

R E V I E W.

From the Scottish Cuardian.

AN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF ICELAND, GREENLAND AND THE FAROE ISLANDS, with Illustrations of their Natural History. Being Vol. xxviii, of the Edinburgh Cabinet Library.

This delightful volume has many claims on the public notice and regard. It forms one of the series of interesting and useful publications which, under the designation of the Cabinet Library, the enterprising publishers have given to the world. Among those it not only does not fall behind its fellows in stirring interest and useful information, but rises in both above many of them. It opens up a world, which very few Europeans, either on the Continent or in Britain, have anything beyond the most meagre acquaintanceship. It details the history, both political, religious and literary, of the Icelanders, one of the most interesting nations on the face of the earth,—a nation *sui generis* characterised by manners of its own, and for ages unmodified by intermixture of foreign usages. It presents us with the physical features of one of the most singular portions of the earth's surface, which, singled out as it were, and planted midway between Europe and America, has for ages invited the philosophic research of the learned, both in the old and new worlds, and which, now in the tail of the day, it is beginning to attract. Above all, it unfolds the wonders of the Lord of Creation, the working of his hand, the might of his footsteps, the thunder of his power, and the indefinite resources which his wrath can draw upon "in the day when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burned up."

The details of the volume, whether they embrace the discovery and colonisation of the various places described, or the ulterior history of the colonists, from their first settlement to the present day, or the topographical and geological features of the country, are replete with instruction and interest to the ordinary reader, who skims the page to while away an hour, and not less replete with matter for meditation to the studious, who can philosophise on the works of nature and the leadings of Providence. Few, very few indeed, know the strange fact, that

so early as the middle of the tenth century, the bold and daring adventurers of the north had discovered and peopled the island of Iceland, and that its inhabitants under the working of a system of freedom, no where else to be found at that period, very speedily attained to eminence as a literary nation, having poets, and annalists, and historians, and lawyers, when Continental Europe groaned beneath the load of Popish superstitions, amidst darkness which could be felt. And still fewer, who look on the Genoese Columbus as the discoverer of America, are acquainted with the fact, that as early as A. D. 936, that is, more than five centuries before Columbus discovered the Bahamas, the Icelandic colonists of Greenland had discovered America as far south as New England, and were in the habit of making voyages thither, recording the accurate details of them in *Sugas*, which remain to this day, while the learned of Europe were content to sleep in the quiet security of ignorance, regarding any other lands but those under their immediate ken. And even fewer still imagine that these same enterprising Icelanders had two colonies in Greenland towards the close of the tenth century, which continued to flourish till the middle of the fourteenth, when, on the one hand, from Europe, the pestilence called the black death, and, on the other, from America, the invasion of the Esquimaux, combined to sweep them both, one after the other, away; so that Greenland, once civilised and christianised, returned to barbarism and heathenism. How strange to us, who from infancy have pictured even *Greenland*, spite of its name, to be a land of icebergs and eternal snow, to hear of farms and pasture lands, by the sides of the firths, and of heat there so excessive as actually to wither the herbage! How strange to those who have no idea of its ever having been inhabited by any but the Esquimaux, that dark and degraded race, from whose minds the belief of a Diety has almost been obliterated,—to learn that far back in the