

CHAPTER. III

THE ALGERIANS IN ICELAND

'FULL costly and pitiful tidings in Iceland, the which wrought more scath than any of this kind since Norseman first settled the land'—in some such words the annalist Björn of Scardsá, who was alive and writing when they occurred, refers to the events to be set forth in the present chapter. Iceland had been subjected to many disasters, to earthquake, volcanic eruption, pestilence, and civil war, almost since the days of the settling in the ninth century ; but it was not until the year 1627 that she experienced the ravages of the African hordes who were then the scourge of Europe. English pirates had landed on her shores, and had sacked her homesteads : but now she was to experience the full horrors of the 'Turkish fiends.'

A story is told in the Westman Isles to the effect that either on June 20, 1740, or, as some say, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Algerians returned, and were outwitted by the cunning of the *sýslumaður* or sheriff, a Dane named Johannsen, who, when he saw the corsair approaching Heimey (the 'Home Isle'), drew up all the men who had guns along the shore, bidding all unarmed persons of both sexes march up and down the islands with fowling-clubs, skating-poles, or anything else that might seem in the distance like a gun, upon their shoulders. The pirates, thinking that the island was occupied by an armed force, departed without effecting a raid. Such is

the legend, and possibly it may be true; but we are at present concerned with a far more serious, and an earlier, attack, of which several contemporary accounts have been preserved, compiled partly from the statements of survivors and partly from the letters the captives wrote from the land of their captivity. The majority of these accounts were carefully edited and printed in Reykjavik in the middle of the nineteenth century; but they are now difficult to obtain, and I am not aware that any of them have been hitherto translated into English, except in a couple of articles contributed by myself to the *Scotsman* in August, 1901. The most notable are, perhaps, the *Travels of Sir Olaf Egilsson*, and the *Story of the Turkish Raid* by Björn of Scardsá—a respectable Icelandic historian, or rather annalist, who was noted for the bad Icelandic he wrote and for the numerous annals he compiled.

Occurring at a period when the old Icelandic speech had become temporarily debased, and when it was considered correct to be as foreign and as pedantic in diction as possible, these annals are not literature in any sense of the word; but their very close agreement even in minute details regarding the events of the sudden and utterly unexpected disaster with which we are concerned, gives them a practical interest as historical documents. To translate them literally, *in extenso*, could serve no useful purpose, for they abound in repetitions and uninteresting details. One of their most curious characteristics is an almost complete absence of emotion, an almost morbid restraint, which adds a peculiar poignancy to them, only giving way in the extraordinary series of abusive names with which the pirates are branded. As often as possible, I have given a literal translation of the more powerful phrases and passages. In doing so I have been much in-

debted to the kind assistance of Sysselman Jónsson, of the Westman Isles, and other Icelandic friends on Heimey.

It is of course impossible that even contemporary Icelanders can have had exact and detailed information of the events in Algiers which led to the corsair's attack on a country so remote as Iceland; but their annalists have not hesitated to give a graphic account of these events, as they conceived them to have happened. They state that in the early summer of the year 1627 the chiefs of the Barbary pirates assembled at Algiers to discuss whither they should make their next foray, and that one of the company mentioned 'that island in the north-west sea which is called Iceland.' The eldest of the counsellors, who appears to have been the chairman of the council, ridiculed the rashness of any such suggestion, saying that it would be folly to visit the uttermost inhabited spot on earth for the sake of a few miserable Christians. But it chanced that the slave who waited on the council was a Danish Christian of the name of Paul, who had been taken on some previous raid. Paul was tired of servitude. He made bold to speak, and promised that if his lords would permit him to pilot an expedition to Iceland (which he had already visited on several occasions) they would gain much profit in sheep and men. In return for the success of the voyage, he would beg for his own freedom. After much discussion, this was agreed to, and Paul acted as pilot on board one of the ships which visited Iceland that summer.

Here we may pause in the narrative for a moment to describe the fate that overtook Paul, according to the Icelandic annalists, ere he had long enjoyed the fruits of his treachery. When the expedition returned to Algiers he found that he no longer desired to visit Denmark, and elected rather to become a renegade and to accompany

the pirates on future expeditions—no longer as a slave but now as an equal. To this his comrades made no objection, and Paul was one of the crew of the next corsair that sailed out from Algiers to attack the shipping of Christendom. The annalist may now speak for himself, as clearly as a literal translation of the Icelandic will permit him, 'Late one night an evil spirit, such as they had never thought to see, stood on the deck, and called upon Paul with a loud voice, saying, "Paul, thou art mine! Lo, I have come for thee!" And as the words were in the saying, it vanished in a whirlwind over the face of the sea. Next day a Christian ship came out against these bloodthirsty hounds, and fired upon them. And then was Paul shot to hell by these Christians, and his head clipt from him. But no other man, save Paul only, was struck down on that day.'

When we deal with events that happened in Iceland during the summer of 1627, we are on firmer ground, and there is no reason to suspect even a trace of myth in the native accounts of the 'Turkish Raid,' as it is generally called at the present day. I will relate it simply as the Icelandic annals do, making no comment upon the facts as they are told by contemporary scribes.

Four ships of Barbary came to Iceland in this summer, three sailing from the city of Algiers, and one from a port on the Straits of Gibraltar which Icelanders called Kyle. What town exactly this was it is rather hard to say. That it was not the historic Salee, which had then passed its zenith, is proved both by the description of its position and the fact that 'Salee' is also mentioned in the Icelandic records as a city of the pirates. On the whole, it would seem to have been further east than Tangier, and rather to have occupied the position of Ceuta; for it was well within the straits, some little distance from their opening into the

Atlantic. In any case, the Algerian and the Kylean expeditions acted quite independently of one another, and I think it will be best to follow our authorities in treating them severally, dealing with the Kylean vessel first.

The ship from Kyle was under the command of a trio of Moors, named Amorad, Areif, and Beiram, all of whom bore the title *reis*, though Amorad was the superior officer, being also called 'admiral' or captain. It is noted that these men, 'Turks' by birth, were far more merciful in their dealings than the leader of the Algerians, who was a German renegade, and that they restrained their men from illtreating the weak and aged, and even from doing wanton damage to property which they were unable to remove.

On June 15, 1627, they arrived off the coast of Iceland, anchoring at Grindavik, a government trading station near the south-west corner of the island. The district was then (as it still is) but thinly populated, and the only buildings that the pirates could see were the store, a solitary farmhouse, and the residence of the local trading agent. As soon as they had come to anchor they lowered a boat and rowed to a small Danish vessel which lay in the roads, awaiting her cargo of dry fish and wool. To allay suspicion they told her skipper, speaking in German, that they were subjects of the Danish king—whalers who had been out on the high seas for nine months and had run short of provisions. The skipper was surly. (It must be remembered that at this date trade in Iceland was a government monopoly, and that therefore all strange vessels were discouraged from visiting the island.) He replied that he had no provisions to sell them. Meanwhile their arrival had caused some little excitement on shore, and Lauritz Bentsen, the agent, sent out a boat to inquire of the new-

comers their business in Iceland; for he evidently suspected them of contraband trading. Bentsen's boatmen were not permitted to return ashore.

The pirates' boat had now returned to their own ship, and the crew proceeded to arm themselves, having first put the agent's nine men in chains. Then thirty of them entered the boat again, taking a supply of guns and scimitars as well as a stock of provisions, and made their way to the Danish trader for the second time—only to find that the skipper was the one man aboard her. Him they bound; and, having taken two more boatmen prisoners who had come out from land to see what they were doing, they rowed ashore.

Bentsen and his assistants fled up country, leaving the store to its fate. The pirates ransacked it, but found very little of worth. The solitary farmhouse next attracted their attention, and in it they seized a woman named Gudrun, Jón's daughter, whom they hurried off towards the sea. On their way to the shore they fell in with a brother of Gudrun, Philip by name, who did his best to save her. He was quite unarmed, and they soon left him bleeding on the ground. Then Hjalmar, a second brother, rode up on horseback, and attacked them with an iron-handled riding-whip; but he too was speedily disabled and overcome. Besides Gudrun, her husband, a third brother named Halldor, and her three sons, were all taken at the farm, as well as a little serving-girl. The eldest of the children was a schoolboy called Jón, and he afterwards became a rather important person in the history of the Icelanders in Barbary, as he wrote home a long letter to his relatives in Iceland, describing the life that the captives led and begging for money to ransom himself and his companions in misfortune. He is said to have finally become

a Mohammedan, and to have risen to a high position in the court of the Dey of Algiers. Gudrun's husband, also called Jón, was an old man, of little worth as a slave, and he was permitted to escape by the pirates before they reached the sea.

It is specially mentioned that the Icelandic children made no attempt to run away from their captors, regarding them merely as sheep-stealers, who could have no object in injuring people. As we shall see later, the pirates were mistaken on several occasions for Englishmen, and it may be of interest to point out that the hatred entertained at the present day in Iceland for the English trawlers who frequent Icelandic waters is not wholly due to the belief that the trawls injure the fishing which should properly belong to natives, but also, to some extent, to a remembrance of the marauding habits of English fishermen in the past. The captain of a Grimsby line-fisher who is personally, and rightly, a most popular person in the Westman Islands, has told me that when he was a youth hardly a boat visited Iceland without the crew landing and appropriating sheep, on the principle that the Icelanders had more than they could use themselves and that there was no harm in helping oneself to their surplus. It would even appear that in 1627 the English fishermen entered into league with the pirates.

On the same day on which Amorad reached Grindavik a Danish merchantman sailed past on her way to the west coast. Amorad promptly hoisted the Danish flag and sailed out to meet her. Her captain had no reason to be suspicious of a vessel which came from a government trading station in this guise, and he and his crew were taken practically without a struggle, and were transferred in chains to the corsair's hold. After this, two of the men

who had rowed out at Grindavik were set free, being permitted to go ashore in their own boat, why it is not stated.

The Moorish captain had gained information that a ship lay fully laden at Hafnafjord, a small inlet seven miles due south of Reykjavik, which was then a place of no importance. So he rounded the promontory of Reykjanes, taking with him his prize. Before he had sailed far, however, news of his arrival reached Holgeir Rosenkrantz, the Danish Governor of Iceland, who was then stationed at a place called Bessastad, also near the present capital and then the seat of government and of the royal treasury. The Governor was able to send a message to the agents at Hafnafjord and at the neighbouring station of Keflavik, warning them to act on the defensive and to bring in their ships to Seilahöfn—a harbour whose entrance is still rendered difficult by the hidden reefs and sandbanks at its mouth. He himself, at the same time, made what little preparations he was able to defend the country against the pirates, being assisted by several north-country officials, who had come to Bessastad on business, and by the famous Icelandic divine and scholar, Thorlak Skulason, shortly afterwards appointed Bishop of Holar.

The treasury lay on the shore of Seilahöfn, but, apparently, Amorad was not aware of the fact. We are told that he rejoiced when he entered the harbour and saw three ships lying at anchor. Out of pure bravado he fired off several guns—with rather unfortunate effect to himself, for the noise caused all the people of Bessastad, except the Governor and his friends, to rush off into the mountains, where they were practically beyond pursuit. Moreover, Amorad's own ship soon stuck on a sandbank and refused to budge. Meanwhile, the Governor's party

had fortified themselves as best they could, and had trained some guns, used generally for firing salutes on birthdays and marriages, upon the pirates. They were not called upon to fire, or did not think they were; but popular opinion in Iceland blamed them for not doing so, and the fact that they made no attack upon the Moors was held a matter for grave comment upon Rosenkrantz in later days. The pirate vessel remained fast on the sandbank through the night, despite the efforts of her crew to relieve her, and early the next morning the prisoners were removed to the prize that had been taken off Grindavik. The ammunition and stores were then transferred also, and on the following day the ship floated off the bank. Amorad, however, did not return to her, but, remaining on board the prize himself, put Beiram in command of her and gave orders to set sail, having made no attempt either to land or to take the three Danish merchantmen which lay behind the bar. He then sailed north, falling in, under the range of mountains known as Snæfellsjökul, with some English fishermen, who warned him that four English men-of-war lay off Vestfjord. This information caused him to change his course, and it is written that he sailed due west for four days; but no mention is made of the coast of Greenland, which he might have been expected to reach, had the wind been anything but adverse. On June 21 the two ships turned southwards, and proceeded home to Africa, reaching Kyle on July 30, exactly five weeks out from Seilahöfn.

The great waves that broke on a sandbank outside the harbour of the Moorish town prevented him from entering for two days, but boats came out on the third day and conducted him in with great rejoicings. On the shore men were stationed to blow bagpipes and trumpets, and

all the chief citizens came down to the quay to congratulate Amorad, who had announced the success of his foray by firing a salute of twelve guns as he entered the harbour.

The prisoners were taken ashore on August 2, and were shut up in a house in the town for four days, where they were visited by many Christian captives and others. On the fifth day they were taken out into the market-place, with their heads and feet bare as a sign of degradation, and, after being paraded through the town, were sold by public auction.

We must now return to Iceland and to the three ships which sailed from the city of Algiers, their commander being a German renegade, whose name is variously given as Morad Flamming¹ and Morash Heming. Two of them reached Iceland on July 3, appearing off Berufjord, on the east coast, and sailing up the firth to the anchorage opposite a small farmhouse which stood at its head. Then, without delay, their crews rowed ashore in four boats and looted the farm, breaking up the chests in which the farm people kept their clothing and valuables, and thus obtaining goods to the price of 'six hundreds².' They also took possession of some lambs and a new six-oared boat with all its gear, and then began to search for the inhabitants of the farm, who were away haymaking at the *sel* or summer camp in the uplands. Though the pirates were well aware of the probable existence of such a place they did not succeed in finding it, and the farm people escaped capture for the time, some of them being

¹ According to Mr. Stanley Lane Poole this was not the famous Algerian captain of that name, but a contemporary.

² 'A hundred—i. e. 120 ells of the stuff *wadmal*—a milch cow or six ewes with lambs counted for a hundred,' Cleasby and Vigfusson's *Icelandic Dictionary*.

taken a day or two later. Giving up the search, they then launched their four boats, with the one they had looted, and commenced to row back to their ship. Just as they started, the owner of the farm, a man named Guttorm, chanced to pay a visit to the homestead, and seeing them making off with his property, called out asking why they troubled innocent Iceland folk, who had done them no harm. We are told that he took them for Englishmen. They were very indignant at what they called his insolence in thus addressing them, but the sea was rising and they did not venture to return to the beach, on which tremendous waves were now breaking. They captured him a few days later, and took him with them to Algiers.

The pirates remained on the east coast of Iceland for eight days, during which they took 110 prisoners of all ages and both sexes, several good boats, a large number of sheep, plate belonging to at least one church, a priest's boxes, containing goods to the value of 'thirty hundreds,' and much other booty of a miscellaneous nature. To follow their doings in detail would be tedious and unprofitable, but it was noticed that they exhibited far greater ferocity, and did far more wanton damage, than their colleagues from Kyle.

One example of their cruelty will suffice. At a place called Hál they found a bedridden woman, the wife of a priest, and ordered her to accompany them. This she was physically incapable of doing, but they dragged her out of the house, and when they found that she really could not walk, struck her with the butts of their guns until she fainted, and then left her for dead. After their departure she recovered, and her fate was enviable compared to that which befell not a few of her friends.

Meanwhile the third vessel had arrived, and had joined her consorts at Faskrudsford, having been delayed by a storm, in which she had suffered much and had been partially disabled. At best she was old and not very seaworthy. A council of war was held, and it was decided that the three ships should sail at once to the Westman Islands (where the only trading station on the south coast was then situated), and should there exchange their leaking vessel for the Danish trader which they would probably be able to seize. As they sailed along the coast, under Eyjafjallajökul, the 'Island Mountain Glacier,' they came upon an English fishing-smack, manned by ten English fishermen and an Icelandic pilot, who was a native of the Westman Isles. Leaving the captain of the smack to pursue his fishing, they pressed nine Englishmen and the Icelander, whose name was Thorstein, into their service, promising that if Thorstein would safely pilot them into the harbour at Heimey they would leave the ten of them unharmed on the island, where their skipper could call for them later. They seem to have performed their bargain to the letter in the case of the nine Englishmen, but what became of the pilot is not quite clear. He seems to have gone to Algiers with them, very possibly as a renegade.

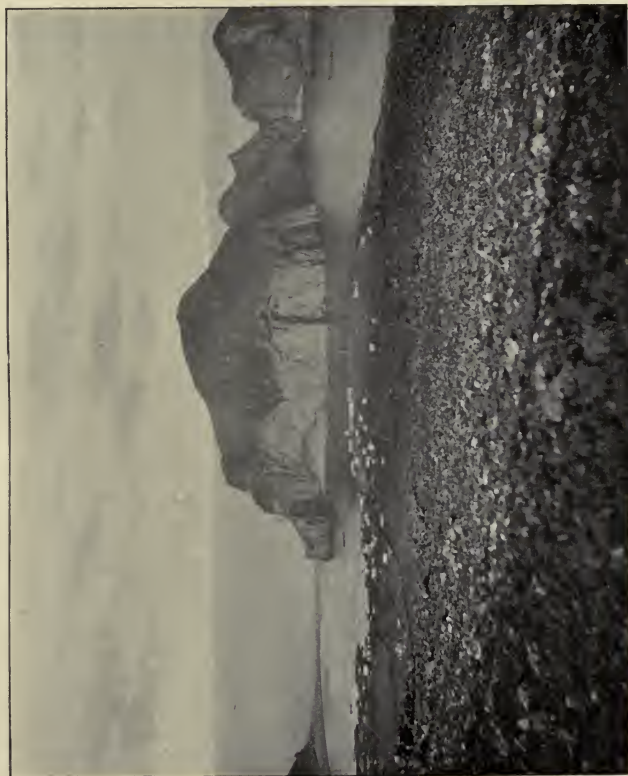
The people of Heimey, who had already received news of the Algerian's arrival in Iceland, saw the three vessels lying becalmed off the south of their island on the morning of July 16; but the mutual suspicion which existed between the Danes and the Icelanders could not be put to rest even by so terrible a crisis. Each party began to make preparations for defence independently of the other, and while the Danish officials shut themselves up in the agent's house, the natives fled into another building in the village. Public alarm was allayed, at any rate as far as the

Icelanders were concerned, when the pirates hoisted the Danish flag, but so transparent a ruse could not long deceive them, and Bagge, the Danish agent and bailiff of the crown lands, does not appear to have been even temporarily duped. Cleaning the small cannons that stood in front of his house, more as ornaments than as effective weapons, he served out guns to his assistants, who, in all probability, did not number more than half a dozen men, and, when night fell, posted watchers round the island, with orders to bring him news of any movement on the part of the strangers, who were still prevented from landing by contrary winds.

Early on Tuesday morning three large boats full of armed men came ashore at the base of the cliffs which rise almost directly from the sea at the south end of Heimey, and the raiders climbed up on to the island by a secret path, which Thorstein, the pilot of the English fishing-smack, disclosed to them. This path still exists, but it is known to few even of the bird-catchers. A tradition, current in the Westman Isles, has it that the pirates had accidentally got their powder wet, and that they spread it out to dry in a little hollow near the summit of the cliffs called Lingdal. At any rate, they did not proceed to the attack immediately, but danced and yelled for some hours after landing, during which interval Bagge, who had been summoned by his watchers, fired upon them, doing them no harm, and merely exciting their derision.

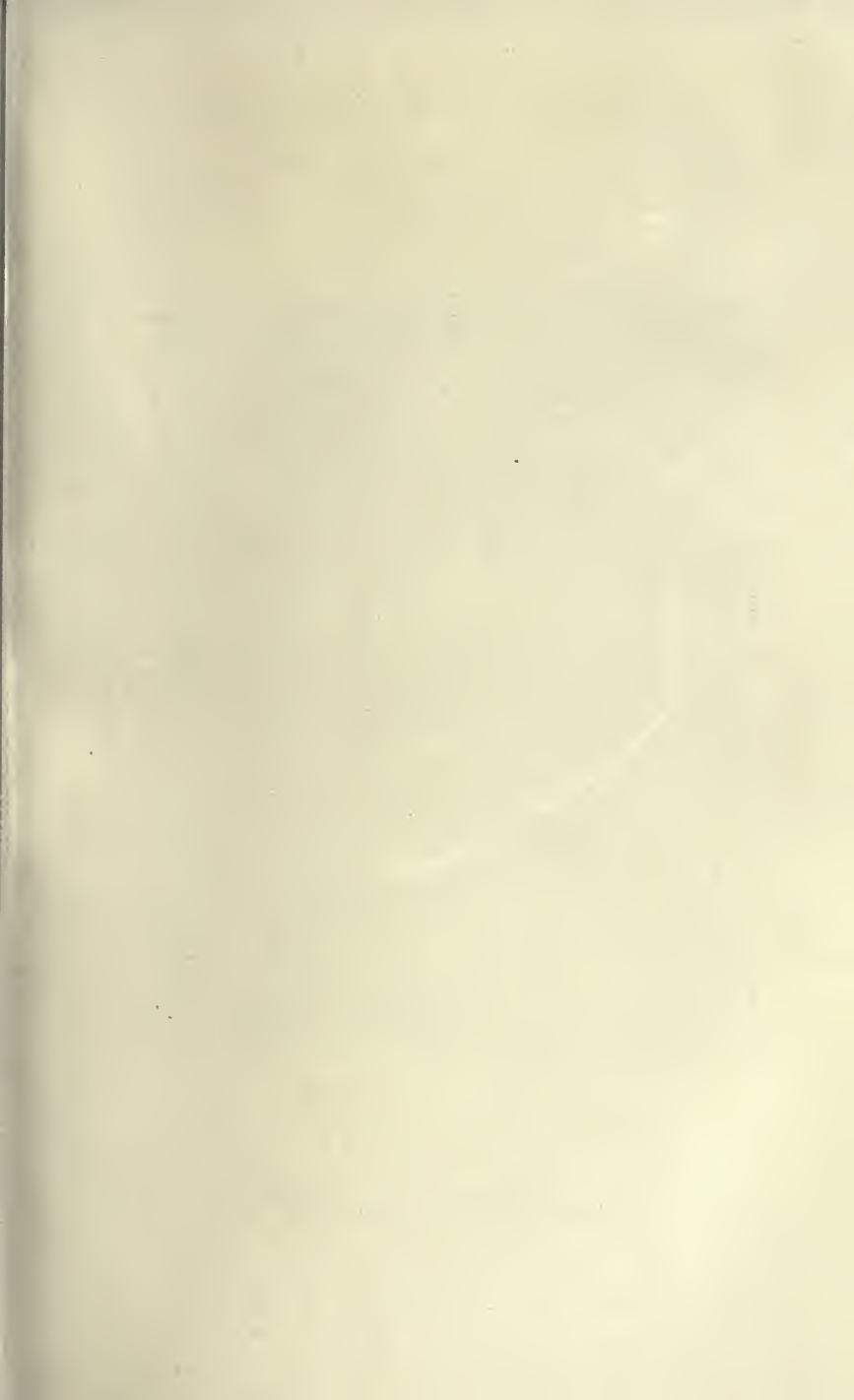
Before continuing the narrative of the Algerians' raid on Heimey—by far the most disastrous part of their Icelandic expedition—it may be well to consider the scene of this incident in some little detail, as it is one which offers many peculiarities, and a knowledge of which serves to explain certain subsidiary events. The Westman Isles, of which

Heimey alone is inhabited, lie about seven miles off the south coast of Iceland, from which they are separated by a strait full of devious and erratic currents. The coastline opposite them is one of the most inhospitable in northern Europe, on account of the vast level stretches of black volcanic dust, known as the Rangar Sands, which fringe it, and on which a tremendous surf breaks almost continually. It is only possible for even small boats to land on this part of Iceland when the wind is from the north, driving back the surf from the shore. The writer has been delayed for three weeks on Heimey, in early autumn, before it was possible to cross the strait. Heimey itself has an area of about four square miles, or rather less, and at present supports some five hundred and twenty inhabitants, who live on the proceeds of fishing and fowling, the latter industry being of great importance to them. The majority of the people, now as in the seventeenth century, live together near the northern extremity of the island, their village being built on the south shore of a narrow bay, which still affords a harbour to small vessels, though its mouth is dangerous, owing to the rocks which beset it, in anything but very calm weather. This bay is only separated from the strait by a line of magnificent bird-cliffs, which cling on to the rest of the island in a very curious way by a level isthmus, not much more than a hundred yards wide, almost opposite the village. Behind the houses, the land slopes gently up to the flanks of Helga Fell, a shapely cone of scoriae and ashes whose lower parts produce a scanty vegetation, contrasting with the naked blackness of the peak. Further inland, uneven, hummocky pasturage, wild moors, with jagged lumps of lava protruding at every turn, and patches swept bare by the wind, combine to form a dreary and somewhat desolate landscape, unshadowed by trees, un-



HEIMARKLETTEN FROM HELGAFELL, WESTMAN ISLANDS

[To face p. 80





PINNACLE ROCKS ON NORTH SIDE, WESTMAN ISLANDS

[To face p. 81

watered by streams. Where the lava has been removed from the soil and on the summit of the cliffs, which have been fertilized by countless generations of puffins and fulmars, the grass is very green; for the climate is moist and Heimey enjoys the highest mean temperature in Iceland. All round the coast of the 'Home Isle,' precipitous cliffs, worn and fretted into the most fantastic shapes, alternate with coal-black shores and banks of volcanic ash, while the other islands of the groups are mere rocks and skerries, which offer a resting-place to myriads of sea-fowl, and in some instances produce sufficient vegetation on their summit to feed a few sheep throughout the year. On some of them a company of fowlers camp out during the fowling season, and all of them are visited, should the weather permit, at least once a year, in order that birds or eggs may be taken on them.

But to return to the Algerians. While Bagge and the men who had landed were demonstrating against one another, Morad's ship was making its way round the island to the harbour, the wind having suddenly changed, as it frequently does in the Westman Isles. When this was discovered, the Danes determined on flight. Bagge spiked his cannons and made off with his family in a small boat which happened to be launched in the bay. Henrik Thomsen, the captain of the Danish ship that lay at anchor, waiting its cargo (but Björn of Scardsá calls it a war-ship), attempted in vain to sink it, and then followed the other fugitives in a yawl. Morad fired upon them, but without hitting either boat, and they reached the Rangar Sands, on which their boats were overturned in the surf and their oars broken, so that they escaped alive with difficulty.

After demonstrating for some hours, the raiders who had

already landed divided themselves into three parties, the largest of which is variously computed by different eye-witnesses to have numbered 150 or 200 men. The first company marched right across the island to the village, and seized the house wherein the Danes had shut themselves. They bound all their prisoners, and hurried on. Another company looted the Landakirk or Parish Church, and amused themselves by ringing the bells, dressing up in the priest's vestments, and finally setting fire to the church. The third company visited the manse of the priest Olaf Eigilsson¹, to whose 'Travels' I have referred, and, having seized and bound him, his wife and his family, hurried them all off to the Danish agent's house, in which there were already many prisoners. Olaf, rather ungenerously, blames his wife as the cause of his captivity, for he says that they would have permitted him to go free, as he was an old man and made no attempt to defend himself, had not she foolishly begged to be allowed to remain with him. He says also that he thought that the raiders were Englishmen, until he noticed their turbans.

The man-hunt now became scattered, for the island of Heimey, small as it is, contains many hiding-places, especially in certain peculiar caves, or rather tunnels, which open to the surface in the wilder parts of the island by more or less perpendicular shafts. They are of various sizes and appear to be due to the action of gases bursting forth in some ancient volcanic disturbance, their mouths being often surrounded with fantastically contorted lava rocks. The cliffs, too, provide many a ledge which none but a man exercised in the hazardous art of the fowler

¹ At that date there were two priests in the island, now there is only one.



BEE-HIVE HUT, FORMERLY USED FOR DRYING STOCKFISH, ICELAND

[To face p. 83

could reach in safety; but the pirates, being seamen bred, could climb better than most people, and did not hesitate to shoot down those natives who had scrambled beyond their reach. On such a ledge, on the face of the cliff called Dalfjall, the ruins of a small beehive-shaped hut, in which the people of the island formerly dried their stockfish beyond the range of the flies that swarm round the houses, are still pointed out as the scene of several murders of the kind. One of the larger tunnels, on the other hand, is known as the 'Cave of the Hundred Men,' because a hundred persons are said to have remained hidden in it for the three days in which the raid was consummated. It consists of two narrow passages, now so blocked with sand that it is impossible to stand upright in either, the one eighty feet in length and the other about forty, and opening to the surface at an incline by a common mouth, which is so well concealed by the rocks surrounding it that it can only be discovered by a most careful comparison of prominent points in the neighbouring cliffs.

Another cave is shown as the scene of the murder of the priest Jón Thorsteinsson—the 'Martyr,' as he is still called—whose psalms and sacred songs are much admired in Iceland. Björn's account of his death is so direct and so simple that I cannot do better than give a literal translation of it.

'The other priest,' he says, 'who was that famous bard Jón Thorsteinsson, fled from his homestead at Kirkeboe, with his wife Margrjet and his daughters and his son and all his family, to a certain pile of rocks by the sea, into a cave below the cliff. And when he was come therein he read to his folk, and exhorted them and comforted them; and at length he read a litany. Among these folks was an old

man, named Snorri Eyjolfsson¹, who had given the priest charge over his property. He would not go into the cave, though the priest bade him in, but remained ever before its mouth. After a while, the priest went to the outer part of the cave, and there he saw that blood ran in at the opening; and then he hied him out, and saw that Snorri lay headless at the door of the cave; for the raiders had seen him and had shot off his head, and he had been to them a signal to the cave. Then Jón went within again, telling this hap; and he bade his folk beseech Almighty God to succour them. Forthwith thereafter these noisy hounds stood over the cave, so that he heard their footfall. "Margrjet, they are coming," he said, "Lo, I will go to meet them without fear!" He prayed that God's grace might not leave her. But while the words were in the saying, the bloodthirsty hounds came to the cave's mouth and would search it, but the priest went out to meet them. Now when they saw him, one of them said, "Why art thou here, Sir Jón? Ought'st not to be at home in thy church?" He answered, "I was there this morning." Then said the murderer, "Thou wilt not be there to-morrow morning," and thereafter he cut him on the head to the bone. The priest stretched out his hand and said, "I commit me to my God. That thou doest, do freely!" The wretch then struck him another blow. At this he cried out, saying, "I commit me to my Lord Jesus Christ." Then Margrjet, the priest's wife, cast herself at the feet of the tyrant, and clung to them, thinking that his heart would be softened; but there was no pity in these monsters. Then the scoundrel struck

¹ It was formerly the custom in Iceland for aged persons to give over all their property to the care of some responsible person, who undertook in return to provide them with the necessaries of life and a comfortable home. Snorri had done this to Sira Olaf.

a third blow. The priest said, "That is enough. Lord Jesus receive my soul!" Then the foul men cleft his skull asunder. Thus he lost his life. His wife took the linen cloth from his head and kissed his brow, but they dragged her and her daughter from the corpse, and bound her son with the other folk that were there, and hurried them to the Danish house. There was a little rift, higher up in the cliff than where these folk lay, and two women were hidden therein, who saw and heard all these things.'

There can be little doubt that Jón Thorsteinsson's murderer was the Icelander Thorstein, who had acted as guide to the raiders, though Björn hesitated to brand an Iceland traitor by name. The anonymous editor of the Reykjavik edition of Björn's 'Story of the Turkish Raid' adds a note to his author's account of the murder, to the effect that Thorstein had been the priest's servant, and, having been rebuked by him for immorality, had sworn to be revenged upon him. Björn himself tells us that on board Morad's ship a man confessed to Margrjet that he had been her husband's bane, and that it was noticed that during the voyage the guilty wretch was continually begging for water from the prisoners' allowance in which to wash his hands. 'As if washing could cleanse him from so great a sin,' the annalist indignantly exclaims.

During July 17 and 18 some two hundred and forty prisoners were taken on Heimey, and thirty-four persons were killed, being either shot on the cliffs or burned in their houses. As a rule, children were treated kindly; for the Moors did not wish to prejudice them against a free profession of Islam; but a few infants were thrust into the fires which were consuming their homes.

On the morning of the nineteenth the priest Olaf Eigelsson was taken on board Morad's ship, and was

questioned about a treasure which was said to have been hidden on Heimey. He declared that his people had no money, but was savagely bastinadoed to make him confess. Probably Morad had heard some rumour of the legendary 'Herjolf's gold,' for which the people of Heimey still search whenever they have nothing else to do. The story goes that a certain Herjolf, the first Norse settler on the Westman Isles, had gained large sums of money by selling the water of the only spring on Heimey, of which he had taken possession, to his neighbours during a drought. He had a daughter named Vilborg, who was as charitable as he was avaricious, and who used to give away the water to poor people without his knowledge. Vilborg had a tame raven, which she had found wounded and had cared for until it recovered its powers of flight; and one day, while she was sitting outside her father's house and making hide shoes, this raven seized a shoe which she had just finished and flew off with it, alighting a short distance away. Vilborg pursued the bird, which always flew on just as she had nearly rescued her handiwork, until she had gone a considerable distance from home. Then there was an earthquake, and her father was buried beneath a cliff, which fell on his house, with all his illgotten treasure; but the daughter was preserved on account of her charity. The rocks among which Herjolf is said to have stabled his ponies are still shown, and the only perennial spring on Heimey, or rather the pool in which it comes to the surface, is still called Vilpá, after Vilborg.

So much for the Westman treasure, which the raiders did not find. On July 19 they gave up the search and sailed for Algiers, having first captured a Danish vessel, which sailed into the harbour as they left it, and having transferred their prisoners to her hold.

On the voyage Asta, the wife of Einar Loftsson (a man who has left an account of his sufferings in captivity), gave birth to a son, who was christened Jón, in memory of the Martyr, by the priest Olaf. When the pirates heard the baby cry they were much amused, and gave its mother two old skirts to make it clothes. Two other babies were born before they reached Algiers; two women died, and a man hanged himself. Off the coast of Spain six other Moorish vessels were spoken, and they all entered the Straits of Gibraltar together on September 11, reaching their destination either on the seventeenth or the nineteenth of the same month. The Icelandic captives were sold in the city of Algiers, very much in the same way as their fellows had been sold in Kyle two months earlier; but before the sale the Pasha of Algiers chose out eight women and children, and Morad received two slaves, either women or children.

Many of the Icelanders suffered persecution for their religion in Algiers; being chained in insupportable positions, beaten on the hands and faces, exposed naked in public places, and again beaten until they lost the power of speech. Under these torments over a hundred persons, many of whom were children, renounced the faith of their fathers. Others, who were not publicly misused, suffered much hardship at the hands of their masters, or more commonly at those of their mistresses; for, as Cervantes observed when he was a prisoner among the Moors, the Algerian women were allowed far greater liberty in the presence of Christian slaves than in that of men of their own creed. Many of the prisoners, however, were bought by persons who treated them kindly, permitting them to work or beg in their spare time to obtain money with which to purchase their freedom. Among these more fortunate ones

was Einar Loftsson, whose account of his 'misery and oppression' has been preserved. His master was a Moor named Abraham, who was fond of him and treated him well. Abraham had a concubine of whose existence his wife was unaware; and, unfortunately for Einar, he gave him to this woman. She bade him draw water from a certain fountain, which, as she had forgotten, no Christian was permitted to approach, the punishment for any but a Mahomedan who went under an iron chain that hung over the entrance of the courtyard being death.

Thinking no harm, Einar entered the forbidden courtyard, where he was seized by a soldier on guard and dragged before the Council, which was then sitting in the palace to which the courtyard belonged. When it was understood that the prisoner was an ignorant Icelfander, who knew no language but his own, he was reprieved from the legal penalty of his offence and was cast into prison, where he was chained to a heavy log of wood. For five days he was persecuted by the gaoler and a French renegade, who endeavoured to make him an apostate by very forcible means. Finally, finding it impossible to pervert his faith, the renegade was persuaded to cut off his nose with a sword and otherwise to mutilate his face. They then gathered up the pieces of flesh that had been severed and rubbed them over his naked shoulders. Thus disfigured, he was paraded through the streets and then given back to his master Abraham.

It is pleasant to learn that Einar, in spite of his disfigurement, not only returned to the Westman Isles, but married, on the very day on which he landed on Heimey, a woman who had shared his captivity in Algiers; his first wife having died shortly after they reached Africa. Moreover, he was able to exult over the fate of the guard who

arrested him, and even over that of the prison in which he was confined, though the gaoler and the French renegade appear to have gone unpunished. He tells us that shortly after his arrest the guard was convicted of assault on a little Moorish boy, and was condemned to have all his limbs broken and to be exposed for two nights; while the prison was blown up with gunpowder in a riot caused by the unauthorized return of certain renegades, who had been banished from the city for talking treason over their cups.

In the five years of captivity which followed Einar's return to his master's house he managed to save one hundred and twenty rix-dollars, with which he purchased his freedom. He had also laid by a further sum as a provision for the journey home; but this he lost by imprudently lending it to an Englishman, and so was forced to wait for another five years before an opportunity of going back to Iceland occurred to him. During this period he made a living in Algiers by knitting woollen caps and by distilling brandy. His position as a freedman also gave him an opportunity of befriending other Icelandic captives less fortunate than himself, and he persuaded his old master to take into his house an old Icelandic lady, who had been cast out into the streets to die, no longer fit for work.

Einar was not the first of the prisoners to return to Iceland, for in the year following the raid, the priest Olaf Eigilsson, of the Westman Isles, was permitted to leave Algiers on board an Italian ship, in order to carry a petition to the King of Denmark begging for one thousand two hundred rix-dollars, for which sum the Algerians had agreed to set all their Icelandic captives free. He has left a most curious account of his time in Algiers (and especially of his visit to Italy on his way to Copenhagen), in which he dwells at considerable length upon the green marble churches and

the religious processions of Leghorn, and upon the dress and luxury of the Italian women and the destitution of the Italian beggars. Like a true Icelander, he compares the Algerian with the Icelandic ponies; but he tells us very little about Algiers itself. The 'Turks' gave him a letter, bidding any of their captains who might chance to capture the vessel in which he sailed not to molest him. He expresses astonishment that not even the Archbishop of Copenhagen could read this epistle, which was probably kept as an heirloom in his family, and may very possibly still exist in some Icelandic farmhouse occupied by his descendants.

In the year 1633, at Whitsuntide, the schoolboy Jón Jónsson, who had been taken prisoner at Grindavik by the Kyleans, wrote home from Algiers, whither he had been brought from Kyle, describing his life in Africa and begging his friends to ransom himself and his brothers; his mother and his uncles having already obtained their liberty through a Dutchman's generosity. The letter was sent to Iceland in care of a man named Bededicsson, who had been captured on board a Hamburg ship and had been ransomed by his people.

One passage from Jón's letter is worth translating, as showing the Moors' opinion of the Icelanders. It runs as follows:—'The Turks say that Iceland folk are better than other folk, least given to rascality of all men, obedient and true to their masters. Therefore have their captains consulted together to take only young persons of about twenty years, of which captains that poisonous dragon, Morad Flamming, whose memory remains in hell, is the most blood-and-soul-thirsty. Formerly he took folk in the west country and on the Isles, and now, in the year 1632 of our Lord, was this said captain come on his way to

Iceland with two other ships ; but because he took a strong ship off England, he turned back, and so, by God's grace, was stayed from his purpose.'

Meanwhile a public subscription was being raised in Iceland, and the King of Denmark had contributed a large sum of money towards the ransoming of Icelandic prisoners in the Barbary States. So, in the summer of 1637, thirty-four persons were set at liberty, out of between three and four hundred who had been captured in Iceland. Of these thirty-four persons, six died on the way home.

Such was the 'Turkish Raid on Iceland,' as it was depicted by the sufferers and their contemporaries and friends ; even at the present day it has lost little of its horror in the eyes of their descendants. During six weeks' stay on Heimey in 1898 my friend and I heard almost daily of it.

It is sometimes said that the dark-skinned, black-haired element in the populations of Iceland and the Faroes is due to intermixture with the Barbary pirates ; but there does not appear to be one particle of evidence for any such theory. In the first place, we must remember that there was a dark strain in the Scandinavians, probably due to marriage with the aboriginal inhabitants of what now is the coast of Norway, from the earliest historical times, and, in the second, that the Scandinavian chieftains who colonized Iceland and the Faroes had certainly mixed to a great extent with the peoples of Ireland and the Hebrides before Iceland was discovered. As I have shown in a former chapter, it is further probable that members of some 'Iberian' race reached the Faroes at a later date. And even if the Algerians, as is probable, did make a few of the Icelandic women their wives or concubines, it is practically impossible that this could have affected the popula-

tion of Iceland at the present day. It is extremely unlikely that the few Icelandic women who returned from captivity to their native land, would have been permitted to take with them their children by Mahomedan fathers, and even supposing that they were allowed to do so, nearly all these women belonged to the Westman Isles, where hardly a baby survived for a fortnight after its birth until quite recent times. It is only within the last few decades that proper sanitary precautions put a stop to the fearful mortality from infantile lockjaw which formerly occurred in many of the small islands of north-western Europe and was especially rife on Heimey.

As regards the Faroes, there are several legends of a 'Turkish' raid current among the people. It is said that the corsairs visited Naalsoe once when all the men were away at sea. They took the women and hurried them aboard their ships, but the women preferred to die and cast themselves into the waves. Then the 'Turks' drew their swords and cut off the women's breasts in the water, so that they sank and died, and the sea was red with their blood when their men came home. But I cannot find any proof that any such event really occurred.

We may say, therefore, that it is most improbable that any trace of Algerian blood exists in the Icelander or the Faroeman of to-day, though it is quite possible that, as a result of the Algerians' raid on Iceland and the capture of occasional Icelanders in other ways, there is a small Icelandic element in the very mixed population of Algeria, in which individuals of almost all the races of modern Europe must have lived and married, in addition to the native Berbers and the Arab conquerors, not to mention the Romans and other peoples of antiquity.