted with him. The management of the affairs of the Tract Society could not have been vested in better hands ; and much good may be expected to result from the circulation of such tracts as are written or revised by this worthy friend of truth.

The good man was quite delighted with the accounts I gave him respecting the numerous institutions which had recently been established for extending the benign influences of the moral reign of Jesus among the sinful inhabitants of our globe. They were as cold waters to a thirsty soul. His eyes sparkled with joy as he told me of his intention to impart the same intelligence to his countrymen, that such of them as felt interested in these things might be partakers of his joy, and that it might excite many to serious reflection, who rested in the cold formalities of nominal Christianity.

On the 8th, I was under the necessity of bidding a long farewell to this devoted servant of Christ, and his equally pious and interesting family. Accompanying me to the upper end of the valley, and procuring for me a guide to proceed with me as far as the first station on the road leading into the interior, he returned to his humble abode, with a heart, I doubt not, overflowing with gratitude to God for all the wonderful things he had heard on this occasion.

The following morning I once more abandoned the habitations of men, and entered the dreary

and inhospitable regions through which I passed on my way to the north in 1814, and which are described in the former part of the journal. The guide conducted us across the *Yökulsá*, at no great distance to the south of which I pitched my tent for that night; and the fog in which we had been enveloped having cleared away next morning, he returned, and I proceeded with my servant and the horses into the interior. We had not proceeded far, however, before the fog again thickened around us, and completely hid from our view the mountains on either side, from which we were to take our bearings of the direction in which we were to travel. This circumstance proved the more alarming as the servant had never travelled this way before, and I had only traversed the region once myself; add to which the entire effacement of the track in many places, owing to the melting of the winter snows. However, by proceeding as nearly as we could straight forward, we always found it again; and before dark we had fairly passed the south-western termination of the *Yökul*. We had still a ride of nearly fifteen miles ere we could reach the smallest patch of vegetation, most of which we performed in the dark. At times we began to fear that we might miss it, and then the painful recollection forced itself upon my mind that upwards of thirty miles lay between us, and the next green spot in our route. About nine o'clock we had the inexpressible pleasure of finding the sand give place to the grass and willows of *Grá-*

*naness*, where I instantly tented, and after partaking of some refreshment retired to rest, greatly fatigued with the long ride, but enjoying, perhaps, a greater share of tranquillity of mind than I should have done had I been in the midst of the most populous city.

On the 11th the heavens were clear and serene. I started at an early hour, and pursued my journey to the northern bank of the *Hvitá*, where I halted a short time for the sake of the horses; and then fording the river, ascended the rising ground which terminates in *Bláfells-háls*, having reached which, I could again descry the *Geysers* sending forth vast columns of steam into the atmosphere; and inviting me once more to the contemplation of the wonders of nature, which are exhibited in that quarter of Iceland.

Though it got dark before I left the desert, I succeeded in finding the path which leads to *Holum*, and experienced, on my arrival at that place, all that kindness and hospitality which the general appearance of its inhabitants, the preceding year, had led me to expect. The following morning I proceeded to the *Geysers*, where I spent two days partly with a view to rest my horses, and partly, that I might avail myself of the last opportunity I should, in all probability, ever have of witnessing so sublime a spectacle as that which is here presented to the view of the traveller. The result of the observations I

made during this visit, I have already inserted in the former part of the journal. \*

On the morning of the 14th I left the *Geysers*, and taking the eastern road to *Reykjavik*, entered the extensive marshy plain which stretches from this part of the island to the south coast between *Eyrarbacka* and the *Eyafjalla Yökul*. In the course of the day, I fell in with two hot-springs, one of which lay near *Yfri Reykiuum*, but it was very diminutive in size, and did not present any remarkable phenomena; but the other, situated close to the cottage of *Sydri Reykiuum*, is more worthy of observation. It consists of a large irregular bason, which appears to communicate with the subterraneous reservoir of hot water by means of a rent in the ground; for on the explosion of the fountain, the jet bursts forth from near its southern margin, and, after continuing to rush up with great impetuosity for the space of about twelve seconds, it runs gradually across the bason till it reaches the opposite margin, when it again subsides, after having played about twenty seconds. The greatest diameter of the column appeared to be between two and three feet, and the height of the jets about twelve. At a short distance from this fountain, where it has its outlet into a rivulet, is another small boiling spring, but it does not erupt, and is used by the people of the cottage for boiling, washing clothes, &c.

\* See Vol. i. p. 55.

From this place, I proceeded across a number of dangerous bogs till I reached the *Bruará*, which I had crossed the preceding year, but which I now found much more formidable, owing to the great accession it receives to its contents from the *Apa* and *Laugarvalla* lakes. Skirting its eastern bank for some time, I passed a fine cataract down which its waters were dashed with resistless fury, and arrived at the ferry, when I got the whole of my cavalcade across without any difficulty. I now directed my course over a dreary moor, which, from the inequalities of its surface, evidently rests on a bed of lava, which has, in all probability, descended from one of the volcanoes to the north-east of *Thingvalla*.

Having stayed all night at a solitary farm, about six miles to the west of *Skalholt*, I renewed my journey on the morning of the 15th; and, after passing a number of red volcanic cones, of immense size, I encountered a dreary tract of lava, over which I had to scramble for several hours, and which presented such prodigious heights and gulleys, that were the sea when brought into agitation by the most violent storm, and running, as the phrase is, mountains high, suddenly to congeal, it could scarcely furnish a counterpart to the scene before me. What must then have been the terrific appearance of this region, when the red-hot flood of melted substances rolled across it, consuming every thing that lay in its way, and raising its fiery waves to the height they still exhibit!

On reaching the southern margin of the lava, I arrived at the *Alftavatn*, a sheet of water upwards of a mile in breadth, which connects the *Thingvalla* lake with the river *Sög*, through which their collected waters are discharged into the *Ölfusá*, near *Eyrarbačka*. Concluding from the nature of the tract, that the bottom of this lake consisted entirely of lava, it was not without the most lively impressions of danger I entered it on horseback, lest I should fall into some of the fathomless cracks formed by the earthquakes, which are very common in this part of the island. What increased the danger, was the circumstance that the water was rendered so turbulent by a strong westerly wind, that it was impossible to discover the bottom. Happily the water was not so deep as I had suspected; and, though completely wet, I gained the opposite shore without meeting with any accident.

I now entered a singularly wild region of volcanic formation, where nothing presented itself to the view, but hills of tuffa, or streams of ancient lava, partially covered with moss; and continued to ascend for some time, till gaining the summit of the pass, when the whole of the extensive level tract between Mount *Hekla* and the sea opened before me. From this place I descended by a circuitous route between huge masses of tuffa which have been dislodged from the adjacent mountains, and arrived about three o'clock in the afternoon at the church of *Reykium*, a little to the north of which, I pitched

my tent, at the distance of a few yards from the most considerable of the hot springs with which the tract abounds.

Having dined, I devoted the evening to the contemplation of the natural wonders of the place. From below the church, a valley, or rather a wide gulley, stretches back to the distance of some miles between the mountains, and exhibits in the extensive banks of hot sulphur and clay, and the numerous columns of steam which rise into the atmosphere in every direction, the most convincing proofs of the conflagration which is still going on at no great depth in this part of the island, while the volcanic appearance of the mountains and rocks in the vicinity leads back the mind to ancient scenes of devastation and ruin.

The largest jetting spring is known by the name of *Geysir*, which designation it has in common with the majestic fountain near *Haukadal*. It is situated at a short distance to the north of the church, at the base of a beetling mountain, the crags of which rise to the height of between four and five hundred feet above the spring. This subterraneous fountain has two apertures through which the water and steam make their escape; the more southerly of which continues to spout incessantly, and throws the water to various heights of from three to twelve feet; but the other aperture, which is only separated from it by a distance of ten feet, is the more remarkable of the two. It is surrounded

by an incrusted brim ; and a large stone, which has been precipitated from the mountain, lies directly across it, owing to which the water is prevented from rising to that height which it might otherwise attain. Notwithstanding this obstruction, however, the eruptions, which take place about fifteen times in the twenty-four hours, are carried with amazing velocity, and a tremendous noise, to the height of at least thirty feet ; and the vast clouds of steam which make their escape along with the water, add greatly to the interest of the scene. While the eruption lasts, which is generally about three or four minutes, an immense quantity of water is discharged by the spring ; and to judge from what I witnessed during my stay there, I should suppose that the quantity at present discharged cannot be inferior to what it was when Sir John Stanley \* visited these springs in the year 1789, at which time Mr. Baine found that the quantity of water thrown up every minute to be 59,064 wine gallons, or 78.96 cubic feet.

At some distance from this spring, and close to the margin of the river which divides the valley, lies another remarkable fountain, called the *Badstofa*. It consists of an irregular aperture, which appears to open into an immense excavation, beneath a high bank of red bolus, which here projects towards the river. Into this excavation the water sinks the moment the eruption

\* Account of the Hot Springs in Iceland.



ceases, and continues alternately to retreat and be impelled forward again like the waves of the sea, at the depth of three feet below the margin of the aperture. At the same time, a rumbling noise is heard, which is most probably occasioned by the confinement of a quantity of steam, by means of which the water is dashed against the sides of the excavation, and some quantity of it is suffered to escape.

The spring having remained in this state of comparative quiescence for the space of five minutes, a slight concussion of the ground takes place, loud subterraneous reports are heard; and the water is thrown out, partly by perpendicular jets, to the height of twelve feet, and partly in an oblique direction towards the river. This latter jet carries along with it the greatest quantity of water, and generally reaches a height of twenty feet. While the fountain is in action, which is generally about ten minutes, a number of large waves are thrown over the ground in front of it, by which a number of uncommonly fine and beautiful calcareous incrustations are formed; and when the steam is exhausted, the water subsides as described above.

In the intervening ground, a great number of boiling springs, and steaming apertures, make their appearance; and it requires no small degree of courage to walk among them, as it is impossible to say how thin the arch of clay may be which separates you from the boiling abyss below. In many parts beautiful banks of varie-

gated bolus present themselves; and I had the satisfaction of contemplating the interesting process described by Sir John Stanley; the formation of what appeared to be jasper, from its soft state in the bolus, till it has gone through all the degrees of induration, and ultimately become so hard that it will strike fire from steel.

About half a mile farther up the valley, and on the same side with the springs just described, appears a huge chasm filled with boiling water, from the south side of which a spring throws out the water in a direction perfectly horizontal, emitting at the same time a great quantity of vapour, and bellowing with a very disagreeable noise. At a short distance to the north of this, is a large break in the ground, which has evidently been formed by the roof of one of the excavations having given way with which the earth is perforated at this place. In the middle of this hollow, which may be about fifteen feet below the general surface of the ground, lies a large pool of turbid water, from which a considerable column of the same liquid is almost uninterruptedly thrown to the height of nearly twenty feet.

On passing from this spot along the left bank of the river, I was surprised to find steam issuing from within the margin, and, on examining the place, I found that several springs existed in the very bed of the river; and the quantity of boiling water which they threw up was so great, that it could not be kept under by the cold water above it, but forced its way through the

stream in a very amusing manner. At some distance, on the south side of the river, is a great assemblage of springs, of which two, called the *Akkra hverar*, are remarkable, on account of their size, but they never throw up the water.

There are also about *Reykium* several vapour springs, one of which, called the *Seyder*, or Boiler, is situated close to the *Geysir*, and consists of an aperture about a foot and a half in diameter, through which a vast quantity of steam issues forth incessantly with a loud noise. This aperture is surrounded with banks of blue, yellow, and red bolus, on the surface of which a considerable quantity of pure sulphur appears, and in some places small streaks of alum were visible.

Early on the morning of the 16th I was alarmed by an uncommonly violent eruption of the *Geysir*, the water of which was carried to a much greater height than I had observed it the preceding day, and fell in part with a tremendous dash directly upon my tent. Availing myself of a momentary suspension of its operations, I rushed out, and taking my station at a convenient distance, I contemplated with amazement the immense quantity of water which continued to be poured forth for upwards of a quarter of an hour.

The whole tract of *Ölfus*, in which *Reykium* is situated, is much exposed to earthquakes. Indeed it appears to lie exactly in the angle of a

subterraneous line of communication, which, with great probability, is supposed to exist between *Reykianess* and the volcanic mountains in *Gullbringa SysseL*, and *Mount Hekla*, and the volcanic *Yökuls* in the eastern quarter of the island; and must therefore be subjected to commotion when any of these mountains are in a state of activity.

Of the dreadful physical evils to which Iceland is exposed, scarcely any are more alarming than earthquakes. Many of these awful convulsions of nature have not been recorded in the annals of the country; yet the number they do exhibit is more than sufficient to excite feelings of the most tender commiseration for its inhabitants in the breast of every friend of humanity.

The first of which any notice is taken, happened in the years 1181 and 1182; but we are not informed of any bad effects resulting from them. In 1211, the year in which the first mention is made of an eruption from the submarine volcano near *Reykianess*, numerous earthquakes happened, in which several lives were lost, and the houses, in many parts of the island, completely thrown down. In the years 1260 and 1261, severe shocks were felt in the island of *Flatey*, in the *Breidafjord*. In 1294, the ground rent in *Rângárvalla SysseL*; the *Rângá* river changed its course; a number of farms were overturned; and, for the space of eight days, all the wells were white as milk. In the year 1300, during

an uncommonly violent eruption of *Hekla*, earthquakes were very frequent in the south of Iceland, and many houses were thrown down. They were repeated with still greater violence eight years afterwards, when eighteen farms were destroyed, and numbers, both of human beings and of the brute creation, perished.

In 1311 a still more dreadful earthquake took place, by which not fewer than fifty-one cottages were thrown down, or entombed; and so great was the darkness occasioned by the sand and ashes thrown up by some of the volcanoes, that it was impossible to travel from one part of the island to another. Among other severe calamities to which the inhabitants were subjected in the year 1313, was an earthquake in which eighteen houses were destroyed. In 1339, severe shocks were felt throughout the southern quarter of the island; farm-houses were overturned; men and cattle were raised from the ground by the violence of the shocks; several of the mountains disrupted, and fell; the earth rent to a great depth; and among other collections of boiling water which made their appearance, was a hot spring, sixty feet in diameter, which broke forth in the mountainous tract, a little to the east of *Mossfell*. In the year 1370 an earthquake happened, in which twelve farms in the district of *Ölfus* were totally destroyed.

In 1390 and 1391 numerous shocks were felt, especially in the latter year; fourteen farms in the districts of *Grimsness*, *Floa*, and *Ölfus* were

destroyed, and several people buried in the ruins. The ground rent in various places; boiling water sprang up; and the effects of the earthquake were felt as far as *Holltu-vördu-heidi*.

In 1552, a severe earthquake was felt, but no damage was done by it; and in 1554 the shocks were continued with such violence for the space of a fortnight, that the inhabitants durst not risk their lives in their houses, but were obliged to live in tents. Several shocks were felt in the year 1578; and in 1597 an earthquake again overturned a number of farms in the district of *Ölfus*. In 1614, severe shocks were repeated almost uninterruptedly the whole of the autumn, the consequence of which was that a number of houses were thrown down. During the winter of 1633 the farms in *Ölfus* were again destroyed, and the rockings were so incessant, that in many of the churches there was no service almost the whole of the winter. In 1657 and 1661 very severe shocks were experienced in different places, particularly in *Fliotshlid*, to the south-east of *Hekla*, and a number of houses were levelled with the ground.

A most tremendous shock was felt in the districts of *Ölfus* and *Floa* on January 28th, April 1st and 20th, 1706. Not fewer than twenty-four farms were destroyed; the provisions of the inhabitants spoiled, and many of the cattle killed. Shocks were continued with greater or less violence till the approach of summer, and were more

perceptibly felt in the vicinity of *Hekla* than elsewhere in the south.

As the eruption of the *Skaptár* volcano was the most dreadful of any recorded in the annals of Iceland, so the earthquakes which happened on the 14th and 16th of August, 1784, which was the year after the eruption, were by far the most destructive of any ever felt by the inhabitants of that island. Though the principal scene of its devastations appears to have been about the districts to the west of *Hekla*, it was nevertheless felt over the whole island, and in the Syssels of *Snæfellsness* and *Isafjord* the shocks were uncommonly severe. In the Syssel of *Arness* alone, not fewer than three hundred and seventy-two farm-houses were damaged; sixty-nine were entirely subverted, and sixty-four received so much injury that they could not be inhabited. The number of houses that were thrown down, throughout the island, amounted to one thousand four hundred and fifty-nine; upwards of two hundred were partly subverted, and three hundred and thirty greatly injured. The churches which were damaged amounted to nineteen, and of these four were completely overturned.

Besides the damage done to the houses, the grass-lands suffered much injury from the rents which were produced, the changing of the course of the rivers, and the immense quantities of rock and gravel which were thrown down from the sides of the mountains. Many of the

old boiling springs were closed up ; and others appeared, from which the water was thrown to a great height. At the *Geysers*, near *Haukadal*, not fewer than thirty-five new springs made their appearance.

In the year 1789, another dreadful earthquake happened, the shocks of which only intermitted at first for the space of ten minutes, but were continued more sparingly a considerable part of the summer. A number of wide rents were formed in the earth ; and among other remarkable phenomena attending this earthquake, was the change which took place in the lake of *Thingvalla*. The bottom of this lake sunk towards the north-east, and the water being precipitated thither, encroached considerably on the land, and in many places overflowed the ancient road which ran in that direction ; whereas, the lake became so shallow towards the south-west, that it was now almost dry where there had been formerly four fathoms water. \*

In 1808 a violent shock was felt, which made some alteration in the mechanism of the hot-springs ; but no devastation whatever followed. The last concussion that was observed in Iceland took place in the month of June, 1815 ; but it was very slight, and was felt only in the northern parts of the island.

It was my intention to have visited the tract between *Reykium* and *Cape Reykianess*, before

\* See a paper on this subject, by the late Bishop Finsson, in the Transactions of the Icelandic Society.



leaving the island; but as the ships were nearly ready for sailing, I was obliged to abandon the idea. The following description of the Sulphur Mountain and hot springs in that dismal volcanic region, as given by Sir George Mackenzie, \* cannot fail highly to interest every reader.

“ At the foot of the mountain, (about three miles distant from *Krisuvik*,) was a small bank, composed chiefly of white clay, and some sulphur, from all parts of which steam issued. Ascending it, we got upon a ridge immediately above a deep hollow, from which a profusion of vapour arose, and heard a confused noise of boiling and splashing, joined to the roaring of steam, escaping from narrow crevices in the rock. This hollow, together with the whole side of the mountain opposite, as far up as we could see, was covered with sulphur and clay, chiefly of a white or yellowish colour. Walking over this soft and steaming surface we found to be very hazardous; and I was frequently very uneasy when the vapour concealed my friends from me. The day, however, being dry and warm, the surface was not so slippery as to occasion much risk of our falling. The chance of the crust of sulphur breaking, or the clay sinking with us was great, and we were several times in danger of being much scalded. Mr. Bright ran at one time a great hazard, and suffered considerable pain from accidentally

\* Travels in Iceland, p. 115.

plunging one of his legs into the hot clay.\* From whatever spot the sulphur is removed, steam instantly escapes ; and, in many places, the sulphur was so hot that we could scarcely handle it. From the smell, I perceived that the steam was mixed with a small quantity of sulphurated hydrogen gas. When the thermometer was sunk a few inches into the clay, it rose generally to within a few degrees of the boiling point. By stepping cautiously, and avoiding every little hole from which steam issued, we soon discovered how far we might venture. Our good fortune, however, ought not to tempt any person to examine this wonderful place, without being provided with two boards, with which any one may cross every part of the banks in perfect safety. At the bottom of this hollow, we found a caldron of boiling mud, about fifteen feet in diameter, similar to that on the top of the mountain, which we had seen the evening before ; but this boiled with much more vehemence. We went within a few yards of it, the wind happening to be remarkably favourable for viewing every part of this singular scene. The mud was in constant agitation, and often

\* Mr. Hooker appears to have been in an equally perilous situation near this place ; for he informs us, that in endeavouring to avoid one of the sulphureous exhalations, he jumped up to his knees in a semi-liquid mass of hot sulphur and bolus, and should probably have sunk to a greater depth had he not instantly thrown himself with his whole length upon the ground, so as to get his hands on a more solid soil. *Tour*, Vol. i. p. 240.

thrown up to the height of six or eight feet. Near this spot was an irregular space filled with water, boiling briskly. At the foot of the hill, in a hollow formed by a bank of clay and sulphur, steam rushed with great force and noise from among the loose fragments of rock.

“ Further up the mountain, we met with a spring of cold water, a circumstance little expected in a place like this. Ascending still higher, we came to a ridge composed entirely of sulphur and clay, joining two summits of the mountain. Here we found a much greater quantity of sulphur than on any other part of the surface we had gone over. It formed a smooth crust, from a quarter of an inch to several inches in thickness. The crust was beautifully crystallized. Immediately beneath it we found a quantity of loose granular sulphur, which appeared to be collecting and crystallizing as it was sublimed along with the steam. Sometimes we met with clay of different colours, white, red, and blue, under the crust; but we could not examine this place to any depth, as the moment the crust was removed, steam came forth, and proved extremely annoying. We found several pieces of wood, which were probably the remains of planks that had been formerly used in collecting the sulphur, small crystals of which partially covered them. There appears to be a constant sublimation of this substance; and were artificial chambers constructed for the reception and condensation of the vapours, much of it might

probably be collected. As it is, there is a large quantity on the surface, and by searching, there is little doubt that great stores may be found. The inconvenience proceeding from the steam issuing on every side, and from the heat, is certainly considerable; but, by proper precautions, neither would be felt so much as to render the collection of the sulphur a matter of any great difficulty. The chief obstacle to working these mines is their distance from a port, whence the produce could be shipped. But there are so many horses in the country, whose original price is trifling, and whose maintenance during summer costs nothing, that the conveyance of sulphur to *Reykjavik* presents no difficulties which might not probably be surmounted.

“ Below the ridge on the farther side of this great bed of sulphur, we saw a great deal of vapour escaping with much noise. We crossed to the side of the mountain opposite, and found the surface sufficiently firm to admit of walking cautiously upon it. We had now to walk towards the principal spring, as it is called. This was a task of much apparent danger, as the side of the mountain, for the extent of about half a mile, is covered with loose clay, into which our feet sunk at every step. In many places, there was a thin crust, below which the clay was wet, and extremely hot. Good fortune attended us; and we reached, without any serious inconvenience, the object we had in view. A dense column of steam, mixed with a little water, was forcing its

way impetuously through a crevice in the rock, at the head of a narrow valley, or break in the mountain. The violence with which it rushes out is so great, that the noises thus occasioned may often be heard at the distance of several miles ; and, during the night, while lying in our tent at Krisuvik, we more than once listened to them with mingled awe and astonishment. Behind the column of vapour was a dark coloured rock, which gave it its full effect.

“ It is quite beyond my power to offer such a description of this extraordinary place, as to convey adequate ideas of its wonders, or its terrors. The sensations of a person, even of firm nerves, standing on a support which feebly sustains him, over an abyss where, literally, fire and brimstone are in dreadful and incessant action ; having before his eyes tremendous proofs of what is going on beneath him ; enveloped in thick vapours ; his ears stunned with thundering noises :—these can hardly be expressed in words, and can only be well conceived by those who have experienced them.”

Crossing the *Henglafell* mountains, which took me nearly four hours, owing to the inequalities of the lavas, which they have poured down in every direction, I made my horse quicken his pace, and reached *Reykjavik* about five o'clock in the afternoon.

Had I arrived a few days sooner I might have proceeded to Liverpool, in a vessel which sailed for that port the following morning ; but it was

still necessary for me to make some final arrangements respecting the affairs of the Bible Society, which prevented me from availing myself of that opportunity. I was under the necessity, however, of using all possible expedition, as the Danish vessels were also on the eve of sailing.

Having taken leave of the Bishop, and the rest of the public authorities in *Reykjavik*, from all of whom I had experienced the kindest and most unwearied attentions during my stay in Iceland, I embarked on the 20th of August, on board a Danish vessel, bound for Copenhagen. As we stood out from *Reykjavik*, and the land on both sides of the *Faxe Fiord* began to recede from my view, I was conscious of strong feelings of regret, which not even the anticipations necessarily connected with my return to the continent of Europe were able fully to repress. I was leaving an island, distinguished by its natural phenomena from every other spot on the surface of the globe, where I had been furnished with frequent opportunities of contemplating and admiring some of the more sublime displays of the wisdom and power of God in the operations of nature. But what principally attached me to Iceland, was the exhibition of moral worth, and the strong features of superior intellectual abilities which had so often attracted my notice during the period of my intercourse with its inhabitants. My thoughts were also directed to the effects which were likely to result from my visit. I had circulated extensively among them that

blessed Book, which is able to make them wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ; which alone contains an authenticated, complete, and most satisfactory revelation of the character, purposes, and will of the Supreme Ruler of the universe; and directs the guilty sons of Adam to the only possible way in which they can obtain true and lasting felicity. And while I reflected on the responsibility which attaches to the situation of such as are favoured with this Revelation, and the aggravated guilt and condemnation of those who receive not the truth in the love of it that they may be saved, my earnest prayer for the Icelanders was, that they might have grace communicated to them from above, to enable them suitably to improve the inestimable privilege which had been conferred upon them.

On the 6th of September, after a rough passage of seventeen days, I again arrived in Copenhagen, where I met with a hearty welcome from the numerous friends I had left behind me in that city.

# APPENDIX.

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No. I.

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A HISTORICAL VIEW

OF

*THE TRANSLATION AND DIFFERENT EDITIONS*

OF THE

ICELANDIC SCRIPTURES.





# APPENDIX.

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No. I.

HISTORICAL VIEW, &c. &c.

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IT is impossible for a mind imbued with Christian sentiments to take a retrospective view of the state of the church, during the dismal ages of papal darkness, without being penetrated with feelings of the most tender sympathy for the numerous millions who were denied all access to the benefits accruing from an intimate acquaintance with the precious volume of Divine revelation. Dignified with the name of Christians, but destitute of the spirit, and uninfluenced by the power of genuine Christianity; professedly the worshippers of the true God, but ignorant of the Scriptural character of Him who is “the way, and the truth, and the life;”

placing the essence of religion in the punctual observance of a number of superstitious, unmeaning, and ridiculous ceremonies, instead of love to God and benevolence to man : the votaries of hierarchical impositions remained in an awful state of moral blindness, degradation, and misery. The sacred fountain of truth was locked up in a language with which only a few were conversant, and was absolutely unknown to the generality of those who were constituted teachers of others. Nor was this the case merely in those countries which lay contiguous to the seat of that power whose antichristian tyranny rested on ignorance and superstition as its surest props ; the same veil of spiritual darkness was drawn over the horizon of more distant regions, and their inhabitants were equally removed from the cheering beams of “ the light of life.”

In the midst, however, of this horrible and universal gloom, it is not to be doubted that God had reserved to himself a remnant who did not bow the knee to Baal, who worshipped him in spirit and truth, and whose minds, by a wonderful combination of providential circumstances, were enlightened by the truth, and thus prepared for shewing forth his praise. How many of them fed on the heavenly manna, by receiving instruction in their vernacular languages, it is now impossible to determine ; yet, to judge from the translations, or fragments of translations, which have reached our times, their number seems to have been greater than has commonly been

supposed. The Anglo-Saxon versions of King Alfred, and Ælfric, the abbot; the English of Wickliffe and Trevisa; the French of Stephan de Ansa, Guiart des Moulins, and others; the German of Ottfreid, Notker, Rabanus, Maurus, &c.; a Danish translation in MS. supposed to have been written about the beginning of the fourteenth century, and still preserved in the Royal Library at Copenhagen; and those of St. Briget, Rawald, Buddha, &c. in Swedish, with several more that might be adduced: all prove, that in various places the Scriptures, or parts of the Scriptures, were accessible by certain unlettered individuals, even in the darkest ages of Roman superstition. It is true, many of them deserve the name of paraphrases rather than that of versions, and some of them are obscured by mystic interpretations; yet the light they contain was sufficient to guide the weary and bewildered pilgrim to the realms of endless felicity; and it is only to be deplored that they were not more generally known, their orbit being circumscribed by the walls of a convent, or, at most, they were confined to a small select circle, beyond which it was deemed unlawful to disseminate them.

That something of this kind should have been attempted in Iceland, is a conclusion to be drawn from the early and successful application of many of its inhabitants to literature; and that the Bible actually was translated into Icelandic long before the Reformation, has been believed on

the testimony of Eric Brochenhusius, Governor of Mandale, in Norway, who asserts, that, in the year 1567, he saw a copy of the Bible in that language ; that the version had been made three hundred years previous to that date ; and that the initials of the chapters were embellished with gold. \* It has, however, been called in question, whether it was an entire version of the simple text of Scripture which that nobleman had seen ; and it is more than probable that the book he mistook for it was a copy of the famous work, entitled “ *STIORN,*” which was composed about the middle of the thirteenth century, by Brandr Jonson, at that time Abbot of *Thyckvabæ* monastery, in the eastern quarter of Iceland, and afterwards Bishop of *Holum*. † What confirms this supposition, is the fact, that on turning up certain parts of “ *Stiorn*” it is scarcely possible at first sight not to believe but it is the Bible we have before us ; as, for instance, at the end of the preface, where the author, after having described three species of the spirit of prophecy, adds : “ Now, it was by the first of these species of sacred prophetic spirit alone that Moses composed five books, the first of which is called Genesis, because it contains the origin, creation, and birth of the world. With this book he begins his written accounts, and the formation of

\* Undalin. *Descript Norveg.* p. 168.

† Bishop Harboe’s “ *Kurtze Nachricht von der Isländischen Bibel-Histoire*” in the *Dänische Bibliothek*. VIII. Stück. pp. 4, 5.

the world, in the manner and with the words which in our language are as follows: "In the beginning God created heaven," &c.

In like manner he subjoins to the account of the death of Joseph: "Here ends the first book of Moses, Genesis, and the second begins, which is called Exodus." This circumstance, combined with the paraphrastic version of a great portion of the Old Testament history contained in this volume, rendered it extremely natural for Brochenhusius, who did not perhaps examine its contents with much minuteness, to view it as a copy of the Scriptures, to which it certainly bears a great resemblance. Of this valuable monument of northern antiquity, several manuscripts, elegantly written on parchment, are preserved in the Arnæmagnæan Library, which is attached to that of the University of Copenhagen. In Iceland, itself, copies are very scarce, as indeed all the ancient manuscripts are. Having been presented with a copy by the very Rev. A. Thorsteinson, Dean of North Mulè Syssel, on my tour through that quarter, I will here insert a brief description of its contents, as it may not prove altogether uninteresting to the friends of Biblical literature.

It is written on paper, in ordinary folio, and consists of 887 pages. The title-page, and especially the initials of the different principal divisions, are embellished with a variety of curious figures, done with red, green, and violet tints, prepared from some of the natural productions

of the island. The primary divisions are again subdivided into chapters, to each of which is prefixed a title, or index, of its contents. There are three different hands observable in the manuscript, none of which appear to be very old; and the words are abbreviated in the same way as the Copenhagen codices. The general title is as follows:

### Stiorn

á Noræna Tungu ritoth af Brandi  
Abota i Veri A° Dni MCCLV  
ath fciþon Virtholig. Magnuf  
Kgs Hácon<sup>r</sup> f. Lagabætis.  
eftir

Sögom AUGUSTINI, HIERONYMI,  
BEROSI, ISIDORI, JOSEPHI, &c.

i. e. “*Stiorn*; written in Norse by Brandr, abbot of *Ver*, (or *Thyrcvabæ*,) anno domini, 1255, according to the mandate of the honourable King Magnus Haconson, reformer of the laws, from the accounts of Augustinus, Hieronymus, Berosius, Isidorus, Josephus,” &c. As the Icelandic word “*Stiorn*” properly signifies government or direction, and this volume contains the substance of the Old Testament history, it might be supposed that it received this title with a view to the theocracy or divine government of the Hebrew nation during the period which that history embraces; yet, on the other hand, when we con-

sider that it was written at the instance of King Magnus, who rendered himself famous, by reducing the different books of Norwegian law to one grand code, (whence he obtained the surname of Lagabæter,) it seems most probable that it was so called, because the laws of the theocracy were viewed as the ground-work and model of all equitable legislation.

The work consists of thirteen parts.—I. The history of the creation and the antediluvian world.—II. The period from the flood to the calling of Abraham.—III. The history of Abraham.—IV. The history of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.—V. The Exodus.—VI. The Mosaic legislation, and the journeyings of the Hebrews in the wilderness.—VII. Joshua.—VIII. Judges.—IX. Ruth.—X. The government under Samuel.—XI. The reign of Saul.—XII. The reign of David.—XIII. The reign of Solomon and the Jewish kings till the captivity.

In many places, a literal version is given of the Vulgate text, in others, especially in Genesis, the sacred history is strongly paraphrased, and interspersed with legendary tales and fanciful interpretations; while in the following divisions, the Scripture account is shortened, and only a brief compendium exhibited of its contents. Between the first and second divisions is inserted, a discourse on the nature and design of the nine weeks' fast, in which are contained a number of ridiculous observations, strikingly characteristic of the age in which they were written. After



the account of the confusion of tongues, follows a long dissertation on geography, chiefly taken from Isidorus: the history of Abraham concludes with a homily on the temptation of Christ; and, in that of Joseph, we are entertained with a tedious legend respecting Aseneth, how God revealed himself to her; her conversation with an angel, &c.; to dwell on which would only be to trifle with the feelings of my readers. That they may be able, however, to form some idea of the interpretation of Scripture, which was current in those days, I shall lay before them the following specimens: “When Adam gave our first mother the name of *Eva*, it was because he foresaw that all who should be born of woman, would either enunciate E or A,\* it being a fact that every male child on entering the world, begins its crying with A, and every female with E.”—“As Nibal, the brother of Tubal-Cain, was sitting in the smithy, and listening to the sound of the hammers, he became sensible of a certain dissonance, whence conceiving the idea of harmony, he invented the different kinds of poetry and music.” In like manner, after the relation of the victory of Abraham, we are told that he held a jubilee, and “that the reason why the children of Israel afterwards kept a jubilee, every fiftieth year, was, because Lot was fifty years old when he was delivered out of captivity; or, according to others, because fifty years had

\* Lat. E vel A—*Eva!*

elapsed from the period of his departure from Haran.” Treating of the curse of mortality pronounced upon Adam, the remembrance of it is said to be still continued in the holy church, when, on Ash Wednesday, she gives her members ashes, repeating these words: “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.” It deserves to be noticed, that this custom is not yet entirely forgotten in Iceland; inasmuch as on the above-mentioned day the females generally endeavour to bind what they call *ösku-pokar*, or small bags filled with ashes, to the coats of the men as a trick, at which they greatly triumph if they succeed in the attempt.

When we deduct these and similar passages, and confine our attention solely to those in which the author adheres to the text, it cannot be denied that the volume contains a considerable portion of sacred scripture, and is justly entitled to a place in the history of Biblical Translations. As a specimen of the translation, I will here subjoin part of the eighteenth chapter of Genesis, together with a literal English version in the parallel column.

*Drottinn vitradiz Abrahe i dalinum Mambre, á einn thann dag sem hiti var mikill uti, sem hann sat í sea'li t íbular durum. ok er Abraham litadiz um thá syndiz honum sem iij menn stodi thar driugum iheá honum, hverium er hann moti*

“The Lord revealed himself to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, when the day was very hot without, and he sat in the door of his tent. And as Abraham looked about, it appeared to him as if three men stood there, close beside

rennandi, ok til iardar framfallandi, dyrkadi þá einn af þeim svo segiandi, far ei í brott min herra frá mér thionustu manni ef ek hefer nockurn tíma gíftu fundit ok fengit í thínu augliti, vil ek helldr bera ydr til litit vatn, at ther thvait þar í sætr ydra, ok hviliz her under trenu. Man ek fram setiu fyrir ydr nockut litit braud. Nærít ydr ok styrkit svo ydvert líf ok hiörtu, verit síðann á veg; fyrir þína skyllt væntir mik at ther vikít hígat til ydars thionustu mans. Their svörudu: Gör eftir þi sem þu seger. Hann skundaði heim í tialldbudina til Sarah, ok bad hana sem skiotast taka iij sinnum braud, ok mat göra þeim þar af, enn sealf hann for þagat sem naut hanns voru, ok tok þaðann einn hinn bezta kalf miök ungang ok feck í hendr sveini sínum, ok bad hann síoda thegr í stad, ok hann giordi svo. Síðann bar Abraham fram fyrir þau smiör ok miolk, ok þar meðr kalfinn þann tíma sem hann var sodinn, hann stod hiá þeim undir trenu.

him—running to whom, and falling forward to the ground, he worshipped one of them, saying: Pass not away, my Lord, from me thy servant, if at any time I have found favour in thy sight: I will rather bear you a little water, that ye may wash your feet in it, and rest yourselves here under the tree. I will place before you a little bread: nourish yourselves, and thus strengthen your life and hearts: then pass on. For thy sake I hope ye will turn hither to your servant. They answered: Do according as thou hast said. He hastened home into the tent to Sarah, and bade her take as quickly as possible three rations of bread, and prepare meat to them of it: but he went himself to the place where his cattle were, and took from thence one of the best, a very young calf, and gave it to his servant, and bade him boil it instantly, and he did so. Afterwards, Abraham placed before them butter and milk, and also the calf when it was boiled, and stood beside them under the tree.”

The interpretations of the text are mostly taken from the *Historia Scholastica*, a work written in the twelfth century, by Peter Com-

mestor, chancellor of the university of Paris, and held in such repute in the dark ages, that it was not only supposed to possess equal authority with the Scriptures, but was even preferred before them. Considerable use is also made of the *Speculum Historiale*; and numerous quotations are made from Josephus, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and the rest of the fathers.

It is not unworthy of notice, that such parts of the sacred history as are inserted in the ancient Norwegian production, entitled *Kongs-Skugg-Sio*, or “The Royal Mirror,” \* coincide almost verbatim with the same passages in *Stiorn*. The only difference consists in the use of a greater number of expletives in the former, from which it seems natural to conclude, either that the translations have been derived from a common source, or that the author of the Royal Mirror has known and availed himself of *Stiorn*. It is also remarkable that the various reading of the former is almost universally the textual reading of the latter. The following passages will be sufficient to shew the agreement and discrepancies that exist between them :

## STIORN.

*Thâ David var gamall ok nær örvasa.*

*Thessir varo i Râdagörd met hannem.*

## KONGS-SKUGG-SIO.

— var gamall madur ok allnær á aurvasa alldri.

*Thessir varo haufdingiar i râdagerd met hanem.*

\* First published at Soröe, 1768, 4to.

## STIORN.

*Joab hertogi Davids.*

*Hallt ok ord vid Simeí, tho at hann bölvadi mer er ek flydi fyrir Saker Absaloms brodr thins. ok tho met theim hætti at hann haffi nockum minning thess glæps, at æ stadfestist su bölván yfir hannem at Eylifu er hann bölvadi mer Saklausum.*

## KONGS-SKUG-SIO.

*Joab hertogi Davids kongs, ok frændi hans.*

*Hallt ok ord minn vit Simeí tho at hann bölvadi mer tha er ek flyda ofriki brodur thins Absaloms, ok tho met theim hætti, at hann hafi nockora minning glæpa sins til idran, at eigi stadfestist su bölván eilífliga yfir haufdi hannum, at hann bölvadi mer Saklausum.*

There is also a striking resemblance between the language and style of these works, both of them departing in some degree from the pure and classic Icelandic, and approaching more to the Latin idiom than most other writings of that period.

From the few documents that have been handed down to us, relative to the state of sacred literature in Iceland, during the reign of superstition, it would appear that copies even of the vulgate were by no means common; and the learned Bishop Jonson supposes, even that in many instances in which mention is made of the holy book (*helga bok*) being used in the administration of oaths, nothing more is meant than an image or representation of the Gospels cut in wood and painted, or cast in a mould, relics of which were still found in his time in the cathedral of *Skalhóllt*. \* The Psalms of David

\* Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. ii. p. 183.

in Latin, however, were more frequently to be met with; and such as were distinguishingly strict in their devotions made conscience of repeating a third part of the Psalter daily. The only attempt that was made to communicate the knowledge of the Divine oracles to others, seems to have been owing to the zeal of Thorlak Runolfson, who lived in the twelfth century, and of whom it is said, in the *Hungurvaka*, that “he read lectures on the sacred Scriptures;” but whether these lectures were public, and in the vernacular language, or merely delivered to such as were designed for the priesthood, cannot now be ascertained.

Notwithstanding the extreme distance of Iceland from the spot where the light of the Reformation first dawned on the benighted nations of Europe, that zone of the moral hemisphere was early irradiated with its beams, and invested with those inestimable blessings which the Sun of Righteousness never fails to impart to all who are within reach of his influence.

Oddur Gotshalkson, whose father filled the episcopal see of Holum, was the instrument employed by Providence for the purpose of effecting this important and beneficial change. In his sixth year he was sent over to Norway to the care of his uncle Guttorm, a lawyer in that country, by whom he was introduced into the school of Bergen, at that time taught by the pious and

\* *Hann lass yfir heil. ritningu.*

learned Magister Petreus. Happily for himself and for Iceland, he continued abroad till the doctrines of the Reformation began to excite a general sensation throughout the north of Europe. These doctrines attracted the attention of Oddur, who assiduously weighed their merits, and, even while others slept, made them the subject of close and impartial investigation. He soon perceived that they were vastly different from the principles with which his mind had been imbued from his infancy; but which of them were consonant with the will of God, was a question which gave him no small perplexity, and to which it was some time before he obtained a satisfactory solution. At last he was directed to the only way in which it was possible for him to arrive at the truth. Conscious of his lack of wisdom, and his liability to error, he “asked of God, who giveth unto all liberally, and upbraideth not.” For three successive nights he prostrated himself, half-naked, on the floor of his apartment, and besought the Father of Lights that he would graciously be pleased to open the eyes of his understanding, and shew him whether the principles of Rome, or those of Luther, were from heaven. The result was, a firm conviction that the cause of the reformer was the cause of God and truth.

Not long after this he left Bergen, and proceeded to Germany with the view of prosecuting his studies, and obtaining a more thorough acquaintance with the doctrines he had espous-

ed. Amongst other places he visited was Wittenberg, where he heard Luther and Melancthon, from whose sermons and conversation he derived much spiritual improvement. It is not improbable that it was here he first conceived the idea of translating the New Testament into his native language, and that he returned to Iceland full of the pious and noble design.

The difficulties, however, which Oddur could not but anticipate, were sufficient to have deterred any ordinary mind from engaging in such an undertaking. Ögmund, bishop of Skalholt, into whose employ he went, on his return from the continent, was the sworn enemy of every thing of the kind. Happening one day to surprise the rector of the cathedral in the act of reading the Gospel of Luke in German, in an obscure corner of the church, he instantly demanded what book it was he read? The poor priest was panic-struck, and could not make any reply; at which the Bishop was enraged, and, with as much delicacy as lenity, exclaimed, "Shew me it, thou son of a ——." Gisle, for so the priest was called, was obliged to hand him the New Testament, which he had no sooner opened than he condemned it as full of Lutheran heresy, and threw it with a vengeance into the court before the church. Yet, it was at the residence of this haughty and bigotted prelate, by one of his own servants, and partly at his expense, that this blessed, but by him de-



tested book, was to be translated into the vulgar tongue!

It is a remarkable fact, that the first Icelandic New Testament owes its birth to a place similar to that in which the glorious Subject of its testimony entered the world. To escape detection, Oddur made choice of a small cell in a cow-house, in which humble apartment he laid the foundation of a work which has proved a blessing to thousands, and which will continue to operate in its saving effects on thousands yet unborn. He was otherwise employed here in transcribing ancient ecclesiastical statutes and constitutions, on shewing his progress in which to the bishop, he obtained fresh supplies of paper and other writing materials, by means of which he was enabled to prosecute his favourite enterprise. He had not advanced farther, however, than the end of Matthew, when he was under the necessity of leaving the episcopal see. This removal was most probably occasioned by some information having been lodged against him and his crypto-lutheran brethren on account of their clandestine meetings, \* and the principles of the Reformation, which it became every day more and more apparent they had embraced.

\* The associates of Oddur were, Gisle Jonson, the priest above mentioned, Gissur Einarson, the Bishop's secretary, and his steward Oddur Eyolfson; all of whom met at the house of the latter, in order to read the Scriptures, and the works of Luther. *Hist. Eccles. Island.* tom. iii. p. 204.

On quitting Skallholt, he took a lease of the farm of *Reykium*, in the district of *Ölves*, where he brought his translation to a conclusion in the year 1539. As he found it would be in vain to think of printing it at the press which the Bishop of Holum had established in his diocess, he sailed the same year to Denmark, in which country he hoped, from the progress the Reformation had there made, to meet with men who would espouse the cause he had in hand, and facilitate the execution of his noble undertaking. Nor was he disappointed in his expectations. His Majesty, Christian III. patronised the work; and, on its being approved by the university, issued an edict authorizing its publication. Having thus obtained the Royal privilege, it was put to the press, and appeared the following year with the title :

*THETTA ER*

*hid Nya Testament*

*Jesu Christi eigenleg ord og Evangelia*

*hver hann sialfr*

*predikadi og kendi her i heime.*

*Sem hans Postular og Guds Spiallamenn*

*Sydann Skrifudu :*

*thau eru nu hier utlögð a Norrænu*

*Gudi til loffs og dyrdar*

*en Almugannum til Sæmdar og Sialuhialpar.*

“ This is the New Testament, the very words and Gospels of Jesus Christ, which he himself

preached and taught in this world, and which his Apostles and Evangelists afterwards committed to writing. These are now here translated into Norse, to the praise and glory of God, and the benefit and salvation of the common people.”

The name of the place where it was printed, that of the printer, and the date, are postfixed thus :

*Thryckt uti Konungligum Stad Roschyld af mier  
Hans Barth, XII. Dag Aprilis, Anno Domini  
MDXL.*

The size of the volume is large 12mo. The title page is ornamented with a cut, representing at the top a venerable personage in the attitude of preaching to a number of people who are sitting around him on the ground ; and, at the foot, are two men, the one with a large key in his hand, from whom several persons, that from their beards and attire seem to be monks, are running away perfectly affrighted ; the other is extending his arms as if he would wrest the key from the former. The mystery of these hieroglyphics is by no means recondite. They strikingly point out the effects which were to result from the circulation of the New Testament in Iceland. The word of God would be preached in purity to the inhabitants ; the key of knowledge would, in spite of the hatred and rage of its enemies, be put into their own hands ; and

before the gospel-light thus admitted, their ghostly deceivers would disappear like the vermin of night before the morning sun. On the inside of the title-page is another cut, representing the royal Psalmist praising God upon the harp, above which are the words: "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;" and at the bottom: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him," John 12.; together with a note from John xiv. 6.

The prefaces of Luther are prefixed, that to the Apocalypse excepted, which Oddur did not deem it prudent at that time to publish, on account of the harshness of some of the Reformer's expressions respecting the Roman hierarchy. There are also on the margin a few notes and parallel texts from Luther. The chapters are not divided into verses, but into paragraphs, which generally comprise two or three of our verses. The initial of each chapter is large, and ornamented with such figures as are commonly to be found in books printed at that period. The typography is rather coarse; and, besides the abbreviations peculiar to the Icelandic, there are several of such as were used by the monks. A list of the Gospels and Epistles is subjoined, according to the order in which they were read in the churches. At the end is an address to the inhabitants of Iceland, in which the translator states the supreme importance of the New Tes-

tament, and gives a compendious but lucid and scriptural view of its contents.

With respect to the merits of the translation, we have, in the royal grant prefixed, the opinion of the Copenhagen Professors, who declare it to be done “ exactly according to the Latin version,” or the Vulgate, from which it has certainly been made, with the exception of some few passages, in which Oddur has followed the version of Luther. In the choice of his renderings, however, he appears to have been more judicious than many contemporary translators, neither following the Vulgate, where it evidently was false, nor blindly adopting the variations of Luther, how high soever the opinion was which he entertained of his merits.

A considerable number of omissions occur, most of which, however, are common to almost all the translations made at the same period, and are to be ascribed to the small degree of progress which Biblical criticism had then attained. In point of language it bears the palm from all the succeeding versions, and is, on this account, highly esteemed by such as cultivate Icelandic. Besides the New Testament, Oddur Gottshalkson, translated also the 53d chapter of Isaiah into his mother tongue. To this he added short expository notes, and got it printed at Copenhagen in the year 1558. He must also have translated some entire books of the Old Testament (although it does not appear that he

ever published them) as Bishop Gudbrand declares he had adopted Oddur's version, after having revised and corrected it, into his edition of the whole Bible.\* Nor must I omit mentioning, to the praise of this friend to the word of God, and his country, that such of his translations as he made public were printed at his own private expense. In the year 1554, he was made lawyer of the northern division of the island, which office he filled with much credit till 1556, when he lost his life in the river *Laxá* in the *Kiosar* district. †

In 1562, Olaf Hjalteson, the first Lutheran bishop of Holum, published a small quarto volume called the "Gudspialla Bok," which contains the Gospels and Epistles arranged in the order according to which they were to be read in all the churches in his diocess, and may be viewed as a second edition of certain portions of Oddur's New Testament: the compiler having availed himself chiefly of that version in writing out the lessons of which the work consists. It was printed at Breidabolstad by Jon Matthieson, the first printer in Iceland. The learned author of the *Eccles. Hist.* ascribes a New Testament to the same bishop; ‡ but it was likely this volume he had in view. It has since been reprinted 1581,

\* *Hist. Eccles. Island*, Tom. iii. p. 376.

† Harboe ut sup. *Hist. Eccles. Island*, Tom. iii. p. 202—206. and *Kjöbenhavnske Selskabs Skrifter*, Tom. v. p. 286.

‡ *Ut Sup.* p. 361.

1599, and 1609 in 8vo; and in 1617, 1658, 1670, 1686, 1706, 1725, and 1750 in 12mo.

A translation of the Proverbs of Solomon appeared in the year 1580 in large 12mo, under the following title :

*Salomonis Ordsqvider  
a Norrænu  
Actorum X.  
Hver sem ottast Gud  
og giörer Rietvise a theim  
hefur hann thocknan.*

At the end is subjoined: *Thryckt a Holum i Hialltadal af Jone Jons Syne, anno 1580.* The translation is supposed to be the same that was begun twenty years before by Gissur Einarson, the first Lutheran Bishop of *Skalholt*, who also translated the book of Sirach, printed the same year at *Holum*. It is done from Luther's version, with the exception of a few passages, in which the rendering of the Vulgate has been preferred. According to Bishop Jonson,\* the translator was one of the most learned Icelanders of his day.

It was not till the year 1584 that the inhabitants of this island were put in possession of the whole of the revealed will of God. For this invaluable treasure they were indebted to Gud-

\* Hist. Eccles. Island, Tom. iii. p. 269.

brand Thorlakson, whom God raised up, and endowed with a more than ordinary degree of ingenuity, zeal, and perseverance; all of which qualities were indispensably requisite for so arduous and expensive an enterprise. He had no sooner been installed into the episcopal see of *Holum*, than he set himself with all his might to relieve the spiritual wants of those committed to his care. Notwithstanding the strenuous and indefatigable exertions of his predecessors, he found that much ignorance still prevailed, and that many deeply rooted prejudices and errors still continued to operate in the minds of the people; and he was convinced that the most effectual method that he could employ for eradicating these evils would be to furnish his countrymen with the Bible—that book which “enlighteneth the eyes,” and proves “a lamp unto the feet, and a light unto the paths,” of all who consult its contents. He accordingly formed the resolution of establishing a printing-office, through the medium of which, he might, with greater facility, carry his pious design into effect; and actually purchased, for the sum of 1100 rix-dollars, the press that had been set up at *Breidabolstad*, under the direction of Jon Matthieson, a Swede, whom Jon Areson, the last Catholic bishop of *Holum*, had brought over for that purpose. Little did this turbulent and ambitious dignitary anticipate, that the very press which he had procured from a foreign country, with the view of facilitating his hierar-



chical plans, was one day to be employed in printing a book which completely disproved the legitimacy of his claims to the character of a Christian bishop, and condemned, in the most pointed manner, the doctrines and ceremonies of that communion of which he was so zealous an advocate. Had he entertained the most distant idea that it was afterwards to furnish the common people with the word of God in their own language, he would most assuredly have refunded the expenses to the printer, and supposed he was doing God a service by committing it to the flames. How wonderful are the ways of the Most High! He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and accomplisheth his own all-wise purposes, through the instrumentality of men who have diametrically opposite ends in view.

Jon Jonson, who had already acquired some knowledge of the art of printing from his father, was prevailed on by Bishop Gudbrand to undertake a voyage to Copenhagen, in order to gain a more perfect acquaintance with the business. In the meantime, the bishop himself was assiduous in the preparation of a good translation, and provided types and other articles necessary for such an establishment: so that in the space of three years after he was invested with the episcopate, he had every thing in readiness for beginning to print. The press was first set up at *Nupufell*, in the valley of *Eyafjord*, which farm his Danish Majesty was pleased to grant to the printer and

his successors in office for a perpetual residence. Finding, however, that his personal presence was often required, the Bishop got it at length removed to *Holum*, where he rendered it more complete by the addition of various implements which he had partly obtained from abroad, and partly constructed by his own ingenuity and labour; for, being a great mechanic, he could imitate almost any thing he saw, or which he heard described by others. This aptitude was of great service to him, as it enabled him, in no small degree, to accelerate and beautify his typographical productions.

Notwithstanding the unremitting zeal and noble liberality of Gudbrand, it was with grief he found that he was not in possession of means adequate to defray the expenses connected with so stupendous an undertaking, and therefore applied to his Majesty, Frederic II. who not only authorized him to raise a rix-dollar from every church in Iceland, but also, of his own royal bounty, contributed to the execution of the work. The exact amount of his donation is not known with certainty, some estimating it at 500 rix-dollars, some at 300, while Helvaderus states it to have been 3000 rix-dollars. \* The Bishop afterwards obtained a second edict from his Majesty, in which it was ordered, that every church on the island should purchase a copy of the Bible when published. Both grants are prefixed to the

\* Dänische Bibliothek. ut sup.

work, which at length made its appearance, in folio, under the following title :

BIBLIA

*Thad Er, Öll*

*Heilög Ritning, utlögð*

*a Norrænu*

*Med Formalum Doct :*

*Martini Lutheri.*

*Prentad a Holum af*

*Jone Jons Syne*

M. D. LXXXIIII.

In English : “ *Biblia*; That is, The whole of Sacred Scripture translated into Norse, with the prefaces of Martin Luther, D.D. Printed at Holum, by Jon Jonson, 1584.” At the end is added : *Thetta Bibliu verk var endad a Holum i Hiallta dal, af Jone Jons Syne thann vi Dag Junii Anno Domini M. D. LXXXIIII. Einum, Almattigum, Odaudligum Gude, Födur, og Syne, og heilögum Anda, Sa sem er einn Gud i threnningu, og thrennur i einingu, theim hinum samma, sie Lof og Dyrð, Heidur og Thackargjörd um alldar allda, og ad eilyfa, Amen. i. e. “This Bible was finished at Holum, in Hialltadal, by Jon Jonson, on the 6th of June 1584. To the One Almighty and Immortal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, be honour and glory, praise and thanksgiving, throughout all ages, and eternally, Amen.”*

The typography of this volume, compared with that of the first Icelandic New Testament, is very perceptibly improved, and may even be called elegant, if we modify the expression according to the progress of the arts at that period. The pages are numbered with capitals, after the manner of the German Bible, which, from their augmentation towards the close, give it rather an awkward appearance. The chapters are divided into paragraphs, which are distinguished by capital letters on the margin, for the sake of reference. A number of cuts, for the most part designed and engraved by Gudbrand himself, are inserted in the corner of the space allotted for the text, and the insignia of the evangelists are prefixed to their writings. The only points made use of, are a stroke drawn downwards from right to left, and a full stop ; and almost all the contractions used in Oddur's Testament are retained. As the title intimates, the prefaces of Luther are inserted in their proper places, and his marginal notes and references are also adopted.

The version itself must be considered as the production of different hands. Not only the New Testament, but also some books of the Old, which had been translated by Oddur Gottshalkson, were adopted, after having been revised and corrected by the Bishop, as also a version of the Prophets, and the two books of Maccabees, by Gisle Jonson, whom Bishop Ögmund surprised in the act of reading part of the New Testament,

but who was afterwards advanced to the episcopal see of Skalholt. The share this prelate had in the translation of the Scriptures is considered to be uncertain by the author of the *Eccles. Hist.* *Aut*, says he, *universos Prophetas, aut magnam eorum partem, exposuit*; \* and again, *Postea autem plerosque, si non omnes Libros Propheticos ex Germanica in Islandicam linguam transtulit, cujus versionis schedulæ aut reliquiæ quædam a posteris ejus diu, aut ad patrum nostrorum tempora, servabantur.* † Being in possession of the MS. itself, I have the pleasure to be able to say, that it not only contains *all* the Prophets, but also the two books of Maccabees. It is written on paper, and consists of 455 pages, in ordinary folio. The title-page, and the beginning of the preface to Isaiah, are wanting. This preface, as well as those to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, are from Luther, but his prefaces to the lesser prophets are omitted. The pages are divided into two columns, except in two or three places where defective pages have been supplied; the hand-writing is good; and the abbreviations are by no means difficult. At the end of the prophets is the following subscription: *Endir a Malachia propheta: finis. Sie gudi Loff ad eilyfu, amen. Skriffad thann 30 dag Januarii anno domini 1575. i. e.* “The end of the Prophet Malachi. Finis. God be praised for ever, amen. Written the 30th Jan. 1575.” And at the end

\* Tom. iii. p. 376.

† Ibid. p. 320.

of the whole : *Skrifad i Skalholti Anno 1574. Byriad thann 23 dag Septembris : endur thann 10 dag Martii 1575. j. e.* “ Written at Skalholt, Anno 1574. Begun Sept. 23d. Ended March 10, 1575.” The author is declared, by Bishop Jonson, to have been a pious, diligent, and modest man, who stretched every nerve in rooting out the superstitions of Popery, and establishing the true religion in their place. He was well acquainted with the Latin, but principally studied the Danish and German languages ; and was assiduous in reading the best authors who had written in them, and especially the Holy Scriptures. \*

Yet, although it is manifest that Gudbrand has availed himself of this translation, it is equally evident that he has taken great pains in correcting and altering it, previous to his adopting it into the Bible. Of this the following specimen, from the conclusion of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, may serve as a proof :

## GUDBRAND.

*Fyrst hann hefur nu sitt Lyf til Synd offurs utgiesit, tha mun hann Sæde hafa og all leinge Lifa. og Drottins aform mun fyrir hans Hönd framganga. Thar fyrir at hans Sâla hefer Erfide drygt man han fögnud sia, og nægd hafa. Og fyrir*

## GISLE.

*Fyrst hann hefur nu sitt Lyf til Synd offurs utgiesid ; tha mun hann sædi hafa og all leingi lifua, og Drottins astundan mun fyrir hans haund utgreijd verda. Thar fyrir at hans sâla hefur erfuide drygtt, mun hann fagnud sia oc gnægd*

\* Tom. iii. p. 319.

## GUDBRAND.

*syna Vidrkenning, mun hann minn thion sa hinn Riettlátr, marga riettláta giöra, thviat hann ber theirra Synder. Thar fyrir mun eg honum mikin fiölda manna til bytis gefa, og honum skulu hiner Öflugu ad Herfange skiptást, thar fyrir at hann hefr sitt lyf i Daudann ut gefit, og er a medal Spillvirkianna reiknadr og hann hefur margra Synder borit, og hefr fyrir yfetrodnu mönnum bedit.*

## GISLE.

*hasa. Oc fyrir syna skilnings vitsku mun hann minn thion, sa hinn rietllate marga riettlata giöra, thviat hann ber theirra Synder thar fyrir mun ec honum mikin flokk manna til bytis gefa, oc honum skulu hiner auflugu at herfangi skiptlast, thar fyrir at han hefer sitt lyf i daudann ut gefuit og er a medal spillvirkianna reiknadr, oc hefer margra synder bored, og hefer fyrir yfuer trodnu mönnum bedit.*

When we reflect that the revision of the translations, the correction of the press, and the direction of the whole work devolved on Gudbrand alone, we cannot but be surprised at the vigour and diligence with which he prosecuted it, and especially at the close attention he has paid to the correctness of the version. The style and diction, says Bishop Jonson, are in no place dissimilar, but are the same throughout the whole Bible; and as these were peculiar to this worthy prelate, it is clear that the whole has either been corrected or translated by his own hand. The translation is not only accurately done from the version of Luther, but appears, with the exception of a few passages, to be expressed in such a manner, that Luther himself could not have expressed it better. Besides, the diction is extremely similar, being pure, simple, heroic, and

even elegant, yet free from ornament ; and the words are admirably adapted to the things they are designed to express. \* Nor is the Bishop single in his opinion on this subject. The version of Gudbrand is still regarded by the learned in Iceland as a kind of standard, according to which every good translation ought to be modelled ; and were it not for the obsolete phraseology inseparable from the period at which it was made, it might be regarded as absolutely inimitable.

Lest some might be disposed to call in question the validity of this opinion, it need only be observed, that being, for the most part, a faithful mirror of Luther's version, Gudbrand's translation must necessarily be entitled to a proportionate share of the eulogium that has been passed on its original, by men eminent for their erudition and skill in Biblical criticism. Michaelis, after having declared that the Peshito was the very best translation of the Greek Testament he had ever read, adds ; “ that of Lütner, though inferior to his translation of the Old Testament, holding the second rank.” † And a still more judicious critic, Griesbach, treating of the different kinds of German translations of the Bible, writes : “ Luther still holds his exalted rank ; and if we deduct the false interpretations which pretty frequently occur, but which were unavoidable two hundred and fifty years ago, I know of no translator of the Bible, who, on the whole,

\* Tom. iii. p. 376.

† Marsh's Michaelis, 2 Edit. vol. ii. p. 40.



and in this species of translation, has excelled him in the true art of translation. \*

In a short address to the reader, at the end of the Bible, Gudbrand requests all into whose hands it may come, to ascribe what faults they might find in the execution of the work, whether in respect to the translation or the printing, to human ignorance and frailty; and assures them at the same time, that it had been his grand concern to render it as perfect as possible. After which follows a number of errata which had inadvertently crept into the work.

The impression consisted of 1000 copies, of which one hundred were sent to Hamburgh to be bound, and a bookbinder was brought from that city in order to bind the remainder.

When ready, copies were sold to poorer churches and individuals, for about *eight* or *nine* rix-dollars; † and to those in better circumstances for *ten* and *twelve*; from which it is evident, taking the condition of the inhabitants of Iceland, even in those days, into consideration, that the number of those must have been small indeed who were able to procure the precious volume. Even in milder climes, how many thousands would be forever debarred from the privilege of having the Sacred Oracles in their possession, if they did not obtain them for an eighth part of the price? That the real object of the Bishop in the execution of this work, was to

† Eichhorn's Repertorium, vi. Theil. p. 267.

† About £.2 Sterling.

promote the glory of God, and the present and everlasting benefit of his countrymen, and not any private emolument, I was furnished with a convincing proof when at Holum ; having there obtained a sight of his diary, in which he has regularly entered every thing relative to the printing-office. From this MS. it appears, that he gave away a considerable number of copies gratis ; to some parishes *ten*, to others *twenty*, accompanying them with the pious wish, that that they might advance the best interests of the receivers.

Bishop Jonson enumerates five particulars which render this edition worthy of notice : It is the first edition of the entire Scriptures in the Icelandic language ; it was executed by a single individual in a short space of time ; it is the most handsome of all that have been published by private individuals ; it has always been the most esteemed on account of the purity of its diction, and, even at this day, it is preferred before more modern translations : and, lastly, if it did not form a new epoch in the ecclesiastical history of Iceland, it certainly kindled a brighter light in the Icelandic church than she had enjoyed at any former period. \*

Finding that, after all his exertions, the poorer classes had still little access to the sacred fountain of wisdom, Bishop Gudbrand resolved to reprint that part of the Scriptures which was most

\* Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. iii. p. 377.

suited to their necessities, and from the perusal of which, it was likely they would, by the Divine blessing, reap the most advantage. He accordingly published an edition of the New Testament separately in small octavo, the title of which is :

*Thad*  
*Nyia Testa-*  
*mentum, a Islendsku.*  
*Yfer sied og lesid, epter theim rieltustu*  
*Utlekkingum sem til hafa feingist.*  
*Matth. 17.*  
*Thesse er minn Elskulegur*  
*Sonur, a huorium jeg hef*  
*alla Thocknan, Hönum*  
*skulu thier hlyda.*  
*Prentad a Holum j Hialltadal*  
*ANNO*  
*M. DC. IX.*

*i. e.* “The New Testament in Icelandic, revised and corrected, according to the best translations that could be obtained. Matth. xvii. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, him shall ye obey. Printed at Holum in Hialltadal, 1609.” Both the general and particular prefaces of Luther are inserted, as also parallels and marginal notes, only these last are not so numerous as in the former edition. As the title intimates, the text is published from the most correct editions of the New Testament in other languages that had come to the hands of the Bishop sub-

sequently to the publication of the Bible ; for which reason, it is natural to suppose, that a number of defects are supplied, and several passages altered, in conformity to the greater degree of light that had, in the mean time, been thrown on the Scriptures.

But Gudbrand not only exerted himself to the utmost, in providing his countrymen with the Sacred Scriptures, and other useful books, during his life time : \* he was also solicitous that after his decease, they might enjoy the continuance of these blessings, and in his testament, dated Sept. 12, 1611, in default of his son's being qualified or disposed for carrying on the printing, he bequeathed the establishment, with all its appurtenances, to the cathedral of Holum, that those who should succeed him in that see, might prosecute the noble work which he had begun. † Nor was his attention turned to the cultivation of the vineyard of others, to the neglect of his own. That precious volume, which he was so anxious to put into their hands, and with which he wished them to be intimately acquainted, was the source whence he drew his own hopes and consolations. Numerous were the broils and troubles in which he was involved, but he experienced the word of God to be an effectual sup-

\* Vide Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. iii. p. 378—381, where Bishop Jonson furnishes us with a list of *eighty-five* works, mostly theological, which issued from Gudbrand's press, between the years 1575 and 1624.

† Vide Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. iii. p. 381.

port in the trying hour of affliction ; and having made full trial of its powers amidst the vicissitudes of life, he also placed an unshaken confidence in the Divine Testimony, on the arrival of that solemn period when he was called to enter the dark valley of the shadow of death. During his last illness, the Bible lay constantly on the bed beside him ; and though unable to read or handle the unwieldy folio, (being affected in his speech and right side by the palsy), he pointed to such passages as he wished to have read to him for his edification and comfort.\* This most respectable prelate died on the 20th of June 1627, in the eighty-fifth year of his age, after having filled his official capacity for the space of fifty-six years. The following effusions of Arngrim Jonas, his friend and fellow-labourer, will not be unwelcome to the learned reader :—

Floruerat magno Germania vasta Luthero,  
 Gudbrando radiat Patria nostra suo.  
 Biblia debentur Germanica scilicet isti,  
 Quod solum e multis jam tetegisse sat est.  
 Biblia debentur sancto vernacla labori  
 Hujus : et hinc poscit justa trophæa sibi,  
 Miles eras Domini, multus versatis in armis  
 Gudbrande, et ratio nominis inde tui.  
 Hunc veterum si more ducum tumulemus Achillem,  
 Ut simul arma viri fulgida tumbo tegat.  
 Biblia Sacrophago vernacla reponere fas est,  
 Athlethæ illæ Dei fervidus ensis erant.

\* Vide Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. iii. p. 426.

Sin statuæ vivo veluti de marmore surgant,  
 Res eodem recidit, Biblia marmor erunt.  
 Pauca habeat tumulus ; Nam cætera fama loquendo  
 Cum Sole æquatis passibus ire valet. \*

On the demise of Gudbrand, the episcopate of Holum devolved on his grandson, Thorlak Skuleson, who after having spent three years at the university of Copenhagen, had sustained the offices of Conrector and Rector of the diocesan school. As there still existed a great scarcity of Bibles on the island, he formed the resolution of treading in the footsteps of his ancestor and predecessor, and claimed a right to the use of the printing establishment, in virtue of Gudbrand's legacy, which he ultimately obtained by the decision of law, after some altercation with the heirs and near relations of the deceased prelate. He then made application to Christian IV. for liberty to print a new edition of the Holy Scriptures, which that Monarch not only granted, but renewed the edict which his royal father had passed in favour of Gudbrand's plan, and generously accompanied these regulations with a donation of 200 rix-dollars from his own privy purse. The Bishop was at the same time ordered to new-model the existing version, according to the Danish translation done by Bishop Resenius ; in accomplishing which he was assisted by Svein Jonson, who had also studied at Copenhagen, and at that time officiated as Rector of the cathedral of Holum. On comparing the

\* Dän. Bibliothek. viii. p. 60, 61.

dates, it appears that no less than *nine* years elapsed from the time the royal privileges were granted, ere the work left the press, which protraction was chiefly occasioned by a want of paper.\* Its title is :—

BIBLIA  
*Thad er*  
*Öll Heilög*  
*Ritning, utlögð*  
*a Norrænu.*  
*Med Formalum D.*  
*Marth. Luth.*  
*Prentud ad nyu a Hoolum.*  
M. DC. XLIII.

i. e. “ *Biblia, &c.* Reprinted at Holum, 1644.” The impression consisted of 1000 copies. The size is folio, though not quite so large as that of the preceding edition; but both the paper and type are preferable. What renders this edition remarkable, is its being the first into which the division of the text into verses is introduced. Their number is placed sometimes at the beginning, and sometimes in the middle of the line; and at the beginning of a principal paragraph, it stands at the end of the preceding, in order to make way for the large initial. It has a number of cuts, inserted for the purpose of illustrat-

\* Dän. Bibliothek, p. 102. et Hist. Eccles. Island. ut sup.

ing the Scripture history, which, though still sufficiently coarse, are vastly superior to what were exhibited in the former editions. On the margin are the glosses of Luther, with a considerable augmentation of parallel references.

As it is from this edition that the two most recent impressions have been taken, its text may be considered as exhibiting the version in established use in Iceland. According to the royal order, Bishop Thorlak was enjoined to render the version agreeable to that published in Danish 1607, by the learned Professor Resenius, afterwards Bishop of Zealand. On its first appearance, this translation met with great acceptance in Denmark, a circumstance which, it is likely, was owing to the high repute in which Resenius stood for learning, and the consideration that it was made immediately from the Hebrew and Greek originals, with all the aid that was to be obtained from the advanced state of science, and the different translations which had been made by that time into the European languages. It was soon found, however, to be greatly defective in point of perspicuity, the translator having transplanted the peculiar idioms of the Hebrew tongue into his own, and paid more attention to the genius of the former than that of the latter. “Quæ,” says Kortholt, \* “ut proximè ad fontes accedunt, ita cultum et nitorem dictionis parum curant, atque Hebraismo-

\* De Variis Script. Edit. cap. 28. 6.



rum retinendorum studio valde reddita sunt obscura. Sic ut Sermo quo utuntur, maxime in libris dogmaticis, Danicis auribus fere peregrinus sit." Now, although the version of Gudbrand was capable of considerable improvement, it would certainly have lost more than it would have gained by its being rendered entirely conformable to this new Danish translation. This Bishop Thorlak must have been sensible of; for he has actually dared to act contrary to the royal injunction; and it is only in a few isolated passages that the peculiar renderings of Resenius have been adopted. Thus, εικη, which Gudbrand had received into the text, Matth. v. 22. is again omitted; *Frelsaran* "Saviour," Gen. xlix. 10. is changed for the original word *Shiloh*; and "Sonuren," "the Son," 1 John v. 7. for *Orded* "the word." On the other hand, Resenius reads εφεινατε, John v. 39. indicatively, whereas the imperative is still retained in the Icelandic. Resenius adopts the reading Κυριω, Rom. xii. 11.; the Icelandic is still conformable to καιρω. Resenius supplies χωρις, James ii. 18. which is omitted in the Icelandic. These, and numerous other passages which might be adduced, shew, that the Bishop either consulted the version of Resenius on certain passages only, or that, on comparing the two versions with each other, he did not find sufficient ground for the majority of the alterations.

I must not, however, conceal my suspicions, that the version according to which Bishop

Thorlak was ordered to new-model the Icelandic, was no other than that contained in the splendid folio edition of the Danish Bible, commonly known by the name of "Christian IV. Bible," and published at Copenhagen 1633. The difference between the text of this edition, and that published at the same place in 1589, is very inconsiderable. It is rendered as conformable as possible to the version of Luther, with the exception of those passages in which that version had been taken from faulty readings in the original texts. Now, as far as I can find, this is the very characteristic of the second edition of the Icelandic Bible. The author of the Eccles. Hist. says indeed expressly, and quotes Bishop Harboe as his authority, "jubente Christiano quarto accommodatam ad versionem Danicam a Joh. Resenio confectam ; \* but it was easy for him to confound the private version of that learned divine with the common translation published under the care of the consistory of the university at the period when he filled the episcopal see of Zealand. The same mistake has been committed by Hielmstierne, who, in his catalogue, † calls Christian IV. Bible the edition of Resenius.

Three years afterwards, Bishop Thorlak published :

\* Tom. iii. p. 720.

† Bogsamling, vol. i. p. 2.

*DAVIDIS PSALTARE**Med*

*Formala D. Mart. Lutheri, og  
Theirre Stutte Summu edur  
Innehallde sem hann hefur giort  
Yfer sierhvorn Psalm.*

*Prentadur a Holum i Hialltadal  
epter Bon og Forlage thess Froma Velvysa  
Eruverduga Heidurs Manns  
Thorleifs Magnussonar ad Hlydarenda  
Anno 1647.*

*i. e.* “The Psalms of David with the preface of Dr. Luther, and a brief summary of their contents drawn up by him, and prefixed to each Psalm. Printed at *Holum*, in *Hialltadal*, at the request and expense of the pious, learned, and venerable Thorleif Magnusson of *Hlidarenda*, A. D. 1647.” 8vo. The version is the same with that of Gudbrand, only the marginal notes and references are omitted. It was reprinted 1675. The *Liber Psalmorum*, stated by Le Long to have been printed in the year 1619, must either have been Arngrim Jonas’ commentary on the 91st Psalm, published at *Holum* 1618, or a Hymn-book (*Psalmabok*) printed at the same place 1618, 1619, but of which the first edition had been printed 1589.

By a misrepresentation of the circumstances connected with the printing-press, Theodore Thorlakson, Bishop of *Skalholt*, obtained an or-

der from his Danish Majesty, in the year 1685, in virtue of which he removed it to his own see, where he erected it at considerable pains and expense, and bid fair for acquiring the same celebrity by his typographical productions that his father and great-grandfather had done before him. To this he certainly would have been entitled, if, like them, he had availed himself of the improved state of the press, and instantly taken measures for reprinting the Holy Scriptures, seeing neither of the former editions bore any proportion to the population of Iceland; and the lapse of twenty years must have considerably exhausted that printed in 1644. Yet, in a list of forty-six different works which issued from the press, while in his hands, many of which undoubtedly possess considerable importance in regard to the literary history of Iceland \*, we only meet with one that claims the attention of the lover of biblical literature, viz.

*Harmonia Evangelica,*

or “The Harmony of the Gospel-accounts of the incarnation, birth, life, doctrine, sermons, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, according as they are separately described by the holy evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; *Skalholt*, 1687.” 8vo. This Harmony is merely a

\* Such as *Landnâmabok*, *Kristnisaga*, *Saga Olafs Kongs Tryggvasonar*, *Schedæ Ara Prests*, &c.

translation of that published by Chemnitius, Lyserus, and Gerhardus. The following brief extract from the preface will give the reader some idea of the work :

“ With respect to the translation of the gospel history, the good men who originally composed this book did not make any new version, but followed the Latin translation of Erasmus, as Chemnitius himself acknowledges in the preface. But I have adopted that of the last edition of the Icelandic Bible, published by my father Thorlak Skuleson, both because it is in general use in this country, and because it perfectly harmonizes with the version of Luther. To this we closely adhered, and have been careful rather to use *the very words of the Bible*, and suffer no part of it to be lost, than set forth any part of the history in a more polished style. And as nothing is omitted which the Evangelists have written, neither is there any addition to the history, a few passages excepted, where certain words are placed within parentheses, for helping the reader to a better understanding of the text.”

To the harmony is added a triple appendix : 1st, An account of the success of the gospel immediately after the ascension of Christ, which is taken from Acts i. and ii. 2d, A narrative of the lives and death of the Evangelists and Apostles, from And. Hundorfii *Theatro Historico*. 3d, The history of the destruction of Jerusalem, by Oddur Gottshalkson, which con-

cludes with the letter of Abgarus to our Saviour, and the threefold sentence supposed to have been pronounced against him previous to his crucifixion.

The third edition of the Icelandic Bible was printed under the inspection of Stein Jonson, Bishop of *Holum*. The press, the removal of which to *Skalholt* has already been noticed, was purchased in the year 1704 by Biörn, at that time bishop of the northern diocess, who brought it back to its original station, and kept it going till his death in 1713. When Stein took possession of the episcopal residence, he found that the printing-press was estimated at 500 rix-dollars, the price for which it had originally been sold to the bishop of *Skalholt*, and as matters then stood, it was not in his power to remedy the business; but happening ten years afterwards to fall in with the original will of Gudbrand, he applied to the Royal Chancery of Copenhagen for permission to appropriate the establishment to the purposes expressly specified by the testator, the consequence of which was that an edict was issued, ordering those who laid claim to the press, as theirs by right of inheritance, to appear before commissioners who were appointed to settle the difference. The accommodation accordingly took place at the General Assembly 1724, and the press was restored to the Cathedral of *Holum*.

Having in the meantime petitioned his Majesty, Fred. IV., for permission to print a new

edition of the Bible, Stein obtained a renewal of the grants made to his predecessors; but instead of printing the text of the former edition as it stood, he was enjoined to make a new translation from the Danish Bible, printed at the Orphanhouse of Copenhagen. The title of this edition is as follows :

*BIBLIA*  
*Thad er öll*  
*Heilög Ritning*  
*Fyrir Hanns Kongl. Majest.*  
*Vors Alldranádugasta Arfa*  
*Herra Konungs*  
 FRIDERICUS FIORDA  
*Christelega Ummsorgun*  
*Med Kostgæfne og epter Höfud Textanum*  
*meir enn fyrrum athugud so og med*  
*adskilianlegum Parallelar aukenn.*  
*Thrickt á Holum i Hialltadal*  
*anno 1728.*

i. e. “ *Biblia*, That is, the whole of Sacred Scripture, translated with diligence, and more accordant with the original texts than heretofore, by order of his Royal Majesty, our most gracious and rightful Sovereign, Frederic IV., and augmented with several parallel references. Printed at *Holum* in *Hialltadal*, A. D. 1728.” The size of this edition is folio, but smaller than either of the two former ones, and, consequently, more convenient; but the expectations

that were raised respecting it were greatly disappointed both by the badness of the paper and printing, and the very indifferent state of the text. In rendering the text more conformable to the originals, the Bishop has followed the Danish version with so much servility, that innumerable Danicisms have found their way into his translation, in consequence of which many passages are involved in impenetrable obscurity to the mere Icelandic reader. These circumstances, combined with the high price at which it was sold, (seven specie dollars,) excited a general prejudice against it, and greatly obstructed its circulation, and it is still reckoned the worst edition of the Icelandic Bible.

In the year 1741, the learned and pious Bishop Harboe was sent over to Iceland in the capacity of Visitor-General of the Icelandic churches, in which capacity he travelled over the greatest part of the island, made strict inquiry into the state of the churches, the character and abilities of the clergy, the instruction of youth, &c. The representations he gave in to his constituents were attended with most beneficial consequences, especially in respect to the schools, the state of which was greatly ameliorated. In the course of his visitations, this worthy prelate found that there existed on the island a lamentable deficiency of the Scriptures; and, on his return to Copenhagen in the year 1745, his benevolent disposition prompted him to take the necessary measures for providing it with an adequate supply. On



the 3d of June the following year, a royal edict was issued, authorizing the raising of the customary tax of one rix-dollar from every church on the island; and in 1747, the fourth edition of the Icelandic Bible left the press, under the title :

*BIBLIA*  
*Thad er*  
*Öll Heilög Ritning*  
*Utlögd á Norrænu ;*  
*Epter Theirre Annare Edition Bibliunnar sem finust*  
*Prentud a Hoolum i Islande*  
*anno MDCXLIV.*  
*med Formálum og Utskiringum*  
*Doct. Martini Lutheri,*  
*Einnig med*  
*Stuttu Innehalde sierhvers Capitula,*  
*og so*  
*Citatium.*  
*Thesse Biblia Kostar O Innbundinn Tvo Rijkis*  
*Dale og Thriu Mörk*  
*Prentud i Kaupmanna Höfn,*  
*I thvi Konunglega Wäysen-Huuse, og med thess*  
*Tilkostnade,*  
*af*  
*Gottmann Friderick Kisel,*  
*anno MDCCXLVII.*

*i. e.* “The whole of Sacred Scripture, translated into Norse, according to the second edition of the Bible, printed at Hoolum in Iceland, A.D.

1644, with the prefaces and notes of Martin Luther, D. D. and the summaries of each chapter, and the citations. This Bible costs two rix-dollars and an half unbound. Printed in Copenhagen, in the Royal Orphan-house, and at its expense, by Gothmann Friderick Kisel, A. D. 1747." The form is quarto, the paper good, and the typography vastly superior to that of any of the preceding editions. In the revision of the text, and the correction of the press, Bishop Harboe was assisted by Jon Therkelson, who had formerly been rector of the school at Skalholt, but acted as secretary to the Bishop during his stay in Iceland, and accompanied him to Copenhagen in 1745. The text agrees almost verbatim with that of 1644; and where any alterations have been made, we are informed, in a brief address to the reader, that they were introduced according to authority.

Being sold for a very reasonable price, the copies of this edition, 1000 in number, were brought within the reach of multitudes, who had never before been in possession of the words of eternal life. Still, however, there were many whose circumstances precluded them from all access to the treasure, and they must have continued in this state of exclusion had not the Lord raised up a Danish merchant, of the name of Laurence Stistrup, to commiserate their destitute situation. This gentleman formed the noble purpose of devoting the superfluous property of which he was possessed, to the distribution of the Holy Scrip-

tures among his fellow-men. The sum originally appropriated, with this view, amounted to about 7000 specie dollars ; but owing to his zeal and good management, it was increased before his death to 12,000, for which he purchased shares in the Royal Bank of Copenhagen. The rights of these shares were, in virtue of his legacy, transferred to the College of Missions ; and the College have accordingly, ever since, made an annual purchase of about 560 copies of the Scriptures with the interest, which are distributed gratuitously in the different provinces of the Danish dominions. Mr. Stistrup was no sooner apprised of the new edition of the Icelandic Bible, and the poverty of many of the Icelanders, than he purchased 596 copies of the whole Bible, and 1693 copies of the New Testament, and sent them over to be proportionally divided among the poorest inhabitants on the island.

The New Testament just mentioned was published by the same office, 1750, in octavo. The impression consisted of 2000 copies, which were sold at the moderate price of three marks each. From this period, to the close of the century, no attempts were made to multiply copies of the Scriptures in Iceland, though there was still ample room for exertion, as the existing copies bore but a small proportion to the population of the island.

In the first volume of the Transactions of the Icelandic Literary Society, published in 1781, is the commencement of a new translation of select

passages of the prophets, by the learned Jon Olafsen, which is continued in the following volumes, to the sixty-second chapter of Isaiah. The translator was well versed in the Hebrew, and has constantly had the original before him when preparing his version, which, besides its merits as greatly superior to the common translations, is remarkable on account of its being the only Icelandic version done from the original Hebrew that has ever been printed. The common text is first inserted, below which follows that of Mr. Olafson, accompanied with a few critical notes, printed with a smaller type. The manner in which this specimen is executed, cannot but excite regret that the Icelandic church did not receive more extensive contributions, of a similar nature, from the biblical acquirements of the translator. \*

A new version of the epistle to the Galatians, by Dr. Finnsen, appeared in his periodical work, *Qvöld-vökurnar*, in the year 1794 ; but it borders too much on the paraphrastic, and is too much modernized to admit of its adoption into the public translation. Indeed the learned author appears to have been sensible of this, and states, in his preface to the volume, that it was merely designed for private edification.

It was not to be supposed that, in the progress of those exertions, dictated by the laudable spi-

\* His Treatise de Baptismo, Havn. 1770, is justly held in the greatest estimation.

rit of Christian zeal for which the last twenty years have been so eminently distinguished, the spiritual wants of the inhabitants of this remote island should be entirely forgotten. In the year 1800, a Society was formed by several pious clergymen in Fuhnen and Holstein, for the purpose of advancing the interests of true religion, by the distribution of small religious tracts, and as many copies of the Holy Scriptures as the limited nature of their funds would allow. Their attention was soon directed to Iceland; and having opened a correspondence with the Bishop, with the view of ascertaining the exact state of the island in respect to the Scriptures, they received the most authentic information, that copies of that blessed book could only be obtained with the utmost difficulty, and that if no measures were taken for procuring a supply, the copies would all be extinct in less than ten years. They were also informed, at the same time, that the printing-press, which had been removed from Holum, and attached to the Literary Society in the south, was no longer in order, and that the hope of the inhabitants was exclusively turned towards the benevolence of foreign Christians. \* In consequence of this information, the Fuhnen Society immediately resolved to print 2000 copies of the Icelandic New Testament, but ere they had time to put their resolution into exe-

\* Third Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Appen. No. VII.

cution, my worthy fellow-labourer, the Rev. Mr. Paterson, and I were sent, in the Providence of God, to Copenhagen; and having been made acquainted with the designs of the Society, as well as the population and wants of Iceland, we transmitted an account of these to a friend in London, by whom it was laid before the Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The Committee, with their usual liberality, requested that the proposed edition might be increased, at their expense, to 5000 copies; and the work was put to the press under the direction of Justiciary (now Etatsraad) Thorkelin, Privy Keeper of the Royal Archives in Copenhagen, and himself a native of Iceland.\* The impression was finished in 1807, and the edition bears the following title:

*That*  
*Nya Testamente*  
*Vors*  
*Drottinns og Endur Lausnara*  
*JESU CHRISTI*  
*efter theirri annari útgáfu thes á Íslendsku.*  
  
*Prentat i theim Konúnglega Haufutstad*  
*Kaupmannaháúfn af Sebastian Popp*  
*árum efter Guds Burd 1807.*

\* Third Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Appen. No. VII. p. 133, 134.

*i. e.* “ The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, according to the second Icelandic edition. Printed at the Royal Capital, Copenhagen, by Sebastian Popp, the year after the birth of God, 1807.” On the 3000 copies intended for gratuitous distribution is printed: *Bok thessi a theim fátaka gefens at meddeilast og má allsengu verdi seliast.* “ This book is given gratuitously to the poor, and must not be sold for any price.” The rest were to be sold for four marks. It occupies 846 pages in octavo. In the preface, which is very brief, it is stated that the second edition of the book was made the foundation of the present impression; by which we are to understand, not the second edition of the Icelandic New Testament, which would be that published by Gudbrand, along with the Bible in 1584, but the text found in the second edition of the Icelandic Bible which had been reprinted in 1747 and 1750, and was, in fact, to be considered as the standard. A number of orthographical alterations were introduced, together with several new words and phrases, which appeared to the corrector of the press to be more eligible than those found in the former editions. For these latter innovations, however, he alone is accountable, as they were not only done without the knowledge of the Societies, at whose expense the edition was printed, but in opposition to one of the fundamental principles on which the British and Foreign Bible Society is established. It must be allowed, at the same time, that

the alterations are of no great importance, and would not have been mentioned here, had it not been that they are disapproved of by the generality of the Icelanders, who are nevertheless thankful for the gift, and peruse it with assiduity and profit.

Of the impression, about 2000 copies were sent over to Iceland, previous to the breaking out of hostilities between Great Britain and Denmark; 500 copies, which the committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society intended to be placed at the disposal of the Bishop of that island, were unexpectedly detained in Copenhagen, and providentially escaped the flames, which, during the bombardment, consumed the greatest part of the house in which they were deposited; \* and owing to obstacles occasioned by the war, it was impossible to get any more copies dispatched from Copenhagen till 1812, when a considerable quantity was consigned to the care of the Archdeacon, and other individuals of respectability, who cordially interested themselves in their distribution. The remainder were sent over and brought into circulation in 1814 and 1815, and received by the inhabitants with every demonstration of gratitude and joy.

The Committee had it also in contemplation, to promote the printing of an edition of the Icelandic Bible, but their plan was interrupted by the intervention of hostilities, and it was not be-

\* Fourth Report, p. 170, 171.



fore the beginning of 1812 that it could be carried into effect. Yet even then the difficulties arising from the suspension of regular correspondence, threatened to put a stop to the progress of the work, so that the Committee were induced to request me to proceed to Copenhagen, in order to superintend its completion, and make the necessary arrangements for the binding and dispatching of the copies, when printed, to Iceland. His Danish Majesty having been graciously pleased to grant me permission to reside in that city, I repaired thither in the autumn of the above-mentioned year. The peculiar circumstances of the times still retarded the execution of the work, especially the impossibility of procuring an additional supply of paper from Sweden, whence the rest had been brought, and we were ultimately obliged to use a very inferior kind, to the no small deterioration of the typography. The impression was at length brought to a conclusion by the end of 1813. It consisted of 5000 copies, and assumed the following title:—

BIBLIA

*Thad er*

*Aull heilaug Ritning*

*útlaugd á Islendsku*

*og prentud*

*Epter theirri Kaupmannahausnfsku Utgafú*

MDCCXLVII

*at forlagi*

*Thess Bretska og útlenda Felags  
til útbreidslu Heilagrar Ritningar meðal allra þjóða,*

KAUPMANNHAUFN,

*Are epter Burð vors Herra og endurlausnara Jesu*

*Christi MDCCCXIII*

*af C. F. Schubart ; prentara thess Konunglega*

*Foreldralausu Barna Húss.*

*i. e.* “The Bible, containing the whole of Sacred Scripture, translated into Icelandic, and printed according to the Copenhagen edition of 1747, at the expense of the British and Foreign Bible Society, for the distribution of the Holy Scriptures among all nations. Copenhagen, the year after the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ 1813, by C. F. Schubart, printer to the Royal Orphanhouse.” The New Testament, which, for the sake of expedition, was printed at the office of Thorstein Einarson Rangel, has the same title with that of the preceding edition. The Committee, desirous of rendering the supply as ample as possible, and knowing both the wants and the desire of the Icelanders to possess the Scriptures, resolved to have 5000 additional copies of the New Testament, struck off with the same types employed in printing that for the entire edition of the Bible, which was accordingly accomplished at the same time; and most of the copies were got ready for the spring ships, in which they were forwarded to the different harbours on the coasts of Iceland.

Towards the printing of this edition, L. 150 were contributed by the Edinburgh Bible Society; about L. 120 by Friends to the circulation of the Scriptures in Holstein; and 308 rix-dollars, 4 marks, by the Fuehnen Society for Promoting the knowledge of Christianity. The rest of the expenses were defrayed by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

# APPENDIX.

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No. II.

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POEM OF THANKS FROM ICELAND

TO THE

British and Foreign Bible Society,

BY

SIRA JON THORLAKSON,

OF BÆGISÁ,

*The Translator of "Paradise Lost" into Icelandic verse.*



# APPENDIX.

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No. II.

POEM OF THANKS,  
&c. &c.

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TIL

THESS ENGELSKA BIBLIU FELAGS

FRA ISLENDINGUM.

Thu, Kristsverdugi felags flokkur!  
forskulldar meir en annar nockur  
at nefnast thannig nu â ölld!  
Rödulskiær thinn sig reisti liomi  
thâ riki myrkra Kristindomi  
ögra let nærri komid qvölld.

Englanna kongur ut thig sendi;  
Englar komnir frá Drottins hendi  
hans ther safnadar styrkid stand,

og honum smyried holla thegna ;  
 hedanaf gicrist Ydar vegna  
 England sannkallat Englaland.

Thá vorir skiaedu villu-fiendur,  
 vöktu Ritningar fottrodendur,  
 ther Englar, risud theim igegn ;  
 i kjarleiks anda samansvarnir  
 sannleikans til ad efla varnir  
 ei huga spördud, aud ne megn.

Fådæma-kjarleiks fegurd slika  
 frá Ydur streyma ser eg lika  
 allt nordur hingat yfir mig  
 éyu thar himi, kend vid klaka  
 i kölldum mar, sem eins og iaka  
 i kringum Island sveigir sig.

Fætur engelskra fridarboda  
 fornar Postula brautir troda  
 utsendir likt um allann heim ;  
 Siá their hugprudu sannleiks vinir  
 sitt lif ei spara meir en hinir  
 einn til min kominn er af theim.

Gudliga stiorn eg thari thecki  
 thess sem eg dyrka, en se tho ecki ;  
 min svo berliga minnist hann !  
 o skylda'g thannig uhrærd, sofa  
 is-kölldum fângin sinnis dofa  
 velgiörning eiga thacka thann.

Mammon og Judas mundu syta  
 mikil gíald-spell, og thaug álita  
 eins og án þarfar utsoud  
 sem kostat hafid kíærleiks vegna  
 Krists til at smyria rikis thegna  
 og eingi reiknar utan Gud.

Mergd af Guds orda megin-hirdslum  
 mörg thusund-full af andar smyrslum  
 hvörvetna færast ker umkring ;  
 heilög Ritning til hiálpur sálum  
 í hvörskyns landa tungumálum  
 utbyttist frons um heilann hring.

Hvad má godgírni gudlig heita  
 gefins ef eigi slíka að veita  
 Guds helgidoma gnægd af aud,  
 og með gíafverdi sumpart selia  
 svo at okeypis jafnt má telia  
 heimum utdeilt himnabraud.

Er thvi iardneskum avinningi  
 ærit fíarstædt, at hertil thvingi  
 ydar himinlynd hiörtu sá ;  
 helldur thusundfaldt honum ædra  
 heidur Drottins og velferd brædra  
 vakti með Ydur verkun thá.

Háleitt felag ! til heidurs Gudi  
 helgat, og frama Krists söfnudi !  
 gott verk hefir thu gíört á mer !



thess skal eg iafnan vottur vera,  
og verdug heidursteikn frambera  
tharum, eins fyrir Hæd og her.

Tho hraustir kappar hrosi sigri  
hrak er ámoti tignarligri  
gudræknis athöfn thinni thad ;  
hennar not, laun og heidur vara  
heims yfir serhvörn maktarskara  
her og á ödrum hærra stad.

I minu nafni og minna barna  
med thessum ordum vel eg giarna  
Thacklæti giallda ther og pris ;  
o! at ver mættum eins vel niota  
till allra heilla og sálarbota  
thinnar giâfar, sem thu oss kys!

Ölldrud kona med falldi og feldi  
fann hvitum, undir Nordra Veldi,  
Bardarsey, stirdann gel eg od!  
Opt thad sem minir kundar qvâdu  
konnungar fordum milldir thâdu  
thiggid og, Fedur, thessi liod

Engla Iöfur, sem himni og heimi  
med hátign styrir, Ydur geimi!  
Hanns blessun Ydur stydie sterk!  
Su er min osk af heitu hiarta  
her og sidar at meigi skarta  
umbun Hanns god fyrir Ydar verk.

Pann Iöda Julii, 1815.

# Societati Biblicae Anglorum

## ISLANDIA. \*

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*TU, CHRISTO digna Societas,  
Meres, præ alia quavis,  
Tale nomen, in nostris diebus ;  
Tuum jubar, solari non cedens,  
Ortum vidimus, quum tenebrarum imperium  
Christianismo noctem ruentem intentavit.*

*REX Ang(e)lorum te delegavit ;  
Angeli a DEI latere,  
Vos ejus civitatis statum firmatis,  
Et ipsi fideles subditos ungitis ;  
Dehinc ANGLIA ob vestram causam  
ANG(E)LORUM TERRA merito vocabitur.*

*QUUM hæretici, nocivi nostri hostes,  
Excitarunt scripturæ calcatores,  
Vos ANGLI contra eos surrexistis,  
In spiritu caritatis conjurati,  
Ad veri defensionem instituendam,  
Non animo, nec divitiis, nec viribus, pepercistis.*

\* Translated by the learned Professor Finn Magnusson.

*RARISSIMUM talem caritatis splendorem  
Ego etiam a te effundi cerno  
In me boreali vicinam polo,  
Insulam a glacie nomen trahentem,  
Quæ, nivis concretæ cumulo similis,  
Frigidæ zonæ cingor oceano.*

*PEDES Anglorum, pacis nuntiorum,  
Apostolorum prisca vestigia calcant,  
Simili modo per totum mundum emissi ;  
Ecce ! cordati ii veritatis amici  
Non minus illis propriæ parcunt vitæ ;  
Unus eorum me jam visitavit.*

*IN ea re recognosco regimen  
Ejus quem colo, sed non video ;  
Tam aperte mei memor est !  
Num, sic attacta, dormiero,  
Perfrigido mentis torpore capta ;  
Pro tanto beneficio gratias non egero !*

*MAMMON vel Judas sane lugerent  
Magnas impensas, censentes  
Sine ulla necessitate profusas,  
Illas, quas vos, caritate commoti,  
Erogastis in Christianorum unctionem  
Et quas nemo, DEO excepto, computavit.*

*LARGA copia e divini verbi thesauris,  
Vasa unguentorum spiritualium multoties mille,  
Circumferuntur ubicunque ;*

*Sacra scriptura, regionis cujusvis  
Idiomati reddita, in animarum salutem,  
Distribuitur per totum terrarum orbem.*

*QUID meret nomen divinæ benevolentiae,  
Si non gratuita præbitio  
Sacrarum DEI divitiarum,  
Atque venditio æquissima,  
Ut donis adnumerari posset  
Panis cælestis mundo distributus!*

*NULLUM terrestre lucrum  
Ad hoc vestra cælestia  
Pectora cogit ;  
Sed illo millies sublimior  
Domini veneratio, atque fratrum salus,  
Officium tale vobis indixerunt.*

*ILLUSTRIS SOCIETAS! divino honori  
Ac Christiani cætus refectioni sacrata,  
Perutilem mihi operam dedisti ;  
Semper hujus rei testis ero,  
Ac ejus honorifica signa  
Et cælo et terræ exhibebo.*

*FORTIUM ducum triumphum  
Cedunt tuo inclyto  
Pietatis exercitio ;  
Ejus merces et honos  
Mundanae cunctae gloriae prævalebunt,  
Hic et in summo cælo.*

*MEO et liberorum nomine,  
His verbis cupio tibi  
Gratias et laudes solvere ;  
Utinam tuo dono fruamur  
In omnifariam salutem,  
Ex tuo voto !*

*ANNOSA, peplo et palla  
Amicta candide sub Boreæ regno,  
Rigidam cano cantionem THULE ;  
Sæpe meorum gnatorum odas  
Clementes olim accepere Reges,  
Vos etiam hocce, PATRES ! accipite carmen.*

*ANGELORUM princeps, qui cælum et solum  
Summus gubernat, vos ille seruet !  
Ipsius valida benedictio vos suffulciat !  
Opto fervido corde  
Quod in æternum ejus remuneratio  
Opera vestra bona decoret !*

FI. ID. JUL. A. S. MDCCCXV.

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OBSERVATIO TRANSLATORIS

AD STROPHIAM SECUNDAM.

Vox *Englar*, vel *Einglar* linguâ Islandicâ et ANGLOS et  
ANGELOS significat.

# ICELAND

TO THE

British and Foreign Bible Society.

IMITATED IN ENGLISH.

SOCIETY OF CHRIST ! whose fame  
The world shall raise o'er thy compeers—  
Thou most deserving of such name  
Or in the past or present years—  
Thy beam has shone, more lovely bright  
Than solar blaze, or lunar ray—  
Has shone, when all around was night,  
And bade the darkness pass away.

When they, our unbelieving foes,  
Would crush the hopes they could not feel,  
You, Sons of England, then arose,  
With hearts all love, and hands all zeal ;  
You, bound by Charity's bless'd tie,  
And fearless in defence of truth,  
Spent in our aid unsparingly  
Riches and power—and age and youth.

And what ! though near the Arctic pole,  
 And, like a heap of drifted snow,  
 The chilling north winds round me roll,  
 The land of ice—call'd rightly so—  
 Tho' circled by the frigid zone,  
 An island in a frozen sea ;  
 Yet I this charity have known,  
 This Christian zeal has glow'd for me !

For see—the Messengers of Peace—  
 From Albion new Apostles come :  
 They, like the old, shall never cease  
 To quit their kindred and their home.  
 Like them, with canvas wide unfurl'd,  
 Careless of life, they tempt the gale,  
 And seek the limits of the world—  
 Ye friends to God and Iceland, hail !

One visits me—thou Great First Cause  
 Enthron'd in majesty above ;  
 'Tis here I recognise thy laws,  
 And feel how mindful is thy love.  
 And shall I, when thou deign'st to bless,  
 Forgetful sleep the years away ;  
 And, sunk in torpid listlessness,  
 Nor strike the lyre, nor raise the lay ?

Th' unfeeling heart, the sordid hand,  
 Would mourn, perchance, the vast expense,  
 With which on earth's remotest land  
 You spread the gifts of Providence.  
 The treasures of the Word sublime  
 Go forth, where'er your banners wave ;  
 In every language, ev'ry clime,  
 The mind to form, the soul to save.

What then can merit more of praise,  
 The mortal and immortal crown,  
 What better shall your honours raise,  
 And call the tide of blessings down,  
 Than pouring through this world of strife  
 The healing balm of sacred lore ;  
 And minist'ring that bread of life,  
 Which, tasted once, man wants no more ?

Yet, what your ardent breasts could lead  
 These gifts to spread, these toils to dare ?  
 Could hopes of gain impel the deed ?  
 Could thoughts of avarice be there ?  
 No :—'twas the love of Him on high,  
 The safety of the poor on earth ;  
 Hence rose your Sun of Charity,  
 Hence has your Star of Glory birth.

SOCIETY OF CHRIST ! most dear  
 To Heaven, to virtue, and to me !  
 For ever lives thy memory here :  
 While Iceland is—thy fame shall be.  
 The triumphs of the great and brave,  
 The trophies of the conquer'd field—  
 These cannot bloom beyond the grave,  
 To thee their honours all shall yield.

Thy fame, far more than earth can give,  
 Shall soar with daring wing sublime ;  
 And wide, and still more wide, survive  
 The crush of worlds, the wreck of time.  
 Thus Thule and her sons employ  
 Their harps to pour the grateful song ;  
 And long thy gifts may we enjoy,  
 And pour this grateful tribute long.



Aged and clad in snow-white pall,  
I twine the wreath, and twine for thee ;  
Tho' mingled howls, in Thule's hall,  
The north wind with our minstrelsy.  
These strains—tho' rigid as the clime,  
Rude as the rocks—oh ! scorn not thou !  
These strains, in Thule's elder time,  
Kings have receiv'd—receive them now.

Yet, not the harp, and not the lay,  
Can give the praise and blessing due ;  
May He, whom Heav'n and Earth obey,  
Ye CHRISTIAN FATHERS, prosper you !  
May He—if pray'rs can aught avail—  
No joys in life or death deny ;  
Crown you with fame that shall not fail,  
With happiness that cannot die !

# APPENDIX.

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No. III.

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## AN INQUIRY

INTO

THE ORIGIN, PROGRESS, NATURE, AND CHARACTERISTIC  
FEATURES OF

## ICELANDIC POETRY.

VOL. II.

Y



# APPENDIX.

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No. III.

## ICELANDIC POETRY.

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OF all the liberal arts, none can lay claim to a more remote antiquity, or boast of a more extensive diffusion than poetry. Through all the different gradations of mental culture, from the lowest state of uncivilized humanity to the highest degree of refinement, the power of its charms has been felt, and its multifarious utility acknowledged. The shepherd and the husbandman, the legislator and the prophet, the sage, the lover, and the warrior, have, each in his respective station, cultivated the poetic talent, and either converted it into a means of present amusement, consolation, or instruction, or employed it as a vehicle for transmitting the memory of past events to posterity.

The general principles of poetry, like the grand outlines of the human character, are the same among all nations ; nevertheless each people display in their poetical compositions, certain peculiar traits and properties, arising from the genius and laws of their language, the nature of their religion, their political and domestic circumstances, manners, and customs, which so completely distinguish these compositions from the productions of other nations, as justly to entitle them to the character of an original and independent national poetry. Thus the poetry of the **Hebrews** differs from that of the **Greeks** ; the **Latin**, though more consonant with the latter, from both ; and the numerous versified productions of the northern and western European nations from each other. Though they unquestionably possess much in common, and have, in more instances than one, reciprocated with each other, yet their respective poetry retains a discriminating garb, which may easily be recognised, even by strangers, but is still more perceptible by the native eye.

It has generally been agreed among the learned, that the ancient inhabitants of Scandinavia were, and that the Icelanders still are, possessed of a peculiar and underived national poetry. While the bards and minstrels occupied a conspicuous place in the more westerly regions of Europe, the north exhibited its Skalds : an order of men who were poets by profession, whose names have been enrolled in the annals of fame,

and who have left behind them ample specimens of their poetic skill. In the Edda, the Heimskringla, the edited and manuscript Sagas, besides a multiplicity of more recent examples of versification, we possess almost innumerable monuments of northern prosody, all of which bear the most unequivocal marks of independent origin, and well merit the attention of such as wish to become acquainted with the diversified productions of the human intellect, or the peculiar features which it assumes under different circumstances.

Accustomed, indeed, as we are, from our school years, to hear the Roman historians expatiating on the barbarism and ferocity of the northern nations, and taught to regard the terms “Goth” and “Gothic,” as synonymous with savage and barbarous, we naturally deem it in a high degree paradoxical to assert, that those very nations, whose furious ravages extinguished the poor remains of expiring genius among the Romans, should cherish the art of poetry with all possible care among their own countrymen; \* but not to insist on events of a recent date, still more irreconcilable with the boasted illumination and refinement of the age, it must not be forgotten, that effeminacy and excessive politeness are even more hostile to some of the principal beauties of poetry—enthusiasm, boldness, and sublimity, than the fierce and martial spirit which generally cha-

Preface to five pieces of Runic poetry, London, 1763, 8vo.

racterizes the ruder and more ancient stages of society.

In examining the ancient prosody of the north, it is necessary that we divest ourselves of local and educational prejudices, and abandon, as it were, our own ideas of poetic taste; that we make every allowance for the distinctive genius of the language, and place ourselves in the circumstances of the poet, and by familiarizing ourselves with his religion, manners, customs, and, in short, his entire range of objects, that we be prepared for taking, not a partial and superficial, but a liberal, penetrating, and extensive view of the whole.

The principal nations of Scandinavia being descended from the Goths or Getæ, who had their seat in the vicinity of the Black Sea, it follows, by consequence, that their poetry is to be traced to the same source. Not that we are able, at this distance of time, to determine its original characters, as it existed among that people, or mark its progress during the subsequent peregrinations of their offspring across the vast regions of Russia and Germany: the storms of ages have obliterated the tract, and all we have to assist us in our inquiry is the guidance of a few scanty and insulated monuments, the inscriptions of which rather leave us to draw inferences, than furnish us with clear and particular directions. The testimony of Herodotus \* and other

\* In *Melpom.* lib. iv.

ancient authors in favour of the wisdom of the *Scythians*, a general name given by the Greek historians to the northern nations, might of itself warrant the conclusion, that the art of poetry was cultivated by that people; for we know, that among the Greeks, a wise man and a poet were often synonymous terms. Ælian, in the second book of his treatise on the nature of animals, describing the *hyperboreans*, expressly states, that they were addicted to poetry\*; and we are informed by Quintus Curtius, that when Alexander sentenced to death for a revolt, some of the Sogdians, a people who lived between the Caspian and Black Seas, they were filled with joy to that degree that they *sung* and danced; and when asked by the king, what was the cause of this frantic and untimely joy? they replied, that as they were soon to be restored to their ancestors by so great a conqueror, they could not help celebrating so honourable a death, which was the wish of all brave men, in *their own accustomed songs*.† It is impossible for any one, who is at all acquainted with the sanguinary religion of Odin, or who has perused the death-song of Regner Lodbrok, not to be sensible of the palpable coincidence between the spirit of this passage, and that contempt of death, combined with the anticipation of warlike exploits

\* Ανθρωπων υπερβορειων γενος και τιμας Απολλιοτος εκειθι αδουσι μεν και ποιηται υμνουσι δε και συγγραφεις.

† See Wharton's Dissert. I. to his History of English Poetry.



in a future state, which characterized the ancient inhabitants of Scandinavia.

Jornandes, himself a bishop of the Goths, under the reign of the emperor Justinian, declares, in his book, *De Rebus Geticis*, that the recital of ancient historical poems was common among his countrymen, \* a custom which is still kept up by the Icelanders ; and he states in another place, that the exploits of their ancestors were sung to the harp in the presence of the most distinguished families. † There is also in the 11th chapter a passage, where he speaks of the changes introduced by Diceneus being kept in memory even in his day, through the medium of songs ; and from what he says respecting the origin and genealogies of the Goths, in connection with their fables, it is evident he had in view something very analogous to the fables in the prosaic Edda. ‡ Priscus, in his *Hist. Goth.* relates, that in the time of Attila, king of the Huns, two Scythians presented themselves before the Monarch one evening, and recited certain verses which they had composed in commemoration of his victories and military achievements ; when, the eyes of the guests being turned towards them, some were delighted with the structure of the verses ; some had their minds roused by the recollection of battles they had fought ; while others shed tears at the thought, that old age had come upon them, completely

\* Cap. iv.

† Cap. v.

‡ Cap. xv.

damping their military ardour, and rendering their bodies unfit for engaging in war.\* The Marcomanns, too, who sprang from the same stock, long retained their heathen rites, and recorded with peculiar characters (probably *runes*) their *songs*, enchantments, and divinations. † That the Goths had a regular poetry in the days of Ovid, and that he learned its rules during his residence among that people, is manifest from the poem he afterwards wrote in honour of Augustus. His words are :

Nec te mirare si sint vitiosa decebit  
 Carmina, quæ faciam pene poëta Getes.  
 Ah pudet ! et getico scripsi sermone libellum,  
 Structaque sunt nostris barbara verba modis.  
 Et placui, gratare mihi, coepique poëtæ  
 Inter inhumanos nomen habere Getas. ‡

Of the early use of poetry among the Danes, we are furnished with the strongest proofs, in the ancient Anglo-Saxon poem, describing the affairs of that people in the third and fourth centuries, which has lately been published by my learned friend Etatsraad Thorkelin. || Depicting the customs of one of the northern courts, the author of the poem exhibits something strikingly

\* P. 51. † Biorneri Antiq. Hyperbor. p. 67.

‡ Ovid de Ponto, lib. iv.

|| De Danorum Rebus Gestis, Secul iii. and iv. Poëma Danicum Dialecto Anglo-Saxonica. Ex Bibliotheca Cottoniana Musæi Britannici, edidit versione lat. et indicibus auxit Grim. Johnson Thorkelin, Dr. J. V. &c. &c. Havniæ 1815, 4to.

analogous to the matter of the ancient Eddaic poetry :

Thær was hearpan  
Sweg swutol sang  
Scopes sægde  
Se the cuthe  
Frum sceaft fira  
Feorran reccan  
Cwæth thæt se Almightyga  
Eorþan worh, &c. p. 9.

*“ There they played on the harp, and sang delightful songs ; and the poets repeated what they knew of the origin of the human race, derived from afar—the creation of the earth by the Almighty,” &c.*

We are also told, p. 39, that at their convivial feasts,

Scop hwilum sang

*“ Meanwhile the poet sang.”*

And again, p. 67.

Hwilum cynninges thegn  
Guma gilp hlæden  
Gidda gemyndig  
Se the eal fela  
Eald gesegena  
Worn gemunde.  
Word other fand  
So the gebunden  
Secg eft ongan  
Sith Beowulfes  
Snyttrum styrian  
And on sped wrecau  
Spel gerade  
Wordum wrixlan  
Wel hwelc gecwæth  
Thæt he framsige  
Munde secgan  
Hyrd e ellen dæthum  
Uncuthes fela  
Wæl singes gewin  
Wide sithas  
Thara the gumena bearn  
Gearwe ne wiston.

*“ In the mean time the royal servant (the poet,) commemorated in songs the virtues of such as had fallen in battle—he who retains in his memory all the traditions of past ages. One word produced another, and, when joined together, they formed a history of the voyage of Beowulf. It was sagely composed, and easy of interpretation, because the events followed each other in historical order. What he thus masterly composed, he repeated to such as were present. heard noble deeds set forth in elegant poems ; things which had never before been known to the children of men.”*

These testimonies not only prove the esteem in which the poetic art was held by those nations which have from time to time emigrated into the north of Europe, but, taken in connection with the fact, that so many ancient poetical monuments have been preserved by the Scandinavians, they place it beyond a doubt, that their ancestors were passionately fond of song, and employed it as a medium for the transmission of their genealogical and historical knowledge to posterity. Anterior to the introduction of writing, it was only by means of verse that the exact memory of past events could be preserved. Oral traditions in prose neither excite that interest, nor make the same impression on the imagination and memory, which inseparably attend the recital of poetical compositions; consequently, such traditions are greatly liable to corruption, and even to be entirely forgotten. The advantages of measured language, on the other hand, its abruptness, imagery, and musical sounds, are all calculated to rouse and keep alive the intellectual powers, while the rythmical assonances prove an infallible safe-guard against either addition or omission.

The most ancient records which have been handed down to us by the Scandinavians perfectly agree with the foreign testimonies that have just been produced in referring the poetry of that people to a remote antiquity. Like the Greeks, the northern nations attributed their poetry to a divine origin. It was their belief,

that Odin and his followers were the inventors of runes and songs, on which account they obtained the name of *Lióda-smidir*, or modellers of songs. To this purpose are the words of Snorro Sturluson, when treating of the arts and abilities of Odin: "All these arts he taught others by means of runes and magic, which procured for the gods the appellation of the fabricators of magic songs." \* To shew how Odin came by this gift is the object of the following fiction in the dialogues of Bragur, which form part of the prosaic Edda: "The Asas, or gods, formed a man called *Quásir*, who was so clever that no question could be proposed which he was not able to resolve: he traversed the whole world, teaching mankind wisdom. But his merits exciting envy, two dwarfs treacherously slew him; and receiving his blood into a vessel, mixed it up with honey, and thence composed a liquor, which renders all those that drink of it good poets. The gods missing their son, inquired of the dwarfs what was become of him. The dwarfs, to extricate themselves out of the difficulty, replied, that *Quásir* had died, suffocated with his knowledge, because he could not meet with persons to ease and disembody his mind to, by proposing to him so many learned questions as was necessary to his relief. But their perfidy was afterwards discovered by an unexpected accident. These dwarfs having drawn

\* Ynglinga Saga, cap. 7.

upon themselves the resentment of a certain giant, he seized and exposed them upon a rock, surrounded on all sides by the sea. In this frightful situation, their only recourse was to purchase their deliverance at the price of that glorious beverage. The giant being satisfied with this ransom, carried it home, and delivered it to the custody of his daughter Gunlöd.

“ This valuable acquisition was eagerly sought after by the gods, but very difficult to obtain, because it was concealed under rocks. Odin was nevertheless determined to try for it, and he made the attempt in the following manner. Transforming himself into a worm, he glided through a crevice into the cavern where the beverage was kept. Then resuming his natural shape, and gaining the heart of Gunlöd, he prevailed on her to let him drink three draughts of the liquor entrusted to her care. But the crafty deity, resolving to make the most of his advantage, pulled so deep, that at the last draught he left none behind him in the vessel ; and, transforming himself into an eagle, flew away to Asgard, to deposit in safety the precious treasure he had obtained.

“ The giant, who was a magician, instantly discovered the artifice that had been practised, and changing himself also into an eagle, flew with all speed after Odin, who had almost reached the gates of Asgard. Then the gods all ran out of their places to assist and support their master ; and, foreseeing that he would have much difficul-

ty to secure the liquor, without exposing himself to the danger of being taken, they immediately set out all the vessels they could lay their hands on. In effect, Odin finding he could not escape but by easing himself of the burden which retarded his flight, instantly filled all the pitchers with this miraculous liquor; and from hence it hath been distributed among both gods and men. But in the hurry and confusion in which the liquor was discharged, the bulk of mankind were not aware, that Odin only threw up part of it through his beak; the rest was emitted through a more impure vent. And as it is only the former liquor that this god gives as a beverage to the good poets—to such as he would animate with a divine inspiration; so it is only the latter sort that falls to the share of bad rhymers; for as this flowed from its inferior source in greater abundance, the gods bestow it in liberal draughts on all that will apply. This makes the crowd very great about the vessels, and this is the reason why the world is overwhelmed with such a redundance of wretched verses.” \*

That poets were supposed to derive their genius from Odin, who imparted it to his favourites, is evident from *Gautreks-saga*, where he is introduced as saying: “ I will endow him with the poetic art, so that he shall be able to compose poems with the same facility with which he can

\* The above is taken almost verbatim from Mallet, vol. ii. p. 186.

speak.” On this account poetry came, in after times, to be denominated *asa-mál*, or the language of the gods. And even after the introduction of Christianity into the north, we find the poet Hallfred celebrating the merits of Odin and his progeny on account of their cultivation of this art.

Öll hefir átt til hylli  
Odins skipat liodum  
Allgilda manc alldar  
Idio varra nidia.  
Eme traudr thvi vel vidris  
Valld hugnadiz skâldi  
Legg ec â frumver friggjar  
Fion er kristi thionum.\*

*The composition of popular songs has at all times distinguished the race of Odin: The invaluable works of our ancestors are still fresh in my memory. But I dare say no more; for, how favourable soever the power of Odin was to the poet, I must hate the husband of Frigg, because we now serve Christ.*

To judge from the prosodiacal parts of the Edda, the more original mode in which the Scandinavians communicated their poetical productions was in company, by rehearsing them for the instruction and gratification of the hearers, or by the extemporaneous solution of enigmas and questions of ancient wisdom. When any stranger lodged a night with a family, his wisdom was generally tried in this way. Thus Vafthrudnir declares to Gângrâd, when he desires him to take a seat:

Thâ skal freista  
Hvar fleira viti  
Gestr, etha inn gamli thulr.

*Now we shall try  
Who knows most,  
The guest, or the aged speaker.*

Aged people, who had treasured up in their memory a rich fund of traditionary relations, were

\* Olafsen om Nordens gamle Digtekonst, p. 3.



regarded as under a kind of obligation to repeat them on special occasions, that they might be learnt by the young, and thus be transmitted to future generations. These traditions, to which the Icelanders gave the name of Sagas, were generally interwoven with long pieces of poetry, which the recitor had to sing, and which gave greater life and interest to the story. In this way has the knowledge of the most ancient poems been perpetuated among the Gothic tribes; and many of them have survived the ravages of time, and reached our days in a garb, which is of itself a strong internal proof of their being genuine. The most valuable of these are the different odes, chiefly of mythological import, which compose the greater part of Sæmund's Edda, and which it is only necessary to read in the original Icelandic, in order to be convinced of their high antiquity. Yet these are in all probability only a few remains of the ancient poetry, which the Scandinavians had transplanted from their original seat within the western confines of Asia, but which was new-modelled from time to time, according to the changes which crept into their vernacular language, and to which also their manners and customs were in a certain degree naturally subjected.

These poems, as well as those which have been furnished us by the ages immediately preceding the reign of Harald Harfagra, are remarkable for their simplicity, the natural order in which the words follow each other, and their freedom from

the obscure and far-fetched images and poetical synonymes which afterwards characterized the northern muse. They are all of the kind of verse called *Fornyrdalag*, or the versification of antiquity, and appear to have been composed without any farther study than what regarded the alliteration. They contain, indeed, passages which, at this distance of time, it is difficult, if not impossible, satisfactorily to explain; but this is to be ascribed to our limited acquaintance with certain mythological allusions, and the objects the poet had in his eye—a veil which, to a greater or less extent, is drawn over all the works of antiquity. These, however, are merely insulated passages, and bear no proportion to the rest of the compositions, which, taken as a whole, possess a simplicity, and not unfrequently a sublimity, that may justly be said to vie with the effusions of more polished bards.

As a specimen of this kind of poetical composition, I shall here select some stanzas of the *Völuspá*, or the “Oracle of the Prophetess Vola.” It has justly been considered as the most important part of the Edda, containing an epitome of the Scandinavian mythology, and serving as a text on which the rest of that work is a comment. \* The argument of the poem I shall give in the words of Mallet. †—The Prophetess having imposed silence on all intellectual beings, declares, that she is going to reveal the decrees

\* Vol. II. Introd. p. 27.

† Ibid. p. 204.

of the Father of Nature, the actions and operations of the gods, which no person ever knew before herself. She then begins with a description of the chaos ; and proceeds to the formation of the world, and of that of its various species of inhabitants, giants, men, and dwarfs. She then explains the employments of the fairies, or destinies ; the functions of the gods ; their most remarkable adventures ; their quarrels with Loke ; and the vengeance that ensued. At last she concludes with a long description of the final state of the universe, its dissolution, and conflagration ; the battle of the inferior deities and the evil beings ; the renovation of the world ; the happy lot of the good, and the punishment of the wicked.—The text is taken from the edition of the Edda just published in Stockholm.

Hljóths bith ek allar  
helgar kindir,  
meiri ok minni  
mavgo Heimthallar ;  
vildo' at ek Valfavthur  
vel framteljak,  
fornspjöll fira  
thau ek fremst of-nam.

*Give silence all  
Ye sacred race,  
Both great and small  
Of Heimdal sprung :  
Val-father's deeds  
I will relate,  
The ancient tales  
Which first I learned.*

Ek man jötna  
ár of-bornna,  
thá er forthom  
mik frædda höftho :  
nío man ek heima,  
nío ivithi,  
mjotvith mæran  
fyrir mold nethan.

*I know giants  
Early born ;  
My ancestors  
Of former times :  
Nine worlds I know,  
With their nine poles  
Of tender wood  
Bensat the earth.*

Ar var alda  
thâ Ymir bygthi,  
var-a sandr, ne sær,  
ne svalar unnir ;  
jörth fanz æva,  
ne upphimin,  
gap var Ginnunga,  
en gras hvergi.

*In early times,  
When Ymir lived,  
Was sand, nor sea,  
Nor cooling wave ;  
No earth was found,  
Nor heaven above ;  
One chaos all,  
And nowhere grass.*

Athr Börs synir  
bjöthum yptho,  
their er Mithgarth  
moeran skopo.  
Sol skein sunnan  
á Salar steina,  
thá var grund groin  
groenum lauki.

*Until Börs sons  
Th' expanse did raise,  
By whom Midgard  
The great was made.  
From th' south the sun  
Shone on the walls,  
Then did the earth  
Green herbs produce.*

Sol varp sunnan,  
sinni Mána,  
hendi hinni hoegrí  
á himin jodyr.  
Sol that ne visse  
hvar hon sali átti,  
Stjörnor that ne vissi  
hvar thær stathi átto,  
Máni that ne vissi  
hvat hann megins átti.

*The sun turned south,  
The moon did shine ;  
Her right hand held  
The horse of heaven.  
The sun knew not  
His proper sphere ;  
The stars knew not  
Their proper place ;  
The moon knew not  
Her proper power.*

Thá gængo regin avll  
á raukstola,  
ginnheilög goth,  
ok um that gettuz :  
not ok nithjom  
nöfn umgáfu ;  
myrgin heto  
ok mithjan dag,  
undorn ok aptau,  
ár of at telja

*Then all the powers  
Went to the throne,  
The holy gods,  
And held consult :  
Night and cock-crowling,  
Their names they gave  
Morning also,  
And noon-day tide,  
And afternoon  
The years to tell.*

Hittoz Æsir  
á Ithavelli  
their er havrg ok hof  
há-timbrotho,  
afla lavgtho,  
auth smithotho,

*The Asas met  
On Ida's plains,  
Who altars raised  
And temples built ;  
Anvils they laid,  
And monecy coined ;*

afis kostotho,  
alls freistutho,  
tángir skopo  
ok tol giörtho.

Tesldo i tuni,  
teitir váro,  
var them vettugis  
vant or gulli ;  
unz thriár komo,  
thursa meyar,  
ámátkar miök,  
úr Jotunheimum.

\* \* \*  
Unz thrir komo  
ör thvi lithi,  
avflgir ok ástgir  
Æsir, at husi ;  
fundo á landi  
litt megandi  
Ask ok Embla,  
avrlavglausa.

Avnd thau ne átto,  
oth thau ne havflio,  
lá ne læti,  
ne lita gotha :  
avnd gaf Othin,  
oth gaf Hoenir,  
lá gaf Lothur  
ok litu gotha.

\* \* \*  
Ask veit ek standa  
heitir Ygg-drasill,  
nár-bathmr ausinn  
hvita auri :  
thathan koma döggar,  
thærs i dalla falla,  
stendr ey yfir groenn  
Urthar brunni,

Thathan koma meyjár  
margs vitandi,  
thrjár ur them sal,  
er und tholli stendr :

*Their strength they tried  
In various ways,  
When making songs,  
And forming tools.*

*On th' green they played  
In joyful mood,  
Nor knew at all  
The want of gold,  
Until there came  
Three Thursa maids,  
Exceeding strong,  
From Jotunheim.*

\* \* \*  
*Until there came  
Out of the ranks,  
Powerful and fair,  
Three Asas home,  
And found on shore  
In helpless plight,  
Ask and Embla  
Without their fate.*

*They had not yet  
Spirit or mind,  
Blood, or beauty,  
Or lovely hue.  
Odin gave spirit,  
Heinir gave mind,  
Lothur gave blood  
And lovely hue.*

\* \* \*  
*I know an ash,  
Named Ygg-drasill,  
A stately tree,  
With white dust strew'd.  
Thence come the dews  
That wet the dales ;  
It stands aye green  
O'er Urda's well.*

*Thence come the maids  
Who much do know ;  
Three from the hall  
Beneath the tree :*

Urth hetu eina,  
athra Yerthandi,  
skáro á skithi  
Skuld hina thrithju

\* \* \*  
Ein sat hon uti  
thá hinn aldni kom  
Yggjongr Asa,  
ok i augo leit :

Hvers freguit mik ?  
hvi freistith min ?  
allt veit ek Othinn,  
hvar thu auga falt thitt ;  
i inom moera  
Mimis brunni ;  
dreckr mjöth Mimir  
myrginn hverjan  
af vethi Valfavthurs ;  
vithoth enn, etha hvat ?

Valdi henni Herfavthur  
hringa ok men ;  
— — — —  
— — — —  
fèspjöll spaklig  
ok spá ganda ;  
sà hon vitt ok om vitt  
of veravld hverja.

Sá hon walkyrjor,  
vitt um-komnar,  
gavrfar at ritha  
til Goth-thjódar ;  
Skuld hêlt skildi  
en Skavgul önnur,  
Gunnr, Hildir, Gavndul  
ok Geir-skavgul.  
Nú ero talthar  
nonnor Herjans,  
gavrfar at ritha  
grund valkyrjor.

Heithi hana hêto  
hvars til húsa kom,

One they nam'd Was,  
And Being next,  
The third, Shall be,  
On the shield they cut.

\* \* \*  
She sat without  
When th' Ancient came,  
The awful god,  
And viewed his eye.

What ask ye me ?  
Why tempt ye me ?  
Full well I know,  
Great Odin, where  
Thine eye thou lost ;  
In Mimi's well,  
The fountain pure :  
Mead Mimir drinks  
Each morning new  
With Odin's pledge.  
Conceive ye this ?

To her the god  
Of battles gave  
Both costly rings  
And shining gold ;  
The art of wealth  
And witchcraft wise,  
By which she saw  
Through ev'ry world.

She saw Valkyries  
Come from afar,  
Ready to ride  
To th' tribes of god ;  
Skuld held the shield,  
Skaugul came next,  
Gunnr, Hildir, Gaundul,  
And Geir-skaugul.  
Thus now are told  
The Warrior's Norns,  
Ready to ride,  
The Valkyries.

Heith she was nam'd  
Where'er she came ;

ok vavlu velsþá,  
vitti hon ganda,  
seith hon kunni,  
seithi hon leikin ;  
æ var hon ángan  
illrar brúthar.

That man hon fólkvig  
fyrst í heimi,  
er Gullveigo  
geirom studdo ;  
ok í höll Hárs  
hana brendo ;  
thrisvar brendo  
thrisvar borna,  
opt, ósialdan,  
thó hon enn lifir.

Thá gèngo regin avll  
á ravkstóla,  
ginnheilög goth,  
ok um that gettuz :  
hvárt skyldo Æsir  
afráth gialda,  
etha skyldo gothin avll  
gildi eiga ?

Brotinn var borgveggr  
borgar ása ;  
knáttu Vanir víg-spá  
vavllu sporna ;  
fleygthi Othinn  
ok í fólk um-skaut,  
that var enn fólk-víg  
syrst í heimi.

Thá gèngo regin avll  
á ravkstóla,  
ginnheilög goth,  
ok um that gettuz :

*The prophetess  
Of cunning arts.  
She knew right well  
Bad luck to seethe,  
And mischief was  
Her only sport.*

*She murder saw,  
The first that e'er  
Was in the world,  
When Gullveig was  
Placed on the spear.  
When in Har's hall  
They did her burn :  
Thrice she was burnt,  
Thrice she was born,  
Oft, not seldom,  
And yet she lives.*

*When all the powers  
Went to the throne ;  
The holy gods,  
And held consult :  
What punishment  
They should inflict  
On th' Asas now  
For bad advice.  
Or whether all  
The gods should hold  
Convivial feasts.*

*Were broken now  
The castle-walls  
Of Asaborg,  
By murd'rous Vanes  
Who took the field.  
Forth Odin flew  
And shot around :  
This murder was  
The first that e'er  
Was in the world.*

*When all the powers  
Went to the throne,  
The holy gods  
And held consult :*

hver hefthi lopt allt  
lævi blandit,  
ethr ætt jötuns  
Oths mey gefna?

*Who had the air  
Involved in flames,  
Or Older's maid  
To giants given.*

Thór einn thar var  
thrúnginn móthi;  
bann sjaldan sitr,  
er hann slíkt of-fregn;  
á gèngoz eithar,  
orth ok særi,  
mál avll meginlig,  
er á methal fóro.

*There Thor alone  
Was in ill mood,  
He seldom sits  
When told the like:  
Broken were oaths  
And promises,  
And all contracts  
That had been made.*

Veit hon Heimthallar  
horn um-fólgit  
und heithvonum  
helgom bathmi:  
á ser hon ausaz  
augom forsi,  
af vethi Valfavthurs:  
vith enn, etha hvat?

*She knows where hid  
Lies Heimdall's horn,  
Full deep beneath  
The sacred tree.  
She sees a flood  
Rush down the fall  
From Odin's pledge,  
Conceive ye yet?*

\* \* \*  
Sól tekr sortna;  
sígr fold í mar:  
hverfa af himni  
heithar stiörnur;  
geisar eimi  
vith aldur-nara;  
leikr hár hiti  
vith himin sjálfan.

\* \* \*  
*The sun turns pale;  
The spacious earth  
The sea engulphs;  
From heaven fall  
The lucid stars:  
At the end of time  
The vapours rage,  
And playful flames  
Involve the skies.*

Sèr hon uppkoma  
avthru sinni  
jörth or ægi  
ithia græna:  
falla forsar,  
flygr avrn yfir,  
sá er á fialli  
fiska veithir

*She sees arise  
The second time  
From th' sea, the earth  
Completely green:  
Cascades do fall,  
The eagle soars  
That on the hills  
Pursues his prey.*

Hittaz Æsir  
á Ithavelli,

*The gods convene  
On Ida's plains,*



ok um mold-thinur  
mátkar doema :  
ok minnaz thar  
á megiu dóma ;  
ok á fimbul-tys  
fornar rúnar.

Muno ósáuer  
akrar vaxa ;  
bóls mân alls batna,  
Baldur mon koma ;  
búa their Havthr  
Hropts sigtóptir,  
ve valtíva :  
vitoth enn, etha livat ?

Sal sèr hon standa  
sólo fegra,  
gulli thakthan  
á Gimli (hám) ;  
thar skulo dyggvar  
dróttir byggia,  
ok um aldur daga  
yndis nióta.

*And talk of man  
The worm of dust.  
They call to mind  
Their former might,  
And th' ancient runes  
Of Fimbultyr.*

*The fields unsown  
Shall yield their growth  
All ills shall cease ;  
Balder shall come,  
And dwell with Hauthr  
In Hropt's abodes.  
Say, warrior-gods,  
Conceive ye yet ?*

*A hall she sees  
Outshine the sun,  
Of gold its roof,  
It stands in heaven.  
The virtuous there  
Shall always dwell,  
And evermore  
Delights enjoy.*

In the death-song of Regner Lodbrok, we are furnished with an interesting specimen of Scandinavian poetry, which, besides exhibiting the state of the art, gives a striking description of the spirit which predominated, and the manners which obtained among the northern nations at the period of its composition. Regner was king of Denmark, and flourished towards the close of the eighth century. In the course of his piratical expeditions he landed in England, where, after committing a number of depredations, and fighting numerous battles, he was made prisoner by Ella, a Northumbrian prince. As a punishment for the outrages he had committed, he was shut up in a dungeon filled with serpents,

and while the poison he received from their bite was operating, he sang the following warlike and ferocious song :

LODBROKAR QVIDA.      LODBROK'S DEATH-SONG.\*

FLOCKR.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi:

LODBROK.

Hitt var ei fyrir laungo  
Er á Gaut-landi gengom  
At graf-vitnis mordi ;  
Thâ fengom ver Thoro.  
Thathan heto mic fyrdar,  
Er ling-âl um lagda'c,  
Lod-Brok. At thvi vigi  
Stack ec â stordar-lyckio  
Stâli biartra mála.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Helldr var ec ungr thâ er fengom  
Austr i Eyrar-Sundi  
Undorn frecom vargi  
Oc fot-gulom fugli.  
Fengom ver thar eth sungo  
Vith hâ-seimda hiâlma  
Haurd iârn micils verdar.  
Allr var aegir sollinn.  
Od hrafin i val-blodi.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hatt barom thâ geyra  
Er tvi-togir taldunz  
Oc tyr ruthom vitha.  
Unnom âtta Jarla  
Austr i Dyno-mynni.  
Gera fengom thâ gnoga  
Gisting at thvi vigi.  
Sveiti fell i sollin  
Sae. Tyndi lith aesi.

CHORUS.

*We hew'd with our Swords !*

LODBROK.

*When first we landæd on the Gothic shore, vengeance soon o'ertook the wily dragon miner of the ground—'twas then I won my Thoro. Men call'd me Lod-brok, from what time I slew the snaky dweller of the heath. At that assault, my point, inlaid with burnish'd gold, transfix'd the circling monster of the earth.*

*We hew'd with our Swords !*

*Blooming was my youth when east at Eyræ's straits, opposing bands we gash'd for the insulting wolves, and golden-footed king of birds—there, while our temper'd steel sung on the high-seam'd helm, they found a rich repast. Gore distain'd the deep. The raven waded through the blood of the slain.*

*We hew'd with our Swords !*

*High I bore my lance, and wide I carried my ensanguin'd blade before I number'd twenty years. Eight Earls grac'd my triumphs at the Dæwina's mouth—there we the falcon entertained with plenteous meals. The crimson sweat of death poured on the sullen sea. Warriors lost their lives.*

\* Both the original text and the translation are taken from the edition of the Poem published in Copenhagen, 1782, by the Rev. James Johnstone, A. M. Chaplain to the British Embassy at the Court of Denmark.

Hiuggom ver með hiaurvi.

Hethins qvonar varth authit  
Thâ er Helsingia heimtom  
Til heim-sala Othins.  
Laugdom upp i Ifu.  
Fiödr náthi thá bita.  
Aull var unda gialfri  
A su rodin heito.  
Greniadi brandr i brynio.  
Ben-silder klufo seilldi.

Hiuggom ver með hiaurvi.

Hygg ec enginn thâ flydi  
Athr enn â hefils-hestom  
Her-rauthr i styr felli.  
Klyfr ei aegis-aundrom  
Annar Jarlinn fraegri  
Lundar-vauil til laegis  
A lãng-scipom sidan :  
Sâ bar siklingr vitha  
Snart fram i styr hiarta.

Hiuggom ver með hiaurvi.

Herr kastathi skiaulldom  
Thâ er rae-gagari rendi  
Reistr at gunna briostom.  
Beit i Scarpa skeriom  
Sceri-billdr at hialldri.  
Rothinn varth randar-mâni,  
Athr Rafn Conongr felli.  
Dreif or haullda hausom  
Heitr a brynior sviti.

Hiuggom ver með hiaurvi.

Hâtt greniotho hrottar  
Athar â Ullar-Akri  
Ey-steinn Conongr felli.  
Gengom gulli fãthir  
Grundar vals at bryndom.  
Rae-kindill sneith randir  
Rittr at hialma-moti.  
Svira-vin or sãrom  
Sveif of hiarna kleifar.

*We her'd with our Swords!*

*Heiden's queen indulg'd our thirst  
of fame, while to the hall of Odin we  
dispatch'd Helsinga's race. Our gal-  
leys enter'd Iva's flood. Keenly bit  
the feather'd arrow. Streams, gush-  
ing from the reeking wounds, soon  
ting'd the redd'ning torrent. Swords  
rung upon the breast-plate. Death-  
ful weapons cleft the targe.*

*We her'd with our Swords!*

*Methinks none from the battle  
turn'd till 'midst his winged steeds  
fierce Herraud died. While posting  
to the destin'd port, no Earl, of old,  
borne by the foaming coursers of the  
main, more fearless plough'd the sea-  
fowl's haunt. Aye his daring heart  
propell'd him headlong through the  
troubled fight.*

*We her'd with our Swords!*

*The warriors dropt their bucklers—  
brands, the rapiers of life, flew wrath-  
ful from their scabbards against the  
bosoms of the brave. At Scarpa-  
skeria cruelly hack'd the trenchant  
battle-ax. Red were the borders of  
our moony shields, until King Rafn  
died. The tepid blood, spurting from  
the temples of the valiant, was drifted  
on their harness.*

*We her'd with our Swords!*

*On Ulla's plain loud roar'd the  
spear ere to our force King Eistein  
bow'd. Gleaming in gold the slaugh-  
t'rous field we travers'd. The taper'd  
lance, indignant, bor'd the shield, at  
the helm'd conflict. Rills, of wing  
hue, warm from the wounded neck,  
flow'd down the hero's shoulder.*

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hafa gâto thâ hrafnar  
Fyrir Indyris eyio  
Aerna brâd at slita.  
Fengom F'alo-hestom  
Fullan verd at sinni.  
Illt var eins at gaeta.  
Med upp-runu solar  
Streing-vaulor sa ek stiga :  
Stacc âlmr af ser mâlmi.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hâdom rendor i dreyra  
Thâ er bon-thivara bendom  
Fyrir Borg-undar-holmi.  
Hregg-scy slito hringa,  
Hratt âlmr af ser mâlmi  
Vulnir fell at vigi ;  
Var-at einn Conongr meiri.  
Val rak vidt of strandir.  
Vargr fagnathi tafni.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hilldr var synt i vexti  
Athr Freyre cononar felli  
I Flæmingia velldi.  
Nâthi blârr at bita  
Bloth-smelltr i gylltan  
Haugna-kufi at hialldri  
Hardr ben-grifill fordom.  
Maer gret morgin scaera :  
Maurg tha er tafn fekz vaurgom.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hundredom frâ ec liggia  
A ey-nefis-aundrom  
Thar er Engla-nes heitir.  
Sigldom ver till snerro  
Sex daegor âdr lid felli.  
Attom odda-messo  
Vid uppruna solar.  
Vard fyrir vorom sverdom  
Val-thiofr i styr falla.

*We hew'd with our Swords !*

*The raven at Indoro's isle might for himself have torn a sumptuous banquet. We soon procur'd a glutt'nous meal for Fala's speedful wolves—ill then the corslet fenced the warrior's body. By the orient lamp of light, I saw shafts starting from the string. The flexile yew sent forth the barbed reed.*

*We hew'd with our Swords !*

*Stained were our shields with gore when on Borgunda's isle we bent the trusty bow. Clouds of arrows pierc'd the close-ring'd harness. Vulner was mingled in the carnage—no chief was more renown'd. Crowded was the strand with a cadav'rous wreck. The savage beast was gladden'd with his prey.*

*We hew'd with our Swords !*

*High waxed the joys of Hilda when on the Belgian plains King Freyer stoop'd to fate. There the hard blue falchion forc'd its way, till, drenched in blood, it rent the golden cuirass. The virgin wail'd that dawning morn—she saw a copious feast prepar'd for rav'ning wolves.*

*We hew'd with our Swords !*

*At Engla-nes, I vow, by hundreds were the adversaries strew'd among their ships that lurk'd around our isles. For six long days our gallies speeded to the contest—humbled, at last, was the insulting foe. With the uprising sun we chaunted the matins of dire battle. Amidst the stir, Waldevc was doom'd to sink beneath our swords.*

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hrundi daugg af sverdom  
Bryn i Bartha-firdi.  
Bleican nâ fyrir hauka.  
Vindi âlmr thar er oddar  
All-hratt bito skyrtor  
I slidor-loga-senno  
Svolnis hatte thaefdar.  
Rendi omr til unda  
Eitr-hvass drifinn sveita.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Helldom hlackar-traulldom  
Hâtt at hildar-leiki,  
Fyrir Hiadninga-vagi.  
Siâ knatto thâ Seggir  
Er sundrodom sciaulldo  
At hrae-sillna hialdri  
Hiâlm slitnadan gotna.  
Var'at sem biarta bruthi  
I bing hiâ ser leggja.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Haurd kom rid a sciaulldo;  
Nâr fell nidr til iardar  
A Northymbra-landi.  
Var'at um eina otto  
Aulldom thaurf at fryia  
Hildar-leik thar er hvassir  
Hiâlm-stofn bito skiomar.  
Var'at sem unga eckio  
I aund-vegi kista'c.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Herr-thiofi vard authit  
I Sudor-Eyiom sialfom  
Sigors a vorom maunnom:  
Vard i randa-regni  
Raugn-valldr fyrir-hniga:  
Sâ kom haestor of hauka  
Harmr: at sverda-gusti  
Hvast kastadi hristir  
Alm streing-laga palnti.

*We her'd with our Swords!*

*By Bertha's haven down from our  
points distill'd the dew of death. Wan  
lay the lifeless trunk before the hawk.  
Loud humm'd the bow-string—shafts,  
hurrying thro' the glare of brands un-  
sheath'd, transfix'd the morion 'midst  
the press of close wove armour. Mean-  
time our swords, sharp as the viper's  
poison, open'd the bleeding gash.*

*We her'd with our Swords!*

*Near Hadninga's bay high tower'd  
our crests in fierce encounter. While  
in the fell dispute we split the shiver'd  
targe, men might observe our baneful  
falehious cleave the casques of heroes—  
the sight was pleasing to my heart as  
when my blooming bride I seated by  
me on the chair of state.*

*We her'd with our Swords!*

*Hard came the tempest of war upon  
our bucklers, till low lay the foe on the  
Northumbrian shore. None, on that  
morning, needed rouse the rueful sport  
of Hilda. The tempered edge divid-  
ed steel-capt skulls—the scene was sweet  
as when I welcom'd the youthful wi-  
dow to my throne pre-eminent.*

*We her'd with our Swords!*

*O'er my men for Herthiof was de-  
erced a splendid victory in the Sudor-  
reys. Rogwald fail'd before the storm  
of spears. The mishap of their pro-  
vider full sore the hawks bewail'd—  
amidst the gust of swords, ne'er did  
the string of his unerring bow dismiss  
its bolts in vain.*

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hverr lå thverr of annan.  
 Gladr vard gera brothir :  
 Geto vid soknar læti.  
 Let ei aurn ne ylgi  
 Så er Ir-landi styrði  
 (Mot vard málms oc ritar)  
 Mar-steinn conongr fasta.  
 Vard i Vethra-firdi  
 Val-tafn gefit hrafni.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hundmarga så ec falla  
 Morgin-stund fyrir meidi  
 Menn at odda-senno.  
 Syni minom hneit snemma  
 Slithr-thorn vid hiarta :  
 Egill let Agnar raentan  
 U-blauthan hal lifi.  
 Glumdi geirr vith Hamdis  
 Gran-serk. Bliko merki.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Halld-orda så ec brytia  
 Egi smátt fyrir Ulfa  
 Endils nitha braundom.  
 Varat â-vik â Scæthi  
 Sem vin conor baeri.  
 Rotheinn var ægis-asui  
 O-fárr i dyn-geira  
 Scorin var Scoglar kâpa  
 At Sciaulldunga hialldri.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hâr-fagran så ec hrauckva  
 Meyar dreng at morgni  
 Oc mál-vin eckio.  
 Var'at sem varmar laugar  
 Vin-kers niorun baeri  
 Oss i Ila-sundi.  
 Athr Aurn Conongr felli  
 Bauth mâna så ec brezta  
 Brâ thvi fira lifi.

*We hew'd with our Swords !*

*In heaps promiscuous was piled the  
 enemy. Glad was the kindred of the  
 Falcon—from the clam'rons shout they  
 boded an approaching feast. Marstein  
 Erin's King, whelm'd by the ir'ny  
 slect, allay'd the hunger of the eagle,  
 and the wolf. The slain at Wedra's  
 gulf became the Raven's booty.*

*We hew'd with our Swords !*

*Numerous were the bands, which,  
 with the early dawn, I spied in the sore  
 onset slaughtered. Too soon a thorn,  
 issuing from its sheath, stung the heart  
 of my son Regner—'twas Egil rest  
 the fearless youth of life. Weapons  
 thunder'd on our steel-proof armour.  
 Our pennons glistened in the skies.*

*We hew'd with our Swords !*

*I descried the Sons of Endil, true to  
 their promise, carving liberally for the  
 wolves. Delightful was the strife at  
 Scæia, as when the damsels bring the  
 purple wine. Red were our steeds  
 that bound along the surge. Amidst  
 the din of arms full oft was Scogul's  
 iron vesture ripp'd by Skiold's hardy  
 race.*

*We hew'd with our Swords !*

*With the rising sun we saw the lover  
 of the maid, and the wooer of the wi-  
 dow, fainting beautiful in his locks.  
 Pleasant was the sight at Ila's straits,  
 as when the ministring virgin hands  
 the fuming goblet. Ere King Aurn  
 fell, I mark'd the warding shield to  
 pieces hacked, and chieftains gasp in  
 death.*

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hâthom sverd-glâm at morgni  
Leik fyrir Lindis-Eyri  
Vid Lofdunga threnna.  
Fârr âtti thvi fagna  
(Fell margr i gyn Ulfi,  
Haukr sleit hold med vargi),  
At hann heill thathan kaemi.  
Ira bloth i aegin  
Aerit fell in scaera.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hâ sverd bito scilldi  
Thâ er gull-röðinn glumthi  
Geirr vith Hilledar-naefri.  
Siâ mun i Aungols-Eyio  
Of alldr mega sithan  
Hve ver at laugðom leiki  
Lofðungar fram-gengom.  
Rodinn var ut fyrir eyri  
Ar flug-dreki sâra.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hverr se drengr at fegri  
At hann i odda-eli  
Aundverdr lâtinn verthi?  
Opt sitir sâ aefi  
Er alldregi nistir.  
Illt qvetha argan eggia  
Aurom at hilledar-leiki:  
Hug-blauthom kemr hvergi  
Hiarta sitt at gagni.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hitt tel ec iafnt at gângi  
At sam-togi sverda  
Sveinn i moti sveini  
Hrauckv'at thegn fyrir thegni:  
That var drengs athall lengi.  
Ae scal âst-vinr meyia  
Ein-hardr i dyn-sverda.

*We herw'd with our Swords!*

*South at Leinster, with the breaking day, commenced a stubborn struggle against three kings. Few went joyous from that conflict—few cou'd boast that they escap'd unhurt. Within the wolf's wide gaping jaws full many sunk. The Falcon's offspring pounced the mangled limbs. Erin's blood, streaming from the decks, flow'd on the deep beneath.*

*We herw'd with our Swords!*

*Shields were riven by the uplifted falchion. Blades, rich with ruddy gold, resounded on the mail of Hilda. Future ages shall review the spot on Mona's shore, where, in array, we stalked to beard the adversary. Our spears, swift as the dragon's flight, were deeply dyed along that bank where seas engulf the mountain torrent.*

*We herw'd with our Swords!*

*What youth is fairer among men than he, who, far advancing thro' the blast of jav'lins, bends under adverse wounds—they 'scape not human woe that shun the hard-fought field. Yet 'tis hard to egg the coward soul to deeds of manhood—the dastard's heart ne'er moves him on to feats of valour.*

*We herw'd with our Swords!*

*That I esteem fair combat when, at the rude interview of swords, youth meets his youth, and thane yields not to thane——this was, in ancient times, the pride of chiefs. Bold shou'd the lover of the fair be seen amidst the battle's whirlwind.*

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hirt synis mer raunar  
At for-laugom fylgiom.  
Fârr gengr of scaup norna.  
Eigi hugda ec Ello  
At alldr-lagi mino  
Thâ er ec bloth-vali breidda'c,  
Oc bord â laug keyrtha'c:  
Vitt fengom thâ vargi  
Verth i Scot-lands fjaurdom.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hitt hlaeir mic iafnan  
At Baldors fedors-becki  
Buna veit ec at sumblom.  
Dreckom bior at bragthi  
Or biug-vithom hausa.  
Sytir ei drengr vid dauda  
Dira at Fiaulnis husom:  
Egi kem ec med aethro  
Orth til Vithris hallar.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Her vilddo mic allir  
Burir Aslaugar braundom  
Biaurdom hiildi vekia.  
Ef vandliga vissi  
Of vith-farar ossar:  
Hve u-fâir ormar  
Eitor-fullir mic slita.  
Mothernis feck ec minom  
Maugom sva't hiaurto duga.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hardla lidr at arfe.  
Grimt stendr grand af nathri.  
Goin byggir sal hiarta.  
Væntom hins at Vithris  
Vaundr i Ello standi.  
Sonom minom man svella  
Sinn saudor râdin verda:  
Ei mano snarpir sveinar  
Sitt kyrt vera lâta.

*We her'd with our Swords!*

*Experience proves that we must follow destiny. Few can evade the potency of fate. Little did I dream that e'er my days by Ella wou'd be bound—when I strew'd his land with the slain—when I led my ships into his havens—when we gorged the beasts of prey along the Scottish bays.*

*We her'd with our Swords!*

*But still, there is a never-failing consolation for my spirit—the board of Balder's sire stands open to the brave. Soon from the foe's capacious scull we'll drink the amber beverage. Departed heroes know no griefs when once they enter the palace of dread Fiolner—I'll not approach the courts of Vithris with the faltering voice of fear.*

*We her'd with our Swords!*

*Soon would the sons of Aslaug come, arm'd with their flaming brands, to wake the battle, did they but know of our mischance—what a swarm of vipers, big with venom, sting my body.—I sought a noble mother for my children—one that might impart advent'rous hearts to our posterity.*

*We her'd with our Swords!*

*Now to my heir devolves the crown. Grim seem the terrors of the udder. Serpents nest within my heart's recesses—yet 'tis the cordial of my soul, that Vithris' lance shall soon stick fast in Ella. My sons will swell with vengeance at their parent's doom—those gen'rous youths will, sure, forego the sweets of peace.*



Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.  
 Hefi'c fim-tio sinnom  
 Folk-orrostor frandar  
 Flein-things-bothi oc cina.  
 Minnz hugda ec manna  
 At mer vera skylldi  
 (Ungr nam'c odd at rioda)  
 Annarr Konongr fraegri:  
 Oss mano Æsir bioda  
 Er'at sytandi daudi.

Fysomz hins at hætta.  
 Heim biotha mer Disir  
 Sem fra herians haullo  
 Hefir Odinn mer sendar.  
 Glathr scall ec aul med Asom  
 I aund-vegi drecka.  
 Lif's ero lithnar stundir.  
 Laegiandi scall ec deya.

*We here'd with our Swords!  
 Full fifty times my lance, dire de-  
 vastation's harbinger, announc'd the  
 distant enterprize. Methinks no King  
 has truer cause to glory—it was the  
 pastime of my boyish days, to tinge my  
 spear with blood. The immortals will  
 permit my presence in their company.  
 No sigh shall e'er disgrace my exit.*

*Now let us cease our Song!  
 See! the celestial virgins, sent from  
 that Hall where Odin's martial train  
 resides, invite me home. There, happy  
 on my high-rais'd throne, I'll quaff  
 the barley's mellow'd juices. The mo-  
 ments of my life are fled. The smiles  
 of death compose my placid visage.*

At the time the above poem was composed, or about the end of the eighth century, the poetry of the northern nations began to assume a very different garb from that by which their earlier productions had been distinguished. Their poets abandoned the simple and natural style of antiquity, attempted to reduce their compositions to fanciful metrical rules, and introduced a vast number of new species of versification. They not only used the utmost liberty in the transposition of words, and carried their metaphors to the most extravagant lengths, but indulged in the wildest fancies, and swelled so much into the bombastic, as, in many instances, to become perfectly ridiculous.

But the nature of the versification was not more different from that of the ancients, than

were the subjects of the poems themselves. While the earlier compositions embrace abstract ideas, ethics, mythology, the pastoral life, &c. the more recent re-echo scarcely any other sound than the horrid uproar of war. The same mythological ideas are found in both, which proves them to be the productions of the same people ; but the circumstances in which they were composed were altogether different. The former were put together in times of peace, when the poet had no impending invasion to describe, no warriors to animate, no martial exploits to celebrate, nor any particular enemy against whom to level the shafts of poetical invective. In the latter, little else is heard than the tocsin of war, the clashing of shields, or the fanatical cries of wounded and dying warriors.

This remarkable change in the effusions of the northern muse, is easily accounted for, by adverting to the political circumstances of the inhabitants of Scandinavia. They were divided under the rule of a number of petty princes, who were continually carrying on war against each other ; and some of the more powerful extended their conquests into foreign countries, and acquired an immense booty, which they brought back on their return to their native country. On these expeditions, each prince was attended by his poet-laureat, who sang the deeds of his royal ancestors, celebrated his own military virtues, and animated his warriors to feats of warlike glory.

From the time of Regner Lodbrok to the days of Snorro Sturluson, comprising a period of three centuries, we meet with a series of upwards of two hundred celebrated poets, whose existence is established by the most indubitable historical proofs; and of the poetical compositions of eighty of these, scattered fragments are still extant in the Sagas, and especially in that part of the more recent Edda, called the *Kenningar*, where we find nearly five hundred verses quoted from their respective poems, in illustration of the rules laid down in that treatise.

The following is a list of some of the more eminent poets of this period:

*Regner Lodbrok*, whose death-song is inserted above.

*Egil Skallagrimson*. His principal poem is the “*Höfud-lausn*,” or, The Redemption of his Head, which he composed in praise of Eirik Blodoxe, king of Norway, and thereby saved his life. It forms one of the five pieces of Runic poetry, published London 1763, 8vo.

*Einar Skalaglam*, author of the “*Velekla*,” a poem on the heroic exploits of Hakon Jarl.

*Eyvind Skaldaspiller*, whose “*Hakonarmâl*,” or Eulogium of Hakon, is reckoned one of the best productions of the northern Scalds. See five pieces of Runic poetry.

*Gunnlaug Ormstunga*.

*Marcus Skeggiason*. His beautiful poem on

King Eirik, called “Eiriks-drâpa,” is preserved in the *Knytlinga Saga*.

*Olaf Hvitaskald*, author of part of the *Edda*, and of a poem in praise of Waldemar, King of Denmark.

*Ottar Svart*. “Knutz-drâpa.

*Sighvat Thordarson*.

*Snorro Sturluson*. “Hâttalykil,” &c.

*Sturla Thorarson*. “Hakonar-qvida,” and “Rafnsmâl.”

*Thord Kolbeinson*. “Eiriks-drâpa.” \*

It is a striking fact, that most of these poets were natives of Iceland. Situated at a distance from the turbulent scenes of discord and war, the inhabitants of that island enjoyed the most favourable opportunities of cultivating the arts of peace, while the recital of the history of their ancestors, most of whom were connected with the first families in Norway, had a natural tendency to stimulate them to apply to the study of eloquence, and to inspire them with a desire to visit a country which had been the scene of so many great and noble achievements. The first Icelandic poets who went over to the Continent succeeded so well, that the art began to be cultivated with greater ardour than ever in the valleys of Iceland; and, ere long, a numerous order of men, distinguished by the name of *Skalds*, or polishers of language, was spread over the whole

of the north, and many of them flourished at the English courts.

When a Skald was anxious to improve his external circumstances, he repaired to the court of a prince, or earl, and requested liberty to repeat one of his poems. If the song was approved of, the poet was instantly rewarded with the present of a gold ring, a sword, or a suit of rich apparel; and, as had been customary among the Anglo-Saxons, he was admitted into the number of the royal attendants. He was often raised to fill the second place in the hall, and thus became the principal officer of state, the genealogist and historiographer, and the intimate counsellor and friend of his master. The other courtiers generally learned his poems by heart, that wherever they came they might resound the praises of their lord, and with these the honour of the poet was always inseparably connected. Of the importance of these poets, we cannot desire a more convincing proof than the fact, that they oftentimes told their princes truths which no other person would have dared to utter.

Before taking the field of battle, it was the office of the Skald to compose a poem suited to the occasion, which he repeated in the presence of the king; and the soldiers, learning it from one another, animated each other by its repetition while engaged in fighting the enemy. During the engagement, the poet took his station near his master, that he might witness his bra-

very, and be able to transmit his fame to posterity. Thus, in the battle of *Stiklastad*, A. D. 1030, King Olave ordered his poets to enter the *Skiálldborg*, or the body-guard, consisting of a number of choice warriors, who surrounded the king with their shields: "Ye shall be here," said Olave, "that you may see with your own eyes what is achieved this day, and have no occasion, when ye shall afterwards celebrate these actions in song, to depend upon the reports of others."

The introduction of Christianity into the northern nations, tended in no small degree to check the progress of the skaldic muse, by civilizing the habits and manners of the people, and curbing that unbridled passion for war which they had so long indulged, and which furnished the poet with so many striking subjects for popular composition. It was, in all probability, the suspicion lest the art might entirely be lost, in proportion as the ancient mythological ideas should sink into oblivion, which first suggested the necessity of collecting the poems of antiquity, and treasuring up for the use of future Skalds, the poetical figures and synonymes in common use among their predecessors. Hence originated the *Edda*, that celebrated work of northern antiquity, to which we are principally indebted for our knowledge of the Scandinavian mythology. As the collection of the different materials of which that work is composed, falls with-

in the period under consideration, I shall insert some account of it at this place.

In regard to the name *Edda*,\* the learned have been nearly as much divided as they have differed in their opinions respecting the work itself. The more probable interpretation is that of Mr. Olafson, who derives it from the obsolete verb *æda*, “to teach,” and concludes that it was intended to designate poetry as the science or art, by way of eminence. The *Edda* consists of two parts, the former known by the name of *Sæmund’s Edda*, containing a collection of ethic, mythological, and historical poems; and the latter, commonly called *Snorro’s Edda*, treats of the art of poetry, and exhibits, by way of illustration, fragments of ancient poetical compositions.

The more ancient, or prosodiocal *Edda*, is generally ascribed to Sæmund Frodè, as he is supposed to have had the principal hand in collecting its contents: These consist of thirty-eight poems, of which the following are the subjects:

1. *Hávamâl*, or “The Sublime Speech of Odin,” comprising a number of ancient maxims and proverbs, in which the manners and sentiments of the Scandinavians are strikingly depicted.

2. *Solarliod*, “The Solar Poem,” a much

\* Bede mentions one *Edda*, a monk at Canterbury, who was a learned man, and *primus contandi magister*, lib. iv. cap. 2. Query, Might not this coincidence admit of some elucidation?

more recent production, in which evident traces of the Christian doctrine are to be found.

3. *Völuspá*, “The prophecy of Vola,” containing fragments of a complete system of Northern mythology.

4. *Vafthrudnismál*, “The poem of Vafthrudnir” the giant, who proposes a number of questions respecting the creation of the world, &c. to which answers are given by Odin.

5. *Grimnismál*, “The poem of Grinnir;” a name under which Odin concealed himself; and, while in a state of imprisonment, he composed this song, in which he enumerates the names and habitations of the gods, &c.

6. *Skirnisföer*, “The journey of Skirnir” to Iotunheim, or the abode of the giants.

7. *Harbardslíod*, a poem containing a dialogue between Thor, and the ferryman Harbard, who would not on any account row him across a river.

8. *Hymisqvida* treats of a visit from Thor and Tyr to the giant Hymir, in order to procure from him a kettle in which to prepare a feast for the gods.

9. *Egisdrekka*, or the famous banquet at which Lok (the evil spirit) slanders the gods.

10. *Thrymsqvida* treats of the betrothing of Thor, in the disguise of Freya, with Thrym, the king of the giants, in order to recover his hammer which had been stolen from him.

11. *Hrafnagaldur Odins*. “The Magic Song of the Ravens of Odin;” giving an account of



an embassy of Braga and Heimdal to Iduna, one of the goddesses of fate, with the view of ascertaining the future destinies of the gods and the world.

12. *Vegtamsqvida*. Odin travels under the name of Vegtam to the habitation of the goddess of the dead; and raises a witch, whom he interrogates respecting the meaning of some dreams which had terrified his beloved Baldur.

13. *Alvismál* treats of the appellatives given to different objects in the languages of the gods, giants, men, &c.

14. *Fiölsvinnsmál*. A very obscure poem, which is supposed to contain a number of obscene riddles.

15. *Hyndluljóð*. “The Song of Hyndla,” or the shorter *Völuspá*.

16. *Gróugalldur*. “The Magic Song of Groa,” in which she teaches her son a number of necromantic arts, during a short period in which she is raised from the dead.

17. *Gróttasaungr*. A song about the hand-mill Grotte, with which Frode, King of Denmark, caused the two gigantic girls, Fenja and Menja, to grind gold.

18. *Gétspeki Heidreks Kongs*. A number of riddles which are proposed to King Heidrek by Odin, under the name of Gestur Blindi, together with their solutions.

19. *Völundarqvida*. A historic poem on Völund, a Finnish Prince, and Nidud, King of Sweden.

20. *Helgaqvida Haddingiaskada*. A similar poem on a Norwegian Prince of that name.

21—38. Contain poetical descriptions of the exploits of several distinguished individuals among the Goths, Franks, Huns, &c. \*

The prosaic Edda, on the other hand, is a collection of various treatises, which are designed to elucidate the mythology of the ancient Scandinavians, and render more intelligible to younger poets the number of obscure and difficult passages in the works of their predecessors, and more especially in the odes of the Edda we have just described. It begins with a most absurd and ridiculous preface, which has evidently been prefixed to the work by some transcriber, tracing the connection of the northern nations with those of antiquity, and carrying back their genealogical relations to the original families enumerated in the book of Genesis. Then follow what are called the *Dæmisögur*, or “Dialogues,” explanatory of the origin of the gods, the creation of the world, the principal events which are to fill up the period of the duration of the world, the final conflagration, the destruction of the gods, &c. The second division of the work comprehends the *Kenningar*, or “Instructions;” a digest of poetical phraseology, founded on, and illustrated by quotations from the principal Skalds. We here find not fewer than one hundred and

\* Professor Magnusson's *Indledning til Forelæsninger over den ældre Edda*. Kiøben. 1816.

thirty-seven synonymes of Odin ; twenty four of a bear ; sixty-four of fire ; sixty-five of gold, &c. The third treatise is called *Skálda*, or “ The Poetics ;” and consists of a dissertation on the Icelandic alphabet, and a number of rules respecting the use of rhetorical and poetical figures. To this is appended Snorro’s *Háttalykil*, or “ The Key of Versification ;” giving a view of the structure and measure of the different sorts of verse in use among the northern poets.

From the above view of this monument of Scandinavian antiquity, the reader will perceive that it is made up of a number of heterogeneous parts, all of which, however, are intended to facilitate and promote the study of Icelandic poetry. So far from being the work of any single individual, it is manifestly the result of the separate labours of different individuals at different periods of time ; those who succeeded having improved and augmented the productions of such as had previously written on the subject. The disputes which have arisen respecting these writers are not yet settled ; nevertheless it has been rendered as probable as the nature of the question will allow, that the individuals concerned in reducing the Edda to its present form, were Sæmund Frodè, Snorro Sturluson, and Olaf Thorðarson, surnamed Hvitaskald, or the White Poet, a nephew of Snorro’s, at whose house he received his education ; and, having most likely been employed by his uncle in transcribing his historical and poetical works, he not only possess-

ed the best opportunities of cultivating the art of poetry, but had access to know the sources from which the Skaldic rules had been derived. The argument, on which the share these learned Icelanders had in the work rests, is similar to that generally employed in determining the authors of other ancient compositions, *viz.* the universal consent and tradition of their own countrymen, and the coincidence between such works and their general habits and studies.

The simplicity and natural structure of the Eddaic poetry, furnish a strong internal proof of the antiquity of the pieces ascribed to Sæmund; and, as they must have been collected before the work was enlarged by Snorro, there does not appear to have been any so likely to make such a collection as that learned priest. From the notices we have respecting him, his attention was strongly bent on the antiquities of his countrymen; and it was impossible for him to gather the different accounts, which had passed from generation to generation, through the medium of oral tradition, without falling in with numerous fragments of mythological import, especially as paganism had only been recently abolished, and many of its rites and doctrines must still have been fresh in the recollection of the Icelanders. That Snorro wrote part of the Edda is placed beyond all doubt by the testimony of his nephew. In his treatise on Orthography, Olaf observes: “Nevertheless, we may still use the expressions and appellatives of the

ancients, only we do not carry them further than what is allowed by Snorro.” Here is an explicit acknowledgment of Snorro’s work—a recognition of his poetic phraseology as the standard, beyond which it would be improper to augment the poetical synonymes. The circumstance, too, that the genealogical table, and the list of Icelandic Lögmen, in the Upsala Codex, are both continued till they come to Snorro Sturluson, if it does not prove that he was alive at the time this codex was written, it at least substantiates the hypothesis, that the transcriber viewed him as the author of the Edda, which goes by his name; else, why should he just happen to stop when he comes to him. The codex referred to bears evident marks of its having been written before the fourteenth century; and the superscription, which expressly declares the Edda to be the work of Snorro, is ascertained to have been written by the same person that wrote the rest of the volume. \*

The Edda of Sæmund was first sent from Iceland by the learned Bishop Svenson about the middle of the seventeenth century. It is beautifully written in parchment, and is still preserved in the Royal Library of Copenhagen. There exists also a number of paper codices, containing various readings, many of which greatly elucidate the original text. Of Snorro’s Edda there exist two principal codices, written on parch-

\* Skand. Litt. Selsk. Skrift, 1812, förste Hefte, p. 97.

ment: viz. the Wormian MS. in the University Library of Copenhagen, and the Upsala MS. preserved in the library of that University, besides a number of manuscripts on paper to be met with in different libraries on the Continent. There is a copy of the Upsala Codex preserved among the Marshall MSS. Oxford, No. 114. 8vo.

The first edition of the Edda was published by Resenius, accompanied with a Latin and Danish version, Copenhagen, 1665, in 4to; but it contains only the part composed by Snorro, with the addition of the *Völuspá* and *Hávamál*. It is reckoned very imperfect, and the Icelandic text is so full of errors, that little dependence can be placed on it. Göranson's edition, with a Swedish and Latin version, published in 4to. at Upsala 1746, is still more imperfect: but the Swedes have recently been put in possession of an excellent edition of both parts of the Edda, by the united exertions of Messrs Rask\* and Afzelius. Of the more ancient Edda, a correct

\* Mr. Rask is the editor of the Icelandic Lexicon, and the learned author of an Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon Grammar, and several other philological works of great value in northern literature. In the years 1814 and 1815, he made the tour of Iceland, with the view of collecting what might remain of the ancient monuments of antiquity, and gaining a more intimate acquaintance with the Icelandic language; and he has recently proceeded through Sweden, Finland, and Russia, to the regions between the Caspian and Black Seas, for the purpose of tracing the connection between the languages of the tribes inhabiting those parts, and those of the northern nations of Europe.

edition is publishing by the Arnæmagnæan Committee in Copenhagen: the first volume appeared 1787 in 4to. and the rest of the work is expected soon to be ready. A very accurate Danish version of Snorro's Edda was published by Professor Nyerup, Copenhagen 1808, and the best German translation was produced by Professor Rühls of Berlin, 1812. Besides translations and editions of single odes, there exist in English a version of Snorra's Edda in Percy's translation of Mallet's Northern Antiquities, and a poetical version of such of the poems of Sæmund's Edda, as had appeared in the first volume of the Copenhagen edition, by A. S. Cottle of Magdalene College, Cambridge. Bristol, 1797.

After the introduction of Christianity among the northern nations, the attention of the poets was more directed to the legends and pretended miracles of the church of Rome, and the saints now occupied the place of the heroes of antiquity. Of the Skaldic productions of this nature, the most celebrated are: *Geisli*, or "The Ray," composed by Einar Skulason in praise of St. Olave; and *Lilia*, or "The Lily," an encomiastic poem on the Virgin Mary, by the monk Eystein. The former consists of sixty-eight verses of eight lines each, and is printed with a Danish and Latin version in the third volume of Snorro Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, pp. 461—480. The Lily has been held in such estimation by

the Icelanders that it has passed into the proverb : *Öll skálld villdu Lilia kveðit hafa*. “ Every poet wishes he had been the author of the Lily.” The original is printed along with two Latin versions by Finn Jonson in the second volume of his Ecclesiastical History, pp. 398—464. It contains exactly one hundred eight-lined verses.

Since the Reformation, the Icelandic poets, have, in a great measure, confined themselves to religious subjects ; and it is somewhat remarkable, that they have not only given their countrymen numerous metrical versions of the poetical books of Scripture, but have also translated many of the historical books into Icelandic verse.

Several eminent poets flourished in the course of last century. The more celebrated were, Paul Vidalin, Eggert Olafson, Gunnar Paulson, Halgrim Peterson, and Stephen Olafson. The most distinguished poets of the present day are ; Jon Thorlakson, author of the beautiful translation of Milton’s Paradise Lost, Pope’s Essay on Man, and various other poetical effusions ; Thorvald Bödvarson, the translator of Gellert’s Christian, and Pope’s Messiah ; Professor Magnusson, Benedict Gröndal, Jon Jonson, and Sigurd Peterson.

Having thus taken a view of the state of Scandinavian poetry, from its earliest periods, down to the present time, I now proceed to examine its peculiar character, as it regards the structure and kinds of versification in which it appears.



The most prominent feature of the Icelandic poetry is undoubtedly its alliteration, or the assonance produced by a correspondence between certain letters or syllables. The fundamental rule of this alliteration is, that there be in every couplet, three words, having the same initial letter, two of which must occur in the former hemistich, and the other in the latter. The last, which generally forms the initial word, and must always stand as near the beginning of the line as possible, is called in Icelandic, *Höfustafur*, or “Cardinal,” being that which governs the others; and these are termed *Studlar*, or “Auxiliaries,” because they support and give force to the cardinal. The two following examples from the Icelandic Milton, will illustrate this rule; the alliteration being distinguished by capitals:—

Gott at Göra  
 Gætum ver aldrei.  
*To do good will ne'er  
 be our task.*

Vid that Villu-diup  
 Vard enum slæga  
 Bölverk Bidleikat  
 Bæmi vitis á;  
*—Into this vast abyss; the weary fiend  
 Stood on the brink of hell.*

Here the alliteration is perfect; the number of corresponding letters is complete; they are all accentuated; and the cardinal occupies the primary place in the second hemistich. This perfection is almost always found in the longer kinds of versification, when the line exceeds four long syllables, as in this case the poet has more freedom of choice, and possesses a greater facility in composition than in the shorter kinds of verse.

In compositions of the latter sort, however, two licenses are allowed: The poet may introduce one or more particles, or short words, into the beginning of the second hemistich, only they must be unaccented, thus:—

Ar var Alda,  
Thá Ymir bygthi,  
Var-a Sandr, nè Sær,  
Ne Svalar unnir,

*In early times,  
When Ymir lived,  
Was sand, nor sea,  
Nor cooling wave.*

where *thá* and *nè* are the augmentative words. Or, one word only in the former hemistich may be made to correspond with the cardinal in the latter, as:—

Sat a Trón hafinn  
Tignarlíga.

*High on a throne  
Of royal state.*

The occasional use of these licenses has a good effect, by giving a variety to the quantity, and thus prevents monotony.

When the cardinal word happens to begin with a double or compound consonant, as; *bl, br, dr, gl, gr, sk, &c.* the auxiliaries must begin in the same manner, for instance:—

Thá á Hler Hlyri  
Hleypti nátt-orum,  
Er Sidan Svæfir  
Saung-om hásum  
Thann of Siglir Sæ  
Sér i hlé boda  
SKylanda SKædu  
Vid SKarki vindar.

*—which all night long  
had roused the sea, now with rough  
cadence fell;  
Sea-faring men o'er watched, whose  
bark by chance,  
Or pinnace, anchors in a craggy bay  
after the tempest.*

Here *hl* and *sk* form the compound alliteration, and the *s* in the two middle couplets, the single. Of all the compound consonants, none are in more common use than *sk*, *sp*, and *st*, which association seems to possess a peculiar charm in the ear of the Scandinavian poet; and though it was allowable to combine other letters with the rest of the compounds, it was absolutely intolerable to do it with these.

This strict exactness of alliteration, however, is entirely confined to consonants. When the cardinal is a vowel, or a diphthong, the auxiliaries may begin with any of the other vowels or diphthongs. Thus in the example produced above, from the *Völuspâ*, the cardinal is *y*, and both of the auxiliaries *a*: to which I add another instance from the poet *Sighvat*:—

Lopthbyggvir máttu læggia  
Landrett thann er kan standaz,  
Unnar Allra manna  
EYkia lids á midli.

*Thou who wast accustomed to associate with naval warriors, didst ordain those celestial laws which shall ever remain inviolate.*

In regard to the use of the vowels and diphthongs, uniformity is so far from being regarded as a beauty, that the alliteration is considered more pleasing when they are different; and *j*, *v* and *h*, when followed by a vowel, are admitted into the number of correspondent letters.

When there is an unequal line, or a solitary member in a verse, such as the third and sixth lines of the six-membered stanzas, it always con-

tains two alliterated words, as will appear from the following example from *Vafthrudnismál*, which exhibits at the same time the common assonance :—

Or Ymis holdi  
 Var jörth um scauputh,  
     Enn or Beinom Biorg  
 Himin or hausi  
 Ins Hrimkalda iotun  
     Enn or Sveita Siór.

*Of Ymir's flesh  
 The earth was made,  
     Of bones the mountains :  
 Heaven of the skull  
 Of the hoar-frosty giant ;  
     And of his sweat, the sea.*

With respect to the position of the cardinal, it was already observed, that it must never be far from the beginning of the second member of the hemistich ; but the two auxiliaries may be placed any where in the first. They may follow each other, or be separated by one or more words. They may either be at the beginning, or the end of the line ; generally, however, the one begins the line, or is the first accented syllable, and the other is at, or near the end, thus :—

Flóttu geck til Frettar  
 Felli niördr á velli.  
 Draugr gat Dolga sögu  
 Dagrád hedins vada.  
 Oc Halld-bodi Hildar  
 Hræ-gamma sa ramma  
 Tyr villdi thá Tyna  
 Tein-hlautar fior gauta.

*There on the plain, the hero who  
 slew such as fled from battle, con-  
 sulted the divine oracle, by which  
 he was urged on to the combat with  
 assurance of victory. And he who  
 keeps up the sacrifices, courageous-  
 ly viewed the ravens, and prepared  
 to slay the Goths.*

Besides this system of assonances, which we meet with in the most ancient specimens of Icelandic poetry, the Skalds of the heroic period introduced a still more complicated alliteration, called

*hending*, which consists partly in a hemistichial, and partly in the common terminating rhyme.

The hemistichial rhyme is an assonance of two syllables in the same line, and generally, they are so placed, that the penultimate corresponds in sound with the first, second, or third syllable, thus :—

Val-thÖGNar let vEGNumi,  
Vig nESTR saman brESTa,  
Handar nAF's of hÖFdum,  
Hlym mILLDingum gILLDir.

*The giver of gold caused the  
blood-stained shields to dash  
against the heads of magnani-  
mous kings.*

This kind of rhyme is again divided into two sorts, the *skothending*, or *snidhending*, imperfect, or half-rhyme; and *adalhending*, noble and full rhyme. The half rhyme has simply a harmony of consonants, without any regard to the vowels; as *ögn* and *egn*, *af* and *öf* in the example just quoted. The full rhyme, on the other hand, consists in the perfect assonance both of consonants and vowels; as *est* in the second line, and *illd* in the fourth. The use of these two sorts of intermediate rhyme is left entirely to the taste of the poet; but the half rhyme is commonly used in the former, and the full rhyme in the latter hemistich. The more perfect the correspondence, the greater was the poetical merit of the composition; and the ear got so accustomed to certain combinations, that it became sensible to the smallest deviations from them. We accordingly find, that when the poet Thiodolf, once rhymed *gröm* and *skömmo* together, King

Harald at once detected the cacophony, and addressed him thus : “ What a vulgar poet ! Did you join *gröm* with *skömmo* ? These rhymes are not equivalent.”\*

It appears to have been a rule in regard to the position of the assonant syllables, that the first should constitute the initial syllable ; as, in conjunction with the emphasis, which in that case uniformly accompanied it, a greater force and majesty was thereby given to the verse. Some of the good poets, however, only introduced the rhyme with the second or third syllable. In Snorro’s “ Key,” the first rhyme is called *Frum-hending*, and the second, *Vidr-hending* ; and, when the first occupies the initial syllable it is called *Odd-hending*, and *Hlut-hending* when it occurs in the middle of the line.

The terminating rhyme of the Icelanders is formed on the same principle with that of the poetry of other nations, only we find no instance before the Reformation, in which the first line is rhymed with the third, and the second with the fourth. The occurrence of this kind of rhyme, may, therefore, be regarded as an innovation, and has most probably been transplanted from Denmark or Germany. Concluding rhymes are either single or compound, *i. e.* they are either formed by the ultimate, or by both the ultimate and penultimate together. Of the

\* Olafson, p. 43.

former, the following is an instance in the *Höfufut-lausn*, or “Ransom” of Eigil :—

Barc thengils lof  
A thagnar rof  
Kann ec mæla miöt  
Vid manna siot,  
Or hlatra lum,  
Hrodr fluttac gram,  
That for sva fram,  
At flestr of nam.

*I published the fame of the king, and knew how to instil my words into the minds of the people: my compositions flowed so smoothly, and so charmed the hearers, that most of them learned them by heart.*

An example from the “Key” will illustrate the latter :—

Mærd skal auka,  
Mistar lanka,  
Gioma sverdi,  
Grundar skerdi,  
Dyrd skal segia,  
Drott mâ thegia,  
Styriar glöda,  
Stöckvi moda.

*My song shall augment the praise of him who stains the shields. A song shall now be sung (hearken ye people) in honour of the courageous warrior.*

Some of the Icelandic poets, have carried their mania for rhyming so far, that they have introduced it into every alternating word in the poem; but as it required much art and study, it was seldom used. The following specimen is taken from a poem written about the beginning of the twelfth century :—

Framan unno gram gunnar,  
Gramnis seids tamir meidar,  
Bido jótar lid lióta,  
Laga-gánga daga stránga.  
I ofac sialldan hof halldit,  
Hataz dygd, hrataz lygdir,  
Tregs hallda, vegs valldar  
Vegin arf megin diarfir.

*The excellent king was slain by those accustomed to battle—the Jutes, whose crime was punished with evil days. For, I deem, keep within the bounds of decency: virtue is hated; lies are circulated; and the estates of the slain are possessed by the villainous proud.*

The most complete of any, however, is the kind called *Nyi-hátr*, or the new metre, in which every word is rhymed, as :—

Ræsir glæsir  
Röckva döckva  
Hvitum ritum  
Hreina reina  
Skreytir hreytir  
Skafna stafna  
Hringa stinga  
Hiörtum svörtum.

*The king bedecks his beautiful dark-coloured ships with white shields. The divider of gold hangs on the smooth-planed fore-castles the black heart-shaped anchors.*

I shall only adduce one variation more, which consists in beginning the second hemistich with the penultimate syllable of the first, thus :—

Hrein-tiörnum gledr horna  
Horn nâir litt at thorna  
Miödr hegnir bol bragna  
Bragningr scipa fagnir.  
Folk hömlo gefr framla  
Framlyndr vidum gamlar  
Sâs helldr fyrir skot skiöldum  
Skiöldungr hunângs ölldur.

*The king refreshes his rearriors with the pure mead—mead which soothes the sorrows of man. The horns are seldom empty. The aged and magnanimous monarch who wields off the darts with his shield, divides the honey-drink among his warriors.*

To determine at what period alliteration was introduced into the Scandinavian poetry ; or whether it may not have been used originally by all the Gothic poets, though those belonging to the southern or Teutonic branch may have neglected its cultivation, and thus suffered it to fall into oblivion ; whether the Skalds were the inventors of it, or whether they borrowed it from some other nation : are questions which, in the total absence of historical proof, it is wholly impossible to solve. It might, however, be made



a subject of curious inquiry to trace the resemblances of a similar assonance, which exist in a greater or less degree in the poetry of all nations, though it might not be found to have been so completely reduced to rule as it was by the northern Skalds.

The acrostics of the Hebrews present a singular phenomenon in the literature of that people, and have been adduced as a coincidence between the northern and oriental poetry.\* We find in the Bible several poems in which either a certain number of lines begin with the same letter of the alphabet, or all the verses begin with the letters in regular alphabetical order. But it is of more importance to remark, that many passages in the Hebrew poetry most palpably correspond with some of the modes of alliteration adopted by the northern Skalds. Thus, in Jacob's dying blessing, Gen. xlix. 19.

*Gad gedud yegudennu,  
Vehu yagud akeb.*

Between which, and the following passage from the Edda, there exists the most striking resemblance :

*Hvat er that hlym, hlymia  
Er ec hlymia heyri nu til.*

In like manner the following examples, the former taken from the song of Deborah, Judges v.

\* Mallet, vol. ii. p. 193.

30, and the latter from the *Hávamál* of Odin, are as completely parallel as the genius of the languages will admit :

Halo yimtzeu yechalku *shálâl*,  
 Racham rachamâthaim lerosh geber ;  
*Shelal* tzebâim leisirâ,  
*Shelal* tzebâim rikmâh  
 Tzeba rikmâthaim letzavrê *shálâl*.

*Deyr* fe  
*Deya* frændur  
*Deyr* siâlfr it sama,  
 Enn ords-tir  
*Deyr* alldreigi  
 Hvem ser godan getr.

In the Hebrew specimen I have only marked the words *shálâl* and *shelal* as alliterations ; but the reader will perceive that there is something of the same kind in *racham*, *rachamâthaim*, in the second line, and *rickmâh*, *rickmâthaim*, in the two last lines ; as also in *tzeva*, and the repetition of *shelal tzevaim* in the third and fourth lines. There is likewise a beautiful transposition of *tzevâim rickmâh*, and *tzeva rikmâthaim*, which deserves to be noticed, as corresponding, in a certain degree, with the rule of Icelandic poetry specified above, according to which the penultimate syllable of the first hemistich forms the first syllable in the second.

Nothing is more common in Hebrew poetry than to employ two assonants, the one at the beginning of the former member of the parallel-

ism, and the other at that of the latter, only with the addition of an argumentative particle, agreeing with that of the Icelanders, thus, Judges xiv. 14.

*Mêhaochel yatza Maachal*  
*uMeaz yatza Mathok.*

In the 18th verse of the same chapter, we meet with a similar example :

*Mah Mathok Midvash*  
*uMah az Mêari.*

Sometimes the auxiliaries, as they are called by the Skalds, occur in the second hemistich, while the cardinal stands in the first, which is exactly the reverse of the position they occupy in the northern poetry. Of this, the following is an instance from the Song of Solomon, Chap. i. 3.

*Lerêach shemanecha tobim,*  
*Shemen turak shemecha.*

Of all the passages in the Hebrew Scriptures that I have fallen in with in the course of my reading, none exhibits such striking alliterations and repetitions of sound throughout as that containing the first of Balaam's prophecies, Numbers xxiii. 8.

*Min-arâm yanhêni Balâk,*  
*Melech-Moâb Mêharrê-kedem;*  
*Lechâh ârah-li Yaakob,*

uLechâh zoamâh Yisrâel.  
 Mah ekob lo kaboh El,  
 uMah ezom lo zâum Yehovâh, &c.

This assonance is most evidently studied; for though the prophet tells us, in the third line, that he had been sent for (*ârâh*) to curse Jacob, he does not repeat this verb in the fifth, when he asks, "How shall I curse?" but borrows another verb (*nâkab*) manifestly suggested by the last syllable in the name of Jacob:

— ârâh-li Yaakob  
 Mah ekob lo kaboh El.

Similar insulated instances of an agreement of sound are to be found in the Greek poets; as

Συν μοι πινε, συνηβα, συνερα, συνστεφανεφωρει  
 Συν μοι μαινομενω μαινε, συνσωφρονησω σωφρονη.\*

As also in the Latin:

*O Tite tute Tate tibi tanta tyranne tulisti.*  
 ENNIUS.  
*Non potuit paucis plura plane proloqui.*  
 PLAUTUS.

Von Troil produces a specimen of Finnish poetry, strongly alliterated, but which does not appear to be subject to the same rules with the Icelandic:

\* Quoted in *Transact. Irish Acad.* ix. p. 89.

Kosta kulki kuningamme  
 Adolph Fredric armolinen  
 Meinan maalla matkuseli,  
 Kaicki vereni venahti,  
 Haicki lukathti lihani &c.

The Celtic poetry, however, bears the greatest resemblance in this respect to the Icelandic, of any composed in languages so radically different from one another as these two manifestly are. The Welsh prosody depends entirely on alliteration. At first, it appears not to have been so very exact, and was but sparingly used by the bards of the sixth century. But from the Norman conquest to the death of Llewellyn, the alliteration was more strictly attended to; and from thence to the time of Queen Elizabeth this was so accurately observed, that a line not perfectly alliterated, would have been condemned as irregular. Comparing this progress in point of alliterative exactness with that of the northern Skalds, it has very justly been supposed that the Celts borrowed the art from their Teutonic or Scandinavian neighbours, with whom they maintained an intercourse from a very early period.\* The following specimen from Evan's will convey to the reader some idea of the Welsh assonances :

Bryd erof gryd arf greu a ddoddai  
 Brwydr eugrwydr eurgrawn ni guddiai

\* Percy in Mallet's Northern Antiquities, vol. ii. p. 197.

Bradog waith gwynniaith gwynnygai  
 Brys briwgad brig bragad briwai.

It is somewhat remarkable, that Turner, in his history of the Anglo-Saxons, should have been totally insensible to the strikingly alliterative nature of their poetry, as the most palpable instances of it occur in the specimens which he has inserted in his work. Between these compositions and those of the Skalds, the agreement is most regular and complete. The Anglo-Saxons have also their cardinal and auxiliaries, and make use of one or more augmentative particles at the beginning of the second hemistich in the same way. The Teutonic *ge* being used as a prefix to many of their verbs, it is of course left out of the account, and the alliteration proceeds to the second syllable, where the verb properly begins. For instance :

Meotod ana vat  
 Hvyder seo Savul Sceal  
 Syththan hveorfan :  
 And ealle tha Gastas,  
 The for Gode hveorfath,  
 Æfter Deað Dæge  
 Domes bidath.

On Fæder Fæthme  
 Is seo Forth-gesceaft,  
 Digol and Dyrne,  
 Drihten ana vat,  
 Nergende Fæther ;  
 Nænig eft-cymeth.  
 Hider under Hrofas,  
 The thæt Her for soth  
 Manum secge,  
 Hvylc sy Meotodes gescéaft,  
 Sige-folka geSeta,  
 Thær he Sylfa vunath.

*The Lord only knows  
 Whither the soul shall  
 Afterwards turn :  
 And all the spirits  
 That turn to God,  
 After death's day  
 Till the doom shall bide.  
 To the Father's bosom  
 It is conveyed,  
 Hidden and secret :  
 God only knows,  
 The compassionate Father,  
 None comes back  
 To our abodes,  
 That can forsooth  
 To men declare  
 How the Lord hath made  
 The victors' thrones  
 Where he himself doth dwell.*

Menologium Saxonium.

But the Anglo-Saxon poets did not confine these alliterations to such verses as they composed in their own language. They also introduced them into Latin. Of the alliterated Latin poems of Aldheim, Bede, Alcuin, &c. many are still extant. The following may serve as specimens :

Althelmum nam Altissimum  
Cano Atque clarissimum ;  
Summum satorem Solia  
edet qvi per æthralia.

Te HOmo laudet	Non modo Parva
Alme Creator !	Pars qvia mundi est,
Pectore, mente,	Sed qvia Sancte
Pacis amore :	Solus imago, &c. *

The relics of ancient English and Scotch poetry which have been handed down to us are full of corresponding letters, and strongly indicate their Scandinavian origin. With a specimen in proof of this, taken from the *Houlat*, which was written about the middle of the fifteenth century, I shall conclude this part of the subject :

Fra thy Gree to this Ground, let thy Grace Glyde !  
As thou art Grantare thairof, and the Givare ;  
Now Sovrane quhair thou Sittis, by thy Sonis Syde,  
Send Sum Succor doun Sone to the Synnare !  
The Feind is our Felloun Fa, in the we confyde,  
Thou Moder of all Mercye, and the Menare.  
For ws Wappit in Wo in this World Wyde,  
To thy sone Mak thy Mane, and thy Makar.  
Now Ladye Luke to the Lede, that ye so Lele Luifis.

\* Rask's Anglo-Saxon Grammar, Stockholm, 1817.

Thou Sekir crone of Salomon,  
 Thou Worthy Wand of Aaron,  
 Thou Joyis flece of Jedion,  
 Us Help the taHufis.

The Icelandic poets were nearly as extravagant in the variation of their verses, as they were in regard to their rhymes. In Snorro's key of versification are contained upwards of one hundred different kinds of verse, a great number of which appear to have been invented by himself, and designed as models according to which other poets might frame their compositions. Yet, notwithstanding their multiplicity and variety, they are all reducible under four principal classes: *fornyrdalag*, *drottqvædi*, *toglag*, and *runhenda*.

1. Of these, *fornyrdalag* is the most ancient, and, at the same time, the most easy and simple, being unincumbered either with hemistichial or terminating rhymes. It has merely the alliteration, and, when regular, consists of four long syllables in each line. The stanzas generally contain eight lines; and of these there are two kinds; 1st, Such as have regularly four long syllables, as in the specimens which I have inserted from the *Völuspá*; 2dly, Such as have only three long syllables in the first and second lines, and four in the third and fourth. Thus,

Oc til Things  
 Thridia jofri  
 Hvedrungs mæR  
 Or heimi baud.

*The daughter of Lok (Death)*  
*summoned the king from this world*  
*to appear at the bar of Odin.*



The six-membered stanzas differ only from the other, by the third and sixth lines exceeding the common measure, and consisting of five, six, or even more long syllables, according to the choice of the poet. Several of the Eddaic poems are of this kind, as *Vafthrudnismál*, *Skirniför*, *Hávamál*, &c. Sometimes these two kinds of *fornyrðalag* alternate, as in the *Hakonarmál*; the second and third stanzas of which consist of eight lines, and the rest of six.

2. The second kind of Icelandic verse, is called *drottqvædi*, or “heroic verse,” on account of its boldness and majesty. It is subdivided into a vast number of subordinate branches, but they may all be reduced to two principal sorts; *drottqvædi* proper, which consists of six long syllables, and *lilulag*, which consists of eight. Both kinds are found in stanzas of eight lines, with and without rhyme; the latter differing only from *fornyrðalag* in the length of its quantity. This kind of verse is most common among the poets who flourished after the ninth century, and was better adapted to the honorary and encomiastic poems they composed in celebration of the heroic deeds of the princes whose courts they frequented, than the simple versification of antiquity.

3. The third species is termed *toglag*, and differs very little from *fornyrðalag*, except in the use of rhymes; the lines being of the same length, and each stanza containing, uniformly,

eight lines. Of this kind, the following is a specimen from the “Key” of Snorro:—

Hâ röst hristir  
 Hlum vigg tiggia,  
 Bord grund bendir  
 Brimdyr styri.  
 Blâ veit briota  
 Byr skid vidi  
 Baud hardr bördum  
 Budlungr thunga.

*The royal ship splashes the sea, and  
 moves the water with the helm.  
 The vessel cleaves the blue-co-  
 loured waves. The brave prince  
 loaded his ships to the full.*

4. The fourth, and most common among the poets of the present day is the *runhenda*. Each stanza consists of eight lines; but the length of the members is different, having sometimes only three syllables, and sometimes four, six, and even eight. The couplets are not encumbered with hemistichial rhymes, but are all rhymed at the end, either with one or two syllables.

Besides these different kinds of verse, the Icelanders use, at times, what they term *omqvædi*, or “repetition,” which varies exceedingly in its application; but generally consists of two or four hemistichs, which close one of the divisions of the poem, and contain, in epitome, the subject of what has been sung. Sometimes it occurs at the end of every stanza, and forms a kind of chorus, as it also does sometimes at the beginning.

As it may interest the reader, to see some specimens of Thorlakson's able translation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, I shall here subjoin a few from different parts of the poem :—

Um fyrsta manns	Eda lysti thig
Fellda hlydni	Langtum helldur
Og át-lysting	At <i>Zions</i> hæd
Af epli forbodnu,	Og <i>Siloa</i> brunni,
Hvadan ovægur	Sem framstreymdi
Uppkom daudi,	Hiá Frett gudligri ?
<i>Edens</i> missir	Eins thar odur minn
Og allt böl manna ;	A thig heitir,
Thar til annar einn	Hvörr ser vogar
Ædri madur	Med háu flugi
Aptur fær	At efni thvi,
Oss vidreista	Er einginn hefir
Og afrekar nyiann	Hingat til vidreynt
Oss til handa	Hugar-krapta
Fullsælu stad	Liodum i
Fögrum sigri ;	Eda lausri rædu.
Syng thu, Menta—	En einkum thu
Modir himneska !	Andinn godi !
Thu sem <i>Horebs</i> fyrr,	Sem hefir hiarta fromt
A huldum toppi	I hávegum
Eda <i>Sinai</i>	Meir en mustera
Sauda-verdi	Mestu prydi,
Innblest frædanda	Fræd thu mig,
Utvalit sædi,	Thvi thu frodur ert !
Hve alheimur skopz	Adur vartu thar
Af alls samblandi.	Er upphaf vard,

Og vængi volduga  
 Of vötnin hrærdir ;  
 Alheims afgrunn  
 Sem egg dufa,  
 Til fiörs vermandi  
 Friöfsamt giördir.  
     Upplys oliost,  
 Ebl hit veika,  
 I mer, svo hrödr hár  
 Sem höfugt efni  
 Vitni eilifrar  
 Veg Forsionar  
 Og giöri mönnum liost  
 Guds rettlæti.  
     Inntu mer thá,  
 (Thvi einkis hlutar  
 Dylur thig himin  
 Ne dypz helviti :)  
 Hvörr feck svo tælt  
 Og töfrum velat  
 Fyrstu hion  
 I farsæld vafin.  
     Og af Gudi  
 Gædd enu bæsta,  
 Siálfrádendur  
 Serhvörs hlutar,  
 Einum einasta  
 Undan skildum  
 At Skaparann  
 Og skipun hans smádu ?

Thu hefir ollat  
 Uppreist theirri,  
 Hvervetna bölvut  
 Helvitis nadra !  
 Logand' af öfund  
 Og hefndar huga  
 Frum-modur vora  
 Frekt thu tældir.  
     Er thu siálfur vart  
 Ur sæti hrundin  
 Dyrðar himneskrar  
 Dramb thitt fyrir,  
 Sem fysti thig  
 Med fylgd eidrofa  
 At hefia hernat  
 Vid himna Drottinn.  
     Og keppaz eptir  
 I krapti dyrðar  
 Og hæsta veldi  
 Vid hann at jafnaz ;  
 Gudlegt almætti  
 Grimmum fianda  
 I botnlaust afgrunn  
 Bundnum steypiti.  
     Sem logbrandur  
 Af leiptranda himni  
 Hrapadi *Satan*  
 Hrædiligur  
 Og var i demants  
 Droma keirdur,

Til hardrar hegningar  
 Hroka sinum,  
 Er ser vogadi  
 Alls valldanda  
 Maktar armi  
 Mot at risa.

Nott og dagur  
 Niusinum  
 Skiptuz um,  
 Medan skari diöfta  
 Velltiz fallinn  
 I vellanda diki  
 Geysi thiakadur,  
 En gat tho ei drepiz.

Svo var ályktat ;  
*Satan* skyldi  
 Lengur bida  
 Lakari hefnda.  
 Raknar hann nu  
 Ur roti sliku,  
 Og minniz i qvölum  
 Mistra heilla.

Dapurri rendi  
 Diupsocknum augum  
 Vidt um hverfis,  
 Vottum skelfingar,  
 Harms, heipt ræknis  
 Og hæstu drambsemi  
 Harla fiarstædrar  
 Hoss takmörkum.

Hann sá i einu  
 Um allt vidlendi  
 Sem mega englar  
 Mest yfirlita,  
 Ogn og olucku  
 Endalausá,  
 Og sig innlæstann  
 I henni midri.

Thar var at síá  
 I öllum áttum  
 Dapra dyblissu,  
 Diupann ofn kyndtann ;  
 Tho gaf eldur sá  
 Einga birtu,  
 Heldur var si-sær  
 Sortin myrkra  
 Eintomafullur  
 Med ángur-boda,  
 Bleikar vofur  
 Bölfærandi.

Ro var thar eingin,  
 Ne rök til fridar,  
 Ei von, ne vyls bot,  
 En vesæld án enda  
 Sá z thar synda flod  
 Sifeldt alit  
 Af æ vellanda  
 Sem alldrei tæmiz,  
 Brennusteins báli ;  
 Bolstad slikann

*Satan* sambodinn  
 Ser þar hreppti.  
 Her var ránglátum  
 Af rettvisinni  
 Utvalin byggd  
 Og erfd i myrkri  
 Þri-slikt frá Drottni  
 Og dyrdar liosi  
 Sem himin-rönd ytsta  
 Frá heims midpunkti.

O hvat miög mundi  
 Misjafnt háttat  
 Hibylum thessum  
 Og hinum mistu!  
 Nu sá Nidhöggur  
 Neyd umkringda  
 Bölmods brædur  
 I bál-straumi.

Likastur hönum  
 Lá hit næsta.  
 I makt og vondsku  
 My-höfdingi;  
 Sá var *Belzebub*  
 Sidar laungu  
 Puki nefndur  
 I *Palestina*.

Máli firilan  
 Af miklum otta  
 Hann thá vekur  
 Höfut andskoti:

*Satan* a himni  
 Sidan nefndur:  
 Forsug ord thannig  
 Framberandi  
 Ertu thetta?  
 Yfir mig gengur!  
 Lágt liggur thu,  
 Lángt er á milli  
 Thess er ádur  
 Af thusund englum  
 Heidur bar  
 I hæd skinandi.

Ertu thetta,  
 Sem ádur hafdir  
 Vina sáttmála  
 Vid mig bundit,  
 Sömu rádagjörd,  
 Sömu hyggiur,  
 Von og diörfung  
 Til verka storra?

Erum vid thá  
 I aumu hruni,  
 Sem i sælunni  
 Samfara vordnir?  
 Her má nu merkja  
 Af háu falli,  
 Hvetthungt varthrumuslag  
 Thess er oss refsti.  
 Hvörr vissi fyrr,  
 Enn ver nu reyndum

Krapt grand-eblandi  
 Grimmra vopna?  
 Tho skal mig ecki  
 That á bita,  
 Hvat refsa kann framar  
 Reidur sigrari.

Er eg enn nú  
 Sama sinnis,  
 Horfnar dyrdir,  
 En hugur ecki;  
 Föst er reidi,  
 Fast mer svidur  
 Vansi sá  
 Er vid mig skedi.

At minum heidri  
 Var ofnær gengit,  
 That mig Gudi gegn  
 Til grimdar hvatti,  
 Og otal anda,  
 Sem árædi syndu  
 Hans at flyja,  
 En hylla mitt veldi.

Og til orrustu  
 I upphædum  
 Valltrar vonar  
 Vopn at hefia,  
 Vellta ram byggdum  
 Ræsis stoli;  
 Tynt höfum sigri,  
 Enn ei tapat öllu.

Heill er hugur minn  
 Og hefndargirni,  
 Fastur fiandskapur  
 Og fölmodur,  
 Og hvat umfram er  
 Osigrandi  
 Missir eg eigi,  
 Fyri makt ne reidi,  
 Ei skal han æru thá  
 Af mer kuga.

Ef eg bliugur  
 Beiddi nádar,  
 Og virtdi gudliga  
 Vald that hnokinn,  
 Sem armur thessi  
 Efasamt giördi,  
 That væri vesældt,  
 Versta sneipa,  
 Hádung verri  
 Hreptu falli.

Oss giördu Forlög  
 Odaudliga,  
 Gáfu Guda krapt;  
 (Gott er i efnun :)  
 Hefir oss reynslan  
 Hyggnari giörda,  
 Enn ei veikari  
 I vopna-burdi;  
 Kunnun ver thvi  
 Til kifs eilifann

Samdrátt byrja  
 Med sigur-vændum  
     Ver skulum bruka  
 Vel og krapta,  
 Og vid ovin vorn  
 Alldrei sættaz

Sem os unnum nu  
 Yfir hlackar,  
 Og rædur ein öllu  
 Rikiâ himnum.

PARADISE LOST, Book I. line 1—124.

Flyektuz thessir  
 Og fleyri thángat  
 Dimmum augum  
 Dapurt vendandi,  
 Tho mátti ad visu  
 Thari merkja  
 Glampa litinn  
 Af gleði bragði;  
     Er their sáu svo  
 Sinn foringia  
 Ei af Örvanting  
 Yfirfallin,  
 Er their sáu sig  
 I sælu tioni  
 Ei med öllu tho  
 Enn tortynda.  
     Einneginn ásynd  
 Erkifianda  
 Med sama sorta  
 Sáz umvafinn,  
 Tho feck heim heimtan  
 Hann at vana

Styrk hugar sins  
 Og stor ord mælti;  
     Voru thau agæt  
 At yfirskyni,  
 Enn i raun rettri  
 Rækar lygar,  
 Hvar med vina von  
 Hann veika hresti  
 Og theim hrædslu geig  
 Hratt ur briostum.  
     Hann baud hernæst  
 At hefiaz skyldi  
 Merki mektugaz,  
 Med heropi,  
 Básunu og ludra  
 Blæstri hvellum;  
     Kaus ser kjörtign thá  
 Cherub Azazel,  
 Thoktiz hann heidri  
 Thessum nærstur,  
 Og strax ut rakti  
 Af staung gull-legri



Fanu furdanliga  
 Fylkis dyrindi ;  
     Stod hun hafinn  
 Sem hærst kunni  
 Til at lita,  
 Sem teikn á lopti,  
 Blánkadi hun  
 Og blakti i vindi  
 Gulli giorthakin  
 Og Gimsteinum,  
 Sylfri, Seraphs tign  
 Og sigur prydi.  
     Gall thá geysi-hvellt  
 Glymiandi málmur,  
 Og herinn hropadi :  
*Hurra !* giörvallur,  
 Svo hol helvitis  
 Hlaut at rifna,  
 Skálf audn alheims  
 Og hin alldna nott.  
     Mátti nu gegnum  
 Myrkur lita  
 Tirs-els teikna  
 Tiu thusundir,  
 Sem bloktu bylgium lik,  
 Blikandi i lopti  
 Mjög til at mynda  
 Sem morgunrodi.  
     Med theim uppkom  
 Af mækium, spiotum,

Skogur skialfandi  
 Skiöldum, hiálmum,  
 Rig reknum saman  
 I radir thraungvar,  
 Er eeki mátti  
 Fyrir enda síá.  
     Fer nu herr fram  
 I fylking jafnri,  
 Fylgdi thar saungur  
 Fagur-hlioda  
 Med ton Doriskum  
 Af trumbuslætti  
 Og hvellum pipum  
 Hvervetna sætur ;  
     Sá er miög fordum  
 Til manndádar  
 Giördi hreifann hug  
 Hreysti manna,  
 Er vopna thing  
 Vaskir soktu  
 Ei bles hann ædi,  
 Ne of stopa,  
 Heldur styrkti briost  
 Med stödvun thánka.  
     Til at fá festu  
 Fotum örugga  
 Og dirfa dug  
 Fyrir daudans otta,  
 Til at fráfælaz  
 Flotta ragann ;

Nær oölld ædir  
Med áhlaupi.

Varat hliomur hans  
Hinn hátidlegi  
Minnur máttugur  
I mot hug-deigiu,  
Angist, efasemd,  
Otta, sorgum,  
Öndum og mönnum  
Sem at threngia.

Thannig tráðu their  
Med thánka stilltum  
Hliodir heita jörd  
Og hardla qvaldir,  
Gat thogángs pinu  
Glápit töfrum  
Hliomur yndæll mjög  
Af hliodpipum.

Nu their ná komnir  
Námu stadar,  
Feiknarlig reim  
Fylktra skara  
Lengdin leida baud  
Og leiptur vopna,  
Sem hermenn fornir  
Med hlifar og spiot.

Thidu their ávamrs  
Yfirbiodanda,  
Enn hann skiot eygdr  
Skodun tamri

Rennir brádt gegnum  
Rod serhvörja,  
Og sinn allann herr  
Yfirlitur.

Nidurskipun  
Mærsta fallegri,  
Einnig skapnadi  
Og ásynd theirra  
Gaf hann gætrat  
Gudum somandi,  
Og thá at lyktum  
Alla taldi.

Miög svo vid thetta  
Mektar ogrynni  
Of drambi thrutnar  
Djöfuls hiarta,  
Stolltur stærir sig  
Og stæliz mærsta,  
Thvi iafnt lid thessu  
Bar jörd alldrei.

Færri var Phlegru  
Slagda sægur  
Hetiur thær *Thebis*  
Er hjá striddu  
Og Troju-kifs kappar  
Kænir, á mædal  
Biargvætta sinna  
I beggia lidi.

Færra var tal  
Hinna feiknar miklu

Riddara skara  
Skröksögum i,  
Og frá Serklandi  
Sendra herrja,  
Er Kallamagnusar  
Kappa giörvalla  
Vid Fontarabia  
Fellda letu.

Tho var herr thessi,  
Thusundsinnunum  
Alla daudliga  
Sem yfir geck,  
Oddvita sinum  
Yfrit hlydinn.

Var hann fyrir theim  
At vænleik mjög,  
Stod hann sem turn  
Med stolltar bragdi  
Mist var ei giörvöll  
Medskopt prydi.

Her sáz en hrasadr  
Hofut-engill,  
Dyrd sem dulin var  
Med döcku myrkri,  
Rett sem nyrisin  
Rödull syniz  
Gegnum siondeildar  
Glyiu daggar,  
Og thá blakt hum,  
Bak frá mána

Formyrkvut sunna  
Yfir fold breidir,  
Og jafnval alvöldum  
Ugg i briosti  
Eykur geigvænnar  
Umbreytingar.

Svo var dymmur  
Tho af dyrd skini  
Hofut-engill  
Af hæd fallinn  
Og bar inngrafin  
I andliti  
Thrumu djup ör  
Af thungu slagi.

Hryggd var afmálut  
Helvardar kinnunum  
Nærsta döpur  
Ná bleikum á ;  
Hár skein af enni  
Hugar styrkur,  
Vottar drambs vidmot  
Vændir hefnda.

Heit brann ur augum  
Heiptar eisa  
Tho var medaumkan  
Thari blandin  
Af brædra falli  
Til böls dæmdra  
Oendanlegs  
I erfd qvala ;

Med thvi mergð slika,  
 Margar thusundir,  
 Leit hann frá himni  
 Lángt burtrekna,  
 Fyri fylgd veitta  
 Flasi sinu,  
 Tho ser enn trua  
 At throtnum glansa.

Svo stendur bein vaxinn  
 A bláfialli,  
 Eiki-skogur  
 Ofanvissinn,  
 Og heidar greni  
 Sem háa toppa  
 Látit hefir  
 Fyri lopt-eldi  
 I briosti thrungnu  
 Bjo nu at varpa

A thá ordum  
 Erki diöfli ;  
 Stod hann fylkinga  
 Midt a milli  
 I ára-hring  
 Inni laktur.

Nuvar gaungæft  
 Og gætt thagnar,  
 Thá reyndi Satan til  
 I thrjár reisar ;  
 Trodu ser engillig  
 Tár fram thrisvar  
 Gegnum diupt forakt  
 Og drambs feiknir.

Fundu tho loksins  
 Farveg thessi  
 Ord af andvörpum  
 Opt thverskorin.

Book I. line 522—621.

Hun at svo sögdu  
 Frá sidu leysti  
 Illsvalldan lykil  
 Ohamingiu  
 Tol that táraverdt  
 At tioni voru  
 Drog nu hringhala  
 Hrædiligann  
 Skrimsl skadvæna  
 Er skreid at porti.

Thá strax theyttiz upp  
 Thungur slagbrandur  
 Hvörjum eckert abl  
 Annat Vitis  
 Mátti hot haggja  
 Hun sidan vatt  
 Lagkæn lykil sinn  
 I lás fiölbrotinn  
 Datt frá digur hvörr  
 Demants boltti

Stinnar stal fiadrar  
 Strax undanletu  
 Svo skall frá bröndum  
 I skyndingu  
 Helvitis hurd  
 Med háu braki  
     Hrykti hardt gnunum.  
 I hennar lómum  
 That var thvilikaz  
 At thruma slægi  
 Svo nötrar nedsti botn  
 I Niflheimi.  
 Upp gat hun lokit  
 En apturbyrgia  
 Vondrar eigi var  
 I valdi *Syndar*.  
     Nu stodu portin  
 Næsta vidt opin  
 Svo styröld stærsta hvör  
 Med stridsfánum,  
 Hestum, hjolvögnum  
 Hægliga gat  
 Gengit thá thegar  
 Thar i gegnum.  
     Gaus ur gapi thvi  
 Grimdar-svæla  
 Og liotir logar,  
 Likt sem ur ofni ;  
 Vard theim vidsynt miög  
 Um vid blasandi

Allt hit auda diup,  
 Adur hulit,  
 Haf eitt landa laust  
 Lioss og mælis.  
     Thar breitt og langt allt  
 (Tho til bysna se)  
 Tyniz án tölu,  
 Tid og stadur ;  
 Thar Osorg ellst  
 Og Oskapnadir  
 Æ ráða ríki  
 Regluleysis  
     Her their forfedur  
 Fyri ráða,  
 Fra hveim natturan  
 Nidurstigur  
 Oro umkringdir  
 Og æva stridi.  
 Her vill hvat ödru  
 Heitt og kallt  
 It vota og thurra  
 Verda meira,  
 Æ og án afláts  
 Utfærandi  
 Her ens minsta mors,  
 Er má ei deila.  
     Sem fer sveymandi  
 A sinn máta hvört  
 Til lids ut buit,  
 Lett edur höfugt

Hvast edur hudslett  
 Hvat og sein fara,  
 Otalin urmull  
 Eins og foksandur,  
 Af sterkt stridandi  
 Stormum theyttur.

Her ber hvörr um sig  
 Herradæmi  
 Eit augna blik :  
 En *Oskapnadur*,  
 Sem ur skera skal  
 Med skipun sinni,  
 Giörir theirra thá  
 Thrætu verri,  
 Hann fyrir hvöria  
 Heldur riki  
 Her er hönum nærst  
 Yfir hvivetna  
 Bods vald berandi  
 Blind *Tilvilian*.

Svo stod Satan nu  
 I sögdu diupi,  
 I hiulstri heims vors,  
 Sem hönum mäske  
 Verdur giört ad gröf,  
 Thar grund er eingin  
 Ei lopt, ei logur,  
 Ei Loga brimi,  
 Heldur frum efni  
 Og fræ til theirra,

Hvat vid annat allt  
 I oröd blandat,  
 Er at eilifu  
 Aldrei sættiz  
 Ut an Almættit  
 Af theim nyiar  
 Vilji veraldir  
 Verda láta.

Vid that villu-djup  
 Vard enum slæga  
 Bölverk bidleikat,  
 A barmi vitis ;  
 Starandi stod han  
 Um stundar sakir,  
 Og virtdi fyri ser  
 Vandann gang.

Ei var allmiott sund  
 Um ad sveima  
 Ei mundu minna  
 Merkja hlustir  
 Hark og háreysti  
 Her : (at likja  
 Mjög storum hlutum  
 Vid miklu smærri :)  
 En thá heitan her  
 Hildur æsir  
 Med gny giörvöllum  
 I gegn borg einni,  
 At um koll kunni  
 Keyraz nidur ;

Ei minnur, enn ef  
Ofan felli  
Himins hvelfing,  
Eda höfutskepnur  
Yndi i áfflogum  
Allt jardar hvel  
Snoggla af sinum  
Snunings ási.

Loksins lætur hann  
Lánga vængi  
Til flugs utspenta  
Og flíott upplyptur  
Botni burtparkar  
I bylgjum reykiar  
Svo fer hann fram  
Um fiolda rasta ;  
Stollt um hug  
Sem i stol af skyium.

En er thrutu thau  
Thá vard fyrir  
Audn, thar eckert var  
Afar vid flæmi,  
Misti thá mord-árr  
Er hann minst vardi,  
Flug sins, forgefins  
Tho flögta reyndi,  
Fell hann fimthusund  
Fadma tvenna  
Ofan aptur  
Olipra billtu.

Og dveldiz dettandi  
I dag enn nu  
Utan hefði hann  
Heilli verstu  
Skyi framfeyktu  
Fyrir ordit.

Brennusteini með  
Og bitru loptsallti  
Altendrat var thát,  
Og upphratt fianda  
Svo margar milur,  
En misti fareblis,  
Og lendti loks  
I ledju feni,  
Hvar ei vatn var  
Ne völlum fastur.

Thar östar hann  
Thvi nær uppgefin  
Seigann saur  
Milli sunds og gaungu ;  
Tho thraut hann eigi  
Thráláta keppni  
Af fram blautt og bratt  
Brautz hann gegnum.

Yfir thyckt og thunt  
Tho thungt veitti,  
Med höfði fotum  
Höndum, vængjum,  
Sveymar á sundi,  
Söckur, gengur,

Fer fobnis gáang  
Eda flug threytir.

Loks hann merkia má  
Moti ser koma  
Grenjanda glaum,  
Og greinarlausann  
Ohliod undarlig,  
Er ofallt glymjá,  
Rugladar raddir,  
Sem rákuz gegnum  
Holt hum-flæmi  
Heldur sterkliga.

Styrir han nu thángat  
Stefnu sinni  
Ei vid abl nockurt  
Otta sleginn,  
Ei vid anda neinn,  
I ærslum theim  
Enum stiorntlausu  
Stad eganda.

Eitt var áform hans  
At um fretta  
Ena næstu leid,  
Er lægi thángat,  
Sem mættuz merki  
Myrkva og loss;  
Andspænis hönum  
*Oskapnadar*  
Tíádi thron sig  
Og tiald hans myrkva;

Thess döckvir dukar  
Of diup breiddu sig.

Sitjandi thar sáz  
I svörtu skrudi  
Grima gömul  
A grams stoli,  
Hönum sifelldt su  
Er samrikjandi.

Thar stodu thessir  
Theim til hlida,  
Orcus og Ades,  
Og med ogn nefndur  
Demogorgon,  
Thá dauf Tilvilian  
Thá Ospekt, Ohliod  
Og O-orda,  
Öll i áflogum,  
Og enn at lyktum  
Thræta thusund mynt  
(Theirra verst.)

Hugdjarfur vid theim  
Sneriz Helvardur,  
Og skaut ordum at:  
Ther Yfirvöld  
Sem drotnit her  
Yfir diupi thessu!  
Thu aldin Osorg!  
Thu Oskapnadar!  
Hefir-at mig hnysni  
Hingat leiddann,



At um hulin hag  
 Hefia vilji  
 Ransökn ne röskun.  
 Ríkis yckar,  
 Heldur naudsyn nog  
 Nu faranda  
 Yfir audn thessa  
 Oskipuligu.

Gegnum vidáttu  
 Velldis yckars  
 Liggur leid min  
 I lioss álfur,  
 Og án vegvisis  
 Vil eg einförum  
 Til hálfis tapadur  
 Tröd hitta thá,  
 Er má nærst komaz  
 Ytstu merkjum  
 Humfullra heima  
 Og himin-deildar.

Og hafi há-vegs  
 Hilmir yckur  
 Nyliga rænt

Nockrum parti,  
 Odal yckart  
 Sem tho ádur var,  
 Thá er thánki minn  
 Thángat vendur—  
 Visit veg thann mer  
 Og vil eg yckur  
 Eckert allsmátt  
 I umbun gefa.  
 Land that er letut  
 Legg eg aptur  
 Undir yckart vald  
 Og audn sem fyrr  
 Svo gamla grima  
 (Geng eg thvi thannig)  
 Megi merki thar  
 Maktar sinnar  
 Aptur upp setja—  
 Er thá min hefndin  
 Eintom, en ardur  
 Yckar heill.

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