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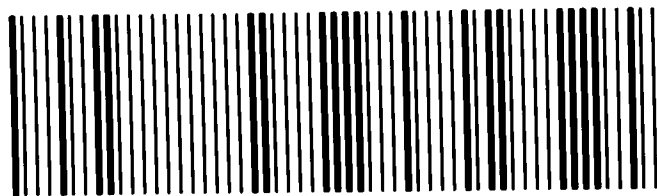
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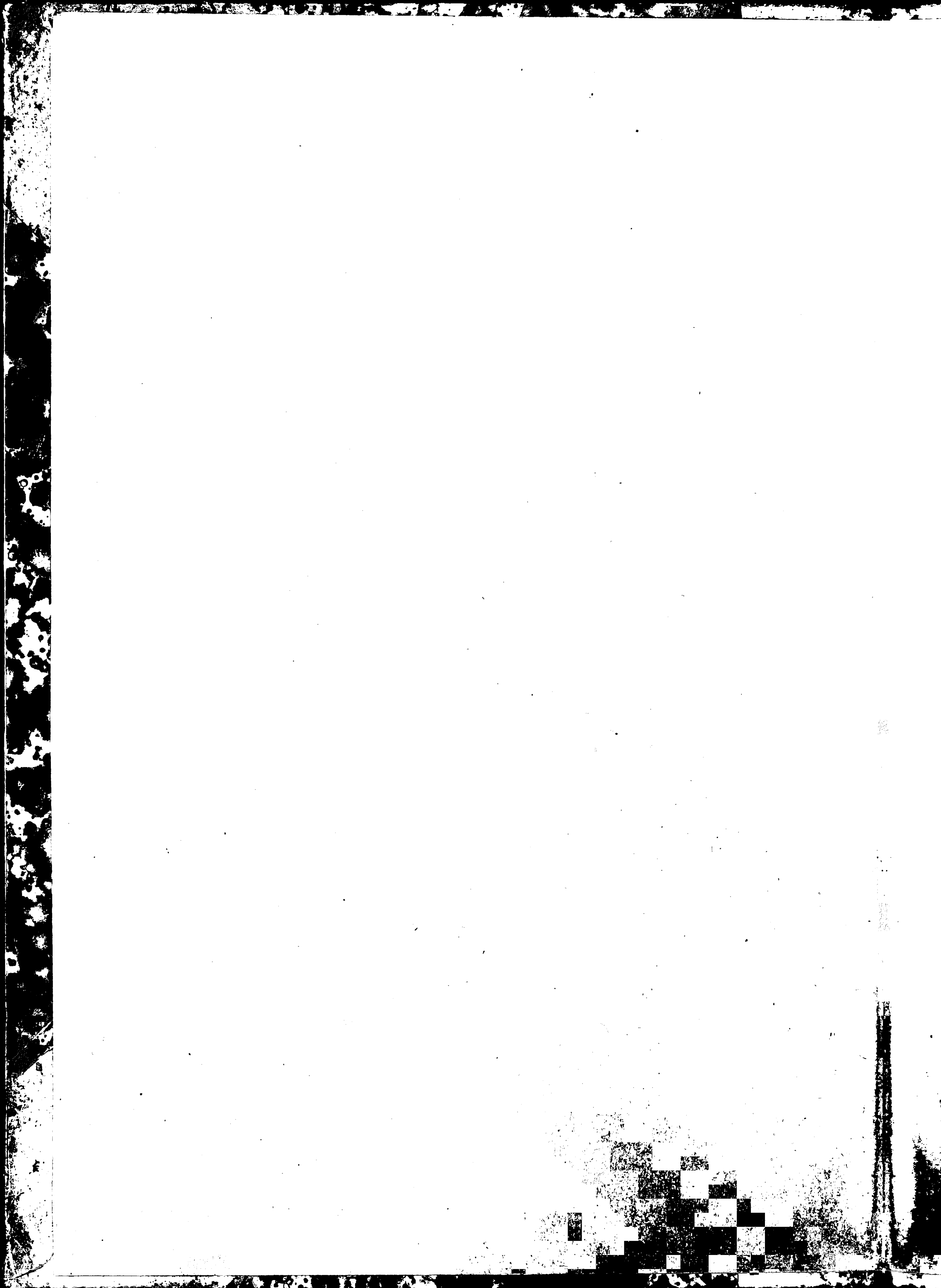
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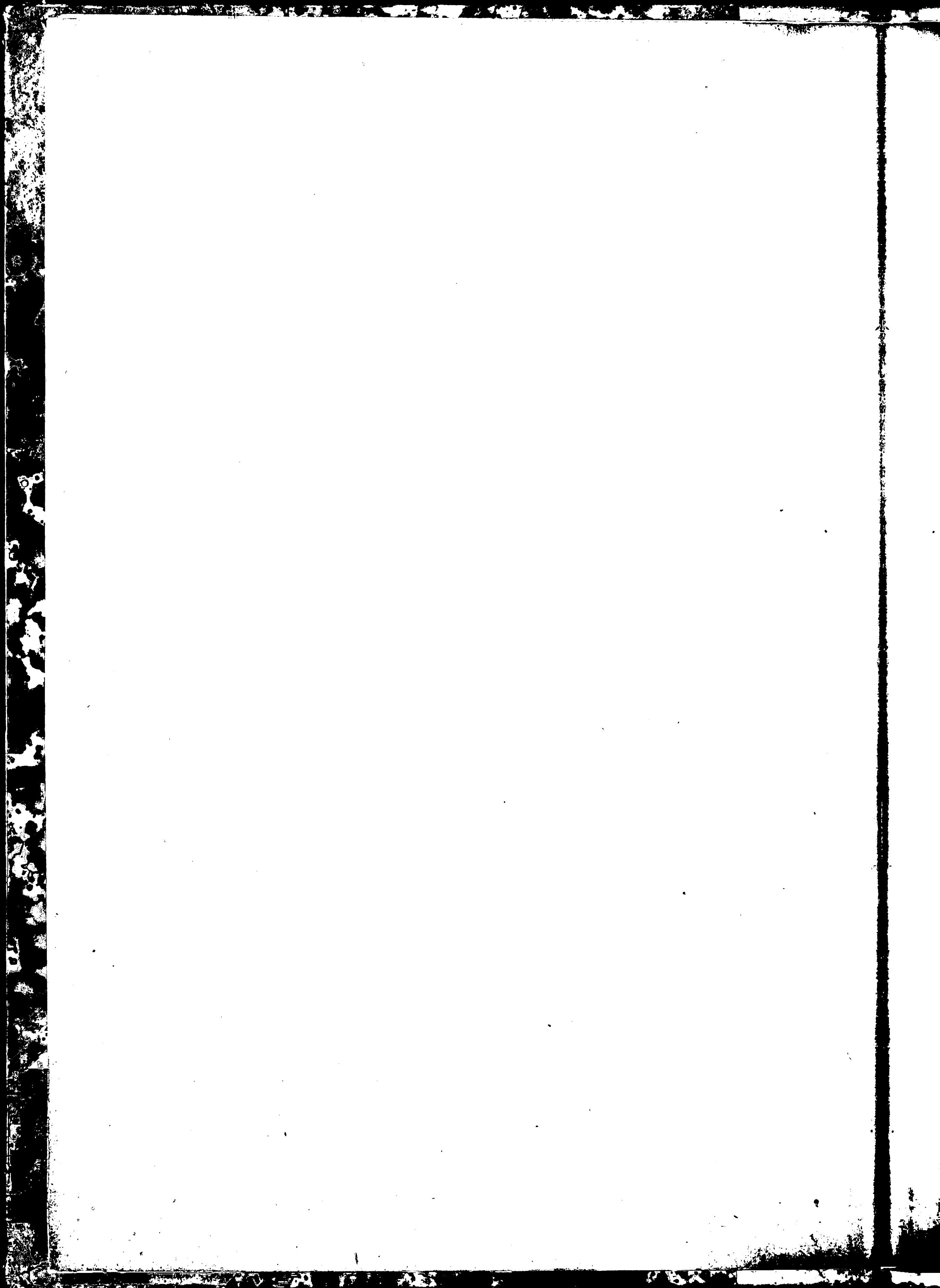
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JÓN SIGURÐSSON,

THE ICELANDIC PATRIOT.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

PUBLISHED BY ONE OF HIS RELATIVES.

REYKJAVÍK.

FROM THE PRINTING HOUSE OF S. EYMUNDSSON AND S. JÓNSSON.

1887.

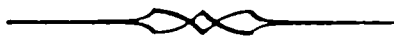
This Sketch is chiefly based on „Yfirlit yfir æfi Jóns Sigurðssonar“ by the Rev. Eiríkur Briem, in the magazine „Andvari“ Vol. VI. 1880, and on „Um vísindalega starfsemi Jóns Sigurðssonar by Dr. Jón Thorkelsson, Principal of the College in Reykjavík, in „Tímarit hins íslenska Bókmentafélags“, Vol. III. 1882. Translated into English by W. G. Spence Paterson, H. B. M. Consul for Iceland, and Geir Zoega, Professor of the College in Reykjavík.





JÓN SIGURÐSSON.

A Biographical Sketch.



Jón Sigurðsson is without exception the greatest man that Iceland has produced in modern times, and though search be made in a wider field, he still remains a rare example of a true patriot — a man who in spite of limited means, narrow surroundings and countless difficulties, by his own unaided energy and indomitable perseverance did his country inestimable service. If all that he has spoken, written and done, in a word, if the whole effects of his remarkable career were obliterated, what a blank would be left in the history of our country. The chief details of the life of this notable man, who marks a new period in our history, are as follows.

Jón Sigurðsson was born at Eyri in Arnarfjord (Rafnseyri) on the 17th June 1811. His father, the Rev. Dean Sigurð Jónsson, is described as a man of average abilities, of somewhat rugged temper, but energetic and earnest, sincerely pious, conscientious in the discharge of duties and hardworking. His mother, Thórdís, is said to have been an excellent woman endowed with considerable abilities and much good sense. Jón Sigurðsson was come of a good stock and could trace his descent back to such men as Snorri Sturluson the historian and the celebrated Bishop Jón Arason of Hólar.

Jón Sigurðsson grew up in his parents' house and took his share of all the ordinary work of an Icelandic farm; while a mere youth he is said to have taken part in the sea-fishing at one of the outlying fishing stations in Arnarfjord, and even to have been captain of a boat. His remarkable abilities attracted attention at an early age, and under the private tuition of his father he passed through the usual course of Grammar School learning. At the age of eighteen he went to Reykjavík and passed the examination prescribed for Grammar School students on graduation. The next year he was employed in mercantile work in Reykjavík, and in the spring of 1830 he went to Laugarnes as secretary to Bishop Steingrím Jóns-

son, with whom he remained for three years. Bishop Steingrím Jónsson was in many respects a notable man, a man of much learning and especially well versed in the history of Iceland, and while in his service Jón had access to the best historical collections that Iceland possessed, both in the bishop's own library and in the archives of the bishopric. In 1833 Jón Sigurðsson entered the university of Copenhagen, and in that city he continued to reside to the end of his life. There he passed the two first examinations with much distinction and devoted himself to the study of languages with a view to passing the examination in philology prescribed for Grammar School teachers, but when he¹ in 1835 obtained the Arna-Magnæan Fellowship, he commenced with enthusiasm to study Northern Antiquities and the history of Iceland, and in this field his learning and acuteness soon became evident. By degrees these new researches led him from his classical studies, and he abandoned his preparation for the philological examination. Another circumstance which led to this result was that now he began to turn his attention to politics, and especially to the condition of his native land. Few years had passed since the revolution of July 1830 in France rolled its billows over the national life of Europe,

and set its mark on the course of history by leading to the foundation of representative parliaments in many lands. Frederick the Sixth founded the Provincial Diets in Denmark, and the patriotic Baldvin Einarsson, who may well be called Jón Sigurðsson's precursor, showed how necessary it was for Iceland to obtain a separate legislative assembly in the country itself. A few years later (1837) several of the chief Icelandic officials sent a petition to the king to the same effect, with the result that the king appointed the so-called „Committee of Officials“ to meet every other year in Reykjavík, for so long as Frederick the Sixth reigned there was no hope of Iceland obtaining a separate Parliament. This Committee met in 1839, and again repeated the desire of the Icelanders to obtain a legislative assembly in the country itself, and thus the matter stood when King Frederick died in 1839.

It was the natural result of nearly 300 years of subjection, of the strictly monopolized trade, and of isolation from the civilized world, that the mass of the people in Iceland up to this date took little interest in public affairs and paid them little attention, while the officials for the most part were dependents of the Danish Government and were strictly conservative in their views. There

was certainly considerable discontent with the trading system, but it did not appear openly and only found expression in the grumbling of individuals. Public spirit, union and combined action were scarcely known, and indeed the mass of the people dreaded and opposed all innovations on account of the trouble and expense which accompanied them.

As was to be expected, we find the first traces of a more liberal tendency and of the awakening of an Icelandic national movement in the spirit of the times, among the Icelandic students in Copenhagen, for they were nearest to the civilized world and most susceptible to its influence. Thus it was that, through the exertions of the above mentioned Baldvin Einarsson, the Icelandic students began to hold meetings for the discussion of public affairs, to which meetings they gave the time-honoured name of „Althing“. Baldvin died in 1833, but the course of progress begun by him was carried on by others, especially by another notable patriot, Tómas Sæmundsson, a man as true as he was talented, energetic and enduring, but not proportionately practical in his political views. He was one of the founders of „Fjölfnir“, an excellent periodical which was issued from 1835—1847, and whose field was literature rather than politics, but he died, unfortunately

for his country too early, in 1841. He was the other chief leader in the movement of progress before Jón Sigurðsson.

Frederick the Sixth was succeeded by Christian the Eighth, who showed himself well-disposed towards Iceland. On his accession Jón Sigurðsson and the other Icelanders in Copenhagen presented to him a congratulatory address, in which they petitioned for various reforms in Iceland, for increased freedom in trade, for the remodelling of the Grammar School, which was then at Bessastaðir, for the formation of a Theological School, the increase of the number of state-paid physicians, and above all, for a representative parliament in Iceland. The King received the address favourably, and decreed shortly afterwards that the Althing should be restored and the School reformed. About this time Jón Sigurðsson founded a new periodical, which he called „Ný Félagsrit“, and which for thirty years (1841—1873) was the organ of his political views and had more influence on Iceland and its welfare than any other publications have had before or since.

A Royal Decree in 1840 promised that a representative parliament should be established in Iceland, and at the same time indicated that it would be most suitable to call the new assembly

„Althing“, to hold its meetings at Thingvellir, and to model it as far as possible on the lines of the ancient Althing. This was also the wish of the mass of the people of Iceland, and Tómas Sæmundsson was especially eager in support of these proposals, but Jón Sigurðsson set himself in vigorous opposition to them, on the ground that, although patriotic sentiment might incline to Thingvellir, common sense and prudence showed the advisability of establishing the Althing in Reykjavík. He pointed out the necessity of forming a centre in the country itself, both for government, culture and industry, the suitability of Reykjavík to become such a centre, and the folly of objecting to Reykjavík on the ground that the town was opposed to Icelandic national feeling, when it lay within the power of the natives to effect a change of sentiment there. For these reasons he would as far as possible centralize the country in Reykjavík. These opinions he pressed forward with vigour, and it was without doubt due to his energetic intervention that the constitution of the Althing was for the most part arranged according to his wishes.

At the first election to the Althing in 1844 he was elected for the county of Ísafjörður, which he continued to represent to the end of his life.

Thus Jón Sigurðsson appeared in the first free representative assembly of his country (in 1845), which owed its existence in great part to his exertions. On his departure from Copenhagen his countrymen there held him a banquet at which were sung verses composed in his honour by the celebrated antiquarian Finn Magnússon and the national poet Jónas Hallgrímsson, and he was welcomed in like manner on his return. This shows how great popularity and esteem he had already gained among both young and old and how much confidence they placed in him.

He was now in the prime of life, only thirty four years old, endowed with all the qualities that can adorn an eminent chief of a party or leader of the people, rare abilities combined with great acuteness and a tenacious memory, many-sided knowledge, ardent love of country, an active enterprising spirit, unwearying industry and capability for work, a blameless, noble and resolute character and a stately and chivalrous appearance; his demeanour, while gentle and winning with all without distinction of rank, never failed to inspire respect. He was a handsome, stately man, dark-eyed and fresh-complexioned, youthful in appearance, though his hair began to turn gray before he reached his thirtieth year, with bright, piercing eyes, sparkling

with mental vigour and kindliness. It was no wonder that his countrymen longed for and rejoiced over his landing on their shores each alternate year, when the Althing met, and saw in him the hope and pride of their country and people. The little nation had for the first time obtained a worthy representative of its own best qualities, and there were but few who did not regard him as the champion and advocate of the whole people who might be trusted to defend their cause with firmness, vigour and courage against all opponents. It is a striking proof of Jón Sigurðsson's personal pre-eminence, that he obtained and held all his life so great an influence over a people crippled by long oppression and given to disunion, and who never before had had a leader or known what it was to unite for political action. — His qualities showed themselves at once in the first Althing. He displayed a most resolute spirit and never hesitated to speak his mind freely, though his language never exceeded the bounds of courtesy. He had so clear an intellect that he could with ease form a distinct opinion on every subject which he considered of any importance, and he sought with unwearying energy for all the information that could be of use. He had so resolute a mind that no amount of persuasion could induce

him to change his opinion, unless accompanied by unrefutable reasons, and he never despaired of the ultimate victory of the cause he advanced. As a parliamentary speaker he was eminently qualified and surpassed all his colleagues in eloquence and energy, his voice was strong and clear and his delivery impressive; he usually kept to the point and adhered closely to the essential parts of every question, but he was not lacking in sharp satirical humour when the current of debate admitted or required its use. If he spoke with vehemence, which specially occurred when he defended the rights of Iceland, he could sway his audience, and few cared then to oppose him in debate.

Among the many reforms Jón Sigurðsson had planned or brought about in the Althing was the reform of the only Grammar School existing in the country, the establishment of a theological, a medical and a law school, besides several children's schools and schools of agriculture. On this subject he wrote a valuable treatise pointing out the best course to pursue. Some of his proposals were soon carried through, such as the reform of the Grammar School which was removed from Bessastaðir to Reykjavík, and the establishment of a Theological School there. The establishment of a Medical School and the formation of a staff of state-

paid physicians was not carried out until many years later, and the Law School has not yet been established. Next he paid particular attention to the finances of Iceland and its financial relations with Denmark. He criticized sharply the accounts of the Government and pointed out various instances where Iceland was wronged; he caused the Althing to interfere in this matter with the result, that the accounts of the country became more accurate and distinct. He wrote continually articles on this subject and never lost sight of it, whereas the Icelanders had formerly paid no attention to it. He was the first who was bold enough to move in this matter.

But it was the commercial laws the Icelanders had most at heart, for there the people felt the shoe pinch most, and Jón Sigurðsson took every pains to get them altered. Although the commercial monopoly was nominally abolished in 1787 and freedom of trade gradually somewhat enlarged, still the commerce of Iceland continued to be encumbered by many restrictions, as none but Danish subjects were allowed to trade there, except on the most exorbitant terms, as for instance by paying a duty of 25 rixdollars (about £3) per ton; nor were the Danish merchants permitted to trade direct with foreign markets, except on

the condition that they paid a considerable duty ; all merchandise both domestic and foreign had first to go to Denmark, in order that she should gain a profit on it. The authorized trading stations were but few, and it always proved difficult to get their number increased. On this subject Jón Sigurðsson wrote an able and detailed article in the „Ný-Félagsrit“, demonstrating the necessity of making trade entirely free. He pursued this cause with great energy, but it was strongly opposed by the Danes and the Danish government, for not only did Denmark on the whole draw a considerable profit from the trade with Iceland, but many people of influence in Copenhagen had a direct interest in the question. Further various prejudices prevailed among some people in Iceland itself who, for example, feared that the supply of imported goods would become so uncertain, that want of goods might be apprehended more often than before, which would result in hunger and starvation. The Icelanders had for so long a time trafficked with the Danes alone, to the exclusion of all other nations, that some of them could not understand this free trade system, as the Danes had made the Icelanders and even themselves believe, that they alone prevented them from starving and supplied to them, as to a child

in the cradle, all they wanted, of sheer mercy and care for their welfare. As to the merchants themselves Jón Sigurðsson did not blame them, he showed on the contrary, that the fault was not attributable to them, but that the commercial laws were quite unbearable and their restrictions a great encumbrance to the merchants themselves. Therefore he wished to have the petitions in favour of free trade couched in such terms, that the merchants could join with the peasants in signing them. Before the first Althing was laid a petition for free trade with 2253 signatures. This petition was supported by successive Althings with a great majority of votes and by the National Assembly in 1851; Jón Sigurðsson was the mover of the bill and strove in other respects by every possible means, by speeches and writings and by influencing members of the Danish Parliament, to carry it through. At last the unwearying exertions and energy of Jón Sigurðsson succeeded in 1854 in fully undoing the restrictions by which the trade had been encumbered for more than two centuries and a half, inflicting the greatest griefs and misfortunes on the country and people. It is near the truth when an English traveller says: „In short, the country had become so completely impoverished by Danish exactions, bad seasons,

and the extinction of national spirit, that *fuit Ilion* might be said of it in every respect; and it now only remains to be seen whether the recent establishment of free trade will not have come too late. One thing is certain, that while the Danes kept the trade in their own hands, all chance of raising the material condition of Iceland was out of question. What they did with one hand they were only undoing with the other". Metcalfe, „Oxonian in Iceland“, p. 151—152.

It was by no means willingly that the trade was made free, but the Danes were also under external pressure, as the government then found it difficult to conclude commercial treaties with other nations that disapproved of their commercial dealings in Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

Last but not least we have to mention the political struggle of Iceland, to which the name of Jón Sigurðsson is particularly attached and which would doubtless either never have been begun or have been without any result, if he had not taken the leadership. Already in his first treatises he had expressed the opinion, that the administration of the country should be concentrated in one place (in Reykjavík) with increased power, but while Denmark was fettered by absolutism, there was no

chance of bringing this idea into effect. So the matters remained until a change in the political state of Denmark took place. Christian VIII. died in January 1848. Frederic VII. succeeded to the throne and promised his subjects the constitutional reform which they had long desired. A month later the revolution in Paris occurred which caused great convulsions in many countries.

The people of Schleswig-Holstein rose against the Danes and at the same time great tumults took place in Copenhagen; the ministry was obliged to resign and was succeeded by a new one of the National-Liberal party who were opposed to the absolute rule of the king, and they began immediately to prepare for a congress to form a new constitution for Denmark. In the spring of the same year Jón Sigurðsson wrote an „Address to the Icelanders“, in which he set forth all the main political principles to which he adhered to the day of his death. There he speaks gravely of the uncertainty of the future of Iceland and expresses his fear, that the National-Liberal party who were then come into power would not do justice to the nationality of the Icelanders or duly regard their rights. At the same time he points out, that when the king relinquishes his absolute rule both nations must regain the

rights which were theirs, when they transferred to him the absolute power, and with regard to Iceland these rights were about the same as originally settled in the so-called Old Covenant between Iceland and Norway. From this he drew the conclusion, that the Danish nation had no power over Iceland, and that the Icelanders were entitled to treat with the Danish king *alone* as to the administration of the country, after he had relinquished his claim to the absolute power they had transferred to him alone; the Danes had thus no voice in this matter. And besides this historical right it was of pressing necessity for the Icelanders to have a separate administration of their own on account of their having a distinct nationality and language of their own; their country was far distant and the habits of the people were different from those of Denmark. As to what was to be done his principal proposals were these:

1st. that the Althing should have the same rights in the separate affairs of Iceland as the Danish Parliament in the affairs of Denmark.

2nd. that a Governor, responsible to the Althing, should be appointed in Iceland and a resident Minister in Copenhagen.

3rd. that a complete separation of the finances of the two countries should be made by Royal Decree,

after a committee, consisting of both Danes and Icelanders, had come to an agreement, and

4th. that Iceland should then take a share in the common expenditure of the kingdom. Finally he exhorts his countrymen to discuss the matter in public meetings and send in petitions to the king, that no resolutions be made as to the form of administration in Iceland until a national assembly in the country itself had considered this subject. This exhortation by Jón Sigurðsson to his countrymen had complete success and petitions from various counties with many signatures were sent to the king, almost all of them in accordance with Jón Sigurðsson's proposals. The result was that the Royal Decree of the 23rd. September 1848 promised, that the position of Iceland in the Danish kingdom should not be decided, until the Icelanders had given their opinion of it in an assembly held in their own country.

In the autumn of 1848 the congress which was to form a new constitution met; five Icelanders were summoned by the king to take part in that assembly on behalf of Iceland; one of them was Jón Sigurðsson. Although he was of the opinion that this congress had no right to deal with Iceland, and that therefore Iceland ought not to be represented there, still he would not refuse

to act in compliance with the summons of the king. He wished, with regard to the actual state of affairs, to avoid every thing that might be disagreeable and vexatious to the Danes, and indeed he considered the above mentioned promise of the king a sufficient security for the rights of Iceland. In this congress no decisions to the detriment of Iceland were embodied in the constitutional laws of Denmark, which most probably was chiefly due to the influence of Jón Sigurðsson. The Althing of 1849 passed a liberal law of election, and the elections to the intended National Assembly took place in conformity therewith. The state of public feeling in Iceland was somewhat agitated in those days and the Governor, Trampe, thought it advisable to have Danish soldiers sent to Reykjavík before the National Assembly met. At this time Jón Sigurðsson sent an address to the Icelanders which shows clearly his mode of exhorting the people to support his cause, and how he refrained from unnecessarily exciting the public mind. A part of the address runs thus:

„Form a national league all over the country. No one can justly forbid you to meet and discuss public matters, but remember to conduct the meetings with the utmost order and propriety.

Do not conceal what every one may know and ought to know, and do not aim at any thing that may not become public. Take care never to be induced to go farther or shorter than reason bids you and than befits prudent, but resolute people. Do not by any means be induced to show your magistrates disrespect or unseemly opposition; remember, that the magistrates are appointed to maintain the laws, and when they appear as maintainers of the laws he who dishonours them dishonours the laws, for „the land shall be sustained by laws and not be laid waste by lawlessness“. Try as far as possible each in his sphere to propagate and strengthen union, good sense and order among yourselves.

The National Assembly met early in July 1851, but Jón Sigurðsson proved to be only too good a prophet as to the liberality of the National-Liberal party which now was come to power in Denmark, for most of the deputies found the bill the government laid before the assembly quite inadmissible: a complete incorporation, making Iceland a province of Denmark, was proposed; Iceland should be represented by six members in the Danish Parliament, which should decide all the most important questions and be entitled to lay taxes on Iceland at pleasure. The power and

sphere of action of the Althing should be like that of the local government in Denmark. Further the Royal Commissioner stated, that it was of no use to make alterations in this bill, for no notice would be taken of them. If the National Assembly had agreed to this bill the national rights of Iceland would have been utterly lost. The committee, appointed to consider the matter, threw out altogether the government bill and formed a new one, based on the views Jón Sigurðsson formerly had set forth, and he became the mover of the bill. Now the Royal Commissioner (Trampe) saw what was coming and wished by all means to hinder the discussion of the matter; the 9th of August the last meeting was held; that day the Danish soldiers made themselves more prominent than usual to overawe the members of the Assembly. The Royal Commissioner spoke in the beginning of the meeting censuring the Assembly and the committee severely; he said that it lay beyond the power of the Assembly to take such a report as that into consideration and therefore he dissolved the Assembly. But at the moment the Royal Commissioner said: „and I proclaim in the King's name —“, Jón Sigurðsson interrupted him and said: „May I ask for a hearing to defend the proceedings of the committee and the Assembly“.

The president answered: „No“. Then the Royal Commissioner concluded his sentence saying: „that the Assembly is dissolved“. Jón Sigurðsson rose immediately and said: „Then I protest against this proceeding“. As the Royal Commissioner left his seat along with the president, he said: „I hope that the members have heard, that I dissolved the Assembly in the King's name“. Then Jón Sigurðsson said: „and I protest in the name of the King and the people against this proceeding, and reserve to the Assembly the right to complain to our King of this breach of the laws“. Then the members rose and said with one voice: „We all protest“. In the meantime the Royal Commissioner and the president retired from the chamber, but the members gave cheers for the King, as usual, and then left the house. After that the members of the Assembly wrote an address to the King and chose three deputies to lay it before him; the first of whom was Jón Sigurðsson. The King's answer was a proclamation, dated the 12th May 1852, decidedly ungracious in tone, refusing the claims of the Icelanders and in other respects decreeing, that every thing should remain unaltered; and the Danish government wrote to the Governor of Iceland, that the officials who had signed the address should not be allowed to sit

in the Althing and made them feel its displeasure in other respects. The result of the dauntless conduct of Jón Sigurðsson was, that the Government never again laid such a bill before the Icelandic deputies, nor made further attempts to carry it through. The nationality of Iceland had on this occasion been in great danger and it was chiefly due to one man, that the danger was prevented.

For a considerable time this question made no progress. It is true, that every Althing, except that of 1855, desired to have the question settled, but to this the Government paid little attention. Still Jón Sigurðsson lost no opportunity of defending the views of the Assembly and pressing the matter forward.

On the other hand the Danes also thought it necessary to support by argument their theory of government as applied to Iceland, and one of their ablest and most noted jurists, Professor J. E. Larsen, appeared in the arena in 1855, with a long dissertation, intended to show that Iceland had long ago been legally incorporated in Denmark, which was translated into Icelandic by order of the Government. Against this Jón Sigurðsson wrote another treatise in Danish on the claims of Iceland as supported by historical and legal

arguments; this essay is very highly esteemed and is written with such acuteness and thorough knowledge of the subject as to leave no room for addition or improvement, indeed Larsen never made any attempt to reply to it.

In the meantime the public expenditure of Iceland was paid out of the Danish treasury, and required every year the sanction of the Danish Parliament. The amount increased year after year till the Parliament took the alarm and insisted that the Government should take steps to separate the finances of Iceland and Denmark. The King therefore appointed a committee of five men to consider and report on the matter; three of them were Danes, the other two were the chief of the Icelandic department, Oddgeir Stephensen, and Jón Sigurðsson. Naturally enough Jón Sigurðsson was the only member of this committee who advocated the cause of Iceland, and as was to be expected he stood alone in supporting her claims. He maintained that Iceland was entitled to receive from the Danish treasury 120,000 rixdollars per annum, besides certain funds devoted to special purposes, while on the other hand she should contribute 20,000 rixdollars per annum to the common expenditure of the Danish realm. In 1865 the Government laid before the Althing a bill giving

the Althing the control of the finances and granting a yearly payment from the Danish treasury of 42,000 rixdollars for 12 years. The Althing rejected this bill, and requested that the whole question of the administration of Iceland should be laid before the people's representatives. In 1867 a new bill from the Government came before the Althing, the terms of which were considerably more favourable, this led to an agreement between the Althing and the Royal Commissioner (then Governor Hilmar Finsen), who promised to advise the Government to accede to the alterations made on the bill by the Althing. But the matter now took quite a different course from what had been expected, for the Government laid the question of the yearly payment to Iceland before the Danish Parliament in 1868, and the Parliament not only took the matter into consideration, but even passed resolutions as to Iceland's constitutional position in the realm. The result of this was that in 1869 the Government laid before the Althing a bill defining the constitutional position of Iceland, which was afterwards to be submitted to the Danish Parliament. Jón Sigurðsson objected strongly to this course and maintained his original view, that the Danish Parliament had no voice in the matter, but that the Icelanders were entitled

to treat directly and solely with the King as to their position in the kingdom and all other matters relating to their government. The Althing therefore rejected the bill totally, but notwithstanding this the Government brought the matter before the Danish Parliament, which issued an Act as to the constitutional position of Iceland on the 2nd January 1871. The Althing of 1871 declared itself unable to acknowledge the validity of this law, as it was enacted arbitrarily and without the assent or concurrence of the Icelanders, and as it would be within the power of the Danish legislature to alter the law without the consent of Iceland in the same manner as it had made the law without their consent. The Althing further maintained Iceland's claims to self-government and protested firmly against any enactment other than that to which the Icelanders had given their consent.

At this time the Icelandic political question had begun to arouse attention in other countries, and several men of note, such as Professor Conrad Maurer, Björnstjerne Björnson and others, wrote on the subject, most of them taking part with Iceland. The Danish newspapers were full of violent attacks on Jón Sigurðsson, as the leader of the movement for Iceland's independence, he

was charged with illegal and underhand agitation, and attempts were even made to deprive him of various grants of money bestowed in recompense for his literary labours which formed the chief part of his income, for he held no salaried office, but supported himself by his own exertions.

Jón Sigurðsson had at this period a hard battle to fight, and must without doubt have endured many a trial and vexation, of which few can now form any idea. He was, it is true, the pride and darling of his own countrymen, but the mass of the Danes, and especially the National-Liberal party, which was then the most influential, looked on him with suspicion and dislike. It was about this time (1870) that some of the people of Thingey county, in the north of Iceland, formed the idea of founding a society to maintain and advance the views of the majority in the Althing, while at the same time they intended that the society should yield Jón Sigurðsson some assistance. This association was called the „Þjóðvinafélag“ (Society of Friends of the People), and was regularly established when the Althing met in 1871. Jón Sigurðsson was chosen the president and continued to hold that post till his death. The Society organized the holding of meetings all over Iceland, and the constitutional question roused at that time

intense excitement among the people. A great meeting was held at Thingvellir before the Althing met in 1873, at which Jón Sigurðsson was present. In the Althing that year the majority adhered to their former demands for self-government, but as an alternative agreed to petition the King to grant a constitution to the country next year. The reasons which led to the adoption of this alternative proposal were, that people saw that the long-drawn constitutional struggle hindered the progress of the country, and therefore they desired by all means to obtain a constitution of some kind, even though it did not in all respects fully satisfy their wishes, and as the thousandth anniversary of the colonization of Iceland was to be celebrated next year, it was thought likely that the King and Government would on such an occasion be more easily persuaded to do justice to Iceland. And indeed the result of the alternative proposal by the Althing was, that on the 5th January 1874 the King granted a constitution to Iceland. For all the benefits which this reform conferred, the country was chiefly indebted to Jón Sigurðsson. The Althing had now obtained legislative power and the command of the finances, the office of Governor-General (Landshöfðingi) had already, in 1872, been established, with greater

powers than the former Governors (Stiptamtmennt) had possessed, but responsible to the Althing, and the yearly payment from Denmark, though less than Jón Sigurðsson considered right, was still not to be despised. Though Jón Sigurðsson pointed out clearly the defects of the constitution in an article in the magazine „Andvari“ (which the Þjóðvinafélag issued as a continuation of the „Ný Félagsrit“), he did not in other respects move further in the matter. He was far from being satisfied with this new constitution, and he has doubtless seen more clearly than many others that the performance would fall short of the promise.

To show more clearly the course of the constitutional struggle between Iceland and Denmark and the part Jón Sigurðsson played in it, we insert here the following quotation from Professor Conrad Maurer of Munich. „The Danes alone were now (1848) to obtain the benefits of a free government. They were to overturn every thing, without taking into consideration the Germans, Icelanders and Faroese, though these were also subjects of the realm, and they arranged their proceedings solely to suit their own views and advantage. The German Duchies rose in arms against such injustice, and after a long struggle they broke at last from under the sway of Denmark, their suc-

cess being due to the unfailing aid of Germany. The Faroese were few in number and had no strong national feeling; they made little resistance to the despotism of the Danes and calmly submitted to incorporation with Denmark. But the Icelanders, though their total population did not then amount to 60,000, and though they obtained no support or assistance from other nations, resisted the encroachment on their liberties. It was evident that they could only defend themselves with mental weapons, and their defence was encumbered with many difficulties. During the long period of absolute monarchy no attempt had been made to keep the various parts of the Danish kingdom separate from each other, for the absolute kings ruled, whether rightly or wrongly, with equally unlimited power over them all. But it was necessary by historical researches to define the political relations between Iceland and Denmark, for the Icelandic people had both a right and a will to take a share in the government of their country. The Danes were masters of the situation with regard to the condition of the country, for although Denmark had become a limited monarchy, they could continue the same mode of government in Iceland as the King's officers had maintained while his rule was abso-

lute. The royal estates, the property of the bishoprics, and many other funds belonging to Iceland had been expended in the interests of the Danish realm or deposited in its treasury, so that the island was left in poverty and could not meet its own requirements, unless these losses were made good. For centuries Iceland had groaned under a most oppressive trade monopoly, carried on to the profit of the Danish Government and Danish trading companies, by which the country had been impoverished, its industries destroyed, and its people had grown unaccustomed to begin any new undertaking themselves, but had learned instead to look for assistance in every thing from Copenhagen. With the exception of the greater part of the clergy, all the Icelandic officials were not only entirely dependent on the Danish Government, but had studied in Denmark, and not a few were Danes, so little aid was to be expected from them in this matter. The Danes were but little acquainted with the state of the island, and as it was for the most part impossible to gain a knowledge of the history of Iceland except from manuscripts written in a foreign tongue (Icelandic), they could not acquire independent information on the subject, but were obliged to follow their leaders blindly. In spite of all these

difficulties Jón Sigurðsson fought undauntedly and steadfastly for the rights of his country. With untiring energy he laboured for the cause, not only as a representative in the many Assemblies that met to discuss the question of Iceland's government, but also by writing in the Danish and Icelandic papers, by issuing pamphlets, by causing deputations and addresses to be sent to the King, and by holding public meetings or causing them to be held. The number of his followers increased rapidly, and though he had to endure much from the perverseness, obstinacy, rashness and arrogance so often found among Icelanders who have studied in Copenhagen, the Icelandic peasantry and clergy adhered to him all the more firmly". (Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung, 10. Febr. 1880).

It may be seen from what has been stated above that Jón Sigurðsson generally appeared and was obliged to appear as an opponent of the government, but still in one matter he fully agreed with and supported it, that was namely, when the long-continued plague, the scab, afflicted the country from 1857 and the following years and threatened to destroy one of the principal resources of the country. The majority of the people and several stubborn officials insisted upon

slaughtering all the sheep the healthy as well as the sick and even carried out this plan. Jón Sigurðsson was one of the two commissioners to examine this matter and showed great zeal in hindering the execution of this extreme measure, and drew thereby upon himself for a time the aversion of his countrymen, partly because he here partook in the views of the Government and indeed adversaries spared no effort to fan the embers of discontent and bring him into discredit. But Jón Sigurðsson pursued the even tenor of his way, thus showing that he did not care for popularity, if it could not be gained justly.

These were the principal and most important affairs Jón Sigurðsson engaged in, but it would take too long to tell all his labour and energy in the public interest. When the Althing first commenced to meet, the Icelanders were unused to all parliamentary business, and it may justly be said of Jón Sigurðsson that he conducted the Althing in its infancy, put it in order and gave it the character and form which it has ever since retained. He had great powers of organization and under his guidance much grew out of little. But it was not only the political questions of Iceland which he had at heart, but in short, everything that tended to progress both in material

and intellectual affairs of the country. He desired greatly to have the Icelanders trained in farming and therefore he wished to establish agricultural schools in the country itself, but when he saw this could not succeed, he tried by all possible means to aid those of his countrymen who went abroad, in order to learn agriculture. He procured them support sometimes from the government at other times from the Danish Agricultural Society and was their counsellor in all respects. It was at his suggestion that the Icelanders began to study agriculture in Norway. He gave much assistance and many important hints to those of his countrymen who were engaged in promoting trade in Iceland, procured them various reports and information and took great trouble on their account. He continually impressed on his countrymen the necessity of improving their farms, making progress in husbandry, increasing the fisheries and improving the quality of their products.

His many articles and treatises relating to these subjects show clearly the uncommon interest he took in the progress of Iceland in this respect as well as in others. He lost no opportunity of inciting his countrymen to combine in action, not only to promote each individual matter, but even more to rouse and kindle the spirit of union and

national life in general, and therefore he encouraged them to hold meetings and assemblies in the provinces. Although he constantly reproached the people for spending their means foolishly, still he had no objection to reasonable expenditure for ornament and comfort. He disapproved highly of people applying to the authorities in matters which he thought could be managed as well by themselves, and impressed on them, that they should rely as much as possible on themselves, trust to their own power and depend as little as possible on the help of others. He listened unwillingly to complaints and lamentations as to the misery and distress of the people and said it was more manly to bear their troubles in silence, when they could not be helped, and that all such wailing served only to weaken the energy. He said that confidence in oneself promised more progress than too much diffidence as to one's powers. The encouraging influence which Jón Sigurðsson exercised on his country was equally great in his conversation, his writings, his widespread correspondence, in the Althing and everywhere. And what was of most importance, the man himself was a shining model of active love of country, industry, disinterestedness, courage, energy and generosity.

Jón Sigurðsson did not devote himself solely

to political and patriotic work, but engaged also in literary labours, and it is surprising how he could find time to carry out both and still at the same time take part in the social life as much as he did, for it was remarkable that however busy he might be, still one scarcely was aware of it, for he always found time to speak with the utmost kindness and readiness to every one that applied to him, and they were very many. This must be chiefly attributed to his remarkably methodical and industrious habits, while at work, thereby proving the truth of the proverb: „Give every thing its time and you will find time for every thing“. And not only was he extremely industrious and got through an incredible amount of work, but he executed every thing with great care and exactness. His literary labours, besides affording him means of subsistence, secured for him much renown. He devoted himself chiefly to the history and literature of Iceland and thus his literary pursuits were in thorough agreement with his political labours, as he thereby acquired a deeper insight into the different questions relating to Iceland and its intellectual and material affairs in the past and present, than any one else possessed.

From the time he obtained the Arna-Mag-

næan Fellowship he took a considerable part in the works which the Arna-Magnæan Commission published, and he wrote reports of its proceedings which contain much important information. He also wrote an account of a part of the Arna-Magnæan collection of manuscripts, a voluminous and accurate work, which has not yet been published. In the year 1848 he was appointed secretary to the Arna-Magnæan Commissioners in succession to the famous archæologist, Professor Finn Magnusson, which position he held to his death. He also executed considerable work for the Northern Archæological Society and published various of its old MSS; in 1841 he went to Sweden in the interest of the society and at its expense, along with another man of letters, Ólaf Pálsson, afterwards Dean of the Cathedral of Reykjavík; they were charged with the examination of Icelandic MSS in the libraries and collections in Upsala and Stockholm. They spent three months in this work and Jón Sigurðsson discovered many Icelandic MSS which till then had been overlooked. In the year 1847 he was appointed member of the publishing committee of the Archæological Society and for 18 years he was Keeper of the Records to the Society. He was also charged with various tasks for the Danish Scientific Society.

But of all learned societies the Icelandic Literary Society owed most to Jón Sigurðsson. In the year 1839 he was elected Vice-president of the Copenhagen Section and the following year he became secretary; from that time he was the principal mover in all its actions. It was at his suggestion that the excellent map of Iceland, founded on the survey by the able geometrician Björn Gunnlögsson, was issued; then it was chiefly due to him that a great many descriptions of parishes and meteorological observations were sent to the Society. He was also the founder of the collection of MSS belonging to the Society. In 1851 he was elected president and held that post ever since. It was not long before clear proofs of his exertions and energy in the interest of the Society appeared. Within only a few years the number of the members increased greatly and the income and activity grew in the same proportions. One has only to look at the publications of the Society during this period in order to be convinced that it was never so flourishing as under his direction. He himself worked and wrote more than any one else for the Society and he was the life and soul of all its proceedings. Among the works published by the Society at this period we may mention „Íslenzkt Fornbréfasafn“ (Diplomatarium Icelandicum), edited

by Jón Sigurðsson; in it are to be found full and accurate details on various subjects which no one but he could give; „Byskupasögur“ (Lives of the Bishops of Iceland from the earliest times down to the Reformation), and „Safn til sögu Íslands“ in both of which he took a great part. With regard to the proceedings of the Society in other respects, he thought it of the greatest importance that it published scientific works or such as might be an honour to Icelandic literature and especially such as were not likely to be published by private individuals. He devoted much time to the management of the Society and carried on constant correspondence with a great many people all over the country, which together with his popularity contributed much to further the prosperity of the Society.

One of his most extensive and most important of his literary labours is the Icelandic Collection of Laws (Lovsamling for Island) in 17 volumes. It is true that another man's name, Oddgeir Stephensen, Chief of the Icelandic Department, stands also on the title-page, but his share in the work was much inferior. In this work the laws and documents are not merely reproduced, but generally accompanied by very instructive introductory notes of great importance for the Legal

History of the country. This work is therefore a gold mine not only for the lawyer and historian, but also for every one who in any way is engaged in the study of the history of Iceland, and certainly no one will undertake to write any historical work on Iceland relating to that period, without consulting it. Jón Sigurðsson had access to the Government archives in order to collect the material for this great work, to which he devoted much time as may be seen from his collection of MSS, where no less than 10 quarto volumes bear the title „Regesta“, which no doubt, were written to prepare for the publishing of the collection of Laws.

Besides these scientific works various of his political treatises in the „Ný Félagsrit“ contain much historical information, based on accurate researches; thus some of these treatises, especially those in the elder series are of much scientific value. In conjunction with Svend Grundtvig, Professor of the University in Copenhagen, he edited „Íslenzk Fornkvæði“ (Old Icelandic Ballads), the material of which was collected and the text edited by himself alone, while Grundtvig wrote the introductions and comparisons with the ballads of other nations. He translated the Almanack of the University and adapted it to the Icelandic

chronology; this task he continued to execute for 30 years. To various noteworthy books he wrote introductions as for example the „Lexicon Poeticum“ by Sveinbjörn Egilsson.

It may be considered a branch of his literary activity that he all his life-time, with the utmost energy and industry, collected all manuscripts, letters, documents and records in any way relating to the history and affairs of Iceland. In this he spared neither expense nor trouble. He examined very carefully all collections in Copenhagen where it might be expected that any thing regarding Iceland could be discovered, and when at the Althing he constantly sought for information in the various collections of documents and records in Reykjavík. It is quite astonishing how much he effected in this respect, for while engaged in these researches he wrote down every thing he considered of any significance and added thereto accurate annotations. He was extremely clear-sighted in judging of ancient manuscripts and when he saw an old letter or manuscript, he was quick in deciding to what period it belonged. This was the result both of his extended learning and uncommon keenness of his eyes, so that he could even read worn out MSS, illegible to others. For a long time he had been gathering a great and

remarkable collection of MSS, consisting of about 2000 volumes. This collection along with his excellent library (of about 5000 volumes) his country bought of him one of the last years of his life for the sum of 25000 Kroner (about £ 1389) on the condition, that both should at his death be added to the „Landsbókasafn“ (National Library), where they now are. Jón Sigurðsson strove also with all his might to assist all public collections in Iceland, in particular the Archæological Museum and the National Library in Reykjavík. Last we may mention as a branch of his literary activity that he by his extended acquaintance, exhortations, suggestions and important information exercised great influence on the younger men of letters and on the whole gave other scientific men assistance and advice in many ways.

This short account suffices to show that his literary services stand on equal footing with those which he rendered his country as a statesman, and it is indeed surprising, how much he executed in spite of many unavoidable hindrances. He spent much time in correspondence with his countrymen and foreigners, in executing commissions for others, further his journeys to the Althing every other year took up a considerable part of his time. It shows the power and grasp of his mind, that

he could with success have so many irons in the fire at once in addition to the load of daily cares which he, a man without office or fixed income, must bear in providing for himself and his family in a manner suitable to their requirements and social position and exercising a generous hospitality.

As to Jón Sigurðsson's literary services they consist chiefly, as we have already mentioned, in his writings relating to Iceland, its history*, lite-

*) „His knowledge of the history of Iceland was quite unequalled and not only do I believe that no other Icelander ever possessed the same knowledge of it from the beginning to the present date, but I am also convinced that no single man has done so much for it as he, and that he has even done more for the history of Iceland than Jón Halldórsson, Finn Jónsson and Hannes Finnsson together, though Iceland, in this respect, is greatly indebted to these three eminent historians. And if I consider the whole extent of Jón Sigurðsson's literary activity, I don't know any other Icelander that has accomplished so much and at the same time done it so well. Finn Magnússon who deserves all honour for his incomparable industry has, no doubt, written more, but he is not so trustworthy and accurate as Jón Sigurðsson“. See Dr. Jón Thorkelsson, „Um vísindalega starfsemi Jóns Sigurðssonar“ in „Tímarit hins íslenska Bókmentafélags“.

rature and general condition both in the past and present. He was also well versed in the history and archæology of Scandinavia. To philology he devoted less time, though he also in that branch of science kept abreast of the times. He was well skilled in many other branches of learning and had many-sided interests, of which his admirably selected library is the strongest proof.

It has been mentioned above that Jón Sigurðsson did not hold any office. He was indeed appointed Keeper of the Records with a salary of 600 rixdollars (about £ 66), but that post he only held for two years 1847—1848, for when he came back to Copenhagen from the Althing in 1849, that office was abolished, no doubt, because his political action did not find favour in the eyes of the Government. While he sat in the National Assembly, it was suggested to him that he should apply for a post then vacant in Copenhagen, which he did, but when he returned to Copenhagen in the autumn, it was intimated to him that he could not obtain the post applied for, unless he promised never more to accept a seat in the Althing or in the Danish Parliament. This Jón Sigurðsson refused to do.

The gratitude of the Icelanders and the esteem they bore him appeared in many ways both

in words and deeds. The Icelandic poets never honoured any other Icelander in the same degree in their verses, and on almost every occasion that he left Copenhagen to attend the Althing and again on his return, the Icelandic students in Copenhagen held a banquet in his honour at which verses were sung to his praise. The members of the Althing had a portrait of him painted and it hangs in the Lower Chamber in Reykjavík, and the Icelandic students in Copenhagen issued a lithographic print of his picture which is seen in almost every farmhouse in Iceland and his bust in marble executed by the eminent Norwegian sculptor, Bergslien. The meeting at Thingvellir in 1873 resolved to pay him a sum of money of the funds of the „Þjóðvinafélag“ and at the millennial festival at Thingvellir in 1874 this resolution was renewed and at the same time the assembly sent to him an address thanking him for his share in the constitutional reform obtained by the country. When the Althing met for the first time in the capacity of a legislative assembly in 1875, both chambers unanimously voted him an honorary salary of 3200 Danish Kroner (about £ 178) yearly for life, which vote was confirmed by the King. He was President of the Althing nearly every session from 1841—1879; thus it became the cus-

tom to call him the „President“, though indeed the word was used in a wider meaning, indicating that he was the chief of all the Icelanders.

On the 4th September 1845 Jón Sigurðsson married his cousin Ingibjörg, daughter of a Reykjavík merchant. She was a good wife and a generous woman; they lived in perfect harmony both pursuing the same object as if animated by one soul. She was a true Icelander and gave all the support that a brave and loyal wife is able to give the man she loves and respects. They had no children. They resided in Copenhagen, but every other year when Jón Sigurðsson went to the Althing they spent the summer in Reykjavík. He never travelled abroad, his duties and other circumstances not allowing it. As may be easily imagined Jóns Sigurðsson's pecuniary means were, as a rule, limited, for he had little income, except what he obtained by his energy and industry, but needed much, as his house was well known for its hospitality and he constantly spent much money in buying books and manuscripts. Still no one ever perceived that he was in difficulties and indeed he was an excellent economist; he could not, however, avoid running into debt which he could not get clear of until he sold his library and received the honorary

salary which the first legislative Althing voted him.

We have above adverted to Jón Sigurðsson's personal apperarance when he first, as a young man, entered into the political arena, endowed with all the external qualities suited to his mission. That time may be called the noon of his life, but as the day advanced, in his manhood until old age approached, he not only retained these qualities and endowments through all his struggles, but it could more truly be said that they even increased in power and appeared more clearly, for it was as if the man grew along with his tasks as long as he lived. What we have said above of his life's work suffices to show his ardent love of country, energy and generosity, courage and magnanimity, vigour and firmness of mind which never failed whatever happened. He had the motto, „Never give way“ engraved on his seal, and he adhered to it to the utmost. This was known to his adversaries who were more afraid of him than they were willing to admit and the strongest proof of this is that he with so slight external means succeeded in obtaining, to the advantage and honour of Iceland, more than any one had before ventured to imagine, much less to demand. Besides being energetic he was

never lacking in expedients whatever happened, gentle and engaging if he thought necessary, well able to take advantage of circumstances, but no further than became an honorable man.

His generosity, humanity and kindness in private life were equal to his greatness in public life. In all intercourse he was a true model, obliging towards all and most interesting in his conversation; at meetings and feasts he was in high spirits and spoke with the greatest animation and his conversation was always spiced with wit and he never used empty phrases. All who were present at such meetings instinctively felt that he was the foremost and the ears and eyes of all clung to him with respect and interest; he never needed to put himself forward, for his personal superiority raised him above all others. Even when advanced in years he had lost very little of his youthful appearance, and besides he had gained a higher degree of manliness and dignity. He was above the average height, well shaped, and strongly built and in all respects a handsome, stately man. Between thirty and forty his hair grew white and formed a peculiar contrast to his piercing eyes and his fresh youthful face. His gait was active, and though he stooped a little, it did not detract from his appearance. His

expression was bright and a smile frequently played on his lips. He was altogether endowed with a captivating and winning power which gained him the favour and support of all.

As we have mentioned above, he was of chivalrous disposition and he and his wife were noted for their hospitality, and in their house in Copenhagen the Icelanders were always welcome, especially Icelandic students. Few evenings passed without visitors, and then he was always in high spirits, after he had done his day's work; his conversation was both amusing and instructive. Many are still alive who think of those evenings as the most agreeable of their life, being passed in friendly intercourse with the most eminent man of their nation and who conversed with them as his equals in spite of his great superiority. The conversation never lasted long without turning to Iceland and its condition in the past and present, and that intercourse with Jón Sigurðsson has inspired many with that love of country which has stood and will stand its test. He had little intercourse with Danish families, for Danish habits were not to his mind; still he was a good friend of many Danish men of letters. His house was constantly open to receive savants from other nations who sought his acquaintance. Jón Sigurðs-

son's readiness to serve others was so great that he even practised it towards those who had wronged him and had proved his enemies.

He was easily conciliated if his opponents behaved honourably, but slow to forgive when deeply offended, for he was a man of strong and deep passions though he kept them well under control. He entered into no personal quarrels; measures and not men were the causes or objects of his wrath, but when excited to anger his words were weighty and few were then able to encounter him. He was not revengeful, vindictiveness or long-continued hate were unknown to his mind. In religious matters he was serious and steadfast; if any irreverent or improperly frivolous conversation was begun in his presence, he at once put a stop to it, courteously but firmly. With all these good qualities, it was no wonder that Jón Sigurðsson won universal esteem both among his countrymen and foreigners.

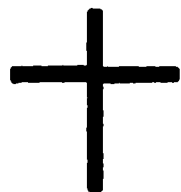
He enjoyed excellent health through the greater part of his life, but when in Iceland in 1869 he began to suffer from rheumatism in the right arm, which made writing difficult to him; and at the same time he suffered from gravel. He recovered from these attacks, but from that time his health declined, and when he for the last time attended the Althing in the summer of 1877, his ill health

increased considerably; his memory began to give way and he became more and more abstracted and inert. Whether this decay of health was in any way connected with his long and hard life-struggle, it is not easy to say, but it is not unlikely that if his life had been easier and calmer he might have reached a greater age. During the last year of his life he was constantly ailing, but retained his mental powers more or less until he died, after much suffering, on the 7th December 1879, in his 69th year.

His decease was thus by no means unexpected, yet Iceland's sorrow was not the less deep, when she lost the greatest and best of her sons that this century has produced, and recalled to memory what he had done for his country and people; it was a loss that touched the hearts of all true Icelanders.

His corpse was removed from his residence on the 11th December to the „Garnison's Church“ where a funeral service was held with great state, to which the King sent a representative; many Danish magnates and notabilities attended it, and, as was to be expected, all the Icelanders in Copenhagen were present. The latter decorated the coffin and the church on this occasion, at their own expense. On the coffin was laid a

handsome silver wreath with a plate bearing this inscription:



Jón Sigurðsson

born 17th June 1811

married 4th September 1845

died 7th December 1879.

„Iceland's favourite son,

Her honour, sword and shield“.

His wife was not present at the funeral, she had long been in poor health, two days after his death she took to bed and she died on the 16th December. In compliance with her husband's instructions she had directed in her will that the greater part of their property should be applied to form a fund to be used for the benefit of Iceland, and she empowered the next Althing to decide as to the manner in which this fund should be utilized.

The mortal remains of Jón Sigurðsson and his wife were, as they had desired, conveyed to Iceland in the spring and buried in Reykjavik churchyard. Their funeral was solemnized there on the 4th May 1880 with greater state than had ever before been seen in Iceland. In the following year on the 7th December a handsome monument,

bearing a medallion of Jón Sigurðsson, was erected, by national subscription, over their grave.

We cannot refrain from quoting here the words of two eminent foreigners whom the Icelanders esteem and honour above most others, namely Professor Willard Fiske and Professor Konrad Maurer. Professor Fiske writes thus shortly after the death of Jón Sigurðsson: „Sad tidings are now borne to Iceland, the death of her greatest son, the noblest Icelander of the nineteenth century. Yet it is at least a consolation to think that his may be called a finished life, that he had completed his great work and went the way of all flesh with the consciousness that his labours would bear an enduring fruit. The national rights of Iceland are secured for all time to come, and the steady progress of his country, as the ages roll on, will form the most fitting monument to Jón Sigurðsson. God bless his golden memory!“ In a letter to Professor Fiske from Konrad Maurer stand the following words: „You have rightly called Jón Sigurðsson the greatest Icelander of this century; to me he was more. For fully twenty five years I have been in personal communication with him. In his struggle for freedom and his country's rights I have faithfully endeavoured to aid him, as far as the distance be-

tween us permitted, and I thus came into closer connection with him, than probably any other foreigner has done. Thus I have learned to know him better than most others, and I can sincerely say that the more I knew him, the more I esteemed and valued him. He was not only gifted and learned above most others, but was also a good, stout-hearted and intrepid man, who never for a moment gave way when following what he conscientiously believed to be the path of duty, fearing neither *vultus instantis tyranni* nor *civium ardor prava jubentium*, the friend of his friends and the enemy of his enemies. Peace to his ashes!" In another place¹ he says "Also in other countries has the death of Jón Sigurðsson been lamented by many whom he had been accustomed to aid in literary questions and other matters with hearty goodwill. But I, who from the year 1856 have been united by bonds of the closest friendship to him, and am indebted to him for much literary and scientific advice and information, for many happy hours and many marks of true friendship, have in him lost the noblest, best and greatest man whose friendship I ever had the good fortune to gain".

When such was the high reputation which Jón

¹) Beilage zur Allgemeiner Zeitung, 10. Febr. 1880.

Sigurðsson had gained among these eminent men of other countries who knew him, and when they regretted his loss so much, how has his death affected us, his countrymen, who knew most clearly what he was to our land and our nation and felt most keenly what he was to each one of us? Must we not have felt more deeply and missed him more keenly, the more so, as we had once hoped that he would be long spared to us, and thus the rapid decay of his health came upon us like a sudden change from joy to sorrow, though his death later on was not unexpected. Yes, we felt and still feel our loss the sorer that the departed one was so near and dear to us, and the keener that we and our country could so ill afford to lose him. But life is not to be measured by years alone, a man's true life consists in the work he does, and of this we are sure, that all that Jón Sigurðsson experienced and suffered, spoke and wrote, laboured and struggled for the liberty and progress of Iceland, will not be despised or forgotten like the words and deeds of those who live only for their own interest and aggrandizement, but will live in perpetual memory, and will bear fruit -- whether great or small we know not -- in the time to come. And Jón Sigurðsson's bright example will be a guiding

star to unborn generations in our fatherland, which in its poverty had the good fortune to count him among its sons. So long as liberty and love of country, energy and courage, truth and uprightness command the world's respect, and that we believe they ever will, so long will Jón Sigurðsson's memory be cherished, for he lived for these virtues and devoted his life to them. He has set his mark on this century of our history, his spirit has pointed out to us the path that we now tread and that will lead us, we hope, to progress and freedom. Let us follow his path of truth and uprightness, and hold undauntedly as our own his motto „Never give way“.



Jón Sigurðsson's Literary Work

„*In the Ný félagsrit*“ . — *Um alþingi á Íslandi* (On the Althing in Iceland) Vol. 1, pp. 59—134, Vol. 2, pp. 1—66
Um skóla á Íslandi (On schools, in Iceland) ib. pp. 67—167. —
Um verzlun á Íslandi (On trade in Iceland) Vol 3, pp. 1—127. — *Ágrip af æfi Finns Magnússonar* (A Sketch of the Life of Finn Magnússon) Vol. 4, pp. V—XII. — *Um félagsskap og samtök* (On co-operation and combined action), ib. pp. 1—27. — *Um registur yfir Íslands stiptsbókasafn*. (On a Catalogue of the Public Library of Iceland), ib. pp. 131—142. — *Ágrip af æfi Stefáns Þórarinssonar* (A Sketch of the Life of Stefán Thórarinsson, Vol. 5, pp. V—VIII. — *Um verzlun á Íslandi* (On trade in Iceland) ib. pp. 61—80. — *Bréf um alþingi* (A letter on the Althing), ib. pp. 81—92. — *Ágrip af æfi Magnúsar Stephensens* (A Sketch of the Life of Magnús Stephensen) Vol. 6, pp. V—XIV. — *Alþing á Íslandi* (The Althing of Iceland) ib. pp. 1—104. — *Ágrip af æfi Jóns biskups Vídalíns Þorkelssonar* (A Sketch of the Life of Bishop Jón Vídalín Thorkelsson), Vol. 7, pp. V—XVI. — *Um ljóðmæli og leikrit Sigurðar Péturssonar* (On the Poems and Plays of Sigurð Pétursson) ib. pp. 186—195. — *Ágrip af æfi Baldvins Einarssonar* (A Sketch of the Life of Baldvin Einarsson) Vol. 8, pp. V—XIV. — *Hugvekja til Íslendinga* (An Address to the Icelanders) ib. pp. 1—24. — *Verzlunarfrelsi á Íslandi* (On Free Trade in Iceland) ib. pp. 74—87. — *Um Jarðatal J. Johnsens* (On J. Johnsen's Valuation Roll) ib. pp. 94—101. — *Útvalin saga frá alþingi* (A choice story from the Althing) ib. pp.

176—184. — *Ágrip af æfi Hannesar Finnssonar* (A Sketch of the Life of Hannes Finnsson) Vol. 9, pp. VII—XIV. — *Um stjórnarhagi Íslands* (On the Political Affairs of Iceland) ib. pp. 9—68. — *Um bænda skóla á Íslandi* (On Agricultural Schools in Iceland) ib. pp. 86—101. — *Um fjárhag Íslands* (On the finances of Iceland) Vol. 10, pp. 1—79. — Vol 11, pp. 132—146. — *Eptirlit* (Supervision), Vol. 12, pp. 100—132. — *Um verzlunarmál Íslendinga* (On the Commercial Affairs of Iceland) Vol. 14, pp. 1—166. — *Um landsréttindi Íslands* (On the Political Rights of Iceland (Vol. 17, pp. 54—78. — *Alþing og alþingismál* (On the Althing and Parliamentary business) Vol. 18, pp. 1—112. — *Um málefni Íslands* (On the Affairs of Iceland) Vol. 20, pp. 1—22. — *Um Íslenzkar Þjóðsögur á Þýzku eptir Dr. K. Maurer* (On „Icelandic Folklore“ in German by Dr. K. Maurer) ib. pp. 190—200. — *Alþingismálin og auglýsingar konungs til alþingis* (Parliamentary Affairs and the Royal Proclamations to the Althing) Vol. 21, pp. 1—101. — *Um stjórnarmál Íslands* (On the Political Affairs of Iceland) Vol. 22, pp. 1—22. — *Um fjarhagsmálið* (On the Financial Question) ib. pp. 22—99. — *Um læknaskipunarmálið* (On the appointment of a staff of State-paid Physicians) ib. pp. 136—159. — *Stjórnarmál og fjárhagsmál Íslands* (The Political and Financial Question in Iceland) Vol. 23, pp. 1—73. — *Um rétt íslenzkrar tungu* (On the Rights of the Icelandic Language) ib. pp. 74—80. — *Vegur Íslendinga til sjálfsforræðis* (The Way to Self-government for Iceland), Vol. 24, pp. 1—26. — *Um fjárhag Íslands og sjóði* (On the Finances and Funds of Iceland) ib. pp. 124—155. — *Fjárhagsmál Íslands og stjórnarmál, samband þeirra og saga* (The Financial and Political Questions of Iceland, their connection and history) Vol. 25, pp. 45—152. — *Um stjórnarmálið* (On the Political Question), Vol.

28, pp. 1—127. — Um verzlun og verzlunarsamtök (On trade and commercial co-operation) Vol. 29, pp. 79—121. — Prjónakoddi stjórnarinnar (The Government Pin-cushion) *ib.* pp. 122—165. —

In „Andvari“ — Stjórnarskrá Íslands (The Constitution of Iceland) Vol. 1, pp. 1—138. — Fjárhagur og reikningar Íslands (The Finances and Accounts of Iceland), Vol. 2, pp. 1—113. — Hið íslenska Þjóðvinafélag (On the Icelandic Society of Friends of the People) Vol. 3, pp. 1—25. —

Om Islands statsretlige Forhold (On the political position of Iceland in the realm) Copenhagen, 1855. — An answer to Professor I. E. Larsen's treatise — *Om Islands hidtilværende statsretlige Stilling* (On Iceland's position in the realm hitherto) Copenhagen, 1855. — A translation of this treatise of Jón Sigurðsson, made under his direction, is to be found in the „Ný Félagsrit“ Vol. 16, pp. 1—110. —

Um fjárhagsmálið og meðferð þess á alþingi 1865 (On the financial question and its treatment in the Althing of 1865) Reykjavík 1867. 23 pp. 8vo.

Lítill fiskibók með uppdráttum og útskýringum handa fiskimönnum á Íslandi (A handbook on Fishing, with illustrations and explanations, for fishermen in Iceland). Copenhagen, 1859. 42 pp. 8vo.

Lítill varningsbók handa bændum og búmönnum á Íslandi (A handbook on Products, for farmers and peasants in Iceland). Copenhagen, 1861. 150 pp. 8vo.

Lovsamling for Island (A Collection of the Laws of Iceland) 17 vols. Copenhagen 1853—77, Note. Vols. 1—15 edited in conjunction with O. Stephensen, Chief of the Icelandic Department.

In the „Safn til sögu Íslands“ (Collection of Material for the History of Iceland) — *Biskupatal á Íslandi* (List

of the Bishops of Iceland) Vol. 1, pp. 1—14. *Biskupa Annálar Jóns Egilssonar* (Annals of the Bishops by Jón Egilsson) ib. pp. 15—136. — *Lögsögumannatal og lögmanna á Íslandi* (List of the Speakers of the Law and Lawmen of Iceland) Vol. 2, pp. 1—250.

In the „Biskupasögur“ (History of the Bishops) — An edition of the *Kristni saga* (History of the introduction of Christianity into Iceland) Vol. 1, pp. 1—32. —

Diplomatarium Islandicum, Íslenzkt Fornbréfa safn. 1 Vol. from 834—1264. XXVI. + 858 pp. 8vo

Hið íslenska bókmentafélag. Stofnun félagsins og at-hafnir um fyrstu fimmtíu árin 1816—1866. (The Icelandic Literary Society, its formation and its transactions during the first fifty years, 1816—1866. — Copenhagen, 1867.

Íslendinga sögur, udgivne efter gamle Haandskrifter af det kongelige nordiske Oldskriftselskab (Icelandic Sagas, from old MSS., published by the Royal Society for Preserving Ancient Northern Literature) Vol. 1, Copenhagen, 1843, 488 pp. 8vo. Contents — *Íslendingabók Ara hins fróða* (The Book of the Icelanders by Ari the Learned), *Landnámabók, o. fl.* (The Book of the Settlement of Iceland, etc.), Copenhagen, 1847, 512 pp., 8vo. Contents — 1. *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar.* — 2. *Hænsna-Þóris saga.* — 3. *Sagan af Hrafni og Gunnlaugi Ormstungu* — 4. *Sagan af Víga-styr ok Heiðarvígum.* 5. *Kjalnesinga saga.* 6. *Þáttur af Jökli Búasyni.*

In the „Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed“—Editions of *Trojumanna saga* and *Breta sögur* 1848, pp. 1—215, and 1849, pp. 1—140; of *Saga Játvarðar konungs hins helga*, 1852, pp. 1—43; and of *Saga Ásvalds konungs hins helga*, 1854, pp. 1—91 — The first three of these sagas are accom-

panied by translations by Jón Sigurðsson, the last by Thorleif Guðmundsson Repp.

Íslenzk fornkvæði (Icelandic Ballads), published by Jón Sigurðsson and Professor Svend Grundtvig — Part 1. Copenhagen 1854, 220 pp. 8vo. — Part 2, Copenhagen, 1858, 152 pp., Part 3, Copenhagen 1859, 226 pp.

He translated the *Icelandic Almanack* from the Danish and adapted it to the Icelandic calendar during thirty years, from 1849 to 1878.

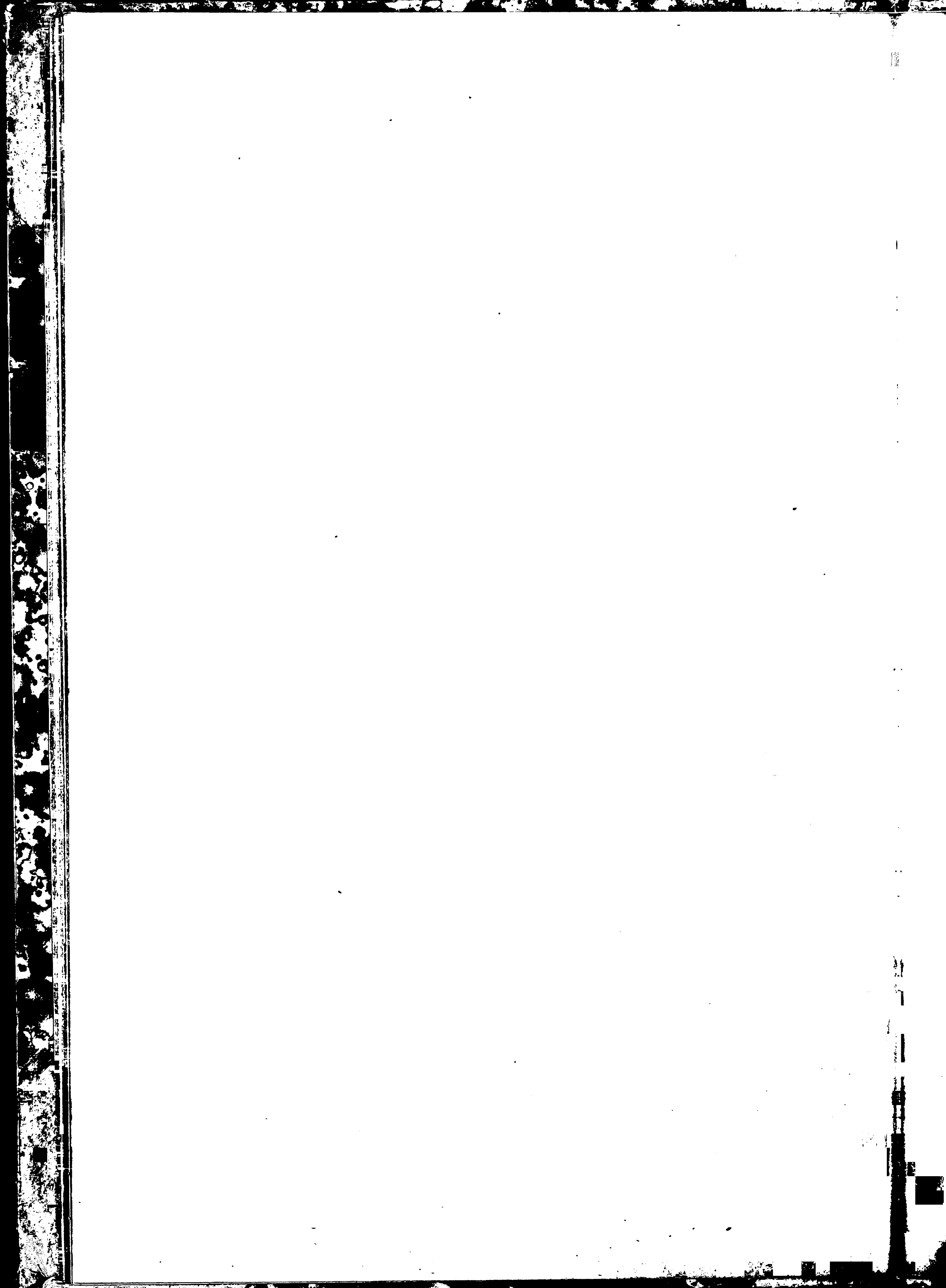
He edited *Ljóðabók Jóns Þorlákssonar með æfisögu* (Poems of Jón Thorláksson, with a sketch of his Life), 2 vols. Copenhagen 1842—1843.

He translated *Æfisaga Franklins* (The Life of Franklin) Copenhagen, 1830.

Besides these there are some other writings by Jón Sigurðsson, and in conjunction with others he took part in many works which we can only briefly mention here. — When he was sent to Sweden in 1841 by the Royal Antiquarian Society, he drew up an elaborate catalogue of ancient Icelandic manuscripts (afterwards published in Swedish: Arwidson, *Förteckning öfver Kongliga Bibliothekets i Stockholm Islandska Handskrifter*, Stockholm, 1848). On behalf of the same Society he also took part in the editing of „*Antiquités Russes*“, Tome I, Copenhagen, 1850, Tome II, Copenhagen, 1852, and „*Grönlands historiske Mindesmærker*“, Copenhagen 1845, 3 vols., and wrote various articles in the „*Antiquarisk Tidsskrift*“, the magazine issued by the Society. He also wrote the preface to *Sveinbjörn Egilsson's* „*Lexicon poeticum linguae septentrionalis*. On behalf of the Arn-Magnæan Committee he edited the *Edda of Snorri Sturluson*, T. I. Havnæ 1848, T. II. Havnæ 1852, T. III. pars prima, Havnæ, and the Icelandic Annals (*Annales Islandici*

ab anno Christi 803 ad annum 1430) and for the Royal Danish Scientific Society he edited the *Regesta diplomatica historice Danicæ* For the Icelandic Literary Society besides what is mentioned above, he had a share in the editing of the second volume of the *Biskupasögur*, the poems of B. Thorarensen, and the poetical works of Jón Thoroddsen; he had a considerable share in the editing of the „*Skýrslur um Landshagi á Íslandi*“ (Statistics of Iceland) 5 vols. Copenhagen, 1858—75, and the „*Tíðindi um stjórnarmálefni Íslands*“ (Collection of Statutes, Royal Decrees etc, concerning the administration of Iceland) 3 vols. Copenhagen 1864, 1870 and 1875, which the society published at his suggestion; further the compendious reports on the state of the Society, its manuscripts, etc, are partly by himself, partly composed under his superintendence. — Various publications might be named, the authors of which he assisted both directly, by exhortation, hints and advice, and by lending them the material he had procured or collected so plentifully, but what is mentioned above is sufficient evidence of his great, untiring and wide-extended literary activity. Still it must not be forgotten that in his collection of manuscripts there is great store of outlines for literary works, accurate copies of ancient manuscripts and excerpts, which he would most probably have completed and published if he had lived longer; these literary remains of his will be of the greatest use, especially to those who wish to study and write about the history and literature of Iceland.





TRANSLATION

IN PROSE

FROM THE ORIGINAL

MEMORIAL PLATE, IN THE ICELANDIC LANGUAGE,

IN MEMORY OF

THE LATE PRESIDENT OF THE ICELANDIC ALTHING,

JÓN SIGURÐSSON.

PUBLISHED BY ONE OF HIS RELATIVES.

REYKJAVÍK, 17th. JUNE 1887.

From the printing house of S. Eymundsson & S. Jónsson.
Printer: Th. Jensen.

In rendering these poems into prose, so as to make them intelligible to the English readers, the publisher is much indebted to his friends, Mr. Steingrímur Thorsteinsson, professor of Greek and Mr. Geir Zoëga, professor of Latin at the Latin College of Reykjavík for their kindness and valuable assistance.

P r e f a c e .

What especially induced me to issue the following biography of my uncle, the late Jón Sigurðsson, President of the Althing, was my desire to take a humble share in doing honour to his memory. In my youth I was placed under his valuable guidance, and to him I owe everything which has tended to awaken my better and nobler feelings. Although but a brief sketch, it will amply illustrate, how much a noble and energetic life may accomplish for the welfare of a nation, even isolated, poor and oppressed as Iceland has been. The great desire of all nations to obtain the right of self-government, makes Iceland no exception, and in all ages Providence appoints able and good men to carry out the most difficult problems for the progress and welfare of mankind. Jón Sigurðsson's name will be found in the rolls of those illustrious patriots. When we consider what a battle justice and humanity have to fight in this world against injustice, bigotry, ignorance and cruelty, one is reminded of a passage by one of our poets, the Rev. M. Jochumsson, in the

*cantate he made in memory of our late president;
in one of those verses he says,*

*„Haf vegsemd og lof fyrir sérhverja sól
er sumar á jörðunni vekur“.*

which means,

*Be praise and honour to Thee for every sun
which awakens summer on earth.*

*viz: for every good and noble patriot amongst
every nation in this world.*

*I hope this brief biography may be well received
by all independent and liberal-minded men, speak-
ing the English language, and may give them more
knowledge about the political life of Iceland.*

The Publisher.

Reykjavik 17. June 1887.



JÓN SIGURÐSSON

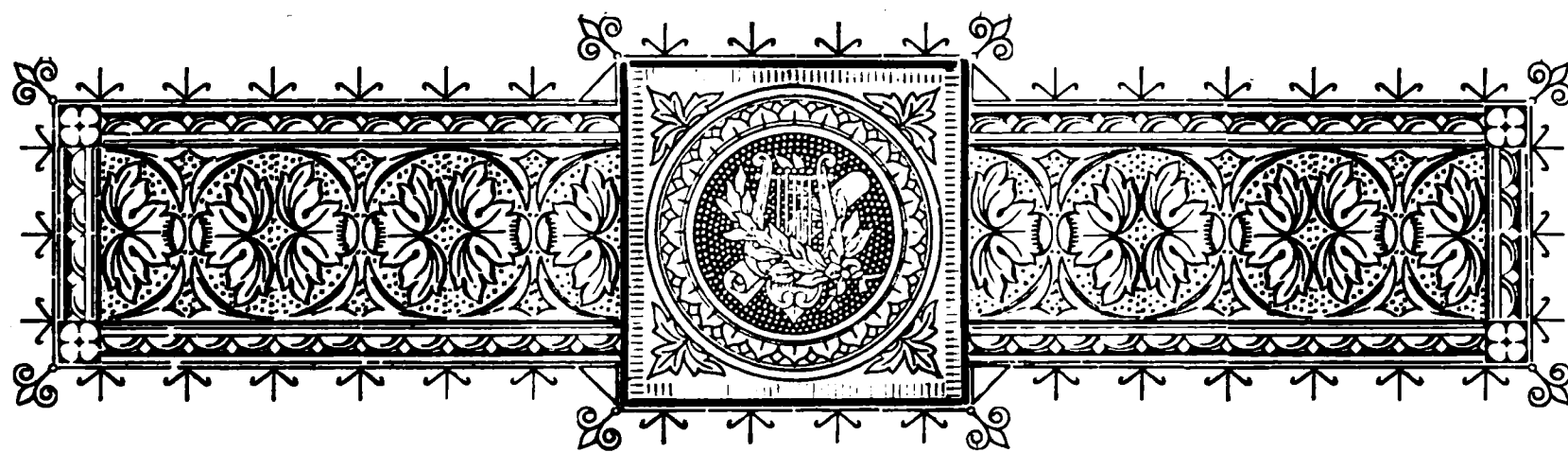
PRESIDENT

“The beloved son of Iceland, her honour,
sword and shield”*

Nec prece, nec pretio mobilis

(neither by bribe, nor entreaty moveable).

*) These words were engraved on a silver shield, placed on the coffin by his countrymen at Copenhagen, now kept in „Jón Sigurðsson’s chamber“ in the Althing House at Reykjavík.



1851.

Before we part from thee
let us call to mind the happy days,
when Saga bestowed happiness on us;
when she let us all see -
him who by the nation was chosen
to show oppression the smile of freedom,
him who by the truthful Saga
is justly called the sword and shield of Iceland.

Benedict Gröndal.

Extract from a song of Welcome to Jón Sigurðsson by the students of the Latin School of Reykjavík on his arrival from Copenhagen to the Althing in 1865.

Soon thou wilt
our wise leader
let thy sonorous voice swell
with powerful eloquence;
may thy genius jointly with popularity
gain victory, and may the
splendid wreath of honour crown thee.

Gallant hero!
 the people should
 praise thy skill
 in tuneful rhymes,
 while in our veins,
 our dear leader,
 the native blood swells.

Matthías Jochumsson.

On Jón Sigurðsson's return from the Althing at a
 banquet in Copenhagen 1867.

It dawned on the mountain brow,
 it dawned over land and ocean
 all covered by mystic hallowed runes;
 the Valkyrie gave thee wisdom;
 then floods, mountains and plains
 as endowed with life and soul
 sang all to the silver chords
 the song of Sigurdrífa*.

Thanks for thy precious example,
 Thy manliness, endurance and fidelity,
 for virtue, which shines brightest
 when falsehood will molest;
 to thee the bright-eyed goddess of song
 now offers the wine-cup

*) Sigurdrífa the wise Valkyrie in Edda.

On the shining shield of Saga
shall thy bright name stand
in splendour.

Benedict Gröndal.

Who can tell all thy struggles
and labour for the people
thy works of affection?
the precious treasures thou gainedst
will be preserved
as long as the waterfall rushes headlong down
and mountains stand.

Steingrímur Thorsteinsson.

On Jón Sigurðsson's arrival at Copenhagen from the
Althing (Iceland). Sung at a banquet in his honour.

Under the snowy brow* thou keepest the fiery
vigour of youth,
even the young thou inspirest with the flame of
activity,
with energy and power and cheerful mind
thou art the hero of youth as of yore.

For those who have with the greatest fidelity
used their lifelong strength

*) Jón Sigurðsson's hair turned quite white in his early man-
hood, hence the expression.

and the radiant goddess of liberty
gives a garland of flowers.

Steingrímur Thorsteinsson.

1867.

On the heart of an oppressed nation
thy name may be read,
those crimson love-runes
glitter in glorious lustre,
they shall firmly stand,
until the tide of time shall end
until no one shall breathe
and we all shall die. —

Benedict Gröndal.

In memory of Jón Sigurðsson by Jón Ólafsson, member
of the Althing.

By holy Providence he was sent at last
to raise his native land, the land of Saga.
The nation that gave thee birth, Jón Sigurðson,
may certainly expect to rise again.

1874.

With hoary locks
strong in spirit
faithful in heart
trusty in struggle.

for the progress of their country,
 resounds the whole nation's praise
 over the space of rolling centuries,
 for they have paved the way for generations
 unborn.

Steingrímur Thorsteinsson.

To Jón Sigurðsson at his last departure from Iceland.
 Sung at a farewell banquet in his honour.

Look! where the silvery Snæfells-ás* stands
 while the day is gloriously

*) When entering the broad Faxabay before coming to Reykjavík, the capital of Iceland, one perceives the fine snowmountain Snæfellsjökul on the left side of the bay; it is conical in shape, and being 5000 feet high has a very imposing appearance on a fine clear summer evening. It is clearly seen from Reykjavík at 70 miles distance. — When the sunset is fine the whole „jökull“ is encircled in a most dazzling splendour of crimson hue, turning the jökul as it were into some ancient god of the Edda, wearing a golden crown of beauty, twined by the evening rays round his hoary brow. Snæfells-ás was, in the heathen legend, the name of the guardian god who was believed to have his abode on mount Snæfell. Hence the poetical comparison in the poem above between the Snæfell's-ás and the chief of Snowland (Iceland).

dying in the west.
Although men do weep
the wheel of time rolls on;
soon the joyous summer
will set behind the snowy throne.

Look! where Snowland's chief sits!
the bright day of his life
resembled the course of summer.
Full of glory and struggles,
vigour, hope and exertion
for his land and people
his stony path was laid.

Why do the bright hues of evening
encircle the noble chief's brow
as the rays of the setting summer sun
wrap mount Snæfell?
The evening crowned with glory
takes leave of a hot day,
promising new splendour
and a happy future to the country.

Hail! to thee and thy worthy wife
Hail! across the old sea!
From the home of the Snowland
may God guide thee!
Jón! beautiful in age

the champion of freedom
 who appeared with spring
 when Saga led him by the hand.

The mountain maiden (Iceland)
 wraps herself in mourning,
 grief vibrates through the peaked mountains;
 the spring dew on the ground
 turns into tears
 and mournful become all the songs of birds.

What can comfort us ?
 His honour we possess,
 his name throws rays on his grave;
 the future of our native land
 his spirit does fertilize ;
 beside his grave the spring
 of our national life grows.

Steingrímur Thorsteinsson.

in our new constitution in 1874, total separation of the finances, and our own legislative assembly (Althing). Jón Sigurðsson was continually elected as member for the county of Isafjord and continually president of the Althing. Hence every other year when the Althing sat he went from Copenhagen to Iceland, always accompanied by his faithful wife, Ingibjörg Einarsdóttir, who died 8 days after him. They were buried in Reykjavík the 4th of May 1880.

our old country blesses
thy beautiful eyes*
tenderly and hoping for victory.

Matthías Jochumsson.

Extract from a song when the coffins of Jón Sigurðsson and his wife Ingibjörg were brought from Copenhagen to Reykjavík the 4th of May 1880. Sung when received by the multitude on shore.

Fallen is the hero,
there is a breach in the wall,
Iceland mourns her beloved son;
out of the abyss of time
arose his day
with new sun and new hope.

Remember that
formerly he often arrived,
stately on Iceland's shore;**

*) Jón Sigurðsson was well known for his beautiful piercing dark eyes full of fire and earnestness with a most peculiar mixture of tenderness and love.

***) Jón Sigurðsson lived for many years at Copenhagen, where he pursued his literary studies and prepared himself for his great political campaign against the Danish government, which after 30 years continual struggle and stubborn opposition from the Danes terminated

From the cantate at the funeral of Jón Sigurðsson and his wife, sung in the cathedral of Reykjavík the 4th of May 1880.

And first when he left his ancient land*
under the bright golden helmet of beauty,
came God's voice and said: thou shalt do dar-
ing deeds
and rescue thy native land.

Then he vowed neither hatred nor power to dread,
nor his holy calling to betray
and engraved on his shield
his knightly motto: — „Never to retreat“.

Then he sailed with a champion's courage
in the cause of his calling
as deputy chosen and our president
with the banner of liberty in front.

Then came he and sailed
with a sea-king's mood,
victorious, fearless hero,
and foremost he stood never retreating

*) When he as a young student left Iceland for the university at Copenhagen.

„with the helmet of terror“* in the assembly.

The oftener the proud ship to Frón (Iceland)
did run

with the gallant leader,
the better she (Iceland) knew herself in his image
and perceived her own dignity and honour.

To thee, Iceland! was sent this winged spirit of
liberty
with the power of ancient days
to make thee acquainted with thine own worth and
qualities
and point out to thee thy mission.

Matthías Jochumsson.

Sung at the grave of Jón Sigurðsson and his wife at
their funeral the 4th of May 1880.

Iceland's fairest hope and love
that openedst the halls of freedom,
now we bid thee farewell, Jón Sigurðsson!
with our last words of longing grief.

*) The Icelandic word „ægishjálmur“ literally in English
„the helmet of terror“ does not quite seem to indicate
the meaning of the poet; he means that Jón Sigurðsson
by his courage, eloquence and manly appearance and
winning personality inspired the members of the as-
sembly with respect and admiration.

Across the sky a cloud of sorrow passes
and hovers over the dales of Iceland.

Formerly we sang to thine honour
the song of victory
and the sun shone bright in the clear sky,
now we sing of thee mournful lays
and bless thy illustrious tomb.
May the Iceland spring which thou lovedst
now spread its flowers on thy last resting place.

Alas! Fare thee well, thou beautiful sun!
thou leader of Iceland's people!
the most illustrious son the century bore
and the muses trained.
As a king formerly thou didst sit in the hall
and alone didst sustain all.

Alike in the morning, daytime and dark evening,
thou remindedst us to keep awake;
thou heldest over us thy guardian shield,
and never didst retreat.
Who will now take thy weapons
in his valiant hands?

Benedict Gröndal.

When a marble bust was made of Jón Sigurðsson by the Norwegian sculptor K. Bergslien.

The skilful artist expressed with tender hands
the beautiful face,
the image of a powerful and noble spirit,
in the shining stone,
the fervent spirit, loving gentleness
the power of virtue, firmness of fidelity;
the cheerful confidence
trusting sincerely in the good cause.*

A skilful son of Norwegian mountains
who in the broad mountain sides
learned the arts of the dwarfs**
expressed in the bright marble
the dearest son of Iceland,
the native land of ancient gods.
A garland of laurels be
the reward for his art.

*) The liberation and restoration from the oppression of Denmark.

***) All works of rare art such as the famous or enchanted swords of antiquity were attributed to the dwarfs.

May the pure image
of the beloved chief,
embellished in the light of art,
last for a long time among his people;
may the people of the snowy isle
contemplate also in the future
the light which radiates
from that noble visage.

Steingrímur Thorsteinsson.

The memorial plate is divided into two parts each consisting of four columns; the first part containing extracts from poems made in his honour while alive (except that one by Jón Ólafsson which was made after his death). — The other poems are made before his funeral, except the last one relating to the unveiling of his marble bust by the famous Norwegian sculptor K. Bergslien.

