

## ICELAND.

ICELAND is a large island in the northern part of the Atlantic Ocean, between the 53rd and the 67th degrees of north latitude, and between the 16th and 23rd degrees of west longitude from London. It is of a very irregular shape, and contains about 56,000 inhabitants.

At what time the island of Iceland was first peopled is uncertain. The Iceland chronicles go no farther back than the arrival of the Norwegians, about the year 861, when Naddodr, a pirate, was driven on the coast. In 864, Garder Suafarson, a Swede, encouraged by the account given by Naddodr, went in search of it, sailed round it, and gave it the name of Garder-sholmer, or Garder's Island. Having remained in Iceland during the winter, he returned in the spring to Norway, where he described the new-discovered island as a pleasant, well-cultivated country. This excited a desire in Floke, another Swede, reputed the best navigator of his time, to undertake a voyage thither. Floke staid the whole winter in the island, and, because he found great quantities of floating ice on the north side, he called it Iceland, which name it has ever since retained.

In 874, Ingolf, and his friend Lief, established a colony; and in sixty years the whole island was inhabited. The tyranny of Harold, king of Norway, contributed not a little to the population of Iceland. Besides the Norwegians, new colonies arrived from different nations.

In 924 they chose a chief; but his powers were inconsiderable, and the Icelanders began to wage war against each other. They remained, however, free from a foreign yoke till 1261, when they became subject to the Norwegians. Afterwards Iceland, together with Norway, became subject to Denmark.

Iceland is famous for the volcanoes with which it abounds, appearing, indeed, to owe its existence to submarine volcanic agency, and to have been upheaved at intervals from the bottom of the sea. Tracts of lava traverse the island and almost in every direction; besides which the country abounds with other mineral masses indicative of an igneous origin. The burning mountains, so dreadful in their effect, seldom begin to throw out fire without giving warning.

A subterraneous noise precedes the eruption for several days, with a roaring and cracking in the place from whence the fire is about to burst forth. The immediate sign is the bursting of the mass of ice, or snow, which covers the mountain, with a dreadful noise. The flames then issue forth, and stones, ashes, &c. are thrown out to vast distances. Egbert Classen relates, that, in the eruption of Kettle-gia, in 1755, a stone weighing 290 lbs., was thrown to the distance of twenty-four English miles.

Besides more than thirty volcanic mountains, there exists an immense number of small cones and craters, from which streams of melted substances have been poured forth over the surrounding regions. Twenty-three eruptions of Hecla are recorded since the occupation of the island by Europeans; the first of which occurred in 1604. But to enumerate the ravages of the many volcanoes with which Iceland abounds, would greatly exceed our limits. It will be sufficient to give an account of that which happened in 1783, and which, from its violence, seems to have been unparalleled in history.

Its first signs were observed on the first of June, by a trembling of the earth in the western part of the province of Skaptar-fall; it increased gradually till the 11th, and became at last so great, that the inhabitants quitted their houses, and lay at night in tents on the ground. A continual smoke, or steam, was perceived rising out of the earth in the northern and uninhabited parts of the country. Three fire spouts, as they were called, broke out in different places; one in Ulfaradal, a little to the east of the river Skaptá; the other two were a little to the westward of the river Ljónsá. The three fire spouts, or streams of lava, united in one, after having risen a considerable height in the air, arrived at last at such an amazing altitude as to be seen at the distance of upwards of 200 miles; the whole country, for double that distance, being enveloped in the densest smoke and steam, while the atmosphere was filled with sand, brimstone, and ashes, in such a manner as to occasion continual darkness. Considerable damage was done by the pumice stone, which fell red-hot in great quantities. Along with these, a tenacious substance, like pitch, fell in abundance. This shower having continued for three days, the fire became very visible, and at last arrived at the amazing height already mentioned. Sometimes it appeared in a continual stream, at others in flashes, with a perpetual noise like thunder, which lasted the whole summer. The obscurity occasioned by this extraordinary eruption, seems to have reached as far as Great Britain; for, during the whole summer of 1783, a haze or dullness appeared to darken the atmosphere.

The whole extent of ground covered by the lava, was computed to be ninety miles long, by forty-two in breadth; the depth of the lava being from sixteen to twenty fathoms. Twelve rivers were dried up, twenty-one villages were destroyed, and 224 persons lost their lives.

After this eruption, two new islands were thrown up in the sea; one of about three miles in circumference, and about a mile in height, at the distance of 100 miles south-west from Iceland, in 100 fathoms water.

FEW METALS ARE MET WITH, BUT THE SULPHUR IS INEXHAUSTIBLE.

HECLA, THE VOLCANIC MOUNTAIN, IS ABOUT THIRTY MILES INLAND.

ON THE SOUTH AND WEST COASTS, NUMEROUS ISLANDS HAVE BEEN FROM TIME TO TIME THROWN UP, SOME OF WHICH REMAIN.