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MRS. ALEC TWEEDIE.

After a painting by Herbert Schmalz.

A GIRL'S RIDE IN ICELAND

BY

MRS. ALEC TWEEDIE

(*Née* HARLEY),

AUTHOR OF "A WINTER JAUNT TO NORWAY" (WITH PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF NANSEN, IBSEN, BJÖRNSEN, AND BRANDES); "WILTON, Q.C., OR LIFE IN A HIGHLAND SHOOTING BOX," ETC.

"Iceland shone with glorious lore renowned
A Northern light, when all was gloom around."
Montgomery.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP.

THIRD EDITION.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

WHEN this little volume (my maiden effort) was published five years ago, it unwittingly originated an angry controversy by raising the question "Should women ride astride?"

It is astonishing what a great fire a mere spark may kindle, and accordingly the war, on what proved to be a very vexed subject, waged fast and furious. The picture papers inserted cleverly-illustrated articles *pro* and *con.*; the peace of families was temporarily wrecked—for people were of course divided in their opinions—and bitter things were said by both sides concerning a very simple and harmless matter. For a time it seemed as though the "Ayes" would win; but eventually appearances carried the day, and women still use side-saddles when on horseback, though the knickerbockers and short skirts (only far shorter) I advocated for rough country riding are now constantly worn by the many female equestrians who within the last couple of years have mounted bicycles.

It is nearly four years since, from an hotel window in Copenhagen, I saw, to my great surprise, for the first time a woman astride a bicycle! How strange it seemed! Paris quickly followed suit, and now there is a perfect army of women bicyclists in that fair capital; after a decent show of hesitation England dropped her prejudices, and at the present minute, almost without a murmur, allows her

daughters, clad in unnecessarily masculine costume, to scour the country in quest of fresh air astride a bicycle.

If women may ride an iron steed thus attired, surely they might be permitted to bestride a horse in like manner clothed in like fashion.

My own experience as to comfort will be found in the following pages, and I can only add that greater knowledge has strengthened that opinion. When discussing the subject with Sir John Williams—one of the greatest authorities on the diseases of women—he said, "I do not see that any harm could arise from women riding like men. Far from it. I cannot, indeed, conceive why the side-saddle was ever invented at all." What more could be urged in favour of cross riding?

Since this little book made its first appearance, many ladies have followed the advice therein contained, and visited "the most volcanic region of the earth," peeped at Iceland's snow-clad peaks and deeply indented fjords, made acquaintance with its primitive people, and ridden their shaggy ponies. Practically Iceland remains the same to-day as it was a century ago. Time passes unheeded within its borders, and a visit to the country is like returning to the Middle Ages. Excepting in the capital, to all intents and purposes, no change is to be noted; and even there the main square opposite the governor's house forms the chief cod-fish drying-ground, while every summer the same odours ascend from the process as greeted travellers of yore.

Thanks, however, to the courtesy of a couple of friends, I am able to mention a few innovations. Dr. Karl Grossman, who travelled through the north-west of the island, on geology intent, has kindly furnished me with excellent photographs of ponies.

Mr. J. R. Jeaffreson, who knows the island well, intends before joining Mr. Frederick Jackson's polar expedition, to explore and cross the interior of Iceland from east to

west during the winter of 1895, on or about the 68th parallel, traversing the practically unknown districts of Storis-anch, Spengis-andr, and O-dadahraimm, and returning across the Vatna Jokull or Great Ice Desert. His reasons for wishing to cross in the winter are, first, that in summer ponies must be used for the journey, and they could not carry sufficient food and fuel for the expedition as well as fodder for themselves; second, the roughness of the ground and the weight of the burdens would necessitate very short distances being traversed each day.

When I pen these last lines, on July 12, 1894, I have just returned from seeing Frederick Jackson and his gallant followers steam away down Thames in their quest of the North Pole. A party of friends and several leading Arctic explorers assembled at Cannon-street Station this morning to see the English Polar Expedition off. Five minutes before the train left, Frederick Jackson, who, having discarded the frock coat and top hat which had earned for him the reputation of "resembling a smart guardsman with handsome bronzed features," appeared upon the scene with his favourite brother. To-day the leader of the expedition looked like an English yachtsman in blue serge; but he did not personally provoke so much comment as his luggage. All the heavy things were already on board the "Windward," anchored off Greenhithe. When the hero of the hour arrived, a large Inverness cape on his arm, carrying a bundle of fur rugs, his only article of luggage was a large tin bath!

"A bath," we cried.

"Yes," he laughingly replied, "I've had a small bath-room built on the ship, and when we get into our winter quarters on Bell Island I shall use my 'baby's bath.' I can rough it, and have roughed it for years, but there is one thing I can't go without—a good tub."

What a true Englishman!

Frederick Jackson was in the best of spirits, and never

gave way for a moment, although those many, many good-byes exchanged with intimate friends must have been a sore trial. In spite of his tremendous self-control, he is strangely tender-hearted and affectionate by nature.

When we reached Greenhithe it was raining; but the boats from the "Worcester," manned by smart lads, were waiting for us, and with hard pulling—for the tide was running fast—we were all soon clambering up a rope ladder to the "Windward's" decks. There was not much room. Food at full rations ($6\frac{1}{2}$lb. per man per diem) for eight men for four years fills a good space, and five or six tons of cod liver oil biscuits for the dogs, twelve tons of compressed hay for the ponies, sledges, tents, boats, clothing, &c., was more than the hold could accommodate, and some of the things strewed the deck.

There was considerable fun getting the shaggy black retrievers on board, for they could not walk up a rope ladder, and were almost too big to carry.

Just as we were all leaving to go on board the "Worcester," and watch the final start, it was discovered that one of the picked eight of the land party had never turned up!

Had he lost heart, or made a mistake as to the time of departure?

Great was the consternation, and eagerly all eyes were turned to the shore; but still he came not. As it afterwards transpired, he had missed his train; and, far from his courage having failed at the last moment, so eager was he to be off, he travelled on to Gravesend, where, thanks to the courtesy of an official of high rank, he was put on board a gunboat, and raced down the Thames, just managing to get alongside the Arctic ship before it was too late.

From H.M.S. "Worcester" we watched the anchor weighed, and as the boys manned the rigging of the two training ships, they sent up a tremendous roar of cheers.

Flags were flying on every side, for several yachts had come to see the start. "God save the Queen" sounded across the water from the land, and the sun came out and shone brightly as the stout whaler "Windward" steamed away with her party of Polar explorers in the best of spirits.

A couple of months hence they will be settling down in their winter quarters in Franz Josef Land, there to wait through the Arctic darkness for the return of the sun, when they will push on towards the North Pole, leaving a chain of depôts behind them.

Everyone must wish them "God speed."

They may meet Dr. Nansen, and Mr. Jackson was immensely amused when I handed him a letter for my good friend—addressed

"Dr. Fridtjof Nansen,
North Pole.

Kindly favoured by F. G. Jackson."

How strange it will be if these two adventurous men really meet and shake hands beneath the Polar star! May good fortune attend them, and their enthusiasm be rewarded.

E. B. T.

London, 12*th July*, 1894.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

It was in June, 1893, that Dr. Fridtjof Nansen started on his North Pole expedition; and it was in July, 1894, that Mr. Frederick Jackson left our shores on a similar errand, to be accomplished, however, by entirely different means. As my second preface was written on the day I saw the Jackson-Harmsworth expedition leave the Thames, my readers may like to hear any news I can give them of these two adventurous men and their followers.

From Nansen nothing has been heard for nearly two years—not, indeed, since he left the Kara Sea, whence he probably made for his ice current towards the north, instead of going as far as the New Siberian Islands, as he had once intended. Therefore, if he be accomplishing his difficult task of drifting across the Polar Regions in the ice current, he ought by this time to have passed the Pole, and be turning towards Franz Joseph Land or Greenland. We can only hope it is so, and that next year or in 1897 we may welcome the brave little party who started on board the *Fram*, expecting only to be away for three or four years, although provisioned and equipped for five.

I said nothing had been heard *from* Dr. Nansen, but, according to the papers, much has been heard *of* him. The Paris *Figaro* actually reported as a fact that Dr. Nansen had reached the North Pole!—a fact they claimed

to have learned by means of a *telegram*—why did they not say a carrier pigeon or a duck, for it is a regular *canard*. It was "officially" stated that the Crown Prince of Norway and Sweden had received a despatch, in which it was said that Nansen had discovered the Pole situated in a chain of mountains, and planted the Norwegian flag to mark the spot. It even went on to state that the temperature was 2° above zero, Centigrade!

A very charming story, and excellent copy; but the truth is somewhat doubtful, unless the correspondent were possessed of second sight! However, this is a harmless joke, and preferable to the rumours, at one time afloat, that the *Fram* had been crushed in the ice with all on board—rumours hideously cruel to the five or six wives left at home. No news of Nansen is good news. His last words to me at the Christiania Station a few weeks before he sailed were: "Whether you hear from us sooner or later, there need be no anxiety on our behalf. We will come back safe and sound, for if we abandon the *Fram*, or the *Fram* abandons us, we will take to our sledges, and with our dogs and our ski will walk across the Pole, or, anyway, the Polar region."

From Mr. Jackson I had a long and characteristic letter, penned from Archangel, in which he said:

WHITE SEA,
July 30th, 1894.

I am sending you a short yarn before we reach Archangel, as I know I shall be very busy when we get there, which we hope to do early to-morrow morning, and there will be mighty little time for letter writing.

Up to the present we have had a very pleasant voyage, but with head winds all the way until to-day, when a stiff breeze from the north is blowing, and, as we are now going south towards Archangel, it is all right.

The *Windward* has behaved capitally, and I am very well satisfied with my seven companions (the land party). They get on A1 together. The missing man got on board at Gravesend, where we

sent on shore for a code book. I am convinced his missing the train was a sheer accident, although a stupid one.

I have been very busy since I left, writing the yarn about my last expedition with Arthur Montefiore's help, to be called "Samoyad and Tundra." Writing is not my line at all; but I wanted it done, so had to get through with it, and, as the British public is long suffering, I hope they may tolerate it.

Remember, you are keeping the first waltz for me after I have captured the Pole! We shall do our little best, you bet, to do that, and leave no stroke unturned. Good times in 1896 or thereabouts, and the trio—you, Nansen, and I—will enjoy snowy larks in Norway.

How far we shall advance remains to be seen, but no pains and exertion will be spared in the endeavour to do our country credit, and to plant the flag we carry with us in the highest possible latitude.

His letter finished up by saying: "I shall write from Franz Josef Land." This letter has not come, nor has the *Windward*, so splendidly equipped by the generosity of Mr. Harmsworth, yet returned. She has probably got blocked in the ice, which formed unusually early last autumn and lasted long into this spring, as we all know even in London, where there were six or seven weeks' skating in the beginning of '95.

With the milder days of summer the *Windward* ought shortly to return, bringing us news of the English party. A balloon has been seen which the papers suggested came from Dr. Nansen. This, to my mind, hardly seems likely, since he had but a single balloon—a large English military one, which he took with him for the express purpose of reconnoitring, while it was captive to the *Fram*. He only carried sufficient gas with him for three fillings, as the cylinders were too heavy. Therefore, unless the balloon escaped, it is not at all likely that it could have come from him. On the other hand, Mr. Jackson took some small balloons for postal purposes. However, the aerial messenger has not been found, so its contents are still problematical.

Do we not all owe kindly thoughts to such men as Nansen and Jackson? It is to enthusiasts of every country

and every age we owe all the knowledge we possess. Some have risked their lives and endured hardships in strange lands, others have devoted their existence to solitary study in the realms of science; but it is to the enthusiast, whose heart is so deeply buried in his work that he sticks at no obstacle, we owe all the information we possess. Enthusiasts have educated the world; we ordinary folk can only look on and admire their courage.

This the third edition of "A Girl's Ride in Iceland," although issued at a popular price, is much enlarged. It has been brought up to date, so far as the old-world country can be made up to date. Icelandic legends have been added, and there are several new illustrations.

To my old friend Herbert Schmalz I am much indebted, not only for the permission to use his far too flattering portrait of myself, but also for his drawing of an Icelandic girl taken from my own rough sketch.

Dr. Jon Stefansson, who is himself writing a large book on Iceland, of which country he is a native, has kindly contributed a chapter on Icelandic literature.

I only hope "the girl" who has been riding now for five years may ride as successfully for a few more. Personally, I don't mind how many!

E. B. T.

LONDON, *May*, 1895.

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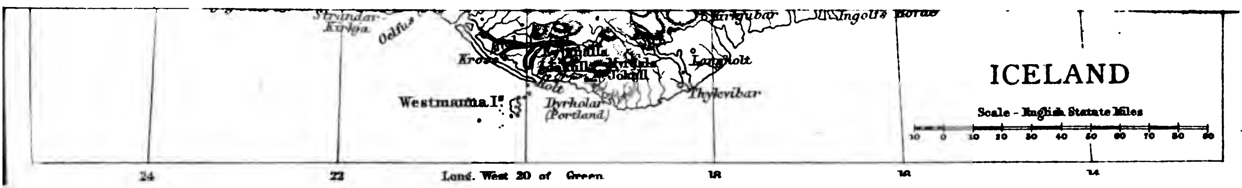
ICELAND
Scale - English Statute Miles
10 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90
Westmanna Is.
Dyrholar (Portland)
Thykvibar
Langholt
Ingolfs Hofdi
Kirkjubar
Strandar Kirkja
Oelfus
Kross
24
22
Long. West 20 of Green.
18
16
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A GIRL'S RIDE IN ICELAND.

CHAPTER I.

OUR START.

As the London season draws to a close, the question uppermost in every person's mind is, "Where shall we go this autumn?" And a list of places well trodden by tourists pass through the brain in rapid succession, each in turn to be rejected as too far, too near, too well known, or not embracing a sufficient change of scene.

Switzerland? That is no rest, for one meets half London there. Germany? The same answer again occurs, and so *ad infinitum*.

"Suppose we make up a party and visit Iceland?" I suggested to one of my friends on a hot July day as we sat discussing this weighty question; fanning ourselves meanwhile under a temperature of ninety degrees, the mere thought of Iceland, with its snow-capped hills and cool temperature seemed positively refreshing. Mad as the idea appeared when first proposed in mere banter, it ended, as these pages will prove, by our turning the suggestion into a reality, and overcoming the difficulties of a trip which will ever remain engraven on memory as one of the most agreeable experiences of my life.

When the idea came to be ventilated outside my private "den," it was treated as far too wild a scheme for serious consideration—since "Iceland," to Londoners, seems much the same in point of nearness as the moon! And there really is some similarity in the volcanic surface of both. Here, however, the similarity ends, for while the luminary is indeed inaccessible, the island can easily be reached without any very insurmountable difficulty.

The somewhat natural opposition which our plan at first met with only stimulated our desire the more to carry it into effect. The first step was to gain the permission of our parents, which, after some reluctance, was granted, and the necessary ways and means were finally voted; our next was to collect together a suitable party from amongst numerous friends, and take all necessary measures to secure the success of such an undertaking.

As soon as our purpose became known and discussed among our immediate circle of friends, many volunteers appeared anxious to share the triumphs of so novel an enterprise.

Thus the party at first promised to be somewhat larger than anticipated. Happily, however, as it afterwards proved, these aspirants for "fame," on learning the length of the passage, the possible discomforts, and other obstacles, dropped off one by one, till only my brother and myself, with three other friends, remained firm to our purpose.

It may be well here to introduce our party individually.

First, my brother, whom, for convenience sake in these pages, I will call by his Christian name, "Vaughan," and who was looked upon as the head of the expedition, as, without his protection, I should never have been allowed to undertake the trip.

He was then a medical student in Edinburgh,* and well

* Dr. Vaughan Harley is now Assistant Professor at University College, London.

suited to the enterprise, being of a scientific turn of mind, as well as practical and energetic—a first-rate rider, an oarsman, and a good sailor, whilst he had spent his vacations for some years in travelling.

Miss T., my sole lady companion, a handsome girl of a thoroughly good-natured and enterprising disposition, was, on the contrary, no horsewoman, though the exigencies of a trip in Iceland soon made her one. She was an excellent German scholar, and a great assistance to our party in this respect, since the natives could often understand German, from the resemblance of that language to Danish.

As it proved afterwards, it was really fortunate that we had not more than two girls in our party, for a larger number could hardly have met with the necessary accommodation. Ladies are such rare visitors in Iceland, that little or no preparation is made for their comfort. The captain of our vessel told us that during several voyages he had not a single female passenger on board.

H. K. Gordon, an Anglo-Indian, on leave from Calcutta for his health, was likewise a valuable addition to our number. He was accustomed to tent life and camping-out, and helped us much in similar experiences.

A. L. T., who completed our party, was a keen sportsman, but the novelties of the trip overbalanced his love for Scotland and the attractions of the 12th of August—no small sacrifice, especially as our travelling proved too rapid to enable him to make much use of his gun, although we often saw game on our various rides.

Of myself, I have only to say that, being worn out with the gaieties of a London season, which I had toiled through with the determination of youth; dancing the soles out of my satin shoes, and wearing my long white gloves till they could be cleaned no longer, I looked forward to a trip to "Ultima Thule" with pleasurable anticipations, which were fully realised.

Five is not a bad number to form a travelling company, and a very happy five we were, although entirely thrown on our own resources for some weeks. Of course we were often placed in the strangest positions, over which we laughed heartily; for on starting we agreed that we would each and all make the best of whatever obstacles we might encounter, and it is certainly of no use going to Iceland, or any other out-of-the-way place, if one cannot cheerfully endure the absence of accustomed luxuries. Travellers not prepared to do this had better remain at home.

The decision once arrived at that Iceland was to be our autumn destination, we endeavoured to collect from our travelling friends any information on the subject, as regarded outfit, route, or mode of travelling, they might be able and willing to impart, also whether the scenery and novelty of the trip were likely to repay us for the trouble and roughing we should have to undergo; but unfortunately all our investigations were futile, as we found no one who had any personal knowledge of the island. Remembering Dr. John Rae, the famous discoverer of the Franklin remains, was an old friend of my father's, I wrote to ask him if he could help us in our difficulties, but his answer was scarcely of a cheering nature, as he had not been in the island for twenty-five years, and then only crossed from east to west—from Berufjord to Reykjavik, which did not form part of our route. He further stated he thought it was too arduous an undertaking for ladies, and endeavoured to dissuade us from making the attempt. Failing to obtain any assistance from such a high authority, we concluded that it would be useless to make further inquiries among our personal friends; we were therefore compelled to fall back on our own resources, and extract what information we could from guide books. Inquiry at a London ticket office whether the officials could give us any particulars as to our route was totally unsuccessful, the astonished

clerk remarking: "I was once asked for a ticket to the North Pole, but I have never been asked for one to Iceland."

Although, however, we never procured any personal experiences, we found there was no lack of interesting historical and geological literature respecting the island.

Our first step was to place ourselves in communication with Messrs. R. D. Slimon, of Leith, the managers of the Icelandic Steamship Company, from whom we learnt that the next steamer would start from Leith on the 31st July, such, at least, was the advertised place and date, but it really left Granton, some three miles further up the Forth, an hour and a half later than the time originally announced.

Before proceeding any further, it may be well to mention the important subjects of outfit and provisions. As we were not going upon a fashionable tour, it was not necessary to provide ourselves with anything but what was actually needed. Intending travellers must recollect that, as all inland journeys are performed on ponies, and the luggage can only be slung across the animals' backs, large boxes or trunks are out of the question, and it is necessary to compress one's outfit into the smallest possible dimensions. The following list will be found quite sufficient for the journey:

A thick serge dress, short and plain for rough wear, with a cloth one in change; a tight-fitting thick jacket, good mackintosh, and very warm fur cloak; one pair of high mackintosh riding boots (like fisherman's waders), necessary for crossing rivers and streams; a yachting cap or small tight-fitting hat, with a projecting peak to protect the eyes from the glare; blue glasses, which are a great comfort, and thick gauntlet gloves. A habit skirt is not necessary, but riding breeches are essential.

My brother has given me a list of things he found most useful. Two rough homespun or serge suits: riding

breeches, which are absolutely indispensable; riding boots laced up the centre, and large, as they are continually getting wet; flannel shirts; thick worsted stockings; a warm ulster, and serviceable mackintosh.

Instead of trusting to the pack boxes provided by the natives, a soft waterproof "hold-all," or mule box, would be an additional comfort.

On one of our long rides two pack ponies came into collision; they both fell, the path being very narrow, and rolled over one another. To our horror, one pack box was broken to pieces, while another lost its bottom, and there in all the dust lay tooth brushes, sponge bags, &c., not to mention other necessaries of the toilet, some of which got lost or broken, and in Iceland could not be replaced.

Rugs, mackintosh sheets, and pillows are required for camping out, also towels. Although the Icelanders provide tents, it is advisable to take your own if feasible. Provisions are absolutely requisite—tinned meats and soup, and a cooked ham or tongues; tea, sugar, cocoa, biscuits (of a hard make), and as no white bread is to be procured, it is as well to induce the ship's steward to provide some loaves before starting on an expedition. Butter can be obtained at Reykjavik. Japanned plates and mugs, knives, forks, and spoons, must not be forgotten. We provided ourselves with wine and spirits, which we found of great use when facing the cold.

Our purchases being made and our party complete, four of us arranged to start from Euston on Thursday, 29th July, and go north by the night train. My brother, who had been away in his small yacht, coasting near Dunbar, was to meet us at Edinburgh. We had, however, sent him all particulars as to our plans. Under the best circumstances, and despite sleeping saloons, and other luxuries, it is a long and tedious journey to Scotland, and we were not sorry to find it at an end, as, with a puff and a shriek, our train entered the Waverley Station, Edinburgh.

Notwithstanding our fatigue, we took a somewhat regretful look at that steam marvel of civilisation, which had brought us thus far on our journey, and to which we now bade farewell, for some weeks, at all events, for a much ruder and more primitive mode of travelling.

Some friends had kindly offered to put us up during our short stay, so we made our way to Belgrave Crescent, and were soon enjoying the luxuries of a wash and a good breakfast. My brother had arranged to meet us there, but as he did not put in an appearance, we determined to go in search of him.

Imagine our dismay on arriving at his rooms to be told by his landlady that he had been absent for a week, yachting, and had not yet returned, whilst all our letters detailing final plans, and date of arrival in Edinburgh, were lying unopened on the table.

We at once resolved to take energetic measures to discover his whereabouts. As it was necessary to go to Leith to engage cabins and take tickets, we decided to push on to Granton, where he kept his boat, and inquire at the Royal Forth Yacht Club if they knew anything about *The Lily* and her owner.

A tram car took Miss T. and myself to Leith, and, after sundry inquiries, we found ourselves in front of an ordinary tin-shop, over which the name "Slimon" was painted in large letters of gold—an unlikely-looking place, we thought, to take tickets for such an important voyage!

In answer to our inquiries, "Yes, mum; the office is next door," was vouchsafed to us in the broadest Scotch dialect, by a clerk, who escorted us there, carrying with him a huge bunch of keys, looking more like a gaoler conducting prisoners, than two girls innocently requiring tickets. We were ushered into a dingy little office, where we found the only occupant was a cat! Our conductor was extremely ignorant, and unable to supply us with any

information, his answer to every question being, "I dinna ken," or "I canna say."

I explained to him what anxiety I was in about my missing brother, and that our party would have to be broken up unless he appeared before the morrow; consequently, it would be useless for us to purchase tickets until we heard from him. He blurted out in a broad and almost unintelligible dialect, which it is impossible to reproduce, that we need not pay until we were on board the steamer, adding that probably the dead calm since the previous night had delayed *The Lily*. Knowing Vaughan had intended sailing beyond Dunbar, I feared that he might be delayed by a gale; but if only becalmed, I felt certain he would somehow manage to get ashore in the dingy, and was confident he had ascertained for himself, independently of our unopened letters, the date of the steamer's starting, being too old a traveller to fail his party, and so spoil the expedition *in toto*.

Rattling over the stones to Granton in a terribly rickety "machine," as our northern friends call their cabs, the first old salt we encountered on the pier replied to our anxious inquiry, "Why, that's *The Lily* sailing past the harbour's mouth," as at that moment she slowly rounded the pier.

When Vaughan came ashore, he told us, after running from Dunbar in a gale, he had been becalmed for two days, and it had taken the whole of that day to cross "the Forth." He had not hurried particularly, however, thinking we were not travelling north till the next day, no letters having been forwarded to him. Thus ended happily what might have been a great catastrophe, which would have compelled us to abandon the expedition.

That night we returned with him to Edinburgh, and on rising next morning from probably the last comfortable bed we should enjoy for some time, were cheered by a bright sun and cloudless sky—a pleasant forecast for the

voyage in prospect. We made several purchases in Princes Street, which included an extra deck chair, warm rugs, &c., and received an influx of "*bon voyage*" telegrams from London friends—the last home news we should get for some time. Yes, several weeks is a long time never to hear of one's nearest and dearest, or they to hear of you. What might not happen in the interval? So much, indeed, that it passed imagination; therefore we contented ourselves with remembering that we had left every one well and everything all right when we started.

At the pier we found the tender waiting to take us to the *Camoens*, the steamer which was to convey us to the goal of our ambition, Iceland.

How many and varied were our experiences before we steamed alongside that pier again!

CHAPTER II.

UNDER WAY.

THE *Camoens*, named after the Portuguese poet of that name, is a fair-sized steamer of 1200 tons, which runs during the summer and autumn months at regular intervals of about once in four weeks, between Granton and Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, calling *en route* at other ports. Subjoined is a map of the island showing the position of the different towns.

Her average run, inclusive of stoppage at the various trading ports, is six or seven days at most; but in steaming direct from Granton to the Icelandic capital the voyage does not occupy more than four and a half days, if the weather be favourable.*

On reaching the *Camoens*, we found the rest of our party had arrived, so we joined forces at once. All was not ready, however, on board, for the stowage of the cargo was still in full swing, and sacks of flour and trusses of hay were being alternately hurled round on the crane and lowered on deck, sailors and "odd hands" rushing hither and thither in the wildest confusion.

Just before our arrival a serious accident had occurred. The steward was returning from market, when the crane

* The *Camoens* runs no longer, but the Danish boats stop at Leith once a fortnight (excepting during January, February, and March, when the island is ice-bound), and after calling at three places in the Faroës and at Vestmannaeyjar (weather permitting) go straight to Reykjavik in much the same time.

struck and knocked him down, injuring the poor man sadly, breaking both his arms, and causing severe contusions of the head. He was carried ashore to the hospital, and but slight hopes were entertained of his recovery.

This fatality was a great misfortune, for, independently of his being a valuable steward, and the sorrow caused to his messmates by his accident, it is not generally easy, just as a steamer is leaving port, to find a substitute. Happily, in this case, a former steward being disengaged, the captain at once secured his services; but as he only came on board at the last moment, and neither knew where the supplies were stored, nor of what they consisted, the ship's company was put to much inconvenience during the voyage.

Messrs. Slimon's agent was on board the *Camoens* with his ticket book, and ours were at once procured; not expensive by any means, the cost being only £8 each person to Iceland and back, including the trip round the island; our food was charged at the rate of 6*s.* 6*d.* per day extra.

The best berth cabin had been reserved for Miss T. and myself, the one opposite for the three gentlemen, with an intermediate passage, which latter proved a great comfort, as it contained hooks for coats and cloaks, and room for two portmanteaux.

The cabins were unusually small, and required very close arrangement of our effects, therefore the extra hooks and cabin bags for the wall we had brought with us were most useful.

Our crew numbered thirty-two in all, and rough-looking specimens of humanity they indeed appeared. We had two stewardesses, who also waited at table, and made themselves generally useful. These individuals, though slatternly in appearance, were attentive and kind-hearted. There were seven firemen, two working at the same time for four hours at a stretch, thus each couple did duty

twice in the twenty-four hours; which means eight hours a day in the engine-room.

There were forty berths on board the *Camoens*, only nineteen of which were occupied during the outward voyage. The ship carried no surgeon, consequently my brother was frequently applied to in cases of burns, sprains, &c.

The captain had a large Board of Trade medicine chest, of which he kept the key, and from which he usually administered the contents when required, to the best of his medical knowledge.

We got under weigh about 4.30 on Saturday afternoon, July 31st, being towed out of the harbour at Granton. The Firth of Forth was then as calm as a lake, scarce a ripple to be seen on its surface. A previous thunderstorm had freshened the air, the rain had ceased, and those lovely mists and tints usually to be seen after a storm had taken the place of the dark clouds now rolling away in the distance. Inchkeith was spanned by a lovely rainbow, and peace, quiet, and beauty reigned around. The water, indeed, was more like a large lake, such as the "Chiem See" in Bavaria—dotted with its islands—than an inlet of the sea.

On we steamed, passing Leith, Portobello, North Berwick, with the Bass Rock and the coast of Fife, and, as evening drew on, May Island and Bell Rock. It was indeed a lovely night. The sky, lit up with the deep, warm glow of the departing sun, cast a rosy hue over the whole expanse of water. A night, indeed, so perfect, we all agreed it was worth coming to sea to witness and enjoy.

The human mind is, however, versatile, and before morning we had cause to change our ideas, and several of us already wished ourselves again at home!

On entering the Moray Firth the evening calm of the untroubled sea was exchanged for rough billows, and hour by hour we became more and more miserable, each alike

in turn paying our tribute to Neptune, and truly realising the difference between a voyage in prospect and one in stern reality.

My brother, Mr. Gordon, the captain, and two other passengers were the sole occupants of the saloon at breakfast. At luncheon the latter couple were also absent, and more people than ourselves bewailed their misery, and wished themselves back ashore.

The rolling of the steamer was tremendous. It pitched and tossed to such an extent that our bags and other things in our cabin were tumbled about in every direction. Despite the discomfort, we struggled on deck about twelve o'clock, hoping the air would revive us, and in half an hour felt quite different persons.

The worst of a rough sea is that when feeling sick, and air is most needed, one is obliged to shut the port-holes, and only imbibe that which comes from the saloon —a mixture of fumes by no means invigorating. Fat bacon and Irish stew seem as necessary in a ship's menu as a cake at a wedding!

I had always prided myself on being a good sailor when on yachting excursions and short sea voyages, but that Moray Firth undeceived me in this respect. My misery, however, soon wore off.

The first day was indeed a miserable initiation into hitherto unsuspected horrors of the sea, and no greater contrast could be possible than the calm of the night before and that wretched Sunday. It rained and blew great guns all day long, and by 6 P.M. the weather culminated in a severe gale, with the glass steadily falling, followed by a heavy thunderstorm, with vivid forked lightning. So furious indeed was the storm, that after passing Duncansby Head and John o' Groat's House, and battling for hours in the Pentland Firth, our captain turned back and ran his vessel into Sinclair Bay, riding at anchor there for the night, not being willing to face such weather.

The bay was fairly calm, and the gentle movement of the waves was like the rocking of an arm-chair after the shaking and rolling we had experienced. We all enjoyed our dinner in peace, whilst the warmth of the cabin was a pleasant change from the searching cold on deck, which, despite furs and rugs, had pierced us through and through. Before we retired for the night, two other vessels had likewise put into the bay for safety from the elements, and there we were compelled to remain for forty-two hours while the storm still raged outside! Our captain was a sensible man; when we asked him why he had put into Sinclair Bay, he said he considered it wiser to "lay-to" for a few hours, and make up the time afterwards, rather than push on through such a gale, burning coal, and only making a knot or two an hour, perhaps not even that, straining the ship with her screw continually out of the water, making every one miserable for no good purpose. To this we all heartily agreed, so in quiet waters we passed a comfortable night.

As dirty weather was still reported ahead, we also spent Monday (a Bank holiday) in the bay. Alongside of us lay a large steamer, which had tried the Pentland Firth in the morning, but after five unsuccessful hours was obliged to put back. This steamer had shifted her cargo, and lay over on her side, in a way that looked alarming; we left her in the bay when we weighed anchor on Tuesday at mid-day.

On the previous night some fishing boats put out from Keiss for herring fishing, and one came so near that we were tempted to prepare some letters and telegrams, a sailor on board our vessel saying he would try and drop them into the boat, in a basket. We tied them, therefore, up in a bag, with the necessary money for delivery, and watched their fate with anxiety.

"Letters," shouted our sailor, but the fishermen shook their heads, evidently thinking it too rough to approach

nearer to the steamer. Again the word "Letters" was repeated, when another fishing smack responded "Ay, ay," and tacked, and as she shot past us, on our lee side, the basket was dropped over, accompanied by a bottle of whisky and ten shillings (the two latter being a *douceur* for the fishermen themselves), wrapped up for safety in an old rag, and tied to the bottom of the basket. The smack to which we thus confided our post was going out for the night, but the men said they would put into Keiss next morning, and promised to send the letters ashore, which we afterwards found they did, whilst the bottle of whisky proved so acceptable a gift, that, finding us still in Sinclair Bay on Tuesday morning, the fishermen brought some fresh herrings, which they threw on board as they passed, an acceptable addition to our breakfast table.

The crew of the smack were a fine-looking set of men, well made, with handsome, frank faces—six men and a boy; but all they got for their night's danger and toil was some three dozen herrings. Such is the uncertainty of the deep.

Our ship's passengers numbered fourteen, exclusive of ourselves, and during the forty-two hours we remained in Sinclair Bay we had ample time to criticise them. All good fellows, no doubt, but mostly of the trading class, and not very attractive, physically or mentally. There were two women in the number, the wife and daughter of a clothier resident in Iceland; but among the entire party we did not find any one likely to add to the sociability of the voyage, so, English-like, we kept to ourselves as much as possible.

How inconsistently some people dress on board ship! Our two women fellow-passengers did not often appear on deck, but when they did venture, despite the wind and rain, the elder wore an enormous straw hat, with a long, brown feather, which latter daily grew straighter, until all its curl had disappeared; and a light-brown silk dress, on

which every drop of rain or spray made its mark. She was a clothier's wife, and accustomed to sea-travelling; therefore one would have imagined experience might have taught her the advisability of a less gorgeous style of apparel.

The girl wore a huge white sailor hat, covered with a profusion of red poppies, and her whole time seemed to be occupied in holding it on her head with both hands to prevent its blowing away. But it would rain, and the red from the poppies silently trickled all over the hat, and gradually formed rivulets on her face.

Then there was a very corpulent old man, with a large square-patterned ulster, and a deer-stalker hat, tied on with a red silk handkerchief under his chin in a large bow, matching his complexion. His companion was thin and sallow, and wore a very desponding air, despite a prolific red beard, which, when we landed, caused much excitement among the Icelanders. I think their admiration made him feel shy, for after the demonstration made in its favour at the first landing port, he seldom went ashore, and even during the four days the *Camoens* lay off Reykjavik, he rarely left the steamer.

Life on board ship is at the best monotonous, and we had to be contented with breathing the ozone, rejoicing in its health-giving properties, speculating as to the result of the voyage, and the novel scenes we hoped so soon to witness.

If ever cheap novels have their use, it is certainly on board ship. Soaked with salt water or rain, it matters not; they most assuredly help to wile away many an hour, and even the usually non-novel reader is not ashamed to seize the tell-tale yellow-covered volume, and lose himself in its romance *pro tem.*

The second day we amused ourselves with making sketches of Noss Head, which one minute was enveloped in thick mist and rain, and the next stood out, clear and distinct, against a dull, grey sky.

When in the midst of our sketching, lo! quite a commotion arose among our ship's company, caused by the sight of a twenty-five feet bottle-nosed whale, which every one rushed to see, and which for some time played around the ship, accompanied by a couple of porpoise. The animal caused as much excitement as if it had been the mythical sea serpent itself. We saw them in dozens afterwards, but never with the same enthusiasm. Of course, the first whale had to be immortalised, and two of our party sketched and painted it; not without difficulty, however, for the rolling of the ship sent the water-colours or the turpentine sliding away at some critical moment of our work, while, on later occasions, chair, artist, picture, and colours were upset together in a disconsolate heap on the other side of the vessel, much to every one's amusement.

Sketching at sea, in fact, is no easy matter, chiefly from the necessity of rapidity in the work; the smuts from the funnel are also most exasperating, settling on the paper just where clear lights are most desirable, and—well, paint in oils on a rough day at sea, with a strong wind blowing the smoke towards you, and judge for yourself!

We left, as I said, our haven of refuge—Sinclair Bay—on Tuesday at noon, on a clear, bright day, but with a turbulent sea. However, we passed the Pentland Firth without having to run into the Orkneys for shelter, passing quite close to Pomona, round Duncansby Head and John o' Groat's House, a hideous modern hotel in the midst of a desolate bay.

Some people say that the story of John o' Groats is merely mythical, but others declare he was a Scotchman, who, ferrying folks across the Pentland Firth for fourpence, or a 'groat' received his nickname. Again it is said that he was a Dutchman, with eight stalwart sons who, having no idea of the law of primogeniture, each alike, wished to sit at the head of the board, whereupon,

John had an octagon table made, which, having neither top nor bottom, saved any wrangling for pre-eminence in his family.

Dunnet Head, which we next passed, is the most northerly point of Scotland. "Stroma," viz., the Orkneys, lay on our right, standing out in relief against a lovely sky—and making just such a picture as John Brett loves to paint.

We were all much struck by the variety of birds in the Pentlands—wild geese, ducks, northern divers, and puffins, with, of course, the never absent gull. What a melancholy noise the gull makes, crying sometimes exactly like a child. And yet he is a pleasing companion on a desolate expanse of water, and most amusing to watch as he dives for biscuit or anything eatable thrown to him from the ship's side. Some of the gentlemen tried to capture the birds with a piece of fat bacon tied to a string; but, although Mr Gull would swallow the bacon, he sternly refused to be landed.

CHAPTER III.

LAND SIGHTED.

On leaving the choppy "Pentland Firth," we now entered on still rougher waters, encountering an Atlantic swell, caused by the previous storm. How the ship rolled! Walking on deck became impossible, while sitting in our deck chairs was nearly as bad, for they threatened to slide from under us. In despair we sought our berths, but to get into them in such a sea was a matter of difficulty. Tuesday evening we bade adieu to the coast of Scotland, but what a boisterous night followed! Oh, dear! that eternal screw made sleeping at first impossible; we had not noticed its motion while on deck, but as soon as we laid our heads on our pillows its monotonous noise seemed to grind our very brains. At last fatigue gained the victory, and we slept for some hours.

In the stillness of the night a wild shriek rent the air, and a sudden stoppage of the vessel awoke me at last with a start; it was still dark, but we heard loud talking and running about on deck overhead. The commotion was tremendous; in spite of the storm we could hear human voices calling in frightened tones, to the accompaniment of the clatter, clatter of busy feet. Alarmed, I sat up in my berth, and wondered what was the matter. All at once the screw ceased, then again revolved a few times; but only to stop a moment afterwards, and then, after more noise and commotion, to be set in motion again. We

seemed to be going backward. We knew we were at least one hundred miles from Scotland, and there was no land nearer.

Wishing to learn what was going on, for in my half-awakened state visions of icebergs and collisions rushed through my excited brain, I hastily summoned the stewardess and asked what was causing such a commotion overhead. I learnt from her that an unusual and almost fatal event had just occurred. The man at the wheel, suddenly seized with a suicidal mania, rushed from his post, possessed himself of two mops, which were lying on the deck, and putting one under each arm, had, with a wild and fiendish shriek, jumped overboard.

The captain immediately stopped the ship and ordered a boat to be lowered; but, owing to the high sea running, some time elapsed before this could be accomplished, while meantime the man had drifted some way from the vessel, and in the grey morning light his form was barely discernible in the trough of the waves. Notwithstanding the danger, the moment a boat was lowered there were no lack of volunteers to man her; but so persistent was the unfortunate fellow's resolve to perish, that he eluded the efforts of his rescuers to capture him, and every time he was approached swam away. The men at the oars had nearly given in, themselves soaked to the skin, and tired out with pulling in such a sea, when a cheery shout from the captain urged them on afresh.

It was only after exhaustion and numbness had rendered the poor maniac unconscious, that the sailors were able to pull him on board in an almost lifeless condition.

At breakfast my brother informed us the man's life had only been restored by constant rubbing; and that the poor creature seemed so violent, the captain had been obliged to have him locked up, probably a case of temporary insanity, which the captain attributed to the

moon! For some days the poor deluded creature was very violent, and made many efforts to escape from his confinement. On one occasion he succeeded in getting half his body through a ventilating hole in his prison, from which he was extricated with great difficulty. The reason he assigned for jumping into the sea was that he feared being "burnt alive in the boiler," a punishment, in his aberration, he fancied the captain had ordered for him.

As may be supposed, the event caused much excitement, for our crew was practically diminished by two, as one man had constantly to be told off to look after the madman. His subsequent career was watched with great interest by those on board. His insanity continued during the whole of the voyage, although sometimes he enjoyed lucid intervals, during which his chief desire was to sing, and he was permitted up on deck, where he amused himself by singing sailor ditties and dancing hornpipes to his heart's content.

At other times his madness assumed a more dangerous form, and he had to be closely watched, to prevent him taking his own life. Every kindness was shown him by the captain and ship's officers, and my brother attended him daily. When we reached Leith he was handed over to his relatives, and was subsequently placed in an asylum. There was little chance of his recovery, however, madness being hereditary in his family.

As we steamed on, our voyage became somewhat monotonous, and we longed for the time to come when we should reach the first trading port in Iceland, hoping there to imbibe new food for thought and comment.

Our fifth day at sea was one of utter misery. At dinner, despite the fiddles, the soup was landed in my lap, and a glass of champagne turned over before I had time to get it to my lips. I struggled through the meal bravely, and then went up on deck, but found it far too rough to

walk about, while sitting down was only accomplished by holding fast to some friendly ropes tied near us with a view to our safety. About nine o'clock I sought my berth, but sleep was impossible, as most of my time was spent in trying to keep within the bounds of my bed, from which I expected that every successive lurch would eject me; whilst the port-holes having to be closed (that greatest of all discomforts in a storm) made the cabin close and unbearable.

The next morning everybody had the same night's experience to relate, whilst the state of disorder our cabins were in, proved that we had not exaggerated our misery.

After leaving the Faroes on our right, we never sighted land for two days, nor did we even see a single ship; the only break in the monotony being the spouting of whales.

Two more days of terrible rolling amid those wild Atlantic breakers, which, as they washed our decks, seemed to sway the ship to and fro. Happily the wind was with us during the greater part of our voyage, and the captain crowded on all sail, making about 10 knots an hour.

On the Thursday following, we sighted Iceland, and our spirits rose in proportion as we felt our voyage was nearing its completion. The sea, too, became calmer, and as we neared the coast the view was truly grand.

At 10.30 p.m. the sun had not yet set, but was shedding its glorious evening glow over mountains which rose almost perpendicularly from the sea, their snow-clad peaks catching the rosy hues and golden tints of departing day. It was one of the most beautiful atmospheric effects I have ever witnessed, doubtless enhanced by the marvellous clearness of the atmosphere. I knew that Iceland was mountainous in its interior, but I had no idea it boasted such a magnificent coast line, or such towering snow-

OUR FIRST VIEW OF ICELAND.

(By the Author.)

capped hills. One thing we made special note of, namely, that while in the day time the thermometer rarely stood above 42°—10 above freezing point—it was very considerably lower at night, whilst instead of the damp cold we experienced during the day, at night the air was dry and frosty; the wind blowing from the north-west, and straight over the ice of Greenland, accounted for its being so sharp and keen.

It was well we had provided ourselves with furs and wraps of every possible warmth, for now indeed we required them all. Happily we only saw field ice in the distance, for had we come into nearer proximity we should not have been able to pass round the north at all. No ice actually forms round the coast line, but the sea ice drifts from Greenland, 200 miles distant, causing the north of the island to be impassable except during two or three months of the year. Polar bears visit Iceland in the winter on the drift ice from Greenland, and any sportsman who cares to winter in this wondrous land, where all game is practically free, may add the arctic monster to his bag.

No country has withstood such ravages of frost and fire as Iceland, for is it not riddled with glaciers, and yet the most volcanic centre of the earth?

The mean temperature of the south of Iceland is 39° F., in the central district 36° F., while in the north it is rarely above freezing point. During the winter of '80 and '81, when we were having what we thought great cold in England, the thermometer in Iceland was standing at 35° below zero, and polar bears were enjoying their gambols.

Iceland lies between N. Lat. 63° 23′ 30″, and 66° 32′; and W. Long. 13° 32′ 14″, and 24° 34′ 14″; is 280 miles in length and 180 to 200 miles in breadth.

Steaming up the east coast of the Island we breakfasted the next morning in the Arctic Circle. What a delight it

was to be there, the next best thing to being at the North Pole itself, and far more comfortable! We were also now in calm water, so could give vent to our excitement without fear of consequences. We had indeed passed through a terrible time since we left Scotland; even the captain acknowledged that the voyage had been unusually rough.

All that day we continued our course along the north-eastern coast of Iceland, in constant admiration of the magnificently wild scenery which broke upon our view. Snow capped-mountains rose almost abruptly from the sea, down which flowed little glacial rivulets, that emptied themselves into the briny deep below. Another clear lovely evening, in which the quaint rocky outlines of the hills were discernible, with valleys, torrents, and glorious fjords, the whole embracing a panorama of miles of grand serrated coast line, showing to the greatest advantage in the curious sunset glow.

So calm and beautiful was the scene, that all our party agreed it was worth enduring a few days' discomfort in order to revel in the beauty of this bold Icelandic scene. The water was perfectly green, and as clear as possible, revealing innumerable yellow jelly fish disporting themselves. We did not, however, see any of the sharks which are so frequently met with in these waters. Seals which form a great fishery round the Icelandic coast abounded. There are superstitions and stories in connection with almost everything in Iceland, and the seals do not escape. There is a belief that they are the ghosts of Pharoah and his followers drowned when they were crossing the Red Sea, and turned into seals. According to Icelandic belief these seals once a year, on midsummer night, are again changed into human beings and can walk about the shore.

A native was sauntering along the beach on one of these beautifully warm midsummer nights when he was surprised to see a number of men and women playing

near the water's edge. Being much interested in their strange antics he stole up to watch what they were doing; but just as he was nearing them they all disappeared into sealskin bags which were lying on the shore and swam away. All except one—she was a beautiful girl, tall and graceful, with long fair hair and lovely brown eyes. Of course he fell in love with her, and they were shortly afterwards married. For seven years they lived very happily, as he succeeded in hiding her sealskin in a big painted chest, of which he kept the key. One day he forgot and left the key upon the table. To his terrible dismay when he returned to his cottage he found his beautiful wife had gone back to her watery home. She left a little note behind in which she said: "I do not know what to do, I am married to a man on shore, and I am married to a man of the sea. I have the same number of children in each place, and I love my two husbands equally; but I have been longest in the beautiful sea, so I feel I must return to the depths of my native waves."

When her land children played on the shore a soft-eyed seal used to appear from the water and throw them pretty shells, glorious coloured anemones, and tangled bits of seaweed, for the mother had not deserted her offspring, although she had changed her form! So says the legend.

Passing along the north-west coast we saw a man suspended by a rope from one of the very rocky headlands. The position appeared most perilous, and as he swung to and fro, the sea lapping the shore some hundreds of feet below him, we felt quite nervous for his safety. He was collecting birds and their eggs in the ledges of the cliff—an extremely dangerous operation. The rocks often cut the rope, as with the man's weight it sways to and fro, and many an adventurous spirit has thus met his death. Formerly to avoid such a catastrophe the rope used to be sprinkled with holy water, one of the relics of Catholicism which are rapidly passing away.

To our horror we suddenly saw the man walking along a narrow edge of the rock apparently freed from his fastening. At the first moment we thought his rope had broken, instead of which he had disentangled himself and was crawling along this dangerous ridge to collect the wild birds eggs, which he packed into a basket on his back. Having secured all he could carry he returned to the rope and through the glasses we could see him refix himself, calling aloud to his companions above to draw him up.

When these men leave their rope they often wander far along the ridges, and to make sure of finding their way back to their only possible means of escape, leave a train of eggs or dead birds along their route, which they can follow as they return with their booty.

Terrible tales are told of these "sigamen" losing their lives from broken ropes, a slipped foot, or even missing their return route among the rocks and headlands. It is by no means an enviable trade although a lucrative one, an eagle's egg fetching as much as £1.

Entering the Eyjafjord on our way to Akureyri, a small town lying some thirty miles from its mouth, as the evening lights shed their rich varied hues all around, it was difficult to believe we could really, after only a week's absence from home, be so far north as the Arctic Circle, the more so as the rich warm colouring of the landscape resembled rather some southern clime.

We anchored off Akureyri at about 11 p.m., still in broad daylight, and could read the smallest print at that hour without any difficulty, so short is the twilight of an Arctic summer. Real night there is none. This latter fact is most convenient for travellers, for to be benighted in their explorations is an impossibility. If, however, the Icelanders enjoy this prolonged daylight during their brief summer, how painful must be the reverse during the long winter, when they have little else than darkness.

We were told an amusing story of an enterprising merchant from Glasgow, who, wishing to impress the Icelanders with the advantage of the electric light to cheer their long winter, went to Reykjavik in his large steam yacht, and sent forth a proclamation inviting the natives to come and behold this scientific wonder. It was August, and he had not taken into consideration the fact there is no night in the island during that month, consequently his display was a total failure.

After breakfast a boat came alongside our steamer to convey us to the town. Off we went, in a high state of pardonable excitement. All past discomfort was forgotten; we were about to set our feet on that *terra incognita* to most Europeans, "Iceland," whose high mountain masses, varying in altitude from 3000 feet to 6500 feet, are, for the greater part of the year, covered with snow.

But, before we land, let me describe the boat; large, of course, or it would never be able to encounter the rough waters of the fjords, which, we were told, are often so turbulent as to render any communication with ships at sea impossible. Both ends of the boat are made alike, resembling two bows; ours had no rudder or stern, and required three men to handle each oar, one facing the other two, and all three pulling simultaneously. Sometimes the men stood up, their combined strength being thus apparently more effective in pulling through the rough sea which surrounded the island. The oars were very thick at the rowlock, tapering off to an almost straight blade, not more than five inches wide. The men pulled well, and soon landed us amid the curious gaze of the inhabitants of the town, who had crowded down to the beach as soon as our steamer came in sight.

The first thing that struck us on landing was the sad, dejected look of the men and women who surrounded our party. There was neither life nor interest depicted on

their faces, nothing but stolid indifference. This apathy is no doubt caused by the hard lives these people live, the intense cold they have to endure, and the absence of variety in their every-day existence. What a contrast their faces afforded to the bright colouring and smiling looks one meets with in the sunny South.

The Icelanders enjoy but little sun, and we know ourselves, in its absence, how sombre existence becomes. Their complexions, too, were very sallow, and their deportment struck us as sadly sober. A few of the women might possibly have been called pretty, notably two of their number, who possessed clear, pale skins, good features, blue eyes, and lovely fair hair, which they wore braided in two long plaits, turned up, forming two loops crossed on the crown of the head. These braids were surmounted by a quaint little black silk knitted cap, fitting close to the skull, like an inverted saucer, and secured to the head by silver pins.

Hanging from this cap was a thick black silk tassel, from some six to ten inches long, which passes at the top through a silver tube, often of very pretty workmanship. I tried on one of these head-dresses, and came to the conclusion that it was very becoming; whereupon my vanity made me offer to purchase, but as its owner asked twelve shillings, I declined to buy, and afterwards procured one for half the sum in Reykjavik.

The bodices of the women's costumes are pretty, bound round two inches deep with black velvet, joined at the neck and waist with silver buckles; the bust is left open, showing a white linen shirt, sometimes ornamented with the finest embroidery; the skirt is short and full, and made of dark cloth.

The men were of low stature, and broadly built, and wore fur caps and vests, with huge mufflers round their throats. These latter, we observed, were mostly of a saffron colour, which, combined with their fur caps, tawny beards, and long locks, gave them a very quaint appearance. Men, women, and children alike wore skin shoes,

A NATIVE WOMAN.
(By Herbert Schmalz.)

made from the skin of the sheep, ox, or seal, cut out and sewn together to the shape of the foot, and pointed at the toe. These shoes are tied to their feet by a string made of gut, and lined merely with a piece of flannel or serge, a most extraordinary covering for a country so rocky as

ICELANDIC SKIN SKÖR.

DOUBLE-THUMBED GLOVE.

Iceland, where at every step sharp stones, or fragments of lava, are encountered. Mocassins are also sometimes worn, The Icelanders, however, do not seem to mind any obstacles, but run and leap on or over them in their "skin skör" (skör-shoe) as though impervious to feeling. Later on we

saw a higher class of Icelanders wearing fishermen's boots, but such luxuries were unknown in the little town where we first landed. The men being short of stature, in their curious kit much resembled Esquimaux.

The double-thumbed gloves worn were likewise a curiosity to us. These gloves have no fingers, but are made like a baby's glove, with a thumb at each side; and, when rowing or at any other hard work, if the man wears out the palm of his glove, he simply reverses it and makes use of the other thumb. These gloves are generally knitted of grey wool, and the thumbs being white, resemble at a distance a rabbit's head with long ears. An Icelander always wears gloves, whether rowing, riding, fishing, washing, or sewing.*

In ascertaining the number of days in a month we English people are accustomed to repeat a rhyme: the Icelander has a different mode of calculation. He closes his fist, calls his first knuckle January, the depression before the next knuckle February, when he arrives at the end, beginning again; thus the months that fall upon the knuckles, are those containing thirty-one days; a somewhat ingenious mode of assisting the memory.

During our short trip to the island, except on our visit to the geysers, which occupied four days, we invariably slept and dined on board the *Camoens*, making use of the time the steamer remained in each port to see the sights of the little towns we touched at, and to make such excursions into the interior as time permitted. In fact, except in the capital, there is not a really good hotel to be met with, although primitive accommodation may be found in the peasant dwelling and small hostelries.

* Since writing the above I have twice travelled in Norway in midwinter; there the natives invariably wear gloves and comforters like the Icelanders, although they will often go without a great coat. Dr. Fridtjof Nansen did not wear an overcoat; but I never saw him without thick woollen gloves when we went over to Christiania in February, 1893, to see his ship before he started on his fearless North Pole expedition.

THE FERRY BOAT.

CHAPTER IV.

AKUREYRI.

CERTAINLY the most noticeable feature of the place, after a brief survey of the inhabitants—at least such of them as surrounded us on landing—was the number of ponies massed together on the beach, fine, sturdy little animals, from eleven to thirteen hands high, stoutly made, with good hind quarters, thick necks, well-shaped heads, and tremendously bushy manes. Their feet and fetlocks are particularly good, or they could not stand the journeys they have to make. There were black, white, brown, chesnut, and piebald, but we did not see a single roan amongst them; a very quaint group they made standing quietly there, laden with every conceivable kind of saddle and pack. Many of the smaller animals were almost hidden by the size of the sacks, filled with goods, which were strapped on their backs. The pack ponies are never groomed, and but badly fed, while the best riding ones are well stabled and looked after.

The scene was interesting, for all these intelligent little animals were in attendance on their owners, men and women alike, who had come down to the ship in order to barter the goods they brought from the interior of the Island for flour, coffee, &c., on which they depend for their winter supplies. For hours these patient little ponies stood there, many of them with foals at their side, which latter, we were told, often get so footsore by the way as to require strapping upon their mothers' backs.

The Icelanders are splendid riders, and accustomed to the saddle from babyhood, for the roads are very bad, and the distances too great for walking. while no vehicles of any kind exist in Iceland. Some one indeed reported that one had been introduced into Reykjavik: we did not see it, however, and after once experiencing the nature of the roads, one can understand the absence of any wheeled conveyance. No ordinary springs could possibly stand the boulders of rock and lava, or the "frost mounds," over which the hardy Icelandic pony is accustomed to make his way.

The native women ride man fashion, a mode—as I shall narrate later—we ladies were compelled to adopt. For short distances a chair saddle is frequently used, somewhat resembling the writing-chair of an English study. The occupant sits sideways, having a board under her feet, in this way securing rest for the back. The ponies are intelligent and sure-footed, and require little or no guiding; but the amount of jogging and shaking which the rider is forced to undergo is tremendous—one wonders they have any senses left.

We had been fortunate in securing an introduction to Mr. Stephensen, one of the chief officials of the Island, and also a native of the place, under whose escort we at once inspected the little town (if such it may be called), the second largest in Iceland. It consists of a collection of two-storey wooden houses, raised on a platform of lava blocks, plain and severe in structure, and painted yellow or white. Pretty muslin curtains and flowers adorn the windows, and as in this northern clime the keeping of flowers is no easy matter, the cultivation of them strikes a stranger as highly praiseworthy. Inside the houses we found nicely polished floors, and rooms simply furnished, after a truly German style, stove included. The poorer abodes were mere hovels made of stones and turf, admitting neither light nor air, and having the roofs covered with

grass. One would have thought them almost uninhabitable, and yet I had seen dwellings nearly as bad around Killarney and Glengariff.

What a hard life is that of the poor Icelanders! When our ship arrived they were on the verge of starvation, their supplies being all exhausted. Glad indeed they must have been to welcome the *Camoens*, and know that flour and other staple articles of food were once again within their reach. Outside every house we noticed rows of dried fish hung up, ready for the winter's consumption. Fish, but especially cod, is the staple food of the Icelander near the coast; but among the poorest class this reserve consists more of fishes' heads than fish *in toto*. What would a London epicure think of being obliged to feed for months together upon the heads of dried cod, which had for some weeks been exposed to the elements in order to render them hard and fit for eating. These heads are the refuse of fish, which are dried and exported to France, Spain, and England, and the heads, not being required in those countries, are used by the poorer Icelanders as food, being boiled down into a species of cake, which is eaten alike by the natives and their cattle, the liquid in which they are cooked being given to the ponies.

Mr. Stephensen told us that a large proportion of ponies thus fed died during the winter for lack of better nutriment.

A good riding pony in Iceland costs from £4 to £8, and a pack pony less: we hired them at 2*s*. 6*d*. a day. The breeding of these ponies is one of the great sources of livelihood, as the export last year numbered 3476. In the previous voyage made by the *Camoens*, she brought home 975 of these hardy little animals, which gives some idea of the extent of the trade.

The smell of the fish while drying is terrible, the whole atmosphere being permeated with the odour. The streets may be said to be paved with old fish heads and fish

bones; indeed, at each port we touched, the smell of fish, fresh or dried, assailed eyes and noses in every direction.

The population of Akureyri is nearly 1000, and the town is the residence of the Lieutenant-Governor of the northern part of the island. We visited one or two of the streets, hoping to pick up some curiosities, but pots, pans, kettles, and other domestic utensils of the most ordinary description, alone met our view. In the eatable line, coarse brown sugar-candy seemed to abound, which the purchasers shovelled into bags or sacks, and carried off in quantities. We subsequently learnt that it is used by the Icelanders for sweetening coffee, having the double advantage of being at once pure sugar, and a hard substance capable of resisting the damp which the snow engenders.

While in Akureyri we saw some poultry, perhaps half a dozen cocks and hens, but they were the only domestic fowls we met with in the island; nor did we ever come across a pig! Fancy a land destitute of these common accessories to a peasant's board! Eggs of wild birds are found in great abundance in the caves and rocky headlands round the coast—the means for procuring which we described a few pages back—swans' eggs are considered the greatest delicacy, though wild duck, eider duck, and puffin seem to be duly appreciated by the natives; but a pig is absolutely unknown. In consequence of this strange fact, bacon would be as distasteful to an Icelander as to a Jew or a Moor. In 1873 one pig was introduced into the island, People came from far and near to look at such a wonder of creation, and even after the butcher's knife had put an end to his eventful career he continued to live in the minds of the people, who still tell stories of the half human shrieks of the strange and marvellous animal as he bled to death. Indeed, that pig has now become historical, and, though he has the honour of being considered a

myth, his memory will linger for centuries in popular tradition. Immortal pig!

The story which Lord Dufferin gaily tells us, in his "Letters from High Latitudes," of an indiscriminating cock which was shipped at Stornway, is too good to omit. The cock had become quite bewildered on the subject of that meteorological phenomenon "the Dawn of Day." "It was questioned, in fact, whether he ever slept for more than five minutes at a stretch without waking up in a state of nervous agitation, lest it should be cock crow, and at last, when night ceased altogether, his constitution could no longer stand the shock. Crowing once or twice sarcastically, he went melancholy mad, and finally taking a calenture, he cackled loudly (possibly of green fields), and then leapt overboard and drowned himself."

Akureyri is both famous for, and proud of, its trees. There are actually five of them; these are almost the only trees in the island, except the low scrub forests in the interior of dwarfed birch and ash. Miserable specimens indeed these Akureyri trees appeared to us southerners, not being more than ten feet high at most, and yet they were thought more of by the natives than the chestnuts of Bushey Park by a Londoner.

The absence of timber in the island is to a great extent overcome by the inhabitants collecting their fuel from the Gulf Stream, which brings drift wood in large quantities from Mexico, Virginia, the Caroline Islands, and even from the Pacific Ocean.

There is no lack of peat in certain districts, which, as in Ireland, is cut into square blocks, then stacked on to the ponies' backs till no pony is discernible, and thus conveyed to the farm, where it is used as fuel.

Many of the houses are built of turf in the interior of the country where wood is not procurable. The turf for this purpose is cut in big blocks, thoroughly dried in the sun, and then it is easily cemented together with mud and

stones, thus making warm rooms, sheds, or passages to the farm-houses.

Beautiful as much of the scenery was through which we passed, I must own that want of foliage struck me as a terrible drawback to the perfection of the landscape, which, in other respects, was very wild and grand.

We dined at Akureyri at the little inn, which boasted of a fair-sized sitting-room, but did not contain sufficient chairs to accommodate our party; so three sat in a row on an old-fashioned horse-hair sofa, while we two girls and our guest, Mr. Stephensen, occupied the chairs. Our dinner consisted of soup, or rather porridge, of tapioca, flavoured with vanilla, a curiosity not know in Paris, I fancy; then a species of baked pudding, followed by some kind of a joint of mutton—but I am quite unable to say from what part of the sheep that joint was cut; no vegetables; black bread, and a kind of tea cake; bottled beer and corn brandy, augmented by coffee.

During our repast, Mr. Stephensen gave us much information about the island. He told us a bank had lately been opened in the capital, which he hoped would soon be followed by a branch at Akureyri, a progress of civilisation which must of necessity circulate money more freely, and make the present system of barter less common —ponies, sheep, fish, &c., being now given in preference to money in exchange for goods.

Sending or receiving money in Iceland anywhere except in its capital, is a difficult matter, as there is no organised post office method for such transactions.

The following history and constitution of the bank in Reykjavik, furnished by Mr. Gordon, may be interesting to my readers.

"There is one bank, the State Bank. Its capital consists of the revenues of the island; there are no shareholders. The manager is an Icelander, who has one assistant only, employed to keep the books. Two inspectors or auditors

AKUREYRI (SHOWING LARGEST TREES IN ICELAND).

are appointed by the Governor of Iceland. The bank which has just been started under the control of the Governor and Council of Iceland, on the 1st July, 1886, began an issue of State notes—legal tender in Iceland only. Danish notes are also tender in Iceland, though the reverse is not the case. The issue is limited to Kr. 500,000, or £27,777. They are issued against the security of the revenues of the island, and forced on the people,

ICELANDIC AND ENGLISH MONEY TABLE.

			£	s.	d.				£	s.	d.
	7½ öre	...	0	0	1	Krone	9.00 öre	...	0	10	0
	15 „	...	0	0	2	„	9.90 „	...	0	11	0
	22½ „	...	0	0	3	„	10.80 „	...	0	12	0
	30 „	...	0	0	4	„	11.70 „	...	0	13	0
	37½ „	...	0	0	5	„	12.60 „	...	0	14	0
	45 „	...	0	0	6	„	13.50 „	...	0	15	0
	52½ „	...	0	0	7	„	14.40 „	...	0	16	0
	60 „	...	0	0	8	„	15.30 „	...	0	17	0
	67½ „	...	0	0	9	„	16.20 „	...	0	18	0
	75 „	...	0	0	8	„	17.10 „	...	0	19	0
	82½ „	...	0	0	11	„	18.00 „	...	1	0	0
	90 „	...	0	1	0	„	36.00 „	...	2	0	0
Krone	1.80 „	...	0	2	0	„	54.00 „	...	3	0	0
„	2.70 „	...	0	3	0	„	72.00 „	...	4	0	0
„	3.60 „	...	0	4	0	„	90.00 „	...	5	0	0
„	4.50 „	...	0	5	0	„	108.00 „	...	6	0	0
„	5.40 „	...	0	6	0	„	126.00 „	...	7	0	0
„	6.30 „	...	0	7	0	„	144.00 „	...	8	0	0
„	7.20 „	...	0	8	0	„	162.00 „	...	9	0	0
„	8.10 „	...	0	9	0	„	180.00 „	...	10	0	0

who do not as yet take to them, and no wonder, considering the great want of communication even in the summer months. They are convertible for either silver or gold at Reykjavik. Branch banks will probably be opened at Akureyri, Seydisfjord, and Isafjord. The bank, which publishes a statement of its affairs periodically, charges 6 per cent., as a rule, on advances, and grants 3 per cent. on deposits. The bank advances against land and houses

(the latter in the capital only, as they cannot be insured elsewhere against fire), and personal security. The advances are said to stand at Kr. 130,000, or £7222. When against personal security a promissory note is taken, signed by the borrower and two irresponsible witnesses, or by two responsible obligants, according to standing. Title-deeds are taken as collateral security. The bank has its own forms for loan-documents. The probability is that the bank will soon become the possessor of a great deal of property in houses and land in Iceland, as bad seasons are frequent, which prevent prompt payment."

The servant having whispered to Mr. Stephensen that a "story teller" had arrived in the town and was in the small house at the back of the little inn, he asked us if we would care to see him.

"Certainly; we want to see anything and everything," was our answer. So accordingly we started to interview this representative of the story-teller profession, long since passed away in Europe.

We crossed the street to a queer little house, with cleanly painted windows, muslin curtains and plants blocking up such light as was available through the small panes of glass.

The party was assembled in the largest bedroom, and as there were not sufficient chairs for their accommodation, some of the folk were sprawling on the beds, covered with wonderful patchwork quilts. In the middle of the party a funny weird old man was declaiming a rhymed song. The tone struck us as monotonous, and his slow gesticulations lacked fire and passion sadly, although he was retailing a wondrous rhyme of love and war.

Needless to say we could not follow the Icelandic; which Mr. Stephensen kindly translated.

"In the tenth century there lived a great chief in Iceland. He was very tall and very brave, with fair hair and clear blue eyes, and he had a son who was even more

handsome and even more famous throughout the country for his bravery and wondrous deeds of valour. The chief one day took a young boy on to his farm—a relative of his own, who had lost his parents. This boy's name was Bolli, and the name of the chief's own son was Kiartan. They were brought up together as brothers, played together, rode together, fished together, did everything indeed together, and became what was called in Iceland foster-brothers. In order to become foster-brothers a great ceremony had to be gone through, all the friends from far and near were called to the farm, and after much merry making and some days of feasting, Bolli and Kiartan made a cut in each other's arms with their swords, until the blood flowed freely—then with great solemnity and pomp, surrounded by all their friends, chiefs from distant parts, and their followers, the two young men dug a hole in the ground, into which they let their blood drip, drop by drop, until they 'mixed their blood in mother earth.'

"After this impressive and wonderful ceremony they were sworn brothers, bound to revenge each other's death, to help each other through life, and to make any sacrifice needed; in fact to be more to each other than they were to themselves, and always to favour their foster-brother before considering their own interests, or even their own lives. Years went by, they loved each other more than before, they swore again and again true allegiance, until one day Kiartan fell in love with the daughter of a neighbouring chief. He became more and more in love with this beautiful fair-haired girl, and as Bolli was never parted from him, he always went to the girl's house with Kiartan. Time went on, the visits became more frequent, and at last Kiartan and Gudrun were engaged. They loved one another as no one had ever loved before, they were wildly happy; but there came a day when Kiartan had to leave Iceland on a voyage to Norway. He might

have to be away three years, for voyages in the days of open Viking ships took long and were often perilous; but still she promised to wait for him three years or more, for did she not love him, wildly, madly? Was he not her hero, her god?

"Bolli went to Norway with Kiartan; had they not sworn foster-brotherhood, which meant they could never be separated in love or in war? Kiartan was highly favoured at the Norwegian Court, for he was a very splendid man, and the son of a great chief, all of whose virtues he had inherited. The king's sister had long talks with him, and they became great friends. He used to tell her of his love for Gudrun, of her entrancing beauty, of the beautiful fjords, and wondrous volcanoes and glaciers of Iceland, and she was always interested in all he had to say.

"After he had been a whole year in Norway, his foster-brother returned to Iceland, laden with messages and many greetings from Kiartan to his bride elect.

"When Bolli arrived at Gudrun's home, he told her about the great honours that Kiartan had received at the Norwegian Court, how every one loved him and made much of him, and how fond the king's sister was of talking to him, laying more stress upon this than he did upon the messages he brought to her from Kiartan himself. This gave Gudrun much uneasiness, and every time she met Bolli her uneasiness increased, for she gradually received the impression that Kiartan was never going to return. What followed may easily be guessed. The sworn brotherhood, the oaths to protect one another, to help one another always before considering self, were gradually forgotten as love trod upon the threshold.

"At last out of pique or revenge Gudrun married Bolli.

"At the end of the three years agreed upon Kiartan landed in Iceland, covered with honours from Norway, and full of stories of daring deeds of the sea, ready to claim his bride and live happily ever after. What were

his feelings when he heard that his Gudrun, his bride, had married his foster-brother!

"From Norway Kiartan had brought with him a gorgeous dress worked in silver intended for his bride, as a present from the king's sister with whom he had become such great friends, and he also had a magnificent sword given him by the king. All these things were useless. His marriage gifts were worthless, for his bride had married another. Kiartan was heartbroken; not alone at the loss of his wife, but the want of honour of his brother. Some time went by, and at last his family found a match for him. Gudrun and Bolli were invited to the wedding. Gudrun envied the royal dress of silver embroidery and dazzling white satin which the new bride wore, and which had originally been intended for her. Bitterness entered her soul, her love for Kiartan returned, tempered with hate, and after wrestling with these feelings for some time, she felt she must have revenge or she should go mad.

"In consequence Gudrun urged on her husband Bolli, who was a tool in her hands, to kill Kiartan, whom he began to hate now when he saw that Gudrun really preferred this foster-brother.

"Joined by Gudrun's brothers, Bolli waylaid Kiartan on his travels. The brothers and Kiartan fought in deadly conflict: but Kiartan's bravery was so great that they could not kill him. Seeing that one of Gudrun's brothers was dead, and the others well nigh overpowered, Bolli's love for his foster-brother, his best friend, having turned to jealousy and hate, he threw himself into the fray. When Kiartan saw this he stood back. Raising his hand to stop the fight, very quietly, very manfully, he handed his famous sword, the gift of the Norwegian king, to Bolli and asked him to strike him with it. Without hesitation Bolli stepped forward, seized the sword and struck his brave foster-brother dead.

"Without delay the family of Kiartan avenged themselves, and Bolli, together with many of his friends, was put to death. Bolli's slayers were not content until they had one and all wiped their bloody swords on the dress of Gudrun!"

At the end of each verse there was a sort of chorus in which everyone joined, and for a moment the interest seemed more enthralling to an onlooker; but directly the chorus ceased, the old man returned to his melancholy style of delivery.

One girl in the audience, with a pretty round face and clear complexion, was spinning at her distaff, and beside her sat a man slowly cutting the wool away from a sheepskin with what appeared to be a very blunt knife. All the men were smoking, and most of the people were drinking coffee.

These public story tellers who have kept green the memory of many of the old sagas from generation to generation by word of mouth, are very popular in Iceland, where they go from village to village, often getting only food and lodging in payment, or, as a great prize, an old coat or pair of boots.

Their origin is very remote, for the sagas of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were only handed down by word of mouth by the forefathers of such a story teller as we saw that day, not being committed to parchment till the thirteenth century.

Leaving the story teller with a gift of a krone, which, from his thanks, he seemed to consider enormous wealth, we visited the small Lutheran Church. Unfortunately we had no opportunity of attending a service, though, to judge from the plainness of the ecclesiastical buildings, it must be very simple. The clergyman wears a black gown, and an enormous white Elizabethan frill, with a tight-fitting black cap. This little church accommodates about one hundred persons, and in lieu of pews, has

merely wooden forms. Over the altar was an old painting of the Crucifixion, done by a native artist, and surrounded by a little rail. The walls were plainly whitewashed, the windows bare, and no musical instrument was visible. There were, however, both a font and a pulpit.

The town boasts a hospital, a free library, and two printing establishments. At night we returned to our ship quarters, as being preferable to the hotel.

The next day, there being nothing more to be seen in Akureyri, we decided to take a ride, in order to visit a waterfall, which Mr. Stephensen told us would repay the fatigue, and also give us some idea of what an Icelandic expedition was like. Truly that first ride was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. Our road lay over rough stones, and "frost-mounds." These latter are a recognised feature in Icelandic travel; they are small earth hillocks, about two and a half feet wide and two feet high, caused, according to Professor Geikie, by the action of the frost. In some parts these mounds cover the ground, lying close to each other, so as to leave little or no room for the ponies to step between, and they have to walk over them, a movement which sways the rider from side to side, causing many a tumble even to experienced native horsemen. It is like riding over a country graveyard,

> "Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap."

As to road, there was none, nor is there such a thing in Iceland worthy of the name. The rider merely turns his pony's head in the direction he wishes to go, and it picks its own way far better than he could guide it. In the better known districts the spaces between various farms or villages have been so often trodden by the hoofs of ponies that they have made bridle paths.

Looking across the fjord bathed in that glorious calm peculiar to Iceland, where in fine days the eye can see for miles, every object being visible with photographic

distinctness in the clearest of atmospheres, we watched two lumbering old boats put off from the opposite shore.

The boats to our surprise were gaily decorated with flowers, and the occupants appeared to be more than usually smart. As they came nearer we discovered it was a wedding party crossing to the little church for the ceremony, after which they would return home for two or three days feasting.

The bride wore her Sunday dress; but she had laid aside her ordinary cap and donned a wonderful white erection from which hung a bridal veil.

The Icelandic word for a bride is "brut kaup," which is really "braut-kaufen" (German) or the buying of the bride. The custom is extinct, but the strange old Teutonic words remain. It is not a pretty appellation and sounds all the more incongruous in a country where a woman is so individual that she does not even give up her own name when she marries but continues to be known as "Fru Gudrun" (Mrs. Gudrun), "Johans tottir" (the daughter of Johan), "kona Arni Bjiornssens" (and wife of Arni Bjiornssen). The word "kona" (wife) means queen, and the word for woman is even more queenly for it is "kvenman," while man is "karlman."

Separation in Iceland was once as easy as it was formerly to get married in Scotland. In the olden days if a woman in the presence of two witnesses, standing beside her bed said, "I will not be married any longer to this man," the divorce was legal. Nowadays they have formal divorce proceedings as in other countries; but they are not very often resorted to.

The Icelandic women enjoy great liberty. Liberty of action, liberty of thought, and from the earliest times have always evinced great independence. There are two girls' schools in the country, where ordinary education, including the four rudimentary subjects, languages, &c., are taught; but many of the girls now go to Copenhagen

to learn more advanced subjects, that is to say, those who can afford to do so, for poverty is the ruling drawback of Ultima Thule, and dwarfs many of its people intellectually.

A girl who has done much for her Icelandic sisters, after learning all she could in Iceland, went over to Copenhagen, where she supported herself by giving lectures and speaking at public meetings on the position of women in her own country, the while she was studying hard at intellectual subjects, and in between times living on a farm to learn how to make butter and cheese from a people whose dairy work and wonderful profits therefrom are an example to all countries. England pays Denmark over thirteen million pounds a year for dairy produce, and prefers to empty her coffers rather than to learn how to make butter, bacon, and eggs profitable.*

This woman on her return to Iceland did much good work among her own sex, and taught her less fortunate sisters the dairy farming and book learning she had acquired in Copenhagen by her own indomitable industry. Women certainly hold a very advanced position in that country. A paragraph in the Icelandic Constitution of 1874 says "that the franchise shall be given to women;" but that day has not yet arrived, although they have municipal votes, and are also eligible for school boards and parish councils.

Among my travels since these pages were first written I have found no country which so closely resembles Iceland as Morocco. This statement may sound extraordinary; but the fact has struck me as so strange—the one country being partly within the Arctic circle, the other not very far north of equatorial Africa—that I must mention a few of the similarities. For instance, Iceland has no roads, neither has Morocco, even the streets of the towns are ill paved and outside the walls are nothing more

* An article, "Danish Butter Making," by the author, appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, May, 1895.

than bridle paths. There are many rivers and very few bridges, so that ponies often have to swim from one bank to the other. No one ever walks, the roadless tracks rendering riding an absolute necessity. The distances between habitations are great, and tents and every possible camping equipment are required by travellers. There are public story tellers, as we have seen in Iceland, who go from village to village or farm to farm, and are paid for telling wild and thrilling tales, most of which have been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation while in Morocco the story teller is a feature of every market. Iceland eight hundred years ago was an intellectual light in a world of darkness, and was teaching Europe—more, 'tis true, in the way of literature—while the Moors were teaching us advanced sciences.

The Icelanders are grave and serious and so are the Moors, who display strange gravity and solemnity for people dwelling in sunny climes.

The less wild parts of Iceland, where the hills are grass grown and not volcanic lava, distinctly resemble Morocco; indeed the similarity of the landscape and want of trees are very remarkable; while both lands are carpeted with flowers, yet how different are the blooms!

If an Icelander travel and put up in some out of the way corner he is always offered food and shelter, and not charged for either, money being of little or no value.

Icelanders are intensely superstitious, love ghost stories, and are great believers in the "evil eye." They use a great deal of snuff, and they make their ponies go by constantly kicking them. The native women ride astride, and pillion is not at all uncommon. The horses are small, but remarkably sure footed and capable of enduring hardship and fatigue.

All these facts would apply equally well if Morocco were substituted for Iceland, except as regard the position of women, who, in the former country still hold a subordinate position, being literally the slaves of the men.

Horse furniture in Iceland is distinctly primitive, as we soon learnt on our first ride. The bridle used is a curious workmanship of knotted rope or thick string with a brass curb or bit, ornamented by some queer head or device. The saddles are equally quaint. Those of the women I have already described; those of the men are made very high, both in front and behind, somewhat like a Moorish or Mexican saddle, there being a hollow in the centre. A crupper is always used, and straps are attached to the back of the saddle, from which the farmer hangs his sealskin bags, containing an *omnium gatherum* of his lighter goods.

The ponies are very slightly girthed, nor, indeed, would it do to tighten them, for so old and rotten is the usual paraphernalia in the way of equipment that an attempt in this direction would bring the whole thing to grief, which species of *contretemps* we met with more than once during our rides. In fact, a small English side-saddle and bridle would be not only a most useful addition to a lady's luggage, but an important adjunct to her safety and comfort.

While at Akureyri, Mr. Stephensen kindly lent us two ladies' saddles, or we should never have accomplished that first ride. They were old-fashioned two-pommeled ones, with gorgeously embroidered cushions. What could these cushions possibly be for? we wondered. They were very elaborate, so could not be intended merely to protect the saddle from rain.

We stood and waited. Mr. Stephensen did not offer to remove them, so we finally asked if we were to ride on them.

"Certainly," he replied; "they are eider-down cushions and beautifully soft."

Imagine going for a ride on an eider-down cushion! but as it was evidently the fashion, and our friend was lending us his best, rather than offend his feelings, we mounted on top of this strange erection, wondering what

friends at home might think if they saw us thus equipped in the hunting field.

Beneath the saddle were marvellously embroidered saddle cloths, and we realised we were travellers in earnest when once we mounted and started. Icelandic ponies walk well, and are also trained to pace, a movement closely resembling that of an American runner. This is a motion which requires experience, as it is too quick to rise without practice, and too rough to sit still in the saddle. Some of the ponies trotted, others cantered well, but one had to make them understand one wanted them to do so, as the usual Icelandic mode of riding is that of "pacing," at which the animals will continue for hours. Later in our trip, when we visited the Geysers, we had to ride over forty miles a day, in order to cover the distance in time to catch our steamer on its return voyage, and thus became well acquainted with pony riding in all its various modes of procedure.

It did not take us long to reach the Glerá waterfall, which was very pretty, about a mile from the fjord, and formed by the river: trout can sometimes be caught in the pool beneath the fosse. Salmon ascend most of the Icelandic waterfalls, and are found in the rivers above them—their strength in jumping from ledge to ledge of the rocky falls against the water pressure, is often very astounding.

Perhaps the most noticeable feature of Akureyri was the shark oil manufactory between that little town and Oddeyri, the stench of which proved something so fearful that I know of nothing that could possibly compare with it. In certain winds it can be smelt for miles. The manufacture of cod liver oil is bad enough, but that of shark oil is even worse. Luckily, the establishments where that oil is made are not numerous, and are principally confined to such out-of-the-way regions as Iceland and Greenland.

At Oddeyri there was another store of great importance to the natives, viz., a large mutton preserving factory, where great preparations were in active progress for the coming winter.

Not far distant from here lives a very remarkable man, a self-taught artist of considerable power, who has never been out of the island, consequently has but rarely seen a picture, and yet his artistic instincts and power of representation are of no mean order; being more especially displayed in his altar pieces. I wonder what he would say to those of Rubens or Vandyck! This man has the greatest love for animals, and was surrounded, when we visited him, by a number of dogs of the Icelandic breed, small animals closely resembling the Pomeranian, with long coats and sharp stand-up ears, which always give a knowing look to the canine head. Most of them seemed to be black, though not a few were a rich sable brown. They are pretty beasts. I do not believe there is a cat in Iceland, at least we never saw one, wild or tame, during our sojourn there. The domesticated cat, fowls, and pigs are practically unknown in these climes.

Some twenty miles from Akureyri once lived another interesting man, Sira Jon Thorláksson, a well-known native poet, many of whose verses are still dear to his countrymen; in his lifetime he undertook and accomplished a translation of Milton's "Paradise Lost."

There are some 20,000 specimens of butterflies scattered over the world, and yet in Iceland butterflies are unknown, although moths exist and insects of certain kinds, especially mosquitoes, as we learnt to our cost. There are no butterflies and but few insects, yet flowers abound.

An agricultural college has lately been established in the vicinity of Akureyri, the head master of which was formerly one of the librarians of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh. No doubt the natives will learn to drain

their bogs and swamps, level their frost mounds, and produce more out of the earth than at present, with the help of this much needed institution.

How terribly soon that curse of modern civilisation, drunkenness' spreads! It was Sunday when we first landed at Akureyri, and I am sorry to say not a few of its inhabitants had imbibed more corn brandy than was good for them, which seemed to have the effect of making many of the population maudlingly affectionate, or else anxious to wrestle with everybody.

The few days the *Camoens* lay off Akureyri gave us no time for prolonged excursions, but more than sufficient to lionise the little town, so we were not sorry when the steamer's whistle summoned us to return to our floating home.

Ten hours' further journey and our anchor was dropped opposite Saudárkrók, an even smaller town than Akureyri, with its 1000 inhabitants, but which interested us more from its very primitive appearance. If the reader will follow the steamer's course in the map, he will find Saudárkrók marked.

CHAPTER V.

HISTORICAL NOTES.

It has been ascertained that before the year 874 Iceland was almost an uninhabited island, being occupied only by a few Culdee monks, who, having seceded from the Roman Catholic faith, retired there for safety and quiet.

Prior to its settlement it was accidentally discovered by a Swede, named Gardar, who is said to have landed and wintered there; but it was in 868 that Flóki Vilgertharson, a second mighty Viking chief, gave it the name of Iceland. This settler was known as Raven Flóki, because he had ravens on board his ship, and after getting far out to sea and finding no land, he let the birds loose and followed in their course, which ultimately brought him to Iceland.

The first permanent settlers were of the Norse race—two men who, banished from their own country, fitted out ships and sailed to Iceland, where in 874 they made a final settlement in the south of the island.

Later Harald Fairhair, a tyrannical and warlike spirit, who was fast extending his kingdom over Norway, so offended many of his subjects, among them several powerful chiefs, that the latter, to avoid further warfare, quitted the land of their birth, and went to settle in Iceland.

On the way thither some of their followers remained behind in Ireland and Scotland, where distinct trace of them can still be found, while others, marrying Keltic

wives, went on to Iceland with their slaves, and started the vein of dark-haired Kelts so common in Iceland to-day, where, on the other hand, the fair-haired Icelander represents the Norwegian element from which he sprang.

Many of the names in Iceland are truly Keltic, such as Patrickfjord; indeed, it is said by some that St. Patrick himself visited Iceland!

This Norse and Keltic emigration in time peopled it, until sixty years later its population was calculated at 50,000, which, after reaching 100,000 at one time, appears now settled at about 72,000 inhabitants.

The climate of Iceland at an early period seems to have been much milder than at the present time, a fact established by scientific research. Indeed, in far remote times, Iceland must have been very hot, as many fossil palms and tropical plants have been found by geologists.

In the early days of the island, the Norse chiefs who took possession of it appropriated to themselves large tracts of country, distributing them among their own retainers; these latter in return swore allegiance to their separate chiefs, undertaking to support them in their private quarrels, whilst they were themselves in this manner protected from aggression.

Every Norse chieftain of any note established a "hof" or temple in his own lands, whilst the yearly sacrificial feasts were supported by a tax gathered from the people. Each chief reigned supreme within his own jurisdiction, and could take life or confiscate property at will. At given periods these feudal rulers met to discuss affairs of importance, or to promulgate laws for the better government of the community; but they had no written laws, nor any general accepted body of lawgivers, hence, as may easily be supposed, constant differences of opinion existed, which perforce were settled by an appeal to arms. Such a state of things, where "might became right," could not continue

long amid such a warlike nation as the Norsemen, and in 926 the principal chiefs of the island took steps to form a Commonwealth, and establish a code of laws for its government. It was for some time a question where this primitive national assembly should meet, and finally a rocky inclosure, situated in a sunken plain, cut off by deep rifts from the surrounding country, was selected. This spot, so romantic in position, so safe from intrusion, so associated with the early government of the island, was named "Thingfield," or "speaking place" — Thingvellir it is now called—and here the first Althing was held in 930; at the same period men were appointed, to whom universal reference on legal questions was made, above whom sat the chief law man, "lögsögu-man," to whom difficult cases were finally referred.

This "Althing" combined both the power of a High Parliament and that of a Court of Justice, and before the introduction of Christianity into the island, its members were called upon to swear upon a sacred ring, brought for the purpose from the temple of the High Priest, to administer both "with justice and clemency." This ring was previously dipped in sacrificial blood.

About the time William of Normandy invaded England, the Isle of Man was conquered by Godred Crovan, son of Harold the Black of Iceland, in whose family it remained for some centuries. Indeed many of the old Runic stones found in the Isle of Man bear Norwegian inscriptions. Probably through the Norse connection in this latter isle the custom of proclaiming the laws to the people from a hill in the open air was first introduced, although now discarded by the Althing in Iceland and in various northern isles. In the Isle of Man the laws are still read to the people on 5th July on Tynwald Hill. In 1865 (on 5th July) was promulgated at this spot "An Act to alter the mode of promulgating Acts of Tynwald." The preamble says: "Whereas the form and custom of pro-

mulgating and publishing Acts of Tynwald by reading them at length in the English and Manx languages from the Tynwald Hill affords little information to the people of the island, in consequence of the number and length of the Acts, and has become greatly inconvenient." It is then enacted that "It shall be necessary to read from the Tynwald Hill the *titles only* and a *short summary* of each section of the Acts, and the official document signifying the Royal Assent and approval of the same. And the reading of such titles and such summary in the English and Manx languages and the reading of such assent and approval shall be held to be a promulgation of the said Acts, and to have the same force and effect as if the whole Acts were read as heretofore accustomed."

Therefore it will be seen that the old custom of reading the laws in Manx and English out of doors still remains in the Isle of Man, although the substance of the Acts is now read instead of the text literation. The Acts of the Insular Legislature are styled Acts of Tynwald, the Legislature itself being called *the* Tynwald.

In Joseph Train's "Historical Notes on the Isle of Man," "the great annual assembly of the islanders at the Tynwald Hill, on the Feast Day of St. John the Baptist, is thus described in the Statute Book: 'Our doughtful and gracious Lord, this is the Constitution of old time, the which we have given in our days: First, you shall come thither in your Royal Array, as a King ought to do, by the Prerogatives and Royalties of the Land of Mann; and upon the Hill of Tynwald sitt in a chaire, covered with the royall cloath and cushions, and your visage unto the east, and your sword before you, holden with the point upwards; your barrons in the third degree sitting beside you, and your beneficed men and your Deemsters before you sitting; and your Clarke, Knights, Esquires, and Yeomen, and yeomen about you in the third degree; and the worthiest men in your Land (these are

the twenty-four Keys) to be called in before your Deemsters, if you will ask any Thing of them, and to hear the Government of your land and your will; and the Commons to stand without the circle of the Hill with three Clarkes in their surplisses.' "

Even at the present day this ceremony continues in the Isle of Man, as previously stated. When the officials arrive at the Tynwald Hill, the Governor and Bishops take their seats, surrounded by the Council and the Keys, the people being assembled on the outside to listen, as in Iceland formerly.

From the establishment of the Althing until the thirteenth century, the Icelanders seem to have managed their internal affairs with moderation and discretion; at least little of importance connected with the island is recorded until the discovery of Greenland by Eric the Red, which subsequently led to that of America, towards the end of the tenth century, by Bjarni Herjúlfsson, who was blown there by chance. Leif the Lucky was the first to go to America with purpose and intent, and its discovery is associated by the Icelanders with his name. Leif stayed there several winters, but it is doubtful whether in Nova Scotia or further south. Some say in Massachusetts; but, owing to wars with the natives and sickness among his men he finally had to abandon America. The Icelanders claim its discovery, however, and declare that Columbus heard all about America from them when he visited Iceland in 1465.

Some idea of Iceland's history may be gleaned by a glance at the following facts:

874	Iceland was colonised.
930	First Althing sat.
1000	Christianity introduced.
1150	The Sagas first began to be written down in abbreviations to economise parchment.
1241	Snorri Sturluson murdered.

1262-4 The Icelanders by a voluntary agreement, owing to incessant internal feuds, entered into a close union with Norway. Subject to the king of that country, they enjoyed most of the rights of Norwegians, while reserving their own independence. The agreement exists in many manuscripts, and is the Magna Carta of Iceland.

1380 Norway was united to Denmark by marriage, and Iceland followed.

1551 Protestantism (Lutheranism) introduced.

1783 Greatest volcanic eruptions ever experienced in the island, destroyed 10,000 men, 28,000 ponies, 11,500 cows, 200,000 sheep.

1814 Norway was separated from Denmark, but Iceland remained under Danish rule.

1830 Home Rule movement, which has now gained the day, had its beginning.

1874 New Constitution signed 5th January by King Christian of Denmark on his visit to Iceland when the 1000th anniversary of the colonisation of Iceland was celebrated, 1st August, 1874.

1875 Latest great eruption.

The following curious custom is copied from Dr. Kneeland's book:

"In their pagan age, it was the custom for the father to determine, as soon as a child was born, whether it should be exposed to death or brought up; and this not because the rearing of a deformed or weak child would deteriorate a race which prided itself on strength and courage, but owing to the inability of the parents, from poverty, to bring up their offspring. The newly born child was laid on the ground, and there remained untouched until its fate was decided by the father or nearest male relative; if it was to live, it was taken up and carried to the father, who, by placing it in his arms, or covering it with his cloak, made himself publicly responsible for its maintenance. It was then sprinkled with water, and named. This was regarded in pagan times as sacred as the rite of baptism by Christians, and after its performance it was

murder to expose it. . . . The usual mode of desertion was either to place the infant in a covered grave, and there leave it to die, or to expose it in some lonely spot, where wild animals would not be likely to find it. After the introduction of Christianity, such exposure was permitted only in cases of extreme deformity."

In 997, the first Christian missionary, Thangbrand, landed in Iceland, and preached Christianity to its inhabitants by fire and sword; but the severity with which he tried to enforce his views failed to convince the people to give up Paganism. Three years later, however, Iceland threw off the heathen yoke, and embraced the Roman Catholic religion. Early in the eleventh century several Icelanders visited Europe to study in the various universities, whilst churches and schools were established in the island, served by native bishops and teachers, and with such marvellous rapidity did education spread among the people that it reached its culminating point in the thirteenth century, when the literary productions of the Icelanders became renowned through Europe during what was termed the Dark Ages.

> Iceland shone with glorious lore renowned,
> A northern light when all was gloom around.
>
> *Montgomery.*

Towards the end of the twelfth century the peace of Iceland was broken up by internal struggles for power, which resulted in the loss of its independence. So widespread, in fact, had become these internal feuds, that at last some of the chiefs, refusing to submit to have their differences settled by the laws of the country, visited Norway and solicited the help of its king, Hakon the Old.

Now this king had long been ambitious to annex Iceland to his dominions, and in lieu of settling the disputes brought before him, by an amicable arrangement between the Icelandic chiefs, he only fomented their quarrels, and

finally persuaded a number of them to place Iceland under his sceptre. This they agreed to do, and in 1264 Iceland entered into a union with Norway, and its far-famed little republic became extinct.

The history of the island since that date has been a mournful one. Until sixty years since, the Danish yoke left in its train nothing but apathy and discontent among its inhabitants; in fact, the poor Icelanders, after they realised their loss of independence, seemed to have had neither spirit nor power to rise above the state of suicidal slavery into which they had fallen through their political differences.

In 1830, however, an heroic band of patriots combined, and fought bravely to rescue their country from the degrading condition into which it had fallen; but its long subjection to a foreign yoke produced, it is to be feared, a lasting impression on the character of its inhabitants, which, combined with their great poverty, has engendered a sadness and lack of spirit which they seem unable to overcome. The present Icelandic Home Rule movement dates from 1883, when Benedikt Sveinsson, the leader of the Home Rule party, which numbers nearly all the members of the Lower House among its adherents, moved the revision of the Constitution given by the Danish king in 1874. This revised Home Rule Bill has always had a majority in the Lower House, but only passed the Upper House in four Parliaments. It tends to give Iceland the same position in relation to Denmark as the English self-governing Colonies stand in to Great Britain.

The Danish Government has twice issued a proclamation telling the Icelanders that it was useless for them to persevere in their desire for changes in the Constitution, as these would never be assented to.

"But," says an authority on Iceland, "the movement will go on under the able leadership of Benedikt Sveinsson, a man who has all the glowing eloquence and

patriotism of an O'Connell united with the statesmanship of Parnell."

In 1380, Norway was united to Denmark, and in some ways Denmark has proved detrimental to Iceland, especially in the monopoly of trade (abolished 1854), wherein Icelanders were only allowed to trade with specified Danish merchants, who could consequently make their own terms! Iceland gradually gave up having her own ships; but since the monopoly has been withdrawn her trade is looking up again.

In 1814, Norway was separated from Denmark and joined Sweden, while Denmark retained Iceland. Iceland was then transferred to the Danish Crown. In 1551 the Icelanders very unwillingly, and after much bloodshed, in the course of which the Roman Catholic bishop and his sons were publicly beheaded, threw off the Roman Catholic supremacy, and embraced the Lutheran form of worship.

In 1800 their time-honoured institution, viz., "The Althing," was done away with, and for the subsequent forty-three years Danish rule prevailed. In 1843, however, the former state of government was re-established, but only in a very limited form, the power granted to it being but a shadow of its former self, whilst its sittings were removed from the rocky fortress where it had so long held sway, to the capital, Reykjavik, where a large stone building was erected for its deliberations. The present building was only completed in 1882.

In 1848, when Denmark proclaimed its Constitution, the Icelanders in a body petitioned that the full power of the Althing should be restored. For many years this petition was presented in vain, until King Christian visited the island, and signed a new and separate constitution for Iceland in January, 1874, at the same time retaining certain prerogatives.

In size Iceland is 8000 square miles larger than Ireland,

its area being calculated at 40,000 square miles. Geographically it lies south of the south of the Arctic Circle, about 500 miles north-west of Duncansby Head. Its eastern, northern, and north-western coasts are deeply indented with a number of narrow fjords, whilst the southern coast, on the contrary, has not a bay or fjord capable of affording a harbour to even a small vessel.

A group of islands, called Vestmannaeyjar, lie off the south coast, and in the various bays on its western side are innumerable small islets. The name Vestmannaeyjar originated from men from the islands of the west, notably from Ireland, settling there; these men were slaves who had killed their masters, and in turn were killed themselves. Hence the name "Vestmenn."

The interior of the island is mostly a broad, barren plateau, from which rise ice-clad mountains and sleeping volcanoes. Its inhabited regions lie along the coast, where there are small tracts of land which repay cultivation. The area of the lava deserts, viz., tracts of country covered with lava that has flowed down from volcanic mountains, is computed at 2400 square miles, whilst there are 5000 square miles of vast, stony, uncultivated wastes—nearly one seventh of the entire area—which apparently increase in extent.

The total area of pasture land in Iceland is estimated at 15,000 English miles, but a large part of this is moor; whilst, sad to say, the pasture land is visibly diminishing, and the sandy waste increasing. This, to a certain extent, is due to the want of industry on the part of the natives.

In 1875 no less than 1000 square miles was buried beneath an eruption of pumice, but it is considered that the action of frost and rain upon this porous substance will eventually fertilise the soil and permit of its cultivation. Iceland is the most volcanic region of the earth.

The island has four large lakes and innumerable small rivers, none of which are navigable beyond a short distance from the mouth. It is not possible to enter here at large on the volcanic features of the island, but a short chapter has been appended at the end of the volume touching on the principal volcanoes, their action and eruptions.

CHAPTER VI.

SAUDÁRKRÓK—RIDING ASTRIDE.

At a short distance from shore Saudárkrók appeared to us a most forlorn-looking little settlement, consisting of some few dozen wooden houses and turf hovels. We made a closer acquaintance with it, however, during the few days the steamer remained in port to enable our captain to unload some 200 tons of cargo, and found plenty of things to interest us in the little town.

There being no warehouses, or even sheds, to store the newly arrived goods, they were piled on the beach, and there sold by auction. It was a most amusing scene, the whole population turning out to witness or take part in the bidding for the wares thus exposed.

The goods, consisting of sacks of flour, barrels of coffee and sugar, cases of biscuits, and bundles of ready-made clothing, were piled up in a half circle, the auctioneer sitting on a common wooden table in the middle, supported by one or two of the chief townsfolk. Outside the circle stood men, women, and children from all surrounding parts of the island; beyond them again, the patient little ponies waiting for the loads they were to carry off inland. Much of the sale was carried on by barter, a system of trading not wholly comprehensible to us strangers, although we saw the natives offer specimens of eider down, Iceland moss, dried cod, knitted stockings, &c., in exchange. As

onlookers, such a novel exhibition afforded a fine field for the study of Icelandic physiognomy, the expressions of anxiety, pleasure, or disappointment being depicted on their faces when the coveted goods were knocked down to the would-be purchaser, or not. To these poor people this must have been a meeting of the greatest importance, as their winter comforts mostly depended thereon; but such is their habitual apathy that even this great event caused little outward excitement.

No sooner were the goods purchased, than the ship's crew sorted them out, and with the help of an interpreter they were handed over to their owners, some of whom within a few hours were starting off on their homeward journey; a considerable part of the goods, however, still remained on the shore when we left two days later, the purchasers having arranged to return for future loads.

Trade has been open to all nations since 1854. In 1883 the imports amounted to £337,000, from bread, groceries, wines, beer, spirits, tobacco, and stuffs.

THE EXPORTS OF ICELAND IN 1887 WERE:

Salted Cod	cwt.	112,201	value	£138,506
Other salted fish	,,	57,226	,,	46,810
Salted herring	barrels	27,096	,,	20,000
,, salmon	cwt.	218	,,	763
Cod oil	barrels	1,215	,,	2,738
Shark oil	,,	7,508	,,	22,524
Seal Oil...	,,	121	,,	336
Whale oil	,,	230	,,	460
Ponies	numbers	3,476	,,	10,428
Sheep	,,	10,000	,,	10,000
Wool	cwt.	12,134	,,	47,561
Salted mutton	,,	9,336	,,	11,968
Eider down	lb.	7,149	,,	5,415

besides woollen stocking and gloves, skins, feathers, tallow,

dried fish, sounds, and roes; and the average exports from 1890 to 1894 as follows:

Salted cod	150,000	cwt.
„ herring	15,000	barrels (Danish)
„ roe	620	„
Whale and Seal oil	8,700	„
Ponies	1,550	
Sheep	25,300	
Wool	12,800	cwt.
Salted mutton	5,000	„
Eider down	64	„

From the above statistics, it will be seen that the exports do not vary much.

But even more important to us than the open air auction was our subsequent ride. The stolid Icelanders, whose very existence depended on that auction, were not nearly so much excited about it, as we over our equestrian performances, which proved to be worthy of circus representations.

Saudárkrók was to witness a new experiment in our mounting arrangements. On arrival, intending riding into the interior as usual, we applied at the only inn in the place for ponies, when to our discomfiture we learnt no such thing as a lady's side-saddle was to be obtained. The innkeeper and our party held a long consultation as to what was to be done, during which the inhabitants of the place gathered round us in full force, apparently much interested in our proceedings.

At last one of the lookers-on disappeared, and presently returned in triumph with a chair-saddle, which he had unearthed from some remote corner where it had probably lain, judging by its appearance, since the Middle Ages. This was assigned to Miss T. No second one, however, was obtainable, and I had to choose between remaining behind or overcoming the difficulty of riding lady-fashion on a man's saddle. My determination was quickly taken,

and much to the amusement of our party, up I mounted, the whole village stolidly watching the proceeding, whilst the absence of a pommel contributed considerably to the difficulty I had in keeping my seat.

Off we started, headed by our guide, and as long as the pony walked I felt very comfortable without a pommel, so much so that I ventured to try a trot, when round went the saddle and off I slipped. Vaughan came to my rescue, and after readjusting the saddle, and tightening the girths, I remounted, but only with the same result. How was I to get along at this rate?

I had often read that it was the custom for women in South America, Albania, &c., who have to accomplish long distances on horseback, to ride man fashion. Indeed, women rode so in England, until side-saddles were introduced by Anne of Bohemia, wife of Richard II., and many continued to ride across the saddle until even a later date. In Iceland I had seen women ride as men, and felt more convinced than ever that this mode was safer and less fatiguing. Although I had ridden all my life, the roughness of the Icelandic roads and ponies made lady-wise on a man's saddle impossible, and the sharpness of the pony's back, riding with no saddle, equally so. There was no alternative: I must either turn back, or mount as a man. Necessity gives courage in emergencies. I determined therefore to throw aside conventionality, and do in 'Iceland as the Icelanders do.' Keeping my brother at my side, and bidding the rest to ride forward, I made him shorten the stirrups, and hold the saddle, and after sundry attempts, succeeded in landing myself man fashion on the animal's back. The position felt very odd at first, and I was also somewhat uncomfortable at my attitude, but on Vaughan's assuring me there was no cause for my uneasiness, and arranging my dress so that it fell in folds on either side, I decided to give the experiment a fair trial, and in a very short time got quite accustomed to the position,

and trotted along merrily. Cantering was at first a little more difficult, but I persevered, and in a couple of hours was quite at home in my new position, and could trot, pace, or canter alike, without any fear of an upset. The amusement of our party when I overtook them, and boldly trotted past, was intense; but I felt so comfortable in my altered seat that their derisive and chaffing remarks failed to disturb me. Perhaps my boldness may rather surprise my readers; but after full experience, under most unfavourable circumstances, I venture to put on paper the result of my experiment.

Riding man-fashion is less tiring than on a side-saddle, and I soon found it far more agreeable, especially when traversing rough ground. My success soon inspired Miss T. to summon up courage and follow my lead. She had been nearly shaken to pieces in her chair pannier, besides having only obtained a one-sided view of the country through which she rode; and we both returned from a twenty-five mile ride without feeling tired, whilst from that day till we left the island we adopted no other mode of travelling. I am quite sure had we allowed conventional scruples to interfere, we should never have accomplished in three days and a half the 160 miles' ride to the Geysers, which was our ultimate achievement.

I may here mention our riding costume. We had procured very simply made thick blue serge dresses before leaving home, anticipating rough travelling. The skirts being full and loose, hung well down on each side when riding, like a habit on the off and near sides, and we flattered ourselves that, on the whole, we looked both picturesque and practical. Our very long waterproof boots (reaching above the knee) proved a great comfort when fording rivers, which in an Iceland ride must be crossed every few miles, sometimes oftener. For the rest we wore ordinary riding attire.

The crooked position on a side-saddle—for one must sit

OUR MODE OF RIDING.

(By G. D. Giles.)

crooked to look straight—is very fatiguing to a weak back, and many women to whom the exercise would otherwise prove of the greatest benefit cannot stand the strain: so this healthy mode of exercise is debarred them, because Society says they must not ride like men. Society is a hard taskmaster. Nothing is easier than to stick on a side-saddle, of course, and nothing more difficult than to ride on one gracefully.

For comfort and safety, I say, ride like a man. If you have not courage to do this, when visiting Iceland take your own side-saddle and bridle (for a pony), as, except in Reykjavik, horse furniture is of the most miserable description, and the constant breakages cause many delays, while there are actually no side-saddles, except in the capital, and a chair is an instrument of torture not to be recommended even to your worst enemy.

In past times women have ridden in every possible position, and in every conceivable costume. They have ridden sideways on both the near and off sides, they have ridden astride (as the Mexicans, Indians, Tartars, Roumanians, Icelanders, &c., do to-day), and they have also ridden pillion. Queen Elizabeth rode thus behind the Earl of Leicester on public occasions, in a full hoop skirt, low-necked bodice, and large ruff. Nevertheless, she dispensed with a cavalier when out hawking at the ripe age of seventy-six.

When hunting, hawking, or at tournaments, women during the Middle Ages always rode astride in this country, reserving their side saddles merely for State functions. Judging from old pictures, they then mounted, arrayed in full ball dresses, in long-veiled headdresses (time of Edward II.), and in flowing skirts, while their heads were often ornamented with huge plumed hats.

Formerly, every church door, every roadside inn, had its horse block or "jumping-on stone"—called in Kent and some other southern counties the "joust stone," and in

Scotland the "louping-on stane." These were necessary in the olden days of heavy armour, and at a time when women rode astride. Men can now mount alone, although the struggles of a small man to climb to the top of a big horse are sometimes mightily entertaining; but women have to trust to any capable or incapable man who can assist them into their saddles.

Fashion is ephemeral. Taste and public opinion, having no corporal identity, are nothing but the passing fancy of a given generation.

Dress to a woman should always be an important matter, and to be well dressed it is necessary to be suitably clothed. Of course breeches, high boots or leggings are essential in riding; but a neatly arranged divided skirt, reaching well below the knee, can be worn over these articles, and the effect produced is anything but inelegant. Of one thing we may be certain—namely, that whenever English women summon up enough courage to ride their horses man fashion again, every London tailor will immediately set himself to design becoming and useful divided skirts for the purpose.

I strongly advocate the abolition of the side-saddle for the country, hunting, or rough journeys, for three reasons —1st, safety; 2nd, comfort; 3rd, health.

I. Of course nothing is easier under ordinary circumstances than to "stick on" a side-saddle, because the pommels almost hold one there: wherein lies much danger. In the case of a horse falling, for instance, a woman (although doubtless helped by the tight skirts of the day) cannot extricate herself. She is caught in the pommels or entangled by the stirrup, both of which calamities mean dragging, and often result in a horrible death.

II. Miss Bird, in her famous book of travels, tells us how terribly her back suffered from hard riding on a side-saddle, and how easily she accomplished the same distances when, disregarding conventionalities, she adopted a man's seat.

The wife of a well-known Consul-General, who, in company with her husband, rode in a similar fashion from Shanghai to St. Petersburgh through Siberia, always declared such a feat would have been impossible for her to have achieved on a side-saddle. Further, the native women of almost all countries ride astride to this day, as they did in England in the fourteenth century.

III. Cross-riding doubtless has been considered injurious to health by a few members of the medical profession, but the majority, and notably the highest authorities, hold a different opinion.

Are we not all aware that many girls become crooked when learning to ride, and have to mount on the off side in order to counteract the mischief. Is this not proof in itself of how unnatural the position must be?

As women ride at the present moment, horses with sore backs are unfortunately no rarity. It is true that these galls are caused by bad riding; still, such things would be avoided with a man's saddle, which is far lighter than a a woman's, and easier to carry, because the rider's weight is not on one side, but equally distributed—a great comfort to a horse's loins and withers.

We know that a woman's horse is far sooner knocked up with a hard day than one ridden by a man, although the man is probably the heavier weight of the two, and this merely because he is properly balanced.

Therefore, ye women travellers, before starting on long and fatiguing expeditions, lay these facts to heart, and remember cross-riding is no novelty; our female ancestors all mounted that way, and all native women who ride for business and not for pleasure sit astride. My own personal experience only endorses its advisability and practicability.

We rode to Reykir, ten or twelve miles from Saudárkrók, where there are hot springs. The road was very bad, and it took us nearly three hours to accomplish the distance, but this may be partly accounted for by our having to stop

every half-hour to mend some one's broken saddlery. My only girth, a dilapidated old thing, was mended with string, and when trotting along soon after starting, gaily laughing at the placid way we all went riding with such horse equipments, and remarking "that none of us fared any the worse for want of straps and buckles——"

Well, I remember no more, until I found myself sitting on the ground, feeling very dazed and stupid, surrounded by all my friends, who were saying "She is all right now," or inquiring, "Are you better?" or "Are you much hurt?"

Yes, I was all right, only badly shaken. The saddle and I had both rolled off together, the only real fall I have ever had in my life, and from a little Icelandic pony, too! I was thoroughly disgusted at the accident and my want of balance. However, I soon had occasion to comfort myself on my comparatively easy fall, when our guide and pony turned three complete somersaults down a hill, the man disappearing. But he speedily rolled out from beneath the animal, shook himself, and mounted once again. How it happened that every bone in his body was not broken I can't imagine, so rough and strewn with lava boulders was the ground on which he fell.

Shortly after our party had left Saudárkrók a young Icelander was noticed riding after us, and when my mishap occurred, he advanced towards us and politely offered me the use of his pony and saddle, which I gratefully accepted, and he mounted mine, riding without any girths, and gracefully balancing himself in a most marvellous manner. He talked English wonderfully, and was most intelligent and communicative, telling us he was on his way to Copenhagen to study languages, preparatory to trying for a position as teacher at Reykjavik, and we found he had already mastered English, French, Latin, and Danish. His name never transpired, but we learnt that as soon as the news reached him that an English party had landed and started for 'Reykir,' he had saddled a pony and ridden

after us, wanting to see what we were like, and also to make our acquaintance, and thus be able to air his English with English people, for until then he had never spoken it except with his teacher. My fall gave him the opportunity he wanted, without seeming intrusive; he was then able to offer his services, which he did with much courtesy.

This young Icelander, who acted as our cicerone until we steamed away from the little town of Saudárkrók, proved a most agreeable companion. Although only able to speak English very slowly, he managed to give us a vast amount of useful and interesting information.

"Cannot you tell us a story—a real Icelandic story," I asked one day when we were riding along.

"Yes, I know a lot of stories, what kind do you like best?"

"Something very Icelandic, the sort of tales the people love," I replied.

Accordingly he began the following weird tale which I give as nearly as I can in his own words, only altering them when his sentences seemed a little obscure.

"In the olden times there was a school in Iceland such as in England is called a Grammar School, for learning Latin and Greek. It was in the interior of the country, at Skalholt. One of the students at this school was a wicked young man who wanted to learn witchcraft. I should have said that Skalholt is also the Bishopric. Some of the old Bishops had been very wise men, but some of them had been great wizards. Now this young man, whose name was Lopt, knew that one of these old Bishops when alive possessed a very big manuscript book full of all sorts of witchcraft and necromancy, and this old Bishop had ordered the volume to be laid on his breast and buried with him. He would not leave it to anybody. Now this young man had a great desire to get hold of that book. He knew something of witchcraft himself; but not very

much, so he got one of his fellow students to help him to obtain the coveted book."

"*How* did he do it?" we naturally asked.

"One night at twelve o'clock the two went into the church alone. The friend of the young wizard was to catch hold of the string of the bells so as to be in readiness to ring if it should be necessary to summon the village to help Lopt if he should need assistance while calling up the dead man."

"What a horrible idea; how do they call the dead?"

"There is a form in Iceland for calling up the dead which proceeds in the following way: The man goes into the churchyard at midnight—it must be between the 18th and 19th of any month—and he takes with him the Lord's Prayer written on a piece of paper, but it is essential the prayer should be written backwards, beginning at the last word and ending with the first. He has to read this continually, repeating it slowly backwards, and repeating also any formulas in witchcraft which he may happen to know, until the grave seems to grow restless and the earth slowly begins to move on the top of the dead man. The living man has now to be very careful, because he will have to wrestle with the dead man, who, since he was buried, is supposed to have gained strength and to be twice as powerful as he was in life. Therefore the living man must choose some one whom he believes he can overpower by wrestling. He continues his formulas in the dark of the night—the darker the night the better—until the head of the corpse slowly and very gradually appears rising from the grave and at last half the body is visible in the indistinct light. Then he has to ask the dead man two questions: Who he was when alive? and how old he was when he died?—these two questions only. After he has heard the dead man's answer it is open to him either to put the dead man down again into his grave with the help of the formulas, or to make him come right up and wrestle with him. Supposing

he decides to make him come up and wrestle with him, he goes on saying the Lord's prayer and many more things, wizards' charms, &c., until the ghost of the dead man is entirely out of the grave. It is an awful moment when they face one another. The living man then has to cut a vein of his own left arm, put the first finger of his right hand into the blood, and then put that finger on the tongue of the dead man."

"Oh, how ghastly;" we exclaimed.

"That is not all," the narrator continued, "he has then to lick the face of the dead man with his own tongue."

"Worse and worse," we all cried with one voice, feeling quite creepy at the dramatic way he told the story.

"The next stage is to wrestle with the dead man; all depends whether the living one can get him under. Stories of many awful fights are told in Iceland. If he can do so, he can employ him as a sort of invisible servant to do anything he may please; he can command him to perform all sorts of acts and deeds for him unknown to the outer world. This is very valuable, some possess these servants, and consequently have great power. If he do not succeed in getting the dead man under, however, the living man's course is run, for the ghost drags him down struggling horribly into the grave, and he is heard of no more!"

The Icelander paused as if overcome by the terror of his story, and no one spoke for a moment. His impressive manner and the gruesomeness of the tale, had fascinated us all so much that, after he recovered a little from the effort of talking in English and the excitement of his narrative, we made him return to the student Lopt.

"That was the common way of waking up the dead," he resumed; "but the wise student Lopt, chose another method. He merely went by his own formula in order to raise the dead Bishop. Many of these old dignitaries were buried beneath the pavement. Lopt began his incantation,

and there came a ghastly procession very slowly and quietly out of the ground into the church, then he called upon the various Bishops one after the other, till he came to the great wizard, who, in life had owned the book. It was called the Grey Book, because it was bound in that colour. Meanwhile the young student (Lopt's friend) had been growing more and more afraid as he stood by the bell-rope outside, because, before the great Bishop arose from his grave, the whole church shook and trembled as if there were an earthquake; but still the friend did not pull the rope of the bell because Lopt had told him not to ring it before he gave him the sign to do so.

"After this apparent earthquake, the wizard Bishop slowly appeared, looking very angry at being disturbed from his rest; but to the joy of Lopt, he carried the Grey Book in his hand. The student continued his formulas more earnestly than before; and he wished so hard that at last the great wizard drew nearer and nearer to him, walking very quietly and very slowly without any noise at all; but Lopt could see him coming in the darkness. When the Bishop was quite near him, Lopt trembled all over; but he reached out his hand, with an awful effort, feeling the crisis of his life had come, to catch hold of the book. He had got hold of one of the corners, when the friend who stood outside looking on through the door, thought he saw Lopt give the signal, and he was so frightened himself that, clutching the rope, he rang a tremendous peal on the bell. The instant he did so the church shook again, and in one moment the wizard bishop disappeared, and the book, with the exception of one little corner, disappeared with him."

"That is the most horrible story I ever heard" I gasped.

"It is not a story, it is true," said the excited Icelander.

"The student Lopt was thus left with only a mere scrap of the Grey Book in his hand. He was very angry with his

friend for causing him to lose so great an opportunity; but his friend said if he had not rung the bell the church, with both of them, would have sunk into the earth, because the witchcraft was so powerful at that moment, the whole building was trembling as violently as when the bishop walked across the aisle to where Lopt was standing. Lopt learnt more from that little corner of the book which he had managed to snatch and retain, than he had learnt before in all his life. Time went on and he became a very great wizard, a sort of Faust, and he, like Faust, promised the devil his soul at the end of a certain number of years if the devil would help to compass his desires in the meanwhile. When the time approached, however, he became exceedingly frightened, and began to consider how he might escape the consequences of his bargain. People sometimes heard him mutter to himself 'the first Sunday in Lent I shall be in Hell,' and such like phrases.

"Now there was a famous clergyman at that time in Iceland, a most pious and good man. Lopt went to the house of this clergyman and told him his story, and the terrible dilemma in which he was placed, whereupon the clergyman said 'If you stay with me all the time, and I never lose sight of you till after Lent is over, then I can save you; but you must obey me implicitly.'

"Lopt eagerly promised implicit obedience and tried to feel a little comforted, but as the fated date drew nearer and nearer, he grew very restless and more nervous than ever when he thought of the Devil and the compact he had made with him.

"The first Sunday in Lent dawned clear and bright, and during the forenoon everything went well until a messenger came to tell the good clergyman, with whom Lopt was staying, that one of his relatives was dying and wished to see him. He felt no hesitation about leaving his guest, after warning him *not to cross the threshold* till he came back.

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Icelandic is the oldest of the present Teutonic dialects, being purer than the Norwegian of to-day. When we could not make the people understand English, German often succeeded admirably, but we necessarily picked up a few Icelandic sentences. It is always well to be practical as far as possible, so I give a few sentences we found useful, with their phonetic pronunciation:

Our young Icelandic student was very proud of the native "Sagas," and justly so. They are works highly esteemed, and of interest to the scholar, embodying the history of the Island, tales of its former chiefs, their laws, their feuds, their adoption of Christianity, the sittings of the Althing, great volcanic eruptions, and fairy legends, handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation, until the pastors and learned men committed them to manuscript. They are also full of the most romantic adventures, stirring incidents, and courageous assaults, dear to the heart of every Icelander, and treasured by them as records of their country's history and its people's hardihood.

Can you lend us any ponies?	*In Icelandic*: Getið þér lánað okkur hesta?
	Phonetic pronunciation: Gyetith theear lounath okkur hesta?
Have you good saddles and bridles?	*Icelandic*: Hafið þér góða hnakka, góð beizli?
	Phonetic: Haveeth theear gōtha hnakka, gōth baitslee?
No; I cannot lend you any.	*Icelandic*: Nei, jeg get ekki lánað yður þá, þau.
	Phonetic: Nayee, yég gyet ekki lounath eethur thou, thoi.
I can give you 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.	*Icelandic*: Jeg get sagt einn, tveir, þrír, fjórir, fimm, sex, sjö, átta, níu, tíu.
	Phonetic: Yeg gyet sagt aidn, tvair, thréer, fyōreer, fimm, sex, syu, outta, neeu, teeu.

How many?	*Icelandic*: Hvað margir?
	Phonetic: Hvath margeer?
Thank you; please bring them.	*Icelandic*: Takk, gerið svo vel að koma með þá.
	Phonetic: Takk, gyereeth so vel ath kawma meth thou.
How long will you be away?	*Icelandic*: Hvað lengi verðið þér burtu?
	Phonetic: Hvath lengyi verthith theear burtu?
We shall come back after riding six hours.	*Icelandic*: Við komum aptur eptir sex tima reið.
	Phonetic: Veeth kawmum aftur eftir sex teema raith.
Where is Reykir?	*Icelandic*: Hvar eru Reykir?
	Phonetic: Hvar eru Raykir?
You are not going the right way.	*Icelandic*: Þér farið ekki rétta leið.
	Phonetic: Theear fareeth ekki ree-etta laith.
You must go back a little way.	*Icelandic*: Þér verðið að fara tilbaka dálítið.
	Phonetic: Theear vertheeth ath fara tilbaka douleeteeth.
Keep to the left.	*Icelandic*: Haldið þér til vinstri.
	Phonetic: Haldeeth theear til vinstree.
Keep to the right.	*Icelandic*: Haldid þér til hœgri.
	Phonetic: Haldeeth theear til higree.
Have you any beds?	*Icelandic*: Hafið þér rúm?
	Phonetic: Haveeth theear rōōm?
Can we have some food?—fish, coffee, milk, bread.	*Icelandic*: Getum við fengið mat? — fisk, kaffi, mjólk, brauð.
	Phonetic: Gyetum veeth fengeeth mat? — fisk, kaffee, meeōlk, broith.
How much do I owe you?	*Icelandic*: Hvað skulda jeg yður?
	Phonetic: Hvath skulda yeg eethur?

Please mend this bridle, girth, reins, crupper, stirrup, pack-box.

Icelandic: Gerið svo vel að gera við þetta, beizlið, gjörðina, tauminn, istaðið, koffortið.

Phonetic: Gyereeth so vel ath gyera veeth thetta, baitsleeth, gyurthina, toiminn, eestatheeth, kofforteeth.

NOTE.—þ = th in think; ð = th in that.

CHAPTER VII.

REYKIR.

On arriving at Reykir, our guide conducted us to his own dwelling, a fair-sized farm, where he and his wife resided, such being the custom in Iceland, with all their mutual relations. In this case they included the wife, her father, mother, grandfather, and sister on the one side; the husband, his two brothers, sister, and mother on the other. Quite a happy little community, as the couple themselves were also blessed with several children. Imagine the love and devotion of an English family under such circumstances!

On entering we were shown into the guest chamber, a small, neatly-furnished apartment, panelled with wood, and containing two windows, neither of which was made to open—a practice not peculiar to Iceland, as it obtains in some other places, especially in Norway and the Tyrol. A wooden bedstead stood in one corner, covered with an elaborate patch-work quilt, whilst a table and two chairs constituted the remainder of the furniture. As our party numbered five, some pack-boxes were added—not very soft seats after a long jolting ride. A looking-glass hung on the wall; but what a glass! It was quite impossible for anyone to recognise his own face in it; I can only liken its reflection to what one would see in a kitchen spoon—not a silver spoon—for there the features, though distorted, would be visible, here they were not. Certainly if such mirrors are the only medium of viewing their features the

people of Reykir possess, they will not grow vain of their personal attractions. The room also contained a barometer and an accordion. In most of the houses we entered we found the latter instrument, which the people, being fond of music, amuse themselves by playing during the long winter evenings. Curiously enough, there is little or no native music, however.

One specimen of the very old Icelandic "Langspil" was shown in the John Chester collection of musical instruments, at the Albert Hall, a few years ago, and after the exhibition was over its owner kindly presented it to me. It probably dates from the seventeenth century, is a long carved wooden box shape, about four inches square and twenty-six inches long. It has four strings made of copper wire, and on the sounding-board are the following row of letters:

R M F S L C U
(Ra me fa sol la si ut)

Madame Lemmens-Sherrington thinks it was probably played with a bow, over an elaborate metal filigree at the end, the instrument resting on a table, while the fingers played the strings on the board, which is divided into three distinct octaves, the notes being marked by the lettering above.

The handle through the carved head of which the wires pass is composed of an elaborately painted griffin's head. It is green, with red eyes and lips, and large white teeth. Its tail curls round into a pretty scaled twist—somewhat gruesome, but decidedly artistic for such remote times.

Tired with our long ride, we were very glad to rest for a time, while our student friend, our guide, and all the combined families in the house down to the babies and the dogs, stood around us, until the room was so full that no other creature could have found entrance.

The Icelanders are on first acquaintance with strangers

somewhat reserved; but if treated affably this reserve soon wears off, and their hospitality is unbounded. Even among the poorest a night's lodging is never refused to a traveller.

In outlying districts the farmhouses take the place of inns, whilst the charges are on a most moderate scale.

We brought with us some cheese and biscuits, and a pound of Buszard's chocolate, which the farmer's wife supplemented with coffee and "skyr," the latter served in soup plates.

Skyr is the national dish, taking the place of porridge to a Scotchman, and is nothing less than curded sheep's milk, like German "dicke-milch," eaten with sugar, to which cream is added as a luxury. As it was rather sour, we fought shy of it at first, fearing future consequences, but this was unnecessary. It is really excellent, and the natives eat it in large quantities. Huge barrels of this skyr are made during the time the sheep are in full milk, and stored away for winter's use. It is agreeable to the taste, satisfying, and wholesome.

While eating our luncheon our host and his numerous family circle—who all seemed much interested at our presence—did nothing but ply us with continual questions about England, the English people, and the cost of the various articles we either wore or carried with us.

We invited our host and one or two of his friends to taste our cheese and chocolate. After every mouthful they each shook hands with all the gentlemen of our party; whilst those of the women who shared our repast, after shaking hands with the gentlemen, kissed Miss T. and myself most affectionately. The men in Iceland always kiss one another when they meet, as also do the women; but I only once saw a man kiss a woman!

Class distinction is unknown in Iceland; in fact, there are no gentry, in our acceptation of the term, and little or no wealth among the inhabitants.

WASHING AT THE HOT SPRINGS.

The Bishop is said to be the richest man in the Island, and his income is about £300 a year, a sum which these simple-minded folk look upon as wealth unbounded.

Our coffee and skyr, with attendance for seven people, cost 1*s.* 7½*d.*, a sum reasonable enough to meet any traveller's purse.

At the ports, however, in Iceland as elsewhere, we found we had to keep our wits about us to avoid being cheated, as English people are all supposed to be made of money.

Near to this farmhouse, at Reykir, there were some hot springs which we visited, and we stood and watched with much interest the water bubbling up to the surface.

Close to one of these springs we noticed a large open tub in which the family washing was being done in the natural hot water thus supplied. The water was yellow, and gave off a sulphureous odour—it did not seem to discolour the clothes, however.

The ground around the house was, as usual, piled up with dried fish. It is difficult to realise the stench caused by this food supply, unless one has experienced it. Cod liver oil is made in large quantities in Iceland, and exported to England, where it is then refined for use. If a lover of cod liver oil—and I believe such eccentric persons exist—could once be placed within 500 yards of its manufacture, I feel sure they would never taste it again.

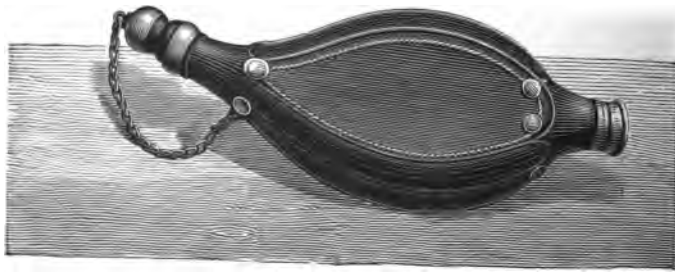
On one occasion, while the rest of the party were settling and arranging about ponies, a business which always occupied some time, I sat down on a barrel of dried fish to sketch, and was at once surrounded by men, women, and children, who stood still and stared, beckoning to all their passing friends to join them, till quite a crowd collected.

They seemed to think me a most extraordinary being. The bolder members of the party ventured near and touched me, felt my clothes, discussed the material, and calmly lifted my dress to examine my high riding-boots, a great

curiosity to them, as they nearly all wear the peculiar skin shoes already described. The odour of fish not only from the barrel on which I was seated, but also from my admiring crowd, was somewhat appalling as they stood around, nodding and chatting to one another.

Their interest in my sketch was so great I cannot believe they had ever seen such a thing attempted before, and I much regretted my inability to speak their language, so as to answer the many questions they asked about it all. I fancy they were satisfied, however, for before going away, they one and all shook hands with me, till my hand quite ached from so many friendly grasps.

All our friends at the Reykir farm used snuff.



"Snuffing" is a great institution in Iceland. The snuff is kept in a box like a gourd, often a walrus tooth, with a long brass mouth. This they put right up the nostril, raising the head to do so—a very dirty and uncouth habit, but one constantly indulged in by both sexes. They also smoke a great deal. On one occasion Vaughan gave a guide some tobacco. He took it, filled his pipe, and put it back in his pocket, shaking his head as much as to say he could not light his pipe in the wind. This dilemma was overcome by Vaughan offering a fusee. The man took it, looked at it, and grinned. So my brother showed him how to use it, and struck a light. His astonishment and

amusement were so overwhelming that he got off his pony, and rolled about on the ground with delight. He had evidently never seen such a curiosity before, and I am not sure that he did not think it somewhat uncanny!

Our host was one of the largest farmers in Iceland, and owned the adjoining island of "Drangey," which means a high rock in the sea, famous as the retreat of the outlawed hero of the "Saga of Grettir." The legend states that one Christmas night the chief's fire went out, and having no means of rekindling it, he swam from Drangey Island to the Reykir farm to get a light, a distance which to us, humanly speaking, seems impossible for any man to have compassed.

The tale goes on to say that an old witch went out in a boat to visit Grettir on Drangey. The boat upset and she was drowned; but a large rock like a boat in full sail rose from the sea a few yards from the Island itself.

The "Saga" contains many wonderful tales in connection with this locality, specially relative to the high tableland which rises almost perpendicularly above the sea. The scenery in this part of the Island is very fine. On the west side of the "Skagafjord," a fair-sized river, are seen the peaks of the "Tindastól," a very steep range of mountains intersected with water-worn gorges; while opposite, "Málmey," or "Sandstone Isle," juts into the sea, north of a rude peninsula with a low isthmus that appears almost like an island,

In the middle of this fjord Drangey is situated. This island, which was a great possession, is a huge mass of rock, nearly perpendicular, while at one end is the witch's rock resembling the ship in full sail. Drangey is the home of innumerable eider-ducks, who swim at will in and about the surrounding waters. The drake is a very handsome bird, a large portion of his plumage being white; the hen is smaller, and brown in colour. In disposition these birds are very shy and retiring. The hen builds her

nest with down plucked from her own breast; this nest the farmer immediately takes possession of; the poor bird makes a second in like manner, which is also confiscated; but the third nest is left untouched, for by this time the bird's breast is almost bare. Eider-down is very valuable, fetching from 12*s*. to 20*s*. per pound. When the farmer desires to catch the eider-duck, he places on the shore, at low water, a board, carefully set with a series of snares on its surface, and as the birds walk over it they are caught by their feet and made prisoners. There must have been many thousands of eider-duck between Reykir and Drangey, and no gun is allowed to be fired for miles around.

Owing to the uneven nature of the ground, caused by constant earth mounds, even where the soil is good the plough is used with great difficulty. In fact, it can only be utilised by removing the sod and levelling the earth with a spade, until smooth enough for a pony to drag the plough over it. There are very few ploughs, or indeed farming implements of any size in Iceland, the farmers being too poor to buy them, nor are the latter at all an enterprising class, contenting themselves with the primitive method of cultivating the soil which their forefathers used to adopt. Our guide, being a man of more energy and wealth than his brethren, had invested in a plough, of which he was very proud, and exhibited to us as a great novelty, evidently thinking we had never seen such a wonderful thing before.

Hay was being cut all the time we were in the Island, cut under every possible disadvantage, and yet cut with marvellous persistency. With this labour, of course, the frost mounds interfere, being most disastrous to the scythe; nevertheless, the natives never leave a single blade of grass, cutting round and round, and between these curious little hillocks. On the hay crop so very much depends, for when that fails, ponies die, sheep and cattle have to be killed,

the meat being preserved, and the farmer is nearly ruined. Hay is therefore looked upon as a treasure to its possessor, and is most carefully stored for the cattle's winter provender; but as during the greater part of the year the Icelanders are snowed up, the cultivation of hay is a difficult matter.

In many parts of Iceland there exist enormous stretches of country covered with dangerous bog, which are, of course, at present undrained. Now, however, that an Agricultural College has been established in the Island, it is hoped a fresh impetus will be given to farming operations in general. At present there are only a few hundred acres under cultivation, whilst its inhabitants number over 70,000! Although there are no trees, as before said, there is an abundance of flowers, indeed the flora is particularly rich, in some instances being composed of specimens not found elsewhere. Often for miles the ground is thickly carpeted with most beautiful mountain and Arctic flowers, sometimes nestling in the snow, which even in the summer lies in patches quite near to the towns. Iceland moss is found on the lava plains.

Mr. Gordon was a botanist, and brought home a collection of specimens; many more, on which he had set great store, were unfortunately lost from the pony's back. The following is a list of those he secured, a great number of which we found growing among huge boulders in high barren places:—

LIST OF PLANTS BROUGHT FROM ICELAND.

1. Plantago maritima.
2. Ranunculus acris.
3. Euphrasia officinalis.
4. Alchemilla vulgaris.
5. Do. alpina.
6. Erigeron alpinus.
7. Rumex acetosa.
8. Do. acetocella.
9. Myosotis sylvatica. (?)
10. Cardamine pratensis.
11. Comarum palustris.
12. Trifolium repens.
13. Saxifraga oppositifolia.
14. Empetrum nigrum.
15. Cerastium alpinum.
16. Cynoglossum officinale

17. Pinguicula vulgaris.
18. Poa alpina.
19. Capsella bursa pastoris.
20. Galium saxatile.
21. Stellaria aquatica.
22. Eriocaulon vaginatum.
23. Dryas octopetala.
24. Salix herbacea.
25. Do. lapponica.
26. Do. aurita.
27. Polygonum viviperum.
28. Thalictrum alpinum.
29. Leontodon taraxacum.
30. Samolus valerandi.
31. Equisetum pratense.
32. Stellaria cerastoides.
33. Viola tricolor.
34. Do. palustris.
35. Cerastium trigynum.
36. Potentilla reptans.
37. Arabis. (sp. ?)
38. Betula nana.
39. Parnassia palustris.
40. Cerastium vulgatum.
41. Silene acaulis.
42. Vaccinium uliginosum.
43. Do. vitis Idæa.
44. Thymus serpyllifolia.
45. Gentiana campestris.
46. Potentilla anserina.
47. Aparagia hispidus.
48. Rhinanthus crista galli.
49. Galium vulgaris.
50. Galium parisiense.
51. Geranium pratense.

Names furnished by Surgeon-Gen. C. A. Gordon, M.D., C.B.

Birch . 2 species.
Willow . 3 „ } included in above.

Mushrooms grow abundantly in Iceland, and we much enjoyed them, eaten with salt, as a supplement to our meals.

After some hours rest at Reykir, we remounted, and rode back to Saudárkrók, parting, for a time, with much regret from our student friend, who had proved a most agreeable and intelligent addition to our party.

That night we were none of us sorry to exchange our saddles for our berths in the *Camoens*, having been on horseback the greater part of the day, on a road the roughness of which defies description.

We girls, however, agreed we were less tired after riding astride than we should otherwise have been—further experience having given us quite a professional grip which even the clambering of the ponies over rocks and boulders failed to loosen. We also agreed that a pony or small horse was preferable for a woman to ride astride, and that

then her seat was just as firm and quite as agreeable as it could be to any man.

A further steam of twelve hours up the Hruta Fjord brought us to Bordeyri, a still smaller place than Saudárkrók. Here our captain informed us he should have to wait thirty-six hours for the discharge of cargo. This fjord is very dangerous, for it has never been surveyed, consequently deep-sea leads were frequently used, the sailors meanwhile chanting a very pretty refrain. When we anchored opposite Bordeyri, we all noticed the anxious look which the captain's face had lately worn was gone, and that he seemed pleased to have brought his steamer safely to her moorings.

We landed in a boat which came alongside the *Camoens*, and commenced at once to take a survey of the place. A few dozen houses or so, with a large store, where every necessary of life was supposed to be procurable (at least an Icelander's necessaries), constituted the town. We entered the store in search of some native curiosities to carry home. A brisk trade was being carried on in sugar candy, large sacks of which were purchased by the farmers, who had come to meet the steamer and barter their goods for winter supplies. Never was any shopping done under greater difficulties than our own, and we almost despaired of making ourselves understood. The store-man, however, grinned most good naturedly when we failed to do so, and we at last unearthed some finely-carved drinking-horns, and a couple of powder flasks, to help decorate a London hall.

While at Bordeyri, we felt we were the subject of much amusement and admiration among the little crowd of natives who flocked to see us, and formed, I doubt not, a topic of conversation among them for many a day to come.

Our survey of the town was soon made, so we ordered ponies for a ride up country, this being the best way of passing our time. On the way we saw a number of large

ravens; splendid birds they were, and wonderfully tame; the ground was quite covered in places by flocks of them.

Iceland boasts a great variety of birds; in fact, they form an inducement to many English sportsmen to visit the Island. Both Mr. Gordon and A. L. T. were sportsmen, but our time was too limited to admit much indulgence of this taste. Among the birds may be noted swan, geese, duck, curlew, mallard, snipe, plover, ptarmigan—ninety species of birds, in fact, fifty-four of which are wildfowl. During our ride A. L. T. shot a fine raven, and on our return to the ship my brother skinned and stuffed it, as a memento of his inland trip. Many of the passengers were so interested in his performance, that he was called on to deliver a lecture on skinning and stuffing birds, and he explained how skilfully this could be accomplished, with the help of a penknife alone. On another occasion, A. L. T. caught a baby curlew as yet unable to fly, but the cries of the parents as they whirled round and round us seeking their offspring, were so heart-rending, that in sheer pity he placed the little thing back on the ground, where it was instantly joined by the old birds, who uttered cries of delight, which continued until we were well out of sight.

There are great attractions for sportsmen in Iceland—reindeer shooting in the north-east of the Island, whale and seal hunting, and salmon and trout fishing, the latter being met with in all the rivers. Indeed some of the finest salmon fishing in the world is to be found here, and several Englishmen rent rivers, where they enjoy this sport every summer; the life being free and independent, the expenses small, and the sport excellent, naturally prove great inducements. At the same time, so much netting and trapping of the fish goes on, there is every probability the salmon will be exterminated before long.

Our ride out of Bordeyri was very interesting. There are some hot springs on the east of the fjord, which are

CLUSTER OF SMALL FARM HOUSES.
(Author's sketch.)

reached by boat, but which we had not time to visit. Had we remained longer, we should much have liked to see the "Anglica fish-lakes," but these were a full day's journey from Bordeyri, and quite out of our route. They are, we were told, abundantly stocked with char, trout, and other good fish, and afford an excellent halting-place for sporting travellers.

A part of our way lay along a peat track, over which we raced our ponies, varying our exploits later amid bogs, which required the most careful riding to avoid a catastrophe. As usual there were many rivers to be forded, through which our ponies plodded up to their middles, never flinching even at the coldest glacial water. Often during our rides, towards evening the cold became intense, although for a few hours about mid-day the sun was very hot.

After some hours' riding, we arrived at another typical farm, which I sketched from my pony's back. The farm-house, and a small hamlet of wooden huts which lay around it, formed a good foreground to the distant fjord. Dismounting, we entered the house by a low door, knocking our heads against the rafters as we traversed a long dark passage which led to the guest-chamber. This room, as usual, was neatly panelled with wood, and contained a bed, chairs, &c., but, from the absence of fresh air, was fearfully close. Our ride had sharpened our appetite, and we at once produced our lunch supply, consisting of cheese and biscuits, &c. We offered some of the biscuits to the farmer, who at first turned them round and round in his hand suspiciously, then seeing that we ate them with enjoyment, he raised one solemnly to his lips, tasted it, and then speedily devoured his share of the meal. In a short time all the various members of the family joined us, and, *sans cérémonie*, proceeded to examine our belongings. Pipes, match-boxes, watches, furs, and jewellery were all passed in review, and we were, as usual, asked the price of each article, and whether we had brought them out from

England. Our table knives seemed to cause them the greatest astonishment, and as the Sheffield steel glanced in the sun, they were quite childlike in their delight; certainly our English cutlery was a great contrast to the jagged iron knives which served them at table. In our turn we admired their quaint old silver ornaments, but when we testified a desire to purchase, we failed to meet with any response.

We did not, as first proposed, remain the night at this farm, its accommodation not being sufficiently enticing, so our hostess was saved fulfilling the curious Icelandic custom considered a compliment to strangers, of putting all her guests, whether man or woman, to bed herself, and not leaving the room until they were safely tucked up. We cannot say, however, that we encountered this form of hospitality ourselves, but we were told it was constantly carried out.

As we sat round the table at our meal in this far-away region, so distant from all the trammels of Society, we wondered what expressions the faces of our London friends would have worn could they have seen our party passing the only spoon available from one person to the other, occasionally even eating with our fingers. Certainly our surroundings were much at variance with a well-appointed luncheon table, and yet we enjoyed ourselves all the more from its primitive simplicity. The meal over, we prepared to continue our journey, but found our ponies had wandered much further off than usual, and our guide went to find them.

The Icelander and his pony have initiated signs, which serve them in lieu of language. For instance, when the rider dismounts, and simply leaves the reins over the animal's head, the latter knows that he will be wanted again soon, and must not wander far off; if, on the other hand, the bridle is left loose, the pony knows he may roam at will in search of food until his master seeks him.

As we rode back to Bordeyri we passed a funeral. There was something very simple and very touching about the little procession. The coffin was fastened across a pony's back, resting on a pack-saddle, and either end projected from the animal's sides. Everyone was riding, the women astride, and in two instances riding pillion with a man in front. They wore their ordinary dress—black only being procurable for the rich—the Icelandic peasants have more sense than ourselves, and do not spend all they possess in a "grand funeral" and common crape, which becomes draggled and unwholesome with the first shower of rain.

We subsequently learnt that the funeral service is very simple. The parson meets the coffin at the church door, and after the usual ceremony, repeats the words "earth to earth," and thereupon throws three shovels of earth into the grave. The people then return to the dead man's house for the "erfi" or burial feast, which is given by the heirs. The "kaka," or universal cake (like Scotch oat cake), made of barley, plays an important part in this banquet, and corn brandy is much in request. Sometimes the burial feast ends with merrymaking; but there is no wake as in Ireland, Scotland, or Norway, although formerly the Icelanders used to sit up with the dead, and were always in ghastly fear of the corpse getting out of its coffin. The shroud even to-day is stitched by the family sitting round the dead body, and they have a common superstition that they must not cut the threads with scissors but bite them off with the teeth, the origin of which is unknown, but possibly that the use of living teeth is supposed to be more respectful and loving than that of mechanical scissors.

To make sure that the dead of evil repute will not become a ghost, and disturb the ultimate peace of mind of the family, nails are driven into the soles of the feet, which is supposed to prevent the corpse walking abroad.

Sometimes a man will die at a distance of fifty or sixty

miles from a churchyard, in which case it takes the funeral procession two days to reach the burial ground. If it arrive during the parson's absence, as it often does, because each clergyman generally has two or three small churches to attend to, the chief mourner is allowed to read the burial service, and all the ordinary ceremonies are gone through, omitting the words, "earth to earth," or throwing the three shovels of mould on to the coffin. In order that the parson may be able to throw his earth and repeat the words when he returns, the mourners leave a pole standing upwards from the coffin and fill in the rest of the grave. When the parson arrives he pulls out the pole and throws the earth down the hole left on to the coffin itself. Then the ceremony is complete.

We reached Bordeyri in the evening, and again slept on board the *Camoens*. During our absence up country on the previous day we heard that the ship's company had been in a great state of excitement, consequent on the embarkation of some forty emigrants from Bordeyri and its surrounding neighbourhood. We saw these our fellow-passengers the next day, men, women, and children, many of the former quite old, apparently not more than one in five was capable of performing a good day's work. These emigrants were bound for Manitoba and Winnipeg, in each of which place there is an Icelandic colony, and which settlements they could reach at a cost of 6*l*. 10*s*. per head. Poor things! we wondered if they had taken into serious consideration the difficulties that lay in their path in the New World whither they were bound. Probably, considering the land they were leaving was one of volcanoes and desert wastes, they hoped for better things. Their Icelandic life must indeed have been hard and colourless, so hard as to take from them all pleasure in existence. To judge by their apathy, these questions did not seem to have been taken much into account by them; possibly when the sight of green fields and Nature's abundance breaks

upon their view, dormant will and energy may rise to fresh surroundings, and inspire them with an impetus to work.

Ah! speculate as we would upon their future, and probably we did so more than they themselves, all we could do for them was to wish them God-speed and good luck in their venture.

A bright 12th of August dawned at sea as we left Hruta Fjord, and steamed again towards the Arctic Circle and Cape North. When we met at breakfast the conversation naturally turned upon grouse, and 12th of August sport in general, and the gentlemen wished themselves in Scotland, and exchanged their last year's experiences there. I remembered mine also, for I was staying in a country house in Lanarkshire, and some dozen men ready equipped for sport, who stood staring out of the windows of the breakfast-room, grumbling lustily at the pouring rain, had finally to abandon their shooting expedition for the day, and content themselves with dancing Scotch reels, and otherwise amusing "the girls,"—sorry consolation for the 12th of August!

The day wore on, and we had the unusual treat of a calm sea, but as the wind blew straight across from the ice regions, it was fearfully cold, pack-ice being seen in the distance, whilst an hour or so later we were enveloped in a thick fog.

The captain looked uneasy, as he had discerned ice ahead, and this fog betokened its dangerous proximity. To turn back now and go round the Island to Reykjavik would be a serious loss of time. We slackened speed, therefore, the fog-horn was blown, and several times the sailors took deep-sea soundings.

At dinner the captain handed me a parcel containing a tiny shell and a piece of coal black lava, drawn up from sixty-six fathoms of water S. E. North Cape, and twenty-seven miles from the same. Though only ten miles from

land, the fog so entirely hid the coast that we missed one of the prettiest views of Iceland.

The next day, however, was lovely, and under a cloudless blue sky the coast-line showed to the greatest advantage. The sunset that night was one of the finest I have ever seen. Snaefellsjökull, with it ssnow summit, stood out against perfect sky, the colours deepening from yellow to orange, and vermilion to carmine, and constantly changing, like a kaleidoscope.

At 11.30 p.m. the sun had not set, but was illuminating the heavens with the most gorgeous colouring, reminding one of the distant warmer regions of the south, although at the same time the thermometer stood far below freezing point as we steamed within the Arctic Circle.

CHAPTER VIII.

REYKJAVIK.

REYKJAVIK is the capital of Iceland. It has a population of about 4000, and is pleasantly situated on the shores of a small bay to the north of a headland, which forms an excellent harbour. Several islands lie so close to the land that they can be reached on foot at low water. We had anchored here at night, and when we left our berths in the morning, the town looked quite imposing when compared with the smaller ones we had already seen.

We were somewhat disappointed to hear from the captain that he could not remain a minute longer than four days at Reykjavik; in consequence of those awful forty-two hours wasted at the mouth of the Pentland Firth; during which time, in order to pay our visit to the Geysers (the chief attraction in our trip), we should be obliged to ride 160 miles over very rough ground; and even calculating our riding powers at forty miles a day, no margin would be left for contingencies, or a visit to Hecla, which had also been an object of our ambition.

It was, however, a question of being contented to see what we could in that time or remaining in Reykjavik for the next steamer, a disaster we did not look forward to at all with equanimity, as we had heard of travellers having been left for many weeks at Reykjavik in consequence of failing to present themselves on board at the appointed

time. Vaughan and Mr. Gordon were up early, and went ashore before breakfast, carrying an introduction to "Herr Zoega," the chief guide and pony owner in the capital; and they engaged for our excursion to the Geysers twenty good ponies and two guides, one of whom could speak English, at the same time bringing back on board four pack boxes to fill with eatables and such necessary clothing as we required for the trip. These boxes we packed as tightly as possible, so as to prevent the things rattling about on the ponies' backs. They were about 18 inches long, 12 deep, and some 8 inches wide, consequently the necessary luggage for five of us quite filled two of them, notwithstanding that we took as little as possible.

Our provender consisted of potted meats, half a ham, biscuits, beer, and whisky, and with dinner utensils, such as enamelled metal plates, tumblers, knives, forks, &c., from our luncheon basket, quite filled the boxes. To carry one's own food on such an excursion is absolutely necessary, unless a person be able to live on coffee and skyr, with a sparse quantity of sheep's milk, mutton, or fish.

When calculating the number of ponies to be hired, it is necessary to allow two per head, whether for riders or for luggage, as from the rough nature of the ground the animals soon tire, and frequent changes are necessary.

A tent had also to be sought for and hired, and while this was being done, ponies laden, and rugs and mackintoshes strapped on to the riding steeds, we were told by our guide that at least two hours must elapse before they would be ready for us to start; therefore we decided to see what we could of the town meanwhile.

The principal buildings—none of which possessed any architectural beauty—were the Cathedral, the Senate House, the College, and the Hospital.

Iceland has suffered much from the ravages of disease,

which has generally occurred in epidemics of the most serious kind. These have been:

1644 Measles.
1651 The spread of leprosy became so pronounced that four leper hospitals had to be built.
1707 Small-pox killed 18,000 persons.
1797 Scarlatina.
1846 Measles.

In 1893 leprosy was supposed to be again spreading in Iceland to such an extent that the Danish Government sent out Dr. Ehlers, of Copenhagen, to investigate the matter. His research was most interesting, especially as it confirmed Hansen's view that leprosy is spread by contagion and is not hereditary; but the subject is too medical for a little book of this kind.

Amongst places of interest, the gaol must not be forgotten. There are four in the island—quite unlike those in other countries, as they rarely have an inmate.

"No one ever in the gaol!" we exclaimed, in amazement.

"No; Icelanders never do wicked. Very good people Icelanders—gooder than English or Danish. Icelanders never bad mans."

We could not help laughing at this quaint way of puffing the virtues of the gentleman's own nationality.

These gaols are a subject of intense indignation to the Icelanders. Some years ago—perhaps thirty—the Danes insisted on building four prisons, and for the purpose took Icelandic money, which, owing to the poverty of the country, could ill be spared. There the gaols remain, crumbling to pieces, a never-ending source of discontent to the natives, who never scarcely require to be put within their walls. Honesty amongst the people themselves is wonderful, and murder is almost unknown.

An old superstition allows a certain theft as permissible. It is this wise: If a farmer's cow be ill and refuse to eat, the cause is attributed to some evil spirit

that has bewitched the hay. In the dead of night the owner of the cow creeps out to some neighbouring farm and steals as much hay as he can carry. He takes it home. The cow eats it and is cured, and returns to the originally rejected meal with fresh strength and vigour, the theft having put matters all right. A delightful excuse for stealing!

Near the Cathedral, on a grassy space in the centre of the town, stands a monument to Albert Thorwaldsen, the sculptor, who was of Icelandic descent, although Denmark claims him as one of her gifted sons. The Danes have erected a splendid museum for his works in Copenhagen—one of the chief sights of that quaint old city. Reykjavik also boasts a small Antiquarian Museum, which, strange to say, is to be found in the Senate House, and for the size of the town (4000 inhabitants) there is a good Free Library, in a loft under the roof of the Cathedral.*

A really interesting sight in the Cathedral was pointed out to us—a rude wooden crucifix, which had been discovered in a lava cave, and is believed to be a Chaldean relic. There was also a collection of thirteenth century ecclesiastical garments and enamelled crucifixes. In the adjoining Museum we saw a number of weapons of war dating from the fourth century, as well as rare old drinking-cups of walrus ivory, beautifully carved, and some old-fashioned tapestry. Most of the old silver ornaments were really quaint, and the carving on the flat-irons much pleased me, never having seen so many or such fine ones before.

In the library we saw the first Bible printed in Iceland, at Holar, in 1584; also a very curious work on "Magic;" two old versions of the New Testament, dated 1540; whilst its shelves boasted quite a large collection of modern works on all subjects.

* It is now in the Parliament House, and contains 45,000 vols.

There are two small inns in the town, as well as a club house, post-office, and stores, besides a druggist, a photographer, and two or three silversmiths.* As to vehicles, there were none, and the silence of the streets reminded one of Venice.

Tradition says that the town was founded in 874 by one "Ingolf," a Norse settler. The early Icelandic settlers are reputed to have had a curious mode of determining the spot on which they should build their homes. On approaching the coast, the head of a family threw overboard the pillars on which the seat of honour in his former home had been raised, and wherever these pillars floated ashore, there he believed the gods of his ancestors wished him to erect his new dwelling.

Ingolf's high seat pillars had drifted into "Reykjavik Bay," consequently he there took up his abode, and thus laid the foundation of the only prosperous town in Iceland.

Our time was too limited to visit many stores in Reykjavik in search of curios, but, being possessed with the idea that some good old silver articles were to be obtained here, we tried our best to find them. The idea turned out to be an illusion, however, for after inquiring at three of the shops, the only things we succeeded in discovering were two silver buckles, for which, after much bargaining, we paid 39*s.* each; certainly not cheap, still they served us as mementoes of Reykjavik.

We had brought ashore a parcel of letters, which we

* Some slight but desirable improvements have been effected in Reykjavik, the most important being the erection of quite a nice little hotel "Iseland," which is kept by Halburg, who speaks excellent English, and whose son, formerly a waiter in this country, is a good sportsman and guide. Ponies are supplied at this hotel. The chief guide in Iceland is now Thorgrimmer Goodmanson. He speaks several languages fluently, and is by profession the English and Latin schoolmaster; during the summer months, nevertheless, he acts as guide. The museum has been much enlarged, and is now located in the House of Parliament. There is a new hospital, and very good public washing sheds have been erected for the town at the hot springs about a mile distant. There are now several shops, perhaps a dozen, and among them a sporting outfitter's, where English cartridges and salmon flies can be procured.

carried for despatch to the post-office, only to learn that they would go no sooner than ourselves in the *Camoens*. Nevertheless, as there was a great possibility of our not returning from our trip to the Geysers in time to catch the steamer, we left our letters, in which we suggested that we might be detained, so that folks at home might receive some news of us if we failed to reappear at the appointed time. In such a case, we should have been obliged to wait for a Danish boat, which was expected to touch at the capital in about a fortnight's time.

While we were gleaning this information, Vaughan had been asked by a Scotchman (the husband of our ship-companion in the brown silk) to go and see his son. He and the boy had ridden from Akureyri to Reykjavik, while we steamed round the Island. The poor boy, resting his pony near the mud springs, had run off to see them better, when suddenly the earth gave way, and one leg was plunged in boiling mud to the knee, and the other immersed above the ankle. Luckily his father was near, and extricated him; but for that, and the fact of his wearing high riding boots, he might have been burnt to death, or lamed for life—as it was, the boiling mud had burnt the boots through before they could be pulled off, and the knee above had been severely hurt. Nothing could be done but ride forward, and the brave little chap managed to stick on his pony, although in awful pain, until he reached home a day and a half later.

My brother suggested everything he could think of to alleviate his suffering, and, when we returned from the Geysers, had the pleasure of finding his little patient very much better, though likely to remain a cripple for a considerable length of time.*

* Most of the pony track from Reykjavik to Akureyri has been marked by stone cairns, which show black against the winter's snow; and as there is now a post for nine months of the year (the boats running occasionally in the winter), letters are carried on horseback across from the capital to Akureyri every four weeks.

At a bookseller's in Reykjavik we procured an Icelandic translation of an English book by one of our standard authors, selecting it from among a number of works by Shakespeare, Byron, John Stuart Mill, &c., all of which stood in long rows, translated into the Norse tongue. We also carried off a neat little Icelandic newspaper, printed in the capital; but, unfortunately, not one of our party could decipher its contents.

This little newspaper, printed after our arrival in the *Camoens*, furnished the only news the Icelanders had obtained of the outside world since the advent of a Danish ship a fortnight previously. Iceland has not yet been annexed by cable, and knows nothing of the marvellous scientific invention which now flashes news so quickly round our world.*

The time was now approaching when our caravan was to make its start for the Geysers, so we returned to the hotel. Here the landlord's daughter, at our request, exhibited herself in her *fête* attire, in which she made a quaint and pretty picture. The dress consisted of a thickly-pleated black silk skirt, very full and somewhat short, embroidered round the bottom with a deep band of gold thread; a black bodice, also similarly embroidered with gold down the front and round the collar; a handsome necklet and girdle of silver gilt, and a high headdress of white muslin, in appearance resembling a Normandy cap. This, she told us, she always wore on Sundays and great occasions, dressing like an Englishwoman on week days.

We found our ponies all in readiness at the appointed hour, and our excitement may be imagined when we caught sight of our cavalcade, with its appendages, drawn up in order before the so-called hotel, for our former excursions were as nothing when compared with the undertaking

* The Icelanders are intensely proud of two telephones put up in 1894. The one is in Reykjavik and the other in Isafjord, where Dr. Nansen stayed some weeks before starting on his journey across Greenland.

which now lay before us, and we realised that all our energy would be required for the enterprise.

Behold our party, then. Two girls and three men; two guides, one being employed as pony driver; seven ponies for riding, and seven for changing on the road; three pack ponies, two laden with our luggage, and one with tents; and three unladen ponies for exchange weights: twenty in all, a goodly company of quadrupeds, well selected and sure-footed. The ponies, too, besides having been picked for the work, were well "trapped," and newly shod, with saddles, girths, straps, and buckles all in order. So at least "Zoega" told us, with an assurance that we might depend on his forethought, adding that if we women could really accomplish the 160 miles ride in three and a half days, his ponies should not be found lacking, but he had never yet known any lady do it under five, and he did not think we knew what rough riding lay before us. Miss T—— and myself, nothing daunted by the difficulties presented, made up our minds, if possible, to compass the ride, see the Geysers, and be back at Reykjavik in time to catch the steamer, for we had no wish to be left in Iceland another fortnight; so we laughingly told Zoega we would show him what English ladies could do in the way of riding, and that he might expect to see us back on the appointed day.

Up we all mounted, to the amusement of the crowd, which had collected round the cavalcade.

"Are you ready?" was quickly answered by "Yes;" but when one of the by-standers saw that we girls were furnished only with men's saddles, there ensued quite a commotion.

"The ladies will never be able to ride in that fashion; only native women can ride such a distance so—not real ladies," and so terrible did they make out the state of the road, that we were persuaded to take two wretchedly uncomfortable side-saddles with us as far as Thingvellir,

which, however, we never used, far preferring our own arrangement.

That start from Reykjavik was a memorable one. It was a glorious morning, the outcome of a splendid sunset the previous night, and the air so genial and warm that for the first time since we set foot on the Island we dispensed with our furs.

A picturesque party we made as we rode on our way towards Thingvalla Lake, a stretch of seven hours' hard riding, one of the guides and Vaughan driving before them the thirteen loose ponies. These ponies were not attached to each other, but followed the leader, and went very well, only now and then one or two strayed from the path, when down jumped the guide, ran after them, and with a curious shriek brought them back into line. Our guides were very dexterous riders, and proved also most kind and attentive. Their names were Sigurthur Sigurthsson and Jon Eiriksson. We had been cautioned that if treated with hauteur the guides often became sullen, whilst kindness ensured their devotion and courtesy; as we never tried the former tone, we immediately became capital friends.

The guide-books had led us to believe that after we had left Reykjavik a mile or so we should find no roads whatever. This is strictly true, as there are no made roads, but here and there we came across long stretches of level land and peat, where we could get a really good gallop; on the other hand, there were parts of our route where no beast could go faster than a walk, and many which only the genius of an Icelandic pony could compass at all.

Herr Zoega had certainly been as good as his word, and supplied us with excellent ponies, some of which excelled in trotting, some in cantering, and others in pacing, but the latter motion was very trying, and I always objected to mounting those which had been trained to that practice.

The Icelandic fashion of making the pony go fast is to

kick his sides incessantly with the legs, which a native does for hours together, and so accustomed is the pony to this "clapping," that he slackens his pace as soon as it ceases.

The scenery along our route was in many parts very fine, and wild in the extreme, huge boulders of lava and rock intersecting our path, and standing like massive ruins on either side, the lava having evidently cooled down in an almost liquid state, and presenting a most uncanny appearance.

Professor Geikie, speaking of the Icelandic volcanoes, says:

"On several occasions the ashes have fallen so thickly between the Orkneys and Shetlands that vessels passing there have had the unwonted deposit shovelled off their decks in the mornings. In the year 1783, during the memorable eruption of Skaptar-Jökull (80 miles east of Hecla), so vast an amount of fine dust was ejected, that the atmosphere over Iceland continued loaded with it for months afterwards. It fell in such quantities over parts of Caithness—a distance of 600 miles—as to destroy the crops. That year is still spoken of by the inhabitants as the year of 'the ashie.' Traces of the same deposit have been observed in Norway, and even as far as Holland." . . .

The most stupendous outpouring of lava on record was that which took place from the Skaptar-Jökull.

"Preceded by violent earthquakes all along the southern coast, it burst out with great fury, drying up the river in twenty-four hours, and filling its bed. The lava in some places was 600 feet deep and 200 wide, flowing like a mighty river towards the sea, wrapping whole districts in flames, re-melting old lavas, opening subterranean caverns, one of its streams reaching the ocean. It was in full activity for two and a half months, and did not entirely cease for six months.

"It took the lava more than two years to cool. One stream was 50 miles long, 12 to 15 broad on the plain, and

HEKLA.

from 1 to 600 feet deep; another was 40 miles long and 7 wide. Pasture lands 100 miles around were destroyed by the pumice sand and ashes. The matter ejected has been estimated as twice the volume of Mount Hecla, or one hundred thousand millions cubic yards, probably as large as any single mass of the older igneous rocks known to exist—according to Bischoff, greater than the bulk of Mont Blanc.

"Man, his cattle, houses, churches, and grass lands were burnt up, noxious vapours filled the air, and the earth was shrouded by clouds of ashes." . . .

A few instances of the actual outbreak of a submarine eruption have been witnessed. In the early summer of 1783 a volcanic eruption took place about thirty miles from Cape Reykjanaes, on the west coast. An island was thrown up from which fire and smoke continued to issue, but in less than a year the waves had washed the loose pumice away, leaving a submerged reef from five to thirty fathoms below sea level. About a month later followed the frightful outbreak of Skaptar-Jökull, a distance of nearly 200 miles from this submarine vent.

The bluest of skies was above our heads, and the atmosphere so clear we could see objects many miles distant, among them Hecla, whose snowy cap glistened like silver in the sun.

The air was so pure and invigorating, that it acted like champagne on all our party, and we rode on in the highest spirits. About every two hours we halted and gave our ponies a brief rest, letting them nibble the short grass near, when any was to be found, then changing our saddles to the backs of the reserve animals we started afresh, the wild mountain paths becoming steeper and rougher as we advanced.

We had only passed two farms on our way, when, our guide informing us there was not another for many miles, we dismounted by the side of a babbling brook for our

mid-day repast, and, feeling very hungry after our long morning's ride, did full justice to the ham and tinned beef we had brought from London with us. While eating our meal, the twenty ponies were allowed to wander at will with the reins thrown over their heads, and had there been any passers-by we might have been taken for a gipsy encampment.

Luncheon over, everything had to be washed, and securely packed, but, despite all our previous care, we found some of our china had been sorely smashed, and the biscuits shaken to perfect powder.

Our guides ate with us, respectfully taking their seats at a little distance, and their delight at tasting our tinned beef and mustard entertained us greatly. The latter stung poor Jon's mouth till the tears ran down his cheeks, but, nothing daunted, he persevered in taking the condiment, till he grew so fond of it as to ask for it with every kind of food, even spreading it on an Albert biscuit.

Feeling very much interested in Jon, we were naturally anxious to learn a little more of his personal history. He told us he had always been a guide, and so had his father before him, but that he would soon give up that profession and become a farmer, as he was about to be married.

"If you are going to be married, Jon," I said, "you must tell us all about the young lady." He looked shy, and through his bronzed face positively blushed at my questions concerning his *fiancée*.

"Have you been engaged long?" I asked, feeling that shyness alone prevented Jon telling us the whole story.

"Yes, for five years," he replied; "I was engaged when I was nineteen."

"And how old is the girl?"

"About the same age, and we are going to be married next year. Her father is a farmer," he said, laughing. "Every year fishing smacks come over from France for our fishing, and the captain of one of these fell desperately

in love with my Sigrun. At first she would have nothing to say to me, and was always flirting with this French captain, who used to spend all of his time on shore instead of attending to the fishing. He wanted to marry Sigrun, and had really pressed her to marry and go back with him to Brittany; but her father was very angry, and said the captain might already be married for aught he knew, and then what would become of her? She would have married him, though, but one day we arranged to go up country to a friend's wedding, and the French captain insisted on coming too. He had never been on a horse before, and he rode so badly we all laughed, especially Sigrun's father. The Frenchman got very angry and excited, as Frenchmen do, shook his fist in Sigrun's father's face, overbalanced himself, and tumbled off a helpless heap in the sand," and Jon laughed heartily as he retailed the discomfort of his rival.

"Sigrun was shocked at the French captain's exhibition of bad temper, and felt how ridiculous he had appeared in the eyes of the whole village; so she decided to let him go. That was my opportunity, and I asked her again to marry me."

"And did she say yes?" A. L. T. asked.

"Yes," he replied, beaming all over. "That Frenchman has gone back to his frogs, and I have got Sigrun; we exchanged rings at once."

"How do you mean? Did you both have rings?"

"Certainly," he replied. "I gave her a plain gold ring, and of course she gave me the same, and so we were engaged."

"Then why haven't you got married?" I asked.

"Because I have not saved sufficient money," he replied; "and Sigrun has not woven enough linen and woollen things for the house, but when we are married next year our friends will give us the rest."

"How very delightful of them!"

"It is the custom where Sigrun lives for each of the wedding guests to bring some substantial present towards the new household—sometimes they even bring money. Where she lives is a long way from the church—so she could not have married the Frenchman, because he could never have ridden there," he laughed. "I have just given her her saddle and horsecloth, with her name embroidered at the bottom."

"What is embroidered on it?"

"Sigrun Snorradotti, meaning Sigrun the daughter of Snorri."

"And what will you do at the wedding, Jon? Do tell us all about it."

"We shall ride to the church, then we are married by the parson in the church, and after the ceremony there will be a wedding dinner in the parsonage, because it is nearer for all the people to go there than to our house, you see."

"What will you have to eat?" we asked.

"Graut," he answered, "which is a kind of thin porridge made with milk and sugar; then a steak of beef, as they will kill an ox for our wedding; then pancakes, then coffee, then hot punch, and then we will ride home to the little farm I have got for myself. The next day all our friends will come to our house and we will have another dinner."

"Don't you have a dance at the wedding?"

"Yes; we sometimes dance all night till the morning."

"And what customs are connected with the wedding?"

"The parson is always present, and he, as a rule, makes a speech in honour of the wedded couple. The bridegroom is supposed to answer the different speeches made; but I shan't—I shall go away with Sigrun after the dinner."

"If the wedding lasts three days, do all the guests stay at the parsonage?"

"Yes; they have to put the bedclothes on the floor and

THINGVALLA PARSONAGE AND LAKE.
(Author's sketch.)

somehow shelter them all, but they don't sleep for many hours during the wedding days, because, as I have said already, they dance the greater part of the night, and there is an awful noise; we shall only have one such night, however, because they will all come to us for dinner next day, and perhaps they will dance all that night at our farm. If a new couple cannot afford to have a house or a farm to themselves, then the wife continues to live with her parents, and her husband only visits her now and then, because he lives on some other farm; but I have saved money, and Sigrun's father has money, so we will have our own home."

We were very much pleased to hear this, and Jon was given a *douceur* towards his household expenses, which delighted him nearly as much as the mustard, and was not so painful.

Hitherto our path had wound over a range of hills, amid which we saw several small lakes, and the view looking westward towards "Snaefell Jökull," which rises like a pyramid of ice from the sea, was charming. Our lunch had been taken in the valley of the "Seljadal," and now, once more in our saddles, we followed a bridle-path upwards towards the plateau of "Mosfellsheithi," passing through a wild rocky glen of great natural beauty, The "Mosfellsheithi" is a long, stony waste, several miles in length, so wild and rough as to render riding no easy task, the path leading through dreary tracks of lava, over which the ponies stepped with cat-like agility, hardly if ever stumbling, and going up and down hill as easily as on level ground. After two hours or more of this rough riding, suddenly, at a bend of the hill, we came upon our first view of Thingvalla Lake, and were charmed with it and the surrounding country. It was like passing from a desert into fairyland. The lake, which is forty-five miles long, and of a deep cobalt blue, can be seen only in part, as the hills around project to such an extent as to apparently

divide the water into a series of lakes. It was a glorious day, with a bright warm sun and a clear blue sky, and everything around looked fair and peaceful. We were so delighted with the spot, that we stopped to make sketches, allowing the pack ponies to get ahead of us.

Not long after remounting, and while still calmly jogging on our way, we suddenly came upon the verge of a tremendous chasm, which, opening at our feet, divided the barren ground on which we stood from a lovely sunlit plain of many miles in extent. Winding our way down, we entered the Almannagjá by a narrow fissure. The path continues for nearly a mile, the rocks rising as perpendicular walls or rugged rock on either side from 80 to 100 feet; so narrow was it in some parts that there was little more than room for the path. In other places where it widened patches of snow still remained. The dark rocky perpendicular walls, the narrow shaded path, and the brilliant sunlit plain at the farther end, made an enchanting scene of bewildering and yet majestic grandness.

Here was indeed a halting-place full of interest, and we accordingly dismounted, and prepared to spend some time in lionising a spot so replete with historic records.

Running parallel were two or three such chasms, of minor magnitude, over the less steep parts of which we managed to scramble before remounting our ponies, which it was necessary to do, because of the intervening river which we had to ford, although Thingvalla Farm lay but a few yards distant.

PONIES SWIMMING ACROSS LAKE.

CHAPTER IX.

THINGVELLIR.

THE stubbornness of a mule is a well-known appellation; but the stubbornness of a certain grey Iceland pony beats all the mules who ever saw the light. He had given us much trouble on several occasions. Instead of following head and tail with the others, he had often left the track, and had had to be chased over lava or bog, the whole caravan having to wait for the gentleman's return. His performances at Thingvellir were so remarkable they deserve to be chronicled.

He was laden with pack when we arrived at the head of the fissure, to the path through which he apparently had a rooted objection. He planted his four legs and refused to move. Chastisement from the leather-thonged native whip did not have the slightest effect. When tired of this game, he began to kick. After wasting about half an hour of our time, the little brute finally took to rolling, as if to show his utter disdain for our efforts and contempt for the whole proceeding, and finally smashed a pack-box to pieces. That pony scored! We growled.

Independently of the beauty and natural curiosities of the spot, Thingvellir is so associated with the early history of the Norse people, its government and its laws, that it deserves a longer notice here than has been given to any other of our halting-places.

We descended into the "Almannagjá" by a steep rocky causeway made between cloven rocks, and reached the

narrow fissure where, in times gone by, when feudal despotism was the only government acknowledged, the chiefs of the Island met to regulate affairs of state. Whenever it might have been that the volcanic eruption which shivered the rocks into their present fissured condition occurred, it had left this spot so surrounded by deep crevices as to render it inaccessible, save by the rude causeway which connected it with the exterior level. This plain was, as already recorded, chosen by the founders of the first Icelandic Parliament for their sittings. At the upper end of the plain we were shown the stone seats which the principal legislators and judges occupied during their deliberations. Not far from here lies also the "Logberg," or "law rock," a large mound from whence the laws were proclaimed or judgments given to the people who assembled on the outside slope of the eastern wall of the rift, in order to obtain a view of the proceedings below. Our notice was likewise directed to the "blood stone," on which, for certain offences, the criminals were condemned to have their backs broken, after which barbarous punishment they were hurled backwards, and fell into the chasm below.

In Lord Dufferin's "Letters from High Latitudes," he thus describes this spot:—

"Long ago—who shall say how long—some vast commotion had shaken the foundations of the Island, and, bubbling up from sources far away amid the inland hills, a fiery deluge must have rushed down between their ridges, until, escaping from the narrower gorges, it found space to spread itself into one broad sheet of molten stone over an entire district of country, reducing its varied surface to one vast blackened level.

"One of two things must then have occurred, either the vitrified mass, contracting as it cooled—the centre area of fifty square miles must have burst asunder at either side from the adjoining plateau, and sunk down to its present level—leaving the two parallel gorges or chasms, which

form its lateral boundaries, to mark the limits of the disruption ; or else, while the lava was still in a fluid state, its upper surface became solid, and formed a roof beneath, while the mother stream flowing on to lower levels left a vast cavern into which the upper crust subsequently plumped down ' and formed this level plain.' "

From 874 to 1264 Iceland was a republic—the longest lived republic in the world, and during these four hundred years of remarkable independence their Parliaments were held within this romantic spot. Indeed, the sitting of Parliament at Thingvellir was only abolished A.D. 1800. During two hundred years of the republic the Icelanders were Pagans, but their literature was at the head of the literature of the world.

In the organisation of the first "Althing" religious power predominated, for no less than thirty-nine "Gothar" had seats. They were temporal and spiritual chiefs who superintended the temples, their Icelandic name gothi (plural gothar) denoting "temple chiefs." These chiefs were accompanied by hundreds of retainers, each priding himself on the number of his followers. During the early settlement of Iceland, the land was divided into four quarters, each quarter sending its quota of "temple chiefs" to Parliament. Besides the president there were log-men (law-men) and numerous other chiefs, who were followed by hundreds and thousands of retainers. There was no voting at the Althing, but the more powerful chiefs were followed with one accord and carried the day by acclamation. Voting was not unknown, however, although only practised in the law courts or juries.

The chief law-men of the country had to know all the numerous laws off by heart, so as to be able to settle any disputed point at once. Indeed, the laws were only preserved by this means till 1120, when they were first written down.

There was, however, a highly developed and complicated

system of legal procedure, and one must go back to Roman times to find anything so complete, or with such fully developed laws, as the old Icelanders started, and some of which they continue to this day. There are said to have been 145 members of the Althing, but the numbers necessarily varied.

As we stood by these time-honoured rocks, where in ages long past ancient Norse chieftains had promulgated their laws, we tried to conjure up the scene—the rocky entrance to this weird spot, guarded by stalwart Norsemen, the stern senators and law-makers sitting in deep thought, or engaged in stormy debate, while the crowd of interested spectators looked down from the stony platform above. We wondered that although those grand old times of feudalism were passed away, no enterprising artist had been found to transfer to canvas an historic record of such deep interest, and thus make the scene live again in modern times.

It was in the year 1000, on the 4th of June, that Iceland abandoned Paganism, and accepted Christianity. This great change was principally brought about through the instrumentality of a Pagan chief named Hjalti Skeggjason, who, while travelling in Christian lands, had been converted, and on his return pressed his new convictions on the people of Iceland. Many of these accepting his tenets caused quite a division in the island, and the Althing was summoned to take into consideration the new views which had been introduced.

Hjalti was invited to address the assembly, and explain the principles of the new-found faith. The members of the Althing listened with great attention, evidently much impressed with what they heard, for Hjalti spoke with the enthusiastic zeal of a fresh convert.

There were not wanting, however, those among the representatives who resented the introduction into the Island of this novel belief, hence the debate, so records the

"Kristni Saga," waxed warm, when a messenger rushed in and disturbed the council by the alarming news that a stream of lava had burst out at Olfas, and that the priest's dwelling would soon be overrun. On this one of the heathen opponents to Christianity remarked, "No wonder the gods exhibit their wrath, when such speeches as we have just heard against their power have been permitted." On this Snorri, another famous heathen chief, rose and with great dignity said, pointing the while to the riven rocks and deep fissures around them, "At what, then, were the gods wroth when this lava was molten and overran the whole district upon which we now stand?" To this speech there was no reply, for all well knew that the plain was one of the most remarkable lava tracks as well as the oldest in the island.

It is presumed that Hjalti's address told, and his persuasive eloquence won the day, for shortly after, the Icelanders in a body accepted Christianity as their national faith, and this apparently without either bloodshed or quarrelling.

One of Hjalti's chief arguments was, that if one half of the country became Christian while the other half remained heathen, civil war must necessarily be the result. But as the Icelanders were still not thoroughly satisfied, they chose Thorkel, the chief law-man of the day, to give the final vote. For three days and three nights he lay in his tent meditating; he covered his head over with a bear skin and no one dare disturb him, but all waited with impatience till the third day, when he gave his casting vote in favour of Christianity, and Christianity was accordingly accepted.

In the "Saga" mention is made of many remarkable sittings and debates which took place within the Althing, some of which ended in such animosity between individual members as to be the cause of party feuds and bloodshed.

In connection with the deep rifts which encompass the

Althing, a romantic story is told. An Icelander called Flosi, a leader in a family feud in the Island, was condemned to death for having burnt a farm and its occupants and caused much bloodshed. He evaded this sentence by taking a leap from the stone on which he stood, across the adjoining rift—a feat neither his accusers nor condemners were likely to imitate, and one inspired only by his extreme peril.

In 1800 the Althing was abolished, Iceland having fallen under Danish government; it was re-established again in Reykjavik in 1845, but only in a very restricted form, its legislation being cramped in every way by Danish supremacy. The romantic spot where the Icelanders held their parliament for centuries was abandoned, and so ended one of the greatest scenes the world has known.

In the "National Encyclopædia" we found the following note in reference to the new constitution granted to the Icelanders:

"In 1874, on the occasion of the millennial jubilee of the Island's colonisation, the King of Denmark visited Iceland, and conferred upon his subjects there a new and very liberal constitution, most of its articles being moulded upon the Danish charter of 1849. It conceded to Iceland, in all matters concerning the Island, its own independent legislation and administration, superintended by an assembly, the new Althing consisting of thirty-six members —thirty elected by popular suffrage, and six nominated by the King. It put at the head of the country's affairs a Minister named by the King, and residing in Copenhagen, but responsible to the Althing, and exercising his functions through a local governor residing at Reykjavik. It also fully guaranteed the independence of the tribunals, individual freedom, liberty of faith, of the press, of public meetings, the individuality of property, the self-government of principalities, and the equality of all citizens before the law."

As will clearly be seen, this is a case of Home Rule, though the Icelanders are still in a measure under the Danish Government—apparently much the same kind of legislature as Mr. Gladstone is so anxious to confer upon Ireland. Indeed during the last few years several more Home Rule Bills have been passed, and the independence of the country extended. The present Althing or Parliament has two Houses—an Upper and Lower House; there are twelve members in the former, and twenty-four in the latter. They must all be Icelanders, and usually they sit for about six years. The Parliament only meets every second year for about six weeks—July and August—excepting when it passes a Bill making constitutional changes, when it is at once dissolved and sits the next year. One half of the members of the Upper House are elected from the Lower House by the members themselves—a somewhat easy method for solving our great question of the House of Lords; the other half of the Upper House is elected by the King.

We peeped into the Parliament House during the short time we were in Reykjavik; it was then sitting, but much as I should like to have remained and listened to the proceedings, the odours in the gallery (which like the one in Christiania is quite public) in which we were placed forbade it. The impression it made upon me was that it resembled a small English law-court, the governor sitting in uniform at the head of the Council.

Certainly the ancient mode of transacting affairs of state was a far more interesting one, and the precincts of Iceland's primitive Parliament House and law-courts were unrivalled in their rocky architecture and romantic scenery.

Not far from the "Almannagjá" is a very picturesque fall, formed by the waters of the "Öxará," which leap in a single bound from an elevation west of "Thingvellir" (thing=meeting, vellir=plain or field) or "speaking-place" into the "Almannagjá," flowing through a gap in the

rocks, and again leaping into the plain below, forming a large pool.

In this pool it is said in olden times women convicted of witchcraft or infanticide used to be drowned.

Altogether the halt we made at the Thingfields interested us deeply, and the landscape was grand in the extreme. High mountains guard three sides of the plain; among these we had pointed out to us the "Súlur Range," the dark peaks of the "Armannsfell," and the lower ridge of the "Jóruklif" below, on the north-east of the snow-capped "Skjaldbreid," and the peaks of "Tindfjalla-jökull" with the more distant "Langjökull" sparkling like silver. South-west of the lake another group of mountains is seen, from one of which—Hengill—a cloud of steam ascends, it being evidently volcanic. Among the rocks of the "Almannagjá" we saw some pretty mountain sheep grazing, the only sign of life in this wild region. The Icelandic sheep are very small, and we noticed often wander in pairs, one black and one white; they mostly have horns; the wool of the white sheep is spotless. There are plenty of sheep in the Island, and they are left out most of the winter. It is for the cattle and ponies that the grass is cut, dried, and stacked under such woeful disadvantages and in such a marvellously painstaking manner.

Leaving the rift, and crossing over a small river, we arrived at the door of Thingvalla Parsonage. Here it was arranged we were to pass the night. The farms and inns are so few and far between in Iceland that the parsonages are thrown open for the accommodation of travellers. Formerly the wooden benches of the Thingvalla Church itself used to be converted into sleeping berths; travellers, however, behaved so indecorously within the sacred walls, that the Bishop forbade the further use of the edifice for this purpose. The church, a simple wooden building, is surrounded by a graveyard, a few iron crosses marking some of the graves. The pulpit

dates from 1683, and there is an ancient altar-piece of the Last Supper. The so-called village of Thingvellir consists merely of the church, the parsonage, and a few outhouses for storing winter supplies. When we arrived at the parsonage, we learnt that the clergyman was absent—further, that a party of travellers from our ship had arrived before us and engaged rooms, the only remaining accommodation being two very small bed-chambers and one parlour. To Miss T. and myself was assigned the clergyman's own bedroom. This contained the smallest bed I had ever seen, and, having to be made available for two persons, we did not pass a very comfortable night. First one of us rolled out and then the other, while a general fight went on to secure the bed-clothes. The only luxury in the room was a well-stored book-case containing many standard works in various languages, but we would much have preferred the creature comforts of a second bed to the mental food contained in those ponderous volumes. Our three gentlemen occupied the remaining bed and sitting-room.*

We ascertained that the party who had preceded us consisted of seven men, who, having only one iron bed and a small sitting-room, had most of them to sleep on the floor rolled up in their rugs. These men it appeared were not accustomed to the saddle, and, having ridden forty miles on the day they arrived at the parsonage, found themselves so stiff on the morrow as to be barely able to continue their journey; indeed, two of their party gave in, and never started for the Geysers at all.

Among the ancient curios of the Thingvalla Parsonage was an old grinding-machine, such as one reads of in the Bible; at this a girl sat turning its stone wheel with her hand, whilst the corn thus converted into flour fell into a

* Two or three little cabin bedrooms have since been put up at the parsonage, the beds being very preferable to the floor in the opinion of weary travellers.

receptacle below. In all their domestic arrangements Icelanders are very primitive. A large jar containing rice attracted our attention, for curiously enough the rice was not to eat, but to make poultices instead of linseed. We found the commissariat at the parsonage at a very low ebb; in fact, nothing but coffee and skyr were procurable; and but for our provision of tinned meats we should have fared badly.

We could not even procure white bread; simply the black "pumpernickel" bread so much prized in Germany. Vaughan persuaded a man to go to the lake and secure us some fish for the next morning's breakfast; this he did, and returned with some excellent pink trout and yellow char, which we much enjoyed.

No one at Thingvalla Parsonage could speak English, and we had great difficulty in making ourselves understood; our guides, however, waited upon us as servants, and were very handy. After breakfast we remounted and set out on our way to the Geysers, where we hoped to strike our camp that night. Our guide-books had led us to expect that the scenery of this ride would surpass all we had yet seen, and we certainly found it did so. Within an hour's ride of Thingvellir we reached the Hrafnagjá, another lava plain, not so wide or long as the Almannagjá, which is crossed by an improvised road formed of blocks of lava. Our path led us past an extinct crater, which, from its singular form and emissions, had long puzzled geologists: it was called a Tintron.

This lava spout resembled the trunk of an old tree, and during an eruption the liquid flame soared through it high into the air, as water does from a hose or fire-engine. This curious volcanic spout is not the only one in the island; further north there are several, some reaching as much as thirty feet in height. One remarkable thing in our eighty miles journey to the Geysers was the number of rivers we had to cross, seldom very deep, but some sufficiently so to necessitate lifting our feet from the

FORDING A RIVER.

stirrups and laying them on the pony's back as high as possible to avoid a wetting.

One of the rivers had so many turns that we crossed and recrossed it about twenty times. The low-lying land around being all bog, it was necessary to keep our ponies to the comparatively firm shingle on the river side.

An abrupt ascent, long and steep, formed a pleasant change after the monotony of the rugged plain. Up this "berg" our ponies wound their way zigzag between the rough boulders of rock which strewed the path. At the top we met several men with their train of ponies, waiting for us to pass them, the path being only wide enough for single file. Here we waited to give the ponies breath, and admired the view, which was wonderfully extensive. The road up looked like a ladder, so steep was it, and we wondered how the ponies could have climbed it at all.*

The Icelanders are a very polite race; nearly every man one encounters takes off his cap and salutes. When meeting friends they pull off their right-hand glove and shake hands heartily. In Iceland, as on the Continent, they also pass on the left side; indeed, I believe we English are the only nation who pass on the near side or right hand.

We halted for luncheon at a small cave, a place in which one might expect to find Runic remains, but there were none, so we contented ourselves with eating chocolate, and letting the ponies enjoy a little grass. This cave, like many others in the island, was used in winter as a sheep pen, the poor brutes being huddled together to prevent their being frozen to death during the long winter nights.

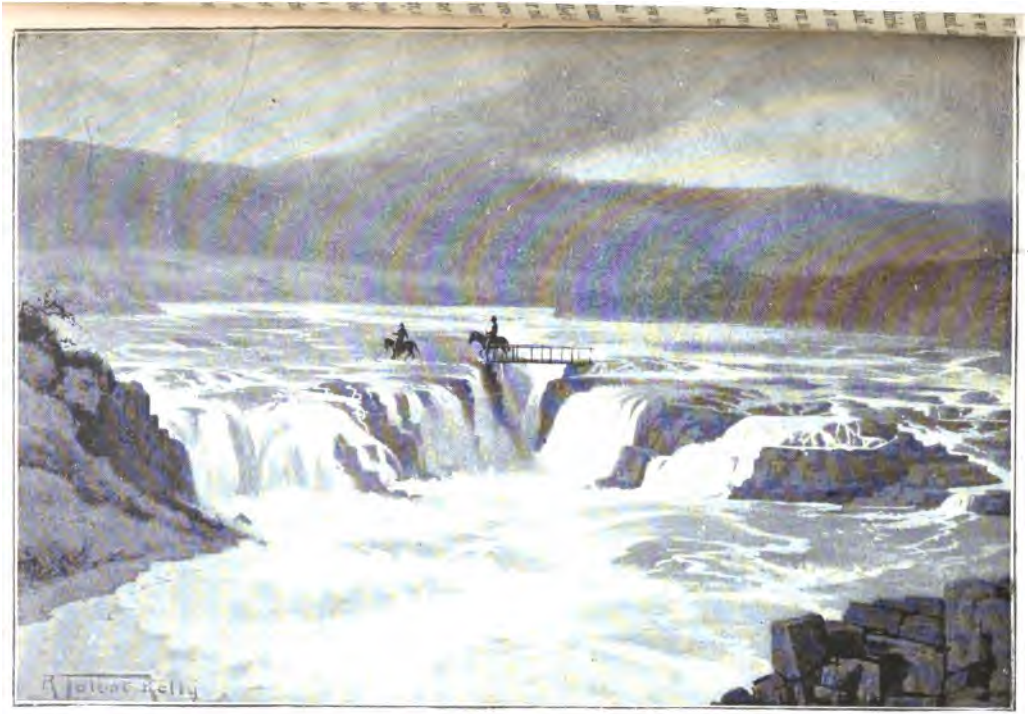
From this point we galloped merrily on for some distance; at last we called each other's attention to an extraordinary yellow haze, like a band of London fog, across the horizon. Thicker and thicker it became: and as it rolled towards us, we realised we had

* The road from the capital to the Geysers still remains as rough as at the time of our visit.

encountered a regular dust-storm. Into it we rode: so thick in fact did it become, that by the time we reached the Geysers all around was hidden in yellow sand, and our eyes were filled with dust, until the tears streamed down our cheeks and we were nearly blinded. It whirled round and round in its storm fury, until we were half choked. It powdered our hair also to a yellow grey, but our faces, what a sight they were! The tears had run down, making little streams amid the dust, and certainly we were hardly recognisable to one another. These dust-storms are somewhat uncommon, but proceed, in certain winds, from a large sand desert.

We pulled up at some hot springs within a few feet of the lake, which were smoking and steaming to the height of several feet, and falling down again formed numerous boiling pools. In these we put our fingers, but pulled them out quickly. Next we inserted the handles of our riding-whips, the brass bands round them turning mauve and violet from the sulphur and alum in the water; but this pretty effect soon wore off. The colour of the water and deposit round the edges of this pool were very pretty, and the bubbles as they ascended took the most lovely colours —emerald, purple, &c., turning into aqua-marine before breaking on the surface; the odour, however, was like terribly bad eggs. These hot springs are a curious freak of Nature, boiling and bubbling up within three feet of a cold water lake; in fact, we sat down and placed one hand in cold water and the other in hot. This was a very curious experience.

Two hours' more riding through a tract covered with willow and birch scrub brought us to the Brúará river. When this river is low, it can be crossed by means of a rudely-constructed bridge, with strong iron-clamped hand-rails on either side; but during floods it is impassable, as the waters form a roaring cataract, when travellers have to be ferried across at a higher point.



BRÚARÁ RIVER.

On we rode still through the dust-storm, over lava fields, rugged and rough in the extreme, and most weird-looking owing to their blackness. We passed several paths which our guide told us led into the interior of the island, where there are still large unexplored tracts, lying at the base of a range of high snow mountains, called "Jöklar," most of them supposed to be volcanic, but of which little is really known.

We were all getting very tired as we neared the end of our second days' ride; tired and dirty, for the sand-storm still continued. No person can have the slightest idea of the horrors of such a storm who has not passed through one in or near some desert. The wind blew the gritty particles into our eyes, ears, noses, and mouths until we really gasped for breath, while the tears streamed down our cheeks from the irritation to our eyes, and our throats were sore and inflamed.

Fresh impetus was given to our ride, however, by overtaking one of the miserable party of five who had preceded us by three hours from Thingvellir. He was walking dejectedly beside his pony, too great a sufferer from inexperienced riding to remount.

I have often since thought of that poor man—indeed, not only of him, but of his companions, for they were all in a sorry plight.

It is madness for anyone to go to Iceland who cannot rough it, and more particularly who cannot ride, for riding is an absolute necessity, often for long distance over roadless tracts, in traversing which the unhappy novice may endure more agony than any scenery or novel experiences can repay.

Being inspired with ambition to be first in the field, we galloped past the limping man and his companions one by one, and A. L. T. and I had the excitement of finishing our race to the Geysers.

Yes—we two were the first to arrive at the Geysers Does the reader smile?

CHAPTER X.

THE GEYSERS.

We had been told at Reykjavik it was necessary to carry tents, as there was no accommodation for travellers at the Geysers,* but on arriving the wind was so strong that considerable difficulty was experienced in pitching them, and while our guides and gentlemen friends were making the attempt, we girls tied up some tea in a muslin bag, and put it into a kettle, which we filled at the nearest hot spring. The boiling water was ready, actually waiting for us. No need for spirit lamps this time; we were surrounded by bubbling, boiling springs of water! In a very few minutes the tea was infused, and, with thick cream procured from the neighbouring farm, we enjoyed it much after our long dusty ride.

It might be supposed sulphurous water would spoil the taste of the tea; whether our palates, however, had become accustomed to the fumes through which we had been riding for hours, I know not, but certainly all of us pronounced the tea excellent.

Just as the tent had been, as my brother thought, securely fixed, and while he and Mr. Gordon were inside arranging the rugs and pack-boxes as seats, a fresh gust of wind brought the whole affair down, burying them under the ruin. Our guides hastened to the rescue, and, more experienced in Iceland weather forecasts, advised waiting

* Tents are still necessary at the Geysers, although a two-roomed shed is in process of erection for the accommodation of visitors.

till the wind had subsided before attempting to put up the tent again. To take our tea sitting on the pack-boxes was all we could do, encouraging each other to patience. We dare not open our boxes of eatables till the storm had subsided, or at least until we had some shelter to protect them from a deposit of dust.

After tea we proceeded to make an inspection of the Geysers. Our first need was, however, to wash our hands and faces, so, armed with towels, sponges, and soap, we knelt at the brink of the nearest pool, and stooping down performed our ablutions, with our faces toward the east, our persons being reflected in the clear green water. We could but liken ourselves to Mahommedans, who, when called to prayer by the sad-voiced Muezzin from the mosque, immediately kneel with faces towards Mecca, or Parsees, who worship facing the sun, which is considered by them a representative of God.

The immediate neighbourhood of the Geysers is not pretty; hills rise on one side, but otherwise they lie in a plain, which, when we saw it on our first arrival, was so thickly covered with sand from the storm that we could hardly discern any separate object. We hastened to examine the great Geyser. Alas! it did not, and would not play; it had done so two days previously, and we were told it was expected to renew the exploit, but, to our great mortification, it failed to do so during our visit. One of the peculiarities of this natural phenomenon is that sometimes at intervals of only a few hours it will eject columns of boiling water to the height of 100 feet, at others it will remain silent for days together. In 1770 it is recorded that this Geyser spouted eleven times in one day. Disappointed at losing the sight we had come so far to see, we turned our attention to the "Strokkur," which is situated about ninety feet from its bigger neighbour. This also seemed in a quiescent state, but as the "Strokkur" can always be made to play by filling up the opening with

earth sods, until there is no hole for the steam to escape, when it vomits the whole mass with a gigantic spout, we requested our guides to arrange for this artificial display. The emetic was consequently administered. "Strokkur" was evidently sulky, however, for the process had to be gone through no less than four times, whilst we waited the result in patience for at least two hours; but the display was all the better when it did come.

I said we waited in patience, which was hardly true, as we were all on the tiptoe of excitement. Continual false alarms, and we all rushed to the "Strokkur's" side, only to be again disappointed, so we unpacked our goods, and made preparations for our evening meal, examining the Great Geyser and the hot springs meanwhile, grumbled at the smell of sulphur, and nearly despaired of the eruption ever taking place, when, after a sudden start from our guides, who were standing on the edge of the crater, and a shriek from them of "He comes!" a huge column of water ascended straight into the air for about sixty feet, the spray being ejected to a considerable distance. The eruption was accompanied by a rumbling noise and a hissing sound, as the shafts of water ascended.

We stood and watched the effect a few feet distant merely from this boiling column, feeling the rumbling distinctly under our feet, while as the wind blew the steam back, it fell like rain, quite cold, and with sufficient force to wet us uncomfortably.

This great fountain display continued in full force for a quarter of an hour; then the column gradually got smaller, though steam and water issued from its mouth for a full half-hour before it quite subsided. It was a splendid spectacle, and one which left a great impression on our minds; the height of the column was fully sixty feet, and even after it had subsided we remained some time in contemplation of its cause and effect.

Mr. Jeaffreson told me that at Yellowstone Park, in

STROKKUR IN ERUPTION.
(*Author's sketch.*)

America, visitors are carefully watched to see that they do not make the geysers work artificially by means of soap.* Remembering this experience the last time he went to Iceland, he packed some 2lb. bars of common soap among his luggage.

"When I got to the Geysers," he continued, "the dirty old Icelander guarding them asked me for 5 kroner to make the Strokkur play. When I refused his request he became most abusive, but, seeing I was inexorable, finally went away, declaring the geyser would never play unless I paid him, and I declaring as emphatically that it would, and directly too.

"As soon as he was at a safe distance I looked up my bars of soap, and dropping a couple of them under the lid awaited the result. Very shortly a hiss and a groan were heard, and up went the boiling water, sending the wooden grating into the air.

"Back rushed the dirty man, not knowing whether to abuse or worship me as a worker of miracles. He was profoundly impressed, and finally declared he had never seen 'Strokkur' play so well before, but——'Was it the Devil who had worked the game?' I had not enough soap left to try the big geyser, so waited a couple of days to see it play. Fortunately it did so in the end."

Speaking of Geysers, Professor Geikie says:

"Eruptive formations of hot water and steam, to which the general name of Geyser (*i.e.*, gusher) is given from the examples in Iceland, which were the first to be seen and described, mark a declining phase of volcanic activity . . . It is from irregular tube-like excrescences that the eruptions take place. The term Geyser is restricted to active openings whence columns of hot water and steam are from time to time ejected; the non-eruptive pools are only hot springs. A true Geyser should thus possess an

* Hardly explicable in such small quantities by chemistry or physics.

underground pipe or passage, terminating at the surface in an opening built round with deposits of sinter. At more or less regular intervals rumblings and sharp detonations in the pipe are followed by an agitation of water in the basin, and then the violent expulsion of a column of water and steam to a considerable height in the air."

Dr. Samuel Kneeland, in his interesting book on Iceland, says:

"There are two kinds of Geysers, one having jets of clear water, the other puffs of scalding vapour, coming up through a soft mud or clay of a reddish colour, probably from iron salts. In the water silica is held in solution by salts of soda, a silicate of soda being the chief ingredient. They are said to have great remedial powers; but, judging from the facility with which objects are encrusted by their silicates, it would seem as if their free use would soon turn a person to stone. . . . The geyserite, or the solid incrustations, is over 80° of silica, with 3° alumina, and a little magnesia, iron, potash, and soda."

One thing I looked for in vain at these Geysers, namely, the pretty-coloured mud which is found at the Yellowstone Park of America, and which I had often heard my father and brother describe. In New Zealand the Geyser mud was formerly used by the Maoris as a kind of porridge, of which they were very fond. It is a pity the starving Icelanders cannot follow their example.

The most remarkable Geysers in Iceland are those in the north-east near Myvatin Lake; but they are very little known and difficult to get at, there being no town anywhere near. They are of mud, sulphur, and clear water, and all found in the same district.

I wish our party could have been photographed as it stood round the "Strokkur" waiting for the display, everyone's face a picture of expectation, which changed to disappointment at the long time we had to wait. As

"little things please little minds," to pass the time, Miss T. and I were trundled about in the wheelbarrow in which the old men had brought the sods for the Geyser's emetic from the farm; an occasional upset made our ride all the more amusing. It was a ride worth noting, as it was performed in one of the very few wheeled conveyances in the Island. Perhaps the only one.

By the time the exhibition of the Geyser was over the wind had lulled, the sandstorm had ceased, and our tents had been successfully pitched. In the larger tent we dined, and for such an out-of-the-way place it was so wonderful a meal that I must describe it. We sat on the pack-boxes inside the tent, waited on by two guides. First there was ox-tail soup quite hot, the tin having been placed in a neighbouring hot spring—the Blesi—for twenty minutes. We had no soup plates, but tumblers served the occasion, being afterwards washed by the guides and made ready for further use.

Tinned meat-collops followed, splendidly hot, which to us hungry mortals appeared excellent. The third course was tongue, followed by tinned apricots and thick cream. Alas! we had no spoons, and how to eat our cream and apricots was a puzzle. Our guide, whom we had christened "Johnny," to his great delight, helped us out of this difficulty. He produced some horn spoons which he had carved during the long winter evenings, and which he offered to sell to us for a krone apiece. The price was quite high enough, notwithstanding the carving, but the neccessity of the occasion made us glad to close with his offer. Cheese, biscuit, and figs concluded our magnificent repast.

While the gentlemen sat smoking, we persuaded "Johnny" to tell us a ghost story. His faulty English and his impressive manner, as he sat at the door of the tent on a pack-box, were delightful, so the idea proved to be a happy one. Johnny was shy at first, but gradually warmed to his tale, which was as follows:

"In the north of Iceland a parson was engaged to a young girl; they lived one on each side of a river, which he often crossed on horseback in order to visit her. Once he went over and invited her to a ball which was to take place on the day before Christmas. He left the farm where his sweetheart lived and was about to recross the river to his own home when he found a thaw had set in and left a channel free from ice in mid-river, which he made his horse try to leap; but the animal could not manage to jump so far—it was too wide—and he as well as his master was drowned in the attempt. Next day the parson's body was found on his own side of the river, and he was buried. But, as it was impossible to cross the river on account of the thaw, no news of his death reached the other side where his *fiancée* lived. The day came, on which he had arranged to fetch his sweetheart and take her to the ball. That afternoon at the farm of the girl's father a knock was distinctly heard three times on the door —there are no bells in Iceland. A servant girl was sent to see who it was. She opened the door, but she saw nobody.

The young girl, the daughter of the farmer, after hearing the knocks repeated, said she would go to the door. Knowing her lover was coming to fetch her, she naturally thought it was he. She put on a cloak as the night was cold, but in her hurry to go, she only got her arm into one sleeve. When she opened the door she saw her sweetheart standing outside with his horse beside him; but he did not say a word to her, only slowly raised his hand and beckoned to her, and then lifted her up and put her on the back of the horse, still without speaking a word. It is a custom in Iceland for two people to ride the same horse, so they rode off together. When they came to the river, which had still an open channel in the middle, with ice on both sides, the horse jumped quite easily over this gap; but in mid-river the hat of the man was lifted right up, and she saw a white spot on the back of his head, where the hair had

COOKING IN A GEYSER.

been torn off. This had been done by an ice-floe when he was drifting in the river. She got very much frightened, for she knew this meant an accident had happened to her lover; but she did not say anything, because there was nothing to do but to sit still. They crossed the river and came to the place where the young parson had lived. Here they drew rein, and the lover alighted from the horse near the wall of the churchyard."

"That is a wonderful story. What was the name of the girl?"

"I should say that her name was Gudrun; the first part of her name means God. It is a common belief in Iceland that a ghost cannot pronounce the name of God; therefore the young man said to her, 'Wait here, Gadrun, while I take my horse to its stable.' He took his horse away, and while she was waiting she looked round and saw an open grave in the churchyard, with the mould heaped up on both sides. She walked across to it, and saw it was a new grave, and then, like a flash of lightning, she realised what it all meant. In Iceland the ropes of the church bell are outside the porch, and she hurried to the church door and caught hold of the rope and rung as hard as she could continually. The parson's farm was close to the church (as a rule in Iceland the church is beside some farm), and she rang the bell in order to rouse the people in the house that they might come and save her; but when she got hold of the string the ghost came and caught hold of her cloak. Now, as I said, she had had only time to put on one sleeve of the cloak, and as he seized the cloak he tore it away, and left only the sleeve she had got her arm into, and she saw her lover and the ghost go down into the grave, the earth and mould being swept down upon them. She went on ringing till she had roused the people to come and save her; but it was too late—her lover had disappeared for ever, and it is said that after this she became mad. That was the end of her."

This is but a specimen of hundreds of ghost stories dear to the heart of every Icelander.

Johnny had told us the story so well, and thrown such dramatic gesture into the recital, we asked him what he would like for a reward.

"One biscuit," he replied, "with mustard."

We could not help laughing at his idea of a reward; but he was handed his Albert biscuit mustard strewn, and while he enjoyed the tasty morsel the tears ran down his cheeks.

Was it the biscuit or the tears he enjoyed the most, we wondered.

Another inspection of the Great Geyser, to see if it were more inclined to favour us with a display of its power, but a fruitless one; we took a walk amongst the hot springs, and then, as it was bitterly cold, decided to turn in for the night. Our tents were pitched exactly half way between the Great Geyser and the "Strokkur." The large tent was to serve for the three gentlemen and the two guides, and the smaller one for Miss T. and myself.

We had secured some bundles of hay for our beds, and our mackintosh sheets were used to cover over them. My brother undertook to make our beds, and arrange our tent for the night, and disappeared inside, carrying with him the rugs, air-pillows, &c., necessary for the purpose.

On his returning and telling us all was ready, Miss T. and myself prepared to bid our friends good-night.

But great was our consternation to find one of the party was suffering from a terrible throat. We had thought little of it during the evening, for we had all felt the effects of the sandstorm about the larynx, but this seemed more serious. Here were we nearly a hundred miles from a town, with no possible chance of procuring medical aid or medicines nearer than sixty-four miles, and everyone felt puzzled to think what could possibly be done.

Vaughan examined the throat, the daylight being

sufficient for such a purpose even at that late hour, and, after recommending a primitive gargle and a cold water compress, could do no more, for we had nothing to do anything with. We were all very much distressed, as may easily be understood; but further gargling and a spoonful of vaseline so improved matters by the morning that nothing serious happened, as at one time appeared imminent.

Miss T. and I repaired to our bed-chamber; but how to enter it was a puzzle. It was not like the big tent, which would hold a dozen people standing erect, but a tiny gipsy tent, the opening so low, we literally had to crawl in on our hands and knees, whilst the whole community stood round watching us, and laughing heartily.

Once inside, our difficulties were not over, for we found the walls of the tent so low that we could only sit up straight in the middle. So we could do no more than partly undress and roll ourselves in our fur cloaks and rugs. With the exception of waking now and then to listen to the rumblings we had been told to expect before the eruption of the Great Geyser, we spent a tolerably comfortable night, notwithstanding we were surrounded by boiling, seething waters on every side, and were in hopeful expectation of the big Geyser's eruption. By the morning we had got quite accustomed to the sulphurous odours.

We had several visitors in the early hours, who thrust under our tent such articles as jewellery, saddle-cloths, carved spoons, &c., for sale. We bargained for some of these, and ultimately obtained them. The prices at first asked were absurdly high, but these simple-minded Icelanders have an idea that our nation's liberality is unbounded.

There is really little good old jewellery left in the island, in consequence of the extreme poverty of the natives, who have sold to travellers the greater portion of that which they possessed.

How to dress in our three feet high tent was a problem which for some time our minds failed to solve, and still more, how and where to wash, until the gentlemen informed us that as they were going to the springs to bathe, their tent was at our disposal for as long a time as we might wish. Here we found that their forethought had provided a large tub from the farm, which they had filled with warm water, so, after all, we had a luxurious bath.

When our only looking-glass was passed round, we each in turn exclaimed: "How fearfully burnt I am!" and so indeed we were. Our yachting caps and deerstalkers had been shade enough on board ship, but not for several days' ride across country in wind and a dust storm.

We had arrived at our journey's end, had seen the "Strokkur," at any rate, play, and now if we wished to catch our steamer at Reykjavik, we had no time to lose in preparing for our return journey, so, after breakfast, while our guides collected our steeds, packed the tents, &c., we started for a final look at the Geysers and the hot springs, which so abound in this neighbourhood. There are, I believe, no less than fifty within the circuit of half a mile. These springs lie at the base of a mountain of no great height, the tract in which the thermal waters is found being about 700 yards in length and 300 in width.

The Great Geyser lies to the north of this plain, its basin, sixty feet in diameter, is at the summit of a mound twenty feet in height, composed of silica, a mineral that the Geyser water holds in solution, and which, from the constant overflowing of the water, deposits layers of beautiful enamel, which at the top is too hard to detach, although soft and crumbly round the base. The basin is nearly circular, and generally, except after an eruption, full to the brim, and always steaming, the water at the bottom being about 228° Fahr.

The tube in the centre, from which the water spouts, is about ten feet across, and I read somewhere that on

measuring down about seventy feet, the tube took a sudden turn which prevented further soundings. The water is ejected at a heat of 180° or 190° Fahr., and rises over 100 feet into the air.

These Geysers are nearly 400 feet above sea level.

The formation of the "Strokkur" differs from that of the Great Geyser in not having any basin round its well, the latter being in shape like a rough test tube, about 8 feet in diameter and 36 feet deep, with two pipe-mouths. After the eruption witnessed by "Burton," he noticed that "the level of the water in the tube was at a depth of 25 feet, where might be seen, partly submerged, the mouths of two pipes entering at different angles, close together on the side nearest the Great Geyser. From these pipes steam belched forth at intervals with considerable force, churning the water in the well round rapidly."

It is strange that the eruptions of the "Strokkur" do not affect the water in the well of the Great Geyser, though it is not 100 yards off, while on the other hand, when the Geyser is in eruption, the water of the "Strokkur" subsides.*

It really was very tantalising to have come so far, and be within a few hours' distance of Hecla, and yet have to return without visiting it. Besides, from what we gathered, we could well have exhausted another week in expeditions round the neighbourhood, but snow-capped Hecla, the ice-clad heights of the Jöklar, and the Red Crater, with innumerable other interesting excursions of Icelandic note, had to be left for a future visit to the island, if ever we should make one.

The name of Hecla means a mantle: its last eruption occurred in 1845. Where is Hecla? Who has not been asked that question at school? Little did I think, when learning geography, that I should ever see it, even at a

* The Strokkur Geyser, which stopped for some time, is now working again, and is kept covered with a little lattice wood lid.

distance. Alas! time would not allow us to make its nearer acquaintance. Visiting it meant either seventeen days round the island in a Danish boat, or waiting six weeks for the *Camoens*, and as circumstances over which we had no control made both courses impossible, we had reluctantly to give up the excursion. While these volcanoes and their adjuncts must ever remain, from their uncertain eruptions, a cause of terror to the inhabitants—boiling and bubbling for years, and then suddenly bursting forth, to the entire destruction of all around—they have also, we know, a beneficial effect in the world's domestic economy. What, for instance, would happen to Britain were it not for the Gulf Stream? It would be as cold as Labrador. The streams in the Gulf of Mexico are fed from equatorial currents and boiling springs, and rush on to the North Atlantic 25° or 30° warmer than the sea through which they pass, warming the air of Western Europe.

Again, hot springs (caused by subterranean fires), which, from their curative celebrity, attract visitors and invalids, mean business, and business means money to the inhabitants of the locality.

Taking our last farewell of these seething pools, which bubbled and boiled around us, I could not help wondering what kind of commotion could be going on beneath the earth's surface. A power that could thus eject 100 feet of boiling water into the air, and not burst asunder the surrounding ground, was indeed a marvellous phenomenon. The Iceland Geysers, which were the first discovered, as well as those of New Zealand (now alas! destroyed), and those of the Yellowstone Park, must ever be of enormous interest to the traveller and geologist, and with regret we turned our backs upon them, having reached the turning-point of our journey and the limit of our time. Time waits for no man, so we tore ourselves away, feeling, however, we had seen in the Iceland Geysers one of the greatest marvels of Nature.

Various explanations of Geysers have been attempted by scientific men, and, as some of my readers may take sufficient interest in these wonderful phenomena to wish to know something regarding the causes which originate them, I have got my father (Dr. George Harley, F.R.S.) to write a short chapter on what he saw and thought of the great Geysers in the volcanic district of the Yellowstone Park, which I have appended at the end of my narrative.

CHAPTER XI.

FARM HOUSE.

We traversed nearly the same road on our return journey from the Geysers as we had taken *en route*, our first halt being made at the farm near which we lunched on the previous day, situated close to the winding river we were compelled to cross so often. In our up journey, we had no time to spare, and therefore could not visit the farm house and buildings. Indeed the Icelanders are very chary of exhibiting their domestic arrangements and dwellings, for which reason it is difficult at all times to visit their homes. However, I was determined to see over a farm house before leaving the Island, so wandered around until we found an old woman. After shaking hands and praising up her skyr, we made her understand by signs that we wished to see the house and byre. These were built of turf, stones and rubble, roofed with sods of grass on which a cow was actually grazing at the time. Outside, drying in the sun, were pieces of peat in size about two feet by three, and about two inches thick; they were doubled, tent-fashion, to enable the air to pass through, and were standing in a row along a turf wall. On inquiring their use, we learnt they were intended as a species of saddle-cloth for the pack ponies, to protect the vertebrae. The peat being placed on the animal's back, the loads are attached on either side by a rope made of the mane and tail hair of the ponies, plaited neatly in three, either black and white, or brown and white. When mixed with a little flax, they really form quite a

pretty adornment to the trappings; the loops through which the ropes pass are of carved sheep's horns, knotted into most fantastic shapes.

We first visited the dairy, built of peat and rubble as usual. Inside, placed on a shelf, were large basins of milk and cream, as in England. Sheep and cows' milk were side by side, for this farmer was a wealthy man, and the happy possessor of a few cattle. He had butter, too, waiting to be sent to Reykjavik, which we tasted and found very good, and an old-fashioned churn, some three feet high, like a chimney-pot with a rod down the middle, terminating in a piece of flat wood. Of this churn the old lady seemed very proud, and she was quite delighted, when I lifted the rod up and down, to find I knew how to use it. I believe that won her heart.

Leaving the dairy, the old woman took my hand and dragged me along a perfectly dark passage, Miss T. following. This passage was paved with stones, and had stone walls on either side. Half stifled with peat smoke, we arrived, puffing and panting, in the kitchen. Here in a corner was the customary big peat fire which filled the whole dwelling with its exhalations. All around was perfect blackness, until our eyes got accustomed to the dim hazy light, when we espied a woman in a corner making cakes, formed of two layers of meal buttered and placed at the bottom of a huge cauldron, such as is used by the Irish peasantry for boiling potatoes. Icelandic cakes, as a rule, are baked in the hot ashes on the hearth. These cakes served hot are very palatable.

There was no chimney; the smoke merely escaped the best way it could through a small hole, around which some hams were being smoked. They must have been mutton hams, for there were no pigs from which to get others; and mutton hams properly smoked are very good too.

We were next conducted through another long dark passage, down which we stumbled, bumping our heads

against the side walls, there being no light whatever, save that which came through the doorway from the reflection of the embers of the peat fire. So dark was the passage, we almost fancied we were going through a coal mine. After a time we reached a second room, devoted to the storing of packets of dried fish and huge barrels of skyr; but the want of ventilation and light in this quaint Icelandic larder was sadly felt.

Where did the family sleep? we asked ourselves, after visiting another such apartment. Finally, by sundry gesticulations, we succeeded in making our old friend understand our question, when off she led us to the family bedroom. Yes, "family bedroom," for such are universal in Iceland, where the cold is great during many months of the year, and "the more the merrier" turns into "the more the warmer."

Imagine a long passage room with a small window at each end, containing seven wooden bedsteads, placed so that five joined head and foot along one wall, while the other two were on either side of the door. Here the whole family disposed of themselves at night.

In one of the beds lay a poor sick child. From her wasted appearance one might have supposed she was in a consumption, but this fatal disease is unknown in Iceland.

In another bed lay a poor aged woman, who, when we addressed her, grinned horribly in the dim light, for the little chamber was dark from smoke-begrimed walls and the accumulated dirt of ages, the one streak of light from the securely-shut window falling on her face, which had the appearance of an awful old witch, and afforded a great contrast to the fragile child in the adjoining bed. Each bed was covered by an old-fashioned patchwork quilt.

Stowed away among the low rafters of the roof were a spinning-wheel and paraffin lamp, and some clothes packed in little tight bundles; much as we should have liked to stop and take in a few further details, our nasal organs

could stand no more, and, feeling somewhat faint, we had, *nolens volens*, to make a rush for the door. Much to our regret we did not dare venture inside again and further inspect this curious bedchamber.

Our old guide bade us a most affectionate farewell, returning several times to shake us warmly by the hand, but distinctly refusing our proffered krone.

About half way between the Geysers and Thingvellir we recrossed the famous Brúará Fall. From bank to bank it is probably 200 feet, but in fine weather a crossing can be made by means of a little bridge which spans some six feet of babbling, seething water at the narrowest part of the rocks, where the river forms two cascades. The bridge is old and rickety, and, as the water is of considerable depth and tremendous volume, can hardly be considered a desirable halting-place for any length of time, although the view from its planks is very fascinating.

We passed that night once again in the parsonage at Thingvellir, but much more comfortably, as we had engaged all the rooms beforehand, and also ordered a good fish dinner to be ready for us on our arrival.

As to meat, we did not expect to get it; beef is hardly ever eaten by the Icelanders, being too expensive to procure. The native sheep are usually killed towards the end of September, and the meat salted or smoked for winter consumption. Formerly horse-flesh was much eaten in the Island, but is not so now. This struck us as strange in a country where such a scarcity of food exists, and where ponies abound. Having tasted it myself while in Germany, I know it is by no means to be despised.

The principal vegetables to be had in Iceland are turnips and potatoes, and of these there is only a limited supply; so that really fish remains the one staple diet of the Island —on the coast this is eaten fresh, but cod, salmon, haddock, trout, halibut, herrings, flounders, and sometimes sharks are dried before being packed and sent into the interior.

The next morning, as soon as we had breakfasted, we mounted our ponies with the regretful feeling that day's ride would be our last in Iceland. We had been unfortunate in missing the clergyman at Thingvellir both going and returning: we regretted this the more as we heard that he was a very clever man and a good English scholar. Our good-natured hostess, however, did her best to supply his place, and we bade her a hearty farewell, with much shaking of hands. Off we went at a gallop, traversing the same route, fording the same rivers as on our up journey, arriving safely at Reykjavik on the fourth day from that on which we had left it, having compassed the 160 miles in three and a half days with comparatively little fatigue, which I attribute to our mode of riding being so much easier a movement than sitting sideways with a half twisted body. I can only repeat what I before said, that we should never have accomplished this long and fatiguing journey so easily, and in such a short time, either in a chair or on a side-saddle; so if any lady should follow our example, and go to Iceland, let her be prepared to defy Mrs. Grundy, and ride as a man.

We had certainly every reason to be contented with the result of our trip to the Geysers. The weather had been favourable—very hot sometimes in the middle of the day, though cold at night; but this was rather refreshing than otherwise, and the scenery well repaid our toil and trouble. The Icelandic landscapes do not lack colour, as has been asserted by some travellers; whilst the clearness of the atmosphere is wonderful, and the shades of blue, purple, carmine, and yellow in the sky melting into one another produce most lovely effects.

Unquestionably the landscape is destitute both of trees and verdure, and one missed the gorgeous autumn colouring of our English woods, there being no foliage, only low scrub jungle. It seems very doubtful if Iceland were ever wooded, as is supposed by some persons, since no trees of

any size have as yet been discovered in the peat beds; very conclusive evidence to the contrary.

Iceland is so sparsely populated that one often rides miles without encountering a human being. Even in the little town of Saudárkrók there is not much life in the streets, as may be supposed from the following incident: A. L. T. dropped his pipe as we rode out of the town. He was miserable; no greater calamity could have befallen him!

"What shall I do?" he said, piteously, when he discovered his loss.

"Do without it, and be philosophical."

"Impossible. Fancy having to live all day without a smoke, not even a cigarette—for we have no paper to make one!"

Our Icelandic guide was so distressed at seeing one of the party so miserable that, after rummaging about in his pocket, he produced his walrus tooth snuff box and offered it as a very good substitute for smoking!

A. L. T. did not enjoy himself at all that day, although he carried his gun and made a good miscellaneous bag. He was inwardly grieving over the loss of his favourite pipe—all smokers must sympathise with him when I add he was in a land far removed from tobacconists' shops—and we were still chaffing him for his want of sociability and general air of depression as we re-entered the town after our long ride. Suddenly his face beamed and happiness overspread his countenance, for there in the chief street, evidently in exactly the same spot where it had been dropped eight hours before, lay the loved pipe quite unhurt!

Now, as a pipe is a coveted luxury to an Icelander, it seems more than probable that no one could have passed along that street during our absence.

As we were nearing the town of Reykjavik, our attention was arrested, when passing some fine rocky

boulders, by the guide asking us if we knew the story of the "rock fairies."

Not in the least knowing what he meant by such an extraordinary question, we said we had never heard of a "rock fairy" before, and would he please enlighten us as to what he meant by the phrase.

"Well," he said, "God suddenly appeared one day on a visit to Adam and Eve, who had received no intimation of His coming. According to the story, Eve showed several of her children with great pride to God; but some of her boys and girls—for she had many—not being washed, she did not bring out, because she did not like anyone to see how dirty they were. The result of her folly was that when God left the house He said 'That He would punish her for not showing him all the children, and that the descendants of the dirty ones should live in the rocks for ever, and, while themselves invisible to mankind, would be able to see all the doings of others.'"

We were very much interested in this strange recital, and asked our Icelander what these rock men or fairies were like.

According to Johnny, they exactly resemble ordinary beings in size, manners, and everything. Some of their customs are also the same; for instance, they have churches in the rocks, one of which he subsequently pointed out to us with great pride, adding that the legend was unquestionably true. Certainly the formation of the basaltic pillars and lava stalactites closely resembled a Gothic church.

"What are they supposed to do, these rock fairies," we asked.

"Everything," he replied; "they can do much harm when they are angered, or they can watch over and confer marvellous benefits on those they favour."

He continued his story by telling us a romantic incident concerning one of these rock fairies who married a common flesh and blood Icelander.

"How remarkable!" we exclaimed. "How did it happen?"

With the gravest face, firmly believing in the facts of his romance, Johnny proceeded to tell his story.

"Once upon a time, some men in a boat went to Rocky Island to gather eggs and eiderdown, and, when they left, accidently one of their number remained behind; his absence was not noticed at the time, and the others rowed away quite content with their booty. Arni was his name, and this said Arni, finding he had been forgotten, walked over the island, dejectedly looking forward to starvation in the future. Hours went by and night came on, but, beyond a few puffins' eggs that he found in the rocks, he had neither food nor drink. Utterly worn out with fatigue and hunger, he threw himself down at the foot of a ridge of rocks, there to await death. Gradually sleep claimed him, and the pangs of hunger vanished in his dreams as he heard the sound of beautiful music. The sound seemed to become more and more distinct, until at last he awoke to find himself in a great room, not like any room he had seen before, but full of beautiful things. After listening to the music for some time, Arni got up and looked through the window, when he saw a review of warriors and a lovely lady. She was the daughter of the chief, and was riding by her father's side. Arni had never seen anything so lovely before, and he asked a servant that came into the room who this exquisite vision was.

"The servant replied, 'she is the daughter of the chief to whom the house belongs.' And the servant told him that this fair girl, seeing him lying under the rocks, had taken pity upon him, and transplanted him by her fairy means to her own home.

"The natural outcome of this, of course, was that Arni and the chief's daughter were married, and from that moment the beautiful fairy lady became a mortal. In the spring Arni longed to return to the shore, to go back to

his own home and his own people; he promised only to remain a few months and then come back to his fairy wife in the autumn. But," added our guide, with a tragic air, "*he never returned!*"

The expression of Johnny's face was splendid—distress mingled with horror at the faithlessness of Arni.

"Long afterwards," he continued, "when Arni was one day in church surrounded by his friends, a woman's form suddenly glided into the building. In her arms she carried a cradle. The clergyman, much surprised at this extraordinary apparition, asked who she was and what she wanted. Looking sadly round, and speaking in a subdued whisper, she said:

"'This is my child, and the father is in this church—let him now come forward.'

"There was no answer.

"After repeating her question and again receiving no reply, tears started to her eyes, and, sadly looking across the congregation, with a low moan she suddenly disappeared. From that moment Arni, who had not the honour or courage to own the stranger was his fairy bride, became unlucky in everything he undertook—*the evil spirits had got hold of him.*"

"But what became of the poor wife?"

"Having become a mortal by marrying a *man*, she was unable to return to her fairy companions, and pined away."

"That is a very sad story, Johnny," I said.

"It is not a story," he replied; "it is true."

"And do such fairies live amongst these rocks?" I asked.

"Certainly," he answered; "rock fairies live everywhere in the rocks and the hills of Iceland."

And his superstitious beliefs evidently afforded him so much pleasure we said nothing, for we would not have laughed at our good Johnny and his tragic stories and delightful ways of retailing them for anything.

Johnny was a character, and we were all quite fond of him.

It was just 3 p.m. when we entered Reykjavik, having accomplished our last day's ride from Thingvellir in six and a half hours. We five (two of whom were women) had in fact ridden 160 miles in three days and a half. The *Camoens* was still safely at anchor in the harbour, and we rejoiced at having returned without a single *contretemps*.

On our way through Reykjavik to the ship Mr. Gordon ordered dinner at the hotel to be ready by seven o'clock, and we looked forward to this repast with much pleasure after our tinned meat and biscuit diet of the last few days.

Before proceeding on board to change our riding dresses, we went in search of the clean clothes which we had left to be washed. In a queer little wooden house, at the back of the town, we found the launderer, who smiled and nodded, and asked 3*s*. for what would have cost 30*s*. in England, at the same time handing us an enormous linen bag, in which the things were packed. This was consigned to A. L. T.

"What am I to do with it?" he asked, aghast, the parcel being so enormous he could hardly hold it in his arms.

"Carry it, of course," I mischievously replied.

He looked miserable.

"Is this what I have come to Iceland for?"

"Certainly—to make yourself useful."

After a considerable amount of chaff he did carry that huge bundle of clean linen down to the shore, to his evident discomfort and our amusement.

When we got on board we found the linen had been most beautifully washed and got up, in a style quite worthy of a first-class laundress, and yet it had been washed in natural hot springs outside the town, where the women at their daily work make quite a feature in Icelandic life.

The dinner was excellent, everything being very hot and served in Danish style. As is the universal custom among the better class, the hostess waited on us herself, and told us she had spun her own dress and the sitting-room carpet the winter before, and always wove her own linen. This was our last evening ashore, as we were to heave anchor at midnight one of the last days of August, and in four and a half days we were, if all went well, to find ourselves back in Scotland. Alas! these expectations were not realised, as few human aspirations are!

During our four days' absence to the Geysers, the captain and crew had been engaged in shipping no less than 617 ponies, which additional cargo caused two days' delay. Poor little beasts, when we arrived on board we found they had all been so tightly stowed away as not to be able to lie down. Fine sturdy little animals they appeared, mostly under seven years of age, and in excellent condition—a very different sight to what they were on arriving at Granton, when, after six and a half days' voyage, every rib showed distinctly in their wasted, tucked up bodies.

After our dinner we lounged about in Reykjavik, paying a farewell visit to the few objects of interest it contains for travellers, most of which have already been cursorily noticed in a previous chapter.

We spent some little time in the Museum again, which, after all, is not much of an exhibition, for, as our cicerone, the hotel-keeper's daughter, Fröken (*i.e.*, Miss) Johannesen, explained, all the best curiosities had been carried off to Denmark. I naturally looked everywhere in the little Museum for an egg of the great auk, or a stuffed specimen of the bird, but there was neither, which struck me as rather curious, considering Iceland was originally the home of this now extinct species. Not even an egg has been found for over forty years, although diligent search has been made by several well-known naturalists.

The Great Auk was never a pretty bird; it was large in size, often weighing 11lb. It had a duck's bill, and small eyes, with a large unwieldy body, and web feet. Its wings were extremely small and ugly, from long want of use, so the bird's movements on land were slow, and it was quite incapable of flight. On the water it swam fast and well.

There are only about ten complete specimens of this bird and about seventy eggs known to exist at the present time. In London, in 1894, one of these eggs was sold by auction for £300!

From the Museum we entered some of the stores, and purchased a fair collection of photographs, some skin shoes, snuff-boxes, buckles, and other native curios; we then returned to the hotel, paid our bill, bade our host, hostess, and guides farewell, with many regretful shakes of the hand on both sides, and finally quitted Icelandic ground about 9 p.m.

The evening was lovely, and after arranging our cabins we remained some time on deck watching the Northern Lights, which illuminated the entire heavens, and were most beautiful. Unfortunately we did not see the "Aurora Borealis," which in these latitudes is often visible.

The following afternoon, as we were passing the curious rocky Vestmannaeyjar, we slackened steam, to throw over the mail bag to an old man in a boat, who had rowed out some three miles. The bag contained a few newspapers and exactly one letter! Fancy the excitement of the recipient of that letter, in a land where the postman's knock is unknown, and the tax collector and quarterly bills exist not!

Steaming on again we sighted no more land until Scotland came in view, which we reached on Sunday afternoon. What a passage we had! It was rough going to Iceland, but nothing to be compared with our return voyage! We sat on deck, either with our chairs lashed, or else holding

on to ropes until our hands were quite benumbed with cold, while huge waves, at least fifteen feet high, dashed over the ship, often over the bridge itself. If we opened our cabin portholes for a little fresh air, which at times was really a necessity, the cabin was soon flooded, and our clothes and rugs spent half their time drying in the donkey-engine room.

Eleven of the poor ponies died, and had to be thrown overboard, a serious loss to their owners; but one could not help wondering that more of them did not succumb, so closely were they packed together, with very little air but that afforded by the windsails. It was marvellous how the sailors managed to drag out the dead from the living mass of animals. This they accomplished by walking on the backs of the survivors, and, roping the dead animals, drew the carcases to the centre hold of the ship, when the crane soon brought them to the surface, and consigned them to a watery grave.

A. L. T. always declared we were fed on the dead ponies, the meat was so excruciatingly tough; but then A. L. T. is not a particularly good sailor!

For six days the live cargo of beasts had to accommodate themselves to the ship's movement in those turbulent seas without one moment's respite or change of position. No wonder that on arriving at Granton they were in a miserable plight! Within five minutes, however, of our being roped to the pier they were being taken off in horse boxes, three at a time, the entire number being landed in three hours

The hot air from the stables was at times overpowering, notwithstanding that eight windsails were kept over it, which, as they flapped in the wind, looked just like eight ghosts.

The *Camoens* was a steady sea boat, but better adapted for cargo than for passengers, especially lady passengers, and the captain did not disguise that he preferred not

having the latter on board. Once in calm water we discovered we had seriously shifted our cargo, and lay all over on one side, so much so that a cup of tea could not stand flat, the slant being too great, although the water was perfectly calm.

Well, we had accomplished our trip, and very much we had enjoyed it. We had really seen Iceland, that far off region of ice and snow, and returned in safety. The six days on board ship passed pleasantly enough for us; we had become accustomed to roughing it, and were all very good friends with each other, and the few other passengers. We found one of the latter especially interesting; he was a scientific Frenchman, who had been sent to Iceland to write a book for the Government, and being a very poor English scholar was very glad to find someone who could converse with him in his native tongue. We hardly saw a ship the whole way, but sighted plenty of whales, not, however, the kind which go to Dundee, where the whalebone fetches from £1200 to £2000 a ton!

We brought an enormous skeleton home, which was found off the coast of Iceland; it was sent to England as a curiosity for some museum.

Occasionally we had lovely phosphorescent effects, and, as we neared Scotland, millions of pink and brown jellyfish appeared in the water. At Thurso we hailed a boat in order to send telegrams ashore—such a collection!—to let our various friends know we had returned from Ultima Thule. That night as we passed Aberdeen we entered calm water, and there was hardly a ripple all the way to Granton, where we landed at 3.30 on the last day of August, very brown and very well after our adventurous expedition.

Such a lovely day! The Forth looked perfect as we steamed up to our harbour anchorage. The grand hills and rocks and the fine old Castle were indeed a contrast to poor little Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland. How we

enjoyed the sight of the beautiful city and the trees, for we had seen no trees for weeks, and their green looked most pleasing amongst the stone buildings!

How busy, how civilised everything appeared! When will trains and carts traverse the Northern Isle we had just left? Oh, but where are the emigrants? Let us go and watch their surprised faces as they catch the first glimpse of this new scene. We went, and were sorely disappointed. They were merely standing together with their backs to the view, putting on their boots, or occupied about minor matters, taking no notice whatever of their surroundings, and receiving no new impressions. It requires a civilised mind, one must suppose, to appreciate civilisation, just as it requires talent to appreciate talent.

There is a practical side to everything into which that sordid subject money creeps. Wild rumour has it that a hundred pounds a month is required per head to travel in Iceland. Well, by simpletons it may be, or by people who insist on having luxuries in a land where luxuries are absolutely non-procurable.

Ponies can be bought for about £8 for long expeditions, or for shorter ones hired.

Four days' ride to the Geysers, two nights at Thingvellir Parsonage, ponies, guides, tents, sods, pasturage for ponies, milk, coffee, &c., cost about £20 for five of us, or about £4 each. We took our own provisions, of course. Therefore it will be seen long expeditions can be undertaken at £1 a day each person, and even 10*s.* will often suffice; while living at any one place is ridiculously cheap—but then it is equally primitive.

CHAPTER XII.

VOLCANOES.

It may seem strange that in the foregoing pages hardly any allusion has been made to the special characteristic of Iceland, viz., its volcanic structure, or to the numerous lava floods which, bursting forth in furious molten streams, have from time to time devastated its surface, leaving in their track a chaos of disrupted rocks, chasms, vast fissures, and subterranean caverns.

Our trip to Iceland was, however, unfortunately so limited in duration as to preclude, save in our days' ride to the Great Geyser tract, any extension of travel in the various volcanic regions. Hence the omission. I have therefore extracted the following data relative to its principal volcanoes and their eruptions from such books of reference as have been available to me.

The annexed compilation will explain to such of my readers as are not acquainted with the geological strata of Iceland its sterile nature, the extreme poverty of its inhabitants, and the constant terror under which their existence is passed, lest a fresh outbreak of lava should sweep away both them and their homesteads. It is somewhat singular that although Iceland may be looked upon as a veritable mass of volcanoes and hot springs—for, with the exception of some 4000 square miles of habitable ground, it may be said literally to rest on underground fires—and while the various eruptions of Etna, Vesuvius, and other volcanoes have for centuries been watched and

recorded in the public papers with interest—it is only comparatively recently that the awe-inspiring volcanic eruptions of Iceland have been brought into notice. For instance, while full fifty pages in Ree's "Cyclopædia" are devoted to the subject of volcanoes, those of Iceland are barely touched upon; yet their eruptions have been by far the most devastating on record. So limited, indeed, formerly were the researches of science in Iceland, that for long Hecla was quoted as its only volcano!

Now that the Island has attracted the further notice of geologists, it has been shown that there exist no less than twenty volcanic mountains, all of which have been in active eruption within historic times, while nearly one hundred eruptions have been chronicled as having taken place.

Although Hecla is doubtless the best known of the Iceland volcanoes, it is by no means the largest; that of "Askja" (a basket) far surpassing it in size. This latter volcano lies in a great central desert, covering a space of 1200 square miles, called "Ódáthahraun," or "Misdeed Lava Desert," a most appropriate name, for the devastation caused by the last flood of lava is indescribable.

In one of the convulsions of this mountain in 1875, a quantity of lava five miles in circumference was disrupted, sinking into the mountain to a depth of 710 feet, and causing an earthquake which was felt all over the Island. In one region, viz., that of the "Myvatn's Orœfi," or "Midge Lake Desert," a fissure was opened which extended over twenty miles in a north-easterly direction, through which molten lava flowed continuously for four months after the earthquake. So great was the column of fire thrown up by the eruption, that it was visible for four successive days at Reykjavik, 100 miles distant. The study of an Icelandic map will show the numerous volcanic ranges of mountains which intersect the island in almost every direction.

To the north there lies a wonderful volcanic tract. So vast, in fact, that Professor Johnstrup has termed it the Fire Focus of the North. To the north-east, again, is found a large lake, called "Myvatn," or "Midge Lake," with a volcanic range of mountains which stretch from north to south; the most famous of these are "Leirhnúkur" and "Krafla," which, after years of quiescence, suddenly poured forth such an amount of lava into the adjoining lake that for many days its waters stood at boiling heat. Other volcanoes in this region eject with terrible force a quantity of boiling mineral pitch, throwing up the dark matter completely enveloped in steam, to an accompaniment of horrible rumbling noises.

Sir George Mackenzie, in his travels in Iceland, thus describes one of the deposits:

"It is impossible," he says, "to convey any idea of the wonders of its terrors, or the sensations of a person even of strong nerves standing on a support which but feebly bears him, and below which fire and brimstone are in incessant action, having before his eyes tremendous proof of what is going on beneath him; enveloped in thick vapour, his ears stunned with thundering noises—such a situation can only be conceived by one who has experienced it."

The extent of the sulphur beds, too, in this region are beyond calculation: they reproduce themselves every few years. In the vicinity of "Krafla" is a curious rock, composed of obsidian, a substance which closely resembles black glass.

To the south of the island is another volcano, termed the "Kotlugja," or "Cauldron Rift," lying among glaciers known as the "Myrdals Jökull," whose eruptions, thirteen of which have been noted, are considered to have done more mischief than any others in the island. Between the Myrdals and the "Örœja Jökull" lies one of the most noted volcanoes of Iceland—the "Skaptar-Jökull," the

eruption of which in 1783 is chronicled in all works on Iceland, as the prodigious floods of lava it poured forth in that year were unparalleled in historic times. The molten streams rushed seaward, down the rivers and valleys, the glowing lava leaping over precipices and rocks, which now they have cooled resemble petrified cataracts, and form one of the grand scenic attractions of the Island.

In Mrs. Somerville's "Physical Geography," she vividly describes this eruption, narrating how, commencing in May, 1783, it continued pouring forth its fiery streams with unabated fury until the following August. So great was the amount of vapour, that the sun was hidden for months, whilst clouds of ashes were carried hundreds of miles out to sea. The quantity of matter ejected on this occasion was calculated at from fifty to sixty thousand millions of cubic yards. The burning lava flowed in a stream in some places twenty to thirty miles broad, filling up the beds of rivers, and entering the sea at a distance of fifty miles from the spot where the eruption took place. Some of the rivers were not only heated to boiling point, but were dried up, and the condensed vapour fell as snow and rain. Epidemic disease followed in the wake of this fearful lava flood. It was calculated that no less than 1300 persons and 150,000 sheep and cattle perished; twenty villages were destroyed. The eruption lasted two years.

Mr. Paulson, a geologist, who visited Iceland eleven years later, found smoke still issuing from the rocks in the locality.

The heat of this eruption not only re-melted old lavas and opened fresh subterranean caverns, but one of its streams was computed to course the plains to a length of fifty miles, with a depth of 100 feet, and twelve to fifteen feet broad. Another stream was calculated at forty miles long and seven wide. Men, their cattle and homesteads, their churches and grazing lands, were burnt up, whilst noxious

vapours not only filled the air, but even shrouded the light of the sun.

The terrible convulsions which occurred in Iceland during the year 1783 were greater than those recorded at any other period. About a month previously to the convulsion of "Skaptar-Jökull," a submarine volcano burst out at sea, when so much pumice stone was ejected that the ocean was covered with it for 150 miles round, ships being stopped in their course, whilst a new island was thrown up, which the King of Denmark claimed and named Nyöe, or New Island. Before a year had elapsed, however, it as speedily disappeared, leaving only a reef of rocks some thirty fathoms under water to mark its site.

But what of Hecla, which is 5000 feet high, and is situated close to the coast at the southern end of a low valley lying between two vast parallel table-lands covered with ice?

If the eruptions of Hecla are not considered to have been quite so devastating as those just recorded of the "Skaptar-Jökull," their duration has been longer, some of them having lasted for six years at a time.

When Sir George Mackenzie visited Hecla, he found its principal crater 100 feet deep, while, curiously enough, a quantity of snow lay at the bottom! There are many smaller craters near its summit; the surrounding rocks, composed chiefly of lava and basalt, are covered with loose stones, scoria, and ashes.

A record of the eruptions of Hecla has been chronicled since the tenth century. One of its most violent convulsions occurred in the same year as that of the "Skaptar-Jökull," viz., in 1783. At a distance of two miles from the crater, the lava flood was one mile wide, and forty feet deep, whilst its fine dust was scattered as far as the Orkney Islands, 400 miles distant.

The mountain itself is composed of sand, grit, and ashes, several kinds of pumice stone being thrown out of it. It

also ejects a quantity of a species of black jaspers, which look as if they had been burned at the extremities, while in form they resemble trees and branches. All the different kinds of lava found in volcanoes are to be met with here, such as agate, pumice stone, and both black and green lapis obsidian. These lavas are not all found near the place of eruption, but at some distance, which, when they grow cold, form arches and caverns, the crust of which is hard rock. The smaller of these caverns are now used by the Icelanders for sheltering their cattle. The largest of the caves known is 5034 feet long, from fifty to fifty-four feet broad, and from thirty-four to thirty-six feet high.

It is believed by some geologists that a subterranean channel connects the volcanic vent of Hecla with the great central one of Askja. This theory is based on the fact that a number of lava floods have burst forth simultaneously at different times at great distances from the volcanoes, leading to the supposition that innumerable subterranean channels exist in the neighbourhood.

The eruptions attributed to the volcano of Hecla vary much in number, some authorities saying there have been forty. Mrs. Somerville quotes them at twenty-three, and Mr. Locke, in his "Guide to Iceland," at seventeen in number. In the latter work is given a table of most of its principal eruptions. One of these was of a singular nature; huge chasms opened in the earth, for three days the wells and fountains became as white as milk, while new hot springs sprang into existence.

The twelfth eruption of this mountain was also of unusual violence. It occurred in January, 1597. For twelve days previously to the outbreak loud reports were heard all over the Island, while no less than eighteen columns of fire were seen ascending from it during its [illegible]e ashes it threw out covered half the Island.

[illegible]enth eruption commenced on the 2nd [illegible]5, and continued for seven months. On

this occasion the ashes were carried over to Shetland, and the columns of smoke rising from the mountain reached a height of 14,000 Danish feet.

Such is a brief description of the tremendous forces which dominate Iceland. Here Nature works in silence for long periods beneath the crust of the earth, and then, with little or no forewarning, bursts forth in uncontrollable fury, ruthlessly devastating with its fiery streams whatever comes in its way.

Who can wonder that, under such existing terrors, the scanty inhabitants of the Island are a sad and dejected race? A people with death and terror continually at their doors can hardly be otherwise; whilst competitive industry, energy, and hopeful prosperity are alike suppressed by the constant devastations which occur.

With respect to the Thermal Springs, these must be considered as products of the same underground fires, and form a second characteristic of Iceland.

These Springs may be divided into three kinds, viz., those of unceasing ebullition, those which are only sometimes active, and wells which merely contain tepid water, though supposed to have been formerly active.

Professor Bunsen, who passed eleven days by the side of the Great Geyser in Iceland, attributes the phenomenon to the molecular changes which take place in water after being subjected to heat. In such circumstances, water loses much of the air condensed in it, and the cohesion of the molecules is thereby increased, and a higher temperature required to boil it. In this state, when boiled, the production of vapour is so instantaneous as to cause an explosion.

Professor Bunsen found the water at the bottom of the great Icelandic Geyser had a higher temperature than that of boiling water: this temperature increasing, finally caused its eruption.

In America, among the hot springs warmed by subterra-

nean vapours, such as those springing from the sides of "Nuerode Chillan," the hot springs gush out through a bed of perpetual snow!

Among the hot springs of Iceland, Mr. G. Loch gives an interesting description of those known as the "Northern Geyser" and its tributary springs. One of these, the "Uxahver," or "Ox Spring," is named from an ox having fallen into it, and in a short time being thrown out in the form of boiled beef. This hot spring emanates from an oval basin, thirty feet in circumference and ten feet in diameter. Its spurts are very regular, occurring about every six minutes, and rise to a height of ten feet. After a spurt the water in the basin is lowered from four to six feet, but quickly refills, whilst the water thrown up is clear as crystal, and its spray glistening in the sun's rays has a most beautiful effect.

The smaller springs in this so-called "Uxahver" group are collected in a bed of rock 280 feet from the principal Geyser, and it is singular that, although separated from it by only 300 yards of boggy ground, the springs in each bed of rock seem to have a distinct source of supply, for they are not affected by each other's spoutings. It is impossible even to enumerate the various hot springs of Iceland, as they are spread over all its volcanic region.

I must here bring my little book to a close. If it do no more than make some of my readers desire to make a personal acquaintance with this wonderful little Island, so full of natural curiosities, so abounding in ancient history, so isolated, and so quaint, it will have served its object.

CHAPTER XIII.

ICELANDIC LITERATURE.

By Dr. Jón Stefánsson.

During the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, with the exception of little glimpses of troubadour poetry in the south and the solitary gigantic figure of Dante rising out of the gloom, darkness brooded over European literature. All literary life seemed crushed and quenched by a double nightmare—scholasticism with its cut-and-dried argumentations; theology with her endless controversies.

It was at this period that suddenly a strange and surpassing literary activity broke out, like a volcanic eruption, in volcanic Iceland on the verge of the polar circle, and shot rays through the pervading gloom.

The Icelanders wrote on parchment—*i.e.*, prepared sheepskin—and one of the black and grimy manuscripts still preserved by thousands is said to contain 105 sheepskins. The earliest writing was in Runic letters, but these were soon ousted by the Latin alphabet.

The highest achievement of this literature is the collection of songs and poems called the poetic or earlier *Edda*. The poems contained in it are supposed to date from A.D. 800 to about 1000. They possess qualities which rank them with the masterpieces of literature—a passionate dramatic power, an intense and deep pathos, a telling and trenchant simplicity of language which appeals at once tc a cultured or uncultured mind. Such qualities

are rarely seen combined. There is no adequate translation into English of these weird and wonderful poems. It would require a great poet to make such a translation. It has been attempted, but most men have shrunk back from it as from a hopeless task.

The names of the makers of these poems are unknown. But the oldest existing manuscript of them was written in Iceland about A.D. 1270. The greater part of what is known about the heathen mythology of all Teutonic nations is derived from them. They are as important for the man of science as for the literary critic. But for them many of the cherished beliefs of our ancestors would have sunk into oblivion. Therefore they cease to be local. They are the common heritage of all Teutonic nations.

When we pass from the Edda to the earliest Icelandic poets whose names are known, we are on firmer ground. These men were a sort of troubadours of the North. Men of strong imagination—flying into a passion of love or anger at the smallest provocation; ever ready with a verse or a sword-thrust—ever ready to fight rival lovers or rival poets. Roving Vikings, living lives full to the brim of adventures, storm-tossed, war-tossed, reckless of their lives, yet fighting to the bitter end when at bay.

No doubt Celtic blood accounts for some of their characteristics. The mingling of the hardy Northman with the vivacious Celt was bound to produce men who, under favourable circumstances, developed the best and most innate qualities of the two races.

Their poetry, however, ranks a long way below Eddaic poetry. The thought is often hidden and overlaid by an elaborate mythical and enigmatical phraseology—by a complex structure of alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and syllabification—with the object of the greatest possible harmony and melodiousness. It needed a marvellous skill to fulfil all the conditions of such verse-making. The consequence was that an artificial imagery was elaborated,

and in poetry hardly anything was called by its natural name. A man could be designated by close upon a hundred names—*e.g.*, the Tree of Battle. A woman might be called the Bearer of Keys, &c. A ship was often called the horse of the ocean; heaven, the home of winds; sleep, the meeting of dreams.

It is, therefore, sometimes only with extreme difficulty that the obscure meaning of these old poets can be made out. The often illegible or corrupted text of the manuscript adds to these difficulties.

The Icelandic poets used to attach themselves to some king or chief and sing his deeds. Some of them were at the English Court. One of them, Egil Skallagrimsson, lost his brother in a battle of King Aethelstan's, in the tenth century. He sat silent and gloomy in the hall of the King, slamming his sword up and down in its scabbard, until Aethelstan, taking a gold ring from his own arm, walked across the floor and handed it to Egil on the point of the royal sword. Egil drew the ring towards himself with his own sword point. Then his eyebrows grew calmer, he took the cup of wine he had refused before, and recited a poem.

We often hear that these poets used to stand forth on the floor of the royal hall and, half singing, half speaking, recite a poem made in honour of a certain king. It is a curious fact that, wherever such Court poets are mentioned in the North, they are almost invariably Icelanders. This is another proof that Iceland was then a centre of light and leading, recognised by neighbouring nations. It was too good to last, yet centuries of misrule and degradation never have effaced from the memory of the people their former greatness. Tradition was so closely intertwined with the very fibres of their being, that it could only be rooted out by killing them altogether.

The Saga.

The most characteristic and indigenous growth of Icelandic literature is, however, the form of story called "Saga."

To tell stories was always a recognised art. At feasts and festivals, at public meetings, in the Parliament itself, the story-tellers held their audiences breathless and spell-bound. In their faithful memories they preserved and handed down the famous deeds and lives of well-known men or families with a marvellous facility. But the personality of the story-teller asserted itself in telling little touches which, while not detracting from the truthfulness of the narrative, gave movement and colour to it. In the course of the thirteenth century most of these stories were written down.

The Sagas are a mixture of truth and fiction, which is really nothing but the modern novel in its earlier stage. They lack the exquisite tenderness of the Eddaic poems; but they have other qualities which make up for that deficiency. With few words, in a sentence spoken by a man or woman, they can portray characters so that they live and move before the reader. The Hallgerd, the Gudrun of the Icelandic Sagas, take rank with a creation like Lady Macbeth. "Revenge, the daughter of deep silence," plays a great part in the Icelandic family feuds.

There are often touches of grim humour that light up with a flash of lightning the inmost recesses of an otherwise unintelligible character. No modern writer, with the single exception of Henrik Ibsen, has this rare gift of intuition in few words. If the drama is the highest form of literature, and the portrayal of characters the highest part of the drama, then this is no mean achievement.

[illegible]rs of the Sagas are unknown. The stories had [illegible] retold so often that they became, so to

speak, common property. Some of the most renowned may be mentioned here.

The Saga of Gunnlaug tells of two rival poets who loved the same woman and their unhappy loves. It has been translated into English by Wm. Morris. Another love story is the Laxdoela Saga, upon which Morris founded his "Lovers of Gudrun." Gudrun is the central figure of this story. Her love for the poet Kiartan, his stay abroad, his betrayal by his bosom friend Bolli, Kiartan's death in revenge for wronged love by Bolli, and the terse dialogue and dramatic action of the Saga bring into play all the most deep-seated passions of love and jealousy and hatred in human nature.

The most famous of all Icelandic Sagas is the Saga of Nial. The number and variety of its *dramatis personæ* make it also the longest and one of the most interesting. It is written throughout in a masterly style. A great part of it is taken up with law cases, and among its types are Nial, the best example of a wise lawyer in those times, and Mord, an example of law trickery and crafty deceit. Gunnar is the most perfect and unblemished type of Icelandic chivalry. Skarphedin is a type of nobleness and bravery pursued by an unkind fate. The different women types, alike in good and evil, are exquisitely and delicately portrayed so as to remain engraven on one's memory. The tragic catastrophes—the last fight of Gunnar, the burning of Nial and his family, and the murder of Hoskuld—are only the inevitable outcome of a multitude of events, led up to gradually and circumstantially. The nameless writer harrows us with terror or softens with pity as if he were turning over before our eyes, leaf by leaf, the book of Fate. Belief in fate was strong in the minds of these old warriors. They had no fear of death. Indeed, a "weapon death," as it was called, was, according to their religion, the only death worthy of a man.

There is no doubt that it was Celtic blood, Celtic

influence, which made these old Icelanders, in mind and body, the flower of the North—which quickened and coloured their somewhat sluggish imagination—which infused into them an artistic spirit that raised them above the level of their kinsmen in Scandinavia, and blossomed out into a remarkable literature.

The general type of an Icelandic Saga is this: It tells the life of some local hero in Iceland. First it speaks about his family, beginning with the settler from whom he sprung; then of his youthful deeds before he left his home to seek gold and fame in foreign lands. This was thought a necessary part of the education of a chief—of a leader of men. Trading or warring, poet or soldier, the young man returned home with vast stores of experience. He had tried his skill of head and hand. He had been welcomed by kings. He had proved himself worthy of the chieftainship he was to hold.

At this point the real Saga of his eventful life begins. Each valley has an individuality and family life of its own. Individual characters are strongly marked. Hence feuds and fights. Hence a succession of events that brings into incessant play and action all their faculties, their passions, their feelings, their skill. Life was picturesque and worth living in those exciting days of old.

Now the Saga, in chronological order, tells, in detail, the story of his life in Iceland—his loves and lawsuits, his fights and friendships, his marriage and all about his wife, his daring deeds, and his death at the hand of an enemy, usually followed up with a bloody revenge taken by his kinsmen. It was the greatest cowardice for a family in those days to leave the death of one of its members unrevenged.

The story-teller never breaks the story by reflections of his own. The style reflects the changing vicissitudes of the plot, only when the interest of the listener is aroused to a pitch he uses present tense in telling of the past.

The plot is so well balanced and the story unfolds itself so inevitably and naturally that the art is merged in the simple, straightforward flow of action.

Yet this art is manifest to the observer. The deep tragic gloom is here and there broken by idyllic, naïve farm scenes. Lifelike and realistic details contribute to conjure up before our mind what the story-teller has in view. The supernatural is used sparingly, but in a weird and powerful way.

The characters explain themselves by their action and speech. The story-teller does not intrude his own personality, but, by means of the short, pithy talk of his *dramatis personæ*, makes them reveal themselves. A word is never needlessly used. The dialogue of these taciturn men and women is always full of meaning—the compressed essence of their thoughts and feelings. These men understood that speech is silver and silence is gold.

In judging of the Sagas, it must always be remembered that they were made to be listened to—to be heard, not to be read. If the bloodshed and revenge in them is not to our taste, still we can take some interest in the pride of birth, in the hereditary enmities and friendships, in the splendid fearless courage, in the keen wit, in the noble and high-minded women that live in their pages.

Rarely in the history of the world has such a combination of extremes been seen as those that make up the character of the Icelandic Viking poet. Steadfast and self-renouncing in love and hate, cool, but passionate to madness, crafty but reckless, grasping yet generous, poet and pirate, chief and champion, deeply religious yet throwing all such thoughts occasionally to the winds, delighting in bloodshed yet tender-hearted, a very human being in his complexity, this descendant of the Celt and the Northman, reared on his island of frost and fire.

Snorri Sturluson (1178-1241).

This is the greatest name in Icelandic literature. As a historian, Snorri takes rank with the great Greek and Roman historians. In deep political insight, dramatic marshalling of facts and presentation of situations, artistic and conscious skill, truth of conception, broad and statesman-like views, vivid colouring and knowledge of men, his works have not been surpassed.

Snorri was a chief in the west of Iceland. He was twice lawman, and twice made a long stay in Norway, where he was highly respected. Later on, during the civil war in Norway, he sided with the king's enemies and, after returning to Iceland, lost his favour. The King secretly sent orders to his enemies to slay him. Snorri took no notice of a mysterious runic message sent him as a warning, and, on the night of the 22nd September, 1241, was murdered by a band of men, led by his son-in-law, A sad and untimely end for a man of whom the Teutonic race has reason to be proud as its earliest and most original representative in the region of pure history—a Thucydides and Herodotus welded into one. For he possesses in an equal degree the power of critical observation, of inserting eloquent speeches, and of grasping character of the first-named writer, and the varied grace of style, the quiet humour, the poetry and pathos of the latter.

He is the author of the later or prose Edda, which consists of a sketch of Northern mythology, a poetic grammar of synonyms, epithets, and expressions, giving over 240 quotations from sixty-five poets and from ten anonymous poems, ranging over the whole of Northern poetry, and a treatise on metre. This work shows the poetic side of Snorri's genius, and how he gathered up in himself all the knowledge of his time.

It is, however, on his "Lives of the Kings of Norway," or, as it is usually called from the first words of the first

chapter, "Heimskringla,"* that his fame rests. It is an elaborate history of Norway, and may be said to forestall many of the principles laid down by later historians. Snorri seems to have dictated all his works.

Icelandic Influence in English Literature.

The greatest of old English poems—the epic of Beowulf—lays its scene on Scandinavian soil. The story of the fight of Grendel in Beowulf is found nearly identical, under similar circumstances, in the Icelandic Saga of Grettir the Strong. Icelandic poets often visited the English Court in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In the eighteenth century Thomas Gray, the famous author of an "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," wrote two splendid imitations of old Icelandic poems—the "Fatal Sisters" and the "Descent of Odin." Bishop Percy was an eager student of Icelandic poems, and published translations of them. During the last ten years of the eighteenth century there was a whole school of Icelandic poetry in England. Dr. Sayers, of Norwich, was at the head of it, and his "Old Northern Dramatic Fragments" appeared in three editions. Not less than ten literary ladies and gentlemen in Devon and Cornwall alone occupied themselves with writing "Icelandic" poems. W. S. Landor in 1805 wrote an Icelandic love story in rhyme, and his friend, Dean Herbert, was an accomplished Icelandic scholar who published several collections of translations from the Icelandic. Coleridge and Southey no doubt helped Cottle in his translation of the Icelandic Edda in 1797.

Southey, in the *Quarterly Review* in 1827, acknowledges that the great outburst of English poetry at the beginning of the century might have taken an Icelandic turn.

Walter Scott published an abridgment of an Icelandic

* Heims-kringla = the round of the world.

Saga, by himself, before he began to write his Waverley novels, thus taking note of the art of the Saga writers, to which perhaps he himself owed a little.

But in Wm. Morris alone can we say that the Icelandic influence overshadows all others. His poetry is saturated with the spirit of the Saga times. He would like nothing better than to change the humdrum present into the time of Song and Saga. I need only mention his "Sigurd the Volsung," "The Lovers of Gudrun," his prose Sagas, &c.

The widespread influence of this poet in modern art and literature has given Iceland a stronger hold upon English imagination than perhaps it ever obtained before.

APPENDIX.

WHAT IS A GEYSER?

By George Harley, M.D., F.R.S.

Having been requested by my daughter to add to her little book a short explanatory chapter on the marvellous phenomenon of Nature she saw in Iceland, commonly called a geyser, I herewith subjoin the results of a few of the observations and reflections I made while visiting the great geysers of the volcanic districts of Wyoming and Montana along with my son, Dr. Vaughan Harley, in the autumn of 1884.

In order to make the matter perfectly plain, let me, at the very outset, say that a geyser is simply a volcano from which a quantity of superheated steam and boiling water, saturated with mineral matters, is paroxysmally ejected high into the air; instead of the ejected matters being, as in the case of volcanoes, smoke, flame, lava, scoria, pumice stone, and scalding mud. Moreover, while the eruptions from all volcanoes are intermittent—that is to say, every kind of volcano has alternating periods of activity and repose—the eruptions from geysers still further differ from the fire and flame ejections of burning mountains, with their other attendant phenomena, not only in occurring at definite periods of time, but in being of definite durations.

It is this life-like periodicity in the geyser's mode of

action which makes it as awe-inspiring to behold as it is puzzling to explain.

That hot water should issue in a continuous and but little varying sized stream from the bowels of the earth, with a force sufficient to carry it high into the air, has nothing whatever wonderful about it. Such a natural phenomenon may be witnessed at many places. For example, it may be seen doing so every day at the white foaming, frothing, natural mineral water sprudel of Nauheim, or at any artificially bored artesian well, such as the celebrated one at Paris. Nor does the mere intermittence of water issuing from the bowels of the earth suffice to surprise one. For such natural phenomena are seen at Bolder-Born, in Westphalia; the Lay-Well, at Torbay; the Giggleswick Well, in Yorkshire; and even on a smaller scale at St. Anthony's Well, Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh. All these occurrences are readily explicable on ordinary hydraulic principles, and are quite different things from geyser action, which, try to explain it as you will, always runs into a volcanic groove. Yet the periodicity of a geyser's action cannot be said to be entirely due to volcanic agency. For the mere action of heat on the solids of the earth's crust, or even of heat in simple conjunction with water, according to either Mackenzie or Tyndall's theories,* even did they suffice to give a satisfactory explanation of the action of the geysers in Iceland, are assuredly totally inadequate to explain the action of those of the Yellowstone Park. For the simple reason that the vapours escaping from nearly all of them are so strongly impregnated with chemical products, like hydrochloric, sulphurous, and sulphuric acid gases, as well as with sulphuretted hydrogen, as to compel one to believe that true chemical action plays a not unimportant part in the production of the phenomena there witnessed.

* Sir G. S. Mackenzie's "Travels in Iceland," in 1810, p. 228. Prof. Tyndall "On Heat," p. 128.

Moreover, the solids brought up by the hot water closely resemble in chemical composition the lava ejected from burning mountains, inasmuch as, besides containing a large percentage of silica and alumina, they consist of lime, potash, soda, magnesia, and iron, as well as of a small proportion of other metals, as was guessed at from the beautifully varied green, rose, yellow, and purple hues, I noticed in the beds of the streamlets flowing from the craters of the geysers.

The geysers of the Yellowstone, although situated at the height of 7765 feet above the level of the sea, nevertheless lie in valleys, for there are mountains surrounding them much higher still.

Some idea of the force with which the water issues from the earth in several of the geysers I saw may be formed from the fact that it is in some cases sufficient to carry a column of over six feet in diameter 250 feet high, for the space of twenty minutes at a time. And all know that 250 feet is double the height of any of our ordinary church steeples.

Moreover, the amount of solids brought up with the water may be imagined when I say that, in one of the boiling springs, the mixture so closely resembles thick milk gruel as to have given to it the name of the "paint-pot," and so loaded is its water with mineral matters, that they consolidate almost immediately after escaping from the spring's outlet. So thick indeed is it that I kneaded some into the shape of a brick, which I have still in my possession. In truth all the geyser water in this district is so charged with silicious earths that it consolidates sufficiently rapidly to form an upright rim around each geyser's vent. Just as a fringe of scoria and lava encircles the mouth of a burning mountain.

The rapidity with which the deposits form and solidify may be conjectured when I say that I saw trees growing close to some of the geysers whose stems and lower

branches were so encrusted with geyserite as to give one the idea that they were actually petrified. While again I saw an old horse shoe, which had only been fourteen days in the water, so completely enveloped with it that it looked exactly as if it had been hewn out of solid marble.

The mere glancing around, and noticing how the geysers had evidently, like human beings, but a transient existence, produced a somewhat strange sensation. For it was perfectly evident that, like human beings, they are born but to die. All of them, after longer or shorter periods, appearing to spout themselves permanently out. For while on one side some seemed just as if they were starting on life's career, on another were those apparently in the full zenith of their strength, whilst others again looked as if they were making but their last feeble efforts at existence. Though it was evident, from the heaps of consolidated geyserite surrounding them, that they had but recently passed through halcyon days of youthful energy and manhood power. Every here and there again we came upon others from whose wide open empty mouths came forth neither a puff of steam nor a drop of water. They were dead, and not a few of them were so completely eviscerated as to allow of the explorer to descend with perfect safety through their vents into large chambers in the bowels of the earth.

Geyser activity is in fact but the last act in the drama of volcanic life: all around proved this. For close at hand were stupendous cliffs of pure obsidian—the black bottle glass manufactured in Nature's furnaces. Even half a mile of our road was macadamised with it. And so similar is this obsidian to actual glass, both in chemical composition and optical properties, that a flat piece I picked up on the road, just after it had been splintered off a block by one of the wheels of our carriage, is as transparent as any piece of black bottle glass of equal thickness. These mountains of obsidian tell plainly how

awfully stupendous must have been the heating process which called them into existence, as well as how big must be the cavities left in the bowels of the earth from which the materials constituting them were obtained. No doubt water scoops out caverns in the softer strata composing the earth's crust, but these can scarcely be thought to equal in extent the cavities made by volcanoes. Think, for example, of what a hole in the earth's crust must have been left by the fifty miles long and five miles broad stream of lava which flowed from Mauna Loa in 1859, and then fell as a fiery cascade over a cliff into the sea, in sufficient amount to fill up a large bay.

The geyser basin is in many places actually honeycombed with various sized caverns, either directly due to volcanic action, or to water, or to both combined, and these caverns, though widely apart, may yet freely communicate with each other by means of subterranean river courses. I have myself followed one river course into the bowels of the earth for three miles and more, in the great Adelsberg Grotto, in Styria. I have rowed across the lake in the dismally dark cavern at Han, in the Ardennes. And even in our own Derbyshire Speedwell Mine, I have seen, half-a-mile from the entrance, a river, a waterfall, and a lake. All of which things tell us that such natural phenomena exist within the bowels of the earth as well as upon its surface. Moreover, the resounding echoes from the clatter of our team of four horses' feet as they briskly trotted over a sheet of the geyserite, as well as the heat we experienced through the thick leather soles of our boots as we walked across it, gave unmistakable proof that but a thin layer of crust separated the part of the surface of the globe we were then traversing in Wyoming and Montana, not alone from vast empty caverns, but likewise from great and still active subterranean fires.

All the preceding facts must be borne in mind, in order

that the theory of geyser action I am now about to propound may be readily understood. For unless the reader believes:

1st. That cavities of various shapes and sizes exist in the earth's crust;

2nd. That the earth possesses internal lakes as well as rivers;

3rd. That there are vast internal fires still actively at work in the neighbourhood of geysers; and,

4th. That the smell of the acid vapours and sulphuretted hydrogen, as well as that the mineral matters dissolved and suspended in the ejected waters, are proof positive of chemical activity, he will entirely fail to perceive the value of my remarks regarding the cause of geyser action being not only spasmodic but periodic.

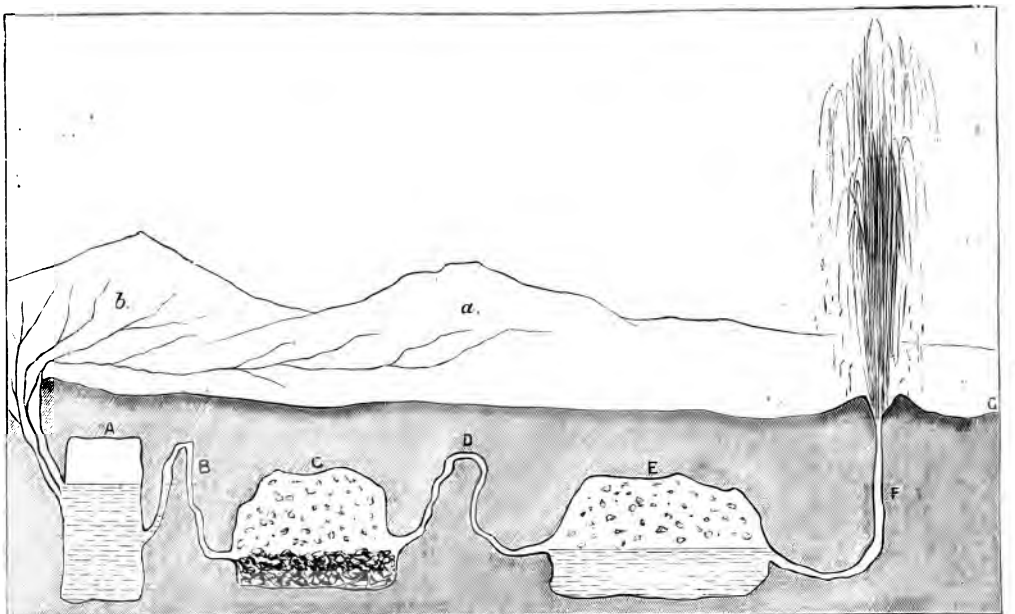
On the next page is a rough explanatory diagrammatic sketch, in which no attempt has been made at the impossible, namely, to apportion either the size, the shape, or the situation of the cavities to each other, as they may perhaps be close together, or they may be miles apart. They may all be on the same level, or more likely not. They may be of nearly equal dimensions, or of varying sizes. But it matters not one whit which they are, for the demonstration of the theory of geyser action now to be adduced will answer equally well in every case.

Seeing that all that it is necessary to believe in is the existence of:—

A. A cavernous reservoir, receiving its water supply from the hills (*a*) by streamlet feeders (*b*).

B. A natural, and, it may be, circuitous syphon conduit, by which the water can only reach chamber (C) after it has filled tube (B) to the level of the syphon's top. Consequently the supply of water to chamber (C) is intermittent, and only lasts until the water in chamber (A) has sunk down to the orifice of its syphon connection.

C. Is supposed to be the chemical laboratory in which



A. Water-tank. C. Chemical Laboratory. E. Geyser-water Reservoir. F. Geyser.

DIAGRAM OF GEYSERS.

(*Dr. George Harley, F.R.S.*)

he decomposable minerals are, and it is further supposed o be heated by subterranean fires.

In case the reader knows but little of chemistry, I may emark that all chemical changes are greatly accelerated by heat, and that superheated steam is a most powerful agent in expediting the decomposition of all earthy and alkaline compounds.

In the case of these subterranean volcanic laboratories, it is utterly impossible for even the scientifically trained mind to conceive what the intensity of the heat may actually be. All he knows is that it is probably vastly greater than suffices to resolve water into its gaseous elements—oxygen and hydrogen—and that even before this point is reached, superheated steam becomed a terrifically formidable explosive agent. Look at what it did at Ban-dai-san in Japan a few years ago, when it actually split a mountain three miles in circumference in twain, and blew one half of it right across a valley; just as if it had been the mere outside wall of a house. And so great was the force of the windshock it occasioned that all the trees growing on the opposite mountain's side were knocked down by it as if they had been mere nine-pins.*

In the case of the geyser, superadded to the superheated steam's explosive power, there will be in addition that of the chemical gases liberated by the decomposition of the carbonates, sulphates, and chlorides (under the combined influence of heat and water) in chamber (c), which I call for the nonce the chemical laboratry. Not alone will all the earthy and alkaline, but even metallic compounds, like iron pyrites, therein contained, be rapidly decomposed on the advent of the superheated water. And from their liberated gaseous elements being held in a confined space, they will acquire an enormous explosive

* In "Nature," of the 17th January, 1889, at p. 279, will be found an account, by Dr. Vaughan Harley, of the scene of devastation it presented when he visited it in the month of October, 1888.

power. Consequently, there is no difficulty in understanding how that on obtaining entrance into chamber (E) by means of conduit (D), they will instantly expel from it all its water. And from the water finding no other outlet except by vent (F), it will rush through it, and, by virtue of the propelling force of the gases, be thrown high into the air in the form of a geyser. Whose activity will only last so long as the supply of water in chamber (F) remains unexhausted.

The above being an outline of the salient points of what I consider to be a rational, though it may be incomplete, theory of the geyser ebullition I saw in the Yellowstone Park, I shall now add a concluding word on the probable mode of action of the so-called "earth-sod emetic" that my daughter describes as having been given to the "Strokkur" geyser in Iceland in order to make it eject its water.

The mode of action of the sods, I think, is easily enough explained on the supposition that the Strokkur geyser has a constriction at some point or another in its vent, and that the sods plug it up sufficiently to hold back the steam and water until they have accumulated sufficient power to blow out the obstructing body, and escape after it with a rush into the air. Precisely in the same way as a fermenting barrel of beer, when its vent-hole accidentally becomes plugged up, blows out its bung, and its fluid contents gush forth.

THE END.