WHEN I WAS A GIRL IN ICELAND

HÓLMFRÍDUR ÁRNADÓTTIR

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BY

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ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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PREFACE

Will you kindly keep in mind that my childhood memories described in this book are from a time twenty-five to forty years ago. Although a great many things are just the same to-day, others have changed a great deal. I will also ask you to bear in mind that what is told in this little book of mine is not taken at random, but that I have given the facts of my own experience, told as truthfully as I was able to, and described as clearly as my imperfect knowledge of the English language allowed. I hope that many of the questions I have frequently heard about my country will be answered here, and I hope also that this book may lead to still further curiosity

concerning matters dealing with Iceland. The Icelanders discovered America and lost it again; let now the Americans discover Iceland and never lose sight of it again.

Written on my forty-sixth birthday, February first, 1919.

HOLMFRIDUR ARNADOTTIR,
570 West 156th Street, New York City.

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CHAPTER I

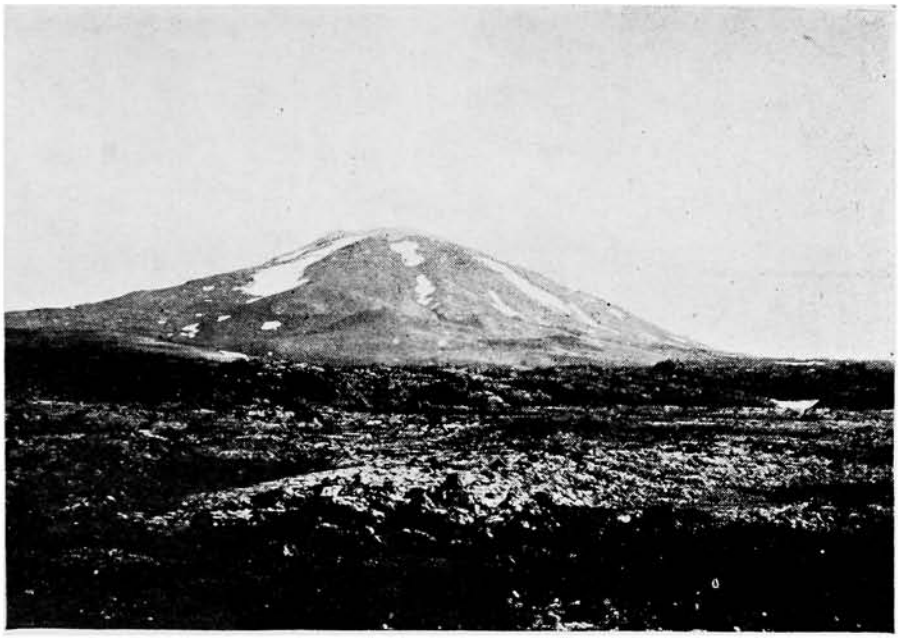
THE COUNTRY

I SUPPOSE you have all heard the name Iceland and know that it is an island in the Atlantic Ocean, touching the Arctic Circle. But the real name is Island, and the meaning of it is Iceland. In this book I will use the English name, Iceland, although it is not correct. Look at the globe, and you will find a little continent between Greenland, Norway, and Scotland. But it is far away from all these countries, and a little continent of its own; as you easily see. The imaginary line between the Old and the

New Hemispheres lies over Iceland; thus one part might belong to America, while the other was a part of Europe. We are not so particular and count it to be in the Old World. This is not at all a small island; it is really the largest island in Europe but one, and that is Britain. The size approaches that of the State of New York, or 42,037 square miles.

Iceland is a very mountainous country, and there are great volcanoes which often are active. You know the name Hekla. It is often mentioned with the name Etna, the other great volcano in Sicily near Italy; these two have often been active at the same time. Hekla has erupted more than twenty times, as recorded in the History of Iceland. Many other volcanoes have been active there and caused awful damage.

In Iceland you will find the very famous Geysir, which has the special name that later has been borrowed for all hot springs



HEKLA, THE GREAT VOLCANO.

THE GREAT WATERFALL, GULLFOSS.

of similar kind, the word of course being Icelandic, and meaning one who gushes. There are many other hot springs. There are also to be found large glaciers, one of them having about the same area as Greater New York.

The country has sometimes been called the island of fire and ice; but you must not think it is nothing but ice and fire. Far from that, there are the most beautiful valleys, with green meadows dotted with flowers of all kinds, with fragrance that surpasses that of the garden flowers. Rivers, lakes, and brooks are all over it, in which are marvelous waterfalls; one of them with the name Gullfoss, is the greatest in Europe. Trees are small and rather scarce there. The highest of them only reach thirty to forty feet. Mountain-ash and birch are the most frequent.

The climate of the country is not very cold, as it is modified by the Gulf Stream,

coming all the way from the Gulf of Mexico. The current of it which washes the south coast prevents the Polar ice from blocking it. But on the northern side the Polar stream with the Polar ice sometimes overpowers the Gulf Stream and takes hold of the coast for some weeks and even for some months of the year. The summer is never so hot as in America, and it is very short. The winter is comparatively long and mild, and all the time the weather may be very changeable. It is considered a nice summer when it neither snows nor freezes for three months. If you look at the map of comparative temperatures you will learn that the actual mean temperature of January is the same in the southern part of Iceland and New York. But the mean temperature of July is similar to that of the southern part of Labrador.

As the island lies so far north, you can

imagine that the length of the days varies very much from yours. From the middle of May to the middle of August we can read and write at twelve o'clock midnight; there is no night at all. In the northernmost parts of the country the sun does not go down one week in June, that is the glorious Midnight Sun. But we have to pay for that in winter. Then the days are very short for some months, and at the solstice time if it is cloudy or snowy weather the lamps have to be lighted the most of the day.

CHAPTER II

DISCOVERY AND SETTLEMENT

You know that the world has been discovered from time to time during several ages. For instance, Iceland was unknown till the end of the eighth century, and even then known to very few people, for they had no cables nor telegraphs to send that news about the world, and no newspapers to publish it in. They who found it first are said to have been Irishmen and for a while some Irish monks lived there. After the middle of the ninth century a viking from Norway was shipwrecked on it. When he came home again, he related his adventure to his country-people and that was the begin-

ning of several excursions up there by the Norwegian vikings. One of them gave the island that grisly name. Please keep in mind, that it is only that man's whim we have to blame for that, and not the nature of the country.

Norway was then a very prosperous land where lived rich and noble people. Their chiefs have got the name vikings, because they anchored their vessels in *viks* (creeks) when they were hunting for each other, or preparing an attack on the coast. The Norwegian vikings used to sail their vessels or viking ships, as they were called, to England, Scotland, Ireland, and the neighboring isles. They fought with the people living there, and even sometimes took their lands and called themselves kings. They were at the same time very much feared and looked up to by the people. In winter time they generally lived on their farms

in Norway, inviting each other to great feasts, and mutually telling their adventures in voyages of the last summer, and planning for the next trips.

We are very often astonished at reading in the Sagas how cruel these men sometimes were, but we often find them performing the most unselfish and noble deeds, even for their enemies. When we read about them, we ought to remember that their pagan gods not only allowed them to kill people, but even promised rewards to those who fought and died in battles. They believed in Odin, Thór, Frigg and Freyja and many others. You know these names from your names of the days. Wednesday comes from Odin (Woden), Thursday from Thór, Friday from Freyja, and so on.

At the time here spoken of Norway was divided into small states or what they called *Fylki*. Each of them was ruled by

a king or earl. One of these kings had the name Harold, son of Halfdan Svarta (the swart or black). His father died when he was a very young boy, but his uncle governed the state as long as he was a child. He had grown to be a big, strong, and good-looking man when he was sixteen years old, and then he took the rule of the state into his own hands. Like most young men, he wanted a wife, and for that purpose he sent his messengers to a daughter of one of the other kings in Norway with the request that she become his wife. Her reply was such that it caused a great change in the current of the Norwegian people's life, and had also a great deal to do with shaping the future of Iceland:

"I will not waste my maidenhood for the taking as husband of a king, who has no more realm to rule over than a few folks. Marvelous it seems to me, that

there be no king minded to make Norway his own and be sole lord thereof in such wise as Gorm of Denmark or Eric of Upsala have done in their countries."

When Harold heard Princess Gyda's answer, he said, "She has brought to my mind something which it now seems wondrous to me, I had not thought of before. This oath I swear to the God who made me and who rules over all things, that I will nevermore cut my hair nor comb it till I have gotten possession of all Norway, with the taxes thereof."

It took Harold several years to conquer the kings and earls, but at last they had to submit to his strong will. The last battle he fought with them was in the year 872, called the battle of Hafursfjörd. The Icelander, Snorri Sturluson, who wrote the History of the Norwegian Kings, completes this tale by saying: "So King Harold took a bath, and then he let

his hair be combed, and then Earl Rögnvald sheared it and heretofore it had been uncombed and unshorn for ten winters. Aforetime he had been called Shock-head, but now Rögnvald gave him a by-name and called him Harold the Fairhaired, and all said that saw him that he was most soothly named, for he had both plenteous hair and goodly."

Now Gyda was willing to become Harold's queen.

The consequence of this was that many of the chiefs and nobles in Norway, and even kings and queens, emigrated to the newly discovered island, called Iceland. There they found what they had lost in their native country: unbounded liberty.

I want to tell you another little story, which is connected with the settlement of Iceland, and in which another woman seems to have been the tool in the hands of Fate to urge the inhabiting of it.

There lived in Norway two young men who were near relatives. Their names were Ingólfur and Leifur. Helga, Ingólfur's sister, was a pretty girl. Leifur and Helga were good friends and had even secretly pledged their faith to each other. In that neighborhood lived an earl by name of Atlï. He had three sons. They had in the previous summers been comrades of Ingólfur and Leifur on their viking raids. Once on a time Ingólfur invited them all to a great feast at his farm. At such occasions it often happened that the young men made oaths and swore either to die or perform some deed or other like that of Harold the Fairhaired. Helga was among the young ladies in the feast-room, and she was the prettiest one. One of the earl's sons could not help looking at Helga all the time; he had fallen in love with her. At last he rose and made oath that he would marry Helga or die. When

Leifur heard that, his face reddened, and, although it is not told, we can imagine that Helga was grieved. The next summer, instead of being comrades, Ingólfur and Leifur fought with the earl's sons and killed two of them. On account of that they had to abandon their homes in Norway, for they were banished from the country. Ingólfur was the first settler of Iceland, but Leifur was killed by his thralls shortly after his arrival. That was in the year 874.

I have already told you that the Norwegians were then pagans. The farmers used to have the engravings of their gods on the pillars they had always placed on both sides of their seats in the main room in their houses. These pillars were the relics of each family.

Now Ingólfur was a great believer in destiny. Besides all his movable property, the high-seat-pillars were shipped on

board his vessel, which had a dragon's head as an ornament at the prow. When he had reached so far as to see the land he had made his destination, he threw the pillars overboard and said he would build his farmhouse where they drove on shore. He landed safely and nowhere were the pillars to be seen. He sent two of his thralls to search for them, and they found them at last in the third year, driven ashore on the southwest coast, where Ingólfur now built his farmhouse and took possession of a vast stretch of land. He called his farm Reykjavík (Smoking Creek), for near there are hot springs, all the time veiled with smoke.

He placed his pillars on the sides of his seat in his new home. And what is worth mentioning is that this first settler's farm has grown to be the capital of Iceland, which has the same name as his farm had. Ingólfur lived there the rest of his life, and

his descendants lived there, too. In about sixty years Iceland became as much inhabited as it is to-day, and, as before told, the settlers were mostly Norwegians. But many of their thralls were Celtic people whom they had captured in their viking forays. For instance, it is related in one of the Sagas that Melkorka, the daughter of Mỳrkjartan, king of Ireland, was the slave of Olaf Pá, who was one of the chiefs, and he had a child by her who became a great man.

What language did these people speak? They spoke the language that was then used with trifling variations in all the Scandinavian countries and in a great part of England, too, now called Old Norse. We see from the Sagas that all these nations have understood each other's speech, and as you know, the Anglo-Saxons had migrated from north Germany and Scandinavia to Britain and were near

relatives to the Scandinavians. Nowadays that language is called Icelandic and is nowhere spoken except by the Icelanders, of course with some unimportant changes. When Iceland was settled there was established a commonwealth, and for several centuries it was the most independent country that existed.

In the year 1000 Christianity was adopted in Iceland, and, as elsewhere, it was followed by the development of the people. Schools were established there, monasteries and nunneries were founded, many books were committed to writing, which have made the country and the nation known among all the great scholars of the world. The so-called Sagas, I have mentioned before, are from that time. They relate the daily life, not only of the Icelanders, but also wherever they paid their visits, which they did to most countries then known. Many of these

Sagas, the Eddas and other legends, are translated into English, and I will earnestly advise you to read them, if you want some interesting books. Very likely you have often noticed in your English dictionary in the definition of a word the letters *Ice.* That means that the original word is Icelandic. This shows how related these two languages are.

CHAPTER III

MY HOME AND FAMILY

In the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is a sculpture of the hand of the Creator holding two soundly sleeping babies. That view awakened in my mind the remembrance of loving parents' tender care, which was my first experience in this life.

How beautiful to be a child in the hands of good father and mother!

I was the eldest of four children, two boys and two girls, but the elder of my brothers died when he was four years old. We were all sick then, and one day we saw our mother kneel in silent prayer beside my brother's bed. And then she told us he had passed away. We cried long and

bitterly. But children forget more easily than grown people. My mother could never mention that boy without getting tears in her eyes, and she told us that he had been the fairest and cleverest of her children.

My father was a stout man of medium height, strongly built, and with an expressive look. He had only to give us a look, if he disliked something we children said or did, and we knew at once what he meant and changed our behavior. My mother was a rather tall woman with lovely mild face, rich, dark hair, and brown eyes that had a tolerant look, which we children sometimes took too much advantage of. I think I may have been only two or three years old when I remember sitting, one beautiful day, on the lawn in front of the farmhouse, picking buttercups and dandelions. The next event printed on my memory is that I was

running from one to another, showing to them a blue sweater I had just got, and of which I was very proud. My clothes were mostly either knitted, or of home-spun and homewoven woolen cloth, from the wool of father's sheep. My shoes were sheepskin slippers, bordered with white skin and fastened round the ankles with a white thong of skin. They were also made at home.

My father's farm was one of seventeen farms in a little valley on the northern coast of Iceland. The farms all had their special names. Our farm's name was Kálfsstaðir (calf-place). The man who first settled there had the name Kálfur (Calf). Still there is a little mound near the farmhouse where he is said to have been buried.

The farmhouse was an old one when my father bought the farm and moved to it

to live there a few years before I was born, but he rebuilt all the buildings, both dwelling-houses and stables. He hired some laborers and a carpenter but he was the master-builder himself. When children visited me I used to take them about to show them the houses I heard the other farmers admire, and now I want you to go with me for a while.

Let us first examine the three rows of turf houses with their fronts and back made of timber. A door is leading in to each row, but between them inside are also passages. We step into the guest-room, a small one with blue walls, white ceiling and brown floor, all of timber. The room gets light through one window on the front side with six small square panes of glass. White curtains are draped at three sides of the window.

In one corner was a press, where my father kept sometimes one or two bottles

of wine to treat his best friend, who occasionally called on him. The walls were decorated with some pictures. There was also a memorial tablet made in 1874, the millennial anniversary year of the first settlement in Iceland, 874. This was placed between the portraits of King Frederick VIII of Denmark, who was one of our best kings, and his queen. You know Iceland belongs now to the King of Denmark. Beneath these pictures was a cushioned trunk and in front of it stood a red table with a red cover with an embroidered center. A little stand was in one corner with embroidered cover and on it were placed family portraits. A big chest of drawers stood against the wall and near it a bookcase. Four chairs were placed at the table. A little room above served as the bedroom for guests.

Opposite the guest-room we find the larder, and beside that a workshop with

How They Sometimes Catch the Birds.

implements and tools of several kinds. From the passage we come to the kitchen, a big room with open fireplace and also a stove for cooking. Opposite the kitchen is the dining-room, and under that a cellar which makes the pantry. In the dining-room stands a long, whitewashed table with benches on both sides. On the wall are fastened shelves for plates and dishes under which stands a long sideboard. At this mother stood when she was serving the food on the plates and into bowls, making the coffee and pouring it into the cups for the thirsty people, who came to get a few minutes' rest and some refreshments to be better able to go on with their twelve to fourteen hours' day work. From that sideboard I was handed many a nice cake and a lump of sugar.

At the end of the long passage we come to the *baðstofa,* which serves both as bedroom and sitting-room. It is divided in

the middle, one part for the family, the other for the servants. In the room of the family are three beds, all folded in the daytime and opened at night. The walls are lined with timber and so is the floor, but the walls on three sides are built of earth, sod, and stone on the outside, one side being wholly of timber. Each of these rooms has two windows. In one corner is a little iron stove; the fuel used for it is peat and sheep manure. The upper floor in the *baðstofa* was only a place for keeping spinning-wheels, cards, a loom, and other tools when not in use, and the wool was also stored there.

Now we are getting tired of walking about the farmhouse, let us take a seat on a little hill in front of it and look around. We fix our eyes on an island in the midst of the Skaga-fjörður. The sides are so steep that it is impossible to ascend except at one place. At the one end of it stands

a rock like an Egyptian obelisk, at the other was once a similar one, but it has tumbled down. I want you to listen to the story of that island.

Long long ago the world was, as all children have heard, full of trolls, elves, and fairies. The trolls were sometimes giants, and all their animals were gigantic, too. One of these trolls and his wife were once moving with all their domestic belongings. In order to take the shortest cut they waded over the fjord, the giant leading their cow by a rein, and the giantess bringing up the rear. But it is the nature of the trolls that if the sun shines on them they become stones or rocks. They have therefore always to do their work on the surface of the earth at night, and their homes are generally in the mountains or on rocky coasts. But now it happened when they were just in the middle of the fjord the sun rose and they

were too late to be able to hide themselves from its beams, and accordingly they turned into stones and their cow, too. Ever since they have stood there with the cow, which now is the beautiful isle between them, called Drangey.

Now the giant (Karlinn) has become age-decrepit and has bent very low, but the giantess (Kerlingin) bears her old age with honor. The cow is worth more than any other cow ever known, for on its cliffs are annually caught many thousands of black gulls and puffins, as it is the home for myriads of sea-birds.

I suppose it would interest you to hear how they catch the birds. In spring when the birds begin to make their nests, they go to the isle. The puffin burrows in the ground like a rabbit and there rears its young. The black-gull and many others lay their eggs on the projecting ledges at the sides of the isle. Nets made of horse-

hair are fastened to a float of wood and placed in the sea near the isle, or they are spread over the nest-holes, and then the bird becomes entangled and its life is taken. Sometimes they are so tame that the fowler takes them with his hands, and, one twist of their neck and they are gone. The fowler has to be a cool, collected, and skilful cragsman, for often he has either to creep along the narrow shelves hundreds of feet above the sea-level, where the least incautious step would cost his life, or he is suspended like a pendulum on a rope, which is made fast at one end at the edge above. It is considered both an art and an occupation to be a fowler in Iceland.

It was in Drangey in olden days that a gray shaggy hand sometimes appeared. It held a knife and cut the ropes the fowlers were swinging in. Guðmundur the Good, one of the bishops of the see Hólar,

was a very holy man, and on account of that, many miraculous things occurred caused by his prayers. He was therefore asked to try to prevent the spirits of the rocks from doing so great damage. He promised to do so and was let down by means of a rope. He was all the time singing hymns and praying aloud. Thus he had nearly gone all over the sides of the isle when he heard a loud voice say. "Not farther, not farther, Guðmundur bishop; the wicked must somewhere have a place to stay in." He did not continue his prayers but was pulled up again.

This cliff where he heard the voice come from has since that time been called Heiðnabjarg (pagan cliff) and is never entered. After that the gray hand never appeared. But it must not be forgotten that the bishop had a hammer with him, and was heard all the time hammering the sharp edges of the projecting cliffs.

These sharp edges had cut the ropes. Where the only trail is upon Drangey we shall come to a big slab, which is called the Altar. At it the traveler always stops to say his prayers. After having done so, he continues his ascending or descending course, which is not at all free from danger.

There is still one story connected with that isle and you can read it in English translation. It is one in the series of the so-called Icelandic Sagas, and its name is the Grettirs Saga.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMER

"HELLO, Tóta!" I cried one morning to my sister. "Do you know that we have got permission to go to the lambs'-fold to-day?" My sister, who was in bed, started up at hearing this good news. "And are we to walk?" she asked. "No, no, we are both to ride on old Skjóna (Piebald)," I answered, "and of course I am to hold the reins," I continued. "Then I must have the whip," she said. I agreed to that.

In the afternoon six horses were driven home to the farmhouse. Among them was old Skjóna; a felt saddle was placed on her back and fastened with a girdle. The other horses were saddled for father and

some of the servants. They had to round the ewes up in the mountain and other pastures, and we had to ride direct to the fold and wait there till they came. It was a beautiful afternoon in June. How we looked forward to the trip! We bade mother and the others good-by and mounted old Skjóna. She did not move. Tóta began to beat her with her green whip. At last we could make her understand that she was meant to carry us on, when she saw the other people mount their horses and start their riding. When we at last came to the fold, which was built of sod and stones on a pretty lawn, we dismounted, and old Skjóna began to graze, glad to be quit of her burden. The dogs were all the time barking while they were driving the sheep down the mountain slopes, and we heard the shepherds shout to them what they wanted them to do. At last they all came with the ewes and

lambs. "I am afraid your Móra is lost, Frida," the herdsboy cried to me, "or it is there and the lamb is lost," he added, teasing me, as he knew nothing worse could happen to me. At last I found my Móra with the pretty black-and-white spotted lamb. Tóta had been so fortunate that her ewe had borne two lambs. But they were both white, so I thought it better to have one colored as mine was.

In the morning when the cows had been milked I had to drive them to the pasture. I was not more than eight years old when that was my business. The pasture was some distance from the farmhouse. Sometimes I was allowed to ride on old Skjóna or Gráni. When the cows came home in the afternoon, I had either to drive them again or guard the "tún" or the home-field, that they did not graze there, for the grass on the "tún," had to be mown and stored for the cows to feed on

in winter. But then I was never alone. Tóta, Arni (my brother), and Siggi (my cousin) went with me. We got our rye-bread sandwiches and ran as fast as we could. When we had driven the cows to the place where they could graze, we began to play. There we had built a turf house, that was so large, that we could all sit in it, of course on the floor. We could just crawl into it. Some of the cows were our good friends and some were our enemies, so were sometimes the bulls. I was glad when I saw the servants come with the milk-pails, for then the cows had to be housed, and I knew I was to get my share of the lukewarm milk. As soon as I was able to, I became milk-maid and left to the younger children the driving of the cows and the guarding of the tun.

I remember once that we took old Gráni and bridled him and led him by

the rein beside a big mound and all four of us crawled upon his back without saddle of any kind. We did not ride far for he did not move, and he looked as if he understood so much of our chattering, that he knew we wanted him to join our happiness and be our playmate. But when we told mother what we had done, she scolded us and told us never to do so again. "For," she said, "although old Gráni did not hurt you this time, because God guarded you, he may do so another time, if you do not listen to my advice, and God does not preserve those who do not obey their parents' commands." One of the girls told us the following story, which I never shall forget.

There were once three children on a farm, who had the habit of mounting all the horses they could get hold of. One day they saw a beautiful gray horse standing at the mountoir or horse-block in

the yard. The horse seemed to lower itself to make it easier for the children to mount, and so they did. Then it started at full speed and did not stop till it was in the middle of the deep river that was near. There the beast dived down and neither did it nor the children come up again. That was the Nikur or the river-horse, which is very fond of eating children. It is to be found in all deep rivers all over the world.

You can imagine we were more cautious after having heard that shocking story, for there was a river flowing in the bottom of the valley we lived in, and there the river-horse surely was watching an opportunity to catch some children to eat.

The season for weaning the lambs was of great interest to us children. It took place in the first half of July every year, when the lambs were about nine or ten weeks old. That was the most busy time

in the whole year for us children. For me it was a time of both joy and anxiety. On the day before the weaning I had to prepare my clothes and make some slippers of calfskin, as I was to watch the lambs. My father, the most of the servants, both men and women, and of course all the children were to gather the sheep and drive them to the fold. The lambs had been marked on their ears by cutting them in special forms. Each form had its name, and there were printed registers of all the earmarks and the names of the owners of each mark. I was proud of having my name in that register, as I had inherited my grandfather's sheep-mark. When the lamb is one year old, the initials of the owner are branded on its horn, for most of the Icelandic sheep have horns. We can even find some with four or six horns, but they are very rare.

The next thing after having rounded them

up, was to shear the wool of the ewes, and that took a long time. When it was done the poor lambs were taken and put in an inner fold and kept there till the shepherds had driven the bleating mothers far, far from the fold into the mountains, where they were watched till evening, when they were driven home to the farm for the purpose of milking them. When the lambs had been folded one or two hours, after their mothers had been driven away they were let out. Oh, how they cried at not finding their mothers! They sought for them everywhere, bleating all the time. I could hardly keep my tears back, thinking of the horror of losing their mothers and never again tasting the palatable milk from their udders. But that was just for a moment. I forgot it very soon. How dull and insensible custom makes most of us, even to the worst kind of cruelty! The first day it was a very easy task to watch

the lambs, for they hardly left the fold for picking up with their small mouths the sweet lamb-grass (moss campion) they were all so fond of.

At four o'clock I saw one of the maidens appear on the top of the stony hill between the farmhouse and the fold, and, what was of still more importance, she had a carved wooden bowl in one hand and a packet in the other. She was welcomed. And let us see what we got for dinner. In the bowl was soup made of ground barley and rice, salted mutton and turnips all cooked together in water to what you would call a one-dish dinner. In the packet were a bottle of milk, bread and butter, two pieces of sugar and two pancakes. How splendid a dinner all that would make, and we were so hungry! Tóta and I began at once to eat the soup with spoons made of cow horns with one sentence on each shaft, which had been carved with peculiar old-

fashioned letters. *"Góða stúlkan á mig"* ("I am the property of the good girl") or, *"Guð blessi matinn"* ("God bless the food") were the common sentences on such spoons. In the evening the lambs were driven home to be housed before the ewes came. Next night I dreamed about the adventures of the preceding day, from the impression they had made on me.

We had to watch the lambs a week, and they were sometimes very unruly. When we did not watch them closely enough, they tried to make fools of us, pretending to be very quiet and then all at once taking to their heels, and immediately they were out of sight. I had many a trying race with them and was therefore often downcast considering the great responsibility of the work I had undertaken to do, as I was the older of the two watchers or herdgirls. The very best part of the weaning was when the weanling-lambs were driven to

the common. It was not far from our home, it was in among the mountains that were at the other end of the Hjaltadalur. To be allowed to drive the lambs to the common was matchless. My uncle was a farmer on the farm nearest to the common, and we were satisfied to go no farther but to stay there till the others had returned from driving the lambs to the common, where they were given their liberty for the rest of the summer.

Our cousins were pleased to see us and took us about, showing us everything they thought might be of interest to us. "Won't you like to see my live-stock?" Valdi asked. We agreed to that, and all went up the tún, and found in a little cave Valdi's horses, cows, sheep, and fowls. They were bones of the feet and heads of sheep, sheep's horns, collections of stones of various colors and shapes, several kinds of shells, birds, cats, and dogs, all carved

out of fish-bones, fragments of earthenware bowls and plates with fine colors, and so on. Every "animal" had its name. Some were grazing outside the cave, others were stalled.

We were not unfamiliar with these things, for such were our own playthings except one doll we sisters both had. We had a good time listening to hear how our cousin managed his household, and telling him our experiments. Now we were called home to the farmhouse to drink chocolate with pancakes, yule-cake and crullers. Now the other people had arrived and we had to go. But we did not ride direct to our home, no, no, we had to visit some children on three other farms that were at that side of the valley. These visits were almost repetitions of the first. Late in the evening we arrived at our home and had enjoyed the trip immensely, and began at once to look for-

ward to the next weaning of lambs.

Many of my best amusements were connected with work. Nothing flattered me more than to feel that I was trusted in as were the maidens. My ambition did not reach farther than to be able to do all the farmwork properly. It was therefore with great satisfaction that I accepted the offer to go into the mountains for gathering moss, "*Fara til grasa,*" as it is called in Icelandic. Formerly it had been the custom at most farms to send two or three of the servants into the wilderness *(á grasafjall)* to gather that moss you know with the name of Icelandic moss. People from several farms went together with a tent and food supply for a week. There are many adventures in that gathering and old people were fond of telling them. This moss is to be found in drug-stores all over the world, as it is considered a remedy for some diseases. But it is not

gathered for that purpose alone; it is used as a cereal. It is getting more and more scarce, on account of the better communication with the world beyond, from which all grain has to be brought to Iceland.

"It looks likely to be drizzling and wet to-night, and it is warm, too. Would you like to go and gather moss to-night, little girls?" Thus my father addressed us one day. "Why not? Surely!" Tóta and I answered as with one voice. "But Manga must go with us, for if it gets foggy to-night we can not find our way alone." To that father agreed.

It is difficult to see the moss when dry, therefore it is gathered in wet weather.

We ran to mother, who was in the kitchen, as fast as we could, to bring her the good news. She had been to that kind of sport in her youth and hesitated a little about giving us her consent. The preparation began, looking after our clothes,

stockings, shoes, mittens. Sacks for carrying the moss had to be found and provided with straps for hanging them on the shoulders while gathering, and the food must not be forgotten. A great addition to the fun was that we were to ride on horseback up to the "Birgi."

We tried to lie down and sleep, as we were to be away all night, but in vain. We started from home at six o'clock in the afternoon, each riding on a pony without a saddle, for we had to risk being obliged to walk home, as the horses were young and unmanageable. It did not take us long to ride to the "Birgi." "Birgi" was the name of the stone house the herdboys had built in the valley behind the mountain which was nearest to our farm called Kálfsstadapjall. It was one of three desolate little valleys belonging to the pasture of the farm. The hut was built on a high mound, from which one could see a long

distance. We dismounted and began ascending the stony mountain slopes. Out of breath we reached the edge.

We were as in a new world. Never before had we viewed the Hjaltadalur in one look, or such a wide fjord, and how distinctly we could see the mountains on the other side of it! Tindastóll with its precious stones, somebody had told me, always danced in a lake there on Easter morning at six o'clock. I thought of the little girl I had heard of who once found one of these stones. It was what is called a wishing-stone. She wished then she were at the best feast to be had in the world.

All at once she found herself in a glorious palace, the like of which she had never imagined. A gentleman came to her and handed her a golden beaker. She took it, but got so frightened at all she saw that she wished she were where she had come from. In a moment she was there and

dropped the stone, saying that it should no more mislead her, and took the beaker home. It was looked at as a great treasure and shown to the parson. At last it was presented to the king, and he gave the girl three farms in the Skagafjôrður in return for it.

About ten o'clock we got to work, talking and laughing all the time. In spite of drizzling rain we were comfortable to begin with. But the fog was setting in from the fjord, entirely closing the sight of the valley. Soon we could see only a few yards around us. It was not dark, for it was in the nightless season. At one o'clock I felt sleepy. There was no longer any fun in gathering moss. Oh! how I longed for my bed! The tears were in my eyes thinking of home. All were silent. Even the birds had ceased singing. All nature seemed to be asleep. All at once

I heard Manga, my foster sister, call: "Tóta, Tóta, what is the matter with you? Are you going to sleep all wet? You will catch cold. Hurry up! The troll will take you if you behave yourself like that." I looked round, and saw my sister sitting under a big stone, leaning against it for sleeping. Whether it was caused by her fear of the troll I do not know, but she rose and began to gather moss.

About three o'clock it cleared up and the sun, the mother of all earthly life, became visible. Everything awakened to welcome its coming. The golden plover sang, the ptarmigan twittered, the sheep bleated, the horse neighed, the scarce flowers' buds opened, the river seemed to quicken its stream, the stones opened their eyes wider, and even the cold glacier, at the end of the valley from which the river started, got moved to tears from joy by

the sunbeams. In the wilderness we can most fully realize the glory of the sun.

"Let us have our breakfast and then sing a song," Manga said. We assented to that. We were not sleepy any more and did our best to the breakfast. Afterwards we sang several favorite folk songs. Among them was the following:

SWAN-SONG O'ER THE HEATHER.

Translated from the Icelandic by Desmey Leith.

I rode upon a summer eve
Across the barren heather;
Short seemed my way, so rough and long,
For listening to the swan's sweet song,
Yea, swan-song o'er the heather.

Fair glows the fell in ruddy sheen,
Far, near, and everywhither
Floats on mine ear like angel's strain,
From out some high and holy fane,
That swan-song o'er the heather.

So wondrous sweet a music hath
Entranced my senses never;

In waking dream my path I rode,
Nor knew how fast the moments flowed,
For swan-song o'er the heather.

Well, we had gathered as much as we were able to carry home, for, as we had guessed, the ponies had altogether left us. I have never in my life been more in pain than that morning, when we arrived home after fifteen hours' absence in the desert. I was so tired that I thought each pace would be my last, when descending the mountain slopes, and that I should drop down. After twelve hours of sound sleep we had recovered and were proud of having gathered a great deal of the moss that everybody was so fond of, whether it was cooked in water with barley, or in milk with rice.

About seven miles from my home was a creek called Kolkuós. Every year in June and July this was a place of traffic in exchanging goods. Vessels laden with mer-

chandise of several sorts cast their anchors there to exchange goods with the farmers near by. After having sheared the sheep the wool had to be washed. The best of it had to be worked at home, the other part was exchanged for necessary goods and a few extravagant things. A pound of wool was worth about sixteen cents. It did not have to be used for knitting soldiers' sweaters then. *Ad fá ad fara i kaupstaðinn* (to be allowed to go to the trading-place) was something I had looked forward to for many years. When I was about eleven years I got permission and my sister, too, for where one was we generally both were. Father had divided the wool and intended to take some of it to the trading-ship at Kolkuós. Mother had been told that they had beautiful muslin, earthenware and so on, and she wanted something of that and was to go. My foster sister should have a new shawl, which

was to be had there. The most desirable thing for me was the candy they were said to have in abundance. I had the wool of my Móra, and in addition to that the wool I had gathered in the pasture and meadows during the spring, and that was not less than half a pound. Of course I would have my choice concerning the exchange. We started, I riding in my own side-saddle on my own pony, and my sister doing the same. After a two-hours' ride we came to Kalkuós, the ponies wet with sweat in the warm weather. We took off our riding-cloaks and prepared for going in the small row-boat that was to carry us to the vessel, which was lying at some distance in the creek. How funny to sit in the boat and move over the water, hearing the men that rowed it speak a language I could not understand. Father told me it was Danish, and he could make out their words and speak to them. Oh, how sur-

prising everything seemed to me on the vessel! We went down-stairs to the small shop where we found all sorts of things mixed up in one room. Many of these things were amazing to me. When we had purchased, the captain of the vessel offered us coffee and cakes, which we gladly accepted. The grown-up men were asked to have brandy in their coffee, which was meant to be very fine treatment. When we went on shore it had become windy. Then I for the first time, but not for the last, found out what it is to get sea-sick.

The ponies had waited patiently on the shore. They were saddled, the goods were tied up and put on the baggage-ponies. We mounted and started, leaving the herds-boy with the pack-horses behind us. These had to proceed slowly. Our ponies were all amblers or pacers, which means that they moved both feet on each side at the same time. Most of the riding-ponies in

Iceland are trained to walk in that way, as most people like that kind of walking better than the trot or gallop. Our ride was like that of a horse-race, father and mother were bringing up the rear. The ponies were so wild that we could hardly manage them. When at home, pancakes had to be made and coffee prepared and served as it had been on board the ship. That trip had to be repeated every year after that first one.

The chief occupation in summer was haymaking. It began about the middle of July and lasted from nine to twelve weeks. If the weather was very changeable, which sometimes happened, the haymaking was no joke, but in favorable weather it was one of the most pleasant labors of the farm. Hay was the only food for all the domestic animals during winter, and the winter was often long and sometimes severe. The ground all round the farmhouse

was cultivated and tilled every spring. The hay from it was used for the cows and some of it for the ewes and pet ponies. Machines for haymaking were unknown. Early in the morning the menservants and the hired people went out for mowing with their scythes and handles. When the maidens had milked the cows and ewes and finished several kinds of work that was their every-day duty, they went out, too, with their rakes. They had to rake the hay into windrows, take it and carry it to the more level ground, spread it out and turn it when dry weather.

When the home field or the "tún" had been mown, the same work began on the nearest meadow, going on in that way till the hay was sufficient for its purpose. When the hay was dry it was piled up in stacks. A few days later it was taken from the stacks and tied in bundles to be baggage for the horses to carry home where it

Bringing Hay from the Meadows to the Barn.

Sorting Sheep in a Fold.

was put into the barns or in big stacks.

Sometimes the working-people were so far from home that the food had to be brought to them. That was generally the task of the elder children. Once I was sent to them with coffee in a pot and bread and butter. I could not see them from the farmhouse, and was afraid I could not find them or something would happen to me. When I had gone some distance from home I knocked the coffee-pot against a big stone I was passing, and spilled all the coffee out. I turned homewards as fast as my feet could carry me, crying at the top of my voice. Mother became frightened when she heard me and thought I had hurt myself severely. But when she learned what was the matter, she laughed at me and hurried to the kitchen to prepare fresh coffee for me to take to the people. Now I avoided every big stone, thinking they might be elf-stones, and that they did not

like me to pass near, and might perhaps tumble the coffee-pot again.

I had my own small rake father had madé me. He even gave me a little scythe and handle or snath to mow with, as I had seen the hired women do.

Twice in the summer were festivities on account of the haymaking. Once when the hay from the "tún" had been brought into the barn, and again at the end of the haymaking season. There were no standard foods or games for those occasions. We had generally a half-holiday. Sometimes the food was rice-pudding with sugar and cinnamon and milk, roasted mutton and potatoes. Later on chocolate and several kinds of home baked cakes, and coffee for the rest, which always was considered necessary after chocolate.

The latter half of August was the time for gathering berries. Blueberries and crowberries were in abundance on the hills

and mountain-slopes. When we went to the meadows or turned back home, we picked some berries. When we had to drive the cows, or bring the horses to the pastures, we used to come home with hands full of blueberries. But one special day had always to be devoted to "going for berries" (*fara til berja*).

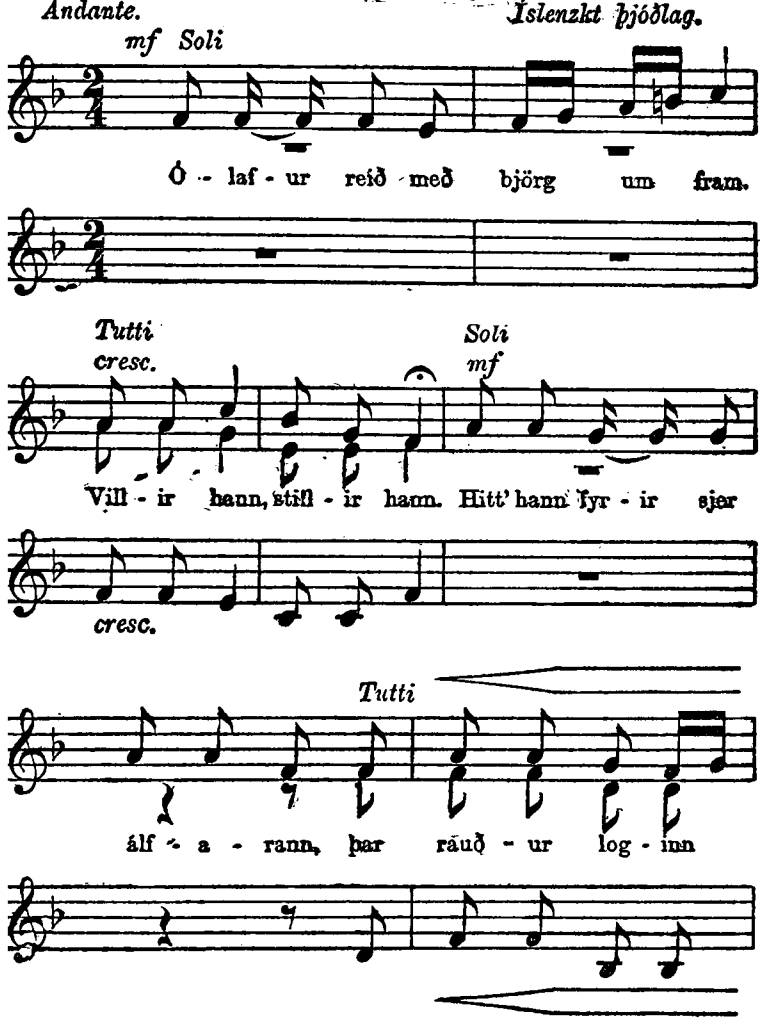
The twenty-ninth of August was a fine day. It had been fixed that children from three farms should meet at one o'clock on the hill on the other side of the river Hjaltadalsá. The horses had been hobbled the night before, so they had not run far. They were led home to the yard and saddled and we mounted, each with a wooden box or a small pail in hand. It took only fifteen minutes to go there. The other children had already arrived. We hailed each other and dismounted on a green lawn, and hobbled the ponies. We were twelve altogether. The

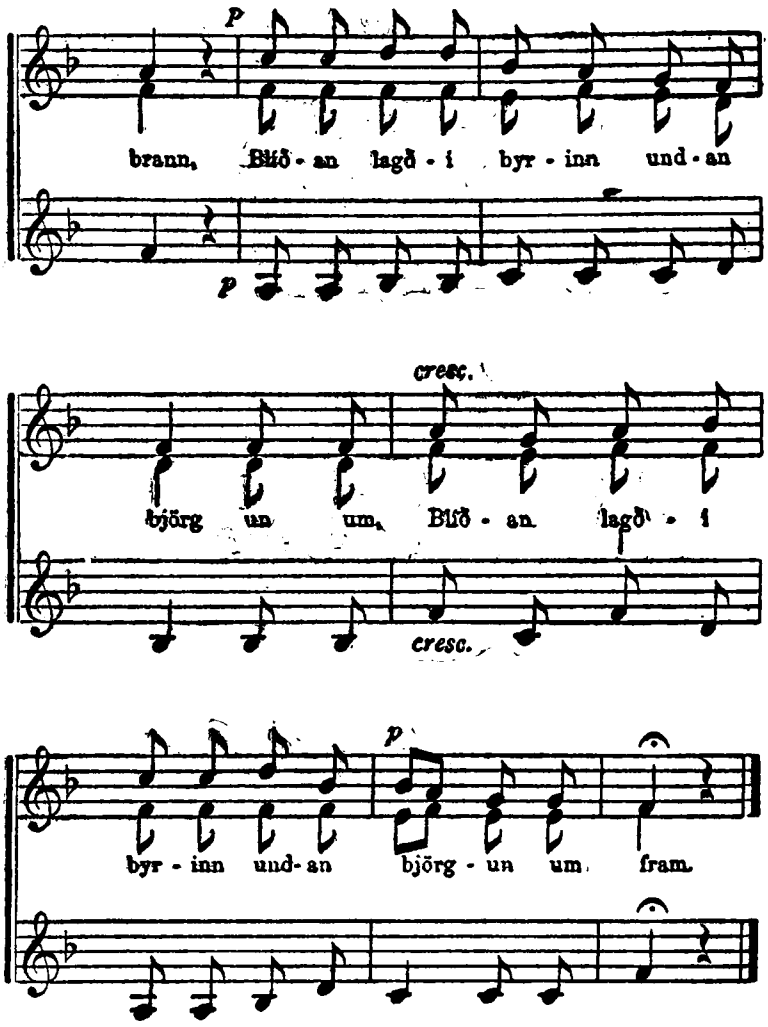
boys wrestled for a while and we girls played several games. I proposed that we should sing a song, and so we did and then began gathering. For the first while I ate all I picked, and so did the others, but soon we all began to put the berries into the pails and other boxes we had and now each tried to be the first to fill his pail. When all had done that, we parted, each going home. Our supper that night was "skyr" with blueberries and cream. Tired and happy we went to bed that evening.

We never worked at haymaking on Sundays, except if the weather the week before had been wet, and the Sunday happened to be dry, and much hay was lying in the meadows. One Sunday father wished to have the hay turned. We were all willing to do that, if he would allow us to ride the ponies to and fro, to which he agreed. The hay was some distance from the farmhouse, so we could have a splendid trip.

Nr. 16. Ólafur reið með björgum fram.

Andante. *Íslenzkt þjóðlag.*

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We had to ride over bogs and quagmires, but the ponies were accustomed to them, so there was nothing to fear. We started to ride at full speed. After a few minutes Manga's pony stumbled. She rolled off laughing, and in a moment she had mounted again. She was not hurt, but she had broken her rake and had to go home for another. We waited for her. We came to the hay. It was spread on a large piece of level ground and had been raked into windrows. We began turning it, walking in train and each turning a windrow the whole length of the hay. Then we would go back with the next windrows. The last was now first in the train, the first last, and we kept on in this fashion till the hay on that lawn was finished. In that way we went from lawn to lawn.

We used to pick out a girl and a boy, whom he or she that turned the last windrow should get. (*Setja à garðinn.*) If

the person that happened to turn it was a boy, he got the girl we had picked out, but if it was a girl, she got the boy. We all wished to avoid being the one that had to turn the last windrow, but we could not help it. We were supposed to be in the same order of the train, so it became only chance who was the unlucky one. We used to joke that person about the other.

On our return we had several accidents, but none serious. They only increased the amusement. Finni wanted his pony to leap over a brook, and the pony threw him off. When we rode over the quagmire, some of the ponies became stuck in it, and we had to dismount. When we reached home, mother served coffee with pancakes.

CHAPTER V

TIMES OF HARDSHIP

I remember one very bad summer when I was a young girl. The polar ice had blockaded the northern coast in winter, and did not leave till late in August. The ships, bound for the trading-places, had to turn back or they became frozen in amidst the ice blocks. With great skill one of them succeeded in finding an opening to go through and reach the harbor of Húnaflóa, but no one could find an open space into Skagafjördur. Many dead whales drove with the ice to the shore, which had been choked under the ice. Their meat was brought to every home. The owners of the ground, where they came on shore became rich, for they could sell

the meat at good prices. The meat was cooked in water and put into sour liquid and stored there for a while. Then it was eaten cold with bread and butter, and tasted very good. I lived so far from the coast, that I never saw any dead whales. Some are very, very big; they may be twenty to fifty yards in length. I believe these here spoken of were of the smaller ones. I have sometimes seen whales out in the sea from boats, when I have been on voyages. On account of their warm blood, they have to come to the surface when they are breathing. It is like a column of smoke from the chimney of a factory.

Father had to travel to Húnaflóa with pack-horses to get some grain, for the supply from last autumn had been used to the last corn. The sale was limited to a certain amount, in order that every farmer might get a share. Coffee, sugar, and several other necessaries were not to be had

there. In my home was plenty of milk, and from that, besides butter, there was made cheese and a dish called "skyr." It is nourishing and wholesome food, and most people are very fond of it. It is a little like curd, but from a special germ it gets a flavor which curd has not. Sometimes it is mixed up with cereal and eaten with milk, or it is taken with sugar and cream. We children were also very fond of skyr and blueberries with sugar and cream. Dried codfish was very much used that summer, here spoken of, and there was an abundance of Icelandic moss (*fjallagrös*). The food we had to save was bread and cereals. At last the southern wind turned the ice back into the Arctic Ocean, where it came from, and the Gulf Stream warmed the coast undisturbed.

The grass did not grow tall this summer, and what was mowed did not dry, for rain and foggy weather were continu-

ous. Reduction of the stock was the consequence all over the country. I did not go to the trading-place with my wool that summer.

One special spring, when I was young, seems to be very close to my mind. The worst enemy we had, the Polar ice, had driven into the fjords. It was so close, that no boat could go through it. In the middle of May a heavy snowstorm came suddenly. It lasted for several days. Many sheep had been driven by the storm into the rivers and became choked in the half-frozen water. Others had sought shelter in rifts and low places and were buried under heaps of snow, they could not get through. The sheep-dogs were excellent guides in such accidents. Their keen sense of smelling led them to the places where the sheep were. The men followed them and rescued many, though some were already dead when they were found.

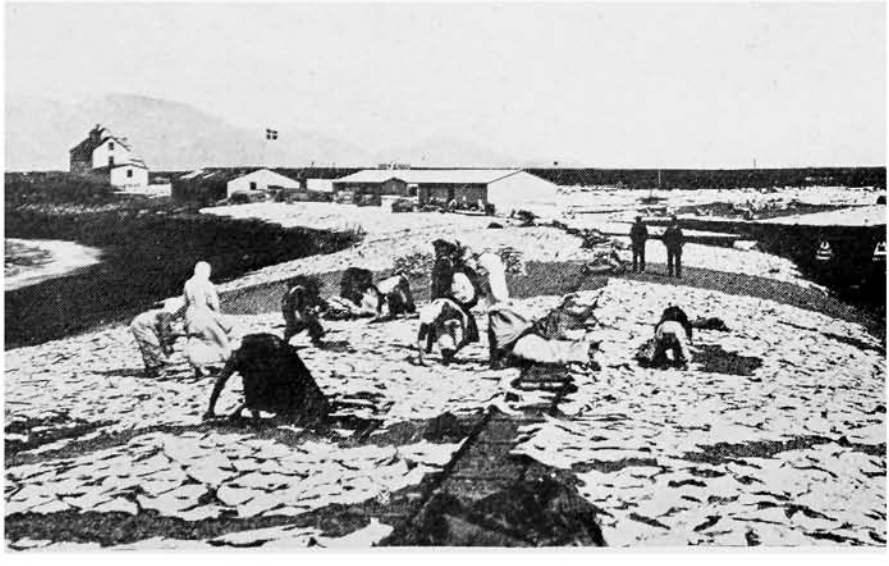
The sheep often live for several days in such snow caves.

That spring, the stores of the trading-place were empty, and most farmers were in need of means for support. I remember once that some of the farmers' wives from the neighborhood came to my home, as they sometimes did, when in trouble. I suppose they knew that mother had a little larger supply of food than they themselves. Mother was a good baker, and had generally some bread in store. She gave what she had of bread and butter to the women, all but a few slices of black bread. When they were gone, I went to mother and complained of feeling hungry, for though we were in want only of some articles of food in my home, the portions had been scant for the last week or two. Mother gave me one of the few bread slices left, without butter or anything else. I am certain that I never in my life have enjoyed

any food as I did this piece of rye-bread.

Then I understood why people had related a story, told of a rich woman, who was told about some people perishing from want of food. She refused aid with these words: "Why do not the people eat bread and butter, rather than die from hunger?"

ISAFJÖRDUR, A SMALL TOWN ON THE WEST SIDE OF ICELAND.



DRYING CODFISH IN ICELAND.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE FALL

ROUNDING up the sheep took place every year about the middle of September, differing a little in the various country districts. The hay harvest was then over in good, dry summers, and the work of preparing for the winter began. For many of the young people the folding of the sheep is the occasion for a great deal of fun. As for the boys, they had to go as rounders-up (*gangnamenn*), but the girls went to the fold to meet them there, only for pleasure.

One evening Siggi, my cousin, came running to Árni, my brother, and said: "Oh, how I look forward to next Sunday! I will tell you. Papa has promised me that I shall be allowed to go to the up-rounding

(*göngur*) in 'Hagi' (the common pasture). Go and ask him that you may go, too."

"I do not want to go. I am going to meet you at the fold!" Árni returned.

"Are you not? I am very sorry for you. You will get no knapsack with food nor leather shoes," Siggi said, trying to make Árni want to go. But Árni was firm; he became giddy when he had to go on hilly ground.

"Hagi" was a small common pasture belonging to our valley. It took only one day to round the sheep up there, but in the larger commons it might take a week, and the workers had to be all grown men, very skilled. At nights they either slept in small tents they brought with them or in mountain stations (*sluhús*), which were here and there to be found. Every man had two horses, a dog, food supply, and other necessary things for a long journey. When they arrived at the fold, the women

and the children were there to welcome them, together with the farmers.

Then the fun began with singing, dancing, and drinking coffee. Formerly most men had a bottle of wine to refresh themselves with, as they used to call it. Iceland now has prohibition.

In a small common like Hagi things could be managed differently. There they could use the boys along with the grown men for the up-rounding, and the amusements were limited.

Next Sunday Siggi and some other boys from the nearest farms had saddled their horses, had knapsacks with such provisions as bread, butter, mutton, cheese, and so on, and were assembled in the yard (*hlað*) in front of the farmhouse long before the grown men began preparing. They all wore new pairs of shoes of cowhide or horsehide. They were equipped for whatever kind of weather.

The time came to start, each calling his dog, Fjára, Smali, Kjái, Krummi and whatsoever they had been named, and the boys singing and shouting, the dogs yelping, and the horses neighing, the flock went on up the valley. They stopped at the two or three farms, nearest to the Hagi to stay there over night, as early next morning the up-rounding was to begin.

All the beds were filled, and the remainder had to go to the hay-barns and sleep there. They who slept in the barns did not sleep long; they were too jolly for that. Only boys who have been to something like that can imagine it. At daybreak all had to be ready. The first thing to do was to grasp the knapsacks and take a hearty breakfast. One of the maidens of the farm had prepared coffee, to which the whole flock was treated. The horses had not gone far, for they had been hobbled the night before. Now the whole

party was assembled. The superintendent told each where to go, and they obeyed. They were to ride as far as they could, then one had charge of the horses of the men, rounding up each mountain side, and went down at the bottom of the valley, and the same in the several valleys the common was made up of. They parted and mounted the hills. It had been foggy during the night, but it cleared up in the morning, and now the sun was shining.

The dogs had been commanded where to go for collecting the sheep; they started at full speed. For a while they went on silently; soon their bark echoed in the rocks and was heard at far distances. The sheep, which had not seen a dog nor a man for several months, became startled. The indulgence of liberty was over for that summer. Nothing had disturbed them in roaming at their will in the desert but the fox, which is the only beast of prey there, be-

sides rats and mice, and it sometimes does great damage in the sheep herds. The farmers did all they could to destroy the foxes, hunting for them and poisoning meat, which was put in their way.

The fox not only kills the sheep and other animals when hungry, but sometimes just to suck their blood. As you know, the fox is the most cunning beast, so it is no joke to have to deal with it in real life. The most expert hunters used to go into the wilderness in the spring season, with guns and supplies for several days. At that season the foxes have their young and the first thing is to find the den with the cubs. The den is always dug deep into the ground, sometimes with two openings and a long passage-way between them, so small that the fox has to stretch itself at full length to creep in. They live husband and wife together. In the night they go out hunting, one of them or both, and

return in the morning to their young ones with their booty. Then is the best chance for shooting them, if their keen senses do not give them a hint that they had better stay away for a while, or if they are in the den, not to go out for some days, but go on a hunger-strike. It is that which causes the long time the hunter has to stay at the den, and he may have to give in, the endurance of the fox is so marvelous.

You have heard a great deal of fiction about the fox, but let us now, while we are waiting for the up-rounders, hear some true things I have been told of it.

A man was once trying to hunt a fox, which every night went into a breeding-place for eider-ducks to steal eggs. He lay down near by where he expected the fox to go. He saw her come, but she went not where it was easiest to go, but where she had to jump from one stone to another and even wade through water. And al-

though the man was about five hundred yards from her, she smelled him and returned as quick as a flash and ran up to the mountain, as fast as she was able to. The wind had been blowing from where the man had placed himself, and brought the fox the news soon enough for her to rescue herself from danger. I was not told, whether she ventured down next evening or whether she left the breeding-place altogether.

Another man was once waiting for a fox near the poisoned body of a horse. He expected the fox would be glad to dine on the meat, and that he would then be able to shoot her. Very well; he saw a big, blue fox approaching, then he happened to move one foot a little bit, and that gave a creak in the snow. The fox stopped immediately and listened. She could not have seen him nor smelled him, for it was calm weather and the man was distant

from her; she must have heard the sound. Now she took a long stroll round the dead horse. She snuffed and listened—as she was likely to be very hungry—at last she went to the body and took a bite—and — that became the last one in this life.

I can not help telling you an event a man once witnessed.

The raven is known everywhere as a bird of prey. He is most fond of the eyes of animals and if a sheep or pony happens to slip into a quagmire and is not able to come out of it, he takes the chance of picking out their eyes and eating them, and does not hurt them more. It was an evening that a fox was on her way down to the coast, and a raven came from it, and was flying up to a mountain, where he had his nest. When the fox heard the cawing of the raven, she laid herself down on the ground motionless. The raven approached and saw her, and thought that there were

two eyes for him to pick out. But—when he saw what kind of animal it was, he considered it wiser to be cautious. He sat down at her tail and gave it a jerk, instantly flying up. She did not move. After a while he came again, and now he pulled the tail twice. The same result. No more was he suspicious and hopped to the head. He had no time to use his claws, for the fox started on her feet and dashed at the raven. A furious fight began for life or death. After a moment the raven lay dead.

The man who was the spectator of the scene had his gun with him and the fox was in a moment dead, too.

The fur of the blue fox is very valuable, and some people breed it for the fur. The foxes' breeding-places are mostly confined to desert isles near the coast. Sometimes a young fox is made into a domestic animal. I know one instance of that.

A farmer who was hunting foxes killed a couple and brought one of the cubs home. He gave her the name Didi. Her playmates were the farmer's little son, a small lamb, and a pet dog. Didi was always kind to her comrades and never scratched them. Sometimes when the boy cried, she licked his hands, and began to try to make him merry by jumping and all sorts of ridiculous antics, till the boy forgot his grief and began laughing at her. One morning the farmer had, as usual, taken a lump of sugar in his hand for Didi. When he came out, she stood in the door of a storehouse. He handed the lump to her, but she did not take it, and commenced howling piteously and looked at him. Then she went into the storehouse, and the farmer followed. What do you think he found there, but the lamb, Didi's friend, entangled in net, which hung down from the loft!

But Didi was no favorite with the fowls, for she stole their eggs and chased them about. Very often Didi played at ball with the children. It was funny to see how smart she was; grasping the ball with her paws, she ran with it, dropped it, and let it roll. Not for anything would the children have played without Didi; of all their pets she was the best, and all who knew her were fond of her.

Let us now watch how the up-rounders are going on. Numerous herds run down the hillsides to the bottoms of the valleys. The dogs are next, and then the up-rounders, who now have mounted their ponies again. They are assembling on the large lawn near the fold, where the people from the district are meeting them, men and women, young and old. They hail each other heartily, shaking hands and kissing. I was among those who came just for pleasure. The superintendent began counting

the up-rounders, and learned that two had not arrived, Jói, and Júlli. After a while they saw Jói approaching with five sheep. He had a long story to tell of his struggles with those sheep and how Fjára, his dog, had at last compelled them to submit. He was quite exhausted.

The fold was in the middle of large, green lawn, and was built of stone and turf. In the main room could stand some two thousand sheep. On three sides of that were small folds, each belonging to a special farm, with passages going from the common-fold into their sides.

It was no easy task to drive the sheep into the fold. Every one had to help in that, and we swung our whips to hold them together.

Notwithstanding all our effort, now and then they rushed through the circle, and men and dogs after them, trying to catch them. At last they were all folded. Júlli

had not yet arrived, we were all sorry for him, but there was nothing to fear as yet. The up-rounders were feeling hungry and it was time for luncheon now. The knapsacks were loosened from the saddles, and the men and dogs sat on the ground in a big group, the dogs waiting patiently for their bones or whatever they would be given. No time was wasted; they had to hurry through their meal.

We girls climbed upon the walls and gazed at the nice-looking animals. The men were sorting the sheep. When they saw a sheep with their ear-mark, or the farmer's they were working for, it was led by the horns to one of the smaller folds, so at last each one had the sheep belonging to his farm in his fold.

"Have you seen my Golta and Gulur?" Tóta shouted to Finni, one of our men.

"I saw Gulur, but I have not seen Golta."

"I hope you have seen my Flekka," I added.

"Not yet, but it may be here."

All the sheep on our farm had got their proper names, and the shepherds knew every one, and so did my father. The only one I knew by name, was my own and Tóta's. My father kept a register of all the sheep and domestic animals.

"Hello, Friða, here is your Flekka. Here I can see Manga's Kolla, but Golta is nowhere to be seen. I hope the fox has not caught it," Finni said. "I found the remains of one lamb, evidently killed by the fox," he added.

Hearing that, Tóta began to cry. She was certain it had been Golta.

"Don't cry, girl," father said to Tóta; "it is very likely that Golta will be found yet. Several searches are to be made, and if Golta is dead or has run far away, I will give you another lamb instead of it."

Tóta was relieved and stopped sobbing.

The next thing was to ride to Reykir, which was not far, to have a nice cup of coffee with cakes.

We bade good-by at Reykir and went back to the fold. The sorting was done, the fold empty, the private folds filled. The men were in a group, and I noticed that they were disputing very seriously. Father was in the midst. I stole near and listened. Father spoke: "There is nothing to do but send two of you at once to look for him. He would have returned now, if nothing had happened to him."

"I am willing to go and I should like Finni to go with me," Páll from Kjarvaldstödum said.

"Júlli's dog is here, and he might possibly direct you," Árni suggested.

I could not be mistaken, Júlli had not arrived and they were going to search for him. What a pity! He might be dead or

he might be lying in a chasm with broken limbs.

Everybody looked grave. The farmers opened the folds one by one and each drove home a herd of sheep. Father had to be the last to leave, he had to take home the sheep the earmarks of which were not known or were doubtful, or if the owners lived in distant districts. They had to be taken care of till the owners sent for them. The others were sold to the highest bidders at an auction, the income of which was added to the poor-law district treasury, of which father was director.

We girls helped to drive the sheep home and house them. We went to bed without having heard any more of Júlli. Next morning when mother awakened me and Tóta, who slept in the same bed as I, the first thing we said was: "Is Júlli found?"

"No news has come so far," was mother's reply.

About ten o'clock in the forenoon I became startled when Páll entered the baðstofa with Júlli in his arms. He was alive and able to speak—how nice! But he had bandages about his head and leg. The story ran thus: Júlli saw three sheep grazing in among the cliffs. In order that they might not be aware of him till he had reached the place where he might stop them from running the opposite direction, he had to steal up the edge of a gully, climb down to the bottom and up on the other side. He was going down; at first it seemed to be an easy task. But all at once he turned dizzy; it seemed as if the earth he stood on were moving down. He knew no more.

When he woke up and was conscious, he was lying on stony ground at the bottom of the gully. He tried to arise—but—no—his left foot—what dreadful pain!—it was impossible—and what was the matter with his head, he wondered. He put his

hand to the forehead and noticed there a bleeding wound. He cried and shouted. He listened if he might hear some one coming. He heard them command the dogs and he heard barking not far away—but —no one heard him. He was in despair. Suddenly a thought struck him—if he could crawl on his hands and knees down to the valley, he might be able to struggle on to the next farm, or somebody might hear him then. He made an attempt. Surely it was painful on the stones and rough ground—but he could do it.

He was in that condition when Páll and Finni found him in the night. The doctor had been sent for. It was a ten-hours' trip with four of the swiftest and strongest horses of the valley. He was the only doctor for several large country districts. After he had examined Júlli, we learned that his leg was broken, but his wounds were not serious. I was also told, that

Júlli had to stay at our home till he had recovered.

I was so happy when I was told that, for I knew that Júlli's mother was a widow and so poor that the ten-year-old boy had to earn his food, at least in the summer season. This summer he had been a shepherd at the next farm to father's, taking care of the sheep which were kept near the farm for milking them.

After a few weeks Júlli had recovered and could join in a fight with the other boys. When he grew up he was a strong man and so good a worker that every farmer wanted his services.

This accident and other similar ones did not prevent the young people from looking forward to the rounding-up of the sheep every year as extraordinarily pleasant work.

HAIFOSS ("HIGH FALL") IN THJORSARDAL.
Height, 450 feet. Note man standing at foot.

CHAPTER VII

WINTER

One special day was called the first day of winter. In the almanac the day was fixed on a certain Saturday in the latter half of October. The winter weather might begin in the middle of September; it did sometimes seem to forget the first winter-day, or want to fix it in its own way.

But it might happen that the weather was so warm that flowers fresh from the meadow were placed in the centre of the Christmas table, and that in the northern part of the country. This may seem fabulous to you. After the rounding-up of sheep the preparations for winter began. Sheep, cows, and horses were slaughtered. Mutton and sheepskin with the fleece on was exchanged for grain and all sorts of

merchandise. The meat was cured and exported to foreign countries. A good deal was also salt-cured or smoke-cured for home use. Sausages were made of blood and liver. The blood was mixed up with water, half of each. In that was stirred barley and rye, meal and chopped suet to make it substantial. Then it was put into sheep-bowels, cooked several hours, and placed in casks when cold. These were filled with water, so that it floated all around the bowels; at last the casks were made air-tight. After a few weeks all had turned sour. Whether it was taken cold or heated in a frying-pan in fat, it tasted good and was very nourishing food. In that way it could keep for months. The heads and feet of the sheep were considered one of the nicest foods. From the blood of calves a pudding was made, of which we were all fond. At that time most people were too orthodox to use horse-

meat as food. Now they have changed their minds.

Big casks of skyr were stored for winter, when it was sour it could keep for a year. Both fresh and sour skyr are said to be very wholesome food, and it is often ordered by physicians for patients with disease of the stomach. When all this had been done, the storage of food for all the household people and animals was enough to last till the next supply was to be brought home in May or June next summer, sometimes with a little addition of coffee and sugar in the middle of the winter, and the storage of hay till the animals could get their food entirely from the ground, and the time for that differed very much according to weather.

In winter the taking care of the animals was the chief work out-of-doors. The little lambs only knew how to graze but not how to eat hay, and they did not like the change

at all. The Icelandic hay is not a bit like the hay I saw last summer in America; it is much more dainty and soft. It is also stated by many that the mutton there tastes far better than in most other countries, which is due to the endless variety of grass in the big, uncultivated pasture-land and in the home fields. Father had to put a few small bits of hay into the mouths of the lambs. We children were allowed to visit them in their house. How amusing it was to see them chew the hay and then, after a long while, swallow it.

The old sheep had to graze every day that the weather was fine till the ice had covered even the longest tufts of grass. The shepherd had to watch the sheep, by no means an enviable job. The wethers were driven out for grazing when the weather kept the other sheep from it, as they were more strong and enduring. One of the flock was generally the leader or bell-

wether; his keenness and sagacity were often marvelous.

One morning just before Christmas time, the sky looked dark and snow drifted from the north. The night before the weather had been calm but it had snowed a good deal, so that every nook and corner of the ground was covered with snow, and it was very deep in the lower places. It did not seem attractive to the wethers to graze that day. This morning a bell-wether, named Háleggur, refused to go out of his stable.

That was very unusual, and so the shepherd deferred driving the sheep out and gave them some hay and told the farmer that Háleggur hesitated about going out for the grazing. The farmer did not believe in the keenness of the sheep and thought this was nothing but a whim. He scolded the herdsman. The herdsman became excited, and when he had hurried through his lunch he went with the sheep

a good distance from the farm. There were eighty sheep together in the flock. Háleggur was very unruly that day and tried several times to return home.

In the twilight a terrible gale sprang up and it was all the time snowing. It became pitch-dark in a moment. What was to be done? Háleggur was the only one that could give the answer to that. He did not wait another minute, but rushed forward in the direction of his stable. The other sheep followed at full speed and the herdsman with his dog brought up the rear, all trusting in Háleggur to find the way home. Neither did he fail; in spite of the difficulty of going through the terrible heaps of snow he pressed on till he reached the stable and the whole train after him. No doubt he had saved the herdsman's life, and the whole flock would have perished with him.

Most of the ponies had to graze till

the ice and snow had covered the grass, and even then they had partly to get their food, and by pawing the snow to clear it from the grass they were able to do that. The young ponies and the pet ones were kept in the stables altogether, except for exercise and taking air. The cows were the only domestic animals which never were to graze till the green grass had grown again. The number of sheep on a farm varied very much, from a few up to one thousand. Some farmers had a few ponies, but most had a fairly large number, and some as many as one hundred and fifty, depending on where they were living in the country.

In winter the occupation of women was the care of the household, milking the cows, and the working of wool into thread. The thread was then woven or knitted into cloth by men and women. The processes the cloth and the knitted articles had then to

go through were fulling, pressing, and dyeing, all done at home, as well as the cutting of clothes and sewing. Singer's sewing-machines had not then been brought to Iceland, so everything was hand-sewed. But a machine was soon provided, resulting in a great saving of time.

Let us now have a view in the "baðstofa." It is about noon. Mother sits on her bed with a spinning-wheel in front of her and is spinning wool, with the natural brown color. It is worsted, to knit stockings from. Father is sitting on a chair at the only table in the room. He is busy writing some entries or reports. On another chair near the table sits Manga, who is sewing or darning a garment, asking mother's advice at intervals. On one side of mother sits Tóta on a footstool. She is trying to card the wood mother is spinning. I am sitting on the bed beside her with my reader, a story-book one of the bishops had

translated from English. I am reading aloud, mother correcting me without stopping her work.

Now it is Tóta's turn to read and mine to card. The younger children are playing in the corner of the room. In the other room of the baðstofa we see two maidens spinning on spinning-wheels. They sit on the same bed. Opposite them sits the herdsman on his bed, carding wool for them both to spin. In a corner near a window a loom is placed. Magnús, one of the menservants, has the job of weaving all the cloth for mother and for several other farmers' wives in the valley. The maidens are both young and good-looking. One of them was especially attractive, and Finni and Magnús had both fallen in love with her. As men in such a condition always do, they tried to please her in everything. Finni carded the wool still better for her than for the other girls. Magnús used to

bring all the water she wanted from the brook into the kitchen. After years of rivalry she became the wife of Finni.

We notice the smell of coffee. All right! In the passage Ólöf appears with a big tray on which are cups and saucers, a sugar-basin with sugar, a cream-jar, and a coffee-pot. She places it on the table. Mother rises and pours out the coffee into the cups, giving the cups to Tóta and me that we may hand them to the others. We children get a cup of milk instead of coffee.

I am tired of reading and carding and so is Tóta, we want to write, as we see father do. We had not yet been given any writing materials. "You are too young for writing," we were told. We did not believe so. Once mother was dyeing cloth black, and to satisfy our ambition, she gave us a little of the liquid in a bottle. We found small sticks of wood that we could use as penholders, and pens which father

could no more use were tied to them with a cord. This done we knelt at a footstool and began to imitate the letters on the slips of paper father had thrown away.

After having tried that several times, we wanted to write letters, as we saw the others do. I wrote one to the kitchen-maid, which I had to take to her myself in order to read it, as I was not sure she could get the right meaning of the important matter. When we had thus given proof of our earnestness in wishing to learn writing, we were given the proper materials, and father showed us how to do it.

The studying of numbers was very much in the same way. Father had an old arithmetic which we studied, and when we asked his help, he gave it to us.

We became skilled readers, and we had a great many books on different subjects. Father was one of the leaders in the district's reading-society, and there were

many books, both classic and modern, for circulating in the valley. We did not get a newspaper every morning as you do, nor once a week, either. The postman came regularly once a month, with letters and newspapers. But in summer mail was also sent by the passenger and freight boats, which stopped at the trading-place.

The regular post or mail was carried on horseback all over the country. One postman came from the east, one from the west and one from the south, and one from the north. These men met at fixed places and exchanged the mail and went back to where they had started from. Each postman had many pack-horses. From these head-stations the mail was sent into the valleys and isolated districts, and to each valley the postman had sometimes to carry it on his own back in winter, as the snow often was so deep that it was impossible to use horses for that purpose. How interesting when

the mail came! It was much more so than when we get it every morning or many times a day. I presume you would not change, though.

The telegraph and telephone had not then reached so far as up to the Polar Circle. No wonder the travelers were welcomed, who sometimes came from faraway districts, not in "fliers," but walking or riding ponies, having perhaps spent a week on the trip, and hearing wherever they stopped some news they could add to the collection they had taken with them from their homes. The news brought in that way was generally more credible than the news from newspapers nowadays. Night-lodging guests came very frequently. There were no hotels nor inns in the country districts and the farmers did not grudge the very best of food and comforting service to a guest of whatever sort of a people.

I remember once when the *sýslumaður* (judge and revenue officer, or a sheriff) took a night's lodging at our farm. I was very young then. He was an old, good-looking man, and I fell in love with him. He had snow-white hair and beard, long and beautiful. Mother was preparing dinner for him, while he was changing his clothing in the guest-room, and she sent me to him with a pair of father's shoes for him to put on. And—think of my joy when he asked me to draw the shoes on his feet! I shall never forget that.

Some of the travelers were rather queer people and there were even a few who wandered about without having any home but that of each night. They were inoffensive persons, and we were generally glad to learn that they were to arrive. Some of them told stories to us, and nothing was more funny. An old woman, by the name of Ingibjörg visited us always once

in the winter. She was an esteemed story-teller in our opinion, nor were we alone in thinking so.

One day Árni came running through the corridor, and before he had reached the baðstofa, he shouted the glad tidings: "*Ingibjörg i Torfhól er komin!*" "Ask her to come in," mother suggested gently. Siggi, Árni, Tóta, and I, all rushed out to meet Ingibjörg. "*Sæl og blessuð, og velkomin* (Hail and blessed and welcome)," we began, as with one voice. "*Sæl og blessuð verið pið äll sömun!* (Hail and blessed be you all together!)," she returned and began kissing us one by one. In a minute she was in the baðstofa hailing the other people.

After having taken a seat on a bed amidst the maidens, she was asked about news. She had several things to tell. One was sick, another had died, a child was born there, another was likely to see the light

of this world soon on another farm, and so forth.

Mother went to the pantry and had soon put on one plate several kinds of food, as bread, butter, sausages or meat, "blódmör," dry codfish, and "svid" (sheep's head). I brought the plate to her, and she placed it in her lap, as she was accustomed to do when eating. The coffee-pot was put over the fire, and a big cup of coffee was poured out for her. When she had done with that, she asked mother, if she had any knitting for her to do. I handed her mittens, the half of which had been done.

Now the lamp had been lighted, and we children thought the right time was come for our business to begin. We were in a corner whispering to each other: "Do ask her to tell us a story." "You can do it just as well." "She will be more will-

ing to do it for you." "Let us go to Finni, and get him to ask her. I am sure she will do it for him, he carried her sack last winter a long way." After this dispute, we agreed to the last suggestion. Finni was at once ready: "Ingibjörg! Do you remember how heavy your sack was last year? How tired I was when I came home. By the way, would you not favor us with one story. I am sure you will not refuse to do so."

"A story! You know I have already told you all I know. Last winter you heard the last. I would really do it if I was able to."

Now we could not keep silent, and fell in: "Dear Ingibjörg, do tell us only one story, we will not ask you for more." "I am sure you have not told us all the stories about Ása, Signy and Helga and the Prince." "I remember you told us last

winter you had one left you would keep till now.''

All this was spoken so rapidly that a listener would not have been able to distinguish which of us said which.

''Of course I am going to take your bag now, when you leave, to the next farm at least, if you go at the time I have not to take care of the sheep,'' Finni continued, seemingly hoping that this would decide the matter.

In Ingibjörg's bag or burden, were the presents she had got from the farmers' wives where she had her night-lodgings, as wool, skin, cloth, bread, butter, meat and so forth. Ingibjörg was a poor, honest woman; she had an invalid husband and an adopted son to provide for. She generally spent two or three weeks in winter visiting her friends, and her sack had grown pretty heavy when she came home. In winter she

had to walk. But sometimes she made a short trip in summer, too, in order to get a little supply of food, and then she rode on a yellow pony and led another one by the rein with packs on.

At last Ingibjörg had submitted to our request, and said: "You might have heard this story I am going to tell you." "No, no, I am certain we have never heard it," all cried, "and if so we have forgotten it and are glad to hear it again," some one added. Mother had come into the baðstofa, and had heard some of the conversation. She believed that we were too impudent, and addressed us: "Children! Be quiet, or I will ask Ingibjörg not to tell you a story to-night. Now, listen little girls! You have to knit, and Árni and Siggi, you are to teasel this wool." We obeyed at once. Then we grouped around Ingibjörg, pretending to be very industri-

ous, and could not help looking at her the most of the time.

How clearly I can see her in my imagination! She was a small woman, about fifty years of age. The hard struggles of life were reflected in every feature and wrinkle in her face. On her left eyelid was a wart, which disfigured her face very much. If not for that, she would have been a good-looking woman.

She had a little black, knitted cap on her head with a tassel of silk thread hanging down at her right temple. At the top the tassel was decorated with a hollow cylinder, made of silver. She wore a black, knitted waist or bodice with a silk neckerchief fastened to the neck-edge, the ends of which were tied in a bow on the chest. On the sleeves were velvet cuffs, and borders of the same material were on the edges of the front pieces. Between these edges was a little gap, in which appeared

a piece of cloth embroidered with silver thread. The lower part of her dress was of home-made, thick cloth, deeply folded at the back. Then came a big apron of Scotch woolen fabric. Her eyes were lively and she was very cheerful and light-hearted. We often laughed at her witty sayings. Let us now listen to Ingibjörg's telling:

"Once upon a time there were a king and a queen in their kingdom, and a man and his wife on a small farm. The king and the queen had one son, and the old couple had three daughters, by name Ása, Signy, and Helga. Helga, the youngest one, was despised by them all.

"Ása and Signy went every day to the king's palace to play with the young prince. Helga had to watch the sheep and do all the hardest work on the farm. Asa and Signy not only treated Helga badly but also their parents, and they even caused

their deaths. Helga buried them in a mound. She was one evening sitting on the mound crying and fell asleep. She dreamt her mother came to her and said, 'I regret very much having treated you worse than your sisters, for I know now that you are by far the best of all. I want to reward your good conduct to me and your father, for if it had not been for you, we should not have been buried. Go to the mound in front of the hut and stamp with your feet on the top of it. The mound will open, and what you will find there is yours and will make you fortunate if you use it rightly.'

"When Helga awoke, she hurried to the mound in front of the hut and did as her mother had told her in the dream. The mound opened when she stamped on it, and Helga entered into it. There she found three winged horses, three dresses, three pairs of shoes, and three chairs. One

horse was black, and belonging to it was a black dress, black shoes, and a black chair. The second horse was red, and what belonged to it was red. The third horse was white, and the things belonging to it were a white silk dress, golden shoes, and a golden chair.

"Helga admired all these things very much. She had to hurry home, for she expected her sisters every moment, and the dinner had to be ready when they came. When she got out of the mound, it closed behind her. The sisters came and ordered their dinner, and told Helga to have breakfast ready early next morning, as the prince wanted them to come and play at chess. Helga did not dare to say a word against them and promised to do so. When they had gone next morning, Helga went to the mound, stamped with her feet, and it opened. She entered and put on the black dress and black shoes, took the black chair

and mounted the black horse. It galloped off and did not stop till it had arrived at the palace, where the prince and Helga's sisters were playing at chess. The prince happened to look out of the window, just as Helga stopped outside of it. He rushed up from the chess and ran out to meet her. He asked her to enter the palace, but she hesitated, yet submitted at last. The prince asked her if she could play chess; she answered that she never had tried to do that in her life. The prince wanted her to play a game, and she played three games. He won the first two, she won the last. He asked her to play one more, but she declined. He then begged her to sit and converse with him, but she told him that she had to go. He requested her then to tell where she lived, but she did not tell him. Now she went out and the prince followed her. She jumped up on her horse and started her air-riding. She

went so high, that the prince could not see what became of her.

"Helga put her rags on again and left the other things in the mound. She had dinner ready when Asa and Signy came home. They were in very bad temper and scolded Helga for everything she did.

" 'What is the matter with you? What has happened?' Helga asked them, very humbly. 'Oh! we are so angry! A black-dressed woman came to the palace, and the prince fell in love with her; he would not look at us, even when she had gone,' they exclaimed to her. 'You need not scold me for that; I am not to blame,' Helga replied.

"Ása and Signy went to the palace next morning very early. Helga, dressed in the red dress and riding on the red horse, started off for the palace. Everything turned out as on the last day, except that Helga won the two last games. The sis-

ters were still more furious when they came home that day. Helga asked the reason, and they told her, that the same lass had come to the prince as the day before. She had been dressed in red and sat on a red chair, 'And as we can not reach her, you have to suffer for that,' they said and gave her several blows.

"The next day was like the preceding one, except that Helga rode the white horse and had on the white silk dress and the golden shoes. The prince received her with great joy, and they sat down playing at chess. As before, they played three games, and Helga won them all. When Helga was going home, the prince besought her to stay with him, and when she refused that, he tried to keep her back with violence. She tore herself from him and mounted. But in the fight, she lost one of the golden shoes. The prince picked it up and made a solemn vow that he would never marry

till he found the one whom the shoe fitted. He was so anxious to find that lady that he proclaimed that all the young ladies in his kingdom should meet at his court the following day.

"Ása and Signy were depressed, for they had each hoped to become the queen. When they came home, Helga had just started the cooking. They said, 'Why is not dinner ready?' 'I did not expect you so early,' said Helga, a little scornfully. 'It was so unpleasant to-day at the palace that we wanted to stay no longer there,' they murmured. Then they continued, 'The same lass came as yesterday wearing gold and precious stones. She played all the time with the prince; we did nothing but look on.' So they told her of the assembling proposed next day, and added, 'But why does that concern you? We hope you do not think so much of yourself as to go there. There is no doubt the shoe

does not fit your large, ugly foot.' That night they crammed their feet into a press.

"When Ása and Signy had left home next morning, Helga went to the mound and put on the same dress she had on the first day that she visited the king's palace. On the black horse she rode to the assembly. She made three circles over their heads and saw the young ladies trying the golden shoe on their feet. The prince's eyes caught a glimpse of her, and he shouted to her to come down, but she did not seem to notice him and rode away. The shoe had not fitted any as yet and the assembly had therefore to meet the following day.

"Then was the same result. Helga came riding the red horse and dressed in the red robe. The prince tried again to move her to descend, but it seemed as if she paid it no attention at all. The prince dismissed the meeting and decided that the following day should be that of the

last test. Ása and Signy got up early that day and went to the meeting. It was a very painful walk, as they had made their feet so sore by squeezing them. Helga came swinging through the air on her white, winged horse, dressed in the white silk dress, with a golden shoe on one foot, which she held out before the prince, as she moved slowly on in the air. As before, the prince besought her to descend and said that he would at once marry her, and she should be the only queen of the country. But she did not heed him at all and rode away.

"The prince was beside himself from grief. A search was started in the town and the surroundings for this fair lady, but she was nowhere to be found. One day the prince and his retinue came to the hut, where the sisters lived. Ása and Signy were proud of the visit. He asked them if there were not more than two sisters. They answered that there was a lass living

with them called their sister, but they had never acknowledged her as such. When the prince expressed the wish to see her, they tried their best to get him to change his mind, but he was firm. Finally Helga came before the prince in her rags, but with the golden shoe on her foot. The prince recognized her at once as the same lady that he had seen riding on the winged horses, and he was exceedingly happy at having found her at last. Helga explained all to him, and they went to the mound, where she showed him her treasures.

"The prince crossly scolded Signy and Ása for their behavior to their sister and parents, and they had to leave his kingdom altogether that same day and never appear again before his eyes.

"He married Helga, and they lived in love and happiness together till their old age. They were the parents of many nice

children, to whom they told this story to prove to them that kind deeds are always rewarded in the long run."

Ingibjörg gave a sigh of relief when she completed the story with the words every story-teller used: *"Og svo er sagan búin"* (And so the tale is ended). The whole group thanked her for the story, and left her undisturbed for the remainder of the evening.

Do you not think that some of these old fairy-tales are prophecy? The winged horse in this story might mean the aeroplane, daily used now, but not even thought of when this story was made. And the wicked sisters, that were made outlaws, might prophesy that brutality and wickedness were made outlaws from the world—though it has not yet become true.

In the Scandinavian myths, Wodin's horse, Sleipnir, had eight feet and walked

equally through all four elements, air, earth, water, and fire. I wonder if that will be a prophecy to be fulfilled in the course of years.

Sometimes it happened that a traveller, who spent one or two nights with us was a good singer and *"kvað rimur"* (recited or sang the legends, which had been made to verses). In each ballad were many different strophes, each having its own tune. That was great fun, and still more so if the others, who often knew the verses by heart, joined in with the singer at the last line of each strophe, and the last syllable rang out with a long note. This often was so ridiculous, that I could not help laughing. The reading of the legends in prose sounded much better to me.

When the out-of-door work had been finished except the last feeding and milking of the cows, the people generally assembled in the one room of the baðstofa. The loom

was stopped. Magnús knitted or carded, and the work done was to be quiet, sewing or mending clothes, knitting, darning and so forth. Then father took some interesting book and began reading aloud. When he had read a while, he stopped and the older people discussed what had been read and then he started again. We children listened very earnestly, but often without grasping much, and occasionally interrupting father with a question for explanation, which he was willing to give. We had many nice books for reading, for instance can I remember besides the Sagas, legends, Eddas and other classic Icelandic books we had translations, such as "Romeo and Juliet," "Robinson Crusoe," "Savitra," "Sakuntala," "Thousand-and-one Nights," "Andersen's Fairy-Tales" and folk-lore of all kinds, and so on.

I felt proud when I had the skill to be able to relieve father from reading the

whole of the evening, for the others had to mind their work. But I was not pleased when I was told to read the sermon, for after it I had to recite the Lord's Prayer and the words of benediction, which I felt too shy to do.

Before and after the sermon a hymn was sung. Mother used to lead the singing with her thin, sweet voice. I sang, too, as soon as I could read, and was fond of that. I remember one evening we were having this domestic service and I sat in the lap of Manga and was singing with the others. Mother was leading the tune, and I wanted so much to let them hear that I knew it that I began every line of the strophe before the others had ended the last one. Then Manga whispered in my ear: "You are not to begin the line before your mother." I realized my error and was ashamed of myself. Then mother gave me a look full of forbearance. I did not worry

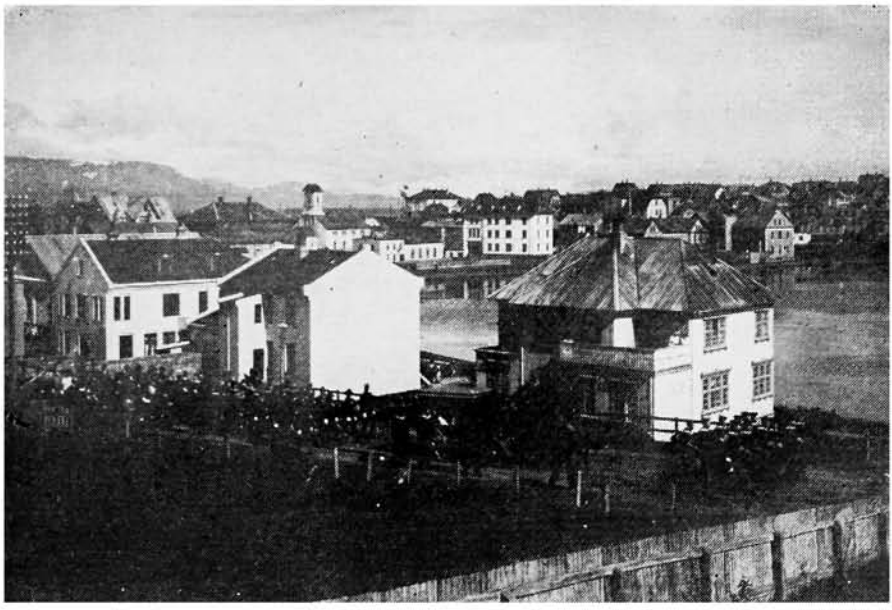
any more but kept on singing, and never tried to lead the tune till it was trusted to me. On Sundays and days of festival father read the sermon himself.

On my tenth birthday, the first of February, I got the Lutheran Catechism from my father with these words: "If you have learned it by heart the twenty-third of April, on the first day of summer, I will give you a small chest of drawers, but you can do as you like, my girl."

That awakened my ambition. When I had dressed next morning and finished the work I meant to be my daily duty, I began reading and learning the Catechism, and so I did every day till I had finished it and father had to give me the prize he had promised. The book was one of only one hundred and forty pages.

I was never told to study, and I was never forbidden it. We had sometimes a race in learning poems by heart, and in

knitting we did the same. We capped verses; one commenced by reciting a verse or a quotation, then another did the same, and in that way they went on by turns, till one of us had recited all he or she knew by heart of quatrains. The one who recited the last time, had won the game. Sometimes there were two on each side. Another favorite game was that of asking riddles and reading them, which we were very fond of, both young and old. Some of the people in my home were able to make verses, and did so occasionally to express their joy and sorrow.



A Part of Reykjavik, the Capital of Iceland.

The Harbor of Reykjavik.

CHAPTER VIII

FESTIVITIES

EARLY in winter we began to look forward to Christmas, which was the star of the winter, sending its rays to shine in the darkest days into every hut and heart of the isolated valley. It was the outward side of things that made the children enjoy it immensely. And the grown-up thought of that, too. Christmas was a landmark of time; a great many things were connected with it. This and that should be done before Christmas, clothes had to be made, stockings, shoes, and mittens. The week before was a busy one. The baking of bread, cakes, and pastry was a very important task and I was glad when I could be used as a hand

for that, either for helping mother, or the cook. But sometimes it happened that the hands were too numerous, as there were more than I who liked to be that. If the wheat flour was scarce, grain had to be ground for adding to it.

A water-mill had been built over the brook flowing some fifty yards from the farmhouse. It was mainly used for grinding rye and barley. In winter it worked only when there was a thaw. Sometimes the mill-stones were then taken and used in a hand-mill. I guess you have never seen a hand-mill and will therefore try to describe it. A large box or case was placed upon four feet or sticks. In the centre of it was fastened an iron pole. On the centre of the stones were holes, fitting that pole, which they were put on in the case. On the edge of the upper stone was fixed an iron bar, and on that was put a handle of bone from the leg of an animal. On the upper

stone the hole in the centre was made larger, and in that was put a handful of the grain to be ground. The worker grasped the handle and turned the upper stone round and round, till the grain had turned into meal and by degrees fell out between the stones into the case the stones were placed in. To grind was hard work, if the flour was to be fine. Barley was especially used for baking cakes.

The lighting material was petroleum, and I can also remember train-oil lamps in the kitchen and the stables. The wick in them was made of cotton-grass, which grew on the bogs. Tallow-candles were always made before Christmas. Mother had to provide the church with candles, and those which were placed on the altar had to have a special shape. They were called "*kóngakerti*" (king's-candles), and were three at the top, but leaning together in one stem at the bottom. I think they

were the symbol of the three holy kings who saw the Star of Bethlehem. The candles were molded in a very primitive way, when I first remember, but later on mother got a real mold.

The tallow was melted and poured into a small tub. A cotton thread was cut into wicks, all of the same length, and these were fastened on some sticks, which were placed on the edges of the tub. Then they were taken one by one and dipped into the melted tallow in the tub. When they all had been dipped once, the tallow had coagulated on the first, and it was dipped again, and the same repeated over and over with them all, each time a little tallow sticking to them. After having gone through that process many times, the candles were completed. The "king's-candles" were made in the same way as the others, with the upper ends turned down, the stem upwards.

Meat and sausages were cooked and roasted, cakes and pastry had been baked and bread of several kinds. Every room on the farm had been cleaned thoroughly. A big washing had been done. *"Fátkrapurkurinn"* (dry weather for the poor) had not failed to come this year, to dry the washing also for those who could not change their clothes unless they could wash them and get them dry the very last day before Christmas. At last Christmas had arrived, as we children called it. Christmas Eve was the most holy night in the year. After six o'clock nothing unnecessary had to be worked. Everybody got at least one new garment, for none wanted to *klða köttinn* (clothe the cat) as we said they did who had nothing new on that evening. If some piece or other of work had not been finished, for instance if you had knitted only the half of a stocking, you were teased by the saying that

you had that about your neck (*að hafa um hálsinn*). I presume the beginning of that was that the bosses used, formerly, to threaten their lazy workers with hanging their half-finished work about their necks to make them ashamed.

I had put on my new dress, new stockings, and new slippers, and so had Tóta and the other children. We were so happy, and every one seemed to be happy. Even the cat and the dogs looked to be more gentle than usual, though they got none of the new things.

We were all assembled for the domestic service. Father took the books from the book-case. The whole atmosphere was filled with sacred peace and joy. A Christmas hymn was sung, the Christmas gospel was read, and a sermon; prayers were said, another hymn was sung, followed by silent prayer. Father broke the silence by saying, "God give you all a good time and

happy Christmas." The others repeated that, rising and shaking hands with each other. We children kissed father and mother.

Father went into the guest-room for a bundle of candles. Every one got one of them for his own use. The Christmas candle was no surprise to us, but all the same, every year it played a big part in the enjoyment of that evening. Every nook and corner had to be lighted that evening. The table was laid and dinner eaten. Later on coffee was served, with chocolate for us children and those who wanted it. Cakes and pastry were in abundance.

The remainder of the evening was devoted to Bible study. Each one took his own Bible and read for himself. The children, who were unable to read, went to mother, and she told them about the Holy Child and what they had to do in order to

imitate Him, and that they had to thank Him for the Christmas.

We went early to bed Christmas Eve with the intention to get up early next morning. When we awoke Christmas day, Oläf had prepared the coffee and brought it into the baðstofa together with sugar, cream, and cakes and pastry. We got our coffee in bed, and no doubt we were not cheated of the due share of cakes.

The grown people went to church, if the weather was fine. At eleven years of age I was allowed to go with the others. What impressed my mind most was to look at the lights in the three big chandeliers of the church. Sometimes the river Hjaltadalsá was a bad obstacle on the way. The ponies were not used much in winter. Generally only one pony was rough-shod, and the roads and ground were for the most so slippery, that they could not be used unless that was done. Sometimes the snow

was too deep for a ride. We had therefore to walk, and it took us an hour.

Young and old people from the neighborhood were frequent guests at Yule-tide on Kálfsstadir. The older played cards, the younger played a game called *Jóla-leikur*. Girls and boys were separated. The girls sat down in the guest-room, the boys went into the hall, and the door was shut. Then one girl "gave" to each a boy of those who were in the hall. The door was opened and in came the oldest boy. He looked at the girls for a while, and they tried to bewilder him and tease him. He bowed in front of one of them. If he happened to be the right one "given" to that girl, she bowed again, but if not, she clapped her hands, and all the rest with her, and the boy was turned out of the room. The next boy came in, and this was repeated till they all had entered the room and tried their luck. They

who bowed to the girls they had been "given" to did not go again and had to keep silent to the other boys about who their matches had been. Some of them failed several times and had always to wait till their turn came again, and were never allowed to bow to more than one each turn. The least successful was put up at auction, which was the greatest fun of all.

Next it was the girls' turn to stand in the hall, and the boys sat in the room. The game was repeated several times. Dancing was one of the favorite amusements, the music being that of the harmonica. Singing was also frequently practised and there were a number of musical plays. There is much folk-lore connected with Christmas. The fairies and giants and giantesses in the vicinity of the farmers often paid them visits at this special time, always for doing some harm.

It was the custom in olden days for both young and old to go to church on Christmas Eve, except one, who generally was a young woman. When the others returned, which was not till the next morning, this woman had either disappeared altogether, died, or became mad or insane. It was difficult to get any to stay at home where this had often happened.

From a farm, where this had been the case, all went to church one Christmas Eve, except a young maiden, who recently had become a servant there, and probably knew nothing about what had happened the preceding years. When the people had started, she put a light here and there in the farmhouse. Then she sat down on her bed in the baðstofa and commenced reading the Bible. Having done so for a while, she saw a crowd of people enter the baðstofa. They were men, women and children. They began to dance. They spoke to the

maiden and asked her repeatedly to join in the dancing, but she did not answer. They offered her beautiful presents, but she did not even look at them, and continued reading. Just before daybreak they left the farmhouse. When the people came home that morning, they were exceedingly glad to find the maiden all right. She told them her adventure, and they praised her for her steadfastness. After that she always stayed at home Christmas Eve, as long as she lived at that farm, and always did the same people visit her, and they never did any harm.

Among the amusements are the fairy-dances. They are especially danced on New Year's Eve or on Twelfth Day's evening. A fairy king and a fairy queen are the leaders in the dancing. They are dressed in white robes with golden crowns on their heads. The dresses of the other fairies are like those of a masquerade.

Some are white fairies, others are black fairies, with all kinds of head-dresses. The fairy folk generally start from among rocks or high cliffs, carrying burning torches. They parade singing to a place where there is a big bonfire. They dance in a circle around the fire, singing fairy songs and reciting poems made for that purpose. A crowd of people are surrounding them all the time. When the bonfire has burned out, all parade to a dancing-hall, where the general dance begins.

From an old tradition several festivities were bound to the first three days of Lent. Monday is always called *Bolludagur* or *Flengingardagur* (The day of muffins, or the day of whipping). The children provide small whips or wands, often made of colored paper. They get up early Monday morning, before anybody else, to whip those who are in bed. They beat with their wands a few times upon the bed where

the person lies. Some people start out of bed when they hear somebody coming, but others stay in it longer than usual, in order to please the children. They who are whipped have to give the whipper a *bollu* (muffin) or a few cents to buy one with. Children in towns go from house to house to whip their friends; both old and young are whipped but it is done mostly by children. Sometimes young people like that fun, too. Wherever you pay a visit that day, at least in towns, muffins are served with the coffee. That Monday is a holiday in many schools.

The Tuesday was a great meat-eating day, which is a tradition from the Catholic times. In connection with that was the game *að sitja i fästunni* (To sit in the fast). That meant never to mention any common words for meat, dripping, or gravy during Lent. To be able to speak of these things, they were given other

names instead of the proper ones. Some failed the first or second day, others kept it all through Lent. They tried to tempt each other to errors, especially those who had themselves failed. At my home this game was only practised by the servants.

On the third day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, or as we call it, *Oskudagur,* the fun came to its height. Many days before, the children began to make preparations for that, which consisted of sewing small bags. They had all imaginable colors and were of all sorts of cloth or fabric, even embroidered stuff. The boys had as a rule to have their bags made by mother or one of the girls. In these bags were either put ashes from the stove or small stones; in those intended for men or boys to carry were ashes, but in those for girls or women, were small stones. At the edge of them were drawing-strings, at the ends of which were fastened bent pins, for hooking them

into people's clothing. Naturally boys and girls opposed each other. If one walked a few steps with a stone or ashes, he or she had "carried it," and he or she who "put it on," endeavored to be near to prove that the attempt had been successful.

The grown-up often joined the children in that game. On one such occasion no less than thirty bags were hooked in my dress. I did not avoid it at all, but was only pleased if it added to the boys' fun. I suppose if something like that had happened to me when a young girl I would not have stopped crying that day. It sometimes looks droll to see ladies and gentlemen walking in the streets with red or green bags dangling on their backs, of which they have no idea.

In the long twilight of winter we were allowed to play outdoors if the weather was fine. We made big snow men and women

with all the specifications possible. Snow houses were built, so large that we could sit inside while we were eating the sandwiches we had got. But sliding on skis, sledges and skates was naturally the principal sport of that season. It was also very amusing to throw snowballs though it was no joke to be beaten and have to flee.

By and by we had to pay a visit to the lambs, to see how fast they grew and occasionally we were trusted with the job of driving them into the meadow, where they had to graze a couple of hours. And how funny it was to run a race with the calves when they were driven out into the open air. They galloped all over the "tún," and it was hard to get them to go into their stable again. Neither did we forget to visit the foals. How fine to see them suck the udders of their mothers.

CHAPTER IX

SPRING

THE ground had thrown off its white robe and was waiting for the green to be ready. The long, dark nights were gone. Lamps were becoming keepsakes, waiting for the next fall to be needed. The first birds of passage had arrived. The ptarmigan was changing clothing, taking off her white winter costume and making her brown summer suit. The brooks were flowing over their banks and hopped cheerfully down the meadow into the *Hjaltadalsá,* which embraced them and carried them into the great ocean. *Sumardagurinn-fyrsti var kominn!* (The first summer day had arrived) the real national holiday in Iceland. It is fixed on Thurs-

day and varied in date from the twenty-first to the twenty-fifth of April.

I had been up early that morning. I knew I should be surprised, as always on that day, with some presents. I was not mistaken. On my bed was a packet addressed to me. What was in it, I wondered. It did not take me long to untie the string. Well! A beautiful box and in it a thimble, thread and needles, and beside that a petticoat of the kind I always had admired so much. Such a beauty! That was a day of surprise not only for me but for everybody, as presents were exchanged from one to another. When the flood of admiration had settled a little, a domestic service followed with special hymns and sermon for that day. Coffee, cakes, pastry, and several kinds of delicate foods belonged to the festivity. Later on the whole youth joined in blindman's buff on the lawn behind the farmhouse, and

it might happen that mother would favor us with her presence, but I cannot remember that we could move father to that.

The fourteenth of May was the date fixed for the domestics' moving-day. My parents were so fortunate that their people did not move frequently. Most of them stayed from four to ten years. They were not hired for less than one year at a time, and it was considered a great shame, if anybody moved before the next *Krossmessa* (Crossmas) which was the name of May 14th.

All children looked forward to the time of confirmation, and so did I. That took place at fourteen years of age. Whit-Sunday was the general day for that in the parish church we belonged to. I had reached that age. We were about twenty who had been prepared for confirmation by Reverend Z. Halldórson. Hólar was the name of the farm, where the parish

church was. It was an old cathedral from the days when Hólar in Hjaltadal was a see, which it had been for centuries. Now there was an agricultural school there. The church was built of red granite from a quarry in the mountain, Hólabyrda, at the foot of which the church had been placed, in the midst of a cemetery.

People from far-away districts made their way to Hólakirkja that day, riding their ponies. That was the day for children to visit the church, to learn from the candidates for confirmation how to behave when their turn came.

Not one stayed at home in Kálfssadir that day. We had to go early, for mother and I brought to Hólar in boxes the dresses we were to wear in the church, and it always took some time to put them on. Mother's dress was of black cloth, the bodice embroidered, with silver thread, and the skirt adorned with appliqué of velvet.

It was called *Skautbúningur*. A little white cap with a golden coronet at the forehead and a white veil going down on the back, was the headgear of us both. But my dress was of white stuff, and after the style of it, it was called *Kyrtill*. That style of gown was mostly used for girls, the other kind of dress for older ladies. A belt belonged to both, mother's embroidered with silver thread with a buckle of filigree, while mine was altogether handmade filigree. How grand, that from that day I should be dressed as the grown-up women! Of course we only wore these dresses occasionally at festivities, but I got another costume for Sundays and travelling purposes.

The candidates had to answer several questions, asked by the minister, and recite from the catechism and the Bible, in order to prove to the parishioners their capacities and abilities. After the sermon was over,

THE THREE NATIONAL DRESSES OF ICELAND.

our friends congratulated us, and the relatives of ours who had come from a distance were invited to our home for dinner and coffee and so forth.

CHAPTER X

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

I SAT with my friend in the little office belonging to the girls' school in Akureyri. It was just before Christmas, and we were planning for the holiday. I looked out of the window, which was facing the pretty harbor near which the town is situated, and I saw there was a boat casting anchor. I knew that was the only boat expected to come before Christmas, and moreover, that it was bound for Skagafjörður, which was the harbor nearest to my home. A thought struck me: Should I not go home by this boat? It might take me a day or two on the boat and a half-day from it to my home. If anything happened, I could arrive home Christmas Eve; and such a surprise that would be! In a moment it was all settled.

"I am going by the *Viking* to-morrow," I broke the silence.

"Going home! You don't mean it!" was my friend's answer.

"Certainly, I do," I said firmly.

"You could just as well say you left the school altogether, for you know the changeable weather in that season and the short, dark days," was her warning answer. Homesickness is no joke, and at this moment I had become entangled in it and discrimination was shut out.

Next day I went on board the *Viking,* with the best hope for the voyage. The weather was fine. The boat had to take a little freight next night in a harbor near Akureyri. I was the only woman on board, and I went to bed early that night. When I awoke the following morning I learned that the weather had changed, and nothing had been brought on board as yet, and very likely we should have to lie in the

harbor all day. It turned out to be true. Snowstorm and fog prevented any movement of the boat. The same weather lasted for four days, and I had to spend Christmas on board the *Viking*.

When it cleared up, it did not take long to get ready to go on, and by starlight and moonlight we could sail the whole night till we reached the port of Hofsós at the Skagafjörður. I went on shore. The snow was not deep, so I could use a pony for the remainder of my travel. However, it was so late in the day when I started the ride that I could not reach home that evening. My guide was walking with a long stick in his hand with which to try the ice on the brooks and rivers we had to pass over. That evening I stopped at the parsonage, where Rev. Z. Halldórsson lived, and there I stayed over night. In the night the snowstorm became so heavy that I had to walk the rest of the way; fortunately it

A Country Parsonage.

Hallormstadaskógur.
The Largest Forest in Iceland.

was not very far, and the whole trip had taken me seven days, instead of two.

I will not try to describe the warm welcome I had at home. The surprise was great, for I had never mentioned the possibility of coming home for the Christmas holidays, since I became a teacher in Akureyri. I enjoyed the old home life New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day. The *Viking* was to return to Akureyri, and I intended to go with her. But the day after New Year's Day the news was told that the *Viking* had stranded New Year's Eve, and the crew and passengers had a narrow escape.

I knew I had to wait one or two months for the next boat, and I was to begin school the day after the Twelfth Day. Nothing was to be done but walk, or ride on horseback. The day was fixed for my departure. My brother was to go with me, and besides him two guides, for we had to travel over

mountains and moorland. I could ride to the farm nearest to the heath, where we remained the first night.

The following morning the weather was clear and calm, and the frost was not heavy. I prepared for walking and dressed in a short skirt, two pairs of woolen stockings, Icelandic slippers, two pairs of mittens, shawls, and scarfs. Each of us had a pair of skis and a big stick. We had breakfasted at four o'clock in the morning. The snow was deep and loose and I had not had much experience in using skis since a young girl, so it was impossible for me to use them when climbing the mountain. I was therefore out of breath when I reached the top of it.

I wish I could give you the view of the scenery that lay open for my eyes. Such a splendor! Wherever you looked, nothing but the whitest sheet of snow, the snow-grains twinkling like small stars on the

ground. The most beautiful northern lights (aurora borealis) quivered in the sky, and in the bright light of that the stars fainted. I know it is difficult for those who never have seen anything of that kind, to imagine the heavenly beauty of that scenery, but—I pray—try!

We sat down in the snow drifts and took a hearty lunch. We had not sat long when the leader of the trip took his skis and stick and wanted us to do the same. In the noses of my skis was fastened a string which I tied round my waist, in order to keep the skis from gliding from under me. You should have seen me the first ten minutes after I started to slide on the skis. I fell all the time, but the snow was as soft as eiderdown, so I did not hurt me in the least, only looked like the snow-woman we made at home. After a while I could glide just as well as the others, and enjoyed it very much.

In the evening we came to the farm nearest to the mountain on the other side. There we asked for night-lodging, for my speed on the skis was gradually declining, and the two guides were to return from there next day. The farmer and his wife did not grudge any pains to make us comfortable. Nice broth was served, which was welcome after the long day's journey. The baðstofa was only one room, and only one bed vacant; the farmer and his manservant had therefore to sleep in the haybarn that night. When we had taken breakfast next morning, we bade farewell to the good peasants and thanked them for their nice treatment, and that was all the reward they got. We should have insulted them, if we had offered them money for what they bestowed on us. But remember, that was twenty years ago; since traveling has become more frequent, peo-

ple have been obliged to decrease their hospitality to strangers.

Our two guides went upon the mountains again to return home, but Árni, my brother, and I went on to Akureyri. We walked down the valley, the name of which was Barkárdalur. The weather had changed to a thaw, and the snow melted fast. Farther down, the roads were in such good condition that a pony could be used, and one was provided for me, but Árni walked. Yet we were to stay over one night on a farm, before we reached our destination, Akureyri, and there we arrived on Twelfth Day, the day before the morning I ought to begin teaching. I had not been able to send any message to my friend, the mistress of the school; she only knew the bad travelling conditions, and still she hoped they would not prevent my going on. All shared her feelings.

That was the first and last time I went home for Christmas holidays, and perhaps you believe it was because I regretted having done so this time. You are wrong there. If you have ever seen tears of joy trickle down your mother's cheeks, caused by your home-coming, you will not blame me for saying that least of all my doings have I repented the effort I made for spending the three days at home this time.

CHAPTER XI

HELGA THE FAIR

I CAN not help it telling you a little bit of one of the Icelandic Sagas. Afterwards you can read it in the translation. When I read it I was very young and I loved it, although I had to stop several times to dry my eyes and could hardly make myself understood for the lump in my throat. I warn you, have your handkerchief near by while reading it.

In the eleventh century there lived a young man. His name was Gunnlangur and he got the nickname Ormstunga, (worm's-tongue) for he had a very rapid tongue and I suppose he sometimes had used bad words for he was very hot-tempered. He was still young when he de-

cided to go abroad as the other men so frequently did. For that he should have his father's consent, but his father thought Gunnlangur could not behave himself properly at the king's courts, so he did not allow him to go. At that Gunnlangur turned so angry that he left his home and offered his service to a farmer whose name was Thorsteinn and who lived at Borg.

Thorsteinn had one daughter with the name Helga and as she was very beautiful everybody called her Helga Fagra, which really means "Beauty" in English. Now Gunnlangur and Helga Fagra soon became good friends. They very often played at chess, they went to the haymaking together, they watched the sheep in summer, and it was clear that they liked each other.

One day Gunnlangur asked Thorsteinn if he was not willing to give him Helga as wife. Thorsteinn hesitated in answer-

ing this, for he was not at all pleased with Gunnlangur's behavior toward his father. That obstacle was soon removed. Gunnlangur came to an agreement with his father, who went with him to Borg and asked Thorsteinn to give Helga to Gunnlangur. At last Thorsteinn promised that he would not give Helga to anybody as wife for three years. In the meantime Gunnlangur wanted to go abroad, and now his father willingly gave him the necessary equipment for traveling.

Gunnlangur bade farewell to his friends, relatives, and his beloved. He made Norway his first destination, and visited Earl Eirik. From there he sailed for England and paid a visit to King Adalrád who lived in London. Gunnlangur saluted him very respectfully. The king asked from what country he came; Gunnlangur told him the truth. Then Gunnlangur said, "I wanted to see you, sir, and bring a poem I have

made about you, and I would like to have you listen while I say it.''

The king said he would do so. Gunnlangur recited the poem aloud, with imposing gestures and appearance. The king thanked him and presented him with a scarlet cloak ornamented with lace and lined with the best kind of fur. The king invited him to stay at his court for the winter, and Gunnlangur accepted.

Although Gunnlangur received the greatest honor at King Adalrád's court, he wanted to see more chiefs. Before he parted from the king he received a big gold ring. Next he took a trip to Ireland and visited King Sigtrygg. Gunnlangur had also made a poem about him which he recited in the presence of the king, who was very proud of it. He told Gunnlangur that this poem was the very first made about him, and he rewarded Gunnlangur

with many precious gifts, including garments and a gold ring.

From there Gunnlangur sailed to the Orkneys and presented the earl there with a poem which was amply rewarded.

Gunnlangur then went to Sweden, and, as before, his destination was the king's palace, neither did he now fail to bring King Olaf a poem.

Gunnlangur's reputation grew day by day; wherever he went he became known as a great poet and a man brave of deeds.

But let us now go back to Helga Fagra. She had grown still more beautiful and all the young men who saw her thought that she would make a charming wife. They knew that Thorsteinn was freed from his promise to Gunnlangur, if he had not returned within three years. The three years passed, Helga had heard nothing from him. At that time, we must remem-

ber, there were neither telegraphic lines nor wireless instruments, the sailing-ships went very slowly and had no mail on board. The circumstances were quite different from our time.

Gunnlangur had met abroad a young nobleman from Iceland who was a poet as well as he, and whose name was Hrafn. He had been Gunnlangur's rival as poet, and now he thought he could serve him out by fooling him. He wanted Thorsteinn to give him Helga, but Thorsteinn said he would wait the fourth year for Gunnlangur's return. The fourth year passed, and Gunnlangur did not come back.

Now it was settled that Hrafn should become Helga's husband, as Gunnlangur very likely was dead or would never come again to his own country. The wedding-feast was to be held at Borg the next autumn. For that Helga's consent had not been asked at all.

The wedding-day came. The bride was downcast and she knew she had to submit to her father's will and kept silent. She thought of nothing but the bright young boy to whom she gave her faith. She remembered all the many sweet hours they walked side by side in the green meadows or on the snowy fields. For hours they had sat together watching the beauty of the midnight sun or the northern lights. Very often the moon alone had witnessed their embracing and kisses. They had been as innocent as flowers in the garden, and saw nothing but the beauty of life and the good in everything. Helga recalled in her mind the last day before his departure, the last poem her beloved had made about her; it was written in her mind, and many, many others. She remembered how he bade her good-by, mounted his horse, and their eyes met once more as he rode off.

Four long years had passed since then.

During the first three, hope had never failed her—but the last one—she tried not to recall it. All these years she had prayed for him every evening, she had dreamt of him in her sleep, the first thought in the morning was of him. She often heard his footsteps in the sleepless nights. In the twilight she saw him sometimes coming riding his steed to the farmhouse. When she sat at the brook and washed the pails into which the cows had been milked she had heard the sweet, soft voice repeat her name—. But, all these were illusions; hopelessness was the only reality. All this and much more was going through Helga's mind, where she sat at the side of her bridegroom. Never had she believed that Gunnlangur had been false to her. That was impossible, anything else in the world could happen.

Let us now hear from Gunnlangur. When he had visited all the kings and earls

of Scandinavia he went again to the king of England. About that time King Adalrád was in an agony of fear of being attacked by King Knut of Denmark. Consequently when Gunnlangur asked his consent to return to Iceland the king wanted him to stay and assist him in the expected fight and Gunnlangur could not refuse to do the king's will, although the time had come that he had fixed for his home-going, and he stayed through the winter at the court.

Next summer he went to Norway and made an arrangement with a homeward-bound Icelander for taking him and his goods on board. On the voyage the captain of the ship told Gunnlangur of the planning of Hrafn's and Helga's wedding the coming autumn. Hearing that Gunnlangur turned pale, he did not ask a question; he knew Hrafn had not got his place in Helga's heart; he trusted her.

The sea was rough and the wind blew against the ship. At last they landed on the north coast of Iceland and their homes were in the south country. When they came ashore they learned that Hrafn and Helga Fagra were to have their wedding feast within a few days. They did not lose a moment, but ordered horses for their travel and the whole crew from the ship started on horseback. They only stopped on their travel to rest the horses. The trip took them seven days to the homestead of Gunnlangur. It was Saturday, the day called the first day of winter, and—how awful!—that very day they arrived Hrafn and Helga Fagra had their wedding at Borg. I shall not try to describe Gunnlangur's feelings; it was hard to keep him back from riding on to Borg. For several days he was confined to his bed. He had got a sore foot, which kept him at home for a long time. Nobody would tell Helga

that Gunnlangur had arrived but she guessed it from her husband's behavior and when he did not deny it she accused him of having deceived her and parted from him and lived with her father and mother. She mourned her bad fate day and night and would not even see Hrafn.

Gunnlangur and Helga had not yet met. At Christmas time it happened that both Gunnlangur's and Helga's families were invited to a wedding feast. They met there, and spoke together for a long while. Gunnlangur presented to Helga the precious cloak he got from King Adalrád when they parted. Hrafn was at that wedding party, too.

At the Althing (Parliament) Gunnlangur challenged Hrafn to a duel within three days. Hrafn was willing to fight with him. They did so, but their friends separated them when one had broken his sword and the other got wounded; but they were not

themselves satisfied with the result. They had agreed to repeat the duel later on, but at that sitting of the Althing their friends caused dueling to be forbidden altogether in the country by law. The only way for them was to go abroad to have their duel, and that they agreed to do.

They went to Norway and from there to Sweden where they met. Nothing could now prevent them from fighting. Gunnlangur cut one foot off Hrafn but he did not fall, he supported the stump of his thigh on a log. Then Gunnlangur said: "Now you are unable to fight and I will no more struggle with you, a maimed invalid."

Hrafn answered, "It has happened that I have been overpowered and got the worst of it, yet will I become strong enough yet, if I get a little to drink."

Gunnlangur replied, "Betray me not, if I bring you water in my helmet."

Hrafn said, "I will not deceive you."

Gunnlangur went to a brook and brought Hrafn water from it in his helmet. Hrafn stretched out his left hand for the helmet, and with his right hand he gave Gunnlangur's head a stroke with the sword so that he became sorely wounded.

Gunnlangur said to him, "Badly did you deceive me now, and unfair was your doing so, as I relied on your honesty."

Hrafn's answer was: "That is true, but I behaved thus because I grudge you the embracing of Helga the Fagra."

After that they went on fighting furiously till Hrafn had to submit, and after a while he was dead. A few days later Gunnlangur passed away from his wounds, and both were buried in Swedish ground.

In the meantime Helga Fagra stayed with her parents at Borg. She learned the terrible news from an Icelander, who had witnessed the duel. She became as one benumbed, her feelings were as if

frozen. Some years later she married a farmer for whom she did not care in the least.

All her life she mourned for Gunnlangur. When she was very sorrowful, she used to take the cloak Gunnlangur presented to her, and unfold it and look at it. Once when she had become ill but was staying up, she had the cloak brought in, and leaning toward her husband she unfolded it as usual and looked at it with eager eyes. She did not speak, neither did she weep. A moment later she had passed away. Her beloved had sent for her to bring her up to heaven, where he had waited for her to come. Let us hope they have never been parted since.

CHAPTER XII

SUMMER HOLIDAYS

I USED to travel a good deal in the summer holidays, both at sea and on land. I am going to tell you about one such trip.

When we had closed school for the summer, I packed my trunk and went on board the *Ceres,* which was bound for Reykjavík. The voyage was splendid. The boat was coming from Copenhagen and had stopped at Leith, so there were Englishmen, Danes, Germans, and Icelanders on board. Some of these travelers were business men, others were taking the trip to see Iceland and the noted places there, which all travelers appreciate so greatly.

It was in June, near the time of the summer solstice. The weather was fine,

the temperature about seventy to seventy-seven degrees above zero. That was the nightless month, for a week of which the sun does not disappear below the horizon. The sun is splendid by day, but it is still more admirable in the night. It looks like a big, big ball of fire, swimming on the sea and its radiant beams illumine the level of the sea, so that it seems to be an ocean of gold. We are not able to distinguish between the sky and the ocean, all is one indescribable glory; we never can forget it having seen it once.

It is pretty hard to have to sleep during that incomparable season, at least it seemed so to the travelers, who never had seen it before. The *Ceres* arrived at Reykjavík and several small row-boats came to her side to carry the passengers on shore, for then the harbor had not been built. Some went to the "Hotel Iceland," others to the "Hotel Reykjavík." I had friends whom

I was invited to visit. When I had stayed a month with my friends, I was told that a couple and a gentleman I knew would go the next week on horseback to Thingvellir, Geysir, and Gullfoss. At once I secured a pony to take the trip with them, for I had not yet seen these noted places that travelers come from abroad to see, and moreover, are not satisfied to see once, but often. At that time the only means of traveling was by ponies; now automobiles are used much, but many still choose ponies.

The first day we had only a six-hours' journey to the Thingvellir. That is the place where the Icelandic Commonwealth had its meeting which they called the Althing, from the year 930 to the end of the eighteenth century. That place is not only famous historically but also physically. Immense lava chasms, a waterfall, a lake, heather, and green meadows are mixed together in such harmony and grandeur, that

it makes one forget all but this scenery.

On Thingvellir was a hotel called "Valhöll," but we preferred to go to a farm near by for night-lodging. On the way to Kárastadir I went in my thoughts through the great events, which had happened in that place, we had just left, which are related in the Sagas. In my imagination I saw Thorgeir Ljásvetningagoða where he stood at the Lögberg (Law mound) the twenty-fourth of June, 1000 and declared that for the future the only religion in the country should be the Christian.

I saw Gunnar á Hlidarenda and Hallgerdur Langbrók walk side by side planning their wedding feast, I saw Gunnlangur Ormstunga speaking to Helga Fagra. When they parted, tears shone in the eyes of both.

I was in the "both" of Njáll on Berg-

pórshvoli. He sat in the middle of a group of men, giving them advice how to settle a quarrel. The "both" was built of turf, lined with cloth inside. They went to Lógberg, where the Lögsögumadur stood in the middle of the Lögrjetta, he was the only paid officer of the Commonwealth. On a green lawn at the foot of a big mound, young men were wrestling, and on the slope of the mound were young ladies sitting, dressed in bright-colored robes. They were watching the young gentlemen's games.

Again I came in fancy to "Lögberg." There were many people assembled, men and women, old and young. They were listening very intensely to a story-telling. The man who told the story was a big, grand-looking gentleman, dressed in blue and red attire. He was the famous writer, Snorri Sturluson, and he was relat-

ing his last trip to Norway. After he had finished a young-looking poet recited a poem to the meeting.

The messengers of King Hakon of Norway came to the Althing and made attempts to subject the island to him. They succeeded in the year 1262, assisted by several ambitious sons of the country itself. Denmark and Norway became united. They parted again. Iceland, remaining with Denmark, was neglected, and monopolized by the rulers. Plagues and famine visited the already oppressed nation, to which volcanic eruptions added a good deal.

The tragedies from the time of the beginning of the Lutheran Reformations came to my memory, which were partly connected with Thingvellir. The aged bishop Jón Arason and his two sons are executed as heretics the year 1550.

The Bible is translated and printed by the great bishop on Hólar, Gudbrandur

Thorláksson (in Icelandic language) 1584.

The leprous minister, Hallgrimur Pjetrusson, made his immortal Passion psalms, part of which have been translated into several languages, whereof the English is one. In the church of Thingvellir, Jón Vidalin, bishop, gave his preaching the power of which may still be felt, when the sermons are read. All this rolled on in my imagination and much more, while I rode on to the place of our night's lodging. It had rained in the afternoon, so we were glad to stop, and I suppose the ponies were not less pleased to get their liberty and be able to graze. "Skyr" with sugar and cream was among the dishes served at Kárastaðir; and nothing tastes better after a day's ride.

The following morning I wakened up early, for the shade had not been pulled down over the window, and the sun shone through it into the room and a beam of it

was illumining my face. The principal food for breakfast this day was trout, which had been caught during the night in the Lake Thingvallavatn, where trout are found in abundance.

The destination for our travel that day was Hankadalur, where the famous warm springs are. The districts we went through were wonderfully beautiful. Green meadows, hot springs, bushes, heather, rocks, caves, and stony ground made the view one of charming scenery for our eyes. Among this were scattered the farms with their smoking chimneys. At one of these farms we got our midday coffee.

We arrived at Geysir in the night and borrowed a tent for our lodging. At that time there was no hotel at Geysir, but now one has been built there. At the next farm we could get some food, which we tied up in a square of linen and put down into the

GEYSIR IN ACTION.
As if to greet the King of Denmark in 1907.

boiling water of Geysir. The ground was dotted with hot springs, some boiling at the level, others spouting or gushing. Many of them have their proper names, Strokkur, Blesi and so forth. But the biggest and most active of them all is Geysir.

I am not going to give you any formal description of him; if you should want that, you can find it in several books of travel, written about Iceland in the English language, and you will find that they count him to be the king of his namesakes in the world.

We were very lucky, more so than most people, for we saw him erupt three times in eighteen hours; once in the evening, shortly after our arrival in the middle of night, and at noon the next day. We did not go to bed all night, so that we might run out of the tent whenever we heard the least groan or sigh shake the bosom of this gigantic nature-being.

Nor were we mistaken, for in the middle of the bright night Olafur cried out, "Hurry up! Now it comes."

He needed to say no more. In a moment sleep had left us, and we were all out of the tent. What a display! A column of water was thrust by tremendous power from the mouth of Geysir about a hundred feet straight up into the air, where it dissolved on all sides of the column. Beginning at the top, it dashed in torrents to the ground all around Geysir. Some of it flowed into the basin of Geysir, and the rest flowed in small brooks in all directions. I happened to have come so near, as I wanted to see it as close as possible, that my feet became wet from the water, but fortunately it had become so cool, that I did not burn them. The eruption lasted about ten minutes.

My feeling was that of thrilling joy, I dared hardly breathe for fear of spoiling

the view. None of us spoke a word till we were again in the tent, and even then we did not say much. Our next destination was Gullfoss, the great waterfall. On our way we had to pass some rivers, of which the deepest was Tungufljót. We had to secure a guide. That done we strapped the saddles firmly on the backs of the ponies, mounted and rode to the river. The guide rode by my side and steered my pony as well as his own. The couple rode side by side and Olafur brought up the rear. My feet and skirts had got wet in the river, but the sunny weather had soon dried that. Gullfoss is in the river Hvitá, and it attracts a great many travelers from all over the world. The spray from its stream and the foam shone in the light of the sun. The feeling of heavenly peace overpowered me. I had no wish but to sit there on the green grass, listening to the ever-sounding whizz and whistle in a thou-

sand variations from the water-elf's playing on his magnificent organ.

We had to start our ride again, and say good-by to Gullfoss. That was the first and last time I have seen him, but the view is printed in my mind. The following night we slept in the old Cathedral in Skálholt, where the see of the bishops of the south and west of Iceland was for centuries. We arrived at Reykjavík after having spent seven days on the trip. We had to turn back at Olvusá, and could not, as I would have liked very much to do, go to Hekla, which is on the same route, further east. The whole trip had been very successful, and although we enjoyed it very much, we were glad to be back.

I took daily excursions from Reykjavík into the surrounding country. One day I walked to the hot springs from which they take the boiling water for washing clothes in. A basin is built of concrete to plunge

A LAUNDRY NEAR REYKJAVIK.
A plenteous and never-failing supply of hot water from hot springs.

TRAVELERS STARTING OUT FROM REYKJAVIK.

the clothes into, and in a corner of it the boiling water springs from the ground. Two big laundries have been built near by.

There is another interesting place at the hot springs. A big swimming-basin has been built, in which the water has the temperature of the water we bathe in, or a little colder, if desired. Men and women, boys and girls, learn to swim there. Once when I was swimming there I heard myself addressed in English by a lady, who came swimming across the basin. Presently I learned that this lady was a traveler who had arrived from England at Reykjavík a few days ago and intended to go to Akureyri on horseback, which she expected would take her a week or more. One of her greatest pleasures in Reykjavík was to swim in the warm-water basin.

If I wanted a good book I went to the public library, where I could choose from 80,000 volumes in several languages and

good translations. The library is in a big house built of concrete. On the ground floor is a collection of natural objects and curiosities. On the upper floor is an antiquarian museum.

Sometimes it might rain so heavily that I was obliged to stay in. Two biograph theaters were filled every day with people. If the play was especially good, they were so crowded that one might have to go back. The real theater was not open in the summer season.

In the fall I went to Akureyri riding on a pony. I could pay a short visit to my home in Hjaltadalur on the trip, as it was only a short detour.

The whole summer had been fine, and I had enjoyed the holidays very much, indeed.

CHAPTER XIII

LOOKING OUT INTO THE WORLD

ALTHOUGH my home in the out-of-the-way little valley was the most beloved place on earth, in my opinion, I did not decline my father's offer to go to the school for girls on Langaland. My ambition was now to become a teacher, and I knew I never could carry that through if I always stayed at home.

There were about forty jolly girls in the school, the feeling of home-sickness therefore soon vanished in the merriment and school-work together. The schoolmistress was a highly educated woman, and the other teachers were well educated, too. I stayed there two school-years and enjoyed it immensely.

My first experience in school encouraged me to ask my parents to give me the necessary means to stay for a while in Reykjavík, the capital, and so they did. Shortly after I came home from there I got a position as teacher at a girls' school in Akureyri, the biggest town in the north country. After having taught there for five years, I wanted to see more of the world and decided to go to Denmark for further education. There I stayed for more than three years, all the time attending schools. I went home again and got a position as teacher.

A few years later I took a trip to Scotland, for I wanted to add a little to my knowledge of the English language. For that purpose I took a course at the University of Edinburgh.

Shortly after my arrival home I started an evening high school for girls in Reykjavík which I kept up for seven years. The

constantly increasing prices and the shortage in coal, caused by the war, made me close it in the spring of 1917.

CHAPTER XIV

ICELAND TO-DAY

SINCE the first of December, 1918, Iceland has been an independent sovereign state, with its own flag, which has a blue field with a red cross and white stripes beside the cross. It is a beautiful flag, I assure you. It has been used as our home flag since 1915, but the Danish flag was the marine flag. Iceland is still in personal union with Denmark, which means that the king of Denmark is the king of Iceland, too.

The government consists of the Althing (parliament) and three ministers, residing in Reykjavík, the capital, which has now about fifteen thousand people. A submarine cable and wireless telegraph unite the

island to the world beyond, and the telephone network is all over the country. Made roads lie over the whole country, but not a single railroad. The houses are now built of timber, stone, and concrete. The capital is illuminated by means of gas, but several of the smaller towns are lighted with electricity, produced by water-power. There is a complete school system, with public schools, high schools, a college, normal, commercial, nautical, technical, and agricultural schools and a university established in 1911, on the centennial birthday of the greatest Icelandic political leader, Jón Sigurðsson, to whose leadership the Icelanders owe to a great extent their regained freedom.

It happened that while traveling in this country last summer I came to a town where I had no friend to meet me at the station. I asked an attendant where the Y. W. C. A. home was. He told me where

to go and that there was a sign over the door, but added the question: "Can you read?" I had never in my life heard an Icelander asked if he could read, so I did not understand what he meant by that queer remark. I assured him that I could. The man knew I was from Iceland and believed that the education there was poor, as in many other countries. I presume he would not have believed me if I had told him that he could not find any normal person there who could not read and write. Neither would he have believed me if I had told him that the coldest climate I had ever known in my life was that of New York last winter.

There are published about thirty newspapers in the island, some daily, some weekly, and about fourteen periodicals. A number of books are also published each year.

Moreover there are three Icelandic pa-

pers in Winnipeg and some books are published there.

"How can it pay to have so many books and in so small a nation?" I hear you ask, doubtingly.

Well, in spite of the fact that the Icelander is struggling hard for his support, he seems to have more leisure time than most people in other countries to spare for reading. And the main thing is that the authors of books and other printed matter are not writing merely for the sake of money but because they have a message to give out to the public, so they cannot help writing novels and making poems and plays. And notwithstanding a little support many of them have from the state treasury, they have to earn their living partly from some other occupations.

Many people wonder that the Icelanders do not get some capitalists to utilize the wealth of the country by mining and using

the power of the water-falls, etc. There is a great movement in that direction in Iceland now, but many are against any emigration to Iceland from abroad, for fear of mixing their nationality with a lower type of people and injuring their old, beautiful language by foreign tongues. That may sound queer to the ears of an American.

HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT AND CATHEDRAL IN REYKJAVIK.

THE BRIDGE OF OLVUSA.
Note automobile crossing the bridge.

CHAPTER XV

HOW I CAME TO THE UNITED STATES

For several years I had been longing to see America, and when the difficulties which I mentioned another place in this book had compelled me to close my school, I began to plan a trip over here. One of the boats of the Icelandic Steamship Company, called the *Gullfoss,* lay at the bay of Reykjavík and had to start for New York October twenty-fourth, 1917.

In spite of the danger caused by the U-boats and the mines, I made up my mind to go over here by the *Gullfoss* and did not listen to my friends' advice.

We were about twenty Icelandic passengers; the officers on board and the crew were Icelanders, too.

It was snowing the day we started. A

crowd of people came to the boat, some out of curiosity, others to say farewell to friends and bid them *góða ferð* (happy journey). A professor whom I knew addressed me by saying, "What are you going to America for? And when do you intend to come back?"

"I want to hear and see as much as I am able to of what is worth hearing and seeing, for one or two years, and then I intend to return to my country," was my answer.

He smiled, and I am afraid he doubted that I would ever return. He knew that a great many Icelanders have emigrated to Canada and the United States with the intention of returning and very few have done so. There are now from thirty to forty thousand Icelanders living in Canada and the United States. The most numerous colonies are in Manitoba and North Dakota.

I had no near relatives in Reykjavík to part from. Long before, I had for the last time on this earth seen some of them, and others were living in the northern part of the country. Therefore it did not take me long time to say good-by.

The column of steam was growing denser and denser. The boat was cleared to go. It whistled the third time. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved, and the crowd on the quay shouted three times, "Hurrah for the boat and the passengers!" I stared at the shore as long as I could distinguish land from sea. We had to go as far north as was safe on account of the Polar ice, to avoid the U-boats. I was sea-sick the first days; even some of the men kept their beds for some days, the sea was so rough. I asked the stewardess three times a day for a glass of condensed milk, that was all the food I got for the six krónur a day [1] for

[1] One dollar is normally about 3 krónur and 75 aurar.

food. Later on I got up and tried to sit at the table with the others, and between the meals I lay down on the cushions in the sitting-room thinking of my friends at home or picturing the country I was going to, in my imagination, and sometimes I knitted or read a novel. After dinner we generally sat a while together and had a good time. The amusements were discussions of all kinds, story-telling of all sorts, playing at cards and chess, and so on. On voyages it is easy for us to be blended into one big family, and that is one of the most interesting facts of traveling.

On the tenth day we arrived at the port of Halifax. Everything on board had to be examined there. For four days we had to wait for leave to go on to New York. No one was allowed to go ashore. At last we arrived at New York on the ninth of November. Again everything had to be inspected, the wool, fish, eiderdown, which

were brought from Iceland, and trunks and suit-cases, and at last a doctor came to look after the condition of the health of the passengers, which did not take him long. The first thing that attracted my attention when we sailed into the harbor of New York, was the Statue of Liberty, beckoning to heaven.

CHAPTER XVI

UNDER THE STARS AND STRIPES

I HAVE lived one year and three months in this country. It did not take me long to find my way in New York. Neither did it take me long to find people whom I liked and who gave me good advice. Compared with this country, the country I came from is as a dwarf to a big giant. Wherever I look it is the same, but my consolation is that it is not the quantity but the quality that really counts.

Life in New York is like a great wheel, rolling very fast, and if we do not go at the same tempo, we are run over. No one seems to have a minute to spare.

My mission here is to instruct and study; instruct in Icelandic and Danish, and the

main subjects for my study are education and schools. In the courses at Columbia University Extension Icelandic and Danish have been placed among the spoken languages offered, and I have the privilege of being the instructor.

Since I came here, I have learned that my country is among those that people know little about. Those I have met have often said to me, "You are the first person we ever have met from Iceland"; and, in the course of conversation many have asked me to come to their club-meetings and tell them about my country, which I have never refused to do. In that way I have had an excellent opportunity to come in contact with most interesting people, and at the same time to enlighten a little the opinions about the out-of-the-way spot of the world, where I have lived the most of my past life and where I hope to live most of the remainder of it.

The war has caused a new educational movement. The American "wheel" does not stand still there, either. I am glad to have opportunity to watch it and take an advantage of studying the steady progress in schools and educational problems.

Although my task has been merely to describe my impressions of the Icelandic country, you must not believe that I am blind to the beauties of other countries. Far from that. I have had opportunity to admire Niagara Falls, and enjoy a trip on the Great Lakes, and numerous places with beautiful scenery have attracted my attention. I have also endeavored to keep my ears open for what was worth hearing, and I have come to the conclusion that it would take me years to listen to and look at all that I like here in the United States.

I am of the opinion that the foundation for the world's brotherhood must be knowledge, and that sympathy is usually

increased by proper understanding. We have therefore to give to others our knowledge and take theirs to be able to understand each other. My endeavor is therefore, by this little book, to make a tiny thread in the bonds of brotherhood which we all hope will embrace our globe in the time to come.

THE END