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Review

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## REVIEWS.

## EUROPE.

## ICELAND.

'Across Iceland.' By W. Bisiker. With Illustrations and Maps, and an Appendix by A. W. Hill on the Plants collected. London: Edward Arnold. 1902.

A number of narratives of travel in Iceland by Englishmen and Americans have appeared in recent years, but, unfortunately, few contain anything of geographical or scientific importance, and still fewer any new information. A book, therefore, describing a really new geographical examination of some part which was little known before is very welcome, and such a work is that of Mr. W. Bisiker. The author made it his especial task to examine and survey the Kjalvegur country between Hofsjökull and Langjökull, in Central Iceland. Although this route is annually used by travellers, and has been described by various scientific men,\* Mr. Bisiker is the first who has surveyed this region in detail, and he has published in his book an excellent map of the central part of Kjalvegur, which gives his work permanent value. It is to be hoped that the author will continue his explorations of little-known districts in Iceland or elsewhere, which he has so well commenced. Work is plentiful everywhere, but the trained labourers are few. The party stayed some time at the remarkable group of warm springs on Hveravellir, explored the neighbourhood, and ascended the volcano Strytur and other adjacent summits. Hveravellir and its surroundings were first examined by E. Olafsson in 1752, and were fully described by Ebenezer Henderson in 1815,† but since then the warm springs are much changed. From Hveravellir Mr. Bisiker made an excursion to Kerlingarfjöll, a wild mountain group of liparite, where great solfataras and fumaroles burst forth in deep fissures amidst ice and snow; the sulphurous fumes have converted the rocks into soil of various colours, and the whole scene has a grand and fantastic character unmatched in any other part of Iceland.‡ From here Mr. Bisiker proceeded to the pretty Lake Hvítárvatn, which is filled with fragments of ice from two glaciers which extend into the water. All these places are well and clearly described by the author in a very agreeable style. After his researches in Kjalvegur were ended, Mr. Bisiker travelled to Reykjavik, to the lava caves of Surtshellir, to Stykkishólmur at Breidifjörður, and then on a coasting steamer round Cape Nord to the north and east coast. He therefore saw only a small portion of inhabited Iceland, and as his route, except in Kjalvegur, touched districts which have been repeatedly described by travellers, he had no opportunities for fresh inquiries.

The book contains many striking photographs which give a good picture of Icelandic scenery and manner of travelling, and several are also of geographical and geological interest. In many English books of travel Icelandic names are so

\* I have myself, among others, described the geography and geology of this region in the *Geografisk Tidsskrift*, vol. x. (Copenhagen, 1889), pp. 10-29; and *Ymer* (Stockholm, 1889), pp. 49-59, where also is to be found a special map of the hot springs at Hveravellir.

† 'Iceland; or, the Journal of a Residence in that Island during the Years 1814 and 1815.' By E. Henderson. 2 vols. Edinburgh. 1818. This work is still in every respect the best, most complete, and trustworthy narrative of travel in Iceland that exists in English.

‡ Kerlingarfjöll was first explored by me in 1888, and I described the mountain in *Das Ausland* (Stuttgart, 1889), No. 9, pp. 161-164.

incorrectly spelled that a whole course of study is necessary in order to recognize them, but Mr. Bisiker writes the names correctly as a rule, though I can quote some exceptions which should be corrected in a new edition. The following are the most important errors: "Falakvisl" for Fúlakvisl, "Hoff Jökull" for Hof's Jökull, "Asquidsá" for Asgardsá, "Skrutharfell" for Skridufell, "Flossi" for Flosi, "Skriffir" for Skrifla, "Rauthamisolkaldá" for Raudamelsölkelda, "hakarü" for hákarl, etc. The descriptions of the traveller's experiences are written in a lively and entertaining manner, and but few errors can be found. The following, however, should be corrected in a new edition. On p. 109 it is said of the new road from Thingvellir to Reykjavik that it is "the only one of any length in all Iceland, for it is 36 miles long." This is not correct, for the recently made road from Reykjavik to the southern lowland over Hellisheidi has a length of more than 60 miles. On p. 114 the author says that Reykjavik has 4000 inhabitants, whereas, according to the last census, it has 7500. At the same place he says that almost all the business men in Reykjavik are Danes, but, in fact, the majority of tradesmen in Reykjavik and other places in Iceland are natives,\* and there are hardly more than five to six Danish families in Reykjavik and perhaps ten to twelve in the whole island. All the officials in Iceland are Icelanders, *without exception*; not one is a Dane. The cathedral of Reykjavik is not built of wood, but of brick.

At the end of the book we find a list by A. W. Hill, of the plants collected during tours in Iceland and the Færoe islands, with some interesting notices of the vegetation on Kjalvegur. The plants named have, indeed, been all found before in these districts, with the exception of *Ophioglossum vulgatum* from Hveravellir; this plant has been previously reported from only two places in Iceland—Gunná on Reykjanes and Bjarnarflag at Myvatn. Of late years the plant-geography of Iceland has received much more attention than previously, especially from the Icelandic botanists Helgi Jonsson and Stefan Stefansson, who have published many articles on their investigations. Helgi Jonsson has also made especial examinations of alga vegetation, while fungi, mosses, and lichens have been the object of investigations by the Danish botanists, E. Rostrup and Chr. Grönlund.

TH. THORODDSEN.

## ASIA.

### JAPAN.

Henry Dumolard, 'Le Japon, politique, économique et social.' Paris: Armand Colin. 1903.

In spite of its unpretentious appearance, this is a work of serious value, and does not present the mere impressions of a tourist like the greater number of modern books on Japan. The author, formerly professor at the Imperial University at Tokyo, claims to have spent over three years in the study, at first hand, of the social and economic conditions of the country, during journeys made through the length and breadth of it, which gave him the opportunity of mixing intimately in the inner life of the people. His views on Japanese questions are thus deserving of careful attention, even though they may not always meet with general acceptance. The separate chapters treat fully of the constitution, politics, administration, industries, commerce, etc., of the country, the conclusion being supported by an array of statistics, which certainly seem to justify them in many cases. The

\* According to official statistics there were in Reykjavik, in 1899, 41 traders, of whom 38 were Icelanders, and 200 business houses in the whole island, of which 156 were owned by natives, while the remaining 44 were in the hands of Danes, Englishmen, and Norwegians.