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A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php

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1906.

ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING.*

THE EARL OF HALSBURY, D.C.L., F.R.S. (PRESIDENT), IN
THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read and confirmed, and
Dep. Surgeon-General W. P. Partridge was elected Associate.

The following paper was read by the Author :—

ICELAND: ITS HISTORY AND INHABITANTS. II.

By Dr. JON STEFANSSON, Ph.D.

THE earliest inhabitants of Iceland in historical times were Celts, who called the island *Thule* (Thyle, Thile). The Greek traveller, Pytheas of Massilia, made voyages of discovery in the north-west of Europe in 330–320 B.C. He relates that he had found the northmost country of the world, “Ultima Thule,” of which he gave a somewhat fantastic description. We only know of this discovery of Pytheas through the quotations of the Greek geographer, Strabo, and other ancient writers. Strabo himself seems to have got his knowledge of it not from Pytheas, but indirectly through the historian Polybius. Yet it is possible that Strabo may have seen Pytheas’ own account, which, however, has been lost. All descriptions and accounts of Ultima Thule found in writers before A.D. 825 are indirectly derived from Pytheas as a primary source. It is true that Bede (died A.D. 735) mentions Thule three times in his writings, and his description of its site is suitable to Iceland; but he may have taken his account from Plinius, who again derived his from Pytheas. It is more probable that Bede heard of Iceland from monks in the British Isles who had been there.

* 1st January, 1906.

The first undoubted account of the discovery of Iceland is found in Chapter VII. of "*De mensura orbis terrae*" by the Irish monk Dicuil, written in A.D. 825. He states that thirty years ago (*i.e.*, 795) some monks told him of their stay in Iceland. There is nothing in the passage to show that the island had not been discovered long before 795, or that it was only visited by monks; on the contrary, for Dicuil says it is untrue what *others* say that the sea round Iceland is frozen, etc.

Dicuil thinks this island is Pytheas' Thule, and this seems to have been the name given to the island when it was discovered by the Celts. We may, then, take it for certain that Iceland was called Thule by its earliest inhabitants.

The Norwegian heathen settlers who followed in the latter half of the ninth century found books, bells and croziers left behind by the monks who fled from the island at the approach of the vikings. But these and a few place-names, such as Papey, Papyli, Papós, are the only traces left of these early settlers. They were called *Papar* by the vikings.

It is doubtful whether Naddoð or Gardar was the first Scandinavian discoverer of Iceland, about A.D. 860. Raven-Floki, who let loose three ravens in mid-ocean and sailed in the direction in which they flew, was the next to go there, and called it Iceland because from a mountain top in north-west Iceland he saw a fiord full of drift ice. The first Norwegian settler in Iceland was Ingolf Arnarson, a chieftain, in A.D. 874. When in sight of land he threw the pillars of his own high seat overboard and settled where they came ashore, on the advice of his gods, as he believed. When, after the battle of Hafursfiord, 872, Harald Fairhair became undisputed king of all Norway, and subjected the free chieftains and noblemen of the country to taxation, they preferred to emigrate. For sixty years the men of the best blood in Norway flocked to Iceland. Each chieftain took with him earth from below his temple altar in the motherland, built a new temple in the new land, and took possession of land by going round it with a burning brand in his hand. He deposited the holy gold ring on the altar which he was to wear at all ceremonies. Until a Parliament for Iceland was established in 930, these chieftains were the rulers of the island, each in his district or land-take (*land-nám*), as it was called.

PERIODS OF ICELANDIC HISTORY.

- I. The Commonwealth, A.D. 870–1264. The Eddas. The Sagas.
- II. The Norwegian time, A.D. 1264–1400. Copyists annalists.
- III. The English period, English influence being paramount, A.D. 1413–1520.
- IV. The Reformation, the sixteenth century.
- V. The Renaissance, the seventeenth century.
- VI. The Stagnation, the eighteenth century.
- VII. The Independence Movement and its victory, 1830–1905.

Few Englishmen are aware that there is a *British Colony* in the Atlantic which has never owed allegiance to the British Empire—which was a republic for about four centuries, and during that time produced one of the great literatures of the world—which is larger in area than Ireland by one-fifth, which is only 450 miles distant from the nearest point of the north-west coast of Scotland, Cape Wrath. This is *Iceland*, fully one-half of whose settlers, in the ninth and tenth centuries, came from the northern parts of the British Isles—Scotland, Ireland, the Hebrides, and Orkney—and were partly Norse, partly Gaelic in blood.

Fewer still are aware that the long Constitutional struggle of Iceland is at an end, Denmark having conceded all its demands. To understand the present stage of this question it is necessary to tell the history of the past.

Iceland was settled and colonised in the years 870–930, partly by Norwegian chieftains who left Norway because they would not submit to King Harold Fairhair, partly by the kinsmen of these chieftains and by others from the northern parts of the British Isles. We possess the record and genealogy of about 5,000 of the most prominent of them in the *Landnámabók* or Book of Settlement. No other nation possesses a similar full record of its beginnings.

A republic or commonwealth, with a Constitution and an elaborate code of laws, was established and lasted till A.D. 1262–64, four centuries if reckoned from the Settlement, the longest-lived of republics, Rome alone excepted.

The chieftains, *Goðis*, who presided not only at meetings but at temple feasts and sacrifices, and were thus the temporal and spiritual heads of their dependants, sent *Ulfjot* to Norway to

inquire into the laws and make a Constitution for Iceland. He accomplished it in three years. According to this, in 930, a central Parliament for all Iceland, the *Althing*, was established at *Thingvellir*, in the south-west of Iceland, and a "Law-Speaker" was appointed to "speak the law." In 964 the number of chieftaincies, *Goðorðs*, was fixed at thirty-nine, nine for each of the four quarters into which the island was divided, except the north quarter, which was allowed twelve. The *Althing*, as a court of appeal, acted through four courts, one for each quarter. There was also a fifth court, instituted in A.D. 1004, which exercised jurisdiction in cases where the other courts failed. For legislative purposes the *Althing* acted through a committee of 144 men, only one-third of whom, viz., the thirty-nine *Goðis* and their nine nominees, had the right to vote. The nine nominees were chosen by the *Goðis* of the South, West and East Quarters, three by each quarter, to give each of these quarters the same number of men in the Committee as the North Quarter had. Each of these forty-eight men then appointed two assessors to advise him, one to sit behind him, the other to sit in front of him, so that he could readily seek their advice. Thus the Committee of 144 was made up, and it was called *Lögretta* (Amending of the Law).

After the introduction of Christianity in A.D. 1000 the two bishops were added to the *Lögretta*, while the sole official of the republic, the *Law-Speaker*, used to preside. It was his duty to recite aloud in the hearing of all present at the Parliament the whole law of Iceland, going through it, in the three years during which he held office, at the annual meeting in the latter half of June, which generally lasted a fortnight. Also to recite, once a year the formulas of actions at law—all from *memory*, for no laws were written down till about 1117. When any question of law was in dispute, reference was made to him, and his decision was accepted as final. For his labours he received an annual salary of 200 ells of vadmál (woollen cloth) and one-half of the fines imposed at the *Althing*. He was the living voice of the law, *viva vox juris*, but he was neither judge nor magistrate, and did not open the *Althing* or take the responsibility for keeping order at it, for that was done by the *Goði*, within whose jurisdiction the *Althing* met. He enunciated the unwritten law, accepted by all.

The *Goðis* and their nine nominees sat on the four middle benches arranged round a central square, twelve on each, while the two assessors of each of them sat, one on the bench behind, the other on the bench in front of him. The *Lögretta* made,

modified, and applied the laws. Decisions were carried by simple majority, though the minority must not consist of more than twelve members. If a resolution of the *Lögretta* infringed the rights and interests of any free man, he could veto or suspend it by appearing in person. It was one of the numerous precautions taken to guard the ancient palladium of personal liberty. It was a counterpoise to the abuse of oligarchy. The whole nation, through any of its members, had, in the last instance, the right to take part in the deliberations of the Althing.

The *Lögretta* published and interpreted the laws through the Law-Speaker. He could be consulted at any time of the year on a point of law, being its official interpreter. If a law was passed by in silence and not recited publicly by him for three years, *i.e.*, for his term of office, it was abolished, provided that no remonstrance was made. The only trace there was of central power in the island resided in him, but as he had no executive power, it was next to none.

After the Althing the new laws and other matters of public importance were proclaimed at a Thing, held in each Thing district of Iceland, and called *Leið*. There was another Thing held in the spring, dealing with local matters and preparing for the Althing.

The source of the English trial by jury is the Icelandic *levið*, and the English juries *de vicineto* in the thirteenth century correspond with that form of trial.

At the Althing of A.D. 1000 a debate took place about the introduction of Christianity. The Christian chieftains supported the envoys of King Olaf Tryggvason of Norway, and the heathens, to avoid civil war, agreed to submit it to the decision of the heathen Law-Speaker, *Thorgeir*, whether the Christian religion or the old faith should prevail in Iceland. For three days and three nights he lay quietly in his tent, thinking over the two religions. On the fourth day he stood forth on the Law mount, or hill, and declared that they were to be baptized and call themselves Christians, the temples to be destroyed, but those who liked to sacrifice at home to the old gods might continue to do so, and a few heathen customs were to be permitted. The people accepted this, only the men from North and East Iceland refused to be immersed (baptized) in cold water, so the hot springs at Reykir were used for the rite.

Two bishops' sees were established, at Skálholt in 1056, and at Hólar in 1106, subject successively to the Metropolitan sees of Bremen, Lund and Thrandheim. The bishops were elected

at the Althing until the Archbishop of Thrandheim appointed Norwegians in 1237. Two bishops, St. Thorlac and St. John, were, by a public vote at the Althing, declared to be Saints, after a thorough and searching inquiry into the miracles they had wrought. Thus the Icelandic Church was a Church of the people for the people, and Rome had little power in the island. Celibacy was never accepted by it. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries six Benedictine and five Augustinian Cloisters were founded, all centres of learning and culture. The greater part of the Icelandic Sagas is supposed to have been written or at least copied in them. The oldest was the Benedictine Cloister at *Thingeyrar*, 1133, next *Thverá* 1155, also Benedictine. The Icelandic monks wrote in Icelandic, not in Latin, as all their brethren on the Continent. They were intensely national, and handed down with scrupulous care even the records of the heathen faith. But it was owing to disputes about the jurisdiction of the clergy that the King and Archbishop of Norway were able to set chieftain against chieftain and undermine the Icelandic commonwealth, disputes similar to those which Thomas à Becket of Canterbury carried on with Henry II. half a century earlier, and which are recorded in the Icelandic Thomas Saga.

The two centuries and a half which followed the introduction of Christianity were the greatest period in the history of Iceland. A great literature, especially the *Sagas*, came into being, while the Continent, with the single exception of the Provençal Troubadours, had nothing better to show than monkish annalists. At the Courts of Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Dublin, England and Orkney, Icelandic poets were the chief or, usually, the only singers of heroic deeds. It was an outburst of literature such as the world had not seen since the downfall of Rome.

By degrees the chieftaincies, *Goðorðs* which passed not only by inheritance but also by gift or sale, came into the hands of a few great families. In consequence some chiefs became masters of large districts, and, like feudal lords, rode to the Althing with an armed body of retainers, numbered by hundreds. The old blood-feuds became little wars conducted by armies that engaged in battles. Disputes about the jurisdiction of the Church provoked interference by the Metropolitan See of Drontheim, which appointed the two Icelandic bishops of *Hólar* and *Skálholt*. Internecine civil wars, lasting through the first half of the thirteenth century, exterminated some of the great families who had monopolized the chieftaincies. The

Wars of the Roses in England (1465-85) are a close parallel to these wars in Iceland.

The Kings of Norway had always held that the Icelanders, as Norwegian colonists, ought to own their supremacy. Olaf Tryggvason and Saint Olaf had, in vain, laboured to win the Icelanders over to this view. King Hákon Hákonson (1217-63) now suborned chief against chief. The great house of the *Sturlungs* had perished at the battle of Orlygsstad, 1238, and *Snorri Sturluson*, the greatest historian and writer that Iceland has produced, was murdered at Reykjaholt in 1241 at the King's instigation. The one leading man of the family left alive, Thord Kakali, was called away to Norway. By bribes, by persuasion, by sending Icelandic emissaries through the island, by winning over the most powerful chief in Iceland, *Gizur Thorvaldsson*, it came about that the Icelanders, of their own free will, in solemn Parliament, made a Treaty of Union with the King of Norway in which they accepted his supremacy: the South, West and North Quarters at midsummer 1262, one year before the battle of Largs, when Norway lost her colonies in the West, the powerful family of the Oddaverjar in 1263, and the East Quarter in 1264, the date of the summoning of the first Parliament of England by Simon de Montfort.

The *Treaty of Union*, as passed by the Althing, enacted that a *jarl* should represent the King of Norway in Iceland, that the Icelanders should keep their own laws and keep the power of taxation in their hands, that they should have all the same rights as Norwegians in Norway, that at least six trading ships should sail from Norway to Iceland annually, that "if this treaty, in the estimation of the best men (in Iceland) is broken, the Icelanders shall be free of all obligations towards the King of Norway." This treaty is the Magna Charta, the charter of liberty of Iceland. It has sometimes been in abeyance, but has never been abolished. It has sometimes been disregarded by Denmark, when it wished to make Iceland a Danish province; but the people of Iceland have always taken a firm stand upon it.

There never was more than one jarl in Iceland, *Gizur Thorvaldsson*, who died in 1268. The old code of laws, *Grágás*, elaborate as the Codex Justinianus, and going beyond it, *e.g.*, in the mutual insurance of each commune against fire and against loss of cattle, was replaced in 1271 by a Norwegian Code, the Ironside, *Járnsíða*. Two law men (*lögmenn*) were to govern the country and the *Lögretta* was limited to its judicial functions. The Althing refused to accept the new Code, though it was

brought from Norway by the greatest author of the latter half of the thirteenth century, *Sturla Thordarson*. A new Code, *Jónsbók*, was a compromise code, brought by the lawman, Jón Einarsson, to Iceland in 1280, was accepted at the Althing of 1281, with some alterations. It is called *Jónsbók* after Jón Einarsson, and is still, in parts, the law of Iceland.

Iceland was divided into *sýslas* or counties, administered by sheriffs (*sýslumenn*) appointed by the King, and the place of the local Things was taken by bailiffs (*hreppstjórís*), mainly concerned with the poor law and tax gathering. The estates of the Sturlung family were confiscated by the King. Trade languished, and the Black Death, in conjunction with great volcanic eruptions, brought Iceland to the verge of ruin. As soon as Norway became united with Denmark through marriage in 1380, the Treaty of Union was more or less disregarded, and the Icelanders were so broken in spirit that they meekly submitted.

The fifteenth century is looked upon as the darkest age of Icelandic history. Denmark confined all Iceland trade to the one port of Bergen in Norway, and the English trade with Iceland, which began about 1412, was carried on in defiance of edicts from Copenhagen. Soon the English buccaneers took the law into their own hands and arrested all Danish and Norwegian officials who tried to prevent their trade. The Icelanders seem to have taken the English side in these quarrels, and about 1430 the two Bishops of Iceland were both Englishmen. At one time Iceland was actually held by them, and they built a fort in the south of the island. A number of English words came into the Icelandic language, and are in it to-day. By favouring the Hanseatic traders, Denmark finally succeeded in ousting English trade from Iceland, but the English fishing fleet, the so-called "Iceland Fleet," continued to fish for cod and ling on the shores of Iceland during the whole of the sixteenth century. As late as 1593, fifty-five ships sailed for Iceland from Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk alone for this purpose. Henry VIII. negotiated with Denmark, in 1518 and 1535, about the transfer of Iceland, the interests of England in that island being of great importance. The House of Commons, in one of its petitions to the King, states that the realm will be undone unless the fish supply from Iceland is regular. Both Henry VIII. and Elizabeth had Iceland fish on their table at least twice a week, and special Commissioners selected the best fish out of every ship on its return from Iceland for the Court.

The Reformation came to Iceland about the middle of the

sixteenth century, and was resisted by the Bishop of Hólar, Jon Arason, a well-known poet and popular leader. At last he was taken prisoner in a battle and publicly executed, with his two sons, in 1550. Thus the Reformation was forced by the Crown on an unwilling people. The New Testament in Icelandic was printed in Denmark in 1540, but the first Bible in Icelandic came out at Hólar in 1584. The woodcuts and some of the fount of type of this fine work were made by Bishop Gudbrand Thorlaksson with his own hands. The translation of the Old Testament was also made by him.

The printing press woke the national spirit. Arngrimur Jonsson at the end of the sixteenth century rediscovered the treasures of the past and brought them to the knowledge of Europe, in his Latin writings. His *Brevis Commentarius* in 1593, and his *Crymogaea* in 1609, were known and partly translated all over Europe. It was the beginning of the Renaissance of Old Icelandic literature. The learned Thormod Torfaeus (1636–1719), an Icelander who was the historiographer of the King of Denmark, continued Arngrim's work. The Icelandic antiquarian, Arni Magnusson (died 1730) diligently rescued every scrap of old manuscript to be found in Iceland, and founded the magnificent *Arna-Magnaean* collection in Copenhagen, devoting all his life and money to it. It is due to him more than to any single man that the old literature of Iceland has been preserved.

The Hanseatic trade was succeeded by a Danish monopoly of trade which completed the economic ruin of Iceland. Algerine pirates appeared off the coast and carried off hundreds of people into slavery, in 1627. Small-pox carried off one-third of the population in 1707, a famine raged in 1759, and the volcanic eruptions of 1765 and 1783 laid waste large tracts of the island. Nature seemed in league with man to render Iceland uninhabitable.

During the war between England and Denmark, 1807–14, English privateers prevented Danish ships from reaching Iceland, and a famine would have broken out if Sir Joseph Banks—who had visited Iceland in 1772—had not, by an Order in Council, got Iceland specially exempted from the war.

The national movements in Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century reached the shores of Iceland, and a band of patriots began a political struggle to win back the old freedom. On March 8, 1843, a deliberative Council was established in Iceland, and when Denmark had got her own free Constitution, a National Assembly, a *Constituante*, met, in July, 1851, at

Reykjavik. Denmark proposed to extend her Constitution to Iceland, which was to send six members of Parliament to Copenhagen. But a Committee, under the leadership of Jon Sigurdsson, declared that as Iceland, by the Treaty of Union in 1262, entered of her own free will into union with the Crown, on certain conditions, she claimed, not provincial independence as proposed by Denmark, but a sovereign status, taxation, a High Court, Ministers in Iceland responsible to the Althing; in short, personal union. The Constituent Assembly was dissolved or dispersed with threats of military interference. This Constitutional struggle went on under the leadership of Jon Sigurdsson, equally eminent as historian, antiquarian and politician until the King of Denmark came to Iceland in 1874 with a Constitution which was a compromise. From 1874-1900 more than 50 Bills passed by the Althing were vetoed at Copenhagen, where the Danish Minister of Justice was simultaneously Minister for Iceland. At last, in 1902, a new Liberal Government at Copenhagen conceded all the demands of Iceland. An Icelandic Minister for Iceland now resides at Reykjavik, solely responsible to the Althing. The King can only veto a Bill on his advice.

Thus the geographical isolation of Iceland, instead of relegating her to oblivion, has given her an opportunity to play a part on the stage of history as an asylum for the old institutions, faith and customs of the Teutonic race. With the language of the tenth century unaltered, it is to-day a living Pompeii where the northern races can read their past.

DISCUSSION.

The SECRETARY.—I may just observe that this is the second valuable paper that Dr. Stefansson has contributed to the Society on the institutions present and past of Iceland.* Being a native of that remarkable country himself, and being qualified by his learning and investigations, perhaps better than any other living man, to deal with the subject, he has given this Institute the advantage of his knowledge in both these papers. Possibly it may

* The former paper is entitled "Iceland; its History and Inhabitants," *Trans. Vict. Inst.*, vol. xxxiv, p. 164 (1902).

not be the last which he will give ; at any rate we have these two valuable communications, and I think very few Societies in the Metropolis have been equally favoured. (Hear, hear.)

Iceland is certainly a country about which, until very recently, we have known very little ; and I was saying to Dr. Stefansson it would be a very nice place to pass the winter in, because it is well known that the Gulf Stream possesses such remarkable calorific power while wending its way round the southern coast of Iceland that perhaps while we are suffering from bitter east or north winds here, the Icelanders are enjoying a climate which probably resembles that of Biarritz or the south-west of Ireland. If we had only a line of steamers going as fast as the Atlantic liners we could go there in about twenty-four hours from the north of Scotland ; so that the day may come when in order to escape the rigours of an English winter some inhabitants of the British Isles may be wending their way on large steamers to Iceland in order to pass the winter as they do now to the south of France.

We are all very much indebted to Dr. Stefansson, and I move the thanks of the meeting.

Colonel HENDLEY.—The concluding remark, that in Iceland the institutions, faith and customs of the Teutonic race are observed, is interesting. I notice amongst other points, the bringing from Norway of handfuls of earth to place beneath the temple altar in Iceland. This was done in Hungary when the Royal Constitution was proclaimed. I notice also that the institutions, faith and customs of other races seem to be very much the same in Iceland as those of the Teutonic races, for example, the custom of Law-givers reciting the laws from memory. I would like to ask Dr. Stefansson whether these Law-speakers were bards, because in Rajputana the Rajputs are accustomed to, and do still I believe in their homes, hear all the laws and history of their race recited by their bards. Another custom referred to is that of the chieftains presiding, not only at meetings, but at temple feasts and sacrifices. This of course is also a Semitic custom, but it survives in India, at Oudaipur, where the Maharana or chief habitually performs the first portion of the temple duties when he enters the temple.

With regard to the moving round the altar with a burning brand, may I ask whether the direction is always that of the sun, or is there any definite rule ?

It seems that many of these customs appear to be purely Semitic, for which reason I refer to their having a wider sway than amongst the Teutonic races. They were probably the same before that race left Central Asia.

I wish to thank Dr. Stefansson for his interesting paper.

A MEMBER.—May I ask what is the general population of Iceland at present ?

The LECTURER.—About eighty thousand.

Mr. ROUSE.—I think this has been a most fascinating paper, and has informed us on many matters whereof we were formerly ignorant, especially that the Celts were the first colonisers of Iceland—that they were there before the Norwegians. That the first preachers were Celtic I knew ; but I thought that their hearers were Norsemen.

I should like to ask the Lecturer the meaning of the prefix *pap* in Papey, etc. I think it suggests an interesting fact. Does it come from *papa*, a priest ?

The LECTURER.—Yes.

Mr. ROUSE.—Herodotus tells us that all the priests of Scythia were called popes, and to this day in Russia the priests are called popes. Again, Ovid says the Roman priests were called popes in certain rites ; and we know that a certain Bishop of Rome, the second successor of Gregory the Great, got the Byzantine Emperor to confine that title to himself, whereas it had formerly been the alternative title with “*pastor*” given to all the clergy.

The Lecturer mentions that the trial by jury passed from Iceland to England ultimately. Now Knight in his *English Encyclopædia*, and Nasmith in his *Institutes of English Public Law*, give proof that trial by jury was not an Anglo-Saxon institution but a Norman one, as the name suggests, but it may have come to the Normans from Iceland. I do not quite understand the reasoning here about it. Are we to gather that the forty-eight men were subdivided into portions of twelve men apiece to form the local Courts, and that each of these parties of twelve men forming a “*Thing*” or lesser Court, was the origin of our Jury ?

The LECTURER.—Yes. The Court and Jury are different.

Mr. ROUSE.—I should like to say further regarding the matter which has been dealt with by Colonel Hendley so interestingly, that even supposing—which I do not for one moment suppose—

that the early facts of the Bible were first handed down traditionally and not written, we have not the slightest reason to doubt their truth. I believe, however, that they were written down because of the very specific way in which they are dated in the history of the Deluge, etc. But it has been the fashion to condemn these ancient traditions. Now we know that the Greek children used to learn the whole of Homer's poems by heart ; and we learn from this paper that genealogical trees were known by heart very far back, for I gather that these were not written down, but memorized and repeated. Also in this paper we have the fact that once in three years a fresh Law-Speaker was appointed, and that he knew the whole of the laws by heart. Quite recently, for a second time, this country has been visited by the Somalis, and some who have interviewed them said that they could repeat their genealogy for twenty-two generations back, say 660 years. Before books were largely written this system of memorizing was far more freely practised and we have had a most interesting fact brought to light recently by a German Resident among the Masai, that once in the year, at least, this old tribe, which is the most warlike in German and British East Africa, holds a congress at which it recites all its early history ; and this goes right back to the beginning of all things—to the placing of man and woman in the Garden of Eden, and to the fall in which woman was the first transgressor—curiously enough it mentions this, and that the tempter was the four-headed serpent. They tell of the murder of Abel by Cain and of the Flood, and how the Creator gave a token that the flood should never return by the four-fold rainbow.

As regards the other matter that Colonel Hendley has just mentioned about the transferring of the earth. We get that in the Bible ; for Naaman begged of Elisha that he might carry some of the earth from Canaan to build his altar with. That was a peculiar case, of course, and shows the contrast between his first despising of Canaan and his after-gratitude. It is a curious fact, and fits in with what we have learnt here.

Professor LOBLEY.—May I ask if the lecturer has any information with regard to whether the glaciers of Iceland are making any progressive way towards the covering of the unglaciated lands. This is a matter of physical history, but it is a matter that must affect very seriously the future prospects of Iceland, if it is true, as I

understand, that the glaciers, those great glaciers in the south-east of Iceland, are spreading out to cover lands which have been cultivated.

Dr. JON STEFANSSON.—I am obliged for the kind reception of my paper.

Colonel Hendley put a question whether in moving round the altar with a burning brand the chief walked with the sun. I believe it is said that they did go with the sun.

With regard to the bards—they were not professional bards, but some of them happened to be poets or authors; but there is no rule about their being poets or writers. The laws were recited in prose, not in verse.

Referring to the trial by jury—I think it has been pointed out by others that the ancient jury is more likely to have come from Scandinavia than from elsewhere; but it is an extremely difficult question; and with Lord Halsbury here I would rather not enter into a legal question. In reply to the question by Professor Lobley about glaciers—I do not know any facts showing that they are extending. During the last 1,000 years they have not done so. They do not occupy a larger area.

In answer to a question whether flint or palæolithic remains had been discovered in Iceland—nothing of the kind has been found in Iceland; but lately some caves have been found in the south with what is supposed to be rock tracing, but it is doubtful whether it is so or not.

The PRESIDENT (Lord HALSBURY).—I should like in the first place to wish you all a Happy New Year, and in the next place I cannot allow the motion that has been made that we should give our thanks to the lecturer to pass without seconding it, and saying how deeply indebted we are to him for his extremely interesting paper. Some of the things that I found in this paper surprised me. I suppose we are all thinking that as we grow older we will know more, and yet though we know more we come upon profound depths of ignorance. But we cannot help ourselves. Certainly I have learnt more about Iceland than anything I knew before. I will not speak for all of you, but so far as I am concerned I make this statement freely. I am pleased to have learnt so much from the lecturer. There are one or two observations. I have been a Law-speaker for a good many years, and I am filled with profound gratitude that it is not my duty to repeat the whole Law of England

from memory. If I did I think it would not be once in three years, for I should not have finished it by then.

I observe the Lecturer with great prudence avoided saying where the trial by jury came from. I am disposed to imitate his prudence because I think the simplest form would be to say, "I don't know," and I doubt whether any one else does know. These things grow up and their beginnings cannot be identified. I have a strong suspicion that there is a certain rough likeness about it to Greek laws, but that would bring us into a long discussion. At all events, we can say that it is a great example that so interesting a paper—so remotely interesting a paper—should be read in our Society; and I have the greatest possible pleasure in seconding the vote of thanks which has been moved on the Author's behalf, and hoping—as has been hinted—that we may have another paper from him equally interesting. It could not be more so than this which we have had to-night.

Dr. STEFANSSON, replying, said it had been an honour for him to be allowed to read his paper to the Society. The paper had been greatly compressed, and perhaps it was difficult to understand some points; but perhaps on another occasion he would be allowed to make these points clearer.

A vote of thanks was passed to the President.