HOWARD THE HALT
THE BANDED MEN
HEN THORIR
THE SAGA LIBRARY.

VOL. I.
THE STORY OF HOWARD THE HALT.
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DONE INTO ENGLISH
OUT OF THE ICELANDIC.

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AND
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PREFACE.

AS the series of tales and histories to be published under the title of the Saga Library is addressed to the whole reading public, and not only to students of Scandinavian history, folk-lore, and language, the translators think it well to say a few words about Icelandic literature in general before dealing with the three stories contained in this volume.

Although Iceland is a barren northern island, of savagely wild, though to the eye that sees, beautiful scenery, the inhabitants of it neither are nor were savages cut off from the spirit and energy of the great progressive races. They are, rather, a specially intellectual family of one of the most active of those races, to whom fate, which has deprived them of so much, has allotted the honourable task of preserving the record of the thoughts, the aspirations, and the imaginations of their earliest ancestors: their language, which they have kept scarcely altered since the thirteenth century, is akin to our own. Their ancient laws, of which they have full record, were nearly the same as those under which the freemen of Kent and Wessex
tation by blended huckstering and sea-roving about the shores of the Baltic, and the British seas. The Scandinavians established a semi-independent kingdom in Northumbria; names of English places and words in our language still testify to their dealings with our forefathers throughout the country. The Orkneys and Shetlands, and the Faroes were settled by them; they established a Norse kingdom in Man, the constitution of which, as far as local affairs go, is still little altered. Dublin also was a Scandinavian kingdom, and they had other settlements elsewhere in Erin. The Icelanders sailed west and made settlements in Greenland, which still retains the euphemistic name which, we are told, the first settler gave it of set purpose. Thence they stumbled on the coast of North America, which they knew under the name of Vineland the Good nearly five centuries before the voyage of Columbus. They took warlike and literary service, not only with the kings and earls of Scandinavian countries, or with the English kings, but even with the Greek emperor at Constantinople, where, with their kinsmen of Norway, they formed the mass of the Varangian (say Væring) guard, which was the backbone of the sovereignty of the Comneni.

Amidst this restless life, the deeds which they did and witnessed, the histories and traditions which they heard, cried on them for record, and not in vain; for the Icelanders became the historians of the mainland of Scandinavia, which but for them would have had no record of its early epoch.

But, furthermore, Iceland itself gave them abun-
dant materials for the exercise of their historical faculty. Their fierce independence and their individuality of character, from which sprang so many strange and stirring stories, they shared perhaps with other folks living under early forms of society; yet, if they were not somewhat pre-eminent herein, their case is a strong example of the advantage of not "lacking a sacred poet."

Their customary law also, which (once more as with other early peoples) made vengeance for injuries not a mere satisfaction of private passion, but a public duty owing to the tribe or family by no means to be neglected by a man of honour, bred a plentiful crop of feuds and tragedies, which such men could neither forget nor avoid recording. Accordingly, most of these events have been recorded, and very many of these records have in one form or other escaped the waste of time; they have come down to us told in abundant detail and in the most dramatic manner; and, as hinted above, are to this day household words with the whole population of the island.

The fact that the Icelandic historians and tale-tellers were cut off from the influence of the older literature of Europe, was, we think, a piece of good luck to them rather than a misfortune. For the result was that, when the oral traditions and histories came to be written down, and had to receive literary form, the writers had to create that form for themselves, and thereby escaped the meshes of the classical Latin pedantry which so grievously encumbers the mediæval literature of the rest of Europe, even in early times—a pedantry which
would be unendurable if it were not that the mediæval writers misconceived it, and made something else of it than was originally intended; since they saw it through the medium of feudal Christianity, and in this guise handed it down to us.

With the Icelandic stories, on the other hand, the life and feeling of the original traditions are in the main preserved intact; the literary style which they have received does not encumber or falsify them, but serves them as a vehicle of expression, so that they have become capable of being understood outside the narrow limits of the family or district where the events told of happened, or were imagined to have happened. The literature in which they are enshrined has taken them out of the category of mere parish records, and made them valuable to the world at large. For not only is the style of the ancient Icelandic literature a fitting vehicle for the still more ancient traditions, but it is in itself most excellent. It may be said, indeed, that the imagined stories of the lives of a few obscure chieftains of the furthest North are of little importance; yet, after all, the impression that dramatic events make upon us is not measured by the mere count of heads of those who took part in them. *I, thou, and the other one*, with some small sympathetic audience to act before, are enough to make a drama, as Greek tragedy knew. Only the actors must be alive, and convince us (as a recent critic says) that they are so. For this quality the Icelandic Sagas are super-eminent; granted the desirability of telling what they tell, the method of
telling it is the best possible. Realism is the one rule of the Saga-man: no detail is spared in impressing the reader with a sense of the reality of the event; but no word is wasted in the process of giving the detail. There is nothing didactic and nothing rhetorical in these stories; the reader is left to make his own commentary on the events, and to divine the motives and feelings of the actors in them without any help from the tale-teller. In short, the simplest and purest form of epicical narration is the style of these works.

Icelandic original mediæval literature may be divided by its subjects much as follows:

1st. Mythology, as set forth chiefly in the two Eddas, the Poetic and the Prose Edda, though much information on the subject is scattered up and down other works.

2nd. Romances founded on the mythology; of these the Volsunga Saga is the most striking example.

3rd. The histories of events foreign to Iceland, the chief work of which is the collection of "King-Stories," familiarly called the Heimskringla.

4th. The histories of Icelandic worthies, their families, feuds, etc. These form the great mass of the literature, and are in some respects the most important, as being most characteristic and unexampled. The present volume offers three noteworthy examples of these stories, and our Library will include all the most important of them.

5th. Mere fictions which, on account of their
confessedly unhistorical character, are looked upon with little favour by the Icelanders themselves. It is a matter of course that they are of later date than the historical tales. It must, however, be said of some of them (as notably the story of Viglund the Fair, included in the Saga Library), that they are of high literary merit.

There are other important works that do not come within the scope of the Saga Library; of these are the Sturlunga Saga, the Bishops’ Sagas, the Annals, religious poems like the Lilja, codes of law like Grágás, and translations of mediæval romances; some of which latter are of much interest in elucidating the literary history of these works.

We now proceed to a few explanations on the history of the three Sagas in this volume, and first of the Story of Howard the Halt.

The Saga of Howard the Halt is an old favourite in Iceland, and was well known even to the authors of Landnámabók, as our references to that work will show. It rests throughout on an historical basis. But it has suffered greatly in historical accuracy during the course of transmission, from the tellers’ want of familiarity both with the topographical features of scenes where the events

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1 Translated by Einfr Magnússon. London, 1870.

2 The book of land-takings or settlings, originally written by Ari the Learned and Kolskegg the Learned, which, together with the Islendingabók, forms the earliest authoritative historical Icelandic record, and dates from the twelfth century.
took place out of which the saga grew, and with the genealogical lore of the West-country. The reason is obvious. The hero moved immediately after his victory over his enemies far away to the North-country, and settled in Svarfsadardale on the northern side of Eyjafjord, towards the mouth of it, and dying not long afterwards, the memory of his life's deeds had to be cultivated, as it were, in a foreign soil. No doubt the saga, as first told by Thorhall, Howard's kinsman, was correct enough in its details. But passing into oral tradition so far away from the scenes where it had been enacted, the tellers of it had no opportunity of correcting themselves by personal observation of its locality, and rarely, if ever, met with those who were able authoritatively to check historical or topographical mistakes. Hence its many inaccuracies.

The Landnámabók, pp. 145-7, has preserved a fragment of the saga in its older and purer state, and, as it is a very important record, we insert it here:

"Liot the Sage dwelt at Ingialdsand; he was the son of Thorgrim the son of Hardref, but his mother was Rannveig, daughter of Earl Griotgarth (Stonewall). Thorgrim Gagar (Dog) was the son of Liot. Halldis, the sister of Liot, was married to Thorbiorn Thiodrekson, but Ospak Osvifson seized (took away from home) another sister of Liot, called Asdis, for which case Liot had the law of Ospak, and got him fined. The son of Ospak and Asdis was called Wolf, whom Liot brought up. Grim Kogr (Bantling) dwelt at Brent; his sons were Sigurd and Thorkel, little men and small."
Thorarin was the name of a foster-son of Liot. Liot bought slaughtered meat from Grim for twenty hundreds (of ells), and paid him with the use of a brook that flowed between their lands, which was called Mischief. Grim turned it into his meadow and dug (at the same time) the land of Liot, for which he held Grim guilty of trespass, and so they had but few dealings together. Liot took in a Norwegian who had come out to Vadil, and he fell in love with Asdis. Guest Oddleifsson came to Liot, bidden to an autumn feast. Then there came Egil the son of Valastein, and prayed Guest for a good counsel that his father might be relieved from the agony of death which he bore for his son Ogmund. Guest then composed the beginning of Ogmund’s drapa. Liot asked Guest what sort of a man Thorgrim Gagar would turn out. Guest said his foster-son Thorarin would be the more renowned of the two, but bade Thorarin take heed lest the hair that lay on his tongue should twine around his head. Herein Liot deemed himself slighted, and asked the next morning what lay in store for Thorgrim. Guest said that Wolf, his sister’s son, would be the more famed of the two. Then was Liot wroth, yet rode with Guest to see him off, and asked: ‘What will be the cause of my death?’ Guest said he might not see his fate, but bade him see that he stood well with his neighbours. Asked Liot: ‘What? will the earth-lice, the sons of Grim Kogr (Bantling), be my bane then?’ ‘Hard bites a hungry louse,’ quoth Guest. ‘Where will that be?’ quoth Liot. ‘Hard by,’ said Guest. The Norwegian rode with Guest up on to the heath,
and steadied Guest in his saddle when his horse stumbled under him. Then said Guest: 'Good-
Hap sought thee now, soon another will; take heed lest it be an unhap to thee.' The Norwegian
found a buried treasure as he fared back home, and took to himself twenty pennies thereof, hoping that
he might find the rest later, but when he sought therefor he found it not; but Liot caught him while
he was a-digging for it, and fined him in three hun-
dreds for every penny. That autumn was slain
Thorbiorn Thiodreksen. In the spring Liot sat
watching his slaves from a certain hill-rise; he had
on him a cloak the hood of which was laced round
his neck, and on which there was only one sleeve.
The sons of Bantling rushed upon the hill and
hewed at him both at once, whereupon Thorkel
bundled the hood over his head. Liot bade them
behave in a neighbourly manner, and they trundled
off the hill unto the road which Guest had ridden.
There was the death of Liot. The sons of Grim
went to Howard the Halt. Eyolf the Gray and
Steingrim his son gave them all quarters."

Here Liot, the sage of Ingialdsand, one of the
noblest men of the land in his time, takes in real
history the place of the fictitious Holmgang Liot
of Redsand of our saga; while equally correctly
the part given to Steinthor of Ere in the saga is
here ascribed to Eyolf the Gray of Otterdale and
to his son Steingrim, who must have had the most
to do with helping Howard in his straits, as by
that time Eyolf his father was very far advanced
in years, as we shall see presently, when we come
to consider the chronology of Howard's saga.
Steinthor of Ere, living far away on the southern shore of Broadbay, and bearing no sway among the men of Codfirth-Thing (Icefirth), could have had nothing to do with the sheltering of Howard after the slaughter of Thorbiorn Thiodrekson.

Now, in order to gain a clear idea of the locality of Howard's saga, the simplest way is to enumerate the landnám or first settlements round the Icefirth basin, beginning with the westernmost on the southern side.

I. The land-take or settlement of Eyvind Knee.
   "Eyvind Knee went from Agdir to Iceland and with him his wife Thurid Bedsow. They settled Swanfirth and Seydisfirth and dwelt there. A son of theirs was Thorleif and another Valbrand, the father of Hallgrim and Gunnar and Biargey the wife of Howard the Halt, whose son was Olaf." (Landnámabók, p. 148.)

II. Next to this, east of it, was the settlement of Vebiorn Sygnakappi between Horsefirth and Skatefirth. With this our saga has nothing to do.

III. The settlement of the sons of Gunnbiorn (next eastward of the preceding).
   "Gunnstein and Halldor were hight two sons of Gunnbiorn the son of Wolf the Crow, from whom Gunnbiorn's Skerries are named; they settled Skatefirth and Bathdale and Ogrwick all the way to Narrowbay. A son of Halldor's was Bersi the father of Thormod Coalbrowscald.¹ There in Bathdale

¹ One of the heroes of the Foster-brothers' Saga; slain by the side of King Olaf the Saint at the fatal battle of Stik'la-Stead.
dwelt afterwards Thorbiorn Thiodreksson, who slew Olaf the son of Howard the Halt and Biargey the daughter of Valbrand; whence arose the saga of the Icefirthers and the slaughter of Thorbiorn.” (Ldb. 150.)

IV. The settlement of Snæbiorn (next eastward of the preceding).

"Snæbiorn, the son of Eyvind the Eastman, brother to Helgi the Lean, settled the land between Narrow-bay and Longdale-river and dwelt in Waterfirth. His son was Holmstein, the father of Snæbiorn Galt.” (Ldb. 150-51.)

V. The settlement of Olaf Evenpate (Jafnakollr) (continuation of preceding westward on the northern shore of Icefirth).

"Olaf Evenpate settled the land from Longdale-river unto Sandere-river and dwelt in Pleasuredale (Unaðsdalr); he had for wife Thora, daughter of Gunnstein; their son was Grimolf, who married Vedis, the sister of Vebiorn.” (Ldb. 155.)

The principal homestead in Bathdale is still Bathstead, and the farm of Bluemere (now called Blámýrar) is still standing. The saga is therefore reliable in this respect. Howard thus dwelt within the settlement which originally belonged to Gunnstein, Olaf Evenpate's father-in-law, and no doubt still belonged to his descendants when Howard set up house at Bluemere. But in his days a sudden change came over the fortunes of Gunnstein's family.
Thorbiorn's grandfather, Sléttu-Biorn, a late settler in Skagafjord, had, by the advice of his father-in-law, Steinolf the Short, who had settled in Saurby west away in the Dales, moved away from Skagafjord, and set up house in Steinolf's close neighbourhood. But his son Thiodrek "deemed himself too narrow-landed in Saurby, so he betook himself to Icefirth, and there befell the saga of Thorbiorn and Howard the Halt" (Ldb. 126-7). It deserves a passing notice that Thorbiorn was among the highest descended men in Iceland of his time; the Landnámabók (p. 195) gives the following account of the pedigree: "Gorm hight an excellent duke in Sweden; he was married to Thora, the daughter of King Eric of Upsala; their son was hight Thorgils; he was married to Elin (Helen), the daughter of Burislav, King of Gardar in the East, and of Ingigerd, the sister of Dagstyggr (Daisy), King of the Giants. Their sons were Hermgrim and Hermfinn, who married Halla, the daughter of Hedin and Arndis, Hedin's daughter. Groa was the daughter of Hermfin and Halla; she was married to Hroar, and their son was Sléttu-Biorn." The mention here made of Scandinavian connections with Russia (Gardar) refers to a time at least sixty years anterior to the first intercourse between the two races known to Nestor (A.D. 859).

In what manner Thiodrek got possession of lands and chieftainship within the settlement of Gunnstein's family, whether by law or violence, we know not, nor how long he himself enjoyed the

1 The north of Russia.
dignity and influence he acquired by it. But it is certain that the family even long after his son's death was the mightiest in Icefirth. The peace which Howard had enjoyed before Thorbiorn came into the story was over apparently as soon as Thorbiorn saw that Olaf his son was likely to rival him as a favourite of the people and a man of personal prowess. So Howard, in order to get out of too hot a corner, takes counsel with his son, and proposes to flit across the bay and set up a new home there, "for then we are nearer to our kinsmen and friends." So they moved across, and Howard built for himself a new abode and called it Howardstead.

At the present day people point out on the northern shore of Icefirth the ruins of a long deserted farm called "Howardstead." Its site is but a few hundred "fathoms" west of the still occupied farmhouse of Myri¹ (the Dyrðilmýrr of Fóstbræðrasaga, ch. v.), which again stands only a few miles west from Unaðsdalr, Pleasuredale, the first settler's home and the chief farmhouse about this coast still. All these sites are well within the land-take of the first settler, and the accuracy of the saga in this respect cannot be impugned.

Considering the state of society in Howard's days, the reason given in the saga for his resolve to move away from Thorbiorn's persecutions is obviously the only true one. But then who were these kinsmen among whom he sought peace and rest? They must have been the descendants of

¹ See K. Kálund's monumental work, Bidrag til en historisk-topografisk beskrivelse af Island, i. 606.
Olaf Evenpate. They were not Biargey’s kinsfolk, for among them the name of Olaf does not appear; besides, they had their possessions about Swanfirth and Seydisfirth, west away on the southern side of the bay. They were obviously of Howard’s own kindred, whose son was called Olaf, probably after his paternal grandfather, according to general custom in all ages among the Icelanders; and it can hardly be an accident that among the settlers of Icefirth and their descendants for three generations the name should be borne only by these two persons. Why such a wonderfully detailed genealogical record as the Landnámabók should know nothing about Howard’s family connections, while it enumerates Biargey’s forefathers, is probably to be explained by the fact that his folk had come down in the world by the time he returned from his long viking service abroad, a man maimed for life. Besides this, the great interest felt in the fate of a brutally treated old and helpless man naturally served to draw attention to him alone as a hero of a miraculous adventure.

Howard’s final removal to Svarfadardale is left unexplained in the saga. But it could only have meant quest for a peaceful retreat among kinsmen or friends. We have seen that Snæbiorn, Olaf Evenpate’s nearest neighbour of the land-settlers, was brother to Helgi the Lean, who settled the whole of Eyiafjord, and within whose dominion Svarfadardale lay. Possibly this family connection had something to do with Howard’s emigration from the west. But perhaps a stronger reason still drew him to the north. The name of Howard is a very
rare one in Iceland and, with the exception of the Icefirther, confined to persons in the North-country only. It is worth noticing that some time during the first half of the tenth century, within which nearly the whole of Howard the Halt's lifetime falls, there lived in the very valley in which he finally settled, a franklin who also bore the name of Howard. Very likely, therefore, the hero of our saga betook himself to his own kindred when he went to the north.

The fragment of Howard's saga which we have already given before out of the Landnámabók renders good service for ascertaining the chronology of the saga, or the date of the death of Olaf Howardson. Wolf the Marshal, son of Ospak the son of Osvif, was a faithful and trusted soldier and councillor of King Harold Harðráði, of Stamfordbridge fame. Wolf died in the spring of the year in the autumn of which (Sept. 25th) Harold met his death. He could not have been a very old man then, as only four years before (1062), at the battle on the river Nizi in Halland, against King Svein Ulfson of Denmark, he was in command of one of King Harold's war-galleys. At the utmost he would have been a man of seventy when he died, born then A.D. 996. We know from the Laxdale Saga that he must have been born before 1002, the year when his father, together with his other brothers, was banished the country for the slaughter of Kiartan Olafsson; for none of them ever returned to Iceland again. Guest's visit to Liot the Sage must have taken place after the banishment of Ospak; for no doubt it was in con-
sequence of the breaking up of his son-in-law's house that Liot took his grandson in. This visit happened the same autumn that Thorbiorn was slain. From the Landnáma fragment one is led to suppose that the boy Wolf was well grown, say six or seven years, when Liot asked his sage friend about the fate of his own son. Still further, we must note that Ari the Learned, who was the fifth in direct descent from Eyolf the Gray, states in his Islendingabók that he was baptized in his old age when Christianity was brought to Iceland (A.D. 1000). From the Landnáma fragment it is evident that Steingrim is mentioned as Howard's active helper under the authority of the father's chiefship. Taking all these things into consideration, as Vigfusson has done in his Tímatal, there seems but little doubt that he must be very near the mark in placing Guest's visit and Thorbiorn's death in A.D. 1003—the death of Olaf consequently, which, according to the saga, happened three times twelve months before, in A.D. 1001. Being eighteen years of age when he died, he was then born in 983. The age of Biargey, third in descent from a settler, does not seem necessarily to throw any obstacle in the way of this reckoning.

The verses of Howard's saga have come down to us in a most deplorably mangled state; yet evidently they belong to the classical type of the poetry of Iceland. A not unsuccessful attempt at restoring them was undertaken by the late Gisli Brynjólfsson in 1860, and this restoration we have for the most part followed in the translation. The
Snorra Edda, Skaldskaparmál (i. 232), has preserved one semistrophe by Howard the Halt, descriptive of an impending fight with enemies, which seems to have belonged to the cyclus of Howard verses inserted in the saga, the buoyant hope of victory being expressed in the same vein as in the saga verses. For the sake of completeness we add here a literal translation of this fragment:

"Above the paths of those who wield
The sea-horse and the battle-shield,
Lo, eagles fly! meseems the lord
Of hanged men bids them to his board."

Of the literary qualities of the Howard story we need not say much: it is certainly one of the very best of the shorter sagas, and is worthy to be put by the side of the inimitable Gunnlaug story for its dramatic force and directness of narration; in consequence, probably, of its having been re-made in later times, it is more of a story and less of a chronicle than many of the sagas; and the subject-matter of it, the triumph of an old and seemingly worn-out man over his powerful enemies, has something peculiarly interesting in it, and is fresh in these days, when the fortune of a young couple in love with each other is, in spite of all disguises, almost the invariable theme of a tale.

The Story of the Banded Men (Bandamanna Saga) is the latest of the independent Icelandic sagas, those, namely, that do not form mere episodes of longer sagas. It has come down to us in two recensions, one evidently written in the
north, referring to Ufeig as living at Reeks west-away in Midfirth, the other in the west or the south of Iceland, stating in the same passage that Ufeig dwelt north-away in Midfirth. The northern text is preserved in the Arnamagnæan vellum, 132 fol., which palæographers variously refer to the end of the thirteenth down to the middle of the fourteenth century, and was edited by H. Fridriksson at Copenhagen in 1850. The western text is contained in 2845, 4to., in the Old Collection of the Royal Library at Copenhagen, dating from the beginning of the fifteenth century, and was edited by Gustav J. Chr. Cederschiöld, Lund, 1874. On the ground that the text of Cod. Arnam. is in certain places more expanded than that of the Regius, the opinion has prevailed of late that it was a vitiated transcript or copy of the text of the latter. But this, we take it, is not the case. Both are independent descendants of a common original, and that original was of northern, not of western or southern authorship. This original is now, no doubt with later additions and faults, represented by the Cod. Arnam. But Cod. Reg. represents an early western departure from this original, whether abbreviated or prior to the additions which Cod. Arnam. contains, we are not prepared to say.

A test point in this respect is the following pas-
sage in ch. i. :—
Preface.

Arnam. 132

Úfeigr svarar: "Ekki mun ek minnka tillög við þik ór því sem þú hefur til unnit; mun ek ok því næst göra, ok mun þú vita hvort fullting þér er at því."

Úfeig answers: "I will not lay down for thee less than thou deservest; and I will go as close as I can to that, and then thou wilt know what avail it will be to thee."

Regius.

"Ofeigr suarar ok kuez ecki mundu mícla til laugu ueíta honum af þuí er hann hafdi til unnet ok þuí næst mundi hann uíta hue micill fulltingr honum er at þuí."

Ofeig answers and says he would not grant him much contribution from what he had deserved, and next to that he would know what great avail would be to him therein.

Here it is evident that the Arnam. text, with the fine irony and close reasoning of Ufeig, preserves the true original, but Regius a scribe's paraphrase, unskilful and halting in sense, because he did not understand his original. He misreads "minnka," which his MS. probably had in the form of "míca," and makes of it "micla," which necessitated changing the sentence by the insertion of the verb "veíta," and the latter part of the passage he misunderstands altogether by taking "næst" in a temporal sense, not seeing that the sense was: "mun ek göra því næst sem þú hefur til unnit" = my award shall be closely measured to thy deserts.

We have therefore not hesitated to base our translation on the Arnamagnæan text in preference to the other.

The events related in the saga refer to the middle of the eleventh century. Odd Úfeiggsson is well known to the author of Morkinskinna, probably a twelfth century recorder of Norwegian history,
who has known tales about Odd that were forgotten or unknown to the author of the Banded Men's story, who was probably a century later. The extract from the Morkinskinna which we insert in the appendix shows that Odd, as a young and enterprising chapman, was cotemporary with King Harold Sigurdson Harðráði, who fell at Stamfordbridge in England, and who ruled in Norway from 1046-1066. Thorstein, Odd's friend, pleads with the king on behalf of him as Harold's "former friend," and we know from the þátrr of Heming Aslakson (Flatey book, iii. 386, &c.), that Odd, together with many other Icelanders, was one of King Harold's men (bodyguard). That this may perfectly well have been, and in all probability was, the fact, is not gainsaid by the other undoubted fact, that this þátrr is but a legend so far as the exploits it recounts are concerned. But there is this element of history about it, that the actors are known to be historical persons living at one and the same time in company with each other. The Hemings þátrr is written expressly for the purpose of foisting upon Harold and his court the older legend of Palnatóki, who had to shoot an apple off a beloved son's head at a long range at the bidding of a cruel tyrant—for such is the Harold of this legend.

Our saga refers, ch. ix., to Skeggbroddi as one who had been one of King Harold's men, and made much of by him. There is nothing known elsewhere about this. But the question put by Ufeig, true to life as it is, shows that the matter was generally talked of among people, and Skeggbroddi's
answer, equally true to life, that is to say, to Harold's peculiar character, points to Ufeig's question having been quite pertinent to the subject, that Skeggbroddi had been with King Harold at some time during his reign.

One of the Banded Men, and evidently he for whom old Ufeig, despite his way of framing his speech, had the greatest respect, was Gellir Thorkelson—by a scribal mistake called Thordson in our text—the well-known grandfather of Ari the Learned. He died in advanced age on a pilgrimage to Rome, in Roskilde, in Denmark, A.D. 1073. Now when old Ufeig in chapter ix. of our story is talking to Gellir about his as yet unmarried daughters, Gellir could have been not older than of middle age, which accords well with the birth of the grandson, Ari, in 1067. If Gellir's age was about that of the century he lived in, then he would have marriageable daughters about 1050. The probable ages of all the other Banded Men agree well with this having been about the date of the greatest secret legal conspiracy known in the time of the Icelandic Commonwealth.

The story of the legal process is, of course, dramatic rather than historical. The core of the tale, the process itself, is evidently aimed at the administration of justice in Iceland at the time: a demonstration against judicial red-tape which preserves the husk, the formality, of the law, while the kernel, substance, equity, is left to take care of itself as best it may.

The literary quality of the story is high; the characters are steadily held to all through; the
grave sarcasm of the tale-teller never fails, and the adroit hints by which the reader is let into the secret of plot and counter-plot from time to time are masterly. It is, in short, in its way a model of dramatic narrative. It must be said also that the quaint reversal of the parts usually played by father and son into those of the prodigal father and the money-prudent son is very taking and amusing.

**The Story of Hen Thorir** is an old saga, belonging to the earliest group of the domestic tales of ancient Iceland.

The chief historical points of interest connected with it are:

1. The power, position, and constitutional importance attaching to a Goði, or tribal Priest, in one at least of whose functions Odd-a-Tongue figures prominently in this tale.

2. The changes in customary law to which the burning of Blundketil led.

3. The custom of taking possession of no-man's-land by the ceremony of carrying fire into it or over it.

(1.) The Goði was originally a sacerdotal chief of a tribe or gens which had the same temple in common. His religious functions are best described in the Eyrbyggia Saga, that will form one of the volumes of our Saga Library, which description we need not anticipate here.

As the tribal system wore out, and the religious side of it diminished in importance, the position of the Goði lost its sacerdotal character, and became
more and more that of a secular chief, till finally he figured morally as a privileged official of the commonwealth. Within his dominion, Goðorð, he had sovereign power over his liegemen. But the Goðorð was not exactly a geographical expression, though it stands to reason that most of the liegemen of the Goði lived in his immediate neighbourhood; it was, as the law of the commonwealth defined it, veldi en ekki fé, power, dominion, not property. Hence one Goði might have liegemen anywhere about the land; and they might be scattered far and wide about the island in all the greater number the more powerful he was, and therefore the more sought for as protector. The only tribute his liegemen, þingmen, as they were called, paid the Goði for his protection was personal service whenever he found it good to make his power felt as a military leader; or when he was bound by virtue of his position to assert for himself, his thingmen or allies, what he understood to be law and right at the various law-courts, dómar, local and general. He had to "hallow" the local legal assemblies, þing; and the Goði of the temple of Kialarnes, the descendant of Ingolf Arnarson, the first Icelandic settler, who bore the title of alsherjar- goði, Pontifex Maximus, because his temple (hof) and the community thereto belonging (þing) were the oldest in the land, had to hallow every year the Althing, which both lay within his local dominion, and was the constitutional descendant of the old Kialarnes-thing. All judges in the land were appointed by the Goðar. Ex privilegio they formed the nucleus of the lögregga, or law-making assembly
of the Althing, and on returning from it to their various Goðorð, had to hold those route-assemblies, leiðir, leets, among their liegemen, at which they had to publish whatever measures of general or local interest had been passed by the “lógréttta,” and the calendar for the ensuing year as framed by the speaker-at-law. One of the functions of the Goði was to settle the prices at which inland produce should not only change hands in the country itself, but be sold to chapmen from abroad, whose foreign imports, as a sovereign ruler, after Norwegian precedent, he also, no doubt with the advice of “the best men,” took upon himself to appraise, which regulation of prices had the force of sovereign law for the sale of all the merchants goods. Until his “price list was out,” and until the Goði himself had made the purchases he needed, no dealings might be had with the merchant, no goods be bought from him at any other than the fixed prices. As in the case of Odd-a-Tongue, the exercise of this prerogative by the Icelandic Goðar was generally very unpopular, as in the nature of the thing it could not fail to be, with foreign merchants; and at last in the thirteenth century it led to such deplorable conflicts with the Norwegians as had nearly brought about an armed invasion from Norway, and did in reality furnish the King of Norway with one of the many pretexts on which he seized for interfering in the internal affairs of Iceland preparatory to its subjection in 1262.

It is a curious thing that the code of the commonwealth, the Grágás, does not seem to know of this prerogative as vested in the Goði, but refers
to the matter in the following terms: "It is provided in our laws that people may not buy eastern (Norwegian) wares at a higher price from the ships of ocean-going traders than those three men ordain who are appointed for that purpose within every district" (I. b. 72). The probable explanation is that this is a late addition to the code, as V. Finsen supposes. At any rate the Goðar seem to have treated it as not derogatory to their traditional right, or at least to have abided by it as occasion served, and as it suited their purpose.

(2.) The burning of Blundketil, which took place A.D. 964 or 965—the date is not in dispute, so we need go into no chronological argument to show on what evidence it rests—was in its consequences by far the most significant event in the history of Iceland during the tenth century. According to the account of Ari the Learned, it was the immediate cause of a change being introduced by Thord the Yeller, by which the system of government was finally settled, A.D. 965.

According to the saga the burning took place late in winter, apparently in the month of Göi = March, or very early in spring, while pasture was as yet scarce, and stalling of live-stock necessary. This agrees well with the time required by the outraged party for making all their preparations for the lawsuit, which had to come before the vár-jing, or spring-mote, spring-court, at Thingness, which, as all spring-motes throughout the country, met at its earliest on the 7th of May (Grág. I.a. 96). Thord the Yeller, who became chief plaintiff in the
suit, was repelled by force of arms by Odd-a-Tongue, who had many and mighty alliances throughout Burgfirth; and so violence and brute force defeated the ends of justice in a peculiarly just cause.

In his Iseldinsárbók, ch. v., Ari the Learned gives the following account of the event: "A great contest at law arose between Thord Yeller, the son of Olaf Feilan out of Broadfirth, and Odd, the one who was called Tongue-Odd; he was of Burgfirth. Thorvald, his son, together with Hen-Thorir of Ornolfsdale, took part in the burning of Thorkel, the son of Blund-Ketil. But Thord Yeller was the chief to prosecute the suit, because that Herstein, the son of Thorkel Blund-Ketil's son, had for wife Thorunn, his sister's daughter. She was the daughter of Helga and of Gunnar, and was sister to Jofrid, whom Thorstein Egilsson had to wife. They were prosecuted at that Thing which was in Burgfirth at the place called Thingsness. It was law then that blood-suits should be prosecuted at the Thing which was nearest to the field of the manslaughter. But they fought there, and the Thing might not be held therefore according to law. So the case went to the Althing, and there they fought again, and men fell from the band of Odd, and withal Hen-Thorir was declared guilty, and was slain afterwards, together with certain others who took part in the burning.

"Then Thord Yeller gave forth a speech from the Rock of Laws as to how ill it answered for men to have to go into strange Things wherein to prosecute suits for manslaughters or for other grievances; and he set forth what trouble it had cost him or
ever he might bring this case to law, and said that various troubles would grow up if this were not amended.

"Then was the land divided into quarters, fellow-thingmen having one court of law in common; out-taken the Northlanders' quarter, wherein there were four Things, because they (of the North) would agree to nought else: those north of Eyjafjord being unwilling to have to go to a Thing there, those west of Skagafirth likewise to go thither. But for all that the naming of judges from their quarter, and appointments to the lögrétta, should be the same from this quarter as from any of the others. After this the Quarter-things were set up. In this manner Wolfhedin Gunnarson, the speaker-at-law, told us the tale."

Evidently Wolfhedin told the story of this remarkable reform as it was remembered by the speakers-at-law, who of all men in the country must have been the best informed about it.

Leaving out of consideration the Quarter-things, about which next to nothing is known, and which V. Finsen thinks may or may not have ever come into practical existence, we have to show—

1. How the Quarter and Thing division was carried out.

2. How on this division depended the Quarter Court arrangement.

3. Likewise the constitution of the Lögrétta.
The country was divided into quarters, called—

A. Southlanders' quarter (Sunnlendingafjörðungr).
B. Westfirthers' quarter (Vestfingafjörðungr).
c. Northlanders' quarter (Norðlendingafjörðungr).

d. Eastfirthers' quarter (Austfjörðungr).

Each of these quarters again was divided into "Things," or jurisdictions, as follows:

Quarter A contained—
1. Rangár-thing.

Quarter B—
4. Thverár-thing.
5. Thórsness-thing.
6. Thorskafjarðar-thing.

Quarter C—
10. Thingeyjar-thing

Quarter D—

Everyone of these Things was again divided into three Goðorð, each presided over by a Goði; so that altogether there were thirty-nine Goðar in the land. Originally, and until the introduction of this reform, there were only thirty-six Goðar in all, and only twelve Things in the island. These thirty-six
Goðorð were “full and ancient” (full oc forn), and then, as the Grágás says, were the Things un-cut up (óslitin).

From what has been said already, it will be seen that the Icelandic word “þing,” in its constitutional application, has really a threefold sense: 1, a mote, meeting, an assembly, a parliament gathered together for the discussion of public affairs and for judicial business; 2, the place at which such a mote is held (cf. Thingness-thing); 3, the community and country-sides to which the jurisdiction of such a mote extended.

As we have seen already, there existed, before the introduction of Thord Yeller's reform-law, local assemblies at which judicial and other business was transacted, the so-called vár-þing, spring-motes, spring-courts. Probably after this reform was passed they remained much in the same state as they were before. Here was the judicial forum in the first instance for the fellow-thingmen who formed the community, Thing, of which the vár-þing was the central court. It was regulated and super-intended by the three Goðar of the Thing. It fell into two divisions: sóknar-þing, or lawsuit division, court of law; and skulda-þing, debt division, which was competent to deal with matters relating to debts and public terms for payments, rents, &c., falling due. The law court proper consisted of thirty-six judges, twelve for each of the three Goðar of the Thing, nominated respectively by the three Goðar. It was left an optional matter, after the establishment of the quarter courts at the Althing, whether a case should go before this local
court of justice, or it should be passed by and the case go direct to the Althing.

The trouble to which these local Things obviously would be liable to give rise, in the unreformed state of the constitution, was this, that when the matter in dispute lay between litigants of two separate Things, the outsider was always bound to be at the same time the plaintiff, the court being the defendant’s legal forum, according to the law provision stated by Ari: “It was law then that blood-suits”—and naturally other criminal cases as well—“should be prosecuted at the Thing which was nearest to the field of the manslaughter” or field of action. Here clearly all the advantage was on the side of the defendant, whose family relations, friendships, and alliances by affinity naturally would be greatest within his own district, Thing. The outsider had to depend entirely on his personal influence in collecting and leading into a strange country such forces as might be likely to ensure necessary respect. In failing to do so he was certain to fare as did Thord the Yeller at Thingness-thing, and justice was left at the mercy of the sword. This state of things therefore meant a standing appeal from law to violence.

The remedy proposed was the establishment of the Quarter Courts at the Althing, one court of law for each of the quarters of the land—a wisely conceived measure under the existing circumstances, since there alliances could be formed on the merits of a case rather than by local bias.

These courts were nominated for each yearly session of the Althing by the Góðar out of their
own thingmen (liegemen, clients). The nomination is thus regulated in the Grágás: "It is provided in our law, that we shall have four Quarter Courts, fjórðungs-dóma. Every Goði who has a full and ancient Goðorð shall name one man (judge) into court, those being full and ancient Goðorð which were then, when there were three Things in every quarter and three Goðar in every Thing" (I. a. 38). By the wording of the law then, since the nominators were the three Goðar of every Thing, as the Things stood before the North quarter compromise (see above), and since there were three Things in each quarter and no more to which the right of nomination was given, and since each Goði had to nominate one man into court, it would seem evident that each quarter court consisted of nine judges. Of these nine judges it was provided again that six should be sufficient to form a legal quorum ("withal their judgment is then as valid as if they had all passed it"—Grág. I. a. 74). Some critics, notably the great scholar, K. Maurer, are of opinion that the judges nominated to each of these courts must, as in the case of the spring courts, have amounted in number to thirty-six, the mode of nomination being that everyone of the thirty-six Goðar appointed one judge for every quarter court, or four judges each. But V. Finsen,

the most learned interpreter living of the laws of Iceland, seems to have conclusively proved in his masterly treatise, "Om de islandske Love i Fri-statstiden" (Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed, 1873, pp. 73-76), that this theory is not tenable. Indeed, if this had been the intention of the law, it must be acknowledged that the provision, that only one-sixth, instead of two-thirds, of the court could form a legal quorum, would be at war with the rules of "challenge" in Grágás.

In the sagas these courts are frequently named after the community inhabiting the largest country-sides of the quarter, and exercising the greatest influence on public matters, both at home and at the Althing: "Rangæingadómr" (South Quarter Court), "Breidfrælingadómr" (West Q. C.), "Eyfrælingadómr" (North Q. C.), "Austfrælingadómr" (East Q. C.), alone bearing invariably the name of its own quarter. Each of these courts was the proper forum into which to bring cases in which any inhabitant of the quarter for which the court was nominated was engaged as a defendant. The question whether a defendant belonged to this quarter or that was all-important, inasmuch as bringing a lawsuit into the wrong court might of itself suffice for a dismissal of the case. In this respect it was not enough to know where a person was domiciled; for to have one's hearth and home within a certain quarter did not prove that the owner or occupier belonged to that particular quarter in the sense required in pleadings at the quarter courts. But "þingfesti," or allegiance to a particular Goði, decided to which quarter the defendant belonged, and into
which quarter court, consequently, his case should be brought. Hence the first thing for the plaintiff to do on commencing proceedings at these courts was to ascertain the defendant’s jingfesti; for though a well-known plaintiff, for instance, was domiciled in the east quarter, he might be a liege-man of a Goði in the west, and must therefore be sued before the west quarter court. Even in the midst of the law proceedings against Flosi of Swinefell in the east quarter for the burning of Nial, he (Flosi), himself a Goði, resigned his Goðorð to another man, and then took liege service with Askel the Goði of Reekdale in the north quarter, in order to hoodwink the plaintiffs (Niála, ch. 141, 143). Judgment by these courts was valid only on condition that all the judges were unanimous, otherwise the case came to nought. And this rule was the cause why, after forty years, during which time it had been the source of much inconvenience and discontent, which at last threatened to supersede law by “point and edge,” the Fifth Court, “fimtardómur,” was set up, by the advice of Nial, in A.D. 1004. The unworthy motives ascribed to Nial for bringing about this pressing reform had undoubtedly nothing to do with it. The Grágás thus defines the constitution of this court: “We shall have a Fifth Court, and it shall be called ‘fimtardómur.’ One man shall be nominated into that court for every one of the ancient Goðorð, nine men from each quarter. Those Goðar that have the new Goðorð shall nominate for the court one of the ‘douzaines’ (one of the four dozen members of it). Then the ‘douzaines’ will be four,
and there will be with them (the twelve elected by the new Goðar) twelve men out of every quarter."

There were created twelve new Goðar, in addition to the thirty-six full and ancient ones, expressly for the purpose of nominating twelve judges for this court, so that the number might be forty-eight. It simplified the problem of thirty-six electors having an equal share in nominating forty-eight members. On the other hand, it was provided that each party to a lawsuit before this court should be bound to challenge out of it six of its judges, twelve altogether, and should either party refrain from taking the advantage of this privilege, it was the bounden duty of the other party to challenge out all twelve, for only thirty-six might lawfully sit in judgment in the court. The suit for the burning of Nial was lost by the plaintiffs for disregarding this peremptory rule. Into this court should be brought all cases on which the quarter court judges disagreed, likewise such as related to false verdicts and false witness, or perjury and bribery. Here not unanimity, but majority of votes, carried a lawful judgment.

From Ari’s account of Thord Yeller’s reform it is clear that it did not only extend to the judicial, but also to the legislative affairs of the land, especially to the constitution of the Lögrétta (Law-righter) or legislative body of the Althing. This is evident from the device to which Thord resorted in order to counteract the preponderance of votes which would fall to the north quarter in consequence of its counting twelve Goðar, or three beyond each of
the other quarters, a disproportion created by the insistence of the Northlanders on this occasion to have their quarter divided into four Things. This disproportion was adjusted by the Göðar belonging to the minority quarters (east, south, and west) selecting one person from each Thing—three, therefore, from each quarter—to have a seat in the lögrétta with all the privileges of a Göði, so that, in addition to the thirty-nine Göðar that formed the nucleus or pith of the lögrétta, there came nine elected men who brought the number of the pith of the assembly up to forty-eight members, each of whom bore the distinguishing title of Lögrétta-maðr. Each Lögrétta-maðr again had to provide himself with two assessors or counsellors, and thus the whole number of the legislative body amounted to $3 \times 48 = 144$ members, to which number were added three ex officio members—the speaker, to wit, and, after A.D. 1056 and 1106 respectively, the two bishops of Skalholt and Holar.

It was provided that the assembly should be seated on three daís or benches surrounding the lögrétta or hallow space within. These benches were to give easy sitting space to four dozens of men each, a provision which indicates that on each set of benches were seated the representatives of each respective quarter. Whether they were arranged in a square or a circle fashion does not appear. On the middle bench sat the Lögrétta-men proper, behind and in front of each his two assessors or advisers.

On the lögrétta devolved the important duty of making laws for the whole land, framing new laws,
amending older enactments, and, in certain evidently frequently recurring cases, deciding what should be law when disputes arose between any parties present at the Althing, without being litigants in a pending lawsuit before the courts, as to doubtful points in law. On this interesting point the Grágás (I. a. 213) says: "Now there is a dispute between men as to what is the law, then the vote of the lögrétta may be taken, provided the copies of the code (scrár), do not decide the matter. But this shall be done thus, that under witnesses at the Hill of Laws all the Goðar at the Althing and the speaker-at-law shall be bidden to go to the Lögrétta and take their seats, and decide this point of law even as thenceforth it shall stand." That the enactments of the lögrétta were carried by majority of votes, not by unanimity, Finsen has conclusively proved. In one respect there was an exception. The speaker-at-law, who seems to have acted, at least in certain cases, as chairman or president of the lögrétta, must be elected unanimously; failing this, lots were cast as to which of the quarters the election should fall, whereupon the representatives of the quarter to which the lot fell elected him by simple majority. His term of office was three years, at the end of which he could be, and frequently was, re-elected. His most important function, especially while there was as yet no written law in the land, was to recite to the assembled Althing the laws of the country from the Hill of Laws, in the following manner. The law of judicial procedure at the Althing he had to recite every year, and with such perfect accuracy that no one present should
be able to do it as well or better. The rehearsal of the rest of the law was, under the same condition, spread over three years. If his knowledge of the text of the law was at fault, he was bound to confer with five experts, the day immediately preceding his recital, in order to ensure thorough accuracy. All new enactments and amendments, as well as decisions relating to dispensations, mitigations of penalties incurred, and the like, he had to give out to the assembled multitude from the Rock of Laws; likewise whether the Althing should meet before the time fixed by law; 1 further, he had to proclaim the calendar for the ensuing year, especially in relation to the movable feasts. All this he had to do towards the breaking up of each session. Cf. Grág. I. a. 208 foll.

Such, briefly stated, are the broad outlines of the constitution of the commonwealth of Iceland. It may be said in passing that all this story of the quarter courts and Thord the Yeller's changes points to the fact that when the Goðar first come before us, society in Iceland was in a transition state between the condition of mere personal relations of each member of the tribe to

1 Ari, referring to a law passed in 999, Isl. bók, ch. vii., says: "Then it was proclaimed by law that men should then come to the Althing when ten weeks of summer were spent, but up to that time they came a week earlier." Summer, O.S., began on the Thursday that fell on April 9-15, consequently the tenth week of summer closed on the Wednesday that fell on June 17-23. Cf. Grág. I. a. 37: "The fifth day of the week shall be the first (day) of summer," and ib. 43: "All Goðar shall come to the Thing the fifth day when ten weeks of summer are spent before the sun sets on Thingvölli," i.e. on June 18-24
each other, and that of property, or political relations. Thord the Yeller's reform, with its localization of the Godor and Things, indicates the very end of that transition, and the last step in the transformation of the tribal priest-chief into the foreman of landholders.

(3.) The "hallowing" of land by fire. In the ninth chapter of our saga we read: "So Odd rideth to a certain house that was not utterly burned; there he lays hold of a birch-rafter and pulled it down from the house, and then rode with the burning brand withershins round about the house, and spake: 'Here take I land to myself, for here I see no house inhabited.'"

There is frequent mention of this ancient custom of taking possession of land, "hallowing the land to one's self" by fire, during the period of the settlement of Iceland. Thus the Landnámabók, p. 276, says: "Those who came later out to Iceland deemed the others (the former settlers) had taken too wide lands to themselves; but King Harold made them agree to this, that no one should take more land to himself than what he could carry fire across in one day, together with his crew. They should make fires when the sun was in the east; other smokes were to be made, so that each could have an inkling of the other; but the fires that were made in the east were to burn unto nightfall; then they should walk till the sun was in the west, and make other fires there."

Of Helgi the Lean, a Christian settler from the Hebrides, the same record relates, p. 207: "Helgi searched the whole settlement (hérað) during the
summer, and made his own the whole of Eyiafiord between Sigluness and Reynisness, and made a large fire at every river-mouth, and thus hallowed for himself the whole of the settlement."

Helgi's foster-brother, Sæmund, we are told, "went with fire, by old custom, and took for himself the land which is now called Sæmundslith in Skagafirth" (Vatnsdæla, ch. x., Landn., p. 189).

His grand-daughter, Hallbera, goes to Víðaglúm, who was loth to leave the land he had been lawfully forced to sell to her son Einar, and says: "All hail, Glum, but here there is no abiding longer for thee, for now I have brought fire unto the land of Thvera (Thwart-ride-stead), and I now bid thee be off with all thy belongings, since the land is hallowed to my son Einar" (Glúma, ch. xxvi.).

Of Jorund the Goði, a settler of Rangárvellir, the Landnáma, p. 284, relates: "A corner of land lay unclaimed to the east of the Fleet (Markfleet), between Crossriver and Joldustone; over that land Jorund went with fire, and bequeathed it to the temple" (which he himself had raised at Svertings- stead, on the western side of Markfleet).

But the most curious passage relating to these fire-hallowings of unclaimed lands is the following in the Landnámabók, p. 193:—"Onund the Sure hight a man who settled land up from Mark-Gill, all the eastern side of the valley, but when Eirek" (Hroaldson, a settler of Goðadalir) "was minded to go and settle all the western side of that valley, Onund had a sacrifice and cast lots that he might be sure what time Eirek would go to make the
valley his own, and Onund was the quicker of the two, and shot a tinder-arrow across the river, and thus hallowed for himself the land on the western side."

It is clear that hallowing waste lands, or lands unlawfully occupied, for one's self in this manner, carried with it an absolute title to ownership in the land-settling days of Iceland, and for some time afterwards. To investigate the question of the origin of this custom is a matter far beyond the scope of these prefatory remarks. It may be noticed that the use made by Tongue-Odd of the ceremony, when he, in the presence of the heir to the murdered father's property, claims it because he sees no house inhabited, sees nought but a waste land, shows, not perhaps so much his love of wrongdoing, as his ignorance of the sacredness of a rite which perchance had a different meaning to the heathen from the east and the Christian from the west, i.e., from Great Britain.¹

The style of Hen Thorir's Saga is of the very simplest—simple sometimes even to abruptness; especially in the passage where a few words tell of the burning of the noble and generous Blundketil; and wherein our saga offers such a curious contrast to the tremendous drama which surrounds the death of Nial and his sons. Yet even this strange

¹ The Icelanders' way of speaking of those who came from Ireland, the Hebrides, and even from Scotland and Orkney, as coming from the west, is to be explained by tradition, not by their want of geographical orientation. From Norway these lands lay in the west, and their inhabitants were "Westmen" to those of the primitive fatherland. Hence the inaccurate use of the cardinal point by the Icelanders.
blankness is not without weight in the telling of the tale, helping to bring home to us the desolate condition of the franklin’s heir, and the gradual building up of his fortune again from that barrenness. For the rest, the catastrophe is led up to with a full share of the usual skill and intentness of the Icelandic saga-man, and the chronicle-tale into which it lapses in the latter part, like most of the more historical of the local sagas, is told briskly and with purpose, and ends very pleasantly, with the generous and manly dealings between Thord Oddson and the gallant archer, Gunnar Hlifarson.

Those who are curious to go into a comparative study of the historical details of this saga we refer to our Note to page xxxii.