

BOYS AND GIRLS

Memories of Thule.

(Chrissie M. Wilson, Oldmeldrum, N.B., in the 'Presbyterian'.)

North, ever North, we sailed by night,
And yet the sky was red with light,
And purple rolled the deep.
When morning came we saw the tide
Break thundering on the rugged side
Of Sumburgh's awful steep,
And weary of the wave, at last
In Bressay Sound our anchor cast.

—Aytoun.

It is generally believed that the Shetland group of islands was the 'Ultima Thule' of the Romans. After Agricola defeated Galgacus at the battle of Mons Grampius in 84 A.D., his fleet cruised northward, subdued the Orkney Islands, and, according to Tacitus, descried Thule. 'Dispecta est Thule.' These words of the early historian have been adopted by the town of Lerwick, the capital of the islands, as the motto of its corporate arms.

Amongst the earliest known inhabitants of Shetland were the Picts, traces of whom are still found there, notably in the curious round castles, or towers attributed to them, and evidences of their Christianity in various inscribed stones, and in place-names. In 410 Roman sway over Britain was withdrawn, and the Orkney and Shetland Isles were seized by the Scandinavians, and became the home of the roving Viking. No more fitting home could be imagined for these daring, dashing buccaneers, than those remote and lonely isles, their shores bristling with rugged promontories, and lashed by a seething, surging sea. Here, from their fastnesses, they could swoop out and scour the seas in



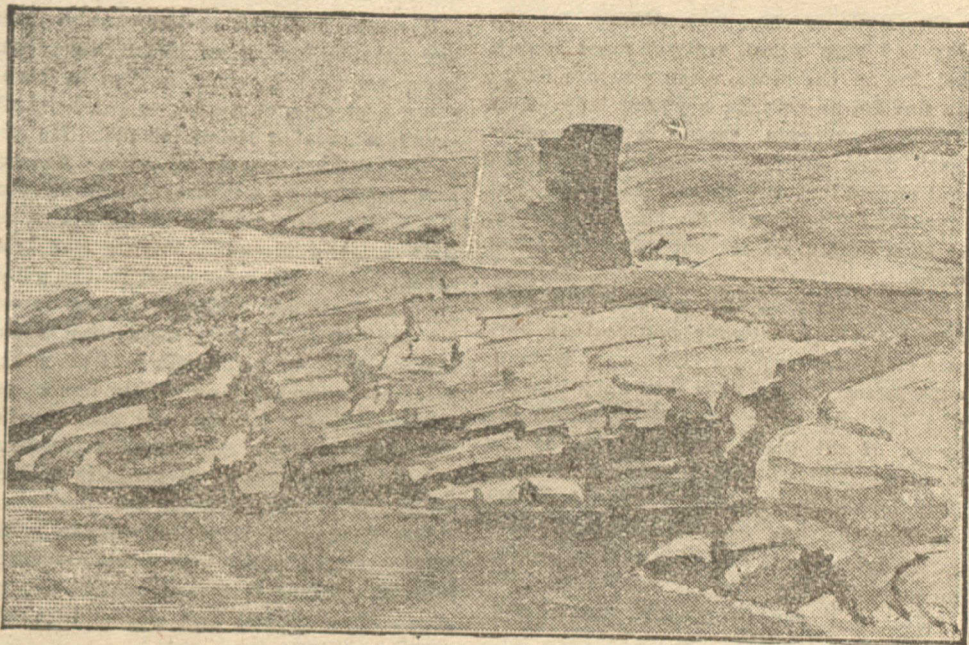
THE GIANT'S LEG, BRESSAY.

search of prey, and woe be to the storm-tossed mariner who heeded their luring lights! Goaded by the marauding excesses of these freebooters, King Harold Harfager of Norway attacked them in their eyry, drove them out, subdued the islands, and created Rognvald first Jarl of the same.

The old Norse Sagas record the interesting history of the islands while under the sway of the Norwegian jarls, who continued in power until 1468, when, as the

dowry of Princess Margaret, daughter of King Charles I. of Norway, the islands came into the possession of the Scottish crown. Old manners and customs die hard. Scotland's new possessions lay at a considerable distance from the mainland, its inhabitants were Norse, the laws, manners, and speech of their mother country lingered long amongst them, and many

now placed, one on the west and the other on the east of the island. Here, after the defeat of the 'Invincible Armada' in 1588, the 'Gran Grifon,' one of the Spanish galleons, was completely wrecked, but a number of the crew landed safely on the island. It is probable that from them the natives acquired the art of making their peculiar hosiery,



PICTISH CASTLE.

remnants of these still obtain, and add their quota to that indefinable charm which encircles these rugged isles.

The Shetland group of islands lies north of the Orkneys, and in nearly the same latitude as Bergen in Norway; their shores are washed on the east by the North Sea, and on the west by the rude Atlantic; while rushing, conflicting tideways surge between the islands. The coast-line is incredibly extensive when compared with the area of the islands, so deeply are the shores serrated by arms of the sea, which resemble the Norwegian fiords, but are called 'Voes' by the Shetlanders. Many of these voes are very beautiful, and also safe havens for vessels; as they come in on all sides, it is said that you can never get further than four miles from the coast. Compared with the Orkneys, the Shetlanders may have fewer points of antiquarian interest, but their surface is not so flat, and their coast scenery is generally considered to carry the palm for magnificently rugged and solemn grandeur. The climate is generally temperate, the sea breezes keeping it cool in summer, and, owing to the proximity of the Gulf Stream, snow does not lie in winter, nor do they experience the same rigors of that season as are felt in Scotland. During the summer months the sun seems merely to dip from view, and rise again, so it is never dark, and golf may be indulged in, photographs taken, and the smallest type read with ease at midnight. The Shetlanders consist of a group of over one hundred islands of varying size, of which only a small proportion is inhabited.

Approaching the islands from the south, the first of the group we see is Fair Isle, about twenty-four miles south of mainland. It stands in solitary grandeur, crowned by its Ward Hill, and guarded by its towering rocky cliffs, the scene of many a shipwreck before the erection of the two lighthouses which are

which is quite distinct from that made on the neighboring isles. The wool is colored by dyes obtained from lichens and plants growing on the island, and the patterns are identical with those employed by Spanish fishermen.

Steaming northwards, Sumburgh Head, a sheer precipice of rock, comes into view, and, looming beyond it, the dark, forbidding height of 'Fitful Head' (famous as the scene of Sir Walter Scott's 'Pirate'), and we are soon ploughing through that headlong boisterous tideway, known as 'Sumburgh Roost,' that hisses and seethes around the rent and jagged rocks at the base of the cliff. Sumburgh Head is the southern point of mainland, and the lighthouse on its brow flashes at night a kindly warning twenty-four miles out to sea.

Continuing northward along the eastern coast of mainland, we pass Mousa, the chief island of the group, with its interesting Pictish castle, the best specimen of such in the islands. The structure resembles a round tower, is fifty feet in diameter, the walls, about fifteen feet thick, are built of slabs of slate compactly wedged together, without the aid of mortar, and the one low doorway is small enough to be quickly barricaded or built up, at the approach of danger. All speaks of security, and of an age when the struggle for existence left no room for luxury, or the study of aesthetics.

Some distance beyond this lies the island of Bressay, and between it and mainland stretch the sheltered waters of Bressay Sound, the northern part of which forms the harbor of Lerwick. The southern coast of Bressay presents a bold, precipitous front, at some points over 500 feet high, but fretted and pierced by the violence of the waves. On its seaboard we pass 'The Giant's Leg,' a wonderful massive arch of rock dipping over into the sea; then the entrance to the finely-arched Orkneyman's Cave, frequently explored by pleasure par-