

#### IV.

##### ON SOME RUINS AT ELLIDA VATN AND KJALARNES IN ICELAND.

By R. ANGUS SMITH, PH.D., F.R.S., &c. (PLATE II.)

In June and July of this year (1872) I had the privilege of sailing in the yacht *Nyanza*, belonging to my friend Mr Young, and of floating in the harbour of Reykjavik for a couple of weeks. During this time we found long journeys unpleasant and too laborious to make, and,

unlike tourists generally, we confined ourselves to a circuit of a few miles. One of the first sights that caught my eye, after gazing in a bleak morning on black shores and unclad hills, was a small island, almost approachable with dry feet from the town during low water. It is called Effersey, because, as is supposed by Mr Thorsteinsen, the Sheriff, it is just beyond the reach of an arrow from the mainland. There were two ruinous heaps upon it visible from the vessel, but the island was uninhabited. I had frequent opportunities of going there. We let down the gig, and were rowed over in five minutes. Some of us fished round the shores, and looked after a seal which sometimes showed itself, or looked at the solitary nest of an eider duck, the last of the season. In these hours it was easy to become acquainted with ground about one quarter of a mile long and not so much broad. I fear it is not even recognisable on the large Danish map. There are on it several remains of houses, having the thick walls of the Iceland fashion, and small interiors. These, I was told by the Sheriff, had been fishing-stations—places for the abodes of fishermen and for salting and drying fish—not later than last century. Five rings or circles of stones, set apart, particularly fixed my attention. They were like the stone circles of the West of Scotland, made with very small stones, but still more like those figured by Waring as in Sweden. I did not measure each circle ; but they were 10 to 15 feet in diameter, and one a good deal more. They were clear and unbroken. In speaking of stone circles, it is not at all decided by what name we should describe them. To be more precise, people generally say circles such as are called Druidical. Now, it is better to have a proper word and no such periphrasis suggestive of a theory which seems untenable ; and after trying many, I have come to the conclusion that stone circles is the simplest and best compound.

The closeness of these circles to a fishing establishment, and also to a kind of landing-place, suggested something connected with drying ; but although this fancy came into the heads of my Iceland friends, none could explain how the circle could be used. No erection could be put over the stones ; they had not sufficient surface above, and no traces of such a foundation as could support an erection could be seen. I opened the ground in the centre of one, but found nothing but earth. This, however, proves nothing. The stones were not a foot above the ground,

and in some cases nearly level with it ; but there they were, making stone circles. Some of these circles cut each other : on this I have no remark. Allowing for a moment that some easy explanation might occur, I wandered to other parts, and at the extreme west, and close to the sea where it rolls in towards the bay, were two cairns. Cairns they were unmistakably ; one becomes used to the appearance of such even in decay. Every person I spoke to of them in the town stoutly denied the existence of any such thing close to Reykjavik ; but they were easy to distinguish, from the great heaps of stone that seem to have been driven far up the shore by violent waves. One of these cairns was almost levelled with the ground, scarce a wreck remaining above ; and yet we could see it had been higher, perhaps opened. No one would have believed me had I not obtained abundant proof. On removing a few stones, it became clear that not only had it been a cairn, but it contained a stone kist, proving fully the correctness of the diagnosis. This kist or kist was rude enough, because it had been made with stones that were not flat, and had not been subjected, so far as I saw, to any process of flattening. It was small, and no cover was upon it, and nothing but stones in it,—deseccated long, long ago, before the fishing-station became large, in all probability. I am exceedingly sorry that a photograph which I attempted of this place with great care has not turned out well. I give a rude sketch instead. The other cairn was close to this, but much more decided in its external appearance, although hitherto unobserved, I am told. An opening was made in it, but nothing was found. The stones around seemed to indicate the rude remains of a circle of much higher and more pointed stones than those before mentioned, which being low and of the boulder class, had not been disturbed. I conclude it had been a cairn with a circle. I could not be sure that the cairn with the kist in it had had a circle round it. A rough sketch taken at the time is given ; I fear the digging somewhat disturbed the appearance. On opening this latter cairn, a bone was found of about 7 inches in length, having an aperture through its diameter, carefully made, at one end near the joint, whilst the whole had been carefully cleaned,—the core cleared out the whole length. It was not old, and had not been buried in the cairn, but it was a novelty to me, and I took it to the town. Inquiring of a gentleman there, his

wife said nothing, but went out, and brought one exactly the same, with thread wound round it. Wood is scarce here, and so we have bone instruments. But why the hole? Mr Ion A. Hjaltalin kindly writes an explanation:—"Usually they have two holes—one in the end, and another right through the bone, near the joint. These holes are made to suck out the marrow, which is taken out at one end. The transverse hole is, merely to make a draught. Sometimes also they use the bones for needle-cases, putting the needles in through the hole in the end, and then putting a stopper into it. There is a superstition connected with these sheep bones. You must get the marrow out either by sucking it or by splitting the bones longitudinally; but if you break them right across, your sheep will break their legs."

This is the first time that I have met with the practice of splitting bones as a European habit, although I believe it not to have ceased at an early time, seeing that I had proved the results in a lake dwelling which did not speak of high antiquity.

In the cemetery at Reykjavik I observed several circles over the graves, made of small stones, which seemed to be like drawings I had seen of Swedish burying-places, and very like the habit, very old and widespread, of making circles of white pebbles. Mr Hjaltalin tells me that the habit has come from Denmark, and that these small circles are made to imitate garlands, which indeed they much resemble. Circular heaps are sometimes found in churchyards marking the graves of criminals or suicides, and may suggest heathen burials, although not so.

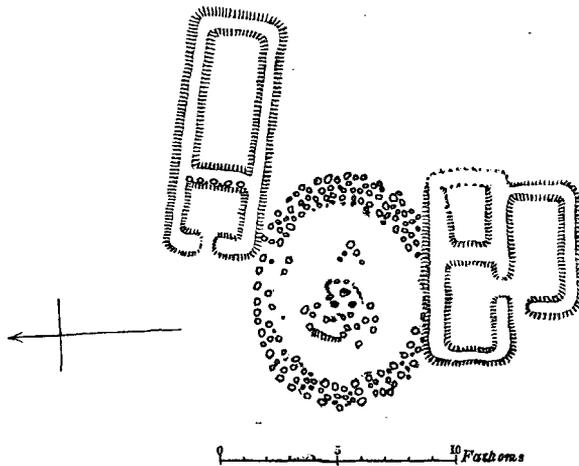
This little find on the little island is not unimportant. It shows that we may miss the objects before our face, and that we need not despise the smallest spots. But it also tells us that this mode of burying is as late as the ninth century at any rate, if we did not know it from history. At this time a cistvaen was made rudely, a cairn was built, and a circle of pointed stones was put round it. If we take Burnt Njal, we find that after Iceland had been well colonised a larger cairn was made, and, as a mark of honour, Gunnar was buried sitting. Still later, Grettir the Strong went into the cairn of a Norwegian king, and found him sitting. From all this I simply conclude that large cairns, small kists, and stone circles are not necessarily very old. I dare say this is well known to the members, but I believe the knowledge not to be widespread, and that the

observations are worth recording. I had nothing to prove these remains to be older than Norwegian occupation. Poor as they are, they are greater than the mass of the people could obtain, and the poorest may exist contemporaneous with the richest, as we see at this day.

When making inquiries at Reykjavik, I was told of an old Thingstead at Ellida Vatn, a small lake a few miles off. We decided to go, having a guide, Zoega the dark-haired, a fine man, but less known than the brother, and having also the company of Mr Gudmundsson, the artist and keeper of the museum. The ride is often taken by pleasure parties. On the farther margin of the lake is a small peninsula or ness, and at the neck is a collection of ruins. One sees the foundations of many dwellings, oblong like houses or booths, whilst there are many standing stones not very high, and a round wall or foundation of a round building. Mr Gudmundsson has been good enough to make a drawing, or rather plan, for me (see Plate II., and the annexed plan). There are foundations of eighteen so-called booths. Close to them and amongst them is a round wall, levelled now with the surface of the grass, but I do not know what depth or height it may have been; at any rate, it is about 5 feet in thickness, and the space enclosed is 22 Danish ells in diameter, each equal to two Danish feet. I had never seen a circular wall (it appears on survey to be oval) of such dimensions, and marvelled. Mr Gudmundsson called it a Domring. I could not contradict, but wondered again at my ignorance. This circle was built solid,—it was not an open or so-called Druid's circle; it was like the other house walls of Iceland, to all appearance made to hold a roof and to keep out bad weather. If a Court, or Thing, or Domring, surely it must be different from others. This, however, was not all the surprise, because in the middle of this large circle was another circle about 12 feet in diameter. This was an open one of the kind called Druid's. Although imperfect, no doubt entered my mind as to the form intended, and it was as unexpected as bewildering. In the very middle, again, was a large stone, rather out of its place, but somewhat tabular. Here, then, was a stone circle enclosed with a strong wall such as people build to hold roofs. Surely this stone circle must have been of value. (See plan, p. 156.)

At no great distance were three or four places which showed stone

circles in decay. I say three or four—I think four—but there were only two which appeared decidedly to have circles in the eyes of my companions, and I shall therefore not insist on more; at the same time, they had not before seen stone circles, and could not recognise them when in ruins so easily as I believe I could. Of the two there appeared little doubt. One of these less distinct places had a small circle and another concentric, and I believe a third outside, but so much in ruins that I am willing to leave part uncertain. They were small, and stood on a small eminence. Another of these places with uncertain circles could be seen below.



Ground Plan of Domring (so called) and the nearest booths.

The booths or houses were in some cases 17 yards by 5. The whole would seem to have been a collection of important public places with booths near. I suppose it is agreed that there were several courts near each other, and it seems not out of the way to suppose these concentric circles to have marked such places. I know the reasoning against this; but I must ask, Why the carefully-enclosed circle and centre stone, clear enough to see? and why the other concentric circle, if less clear? I

never before had seen a so-called Druid's circle inside a house, because this is probably the real meaning of the thick enclosing wall. It was also unlike anything either seen or read of by me, and on inquiry I saw it necessary to look up a number of points.

Why are these booths there, or are they booths? and why so many in this sequestered place? Inquiry showed that history could not assist. The place is called Krossnes and Thingnes, and on the large map of Iceland, Kjalarnesthing. Are we to disbelieve these names except the first, which is descriptive of the land, as the map shows? I was then referred to the Saga regarding Kjalarnes, but then it seemed clear that only the limited Kjalarnes, under Mount Esja, was alluded to. Here we are some miles away from Esja. Again, it seemed the belief that the whole of the circle of the bay of Reykjavik was called Kjalarnes at times, all being in the land where the first *keel* landed—the origin of the name, some people say, is “the promontory of the keel.”

Not finding the recorded history, we must pursue the natural history of the subject; and so it seemed next right to go to Kjalarnes, and find out what remained in that place, where we are told that both a temple and a court were erected. Does the place suit the description? We accordingly decided to sail to Kolla Fiord; and before going there I may give a part of the Saga, to show the nature of the interest to be had in looking in that direction. The translation is made by Mr Hjaltalin, of the Advocates' Library, who kindly undertook to read out a few chapters in English, translating every word carefully, whilst I was careful to write down every word as we went on, receiving his comments and explanations, for which I am certainly much indebted, as my readers will be, since this Saga has not hitherto been published in English.

*Kjalnesing Saga.*

I.—Helgi Bjóla, the son of Ketill Flatnefr, took possession of the whole of Kjalarnes between Leyruvogr and Botnsá, and lived at Hof at Kjalarnes. He was a very useful man during the time of the old religion. He was not a great worshipper, but quiet and gentle towards all. Helgi married Thórny, the daughter of Ingolfir, at Reykjavik, who first settled in Iceland. Their sons were Thorgrimr and Arngrimr. They were both large men and strong, and the most active-looking men. Helgi distributed the land of which he had taken posses-

sion among his crew. To Thráendr he gave Thranderstade ; to Eylifr, Eylifsdal ; to Hækinger, Hikinigsthal (Hækingsdalr); to Tindr, Tindstadir; and to every one he gave the place which he liked most.

A man is named Erlig (Örlygr), an Irishman both by his father and mother. Ireland was Christian at that time, and was ruled over by Konfögr, the king of the Irish. Erlig (Örlygr) offended the king, and then he went to see his kinsman, Bishop Patrick, and asked for his advice what he should do. But he told him to go to Ireland, for, said he, a great number of powerful men have gone there. But I would advise you to take with you three things—consecrated earth, which you shall put under the corner pillar of the church, a mark of the cross, a plenarium, and a consecrated iron bell. You will come to the south of Iceland, and then you shall sail round to the west. A large fiord goes into the country from the west, and far in the firth you will see three lofty mountains divided by valleys. You shall direct your course to the last mountain, where you will get a good harbour, and there lives a wise chief called Helgi Bjóla, who will receive you, because he is not a great worshipper. He will give you a dwelling-place under the mountain of which I told you before. Build a church there, and bury your men, and dedicate the church to St Columba. Now, farewell, said the bishop, and take good care of your faith, though you will be living among heathens. After that Örlygr prepared to go, and it is to be said of his voyage that everything went as the bishop had told him. He landed in the Therneyarsund, and went then to see Helgi Biola, who received him well. Örlygr erected a farmhouse and church under the mountain of which the bishop had told him, and lived there afterwards to old age.

II.—During the latter portion of the reign of Konfögr, the king of the Irish, a vessel with Irishmen on board arrived at Leyrufvágr. A man is named Andridr, a young man and unmarried, large and strong; with them (the Irishmen) was a woman, by name Esja, a very wealthy widow; there was also a man, by name Kolli. Helgi received all of them. Kolli he placed in Kolla Fiord; but as Erlig was old and without children, he gave up his land and farm to Esja who took up her residence at Esjuberg. All these people were said to be baptised, yet many said that Esja knew many old tricks. Andridr went to spend the winter at Hof, and he and Helgi's sons became foster-brothers. Andridr asked Helgi to procure him a dwelling-place and a wife. He was very wealthy. At that time the whole of Kjalarnes was overgrown with wood, and those were the only clearings where the people cleared the place for a farmhouse on a road. A large road went along the hill from Hof. In the spring Helgi and Andridr went there, and when they arrived at the hill, Helgi said, Andridr, here I will give you land, and I wish you to build a farmhouse here,

It seems to me that my sons wish to press you. After that Andridr built a farmhouse across the road, and called it Brautaholt, because the wood was so thick that they thought it less trouble to build a farmhouse there (*i.e.*, on the road). Andridr made there a splendid farmhouse. A man is named Thormóthr, who lived in Thormódsdal; with him lived his sister, by name Thorðr, who was good-looking and wealthy. Helgi wooed this woman for Andridr, and she was betrothed to him. This summer also Arndys, the daughter of Thórðr, Skeggi's son, at Skeggjastadir, was betrothed to Thorgrimr, the son of Helgi. Both weddings were to take place together at Hof, and the guests were treated with great energy. There were a great many people. After the wedding, Thuridr went to Brautaholt and took the management of the household duties, and it soon became evident that she was a very pushing woman. They had a large number of live stock, and the sheep went in the wood by themselves, over the ness. This autumn Andridr missed a dark grey heifer, three winters old, which was called Maus. This heifer was found three winters afterwards on a ness west from Brautaholt, and then she had two calves, one a year old, another six months old. They therefore called the ness Musarnes. The first winter that Andridr lived in Brautaholt, Helgi Biola died, and it was thought the greatest loss, for he was very popular. In the spring the brothers divided their patrimony; Thorgrimr retained the paternal seat and the chieftainship, because he was the elder of the two, but Arngrimr got the outlying farms. He began farming close to the fiord, and called the place Saurbaer. He married a woman by name Olöf, from Borgarfjord. They had two sons: one was named Helgi, the other Vakr. They became brave men, but were not of a large stature. Thorgrimr began farming in the spring at Hof. His farm soon became very magnificent, as there were many things to support him, also friends and kinsmen. He became a powerful man in the district, and ruled over the whole, all the way to Minna-braun, and this was called Brunndæla-godord (chieftainship). He was called Thorgrimrgothi. He was a great worshipper, and built a temple on his farm a hundred feet long and sixty feet broad; all the people were to pay a tax towards it. Thorr was most worshipped there. It was made round within like a skull-cap. It was hung with tapestry, and there were windows in it. Thor was standing in the middle, and the other gods on both sides. In front of Thor stood an altar, finely made, and covered on the top with iron. There was to be the fire which should never go out—we call that consecrated fire. On that altar a large ring, made of silver, was lying. The temple priest wore it on his hand at all public meetings. By it all people were to swear on giving evidence. On that altar stood a large bowl of copper, into which the blood of cattle or men sacrificed to Thor was to be poured. This they called hlaut (blood), and hlautbolli (blood-bowl). From this bowl men and cattle which were sacrificed and feasted

on were to be besprinkled, when there were sacrificing feasts. But the men who were sacrificed were thrown down into a pool close to the door. This they called blotkelda. The cross beams which were in the temple were put in the hall at Hof when Olaf built it. He had them all split, yet they were thick enough. Thorgrim instituted a spring meeting at Kjalarnes, close by the sea, and the ruins of the booths may still be seen. All minor matters were to be decided there, and only such cases were to be brought to the Althing as could not be decided or compromised here. Thorgrim and Arndys had a son, by name Thorsteinn. He was soon a very violent man, and considered everything low beside himself. Kolli lived in Kolla Fiord, as has been said before. He married a woman by name Thorgerdr, the daughter of Eylifr, in Eylifsdal. They had a daughter, by name Oláf, and her beauty became a common talk. She was therefore called Oláf the Beautiful.

III.—When Andridr and his wife had lived some winters at Brautaholt, they had a son who was poured over with water and called Búi. He greatly surpassed other young men, was larger and stronger, and finer to look at. Esja lived at Esjvberg, as has been said before. She offered to foster Búi, the son of Andridr, and he grew up with her. He was called somewhat wayward in his youth; he would never worship, and said it was not manly to bend knees to such things. He would not carry a weapon, but a sling, which he tied round himself. There was a woman, by name Thorgerdr, who lived at Vatn, which was afterwards called Ellida Vatn; a son of hers, by name Kolvidr (Coalwood) grew up with her; he was soon a large man, with black hair, and ugly. He laid himself down in the kitchen, and gnawed the bark of wood, and took care of his mother's cattle. Thorgerdr was very sorry for this, yet Coalwood had his way. Thorgrimgothi took much notice of those men who would not worship, and they were severely treated by him. He and his son Thorsteinn spoke threateningly concerning Bui, as he would not worship, and called him the dog Bui. Bui was then twelve winters old, and Thorsteinn eighteen. Thorsteinn summoned Bui to Kjalarnesthing for heresy (wrong faith), for which the penalty should be outlawry. Thorstein carried out the case, and Bui became an outlaw. Bui pretended not to know of it, and went about as before. He went frequently to Brautaholt to see his father and mother, and still he did so. From all this, great coldness arose between the people. Once in the spring, Bui, it is said, went to Brautaholt: he always went alone, and did not carry more weapons than before. He had his sling tied round himself. Thorsteinn saw where Bui went, and recognised him. Then he went to his father and said, "How long is this to go on, father?—that the dog whom I made an outlaw last summer shall pass the farm here in full liberty, as if we had no charge against him. I think if your neighbours are suffered to do this, that

others will not think much of breaking your commands, and will care nothing for what we say." Thorgrimir said, "There is much in what you say; but what will you do now?" Thorsteinn replied, "It is a plain thing to me: I wish you to give me men, and I will slay Bui when he goes home, because I think it will be a long time till his father offers to make a compensation for him." Father and son agreed about this, and they kept watch when Bui went home. Bui staid some nights at Brautaholt, and when he prepared to go home, his mother Thuridr came to him and said, "I wish, my son, you would not go so incautiously; I am told that Thorsteinn has been threatening you. I wish you would take with you at least two men, and carry some weapons." Bui replied, "It is my duty to do your will, but it will be difficult for my foster-mother to keep more such as I am; but as to Thorsteinn and me, it is difficult to see which of us will be able to tell the news, even if he has a larger attendance, and this time I shall go as I intended." Then Bui went his way along the sea-shore, and Thorsteinn became aware of it. He and eleven others took their weapons. When Bui saw the pursuit, he was on a hill, and there he stopt and gathered together some stones. Thorsteinn and his men ran over a brook when they heard the sound of Bui's sling, and a stone soon hit one of Thorsteinn's men on the breast and killed him on the spot. Bui sent some more stones, and killed a man with each. Then they were close to him, and he left the hill and walked down on the opposite side. An eminence separated them, and at the same time darkness fell on, and they could not see farther than their toes. Thorsteinn said, "Here is a heavy road to pull when we have to fight against a dog and a witch, and let us return this time, but I should wish that I and Bui should meet in that way another time, so that we could not both of us tell the news." Then they turned back, carrying the men with them, and were very badly satisfied with their trip. It was also the talk of people that they had succeeded very poorly.

IV.—Bui now went home, and Esja his foster mother was at the door and saluted him, and he received her greeting well. Esja said, "Did you not think a while ago that you were too few men?" Bui said more were not wanted. Esja said, "You were not quite alone in the play." Bui said, "I am glad to enjoy good health." Esja said, "Do you not think you will be tired of Thorsteinn's pursuit?" Bui said, "That would be known if I could expect any assistance." Esja said, "We must often venture many things." Thus the talk ended, and the winter passed on. Late one evening Bui went to Brautaholt and spent the night there. In the morning, before daybreak, he was up and turned to the east of the hill. He could clearly see the farm-house at Hof. The sky was clear and bright. He saw a man dressed in linen clothes only come out of the house at Hof. He turned to the gate, and walked along the road to the temple. Bui thought he

recognised Thorsteinn, and went to the temple; and when he came there he saw that the yard and the temple were not shut. Bui went into the temple, and saw that Thorsteinn lay down on his face before Thorr. Bui went slowly up to him, and took hold of him in this way: one hand he placed under his knees and the other under his shoulders, and lifted him up, and drove his head down on a stone so hard that the brain was scattered about the floor, and he died instantly. Bui carried him out of the temple and threw him into the yard. Then he turned back into the temple, and took the consecrated fire and made it burn up. Then he carried it about the temple and set fire to the tapestry, and the flames spread rapidly from one to another, and in a short time the whole of the temple was in flames. Then Bui went out, locked the temple and the yard, and flung the keys into the flames; then he went his way. Thorgrimr awoke in the morning, and looked out and perceived the flames in the temple. He called on his servants, both men and women, to bring pails of water and save the temple. He also called his son Thorsteinn, and he was nowhere to be found. When they came to the yard gate, they could not easily get through, as it was locked, and the temple as well, but they could not find the keys anywhere. They had to break the gate open, because the wall was so high that it was impossible to get over it anywhere. When they had broken open the gate and were inside the yard, they saw Thorsteinn lying dead. The temple was locked, and nothing could be seen that was within. Then they made hooks, and at last the temple was pulled to pieces, and thereby some of the timbers were saved.

Now, it is to be told of Bui, that he came to a farm called Holar and declared himself to be the slayer of Thorsteinn,<sup>1</sup> and then he went home. Esja was on the west side of the farm, and saluted Bui, who received her greetings well. She said, "Have you been chased by Thorsteinn this morning, or have you now thought of my egging?" Bui said he would not deny that the Hof people might think they had suffered some loss. Esja said, "Have you declared the killing?" He said he had done so. Esja said, "I am not powerful enough to keep you here without hiding, because I know Thorgrimr will be here to-day." Bui said, "I suppose you had better do as you wish." Then they walked from the farm up to the mountain and across the river; then they went up a narrow path to a peak called Laug ar-gnipa (Bath-peak). There they came upon a fine cave; there was a beautiful room, and under it was a brook. In the cave there were provisions, drink, and clothing. Esja said, "You will have to be here for a while," and Bui said "he would do so." Esja went home and made fires in the house with wet sweepings, which made a great deal of smoke.

<sup>1</sup> If a man told within the next two farms that he slew a man, it was a homicide; otherwise, it was a murder.

The Saga continues, but the rest has no interest for us in this inquiry. Bui leaves the country, and goes through many adventures.

There are said not to be the remotest signs of the temple spoken of in this Saga at Hof, and we did not look, but we went to the shore of Kolla Fiord under Esja, which is in a small degree a jokull, and showed deep ridges filled with snow, and no doubt also with ice. There was a little grass on the shore, and at the extreme head of the fiord a good deal, and a farm-house, but the upper land, and much of the lower was almost as void of vegetation as a pane of glass. The shores on the south were heaps of large stones, as if in gigantic cartloads; on the north side there was a little level ground, and the sea was evidently diminishing it. A low flat shingle was shown us as the place where once stood the Kjalarnes Thing, as smooth now as any shingle is whereon the waves have acted for many years. We passed off the stones and found a little grass under the hill, and here were the remains of what might have been, and what are considered to have been, two booths.

If we suppose the Sagas to be absolutely correct, that at Krossnes was not alluded to. That is on the shores of a lake, this is on the sea. In minute details they do not correspond. I should certainly conclude that the Saga did not relate to Ellida Vatn. Let us see what is to be learned from it.

It is clear that sacrifices were made both of men and animals, and the remains were buried in the temple or at the door. It is clear, also, that the temples were made with a round portion, if all were not round. We must conclude, therefore, that to find remains within or at the circumference of a circle is no proof of ordinary burial. Remains of victims thrown into holes in the rough manner alluded to might account for many cases where the bones lie in great disorder, and are not found within the circle.

In the Eyrbyggja a temple is described as built by Thorolf, and of a great size ("ingentis magnitudinis"), which this was not. In the centre was the Pulvinar (a place for holding the images), "ac ara altaris instar," the altar for sacrifice probably. In Smith's "Dictionary of Antiquities" we are told that "ara" and "altare" were often used as the same, but "altare" had a greater importance, properly speaking. At this temple of Thorolf's was an aspergillum for sprinkling the blood of animals, while

blood was held in a bowl ; and there was also a ring, which was held by the person taking an oath.

With all these facts, in conjunction with the narrations, we may fairly conclude—

*1st*, That open circles were built at a period as late as the Norse occupation of Iceland.

*2d*, That the character of that at Krossnes is too remarkable to allow us to suppose that the place was unimportant.

*3d*, That if the open circles were not considered symbolical, they were at least held as very important.

*4th*, That the stone in the centre, in conjunction with the other details, seems to answer the description of the Blood Stone.

*5th*, That to find human remains is no proof of a regular burying-place; but if the remains have been thrown down irregularly, they point to the rough usage given them after sacrifice.

*6th*, Many places which we call burial-places only may have been places of sacrifice, and this may account for the irregularity in the disposition of the remains. On the other hand, it may be that in all the cases the burial was the chief point and the sacrifice only an accompaniment. If the body for burial be lost, the circle may still exist with the sacrificial remains only, whether human or not, which had been tossed aside. Much interesting matter on this subject is to be found in Dr Thurman's "Ancient British Barrows," Society of Antiquaries, London, 1869.

With these ideas, and the facts before us, it was difficult to resist the opinion, when looking at the large saucer-like stones in New Grange, in the Boyne valley, that they were intended for bloody rites. For liquid they are apparently intended. Then, what liquid? They are not such as one would use for a large amount of liquid, but quite such as would be found convenient for retaining a small amount, whereas the surface being large leads us to suppose it was required to hold a large object. This is an old idea, but ideas rot and fructify anew, when there is life in them.

When opposing many absurd and unfounded legends, or perhaps fabrications about the Druids and the supposed Druidical use of circles, an opposition has arisen to all idea of any religious use for any one of that class of buildings or monuments; and whilst many false views

have been thrown down, it may happen that a good deal of sound material has also fallen in the confusion of the struggle. Man has no doubt spent much time in putting his dead into lasting resting-places, and in this showing his great love of his relatives, I will not say species, but that love has not distinguished him so much as his love of, or at least attention to, spiritual beings. For this he has not spared any even of his most intimate friends. It is very hard to suppose that one idea, the love of friends, so much weaker than the other at certain stages of civilisation, should have so outlived it. However, this is not an argument. The connection of booths and temples, and we might also add of round buildings, is interesting. Although Stukely may have first connected the idea of temples of a Druidical kind with certain remains, he by no means introduced the opinion that stone circles were temples. This is very old indeed, and if Hector Boece is put out of court as a historian, he cannot be put out of court as a gossip, and he distinctly says it was the vulgar idea of his time:—"Enormous stones placed in circles, and vulgarly called the ancient temples of the gods,"—"Ingentia ea saxa ducta in circos, prisca deorum Fana vulgus appellat."

Whatever he may say, the Iceland Sagas seem clear enough on the circular form, and one object of this paper is to show that the open stone circle, our common one, is found conjoined with the closed one as well as not conjoined, and may be seen in Iceland to-day. I never travelled over Iceland, and do not know its antiquities; I give what I saw, and connect it with what I know elsewhere. We need not attempt to make very early times refined.

Having advanced this length, I had the fortune of some guidance from two great Icelandic authorities, who will keep me right, at least in the history, although I fear I am still inclined to keep to my opinion that these accumulations represent the ruins of either courts or temples, at least one of them being the remains of a very important place, throwing light on our own stone circles. And first let me quote Mr Vigfussen, joint-author of the "Icelandic Dictionary," p. 101:—

"Dom-hringr, *m.*, doom-ring, judgment-ring (compare also ve-bond, the sacred bounds or bar) The courts of heathen times were surrounded by the dom-hringr, about a bowshot from the centre, where the benches were placed; no evil-doer might enter this hallowed ring, or commit an act of

violence within it; if he did so, he was called a vargr i veum (lupus in sanctis). The English law term 'bar' answers to this old word; compare Greek, *δρυφακτοι*; Lat., cancelli; the Gothic staua-court and judge, properly means a staff bar. The bar was, according to Egils Saga, *l.c.*, a pole of hazel-wood, hesli-stengr. Classical passages referring to this: Thar sér enn dom-hring thann, er menn vóru daemdir i til blots, í théim-hring stendu Thórs Stein, &c., Eyrbyggja Saga, chap. x. Thar stendu'enn Thors Steinn . . . ok thar hja (better) er sa dom-hringr er (in which) menn skyldi til blots daema; Landnama, 98. Another classical passage is Eg. chap. lvii., beginning; comp. also Fas. III., Gautret's Saga, chap. vii., Edda, 10, though the ring is not expressly mentioned in these two last passages; hann gengr i dom-hringinn ok setzk nidr, Band: 6; en their eigu at risa or dominum ok sitja i dom-hring innan medan um tha sök er daemt, Gragas. i. 78; comp. 17, 26; in early heathen times this sacred circle was formed by a ring of stones, comp. dom-steinar; no doubt some of the so-called Celtic or Druidical stone circles are relics of these public courts, *e.g.*, the stones of Stennis in the Orkneys; comp. Scott's last note to the Pirate, referring to this subject; even in later times, when the thing was obsolete, the name remained."

It may be remarked that the distance of the ring from the centre of the circles in question does not coincide with the distance mentioned in this article, and indeed a bowshot is a distance incredibly great. The bystanders in the court in Burnt Njal hear the pleading and make their remarks. The whole outer ring at Ellida Vatn is 44 feet. This account suits the oval place, leaving the bowshot out, but it does not explain the inner circle or the centre stone as a part of a court. Therefore, I fancied it nearer to a temple than a court; but I have no strong feeling on the subject, and shall be satisfied to have the matter cleared. I came to the subject without a theory.

When deliberating, I received a very full and complete letter from Professor Maurer, of Munich, who is the highest authority I suppose on Icelandic history. He finds no reason at all for believing any court to have been here, and considers it must have been at Esja, already described. He has kindly allowed me to print his remarks, and although they arrive at conclusions which do not appear consistent with what I have seen, I do so with much pleasure. I must really beg pardon

of several men of great standing as antiquaries for thinking differently from them, when the subject is so new to me and foreign to those things on which I have all my life been writing.

*Letter from Professor R. Maurer, of Munchen.*

“Kjalarnes is now and was in old times that piece of land which lies north of Reykjavik, and on the southern and western sides of Esja. I leave the question whether a smaller part of this district ever bore the name. Not only the Kjalarnes Saga, but the *Islendinga Bok* and the *Landnama*, the most trustworthy sources for the history of Iceland, tell of the Kjalarnes Thing; but it is true the accounts do not quite agree. According to the *Islendingabok* and *Landnama*, Thorstein, the son of Ingolf, established the Thing at Kjalarnes, and associated with him are put Helgi Bjola, who lived at Hof, and Orlygr Gamli, who lived at Esjuberg. Although it says also that Thorstein and his father Ingolf, and his son, Thorkell Mani, lived at Reykjavik, and the other two chiefs in the circle of Kjalarnes, there is no room left for the unquestionable assertion that the court was established at Kjalarnes. The Kjalarnes Saga, on the other hand, makes the establishment to be by Thorgrim Godi, and differs so far from the first description that it may be a later remembrance of the circumstance, which might become necessary when the Reykjavik people transferred the authority to the Thing Valla; but even this Saga places the court at Kjalarnes, and when it is added, “*Sudr vedisjoinn*,” it is meant that it is south of the temple at Hof, in the direction of the sea. Not a trace is to be found in old sources of the Kjalarnes court having been held elsewhere than at this place, and the name would be unintelligible if this were not the case.

“Till lately no one has doubted this, since the very well-informed Lögmandr Eggert Olafsson, in the journey of himself and Bjarni Pálsson, p. 111, speaks of the Thingstead at Hof in Kjalarnes as an established fact (1752-57, Resp. 1772). It first occurred to the known poet, Jonas Hallgrímsson, who worked on a description of Iceland never published, and took the idea that the Kjalarnes Thing might have been at Ellidavatn, because he there saw so many booth remains, and he was perhaps inclined to this by the belief that the place must be sought nearer to Reykjavik. This, if I am not mistaken, was told me in Iceland by the

Conferenz Rath Bjarni Thorsteinson ; so also we are told by Brynjulfson in his memoir (sufficiently uncritical), um godord fornöld buaaskipun a Thingvöllum Ny Felagsrit, xiii. § 38. On this mere suspicion of a late time stands all the evidence of a Thingstead being at Ellida Vatn. The reputed remains of this Thingstead are, in my opinion, only those of stables and houses which were kept here by the Baron Hastfer in 1758, at his model sheep farm (Erz. Lohnse Iaardatal a Islandi, seite xciv. anm. 2, dofter.) True, one can no more see with certainty the remains at Kjalarnes, which, however, would sink rapidly in marshy ground, or easily be washed away if near the sea.

“This is my opinion, drawn from old sources, so far as I know them, and also by actually seeing the places and making inquiries there. That under such circumstances I think it hopeless to look for a temple or a Dom-ring at Ellida Vatn is easily understood.

“P.S.—I may remark that the name Kjalarnesthing on the map is founded only on the conjecture of Ionas Hallgrimson.”

Finding that Hallgrimsson had written on the subject, and that his work was only in MS., I asked Mr Hjaltalin for advice, and he wrote to Denmark, receiving a copy of the part alluded to from the President of the Althing. This he also kindly translated from the Danish :—

*From the Autograph Diary of Ionas Hallgrimsson, 1841. Communicated by H. Ion Sigurdsson, President of the Althing and the Icelandic Literary Society at Copenhagen. Translated by Mr Ion A. Hjaltalin, Advocates' Library.*

“Last winter, when I began in earnest to inquire after the place where the old Kjalarnesthing had been, there was no one who could give me information about it. People said, indeed, that there were remains of a Thingstead somewhere on the Kjalarnes, to the west of the farm Moar near the sea-shore, but that no ruins of booths were to be seen there. Besides, be it remarked, the place is called Leidvöllr (the Plain of the Leid, or the district meeting after the Thing). This naturally led me to think that the Kjalarnesingar had in their time held the yearly Leidarthing on this spot, but that it was not therefore decided that the district Thing (court or meeting) had ever been there. About the same time I

learned that at Ellida Vatn (an inland lake full of fish, situated above the Seltjarnarnes, on the old boundaries of Kjosarsysla and Gullbringu Sysla, and in the centre of the district Kjalarnesthing) there were to be found many and important ruins on a ness going into the above-mentioned lake, half-way between the farms Vatnsende and Vatn. After previous inquiry, I went from Reykjavik to this place in the evening of the 20th of June, as I intended next day to do some digging, hoping by such means to attain some result with respect to the original purpose of the ruins.

“Next morning, the 21st June, I began the work, assisted by four hired labourers, my attendant, and a couple of friends—eight in all.

“The owner of the ground, Ion Ionsson, of Vatn, was present himself and gave me permission to dig where and how I liked, limited only by the reasonable condition that he himself should be at liberty to dispose of what might be found of antiquities. There was therefore nothing to hinder the success of the work according to the small power at my disposal.

“The first ruin dug up was apparently an old booth, and indeed one of the largest that I remember to have seen at any Thingstead in Iceland. Its dimensions were as follows:—

Length,	. . . . .	32 feet.
Breadth (inside)	. . . . .	14 „ at lower end.
Do. do.	. . . . .	13 „ at upper end.
Thickness of Wall,	. . . . .	6 „

It was built of good, partly selected, but rough stones. The entrance at the lower end on the middle of the cross wall was about three feet. From the quantity of stones fallen down, the height of the wall may be concluded to have been about three ells, or six feet. The inside area of this ruin is therefore somewhat about 100 square ells. It is at least the broadest booth that is to be found at any of the old Thingsteads of Iceland. I say booth, for so it is without any doubt. The digging has shown to demonstration that it has not been any building intended for animals. I took with me specimens of the hard trodden-down crust of the floor to prove this assertion.

“Then the work was begun immediately on the north-west side of the ruins, on an elevated spot (*póll*), where there was a heap of stones of such a shape as to induce me to believe that it was the work of man. By

joint efforts large stones were removed, but this toilsome labour led to no results.

“From this we removed to the most remarkable spot on the Thingnes—a circle of stones—the Domring (or court ring). The circle must have been nearly correct, as its ruins are still round, and the diameters from north to south and from east to west are equal, namely, 43 feet. At the bottom, the wall has been two ells (four feet) broad, and, to judge from the quantity of stones fallen down, of about the same height; or, in other words, it would have reached a man of middle stature to the breast. This was also the proper height, in order that the wall without being easily jumped over, should not obstruct the public (from seeing). We can fancy them standing round the circle, leaning with their arms round the sacred hedge within which laws were read (aloud), public information promulgated, and judgment pronounced in many cases in which all present took a lively interest. It may be remarked that this Domring is contiguous to two booths, so that the above-mentioned ruin which we dug up forms a part of the north side of the ring, whilst the side walls of three united ruins enclose it on the south-east side. In the centre of the court ring there is a heap of stones, which cannot have come from the surrounding walls: its purpose is uncertain, and will remain so until a complete and careful digging can be made. By the attempts already made about one-third of an inner stone circle have appeared, which seems to indicate that the circle has been complete in olden times, and was then probably the seat of the judge.

“After this, at the request of the landowner, the upper ruin, a little above those already described, was dug out. We were not successful in finding antiquities. The only thing found was a small sharp-edged basaltic stone, which certainly does not belong to the basaltic masses of the neighbourhood.

“Besides the work mentioned, some other ruins were hastily examined, in order if possible to discover a fire-place, but without success. A careful digging up of the ground next the larger booth (Butharhladid, booth-yard) did not lead to the wished-for results. It was thought probable that some of the sweepings of the booth might have contained some article about which its former inhabitants were indifferent, whilst I, under the present circumstances, would have received it with eagerness as a

proof of the correctness of my subjective conviction. One thing, however, has been completely and abundantly disproved by this work, viz., the possible use of these ruins for stables, or at any rate for night quarters for sheep or cattle; for it is well known throughout Iceland that no such house does exist without a dunghill ("havgur") immediately before the door or the entrance; but no vestiges of such were to be discovered.

"Altogether the ruins are about twenty, and the above-mentioned circles besides. What could their purpose have been? Their number, shape, the quality of the floor, &c., all indicate that they must have been the abode of many men. The situation of the place, the name Thingnes, the stone circle, &c., seem further to indicate that in its time it has been a Thingstead. On the other hand, it will be difficult to show any other or reasonable purpose which these ruins served. But if it has been a Thingstead, it must have been an important one, and probably no less than a considerable district Thing; it will not be possible in the whole of Iceland to show such ruins where the district Things were held formerly, Thingey in Skjalfandaflyot alone excepted. Now, there was not in the whole district any Thing except Kjalarnes Thing. The conclusion is—Kjalarnes Thing has been held sooner or later, perhaps always, in Thingnes, at Ellida Vatn.

"I very much regret that from the want of the most simple instruments I was unable to make a map of this remarkable place. Continued rain throughout the afternoon prevented me from making a preliminary sketch.

"The owner is willing to undertake, or cause to be undertaken, further explorations, if the necessary expenses are paid by some one."

A copy of the same document was correctly written out and partly rewritten by the author himself. Here it is in its second form:—

*"Thingnes in Ellida Vatn (Monday, 21st June 1841), where the old Kjalarnes Thing is supposed to have been.*

"After a previous inquiry, by which I became subjectively convinced of the correctness of my supposition, I have now arrived at the spot with my attendant engaged for the summer, student Gunnar Hallgrímsson, and

four labourers, in order to try by digging whether I should succeed in gaining any result, either finding antiquities, or, by clearing out the ruins, forming an idea of their form and shape, obtain a knowledge of their former purpose. I myself will make use of the day partly in describing the supposed Thingstead, to which great historical interest is attached, as it is the oldest one in the country.

“The work is in full progress, and the landowner, Mr Ion Ionsson of Vatn, is present, and has given an unlimited permission to dig where and how I please, on condition—a matter of course—that he shall be at liberty to dispose of what may be found of antiquities; there is therefore nothing to hinder the work progressing well in proportion to the small means at my disposal.

“One ruin has already been dug up; from that it appears to demonstration that it has not at any time been a sheep-pen, or in any way a building intended for animals. I took with me specimens of the trodden-down floor, which are to prove my assertion. What, then, could these eighteen or twenty enclosures<sup>1</sup> have been intended for? standing in an outfield, where it can be proved there never was a farm; further, on a ness going out into a lake full of fish, and this ness called even to-day Thingness, and been called so from time immemorial. No one who has seen the older Thingsteads of Iceland will doubt that these are booths—dwelling-places for those who frequented the Things, over which they used to stretch a tent or a roof of wadmél. But why so many, and so large? It must have been a district Thing, and then undeniably Kjalarnes Thing, as no other district Thing ever was held in the whole of this district.”

(Here follow the measures exactly as in the former description.)

“We now began to work on the north-west side of the ruins, on an elevated spot, where there was a heap of stones, which seemed likely to be a cairn. A row of stones continued about seventy feet, and vestiges of a side wall led us to believe that the whole was the work of men. By joint efforts large stones were removed, but this toilsome labour led to no result. Such places require great labour. With some hesitation, I concur in the opinion of Director Ion and Hr. Hakonson that this deceptive heap of stones was possibly produced by the frost from one year to

<sup>1</sup> Enclosure—Danish Tomt, Icelandic Topt, a building without a roof.

another. The stone is dolerite (the newer lava found in ravines). From want of time and labour, this work could not be continued. As I do not venture to expend any of my natural history fund for an antiquarian research, I must trust to the assistance of some friends"—and so on. (The rest is nearly word for word as before, and need not be repeated.)

As to a farm, we learn in Iohnsen's "Iardatal," lib. xcvi. 214—Ellida Vatn :—"Here a sheep farm (Schæferi) was established in 1758. It was formerly a king's farm, from the monastery of Vithey."

I shall not attempt to dispute, but I think that I saw the place in a condition more favourable than had been seen by any of the gentlemen mentioned. A good deal of material must have been removed, since I saw what they did not. The place was decidedly to all appearance not solely for animals, although animals may have been kept at the booths. They could not have required the making of the ring. It is a remarkable spot. It is clear also that the idea of its being a Thingstead is not new, from its name and the common reports, which led Hallgrímsson to it, exactly as they did me.

It has been remarked that Kjalarnes is exactly Callernish—the same word ; but it is curious that there should be a cross at both,—one natural, however, and the other artificial. The name of that in Lewis is evidently Norse ; I suppose "the cold promontory." The cross may be an accidental circumstance, but it shows at least that when the Norse came to Lewis they did not use any word to designate the stones there standing, taking the natural rather than the artificial appearances as marks.

It opens another question regarding sacred buildings, and there is in my opinion much to learn. I cannot pretend to teach, but accident has thrown this and some other things in my way, and I do not think it right to let the matter pass without calling the attention of abler Scandinavian investigators than I can pretend to be. The prevalence of curvilinear lines in sacred buildings in the East is mentioned by Fergusson in his "Tree and Serpent Worship," p. 81, and every one can find many examples for himself. If this be so, the cause will probably be found in the fact of its being the earliest shape of buildings, and for sacred purposes we keep the ancient as approaching the sacred by the reverend character given by age. My belief is, that the round form may therefore

have been used for all purposes in early times, and that it would probably be kept longer for sacred purposes. This I would conclude by reasoning chiefly, but observation does not appear against it.

However, on the chief point of this paper tradition speaks, but history is silent, and my observations seem to favour the first. Who will decide?

After returning from Iceland, it appeared desirable to have a more complete plan, and I requested Mr Sigurdr Gudmundsson, of Reykjavik, to prepare one. He has done so, and sends the following letter with it:—

“I hereby send you an accurate plan of Thingnes, which is very near to the farm of Ellida Vatn. The plan is all made trigometrically. At first I thought the scale would be too small” (the lithograph makes it still smaller), “but it could not be larger, as the ground is so extensive; otherwise I think it sufficiently exact, as one can see on it every whole and even a half-fathom. It is impossible to measure the Buthir more exactly than from the middle of one wall to the middle of the other; this would at most make a difference of one fathom to a fathom and a half if the foundations of the booths were dug up. The paper in the plan is not so good as I would wish it, because this is the draft itself made on the spot, &c. The drafts are always the most exact, although they are not so fine.

“To compensate for the small scale, I have made another plan of the Domhringur and of three Buthir: the walls of the Domhringur are mostly a fathom in breadth, made of small stones, three to four in the breadth of the wall, and sometimes five. Some of these stones are scarcely to be seen, being covered with (earth or) grass. I think it is not possible to get a more accurate measurement of the Domhringur unless it is all dug up.

“I have measured the distance of all the larger stones on the spot, and made a red line between those which I thought most remarkable. You can, if you like, take the line away. (See p. 156.) It would be better if I sent you the whole plan of the territory of Ellida Vatn.

“The following passage will contain all the historical information belonging to this oldest Thing-place of Iceland, from the old sagas:—

“I shall make a few remarks about this place, which is, historically speaking, covered with a veil of obscurity; but for all that it is probable that this is the oldest Thing-place (place of assembly) in the country. That it is old is proved both by the Domring and the number of booths.

There is an obvious confounding of the Thingplace in Landnamabok, namely, Kjalarnesthing and Krossnesthing. (See p. 38.) ‘Peirra sòn (5 Ingólfs Arnassonar og Hallœigar) var Thorsteinn er thing let setja a Kjalarnesi (variant Krossnesi) adr althing var sett.’ Another recension of Landnama says Thorsteinn Ingólfsson was the first who, before the Althing was established, caused a Thing to be set in Kjalarnes, according to the counsels of Helgi Biola and Erygr of Esjuberg, and other wise men; wherefore (?) the hallowing of Althing is attached to that Godord (p. 335.)

“It is very improbable that a son of the first Landnamsman should go so far as to institute a Thing in the district (Godord) of another chief, the consequence of which was that he himself could scarcely hallow (*i.e.*, solemnly open) it, to do which was considered a great honour; secondly, it is scarcely said that the hallowing belonged to the Godord here mentioned, viz., the Kjalnesinga or the Bryndolagodord, for it is notorious that this honour belonged to the successors of Ingolf on Seltjarnarnes. Thormodur Thorkelsson Mani was the principal Godi in the year 1000, and Magnus the Good, son of Gudmundr Griss, was chief Godi in the thirteenth century, and resided in Seltjarnarnes. Here is therefore evidently some discrepancy, and likewise, too, in Kjalnesinga saga and Hardar saga. It is worth noticing that the promontory is very like a cross, and may have been named from that; it is probable also that it is the very thing mentioned in Gretti’s saga, p. 15 (ch. x.).

“But whether this is the case or not, I consider this the oldest Thing-place, and the next in time to be that at Kjalarnes, on Kollafjord. It would be desirable to have the small sketch printed, but if it is already done, it is necessary to state where it is. It is under Kleifar, beneath Mogitza, at Kollafjordur. From the point where the remains are to be seen, a considerable part has been taken away in the memory of the living — Yours faithfully,

“SIGURDR GUDMUNDSSON.”

These remarks by Mr Gudmundsson must be revised by the light of the observations of Professor Maurer.

I am not interested in knowing which is oldest, but only in knowing that such a circle was important and enclosed, and that there were several places around which seem to have been stone circles, and,

besides, straight lines also of open stone, parts being apparent for a short way. One of these apparently elaborate circles, with parts of straight lines, is on a rising ground suited for circles, most unsuited, and indeed impossible, for cattle booths in such a climate, where protection from wind must be sought.

I shall conclude with the remarks made by Mr Ion A. Hjaltalin, himself an Icelfander and a scholar:—

“To my mind the strongest proof of there having been a Thing at Ellidavatn lies in the name Thingnes. We have in Iceland a great many local names composed of ‘thing,’ *e.g.*, Thing-eyrar, Thing-vellir, Thing-skali, &c., and we know that in all such places Things were held at one time or another. If a Thing had never been held at the Thingnes in question, it would be the only exception.

“The evidence of the Sagas against Thingnes as a Thingstead does not appear to me in any way conclusive; and if was a Thingstead at all it was that of Kjalarnes Thing.

“In order to make the following remarks clearer, it is perhaps not unnecessary to observe that a *Thing* means in Icelandic—(1.) An assembly, gathering, meeting; (2.) A district or county over which the authority or jurisdiction of such an assembly extends. Thus Kjalarnes Thing may be—(a), An assembly, meeting at Kjalarnes; (b), An assembly for the county of Kjalarnes, meeting anywhere within the boundaries of the district or county over which the jurisdiction of this assembly extended; (c), The county of Kjalarnes. The Kjalarnes Thing in the last sense extended much further than the peninsula of Kjalarnes.

“The Icelandic Sagas which mention Kjalarnes Thing are—the *Islendinga-bók*, the *Landnáma-bók*, and the *Kjalnesinga Saga*. Even in these it is mentioned only in a very brief manner. Their statements do not at all disprove a supposition which to me seems a probable one, *viz.*, that the Kjalarnes Thing might actually have been at Ellidavatn, and afterwards removed to Kjalarnes.

“The *Islendinga-bók* was not written till late in the eleventh century, or early in the twelfth. If we suppose the Thingstead was removed to Kjalarnes shortly after the establishment of the Althing (928), we can easily imagine the author talking of the locality of the Thing as it was in his days, without mentioning its former removal, especially when we

remember that the copy of the *Islendinga-bók* handed down to us is, according to several trustworthy authorities, only a condensed epitome of a larger work. Besides, the author may have been misled by the name *Kjalarnes Thing* (the county of *Kjalarnes*), and taken it for granted that the Thingstead must have been at *Kjalarnes*, because the county was so called, as, for instance, the county of *Thórsnes* was called *Thórsnes Thing*, because the Thingstead was at *Thórsnes*. This may also account for the fact that Icelandic scholars, with the exception of *Jónas Hallgrímsson*, have always taken it for granted that the Thingstead was at *Kjalarnes*, and never troubled themselves about the place at *Ellidavatn*.

“The *Landnáma-bók* is of much later date, and its statement about *Kjalarnes Thing* is a mere repetition of *Islendinga-bók*.

“*Kjalnesinga Saga* is the latest of all; and we cannot wonder if its author was not acquainted with the Thingstead at *Ellidavatn*, even although it had been there originally.”

I trust the description of the place and the collection of these authorities will not be found uninteresting.

