

Ruins of the Saga Time:

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF TRAVELS AND EXPLORATIONS
IN ICELAND IN THE SUMMER OF 1895.

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On behalf of Miss CORNELIA HORSFORD, Cambridge, U.S.A.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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AND A RÉSUMÉ, IN FRENCH, BY

E. D. GRAND.

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WORKS OF REFERENCE MENTIONED :—

- “Árbók hins Íslenska Fornleifafélags” (Year Book of Icelandic Archaeology).
Dr. V. Guðmundsson’s “Den Islandske Bolig i Fristats-Tiden” and “Privatboligen på Island i Sagatiden” (Private Dwellings in Iceland in Saga Times).
D. Bruun’s “Meddelelser om Grønland” (Reports on Greenland).
Miss C. Horsford’s “Dwellings of the Saga Time in Greenland, Iceland and Vineland.”
“Gísla Saga Súrssonar.” “Flóamanna Saga.” “Laxdæla Saga.” “Ljósveitninga Saga.” “Landnámabók.” “Hávarðar Saga Isfirðings.”

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS work is the outcome of the travels and researches undertaken by Mr. Thorsteinn Erlingsson in the summer of 1895, at the request of Miss Cornelia Horsford, in order to throw light on the origin of certain antiquarian remains existing on the Charles River, Massachusetts, and elsewhere in America, discovered by the late Professor E. N. Horsford, and believed to be relics of the settlements formed by the Norse discoverers of Vinland in the tenth century. Fig. 1, taken from "Dwellings of the Saga Time in Greenland, Iceland, and Vineland," a paper read before the American Association for the Advancement of Science by Miss C. Horsford, in Dec., 1897, indicates the nature of the American antiquities alluded to.

Other American objects of antiquarian interest are amphitheatre-like structures, etc. These differ considerably from constructions known to have been fabricated by the earliest inhabitants of America or later oversea emigrants, and together form inferential grounds for the assumption that they are the remains of the early Norse discoverers. In order to determine this point definitely, the present and other investigations have been carried out by or at the instigation of the daughter of the late Prof. E. N. Horsford, in prosecution of her father's researches.

Six questions relating to the construction of various Icelandic buildings were formulated by Miss Horsford as the bases of Mr. Erlingsson's investigations and researches. They include enquiries as to the method of construction of the so-called long houses, square buildings, hillside cots with pavements, mounds, things and doom rings, irrigation and drainage ditches, river dams, hithes and ship docks or *nausts*, grave-hills, and forts.

In order the better to grasp the scope and result of Mr. Erlingsson's labours, it seems desirable to outline already ascertained knowledge regarding early Scandinavian house-building, derived from the excavations and investigations of Icelandic, Danish and Norse antiquaries over a number of years in Iceland, Greenland, and the North generally, and from the older literature.

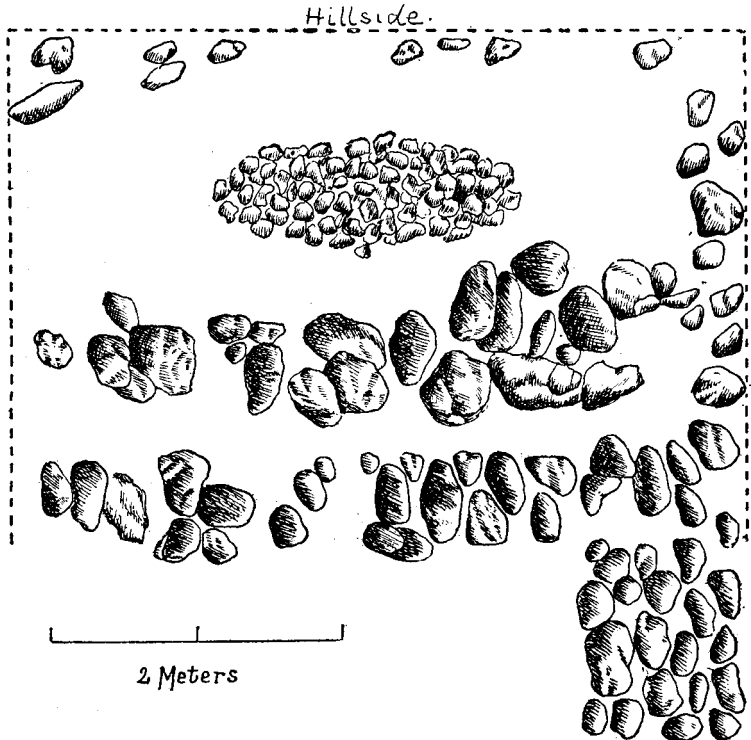


FIG. 1.—SUPPOSED NORSE RUIN IN MASSACHUSETTS.

The general plan of a house or farm in Iceland is shown by the ground plan of the ruin of Sámstaðir in Thjórsárdal (Fig. 6, p. 43); but considerable diversity in detail exists, due to natural development, growth in notions of convenience of their occupants, foreign influence, etc.

Figs. 3 and 4 are from excavations of houses in Greenland, the latter the traditional site of the house of Erik the Red, the Norse discoverer of Greenland.

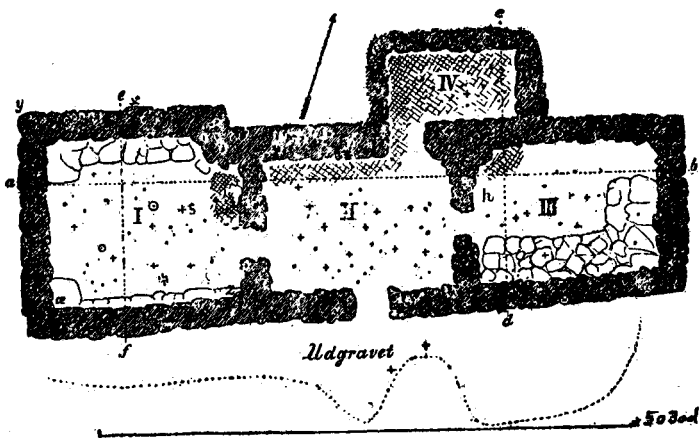


FIG. 3.—PLAN OF A NORSE RUIN IN GREENLAND.
 (From D. Bruun's "Meddelelser om Grönland.")

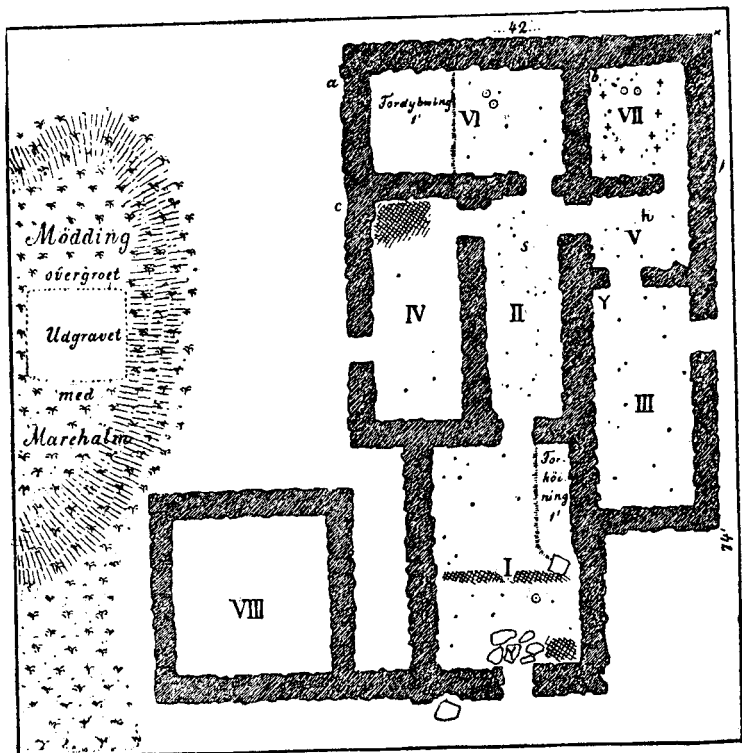


FIG. 4.—PLAN OF THE HOUSE OF ERIK THE RED IN GREENLAND.
 (From D. Bruun's "Meddelelser om Grönland.")

The differences in the details of the plans of these houses from those of Iceland are attributed to local influences. Fig. 5 is an Icelandic heathen temple excavated at Thyril.

The elevation of an Icelandic house is shown by the vertical section of a dwelling which is given on p. 42.

The roofs of houses were usually of the saddle or mansard shape, supported on horizontal beams laid on the walls, and by uprights standing within the interiors. The projections of the roof were called *ups*—English, hips (*cf.* eaves). A distinguishing feature, which marks the connection with early English house-building, is the barge-

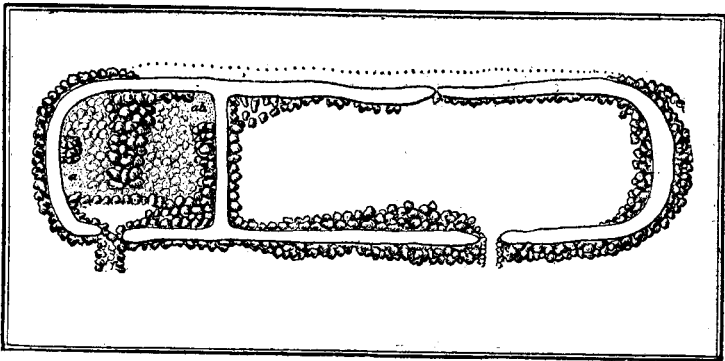


FIG. 5.—PLAN OF HEATHEN TEMPLE AT THYRIL.

57 ft. long, 17 ft. broad. The floor in side house is stone-laid, and lower than the main house.

a—Ashes. *ab*—Ashes and horse teeth.

(From "*Árbók hins Íslenska Fornleifafélags*," 1880-1881.)

board, often the object of ornamentation. The walls were from one to one and a half metres thick, and from one to one and a half high. The inner side was built of unhewn stones, and the interstices were filled with earth. The outer side was of alternate layers of turf and stones, and the space between the two sides was filled in with earth kneaded hard. The woodcut on p. 41 aptly illustrates the general arrangement, whilst the illustration in Fig. 6, from an excavation in Greenland, shows a variation, in which the proportion of stones used is greater, though employment has been made of natural stratified limestone blocks,

as is the fashion in the Orkneys and Shetlands to this day, tooling, if any, being confined to the outer surfaces.

The walls were often built entirely of layers of turf, or with only disconnected rows of stones at the footings. It is obvious that, with walls constructed of such simple materials, when disintegration, after abandonment, occurs, the process of demolition is very rapid and complete, as far as the upper structure is concerned, but that the lower runs are preserved. Excavations, wherever undertaken, have proved this to be uniformly the case. Barely-observed grass-grown mounds faintly indicate the sites of former



FIG. 6.—WALLS OF A NORSE RUIN IN GREENLAND.

(From D. Bruun's "Meddelelser om Grönland," Vol. xvi.)

dwellings, which, however, when excavated, yield fairly complete pictures of their ground-plan and arrangements.

The ordinary rooms of a house or farm were three or four. These were the *stofa*, *skáli*, *eldhús* and *búr*, corresponding to the dining or living room, sleeping room, kitchen and larder. One entrance usually gave access, and a middle passage communicated with the several rooms. Besides the rooms mentioned, there were often outbuildings, but the whole lay together and formed a compact range of buildings, very much like an English dwelling-house of the fourteenth century, such as, for instance, Ockwells in Berkshire.

The growth in the number of the supplementary rooms or outbuildings forming a farm is assumed to mark the progressive stages of architectural development. In the earliest, the buildings were usually arranged in a row, called a *lön* (Eng., lane), of which that at Sæból (Fig. 7), as also the temple of Thyril (Fig. 5), are examples. In the next stage one or more additional rooms are added to

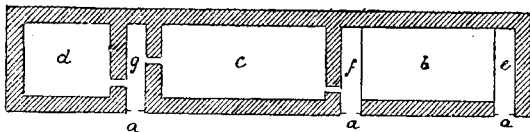


FIG. 7.—PLAN OF FIRST FORM OF DWELLING.

a—Outer door. *b*—Stofa. *c*—Fireplace house, or skáli. *d*—Búr, or pantry.
e—Forestofa. *f*—Foreskáli. *g*—Forebúr (?).

the primitive plan, that of the Greenland ruin shown in Fig. 3 offering an example (note room IV.). A good example of a two-chambered addition is shown in the following woodcut :—

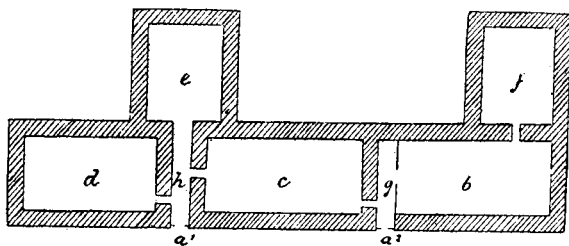


FIG. 8.—PLAN OF SECOND FORM OF DWELLING.

a1—Outer door, workman's door, or north door.
a2—Outer door, fuel door, south door. *b*—Stofa. *c*—Skáli.
d—Fire house. *e*—Búr. *f*—Bath-room. *g*—Forestofa. *h*—Foreskáli.

In the third stage the most perfect type of the three is shown, its development marking the high-water mark of progress. Its peculiar arrangement consists in having a single central passage, on the two sides of which are placed the rooms, to which it gives convenient access. In the earlier transition types there were several and disconnected passages, or the rooms were accessible one

from another. This last type eventually replaced the others, yet historical evidence shows that it existed as early as the tenth century, and may indicate less a chronological than a social sequence. The woodcut, Fig. 9, is that of a modern farm, given by way of contrast. In the view of some, the divergencies of the latest forms have arisen from influences from the British Isles, exerted by the Norsemen who repaired to Iceland and the North

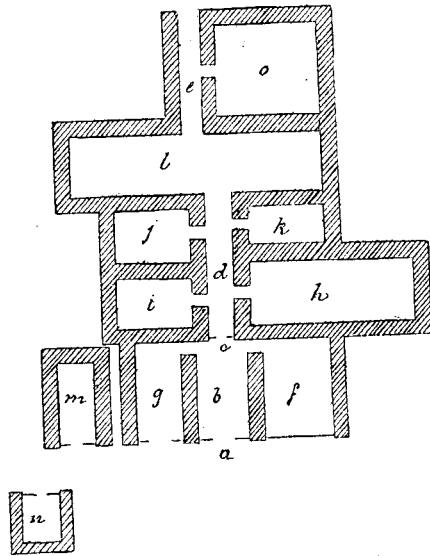


FIG. 9.—PLAN OF HEIÐI I GÖNGUSKÜRÐUM.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>a</i> —Outer door. | <i>b</i> —Bæjar door. | <i>c</i> —Threshold. | <i>d</i> —Inner gangway. |
| <i>e</i> —Outer gangway. | <i>f</i> —Stofa. | <i>g</i> —Skáli. | <i>h</i> —Bath-room. |
| <i>j</i> —Fire house. | <i>k</i> —Fuel house. | <i>l</i> —Barn. | <i>m</i> —Store-room. |
| | <i>n</i> —Smithy. | <i>o</i> —Cowhouse. | |

after a more or less lengthy sojourn here. As affording support to this view it is noteworthy that the two first forms are those which chiefly prevail in Scandinavia.

Contrary to the opinion of so eminent a writer as Sir George Dasent, it is to be noted that the *stofa*, and not the *skáli*, was the main room (*hús*) of the farm, and the word is still preserved in all modern Scandinavian dialects.

It was the sitting and eating room, where men and women sat at their work in the daytime, though there was also a separate women's room (*dyngja*). Occasionally, to accommodate an overflow of guests, it was used as a sleeping chamber, and possibly this gave rise to its misdescription. In the "Laxdæla Saga" it is recorded that in the *stofa* at Helgafell about 200 people were entertained at a wedding feast in the year 1010, and at Tunga, Asgrim Elliðagrimsson entertained 100 guests, with Flosi, on their way to the Althing in 1012, the guests sitting in four rows. The *stofa* at Flugumýr was 26 ells by 12, and held between 100 and 200 persons. As reception and entertainment room, the *stofa* was the most elegant apartment in the house, and its wainscot and ceiling were often carved or painted, the subjects being the deeds of famous heroes or episodes from Scandinavian mythology. The walls were also often decked with tapestry and woven work. The tapestry was variously described, that at the daís end being called *bjór*. The material varied according to the means of the owner—wool, silk, skins, etc. The fireplace was made with a number of flat stones on edge, in rectangular shape, enclosing the fire, which burnt on the earth. There were several fires, occupying the middle of the floor lengthwise, and therefore called *lang-eldar* (long-fires). In "Gísla Saga Súrssonar" mention is made of seven fires burning in the same room.

A wooden raised floor (*þallr*) ran along the two side walls and sometimes along one end of the *stofa*, and benches were placed on it. This was conveniently arranged to keep the places where people sat cleaner than the lower part of the floor, generally overspread with ashes from the fires. When the *þallr* was placed at one end of the *stofa* it was devoted to the use of women, when not engaged in the women's room (*dyngja*). The high-seat (*öndvegi*) was between the two middle uprights, and was capable of seating more than one person. One of these, probably the one to the right of the entrance, was the higher *öndvegi*, where the master of the house sat; while opposite

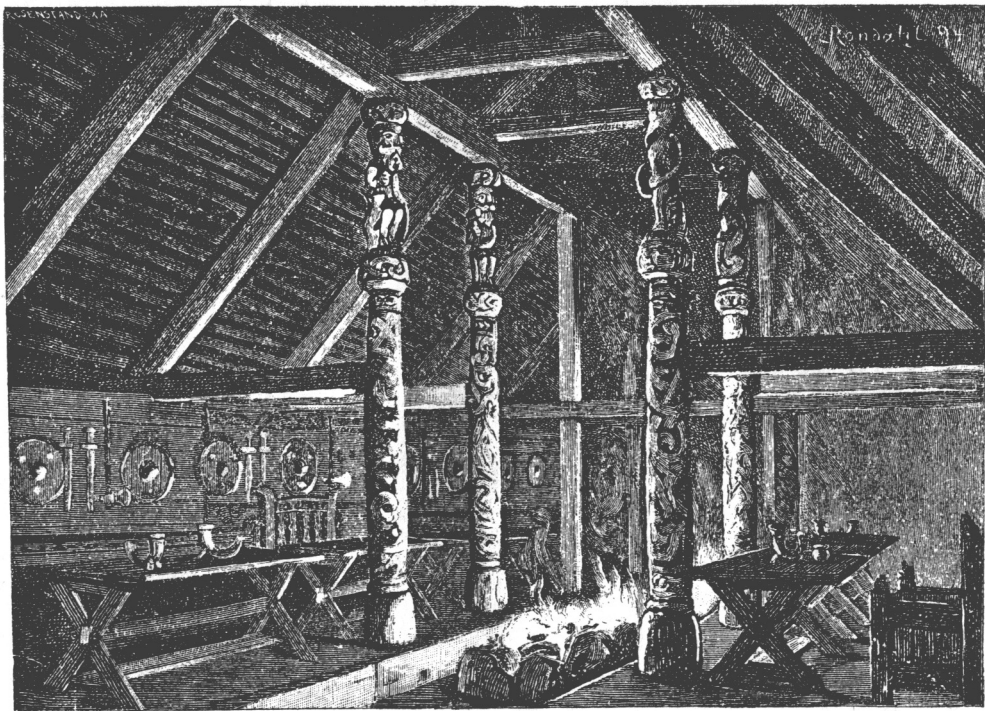


FIG. 10.—INTERIOR OF STOVA OR HALL,
Seen from the upper long pall, over against the high-seat.
(From Guðmundsson's "Den Islandske Bolig i Fristats-Tiden.")

him, in the lower *öndvegi*, the foremost of his guests was placed. The inner uprights, forming the pillars of the high-seat, were elaborately carved with likenesses of gods, and held to be holy.

When meals were taken, many small tables were placed on the edge of the wooden flooring, in front of the benches. The wine or beer-vat, and the table on which horns or beakers stood, was placed at one end of the room.

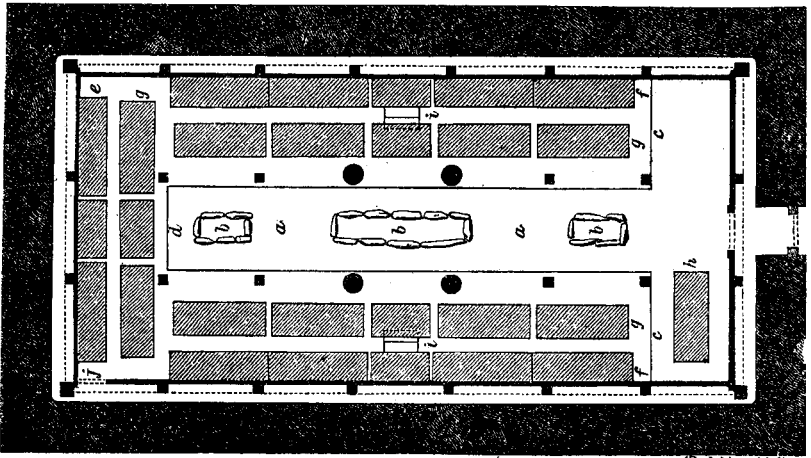


FIG. II.—PLAN OF INTERIOR OF STOFA.

aa—Empty space. bbb—Fire-steads. cc—Long palls. d—Cross pall.
 e—Cross benches. ff—Long benches. ggg—Tables.
 h—Sideboard. ii—Tables. j—Side door.

(From Guðmundsson's "Íslandske Bolig," etc.)

At first the *skáli* was the name of any house, especially the primitive and temporary buildings of the first settlers. A later arrangement consisted of a combination of *eldhús* (kitchen) and *skáli*. After 1000 the *skáli* meant only the sleeping room. Along the side walls ran a raised earthen or wooden flooring (*set*), fenced off in front at times by carved planks (*set-stokkar*). The *set* was divided into sleeping places. At one end of the *skáli* were one or more locker-beds or bedrooms (*lok-hvÍla*, Eng., lockers), usually reserved for the master or mistress or important

guests. Weapons were hung on the walls over the resting places of the respective sleepers. During the day the *skáli* was empty, or occupied only by the thralls or lower servants.

The *eldhús* was the room in which the food was prepared. In the early and primitive times it also served as a sleeping room, but about 1000 it had ceased to be used for that purpose. Before that date it was therefore larger, and was provided with sitting and sleeping places between the inner and outer uprights, on the raised floor. The fireplace (*eldstó*) was in the middle of the floor. On the smaller farms this room was much used by the family. It was customary for men coming home from work to dry their clothes there, and rest while the meal was being cooked. At the great yearly festivals, temporary wooden halls, called *skáli* or *eldhús*, were built; they were also often beautifully carved, as at Hjardarholt, where one of the guests composed a whole poem on the Norse myths, the incidents of which were carved or painted on the walls and pillars. The work was of such a character that it was thought the interior looked even more magnificent when the tapestry was not hung up. There was so much space between wainscot and wall in the *eldhús*, as also in the *skáli*, that an outlaw could be hidden there for a lengthened period, unknown to the people of the farm, and the Sagas afford several instances of persons so hiding (see "Ljósvetninga Saga," xv. 223; "Flóamanna Saga," xix. 140).

The *dyngja* was the women's room, and was only found on the larger farms. Here the women used to sew and weave and work. They seem to have gone to the *stofa* in the evening. The *dyngja* had a raised floor (*pallr*) like the *stofa*.

The *baðstofa* was, as its name implies, a bath-room, for taking either steam or tub bath, and was only found on the larger farms.

The *búr* (bower) in Saga times always meant the larder, though subsequently it came to be used in a larger sense.

There seem to have been several *búr* on a farm, one being for milk, another for meat, etc. Curds and cream were kept there in tubs and vats. The portioning out of the food when cooked and other preliminaries for the meals were also done there. It was exclusively reserved to the women. It was the only room of the farm that had a lock.

The *skemma* was a room for keeping the winter stores of the farm, such as meat, dried fish, cheese, butter, as well as other goods, clothes, saddles, etc. Sometimes traders were allowed to keep their goods in it, and trade with them. A large farm had several *skemmas*, and they were often situated apart from the dwellings. Sometimes an underground passage united them with the main house. In emergencies they were used as sleeping rooms, especially in summer.

In the *smiðja* (smithy) were made weapons, scythes for cutting grass, and other metal appliances.

The *naust* (shipshed) was a structure of turf and stones with a wooden roof, which served both as the hithe for the ships in winter and as the shipyard where boats were built or repaired.

Other of the outbuildings were the cowhouse (*fjós*), the sheephouse (*fjárhús*), the barn (*hlaða*) for the storage of hay, and the stable (*hesthús*), which were always built of turf and stones.

The sheepfold (*kvíar*) was generally a rectangular structure built of earth and stones, and without a roof, and was only used for milking the ewes in during summer time.

The foregoing extremely elementary outlines will doubtless enable the reader to grasp the value of Mr. Erlingsson's labours, and the contribution which they afford towards the solution of the interesting problems connected therewith. It need hardly be added that they are in the main founded on Dr. V. Guðmundsson's work, "House-Building in Iceland in Saga Times," 1889, which, since its appearance, has been recognised as the standard work on the subject.

AN ACCOUNT

OF THE ANTIQUARIAN TRAVELS AND RESEARCHES IN ICELAND OF

MR. THORSTEINN ERLINGSSON,

IN THE SUMMER OF 1895.

PART I.—ITINERARY.

ON May 26th, 1895, I was commissioned by Dr. Valtýr Guðmundsson, Professor of the University of Copenhagen, to undertake certain antiquarian researches in Iceland, in order, as far as possible, to answer a series of questions sent him by Miss Cornelia Horsford. I at once began preparations for my journey, and on June 1st left Copenhagen on the steamer *Laura*, bound for Iceland, arriving at Reykjavík on the 11th of the same month. From the 12th to the 19th was occupied in Reykjavík in making the necessary travelling and other preparations, and in gleaning information regarding routes and localities. On the 20th of June I made my definite start from Reykjavík for the eastern districts, Árnessýsla and Rangárvallasýsla, where I considered I had the best prospects of obtaining favourable results.

An examination of the architecture and arrangements of old farmhouses was my first and most important task, and Dr. Guðmundsson and myself thought that questions connected with them were the most likely to be solved through my researches. We therefore agreed that I should try to unearth the ruins and remains of such as I found in the best state of preservation. Such ruins exist in Iceland, both in the inhabited and the uninhabited districts. Those in the inhabited portions of the country

are, it is true, easier of access, but have the disadvantage of having been nearly always disturbed. Some are, indeed, nearly erased; others are dug into and built on, so that only bits of walls and corners remain, and an examination of these would therefore, obviously, hardly lead to any satisfactory results. These considerations induced the final decision to undertake the more difficult search of the uninhabited districts, and in particular of two of these which are especially rich in old ruins, the Þjórárdalur (see *Árbók I. F.*, 1884-5, p. 38) and Hvammar, the latter a district as yet unexamined, being a wind-swept moorland on the left bank of the Hvítá, south-east of Bláfell. In fulfilment of the determination come to, on June 20th I crossed the Hellisheiði, my destination being the farm of Selfoss, lying beyond Ölfusá, which I reached at midnight. On the 21st I continued my travelling north-east as far as the farm of Áhraun in Skeið, where a violent rain-storm kept me weatherbound till the next day. On the 22nd, about 3 p.m., the storm having abated sufficiently, I made an examination of the grave-mound of Helgahóll, which is in this neighbourhood. According to "*Landnámabók*," Helgi hrausti lies buried here. A superficial examination, however, led to the conclusion that an examination would be fruitless of result, the earth having been removed at some previous period, and nothing but a disordered heap of stones remained.

On the 24th I left Áhraun, with the intention of making a search in the extensive fens of the neighbourhood, and in particular of the ancient river-bed of the Ós, a river formed or regulated by man. The result of my examination of the whole of the Ós was only the discovery of some twenty year old diggings of no importance. At night I reached the farm of Fjall in a heavy downpour of rain, where I decided to await better weather, as several things of interest for my researches were to be found in this neighbourhood. On the 25th I crossed Hvítá, in order to visit the old bishop's see of Skálholt (Skálaholt), where

I had hoped to find some interesting ruins. In this I was completely disappointed, for all the extensive old ruins have been partly destroyed by the erection of new houses, and partly swept away by the creation of large cabbage gardens. All research being fruitless, I returned to Fjall again, where I was detained the whole of the following day by a terrific storm, which raged so that I could not go out of doors. The 27th was spent in looking for the grave-mound of Brúnahaugur, at the foot of Vörðufell, near Fjall, mentioned in "Landnámabók." I also examined all the other places pointed out by tradition, which, however, I found were, most of them, merely heaps of detritus from the glacial period. The so-called Einbúi alone I reserved for a later examination, as on the present occasion I was unable to get men to dig it out.

On the 28th I travelled in a northerly direction through Hrunamannahreppur. For this journey horses and a guide were required. And I had, besides, two great difficulties. Only a few people, I found, knew the various sites of the old farmsteads, and a guide for these uninhabited tracts could not be got, as everybody had his hands full, either with spring travelling (*vorlestir*), customary in Iceland, or with driving the sheep into the mountain pastures (*fráfærur*). After several fruitless attempts to hire horses and a guide, I set out to Galtafell alone, which I reached that night.

I waited at Galtafell till after midday on the 29th, in hopes of securing the services of two men who, the evening before, had given me hope of being able to accompany me. Finally, as they did not come, I went on to the parsonage at Hrúni, where I decided to wait till twelve of the next day, instead of going on to Hvammar direct. Here, likewise, horses were not to be got, although I offered a man from six to seven kroner a day for himself and one horse.

In the afternoon of the 30th, one of my messengers brought the welcome news that at the northernmost farm of the district, Túngufell, I was promised a good guide

and a horse. I at once set off, and reached the farm of Skipholt in the evening, and about midday on the 1st of July Túngufell was reached. Here I was compelled to wait the whole of the next day, in order to rest the horse of my guide, which had only just come in from a journey. I utilised the time to get one of my own horses shod and my saddles repaired.

On the 3rd, not having succeeded in getting a horse for another guide, we two set off at five in the morning for the mountains, equipped with a tent, provisions for three days, and the necessary digging tools. At seven in the evening we reached the nearest ruin, the so-called Rógs-hólar, where, however, nothing was left for us to do, as only a few scattered stones remained of the old farm.

Some time was spent in searching for the ruins of the farm Stangarnes, without result. They have probably been carried away by the river Stangará, which here joins the Hvítá. Thence we went on to the site where the farm Laugar had been situated, at which place we arrived at 9.30 p.m. The site, the so-called Laugaþýfi, is a grassy heath running alongside the Hvítá. My guide had never seen the ruins himself, and only one man was said to know the site. Accordingly we had to make an examination of this extensive hilly tract, and, after a careful search of two hours, the ruins were found on a bare gravel bank from which all plant-growth and mould had been blown away. It was now midnight, and we pitched our tent on the grass. The glaciers were pink and their summits flushed deep red in the midnight sun, and we slept little with this wonderful scenery in sight.

On the 4th we were up again at 4 a.m., and continued our digging. But the stones were so far apart that we had to look at them a long time before we could form any opinion of the shape of the ruins. I tried to photograph them, but as I could not get a good view of the whole of them, and should only have got the outlines of a hill 600 feet long and 300 feet broad, I desisted from this useless attempt. We had great difficulty in unearthing

and laying bare the ruins, and not till about 5 p.m. was I able to measure and sketch them. But I could not fill in all details in my plan, as the lower part of the wall was swept away in places, and its form therefore doubtful. When we had done, we proceeded to the next ruin, Mörþúfur.

My guide knew this ruin, as he had seen it several times, and its site was, he said, on a grassy tract by Stangará. We found the place, but neither the grass tract nor the ruin. They had simply been carried away by the little river in the last two years.

We proceeded to the next farm, Þórarinsstaðir. Here we saw the walls of a ruin jutting out of a high hillock. The remainder of the ruin was covered by a layer of earth ten feet thick. We dug into the uncovered part of the ruin, which I measured and sketched. As my guide had to be at home by midday of the following day, we refrained from attempting to clear away the hillock, which would have required the labour of both of us for at least three days.

We knew of no other ruins here, and therefore set out from this interesting district at 7 p.m. At about 11.30 p.m. a storm burst on us, and in hot haste, travelling as fast as the horses would go, we reached Túngufell at 5 a.m.

When I got up in the afternoon, I heard the welcome news that the well-known antiquary, Mr. Brynjólfur Jónsson, had arrived at the farm the day before from a journey he was making in this district for the Northern Society of Antiquaries. I recognised that, with his great local and antiquarian knowledge, he would be very useful to me, and therefore asked him whether he would be my guide in the Þjórsárdalur, as its ruins were better known to him than anybody. He readily assented, and after completing our journals we set out.

In the evening of the 6th we arrived at the parsonage of Stóri Núpur. On the 7th we proceeded to Ásólfstaðir, the nearest farm to Þjórsárdalur, where we stayed overnight. Here, again, I met with the same difficulties as

formerly experienced. Hardly a man, and no horse, was to be had in the whole parish. Accordingly I decided to make only a short stay this time in the Þjórsárdalur, spending the 8th and the 9th in preliminary examinations. I found that of twelve ruins only five were likely to yield anything of interest, as not only every trace of a building but the very foundations of the others were completely destroyed, nothing but a few scattered stones remaining. Of these five ruins, with the means at my disposal, I could only attempt one. I chose Sámstaðir, which was easiest of access. Rows of stones in the sand indicated more or less the form of the ruin, but as it was situated on the top of a hillock they would have been invisible in a photograph. After working hard with my guide for two days, from morning till night, I succeeded in unearthing the ruin. I took a sketch of it, and measured it very carefully.

On the 10th we left Ásólsstaðir, and reached the next farm, Hagi, early on the following morning, where we were shown an old, grass-covered ruin, called Snjálaugar-tóttir. As its outlines were unusually clear, though it could not be photographed on account of the high grass, I decided, with the help of two men, to dig it out. In the course of the day we dug three holes, in all 16 feet long, 6 feet broad, and 4 to 7 feet deep, and thus ascertained that the walls were so imperfect that neither length nor width could be found. As I knew of a far better preserved ruin, I decided not to waste more time on this.

On the 11th Mr. Brynjólfur Jónsson left me to continue his researches elsewhere. I crossed the river Þjórsá, in order to examine two *dómhringar* (doom rings) there. Mr. Jónsson assured me they were far better preserved than the one in Hegranes, mentioned in *Árbók*, 1888-92, pp. 112-113, which he had himself seen and partly examined. Besides, new houses, which prevented all research, had been built on the Hegranes site, while the two others had not been disturbed. I therefore decided to examine them, and with the owner of Flagvelta, a neighbouring farm, as my guide, I crossed Þjórsá in the evening to

Árnes, which is surrounded by the river. Having photographed and measured the *dómhringur* there, and made sure that farther examination of it was useless, I went back to the farm, where I spent the night.

On the 12th I had three men at work, and photographed, sketched, and measured another *dómhringur* at Þingholt. I had it dug out to ascertain its form. Thereafter I continued my journey, and arrived at Reyðarvatn in Rangárvellir at night.

On the 13th I went on to Hlíðarendi to see the *geilar* (ditches). On the way I searched for the famous grave-mounds at Knafahólar, but all traces of them had, I found, disappeared. In the evening I reached Hlíðarendakot, close to Hlíðarendi.

On the 15th I examined the *geilar*. As I could not photograph this uneven, one mile long declivity, I sketched it.

On the 16th I sketched and examined a little dry river-bed near to Hlíðarendakot. I also visited the site of an old dam which formerly existed here, but which had been carried away by the river Þverá. I had preserved so good a remembrance of it that when I sketched it from my memory everybody recognised it.

On the 17th I left Hlíðarendi on my return journey, and reached Breiðabólstaður. On the way I inspected and sketched Meyjarhóll, which is said to be an old grave-mound.

On the 18th I reached Oddi, where, owing to a gale and indisposition, I stayed for the day.

On the 19th I crossed the Þjórsá on the way to the farm of Loptsstaðir, where I arrived at midnight.

On the 20th I photographed and measured the remains of the grave-mounds at Haugavað, mentioned in *Árbók*, 1887, pp. 42 ff., and sketched, as well as I could, their original form, according to the descriptions of people who had known them.

Thereafter I proceeded to Þingvellir, in order to look for traces of the regulation of the bed of the Öxará which

is mentioned in the Sagas, as well as river-walls, etc. At night I reached Hjálmholt. Next day I walked to the farm of Áhraun.

On the 22nd I arrived at Búrfell in Grímsnes.

I continued my journey on the 23rd to Skógarkot, near Þingvellir.

On the 24th I examined the banks of the Öxará, but found no traces of any regulation of its bed, nor could any traces be seen of where it might have been made. Reykjavík was reached at 1 a.m.

My next long journey, to Rafnseyri, I had hoped to make by boat; but, as these only go once a month, there was nothing for it but to travel by land, on horseback, along the mountainous west coast of Iceland, a difficult task, for the roads are at best but very poor, and often non-existent. From the 25th of July to the 3rd of August I was engaged in making my preparations, my horses being meanwhile rested. On the 4th of August, in the afternoon, I began my journey, and slept at night at Reykir in Mosfellssveit.

On the 5th I reached Þyrill on the shores of the Hvalfjörður. During the greater part of the rest of my journey I had to have a guide, as the roads are very difficult and dangerous for strangers. Up till now I had more or less known the roads, and been my own guide.

On the 6th I arrived at the parsonage of Hestur in Borgarfjörður.

In the afternoon of the 7th I inspected some old ruins at Hvítárvellir, but found them of no interest.

On the 8th a friend was my guide across Hvítá to Neðranes. From there I hired a guide for the Mýrar, and arrived at Dalsmynni in Norðurárdalur at 11.30 p.m.

On the 9th I could only get a guide for the first part of my day's journey, and had to find my own way along the steep and mountainous Brattabrekka. That day I discovered in the mountains a hitherto unknown ruin of an old farm. I decided, however, to let a closer examination wait till I

had seen all the olden time ruins, and could determine which of them best deserved investigation. At night I reached Sauðafell in Dalir.

On the 10th I reached Hjarðarholt in Laxárdalur, the Sheriff Bjarnarson kindly lending me horses and being my guide for part of the way.

On the 11th I walked by the Svínadalur mountain road to Hvítadalur in Saurbær.

On the 12th it blew a furious northerly gale, which had been gaining strength the two foregoing days, which compelled me to stop in the afternoon at Ólafsdalur in Gilsfjörður.

On the 13th I reached Bær in Króksfjörður.

On the 14th I had to wait till past midday for fresh horses, for the difficult travelling of the latter days had so tired my own horses that on the day before they had thrown themselves down with their baggage so soon as we made a stop. Finally fresh horses were procured at the farm of Hríshóll, near Bær, which I retained for the rest of the journey. I reached Hjallar, near the Þorska-fjörður, at night.

On the 15th I journeyed on foot over extremely bad roads along the Djúpafjörður and the Gufufjörður to Klettur near the Kollafjörður. Here I found it necessary to hire a third horse, as the two others could not possibly last all the way.

On the 16th I crossed the trackless Þingmannaheiði with the help of a guide, starting at nine in the morning and arriving by moonlight at Brjánslækur near Vatnsfjörður at two on the following morning.

On the same day, after resting, I journeyed across the Fossheiði, not without considerable hardship and difficulty, with the horses, and reached the farm of Foss in the Fossdalur, near the Arnarfjörður.

On the 18th I went first to Bildudalur. Thence I crossed the two miles broad Arnarfjörður to Rafnseyri, and thus, after thirteen days' travelling, reaching my objective at last, namely, the ruins of the shipshed at Rafnseyri. I expected

I should need to stay at least two days here and dig, but found that it was no more than a common shipshed ruin, all the details of which were clear without digging, and which was not likely to yield so good results as some other ruins I had seen during the latter days. The ruin was, besides, larger and more difficult to dig than others, and much younger and less characteristic. I therefore decided not to dig, but attempted to photograph the place. The grass, however, hid so much of it that I decided to sketch the ruin and take measurements. This done, I crossed the fiord during the night and arrived at Bildudalur at 2 a.m.

On the 19th I journeyed over the Fossheiði to the farm of Tungumúli.

On the 20th I reached Brjánslækur in a violent gale, but this did not deter me from making an examination of the Flókanaust. This shipshed was built by the first settler of Iceland, and is better preserved and easier to dig than the one at Rafnseyri. I photographed and sketched it and began to dig it myself, with the help of the clergyman, as I could get no one to do the work that day.

On the 21st I continued the work with two men, and sketched the ruin after digging it out.

On the 22nd I crossed Þingmannaheiði, and reached Skálmarnes on the Skálmarfjörður in the evening.

On the 23rd I travelled to Djúpadalur on the Djúpa-fjörður, and on the 24th reached Bær, and the next day Ólafsdalur.

On the 26th I arrived at Leysingjastaðir in Sælingsdalur.

On the 27th I went on from Leysingjastaðir to Fellströnd, where I had heard of interesting ruins, a very old shipshed, two forts (*virki*), an old farm, etc. I first came to the parsonage Hvammar, where the parson showed me the so-called Auðarnaust and a small grassy eminence called *virki*, which we examined that evening. We soon found that its extent and form were no longer discernible. It seemed to be an outhouse for horses. (See under *Forts.*)

On the 28th I examined the apparently well-preserved ruin of the very old farm Ljótólfsstaðir in Fellsskógar. Here I hoped to get new information about the arrangement of old farms, etc. I found that locally a little ruin was called a "*virki*." I engaged four men to dig, but they made little headway that day, as the site was overgrown with low birches, and big stones appeared underground. I slept at the farm of Staðarfell.

On the 29th I continued to dig, and in the afternoon got the following results. The whole ruin was so undermined by water that not one foot of the walls remained, still less a trace of the houses. To sketch it would have taken from two to four days' clearance. I desisted from this, as no result could be expected. I could not photograph it on account of the high birches. The supposed fort I found to be well-preserved ruins of a bath-room, rather than of a kitchen. I had it dug out wholly, and measured and sketched it.

On the 30th I proceeded to Sælingsdalur. Some old ruins there were examined in the course of the day, but nothing of interest was found. In the evening the shipshed was measured and sketched.

On the 31st I arrived at Hjarðarholt.

On the 1st of September I went from Hjarðarholt to Stóra Vatnshorn in Haukadalur to examine the ruins of Eiríkur rauði's (Eric the Red's) farm. He was the father of Leifur, the discoverer of Vínland. "*Landnámabók*" expressly says that Eric built his farm there, and the place has never been examined. Sunday afternoon I hired men to dig. I slept on the farm Vatnshorn.

On the 2nd I set to work with four men, having sketched and photographed the place. The digging continued through that day and the following with five men, when the ruin was dug out. It was so situated that my photos of it could give no idea of it, so I had to measure and sketch it carefully. I also had a little ruin of a bath-room or kitchen, belonging to the farm, dug out, and sketched it.

On the 4th I finished my sketches and went on to

Sauðafell. In the evening I found on a neighbouring farm, Erpsstaðir, an unknown ruin of a very old farm. I therefore stayed overnight at Sauðafell, and prepared to dig next day.

On the 5th, as the faint traces on the grassy plain would have been invisible in a photograph, I began to dig the ruin out, which I succeeded in doing with the help of two men the same day, whereupon I sketched it.

On the 6th I heard of a dam or river-wall in the neighbourhood, in Hörðudalur, and got a guide to take me there. After crossing a very steep mountain I reached the dale and found this dam. What remained of it was only four feet in length, and its age, as I ascertained from a neighbouring farmer who took part in its erection, not more than fifty years. It has again been carried away by the river. I returned, and at night reached Breiðabólstaður in Sökkólfssdalur.

On the 7th I crossed Brattabrekka and arrived at Dalsmynni at midday. I had hired in advance three men to dig out the above-mentioned ruin in Bjarnardalur, and at once set to work. We worked all that day and until 12 a.m. On the 8th I ascertained its form and size and sketched its outlines, but found further digging useless, as it was a ruin of a much younger farm than I expected, about 1500.

On the 8th I reached Neðranes, and, crossing the Hvítá, arrived at Langholt.

On the 9th I went to Grund in Skorradalur. Here I was weatherbound by a heavy downpour of rain for the rest of the day.

On the 10th I arrived at Þyrill, which I left next day for Reynivellir in Kjós, and finally reached Reykjavík on the 12th.

In spite of this extensive travelling, and of my examination and inspection of over 200 old ruins of various kinds, I had not yet solved the task before me. By word of mouth and through letters I had heard of interesting antiquities I had not seen, such as dams, artificial river-

beds, etc. I had not found out what was to be learnt of the arrangement of the old farms, and as I knew of the well-preserved, though not easily accessible, ruins in Þjórsárdalur, there was nothing for it but to go there again, in spite of rough weather and the lateness of the summer.

Consequently, on September 13th and 14th I prepared for the new journey.

On September 15th I left Reykjavík, and arrived at the farm Kröggólfstaðir in Ölfus in a terrible rain-storm.

The weather clearing, I reached Áhraun on the 16th.

On the 17th I arrived at Fjall at midday. Here I made preparations during the day for my stay in the desolate Þjórsárdalur. I heard that nearly all the able-bodied men on the farms next to Þjórsárdalur had gone into the mountains to gather sheep, and was obliged to hire four men in Fjall.

Having provided myself with everything likely to be of use and provisions for a week, on September 18th I set off, and in the evening reached Skriðufell by Þjórsárdalur. I had here beforehand engaged a man with local knowledge, partly for work, partly to guide us across the rivers running along Þjórsárdalur, as they were swollen much by the rains.

On the 19th we examined Skeljastaðir, where one of the chief missionaries of Iceland, the Icelander Hjalti Skeggjason, lived about 1000. Human remains were evidences of the existence of the church which, according to the Sagas, he built there. Photography here, as in so many other places, was of no avail, as the rows of stones which indicated the form of the houses could only be discovered by digging in the sand. After a long examination and hard work we found in the afternoon that water had undermined the greater part of the ruins and washed the stones away, and the loose sand covered the whole so that it seemed to be undisturbed. We found in the sand a well-preserved kitchen, interesting and instructive. We dug it out, and I measured and sketched it. Later in the

day, when we had finished this and re-covered the old human bones with gravel and stones, such a violent gale with rain set in that it was only with the greatest difficulty that we could pitch our tent. But after one hour's desperate struggles to keep the tent above our heads, we at last gave in and took it down. As there was no possibility of fording the rivers in safety in the dark, we sought shelter in a cave, one mile distant, known to our guide. After wandering two hours in the storm and the rain and the pitch-dark night we reached it. We made ourselves as comfortable as it was possible in this cave, and fortunately our horses found a good shelter with plenty of grass near it. For the next twenty-four hours the storm only increased in strength, and the rain poured down in torrents. We owed our safety in this desert to the cave, and remained in it.

On the 21st the storm abated sufficiently for us to leave the cave. After the dangerous fording of a river, I examined another ruin, Bergólfsstaðir, where I found nothing of interest. Yet it was here I dug up a peculiar white stuff in the ground. This drew my attention to the dairy (*skyrbúur*) mentioned in several Sagas, but as yet undiscovered. In the third ruin, that of Lambhöfði, I was fortunate enough to find a comparatively well-preserved dairy. I found the floor and the lowest stone row of the walls in good condition under the sand. I had the walls dug out, and sketched and tried to photograph them. In the evening we left the valley in torrents of rain, and spent the night in a hayloft at Skriðufell.

On the 22nd I worked at the best-preserved ruin of Þjórsárdalur, Áslákstunga innri. As some stones were visible, from which I could conjecture the form of the ruin, I used one moment's dry weather in the early morning to photograph the place. My men worked hard this day and the next (the 23rd), when we succeeded in digging the ruin out. As the whole could not be photographed from any point of vantage, I had to take it in two parts. The interior of the ruin, on account of the

high walls, did not appear on the photos. I therefore took a third one of the part containing the fireplaces. I had also sketched each part as it was unearthed.

On the 24th I sent two of my men away, and with the three remaining did some work of less importance necessary for my sketches and plans. Mr. Brynjólfur Jónsson now partly superintended the work, as I was seized with fever in the course of the day and compelled to lie by.

On the 25th, after Mr. Jónsson had taken some measurements, we left Skriðufell, and reached Fjall in the evening.

On the 26th I was laid up in bed the whole day.

On the 27th I made a tour of inspection of the dykes and ditches and hills, of which there are few in this lowland, the largest one in Iceland. Guided by Mr. Jónsson, I was fortunate enough to discover an old, small river-bed, which I examined and sketched. The rest was only modern.

On the 28th I inspected a large river-wall near the Ölfusá. It was only twenty years old, and there was no trace of an older one under the new one. I also examined the above-named Einbúi, and found it to be merely one of the common stone-heaps from the Ice Age.

On the 29th I left for Reykjavík, where I arrived on the 1st of October.

Of the 218 places set down in my diary as examined or inspected by me, I have here only named those on which I spent time or money, or both, in examining them. I visited all places in the south and west where I could expect any results, so far as such can be gained in the course of one summer. On the whole, I hope my labours have resulted in solving the task entrusted to me, so far as it can be solved in Iceland.

Respectfully,

ÞORSTEINN ERLINGSSON.

Copenhagen,

April 11th, 1896.

PART II.—RESEARCHES

TO ANSWER MISS CORNELIA HORSFORD'S QUESTIONS.

QUESTION I.

LONG HOUSE.

1. A photograph of the ground before it has been disturbed.
2. A ground plan, showing fireplaces and any other arrangement of stonework, with measurements.
3. A description of the condition of the ruin and the materials used.

By "long house" I understand an Icelandic farmhouse, or the so-called old "*skáli*" mentioned in this essay.

The farmhouse ruins I have seen in Iceland, or which are known and described by others, have, in the main, two forms—

A or *Long house*, and

B or *Square house*.

The last named is, however, quite exceptional. I describe them each by itself.

Of ruins of the FORM A the following were the best preserved :—

1.—*Áslákstunga hin innri* (cf. *Árbók*, 1884-85, p. 47),

in Þjórsárdalur. The farmhouse stands at the foot of a high ridge, on the river Sandá. It stands in a line with the ridge. Its long frontage with the main door turns to the river, south-east. The whole ridge is mere sand and gravel, with not a blade of grass. The uppermost stonework of the wall is bare, and clearly indicates the form of the ruin. Plate I. shows the ground before it was dis-

turbed. It is taken from the river bank. The ruin is in front and the ridge in the background.

Plate II. gives the ground plan. Here all measurements are as exact as it is possible and given in metres. The wall (*m*) was only vaguely indicated, as the surface stones were partly disarranged, partly carried away. The door (*a*), the entrance to the farmhouse, could with some certainty be fixed as 1.85 metres broad. It leads to a room (*A*), which, doubtless, must be the *stofa* (cf. Dr. V. Guðmundsson's "Private Houses in Iceland in Saga



PLATE I.—RUIN OF ÁSLÁKSTUNGA HIN INNRI, UNDISTURBED.

Times," p. 171). This room is 20.61 metres long, but its breadth varies. At the gable (*n*) it is 5.2 m., but at the door (*r*) only 3.76 m. Three stones (*bbb*) here seem to be traces of a partition wall. This is rendered more probable by the fact that the whole space between the stones (*bbb*) and the gable (*n*) was about 25 centimetres raised above the rest of the *stofa*. In this space were also found two stones (*c'c*) which looked as if they had been exposed to fire, surrounded by a mass of cinder and charcoal. This showed it to be a fireplace, more likely, however, that of a smithy (*afl* in Icelandic) than that of a

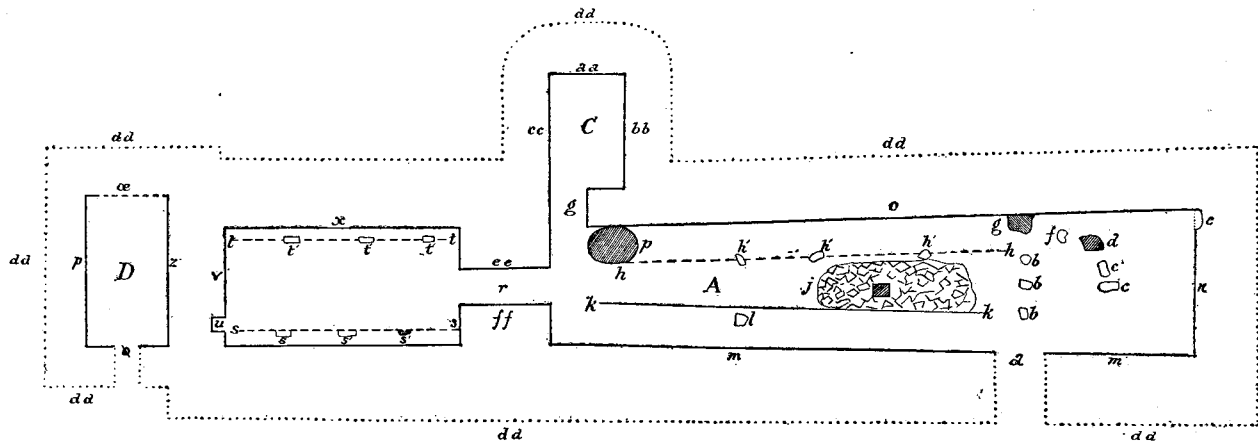


PLATE II —GROUND PLAN OF ÁSLÁKSTUNGA HIN INNRI.

Scale: $\frac{1}{8}$ th inch to the metre.

kitchen (Icel., *hlóð*). The heap of cinders also strongly pointed to this. Near the fireplace there was a square hole (*d*), 42 cm. broad by 50 cm. long and 34 cm. in depth. It was paved with stones down to the bottom, which was of clay, covered with a very hard oxydised crust, which made it probable that this hole had been used as a cistern for water, which properly belongs to every smithy. Near it was a stone (*f*) of considerable size, which hardly could have come there from the wall, but was probably meant to stand there.

At the edge of this raised space, in a line with the stones (*bbb*), there is another hole, close to the wall (*g*), length 68 cm., breadth 63 cm., depth 40 cm., paved with stones also at the bottom. As it was half filled with charcoal and ashes there was no doubt that it was another fireplace. The little nook in the corner (*e*) has probably been formed by the rest of the wall falling in about a foot, but as it might originally have formed part of the house I have put it down here. As neither burnt stones, cinder, charcoal or ashes were found in it, it could not be a fireplace.

Along the whole wall (*o*) in the main room the ground was raised on the average 18 to 26 cm., breadth 1.22 m. The edge of this dais is shown by the dotted line *hh*, and the three biggest stones in it by *h'h'h'*. For the rest this edge was formed by smaller stones, and stopped at the round hole (*p*). This hole seemed to be dug into the clay floor, and was entirely unpaved with stones. Length 1.68 m., breadth 1.22 m., depth 0.45 m. It is uncertain for what purpose the hole was used, but it may have been connected with the bath-room (*baðstofa*) adjoining it, to receive waste water or water sifted through the earth, as the floor of the *stofa* seems to incline towards this corner. In no other ruin have I seen a similar hole.

The whole middle of the floor from the stones (*bbb*) to the door (*r*) showed, in a space 1.22 m. to 1.52 m. broad, so distinct marks of fire, that without doubt it was used for the old long fires (*lang-eldar*, *mál-eldar*). A part of it,

4.88 m. long by 0.91 m. to 1.22 m. broad, was paved with flat stones of varying sizes (*jj*), round a little hole (*i*), length 0.30 m., breadth 0.25 m., depth 0.46 m., paved all over with stones, the bottom clay having visible marks of fire. As it was filled with charcoal and ashes there is no doubt that it was used to keep the fire up all night, to be lit next morning. The flat stones and the whole middle of the floor was blackened and reddened by the fire, and all covered over with charcoal and ashes, leaving hardly a bare spot.

The rest of the floor—*i.e.*, the space between the line (*kk*) and the wall (*m*)—was on a level with the middle, and seems to have been the walking space of the *stofa*, probably with a bench on it (*hinn úæðri bekkur*, *cf.* Dr. V. Guðmundsson, p. 184). The daïs opposite is doubtless the higher bench (*hinn æðri bekkur*, *l.c.*). The stone *l* has probably fallen out of a wall, though it may have supported a pillar. In that case there may have been a partition wall here, a wooden one as the other (*bbb*).

The door *r* leads to room *B*, which with certainty may be set down as the bedroom (*skáli*, *cf.* Dr. V. Guðmundsson, p. 206). The dotted lines (*ss* and *tt*) indicate a slightly raised floor, made of stones, on both sides. These are, of course, the usual sitting and sleeping places in the *skáli* (*set*, Dr. V. Guðmundsson, p. 210). The *tt* daïs is 15 to 20 cm. high and 35 cm. broad; *t't't'* are thin, flat stones, which stand on edge along the outward border of the daïs, and are raised 15 to 23 cm. above it. They probably indicate the length of each bed. The *ss* daïs is similar, though 46 cm. broad and 15 cm. high. One of the flat stones on edge was gone, but the hole in which it had rested was there. *U* is a fireplace built in the wall, and exactly 61 cm. each side.

I have called room *C* a bath-room, but it is doubtful if it ever was one. Its situation points to it, but as the floor bore no signs of such a use it is more probable that it was a larder (Icel., *matbúur*, *cf.* Dr. V. Guðmundsson). I have in other farmhouses found rooms where the

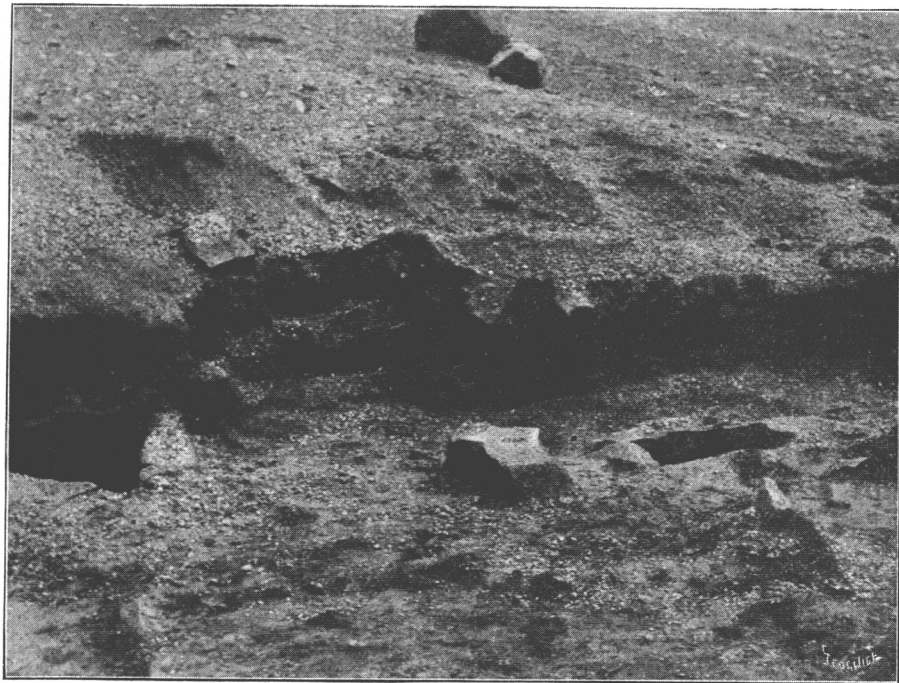


PLATE III.—ÁSLÁKSTUNGA HIN INNRI,
showing holes *d* and *g*, with stones *e*, *b* and *f*, and part of the wall *a*.

characteristics of a bathroom, pointed out by Dr. V. Guðmundsson, were unmistakable, which was not the case here.

Room *D* is doubtless one of the *útibúr* (outhouses) so often mentioned in the Sagas.

The condition of the ruin was such that the whole arrangement of the farm was perfectly clear, as the lowest part of the walls, except here and there in *mm*, was everywhere well preserved. And so were all the fireplaces. The remains of the walls dug out are in height: the gable *aa* (room *C*) 1.25 m., *bb* 1.15 m., *cc* 0.94 m., *O* (in room *A*) 0.68 m. (apart from the *daïs*), the door wall *ee* 0.52 m., the longitudinal wall *x* 0.63 m., the gable *V* 0.81 m., wall *y* on top of *daïs* 0.26 m., the door wall *ff* 0.47 m., the wall *mm* 0.0 to 0.20 m., being only one row of stones broken in places, gable *n* 0.29 m.

The material and the manner of building the walls in no way deviate from what is usual in Iceland at the present day. The inner side is built up of rough slabs, of the size of 45 to 61 cubic cm.; the outer side of alternate layers of turf and stones. The whole space between the two is filled with earth, kneaded hard. The thickness of the wall may with certainty be set down as 1.83 to 2.13 m. But this and the material of the outer part of the wall could not be fixed with exactitude, as the outer side had everywhere broken down. Several things, however, indicate that the thickness of the wall was as I have indicated by the dotted line *dd*. As I could not photograph the whole ruin I took three views of its most important parts. Plate III., taken from the wall (*m*), shows the two holes (*d* and *g*), with the stones (*c' b* and *f*) and part of the wall (*o*) which is behind.

Plate IV., taken from the middle of the wall (*m*), shows the door (*r*), with the flat stone threshold, and the whole *skáli* (*B*), though the door wall (*ff*) cast a shadow on the corner (*S*) and the nearest stone in the *daïs*. In the background are seen the sandy ridge and the mountain. Plate V. is taken at some distance from the gable (*n*), and

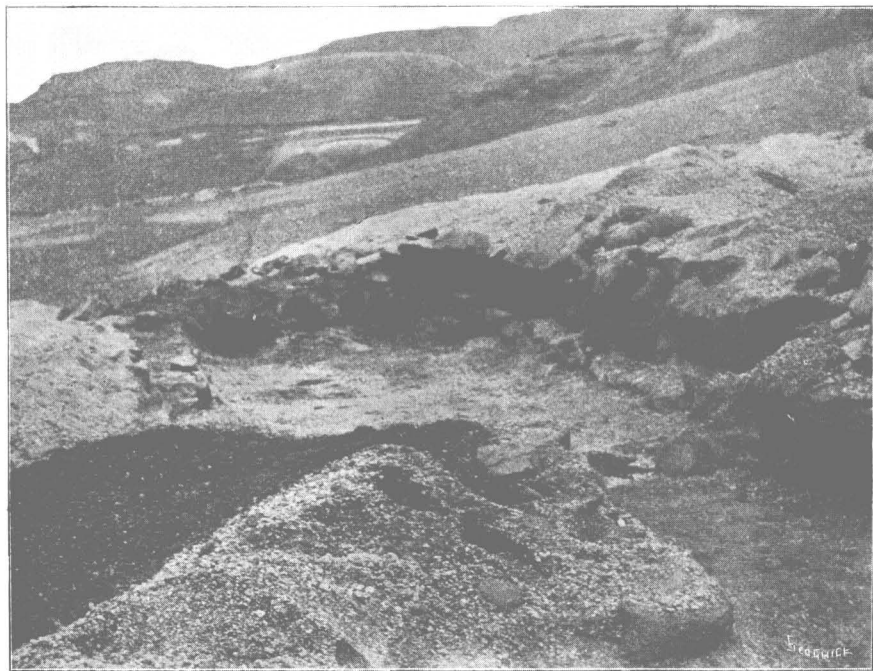
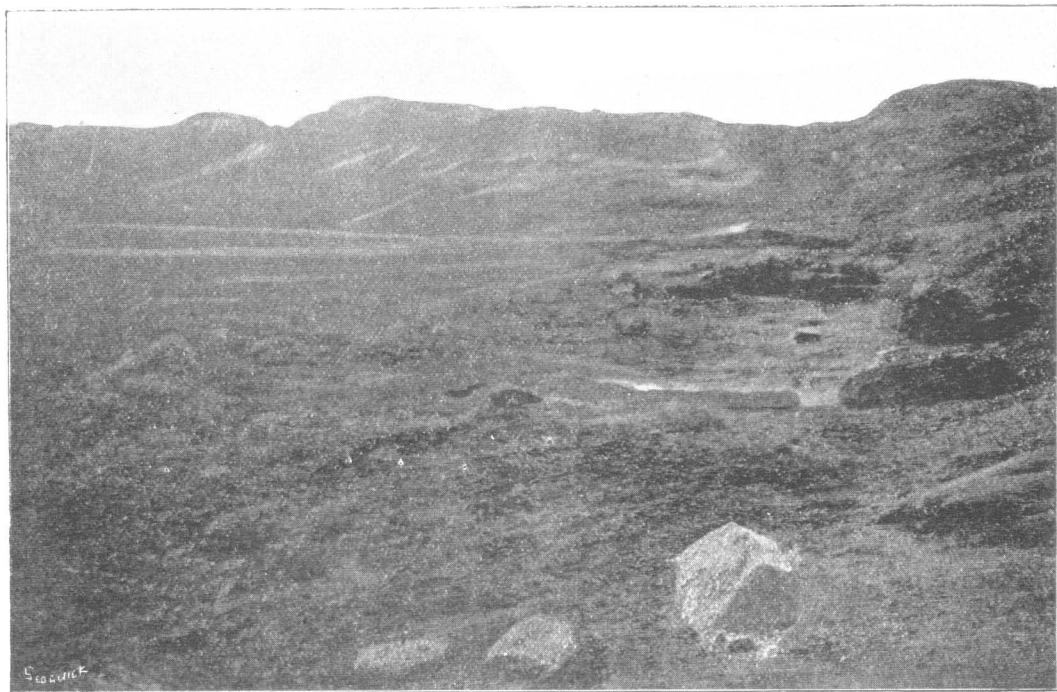


PLATE IV.—ÁSLÁKSTUNGA HIN INNRI,
showing door *r*, with stone threshold, and the Room *B*.



.. A

PLATE V.—ÁSLÁKTUNGA HIN INNRI,
showing Room A.

shows the whole of room *A*. The wall (*n*) throws into shade the part between it and the door (*a*). The door *g* is seen in the wall to the right. In front is the door *r*.

The height of the walls in *D* is: *p*, 0.78 m.; *æ*, or gable, 0.47 m. This had nearly all tumbled down, and only a little part remained. The destroyed part is indicated by a dotted line. The wall *z* is 0.27 m. high. The door *ø* and that side were so damaged that their form could only

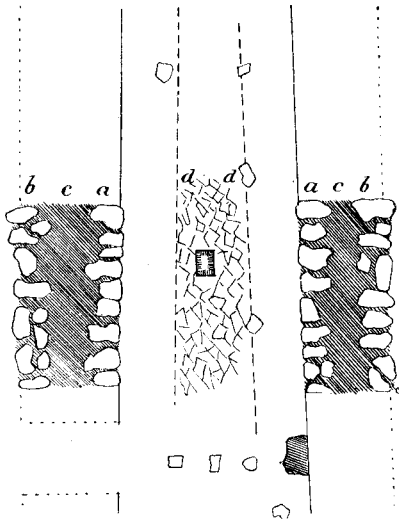


PLATE Va.—HORIZONTAL SECTIONS OF WALLS OF ÁSLÁKSTUNGA.

Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$ th inch to the metre.

be guessed. Plates *Va.* and *Vb.* show horizontal and vertical sections of walls.

I have not yet succeeded in finding out when the farm Áslákstunga hin innri ceased to be inhabited, but several things point to this having taken place before 1350.

Though this ruin shows the usual arrangement of the remains of old farmhouses preserved in Iceland, yet I will describe others of this type, of the best preserved ones, partly for the sake of comparison, partly to make

the description more full. All measures are exact, and in proportion to each other. The scale is $\frac{1}{8}$ th inch to the metre.

2.—*Sámsstaðir*

is also in Þjórsárdalur (cf. *Árbók*, 1884-85, p. 54), and only a variety of the same type. Hardly anything remained standing of the ruin. Only uncertain stone-rows indicated the form of the house, and as they were situated on the top of a ridge they could not be photographed.

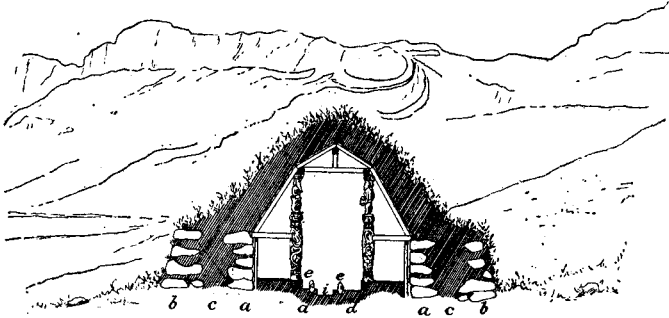


PLATE *v*b.—VERTICAL SECTION OF WALLS OF ÁSLÁKSTUNGA.

a—Inner wall. *b*—Outer wall. *c*—Turf. *d*—Roof posts.

Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$ th inch to the metre.

The ridge in question is composed of the lowest part of a steep mountain of sand and gravel, with no covering of earth. In the ruin the long side wall (*vv jj*) with the main door (*b, a, c*) turns south (cf. ground plan of *Sámsstaðir*, Plate VI.). The arrangement of the farmhouse is, on the whole, the same as that of *Áslákstunga hin innri*, though there are minor differences, which I will give in detail. The *Sámsstaðir* ruin is much smaller, as may be seen on the plan of it, which is exactly $\frac{1}{4}$ th inch to the metre. Outwardly in the door (*a*) there was a flat stone (*b*), about 46 cm. broad, and so long that it filled the doorway from post to post. It is

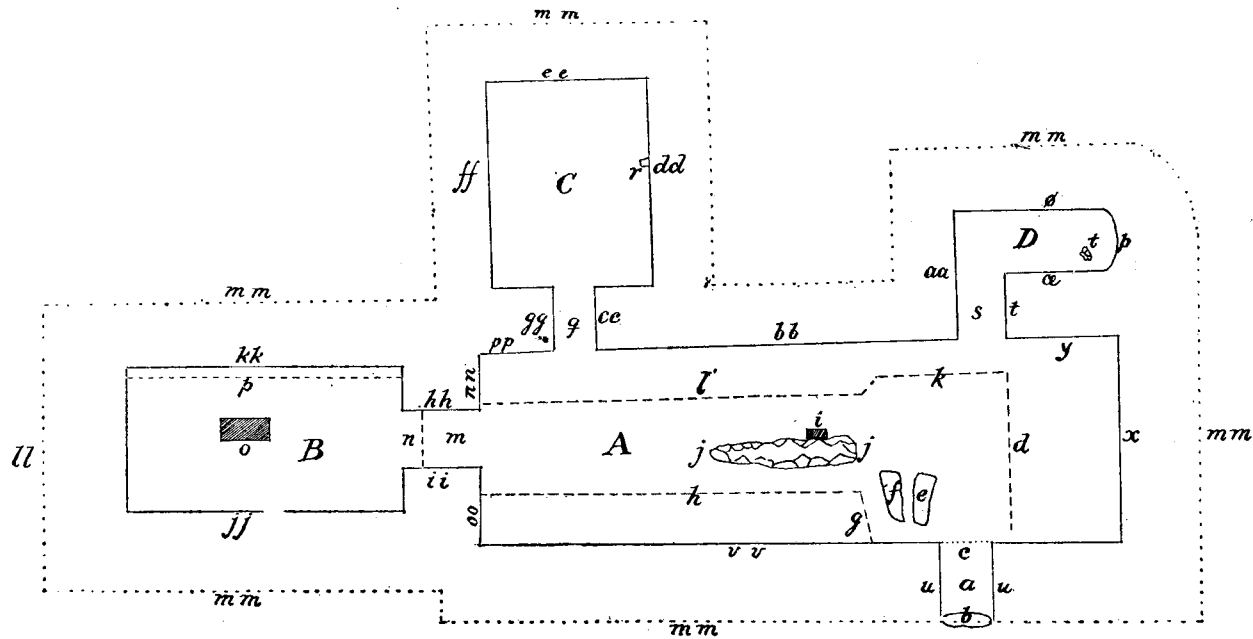


PLATE VI.—PLAN OF SÁMSSTAÐIR.

Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$ th inch to the metre.

the *dyrahella* (door-slab), used in Iceland to-day to support the threshold. In the inner part of the door was a slab on edge (*c*), which served as a threshold. It reached from post to post, and stood about two inches above ground.

In room *A* there were three daïsses (*þallar*) along three walls, here indicated by the dotted lines (*d, k, l, h, g*), and each 18 to 23 cm. high. The fireplaces also differed somewhat from those of *Áslákstunga*. Just inside the door there was a little fireplace, made of two big parallel stones (*e, f*). They were 1.10 m. long, and the fireplace was 1.42 m. broad. Between this fireplace and the larger one (*jj*) runs a passage 0.80 m. broad. The large fireplace was 3.20 m. long, and on the average 0.60 m. broad. It was not, however, paved all over with stones, as in *Áslákstunga*, for the middle of it was composed of clay. The little hole (*i*), *feluhola*, was 0.32 m. long by 0.25 m. broad. The daïsses running lengthwise (*langþallar*) were both 1.12 m. broad. The daïs *l, bb* was, however, only 0.70 m. broad in part (*k*). In the door (*m*) there was a threshold (*n*) of the same kind as the one (*c*) in door (*a*). It was characteristic of this ruin that the floor of room *B* was about 0.20 m. lower than that of room *A*. The fireplace (*o*) was also here in the middle of the floor. It was a hole 0.92 m. long, 0.46 m. broad, and 0.53 m. deep, paved throughout with stones. But the space round this hole was almost unpaved with stones, and there was only a broad daïs (*p*), 0.12 m. high, on one side. There were here no niches in the walls.

Room *C* may also here be designated as a larder (*matbúr*, Icel.). It contained no peculiarities except a stone (*r*), of a size of about 0.32 cubic metres. It seemed to have been placed there with an object, and not to have come from the wall, though this last is possible.

The room figured as *D* here is not found in *Áslákstunga*. It may with certainty be designated as a bathroom (*baðstofa*, cf. Dr. V. Guðmundsson, "Private

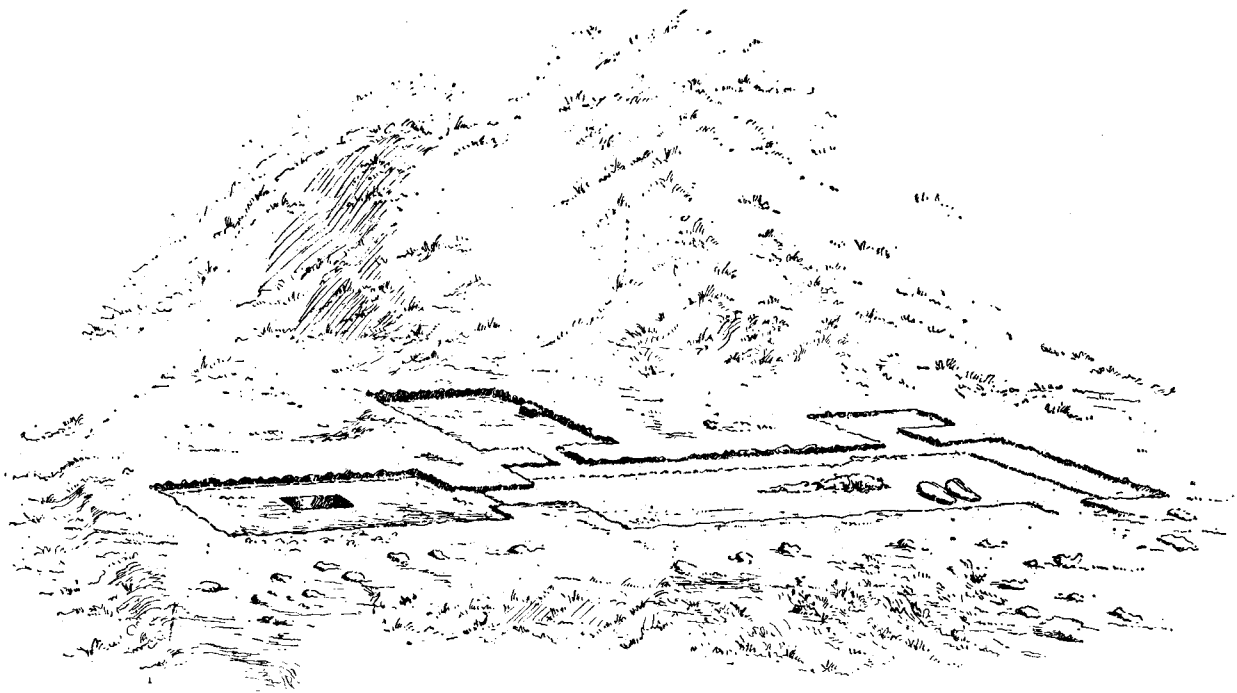


PLATE VII.—SÁMSSTAÐIR, AFTER EXCAVATION.

Houses, etc.," p. 240 ff.). It is true that there was no stove (*ofn*), but in one part of the floor were such distinct marks of fire as burnt stones, ashes, coal, etc. (*t*), that there is little doubt of the use of the room.

The exact sizes are as follows:—Main door (*a*), width 0.87 m. The door of the *skáli* (*m*), width 1.26 m. The dairy door (*g*), width 0.78 m. The bath-room door (*S*), 0.98 m. The length of the walls is: *v* 1.0, 0.22 m., *OO* 1.74 m., *ii* 1.78 m., *jj* 6.0 m., *ll* 3.0 m., *kk=jj*, *hh=ii*, *nn* 1.32 m., *pp* 1.26 m., *gg*, *cc* and *t* 1.60 m., *ff* and *dd* 4.50 m., *ee* 3.50 m., *bb* 8.50 m., *aa* 2.87 m., ϕ 3.20 m., *p* 1.27 m., *x* and *y* 2.50 m., *X* 4.62 m., *V* 2.90 m.

The outer walls are here indicated by dotted lines (*mm*), and their thickness, which could be ascertained with comparative certainty, is given. Accordingly the walls *xmm*, *vmm*, *jmm* and *lmm*, are all of the same thickness, that is, 1.80 m. Yet this could only be ascertained with certainty in the case of *pmm* and *xmm* and partially of *jjmm*. To find length and breadth all that is needed is to measure with metres, when one centimetre is equal to $1\frac{1}{4}$ m., and one millimetre to $12\frac{1}{2}$ cm.

The condition of the ruin is shown in Plate VII. The remains of the walls consist in most places of one layer of stones; that is to say, only the bottom layer remained. It was in most places only 15 cm. high, but every indication pointed to the interior being formed of stone, as in *Áslákstunga*, and the exterior of turf and stones in layers.

The condition of the ruin, the form of the fireplaces, etc., seemed to warrant the conclusion that this farm had ceased to be inhabited earlier than *Áslákstunga*. If 1350 was about the date of the last habitation of *Áslákstunga*, that of *Sámsstaðir* was certainly not later than 1300.

3.—*Laugar*.

Of the same oblong type, too, is the farm *Laugar*. I describe it, nevertheless, because of the peculiarity that outhouses—that is to say, cow-stall, hay-loft, etc.—

adjoin the rooms of the house. The ruin belongs to the circle of farms formerly overspreading the district Hvammar, near Hvítá, south of Bláfell. It is situated on a hilly heath, which has been covered with grass and forest vegetation, though now it is bared of earth in places. This is the case with the long, oval ridge on which the ruin stands. It is one of the highest ridges in the neighbourhood, of which a fair view is obtained from its top. The present remains of this very large farm are so indistinct that only the position of the rooms can with certainty be discerned, and to some degree their size. The thickness of the walls and the site and size of the doors are, however, doubtful. Photographing and sketching were here alike useless, for no regular rows of stones were to be seen, and the original bottom row could only be ascertained after careful examination. A ground plan will show all that is needed in connection with these remains (Plate VIII.).

As regards the separate rooms, everything pointed to the door being situated at *a*, though, in that case, the walls between *B* and *C* are very thin, hardly more than 76 cm. In front of the main door there seems to have been an ante-room (*forškáli*). The door between *C* and *B* was well marked.

Room *C* has been a kitchen or smithy, or perhaps even a *skáli*. There were remains of a fireplace, *hlóð* or *afl* (*b*), but it was so disturbed that its form could not be determined. A mass of cinders indicated the smithy. It seems also to have been a weaving room, as many weaving stones (*kljágrjót*) lay about near the door.

B and *A* probably formed one room, but as there was a row of stones across the middle of it which might have been a partition, I have indicated this with dotted lines. *C* is the fireplace of the room (*lang-eldar*), and its firehole seemed to be larger than the usual hole to keep the fire alive in at night. It was 46 cm. long and 30 cm. broad. The whole round space (*d*) was paved with stones. Passage *e* is as uncertain as passage and door *a*.

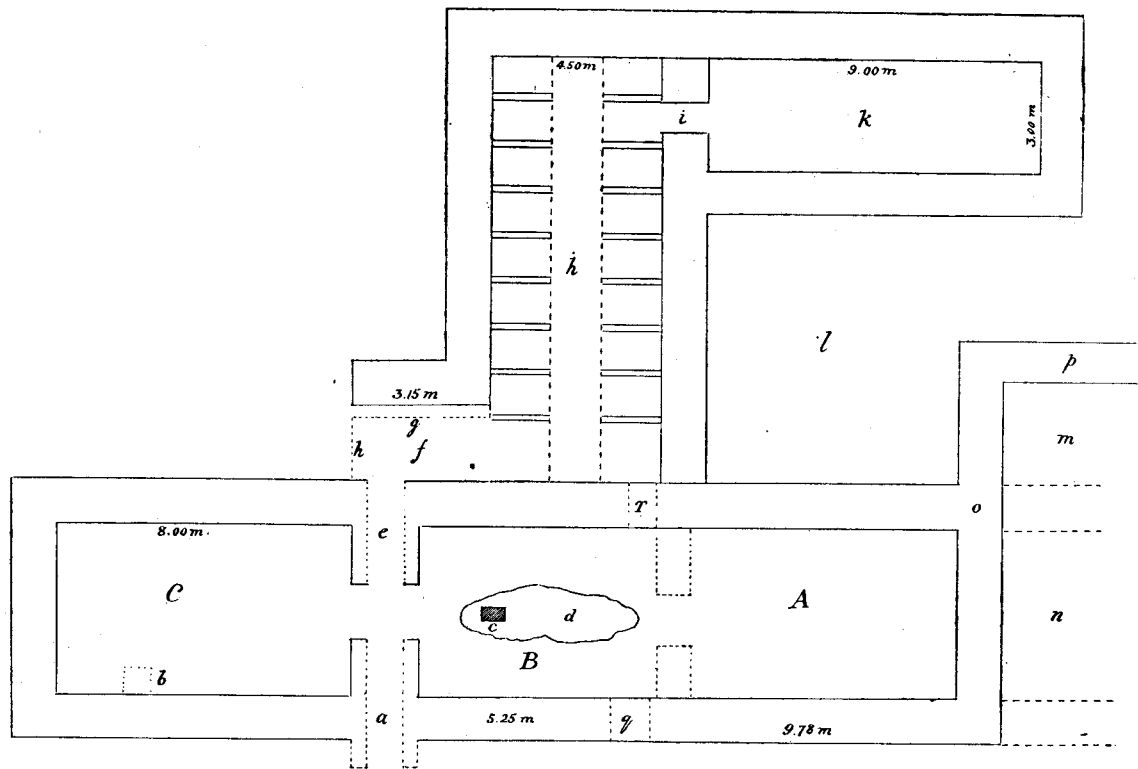


PLATE VIII.—PLAN OF LAUGAR.
 Scale: $\frac{3}{10}$ th inch to the metre.

Passage *e* leads to the cow-house (*f*), a part of which has been used as an entrance for the cows. The door has been formed by a plank or turf wall, as no stones were found here (*h*). The width, 2.14 m., was too great for a door. It has been used for calves, as a manger (*g*) ran along the whole passage. It was formed by flat stones on edge, 25 cm. broad. It was quite undisturbed, and bore a close likeness to a manger I have seen in Iceland.

The cow-house, *ffós* (*h*), contained eight to nine enclosures on each side, most of which were 0.91 m. broad. The partitions between these were large flat stones on edge. Some of these were 0.61 to 0.91 m. in length and breadth.

Door *i* led to the hay-loft (*K*). All these rooms (*f*, *h* and *K*) were in such a good state of preservation that they could be measured with some exactness.

Room *L* seems to have been partly paved, and may have been used to stack the hay (*heygarður*), though this is doubtful.

M and *n* seem to be fragments of rooms, but so indistinct that even this is subject to doubt. Only the walls *o* and *p* are distinct.

I now come to the doors in *B* (*q* and *r*), indicated by dotted lines. These doors are most uncertain. But two large corner-stones pointed to their existence, and as there were no stones in a line with them they may have formed doors. Then *q* is the main door and *r* the door leading to the cow-house. On the last supposition, passage *a*, *e* must be struck out, and the ante-room is then either a little outhouse or composed of stones fallen from the partition. The whole of this passage is very doubtful, as the walls—like the whole farm—must have been partly built of fen-turf (*mýrartorf*). The plan is on the scale of $\frac{3}{10}$ ths of an inch to the metre. Where the length of the walls could be measured with any certainty, the numbers are given in metres and centimetres. The long side wall with the main doors (*q* and *a*) turns south-east.

4.—Þórarínsstaðir (Plate IX.).

Only partial diggings could be undertaken on account of shortness of time. The farmstead is of the same type as the foregoing, with the exception that the cow-house *B* adjoins one end of room *A*, while the *skáli* adjoins the other end, buried nine feet deep in the grassy ridge (*y*), showing a row of stones, uncovered by wind and water, further on in the ridge. This is not visible in the ground plan. Thus all the rooms of the farm adjoined each other in a line, lengthwise.

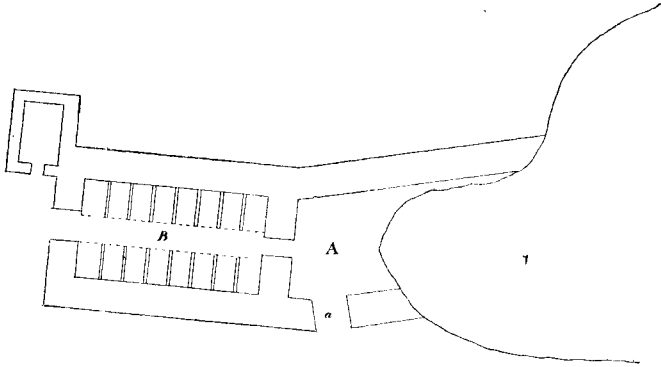


PLATE IX.—PLAN OF ÞÓRARÍNSSTAÐIR.

Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$ th inch to the metre.

The farm was, as usual, built of stones within and of stones and turf outside. The front is turned to the south-south-west, and has in it the main door (*a*).

These two farms, Laugar and Þórarínsstaðir, are certainly very old. According to tradition, they and the whole Þjórsárdalur were deserted by the inhabitants about 1350, but it is Dr. V. Guðmundsson's opinion that this date is 50 to 100 years, or even more, too late.

As the last of this type I mention the *eldahús* (cf. Dr. V. Guðmundsson, l.c.) in Erpsstaðir in Dalir (Plate X.). This ruin stands in a field near the farmstead. Very small and hardly visible unevennesses in the ground

suggested the probable remains of a very old building which, though situated only 200 feet from the farm, had yet remained hitherto unnoticed. After a close examination, I found the remains of an old house, having a length of 16.47 m., by 7.32 m. broad. There was no trace of adjoining buildings, so that this house must doubtless have stood here by itself. All the walls must have been of turf. No stones were found. The inner side of the walls could only be determined by the edges of the charcoal-covered floor. These were in most places distinctly to be seen.

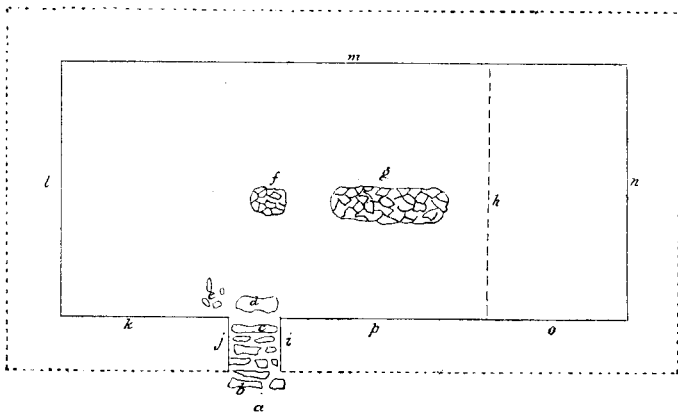


PLATE X.—PLAN OF ERPSSTAÐIR.
Scale: $\frac{3}{16}$ th inch to the metre.

Door *a* turns south-east. *B* is a very thin, long stone, situated in front of a row of similar stones, covering the whole doorway, the space between *b* and *c*. *C* is a similar flat stone, running across the whole breadth of the doorway, or 1.36 m.; though it was not on edge it must have been a threshold. *D* is a similar stone inside the door, only somewhat larger. *E* indicates four little flat stones, apparently meant to step on. *F* is a fireplace, paved with stones which were so burnt that some of them were crumbling to pieces. The same applies to the

larger fireplace (*g*). *H* is a daïs running across the room. Its edges were formed by rows of stones, at irregular intervals from each other.

The distances between the various parts of the room are: from wall *l* to fireplace *f* 5.63 m. Length of *f* 0.78 m., breadth 0.70 m. Distance *f* to *g* 1.25 m., length of *g* 3.62 m., breadth 0.90 m. Distance of *f* and *g* from wall *p* 2.83 m., from *g* to wall *m* 3.07 m. Distance from fireplace (*g*) to daïs (*h*) 1.56 m., breadth of daïs from edge (*h*) to wall (*n*) 4.06 m. The thickness was only visible at the door, and the dotted line is according to the length of *i* and *j* 1.30 m. The distances for the interior of the farm are the usual ones. The length of *m*, the whole room, is 16.90 m., breadth 7.50 m. Wall *k* is 5.00 m. to the door.

The special use of this room is difficult to arrive at, but many things point to its being one of the drinking houses (*veizlu-skáli*, *drykkju-skáli*, *eldahús*) described by Dr. V. Guðmundsson, p. 205. The fact that it stands by itself, and has no firehole in which to keep fire overnight, as is found in other rooms, seems to show that it was not for use day and night, or every day.

The forms and arrangements of the longitudinal type of house are very many, as will have been sufficiently seen, I trust, from my examples. It is, indeed, in my view, almost impossible to exhaust the variety in form of buildings, as well as diversity of arrangement of fireplaces, etc., and these conclusions are also corroborated by Dr. V. Guðmundsson's researches.

FORM B.—*Square Buildings.*

The only ruin of this form I discovered was Eiríksstaðir in Haukadalur. "Landnámabók"¹ says that Eiríkr rauði (Eric the Red), Leif Eiríksson's father, built it. The date cannot be exactly ascertained, but it must have

¹ "Réðst Eiríkur þá norðan, ok ruddi lönd í Haukadál; hann bjó á Eiríksstöðum hjá Vatnshorni."—"Landnámabók," 14.

been about 970. It is not known when he left the farm to move to Breiðafjarðareyjar, but his stay in Haukadalur was not long, and probably about five years, from 970 to 975. Haukadalur is a long, narrow valley, running east and west, surrounded on almost every side by high mountains. Towards the west the mountains are lower, and at last sink into an uneven hollow, through which a little river has found its way. Here the valley is almost closed. In the western end of this valley there is a lake four to five English miles in length. One English mile east of it the parsonage of Vatnshorn stands on the north

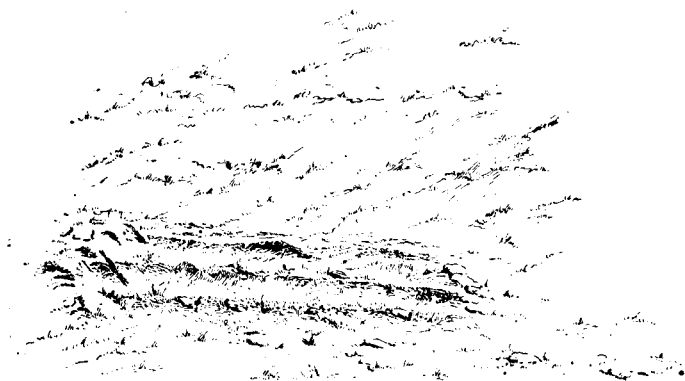


PLATE XI.—EIRÍKSSTAÐIR, UNDISTURBED.

side of the valley, and about half a mile east of it, on the mountain side, is the ruin of Eiríksstaðir. Here in the grass one could descry two parallel knolly eminences, and a third one, also parallel, hardly discernible. As the ruin stands on a knoll, with a deep mire on one side and a deep brook on the other, a view of it could only be obtained from the mountain side above it, from which, however, the slight eminences were invisible. I therefore made a rapid sketch of it (Plate XI.). Plates XII. and XIII. do not give a good idea of the ruin as it was when dug out, though I made two attempts to photograph it from an artificial eminence; but the former gives a

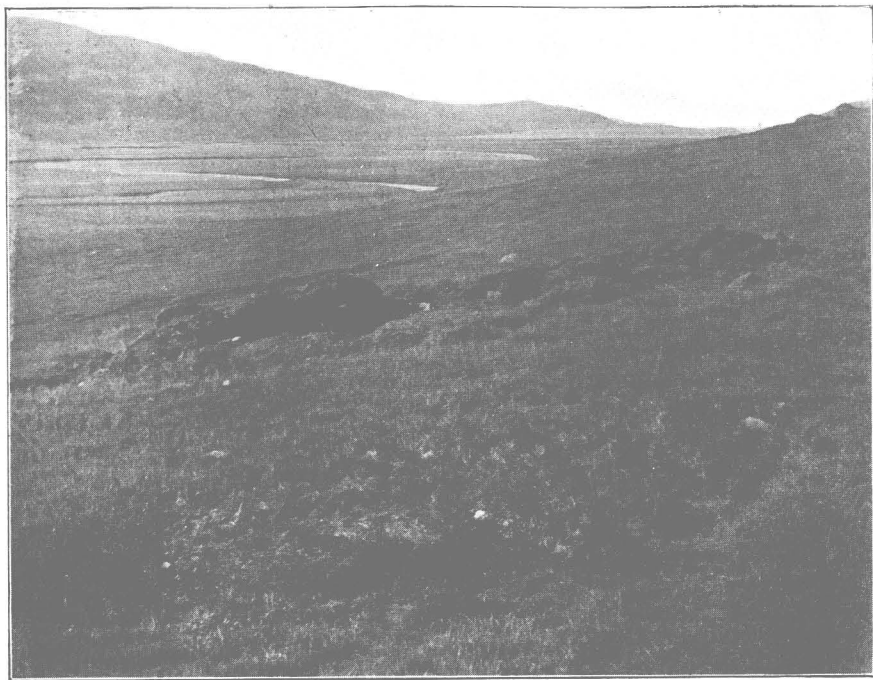


PLATE XII.—EIRÍKSSTAÐIR, EXCAVATED.



PLATE XIII.—EIRÍKSSTAÐIR, EXCAVATED.

tolerably good view of the main ruin, with a heap of black earth and gravel to the left. The surroundings are clear, with the little meandering brook, the lake, and the narrow western opening of the valley in the background. To the right the little church spire is visible.

In the ground plan (Plate XIV.), the door *a* turns south, *bb* are flat stones to step on, *c* is a fireplace, a row of stones forming an irregular angle, with an empty space

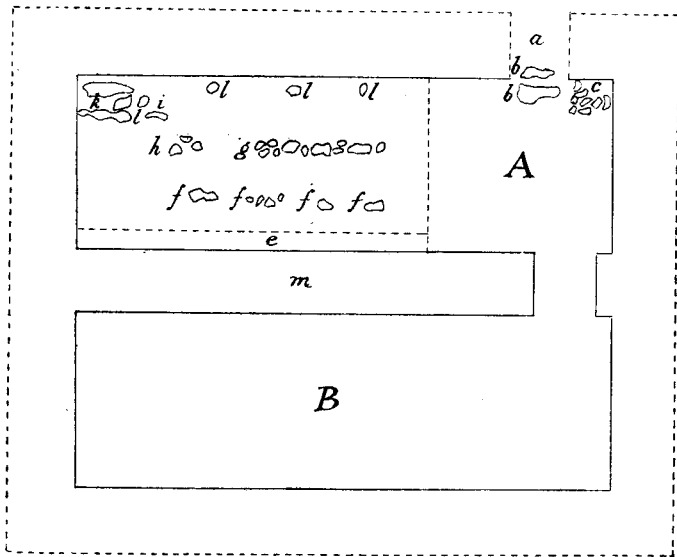


PLATE XIV.—PLAN OF EIRÍKSSTAÐIR.

Scale: $\frac{1}{8}$ th inch to the metre.

in the middle. There was a line across the floor of the ruin along which the soot and cinders of the rest of the ruin were not found. It might have marked a partition wall of planks, and I have shown it by a dotted line. *e* is a daís with stones along its edge, 0.15 m. high and 0.48 m. broad. *fff* are stones forming a curve, 4.63 m. long. *g* is a row of stones, 3.33 m. long, being one edge of the *lang eldar*, while *fff* was the opposite one. The

clay floor between them showed such distinct traces of fire, ashes and charcoal, that doubt is not possible. *h* is a little heap of stones. *i* is a flat stepping-stone, *k* a fireplace (Icel., *hlóð*) as they are found in Iceland to-day. *llll* are stones in a row along the wall. All sizes are, as before, given on a scale of $\frac{1}{15}$ th inch to the metre.

Room *A* has, accordingly, been the *stofa*, and perhaps also *skáli* (bedroom), though room *B* may have been used for that, as no fireplaces are needed in such a room. *B* may also have been a larder, used to stow away various utensils.

The whole house has been built of turf from the fen in the neighbourhood. Stone was only used for the bottom layer of the wall, but the row was not a continuous one.

Only the thickness of the partition wall *m* could be

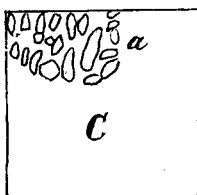


PLATE XIVa.—PLAN OF ROOM C.

Scale: $\frac{1}{125}$ th of real size.

ascertained, the probable thickness of the others being indicated by the dotted lines.

Room *C* (Plate XIVa.) is 42 feet from the door of the main ruin on the steep mountain side. It is about 4 m. square, and built of turf alone. No stones were to be seen, except an irregular square daïs of stones (*a*), 1.88 m. in length and 1.25 m. in breadth, and on an average 0.47 m. high. The stones were many of them a cubic foot in size, while some flat stones on edge, half destroyed by fire, appeared on the surface of the daïs. This must have been a *baðstofa* or bath-room (cf. Dr. V. Guðmundsson, l.c.). The position of the door cannot now be seen. The room seems to have been to some small degree underground.

Plates XV. and XVI. are sketches of the unearthed *skáli* and bath-room respectively.

In connection with this bath-room it may be well to describe the bath-room of Ljótólfssstaðir in Fellsströnd



PLATE XV.—EIRÍKSSTAÐIR.
Room A.

(Plate XVII.). It was situated 100 feet from the farm, and built on a rock whose edge (*d*) projected from the mountain side, 1.22 m. above the level of the plain. This must have led to the common belief that it was the ruin

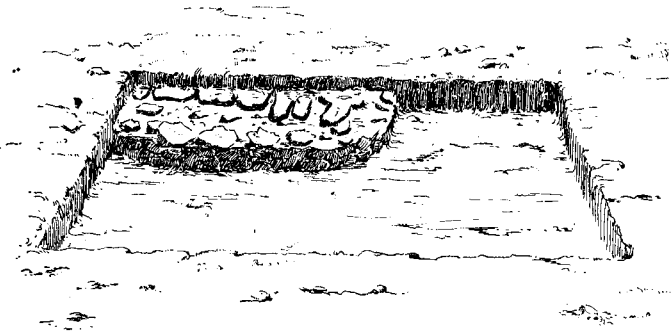


PLATE XVI.—EIRÍKSSTAÐIR.
Room C.

of a fort (*virki*). The walls shown in the sketch were of stone slabs, and if the door was in one of those three walls it must have been above ground. This, when compared with the bath-room of Eiríksstaðir, seems to indi-

cate that one used to *descend* into the bath-room through a door or hatch in the wall above ground. The door can hardly have been in the corner where the four slabs (*bbbb*) lie, as the wall must here have almost reached the edge of the rock (*d*). That part of the wall must have been of earth, as stones would slide down the slanting rock. The slabs (*bbbb*) were flat, 0.61 m. broad by 0.92 m. long, and seemed to have stood on edge along the earth wall. Three of them were broken. The dotted line (*c*) shows where the rock and the clay floor meet. *a* is a fireplace (*hlóð*). The size is on the scale of $\frac{5}{16}$ th

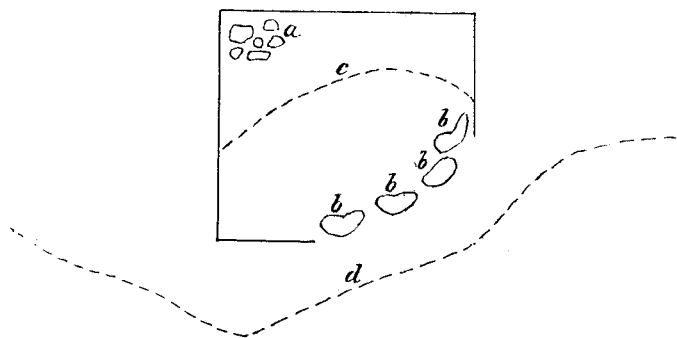


PLATE XVII.—BATHROOM OF LJÓTÓLFSSTAÐIR IN FELLSTRÖND.

Scale: $\frac{5}{16}$ th inch to the metre.

inch to the metre; length of walls 3.66 m. and 4.27 m., thickness not to be ascertained.

I shall describe one more house, which I was the first to dig out. On the farm Lambhöfði in Þjórsárdalur I found the *skyrbúr* or *mjólkurbúr* mentioned by Dr. V. Guðmundsson, p. 227. This ruin is the one given as No. 5 in Plate II., *Árbók*, 1884-85. It was then far more perfect than now, when the form is no longer clear (Plate XVIII.). Here I found three round holes. The first one (*a*) was, however, an ellipsoid, being 1.05 m. broad by 1.18 m. long. It was 0.37 m. deep in the middle,

slanting on all sides like a deep saucer. It was covered with a white and yellowish crust, sticky to the touch.

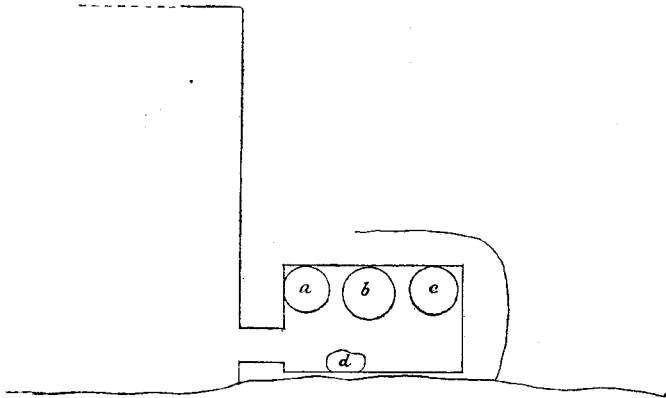


PLATE XVIII.—DAIRY OF LAMBHÖFÐI IN ÞJÓRSÁRDALUR.

Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$ th inch to the metre.

It could not be anything but remains of cheese or junket (*skyr*), and I took small pieces of it with me to be analysed later. In the bottom was a flat stone, very smooth and



PLATE XIX.—DAIRY OF LAMBHÖFÐI.

thin. The crust was 5.15 cm. thick. Hole *b* was quite round, and 1.25 m. in diameter. Its sides did not

slant, but were perpendicular, 0.46 m. high. A *skyr* or milk vessel seemed to have stood in this hole. In its bottom were found traces of two vessels, similar to *a*, and at the bottom of one of these a slab broken like the one at the bottom of *a*. The hole *c* was also round, with perpendicular sides, and 0.16 m. deep. It must also have contained a vessel, but no remains of one were found in the bottom. *d* is a hole of uncertain size, in which many sheep bones were buried and covered with earth. Length of the room 5.10 m., breadth 3.02 m. There can be no doubt it was a *skyrbiúr*, and that the hole *a* was used to

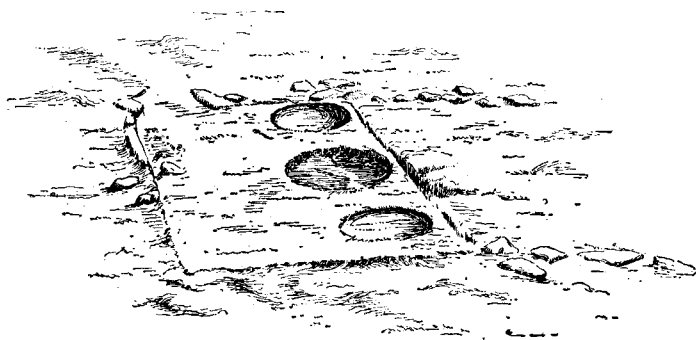


PLATE XX.—DAIRY OF LAMBHÖFÐI, EXCAVATED.

keep or make *skyr*, without a wooden vessel, with a thin layer of something to protect it on the earthen floor. Plate XIX. was taken during a storm, but Plate XX. gives a better view. In two other farms in Þjórsárdalur, Aslákstunga fremri and Bergólsstaðir (cf. *Árbók*, l.c.), I found distinct traces of vessels like *a*. In Aslákstunga the vessel was tolerably well preserved.

For completeness' sake I give the ground plan of the *skáli* of Skeljastaðir in Þjórsárdalur (Plate XXI.; cf. *Árbók*, 1884-85, p. 53). Here, instead of the usual daïsses on two sides, stones of the same height, 0.26 m., stand along the walls at equal distances of 0.47 m. The little

hole *a*, 0.37 m. long by 0.24 m. broad, contains some pieces of rotten wood, probably the remains of a post or pillar.

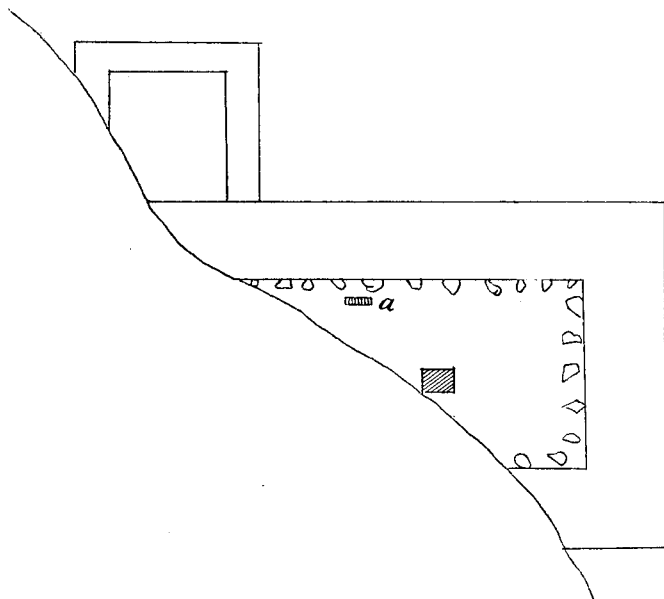


PLATE XXI.—PLAN OF THE SKÁLI OF SKELJASTAÐIR IN ÞJÓRSÁRDALUR.
Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$ th inch to the metre.

QUESTION II.

HILLSIDE COT, WITH A BÆJARSTÉTT, IF POSSIBLE.

1. A photograph of the site before it has been disturbed.
2. A ground plan of the same.
3. A description of the ruin.

At the present day, *bæjarstétt*, in Iceland, means a low, flat pavement. Those I have seen were 3 to 5 ft. broad by 6 in. to 1 ft. 6 in. high, paved, as a rule, with flat, large stones. The pavement is often bad, and some-

times gravel is used instead of stones. Dr. V. Guðmundsson, *ib.*, p. 255, mentions two places in the Sagas where a *stétt* is mentioned, and supposes it was sometimes paved. Though this probably was so, it does not follow that the pavement covered the whole front of the farm. On my travels I examined the ruins of 22 old farms, 18 of them very carefully as to this *stétt*, without discovering the least trace of a pavement in front of the house or



PLATE XXII.—A BÆJARSTÉTT.

main door, except a large, flat slab which often seems to have been placed in front of the door, as *e.g.*, in Sámstaðir, Erpsstaðir, etc. Here, where the front of the house and the space along it were well preserved, I can say with certainty there never was a paved *stétt*. It cannot now be seen whether single slabs were placed here, as the outer part of the wall has partly fallen down. A continuous pavement should have been undisturbed underneath. Some of the farms I have named are hill-

side cots. I found what I supposed to be a kind of *stétt* in front of Áslákstunga innri, Sámstaðir, and Áslákstunga fremri, though I have not mentioned them before because they were completely destroyed, and their arrangement so uncertain that I could give neither exact breadth nor height. They were certainly not paved.

The breadth of the *stétt* of the two former was about 4 feet, and they were unpaved. A somewhat similar *stétt* in a modern Icelandic farm is given in Plate XXII., in which the dark border in front of the cot represents the *stétt*, 4 ft. broad and 9 in. high, without pavement.

QUESTION III.

MOUNDS.

1. A photograph of one or two, undisturbed.
2. A section through the middle shown by a drawing, and a description of what is usually found in them.

THIS question could only be most imperfectly answered, chiefly because there is now hardly a mound in Iceland that has not been dug into, not only once but two or three times. In that third of the country through which I travelled in the course of one summer all mounds (*haugar*) have been destroyed, and can hardly be recognised. Still less could a section be made. I shall give a short list of the mounds known in these districts. They are all mentioned in the *Árbók*. The mounds of Úlfjót, Villing and Ölvir, mentioned in Sec. 18-19, *Árbók*, 1880-81, are three rocks covered with a thin layer of earth, rounded in the Ice Age. They are 15 to 90 m. in diameter and 5 to 9 m. high. The only mound that seemed to be a fitting burial place has been dug into twice on the top.

I had hoped to be able to give a section of Goddahaugr in Laxárdal (*Árbók*, 1882, p. 81), and its ground plan. In this I was disappointed. Mr. Vigfússon had

already, in 1881, disturbed the bare earth now covering the mound. Others have dug too, and the wind has carried away the loose earth, so that now there is only a hill 25 cm. high, and with a hole in the midst of it. I was told that the people of the district had dug and found nothing in it. It was originally 0.91 m. high and 5.49 m. in diameter, of mere clay, with no stones. Cf. the very exact description in *Árbók*, l.c.

Arnkelshaugr (cf. *Árbók*, 1882, p. 97) I did not visit, as it would have taken me a week, with no prospect of a result, as the mound has been dug into at least three times. The same is the case with Vesteinshaugr (*Árbók*, 1883, p. 24) and Ingjaldshaugr (*Árbók*, 1884, p. 6). Skallagrímshaugr (cf. *Árbók*, 1886, p. 7) has been a very interesting mound with two burial chambers, but is now so completely destroyed that only a hole in the sand shows its former site.

Hrafinkelshaugr (*Árbók*, 1893, pp. 39-40) is in eastern Iceland. It was too far away for me, and I should have gained nothing, as it has been dug twice.

I have now given a list of all mounds known in southern and western Iceland, and, though I did not myself make an examination or section of them, they have been described. I shall give an abstract of these descriptions, and a comparison.

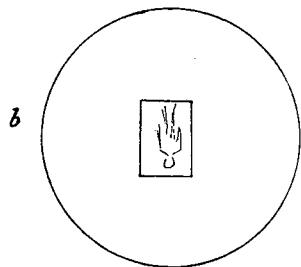
The body was laid on the ground, especially when it consisted of rock or very hard gravel, e.g., Ingjaldshaugr and the mounds at Haugavað (see Plate XXV.), or it was buried, not deeper than 61 to 91 cm. This was especially the case where a natural hill was used as a grave-mound. Possibly sometimes an eminence was first thrown up, on which a burial chamber was built. Round and on top of this a grave-mound was raised, in this case a very large one. This may have been the plan at Arnkelshaugr. In all these cases a burial chamber was built round the body, probably in the same way as a house is built. It was sometimes made of stones outside and inside, or of stones inside and earth outside, with walls 1.22 to 3 m.

thick. As a rule, the burial chamber is 1.22 to 1.52 m. broad and 1.83 to 3 m. long. It was laid in any direction, as was apparently the head of the body, though the latter, as a rule, lay north to south or west to east. These burial chambers have been preserved only when built of stones. The chamber does not seem to have been roofed, but pieces of wood, sometimes singed by fire, or merely flat stones, were placed on the body. Yet it is possible that, as in the case of Skallagrímshaugr, the large flat slab was placed over the lowest chamber as a kind of roof. The deceased was always mound-laid in his clothes and, as a rule, with his weapons, and, up to Christian times, with his horse and dog. Thereupon the burial chamber was covered on all sides with a layer of earth, 0.61 to 2.44 m. thick, so that the mound commonly is like a flat hemisphere. This seems to have been the usual construction of an Icelandic grave-mound. The height of the chamber is between 35 and 46 cm.

I succeeded in getting good and reliable information about the mounds of Haugavað (*Árbók*, 1882, pp. 47-54), and a man who could draw, and had been present at the digging, drew for me the original form of two of these, and carefully explained their construction. I give his drawing.

Mound *A* in Plate XXV. is Hrafnshaugr (*cf. Árbók*, 1882, p. 49, under Aug. 14th). *a* is a section of the mound from north to south. It was round, but its surface was a little flattened towards the south. The mound was grass-grown everywhere, but large and small stones stood out of it. On its flat top there had been lately built a beacon of stones (*varða*). The mound was of earth, though some large stones were found in it. Only round the human bones and the horse bones was there unmixed clay earth. This may be a trace of an earthen chamber. I have indicated it by *l*. The body lay east and west, the head turning west (*o*). The mound is 6.10 m. in diameter and 0.91 m. in height. To the left of the bones Vigfússon found remains of a sword and two

A



b

B

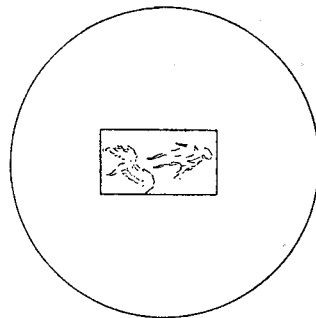


PLATE XXV.—PLAN AND SECTION OF HRAFNSHAUGR AND AN UNNAMED HAUGR.

Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$ th inch to the metre.

glass beads with holes through them. Plate XXIII. shows the ground after the mound had been cleared away. To the left are large stones that were on the top of the body. Fig. *b* on Plate XXV. is a ground plan of the mound, with, possibly, a burial chamber.

B in same Plate is a ground plan and section of the mound described in *Árbók*, 1882, p. 49 (Aug. 13th) and pp. 50-51. It is somewhat larger, being 6.32 m. in diameter and 1.22 m. high. Man and horse have here been placed on the rock, and under two undisturbed stones I found what I thought remains of turf spread under man and horse. Here the man turns his head south, and the horse its head east and its back to the



PLATE XXIII.—SURFACE OF GROUND AFTER REMOVAL OF HRAFNSHAUGR.

man's feet. The construction is the same as that of the last mound, though this was almost solely of earth and very large, while many stones were laid on the top of man and horse. These are clearly seen in the middle of Plate XXIV., though some grass has grown around them. Mr. Vigfússon here found various things of iron and metal, buckles and bits, which showed that the horse was buried in full harness, perhaps with saddle. Shield fittings of iron, which showed that the shield was placed on the face of the man, a few unrecognisable parts of armour, and two buckles of his belt were also found. The human bones in both these mounds were completely decayed, but the horse bones were in good condition.

The sections and measurements given here are fully reliable, but any probable burial chamber must have

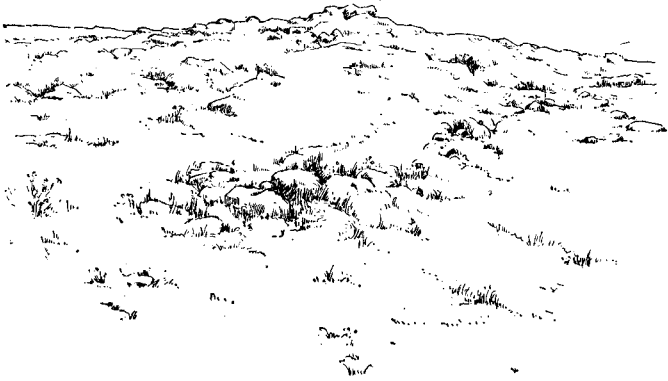


PLATE XXIV.—HAUGR SHOWING STONES ORIGINALLY PLACED ON MAN AND HORSE.

been of turf. The mounds date back for certain to the years 915 to 932.

At Meyjarhóll is what is very like an old grave-mound, though it may not be a real one, as nothing was found in it after digging. I give a drawing of it in

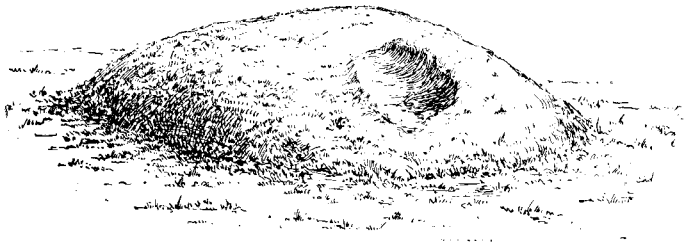


PLATE XXVI.—MEYJARHÓLL HAUGR.

Plate XXVI. It is 12.20 m. in diameter, 3.66 m. high, and grass-grown. The little hollow on the right dates from the digging in 1860.

QUESTION IV.

THINGS.

1. Photograph.
2. Ground plan and measurements.

The photograph of the amphitheatre [sent you] shows what I hope to find duplicated in Iceland.

It seems to me that the Tóltfahringar described on p. 69 of the *Arbók hins Íslenska Fornleifafélags*, 1888-92, may be such a place. Also that Hegranes-þing, as described on pp. 113-117 of the same book, may be another such place; if not, I want to know what those places are. There is another similar meeting-place here, which is a semi-circle with a smooth level ground in front of earthen banks.

As told in my travels, I chose of purpose the Things of Árnes and Þingholt, rather than that of Hegranes, the two former being undisturbed.

Most thing-steads in Iceland are situated at the foot of earth banks, low or high, for two reasons. Firstly, in order that the judges and thing-men might be sheltered, and, secondly, to provide a raised vantage ground whence the public could see the sports. In all the twenty thing-steads examined by myself and others, the *dómhringur* is always surrounded by a circular earth or stone wall, while the scene of the sports, near it, does not seem to have been thus enclosed. As far as I know, an enclosed sporting ground is nowhere mentioned, and no traces of such have ever been discovered; but it may have been enclosed—that is to say, with ropes, stakes, or fencing. It was certainly never enclosed with earthen or stone walls. In all these thing-steads ruins are found—small square ones of the *búðir* (booths), and a large round *dómhringur* in which the judges had their enclosed space. Though some differ, my examination of the *dómhringur* at Þingholt makes it probable that it had no seats, but was only an enclosure 1.22 to 1.83 m. high, inside which the judges remained. That of Árnes is built on the southern slope of a little gravel and stone ridge. The

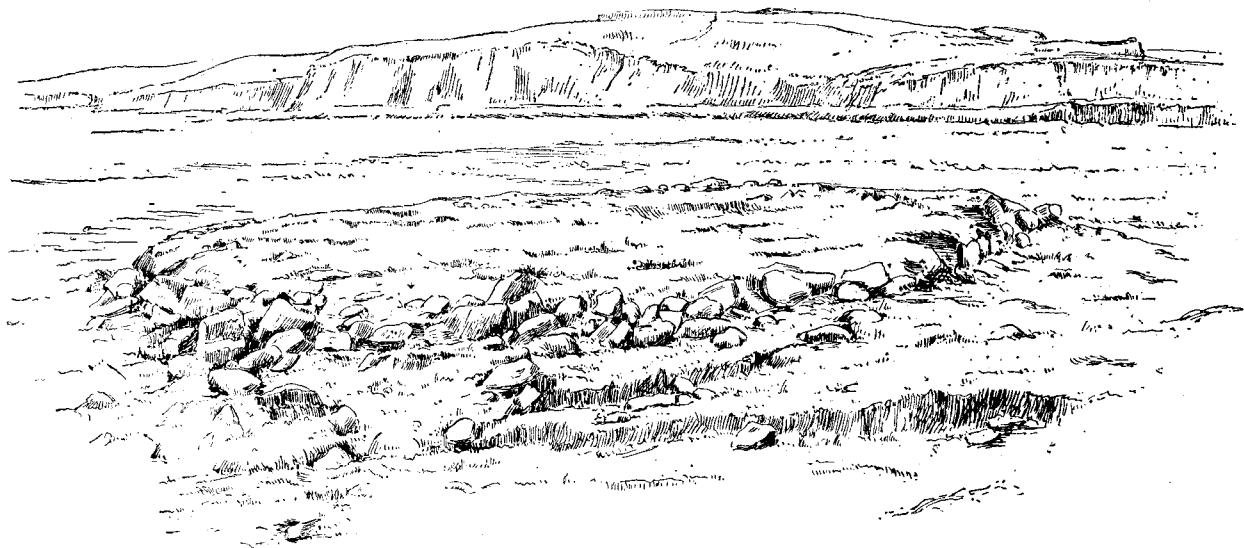


PLATE XXVII.—DÓMHRINGUR AT ÁRNES-ÞING.

height of the *dómhringur* is 1.83 m. on one side, while the other, turning towards the hill, is now only 0.61 m. high. A stone enclosure, 0.61 to 0.91 m. high, seems to have been built on the artificially levelled area. It may have formerly been much higher, as it has now nearly all tumbled down, and much of it removed by the people. Plate XXVII. shows the place as seen from the ridge above the ring, with the level, smooth sand below and a little brook in the background. Plate XXVIII. shows the ring from another side (the high part of the wall being visible), with the ridge in the background. In Plate XXIX. the ring and ridge are seen in profile (A), with the ground plan of the ring (B). The door has



PLATE XXX.—DÓMHRINGUR AT ÞINGHOLT-ÞING.

been on the south, where several steps led to the interior. It seems to have been 1.22 m. wide. The walls rise 1.22 m. thick or more. Diameter of the ring, including the walls, exactly 13.42 m. Height of ridge, 15.25 to 18.30 m. (cf. Mr. B. Jónsson's description, *Árbók*, 1894, pp. 11-14).

As the *dómhringur* at Þingholt is only traceable from little unevennesses in the extensive knolly grass plain west of the little Þingholt hill, it is indistinct in the foreground of Plate XXX., in which the hill is seen against the sky in the background. Plate XXXI. shows the *dómhringur* as it appeared after being dug out, and

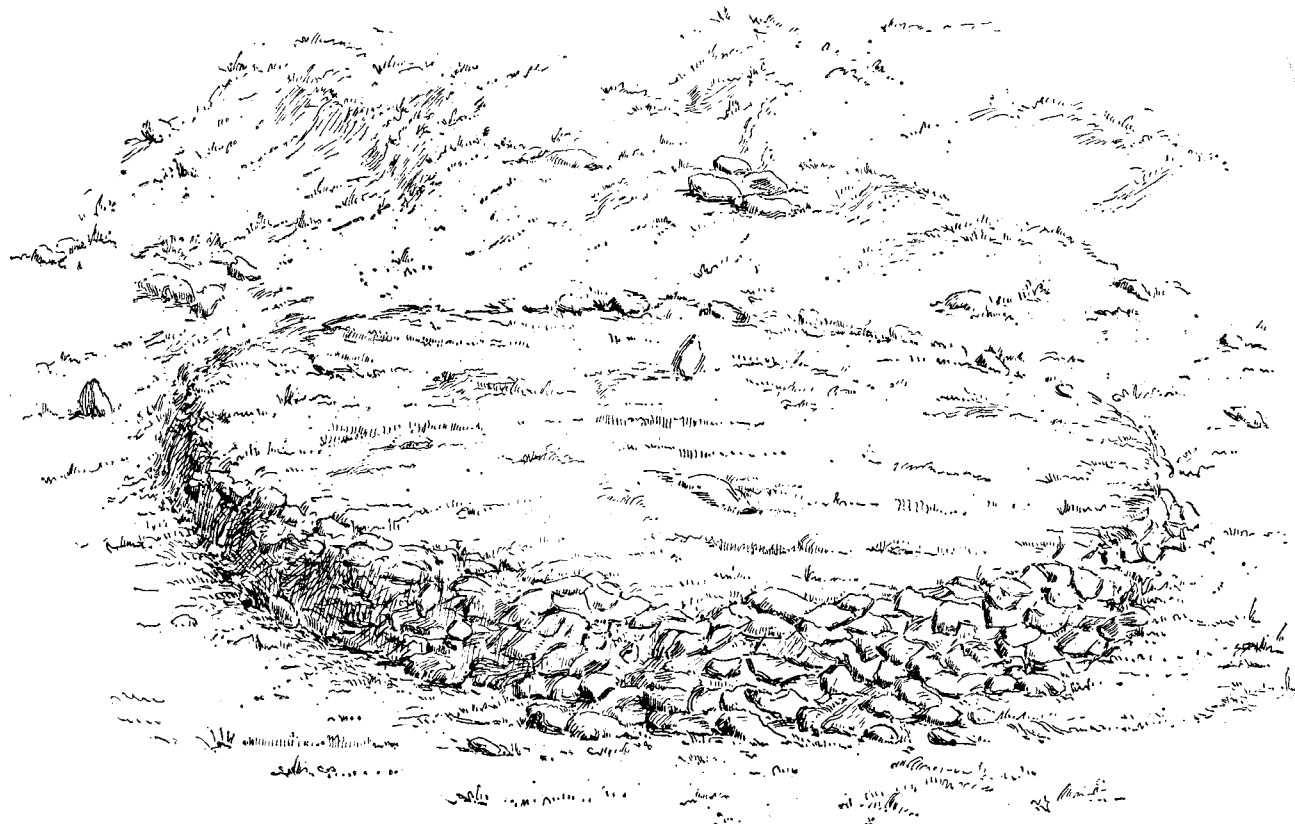


PLATE XXVIII.—DÓMHRINGUR AT ÁRNES-ÞING.

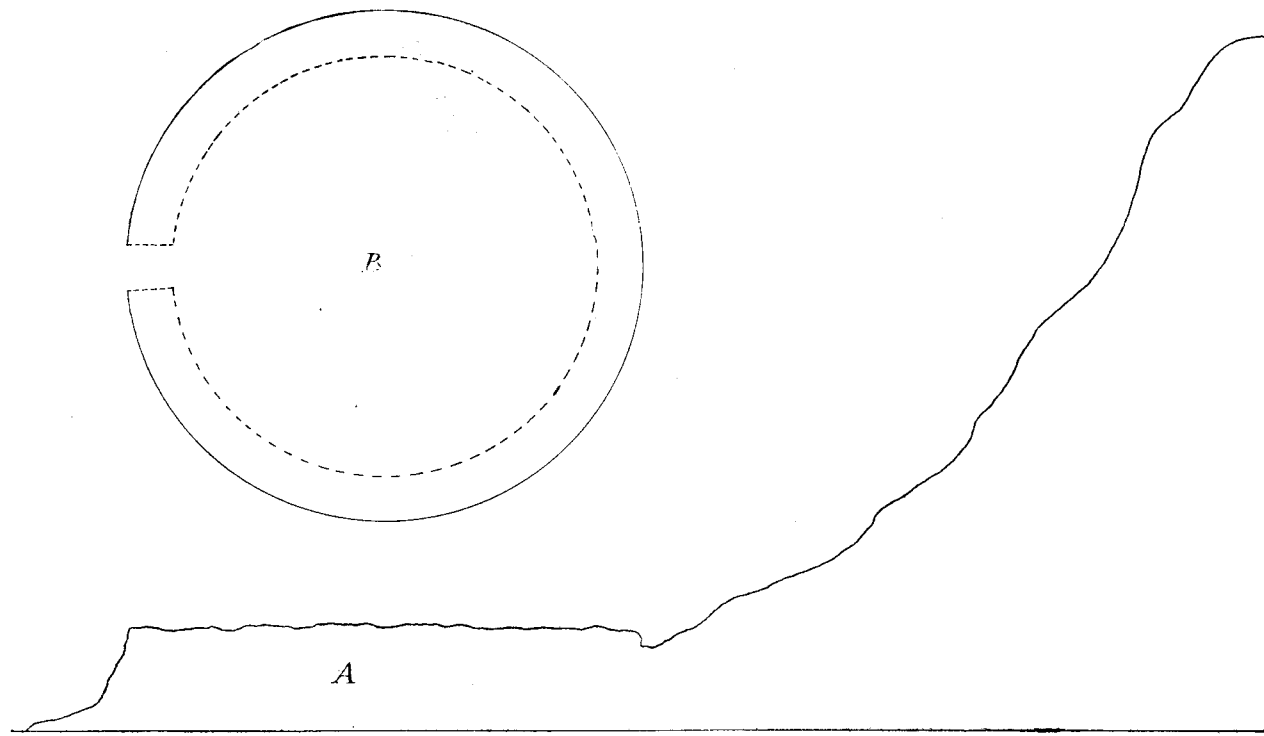


PLATE XXIX.—PROFILE AND PLAN OF DÓMHRINGUR AT ÁRNESHÖFÐI.

Scale: $\frac{1}{8}$ th inch to the metre.

Plate XXXII. its ground plan. Its diameter is 14.33 m., including the walls, whose thickness seemed to be about 1.22 m. It appeared that their height had been reduced in the course of time to 0.97 m., and they must at first have been betwixt 1.22 and 1.52 m. high, so far as one could judge from their sloping and flattened form. The door was about 1.83 m. wide and turned south-west. The walls were built entirely of turf, no stones being discernible in them. This ring was also completely round, without seats, and formed merely an enclosure round the benches of the judges.

From the ring to the ridge there stretches a flat, grassy

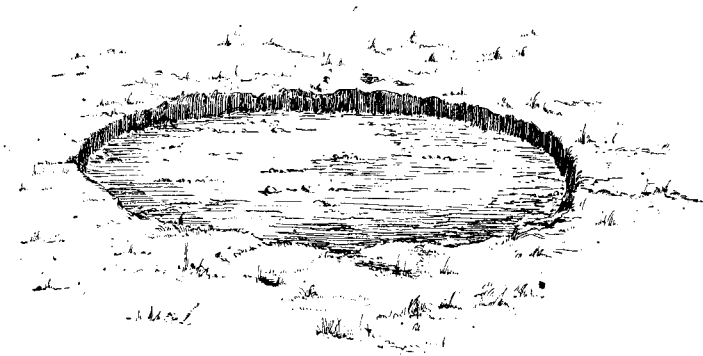


PLATE XXXI.—DÓMHRINGUR AT ÞINGHOLT-ÞING, EXCAVATED.

plain, 36.60 m. broad. Either this or a space under the ridge was the sports ground (*glímu-völlr*), answering to the plain below the other *dómhringur*, and paralleling the supposed one at Hegranes-Þing. Of one thing there is certainty, that the *glímu-völlr* in none of these three places was enclosed with an earthen or stone wall. A *glímu-völlr*, it should also be observed, hardly needs such an enclosure, or, if any, one of very great extent. *Tólfstahringar* (*Árbók*, 1888-92) is neither a thing-stead nor a sports ground, but land containing an area of 30 to 40 English square miles, west of Skaptá in Skaptafells-sýsla. Tradition speaks of there being once here 24 farms,

12 in each of the Tólfahringar. This tradition is well known in the district, and Mr. Vigfússon (l.c.) agreed with it. The district certainly had its own local and special government.

The only peculiarity about the thing-stead of Hegranes

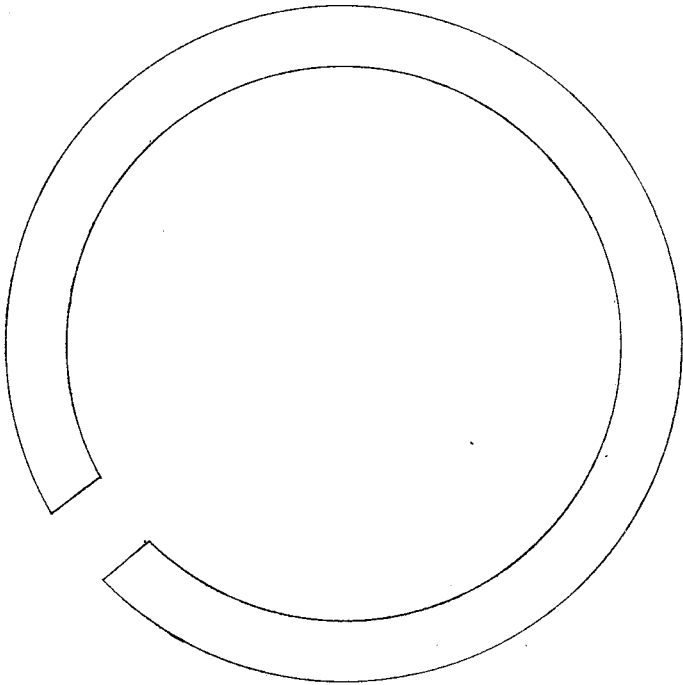


PLATE XXXII.—PLAN OF DÓMHRINGUR AT ÞINGHOLT-ÞING.

Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$ th inch to the metre.

is that there is possibly an earlier *dómhringur* side by side with the older one, though neither of them is so distinct as that of Þingholt (*cf.* Mr. B. Jónsson). No semicircle has as yet, so far as is known, been found in Iceland, either in thing-steads or elsewhere.

QUESTION V.

DRY DITCHES.

1. Photographs.
2. Ground plan, with measurements of depth, width, etc.

These are especially characteristic of the works here, and I think the same thing may be described on p. 41 of the *Árbók*, 1888-92. Some of these are stone-walled on one side, and appear to have carried water. I think the *flóðkill* described on p. 45 of the *Árbók* may be such a waterway as that at Stony Brook.

No dry ditches or old river-beds had up till my travels been found in Iceland, and I cannot say with certainty that those I have found are so old as to be of any importance. The *geilar* of Hlíðarendi, mentioned in *Árbók*, p. 41, are seen in Plate XXXIII. But it is certain that they were not built by man. They are two only of the hundreds of large and small ditches dug by brooks through the softly sloping ground. The *geilar* are about three-quarters of a mile in length. They vary much in breadth, from 6.10 to 18.30 m., varying with the thickness of the earth as the brooks have everywhere worked through it down to the rock. They are from 1.83 to 4.57 m. deep, and their form constantly varies, as their banks at times recede and in other places fall in. But, as I have said, they are not built by the hand of man.

Still less is the *flóðkill*, mentioned on p. 45, a ditch or waterway. It is a little pool or lagoon (*lón*, Icel.), of which there are many in the extensive fens. Here it is, if possible, still more certain that it was not made by man. I did not think it worth while to examine it again to ascertain this, as I knew the place well.

But I have found two very old river-beds. How old I do not know, but they were certainly made centuries ago. One is close to the farm Hlíðarendakot in Fljótshlíð, and has been used as a waterway from the river Þórðará to water the extensive meadow land. It is at least 305 m.

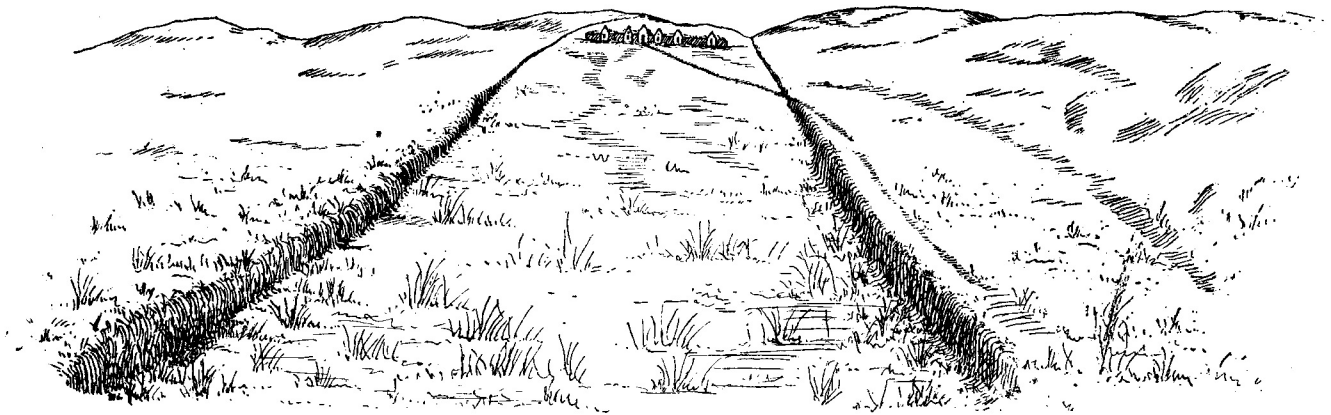


PLATE XXXIII — GEILAR AT HLIÐARENDI.

long, and runs undulating through the meadows. The ground plan, Plate XXXV., *a*. Breadth 0.76 m., depth 0.46 m.; *b* is the section. Its banks were of turf and earth. The second waterway is exactly of the same

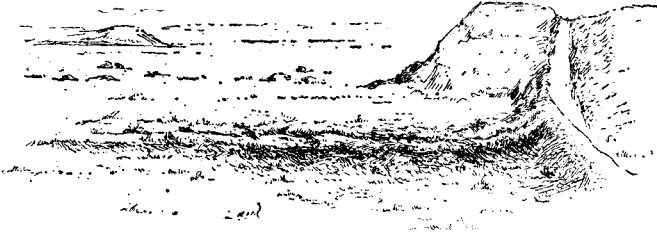


PLATE XXXIV.—SKETCH OF DITCH LEADING FROM THE RIVER ÞÓRÐARÁ.

description. It was longer, and carried water from the river Kálfá in Eystri Hreppur in a sharp bend over the meadows. It was somewhat broader, 0.91 m., and of a depth of 0.61 m. The ground plan is shown in Plate XXXV. at *c*, and the section at *d*. The sketch,



PLATE XXXVI.—SKETCH OF DRY DITCH LEADING FROM THE RIVER KÁLFÁ.

Plate XXXVI., shows the present condition of the last named, and Plate XXXIV. that of the first named. These two old ditches were all I could discover, and though there may probably be more of them in Iceland, it will

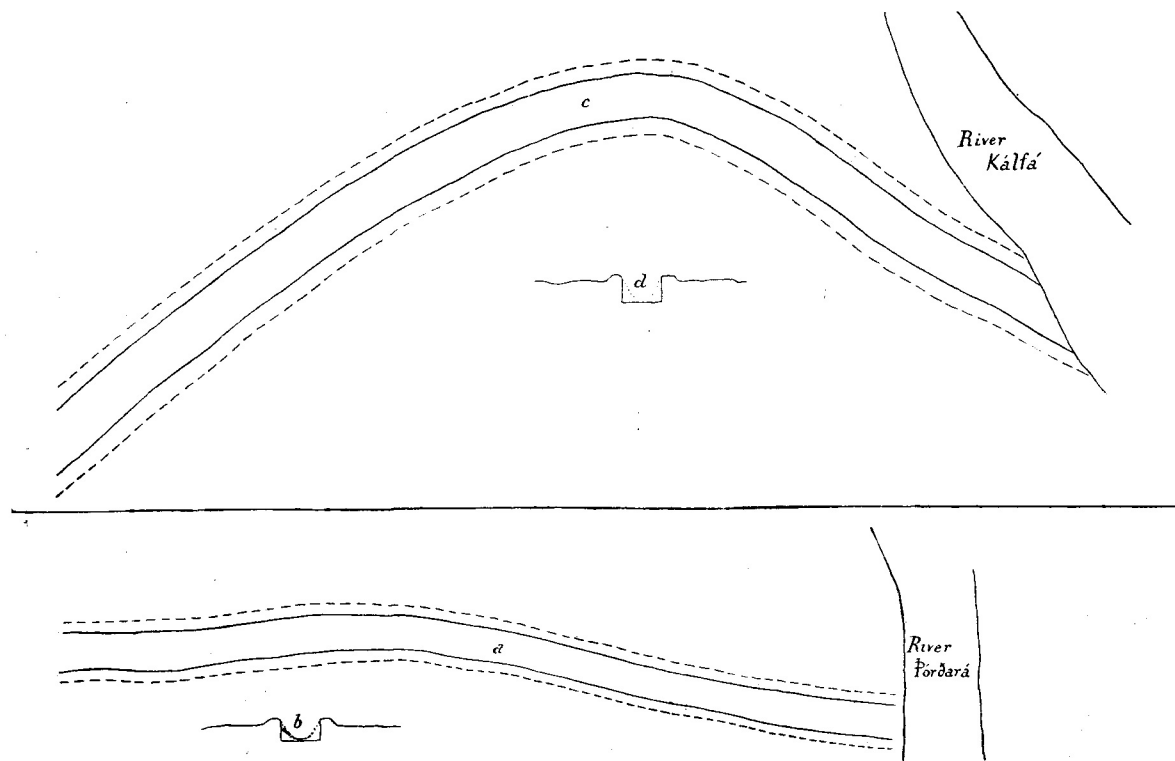


PLATE XXXV.—GROUND PLANS OF DRY DITCHES.

Scale: $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches to the 100 feet.

be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain their age.¹

QUESTION VI.

RIVER-WALL.

A photograph of the stone walls of the stream near Reykjavík. Is this supposed to be old?

THE stone banks on both sides of the little brook that runs through the town of Reykjavík, 0.91 to 1.22 m. high, are not older than 1856-60. Being modern, it did not occur to me to photograph them while I stayed in

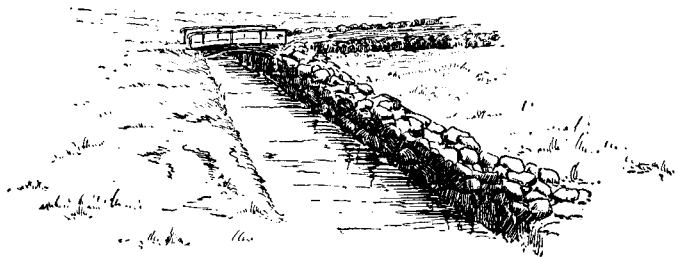


PLATE XXXVII.—STONE RIVER-WALL NEAR REYKJAVÍK.

Reykjavík, but I wrote in November to a photographer in Reykjavík to send me photographs. He replied that the river was so full of ice and snow that he could not take them, but sent me instead a drawing with an exact representation of the brook and its banks (Plate XXXVII.). The part of the brook shown is 1.83 m. broad and the banks 0.91 m. high. The total length of the brook is 338.75 m., and I can say with certitude that apart from these stone banks there exist no *old* river-walls in Iceland.

¹ Mr. Erlingsson does not mean that dams and ditches were not used in the old times. Cleasby and Vigfússon give seven references to dams in different Sagas, and eight to ditches or dikes. The dam described in "Hávarðar Saga Ísfirðings," 14, was in use in Iceland between 1002 and 1003.—C. H.

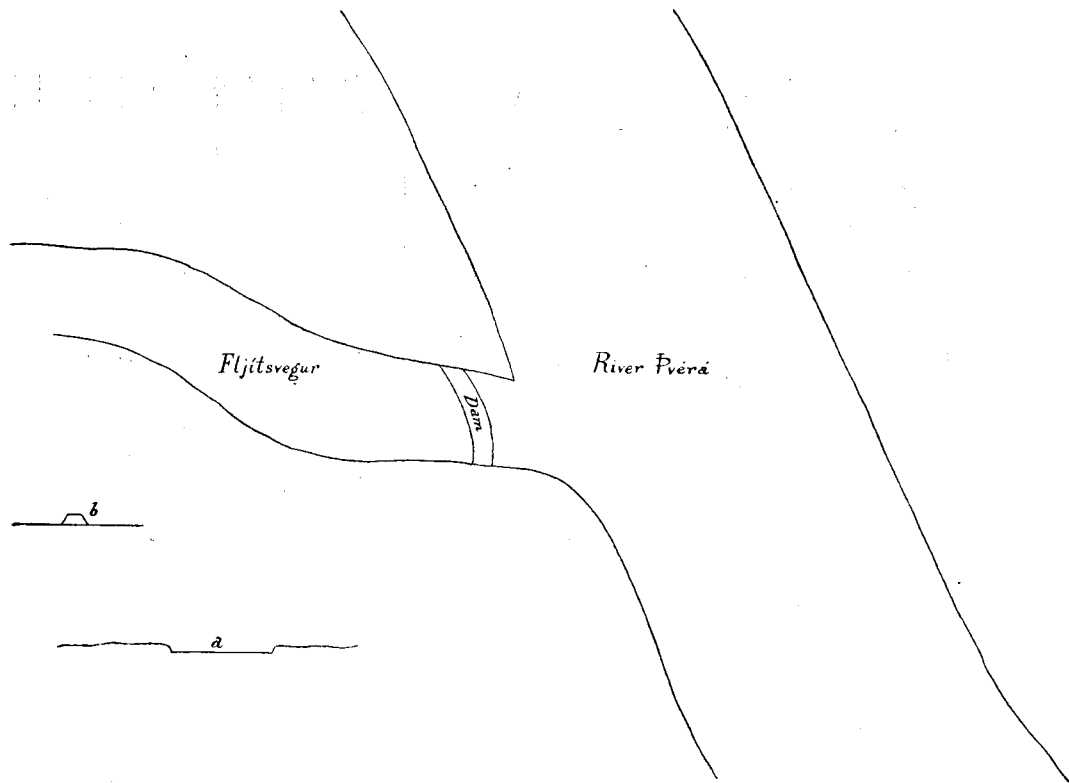


PLATE XXXVIII.—DAM AT FLJÓTSHLIÐ.

Scale: $\frac{1}{16}$ th inch to the metre.

QUESTION VII.

DAMS.

1. A photograph required of a dam known to be old.
2. Measurements and mode of construction. This includes the earth banks on each side of the dam.

I HAVE not been able to photograph an *old* dam, as I have failed to find one. I very much doubt whether any old dams are to be found in Iceland, as none such exist in the plains of the south, though possibly a dam may be hidden in some other part of the country. The oldest, or rather the only, old dam I know of is situated near the so-called Fljótsgvegur, where the river Þverá runs through

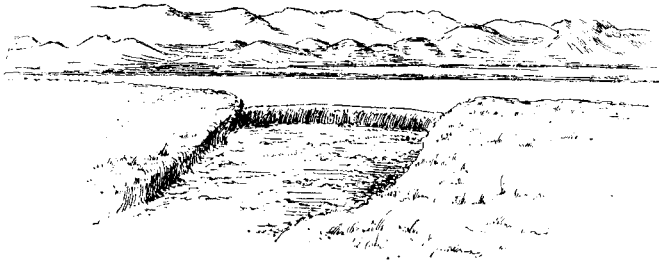


PLATE XXXIX.—DAM AT FLJÓTSHLIÐ.

Fljótshlið, and made for itself a new bed to the south-west, over the extensive pastures lying south of Fljótshlið (*the Aurar*; Plate XXXVIII.). The damage occasioned was so great that a dam was built to stop it. The new river-bed is there still. It is 24 ft. broad. The dam was built 15 to 20 ft. from the river, across the new bed. It forms a bend, with its curvature to the river. It is built of turf and earthen clods, and has a length of 8.54 m., a height of 1.22 m., and a breadth at base of 2.74 m., and at top of 1.83 m. It is about 0.46 m. lower than the bank of the river (*a* is section, *b* section of dam). A sketch made from memory, but correct in all essentials, is given in Plate XXXIX.

Though this dam is certainly not more than 150 to 200 years old, yet it is the oldest I have met with, although I have visited a great many places to enable me to answer this question and the two preceding it, and have besides in my diary marked 43 places with a possible dam.

QUESTION VIII.

DOCKS.

Photographs of the docks at Hrafnseyri, described on pp. 136-137 of the *Arbók*, 1888-92.

Two photographs of this place I secured, but little unevennesses with softly undulating lines, especially on a grassy surface, are, of course, invisible on a photograph. There are no sharp edges to reflect the light, especially

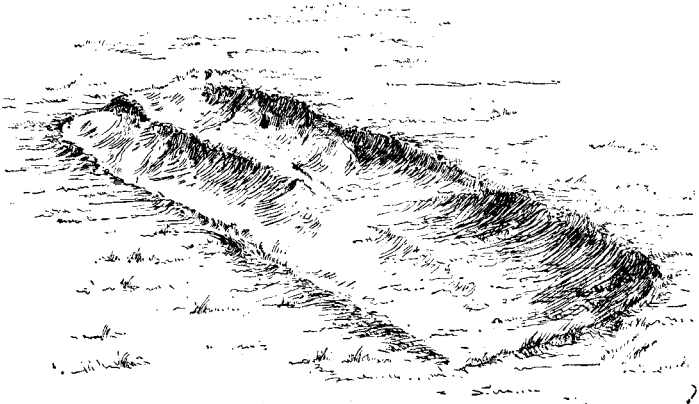


PLATE XL.—HRAFNSNAUST.

as one must stand at some distance in order to include the 100 ft. long view required for the cabinet-sized plate. I therefore made a sketch of Hrafnснаust (Plate XL.), in which all the details of the spot are given clearer and more exactly than in a photo. The ruins of Hrafnснаust are now only a long narrow hollow in the grassy sloping

field. The hollow is 1.07 m. deep in the middle, and its outlines, at first, seem to lose themselves in the surrounding field without any definite limits. On a closer examination one sees a narrow strip on both sides of the hollow where the grass is brown in colour, indicating that a row of stones with an extremely thin layer of earth is hidden under it. In places little sharp stones stick out, which are felt under the foot. Here the form of the ruin is clear. It was about 21.35 m. long—the sea has destroyed part of one end—and 6.10 m. broad. All Mr. Vigfússon's measurements are here incorrect. The *naust* was dug into the ridge, so that the top of its walls was only raised a little above its surface. Its bottom is only 1.52 m. above sea level. (Section of ruin and ridge is shown in Plate XLI., *a*=the ruin, lowest on one side, *bb*=the

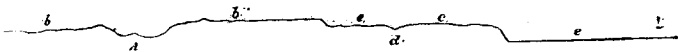


PLATE XLI.—SECTION OF HRAFNSNAUST.

Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$ th inch to the metre.

surrounding field, *cc*=a sandy tract between the field and the fjord, *d*=hollow made by water in the winter, *e*=the fjord.)

While this *naust* probably dates from the thirteenth century, there can be no doubt whatever that Flókanaust in Brjánslækur by Vatnsfjörður in Barðaströnd dates from one of the first discoverers of Iceland, Hrafna-Flóki. "Landnámabók" relates that he wintered there, and built a *skáli*, *naust* (*hróf*) and *seyði*.¹

Leif was placed in the same position in Vínland, and as these hurriedly built, temporary erections may be supposed to have a certain similarity, I thought it worth while to examine these ruins closely. They are situated on the western side of the fjord, 45 m. from the sea. Above and west of the ruins there is a rocky hill, from

¹ "Þar sér enn skálatóft þeira inn frá Br[i]anlæk, ok svá hrófit, ok svá seyði þeira."—"Landnámabók," 2.

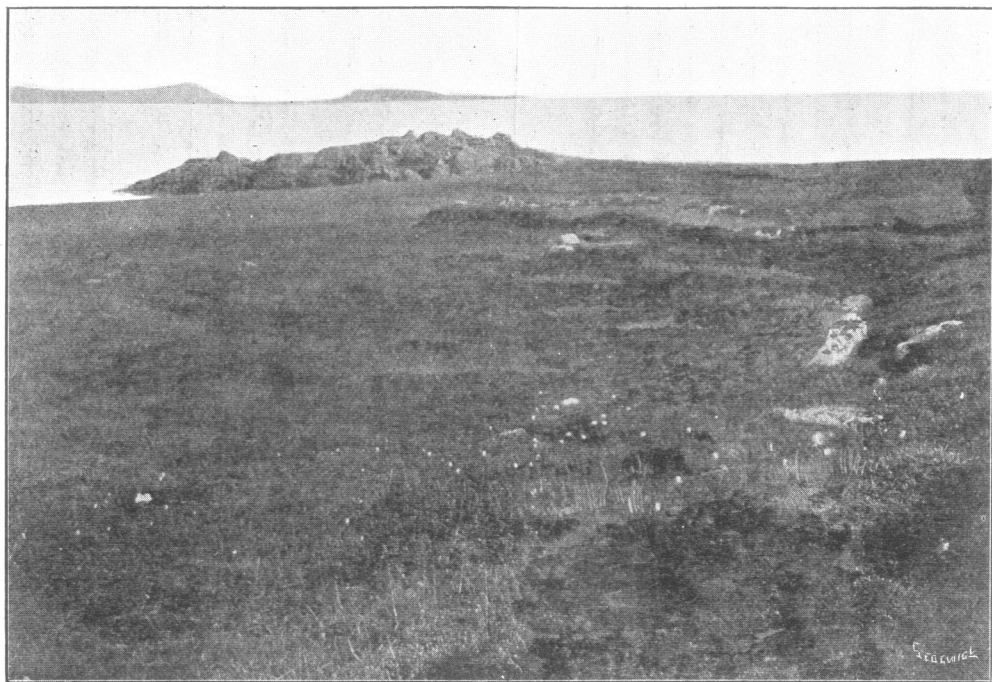


PLATE XLII.—FLÓKANAUST.

which the photograph (Plate XLII.) is taken. The grassy hollow in the middle ground is the ruin. A heap of rocks by the shore and the sea is seen in the background (cf. Vigfússon's description, *Árbók*, 1893, p. g, ff). Plate XLIII. shows the ground plan. The *naust* itself (*a*) was

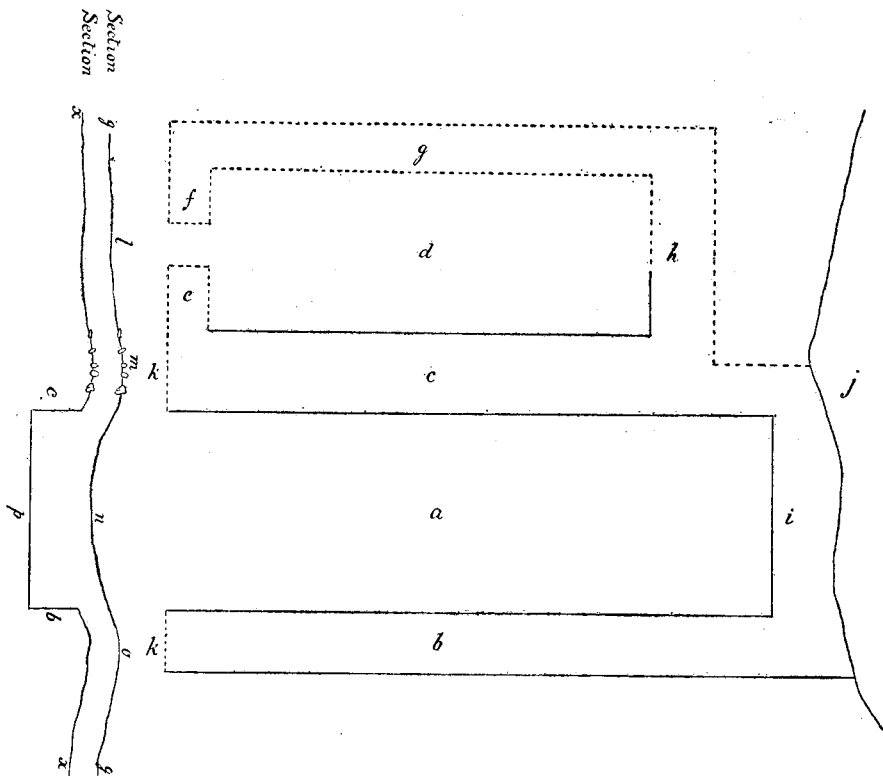


PLATE XLIII.—SECTIONS AND PLAN OF FLÓKANAUST.

Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$ th inch to the metre.

only 18.30 m. long, according to my measurement, but was probably originally about 21.35 m. The walls could now only be traced to lines *kk*. The rest was invisible, but to judge by the ridge a short continuation was probable (perhaps 3.05 to 4.27 m.). Breadth 6.10 m. Wall *b* is of earth, and was 4 ft. high inside, but as the *naust* for

the greater part was dug into the ground, the top of the walls has only been slightly raised above ground. Gable wall *i* joins one side of the rock-hill *j*. The partition wall *c* was 2.44 m. broad and 1.52 m. high on the side turning to the *naust*. It was built of stones, with thin layers of earth between. *d* must be Flóki's *skáli*. Its length only could be ascertained, 14.64 m. including wall *e, f*. The four walls, *e, f, g, h*, are uncertain, but it was evidently built of stones throughout (perhaps with earth between). Line *qq* is a section of the undisturbed earth, and line *xx* the same section after digging the *naust*. The open end of the *naust*, which never had any wall, turns to the sea, east. Hrafna-Flóki, to whom Iceland owes its name of Ísland, according to "Landnámabók" only stayed one winter here, probably about 865. The five or six early and late *nausts* I examined are all of the same form: an oblong square, with no wall in one end, that towards the sea. As this form constantly recurs, further examples are not needed. (N.B.—The height of section *qq* answers completely to the breadth of the ruin opposite. *l* is the *skáli*, *m* the partition wall, *n* the *naust* bottom, *o* the outer north wall, *c* and *b* show the height of the walls, and *p*, the bottom after being dug out.)

QUESTION IX.

CAIRNS (DYSJAR).

1. Photographs.
2. Measurements of ten or twelve.
3. A description of the situation, condition, and the numbers usually found together, and what is to be found in or beneath them. Here 60 to 120 are found together on steep hill sides. Usually nothing is to be found beneath them, never any bones or metal, but the arrangement of the stones beneath have twice suggested a burial.

IN all my travels I have only been able to find seven *dysjar*, but this is enough to fix the form and description of the Icelandic *dys*, for their similarity is so great that to see

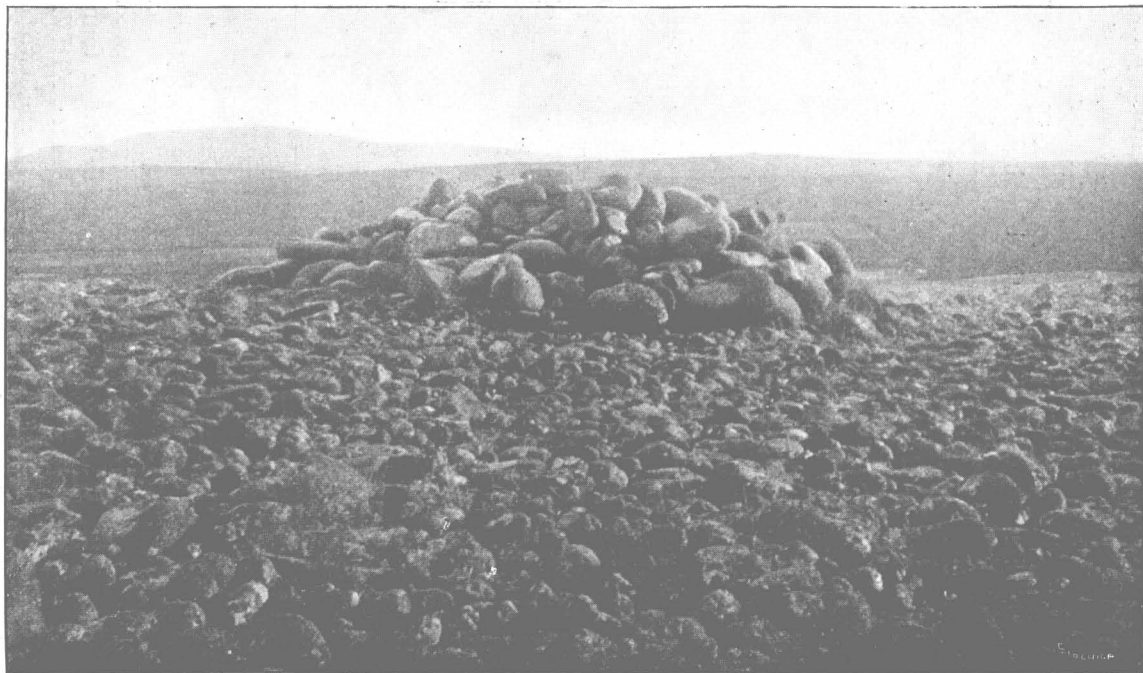


PLATE XLVI.—DYS IN BRATTABREKKA

one is to see all. Only in width and height do they vary. They all consist of round, somewhat flattened heaps of stones, of which the very largest are hardly a cubic foot in size. On penetrating into the *dys* one sees they are irregularly thrown together, with big holes between. There is no earth or turf. I had two examined to the bottom, and no bones or metal were to be found. They are certainly, as a rule, thrown up on a mountain slope or

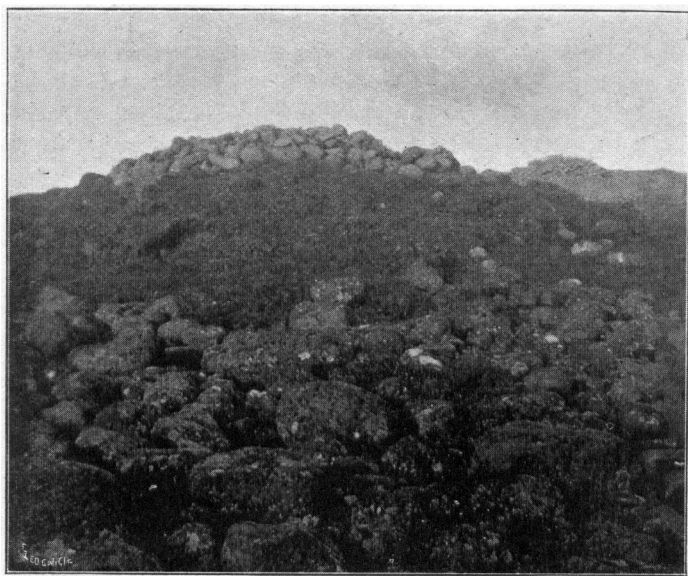


PLATE XLIV.—DYSJAR NEAR REYKJAVÍK.

hill side, and usually one or more larger stones are found on the top. Here, as a rule, there is only one in each place. But in Brattabrekka (a mountain road between Borgarfjörður and Dalir) and by Reykjavík I have found two together. The two near Reykjavík, Plate XLIV.; the others, Plates XLV. to XLVII., are the two of Brattabrekka and one at Ferstikluháls near Hvalfjörður. Of those near Reykjavík, the larger has a diameter of



PLATE XLVII.—DYS AT FERSTIKLUHÁLS.

15 ft. and a height of $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft., the smaller a diameter of 8 ft. and a height of $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft. The others are all about 2 to 3 ft. in height and 12 to 16 ft. in diameter. The two I did not photograph were quite of the same form, and had the same flat stones on the top.



PLATE XLV.—DYS IN BRATTABREKKA.

The common belief in Iceland is that they are ruins of old wayside road-marks (*vörður*), and not burial places; yet there is a tradition about the largest one near Reykjavík that a woman, Steinunn, is buried there, and therefore it is called Steinkudys.

QUESTION X.

FORTS.

IN spite of all my efforts I have not been able to give a contribution to the solution of this question. The *virki* mentioned in the Sagas have either been a sort of wall round the house, which has nowhere left a trace behind, or they formed part of the house (*virki um húsin* or *á húsum*) and have been destroyed with these, being in most cases probably of timber, in which case they could not leave any trace. *Borgarvirki*, described in the *Árbók*, 1880-81, p. 99, is so unique and peculiar that it gives no information about the usual *virki*.

I now hope to have answered the questions propounded for my solution by Miss C. Horsford as fully as could be done by one summer's investigations in Iceland. I doubt not that more information could be brought together by examining other parts of the country. Yet I think I have selected the most favourable field for the purpose, considering the shortness of the time. I must ask indulgence for my sketches and especially for my photographs, as the latter ought undoubtedly to be more numerous and of better quality. Circumstances over which I have had little control are to blame. The only means of transport as yet in Iceland is by horseback, and the rough, trackless roads have been detrimental to the photographic plates, causing damage or destruction to at least nine of them. For the rest, wind and weather made photographing at all times most difficult.

PART III.—RÉSUMÉ

DU RAPPORT DE M. THORSTEINN ERLINGSSON SUR UNE
EXPÉDITION ARCHÉOLOGIQUE EN ISLANDE EN 1895.

L'EXPLORATION des ruines islandaises décrites dans les pages précédentes a été originairement entreprise en vue de l'étude comparée des caractères distinctifs des ouvrages des Islandais pendant la période des Sagas et des caractères de certaines ruines de la Nouvelle-Angleterre que l'on croit être les restes de l'ancienne colonie Scandinave dite *Vínland*, dont la découverte fut faite par Leif Eriksen en l'an 1000 après J.-C. Nous avons aussi espéré que ces recherches pourraient être utiles et intéressantes pour tous les spécialistes et les amateurs de l'archéologie et de la littérature Scandinaves.

Les maisons, tumulus, champs de justice, fossés, digues, hangars à bateaux et cairns, qui sont décrits dans le présent mémoire, ont été recherchés et explorés par M. Thorsteinn Erlingsson pendant l'été de 1895.

HABITATIONS.

Les anciennes maisons d'habitation en Islande étaient généralement situées sur un terrain en pente près d'un fleuve, d'une rivière ou d'un fiord. Chaque pièce formait elle-même une petite maison et l'habitation entière consistait en deux, trois ou davantage de ces pièces ou petites maisons à la suite les unes des autres. Quelquefois une ou deux autres pièces étaient annexées à l'arrière de la *stofa* ou pièce principale (Pl. XXII.). A côté se trouvaient souvent un ou plusieurs petits bâtiments extérieurs, appelés *útibúr*. Les murs étaient bas et très larges ; ils

avaient un ou deux mètres de haut et de un mètre et demi à deux mètres et demi de large. Les mesures intérieures des *stofas* explorées par M. Erlingsson avaient de trois à sept mètres pour la largeur et de dix à dix-sept mètres pour la longueur.

Les matériaux ordinaires et le mode de construction des murs étaient analogues à ceux qui sont communément en usage en Islande à l'époque actuelle. Le côté intérieur était bâti en dalles brutes, dont les dimensions étaient de 0.15 m. à 0.60 m. cubes, et les interstices étaient remplis avec de la terre (Pl. XLVIII., *aa*). Le côté extérieur (*bb*) était formé de lits alternatifs de gazon et de pierres, et tout l'espace compris entre les deux côtés (*cc*) était rempli de terre battue fortement. Quelquefois les murs étaient entièrement bâtis en mottes de gazon ou seulement avec un lit irrégulier de pierres à la base, comme à Erpsstaðir, Laugar et Eiríksstaðir. Le plancher se composait de terre battue en une surface solide, qui se recouvrait graduellement d'une couche mince et noire de charbon ou autre matière étrangère. Ce revêtement s'appelle le *gólf-skán* ou "peau du plancher." Lorsque M. Erlingsson faisait des fouilles dans ces ruines et qu'il trouvait, en soulevant une pierre sur le plancher, le *gólf-skán* au-dessous de la pierre, il concluait que la pierre était probablement tombée du mur, mais si la terre avait l'apparence d'être fraîche, il était évident que la pierre avait été mise là pour quelque destination spéciale, quand la maison avait été construite.

FOYERS.

Un long foyer ou fourneau s'étendait en suivant la partie centrale du plancher de la *stofa*. Quelquefois, cette partie du plancher était pavée avec des pierres plates de différentes dimensions, comme à Áslákstunga (Pl. II., *A*, *jj*), Laugar (Pl. VIII., *B*, *d*) et Erpsstaðir (Pl. X., *g*), mais l'usage habituel était de revêtir le foyer de dalles placées sur la tranche, comme à Sámstaðir (Pl. VI., *A*, *jj*, et Planche XLVIII., *I*, *ee*). On a

souvent trouvé, dans ces longs foyers ou auprès d'eux, un petit trou oblong dont la dimension moyenne était environ de 0.30 m. de long sur 0.25 m. de large et 0.45 m. de profondeur. Ce trou était garni de dalles de pierre et servait à entretenir le feu pendant la durée de la nuit. Il est appelé la *feluhola* ou trou d'entretien. Outre ces longs foyers ou *lang-eldar*, il y avait diverses autres formes de foyers destinées à différents usages. Les *mál-eldar* ou foyers à aliments étaient de petits feux de cuisine. Tantôt ces foyers étaient pavés, comme à Erpsstaðir (Pl. X., *f*), tantôt ils étaient composés de longues dalles de pierre, comme à Sámstaðir (Pl. VI., *A, e, f*) et à Eiríksstaðir (Pl. XIV., *k*). L'*afl* était un petit foyer pour la forge, comme à Áslákstunga (Pl. II., *A, cc*) et à Laugar (Pl. VIII., *c, b*). Il y avait encore d'autres formes dont la destination spéciale est inconnue, comme dans la *stofa* de Áslákstunga (Pl. II., *A, g*), où un trou garni de pierres tenait lieu de foyer, et aussi dans le *skáli* du même bâtiment où un petit foyer était ménagé dans le mur (Pl. II., *B, u*). Á Eiríksstaðir il y avait un foyer dans un coin de la chambre près de l'entrée (Pl. XIV., *A, c*).

ESTRADES.

Des estrades étroites s'étendaient le long des deux côtés de la *stofa* ; elles étaient revêtues de grandes et de petites pierres. Dans les grandes *stofas*, ces estrades avaient environ 0.23 m. de haut sur $1\frac{1}{4}$ mètres de large, comme à Áslákstunga (Plate II., *A, hh, kk*) et à Sámstaðir (Pl. VI., *A, l, k, g, h*).

Quelquefois, il y avait aussi une large estrade à une des extrémités de la *stofa*, comme à Sámstaðir (Pl. VI., *A, d*) et à Erpsstaðir (Pl. X., *h*). On faisait souvent une pièce séparée en élevant une cloison mince à travers une chambre. Des vestiges de ces cloisons ont été trouvés à Áslákstunga (Pl. II., *A, bbb*), Laugar (Pl. VIII.) et Eiríksstaðir (Pl. XIV., *A, d*).

SEUILS.

Un seuil, appelé la *dyrahella* ou “ dalle de la porte, ” consistant en une longue dalle de pierre, est souvent placé, soit à travers l'entrée, soit à l'une ou à l'autre extrémité du court passage qui conduit, à travers l'épaisseur du mur, dans l'intérieur de la *stofa*, comme à Sámstaðir (Pl. VI., *A, b, c*) et à Eiríkstaðir (Pl. XIV., *bb*), ainsi qu'à Erpsstaðir, où toute la surface du plancher dans le passage est pavée d'une manière rudimentaire (Pl. X., *b, d, e*). Des seuils ont été également trouvés dans les passages entre deux pièces à l'intérieur de l'habitation, comme à Áslákstunga (Pl. II., *r*) et Sámstaðir (Pl. VI., *n*).

FORGE.

Des traces de la forge ont été trouvées à Áslákstunga (Pl. II., *d*, et Pl. III.) sous forme d'un trou oblong, revêtu de pierres, ayant 0.42 m. de large, 0.50 m. de long et 0.34 m. de profondeur. C'était probablement la citerne pour la provision d'eau. C'est un fait digne de remarque que nul vestige de fer n'ait été trouvé, ici ou ailleurs, dans les ruines qu'a explorées M. Erlingsson. Les fusaiöles en pierre (pesons de fuseau) ou *kljágrjót* de Laugar ont été les seuls restes d'objets de petites dimensions ou mobiles découverts par M. Erlingsson pendant ses fouilles.

BAINS.

La salle de bains ou *baðstofa* était tantôt annexée à l'habitation, comme à Sámstaðir (Pl. IV., *D*), tantôt placée à une petite distance de celle-ci, comme à Eiríkstaðir (Pl. XIV., *C*) et à Ljótólfsstaðir (Pl. XVII.). Ces salles étaient de petites dimensions et avaient des foyers, de grandeur variable, soit dans un des coins, soit auprès d'eux. L'entrée de ces salles était quelquefois, à ce qu'il semble, une porte coupée ou une trappe au-dessus du niveau du sol.

GARDE-MANGER.

Un garde-manger ou *matbúr* était aussi quelquefois annexé à la maison, comme à Áslákstunga (Pl. II., C, D) et à Sámstaðir (Pl. VI., C).

BÂTIMENTS EXTÉRIEURS.

Les bâtiments extérieurs ou *útibúr* servaient à différents usages et se trouvaient à une courte distance des maisons d'habitation.

LAITERIE.

La laiterie ou *skyrbúr* étudiée par M. Erlingsson à Lambhöfði fait voir la simplicité et l'état rudimentaire des inventions des Islandais des temps anciens. Cette salle avait 5.10 m. de long sur 3.02 m. de large. Trois trous arrondis se trouvaient alignés le long d'un des côtés du mur dans la terre du plancher (Pl. XVIII., a, b, c).

Le premier trou (a), qui était un ellipsoïde de 1.05 m. de large sur 1.18 m. de long, avait 0.37 m. de profondeur dans la partie centrale ; toutes ses faces étaient inclinées vers l'intérieur comme une saucière. Au fond se trouvait une pierre plate, lisse et très mince, recouverte d'une croûte blanche et jaunâtre, qui était visqueuse au toucher. Cette croûte avait de cinq à quinze centimètres d'épaisseur et se composait de débris de fromage ou de caillebottes, qui étaient, comme l'on sait, un des aliments de prédilection parmi les Scandinaves. Le second trou (b) était complètement rond et avait 1.25 m. de diamètre. Ses côtés étaient perpendiculaires et avaient 0.46 m. de haut. Au fond de ce trou on découvrit les restes de deux vases semblables au fragment découvert dans le premier trou (a) ; une des plaques était brisée. Le troisième trou (c) était également rond et à côtés perpendiculaires, mais n'avait que 0.16 m. de profondeur. C'est dans ces trous que l'on conservait les caillebottes ou que l'on confectionnait les fromages, avec ou sans l'aide de vases en bois, avec une couche mince de pierres pour les garantir du contact du plancher en terre.

VACHERIE ET GRANGE.

La vacherie ou *ffjós* était souvent annexée à la maison d'habitation et un passage conduisait quelquefois de l'une à l'autre, comme à Laugar (Pl. VIII., e, r), où la vacherie est placée à angle droit avec le bâtiment principal, et dont la grange ou *heygarður* est placée à son tour à angle droit avec la vacherie. A l'entrée de cette vacherie, il y avait des vestiges d'un vestibule ou *forskáli* dont la dimension intérieure était de 2 m. de large sur 3.75 m. de long. Le long d'un des côtés de cette pièce était une mangeoire pour les veaux, formée de pierres plates ou de dalles posées sur la tranche. Cette mangeoire avait environ 0.30 m. de large. Les mesures intérieures de la vacherie, pour l'espace situé au-delà, étaient de 8.87 m. de long sur 4.75 m. de large. Le long des murs, de chaque côté, il y avait huit ou neuf stalles, dont les cloisons étaient formées de larges pierres plates posées sur la tranche. Quelques-unes de ces dalles avaient de 0.61 m. à 0.91 m. de long et autant de large. A l'extrémité de la vacherie se trouvait l'entrée de la grange, dont la dimension intérieure était environ de 9 m. de long sur 3 m. de large. Il y avait, entre cette grange et la *stofa*, une pièce en partie pavée, mais sa destination n'a pas pu être expliquée.

Les ruines de tous ces édifices, avant les fouilles, présentaient l'aspect de faibles ondulations de terrain ou de creux, recouverts de gazon et souvent difficiles à découvrir, ou encore de rangées irrégulières de pierres sur le sol nu, aux emplacements où les maisons s'élevaient autrefois.

TUMULUS.

Le tumulus ou *haugr* était la forme habituelle de sépulture pour les personnes notables chez les Scandinaves à l'époque du paganisme, et cet usage s'est continué quelques années après l'introduction du Christianisme. Le cadavre était généralement posé sur le sol, mais, lorsqu'il était enseveli, le tombeau n'avait pas plus de 0.60 m. ou

0.90 m. de profondeur. On pouvait quelquefois ériger un monticule sur lequel la chambre sépulcrale était construite, mais ce cas ne se présentait que pour les tumulus de très grandes dimensions.

La chambre sépulcrale était probablement édiflée de la même manière que les maisons étaient construites, c'est-à-dire avec des murs bas, revêtus de parements de pierre, tant sur le côté intérieur que sur la côté extérieur, et remplis intérieurement de terre, ou bien n'ayant un parement de pierre que sur le côté intérieur seulement. Ces murs avaient 1.22 m. à 3 m. d'épaisseur, mais seulement une hauteur de 0.30 m. à 0.46 m. Les dimensions intérieures de la chambre sépulcrale étaient de 1.22 m. à 1.52 m. de large sur 1.83 m. à 3 m. de long. Ordinairement, le cadavre était étendu soit dans la direction du nord au sud, soit dans celle de l'ouest à l'est. La chambre sépulcrale n'avait généralement pas de toit, mais on plaçait sur le cadavre des pièces de bois, qui sont quelquefois léchées par le feu, ou bien des pierres plates. Le défunt était toujours revêtu de son habillement quand il était inhumé dans le tumulus, et généralement ses armes aussi étaient placées avec lui. Avant l'introduction du Christianisme, son cheval et son chien étaient aussi enterrés avec lui. La chambre sépulcrale était ensuite recouverte sur tous les côtés d'une couche de terre ayant de 0.60 m. à 2.45 m. d'épaisseur, de sorte que le tumulus, une fois terminé, avait l'apparence d'un hémisphère surbaissé. Hrafnshaugr (Pl. XXV., A) est le tumulus funéraire de Hrafn Þorviðarsson, décrit dans le "Landnámabók," v. 10. Il a été étudié pour la première fois par Sigurðr Vigfússon en août 1880. Il a comme dimensions 6.10 m. de diamètre et 0.91 m. de haut. Dans ce tumulus, le cadavre est orienté de l'ouest à l'est. Les ossements étaient entourés d'argile à l'état non mélangé, et qui formait peut-être les restes de la chambre sépulcrale. De grandes pierres avaient été placées sur le cadavre. En pratiquant l'ouverture de ce tumulus, Sigurðr Vigfússon trouva, outre les ossements,

des fragments d'une épée en fer et quelques perles de verre.

Il ouvrit également, près du Hrafnshaugr, un autre tumulus, dans lequel les ossements d'un homme et d'un cheval se trouvaient ensemble (Pl. XXV., B). Ce tumulus était un peu plus grand que le premier, mais n'avait toutefois que 7.22 m. de diamètre et 1.22 m. de haut. L'homme et le cheval avaient été posés sur le roc, mais, l'examen du tumulus ayant fait découvrir, sous deux pierres qui n'avaient pas encore été remuées, des débris dans lesquels M. Erlingsson crut reconnaître du gazon, il parut vraisemblable qu'on avait jonché d'un lit de gazon la partie du sol qui se trouvait au-dessous des deux corps. L'homme avait été étendu avec la tête tournée vers le sud et le cheval avec la tête vers l'est et le dos appuyé contre les pieds de l'homme. Ce tumulus avait été élevé de la même manière que l'autre, avec cette différence qu'il était presque entièrement en terre et qu'un certain nombre de pierres de très grandes dimensions avaient été placées sur l'homme et sur le cheval. M. Sigurðr Vigfússon exhuma divers objets en fer et autres métaux, des boucles et des mors, montrant que le cheval avait été enterré en harnais complet, et des ferrures de bouclier, qui faisaient voir qu'un bouclier avait été placé sur la figure de l'homme. Il y avait encore quelques pièces d'armure méconnaissables et deux boucles de ceinturon. Ces deux tumulus datent de 915 à 932 après J.-C.

CHAMPS DE JUSTICE.

Le champ de justice ou *þingstaðir* était un lieu où l'assemblée du district se réunissait pour ses occupations législatives. La place choisie était ordinairement située au-dessous d'une élévation de terrain appelée le *þingbrekka* ou "bordure de l'assemblée," d'où l'on pouvait lire la loi, prononcer des discours et faire des proclamations à l'assemblée assise en-dessous sur le sol uni et doux de la plaine. Là aussi, à un autre moment, les spectateurs pouvaient venir s'asseoir pour assister aux jeux qui étaient

célébrés dans la semaine durant laquelle l'assemblée était en session. Un grand nombre de ruines se rencontrent à tous ces emplacements de *þings* : les murs quadrangulaires des loges ou *búðir*, dans lesquelles les membres délégués à l'assemblée ou *þingmenn* étaient abrités, et une grande clôture ronde appelée le *dómhringur* ou "cercle de jugement" (cercle des juges), dans laquelle les juges tenaient leurs sessions.

Les "cercles de jugement" étudiés par M. Erlingsson ont été ceux de Árnes et de Þingholt. Le premier se trouvait dans une île de la rivière Þjórsá. Il était bâti sur la pente méridionale d'une petite élévation de terrain formée de pierres et de gravier (Pl. XXIX., A) et, à sa base, dans la partie plane, s'étendait un sable uni et doux et, par delà, un ruisseau coulait au pied de quelques rochers escarpés (Pl. XXVII.). Il avait 13.42 m. de diamètre, y compris les murs, qui avaient été en pierres et avaient dû avoir environ 1.22 m. d'épaisseur et de 0.60 m. à 0.90 m. de haut au-dessus de la base formée par le sol aplani, quoique cette hauteur ait pu être beaucoup plus considérable. Du côté méridional, où il y avait eu plusieurs degrés pour monter jusqu'à l'entrée, le mur en pierres a actuellement 1.83 m. de haut (Pl. XXVIII.). L'entrée avait environ 1.22 m. de large.

Le cercle de jugement de Þingholt était un peu plus grand que celui de Árnes et avait 14.34 m. de diamètre, y compris les murs qui avaient eu environ 1.22 m. d'épaisseur, et de 1.22 m. à 1.52 m. de haut et n'avaient été construits qu'en mottes de gazon seulement. L'entrée du côté sud-ouest avait 1.83 m. de large. Entre cette entrée et la petite colline ou *þing-brekka* s'étendait une plaine large, plate et gazonnée, qui était probablement le *þingstaðir* et en même temps le champ des jeux ou *glímuvöllr*.

DIGUES.

Les Sagas nous apprennent que, dans les temps anciens, on endiguait les rivières, pour irriguer les prairies et qu'on

se servait tant des digues que des fossés pour transporter jusqu'à des localités éloignées, par la voie des canaux, des blocs de bois destinés à l'usage ou à la distribution.¹ M. Erlingsson a visité un grand nombre de localités, dans l'espoir d'y trouver une digue remontant aux temps anciens, mais, quoiqu'il ait relevé quarante-trois endroits où il a cru qu'il pouvait y avoir des vestiges d'anciennes digues, la seule digue qu'il ait décrite est celle de Fljótshlið, où le fleuve Þverá s'est fait autrefois un nouveau lit, causant ainsi des dégâts si considérables qu'une digue fut construite pour lui faire reprendre son ancien cours. Quoique cette digue n'ait pas plus de deux cents ans d'existence, la façon dont elle a été construite est probablement la même que celle des ouvrages analogues des temps anciens. Elle se trouvait à une distance de 4.50 m. à 6 m. de la rivière, en travers du nouveau lit, avec sa convexité tournée vers le courant de la rivière (Pl. XXXIX.). Elle consistait en gazon et en mottes de terre, avait 8.50 m. de long, 1.22 m. de haut et sa largeur était de 2.75 m. à la base, mais seulement de 1.83 m. au niveau du sommet.

CANAUX.

Deux fossés remontant aux temps anciens ont été découverts. L'un se trouvait près de la ferme de Hlíðarendakot à Fljótshlið et avait servi à amener l'eau de la rivière Þórðará à travers une vaste étendu de terrains en prairie (Pl. XXXIV.). Il avait plus de 300 m. de long. La profondeur de son lit était de 0.46 m. et sa largeur de 0.76 m. Les bancs étaient formés de terre et de gazon rejetés pendant le creusement du fossé (Pl. XXXV., a, b).

Le second fossé avait servi à amener l'eau de la rivière Kálfá à Eystri Hreppur, le long du bord d'une prairie située au bas du penchant d'une colline voisine. Ce fossé était plus long, plus large et plus profond que celui de Þórðará.

¹ "Hávarðar Saga," 51; "Flateyjarbók," II., 280.

HANGARS À BATEAUX.

Pendant les rigoureux hivers du Nord, les Vikings remisaient leurs bateaux dans des *nausts* ou hangars, qu'ils édifiaient près de la mer ou dans un fiord. Ces *nausts* étaient creusés dans le sol de façon que le fond ne fût qu'à peine à quelques pieds au-dessus du niveau de la mer ; ils avaient des murs bas, en pierres et en gazon, étaient recouverts d'un toit et étaient ouverts par l'extrémité proche de l'eau, par laquelle le bateau devait être lancé de nouveau au retour du printemps. De même que pour les ruines des habitations, les seuls restes aujourd'hui visibles de ces *nausts* ne consistent que dans les reliefs de terrain, formés par les bases des murs écroulés et cachés sous la végétation, et les faibles dépressions qui se trouvent dans les intervalles.

Le *naust* de Hrafn (Pl. XL. et XLI.) formait un creux long et étroit, de 1.06 m. environ de profondeur, situé dans un champ gazonné qui était incliné en pente, près du Arnarfjörðr. De chaque côté de ce creux se trouvait une rangée de pierres recouvertes par les herbes. Il avait eu originairement environ 21.35 m. de long sur 6.10 m. de large.

Ce *naust* date du treizième siècle seulement, mais le Flóka-naust près du Brjánslækur à Barðaströnd sur les rives du Vatnsfjörður est le hangar à bateaux construit par Flóki Vilgerðarson, qui fut un des premiers navigateurs qui découvrirent l'Islande et fut celui qui lui donna son nom en 865 après J.-C. Il était surnommé Hrafn Flóki parcequ'il avait emporté trois corbeaux avec lui sur son navire pendant ce voyage. Le premier corbeau qu'il lâcha s'envola à tire d'aile par l'arrière du navire, le suivant prit son essor et revint ensuite sur le navire, mais le troisième vola droit devant lui et c'est dans cette direction que l'Islande fut découverte.

Les ruines du *skáli* et du *naust* de Flóki se trouvent sur le côté oriental du fiord, à environ 45 m. de la mer (Pl. XLII.). Ces ruines sont dominées par une colline rocheuse. Le *naust* ou *hróf* (toit), ainsi qu'il est appelé

dans le "Landnámabók," et le *skáli* se trouvent à côté l'un de l'autre avec un mur de séparation entre les deux (Pl. XLIII.). Le *naust* (*a*) avait originairement à peu près les mêmes dimensions que le *Hrafnstnaust*, mais le *skáli* n'avait que 14.64 m. de long, y compris les murs de face (*e* et *f*). Tous les murs du *skáli* étaient bâtis en pierres et en gazon, y compris le mur mitoyen (*c*), qui avait 1.52 m. de hauteur totale, du côté du *naust*, dont la partie supérieure était formée de la terre retirée de l'excavation. Le mur extérieur (*b*) du *naust* n'était qu'en terre seulement. Il avait 1.22 m. de haut du côté intérieur, mais, du côté extérieur, le sommet du mur ne s'élevait pas beaucoup au-dessus du niveau du sol du champ environnant. Le mur de gable du *naust* (*i*) était réuni à la colline rocheuse qui se trouvait derrière les ruines.

CAIRNS.

Le cairn d'Islande ou *dys* est un amas de pierres rond et un peu aplati. Ces pierres, dont les plus grandes ont à peine une dimension de 0.30 m., étaient entassées irrégulièrement, sans terre ni gazon, mais en laissant entr'elles de grands vides. Une ou plusieurs grandes pierres sont placées au sommet du cairn. Ces cairns se trouvent sur le versant des montagnes et sur le penchant des collines. Leurs dimensions varient de 3.40 m. de diamètre et 0.45 m. de haut à 4.88 m. de diamètre et 0.90 m. de haut. Quoique les cairns passent habituellement pour être une sorte de tumulus funéraire, l'opinion généralement admise aujourd'hui en Islande est que ce sont les restes de bornes indicatrices (*vörður*). M. Erlingsson en a exploré deux jusqu'au fond sans trouver trace ni d'ossements ni de métal et M. Sigurðr Vigfússon écrit qu'il a fait la même constatation.

FORTS, ETC.

Les forts, *bæjarstétts* et murs d'endiguement, que M. Erlingsson avait aussi la mission d'étudier, ou n'ont

pas pu être découverts, ou n'avaient pas de valeur archéologique.

Le journal de M. Erlingsson donne un compte-rendu intéressant de ses voyages et des nombreuses difficultés qu'il a rencontrées pour visiter deux cent dix-huit localités du sud et de l'ouest de l'Islande. De ce nombre, il n'a mentionné que celles où il a découvert des ruines ayant une importance archéologique ou dont l'inspection et l'examen exigeaient des dépenses de temps et d'argent.

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1895