

part of his property by an application to the commander of the ship.

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We now became very anxious to commence our travels, though all our Icelandic friends endeavoured to dissuade us from undertaking any expedition so early in the season. The horses were still very lean, and the grass had hardly begun to grow. Observing, however, that there was no part of the Guldbringè Syssel \* covered with snow, we resolved to travel through it, and to visit the sulphur mountains without delay. Having mentioned the Guldbringè Syssel, it may be proper to take notice here, that Iceland is divided into four large departments called Amts; the northern, southern, eastern, and western Amts. These are subdivided into districts called Syssels, and the Syssels into parishes. The number and names of the districts will be found in the Statistical Tables, in another part of the work. Not being able to procure riding horses, we determined to walk; and this resolution seemed to astonish the people not a little, as the meanest person in Iceland never travels on foot. A young man who had been educated as a priest, offered his service; he spoke Latin tolerably well; and as he seemed active, and disposed to be useful to us, a bargain was soon made with him. Early in the morning of the 20th, the preparations for our departure commenced; but the motions of the Icelanders were so extremely slow, and they had so many discussions about distributing the loads on the horses which we had procured for carrying our baggage, that it was past two o'clock in the afternoon before all was ready. The packsaddles consist of square pieces of light spongy turf, cut from the bogs. These are tied on with

\* *Gold-bringing* district, a name probably derived from the principal fishing stations being situate on its coasts.

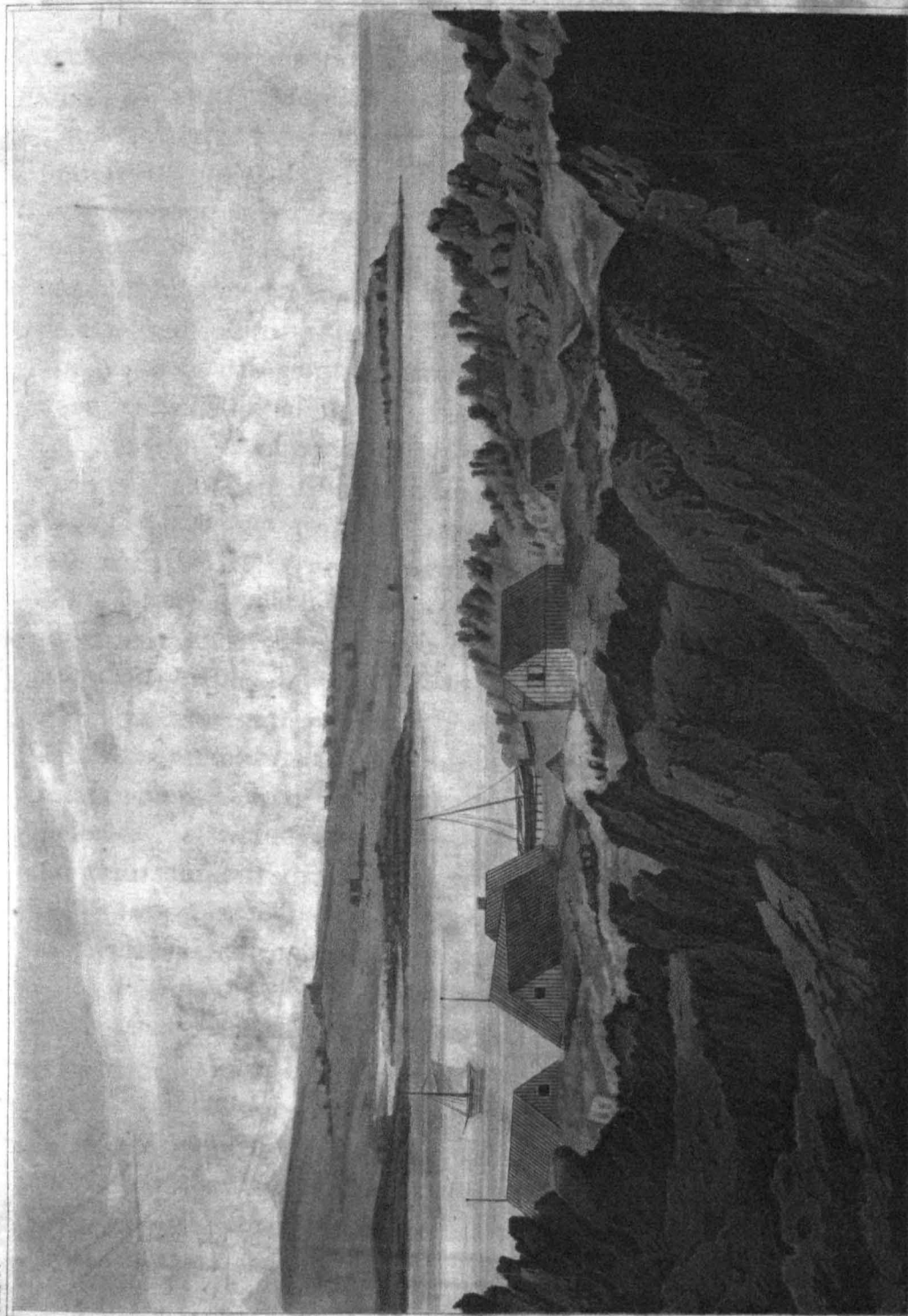
a rope; a piece of wood made to fit the horse's back, with a peg projecting from each side, is fastened over the turf, and on these pegs the baggage is hung by means of cords. The Icelanders pretend to be very nice in balancing the loads; but we do not recollect ever having travelled two miles, without stopping ten times to rectify the baggage. When all the horses are loaded, they are fastened to each other, head to tail. A cord is tied round the under jaw of the second horse, and the other end of it is joined to the tail of the first; and thus we have seen thirty or forty marching through the country. The Iceland horses, though very hardy, and patient of fatigue, are easily startled. When any one horse in a string is alarmed, it often happens that the cords break, and the whole cavalcade is put into confusion. The poor animals, however, never fail to stop where they can get any thing to eat; and at all times they are easily caught. A well-broke riding horse will wait on the spot where his master leaves him, for any length of time. If any grass is near him, he may feed; but, if there is none, he will stand perfectly still for hours. Many horses will not even touch grass when under their feet. Every Icelanders, of whatever rank, can shoe a horse. The shoes are plain; and the nails, which are very large, are driven firmly through the hoof, and carefully doubled over; and in this simple state the shoes remain firm till completely worn, or accidentally broken. Travellers always carry a supply of shoes and nails, when going long journeys; but, for a short journey, it is customary to put shoes only on the fore feet of the horses. When iron is scarce, the horns of sheep are made use of for horse shoes.

It often happens, when horses are heavily laden, especially when they are in low condition, that their backs are galled. By way of preventing this accident, or curing any tumour or

ruffling of the skin, the Icelanders insert one or more setons of horse hair into the breasts of the animals. This cruel practice, instead of alleviating the pain which the horses suffer from their burdens, only serves to add to their torments; and the artificial sores thus produced, soon become very disgusting.

We left Reikiavik with the intention of stopping at Havnefiord, about six miles distant. The day was fine, but we saw snow showers falling on the mountains towards which we were travelling, and expected to meet them. We passed through a bare dismal looking country, over some low hills; till, not far from Havnefiord, we entered a rough path, and got upon a tract which bore dreadful marks of fire. As we approached this scene of desolation, snow began to fall so thickly, that we could not see more than fifty yards distance; and this added not a little to the awful impressions which the first sight of a stream of lava made upon us. The melted masses had been heaved up in every direction, and had assumed all sorts of fantastic forms; on every side chasms and caverns presented themselves. As we advanced the scene assumed a more terrific aspect; and when we least expected it, we descried Havnefiord situate directly under one of the most rugged parts of the lava; and so placed, that the houses obtained the most complete shelter from masses of matter, that had formerly carried destruction in their course.

There are only two merchants' houses here, and a few store houses, all constructed of wood, and placed close to the sea, which here forms a small but very snug bay, in which there is good anchorage. There is a dry harbour, into which a sloop of forty or fifty tons may be brought for repair. The wooden buildings, the cottages scattered among the lava, the sea, and the distant country, form altogether a singular scene.



Sketch by Sir Geo. Mackenzie.

# HAYNEFIORD.

Printed by George & C. Edinburgh 1822.



The view of this place was taken at a little distance from the path. It is extremely difficult to express the appearance of a rough stream of lava by the pencil; and the representation given conveys but a faint idea of its terrific appearance.

We stopped at the house of Mr Sivertson, who had gone to England with Count Trampe, and had not yet returned. His family received us in the kindest manner, and every civility that could be shewn, was bestowed upon us by his son and daughter. The house is one of the cleanest and most comfortable that we saw in Iceland. Here we endeavoured to sleep under Eider-down for the first time. To a stranger, crawling under a huge feather bed seems rather alarming. But though very bulky, the down of the Eider duck is very light; and a bed which swells to the thickness of two or three feet, weighs no more than four or five pounds. At first, the sensations produced by this light covering were very agreeable; but the down being one of the very worst conductors of heat, the accumulation soon became oppressive; and at length we were under the necessity of getting rid of the upper bed, to escape the proofs of the good qualities of Eider-down, which we now experienced to an intolerable degree.

On the 21st we went to visit the school at Bessestad, the only one now in Iceland. We had been invited by the bishop to be present at the examination, which was to take place previous to the boys dispersing to their respective homes for the summer. On our way we visited Mr Magnuson, the minister of a place called Gardè. This gentleman is styled Provost of the Guldbringè Syssel, and superintends all the ecclesiastical concerns of that district. It is to be regretted, that the poverty of the clergy in Iceland has never been taken into consideration by the Danish government. Their influence over the people, by whom they are highly respected, would,

we might suppose, be a sufficient reason for not leaving them to subsist on miserable pittance, hardly sufficient to keep them from starving. Knowing his poverty, we were not surprised that this dignitary of the church exhibited in his person and habiliments, a figure, the description of which we shall spare our readers, that they may not partake the pain inspired by the most squalid indigence in a clerical garb. This gentleman, however, has a considerable collection of books, among which we observed German translations of some of the works of Pope, and Young's *Night Thoughts*. There were a number of volumes written in Latin, chiefly on theological subjects. We were obliged to leave Mr Magnuson sooner than we wished, because the hour of commencing the examination at Bessestad was already past; but we promised to remain with him longer on our return.

The following is the invitation we received, and the order in which the examination was to take place. The first will serve as a specimen of the familiar style in writing Latin: and the other will shew what are the principal branches of education at the school.

‘ Hic tibi, vir nobilissime ! exhibeo exscriptum invitationis publicæ lectoris nostri ad examen, quod in scholâ nostrâ (quæ nunc unica in Islandia est) sequenti hebdomade habendum est. Si tibi, tuisque, vel unica hora a propriis negotiis vacaverit, summo nobis honori ducemus, si nos tua et illorum præsentie dignari velis.

‘ Tuæ singularis humanitatis,

‘ Qbservantissimus cultor,

‘ GEIRUS VIDALINUS.

‘ 17. *Maii*, 1810.

- Ad  
Examen Publicum  
Alumnorum Scholæ Bessestadensis,  
Audiendum d. 21, et seq. Maii 1810,  
ita ordinatum :
- Die Lunæ, hora antemer. . . 8—12. 11 Class. in auth. Lat.  
interpretandis.  
h. pomerid . . . . 2—6. 11 et 1 Cl. in Stylo  
Latino.
- Die Martis, h. antemer . . . . 8—10. 11 Class. in Theologi-  
cis, secundum Nie-  
meirum.  
10—12. 1 Cl. in auth. Latin.  
interpretandis.  
h. pomerid . . . . 2—4. 11 et 1 Cl. in Lingua  
Danica.  
4—6. 11 et 1 Cl. in Stylo  
Danico.
- Die Mercurii, h. antemer. . . . 8—10. 11 Cl. in auth. Græcis  
interpretandis.  
17—12. 1 Cl. in auth. Græcis  
interpretandis.  
h. pomerid . . . . 2—3. 11 et 1 Cl. in Decla-  
matione.  
3—6. 11 et 1 Cl. in Stylo  
Islandico.
- Die Jovis, h. antemer . . . . 8—10. 11 Cl. in Novi Fæd.  
Exegesi.  
10—12. 11 Cl. in *Analysi* He-  
braica.

h. pomerid . . . 2 — 4. 1 Cl. in reliq. dogma-  
tica juxta Niem.

4 — 6. 11 et 1 Cl. in Arithme-  
tica.

Die Veneris, h. antemer . . 8—12. 11 et 1. Cl. in Historia,  
et Geographia.

Omnes rei scholasticæ patronos, fautores, et amicos, qua-  
par est observantia, invitamus.

STEINGRIMUS JONÆUS, *Lector Theologiæ.*

Before going to the schoolhouse we called at the house of the head master, Mr Steingrim Jonson, who received us with great kindness. His countenance displayed a degree of intelligence not common in the physiognomies of Icelanders; and it was not long before the first impressions we received were amply confirmed. We have often regretted that we had but little of this gentleman's company. His learning is untinged by pedantry: and his communicative disposition renders him a most agreeable companion. His room was well furnished with books; and the library he possesses as *Lector Theologiæ* of the school, is the best collection of theological works in the island. Mr Jonson married the widow of the late learned and worthy Bishop Finsson. The lady politely brought us coffee and milk, and after this refreshment we went to examine the church. It is a building of some size, roofed with tiles, and is in much better repair than the church at Reikjavik. At the door is a grave-stone, with the effigy of Paulus Stigotus, a governor of the island, who died in the year 1566, carved upon it. He is represented in armour, leaning on a two-handed sword. In a vault opposite to the door we saw two large coffins, containing the bodies of two ladies, mother and daughter. The date of the inscription was 1788. They



were wrapped in white sarsnet, and enveloped in a quantity of vegetable matter, resembling hop flowers. The bodies had the appearance of mummies, the flesh being completely dry and black. Above the altar is an indifferent painting of the Last Supper, and representations of some saints. On each side is an inscription to the memory of a young man who died in the year 1707. One of them is an acrostic. On the altar were a gilt chalice, wafer box, and two small brass candlesticks; and in a press behind, two very large ones. The space where the altar is placed, is separated from that part of the church, in which are the pews. At the entrance to these, there is a stone inscribed to the father and mother-in-law of our friend at Vidœ. The entrance is formed by two painted pillars, surmounted by two large gilded balls, and between them is an arch supporting the crown and cypher of Christian the Seventh. The pulpit is gaudily ornamented, and has figures of the evangelists painted on the pannels, and inscriptions above and below them; a dove is represented on the sound-board. Opposite to the pulpit is an elevated seat, closed all round with glazed windows, in which the governor formerly sat.

Having satisfied our curiosity in the church, we proceeded to the school-house, and were received by the bishop in his full dress. His under robe was of black velvet; over which was a silk one bordered with velvet; the cuffs were of white cambric. Round his neck he wore a white ruff. In this dress our good friend had a most venerable and dignified appearance.

The school rooms are lofty, but rather confined and dirty. Above these are barrack-rooms for the scholars and attendants, all in a very uncleanly condition. The lector lamented this, and the bishop pronounced with emphasis, ‘*Bella, hor-*

‘rida bella!’ which at once explained the evident state of decay into which this only remaining seminary of learning seemed to be falling. There is a considerable collection of books, a few of them curious and rare; but they are piled confusedly together in a miserable garret, and covered with dust and cobwebs. An account of the institution and management of this school will be given in the chapter on the present state of Icelandic literature.

Bessestad was formerly the abode of the governors of Iceland, and was defended by several small batteries, the remains of which we saw. During the usurpation of Jorgensen in 1809, some guns were removed from the sand, near one of the batteries, to Reikiavik, where they were planted so as to command the harbour. The fort has been demolished, and the guns are now lying on the beach.

From Bessestad we went to visit Mr Einerson, a member of the court of justice, with the title of assessor, who received us with great cordiality. While drinking coffee, we received much useful information from this gentleman. He seems to have set about improving his farm in earnest, and has inclosed a small space for a garden; but he complained much of the want of seeds. He is levelling the ground, and inclosing it with the stones he takes up in that operation. If Mr Einerson perseveres, there is no doubt of his rendering his farm much more productive in grass; and he may even attempt to cultivate rye, barley, and potatoes, with a reasonable hope of success. Had we met with Mr Einerson any where else, we should have concluded from his complexion, that he had spent the former period of his life in some of the tropical regions. As well as we can recollect, we did not meet with any other Icelanders, who had black hair; certainly none that had hair curled somewhat like that of a negro. Mr Einerson may pos-

sibly be descended from a Lapland family. There is nothing in the general appearance of the natives of Iceland, that can discriminate them in the natural history of Man. If there is any circumstance which can be deemed peculiar, it seems to be, that the spine is generally long in proportion to the limbs. Were those to be proportioned to the length of the body, numbers of the Icelanders would become giants. At first this peculiarity appeared to be a deception occasioned by dress; but though it does not hold universally, it occurred so often, that we are inclined to state it as characteristic.

Having returned to Mr Magnuson's, we were treated with a dram and with coffee. He told us, that by going a few miles out of the direct road to Krisuvik, we might see a curious cave; and his description of it determined us to visit it.

On the 22d we left the hospitable house of Mr Sivertson. Having passed a low ridge of hills opposite to Havnefiord, we descended into a valley filled with lava, which is connected with that about Havnefiord, and has evidently proceeded from the same source. Along the edge of this we travelled for about two miles, and then began to ascend a ridge covered with light slags. We observed that the lava had run down on the east side of the valley, and in some places it appeared as if it had ascended. The ascending of lava is a well known fact, though in examining a cold mass, this circumstance strikes an inexperienced observer as something wonderful; more so than the 'random ruin' it so awfully displays. It is caused by the formation of a crust on the cooling of the surface, and a case or tube being thus produced, the lava rises in the same manner as water in a pipe. Beyond this spot we saw the most dreadful effects of subterraneous heat all around us; and as far as the eye could reach over a wide extended plain, nothing appeared to relieve it from the black

rugged lava, which had destroyed the whole of the district. The surface was swelled into knobs from a few feet in diameter to forty or fifty, many of which had burst, and disclosed caverns lined with melted matter in the form of stalactites. The day being very warm we relieved our thirst, which began to be troublesome, by means of snow and icicles which we found in these cavities. We met with some deep clefts; and soon afterwards reached a green spot on the bank of the river Kald-aa,\* or the cold river. Here we resolved to pitch our tent, being informed that there was no other place on the road to Krisuvik where the horses could pick up any food. Having unloaded the horses, we proceeded towards the cave described by Mr Magnuson, which lay about two miles to the eastward. It was nothing more than an extensive hollow formed by one of those blisters or bubbles, hundreds of which we had walked over. Many of these are of considerable depth, and great length. The bottom of this was covered with ice, and numerous icicles hung from the roof. Having lighted our lamps, we went to the end of the cave, the distance of which from the entrance we found to be 55 yards, the height not being in general more than seven or eight feet. The inside was lined with melted matter, disposed in various singular forms.

On leaving the cave, we took a circuit in order to examine some of the hills in the neighbourhood. In our progress we saw the source of the river Kald-aa, which is a large bason at the bottom of a hollow, into which numerous springs empty themselves, and at once form a considerable stream. After running about two miles, the water entirely disappears among the lava, and is lost. We now proceeded towards the

\* The double a, or ä, is pronounced like *ow* in *how*.



hill called *Helgafell*, and passed over a lava, which from the comparative smoothness of its surface, and the evident marks of fusion which it bore, struck us as being something uncommon. Having traversed the plain formed of this lava, we met with a number of little craters, which, by giving vent to the vapours produced by the heat, may have prevented the usual heavings and burstings of the surface. One of these craters presented a very singular spectacle. The melted matter had formed a sort of dome, about twenty-five feet in diameter, and open at one side. Within, it was lined with an assemblage of stalactitical forms, hanging in a very curious and fantastic manner. After visiting several of these craters, we returned to the place where we had left the baggage. By means of the apparatus called a conjurer, we cooked a tolerable mess of portable soup and fish ; which with biscuit, cheese, and pure water, composed a very comfortable dinner, after which we chose the most convenient spot for our tent, and settled ourselves for the night. It would be difficult to imagine a country more wild and dreary than that which now surrounded us. The melancholy whistling of a few solitary plovers, and our horses moving slowly with their fettered limbs in search of the withered herbage, contributed to the horror of the scene. The night became so cold that we enjoyed but little sleep. Towards morning it began to rain, the wind having gone round to the east ; but before we had accomplished three miles of our day's journey, the clouds broke, and the rest of the day was fine.

We crept along the foot of the hills by the edge of the lava for some miles, and then began to ascend near several craters, larger than any we had yet seen. While examining some fissures, we found the remains of a woman who had been lost about a year before, and of whom there had hitherto been no

tidings. Her clothes and bones were lying scattered about; the bones of one leg remained in the stocking. It is probable that she had missed the path during a thick shower of snow, and had fallen over the precipice, where her body was torn to pieces by eagles and foxes. It is astonishing how the Icelanders find their way during winter across these trackless deserts. Even with the assistance of marks, which are set up here and there, unless the snow be perfectly firm, there is danger at every step of being swallowed up in a fissure. Accidents of this kind, however, very rarely happen.

We all now became exceedingly thirsty; and our guide having informed us that we should not get any water for some hours, we were very uneasy. Scrambling among lava is very hard exercise; and this, with the uniformity of the prospect, presenting nothing but an extensive country literally burnt up, occasioned our feeling thirst more painfully than usual. We kept up our spirits as well as we could; and while meditating how to get the horses over a great heap of slags at the foot of a crater, we descried a small wreath of snow on the side of a hill about half a mile distant. We instantly left our guide and horses to manage matters as they could; and rushing over slags, lava, and mud, fell upon the snow with inconceivable eagerness. Our enjoyment was excessive; and the very recollection of it is so gratifying, that we must be excused for recording a circumstance of so little importance.

We now proceeded through this dismal country, without any gratification but that occasionally afforded by views of the romantic summits of the mountains. The relief experienced from a further supply of snow, raised our spirits and strength so much, that we had got a considerable way before our guide, when he came hallooing after us, and making signs for us to return. Having kept close to the foot of the moun-

tain, and being persuaded that nothing worthy of observation had escaped our notice, we were at a loss to conceive the occasion of this alarm, and feared some disaster among the horses. We were somewhat surprised on being told that we had passed the road. Already accustomed to the risk of missing our way, we had flattered ourselves with being sufficiently cautious; and when we came to the place where the horses had halted, we could not see any other track than the one we had followed. The guide pointed to the side of the mountain; but no outlet was visible. The steepness of the mountain we might overcome; but how the horses loaded with baggage could gain the summit, was to us utterly inconceivable. After ascending a little way by a winding path, we saw a large hollow, the sides of which were very steep, and composed of loose sand and large stones which required very little force to be rolled from their places. Along one side of this hollow we ascended; and the poor horses, with a degree of steadiness and perseverance truly astonishing, accomplished their arduous task. The scene now before us was exceedingly dismal. The surface was covered with black cinders; and the various hollows enclosed by high cliffs and rugged peaks, destitute of every sign of vegetation, and rendered more gloomy by floating mist, and a perfect stillness, contributed to excite strong feelings of horror. After a pause, we proceeded, and our eyes were soon gratified by a small lake coming into view. From the general appearance of the whole of this mountain, and the situation of this lake, it is more than probable that the hollow now filled with water had been formerly a crater from which the profusion of burnt matter which we had seen had been thrown. The horses made several attempts to reach the water, but in vain: the clay banks sunk under them, and

the poor animals thus cruelly tantalised, were obliged to proceed on their journey.

From this place we saw vapour arising behind a hill at a short distance. We approached, and beheld it ascending with impetuosity from a circular bason, in a hollow near the summit of the mountain. Having advanced to the spot, we were surprised to see no water running from what was supposed to be a boiling spring. On advancing nearer we heard loud splashing, and going close to the bason, which was twelve feet in diameter, we perceived it to be full of thick black mud, in a state of very violent ebullition. This singular phenomenon seemed to be occasioned by steam escaping from some deep seated reservoir of boiling water, and suspending the mud, which was probably produced by the action of the steam, in softening the matter through which it forced its way. We discovered a number of little fissures in the sand round about, from which steam rushed with a hissing noise. Though the splashing of the mud was incessant and violent, we did not observe any of it to escape from the boundary it had formed for itself.

Having satisfied our curiosity here, we descended towards the valley of Krisuvik, and soon saw so large a quantity of vapour below, as effaced the wonder excited by the extraordinary appearance we had left. This proceeded from various cavities, from banks of clay and sulphur, and chinks in the rock. Knowing, however, that we had more curious things of the same kind to examine the next day, we did not spend much time here, but proceeded through a long valley, forming one continued swamp, which forced us frequently to take very circuitous tracks to advance. In going along we had a striking view of the Sulphur Mountains, to visit which was



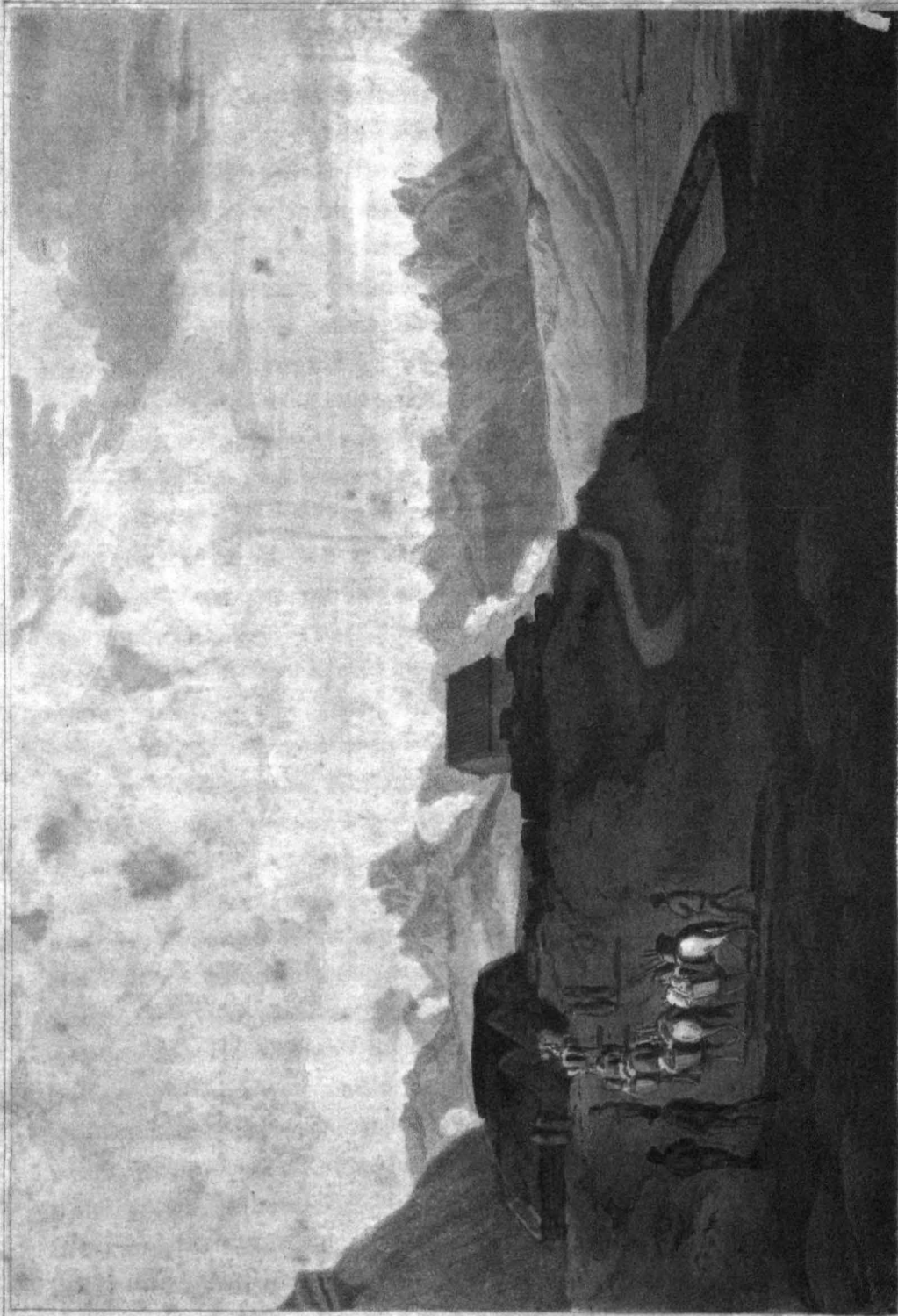
the object of our coming to this part of the country. There is a large lake in this district called the Kleisar Vatn, a part of which we saw when descending from the mountains. There are two small ones in the valley, one of which derives its name, Gröenvatn, from the green colour of the water, which resembles that of the sea. The colour is owing to that of the bottom, which seems to be covered with clay, such as is met with in abundance on the mountains. The water has no peculiar taste or smell.

We may here remark, that the want of curiosity, and the want of observation, so conspicuous in the people of Iceland, often occasioned us much loss of time. We had to explore a country already, one would think, well enough known to the inhabitants to enable them to give some general directions concerning our journey through it. We now reached Krisuvik after two days of fatigue, which might have been saved had we been told, that by taking the direct road, and marching eight hours, we should see just as much, as by making a journey that lasted two days. We had no sooner pitched our tent, than our guide signified his intention of returning to Gardè immediately; and although it was past ten o'clock, he could not be induced to remain; and departed, preferring any fatigue to the risk of losing a share in the next day's fishing.

At Krisuvik there is a farm-house with a few cottages. It was proposed at first that the party should occupy the church; but, on examining it, we preferred our tent. The length of the church, which is constructed of wood, is 18 feet, the breadth 8 feet, and the height, from the floor to the joist, 5 feet 8 inches. Near the door, in the inside, is suspended a bell, large enough to make an intolerable noise in so small an apartment. About ten feet from the door is the division be-

tween the rest of the church and the altar. The space between this and the door was occupied by large chests, filled with the goods and chattels of the farmer, many of which were also piled under the roof. The pulpit, raised about two feet, stood in a corner on one side of the division; and it was evident that, if the priest were a man of ordinary size, his audience would be totally eclipsed from his view, and that he would have to address himself to lumber and stock fish in the loft. There were seats before the pulpit that, with a little squeezing, might be capable of accommodating half a dozen persons. Beyond the pulpit was a space of about eight feet square, in which the altar was placed, between two small windows. The altar was merely a wooden press or cupboard, seemingly destined to serve many unhallowed purposes, as it contained various household utensils. The farmer and his wife cleared away several articles on the top, and, placing some milk on the altar, invited us to eat. There was nothing so sacred in the appearance of this church, as to make us hesitate to use the altar as our dining table. The open space round it being rather small, the floor perfectly rotten, and very damp, we could not think of sleeping in the church; and as to the house, exposure to frost and snow would have been preferable to spending a night in such a place. Varying a little in size, all the houses of the Icelanders are constructed on nearly the same plan. An outer wall of turf, about four feet and a half high, often six feet thick, encloses all the apartments. On one side, generally that facing the south, are doors, for the most part painted red, surmounted with vanes. These are the entrances to the dwelling-house, the smithy, dairy, cow-house, &c. From the door of the house is a long, narrow, dark, and damp passage, into which, on each side, the different apartments open. Be-

FIG. 4



Reindeer by Mr. C. M. M. M.

T. Clark Mount

# KRISUVIK & the SULFEUR MOUNTAINS.

tween each of these is a thick partition of turf, and every one has a separate roof, through which light is admitted by bits of glass or skin, four or five inches in diameter. The principal rooms of the better sort of houses have windows in front, consisting of from one to four panes of glass. The thick turf walls, the earthen floors kept continually damp and filthy, the personal uncleanness of the inhabitants, all unite in causing a smell insupportable to a stranger. No article of furniture seems to have been cleaned since the day it was first used; and all is in disorder. The beds look like receptacles for dirty rags; and when wooden dishes, spinning-wheels, and other articles, are not seen upon them, these are confusedly piled up at one end of the room. There is no mode of ventilating any part of the house; and as twenty people sometimes eat and sleep in the same apartment, very pungent vapours are added, in no small quantity, to the plentiful effluvia proceeding from fish, bags of oil, skins, &c. A farm-house looks more like a village than a single habitation; and sometimes several families live enclosed within the same mass of turf. The cottages of the lowest order of people are wretched hovels; so very wretched, that it is wonderful how any thing in the human form can breathe in them.

The weather being warm and calm, we slept very comfortably in our tent, which was pitched near the banks of a small stream, at a short distance from the church. The 25th was a delightful day; and, having taken an early breakfast, we set out towards the Sulphur Mountain, which is about three miles distant from Krisuvik. At the foot of the mountain was a small bank composed chiefly of white clay and some sulphur, from all parts of which steam issued. Ascending it, we got upon a ridge immediately above a deep hollow, from which a profusion of vapour arose, and heard a confused noise of



boiling and splashing, joined to the roaring of steam escaping from narrow crevices in the rock. This hollow, together with the whole side of the mountain opposite, as far up as we could see, was covered with sulphur and clay, chiefly of a white or yellowish colour. Walking over this soft and steaming surface we found to be very hazardous; and we were frequently very uneasy when the vapour concealed us from each other. The day, however, being dry and warm, the surface was not so slippery as to occasion much risk of our falling. The chance of the crust of sulphur breaking, or the clay sinking with us, was great; and we were several times in danger of being much scalded. Mr Bright ran at one time a great hazard, and suffered considerable pain from accidentally plunging one of his legs into the hot clay. From whatever spot the sulphur is removed, steam instantly escapes; and, in many places, the sulphur was so hot that we could scarcely handle it. From the smell, we perceived that the steam was mixed with a small quantity of sulphurated hydrogen gas. When the thermometer was sunk a few inches into the clay, it rose generally to within a few degrees of the boiling point. By stepping cautiously, and avoiding every little hole from which steam issued, we soon discovered how far we might venture. Our good fortune, however, ought not to tempt any person to examine this wonderful place, without being provided with two boards, with which every part of the banks may be traversed in perfect safety. At the bottom of this hollow we found a cauldron of boiling mud, about fifteen feet in diameter, similar to that on the top of the mountain, which we had seen the evening before; but this boiled with much more vehemence. We went within a few yards of it, the wind happening to be remarkably favourable for viewing every part of this singular scene. The mud was in constant

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

Further up the mountain, we met with a spring of cold water, a circumstance little expected in a place like this. Ascending still higher, we came to a ridge composed entirely of sulphur and clay, joining two summits of the mountain. Here we found a much greater quantity of sulphur than on any other part of the surface we had gone over. It formed a smooth crust from a quarter of an inch to several inches in thickness. The crust was beautifully crystallized, and immediately beneath it we found a quantity of loose granular sulphur, which appeared to be collecting and crystallizing as it was sublimed along with the steam. Sometimes we met with clay of different colours, white, red, and blue, under the crust; but we could not examine this place to any depth, as, the moment the crust was removed, steam came forth, and proved extremely annoying. We found several pieces of wood, which were probably the remains of planks that had been formerly used in collecting the sulphur, small crystals of which partially covered them. There appears to be a constant sublimation of this substance; and were artificial chambers constructed for the reception and condensation of the vapours, much of it might probably be collected. As it is, there is a large quantity on the surface; and, by searching, there is little doubt that great stores may be found. The inconvenience proceeding from the steam issuing on every side, and from the heat, is certainly considerable; but, by proper precautions, neither would be felt so much as to render the collection of the sulphur a matter of any great diffi-

culty. The chief obstacle to working these mines, is their distance from a port whence the produce could be shipped. But there are so many horses in the country, whose original price is trifling, and whose maintenance during summer costs nothing, that the conveyance of sulphur to Reikiavik presents no difficulties which might not probably be surmounted.

Below the ridge on the farther side of this great bed of sulphur, we saw a great deal of vapour escaping with much noise. We crossed to the side of the mountain opposite, and found the surface sufficiently firm to admit of walking cautiously upon it. We had now to walk towards the principal spring, as it is called. This was a task of much apparent danger, as the side of the mountain, for the extent of about half a mile, is covered with loose clay, into which our feet sunk at every step. In many places there was a thin crust, below which the clay was wet, and extremely hot. Good fortune attended us; and, without any serious inconvenience, we reached the object we had in view. A dense column of steam, mixed with a little water, was forcing its way impetuously through a crevice in the rock, at the head of a narrow valley, or break in the mountain. The violence with which it rushes out is so great, that the noise, thus occasioned, may often be heard at the distance of several miles; and, during night, while lying in our tent at Krisuvik, we more than once listened to it with mingled awe and astonishment. Behind the column of vapour was a dark coloured rock, which gave it its full effect.

It is quite beyond our power to offer such a description of this extraordinary place, as to convey adequate ideas of its wonders or its terrors. The sensations of a person, even of firm nerves, standing on a support which feebly sustains him, over an abyss where, literally, fire and brimstone are in dread-

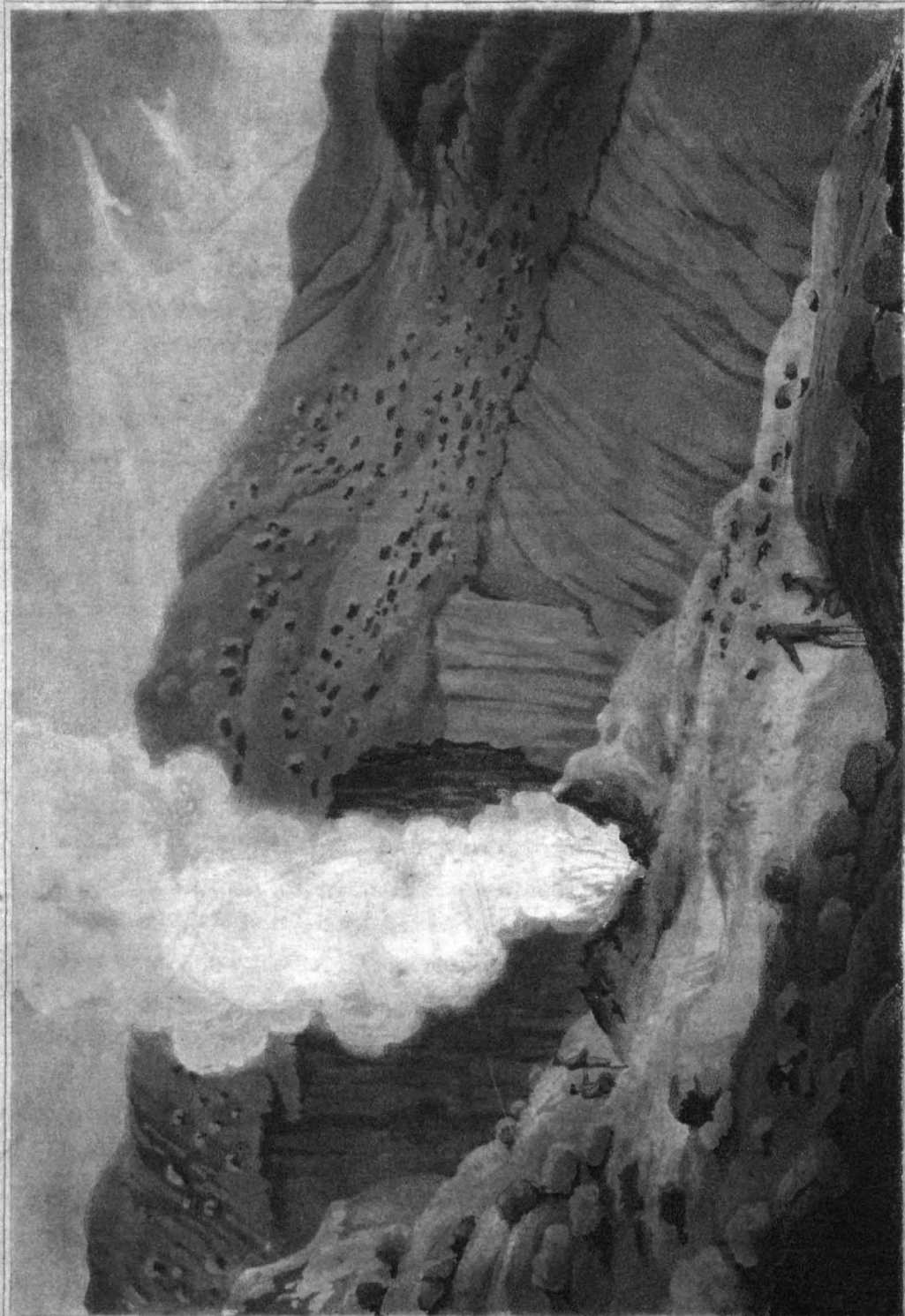


CAULDRON of BOILING MUD on the SULPHUR MOUNTAINS.

Printed by G. & J. S. Smith, Edinburgh, 1841.

Engraved by Mr. Geo. Mackenzie





GREAT JET OF STEAM, on the SULPHUR MOUNTAINS.

ful and incessant action ; having before his eyes tremendous proofs of what is going on beneath him ; enveloped in thick vapours ; his ears stunned with thundering noises ; must be experienced before they can be understood.

Earthquakes are said to occur frequently at *Krisuvik*, limited, however, to a small district in their extent and effects. It was remarked to us also, that they happen generally after a continuance of wet weather ; but whether these statements are accurate or not, we had no means of ascertaining.

On returning to our tent, we were agreeably saved the trouble of cooking, by the farmer and his wife, who brought in a large pewter dish full of boiled rice and milk, and some slices of smoked mutton. The 26th was spent in drawing, and examining the cliffs on the coast about four miles distant, where we found some curious mineralogical appearances, which will be afterwards described. While we were sitting at dinner in our tent, a woman came from an adjoining cottage, having a wooden vessel full of milk in one hand, and a snuff box in the other. These she alternately held out to us. We did not at first understand her gestures ; but afterwards found that she wished to barter milk for snuff. Before we left the place, we gave her some tobacco and snuff, with which she appeared to be highly gratified.

On the 27th, we set out for *Grundevik*, and walked about fifteen miles through a perfect desert of lava, slags, and sand. We saw hardly the slightest appearance of a vegetable, dead or alive. The mountains were of the most dreary aspect : nothing appeared to relieve the eye, or cheer the spirits, till we descried some cottages on the coast, to which we made all possible haste. Our eagerness to get out of this dismal country, made us walk so fast that our guides and horses were left far behind. On coming towards the houses, the people, men,



women, and children, came crowding out like ants from a disturbed hillock, to gaze at us. We were the first strangers that had ever been in that part of the island. On enquiry we found that the place we had to go to, was yet some miles distant. We struck into a path, and at length came to a bay which, from a chart we had with us, we knew to be that of Grundevik. The cottages here were of mean appearance, and we could not persuade ourselves that this was the place where the person to whom we had an introduction dwelt. There was one of the same name, however, and we produced our passport, which was given to an old man who had thick grey hair, and a bushy grey beard. He sat down, and putting a pair of spectacles on his nose, proceeded to read the paper with all the gravity of a patriarch. This done, plenty of milk was brought to us; and we were informed that the Jon Jonson we wanted lived a mile or two farther on, which was by no means very agreeable news. It had become cloudy, and the wind was blowing strongly from the east. At last we reached a part of the coast well studded with cottages. Heaps of fish were every where piled up; and though it was Sunday, this seemed to be a place of considerable business, and to contain a large population. Our surprise, on finding so dreary a region so well inhabited, ceased when we were informed that, at the commencement of every fishing season, numbers of people came from different parts of the country to the fishing stations, to provide fish for winter use. Cottages are set apart for their accommodation, and we here saw a large building destined for this purpose, called the *bud*, or booth.

One of the chief cares of an Icelander is the laying in a stock of provision for the winter season. Towards this object almost his whole time and exertions are directed, and the sea is his great and sure resource. About the beginning of

February, the people of the interior, and even those inhabiting the northern parts of the island, begin to move, and a great part of the male population emigrates towards the western and south western coasts. The farmers send their servants, and frequently accompany them; taking a small stock of butter and smoked mutton, and sheep skin dresses. They are sometimes distinguished from their servants by having a small quantity of rye bread and a little brandy. Before commencing his journey, an Icelander takes off his hat, places it before his face, and repeats a prayer prescribed for such occasions. He is welcomed at every cottage he stops at, and it is seldom that any remuneration is required for his entertainment. Many travel two hundred miles amidst snow and darkness, to the place they chuse for their fishing station; and if they have not previously made some agreement with the proprietor of a boat, a bargain is soon entered into, the terms of which have long been established by custom. By these, a person coming from the interior, engages himself from the 12th February to the 12th May, (the period varies a little) to be ready to obey the call for fishing, and to assist in the management of the boat. In return for his labour he receives forty pounds of meal, (if any is to be got) and five gallons of sour whey, besides a share of the fish that are taken. The fish are divided into two shares more than the number of men employed, and these belong to the owner of the boat, who provides lines and hooks. When he furnishes nets, which are generally used during the early part of the season, he receives one half of the fish caught. All the people engaged for one boat generally live together in the same hut. The previous arrangements being made, a long period of hardship and privation begins. In darkness, and subjected to intense cold, these poor people seek from the ocean the means for subsist,

ing their families during the following winter. As soon as the boat is pushed from the shore, the man at the helm takes off his hat and repeats a prayer for success, in which he is joined by the crew. They generally remain at sea from eight to twelve hours, during which time they taste nothing but a little sour whey, which is the only provision ever taken out with them. The women assist in cleaning and splitting the fish, after they have been brought to land. When the weather is so stormy that the fishermen cannot venture to sea, they frequently amuse themselves by wrestling, or playing at leap frog, and other diversions. Their mode of wrestling is somewhat peculiar. The two men who are to try their strength and skill, lay hold of each other in the way they think best. As soon as they have secured their grasp, each endeavours by sudden jerks, or by lifting him from the ground, or by quick turning, to throw his antagonist; and the dexterity they display is often extraordinary. About the beginning of May, the fishermen return home, leaving their fish, which are not by this time perfectly dried, and which may amount to five or six hundred for the share of each individual, to the care of some person who resides on the spot. About the middle of June, when the horses have got plump and strong, the farmers set out on their second annual journey, carrying with them all their marketable commodities, which they dispose of, and return home with their fish and such things as they may have purchased. When the stock of fish is thought too small, they barter wool, tallow, or butter, for any additional quantity they may require, and pay a small sum for the lodging and food of their servants.

Jon Jonson was not at home when we arrived; but he soon made his appearance, and pressed us to go into his house. It is somewhat remarkable that the Icelanders should display

considerable industry, and even ingenuity, in making the outside of their houses neat, while they keep the inside in such a state of dirtiness as to be truly disgusting. We complied with Jonson's request, but were glad to seize the first opportunity of escaping into the open air.

Our baggage arrived just as it began to rain. Upwards of thirty men, women, and children, gathered round, and disturbed us greatly while pitching our tent, which, had it not rained all night, would have exhibited lasting tokens of the pawing of the crowd that assembled about it. Even after we had gone to bed, they still continued at the door of the tent, and we were not suffered to sleep quietly, till our tormentors thought of rest themselves. With every desire to indulge the curiosity of the natives, and a readiness to submit to various privations and hardships, we could not endure to be touched ourselves, or to have any thing belonging to us handled by them. For this nicety we had another reason besides dislike of filth: the cutaneous eruptions from which very few Icelanders are free, more powerfully deterred us from any near approach. Poor Jonson did all he could to serve us, and gave us what milk he could spare, and some fish. Milk is extremely scarce in this district, and it was lucky that we had filled some bottles with it at Krisuvik.

We rose early in the morning, and found the rain falling heavily, accompanied by a gale of wind from the eastward. It was our original design to go to Cape Reikianes, where there are some hot springs; but having been informed that no food could be got for our horses, we resolved to proceed to Kieblivik. The country towards the Cape becomes low, and is entirely of volcanic formation; and this part of Iceland has been rendered famous on account of a remarkable event in the history of volcanoes, which happened in the year 1783, a

description of which will be found in the chapter on *Mineralogy* ; for which it is reserved on account of the phenomena being important in relation to the origin of pumice.

We now crossed the peninsula to the opposite shore, a distance of about fifteen miles, through a wild and dreary tract of lava ; meeting with nothing remarkable except a considerable extent of gravel, which had every appearance of having once formed the sea beach. We reached the northern side of the *Gulldbringè Syssel* at *Niardivik*, a large fishing village, much frequented by the inhabitants of the interior, who come down to procure fish. There are not fewer than three hundred boats, of different sizes, belonging to this place ; and it is said that the population, during the fishing season, sometimes amounts to two thousand, while at other times it does not exceed two hundred. The fishing banks are at a very short distance from this place, and the fish are esteemed finer than on any other part of the coast.

A mile or two westward is *Kieblivik*, situate at the head of a small bay, in which there is very good anchorage. Two or three merchants are established here, who reside in houses constructed of wood, resembling those at *Reikiavik*. We were very cordially received by *Mr Jacobæus*, a Dane, one of the most respectable as well as wealthiest merchants in Iceland ; who, with his lady, entertained us in the most hospitable manner for three days, during which there was a violent gale of wind and heavy rain. Soon after our arrival at his house, we got excellent coffee, rye bread, and butter. Dinner was not served up till nine o'clock ; but our patience was well rewarded with soup, mutton, and pan-cakes ; and we were treated in the same luxurious manner during the whole time of our stay with the family. It was a matter of much regret to us that, from our ignorance of the Danish language, we had no direct

means of conversation with Mr Jacobæus, who appeared to be a particularly intelligent man, had resided a long time in Iceland, and was well informed in many circumstances relating to the statistics and commerce of the country. It may be mentioned as a singular fact, that Madame Jacobæus, though she has now lived sixteen years in Iceland, has actually never been out of Kieblivik ; not even to visit the metropolis of the island.

On the first of June we took leave of our hospitable friends. As we had about thirty miles to walk, and could not foretell what obstacles we were to meet with, we made a very hearty breakfast. The day was cloudy, but favourable for walking. After having advanced a mile or two, Mr Holland returned for some things he had forgot. Mr Bright and I proceeded slowly, and not seeing our friend coming up, we concluded that he had resolved to remain with the baggage. After passing Niardivik, we were bewildered by the number of tracks, and at length lost them altogether. As we knew the general direction in which we were to go, we advanced, till after four hours walking, we began to feel the painful sensation of thirst. By good luck we found a puddle of rain water, near which we sat down and refreshed ourselves. Soon afterwards, we found a path, but lost it at the edge of a stream of lava. After a fruitless search to recover it, or find the proper place for entering the lava, we left all to chance, and ventured forward. We kept our course as well as we could, among heaps of loose slags, rugged lava, and deep fissures. The moss which grew in some places on the lava, often gave way, and we slid down among the slags. However trying this was to the limbs, we felt no inconvenience till thirst once more distressed us. The soles of Mr Bright's shoes having been torn by the lava, he sat down to cut away the loose pieces



which were troublesome. On rising he neglected to take up his great coat, which he had laid down beside him. Only a few minutes had elapsed before he discovered that he had left it behind, and we had not yet proceeded two hundred yards from the place. I ascended a peak of lava in order to direct his course, but very soon lost sight of him. He was away half an hour, and I remained all the while at my station ; and was beginning to feel some uneasiness, when I heard him hallooing very near me. On my answering, he scrambled to the top of a mass of lava, and was surprised to see me so near him. So rugged was this lava, and so circuitous the way to get through it, that he could not retrace a single step, and failed in his attempts to recover his coat.

It had never occurred to us to enquire whether it would be necessary to carry a little water with us ; and the people being accustomed to perform their journies on horseback with great speed, had no idea that we had any thing else to do than to make the best of our way through the country. Our examination of the rocks, and picking up plants, seemed to afford much amusement to the natives. Delays occasioned by such occupations often produced some inconveniences, and thirst was by far the most considerable. At this time it was almost intolerable ; but after some hours, the path appeared, and in the hollows there was a sufficient quantity of rain water to afford relief.

After a very fatiguing walk of twelve hours, we arrived at Mr Sivertson's, and found Mr Holland already there. On comparing notes, it appeared that he had got into the same track of lava in which Mr Bright had lost his coat, and that he must often have been not more than fifty yards from us. This was discovered by means of a few green knolls that had attracted our attention. He fared worse upon the whole than we did,

for he had been alone during the whole day, his shoes were completely destroyed, and his feet very much cut. In one respect, however, he was more fortunate; as he had found a peasant's cottage on the edge of the lava, where, by the aid of signs and a few Icelandic words, he had contrived to obtain a draught of milk, and a direction for the remainder of the way.

Every thing that could administer to our comfort was provided at Havnefiord. Our horses arrived four hours after us. Next morning we felt completely refreshed, and able to undergo a renewal of our fatigues. Though the appearance of the lava about Havnefiord is sufficiently terrific to a person who has never before seen any, yet on our return to it, the strong impression it had made was no longer felt. It is not to be compared in any respect with the horrible scenes we had passed through, nor were these equal to some lavas we afterwards encountered. No portion of the inhabited part of Iceland is so dreary and barren as that we had now travelled over. The only inducement, (but in this country it is a powerful one) for people to settle here, is the vast abundance of fish obtained on every part of the coast.

On the third of June we returned to Reikiavik, after having been absent nearly a fortnight upon our journey. We were much gratified to observe the progress that vegetation had made during our absence. We now saw some patches of green scattered here and there; and the vegetables in the little gardens about the houses were beginning to appear. On the 4th, we went on board the *Elbe*, from which a salute was fired in honour of our Sovereign's birth-day, and the day was spent in showing every mark of loyalty and affection for our gracious king, that our means allowed.

On the 8th we went to Vidœ to see the Eider-ducks, which

had now assembled in great numbers to nestle : at all other times of the year these birds are perfectly wild. They are protected by the laws ; a severe penalty being inflicted on any person who kills one ; and, during the breeding season, the fine is thirty dollars for each bird. As our boat approached the shore, we passed through multitudes of these beautiful fowls, which scarcely gave themselves the trouble to go out of the way. Between the landing place and the old governor's house, the ground was strewed with them ; and it required some caution to avoid treading on the nests. The drakes were walking about, uttering a sound very like the cooing of doves, and were even more familiar than the common domestic ducks. All round the house, on the garden wall, on the roofs, and even in the inside of the houses, and in the chapel, were numbers of ducks sitting on their nests. Such as had not been long on the nest generally left it on being approached ; but those that had more than one or two eggs sat perfectly quiet, suffering us to touch them, and sometimes making a gentle use of their bills to remove our hands. When a drake happens to be near his mate, he is extremely agitated when any one approaches her. He passes and re-passes between her and the object of his suspicion, raising his head and cooing. The nests were lined with down, which the duck takes from her own breast ; and there is a sufficient quantity laid round the nest, for the duck to cover up the eggs when she goes to feed, which is generally during the time of low water. The down, which is a valuable article of commerce, is removed at two different times from the nest. Sometimes the poor duck is compelled to provide a fourth lining ; and, when her down is exhausted, the drake supplies the deficiency. A certain number of eggs is also removed, as they are esteemed a great delicacy. Our good friend at

Vidœ used to send us two hundred at a time. When boiled hard they are tolerably good, but much inferior to the eggs of common poultry. Swans eggs, of which we got a few, are superior, and really excellent when boiled hard.

When taken from the nest, the Eider-down is mixed with feathers and straws. To separate them, and make the down fit for market, is part of the employment of the women during winter. As soon as the young birds leave the eggs, the duck takes them on her back, and swims to a considerable distance from the shore. She then dives, and leaves the little ones to exercise themselves in swimming about. As soon as they have got the use of their feet in this way, the duck returns, and becomes their guide. Several broods, often great numbers, join company, and are seen quite wild for a few weeks; after which, they totally disappear. Long before we left Iceland, there was not a single Eider-duck to be seen. Whither they retire is not known. These birds are found in the Flannen Isles, to the west of the Island of Lewis. They are seen in Shetland and Orkney; and they breed on the Island of May, at the mouth of the Firth of Forth.

A few days after our return to Reikiavik, a Danish galliot arrived in the harbour, which had sailed from Liverpool about three weeks before, and which brought over as passengers from England, Mr Sivertson of Havnefiord, and Mr Flood, a young Norwegian, who had been private secretary to Count Trampe. The latter was the bearer of a packet which the Count had been polite enough to send, containing letters of introduction to several of the principal people in Iceland. Besides those directed to individuals, there was one addressed generally to all persons holding offices or authority in the island, desiring them to facilitate our travels through the country, and to assist us in the prosecution of the ob-

jects we had in view. The arrival of this vessel effected a sort of miniature revolution in the government of Iceland; which was transferred from the hands of the Chief Justice Stephenson to those of three deputy governors; Mr Thoran-son, the Amtmand of the northern province; Assessor Einar-son; and our friend Mr Frydensberg of Reikiavik. At a ball which we attended a few days after this political change had taken place, the health of the new Governors was drunk with many demonstrations of satisfaction. The name of Count Trampe was also given as a toast, with much applause; and a poem in his praise, composed for the occasion by Mr Magnuson, one of the most celebrated of the Icelandic poets of the day, was sung in chorus by the whole party.

During our present stay in Reikiavik, we frequently visited the Bishop, and continued to be greatly pleased with him. We saw once or twice at his house a Mr Paulson, one of the medical practitioners of Iceland, who lives on the southern coast, at the distance of about a hundred miles from Reikiavik. He is a man of much information, and particularly conversant in the natural history of his own country, which he has studied with great attention. A few days after our return from the Guldbringè Syssel, Mr Holland received from him a note, written in Latin, \* requesting his medical attendance upon one of the daughters of Mr Sigurdson, the minister of Reikiavik. Mr Holland visited Mr Sigurdson's family frequently in this capacity, not only at the present time, but also upon our return from the journies we subsequently made; and his offices were rewarded by that

\* Dr Holland, ut filiulam pastoris templi Reykavianim, domini Sigurdson, ægrotantem, data occasione, concomitante interprete, visitare velit, humillime rogatur.  
PAULSONIO.

expression of gratitude, of which its simplicity was the strongest recommendation.

The 11th of June was a holiday; and the ceremony of confirmation was performed in the church. The ordinary service began with prayer and singing. Lessons were then read from the Bible, and the conclusion was a sermon, the delivery of which occupied more than half an hour. During the first part of the service, the minister was dressed in a sort of surplice, ornamented with broad blue bands, and with gold lace. The singing, or rather roaring, was performed by ten or twelve men, standing round the space enclosed about the altar. The sermon was read from the pulpit with much emphasis and gesture. The Bishop entered the church just before it began, and took a seat near the altar. The minister, having resumed his surplice and his station, at the altar, read a long exhortation to the children who attended for confirmation, and were ranged round him, the boys apart from the girls, all of them dressed in their best clothes. After an examination from a printed form of catechism, the children received confirmation from the minister, who laid his hands upon them. The whole was concluded with another exhortation, and a prayer by the minister, kneeling in the midst of the children. During this service, the Bishop was a mere spectator: his only occupation consisted in taking snuff, and chewing tobacco. A great number of Icelanders had come to Reikiavik from the adjoining country, to attend this ceremony; and the church was crowded with people, all in their finest suits. The women, who were habited in the proper costume of the country, sat together on the left side, and formed a singular and interesting assemblage. They were, for the most part, rather tall than



otherwise; their features in general well formed; and their complexions fair and florid. The men were seated on the opposite side of the church. None of the Danish inhabitants appeared at this ceremony; nor is it customary with them to attend any of the religious services of the Icelandic church.

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JOURNAL.

CHAP. II.

THE object of our second journey in Iceland, was to explore the peninsula on the western side of the island, which is terminated by the remarkable mountain called Snæfell Jokul. We were assisted in fixing our route, by the Chief Justice Stephenson, who was well acquainted with the district called the Borgarfjord Syssel, and by Mr Clausen, a Danish merchant, settled at Olafsvik, not far from the extremity of the peninsula. This gentleman, who came over to Reikiavik soon after our return from the Guldbringè Syssel, we found to be remarkably intelligent. We received from him every necessary direction as to our route, and also some account of the natural curiosities we should meet with in the tract of country through which we were to pass.

Having purchased five more horses, and hired two men, Gwylfr and Gudmundr by name, to attend our cavalcade, we made preparations proportioned to the length of the journey we were about to undertake, which we calculated to be between three and four hundred miles. Our baggage-horses

cost from eight to ten rixdollars each ; and those we intended for our own use, about twelve. They were by no means of the best description of riding-horses ; but sufficiently good for the rough work they had to encounter. An exceedingly good horse may be procured for twenty or thirty dollars ; a sum, according to the rate of exchange at this time, equivalent to two or three guineas. All our cattle were rather lean, and they had not yet lost their rough winter coats. Our servants professed to be well acquainted with the country we wished to examine ; and, being young and stout, we flattered ourselves that we should have little occasion to reproach them with laziness ; but we soon found that, like all their countrymen, they were systematically slow in their movements ; and that every attempt, either in the way of intreaty or of threat, to make them alert, was quite fruitless. One of them, however, who had been a servant to the Danish officers surveying the coasts of Iceland, was somewhat more disposed to activity than the other ; and we were gratified to find, on more than one occasion, that this superiority was the cause of high words between them, and of a little saving of time. Every one who undertakes to travel in Iceland, must resolve to submit with patience to the tardiness of his attendants. The young man who had accompanied us during our first journey, had left our service on being refused an increase of wages ; and he went to cut hay in the northern part of the island, where labourers are very scarce. He addressed a long letter in Latin to Mr Holland, which was so well written, that we suspected it was not his own composition ; and our suspicions were confirmed, on learning that he had gone to the school at Bessestad a few days before.

Early in the morning of the 15th June, we sent off the horses with our baggage, as they had to go round the bay ; and

we crossed it in the afternoon, in a boat belonging to the captain of the Danish galliot, then in the harbour, expecting to meet our horses at the opposite side. The wind was strong from the eastward, and it began to rain violently, when we were about half way across the bay, which is here six or seven miles in width. The rain and the water of the sea, which frequently broke over the boat, in a short time completely wetted us. Our voyage, however, was not long, and we landed in safety near the foot of the mountain called Esian. We now found ourselves in a country very different from that we had before traversed. Here we saw none of the desolated appearances which had marked the progress of volcanic fire in the Guldbringè Syssel. From the shore to the base of the mountain, was a flat green country, about a mile in breadth. It was, however, almost one continued bog, in many places nearly impassable. The mountain rose precipitous from the flat, the lower part being covered by the debris of the beds, which we saw ranged horizontally above; and its bold and lofty front was broken into gulleys of various dimensions. The height of Esian is about 1500 feet, which it preserves for an extent of several miles, without varying. It forms a very fine object viewed from Reikiavik, and is seen from the sea southward of the Guldbringè Syssel, over the mountains of that district.

Our horses not being in sight, we proceeded along the shore, examining the rocks that appeared. We then left the shore, and crossed the swamp towards the foot of the mountain. The rain still continued heavy, but we went on with the intention of stopping at the first convenient spot where we might pitch our tent. After walking to a considerable distance, and descrying no cottages, we waited for more than an hour in momentary expectation that our horses should

make their appearance. Being disappointed, however, in this, and dreading lest we should by any accident miss them, we returned towards the shore, and, in crossing the bog, were unfortunate enough to break one of our barometers. We soon reached some cottages near the sea, and having waked the inhabitants, who had already retired to rest, a man very civilly undertook to guide us to Brautarholt, a place where we had been recommended by some of our Reikiavik friends to pass the night. Here, we found a farmhouse, and a church of similar construction, but considerably larger than that at Krisuvik. Our horses did not arrive till eleven o'clock, owing to the extreme difficulty of guiding them across the bogs; and this lateness of the hour, as well as the difficulty of finding a convenient place in which to pitch the tent, led us to determine upon passing the night in the church. The people who inhabited the adjoining house readily acceded to this plan, brought us the keys of the church, and prepared for our supper a large dish of Eider-duck eggs, which was placed before us on the altar. We found the portable bedsteads, which we had with us, extremely well adapted to the form and dimensions of the church; and placing them in the space before the altar, which was just large enough to receive them, we slept most comfortably in this new situation, undisturbed either by mortal or spiritual visitants.

Next morning, we were supplied with boiled fish, rice and milk, from the farm-house, which, with the addition of biscuit we had brought with us, made a very excellent breakfast. The morning being stormy, we delayed our departure till noon, when the weather became more favourable. We proceeded along the shore of the Hval Fiord (Whale Frith), which runs up the country about twenty miles in a north-



easterly direction, preserving nearly an uniform breadth of about three miles. The scenery was similar to that of many of those arms of the sea, called *Lochs*, in the highlands of Scotland, the grandeur and variety of which it rivalled in every respect, except that its shores were wholly destitute of wood. The precipices are magnificent ; and the eye is carried to the extreme distance, by mountains assuming every variety of romantic form, many of them capped with snow.

Having walked about six miles, we mounted our horses, and left the *Fiord*, passing into a valley to the right. This valley is high, and little more than a mile in breadth. The mountains on each side are lofty, bold, and rugged ; and the patches of snow which yet remained upon their sides added much to the wildness of the scene. Though the ground is swampy, it affords much excellent pasture, and we observed several farm-houses in different parts of the valley.

Turning round the mountains on our left, we came to an open country of considerable extent, but so boggy, that it was with great difficulty we got through it. We now found how necessary the provision of riding horses was to our present journey, and had at the same time an opportunity of ascertaining the confidence which might be placed in these animals. In going through a bog, an Iceland horse seems to know precisely where he may place his foot in safety, and where he cannot venture to pass. If in doubt, he will feel the ground with his foot before he attempts to place his whole weight upon it. If convinced that there is danger, neither coaxing nor whipping will induce him to go forward ; but when left to himself he will find his way, and carry over his burden in safety. It sometimes happens, though very seldom, that in traversing an extensive bog a horse will sink to his belly, but he soon extricates himself with apparent ease.

So very indifferent do the horses appear to such an accident, that we have seen them begin to eat the grass within their reach, till reminded of making their way forward by the application of a whip.

Having left our baggage and our guides behind, we should have been greatly perplexed in crossing the bogs, had not a peasant, whom we accidentally met, very kindly assisted us by leading the way. He appeared to be active and intelligent, though we inferred all this from his motions and signs alone, as we had no other means of conversation with him. Though we had a perfect confidence in his guidance, we were not a little astonished when he conducted us through places where we were in continual expectation of being swallowed up. Our astonishment was not lessened, when we observed him plunge into a small inlet of the sea connected with the Hval Fiord, and proceed directly across it. A river of considerable size empties itself into this bay; and being much swollen by the rain which had fallen during some days before, we were fortunate in arriving at a time when the tide was out; the river itself being impassable. The breadth of the water was little less than half a mile; but by scrupulously following the steps of our guide, we passed over in safety, and soon afterwards arrived at the farm-house called Houls. This we found to be much superior in appearance to such houses of the same description as we had already seen. The general construction of the habitation was the same; and though it was very far indeed from being neat, yet it was some degrees nearer to that desirable state than most others. Our baggage horses did not arrive till a very late hour; and the good people of the house having given us their best apartment, we removed some of the furniture, which appeared not to have been displaced since the house was originally furnished, and put up our own beds, for

which there was just sufficient room. The floor was earthen, and extremely damp, and exhaled no very agreeable odour; but this we endeavoured to correct by smoking segars.

The proprietor of this house, by name Gudmundson, was the Hreppstiorè, or constable of the parish; an office next in rank to that of Sysselman, or Sheriff. The general duties of the Hreppstiorè relate to the preservation of the peace, and the superintendence of the poor. The farm attached to the house supports ten cows, several horses, and above a hundred sheep. Besides a certain proportion of the produce of the cattle, twenty-seven rixdollars per annum are paid as land rent. For this sum, however, independently of his farm, the tenant is entitled to a part of the profits of a salmon fishery in the adjoining river: it being the custom, in the case of most of the salmon rivers in Iceland, to divide the profits of the fishery among the different farms which are situate on their banks. We had some salmon for breakfast at Houls, caught in the river the preceding evening, and found it to be excellent. No other mode of taking the fish is here practised, than that of constructing dams under the falls. The number of salmon caught does not much more than suffice for the use of the different farm-houses in the neighbourhood.

At Houls we saw a small patch of ground laid out as a garden, with regular beds. A young woman was planting small cabbages in it: by means of a plank she preserved the beds from being spoiled by her feet; and, making holes in the earth along the edge of it, she placed the plants in regular and equidistant rows.

Next morning, we gave to the farmer's wife, who was a neat, good looking woman, a trifling present of needles, pins, scissors, thread, &c. with which she appeared highly pleased; and, having breakfasted, we took our leave. Mr Gudmund-

son shewed his kindness in accompanying us as a guide. We returned to the shores of the Hval Fiord, and proceeded to a place called Huamr, where we procured a small fishing-boat, and crossed over to Saurbar, leaving our baggage-horses to go round by the head of the Fiord, and taking only our beds with us. Two men rowed us across, who appeared perfectly indifferent to the swell of the water, which sometimes came over the gunnel of the boat, and now and then occasioned us considerable alarm.

Saurbar is situate on a rising ground, at a short distance from the shore of the Hval Fiord, and is the residence of the parish priest, Mr Hialtalin; from whose house there is a striking, and somewhat picturesque view of the upper part of the Fiord, which has here the appearance of an extensive lake. Mr Hialtalin had just alighted from his horse as we arrived, and received us in the kindest manner. He had very much the appearance of a gentleman, both in dress and manner; and we found him possessed of considerable information. He had been settled at this place twenty-four years, with a stipend of thirty dollars, and as much land as maintains a small stock of cows and sheep. Upon this slender provision he has contrived to support a very numerous family; having had altogether, from two matrimonial engagements, not fewer than twenty-three children, thirteen of whom are still living. One of his daughters is married to Mr Gudmundson, our host of the preceding night. Mr Hialtalin's habitation entirely resembles the common farm-houses of Iceland, except that it is somewhat cleaner and more comfortable in the interior. The sitting room, which is very small and ill lighted, is furnished with a stove, an article not common in the houses of Icelanders, and possesses a considerable collection of books; among which we met with a sort of *catalogue raisonnée* of all

the Icelandic authors, which we wished very much to obtain, but found the author unwilling to part with it.

Having perceived the church to be tolerably clean, we asked permission to sleep in it, which was cheerfully granted. The altar was covered with crimson silk, ornamented with gold lace; and above it was a very indifferent painting of the Last Supper, surmounted by a crucifix. The dimensions of the church we ascertained to be thirty-five by sixteen feet, and about seven feet in height to the joists. We have chosen a representation of this building, in order that the reader may form some idea of the general exterior appearance of the country churches in Iceland.

For supper, we had coffee, mashed fish prepared with butter, milk, and spices, and rice-milk. This last dish was given us for breakfast the next morning, with cakes made of the same materials.

*Sketched by R. Wright.*

CHURCH OF SAURBAR.

*E. Mitchell sc.*



In the course of the evening, we had much conversation with our worthy host, who spoke Latin exceedingly well. We obtained from him some interesting particulars relative to his parish, and had much reason to admire his paternal care of the flock committed to his charge. In a population varying, in different years, from two hundred to two hundred and ten, there are fifteen married couples. The average annual number of births is seven ; and of deaths, six or seven : of marriages, below one. The extent of the parish is sixteen English miles in length, and ten in breadth ; so that the population does not exceed  $1\frac{1}{4}$  to a square mile.

We were gratified with a sight of Mr Hialtalin's parish register ; a very interesting book, in which, for his own satisfaction, he makes an annual record of the state of each family within the district of which he has the pastoral charge. He permitted us to copy part of this book ; and the following is a translation, made by his assistance, of the first page of the register for the year 1805. This example of the attention and pious care with which the duties of a country priest are performed, in so remote a corner of the Christian world, may excite a blush in many of his brethren in more fortunate countries, and amid more opulent establishments.



Names of Habitations	Names of the People in the Family.	Situation, Occupation, &c.	Age.	Confirmed.	Communicants.	Whether able to read.	Conduct.	General abilities, &c.
Storibotn	Gudrun Sigurdardottir,	Widow, and owner of the house,	57	Yes	Yes	Yes	Clean and industrious,	Wellinformed.
	Oddur Jonsson,	Widow's son,	19	Do.	Do.	Do.	A good boy,	Well educated.
	Hans Jonsson,	Do.	19	Do.	Do.	Do.	Clever at work,	Not so good an understanding as his brother.
	Ingiborg Jonsdottir,	Widow's daughter,	18	Do.	Do.	Do.	A hopeful girl,	Wellinformed.
	Gudrun Jonsdottir,	Do.	17	Do.	Do.	Do.	Equally good,	Above mediocrity in her abilities.
	Wigfus Gudmundson,	An orphan kept by the widow,	15	No.	No.	Do.	A tractable boy	Good understanding.

The books in this house are, the New Psalm-book; Vidalin's Sermons; Thoughts on the Nativity of Christ; Psalms relating to the Passion of Christ; the Conversation of the Soul with itself; Thoughts on the Passion; Diarium; Thordir's Prayers; the New Testament, and a Psalm-book.

Thyrell.	Jorundr Gislasson,	Hreppstjore, Elder or Constable,	41	Yes	Yes	Yes	Well disposed and clean,	Moderate abilities.
	Margret Thorstensdottir,	His wife,	53	Do.	Do.	Do.	Good character,	Piously disposed.
	Gudrun Eireksdottir,	Her daughter by a former husband,	19	Do.	Do.	Do.	A hopeful girl,	Wellinformed.
	Gudmundr Grimson,	Servant man,	25	Do.	Do.	Do.	A faithful labourer,	He has neglected his improvement, and is therefore admonished.
	Thorsdys Sæmnsdottir,	Maid servant,	42	Do.	Do.	Do.	Neat & faithful,	Wellinformed.
	Jarfrudr Stephansdottir,	Her child,	3	—	—	—	—	—
	Hristin Jonsdottir,	A female orphan,	8	—	—	—	A tractable child,	Has finished her catechism; —to be confirmed.
	Waldi Sterinderson,	A male orphan,	6	—	—	—	Tractable and obedient,	Is learning the catechism.

The books in the house are, the Old Psalm-book and the New one; Vidalin's Sermons; Vidalin's Doctrines of Religion; Fast Sermons; Seven Sermons; Psalm-books; Sturm's Meditations (translated into Icelandic); Bible Extracts; Bastholm's Religious Doctrine; a Prayer-book; and a New Testament belonging to the church.

This table is extremely interesting in many points of view. Besides showing the great attention of Mr Hialtalin to the duties of his office, it exhibited in some degree the character of the people, the importance they attach to religious and moral dispositions, and the attention which is paid to education even among the lower classes. By attending to the list of names, the manner of forming the surname among the Icelanders may be observed. The son takes the Christian name of his father, and adds *son* to it for his surname; and the daughter annexes *dottir* in the same manner. A similar custom is well known to have given rise to many English surnames. In Scotland, the word *Mac*, signifying son, was prefixed. The inconvenience of this mode is not felt in Iceland, where the population is so much scattered. There are, however, instances here also, in which a surname has been perpetuated, as in the family of the Stephensons.

We slept very comfortably in the church at Saurbar. Before leaving the place the following morning, we inoculated, with the vaccine virus, the minister's eldest daughter, a fine healthy-looking girl, about twenty years of age. We also inoculated a younger child; and a third was brought to us, but finding his arm covered with itch, we declined wasting matter on him, having formerly had experience of the inefficacy of inoculating, when any considerable cutaneous eruption existed. The itch is a very common disease in this country, and it seems to be thought conducive to general health. Having informed Mr Hialtalin how to treat the cowpox in its progress, and to save the crusts, and showed him how he might inoculate from them with a penknife or a needle; we took leave of his hospitable family. Our host himself, putting on a cocked hat, and taking his staff in his hand, accompanied us about a mile, in order to show us the road.

We travelled along the shore of the Hval Fiord, through a flat swampy country, lying between the mountains above Saurbar, and Akkrefell, a mountain which forms the headland between the Hval Fiord and Borgarfiord. On the low ridges above Saurbar, and stretching westward, we observed some patches of stunted birch-wood, the first thing of the kind we had seen in Iceland. We passed some small lakes, one of which formed a sort of bason, close to the Hval Fiord, so that a very little labour would be sufficient to drain off the whole of the water. This day was one of the warmest we experienced in Iceland. At two o'clock p. m. the thermometer stood at 65°, while a pretty strong breeze prevailed. In the sun, at the same hour, the degree was 86.

Passing round the mountain of Akkrefell, we came in sight of Indreholm, the house of the Chief Justice Stephenson, from whom we had received an invitation when we saw him at Reikiavik, soon after our arrival in Iceland. It is situate in a large extent of flat, boggy ground, stretching from the base of the mountain to the sea, in the same manner as the tract under Esian; but containing much more verdure, and better grass. Behind is the lofty and precipitous mountain, which, in passing along, had attracted our particular notice, on account of the disclosure of its internal structure, almost from top to bottom, in a precipice not much short of two thousand feet in height. We arrived at the house about five o'clock. In appearance, it is rather a group of buildings than a single habitation; and, together with the outhouses and church, looks like a little village.

We were received very cordially, and were ushered into the best room by Mr Stephenson, who met us at the door. Almost immediately after we had seated ourselves, the ladies of the family made their appearance; and we had coffee,

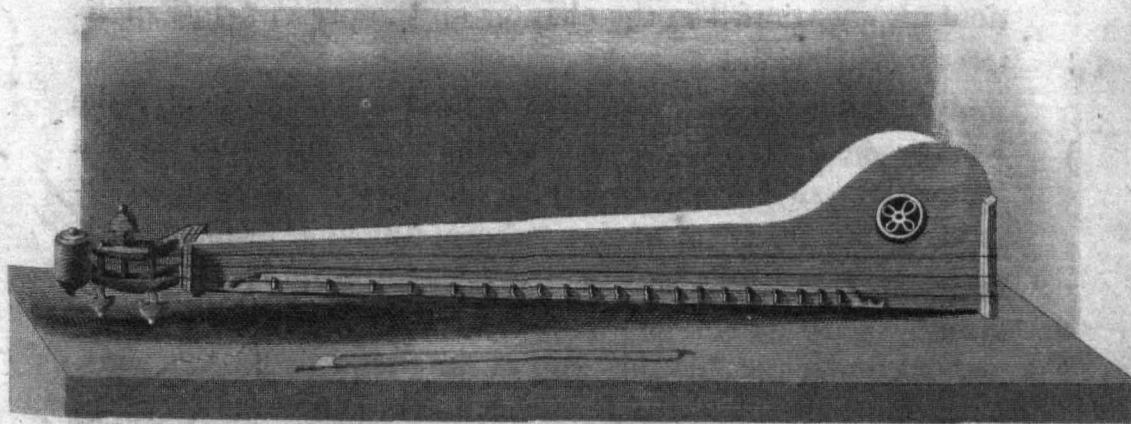
wine, biscuit, and English cheese, set before us. This was merely a prelude to a more substantial dinner, or rather supper, which was brought in at 8 o'clock. It consisted of boiled salmon, baked mutton, potatoes (from England), sago and cream, London porter, and excellent port wine. We had no doubt that the ladies, who had prepared and brought in the dishes, would partake of it; and, on our declining to take our seats before they had placed themselves at table, we were surprised when told that they had already dined. The females, of the highest, as well as of the lowest rank, as in former times in our own country, seem to be regarded as mere servants. During our repast, our hostess stood at the door looking at us; while her daughter, and another young woman, were actively employed in changing the plates, and running backwards and forwards for whatever was wanted. Occasionally the lady assisted in the rites of hospitality; and next day, when restraint was somewhat worn off, she and the young ladies chatted and joked with us, laughing heartily at our broken Icelandic, which was mixed with English and broken Danish, neither of which they understood.

While busily engaged with our viands, our ears were all at once struck with musical sounds. Having heard nothing of the kind before in Iceland, except the miserable scraping of the fiddle in the Reikiavik ball-room, the pleasure we now derived from agreeable sounds, and harmonious music, was very great. When our first surprise was over, we thought that the music, which proceeded from an apartment above, was from a piano-forte; but we were told that it was an Icelandic instrument, called the *Lang-spiel*; and that the performers were the son and daughter of Mr Stephenson, whose proficiency upon this instrument was considered to be very great. The *Lang-spiel*, which was now brought down for our



inspection, consists of a narrow wooden box, about three feet long, bulging at one end, where there is a sound-hole, and terminating at the other like a violin. It has three brass wires stretched along it, two of which are tuned to the same note, and one an octave lower. One of the two passes over little projections, with bits of wire on the upper part. These are so placed, that when the wire above them is pressed down by the thumb-nail, the different notes are produced on drawing a bow across; and the other wires perform the same office as the drones of a bagpipe. In short it is simply a monochord, with two additional strings, to form a sort of bass. When the instrument is near, it sounds rather harsh; but, from an adjoining room, especially when two are playing together, as was the case when we first heard the music, the effect is very pleasing. The tunes we heard played were chiefly Danish and Norwegian. Mr Stephenson's daughter made us a present of her *Lang-spiel*, from which this description and the drawing were taken.

The young ladies did their best to entertain us with singing; but the mode they had of screwing, not raising, their voices to a pitch never before attempted, reminded us of an error not unfrequent in our own country, where musical

*Engel & B. Schell*

THE LANG SPIEL.



proficiency is too often only a display of feats of art, which have no reference whatever to the emotions which natural melody is calculated to excite.

Mr Stephenson's family is the only one in Iceland that can be said to cultivate music at all. He himself plays upon a chamber-organ, which he brought from Copenhagen a few years ago.

This gentleman, who has been already mentioned as at the head of the Icelandic courts of justice, and a privy counsellor of Denmark, with the title of *Etatsraad*, has been very assiduous in his endeavours to distinguish himself in the walks of literature. He has had great merit in recommending the pursuit of knowledge to his countrymen; and has himself written various works on politics, history, and morals. All these amount to about twenty different books; and he had in the press, at the time we were in his house, an additional work on the Polity of Iceland. He is the owner of a very good library, consisting probably of seven or eight hundred volumes, among which are a number of English works, history, novels, and poetry; and a valuable collection of Icelandic books and manuscripts. In his house is also the library belonging to a society, which will be particularly mentioned in the chapter on the present state of literature in Iceland.

The family of Mr Stephenson consists of his lady, the Fru Stephenson, as her title stands; his daughter, intitled the Frukin, or young ladyship, a tall, lively girl, apparently about twenty years of age, whose stiff and formal dress, of coarse blue cloth, but ill accorded with the laughter ever present in her countenance; another young lady who is at present under the guardianship of Mr Stephenson; two sons, both of whom appear to be clever, intelligent youths; and an