

JON JONSONN'S SAGA.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A MODERN ICELANDER.

(Condensed from *Littell's Living Age*.)

BY MISS M. R. J.

JON JONSONN once remarked to Mr. Shepherd, whom he mentions several times in his saga, that he was dissatisfied with his country because it was too "coldish." The expression describes the sentiments of a great many with regard to Iceland; even looking at it from a distance it is too "coldish" to be interesting, and the wonder has always been that those old Norwegians, who first settled this inhospitable region, did not leave it to the undisturbed possession of the ice-king. Nevertheless they came, they saw, they conquered the snowfields and the cold, and to-day Iceland has a history of a thousand years—a history as full of romance as is the natural scenery of the country. Its mysterious mountains, and its grand and gloomy fiords, are fit scenes for the acts which the sagas have immortalized, and we wonder not that the old Vikings, those monarchs of the sea, should have chosen this region for their valourous deeds. There is something in the scenery which impels to deeds of daring, deeds of heroism, and of these the skalds have sung to us in language which, like their own hills, is bold, grand, and spirit-stirring; they have sung us songs of victory and of praise, and have invented tales which, though so different in their nature, for marvel and adventure are unsurpassed by those of the Arabian Nights.

Iceland, too, has had its deep thinkers, its theologians, and philosophers; and, indeed, this country must afford peculiar facilities for the cultivation of the intellect, the simple tastes of the people, and the long leisure of their winters, allowing them much time for mental culture.

This saga, from which we present some extracts, contains no tale of Viking or of fair-haired king; it is a sort of pastoral, a homely recital of the quiet, every-day life of its author. Its notable feature consists in the fact that it was written in English by an Iceland, who taught himself that language in his hours