The oldest form of the Icelandic language is, however, not pre­served in the above-mentioned earliest manuscripts of the later half of the 12th century, which are written in the language of their own age, but in far later ones of the 13th century, which contain poems by the oldest Icelandic poets, such as the renowned Egill Skallagrímsson (about 950) and the unknown authors of the so-called Edda-songs. In spite of the late date of the manuscripts, the metrical form has been the means of preserving a good deal of the ancient language. But, as already remarked, during the 10th and 11th centuries this dialect differs but little from Norwegian, though in the 12th this is no longer the

case.

We may here contrast a specimen of the above-mentioned oldest Icelandic manuscript with an almost contemporary Norwegian one (Cod. AM. 619; see below) :—

*Icel.—*En pat es *Norw.—*En hat er *Engl.—*And that is

vitanda, at allt ma vitanda, at allt ma to be known that all andlega merkiasc oc andlega merkiasc oc that is needed for the fyllasc f oss, pat es fyllasc i os, pat er decoration of the til kirkio bunings til kirkiu bunings church or the service epa pionosto parf at eöa til pionasto barf may, spiritually, be haua, ef ver liuom at hafa, ef vér lifum found and imitated sva hreinlega at vér sva ræinlega, at vér within us, if we live sem verper at callasc sem veroir at kallasc so cleanly that we are gops mustere. guds mysteri. worthy to be called

God’s temple.

Apart from the fact that the language is, generally speaking, archaic, we find in the Icelandic text two of the oldest and most essential characteristics of Icelandic as opposed to Norwegian, viz. the more complete vowel assimilation *(pionοsto, bionasto;* cf. also, *e.g.* Icel. *kollopom,* Norw. *kallaftum,* we called) and the retention of initial *h* before r *(hreinlega, ræinlega), l* and *n.* Other differences, some of which occur at this period, others a little later, are—in Icel. lengthening of *a, o, u* before *lf, lg, lk, lm* and *lp* (as Icel. *hdlfr,* Norw. and oldest lceh *hαlfr,* half); later still, also of α, *i, u* and *y* before *ng* and *nk\*,* Icel. oe and *ey* for older o and *φy* (as in Icel. *doema, heyra,* Norw. and oldest Icel. *doma,* to deem, *hφyra,* to hear); Icel. termination of 2nd plur. of verbs in -Ö (p) or *-t,* but Norw. often in *-r* (as Icel. *takiδ, -t,* Norw. *takir,* you take). These points may be sufficient to characterize the language of the earlier “ classical ” period of Icelandic (about 1150-1350). At the middle of the 13th century the written language undergoes material changes, owing in a great measure, perhaps, to the powerful influence of Snorri Sturloson. Thus in unaccented syllables *i* now appears for older *e,* and *u* (at first only when followed by one or more consonants belonging to the same syllable) for *o,* the passive ends in -z for *-sk.* The other differences from Norwegian, mentioned above as occurring later, are now completely established. With the be­ginning of the 14th century there appear several new linguistic phenomena: a *u* is inserted between final *r* and a preceding con­sonant (as in *rikur,* mighty); o (pronounced as an open *o)* passes into ö (the character ö was not introduced till the 16th century), or before *ng, nk* into *au* (as *long fioll,* pronounced *laung fioll) ; e* before *ng,* *nk* passes into *ei\*,* a little later é passes into *ie,* and the passive changes its termination from *-z,* oldest *-sk,* into -*zt* (or *-zst)* (as in *kallazt,* to be called). The post-classical period of Old Icelandic (1350-1530), which is, from a literary point of view, of but little importance, already shows marked differences that are characteristic of Modern Icelandic; *kn* has, except in the northern dialects, passed into *hn,* as in *knútr,* knot; as early as the 15th century we find *ddl* for *ll* and *rl* (as *falla,* pronounced *faddla,* to fall), *ddn* for *nn* and *rn* (as *horn,* pron. *hοddn,* horn), and a little later the passive ends in *-st, e.g. kallast,* to be called.

Although dialectical differences are not altogether wanting, they do not occur to any great extent in the Old Icelandic literary language. Thus, in some manuscripts we find *ft* replaced by *fst (oft, ofst,* often) ; in manuscripts from the western part of the island there appears in the 13th and 14th centuries a tendency to change *lf, rf* into *lb, rb (tolf, tolb,* twelve; *porf, porb,* want), &c. To what extent the language of Greenland differed from that of Iceland we cannot judge from the few runic monuments

which have come down to us from that colony.

Apart from the comparatively inconsiderable attempts at a grammatical treatment of Old Icelandic in the middle ages which we have mentioned above, grammar as a science can only be said to have begun in the 17th century. The first grammar, written by the Icelander Runolphus Jonas (d. 1654), dates from 1651. His contemporary and compatriot Gudmund

Andreae (d. 1654) compiled the first dictionary, which was not, however, edited till 1683 (by the Dane Petrus Resenius, d. 1688). The first scholars who studied Old Icelandic systematically were R. K. Rask (1787-1832), whose works@@1 laid the foundation to our

knowledge of the language, and his great contemporary Jac. Grimm, in whose *Deutsche Grammatik* (1819 seq.) particular attention is paid to Icelandic. Those who since the time of Rask and Grimm have principally deserved well of Icelandic grammar are—among the Norwegians, the ingenious and learned P. A. Munch (d. 1863), to whom we really owe the normalized orthography that has hitherto been most in use in editing Old Icelandic texts, and the solid worker at the syntax, M. Nygaard; the learned Icelander K. Gíslason (d. 1891), whose works are chiefly devoted to phonetic researches;@@2 the Danish scholars, K. J. Lyngby (d. 1871), the author of an essay which is of fundamental importance in Icelandic orthography and phonetics, and L. F. A. Wimmer, who has rendered great services to the study of the etymology. The latest and greatest Icelandic grammar is by the Swede A. Noreen.@@3 As lexicographers the first rank is held by the Icelanders S. Egilsson (d. 1852)@@4 G. Vigfússon (d. 1889),@@5 and J. Dorkelsson (d. 1904),@@6 the Norwegian J. Fritzner (d. 1893),@@7 the Swede L. Larsson,@@8 and the German H. Gering.@@9

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 1835-1847 by the magazine entitled *Fjölnir,* where we find such authors as Jónas Hallgrlmsson and Konr. Gíslason ; but these attempts proved abortive. Of more remarkable etymological changes in Modern Icelandic we may note the following: *y, y* and *ey* at the beginning of the 17th century coincided with *i, î* and *ei;* the long vowels *å, oe* and ó have passed into the diphthongs *au* (at least about 1650), *ai* (about 1700), *ou, e.g. mal,* language, *mcéla,* to speak, *stoll,* 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, *ljuga,* to lie; initial *g* before *n* is silent, *e.g. (g)naga,* to gnaw; *ps. pt* have passed 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 pet names) as *dtl, dtn, as fjall,* mountain, *björn,* bear; / before *n* is now pronounced as *bp,* as *hrafn,* raven, &c. Both in vocabulary and syntax we find early, *e.g.* in the lawbook *Jónsbók,* printed in 1578(-1580), Danish exercising 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 (d. 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 “ Hio ósýnilega,” 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 the 19th century the following won especial renown in Icelandic literature: Bjarne pórarensen (d. 1841),

Iceland’s greatest lyric poet, and Jónas Hallgrímsson (d. 1845), perhaps its most prominent prose-author in modern times.

The dialectical differences in Modern Icelandic are comparatively trifling and chiefly phonetic. The Westland dialect has, for example, preserved the Old Icelandic long *α,* while the other dialects have changed it to the diphthong *au;* in the Northland dialect initial *kn* is preserved, in the others changed into Aw; in the northern and western parts of the island Old Icelandic *hυ* appears as *kv,* in a part of south-eastern Iceland as *χ,* in the other dialects as *χw, e.g. hυolpur,* 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 F. Jónsson’s very short *Islandsk Sproglære* (1905); cf. also B. Magnússon Olsen’s valuable paper “ Zur neuisländischen Gram- matik ” *(Germania,* xxvii., 1882). A dictionary of merit was that of

(d. 1719) and Brynjólfr Sveinsson (d. 1674) ; (3) the Delagardian collection (Delag. or Ups.) at Upsala, founded in 1651 by Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie; (4) the Stockholm collection (Holm.), founded by Jon Rugman (in 1662) and Jón Eggertson (in 1682).

@@@1 *E.g. Veiledning til det Islandske sprog* (1811); in a new, much- improved Swedish edition, *Anvisning til Isländskan* (1818).

@@@2 Especially *Um frumparta islenzkrar túngu i fornöld* (1846).

*@@@3 Altisländische und altnorwegische Grammatik unter Berücksichti­*

*gung des Urnordischen* (1884), 3 *Aufl.* (1903).

@@@4 *Lexicon poeticum* (1854-1860).

@@@5 *An* *Icelandic-English Dictionary,* based on the MS. collections of the late R. Cleasby (1869-1874).

@@@6 *Supplement til Islandske ordbφger* (1876, 1879-1885 and 1899)

@@@7 *Ordbog over det Gamle Norsks sprog* (1862-1867, new ed.

1883, seq).

@@@8 *Ordforrädeti de älsta isländska handskrifterna* (1891).

@@@9 *Vollständiges Worterbuch zu den Liedern der Edda* (1903).