Icelanders Sv. Egilsson (+1852),@@1 G. Vigfusson,@@2 and J. Porkels son, @@3 and the Norwegian J. Fritzner. @@4

2. *Modern Icelandic* is generally dated from the introduction of the Reformation into Iceland; the book first printed, the New Testament of 1540, may be considered as the earliest Modern Icelandic document. Although, on account of the exceedingly conservative tendency of Icelandic orthography, the language of Modern Icelandic literature still seems to be almost identical with the language of the 17th century, it has in reality undergone a constant and active development, and, phonetically regarded, has changed considerably. Indeed, energetic efforts to bring about an orthography more in accordance with phonetics were made during the years 1835-47 by the magazine entitled *Fjölnir,* where we find such authors as Jonas Hallgrimsson and Konr. Gíslason ; but these attempts proved abortive. Of more remarkable etymological changes in Modern Icelandic we may note the following :—already about the year 1550 the passive termination *-zt (-zst)* passes into the till then very rare termination *-st* (as in *kallast,* to be called); *y, y,* and *ey* at the beginning of the 17th century coincided with *i, í,* and *d*; the long vowels *d, w,* and *ó* have passed into the diphthongs *au* (at least about 1650), *ai* (about 1700), *ou* (as *mál,* language, *mœla,* to speak, *stóll,* chair); *g* before *i, j* is changed into *dj* (after a consonant) or *j* (after a vowel),—*e.g., liggia,* to lie, *eigi,* not; in certain other cases *g* has passed into *gw* or *w,—e.g., lágur,* low, *ljúga,* to lie; initial *g* before *n* is silent,—*e.g., (g)naga,* to gnaw; has passed into *hn,— e.g., knútr,* knot; *ps, pt* into *fs, ft; bb, dd, gg* are pronounced as *bp, dt, gk,* and *ll, rl, nn, rn* now in most positions (not, however, before *d, t,* and *s,* and in abbreviated names) as *dtl, dtn,—* as *j'jail,* mountain, *bjöm,* bear; *f* before *n* is now pronounced as *bp,—* as *hrafn,* raven, &c. Both in vocabulary and syntax we find early, *e.g.,* in the lawbook *Jönsbök,* printed in 1578(-80), Danish exercis- ing an important influence, as might be expected from political circumstances. In the 18th century, however, we meet with purist tendencies. As one of the leading men of this century may be mentioned the poet Eggert Ólafsson (+1768), whose poems were not printed till 1832. Worthy of mention in the history of Modern Icelandic language are the learned societies which appeared in the same century, of which the first, under the name of “ Hið osynilega,” was established in 1760. At this time archaic tendencies, going back to the Old Icelandic of the 13th and 14th centuries, were continually gaining ground. In our century the following have won especial renown in Icelandic literature:— Bjarne Porarensen (+1841), Iceland’s greatest lyric poet, and Jonas Hallgrimsson (+ 1845), perhaps its most prominent prose-author in modern times.@@5

The dialectical differences in Modern Icelandic are comparatively trifling and chiefly phonetic. The Westland dialect has, for example, preserved the old Icelandic long *a,* while the other dialects have changed it to the diphthong *au*; in the Northland dialect initial *kn* is preserved, in the others changed into *hn* ; in the northern and western parts of the island old Icelandic *hv* appears as *kv,* in a part of south-eastern Iceland as *x,* in the other dialects as *xw,—e.g., hvelpr,* whelp. As a matter of curiosity it may be noted that on the western and eastern coasts traces are found of a French-Icelandic language, which arose from the long sojourn of French fishermen there.

Owing to the exclusive interest taken in the ancient language, but little attention is given even now to the grammatical treatment of Modern Icelandic. Some notices of the language of the 17th century may be obtained from the above-mentioned grammar of Runolphus Jonas (1651), and for the language of the 18th from Rask’s grammatical works. For the language of our own time there is hardly anything to refer to but N. Friöriks- son’s works, *Islenzk mdlmyndalfjsing,* 1861, and *Skyring hinna almennu malfroeðislegu hugmynda,* 1864, which, however, are not especially devoted to the modern state of philology; compare also B. Magnusson Ölsen’s valuable paper “Zur neuisländischen Grammatik” *(Germania,* xxvii., 1882).6 A dictionary of merit was that of Björn Halldorsen (+1794), edited in 1814 by Rask. Cleasby-Vigfusson’s dictionary mentioned above also pays some attention to the modern language. A really convenient Modern Icelandic dictionary is still wanting, the desideratum being only partly supplied by K. Gíslason’s excellent Danish-Icelandic *Dönsk orðabök med tslenzkum pyðingum,* 1851.

II. Norwegian or Norse.—The *Old Norwegian* language (till the Reformation) was not, like the modern language, confined to Norway and the Faroes, but was, as already stated, for some time

spoken in parts of Ireland and the north of Scotland, the Isle of Man, the Hebrides, Shetland, and Orkney (in the last two groups of islands it continued to survive down to modern times), and also in certain parts of western Sweden as at present defined (Boliuslan, Sarna in Dalarna, Jamtland, and Harjedalen).

Our knowledge of it is due only in a small measure to runic inscriptions, @@7 for these are comparatively few in number (a little more than one hundred) and of trifling importance from a philological point of view, especially as they almost wholly belong to the period between 1050 and 1350, @@8 and consequently are contemporary with or at least not much earlier than the earliest literature. The whole literature preserved is written in the Latin alphabet. The earliest manuscripts are not much later than the oldest Old Icelandic ones, and of the greatest interest. On the whole, however, the earliest Norwegian literature is in quality as well as in quantity incomparably inferior to the Icelandic. It amounts merely to about a score of different works, and of these but few are of any literary value. A small fragment (Cod. AM. 655, 4to, Fragm. ix., **A,** b, c), a collection of legends, no doubt written a little before 1200, is regarded as the earliest extant manuscript. From the very beginning of the 13th century we have the *Norwegian Book of Homilies* (Cod. AM. 619, 4to) and several fragments of law-books (the older *Gulapingslaw* and the older *Eiðsivakingslaw).* The chief manuscript (Cod. AM. 243B., fol.) of the principal work in Old Norwegian literature, the *Speculum Regale,* or *Konungsskuggtfa,* (“Mirror for Kings”), is a little later. Of still later manuscripts the so-called legendary *Olafssaga* (Cod. Delag. 8, fol.), from about 1250, deserves mention. The masses of charters which—occurring throughout the whole Middle Age of Norway @@9 from the beginning of the 13th century—afford much information, especially concerning the dialectical differences of the language, are likewise of great philological importance.

As in Old Icelandic so in old Norwegian we do not find the most primitive forms in the oldest MSS. that have come down to us; for that purpose we must recur to somewhat (later ones, containing old poems from times as remote as the days of Brage Boddason (the beginning of the 8th century) and pjoðolfr of Hvin (end of the same century). It has already been stated that the language at this epoch differed so little from other Scandinavian dialects that it could scarcely yet be called by a distinctive name, and also that, as Icelandic separated itself from the Norwegian mother-tongue (about 900), the difference between the two languages was at first infinitely small—as far, of course, as the literary language is concerned. From the 13th century, however, they exhibit more marked differences ; for, while Icelandic develops to a great extent independently, Norwegian, owing to geographical and political circumstances, is considerably influenced by the Eastern Scandinavian languages. The most important differences between Icelandic and Norwegian at the epoch of the oldest MSS. (about 1200) have already been noted. The tendency in Norwegian to retain the use of the so-called u-Umlaut has already been mentioned. On the other hand, there appears in Norwegian in the 13th century another kind of vowel-assimilation, almost unknown to Icelandic, the vowel in terminations being in some degree influenced by the vowel of the preceding syllable. Thus, for instance, we find in some manuscripts (as the above-mentioned legendary *Olafssaga)* that the vowels *e, o* and long *a, se,* 0 are followed in terminations by *e, o ; i, u, y,* and short *a, se,* 0, on the other hand, by *i, u,—*as in *b finer,* prayers, *konor,* women ; but *tiðir,* times, *tungur,* tongues. The same fact occurs in certain old Swedish manuscripts. When Norway had been united later with Sweden under one crown (1319) we meet pure Suecisms in the Norwegian literary language. In addition to this, the 14th century exhibits several differences from the old language @@10 : *rl, rn* are sometimes assimilated into *ll, nn,—*as *kail* (elder *karl},* man, *konn (korn),* corn, *prestanner (prestamir),* the priests; *i* passes into *y* before *r, I,—*as *hyrðir (hiriSir),* shepherd, *lykyl (lykill),* key ; final *-r* after a consonant is changed into *-er* or *-ser,* sometimes only *-c, -se,—*as *hester (hestr),* horse ; *bfiker (b&kr),* books ; the names *polleifser (porleifr), Guðlseifae (Guðleifr).* About the beginning of the 15th century initial occurs for old *hv* (not, however, in pronouns, which take *kv* only in western Norway), as the local name *Qviteseið (hvitr,* white). During the 15th century, Norway being united with Denmark, and at intervals also with Sweden, a great many Danisms and a few Suecisms are im­ported into the language. As Suecisms we may mention the ter­mination *-in* of the 2d pers. plur. instead of *-ir, -tð* (as *vilin,* you will), the pronoun *jak* instead of *ek,* I. The most important Danisms

*@@@*1 *Lexicon poeticum,* 1854-60.

*@@@*2 *An Icelandic-English Dictionary,* based on the MS. collections of the late R. Cleasby, 1869-74.

*@@@*3 *Supplement til Islandske ordbϕger,* 1876 and 1879-85.

*@@@*4 *Ordbog over del Gamle Norske sprog,* 1862-67; new ed., 1883 *sg.*

@@@5 See R. Arpi, “Islands yngre literatur och sprak” *(Sprakvetenskapliga sdll- skapets Torhandlingar,* 1883-85).

@@@6 Notices of the Modern Icelandic pronunciation are also to be found in H. Sweet’s *Handbook of Phonetics,* 1877, Chr. Vidsteen’s *Oplysninger om Bygde- maalene i Hardanger,* 1885, and R. Arpi’s above-quoted paper.

@@@7 For these see especially Nicolaysen, *Norske fornlevninger,* 1862-66.

@@@8 The oldest are those on the Valdby-(Laiwik) and Strand-(Aafjord) stones, both from pagan times. The latest rune-stones are from the end of the 14th century, owing to influence of the learned such stones appear again in the 17th century, *e.g.,* in Telemarken.

@@@9 On the old Norwegian manuscripts see the works cited in notes 4, 5, page 368; for the literature hitherto edited see note 1, page 368.

@@@10 The present writer is indebted to Prof. Joh. Storm for the following remarks on the history of the Norwegian language and its dialects during the 14th and 15th centuries.