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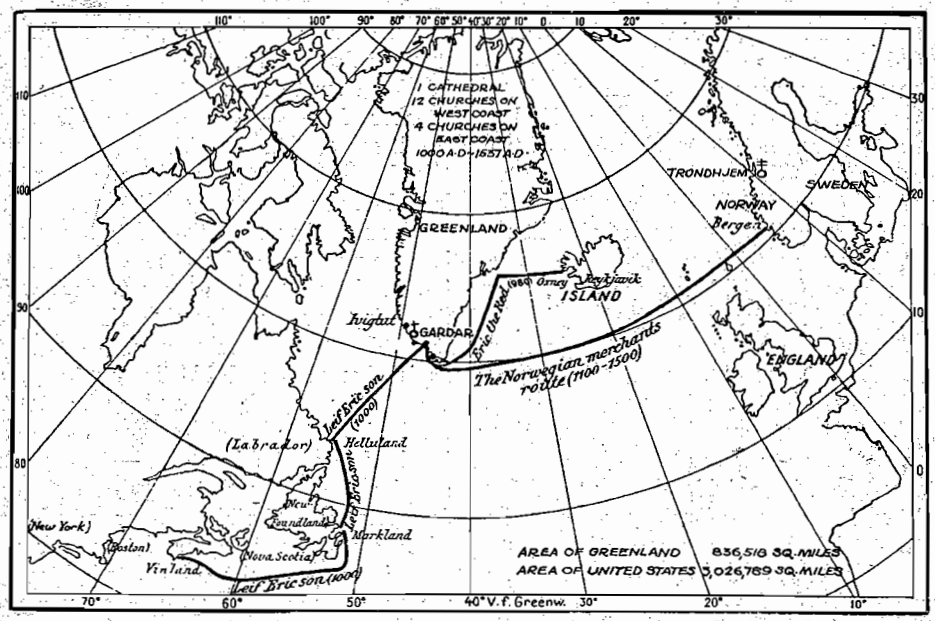
A SAGA OF GREENLAND

The Ancestor of An Iceland Saint

By SIGRID UNDSET *

THE saga of Thorgils, stepson of Scarleg, is also known as Flóamanna saga — the saga of the men of Flói, the coastal plain in the south of Iceland, east of Reykjanes and west of Ingolfshöfdi. It is one of the less known sagas. To the best of my knowledge it has not even been translated into modern Norwegian, and certainly not into English. The historians of the nineteenth century considered it unreliable, and also an inferior literary work, in spite of the vivid pictures it gives of many aspects of life in Iceland, and especially the story it tells of the hardships encountered by some of the first travelers to Greenland. The reason why I have chosen to retell it here in St. Ansgar's BULLETIN, is because we decided this winter to delve into the history of Greenland in the Middle Ages.



The contact between Scandinavia and Greenland via Iceland which began in 983 has existed about one century longer than the connection between Europe and the mainland of America.

Now, the reason why the Flóamanna saga was discredited by the elder school of Norrön philologists was, mainly, that they were committed to a certain view of the whole body of saga literature. It was their belief that the sagas had on the whole received the form in which they came to be written down, by oral tradition,—that the authors, many of which are anonymous, did not do much than pen on parchment the stories as they had been told to them. And, being men of the nineteenth century, they were apt to disbelieve anything bordering on the supernatural. They believed the sagas embodied tradition, and the more realistically the story was told, the truer and purer the tradition must record real happenings. Since, in their opinion, spooks and witchcraft, encounters with trolls and fairies or miracles of the Saints do not happen, sagas that relate such things must represent a garbled tradition, — and the blame for the garbling was frequently laid to some clerical scribe. The old historians were rarely artistically minded themselves,—especially Finnur Jónsson, the grand old man of Icelandic literature, a scholar whose learning and devotion cannot be exaggerated, and to whom everybody who has worked on old Norrön literature is in boundless debt, was strangely dry and conventional when it came to appreciating the artistic qualities of the Icelandic and Old Norwegian literature on which he was the supreme authority.

When a later generation of philologists and historians came to take a somewhat different view of the question, it was partly because they had a keener sense of the literary qualities of the sagas. Professor Sigurdur Nordal is himself an author of poems and novels and Professor Magnus Olsen has much of the poet in him—and they today are the leading scholars in the field. They knew enough about art to understand a saga which tells with consummate artistry a tragic fate, where great and small events, casual conversations, seemingly in-

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evitable happenings, lead up to a logical end, could not just be tradition or a record of things as they happened—life is not as perfectly logical as all that—and oral tradition has a tendency to simplify, not to elaborate, a story. So now most scholars agree that sagas containing a lot of crude superstitions and stories of supernatural intervention in men's lives are probably closer to the oral tradition, from which the sagas drew their subject matter. After all, people believed in ghosts and familiars and trolls and witchcraft, and travelers lost in the desert or on lonely shores would meet many incidents that they would naturally explain in the current beliefs of the times. So it is quite probable that some of the more weird happenings in the saga of Thorgils Örrabeinsstjup just belong to the eldest layers of oral tradition. As to the element of Christian piety that Finnur Jónsson in his edition discards somewhat scornfully as branding the saga with the marks of a monkish or priestly scribe. I think probably it gives a picture of an Icelandic convert in the early days, when paganism and Christianity were cross-currents not only in the nation but in every individual soul. Thorgils' loyalty towards the Christ he had promised allegiance to against the gods of his fathers, and his inability to resign himself to a crushing grief as the will of God, may be a true picture of the mind of many Christian Icelanders and Norwegians of those times. I should not think it is so alien to any of us today either.

The family he belonged to was descended from an Earl in Sogn on the west coast of Norway. When Thorgils was two years old his father returned to claim the family estates in the old country but was lost at sea, and his widow married the man called Scarleg. One of the unique features of saga literature (as contrasted with the rest of medieval European literature) is the genuine interest in children as children which they display. There is much talk about children in the medieval romances,—of boys being born to avenge their fathers, of girls predestined to a glorious or tragic fate. But the saga writers, who were always more interested in actual life than in romance, in the way people behaved more than in the way ideal heroes and heroines were expected to act and react, were keen observers also of the children's way of talking and thinking. Several hundred years before any other people tried to picture a real live child, the sagas teemed with charming, funny and pathetic sketches of naughty, good, brave, or bewildered youngsters.

And so Flóamanna, too, introduces its hero as a small boy of seven years. His stepfather had taken Thorgils with him to the local Thing assembly. There was a crowd of other boys, and Thorgils wanted to join in their play. But the big boys told him no, only boys who had already killed an animal might join their games. They meant, of course, boys who had been initiated in the noble art of hunting, but Thorgils went out the next morning and speared his stepfather's old saddle horse. Scarleg had loved the animal and when the child confessed why he had killed him, because he wanted so much to be permitted to play with the other boys, his stepfather got so annoyed that he sent Thorgils away from home and he was brought up by foster-parents.

When he was fifteen years old he went to Norway to try and retrieve the property his father had meant to claim. The king, one of the sons of Eirik Bloodaxe, befriended him—Thorgils was handsome, well mannered, gallant—a very promising youth. But the family estates were in the possession of the widowed Queen Gunhild, so the King told him it would be hopeless to try to get them back,—as Gunhild never let go her hold on anything. So Thorgils sailed with some Vikings, met adventures in the Baltic and on the east coasts of Scandinavia, and among other things, he laid a very vicious ghost of an old woman on a farm somewhere in Viken. When he returned to the west of Norway the sons of Bloodaxe had been ousted and Haakon Ladejarl ruled Norway as a King in everything but the name. He, too, received Thorgils very well and, it was whilst he stayed with the Earl Haakon, he met Eirik the Red and became his friend,—a friendship that was to become so fateful to Thorgils later on.

As to the estates in Sogn, however, Haakon Jarl told him he would give them back to Thorgils if Thorgils would sail to the Sudröyar, the Hebrides you know, and collect the tributes the rulers of the islands owed the Lord of Norway. Now all the attempts of the Norwegian Kings to maintain their sovereignty over the western isles led to a lot of trouble and never to much else. But Thorgils accepted the job and set out in the company of his best friend, Thorstein the White.

They suffered shipwreck on the north coast of Scotland, at Caithness, and the Earl Olav offered them hospitality until they could get another ship. Whilst Thorgils stayed at the Earl's court, a viking called Svart Jarnhaus arrived and demanded that Gudrun, the Earl's young and beautiful sister, be handed over to him. Now this is a common incident in a number of sagas,—when the Icelandic scribe was at a loss how to fill some pages with his hero's adventures abroad in countries he did know very well, he let him fight an invincible and brutal viking, whose specialty was to demand that maidens and young wives be delivered to him and his wicked will, unless the woman could find some champion willing to meet him in mortal combat. Svart means black and was used as a given name, but Jarnhaus, Ironskull, is a troll name, so it is evident that this was a horrible brute. Thorgils volunteered as Gudrun's champion and killed Svart and, afterwards, he won Gudrun for his wife. Then he sailed to the Hebrides and fulfilled his mission. The return voyage took some time and involved several adventures,—among other things he again saved a damsel in distress, this time a peasant's daughter, from another wild viking. Later on as he had a third adventure of the same nature, he seems to have specialized in the saving of maidens,—one of the features in his saga which called forth the skepticism of the common-sense Finnur Jónsson.

However, at last he landed in Norway with his wife and his friend Thorstein, and so Earl Haakon gave him back his ancestral manor in Sogn and they settled there and lived happily for some years. Gudrun bore her husband a son who was called Thorleif. One day Thorgils told his friend Thorstein the White that he realized he was in love with Gudrun but he had also seen that he had behaved entirely honorably about it. Therefore Thorgils had decided to return to Iceland so that Thorstein and Gudrun could marry,—only he asked his friend to manage his Norwegian property to the advantage of his young son, whom he would leave with his mother. Now among the heathen Norsemen this kind of renunciation was considered a very noble thing.

So Thorgils returned to Tradarholt, his home in the Flói, after all those years abroad not much richer except in renown. He married a second time a young girl called Thorey. As was usual in Iceland, Thorey had been brought up in the home of foster parents who were her inferiors socially, and, for the rest of her life she or her husband were in honor bound to

"Pray for Scandinavia"

protect them and their family. That was why people who were not rich or powerful in their own right always were eager to receive the children of chieftains as fosterlings. The Republic of Iceland had developed an elaborate system of laws, a judiciary body, but no organs for enforcing the law.—no police force, if you will. When the Thing had given judgment in the favor of a man, it was his duty to see to it that the sentence was enforced. The men of the great families did it with the help of their relatives, the little men with the help of the chief whose "Thingmen" they were. So when the foster brothers of Thorey started a quarrel with one of Ásgrim Ellidagrimsson's "Thingmen," Thorgils and Ásgrim had to take up the causes of their respective dependents and, for a long time, Thorgils was kept busy with this feud.

About this time Christianity was first preached in Iceland, and among the first to be baptized were Thorgils with his wife and family. A short time afterwards he received a message from his old friend, Eirik the Red, who had now settled in Greenland and was eager to get renowned Icelanders to come out and join him in his colony. He wanted Thorgils to go to Greenland and Thorgils decided to embark on this new venture.

But strange things started happening on Tradarholt. Night after night the most valuable animals of Thorgils' livestock were killed; in the morning they were found dead, their necks mysteriously wrung. Then Thorgils dreamed one night that a big, burly man appeared and said he was Thor, the god his family had worshiped for generations and whom Thorgils had now forsaken. Thor told him it was he who had killed his cattle and worse things would happen to Thorgils unless he returned to his old allegiance. Thorgils said it was true he had been a worshiper of Thor but now he had learned that Thor was a fiend, and he had pledged his faith to the true God Who had created heaven and earth. Thorgils kept watchers in his barn and *baer* (farm-yard and house) at night and the killing of cattle ceased. But one night Thor returned, took Thorgils with him out on a promontory and made him look to the ocean where waves like mountains were breaking over the forelands. This, and worse, said Thor, was what Thorgils might expect to meet on his planned voyage unless he would be reconciled to Thor. When Thorgils refused Thor beat him and mauled him something terrible, but Thorgils remained firm: "I have sworn allegiance to Him Who redeemed me with His Precious Blood, and I will never break faith with Him." Then Thor gave up.

Thorgils was to sail for Greenland in the company of a neighbor, Jostein, with their families and retainers. Just when he was about to leave Tradarholt his eldest son Thorleif came out from Norway; he was now a young man. Thorgils' half-brother Haering, son of Scarleg, took over Tradarholt, and Thorgils sailed to one of the fjords on the east coast of Iceland, from where he and Jostein had agreed to start their voyage to Greenland. But whilst they were in the fjord, waiting for a favorable wind, Thorgils' small daughter of eight, Thorny, was taken seriously ill, and it was evident she was not fit to travel. Thorgils decided to leave this child in Iceland: "Maybe this maiden is fated to live her life in this country."

They set sail, and soon Thor proved as good as his word. They met terrible storms, first from the south and then from the north, and drifted out of their course time and again. Thor again appeared and upbraided Thorgils: even if he had deserted him, he ought not to withhold the property of Thor's that he had on board his ship. The angry god insisted that the biggest bull of Thorgils' really belonged to him. Thorgils pondered and remembered he had consecrated that bull to Thor years ago, when he was a calf. He was determined never more to sacrifice to the false gods, but up to now he had never appropriated a thing that was not his with full right. So, in the end, he decided to kill the bull and throw him into the sea.—and so let him and Thor be quit forever after. The wife of Jostein, who heard of his dilemma, proposed to buy the bull and have it transferred to their part of the goods, but Thorgils refused—that did not seem an honest way out of his difficulty.

The bull went overboard but Thor was not yet satisfied. The ship drifted towards the north, far beyond the northernmost of Eirik's settlements, and, in the end, it was wrecked on the shores of a small bay under overhanging steep mountains and glaciers. They lost the ship and all of their livestock, but they saved the ships' boat and some of their goods and they succeeded in making the shore. This happened one week before "winter night"—October 15th—and eight days afterwards, whilst the shipwrecked men were building a "skáli"—(a long house)—Thorey gave birth to a boy. He was baptized Thorfinn.

The long house was finished, with a sort of partition, so that the two households of Thorgils and Jostein lived each in one end. So they settled down to meet the winter. The men rowed out every day to fish and hunt, but they suffered great hardship, and Thorey never got well after the childbirth—she remained weak and listless and spent much of the time in her bed. Jostein and his crew kept late hours in their end of the house; they were quarrelsome and noisy and never heeded Thorgils when he asked them ever so often to be quiet, so that his sick wife could at least get sufficient sleep.

It was a sad Christmas, and with the beginning of the new year a strange sickness appeared in Jostein's end of the house. His wife was first to die, then his family, and his men, and in the end Jostein himself died.—and afterwards they haunted the place and made life still more burdensome to Thorgils and his people. The illness however did not attack them. But one evening Thorey told her husband she had had such a beautiful dream; she dreamed she was in a fair green land with wide meadows, and bright, radiant men and women met her and were so kind to her. Maybe it meant, she said, that they were soon to get away from here and go to a friendlier place. "I believe," Thorgils said sadly, "it may mean that you will leave us and go to the beautiful realm where you will reap the reward for your good and pure life and be kindly received by the holy friends of Christ."

May came, and still there were no signs that the packed ice in their fjord was breaking up. Thorey asked her husband to go up to the peak of the glacier to observe if there were open waters to be seen outside, so they might hope to get away from this place before long. But when Thorgils was ready to start one morning, his son Thorleif and Koll, the foster brother of Thorey, who had caused all the trouble with Ásgrim, wanted to go too. Thorey was afraid to be left alone in the house—she did not trust the thralls—but Thorgils said she would be taken care of by their overseer, Thorarin, a man whom Thorgils had always been very good to and trusted implicitly.

The men went up on the glacier, but nowhere could they see a glimpse of open sea. They wandered around on the mountains for a good while and did not return home until late in the evening.

Inside, the house was dark and cold and silent, except for the whimpering of the baby. Thorgils struck a light, and they saw that the room was deserted, their chests with the goods they had saved from the shipwreck dragged out on the floor and broken open, and in her bed lay Thorey cold and rigid, on her breast the babe who tried to suck his dead mother. She had been stabbed with a narrow knife—there was only a little blood on the bedclothes. Thorleif and Koll went out and saw that their boat was gone.

Thorgils said he would sit up during the night to watch over the child,—of course they were sure it must die, for there was nothing they could do to keep it alive. It cried and cried, and towards morning Thorgils got up and took his knife: "I cannot listen to this any longer that boy wailing himself to death. I'll try first if I cannot nurse him on my own blood." He cut into his nipples and, says the saga, first blood gushed out, and then a watery fluid, and in the end milk.

I have talked this over with doctors and they tell me that the story need not be absolutely untrue. It does happen, very rarely of course, that the undeveloped lactal glands of a man may become active and secrete milk. So Thorgils the warrior, already a man past his middle age, became both mother and father to his infant son.

They could not get away from their dreary fjord the whole summer, and they had to spend a second winter in the long house. By the next summer they had made a boat of driftwood and hides and, when the icefloe at last broke up, they started on their voyage toward the south and human habitations, coasting slowly along the bleak and mountainous shores. For more than a year and a half they had not seen a human face except their own, when one morning from their camp they spied two skinclad women down by the waterside, skinning and cutting up a large seal. No Eskimo tribes lived in Greenland at that time, but the women may have been stragglers from the far north. The men however believed them to be troll women. They fled when the men approached, leaving their burdens of meat and hide behind.

One day they camped on a small island off the coast, and the young men found an egg of a "svartbák,"—the great seagull. They cooked it for the little one. The boy ate half of it and put it away. "Why don't you eat?" asked the men, "don't you like it?" "You always save your food," said little Thorfinn. "I want to do as you do."

Winter came early, and still they were a long way from the northernmost settlement. One night a sudden storm threw them on to a strip of shore under steep and wild mountains, and whilst they tried to get a foothold, they lost their boat. They succeeded in making a kind of shelter for themselves, but all of a sudden Thorgils said: "Now I do not see any hope for us—the best thing would be if you, Thorleif, take Thorfinn outside and kill him."

Thorleif and Koll took the baby and went out. "I cannot do it," said Thorleif, "he is my brother." Koll said: "I owe Thorgils a great debt of gratitude. It seems to me, if we disobey him this time and hide the child until tomorrow, I should have repaid some of it." Next morning they found the boat, and it could be fixed. Thorleif and Koll went out and brought back the little boy, handed him to his father. Thorgils thanked them fervently—and so they jogged on their perilous voyage.

At one time a storm had driven them so far out in the ocean they were dying of thirst. A big, evil-looking bird circled around the boat, alighting from time to time on the stern, and each time it nearly sank the boat. The men, half crazy with thirst, wanted to mix their own water and seawater in the scoop they used for bailing, and drink it. Thorgils said he would neither permit nor forbid them. But, when they had prepared the weird drink, Thorgils called out: "Hand me the scoop." He signed himself with the cross and spoke to the bird: "Thou fiend from hell, do you think you could make Christian men do this vile thing and drink their own uncleanliness? In the name of God, be gone." The bird shrieked and ducked into the sea, and blood colored the waves. The men emptied the scoop—and a moment later they were hit by a rainsquall and were saved.

One day Thorgils spied something white on a ness, and recognized it as the tent that had belonged to his dead wife. They landed and found Thorarin, the overseer. He insisted the thralls had murdered Thorey, and afterwards they had forced him to come with them, but at last he had succeeded in getting away from them. Thorgils and his men took council, and decided Thorarin deserved to die, and so they killed him.

At long last they came to a fjord where they saw a small and lonely farm near the shore. An outlawed man from the settlements to the south had found refuge here with his family. His name was Rolf. Thorgils and his men were received with the utmost kindness, and the boy Thorfinn was given over to the women. But he did not like that—they were different from his father, he said. So they decided he ought to be weaned now,—they were out of the desert parts of the land and would always be able to find some food for the child. But Thorfinn disliked cow's milk too, though eventually he had to get used to it.

Thorgils promised Rolf when he came to Eirik the Red he would use his whole influence to get Rolf reconciled so he could return to civilization. Whilst Thorgils was with Rolf one day a great and good ship appeared in the fjord. On it was Thorstein the White who was seeking his friend and his stepson. Gudrun had died, and Thorstein had decided that he would go to Iceland and see them. For a long time he had been sailing around and tried to discover what had happened to them.

So after years of wandering in the wilderness, Thorgils and his followers arrived at Eirik's manor on Brattahlid, and were welcomed as honored and important guests. But, as the rumors of his marvelous adventures in the North and the tale of all the hardships he had braved became known, Eirik did not like it so well,—he naturally wanted to be the first man in Greenland, and now Thorgils seemed to be regarded as the greater chief. Their dependents, too, quarreled all the time about who served the greatest master. One day some of Eirik's men twitted Thorgils; their master had come here as a pauper, and moreover, nobody even knew if he was a man or a woman. Now this was the worst insult to a man, and Thorgils' retainers drew their swords, and nearly came to a killing. That did not improve the relationship between the two chieftains.

Thorstein the White had brought a shipload of goods and had insisted that Thorgils take over half of it, so Thorgils now had merchandise, and Eirik let him store it in one of his own warehouses. One evening Thorgils was there with some customers, and as always the boy, Thorfinn, was where his father was. Thorfinn peeped out in the yard and came running up to his father: "Father mine, there is a fine big dog outside, I have never seen the like." Outside in the moon-

light a big bear rummaged among the houses, but nobody did anything about it. They kept indoors. It is not stated in the Flóamanna, whether these things happened before or after Eirik had been baptized, but as you will remember from the Greenland saga, he was very reluctant to embrace the Faith. And of this bear it was said he was in reality Eirik's "familiar" and Eirik used to bring him sacrifices. So Thorgils just told the boy: "Never mind—and don't you run out." But a little later they heard a child shriek outside. Thorgils rushed out, and there was the bear with Thorfinn under him. Thorgils ran his sword through the heart of the bear. The boy was mauled, but not dangerously. Thorgils became still more renowned because the people were sincerely relieved that he had rid them of this uncanny animal. However there was not much left of the old friendship between Eirik the Red and Thorgils by now.

Then Thorgils achieved—or committed—still one more feat of daring. Some vikings had won a foothold on one of the islands off the fjord and from their stronghold they harried the settlement. There is a strange story about how some prisoners of these vikings heard their two ships, "Stakanhöfdi" and "Vinganaut," talk together in the gray dawn and rejoice because they were soon to get new owners,—gallant and honest men. Next day Thorgils and his friend Thorstein descended on the vikings, killed them and took the ships.

Thorgils and his followers could now bid goodbye to Eirik the Red and set sail towards home. But his tribulations were not yet over. Storms drove them all the way down to Ireland, and when they went on shore the Irish attacked them. Luckily it was discovered that the mother and sister of the Irish chieftain had some time been befriended by Thorgils—he had saved them not from a viking but some other danger. From Ireland he proceeded to Norway, and here he had his last fight with a would-be-violator of young women. Thorgils killed the brute this time too, but got wounded in the knee, so that he was lame ever after. And then, at last, could he set his course towards his native Iceland.

But the vindictiveness of Thor was still not satisfied. For a long time their ship was tossed about by storms from all corners of the sky, the waves climbed as high as mountains. It was impossible to carry a shred of sail,—the men had to bail for their very lives, and Thorgils was at the steering oar, trying to keep some kind of a course. The boy Thorfinn was with his father, clasped firmly between the knees of the man. "Storir sticlpr yfvir nu, Fadir min," the child said. "It is coming over heavily now, Father." Probably he never understood there could be any danger as long as he was with his father. But then came the nine waves, by three and three, and the last was the worst of them all. It carried little Thorfinn out of his father's lap and out into the ocean. Thorgils called out to his men: "Now that such a wave has hit us, it is no good bailing any longer." But the next wave bore the boy back in the ship, and the father cried: "All hands bail as hard as you can."

However the next day the child began to spit blood. The storm abated, but in the evening Thorfinn died. The next morning they sighted Iceland,—they were off the promontory of Ingolfshöfdi. Another day, and they dropped their anchor in Arnarbaelisoss.

Thorleif, his eldest son, and Koll, wanted to take the body of Thorfinn on shore and have it buried in the churchyard. But Thorgils utterly refused to give it up: "Thorfinn and I have been companions too long to be separated now."

Then Thorstein the White, his trusty friend, took a hand. He went on shore and talked with the chief on whose land they had anchored. Thorleif and Koll rushed down to the ship and cried out that their men and the men of Thorstein the White were being killed on shore. The old chieftain responded automatically,—Thorgils sprang from the bunk where he had been nursing the corpse of his child, grasped his arms and rushed up to where his men were staging a sham fight and now fled. Thorgils tried to rally them, and in the meantime Thorleif and Koll carried the body of Thorfinn to the church and the priest interred it.

When Thorgils Örrabeinsstjup saw through the ruse of his eldest son and his friends he did not say much. He lay down in his bunk and for three days and nights he would not touch food or drink; he scarcely slept and did not speak. Only once he said, he did pity all women, because they loved the babes they nursed at their breast more than all else in the world. The words the saga uses—"Thorgils kvadsq varkunnazk konur allar"—means to understand as well as to pity. "Varkunnazk"—that is the word used for the compassion of Christ as well as for the tenderness of Mary. And I think these words that the old saga-writer has put into the mouth of Thorgils Örrabeinsstjup are about the most truly chivalrous ever said about women by a man.

But life had to go on for Thorgils all the same. And one of the merits of this overlooked saga is, in my opinion, the sincerity with which it pictures the changes that come over a man, big-hearted, gallant and just, when a life full of strain and hardships and old age tells on him and hardens his arteries. Thorgils became suspicious, quarrelsome and obstinate. He was now fifty-five years of age,—and people aged earlier in his time than they do now.

To begin with he picked a quarrel with his brother Haering, who had managed his estate whilst he was away. Haering had married Thorny, the daughter that Thorgils had had to leave in Iceland, to a man called Bjarni i Gröf. It was a very suitable match, but it seemed to Thorgils that Haering had given the girl a much larger marriage portion than his manor of Tradarholt could afford. One day he appeared at the home of the newlyweds and demanded that Bjarni return to him the greater part of the girl's dowry. He had his way, and he returned to Tradarholt with almost one hundred head of horse, cattle and other livestock, and packing horses loaded with goods. But Thorgils did not know this daughter of his,—at the tail of the procession rode Thorny, and she told her father she loved her cattle better than her husband, so if he took away the one, he would have to take her back, too. Of course Thorgils could not have such a scandal in the family, he had to give in,—and Thorny returned to her husband heading the train of their retrieved possessions. Thorgils seems not to have borne any grudge,—maybe he was even proud of his girl,—anyhow, the saga says that afterwards the relations between the father-in-law and the young couple became steadily better and in the end they were very friendly.

Bjarni i Gröf had a daughter born a long time before his marriage to Thorny. On account of this girl an enmity sprang up between Bjarni and one of the Thingmen of Ásgrim Ellidagrimsson. Thorgils supported his son-in-law, and so he was back again in the old feud with Ásgrim. Thorgils and Bjarni had the better of it.

Thorgils decided to marry a third time, and he asked for Helga, daughter of Thorodd of Hjalli. Thorodd was eager to become related by marriage to the renowned old warrior, but

Helga did not want a husband who might have been her grandfather. Her brother Skapti Thoroddsson—who afterwards became "lovsigemann" (which may roughly be translated as president of the Icelandic legislature) sided with his sister and tried to help her. But it was of no use. Helga had to marry Thorgils. Some weeks after the wedding Helga went back to Hjalli, for a visit she said, but she did not return to Tradarholt. One day Thorgils appeared at Hjalli, walked into the main room, took his young wife by the hand and led her outside. Skapti tried to protest, but his father said, "No. Thorgils had done nothing but take back his own."

One day Thorgils and Helga sat out in the yard in the sunshine. A rooster was punishing one of his hens cruelly. "Do you see the birds, Helga?" Thorgils asked. "That is the way other husbands, too, might treat a refractory wife." Helga kept silent. The saga says that afterwards she became more friendly with her husband. Maybe because of the children.—they had three sons and one daughter. One night Thorgils dreamed that he was sitting in his own hall and had a leek in his lap.—the flowering allium the old Norsemen loved so much. From the leek sprouted five fair shoots, and on one of them a flower appeared, yellow and bright like sunshine. He deemed it would mean that from five children of his would spring fair and honorable lines, and in one of them he should be the ancestor of a very great and good man. His eldest son Thorleif wanted to return to Norway, so the father reckoned he would not count in this connection, and indeed, Thorleif never saw Iceland again for he and his descendants belonged to Norway.

The last feat of the old man was to chastise some Norwegian merchantmen who had wintered in Iceland and misbehaved. Next year the brother of their leader came out from Norway to avenge the injustice he imagined his brother had suffered at the hands of Thorgils. He ambushed Thorgils and intended to murder him. But when the old man, still handsome and impressive, approached all alone, he was seized with remorse, threw away his sword and went up to Thorgils to talk things over with him. They arrived at a settlement that was honorable for both parties. Not long afterward Thorgils died, aged more than seventy years old.

His children turned out to be fine men and women. And when Jorunn, his daughter by Helga, became the great-grandmother of St. Thorlak,* Iceland's beloved Holy Bishop, people remembered the dream of Thorgils about the fair flower coming from his seed. And this is the end of the saga of Thorgils Örrabeinsstjup.

Pope Honors Swedish Bishop

By Religious News Service

STOCKHOLM (By Wireless)—Bishop Johannes Müller, Vicar Apostolic of the Roman Catholic Church in Sweden, has been named a Papal Throne Assistant by Pope Pius XII.

The honor confers no additional powers, but is looked upon as signifying Papal approval of the Bishop's work on behalf of the Church.

Bishop Müller, who was born in Munich, is highly regarded in both Roman Catholic and Lutheran Church circles here. Last December, it is recalled, he joined in the denunciation of religious and racial persecution issued by the State Lutheran Church and endorsed also by the Free Church groups.

* See 1942 BULLETIN, page 2.

AN APOSTLE OF THE NORTH
His Excellency Bishop Johannes Evangelista Eric Müller,
Apostolic Vicar for Sweden

Can You Help Scandinavia?

DURING the last two years, we have been unable to send either communications or the usual financial help and stipends to the bishops of Denmark, Norway and Finland. We have, however, been able to communicate with His Excellency, Bishop Müller of Sweden, and received air mail replies from him. He acknowledges with many and sincere thanks the bank drafts which we have sent him by cable and states that the usual sources of income within Sweden have not held up as he had hoped and that this was very distressing for he had his own problems and also acted as a refugee center for the Sisters and priests of Scandinavia and the Baltic countries. We quote from his letter:

"We herewith beg to express our heartfelt thanks for your welcome gift which under the present difficult circumstances will be of the greatest service to us.

"We venture to entreat you most earnestly to continue to favor us with economical assistance, so that our ecclesiastical institutions may be able to survive the existing crisis.

"Our prayers will be said for you and for all our benefactors, that God may reward you manifold for your goodness. We send our best greetings to all the members of St. Ansgar's League.

"Once more, we thank you heartily for all your valuable assistance.

"Yours most sincerely,
"Johannes Erik Müller."

"Pray for Scandinavia"

GREENLAND—YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Greenland's Catholic Past

THE REV. LAMBERT ERKENS, S.M.A., Chappaqua, New York
Spiritual Director, St. Ansgar's League

Greenland Today

SOMEWHAT triangular Greenland, with its apex pointing towards the south, its most southerly point in 59° 45′ N., its base 1,650 miles farther north, extending into the Arctic Circle, with a breadth at 70° N. of eight hundred miles and a total area twice that of Texas, sends glaciers from its immense field of ice and its coastal mountain regions, down into the fjords and the ocean, where the North Polar current drives these massive glaciers southward.

The impenetrable interior is a stupendous and usually storm-swept sheet of ice, and except for some towering rocky peaks rising above it, all valleys and mountains are buried deep below its surface. The coasts are well-nigh inapproachable during the long winter and are not easily accessible in the summer months either, with all the fjords and innumerable islands.

Hills and valleys in the southwest are the only regions where vegetation finds a soil to nourish it, and even here the growth is stunted. Some goats, sheep and cattle have been introduced into these parts.

Numerous species of birds, the eggs of sea gulls, the reindeer, bears, foxes, plenty of fishing, whaling and seal hunting and last but not least the imports, which have twice the value of exports, furnish the 18,000 inhabitants of Greenland with the essentials for their existence.

With Eskimos in every locality and only one entire tribe left, numbering about 250, called the Polar Eskimos, living near Smith Sound, the whole population is scattered through a few villages on the east and a dozen of them on the south and west coasts.

Godthaab and Godhavn, the seats of the government, are comprised of two Danish "inspectorates" responsible to the directors for Greenland, at the board of the colony in Copenhagen. Each inspectorate is divided into districts and counts a number of outposts or trading settlements and some so-called Eskimo hunting stations.

The chief trading settlements following the west coast northward are Sydhoven; Julianehaab, near which are the remains of the early Norse settlements of Eric the Red; Frederikshaab, known for its neighboring and rich cryolite mines; Godthaab, which is the principal settlement and has still some Norse remains; Sukkertoppen, a most picturesque locality, and Holstenborg. Godhavn on the south coast of Disko Island is the seat of a Danish station for scientific research. The few east coast settlements are not under the Danish inspectorate and the station of Thula is also privately owned.

While the winter months comprise the seal killing season, no navigation takes place between November and May. In order to prevent any foreign profiteering or any sale of spirits, the prices for both European and native articles are fixed, printed in the Eskimo papers and distributed at the beginning of every year.

The only tax, one-sixth of the price of everything, is spent for public works, charity and all other contingencies. With no police, the Inspectors, being also trade superintendents, are magistrates and pronounce judgments. Besides them, the local parish councils or "parsissaet" for which no Danes are eligible, render justice and are guardians of the poor. Their meetings are conducted exclusively in the Eskimo tongue.

The coastal regions have a very uncertain climate, where the weather even in the best months is liable to change suddenly from sunshine to icy winds. The least inhabitable of the coasts of Greenland is the east coast which is ever washed by cold currents. The best part of the country is the southwest, where people boast of having only a rare frost in June, July and August! During these months they are blessed with heavy rainfall, but since it is only rain, they enjoy the relative but yet appreciable warmth of their short summer.

A village in Greenland then hardly seems to any of us to be a cheerful place at best, though in the long days of the short summer months a place on the southern fjords might be found comparatively pleasant. The fact is, however, that most people who have lived in Greenland always long to go back! A letter, written by a doctor who has spent almost thirty years in Greenland, claims there is no place on earth that he would exchange with his Greenland colony. A so-called colony counts generally three or four Danish houses, built of wood and pitched over, in addition to storehouses and a blubber-boiling establishment. A Danish colony may include, besides a "coloni bestyrer" or director and his assistant, a "missionaer" or clergyman and a few places also a doctor and perhaps a carpenter and a schoolmaster. In some places there are from twenty to several hundred Eskimos who live in huts built of stone or turf, or of imported wood, each entered by a short tunnel.

Ecclesiastically Lutheran Greenland is reckoned in the province of the Bishop of Zealand and the Danish mission of Greenland is allotted a yearly grant from the State. The Moravian mission, which had labored in Greenland for a century and a half, resigned its parishes in 1900 to the preachers of the Danish Lutheran National Church. The Moravians disposed of six mission stations with twenty-seven male and female missionaries. Their largest number of adepts had been in the year 1857 when they were 1,968 members strong, comprising about 900 adults. Since then decay had set in, ascribed variously to difference of opinion among the brethren, millenarian tendencies among the neophytes and friction with the Lutheran ministers of the established Church.

Without doubt the winter months are favorable to whaling, but that takes away from church and home at the best time for prayer and instruction. Also the action of the government in dispersing the Greenlanders over their extensive hunting territories was an obstacle to their conversion. Their concentration during the winter season would naturally have made them more amenable to spiritual influences. Under the circumstances, their conversion to Christianity was superficial. The History of the Moravian Brethren states that the education of the Lutheran Eskimos was limited to reading, writing of singing of songs, that thrift and benevolence were unknown amongst them and that their morality was at least question-

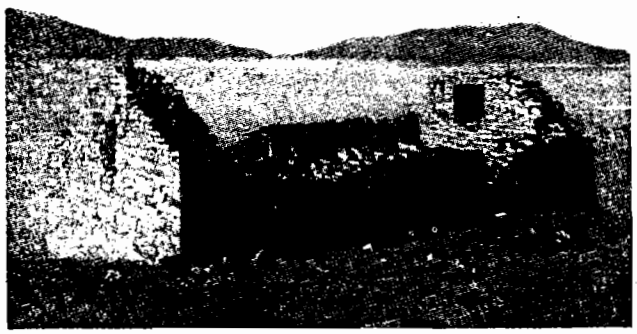
able. When they left the scene of their self-sacrificing but thankless labors, they claimed a nominal membership of about eight hundred.

The village of Godthaab has a seminary from which all that wish to be ordained are sent to Copenhagen. All settlements of Greenland have schools, generally, under native teachers. There are three monthly newspapers in Eskimo. Wireless stations are working at Godthaab, Godhavn, Julianehaab and Angmasalik.

The trade of Greenland has decreased in modern time, so that before the present war, the Danish State had an annual deficit of about $120,000 on the administration of Greenland. The minerally rich island of Disko and the great abundance of cryolite, used to produce aluminum, may prove an asset for the Allies in our present war. Cryolite, being of private ownership, is the only export which is outside the State monopoly and is certain to become a source of great wealth to Greenland. Walrus tusks and walrus hides, which in the days of the Old Norse settlements were the chief articles of export, are now of little importance. The chief articles of export, outside the cryolite, are seal oil, seal, fox and bear skins, fish products, eider down and worked skins. The imports consist of manufactured goods, foodstuffs, etc.

Greenland's Catholic Past

The first trustworthy historian of the Arctic regions was Adam, Canon of Hamburg, "the Rome of the North," under Archbishop Adalbert (1043-1072). He gathered his information and data from the cathedral library, from church archives, from reports of travelers and from King Sven Estruthson of Denmark, "on whose memory as on a tablet was engraved the whole history of the barbarians!" The Heimskringla or Book of Kings, by an Icelander in Norway, the Saga of Eric the Red and the Flatey Book or Icelandic "Flateyjarbok," are all works from which are gathered the beginnings of the Norse church in the New World.



Courtesy of "The American Scandinavian Review."

The Church Ruin at Rakortok from the time of the old Norsemen

Eric the Red and his father Thorvald came from Jaedern in southwestern Norway to Iceland, because Eric had been guilty of manslaughter. In Iceland he was again guilty of murder and other crimes. Being outlawed at Thorsnessthing, he equipped his ship for voyage and with his people, set out westward for the land which "Gunbiorn, son of Ulf, saw when he was driven westward across the ocean." This was in 982. He landed at the southeastern coast of Greenland, called the place Ericsfjord, built a home there, then explored the coast and gave it many local names.

After three years of absence he returned to Iceland, where he told of the land he had discovered and called it Greenland, "for," he said, "that might attract men thither when the land has a fine name." The ruse was successful—thirty-five ships left Iceland in Eric's company, but only fourteen reached their destination; the rest were lost or driven back by storms. "That," says the saga, "was fourteen winters before Christianity was established by law in Iceland, hence the year 985."

In 993 Olaf Tryggvason conquered Norway and with the spirit of the crusader and the zeal of an apostle, he immediately set about winning his nation to the Catholic Faith and his ambition was to enroll all the people of Norse blood, scattered over the peninsula and islands of the North, under the banner of Christ.

Hence when Leif, son of Eric the Red, came from Greenland to Norway to see King Olaf at Trondhjem and "the King expounded the Faith to him," Leif and his shipmates accepted baptism. Next summer in the year 1000, Leif was back in Greenland with Thormod the priest and other clerks to preach to the people and baptize them.

On his way he was driven from his course and discovered "Wineland the Good," which it is quite certain, was the American continent. His arrival at Ericsfjord was warmly welcomed by the people. His father, however, was not pleased with him because he had brought the priest, "a trickster," to Greenland. Nevertheless, Leif caused Christianity to be proclaimed throughout the land and announced King Olaf's message to the people. Eric only later accepted the new Faith, but Thiodhild, his wife, received it joyfully and had a church built near her home.

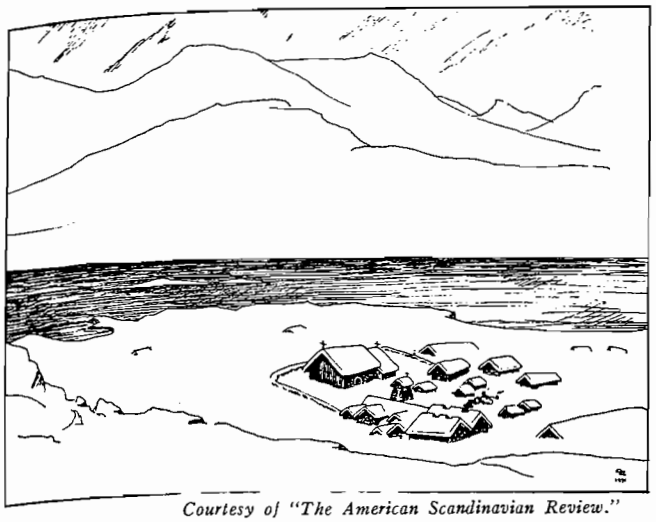
In the lifetime of Leif the Happy, sixteen parishes were founded together with their churches, and even a few monasteries, as the Benedictine nuns' Monastery of St. Michael in the northwest.

The first papal document in which the names of Iceland and Greenland occur, is the controverted bull "Omnium Fidelium" of Gregory IV in 835. In favor of its authenticity is the number of ten later documents from the Papal See, between Gregory IV in 835 and Alexander VI in 1493, all of them just a natural pursuance of Gregory's "Omnium Fidelium."

Charlemagne's son, King Louis the Pious, had requested Rome to organize ecclesiastically all of Scandinavia and to appoint the Picardian Benedictine monk Ansgar, the metropolitan, with Hamburg as his See. In the document, Iceland and Greenland are named as parts of the province. The Heimskringla of the fourteenth century tells us that eleven decades elapsed before the arrival of the first bishop of Greenland. He was Eric the Norwegian. He came in the year 1112; we know he made Gardar his See and he was a great civilizer of the wild and bloodthirsty Norsemen. Ivar Bardsson claimed that Bishop Eric made Steinesnes his episcopal See.

We have no historical records, but only tradition, to assert that Bishop Eric Gnupsson, as his full name was, joined in an expedition to "Vinland," in the year 1121, for the purpose of locating again the eastern coast of North America, which had been discovered a hundred years previously. The hard living Greenlanders wanted to reach the land where "grew vines and self-sown wheat!" This was not indeed the first journey of

exploration and attempt to colonization of Vinland, but none so far had been permanent. The hero of the saga, Thorstein, with his wife Gudrid, were amongst these explorers. The historians Reeves and Fisher tell us that Bishop Eric perished in Vinland, as is indeed very probable, for a year or two later, the people of Greenland took measures to obtain a permanent Bishop.



Courtesy of "The American Scandinavian Review."

Gardar, showing the Cathedral and Belfry, the Bishop's Residence and the Farm Buildings belonging to it. Reconstruction by the architect A. Roussell, 1931.

Canon Adam writes that no Bishops were ever appointed for Greenland by the Archbishops of Bremen.

Soon difficulties arose between Norse kings and Saxon Archbishops, which led to the establishment of the metropolitan See of Lund which received Greenland under its jurisdiction. Later again the archiepiscopal See of Trondhjem (Nidaros) was erected and once more Greenland came under another province.

Politically, Greenland was an independent democracy. As such, the Althing had chosen to accept Christianity and under the influence of Socke Thorarsson, a hero of the Saga and descendant of Eric the Red, had petitioned King Sigurd, the Crusader, for a Bishop of its own, to succeed Eric Gnupsson.

When Cardinal William of Sabina came to Norway in 1247 to crown Haakon Haakonson, he said it was unfair that Iceland and Greenland should not be subject to a King, like all other countries of the world. Consequently, the next Bishop that went to Greenland, Olaf or Olaus, in 1246, was ordered to persuade the Greenlanders to submit to the Norwegian crown. In 1261 Greenland finally consented and acknowledged King Haakon, resolving to pay taxes and fines!

The Union of Galmar, which in 1395 made Eric, son of Margaret of Denmark, the king of the three Scandinavian countries, put Greenland definitely under the crown of Denmark, a crown which for the next two hundred years neglected that colony and practically forgot its existence.

It appears from the ten papal documents that the inhabitants of Greenland, in spite of their wretched economic conditions, were generous towards the Church and the poor. The tithes system and Peter's Pence were introduced, but were mostly paid in nature. Tusks, walrus hides, cheese, fish were collected and sold "for the succor of the Holy Land" and when finally those proved insignificant, in an attempt to exchange them for silver or gold, not only had Greenland to be excused from all contributions, but the Holy See had to beg the Archbishop of Trondhjem to send wheat and wine for the Mass and food to a starving Greenland. The difficulty in securing the material for the Mass raised the well-nigh unbelievable question that was addressed by Sigurd of Trondhjem to Gregory IX, whose reply of May, 1237, tells us that question: "You state, beloved Brother, that in some churches of your suffragans it is impossible to have the Eucharist, because of the scarcity of wheat and that wine can never or hardly ever be had in those countries, and you ask whether it is allowed to deceive the people with some simulation of piety and to distribute to them mere oblations made of some other substance, and give them beer or some other beverage instead of wine. To this we answer that by no means can you do either of those things, because bread of wheat and wine of grapes, consecrated through the ministry of the priest by words of the Creator must needs be the elements of the Sacraments."

Yet there were at that time priests and a Bishop in Greenland. Between 1124 and 1379, Greenland counted 9 Bishops, two of whom failed to reach their destination. The last, called Alf, was, as Dr. Larson writes, "A typical medieval prelate; humble and devout in private life but unbending in all matters, touching what he regarded as rights of his office or diocese."

After him, no less than 17 Bishops were consecrated for Greenland, yet none of them ever resided there or was even obliged to go there. The lamentable conditions on the island made a residence impossible and probably unnecessary. The Black Death in 1359 had killed the clergy and religious and decimated the population. Then we learn from Ivan Bardsson, who for a period of twenty years had been the episcopal administrator and returned in 1364 to Norway, as also from the letter of Nicholas V to the Bishops of Skalholt and Holar in Iceland, that numerous hordes of Eskimos, called the Skraelings "from neighboring shores" had invaded the country in 1345. The Pope wrote: "The land was laid waste with fire and sword, churches were destroyed. Only nine parishes escaped, since they were among the mountains and so could not be reached. People of both sexes were carried away as prisoners. Nevertheless many of them returned and rebuilt some of what had been destroyed."

One of the objects of Paul Knutsson's expedition to Greenland in 1355 was, "death for the Eskimos, for the preservation of Christianity." Yet frequent attacks continued in subsequent years, according to the Icelandic Annals for 1379.

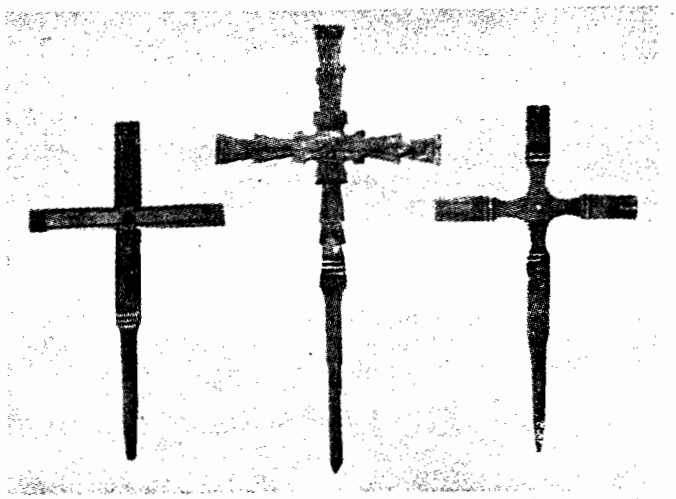
The fact that Rome continued to appoint Bishops during more than a century shows that the

Courtesy of "The American Scandinavian Review."

The Bishop's Crozier found in a grave in Greenland.

Church never abandoned the hope of keeping Catholic life in Greenland.

In 1448 the letter which Nicholas V wrote to Iceland, lamented: "They have been without the comforts of a pastor and the services of priests for thirty years." And to Bishop Mathias, monk of St. Benedict and last appointee for Greenland, Alexander VI wrote in 1490: "We are informed that on account of the freezing of the sea, no ship has touched Greenland and no resident Bishop or priest has ruled its church for the last eighty years. It is said, so pursues the papal letter, that the people of that land have no other relic of the Chris-



Courtesy of "The American Scandinavian Review."

Carved wooden crosses laid on the breasts of the dead.

tian religion than a corporal that they exhibit once a year, upon which the Body of Christ was consecrated by the last priest who was resident one hundred years ago." The Karlesfni saga says: "When people were buried at the homesteads in unconsecrated earth, carved wooden crosses were laid on their breasts and at their feet, a pole was set up from the breast of the corpse and afterwards, when priests came here, they would pull up the pole and pour in holy water and hold chants over it, though it were a long time after. But soon no priests remained for that blessing."

Shut off from civilization, walled in by barriers of ice in a land of hardship, the Norse Christians of Greenland, children of the Vikings, still kept aglow the spark of Faith that in earlier and happier days had flared up in their homes.

The last Archbishop of Trondhjem, Eric Walkendorf, sought in the year 1520 to gather information of the long-unheard-of See of Gardar, with the intention of renewing communication with the lost suffragan; but the Reformation swept over Norway, ended the Hierarchy there and then silence and oblivion fell upon Greenland.

In the middle of the fourteenth century, the trade between Norway and Greenland, being a Crown monopoly, was conducted by one annual ship (Knarren). That was brought to an end by the growing dominance of the Hanseatic League over Norway's shipping, as the league had no interest in Greenland.

When the alarmed King Christian III gave a general permission to emigrate to Greenland, his subjects were deterred by the perils of the sea for their small vessels. The permission remained fruitless and Greenland became the forgotten land.

Frobisher under Queen Elizabeth practically rediscovered that island. It was then reclaimed by the Danish King as sovereign of Norway and expeditions were sent, only one of which, that of Dannels in 1654, reached its goal. Greenland had fallen back into heathenism and ignorance. Only in the nineteenth century the Lutherans and the Moravian brethren went to convert the little population of Greenland to a new christianity!

Today with the American occupation of Greenland, Holy Mass is once more offered up on its shores and Catholic life has returned to that unhappy country. May the land where, nearly 500 years before Columbus saw the New World, the Norse Catholics planted the standard of the Cross, see again, after an exile of another five hundred years, the true Cross replanted forever on its soil, as brought back by the Eagle, the Stars and the Stripes!

Films Available

AT the New York Unit's recent Christmas Party, beautiful colored films of Sweden were shown. These were secured at a very nominal rental from the Swedish Travel Information Bureau. Information as to all the films available, the rental charges and the postal charges can be secured by addressing the Bureau at 630 Fifth Avenue, New York City. They are available in black and white and in color and can be obtained with sound at a slightly higher price.

By addressing the Norwegian Information Bureau at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York City, films are also available, showing the mountains, countryside, skiing, etc., as it is in beautiful Norway.

Three years ago the New York Unit secured permission to show two reels of colored movies taken in Iceland. They were most impressive. These are not available to the public, but if a Unit feels that this subject would be of particular interest to their group, we would suggest they address a letter to the Consul General at 595 Madison Avenue, New York City. He might be disposed to allow them to borrow the films.

May we take this opportunity of asking the Units for their advice and assistance. If they have found something which gives particular quality or substance to a program and have not mentioned it in their Unit reports, we trust they will communicate this information to us so that we and the other Units may profit by their experience. Similarly, if some particularly good paper has been prepared and read at one of the Unit evenings, we respectfully request that they forward it to New York for publication in the BULLETIN as a whole. Buffalo please take note!

"Pray for Scandinavia"

OUR GREENLAND *

By LAURENT CHRISTENSEN, M.D.
Resident Danish Government Doctor

THE Major has been so kind as to invite me to the American Base to tell you something about Greenland. The last year has brought many differences due to the War that brings all sorts of difficulties and to you the noble American Nation who tries to improve the difficulties made by the War. I want to tell you that Greenland very much appreciates the arrival of you Americans. Greenlanders and Danes have confidence in you. We feel you are here as friends who have come to protect this country, as well as your own interests.

Before this War, we saw only Danish ships here. If anyone wished to go to America, for instance, he would have to go to Denmark first. Few foreigners were seen and those who had come were treated as our guests. They had to stay with us in our homes for there are no hotels or inns in this country.

The first woman I met in Greenland was *my sister*. She followed me from Denmark eighteen years ago but really I first met her here. In Denmark we had lived together for many years and did not know much about one another, but here we daily had occasion to share good and bad. Of course, we had difficulties in the beginning. Many things were new and different from home.

When we parted from Denmark my mother told me: "Treat your sister well; she is a good girl, but she is not clever." I don't think I treated her well, for some time later she left me and got married; and I am still alone. But my mother was mistaken. At least my sister grew clever in a very short time. And so do all women here, because it is necessary. Nobody coming for the first time to Greenland knows how to prepare a seal steak so as to make delicious food of it. Nobody has formerly prepared a sea gull or thought that it might be edible. A woman must learn how to make her own bread, her own beer. In most places we have no milk and must use powdered milk; that we do not know at all in Denmark. The same goes for many other things.

A woman means more in Greenland than in Denmark, maybe more than in the U. S. A., that has been called the woman's paradise! The wife, the mother, the sister, the daughter are more responsible here than elsewhere for the happiness of the home. So it is in the Danish homes, and maybe even more so in the natives' homes. When you see a clean Eskimo house with good stores of food and skin you can be sure to find a clever wife. And if she is not clever it does not matter how many seals, fishes or foxes her husband catches.

When the husband comes home from hunting, it is the wife's task to skin the animals and prepare them, and to take off the husband's clothes and boots and prepare them for the next morning. This work must be well done. If the man's skin-boots in winter are not waterproof he may get frozen feet; if his skin-coat is not waterproof it may be dangerous to him if he capsizes in his kayak.

Some people think that the wife in a little Eskimo house cannot have much to do, but that is a mistake. All the things you can buy in department stores in a big town she must make with her own hands. Fortunately the living is not very complicated among the natives here. The clothes do not change fashion each year. The fashion one hundred years ago is the same today and still modern. The preparation of food is very simple.

The Europeans have taught the natives to preserve the food in other ways than they did before. Now they know how to salt the fish and the meat. But it is not good for their health. Salt ought to be prohibited by law in this country and be used only to spoil the health of Europeans and Americans who have means to protect themselves against the damage that the misuse of salt causes.

This brings me to the question of the name-giving among the natives. All of them are Christians, all are Protestants, Lutherans. And they believe in Christ like you do or more so. All of them can write and read. They know their Bible better than most of us do. But many old superstitions and half-forgotten customs rest here as in our countries.

The Eskimo woman is very kind to children, not only her own, but all other children. And Eskimos understand children better than most civilized grown people do. Also Danish children prefer the Eskimos to the Europeans. The mother tries to treat her child well. And she must use the means at her disposition. When the mother in the furthermost north gets her child, she licks it just like a cow does. She gives it breast till at least its third year. Once I had a servant who got mother's milk until she was eleven years old. It is not rare to see big children run to their mother and claim for her milk. And the mother gives it voluntarily—because they want it. What children want they get. And one reason for that is, that the mothers do not want to see their children angry. They might keep getting angry when they grow up "just like the Europeans." Anger is a quality disdained by the Eskimos.

Until now there is no prison in Greenland. If people do wrong they are punished by removal to another place, by fine or by hard labor. But crime is rare in Greenland.

Maybe some of you here feel as though you are living in a desert. I have heard Danes and I have heard Americans say: "I could not bear to live here. I see only ice and stone." But ice and stone have their beauty too.

I might tell you an old Eskimo legend of how strong the beauty of this country can be:

An old man who was born on the southern part of the East Coast, on the beautiful island of Aluk, near the mouth of Prins Kristians Sound, and lived for some years at Igalike, longed very much for his dear Aluk, and at last his son yielded to his requests and brought him back to Aluk. The following morning the old man went outside his tent to look at the sunrise as in former days, and to see how the sun danced like a big ball on the waves before rising higher in the sky. And the old man was so affected by the magnificent sight that he died; he died from the beauty of his country.

Gentlemen! I do not want you to think that much of the beauty of this country. I do not want you to die in or for this country. I want you to return soon to your own happy home. But as long as you stay here I hope you will feel that our country is not desolate, and that you might in this isolated place find in yourself some beautiful oasis hitherto unknown.

* Excerpts from talk given the United States troops.

GREENLAND AND THE ESKIMO

By SIGRID DUBIELL

GREENLAND is an island—the largest in the world, and one of the most sparsely inhabited. The interior is a vast, forbidding waste of ice, which has been accumulating in mystery and splendor since the beginning of time; or at any rate, since blind nature in the glacial period set her inscrutable machinery to work.

An ice-free strip of land encircles the island, extending over an area approximately seven to twenty miles in width. This band expands to as much as one hundred and twelve miles on the west coast and one hundred and eighty miles on the east coast.

Greenland was discovered in the latter part of the tenth century by the Norsemen, who settled the extreme southern portions of the island. Leif, the son of Eric the Red (or Eric the Outlaw) the real discoverer of Greenland, used the island as a base for his visit to North America. In the early days of Greenland's history, the far-venturing Norsemen had evidently colonized Greenland in fairly large numbers. Old records tell us how, after the Black Death in Europe, a brace of enemy ships bore down upon Greenland and spirited away many colonists, to make up for Europeans stricken by the terrible scourge. Whether this is fact or fable is not known. On the other hand, some historians claim that intermarriage with the natives was the cause of the vanishing of the colonies. To this day it remains a mystery of history.

The religious background of Greenland is an integral part of its history—of principal importance are the Catholic era, which extended from 100 to 1450 A. D., and the Protestant era since 1721. Leif, son of Eric the Red, visited Norway in 990, where he was soon won over to Christianity by King Olof Tryggvason, who sent missionaries to accompany him to his country. In a remarkably short time these missionaries succeeded in converting the Norse colony, at least outwardly, and establishing a Church, sixteen parishes were organized, together with churches and even a few monasteries. As the distance to Europe made communication difficult, Greenland, in spite of the small number of inhabitants, was formed into the Diocese of Gardar, suffragan first to the Archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen, then to that of Lund and ultimately to that of Trondhjem. Before the colony perished, sixteen to eighteen Bishops of various nationalities occupied the See of Gardar or at least were nominated to it.

In the search for a northwest passage, the island was rediscovered and its west coast was explored from Cape Farwell to Hakluit Island in Smith Sound by the voyages of John Davis in 1585-88 and William Baffin in 1616. Greenland again passed out of history until 1721, when the foundation of Danish Greenland was laid through the appointment by the King of Denmark of Hans Egede, a Lutheran, as a missionary. His settlement at Godthaab eventually led to the Moravian and Danish missions, to the initiation of the Royal Trade, and to the establishment of Colonial government.

Many exploring expeditions had been sent to Greenland, from Nordenskjöld in 1870, to Charles Augustus Lindbergh in 1933, but the greatest, the most beloved by the Greenlanders, was our own Admiral Peary. He made many trips to Greenland in his quest for the North Pole. Time and again he failed to reach his goal, but with each failure he gained experience. He realized that if he was ever to conquer Greenland's ice and snow he must become an Eskimo as far as possible. He did this, thereby winning the love and respect of his brother, the Eskimo, and so succeeded in his undertaking. The natives called him Peary-ark-suah, meaning Big Peary. In this regard it is only fitting to mention one of Admiral Peary's most trusted assistants. His name was Matthew Henson, his expert colored assistant. He was indispensable to Peary and of more real value than the combined services of all four white assistants. An expert dog driver, a master mechanic, physically strong, most popular with the Eskimo, talking the language like a native, brave, he went to the Pole with Peary because he was easily the most efficient of all Peary's assistants.

On their return journey, five miles from the Pole, the explorer came upon a narrow crack in the ice, through which he attempted a sounding. The length of his apparatus was 9,000 feet, but lead did not strike bottom. So the depth of the sea at the Pole is still undetermined. It has been disputed whether Greenland is an island or a continent extending to the Pole. Admiral Peary conclusively proved Greenland to be an island, when he and one companion ascended the summit of the great ice cap and pushed northward 500 miles into a region where the foot of man had never trod before, in the temperatures ranging from ten degrees to fifty degrees below zero. Surprisingly enough, on descending from the table-land to enter a little valley radiant with gorgeous flowers and alive with murmuring bees, he found musk-oxen lazily browsing.

The snow of the Arctic has not changed nor have the ice-locked mountains of Greenland, but the changes which have come over the Eskimo are profound. In place of old-fashioned igloos made of snow blocks, the Eskimo has houses made of wood. In them you hear the blare of the radio and the monotonous droning of the gramophone. Forty years ago you would see the Eskimo eating soup of seal meat and seal entrails and a porridge made of the ground bones of animals. Today you see him in "store" clothes, dropping in at the trading post to buy the white man's tea and coffee and imported biscuits. Instead of the old animal skin boots, patiently sewed by the Eskimo women, from the skins their men had taken from slain animals, you will see him pull on knee-high rubber boots for a wet day and store made leather boots for dryer weather. But with the white man's clothing, tobacco and devitalized flour, came the white man's germs, particularly tuberculosis.

The kind of house an Eskimo builds depends almost entirely on its location. In eastern Greenland natives' homes are built of Canadian driftwood. Rivers draining down from the Canadian northwest, a richly forested section, bring quantities of driftwood, dancing down the tides. These rivers empty into the polar basin and their waters are carried around the north of Greenland, thence down the east coast by the Arctic current. Thus the east Greenland Eskimo has plenty of lumber for his house.

"Pray for Scandinavia"

Only a little driftwood travels around Cape Farwell or up the west coast, so the Smith Sound Eskimo builds his house of stone. The roof is made of flat stone with a back slope. The house is about twelve feet wide in front, the height just permits a man not too tall to stand upright. A narrow passage, approximately eight feet long, forms the entrance. A low platform of stone fills the back of the house completely. Dry grass is laid on the stone and on this is piled many soft bear or reindeer skins. Then above the passage, at the front of the house, is the single window made of gut. Through this the light filters weakly. This Eskimo house is a jolly, familiar, sociable affair. The platform is the family bed by night and family chair, table and drawing room by day. The only ventilation is obtained through a puncture in the roof about the size of a man's arm, in which, in time of storm or high wind, sod is placed, stopping all chances of air circulation. In Smith Sound, the Eskimos who live in houses like this, have four months of almost continual sunshine, then two months of alternating sun and twilight preface the winter darkness. Much has been written about the depressing period of darkness; very little, however, about the long moonlight periods of each month, when the moon comes above the horizon and remains there continuously. It swings around in a great circle, about ten days each month, and turns the region into a veritable fairyland. During the dark period, for about three and one-half months, they see no sun at all and in these months the white man's germs and the white man's tuberculosis arise and flourish.

Certain rather interesting facts turned up as the Danish doctors considered the rise of tuberculosis among the Eskimos. First the investigator exploded our old idea that the Eskimo by nature is capable of bearing more intense cold than the white man. If he does so, it is because he dresses for the cold and eats fat, fuel-charged foods to stand him in stead during his extreme winter. When this theory seemed established, however, the contradictory fact was revealed that the Eskimo can stand a degree of heat in which white men wilt and suffer. The houses are heated by seal oil lamps. These are rather flat stone vessels, with wide moss wicks, which when properly trimmed burn the seal oil with a wide, white flame. The heat in the house becomes tropic and so hygiene perishes in the midst of food scattered about among the fur skins of dogs here and there, due to all too little attention to sanitation. When tuberculosis enters an Eskimo settlement it is rampant. In the old days such a germ would not have been serious. The Eskimos then abandoned their igloos from season to season or had a house from which they could remove the roof in the spring and let in the bright and cleansing sunshine from a generous heaven. But when they built a permanent house the evil was done. Deterioration and disease clamped down upon men who were experiencing a particular scourge for the first time in the history of their race. For this reason the Danish Government barred all visitors to Greenland, except reputable expeditions. The white man also brought firearms to Greenland, with the result of needless destruction of herds of animals.

The old Eskimos seemed to possess initiative, independence —probably no one yet knows the economic possibilities of Greenland, but the natural resources, for 900 years since Eric the Red visited the island, have kept merchants and traders busy with fairly rich commerce plying between Europe and the largest ice-locked island in the world.

Salt, fish, seal and cod oil, sealskins, eider down, ivory (the tusks of walrus and narwhal) and furs (blue and white fox, beautiful pure white polar wolf, bearskins, etc), have for long years formed a large part of the trade between Greenland and Denmark. Later cryolite mines were developed in southwest Greenland. Other bright-tinted minerals more or less occur along with cryolite. The known mineral wealth of Greenland is not extensive. There are coal mines in Disko Island, graphite is abundant and copper has been observed in a few places. Ivigtut, the seaport, is near the cryolite mines. Cryolite is used in the manufacturing of aluminum.

The approach to Ivigtut is not inviting; just a big corrugated iron building, a collection of cranes and a dozen drab houses on the mountain side, but as the steamer ties up at a buoy, at least a dozen Danish flags are run up, a siren is sounded and many people appear to wish you welcome. The Danish Controller lives here in a house with every modern convenience. The Greenlanders around Ivigtut and the southern point of Greenland are fair-skinned with light hair and occasionally red hair is seen, another reason for the belief that the first Norse colonies disappeared through intermarriage with the natives. There are ruins of stables, churches, houses and some sort of a Nordic town meeting house, which the Danish Government has guarded and preserved.

North of Ivigtut is Fredrikshaab; then Godthaab, meaning Good Hope, the town founded by Hans Egede and his courageous wife in 1721. High on a hill overlooking the harbor is a statue of Hans Egede. Here is the old wooden church with the little graveyard in back, with its white wooden crosses. The Governor's resident is located at Godthaab.

The little settlement of Sukkertoppen and then Holstenborg are to the north. This town also has a Governor's residence. You would almost think it to be a country house on the outskirts of Copenhagen in Denmark and it boasts of the most beautiful window in Greenland. Of course, it is the view from the window, the window being like all other windows.

Then there is Egedeminde; Godhavn on Disko Island, where the coal mines are located; Christianhaab; Jacobshaven; Unamak and Marmorilik, site of an old marble quarry. Before the Danish market was cut off, 400 Greenlanders worked modern machinery here. Now the place is desolate, with blocks of marble waiting patiently on the docks for a ship that may never come.

Further north are Proven, Upernivik, with its graphite mine, Cape York, Thule and Etah, the most northerly inhabited settlement in the world. At Thule, on top of a cliff, is the tall Peary Monument, erected by Captain Bob Bartlett in 1932. Through peace and war, fair weather and bad, it stands as a permanent reminder of the work of the great American explorer. Here and at Etah, you will find the Polar Eskimo, who still loves and reveres the memory of "Peary-ark-suah."

South of Ivigtut is Julianehaab, Nanortalik and Cape Farwell on the very tip of Greenland. Near Julianehaab are the ruins of Eriksfjord, now called Tumigdliarfik.

Beyond a high range of hills separating two sides of a fjord, the ancient town of Brattahlid had its day, not so far from its sister town of Gardar. The church, or the walls at least, are still standing in rather good repair, gray against the green hillside of southern Greenland. Up and above the sturdy stone walls, the whortleberry, the juniper shrub, small willow

trees, and many species of vine and weed keep company with such familiar American wild flowers as buttercups and dandelions.

In Julianehaab there is a modern hospital with "Herr Doctor" and "Sisters," not nuns, of course, just another name for nurses. A regular school is there, taught by a native man teacher, where the children learn the three R's plus Eskimo and Danish.

In this climate sheep, cows, chickens and horses are raised, instead of the usual fishing and hunting. All Danish settlers usually have a garden. The lowly potato does not seem to thrive, but cabbage and carrots grow abundantly. They also have the window garden, where they plant tomatoes in flower pots and tie up the precious fruit with ribbons.

On the west coast we find Angmagsalik, Kungmuit and lastly Eskimoneas, where Dr. Lauge Koch, a Danish authority on the geology of Greenland, has his study expedition located. It was at Angmagsalik that Charles A. Lindbergh at last had his small plane christened by the Eskimos, when he made his trip across the Atlantic. From the moment he landed on Greenland's east coast, the Eskimos shouted "Tingmissartoz, Tingmissartoz" (the one who flies like a bird). Sitting on the wing of the plane when it was at anchor, a young Greenlander painted on its side "Ting-miss-ar-toz."

The east coast of Greenland is more intensified than the west. The mountain peaks seem sharper, blacker and more snow-streaked, and the hills seem steeper. The Eskimos themselves, dark and slant-eyed, wearing native clothing, the women with their hair drawn into a tight top-knot, still follow the old-fashioned Eskimo style. Everything is more primitive and isolated, but it seems that somehow nature tries to make up for the drabness of isolation.

All around the island there is, in season, the most beautiful color harmony, flowers of all kinds, the houses painted red and white, the blue schoolhouse on the hill, the yellow house of the minister, the red church and the green store. The Sunday dress of the women, hip-length sealskin boots and trousers of Arctic blue fox, scraped and multi-colored in fancy designs, a gay red blouse, over which is worn a collar of glass beads, symmetrically designed and reaching nearly to the waistline. Above all the Greenlanders have a stoical, good humor.

Then there are the natural wonders—the very large waterfall in north Greenland, whose musical sound of the falling waters greet the ear all along the west coast; the red and green snows along the coast, due to the presence of plants that do the coloring; the majestic icebergs, many weighing 1,000,000 tons, come sailing down the fjords and block the harbors and silently disappear again. The pack ice fills the mouth of the harbor over night, making navigation impossible. Not even a kayak or skinboat dares to venture out, but a day or two later you find the harbor in open water, clear and calm as a mill pond. So, on and on, a book could be written about things unexplainable in this primitive country.

Geographically, Greenland belongs to North America. Since the fall of Denmark in 1940, Greenland suddenly turned to the United States for food and supplies for her 20,000 people. A year later, under an agreement signed with the Danish Minister in Washington, D. C., American soldiers and hardy workmen poured in to build air bases, runways, hangars and snug cabins. Airplanes, even speedy pursuit ships, and the handy little "jeep" can be seen, a far step from the snow sledge and its twelve Eskimo dogs, spread out fanlike before the sled. Our Arctic soldiers live in model camps in a womanless world. The barracks are insulated against cold, have running water and toilet facilities. The camps boast a moving picture theater, barber shop and library. The military bases are located away from the settlement, so Greenlanders rarely see Americans, except for a few sailors on shore leave. One soldier when asked what he thought of Arctic life answered: "Everything is so different from what I expected. Instead of snow and ice all the time, it is warm here in summer. We had to send a hurry call for our regulation uniforms to replace the heavy clothing we had brought. The biggest drawback when we first arrived was the mosquitoes; they were terrible." Nettings and screens have fixed that. When the Greenlander was asked his opinion of the American soldier, he answered: "They O. K. Absolute O. K. We know Americaner protect us from Germans so we go back to Denmark. See all this chew-gummy—the soldiers give me for my childs, such people is O. K."

And here let us leave Greenland and the Greenlander in God's hand, hoping that his wish to return to Denmark will come true.

St. Ansgar's Mass

Patron Feast, February 3rd

IN accordance with the suggestion of the Reverend Henry Andersen, S.J., and the Reverend John LaFarge, S.J., and conforming to the arrangements made with the Reverend George Esterguard, St. Charles' Church, Big Stone City, South Dakota, it was decided that our official St. Ansgar's Mass should be celebrated this year in the parish of our Field Secretary. While the Units throughout the country were each celebrating their own Mass, the thoughts of all the members were of course directed toward the official public Mass, which was celebrated by Father Esterguard.

During the year 1936 St. Ansgar's League received a precious gift from our Holy Father, Pope Pius XI. This was granting of a Plenary Indulgence to the members of St. Ansgar's Scandinavian Catholic League, after they shall have confessed and received Holy Communion on the Titular Feast of the League, and on the same day shall have been present at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in some church or public oratory, offering at the same time prayers for the intention of the Holy Father. This great grace is ours for seven years, from the 12th of May, 1936.

If your Unit has not celebrated this Mass and would like to be considered for the honor next year, please communicate with the Reverend Lambert Erkens, Spiritual Director, 2 West 45th Street, New York City.

A GREAT CATHOLIC NORWEGIAN

MARIE ELIZABETH BRATAAS, renowned daughter of Peter Overn and Maren Flannum, both strict Lutheran Norwegians, was born January 8, 1867, on the Overn farm, in the Amt of Modum, Norway. She was baptized a Lutheran in the Heggens Kirke, Modum. The family lived quite a distance from the local school of Magnus Hansen. Marie was obliged to use skis in traveling to school. At the time of her birth she contracted asthma and suffered from this ailment until she was twelve years of age. Due to this physical disability, the family doctor advised the parents not to allow Marie to undergo the hardship of traveling on skis to school, so therefore the family engaged a private governess to teach the children at home. There were four children in the family, one boy, Kristian, and three girls, Petrea, Marie and Karoline, the oldest, who also was converted to the Catholic Faith at the age of twenty-eight. This sister received her higher education in the schools of Oslo and was pronounced by Professor Polasjek as the most proficient mathematics pupil he ever met and claimed there was no example she could not solve. She later was employed by the famous jeweler, David Andersen of Oslo, and traveled to the big cities of Brussels, Berlin, London, Paris, etc., to exhibit his wares. In Paris, she became acquainted with the Catholic religion and upon her return to Oslo, she decided to enter the Catholic Fold. At thirty, she became a cloistered discalced Carmelite nun in the Rue Rosiers Convent in Antwerp, Belgium. She died at the age of seventy-four. Petrea, the other sister died at the age of twelve. Kristian, the brother, traveled to the United States and remained a Lutheran.

Marie, the second sister, took up the humble study of cooking, after her schooling. Her father died at the early age of twenty-seven. Her mother died at the age of seventy, after having contracted a second marriage with Anen Bjorndalen, another Norwegian Lutheran. At the age of twenty-four Marie married Kristian Brataas from Arendal, a Lutheran, forty years of age. There was born to this couple an only child, the present Johanna Brataas Petterson. Kristian Brataas, her husband, died in the first year of their marriage. Marie later recalled the story of her husband when on one Sunday, while they were coming home from the Lutheran Church, she asked him what the minister meant when he preached about the one fold and one shepherd. She told him that she always thought the Lutheran religion was the only One Fold but, to her amazement, coming from her Lutheran husband, she heard him say, "No! not the Lutheran but the Catholic is the One Fold and One True Religion." This profession of the Faith she never forgot for it made a deep impression on her inner consciousness. After the death of her husband, Marie, a widowed mother of one child, at the age of twenty-five perfected her cooking at Söstrene Larsens Hotel, on Karl Johans Gate, Oslo. Due to Marie's close association with her sister, the Carmelite Nun, Sister Raphael Thérèse of the Holy Family, she came under the Catholic influence. She was converted to the Catholic Faith in St. Olaf's Church, in Oslo, by Father Kleis, two years after her husband's death. He had been a parishioner of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Oslo, the pastor of that church at that time was Pastor Krogh Tönning, who later became well known as a convert and writer. Marie Brataas went to him to have her name taken off the books as she was entering into the Catholic Faith. His reply was, "You are taking the right path."

A recollection of the early years of 1900 when the Catholics were very few in Norway, was that the Lutherans were very bigoted and not used to seeing the Sisters clad in their Order habit, so new to them. I can remember the children throwing stones and calling, "Catolikker, Bikjolikker bam fallara." While we children called back, "Protestanter, Fillifanter Bom Falara!" The Lutherans in Norway are now much more tolerant of things and persons Catholic. The wonderful Catholic schools and hospitals have brought with them this change of attitude. We pray that this war will make the Norwegians realize their indebtedness to the Catholic Church.

She became a member of the St. Elizabeth Society, the Third Order of St. Francis and the Christian Mothers in Oslo. She also was a subscriber to *St. Olaf*, the bi-monthly, only Catholic edition published in Oslo. She remained such for forty-eight years until her death. Marie came to the United States at the age of thirty-eight, and was fortunate enough to find work at the Catholic rectory of Father McCory at 506 West 153rd Street, New York City. Due to her excellent cooking, she soon found employment among the wealthy families at Newport, R. I., where her daughter Johanna was educated. She continued her employment in that city until she reached the age of sixty-five.

In the year 1912, at the age of forty-five, she first came in contact with the St. Ansgar Scandinavian League in New York City through Rev. Eric Waug, whom she knew from Norway. She joined in 1914 and became one of the first women members of the League. After retirement from work, she took up her residence with her married daughter, Johanna, in the parish of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, Winfield, L. I., N. Y. During this time she was an edification and good example to all, as a daily communicant, as an attendant at every church devotion, as a member of the Rosary Altar Society, as a perpetual member of the Propagation of the Faith, as a weekly Holy Hour adorer at St. Jean

(Continued on page 19, column 2)

LITERATURE'S DEBT TO THE CHURCH OF ICELAND

By Rev. Edward F. Swanstrom, Ph.D.

Iceland's Cathedral

WHEN one thinks of Iceland, he thinks immediately of her literature. As a center of literary activity, as the home of scaldic song and saga literature, Iceland has undoubtedly won her greatest fame among the family of nations. After the discovery and colonization of the island by the Norsemen, it was her rich codfisheries, sulphur deposits and other resources of value to European trade, that first attracted voyagers and traders to her shores. In modern times, though commercial intercourse with Iceland has increased in magnitude with the years, it is her literary fame, together with the picturesque scenery of the island and the charming hospitality and simple rural life of the people, that acts as a magnet to tourist and traveler. One feels constrained to pay but passing attention to the sad turn of world events that is now attracting still other thousands of visitors—in uniform. Her strategic position between the two worlds finds ancient Iceland a new pawn of twentieth-century welfare.

Iceland was colonized in the ninth and tenth centuries by Norwegians, who left their native land when Harold Hárfagri, "Harold Fairhair," forced all Norway to submit to his rule. It was in 872 at Hafisfjord that Harold broke the power of the independent Norwegian nobles and made himself overlord of nearly all the country.

Many of the Norwegians fled to Ireland and assumed control of most of the island until conquered and scattered by Brian Boru. The greatest migration after Harold Hárfagri's conquest, however, was to Iceland. Here there developed an active civilization, fostered by absolute independence and by remoteness from the wars which wracked Norway. Nevertheless, Iceland, though politically independent until 1262, remained in close contact with the mother country. The roving characteristics of the Icelandic settlers saw to that. They also retained the Norse language. The introduction of Christianity into the island about 1,000 A. D. did not interrupt the literary development as in other Germanic lands. Literature was zealously cultivated by priests and laymen and never lost its popular character.

The oldest Norse poems date from about 850; of the poetry preceding that date almost nothing is known. These earliest poems were transmitted orally and such was the case until 1100. A written literature was not introduced until the twelfth century. Most of the manuscripts possessed today and preserved, chiefly at Copenhagen, Upsala and Stockholm, date from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Many of the early military and political leaders were also poets and composed a mass of lyric poetry. Narrative poetry also flourished for the Icelander had a passion for story telling and for listening to stories. The dawn of the twelfth century brought the sagamen, writers who collected the material that for generations had passed from mouth to mouth and gave it permanent form in the written word. The greatest bulk of what we now have of old Norse literature had its origin in the earlier period but we owe an equal debt to the scholars who preserved it in its written form.

When after 1250 Iceland entered upon a rapid and tragic decline, its literature also fell upon evil days. The people, exhausted by the bloody feuds and protracted wars among the chief nobles of the State, offered no resistance to the Norwegian, King Hákon the Elder, when in 1258 he placed a governor over Iceland and made it a province of Norway. Pestilence and famine accompanied the volcanic disturbances that shrouded the country in even greater sorrow for many years after its loss of independence. The accession of Denmark to the rule of Iceland brought Protestantism in its wake and for more than 300 years before 1859 no Catholic priest was permitted to set foot on its soil.

Little wonder that Icelandic literature fell upon evil days. In the days of her Catholicity the priests of Iceland went frequently to French and English universities to make their studies. Many among the clergy and laity made pilgrimages to the hallowed spots of both East and West. There sprang up in Iceland a number of monasteries such as the Benedictine abbeys of Thingeirar, Munkathverá, Kirkjubaer and the Augustinian convents of Thykkvibœr, Flatey, Viotey, Möjruvellir and Skvija. Hermann, in his *Island in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart,* tells us: "A strongly intellectual atmosphere pervaded these monasteries. They were centers of learning and literature, and thoroughly national in character. It is beyond question that it is principally to her Catholic clergy that Iceland is indebted for the origin and prosperous growth of her earlier literature, down to the middle of the sixteenth century" (Hermann, Vol. II, p. 91).

The mass of Icelandic literature collected and put into written form as I described above between the years 1150 and 1250 may be roughly divided into four groups. The greatest in volume and that to which I will devote most of

my attention, as has been suggested, is made up of the sagas. These are narratives, mainly in prose, ranging all the way from authentic history of the Norwegian kings and the early Icelandic settlements to fairy tales. Embodied in the sagas is found the material comprising the second group, the Skaldic poetry. These are a vast collection of songs of praise, triumph, love, lamentation and such, and are almost uniformly characterized by an appalling complexity of figurative language. The beginnings of the Skaldic art are lost in mythical obscurity but it was undoubtedly of Norwegian origin.

There is no absolute line to be drawn between the poetry of the Skalds and the poems of the Edda, which may be called the third group. The Edda is considered the oldest and most important monument of old Norse poetry. The Eddic poems are anonymous, whereas the Skaldic poems are almost always of known authorship and deal, as I indicated, with historic personages and events. In contrast to the extreme artificiality in structure and language of the Skaldic poetry, the Eddic poems are simple and quite impersonal.

The fourth group is made up of didactic works, principally religious and legal treatises—studies which originated in the later and less fruitful period of Icelandic literature. Only a few of these writings command attention among the world's literature.

The finest and most characteristic product of Icelandic genius is the saga, the prose narrative, of historical events—in other words, a prose epic. Unlike Skaldic poetry the saga is of purely Icelandic origin and can be traced back as far as the tenth century. The saga is properly the creation of the peculiar conditions under which Icelandic society was constituted in the earliest medieval times. The material is taken from real life and the sagas are frequently the biography of eminent Icelanders (íslendingasögur) or of Norwegian kings (konungasögur).

The aristocratic Icelander had no diversions except games of strength and skill, out-of-doors, and listening to professional story-tellers, indoors. Story-telling was a recognized form of entertainment at Icelandic banquets and the person who repeated or read the tale was known as the sagaman and was held in high esteem and honor. The poet was at once the chronicler, the entertainer, the musician and the lyric and satiric artist.

The craft of the sagaman was handed down as a precious possession from generation to generation; it demanded a rigid apprenticeship and the command of an exacting technique. Control of the different varieties of meter, the use of the figurative language, and an acquaintance with the great traditions of the past were all necessary for the part. The sagaman lifted up his voice in exultation after victory, mourned the dead, lamented misfortune and satirized the enemies of his patrons. His art was an epitome of the life of his people and his songs afford the truest indication of their character and customs.

The sagamen treated their material with poetic freedom and in a perfectly objective manner; dialogue enlivens the narrative and poetic citations are freely interspersed. In this the saga resembles Old Irish prose narrative and Celtic influence is quite possible. Christopher Dawson in his *The Making of Europe* has this to say: ". . . there seems no reason to doubt the existence of a Celtic element in Icelandic culture, which shows itself both in the character of the people and in their literary achievements. For the elements that distinguish Icelandic literature from the older tradition that is common to the Teutonic peoples, namely, the development of the Saga or prose epic and the elaborate rhymed poetry of the Skalds, are precisely those that characterize Irish literature.

"Nevertheless, the probability that the Icelandic genius, like that of almost every great culture that the world has seen, arose from a soil that had been fertilized by the mingling of two different races and cultural traditions does nothing to detract from the originality of its creative achievement. Even if Icelandic literature is indebted to the Celts for its use of narrative prose, nothing can be further removed from the fantastic rhetoric and magical feats of the Irish epic than the sober realism and psychological truth of the Icelandic sagas."

The greatest of the íslendingasögur, or Icelandic family sagas, are the "Egilssaga," the hero of which is the Skald Egill, the "Laxdæla," which tells of the inhabitants of the Laxá valley in Western Iceland, the "Eyrabyggja," which has for its main theme the life of the goji (chieftain) Snorri, and the "Njálssaga," the longest and most prominent of all the sagas, the scene of which is laid in southern Iceland. In this work two originally different sagas, those of Gunnar and Njáll, have been fused. No saga gives clearer insight into the state of the island's civilization during the period from 960 to 1016.

Of the numerous other sagas of this kind, mention may be made of those of Gunnlaug Ormstunga, of Kormak, of Grettir the Strong, of Gísli Súrsson, as well as of the "Vatnsdaela" and the "Vopnfirthingasaga." The discovery of Greenland and Vínland (America) is related in the "Eiríkssaga rauja" (Saga of Eric the Red), which was written about 1200.

The heroic age of Iceland terminates in 1030. Later events are treated in the "Sturlunga-Saga," which arose about 1300 in western Iceland. It is a collection of sagas grouped around the main portion of the "Islendingasaga" of Sturla Thorjarson.

The history of the Icelandic Church is presented in the "Biskupasögur" (bishops' sagas), composed for the most part by clergymen and narrating the lives of the first Icelandic bishops. The story of the conversion of Iceland is told in the "Kristnisaga," which seems a continuation of the "Landnámabók" based on Ari's work.

The history of the Norwegian kings is related in the konungasögur. The oldest extant attempt at a complete history is the "Ágrip of Noregs Konungasgöum" (Epitome of Norwegian Kings' Sagas). A collection of similar character is the so-called "Fagrskinna" (Fine Parchment), in which Skaldic poems are extensively used. But the greatest historic work in Icelandic is the famous "Konungabók" of Snorri Sturluson (1178-1241), known also from its opening words as "Heimskringla" (earth's circle). Here the history of Norway is told from its mythic beginnings to 1177. The work was probably completed between 1220 and 1230. Snorri's nephew, Sturla, was also an historian. He is the author of sagas of the Kings Hákon, Hákonson and Magnús.

But there were also sagas of purely fictitious content, telling of folk tales and adventure, generally localized in prehistoric Norway. Of this type are the so-called fornaldarsogur (stories of olden times), among which are reckoned the "Völsungasaga," based mainly on Eddic poems, the Frith-

jófssaga," and the "Hervararsaga." All these sagas are known only in late versions of the fourteenth century.

Many of the best sagas fortunately have been translated into English and, of course, there are fine German editions to supplement those preserved in the old Norse tongue. Whether he be a student or lover of Icelandic tradition and folk lore, for one to be conversant with Icelandic history and development he must be familiar with her sagas and literature. You may recall how Madam Sigrid Undset drew upon the sagas in her fine analysis of the "History of the Church in Iceland Prior to the Reformation" at one of the previous sessions in this series.

It is in the transition from the oral narrative to the written saga that we recognize the debt that Icelandic literature owes to Christianity and the Catholic Church.

That period between 930-1030 in which the sagas were first developed as oral is sometimes called Söguöld, or saga age. It was a period of great unrest in Iceland, filled with numerous bloody feuds among warlike chieftains. Active overseas communications with foreign lands were maintained and the news of violent upheavals in Norway, accompanied by frequent overthrow of rulers, helped to tensify the general unrest. Stories about all sorts of interesting events naturally multiplied rapidly. New and more carefully constructed tales about the leading men in such events were added to the family genealogies of traditional groups. It is scarcely any wonder, considering the characteristics of the people, that a rich store of prose narrative was thus created, a folk literature of oral tradition which bore as yet no imprint of distinct authorship.

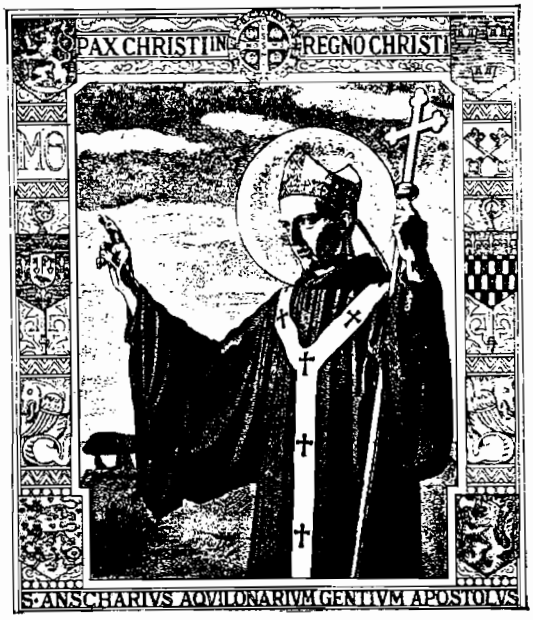
It is significant that the succeeding period, 1030-1118, is called the Friodaröld or peace period. Here it became possible to view past events in a more undisturbed perspective, as the internal struggles subsided, and greater tranquillity began to prevail in political and social life. It was in this period that the fróotir or learned men began to appear, men who bore the imprint of Christianity, men who had studied in schools both at home and abroad, and where were such seats of learning but in the monastic schools of both places. Their possession of the necessary literary ability to gather the ready narrative material and give it permanent form in written sagas could have been gained nowhere but in these distinctively Christian schools.

Iceland itself had now been a Christian state for several decades. Pagan ideas still firmly imbedded in the public mind to the contrary, Christianity amidst the peoples themselves and communication with the rest of the Christian world best showed itself in the development of learning and a new literary spirit. It was thus that the Icelanders entered upon an epoch of intellectual growth, an era which culminated in the literary golden age of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the greater part of Icelandic history writing and other prose literature was produced.

Where else but at the door of Church can the credit be laid for the literary accomplishments of the Icelandic people. Who but Mother Church could have offered the leaven that wrought such miraculous change. Under whose influence but hers did young Icelanders flock abroad, not as Skalds and warriors, but as students seeking the learning of European universities and the distinction to be won through scholarly achievements.

It is to the Church that Iceland is indebted for the new type of national leader that appeared—the schoolman, the historian and the churchman—replacing the Skalds who had hitherto been the chief representatives of the people's higher social and intellectual life. It was their love of scholarship, their study in the Christian schools abroad, in the schools at home that placed their beloved Iceland far ahead of the other countries of the North in intellectual culture and literary achievement. The flower of Iceland's literature is the flower of the Church, coming to seed and blooming in the evening of the Church in Iceland. Yea, withering in the Church's night in Iceland. In the evening of a new day in Iceland may her chroniclers and the historians of her past be Christlike in their Christianity for they will find the rich imprint of His feet upon her sands.

SCANDINAVIAN NEWS



NEWS reports from Scandinavia are very scarce these days. We all know the tremendous hardships the Church is suffering in the occupied countries and the trials through which they are passing for the reason that no Christian Church fits into the Nazi new order.

In times of great peril every nation requires a leader around whom the people can unite and from whom they can draw courage and moral sustenance. Down through the ages the Church has always been such a leader. This does not imply that in sudden emergencies a Church is there as a leader. The role of leadership is recognized in the Church's unwavering stand at all times in its effort to spread light and truth. When material values change or are destroyed, the Church, that is truth, remains as the one solid thing to which people cling and to which they look for guidance and moral support.

Reports coming out of the occupied Scandinavian countries once more prove the manifest position of the Christian people

Mr. Carl Wright, Norway's only Catholic member of Parliament, was the subject of an interview in the *Catholic Herald* of April 2nd, from which the following is quoted:

"Mr. Wright was arrested by the Gestapo and subjected to terrible tortures while in jail. With the help of Norwegian patriots he succeeded in escaping to England.

"Pray for Scandinavia"

"Mr. Wright and his parents are converts to Catholicism and his uncle was the great Norwegian cleric, Monsignor Irgens. His uncle, Mr. Dahl, a member of the Norwegian Consular Service, was Papal Chamberlain.

"Mr. Wright knew Norway's Catholic Bishop, Monsignor Mangers, well, and he has a copy of a letter that Monsignor Mangers sent to Bishop Berggrav on the occasion of the great stand of the Lutheran Bishops against the Nazis. This was the first public occasion of a rapprochement between the Bishops of the two Churches:

"'I quite agree,' wrote Monsignor Mangers, 'with what was was said in the letter from the Norwegian Bishops to Minister Skancke.' (Skancke is the quisling Minister of the Church Department in Norway.)

"'Monsignor Mangers,' said Mr. Wright, 'is a very fine man. He has been in Norway for fourteen years and has been Bishop since 1932. He is very clever and has many friends. On our national Salvation Day, May 17, 1940, he celebrated a Solemn Requiem Mass in Oslo Pro-Cathedral for the Norwegian fallen. But the next year the Nazis forbade him to say a Solemn Requiem. He was just allowed to say Mass.

"'What the Germans have done for Norway is to unite all the Christians of all the churches as they have not been united for years. They are solidly behind the Bishops and the clergy in their stand against the Nazis, and the churches are fuller than they have ever been.'"

The great stand of the Bishops of the Norwegian State Church (Lutheran) mentioned by Mr. Wright probably refers to their letters of resignation in protest against oppressive measures of the Nazi quisling Government.

Two specific actions of the quisling Government against which the Bishop protested and which led to their resignations were, "News of Norway" says, attempts made by Nazi-directed police to block a church service at the Trondheim Cathedral on Sunday, February 1st, and the quisling edict of early February requiring all children between the ages of 10 and 18 years to enroll in the Nazi Ungdomsfylking, Norwegian version of Germany's Hitlerjugend.

In their letters of resignation the Bishops stated that they would continue to perform their spiritual duties insofar as it was possible for non-officials.

The Bishops of the Swedish Church (Lutheran) also expressed sympathy for the oppression being suffered "by our Norwegian brother-people."

Dr. Frank G. Nelson, guest professor at Oslo University at the time of the invasion, was arrested and later exchanged with a Nazi in the United States. In his story to *The Scandinavian News* he relates how Bishop Berggrav preached his brave Christmas sermon to the prisoners in Oslo jail:

"Tonight we celebrate the victory of the weakest power known to man, a new-born Babe, over the world's mightiest empire—a festival which has a special meaning for us tonight. . . . "

The prison interpreter failed to understand the allegory, and the Bishop was allowed to finish his sermon. Then the strangest thing of all happened. Bishop Berggrav suddenly spoke in German and asked the guards to sing the old hymn, "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht." A hidden sentimental streak in them came to light and they sang while tears rolled down their cheeks.

* * * *

The King of Denmark has given the Nazis notice that he will stand for no intolerance in his kingdom. He attended service in a Jewish synagogue and announced that if the Jews of Denmark should be forced to wear a symbol to mark them as different from their fellow citizens, then he himself and the other members of the royal house would wear the same symbol.

Another example of sympathy and encouragement found expression in the action of the citizens of Hälsingborg on Sweden's west coast last Christmas Eve.

They gathered on the shore around a huge bonfire to send greeting to residents of Helsingör, Denmark, just across the waters of Öresund. On the Danish shore a similar bonfire was lighted, around which a crowd of Danes gathered and sang the Swedish National Anthem. This was amplified so it could be heard across the sound, which at this point is only a few miles wide. Blackout regulations forced a fire brigade to extinguish the Danish fire, but the crowd remained and watched the Swedish fire burn down. Mayor Joe Laurin of Hälsingborg, sent a brief address of greeting to Denmark by loud speaker, speaking hopefully of Denmark's free future, and led the Swedish crowd in cheers for their sister nations.

The Swedes have been very active in sending relief supplies to Norway. Supplies of all kinds have arrived in Oslo for distribution under supervision by a special Donors' Committee of Swedes resident in Norway, who see to it that the aid is not diverted. The relief supplies are purchased by the Swedish Norway Relief Committee and also made up from donations by women workers of the Swedish Red Cross.

The Lutheran Church Front

Danish pastors are not afraid to speak their minds. The clergyman in charge of an important church in Copenhagen said to his confirmation class recently: "We are not allowed to discuss politics here . . . but still I want to tell you that I would rather die with the Jews than live in company with Nazis. If there are any of you who have not understood what I said, I'll gladly repeat it."

A pastor in a Danish village preached on the courageous fight of the Norwegian Church, characterizing Bishop Berggrav as a martyr. He pointed out that Christianity and Nazism are irreconcilable enemies, and urged his congregation to remain steadfast in the struggle.

Another Danish pastor said it was loathsome hypocrisy of the Nazis to talk of reforming others before they had reformed themselves. "We need a new spirit," the pastor said, "but I don't believe we need a new system. I can't delay in saying this, because in six months, possibly in three, perhaps even in one month, I may not be able to stand here and say what I think."

A GREAT CATHOLIC NORWEGIAN

(Continued from page 15, column 2)

Baptiste Church, Lexington Avenue, New York City. She was considered by one of her parish priests as one of the genuinely saintliest women of the parish. At the age of seventy-five she suffered a stroke, was anointed and received the Last Sacraments and died July 6, 1942, and was buried in the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis. After a Solemn Mass of Requiem, she was buried in St. John's Cemetery, Middle Village, L. I., N. Y. Indeed we can declare, she was a great Catholic Norwegian. May she rest in peace!

The Church of the Nativity, Blessed Virgin Mary, Harrison, Neb.

IN THE latter part of June, 1940, His Excellency, Stanislaus V. Bona, D.D., Bishop of Grand Island, Neb., decided to establish a permanent parish in Harrison; until then it had been a Mission of Crawford, Neb. Bishop Bona asked Father Madsen to establish the parish; he accepted.

Father Madsen arrived in Harrison August 1, 1940. August 12, 1940, the Very Rev. Msgr. Michael Dolan, dean of the district, installed Father Madsen as pastor. August 15, 1940, was the last time Mass was celebrated in the old church. On August 16th, the old edifice was moved to the new place and

a basement, vestibule, sanctuary and sacristy were added to the old building. A new interior, and new roof were put on the old building. The new location is much more suitable for a church than the former, which was close to the business district of the village of Harrison.

On November 1st the church was finished so that it could be used for Divine Services. During the building period Mass was celebrated in the basement of the courthouse.

The Catholic Church Extension Society gave a very substantial donation to help to defray the expense of this work.

In June, 1941, Father Madsen asked the Bishop and his council to be given permission to begin and build a new rectory. The permission was granted. On July 29, 1941, the building operations began and by November 10, 1941, the house was completed well enough that the pastor could move in. The rectory is built in a log-cabin style somewhat similar to the United States Ranger dwellings in the Black Hills and the Rockies, and as such it fits in well with the pine-clad landscape and the rugged hills that surround Harrison. The rectory is well appointed for a small parish. The pastor's office, library, the bedroom and bath form one group; a dining room, kitchen and the housekeeper's room form the other group of the house. A full basement has a winter chapel, two guest rooms, bath, laundry and furnace room. The whole plant did not cost $4,000. Father Madsen was greatly aided in this work by advice and criticism of the Rev. Leo J. Sehringer, pastor of St. Norbert's Church, Pittsburgh, Pa. Father Sehringer was a close associate of the late Carlton Strong, who built the well known Sacred Heart Church in Pittsburgh, Pa. The parish worked enthusiastically with their pastor and the result is that they can begin 1943 with a debt of less than $900.

The spiritual life of the parish has been built up along with the material structure. The liturgy of the Church is well carried out. High Mass is the order in both Mission and home parish at the late Mass. Gregorian music is used throughout the whole Mass. A special feature is the weekly instruction for high school children. Due to the scattered settlements children come from the whole county (a territory larger than the State of Rhode Island) to high school in Harrison and in that way they stay over the week in Harrison and receive their instruction in catechism. Once a month they have their own Mass at which they sing hymns and also go to Holy Communion. A Council of Catholic Women is established and has bi-monthly meetings. A branch of the Third Order of St. Francis is also flourishing in the parish.

It is the fond hope of the pastor that some day he can have a dormitory under Catholic auspices for the children coming to high school from their homes on the ranches.

Of course, what would interest the readers of the BULLETIN most is the work amongst the Scandinavians. Sioux County, one of the largest in the State of Nebraska and one of the smallest in population, has a fair sprinkling of people who have some Scandinavian blood. However, in the parish there are several who are part Scandinavian and converts, but, of course, they know very little of that heritage. The presence of a Scandinavian priest in the community is noticed in many quarters; Scandinavians themselves will often repeat that in such and such a town there is a Scandinavian priest. Several people have stopped and visited and asked questions about the Church in Scandinavia; men and women who have been away from the old country for a number of years.

What we need today to reach these people in whose veins flows the same blood—yes, even the remnants of the same faith, is a clear, intelligent, logical presentation of the greatness of their ancestral country when it was Catholic. A real history of the great men and women of the North is certainly most imperative. A history of Absolon, Jacob Erlandson, of Queens Dagmar, Margaret; and of saints like Knud, Knud Lavard, Olav, Erik, Suniva, Kjeld, Birgitta and Katrine.

A real biography of Birgitta of Vadstena would be a great boom to the Church in presenting its truth to Scandinavians in America.

Equipped with these cultural weapons and knowing that we have superiority in this field, many would stop and ask wherefrom we got them, then we could open up our spiritual "Waabenhus" and show them our spiritual weapons. The conquest would be ours.

THE various units of St. Ansgar's Scandinavian Catholic League have been rather slow in complying with our request for a report on their activities last year. As a matter of fact, as this year's BULLETIN goes to press, most of the reports are still missing. For this reason, and much to our regret, we are able to give only a very meager report on the League's activities as a whole during 1942. We compliment the units reporting on their accomplishments which we realize have been frequently made at considerable sacrifice.

"Pray for Scandinavia"

Field Secretary's Report

DURING the past year, due to the burden of the war affecting us all in so many ways, it has been impossible to accomplish all the things which were planned.

Government restrictions on travel have curtailed your field secretary's travel to an absolute minimum.

One might feel that this is a cause for discouragement, but rather we should realize that for the present we must pray the harder and the while lay plans for renewed activity as soon as such is possible.

St. Olaf's day was celebrated with great solemnity in Garretson last July and I had the privilege of being present. In Fargo an excellent meeting was held last spring, at which I spoke.

My main report to the League is that I have so many angles which could be followed that I grow impatient at the restraint. Let us continue to plant our seed when and wherever we can and the day will come that peace will return permitting the resumption of our active work.

I would like to ask each and every member to be ardent in prayer for tragic Scandinavia and for her children all over the world, particularly in our own beloved land where they are becoming the victims of the materialistic philosophy which has made such a mess of the thing we called civilization.

For now we must stand and wait, but in God's good time we will be able to reap the harvest of our prayers.

THE REV. GEORGE ESTERGUARD.
St. Charles Parish, Big Stone City, S. Dak.

Fargo, N. Dak., Report

WHILE our unit misses the wise counsel, guidance and encouragement of Father Thomas Hendrickson, who left to do advance graduate work at Marquette University this year, we are being ably directed in his absence by Father Joseph L. Hylden, assistant pastor at St. Mary's Cathedral.

As the New Year opens for us we have two main objectives: First, to spiritualize more greatly our meetings, second, to increase our membership.

Besides the lives of Saints Olav and Ansgar, given by Mrs. Holger and Mrs. Barrett, Father Hylden gave some very inspirational talks on "The Rosary," "Purgatory and the Poor Souls," "The History of Judaism," and "The Season of Advent." At the January meeting Father Marion Roth. O.S.B., pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Moorhead, Minnesota, was our guest speaker and gave a very beautiful, enlightening address on "The Mystical Body of Christ."

On November 24th our unit sponsored a benefit card party in the St. Mary Clubrooms which was a huge success. Mrs. John Holger and Mrs. Mary O'Day were co-chairmen for the occasion, assisted by Mrs. George Barrett, Mrs. Arthur Alm, Mrs. Don Wardwell, Mrs. Pauline Johnson, and Miss Florence Gregerson.

Our Christmas Party was a festive occasion in charge of Mrs. H. J. Stueb and Mrs. John Holger. The tables were delightfully decorated with greens from Norway and beautiful candelabra. A feature of the party was several varieties of Norwegian pastries. Instead of exchanging gifts between the members, we had a linen handkerchief shower for our spiritual director.

At our annual meeting in December the following new officers were elected:

President.....Mrs. A. G. Alm
Vice-President.....Mr. George Barrett
Secretary.....Mrs. Joe Kuppich
Treasurer.....Mrs. Mary O'Day

Under their leadership we look forward to a progressive year.

On January 11th we were shocked by the news of the very sudden and unexpected death of one of our finest members, Mrs. Clarence Knudson. We hope League members of other units will occasionally remember her in their prayers for departed souls.

Throughout the year we hope to feature as part of our social hour at each meeting some special Scandinavian dish. Before the year is over even those of us with lots of Irish blood in our veins will probably have a yen for Scandinavian food!

Respectfully submitted.
FLORENCE E. GREGERSON,
Corresponding Secretary.

Garretson, S. Dak., Report

OUR annual novena in honor of St. Olaf was concluded on the Feast of St. Olaf, July 29th. We observed the Feast that morning with a Solemn Mass celebrated by the Rev. Hendrickson of Fargo, N. Dak., with three priests from St. Bernard's Seminary of Sioux Falls rendering the Gregorian chant in the choir.

The sermon for the occasion was delivered by the Rev. George Esterguard of Big Stone City, S. Dak. The ceremonies closed with the public veneration of the relic of St. Olaf.

The annual pilgrimage of the Fargo, N. Dak., unit to the Shrine of St. Olaf was one of the highlights of the annual celebration of the Feast. With all the difficulties of travel, the faithful devotees of St. Olaf made this journey of over 250 miles to pay homage to the eternal King of Norway, St. Olaf.

REV. HUGH K. WOLF.

Editor's Note—Rev. Hugh K. Wolf was transferred by his Bishop from Garretson, S. Dak., to Ramona, in the same State. There are many Scandinavians in and around Ramona and Father Wolf will there continue his work for the League and for the cult of St. Olaf.

The new pastor at Garretson, the Rev. Luke Murphy, has become much interested in the work of the League and will carry on where Father Wolf left off.

Buffalo Unit Report

THE Buffalo branch of the League has increased in number and enthusiasm since last year's report.

During the year we followed the suggestion of the League and had informal talks on Iceland at each meeting. On the Feast of St. Ansgar we had Benediction in the Canisius chapel, followed by a meeting in Father's office where he gave an account of the Icelandic saints.

The March meeting was at the home of Willert Klass. As

Mr. and Mrs. Oskerz, the appointed speakers, could not be present, Charles Brady reviewed Sigrid Undset's new book, *Return to the Future,* which we all found extremely interesting.

The April meeting at the Oskerz home covered those Icelandic sagas which concerned the Viking voyages to America, with Mr. and Mrs. Homer Hanson giving us the facts.

We had planned a beach party for the last meeting, but gas rationing necessitated calling it off.

This year we welcomed the Joseph Synnerdahls of South Dakota, at our first meeting at Canisius College. The following officers were elected: President, Rev. Henry Andersen, S.J.; Chaplain, Father Joseph Jensen; Vice-President, Joseph Synnerdahl; Treasurer, Bertel Espersen; Secretary, Eileen Larson Brady.

This year we are planning general discussions on important books and subjects. Our annual Christmas party will feature Sigrid Undset's *Happy Times in Norway,* with its charming Christmas chapter.

At the February meeting, Father Andersen will lead a discussion of Jorgensen, the Danish biographer, and Mr. Synnerdahl has promised to sponsor a science discussion during the year.

We are proud to have one star on our flag as Willert Klass, our former Vice-President, has entered the Service.

New York Unit Report

St. Ansgar's Scandinavian Catholic League
Main Events—1942-1943

THE annual Christmas party of St. Ansgar's Scandinavian Catholic League was held at the Kings County Lighting Company of Brooklyn on January 8, 1942. The chairlady was Mrs. Arthur Andersen, assisted by Mrs. S. B. Withammer, Mrs. J. Dubiell and Mrs. Fick. Mr. Viggo Rambusch procured moving pictures of Iceland. They were most interesting and beautiful.

Mr. Beggs accompanied on his violin the singing of Christmas carols by the assembled guests.

Delicious coffee and Scandinavian cakes and cookies were served. About one hundred members and friends were present, one new active member was acquired, Mrs. Root. Mrs. Fick had made a beautiful doll in Icelandic costume, chances were sold and a nice size sum was realized.

The last lecture on Iceland was given by Father Swanstrom at the April meeting entitled "Literature's Debt to the Church in Iceland." Two honored guests from Iceland have paid the league a visit during the year.

In April a young man, Mr. Hakon Loftsson, paid us a visit. He was on his way to St. Mary's College, Baltimore, to study for the priesthood.

At the October and November meeting, the Rev. Jon Gunnarrsson was present. He gave the members an interesting talk on the progress of the Church in Iceland. There are now about 300 Catholics in the country.

Our program for the New Year beginning November, 1942, is to be the study of Greenland. The first paper "Geography and History of Greenland" was read by Mrs. Dubiell at the November meeting. At the December meeting "The Church Hisotry of Greenland" was read by the Rev. Lambert Erkens. The early "Sagas of Greenland" will be read by Madam Undset at some future meeting.

A letter was received in February from a young priest in Denmark wherein he states his satisfaction in the large number of native young men studying for the priesthood. Father Roth sent $100 to the League to be forwarded to Bishop Muller of Sweden, who was a seminarian friend of his. Father Roth saw the Bishop's picture and an account of his need in the BULLETIN.

The *Catholic Digest* has published in their late issues an account of Leif Ericksson, also Madam Undset's article on "Iceland."

Many requests were received during the year for the *Life of St. Ansgar,* BULLETINS and information regarding the League.

We regret to state that Mr. and Mrs. Esterguard, after many years of most faithful service, find it necessary to resign from office. On account of long hours of war work, necessitating frequent absence from the city, Mr. Lassen asked to be relieved of his office.

At December meeting election of officers took place: President, Mr. Viggo F. E. Rambusch; Vice-President, Mr. S. B. Withammer; Secretary, Mrs. Walter Root; Recording Secretary, Mrs. J. Petterson; Treasurer, Mrs. J. Dubiell.

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS ON SCANDINAVIA

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AMIDST THE VIKINGS

(From the N. C. W. C. News Service)

The Catholic Church Amidst the Vikings, a pamphlet by the Rev. Henry J. McCloud, has just been published here by the Paulist Press. It recounts the history of the Church in the Scandinavian countries—Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Greenland and Iceland—and presents briefly the status of Catholicism in these countries today, together with a complete list of the Scandinavian Saints.

"No doubt many Catholics have from time to time wondered if the Catholic Church ever existed in the Scandinavian countries," Father McCloud writes. "The reason for this pamphlet is to show that the Catholic Church did flouish in these North Countries."

Father McCloud, discussing the Church in Iceland and Greenland, mentions the presence of the American troops, who are now occupying these outposts of the Western Hemisphere.

"From the fifteenth to the twentieth century Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament had not dwelled on Greenland," he writes. "But today He once more dwells on this island in the Arctic Ocean." Father McCloud says, for daily by the command of one of His priests, a Catholic chaplain of the United States

"Pray for Scandinavia"

Army, "God comes down upon the altar in the Army base now situated in Greenland." The chaplain who accompanied the United States troops to Greenland became the first priest to celebrate Mass there since the fifteenth century, the author says. "Once more in the person of the Catholic American soldiers, Greenland sees Catholics again," he adds.

Of Iceland he writes: "Today we find the Church of Iceland appearing once more with a Cathedral, a Bishop and priests, Catholic churches, chapels, schools and hospitals. The Catholic population is about 400, but this does not include the large number of Catholics among the American troops who are now stationed in Iceland. The day may not be too far distant when Iceland will return to the Faith of the stanch Catholic Norsemen of old."

The author, dedicating his work to "St. Ansgar, Apostle of the North," pays tribute to ST. ANSGAR'S SCANDINAVIAN CATHOLIC LEAGUE of New York City, which provided him with much of the material utilized in the preparation of this pamphlet. St. Ansgar's League was organized to promote the religious, social and intellectual improvement of its members and to work for the conversion of the Scandinavian people. It publishes an annual bulletin containing a digest of Catholic news from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland, and articles concerning the Church in these countries. The Secretariat of the League is at 2 West 45th Street, New York City. There are now seventeen units established throughout the Middle West.

A few months ago N. C. W. C. released the following item:

With Iceland now more than ever before in recent centuries a focal point of world attention, an article in *Osservatore Romano* recalls that one of the great triumphs of sacred poetry through the ages is a hymn to Our Lady composed in Icelandic about A. D. 1350.

Entitled "Lilja" (Lily), the poem was composed by Eysten Asgrimsson, an Augustinian monk of Iceland who died in Norway in 1361. It is still recited, in part, daily or weekly, in many home in the Scandinavian countries, *Osservatore* states. The Missionary Museum of the Lateran is in possession of the original Icelandic text of "Lilja," together with a Latin translation published in 1774 by the Lutheran Bishop of Skalholt, Finn Johansson. Both text and translation were the gift of the Most Rev. Martin Meulenberg, S.M.M., Vicar Apostolic of Iceland.

Believing it might be of real interest to our many readers, we asked a young Catholic Icelander, now residing in this country, for a short account of its origin. The reply was as follows:

LILJA—THE LILY

An Icelandic Religious Poem of the Fourteenth Century

In Icelandic literature there is a poem which has caused many to say that "all poets wished they had written 'The Lily,' "allir vildu Lilju kvedid hafa." Its author, Eysteinn Ásgrimsson, an Augustinian friar, was an Icelander by birth. Unfortunately nothing is known about his early life.

Popular folklore in Iceland relates that Brother Eysteinn wrote his "Lilja" while in prison for an offence against the abbot of the monastery of Thykkvibaer, Thorlákur Loptsson in 1342. How the trouble arose is not known, but at all events Brother Eysteinn did not stay long in prison, because in 1343 he was released. Whatever may be the truth about Brother Eysteinn's character and about the circumstances of writing the poem, "Lilja" remains one of the most beautiful poems ever written in Icelandic.

The Blessed Mother is the center around which the poet groups the great truths of our Faith. She is the Lily, pure and innocent; she is great in her power and in her love for man and she is the consolation of the sinner. Eysteinn could not have chosen a better name to represent these glories of the Blessed Virgin. Praising her and imploring her the poet before accounts in succession the fall of our first parents, the Annunciation of Our Lady and the Nativity of our Lord, His Passion and Crucifixion and lastly His Resurrection.

The poem consists of 100 verses and its metric composition is one of the most difficult in Icelandic poetry, the so-called dróttkvaedur háttur. The whole poem is a stefjadrápa (generally explained to have been a song accompanied by a string musical instrument). When recited it sounded beautifully to the ear and its rhythm made it easy to memorize. The "Lilja" is acknowledged to be the greatest saint-lay of Iceland from the Ages of Faith.

The English translation of "Lilja" which is printed below was done by the Icelandic scholar, Mr. Eiríkur Magnusson, who lived in Scotland in the last century and who, besides "Lilja," translated some of the Icelandic Sagas into English.

VERSE NO. 1

Almighty God of every state,
Who angels rulest, and nations' fate,
Who needest neither place nor hour,
Abiding in thy tranquil power,
At once abroad, and yet within,
Above below, and there between
Through ages everlastingly
Be praised, O One in Trinity.

VERSE NO. 25

This Mary is our mother bright,
With honour decked, a flower of might,
And bloometh like a ruddy rose,
Which by a living fountain grows;
A fragrant root of lowliness,
A ray of the Spirits' holiness;
She loves but God and who are good,
In virtue is she like to God.

VERSE NO. 49

Now Jesus fain they searched and found,
And found they pushed him, struck and bound,
And bound they lead whom heathens mock
Him mocked they smite, revile, unfrock;
These devils' sons twist piercing thorn
Around His blessed head for scorn,
And Christ they nail upon the rood,
From driven nails spouts forth the blood.

HAPPY TIMES IN NORWAY

By Sigrid Undset. Published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. $2.00.

"When the Germans invaded Norway on April 9, 1940, the Happy Times in our country came to an end." The book begins with this historical date, which shall never be forgotten by those who have witnessed it or by those who know and love Norway.

In this country there are three important celebrations every

year. Christmas—and it is a merry one—which is a religious observance and lasts for several weeks; the seventeenth of May, which is a patriotic celebration, and keeps the growing generations in touch with their bold and magnificent heritage, and the Summer Vacation when the family moves to the saeter high in the hills. These too are the three chapters of the book.

I have never been in Norway, but I have read her history and loved the tales of her great heroes. It is a homely country with great warm hearths and homespun, where people practise and enjoy hospitality. There is the good earth, there is the homestead with the sheaf of golden grain by the door to share the fruits of the field even with the birds. In winter the hills are white with snow; in summer they are covered with flowers and fruits. Beautiful is this land, equally beautiful the lives of its people.

Madam Undset has revealed the heart of her country in opening wide the portals of her own home in Lillehammer by the lake. Her roses are there and so are the flowers of all Norway, her large open hearth is there with all the warmth and charm of Norway, her books, her pets, her children are there, and in them the history, the generations, the homes of all Norway.

With masterful hand and a great heart that knows and loves the lyric, the tender and deeply personal, Sigrid Undset has shown us the Norway that still lives and will come back again beautiful, hearty, eternal—for hospitality, love, joy, heroism never die. JOSEPH P. ASCHERL.

NOTE: *Happy Times in Norway* ($2.00 and postage free) can be ordered from the Guild Book Shop, 117 East 57th Street, New York City. Telephone: PLaza 3-0225.

Autographed copies ($2.50); the additional charge will be deposited for the Church in Norway. Order your copy today.

IN REVIEW

AS the reports come in from the various Units, we realize that their problem is quite similar to our own, namely, that with the increasing demands upon each individual due to the war effort and with the curtailment of gasoline, it is becoming more difficult to have a complete set of six or eight meetings during the year.

We here in New York are going to try to have six or at least four meetings during the year 1943 and would request that the Units work out their own solution and include at least the celebration of the Annual St. Ansgar's Mass on February 3rd, and then one other affair. This could take the form of a social or the reading aloud of one or two of the feature articles from our BULLETIN.

One might also, to give additional color to the meeting, rent the Norwegian movies or the beautiful colored Swedish movies referred to elsewhere in the BULLETIN.

Judging from the Unit reports of the last few years, the Christmas Parties are invariably a success.

The fact remains that each Unit must solve the problem in its own way, but we do leave the request that there be at least celebration of the Mass on the Feast of St. Ansgar, and if it can be arranged, one other gathering during the year.

Meanwhile, all the members are urged to remember daily recitation of one Hail Mary for the conversion of Scandinavia.

Scandinavian Feast Days

Mass is said by our Spiritual Director for the intentions of the League on the Feasts of St. Canute, January 19th; St. Ansgar, February 3rd; St. Olav, July 29th, and St. Bridget, October 8th.

The Officers of the Parent Unit Are as Follows:

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MR. S. B. WITHAMMER, *Vice-President*
375 76th Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

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MRS. E. J. DUBIELL, *Treasurer*
144 Seminary Avenue, Yonkers, N. Y.

MRS. W. ROOT, *Corresponding Secretary*
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"Pray for Scandinavia"