

abode extremely unwholesome.

The long winter evenings are not idled away in the farmer's house. Every member of the family finds some employment. The father and sons mend their tools, or, perhaps, fashion beautiful ornaments (in which the Icelanders are said to excel) from the gold and silver, which he has procured of the merchants at the fair. The mother and daughters knit or spin, while some member of the family reads aloud to the others thus engaged.

The people of Iceland are noted for their moral and religious characters. This is due in part, no doubt, to the general diffusion of knowledge among all classes of the people. The children are instructed in the elementary branches by the parents, and in the absence of the public schools, the village pastor often acts the part of teacher.

But, from considering the present condition of Iceland and its people, let us turn our attention for a few moments to a brief glance at its past history. For it has a history, older than that of the New World, and scarcely less' entertaining and instructive than that of Greece and Rome. The Icelandic chroniclers tell us that in the year 861 A. D., Noddodr, a Norwegian pirate, in sailing to the Faroe Islands, was driven to the northward of his course, and discovered the coast of Iceland, upon which he bestowed the name of Snowland.

Gardar next visited and circumnavigated the island in 864. When he returned home to Norway he gave his countrymen so flattering an account of the country that Floki, a renowned Viking, determined to colonize it. After an eventful voyage in which, as it is said, he was guided by a raven after he had left the Faroe Islands, he landed on the south-western coast of the Island, which still bears the name of Paxa Fiord which he then gave it. Here the colonists began a settlement, but neglecting to cut hay for winter, the cattle which they had brought with them died of starvation. Disappointed in all his ex-

pectations, Floki returned home at the end of two years, and gave his countrymen a gloomy account of the land to which he had in contempt now given the name of Iceland.

But the political disturbances and oppressions in Europe soon drove other colonists to the island. In 869-70, Ingolfr and his cousin Leif succeeded in establishing a permanent settlement on the southern coast. From this time on until the present Iceland continues to be an inhabited country. The political oppressions in Europe drove hither not only settlers from Norway, but also from Sweden and Denmark, Scotland and Ireland. At first each band of emigrants chose its chief, and took possession of certain lands, which were held in common. But intestine strife and anarchy grew out of this disposition of the lands. At length, tired of continual broils, the Icelanders commissioned Ulfliot the Wise to frame a constitution and code of laws, which they soon afterward peacefully adopted.

The island was now divided into twelve provinces and four districts. Each district had its own judge and assembly called the "Thing," while a general assembly, called the "Althing," was the supreme parliament of this northern republic, and an elected president, called "Logmatherung," was the chief magistrate.

This form of government continued in force until the year 1254, when the island was transferred to the Norwegian crown.

With the loss of her independence the glory of Iceland perished. Here on this northern isle, for 340 years, flourished a republican form of government, whose celebrated families, bold discoverers, and *literati*, were renowned throughout the North. Here was light while all Europe was shrouded in the darkness of the middle ages. The writings of Samund, Frodi, Are Thorgilson, Gissur, and Snorri Sturleson, graced the literature of this Arctic isle and became the annals of the whole Scandinavian world. From here such