sion took place between the contending parties. While yet the subject was in agitation before the assembled people, a messenger hurried into the place of meeting with the intelligence, that subterranean fire had burst out in the country to the south, and was consuming every thing before it. The heathens exclaimed, that it was not wonderful the gods should burn with anger at the new and detestable heresies which were thus introduced into the country.—"But wherefore," cried Snorro, a zealous advocate for the Christian cause, "wherefore was the anger of your gods kindled, when the "very rock was burning, on which we now stand." The lake of Thingvalla is in the midst of a volcanic country, and lofty cliffs of lava environed the place of public assembly. The promptitude of the reply had its full effect; the heathen party were repulsed; and though the discussion still continued, the ardour and abilities of the Christians triumphed over all obstacles, and procured a final decision in their favour, which was pronounced with much solemnity by Thorgeir, the chief magistrate of the island. Upon the promulgation of this act, all religious contests were suspended, and the whole people espoused the faith, to which the wise and the learned among them had given their assent.*

Christianity being thus introduced into Iceland, the forms of a religious establishment were soon afterwards adopted: numerous churches were erected; a provision made by tithe for the support of the clergy, and two bishops created, one for the southern, the other for the northern district of the island. Isleif, the first bishop of Skalholt, was ordained in 1057: Jonas Ogmundson was fifty years afterwards invested with the same office at Hoolum in the northern province.

* See the Kristni Saga, and Hist. Eccles. Island. vol. 1. p. 60.

During the early periods of the Icelandic church, the bishops were chosen by the collected voice of the people at the great public assembly: they were men eminent for piety, talents, and learning, and their influence was successfully exerted to maintain the purity of the religion over which they presided. The superstitious practices of the ancient mythology were abolished, and the church of Rome not yet having acquired sufficient influence to substitute its errors in their stead, a simple and undisturbed exercise of religion was enjoyed by the Icelanders, for nearly two centuries after the first introduction of Christianity into the country.

Another event, connected with the history of Iceland at this period, was the discovery of Greenland, effected about the year 972, by a Norwegian named Eric, who had settled in Iceland a short time before. Desirous of establishing a colony there, he called the country *Groenland*, with the design, as it would appear, of alluring settlers by the idea thus given of the country. In this project he succeeded. A year or two afterwards, twenty-five vessels were fitted out on the western coast for an expedition to Greenland; of which number it appears that fourteen reached the newly discovered shores.* A colony was soon established; the population rapidly increased; and in the progress of the ensuing century, a great extent of the eastern coast, opposite to Iceland, became inhabited. Christianity was introduced there at an early period, and the bishop of Garde, which was the principal establishment of the country, was known even to the Roman Pontiffs of the age. The colonists maintained a constant commercial intercourse with Iceland and Norway; and the records of the settlement come down uninterruptedly to

* Landnama Book, Part 2. cap. 14.

the beginning of the fifteenth century, when at once every trace and vestige of it are lost. The causes of this singular fact have never yet been fully ascertained. It is the most probable supposition that an accumulation of ice took place about this time on the Greenland coast, preventing the access to it from the sea; and this idea is confirmed by the narratives of later voyagers in these seas, and by the failure of several expeditions sent out to discover the settlement, all of which have been thus intercepted. Of the fate therefore of this ancient colony, commonly called by distinction Old Greenland, nothing is yet known. The same accumulation of ice, which separated it from the rest of the world, was probably the cause of the unfavourable change which appears about this time to have occurred in the climate of Iceland; the breadth of the sea intervening between the two countries not exceeding three hundred miles.*

Another maritime adventure is due to the enterprising age before us, more remarkable in itself, though less important in its consequences, than that just mentioned. It is a fact well ascertained, though not generally known, that the north-eastern part of the American coast was discovered at this period by the voyagers of these northern countries; and that during two centuries it continued to be frequently visited by the Icelanders and Norwegians, for the purposes either of curiosity or commerce. This singular discovery was made A. D. 1001, by Biorn Heriolfson, an Icelander, who, on a voyage to Greenland, was driven by unfavourable winds towards the south, and reached a flat woody coast, which, from several circumstances in the ori-

* See Egede's History of Greenland; Torfæi Groenlandiæ Antiq. Descript.; and the Hist. Groenlandiæ of Arngrim Jonas.

ginal narrative, we may presume to have been that of Labrador. Attracted by the report of this voyage, Leif, the son of Eric the discoverer of Greenland, fitted out a vessel with the design of pursuing the same adventure; though unprovided with any of those aids which science furnishes to the navigators of modern times. Passing the coasts which Biorn had before seen, and continuing his course towards the south-west, he reached a strait which separated a large island from the mainland. Near this place, finding the country fertile and pleasant, he and his companions dragged their vessel on shore, and building huts, remained there during the winter. From the observation they made that wild vines grew in the country, they gave it the name of Vinland. They remarked also that the days during the winter were much longer than in Iceland, and the weather considerably more temperate. In the spring, Leif returned to Greenland, and was succeeded in the enterprize by his brother Thorvald, who arrived in safety at Vinland, and remaining two winters there, explored a considerable extent of the country and coasts. In the course of the third summer, however, he was killed in a combat with the natives, who appear now to have been seen for the first time, and who attacked the Icelanders with arrows and darts, irritated by an act of barbarous cruelty which Thorvald had committed towards some of their number. Soon after this time it appears that a regular colony was established in Vinland by a wealthy Icelander, called Thorfin; and that the colonists, increasing in numbers, carried on with the natives a regular traffic in furs, skins, and other articles.* Thorfin himself, having remained there three years, returned to Iceland, greatly enriched by his adventure,

* The natives were called by the Icelanders *Skrælingar*, signifying feeble or diminutive men.

and making a very favourable report of the climate and productions of the new country. Few particulars, however, are afforded us of the after progress of the settlement, and though we have a record of it in the early part of the twelfth century, when a bishop of Greenland went over to promulgate the Christian faith among the colonists, scarcely a vestige of its existence occurs beyond this time, and the name and situation of the ancient Vinland are now entirely unknown to the world. Whether the colonists left the country at any particular time, or whether, separated from their connexion with Europe, they were gradually blended with the savage tribes surrounding them, must for ever remain a matter of doubt.*

* The reader who wishes farther to investigate this singular subject may consult the Landnama Book, the Eyrbyggia Saga, the Annales Flateyenses, the Heimskringla of Snorro Sturleson, and, among more modern writings, Arngrim's Hist. Gronlandiæ, Torfæus's Hist. Vinland. Antiq., the Hist. Eccles. Islandiæ, &c. The well-known Venetian narrative of the voyages of Nicolo and Antonio Zeni, at the close of the fourteenth century, might be admitted as a farther evidence, did it not bear the character of one of those maritime romances, which were so common among the Venetians during the period of their commercial greatness. This narrative, however, in describing an extensive country, called Estotiland, situated to the south-west of Greenland, and which had before been visited by the Icelanders for the purposes of traffic, proves at least that the discovery of the northern navigators was not unknown by report to the people of the south of Europe. So many testimonies, indeed, direct or indirect, have come down to us on the subject of the ancient Vinland, that it is impossible not to admit the fact of their general authenticity. There is more room for doubt as to the exact situation of the place, thus named. By some it has been supposed (Hist. Eccles. Isl. Tom. 1. p. 4.) that it might be as far towards the south as Virginia: others have conceived, with more reason, that it was situated on some part of the coast of Labrador, probably near to the island of Newfoundland. Mallet, who in his Introduct. a l'Hist. de Dannemarc, has an ingenious disquisition on this subject, adopts the latter opinion; and in the first edition of his work, cites the evidence of Father Charlevoix, a traveller into these countries, and of Dr Baumgartens,

The sketch which has now been given of the habits, institutions, and arts of the ancient Icelanders, is by no means an exaggerated picture of this singular and interesting people. The comparative eminence, however, to which in this age they attained, was not destined to be permanent; and the rapid advancement of other states towards civilization, concurred with changes in their own condition, to effect an entire alteration in the balance subsisting between them. Even the period of the commonwealth, though the most brilliant and remarkable in the history of Iceland, presents not throughout the pleasing features which have just been delineated. In the progress of time, numerous intestine evils sprung up to disturb the repose of the people; and the middle of the thirteenth century is signalized in their history by the transference of the island to the power of the Norwegian kings, three hundred and forty years after the establishment of the free constitution, under which they so greatly flourished. Several probable causes may be assigned for this change, some of them collateral, others perhaps connected with the nature of the constitution itself. There appears to have been a constant leaning of the aristocracy, which formed the basis of the government, towards an oligarchy; and in the later periods of the commonwealth, disturbances were excited by ambitious individuals, who aimed at the possession of more influence in the state than

a learned German writer, to prove that the Esquimaux Indians, in this part of Labrador, differ materially in person, habits, and language, from the other North American tribes; from which the possibility is inferred that these may be the remnants of the ancient European colonists. That wild grapes were found in Vinland, cannot be considered an objection to this idea of the situation of the country, since modern travellers have ascertained that a species of wild vine grows native on the American coast, even as far to the north as the shores of Hudson's Bay.

the constitution allowed. Where large feudal property and hereditary rights were connected with talent, ambition, and enterprize, it was natural to expect that efforts would be made to infringe the aristocratical equality, which existed in the spirit and design of the commonwealth. Accordingly we find about this period the relation of numerous contests between the more powerful chieftains of the state; and the annals of Iceland are for a time disgraced by the record of sedition, rapine, and bloodshed.*

The liberties of the Icelanders might possibly, however, have survived these intestine feuds, had not other circumstances co-operated with their effect. The Norwegian monarchs, though making no direct attempts to subjugate the island, yet appear to have contemplated at an early period its annexation to their power. This desire was doubtless confirmed by the increasing prosperity of the Icelanders during the eleventh and twelfth centuries; and the means of accomplishing their design were afforded by the disturbances which afterwards occurred. These broils appear to have been fomented by the concealed interference of the Norwegians, who were admitted to a constant intercourse with the island; and who, while aggravating the internal evils under which it suffered, held out to the people the most specious promises of assistance and protection. By such promises, the kings of Norway gained over some of the most eminent of the Icelanders; and persuaded them to urge, even in the councils of the nation, the necessity of composing their feuds by giving themselves to the dominion of a single potentate.

* These contests between the chieftains were not always trivial or unimportant. Instances are related where bodies of twelve or thirteen hundred men, and fleets of twenty vessels, were engaged on one side in such conflicts. Hist. Eccles. Island. Vol. 1. p. 103.

The celebrated Snorro Sturleson, who resided two years at the Norwegian court, and was received there with many honours, was suspected of having aided this cause; a suspicion from which he incurred much odium among his fellow-citizens.

The efforts of the Norwegians, protracted through a long period, were finally successful. The Icelanders, wearied of feuds and contests, consented at last to resign their independence; and, in 1261, an act of the national assembly, unattended with violence or the compulsion of arms, delivered up the greater part of the island to Haco, the reigning king of Norway. The eastern province which at first opposed this act, three years afterwards adopted the same course. It was not, however, a blind submission to arbitrary power which appeared in this revolution. Regular treaties were established between the Icelanders and their future sovereigns; and the acknowledgement of the kingly sway was preceded by conditions, which made it rather an alliance than a timid surrender of rights. All property was secured in the island; no tribute exacted; a liberal provision was made for the external traffic of the inhabitants, and a title given them to the acquirement of honours and civil offices in the kingdom of Norway itself. It was provided that the government of Iceland should be administered by a delegate from the king, either a Norwegian or a native of the island. Little change appears to have been made in the internal government of the country; and the celebrated code of laws, called the *Jonsbok*, which was given to the Icelanders in 1280, by Magnus the successor of Haco, was merely a revised and amended form of the more ancient body of laws, framed for the commonwealth of Iceland.*

* A detailed account of this change in the government of Iceland is given in

The short period during which the island remained subject to the native Norwegian monarchs, is dignified by no remarkable event. The laws were administered by the governors of the country in a mild and equitable manner; and it does not appear that any attempts were made to infringe upon the conditions on which the liberties of Iceland were surrendered. The internal feuds, which preceded and produced this event, were in great measure composed, and the inhabitants at large remained in a state of perfect order and tranquillity.

The annexation of Norway to the power of Denmark in 1380, was an event of little importance to the interests of Iceland, and can scarcely be considered as forming an epoch in its history. The island was transferred to the Danish monarchy without tumult or opposition. The laws were maintained in their former state; and the administration committed, as before, to a governor appointed by the crown. These prefects of the island were sometimes natives, sometimes Norwegians or Danes. Though it was intended they should reside in the country, this does not appear to have been generally done; and many of them visited their government only once in the year, to inspect and regulate its various concerns.

This is the last political change which occurs in the history of Iceland. The records we possess of the succeeding periods are less numerous and less valuable than those which

Torfæus's Hist. Norv. Tom. 4. lib. 5. Also in the Hist. Eccles. Isl. T. 1. p. 373 et seq. The code of laws presented to the Icelanders at this time was called *Jonsbok*, from the name of the governor, by whom it was introduced into the island. Some of the most eminent among the natives, particularly the poet and historian Sturla Thordson, assisted in its compilation from the ancient laws of the republic.

relate to the times already described. The historians of these later ages are occupied chiefly in the detail of events, neither very interesting in themselves, nor affecting beyond the moment the condition or circumstances of the people. Their narratives are remarkable for accuracy and minuteness; but they are spread over too broad and uniform a surface; and are little relieved by any of the ornaments of style or composition. The history of Iceland, however, though now destitute of political event, is still the history of a people; and the four last centuries have exhibited some features not wholly unworthy of attention.

The change in the constitution of the island, from its annexation to an European monarchy, produced, as might have been expected, a corresponding change in the character and habits of the people. Before this event, each individual, possessing property, formed an integral part of the government of his country. Definite objects of ambition existed to every member of the community; and vigour, activity, and talent, gave political importance, as well as private influence, to those in whom these qualities appeared. This, in the same degree, could no longer be the case, when the island was subjected to the government of a foreign power. The great assembly of the people was still summoned to its annual meeting at Thingvalla; and still, under the cognizance of the Governor, enforced the execution of the laws; but its national deliberations had now lost much of their spirit and importance. The influence of property and of personal merit were diminished in the same proportion; and the efforts of individual ambition tacitly and without violence repressed. Had the foreign yoke been a tyrannical one, the primeval spirit of the Icelanders might possibly have been maintained by the persecution which laboured to suppress it. But the case was

far otherwise. The Norwegian, and subsequently the Danish monarchs, exercised their sway with a lenient and forbearing hand; not merely refraining from oppression, but giving much attention to the interests and welfare of this remote part of their dominions. The customs and feelings of the people were respected; the laws administered with equity, and tranquillity maintained throughout all classes of the inhabitants.

To these circumstances we may chiefly attribute the change which appears about this period to have taken place in the national character of the people, and the distinction existing between the ancient Icelanders and their posterity of the present age. Repose and security, succeeding to internal broils, produced a state of comparative apathy and indolence. The same call was not made for individual exertion, nor the same rewards proposed to its successful exercise. Rank and property became more nearly equalized among the inhabitants; and, all looking up to a superior power, the spirit of independence declined, and they expected from others the support and protection which they had once afforded to themselves. Their ardour in maritime adventure was checked at the same time by the revolution which took place in the government of the island. The trade which they had formerly carried on in the products of their country, was now gradually transferred to the natives of other kingdoms; and a copious source of activity and exertion thus in great measure extinguished. It appears, too, that about this period, the agriculture of the country declined; owing either to a change in the nature of the climate, or to diminished industry on the part of the inhabitants. These combined causes had a permanent influence upon the character of the Icelanders. The simplicity and warm social affections, which belonged to the ancient race, were still preserved unimpaired; but their independence, vi-

gour, and activity, were now almost entirely lost, and will probably never be regained.

The period immediately succeeding the union of Iceland to the Danish crown, was more especially unfortunate for the welfare of the country. In 1402, a plague broke out in the island, which in the course of this and the two following years swept away, if the accounts preserved may be depended upon, nearly two-thirds of the whole population.* This tremendous affliction was succeeded by a season of such inclemency, that scarcely a tenth part of the cattle on the island escaped destruction. Another epidemic pestilence prevailed towards the close of the century, which, though less disastrous than the former, carried off a large part of the population and produced much general distress. The calamities of the island at this period were further increased by the occasional incursions of English pirates; who landing on different parts of the coast, plundered the property of the natives, committed frequent murders, and carried many persons into captivity.†

* "Anno 1402, atrox Islandiam pestilentia prevagari cœpit, qua multi morta-"les ita subite extincti sunt, ut quidam dicto citius perirent puerique, adulti, et "senes indifferenter animam efflarent; tantusque fuit contagionis furor ut sæpe ex "12 vel 15 qui unum mortuum sepultum ibant, vix duo aut tres domum incolumes "redirent." *Hist. Eccl. Isl. Tom.* 2. *p.* 135. Very few particulars are transmitted to us by the Icelandic writers with respect to this dreadful disease, nor are its nature and causes distinctly explained; but it may be presumed with some probability to have been the same epidemic which, about the middle of the 14th century, extended its effects over a great part of the European continent. Some accounts say that it was introduced into Iceland from Britain.

† See the annals of Biorn de Skardsaa, and various parts of the Hist. Eccles. Islandiæ. On this subject, a long and curious document is given in vol. iv. p. 162. of the latter work, in which are preserved the names of many of the English pirates who infested the coasts of Iceland between the years 1419 and 1425; and a minute narrative of the various enormities they committed From this document it appears, that most of these piratical vessels were fitted out at Hull, Lynn, and others of the eastern ports of England; and that they came to Iceland with the double

These events, which concurred with the causes before described in depressing the spirit of the people, and destroying the strength and prosperity of the country, are recorded in the annals of Iceland with an affecting and almost painful simplicity. No attempts are made to excite a sentiment of commiseration, beyond what humanity would of itself yield to the recital of such complicated evils. We are told that whole families were extinguished, and districts depopulated, by the virulence of disease; that the learned, the pious, the wealthy, and the powerful, all dropt into a common grave; that the labours of industry ceased; that genius and literature disappeared; and that the wretched remnant of the Icelanders, scarcely themselves saved from destruction, sunk into a state of apathy, superstition, and ignorance. In pursuing his melancholy narrative, the historian sometimes looks back for a moment to the former celebrity and splendours of his country: but he goes no further; and all beyond is left to the feelings and imagination of the reader.

Though, during this gloomy age, the talents and literature of the Icelanders were depressed almost to extinction, yet we must look to an earlier period for the commencement and primary causes of their decline. The alteration which has just been described as taking place in the character and condition of the people, after they were annexed to a foreign power, could not occur without a corresponding change in their intellectual habits. Of the various motives to literary pursuits which before existed, some in consequence of this event were

view of plunder and of fishing upon the coast. In 1512, the then Governor of the island was put to death by some of these marauders. The intercourse of the English with Iceland at this period was not, however, universally thus disgraced. During a considerable part of the 15th century, they appear to have carried on a fair traffic with the inhabitants in the products of the country.

entirely lost, and others so much enfeebled, as to produce few of their original and wonted effects. Talents and knowledge were no longer associated with that political influence, of which before they formed the fairest ornament and the most stable security. Though proud of the eminence which their acquirements had given them among other nations, and attached to the habits and pursuits of their forefathers, these prepossessions were not sufficient to preserve unimpaired the spirit which had once animated their career. A circumstance which assisted to produce its decline, was the change progressively taking place in the customs and institutions of those countries, with which the Icelanders had before been most intimately connected. The European nations were now beginning to liberate themselves from that bondage of ignorance and superstition, which, during the dark period of the middle ages, had suspended all but the sterner and more impetuous qualities of human nature. The restoration of civil and social order, while it gave repose to the mind, invited the exercise of those faculties, by which leisure might at once be occupied and adorned: knowledge and the arts rapidly revived, and the native literature of every country was protected and encouraged, by those who appeared before only as the oppressors of its growth. Under these circumstances, the poets and historians of Iceland were received with fewer honours in the courts where they had once stood so proudly eminent; and their talents were little cherished among nations, in which science had now made equal, or greater progress than among themselves. They retreated gradually into their native island; where, in the little community of their fellow citizens, they still kept alive a feeble remnant of that reputation, which had formerly extended throughout the greater part of Europe.

In addition to the causes just mentioned, there is another, which seems materially to have affected the literature, as well as the general character of the Icelanders during this age. For some time after the introduction of Christianity into the island, the state of religion was distinguished for its purity and simplicity. The active and interested spirit of the Roman church did not, however, long remain dormant, even in this remote part of the Christian world; and, about the close of the 12th century, we find that its superstitious usages and ecclesiastical tyranny began to make innovations upon the religious establishments and customs of the people. Fables of miracles came into vogue; the worship of saints was tolerated; and the bishops of the island, formerly chosen in consequence of their learning and piety, were now recommended chiefly by their subservience to the interests of the Papal see. It appears, too, that even the poverty of the Icelanders did not afford them a security against the pecuniary exactions of the church of Rome. Besides other tributes, the celebrated one called Peter's Pence, was collected at different times among the inhabitants, and the sale of indulgences appears to have been repeatedly carried on, both by foreign missionaries, and by the native bishops of the island. The preaching of the crusades also was attempted in 1275, 1289, and some succeeding years, but with very inconsiderable success. In the first instance, many took up the cross, purchasing dispensations from bearing it to the Holy Land; but in their latter efforts, the missionaries were less successful; and it does not appear, that a single Icelander was at any time drawn away from his country to join in this remote and dangerous contest.*

* See Hist. Eccl. Island. T. 1. p. 571.

The effect of these various circumstances upon the literature of the island was rapidly progressive. The two brothers, Olaf and Sturla Thordson, whose reputation during the 13th century has before been noticed, may be considered the last of the ancient Icelanders who attained any considerable eminence in the arts and knowledge of the age. The historical work of the latter, called Sturlunga Saga, relating the events of his own times, was characterized by a genius worthy of the illustrious family to which he belonged. But he was succeeded by no writer who could claim an affinity of talent to the great names that were extinct. The department of history now degenerated into a mere collection of ecclesiastical fables, the lives of monks and saints, and the stories of miracles, written in a crude style, and displaying little of the erudition or elegance which adorned the compositions of the earlier Icelanders. In the department of poetry, a similar change occurred; the number and reputation of those who were attached to the pursuit, gradually declined; and the few remaining exercised their art in the composition of hymns to the praise of saints and martyrs, which were distinguished only by the rudeness of their structure, and the absence of every beauty of imagery and taste. The study of jurisprudence, so much cherished and so successfully cultivated by the ancient Icelanders, was now exchanged for a laborious attention to the rites and usages of the Catholic church; while the knowledge of the languages, of astronomy, and of the more rational parts of theology, sunk into a state of corresponding depression and decline. This progressive change was completed by the events of the 15th century. The accumulated evils which then oppressed the country, destroyed all that was left of its former literature and greatness, and the annals of Iceland during this period, are the

records only of mental depression, and of physical calamities and suffering. *

The introduction of printing into the island, and the reformation of religion which soon after took place, give a more pleasing character to the commencement of the succeeding century. The first printing press was erected at Hoolum, in the northern province, about the year 1530, under the auspices of John Areson, who was at that time the bishop of this see. Though an illiterate and uncultivated man, he was extremely ambitious; and wished to avail himself of all the means which literature might afford for the promotion of his influence in the country. With this view, he procured as his secretary, a Swede of the name of Mathiesson, who, coming over to Iceland, brought with him a printing press, and made a small establishment for its use. The types were originally of wood, and very rudely formed; and the only works issuing from the press during the first forty years after its institution, were a few breviaries, church rituals, and calendars. In 1574, however, Gudbrand Thorlakson, bishop of Hoolum, made very great improvements in the printing establishment at that place, providing new presses and types, some of which were constructed by his own hand, and bestowing the utmost care upon the correction of every work, which was printed during his lifetime. Before the century had elapsed, a number of valuable publications made their appearance, greatly improved in their style of composition, and displaying a neatness and even elegance of execution, very

* It has been supposed by Schlozer, that the language of the Icelanders, as well as their literature, was materially affected by the events of this age. It is more probable, however, that the alterations which have taken place in the Icelandic language were made progressively, and not at any particular period.

remarkable at this early period of the use of printing in the country.

The reformation of religion in Iceland was not accomplished without some disturbance. Early in the 16th century, the Lutheran doctrines had begun to combat the superstition and tyranny of the Catholic church; and their influence was greatly aided by the zeal of the Danish monarch, Christian III, who, having abolished the usages of popery in his continental dominions, wished to extend this reformation to the religious establishment in Iceland. His intentions, and the progressive change of opinion from the growing knowledge of the people, were strenuously opposed by those of the clergy who were attached to the former state of religion; and particularly by John Areson, the bishop of Hoolum, whose ambitious and assuming character has already been noticed. The power which this man had acquired in the country, and the haughty violence of his temper, led him into acts of open hostility against the reformers. Attended by a body of armed men, he left his northern diocese, and proceeding into the western province, seized the person of Einarson, the bishop of Skalholt, who had some time before espoused the Lutheran doctrines, and was at this time engaged in visiting the different churches of his district. In the course of the following year, however, he was himself arrested by order of the king of Denmark; and being accused of various crimes, was beheaded at Skalholt, together with his two natural sons, who had participated in the violence and usurpations of their father. After his death, no opposition was made to the new doctrines; and in 1551 the Reformation was legally established, and universally received throughout the country. About the same time, the public schools of the island, which, toge-

ther with its other institutions, had almost been annihilated by the disastrous events of the 15th century, were again established, under the patronage of the king of Denmark; and such funds attached to them, as afforded facilities of education to those of every class among the inhabitants. At the time of their revival, it was found difficult to obtain in the country men of sufficient learning to discharge the office of teachers; so greatly had the condition of literature been depressed. Several of the Icelanders, however, having been sent to Copenhagen, to pursue their studies at that university, the schools of the island were afterwards conducted by men whose talents and acquirements well fitted them for this important duty.

The events which have just been described, render the period of the 16th century, a new era in the history of Iceland. Though the former condition and character of the people were never entirely restored, yet their situation appears to have been considerably improved, and their more intellectual habits again excited to that exertion which once conferred so much celebrity upon the country. But the revival of literature among the Icelanders was attended by none of those remarkable circumstances which distinguished its original propagation and growth. The relation of their little community to the neighbouring kingdoms of the north was at this time completely changed: the disparity of their physical condition exerted all its natural influence; and the flame which was again kindled among them, shone dimly beneath the splendours of that sun of science which had now risen over the nations of Europe. In later periods, the literary fame of the Icelanders has rarely been extended beyond the limits of their native island: and though the progress of their knowledge has, in a certain degree, kept pace with that of other coun-

tries, yet this must be regarded rather as an extension of the growth of the latter, than as the effect of any internal powers of acquisition or improvement.

During the century which succeeded the restoration of literature in Iceland, several individuals appeared, whose abilities and learning gave them considerable celebrity in their native island. It may be remarked, however, that almost all these eminent characters were either bishops, or masters of the public schools, the diffusion of knowledge not having yet taken place to such an extent as to include those belonging to inferior classes of the community. The person whose name is most conspicuous among the restorers of learning, was Gudbrand Thorlakson, bishop of Hoolum. Born in 1542, he studied for some years in the school of Hoolum, and afterwards at the university of Copenhagen, where his talents and industry gained him the intimate friendship of Tycho Brahe, Resenius, Paul Matthias, and other celebrated men in the Danish court. When yet only thirty years of age, he was appointed to the see of Hoolum; an office which he sustained during the long period of fifty-six years, in a manner most honourable to himself, and advantageous to his country. His labours for the promotion of knowledge were unwearied and incessant. Having reformed the printing establishment of the island, he occupied himself in the superintendance of the press; and as the best testimony of his diligence in this office, we have a catalogue of between eighty and ninety works, which were either written by himself, or published under his immediate patronage and direction. The greater part of these publications were of a theological nature; and many of them translations of the more eminent works in divinity, which at this time appeared on the continent of Europe. To the zeal and learning of Thorlakson himself, the Icelanders were in-

debted for the first translation of the Bible into their native language; which was published in folio in 1584, and afterwards under other forms better adapted to the common use of the people. About the same time, an edition appeared of the *Log-bok*, or Icelandic code of laws; and succeeding it, several other works of much value, in reference to the history and other circumstances, physical as well as political, of the country.

Another very eminent individual of this age was Arngrim Jonas; the intimate friend and, for many years, the coadjutor of Bishop Thorlakson in the duties of the episcopal office. He was associated in all the schemes for the promotion of literature, which so much distinguished the career of the latter; and twenty-six different works in various branches of divinity, history, jurisprudence, and philology, attest equally the extent of his acquirements, and his zeal for the progress of general knowledge. The most valuable of his writings are those which relate to the history of his native island; the early condition of which, especially during the period of the commonwealth, he has illustrated with singular diligence and success. His works are for the most part composed in Latin, and are remarkable for the purity and elegance of their style, in which he appears greatly to have excelled all his contemporaries.* Of the other historical writers who distinguished themselves at this period, the most eminent was Biorn de Skardsaa; whose annals of Iceland from the year 1400 to 1645, exhibit an extreme minuteness of narrative; animated, however, by few interesting or important events, and deficient

* The most important of the writings of Arngrim Jonas were the Crymogæa; the Brevis Commentarius de Islandia; Anatome Blekfeniana; Historia Groenlandiæ; Specimen Islandiæ Historicum; Compendium Historiæ Norvegiæ; Tractatus de successione ab intestato; Discursus de Literis Runicis, &c.

in the ornaments of composition and style. His work, nevertheless, is valuable, as filling up an interval in the history of Iceland, which has been less dwelt upon than any other by the native writers of the country; and its singular simplicity of character affords an evidence of its perfect authenticity.*

The history of the island during the 17th century is almost wholly destitute of remarkable events. The condition of the people, their laws and government, continued nearly in the same state. The commercial connexions of the country underwent some change about the beginning of the century, in consequence of an edict of Christian the Fourth, which conveyed a monopoly of the traffic with the island to certain commercial towns within the dominion of Denmark. For some time prior to this regulation it had been in the hands of the merchants of Hamburgh and Bremen, who appear to have carried it on with considerable success. The piratical incursions of foreigners, which, during the unfortunate period of the 15th century, had added to the other afflictions of the Icelanders, were still frequently continued; and little opposition being made to their lawless attacks by a timid and unarmed people, the banditti carried rapine and oppression along every part of the coast. Even as late as 1616, the English and French nations bore a part in these enormities; which the more engage detestation, as being exercised against those who were subject from their situation to all the evils of poverty and want. The most calamitous event of this kind occurred in 1627, when a large body of Algerine pirates landed on various parts of the southern coast of the island; and not satisfied

* The other writings of Biorn de Skardsaa are, the Tractatus de Groenlandia; Glossarium Juridicum; Tractatis Juridici; Illustratio odarum in Edda Sæmundina, &c.

with the booty they obtained, murdered between forty and fifty of the inhabitants, and carried off nearly four hundred prisoners of both sexes. These unfortunate captives transported to Algiers, were exposed there to so much wretchedness, that nine years afterwards, when the king of Denmark obtained their liberty by ransom, only thirty-seven out of the whole number were found to be surviving. Of these, thirteen succeeded in reaching their native island.*

Though the feelings and practices of superstition have never gained more ground in Iceland than among the greater communities of Europe, yet at some periods they appear to have existed to a considerable extent; and the 17th century is remarkable for many excesses derived from this source. Numerous individuals, both of the clergy and laity, were accused of dealing in the arts of magic; and several of these, being pronounced guilty of the offence, were sentenced to be burnt alive. For some time the belief in necromancy was so general, and its supposed practises held in so much horror, that in the course of sixty years, not fewer than twenty persons perished in the flames. The superstition afterwards gradually declined; and at present few of its vestiges are to be found in the country.

The later periods in the history of Iceland are too much distinguished by the record of physical calamities. The 18th century was ushered in by a dreadful mortality consequent

* The Westmann Islands, situated on the southern coast of Iceland, suffered more particularly from the Algerines; almost their whole population being destroyed or carried into captivity. Olaus Egilson, a priest in these islands, who had been made a captive, but obtained his release from Algiers in 1629, left a manuscript relation of this event, which has since been published in Danish. Biorn de Skardsaa, and other writers, have also left narratives of these piracies; and on the same subject a poem was composed by Gudmond Erlendson, the author of a translation of Æsop's fables into Icelandic verse.

upon the small pox; which, in 1707, raged with such epidemic virulence, as to destroy more than 16,000 of the inhabitants. The years intervening between 1753 and 1759 were so exceedingly inclement, that the cattle perished in vast numbers from the scarcity of food, and a famine ensuing carried off nearly 10,000 people. The year 1783 was signalized by an event, more alarming in itself, and not less disastrous in its consequences. Several volcanic eruptions had already occurred in different parts of the island during the preceding periods of the century; but without producing, in a country so thinly peopled, any very extensive devastation or distress. At this time, however, the great eruption took place in the Skaptaa-Syssel; the most tremendous perhaps in its nature and extent by which Iceland or any other part of the globe has been afflicted. The sudden extinction of a submarine volcano near Cape Reikianes, which during some months had continued to burn with extreme violence, was succeeded by frequent and dreadful earthquakes, and by the bursting out of the volcanic fire, in a tract of country nearly two hundred miles distant. The scene of the latter eruption appears to have been among the lofty mountains, called the Skaptaa Jokul, situated in the interior of the island, and known to the natives themselves only by the remote view of their summits, clad in perpetual snows. From this desolate and unfrequented region, vast torrents of lava issued forth, overwhelming all before them, and filling up the beds of great rivers in their progress towards the sea. For more than a year, a dense cloud of smoke and volcanic ashes covered the whole of Iceland, obscuring almost entirely the light of the sun, and extending its effects even to the northern parts of continental Europe; the cattle, sheep, and horses of the country were destroyed; a famine, with its

attendant diseases broke out among the inhabitants, and the small-pox invaded the island at the same time with its former virulence and fatal effects. From these combined causes, more than eleven thousand people perished during the period of a few years; an extent of calamity which can only be understood, by considering that this number forms nearly a fourth part of the whole present population of the country. The destruction of the fishery upon the southern coasts of the island, by the volcanic eruptions just described, was another more permanent source of distress, which even at the present time is not entirely removed.

The literature of the Icelanders in later times, though affected in some degree by the various evils of their situation, has nevertheless been preserved from decline; and may perhaps be considered as having made a certain progress, in its connection with the general advancement of knowledge among the nations of Europe. The names of numerous poets and historians still appear in the literary records of the island, and the introduction of new and important branches of science has given to the learning of the country a more extensive and diversified character, than it possessed even in the most splendid periods of its ancient history. It is probable, however, that the proportion of the inhabitants devoted to such pursuits, has in later periods been considerably diminished; and this change may be regarded perhaps as forming the most remarkable distinction between the present and former state of literature in the country. The few are still not unworthy of the names of their ancestors; but the people at large, though possessing a mental cultivation far above their physical circumstances, have probably declined from that spirit of progress and improvement, which so much distinguished the early condition of their community.

The names of Thormodus Torfæus, Arnas Magnæus, and Finnur Jonson, are the most celebrated of those which have adorned the modern literature of Iceland. Torfæus, who was born in 1636, and educated first at the school of Skalholt, and afterwards in the university of Copenhagen, acquired a high reputation at the Danish court, from the extent of his erudition and acquirements; and in 1682 was appointed the historiographer of Norway; a situation for which the number and value of his historical writings shew that he was peculiarly well qualified. Of these writings, the most important are the 'Series of Dynasties and Kings of Denmark,' and the 'History of Norway;' both published at Copenhagen in the beginning of the last century.* Still more conspicuous for his devotion to literary pursuits was the learned and eminent Arnas Magnæus, the son of an obscure country priest in the western part of Iceland. Raised from the original lowness of his situation by extraordinary efforts of industry and talent, he attained in 1694, when only thirty-one years of age, the honourable situation of professor of philosophy in the university of Copenhagen; and a few years afterwards was invested with the further offices of professor of northern antiquities, and secretary of the royal archives. His exertions for the progress of knowledge were laborious and incessant. Besides composing himself several important works, he collected at great labour and expence a magnificent library, illustrative of the literature and antiquities of the north; and especially valuable in reference to the literature of his native island, which he visited several times with the view of collecting all the books and manuscripts extant

* The other most valuable writings of Torfæus are the Historia Færoensium; Historia Orcadensium; Vinlandia Antiqua; Groenlandia Antiqua, &c.

ndic language. The greater part of this library
y consumed by the fire which happened at
1728; and the unfortunate Magnæus, present
w the fruits of his long continued industry
course of a few hours almost entirely de-
l two years afterwards, and bequeathed to the
versity the remnant of his literary treasures,
ndance of certain trustees, selected from
rned men in the Danish metropolis. *
rite pupil, Finnur Jonson, is another of
s who, during the last century, have
ve unimpaired the character and re-
ountry. Created bishop of Skalholt in
17[illegible] office during the remainder of a long
life, [illegible] to the promotion of happiness and
improve[illegible] the community of his fellow citizens.
In his adn[illegible]k, the Ecclesiastical History of Iceland,
he has beque[illegible]o them a monument of extensive erudi-
tion, genuine [illegible] and warm patriotic feelings, which will
long continue as [illegible]e of the fairest and most illustrious orna-
ments of their literature. †

It would be impossible to mention here even the names of all the Icelanders, who, in these later periods, have distin-

* The works of Arnas Magnæus are chiefly historical and critical. In his early youth he was a pupil of the celebrated Bartholin, and assisted him in the composition of his great work on Danish antiquities. His character is admirably drawn by his friend Bishop Jonson (Hist. Eccl. Island. vol. 3. p. 576), to whose intrepidity, at the time of the great fire in Copenhagen, we owe the preservation of some of the manuscripts from the Magnæanian library.

† The Historia Ecclesiastica Islandiæ was published at Copenhagen in four volumes quarto. It is written in Latin of remarkable elegance; and is replete with valuable information, not solely in relation to the ecclesiastical affairs, but also the political history and literature of the island.

guished themselves in the departments of history, poetry, theology, criticism, and physical science; but in a succeeding chapter, on the present state of Icelandic literature, some remarks will be found, illustrative of the actual progress of the people in these various branches of knowledge. Though among themselves a careful record is preserved of all the authors and learned men who have appeared in the country, yet the reputation of few of these individuals has been conveyed beyond the limits of their native island, and their views towards posterity have for the most part been bounded by the small and remote circle of society in which their destiny was cast. * It must be mentioned, however, to the honour of the court of Denmark, that during the last century, considerable encouragement has been given to the progress of knowledge among the Icelanders; and much pains bestowed upon the revival of the various records of their ancient history and learning. For some time, several of the most eminent literary characters of the Danish metropolis were associated together, under royal patronage, for the purpose of illustrating the antiquities of the north; and to their industry and research, aided by the manuscripts which were preserved in the library of Magnæus, we owe very excellent editions of several of the most important of the early Icelandic writings. The editions of the Sagas which were published under their superintendance, are rendered particularly valuable by Latin translations of the text, and

* The names might be recited of between two and three hundred authors in different departments of literature, who have appeared in Iceland during the period intervening between 1650 and the present time. Besides the three distinguished individuals who are mentioned above, there are many others who appear to have merited well the reputation which they enjoyed among their countrymen. Such are, John Haltorson, Paul Vidalin, Paul Biornson, Jonas Vidalin, Eggert Olafson, Biarne Paulson, Halfdan Einarson, John Finsson, &c.

by the very copious notes and illustrations which are subjoined to them. Among the distinguished men who were engaged in this office, we find the names of Luxdorph, Suhm, Langebeck, and of several Icelanders who had acquired reputation in Copenhagen from their abilities and acquirements.* The most eminent among the latter was the learned Professor Thorkelin, whose exertions in behalf of the literature and other interests of Iceland, are yet continued to his country.

The government of Iceland has undergone no material change during the last century. The country is still attached to the dominion of Denmark; and the charge of its administration is committed, as formerly, to governors appointed by the crown, who have generally resided in the island, and administered its laws in a mild and equitable manner. The change which was introduced some years ago into the judicial establishments of the country, when the courts of law were transferred from Thingvalla to Reikiavik, will be spoken of in the chapter on this subject; and the alterations which have taken place of late in its commercial system will elsewhere be detailed at length.

It is much to be lamented that the history of Iceland may not close here. A calamity, however, remains to be recorded, under which the people of this island are still suffering, and the termination of which is yet uncertain and obscure. Secluded from the rest of Europe, bearing no part in the contentions of more powerful states, gentle and peaceable in all their habits, the Icelanders are nevertheless exposed at the present time to the evils and privations of war. The unhappy contest which has now for some years subsisted be-

* By the lovers of northern literature, the name of Count Suhm, as one of its most active and generous patrons, will ever be held in veneration.

tween England and Denmark, by intercepting the trade to the island, has abridged the few comforts the people before possessed, and deprived them of many things, which might almost be considered the indispensible necessaries of life. An attempt was made some time ago by the British government to obviate this evil; but hitherto, from particular circumstances, without all the success which such an effort deserved. It will surely be viewed as one of the most lamentable features in the history of the times, that a people on whom nature has bestowed so few of her blessings, should be despoiled even of these amid the ruthless and injurious contests of their fellow men. The mind, while it recoils from such a picture, will the more earnestly look forward to the period, when these complicated social calamities may have an end; and when the desolate scenes of nature, as well as the fairest regions of the earth, may no longer echo to the continual tumults of war.

TRAVELS IN ICELAND

DURING THE SUMMER OF THE YEAR

1810.

TRAVELS IN ICELAND, &c.

JOURNAL.

CHAP. I.

HAVING had the good fortune to procure accommodations on board the ship Elbe, belonging to Messrs. Phelps and Company of London, we sailed from Leith, on the 18th of April 1810, for Stromness, where we were to meet that vessel. A favourable wind enabled us to accomplish this part of our voyage in forty-four hours. The Elbe had not arrived; but in the harbour was a brig, the property of the same Company, and also bound for Iceland; which vessel had been blown off the east coast of that island in the month of November.

Expecting every moment the arrival of the Elbe, we could not venture to explore any part of the Orkney Islands, except the immediate neighbourhood of Stromness. It happened, when we approached the Pentland Frith, to be the time of slack tide, so that our passage across it was very pleasant.

There is nothing particularly striking in the first view of the Orkneys. On entering the narrow sounds, we were surprised by the great number of ships assembled in the harbour called the Long Hope. These, together with the rocky shores of the islands, and the hills of Hoy (the highest group in Orkney,) formed a very pleasing scene. The security of the Long Hope, the easy access to it and the excellent harbour of Stromness, together with the light-houses on the Pentland Skerries, seem effectually to remove the terrors of the Pentland Frith; the navigation of which, from the violence and rapidity with which the tide flows through it, had long been considered as extremely hazardous. The town of Stromness is pleasantly situate along the foot of a hill, on the west side of the bay which forms the harbour. The houses, of which some are very good, are crowded together in the utmost confusion; and what is called the street, is a long, narrow, dirty lane, badly paved with flag-stones. It is so narrow in some places that it seems impossible for two wheel-barrows to pass each other; and in walking along, it is not unusual to be stopped by the operation of slaughtering a pig, a sheep, or a calf, in the street, which is never cleaned but by heavy rain. The inn is very comfortable, and we had no cause to complain of what was provided for us. There is often a scarcity of wheaten bread, arising from the uncertainty and irregularity of the supply of flour. The water is excellent; and there is abundance of it for the supply of ships frequenting the harbour.

The state of agriculture in the neighbourhood of Stromness is most wretched; the cottages are filthy, and the inhabitants are very indolent. The black cattle, sheep, and horses, are miserable looking creatures; and the implements of husbandry are of the rudest construction, especially the plough.

It seems that the peasants of Orkney are extremely averse to any innovation on their old practices, and exceedingly jealous of strangers. Of the latter quality we had one proof, while examining some cottages, and taking sketches of them. An old man, who was busy in planting potatoes at a little distance, on seeing us thus employed, left his work, and walking up with as much fierceness as his weather-beaten countenance could express, roughly demanded what we were doing, and why we dared to go into the houses to frighten the children. The proprietors of the Orkney Islands, as they have many difficulties to encounter, will have the greater merit when they shall have improved the condition of the peasantry, as well as the productiveness of the soil.

On the 25th, the Elbe arrived at Stromness. Immediately on her arrival, we went on board, and were received with great kindness by Captain Liston, and Mr Fell, who was going out as agent for Phelps and Company. To these gentlemen, as well as to their employers, we are under very great obligations. Not only did they incommode themselves that every thing might be comfortable to us in point of accommodation, but they continued to make every exertion to render the voyage agreeable.

The island of Iceland is placed in the Atlantic ocean, in a direction nearly north-west from the continent of Europe. Its position has not been very accurately ascertained; but, from the best authorities in our possession, it appears to lie between the 12th and 25th degrees of longitude west from Greenwich; its extreme breadth from east to west being nearly 300 miles. From some notes which were obligingly sent to us by the Danish officers employed in surveying the coast, the latitude of the northern extremity of the island, Cape North, appears to be 66° 30′, which nearly coincides

with the Arctic Circle. In the common maps of the country, it is laid down a degree farther north. The most southern part is in north latitude 63° 40′ nearly; and the broadest part of the island from north to south, is probably not much more than 180 miles.

We sailed on the 28th for Reikiavik, the capital of Iceland. A fine breeze carried us about twenty miles to the westward of Orkney, when we were becalmed; and several ships, bound for America, which had sailed the day before, were seen in the same situation. On our return to Orkney in autumn, we were informed that, at Stromness, the same favourable wind which had carried us only twenty miles, had continued several days, and had given our friends reason to believe that we should have a very short voyage.

The weather soon became unsteady; and a heavy gale of wind overtook us on the 3d of May; but it was not against our course. Early in the morning, one of the sailors, an elderly man, fell from the main-yard upon the deck. On hearing of this accident we got out of bed, and, though it was hardly possible to stand, we contrived to reach the place where he lay, and to bleed him. He died in the evening. At night on the 4th, the wind became more violent, accompanied with snow; and the rigging was stiffened with ice. Moderate weather now succeeded, and as soon as it was clear day-light, we had the pleasure of being summoned upon deck to enjoy the first view of ICELAND. The land first in sight was that called by navigators Cape Hekla, though it is at a considerable distance from the celebrated volcano of that name. The range of enormous mountains, which now appeared soaring above the horizon, was entirely covered with snow; and though we felt considerable joy on finding ourselves so near the end of our voyage, we could not help

being impressed with the very uninviting appearance of the country:—

> Where undissolving, from the first of time,
> Snows swell on snows amazing to the sky;
> And icy mountains high on mountains pil'd,
> Seem to the shivering sailor from afar,
> Shapeless and white, an atmosphere of clouds
> Projected huge, and horrid o'er the surge.

In the evening we passed to the southward of the Westmann Islands, a fine group of rocks, extending to a distance of about twenty miles from the most southern part of Iceland. The navigation round Cape Reikianes, the south-west point of the island, not being deemed safe during the night, we lay to, a little to the westward of the rocks, till day-light, when a fresh breeze came off the land.

In sailing along towards the Cape, we had a fine view of the mountains of the south-west part of Iceland. They are not very high, and the snow had almost disappeared from them. Their rugged summits, and the desolate appearance of their sides, seemed to indicate a volcanic origin; and, with the assistance of a telescope, we thought we could distinguish the places whence lava had flowed. We also saw the vapour rising from the sulphur mountains, which are in this range. Towards Cape Reikianes, the mountains gradually decrease in height, and become more conical; and at length the country is low, and rocky, which renders an approach to the shore very dangerous. Off the Cape are some small rocks, about six miles apart from each other; and beyond them is a sunken reef extending about ten miles farther, and terminating in a rock called, in the Danish chart, *Blinde Fugle Skier*, or the blind bird rock. We steered for the passage between

the Cape and the nearest rock; and, just as we got into it, were becalmed. This circumstance excited considerable anxiety in the captain; but he was soon relieved by perceiving the tide to be in our favour, which carried the ship safely from the rocks. We now turned northwards, and observed that the flat country, between the Cape and the Skagen Point, had the appearance of having been desolated by volcanic eruptions. We sailed backwards and forwards during the night, and began to beat up the Faxè Fiord * at sun-rise, on the 7th of May. The day proved clear, and we had a distinct view of the amphitheatre of mountains which bound the Faxè Fiord. On one hand, the view terminated with the bare, rugged, and gloomy hills stretching towards the east from Cape Reikianes; on the other, with the lofty Snæfell Jokul† towering above the neighbouring snow-covered mountains, which rose in a variety of shapes, forming a most magnificent scene; but such a one as seemed to forbid the approach of man. Where no snow appeared, hideous precipices overhung the sea, or the destructive effects of subterraneous fire were visible on the more level country, where alone an adventurer could hope to find access.

A great number of boats were seen coming from different parts of the coast to fish. Passing near one of them, we hailed it, and took the people and their fish on board. They had caught about thirty cod, halibut, and tusk, or cat fish, for the whole of which they demanded four shillings. The people were clad in sheep skins, which they took off before coming into the ship. This covering has a very singular appearance; but it keeps the fishermen dry, and preserves their

* Fiord means, bay, or frith.

† Jokul (pronounced Yokul) is a name given to such mountains as are perpetually covered with snow.

clothes from being spoiled while they are hauling in the fish. In the north of Iceland they wear seal skins, with hoods fitted to the jackets. The dress of the men in this, and in another boat which afterwards approached the ship, consisted of blue, grey, or black cloth jackets and breeches, and coarse woollen stockings. Their shoes were made of undressed seal skin. Some of them wore woollen caps, with a tassel, varying in colour, hanging at the end. The owner of the first boat had his jacket trimmed with red cloth: he officiated as our pilot. Most of them had on round slouched hats; their hair was long and lank, and several of them had long beards. On our approaching nearer to Reikiavik bay, the pilot of that place, who had been fishing, came on board, and superseded the other, who belonged to a place called Kieblivik. The Reikiavik pilot was a tall, stout, good looking man, but his sheep-skin dress gave him rather a savage appearance.

Viewed from the sea, the capital of Iceland has a very mean appearance. It is built on a narrow flat, between two low hills, having the sea on the north-east, and a small lake on the south-west side. We landed for a short time in the evening; and had we not previously seen the fishermen, we should have been a good deal surprised at the odd figures that flocked about us. The Danish inhabitants, who seldom stir without tobacco pipes in their mouths, were easily distinguished. The beach slopes rapidly; but is extremely convenient for boats at all times of the tide. It is composed entirely of comminuted lava. There were two large wooden platforms, made to be occasionally pushed into the water, for the purpose of loading and unloading the larger boats. The anchorage is good; and the bay is defended from heavy seas by several small islands, which render it a very safe harbour.

The houses, with the exception of one that is constructed

of brick, and the church and prison which are of stone, are formed of wood, coated on the outside with a mixture of tar and red clay. The storehouses, some of which are very large, are built of the same materials, which in every case are put together very neatly. The longest range of houses extends along the beach; the other stretches at a right angle from it at the west end, and is terminated by a house which is used by the merchants as a tavern. At the east end of the town is the Toght-huus, or prison, which having been white-washed, is very conspicuous among the other dark brown buildings. Behind this end of the street, which is on the beach, stands the house of the late governor, Count Trampe; and beyond that, near the lake, is the church; a clumsy building covered with tiles. It is in a sad state of dilapidation, the winds and rain having free access to every part of it. Though sufficiently large to accommodate some hundreds of persons, it is not much frequented on ordinary Sundays. On particular occasions, such as a day of confirmation, it is much crowded. In the neighbourhood of the town there is a considerable number of cottages, all very mean, and inhabited for the most part by the people who work for the merchants. The whole population amounts to about five hundred. On the top of the hill, to the westward, is an observatory, in which a few instruments are usually kept. At present they are in the hands of two Danish officers, who are employed in surveying the coasts.

The drawing from which the engraving is taken was made from some rocks above a cottage a little to the south-east of the town. This is the most favourable view of the town; and it includes part of the range of mountains in the Snæfell Syssel, which is terminated by the Snæfell Jokul.

The spring-tides often rise so high as to overflow the

ground between the governor's house and the church, and the street which runs up from the beach. The water sometimes enters the little gardens which are behind most of the houses. A small stream runs from the lake; and, were its channel deepened, a very useful and commodious harbour might be made.

On shewing some letters received from his Excellency Count Trampe, to his agent Mr Simonson, and to Mr Frydensberg, *the landfoged, or treasurer of the island, they*, without the least hesitation, permitted us to take possession of the Count's house, in which we were afterwards confirmed by a letter, from the Count himself, to Mr Simonson, desiring him to provide accommodations for us in this habitation, which, though small, is very comfortable. It consists of three rooms below, one of which opens into the kitchen, and another is occupied as a public office. There is a pantry well fitted up with shelves, presses, and drawers. The kitchen has a fire place like a smith's forge, with a small grate in the middle, in which the fire is kindled. When a dinner is preparing, different fires are lighted to suit different utensils. The rooms are heated by close stoves connected with the kitchen vent. Above, there is a loft, the access to which is by a narrow trap stair-case. In this there are three apartments, one of which has a stove; the rest of the space is left open for lumber. Adjoining the house is an open court, beyond which are a stable and a cow-house, with a hay loft above them. About a quarter of an acre of indifferent soil behind the house, is inclosed by a paling, and used as a garden. Soon after we went to lodge here, some seeds of turnip, radish, cabbage, pease, cress, and mustard, were sown in a corner of the garden, and what we left unoccupied was

filled by Mr Simonson with potatoes and Swedish turnip seed.

The first visit we paid, after landing on the 8th of May, was to the bishop, Geir Vidalin, who received us with great kindness. He is a good looking man, above the ordinary stature; corpulent, but not unwieldy; with an open countenance, which seems to declare his feelings without disguise. He is an excellent classical scholar, and speaks Latin fluently; and his general knowledge is equal, if not superior, to that of any person in Iceland.

Having learned that we should be obliged frequently to return to Reikiavik, after making excursions into the country, our first care was to arrange our household affairs, and to inquire for horses, which, at this season, were difficult to procure. The grass not having begun to grow, they were still very lean, and unfit for hard service. In several districts a disease had attacked the horses, and carried off great numbers of them. Every body told us that it would be in vain to attempt travelling so early in the season; and as we saw that delay was unavoidable, we resolved to employ ourselves in forming acquaintance, and in observing the manners of the people in the capital.

We thought it our duty to pay our respects to Mr Olaf Stephenson, who has the title of Geheimè Etatsraad, and was formerly governor of the island; and having been informed that he would be glad to see us, we went to his house, which is on the island of Vidoe, about three miles from the town. It is built of stone, and bears evident marks of decay on the outside. The situation, between two green hills, the ground in front sloping towards the sea, is very agreeable. On the west side is a neat chapel, where the minister of Reikiavik

performs divine service once in three weeks. Before the chapel is a small garden, inclosed by a turf wall. Behind the house are cottages for the accommodation of servants; and farther off, are the cow and sheep houses.

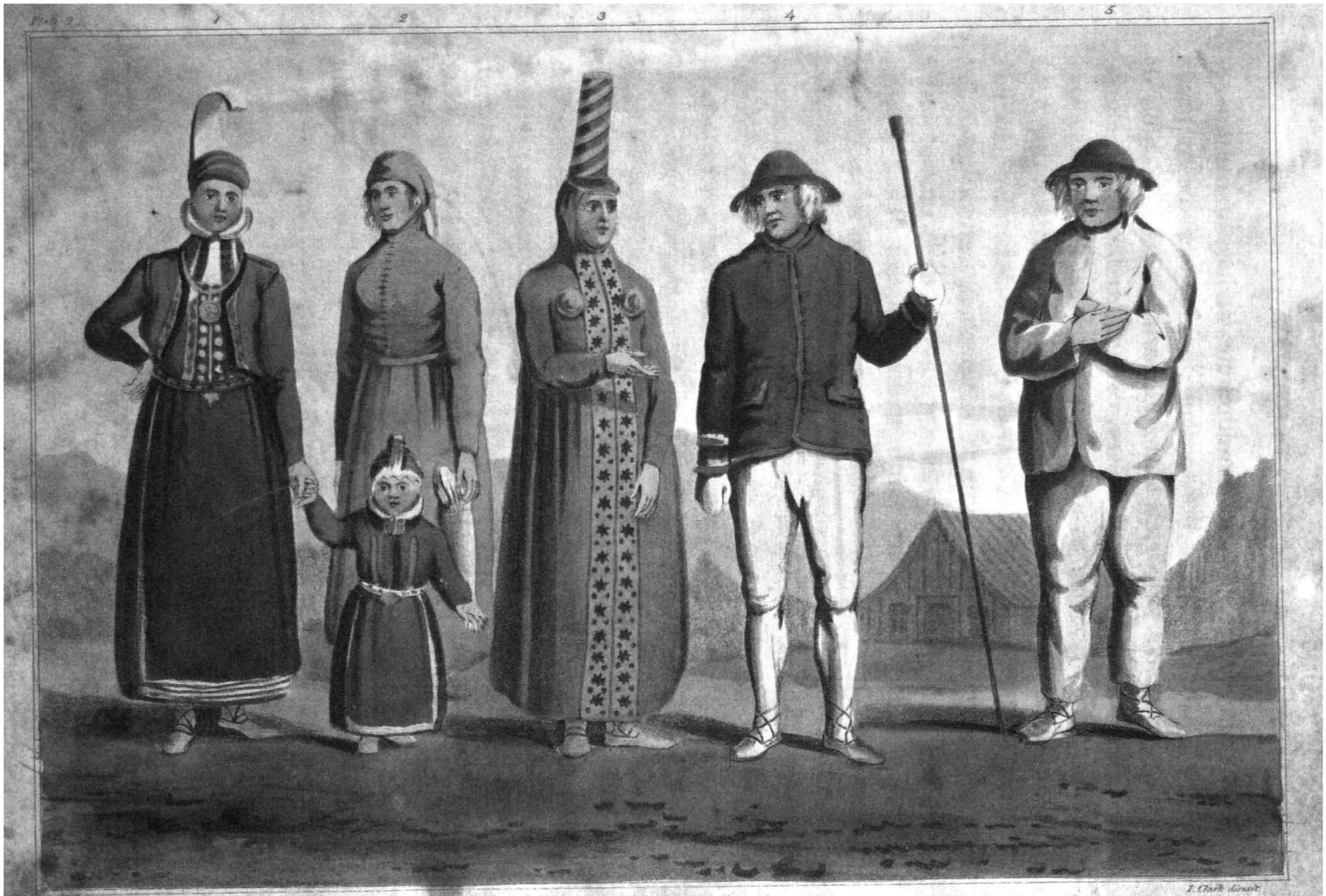
The old gentleman, dressed in the uniform of a Danish colonel of the guards, received us at the door with great politeness, and seemed to be exceedingly gratified by our visit. He ushered us into a large room, furnished with the remains of ancient finery, some prints, portraits, and a number of profile shades, which afforded little relief to the eye while wandering over the damp, decaying walls. The house altogether appeared as if it would not long survive its venerable inhabitant. The next room we entered was our host's bedchamber, which was very comfortable, and well warmed by a stove placed in a corner. After a little conversation on indifferent subjects, the old gentleman talked of his health, and seemed quite delighted to find that we could give him some medicines as well as advice. We had the pleasure of being told, after the lapse of a few weeks, that Mr Holland's prescriptions had been attended with the best effects.

We had no intention of remaining here to dinner; but, on proposing to take leave, we soon perceived that it would give great offence, to withdraw without partaking of his hospitality. Mr Stephenson spoke affectionately of Sir Joseph Banks, who is much and deservedly esteemed in Iceland; and he shewed us, with much apparent satisfaction, some diplomas which he had received from different societies.

While awaiting the hour of dinner, one of the party happened to take a little snuff from a box of no great value; but as it attracted the notice of our host, and as he seemed to admire the snuff no less than the box, he was entreated to accept of both. The present was received with the highest

marks of satisfaction: and the good old gentleman instantaneously drew from his pocket a curious box, ornamented with silver, which had been made in Iceland, and insisted on being permitted to return the compliment. This mark of politeness, and the beauty of the box, produced very warm expressions of admiration from the whole party; when our host suddenly left the room, and returning with a silver box of far greater value, snatched the first from the person who held it, and insisted on an exchange with so good a grace, and with so much earnestness, that this heavy balance against the trifle he had got could not be refused. We afterwards found that the box belonged to his father, whose initials were wrought on the cover. We were very much struck with the refined, at the same time heartfelt politeness which accompanied this little transaction.

In due time, the repast which had been prepared, was announced by a good looking girl, drest in the complete Icelandic costume. The dress of the women is not calculated to shew the person to advantage. The long waist, bunchy petticoats, and the fashion of flattening the bosom as much as possible, together with the extraordinary head-dress, excited rather ludicrous emotions at the first view; but there is a richness in the whole that is pleasing. A dress which we procured, consists of a blue cloth petticoat, with a waist of scarlet woollen stuff ornamented with gold lace, and silver loop-holes on black velvet, for lacing it. On the back of the waist are stripes of black velvet, which cover the seams. Over the petticoat is tied an apron of blue cloth, having a silver-gilt ornament hanging from the middle of the upper part; and along the bottom, several stripes of light blue stamped velvet. Over the waist is put on a jacket of black cloth, having two stripes of black velvet in front, and next to them two of gold



ICELANDIC COSTUME.

Publd by Constable & Co. Edinburgh, 1811

lace. On the back and shoulders are stripes of orange-coloured velvet. Round the waist is buckled a girdle of black velvet, covered with rich silver-gilt ornaments. A collar or ruff of black and crimson velvet, ornamented with silver lace, and having attached to it a sort of tippet of black cloth, adorned in front with light brown velvet, is put round the neck. Silver-gilt chains of various forms, and medals, are worn suspended from the neck.* On going out of doors, to church, or on any occasion of ceremony, the women wear a cloak or mantle of black cloth, called wadmal. That belonging to the dress above described is ornamented in front with two large hollow convex buttons, made of silver gilt and richly ornamented. The cloak is trimmed with two broad stripes of figured woollen stuff resembling black stamped velvet. The head-dress is formed of white linen or cotton cloth, shaped like a large flat horn bending forwards, and made stiff with a quantity of pins, fastened on the top of the head with a coloured silk or cotton handkerchief, which entirely conceals the hair. The petticoat, the apron, and the jacket, are of different colours, though blue and black are the most common; and the ornaments of silver are variously shaped. The general fashion of the dress has long remained the same, though the head-dress has undergone some alterations in its dimensions, and in the mode of bending it. Little girls are dressed in the same manner, only they wear a cap variously ornamented. Boys have more gaudy caps. One in our pos-

* On one side of a medal in our possession, is a representation of God, with three faces, sitting in a cloud, and holding a globe surmounted by a cross in one hand. The following inscription is above in Roman characters, TETRAGRAMMATON. JEHOVAH. ADONAY. ELOY. On the reverse is a representation of the Trinity, with the inscription BENEDICTA. SEMPER. SANCTA. SIT. TRINITAS. The figures are in relief, and well executed.

session is made of blue silk, surrounded with gold lace, and has a green silk tassel on the top.

When a lady goes abroad on horseback, the head-dress is covered by a hat of a very curious shape, which is seen in the engraving, where the different dresses are better explained than by words.

No. 1, is a lady in full dress; No. 2, the ordinary dress of the women of all ranks; No. 3, a lady in a riding dress; No. 4, an Icelander in his best clothes. The jackets of the men are frequently made of black wadmal. No. 5, is the figure of the Reikiavik pilot in his sheep-skin dress, as he came on board the Elbe.

The names of the different parts of the dress are,—*faldur*, the head-dress, of which the upper part is called, *skot*, *upphlutur*, the waist of the petticoat; *fat*, the petticoat; *næripils*, these when joined together; *svinta*, the apron; *troje*, the jacket; *hempa*, the cloak; *skirta*, the shift; *hals-festi*, the neck-chain; *hrage*, the collar; *herda-festi*, the shoulder-chain; *milnur*, the ornamented loop-holes of the waist; *lindè*, the girdle; *sockar*, stockings; *sockabond*, garters; *skior*, shoes.

On entering the room into which we had at first been introduced, we found a table neatly covered, and a bottle of wine set down for each person. This alarmed us a little, as we feared that the old gentleman intended, according to the ancient custom of Denmark, to 'keep wassel.' The only dish on the table was one of sago soup, to which we were helped very liberally. The appearance of a piece of roasted, or rather baked, beef, relieved us considerably; and we submitted, as well as we were able, to receive an unusual supply of a food to which we were accustomed. We had drank a few glasses of wine, when a curious silver cup, large enough to contain half a bottle, was put upon the table. Our host

filled it to the brim, and put on the cover. He then held it towards the person who sat next to him, and desired him to take off the cover, and look into the cup; a ceremony intended to secure fair play in filling it; after which he drank our healths, expressing his happiness at seeing us in his house, and his hopes that we would honour him with our company as often as we could. He desired to be excused from emptying the cup, on account of the indifferent state of his health; but we were informed at the same time, that if any one of us should neglect any part of the ceremony, or fail to invert the cup, placing the edge on one of the thumbs, as a proof that we had swallowed every drop, the defaulter would be obliged by the laws of drinking to fill the cup again, and drink it off a second time. He then gave the cup to his neighbour, who, having drank it off, put on the cover, and handed it to the person opposite to him. Being filled, the cup was examined by the person whose turn it was to drink next, and thus it went round. In spite of their utmost exertions, the penalty of a second draught was incurred by two of the company. While we were dreading the consequences of having swallowed so much wine, and in terror lest the cup should be sent round again, a dish of cold pancakes, of an oblong form, and covered with sugar, was produced; and after them sago puddings floating in rich cream. It was in vain that we pleaded the incapacity of our stomachs to contain any more; we were obliged to submit to an additional load; when a summons to coffee in an adjoining room, brought us a most welcome relief. Our sufferings, however, were not yet at an end. On first entering the house, we had noticed a very large china tureen on the top of a press; and as it had not been used at dinner, we concluded that it was a mere ornament. We had scarcely flattered ourselves that

coffee was to finish the entertainment, when the young woman who had waited at table came in with this tureen, and set it before us. It was accompanied by some large glasses, each of the size of an ordinary tumbler. We looked at each other with dismay, on observing this huge vessel full of smoking punch; and as there was no prospect of being able to escape, we endeavoured to look chearful, and accomplish the task required of us. Having at length taken leave, our hospitable friend insisted on attending us to the beach.

Our next visit was to the minister of Reikiavik, and to the physician, both of whom live at some distance to the westward of the town. The former, Mr Sigurdson, met us at the door of a miserable hut, and led us through a long, dark and dirty passage, obstructed by all sorts of utensils, and by a man beating stock fish, into an obscure room. The apartment into which we were ushered was the family bed room, and the best in the house. The roof was so low that a person could hardly stand upright, and there was scarcely room for any thing beside the furniture, which consisted of a bed, a clock, a small chest of drawers, and a glass cup-board. Our surprise at finding the minister of the only town in Iceland so ill accommodated, ceased on discovering that a stipend of one hundred and twenty dollars, not very regularly paid, with pasture for a cow or two, and a few sheep, were all that he had for the support of himself and his family. We were presented with a bason of very good milk, and, after some conversation on indifferent matters, we proceeded towards the house of Dr Klog.* Nothing can be more dreary than the face of the country hereabouts; and how an elevated and exposed situation, at a distance from the town, came to

* Pronounced Klo.

be chosen for the residence of the physician, seems difficult to explain. The doctor's house, and that of the apothecary, are under the same roof; and with respect to size, furniture, and cleanliness, were the best we had yet seen. The house is built of stone, and white-washed.

Dr Klog having been informed that we had brought some vaccine virus with us, said that there had been none in Iceland for two years, and rejoiced that such a blessing was renewed to the country. He was very impatient to have some children inoculated. Having taught him to use the crust, we had soon the satisfaction of seeing a supply of virus sent off to different parts of the island; and before we left it, we learned that it had reached the most remote corners. The people have implicit faith in the virtues of this mild substitute for small pox.

Madame Klog soon made her appearance, and brought some chocolate, which, we were told, had been made by the apothecary, and had some of the Lichen Islandicus mixed with it. We found it to be remarkably good, but could not distinguish the addition of the Lichen. On examining the laboratory, it was observed to be well stored with old fashioned drugs of all sorts, most of them quite useless. The compounds were prepared according to the directions of the Danish pharmacopœia. From the large supply of medicines, one might suppose that they were much called for; but there are few physicians in the world whose practice is less laborious than that of Dr Klog. There are five other medical practitioners in the island, who have salaries from the Danish government. The little practice they have is very laborious, on account of the very scattered state of the population; and their fees are extremely small.

We had an opportunity of seeing the funeral service of the

Icelandic church performed, at the burial of the sailor who lost his life on the voyage. The minister, dressed in a gown of plain black cloth, and with a band, met the corpse on the beach, and walked before it. On entering the churchyard, he began to chaunt, and was joined by many of the people. This continued till the coffin was laid in the grave, when the priest took a small wooden spade, and pronouncing some words of the same import as 'dust to dust,' &c. in the English service, threw in a little earth. The chaunting then recommenced, and continued till the grave was filled up; after which all present put their hats before their faces, and seemed to pray. A general obeisance followed, which closed the ceremony. The whole was conducted with solemnity, and the people seemed very serious and earnest in their devotions. We did not admire the music of the Icelanders.

On the 13th of May, we were honoured with a visit from Mr Magnus Stephenson, son of our friend at Vidöe. He presides in the highest court of justice, and styles himself Lord Chief Justice of Iceland. He is also a counsellor of state, and was invested with the government at the time Count Trampe went to England in 1809. He was accompanied by one of his sons, and two of his brothers, one of whom is Amtmand, or governor, of the western district, and the other secretary to the court of justice. They were all extremely polite, and, through the Chief Justice, who spoke English tolerably well, expressed their desire to be of use to us in very handsome terms. We found every one emulous in offering his services; and we shall ever remember with gratitude the kind attention and hospitality we experienced during our stay in Iceland, both from the natives and from the Danes. The latter had really little cause to make Englishmen welcome. But on all occasions they spoke of what had hap-

pened at Copenhagen in the most liberal manner; and one gentleman observed, that, though our government had used them ill, we were not to blame; and had as much right as strangers from any other country, to expect and receive such attention as they had it in their power to bestow.

On the 14th a court was held, in order that the deputy-governor might pass sentence in some civil causes. He was dressed in a red coat adorned with gold lace and embroidery. The meeting of the court was announced by the beating of an old drum, the prelude to a short proclamation. In the room was a table covered with a tattered green cloth, and a few chairs. Beside the deputy-governor, the secretary and half a dozen other persons were present; and there was no sort of ceremony, or appearance of dignity. Mr Stephenson took up a book, read the sentences as fast as he could, signed them, and then the whole ended.

We went to Mr Frydensberg's to breakfast, between eleven and twelve o'clock, where we found a table covered as if for dinner, having bottles, glasses, &c. upon it. It is customary in Iceland, either for the lady of the house, or one of her daughters, to place the dishes on the table, and to remove them, the plates, knives and forks, &c.; though sometimes the housekeepers, who are on a very familiar footing with their employers, perform these offices. There are no men-servants. After this breakfast, which was, more properly, a very early dinner, a few glasses of wine were drank, and coffee was served, which concluded the entertainment; when all rose up, and bowed to the lady.

Next day, we went to see some hot springs, about two miles to the eastward of the town, which the people frequent for the purpose of washing clothes. A rivulet runs past them; and, by a little management, a person may plunge his hand

into the water, so that one part of it may be subjected to any degree of heat up to 188°, while another is chilled. The water of the springs mixing with that of the rivulet, every desirable temperature is to be found within a short space: The nearer we approached the place where the hot water bubbles up, the effects of the heat on vegetation were more and more apparent; and the verdure of the banks of the rivulet formed a very striking contrast to the barrenness of the surrounding country. The women who go out to wash clothes, boil fish, or meat of any sort, in the places where the water is hottest. The plants which we took out of the water had a disagreeable, somewhat sulphureous smell, as well as the water itself; but it was not strong. There are some large and deep tepid pools, in which, on a certain day in June, all the girls in the neighbourhood bathe.

On the 15th we gave a ball to the ladies of Reikiavik, and the neighbourhood. The company began to assemble about 9 o'clock. We were shewn into a small low roofed room, in which were a number of men; but to our surprise we saw no females. We soon found them, however, in one adjoining, where it is the custom for them to wait till their partners go to hand them out. On entering this apartment, we felt considerable disappointment at not observing a single woman dressed in the Icelandic costume. It was the fashion, at this time, to have every thing English. An old lady, the wife of the man who kept the tavern, was habited like the pictures of our great grandmothers. Some time after the dancing commenced, the bishop's lady, and two others, appeared in the proper dress of the country.

We found ourselves extremely aukward in dancing what the ladies were pleased to call English country dances. The music, which came from a solitary ill scraped fiddle, accom-

panied by the rumbling of the same half rotten drum that had summoned the high court of justice, and by the jingling of a rusty triangle, was to us utterly unintelligible. The extreme rapidity with which it was necessary to go through a multiplied series of complicated evolutions in proper time, completely bewildered us; and our mistakes, and frequent collisions with our neighbours, afforded much amusement to our fair partners, who found it, for a long time, impracticable to keep us in the right track. While unengaged in the dance, the men drink punch, and walk about with tobacco pipes in their mouths, spitting plentifully on the floor. The unrestrained evacuation of saliva seems to be a fashion all over Iceland; but whether the natives learned it from the Danes, or the Danes from the natives, we did not ascertain.

During the dances, tea and coffee were handed about; and negus and punch were ready for those who chose to partake of them. A cold supper was provided; and, while at table, several of the ladies sung, and acquitted themselves tolerably well. But we could not enjoy the performance, on account of the incessant talking, which was often loud enough to overpower the harmony; but was not considered as in the least unpolite. One of the songs was in praise of the donors of the entertainment; and, during the chorus, the ceremony of touching each others glasses was performed. After supper, the dancing recommenced, and waltzing seemed to be the favourite amusement. Though there was no need of artificial light, a number of candles were placed in the rooms; and when the company broke up, about three o'clock, the sun was high above the horizon.

During our stay in the town, we had an opportunity of seeing the marriage-ceremony of the Icelanders, which was

performed in the church. The bride, in full dress, was seated on one side of the church, accompanied by an elderly woman, probably her mother. Opposite to her, on the other side, was the bridegroom. His seal-skin shoes were fastened by cross bands of white tape; and his striped garters were crossed about his legs. He was attended by several of his friends, who, during the whole of the ceremony, indulged themselves with a profusion of snuff. The priest, standing at the altar opposite to the party, began the ceremony by chaunting, in which he was joined by all present. This was followed by a prayer, and a long exhortation to the bride and bridegroom, who were now brought forward. Three questions, similar to those used in the English service, were then put to them; first to the man. The priest afterwards joined their hands, laid his hands upon their shoulder, and gave them his blessing. They were then conducted to their respective seats, and the service concluded by chaunting. In going from the church, the bride preceded the bridegroom, both being attended by their friends of the same sex. They usually go, on such occasions, to the house of some relation. When the bride retires after supper, she is accompanied by her female friends. When the husband arrives, he finds them all seated by his wife's bedside, and is refused admittance. On his persisting, he is told he must pay; and he offers a snuff-box, or any trifle he may have in his pocket, which is refused. At last he promises some present of value, from twenty to a hundred dollars, according to his circumstances; and the women tell him that he must give it to his bride. This altercation sometimes continues for an hour, in perfect good humour. In the morning, the husband makes a present to his wife of some articles of dress, money, or silver spoons. They now go to their own house. We did not see

the procession to the church; but were informed, that from the house of the minister, or some cottage near the church, girls go first two and two, then the bride attended by a female relation, or the most respectable woman in the company. She is followed by the women, after whom goes the bridegroom with a friend. Next in order is the priest, and the men close the procession.

A day was spent in examining the rocks of the island of Vidöe; and we again dined with the old governor. We now found that the young woman who had attended at table on our former visit, was his niece; and that an elderly female who had appeared at the same time, was his sister-in-law. We had sent some trifling present to these ladies; and, on this account, as soon as we entered the house, it became necessary to submit to the customary salute denoting the gratitude of those who receive presents. On many occasions, we could well have dispensed with the ceremony; and our talents were often exercised in contriving means of evasion or escape. On meeting after a short absence, and on taking leave, the Icelanders take each other by the right hand, remove their hats with the left, and, stroking back their long hair, kiss each other with much apparent satisfaction.

Our reception at Vidöe was as cordial as on our former visit, and the entertainment more agreeable, as the ceremony of the cup was not repeated, and we were not obliged to overeat ourselves. The old gentleman told us of his having been robbed by the people of a ship that had come to Iceland two or three years before; and we were afterwards informed, that this outrage had been committed by direction of Baron Hompesch, who, after his wanton attack on the Faro islands, sent a vessel to plunder Iceland. It must be mentioned, however, that Mr Stephenson obtained the restitution of