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The Icelandic Canadian

Volume XLI, No. 4

Winnipeg, Canada

Summer, 1983

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THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

A North American quarterly published in Winnipeg, Canada,
dedicated to the preservation of the Icelandic heritage.

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Information regarding correspondence and subscription rates, see NOTICE TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS on page 6 in this issue.

Second Class Mail — Registration No. 1909

Printed at 358 Ross Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3A 0L4

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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THE REV. VALDIMAR JONSSON EYLANDS

B.A., B.D., D.D., D.THEOL., Pastor Emeritus,
First Lutheran Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba

With the passing of Dr. Valdimar Eylands the Icelanders of the Western World lost one of their most talented leaders — a man of strong character, inherited by his ancestors and augmented by adverse conditions and struggles to obtain the education necessary to fulfill his versatile talents as pastor and mentor of the communities he served. He was a true son of Iceland and Canada.

Although he has left us he will be remembered for generations to come for his literary works in Icelandic and English, his participation in the Icelandic and U.L.C.A. Synods, the Icelandic National League and other worthwhile projects.

His friends and contemporaries pay tribute to a great leader, educator and spiritual guide — Blessed be his memory.

H.S.

GUEST EDITORIAL

DR. KRISTJAN ELDJARN

former President of Iceland

A memorial address given by *Her Excellency, the President of Iceland Vigdis Finnbogadottir* on the day of Dr. Kristjan Eldjarn's funeral, September 23, 1982. Translated by Haraldur Bessason.

Fellow Icelanders.

Today we have bidden farewell to Dr. Kristjan Eldjarn, our former President, and expressed our sincere respect and gratitude for what he accomplished for our benefit.

The small numerical size of our nation makes us feel quite deeply the loss of any of its members. This is particularly true in cases where the termination of life cuts short an envisioned career. We all know, for example, that Dr. Kristjan Eldjarn's untimely death deprived us of the enjoyment of works he had intended to complete. He was a man of wisdom and knowledge who felt that what the hand labours has a share in our culture equal to that which the mind may obtain. I have never known anyone with a more profound understanding of the classless nature of our national culture in which distinctions based on abode and occupation are not recognized. Different spheres of endeavour are the components of our unity as a nation, and consciousness and industry the cornerstones of pride in nationhood and culture.

The Icelanders have given many different forms of expression to their energies. Dr. Kristjan Eldjarn's special task was that of deepening contemporary awareness and appreciation of the past. His command of the Icelandic language revealed itself in clear and precise expression, and his writings on archeological discoveries, in many of which he had played an important part himself, will long retain their importance. I tend to believe that, as he dug for

this concrete information about our remote past, he treated our native soil with gentleness and sensitivity. Anyone who has read his account of "Pre-Christian Embroidery" at Dadastadir in the district of Nupasveit will be able to form a mental image of the kind of cultural heritage Dr. Kristjan Eldjarn wanted us to retain. Nor should the warmth with which he presented the materials of his book "One Hundred Years in the National Museum of Iceland" escape our attention.

At this time of bereavement, we should all recognize that with disciplined intelligence, Dr. Kristjan Eldjarn created his own good fortune. His ability to activate everyone around him in a positive way, his indisputable qualities as a leader of his nation, and the soundness of his family life, all attest to this. His friends had love and respect for him — so did his entire nation.

I speak on behalf of all Icelanders when I offer the members of Dr. Kristjan Eldjarn's family our most sincere condolences.

Dr. Kristjan Eldjarn was a man of integrity whom we shall never forget, and we all mourn his passing. Not only did he hold the highest office in his nation, but he also gave us a new incentive to further our common cause and to strengthen our national unity.



Your Neighborhood Taxi

AT THE EDITOR'S DESK**DONATIONS TO
THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN**

In memory of Dr. Bodvar Bjarki Jakobson,
Elma Gislason — \$50.

Gudrun and Robert Tait — \$50.

The Magazine Board is, indeed, grateful for these donations.

In spite of periodic financial problems, *The Icelandic Canadian* has seldom solicited donations from the public, but the escalating costs of printing and mail service is threatening the solvency of our quarterly. Accordingly, it would be appreciated if our friends would consider providing financial assistance and soliciting additional subscribers.

It must be remembered that the members of our Magazine Board, dedicated as they are to the preservation of vestiges of the Icelandic cultural heritage in North America, are not only serving without remuneration, but are also contributing their own funds in attending meetings and in defraying the cost of postage in answering correspondence.

THE STARS

by David Stefansson

(Translated by Paul A. Sigurdson)

The stars which adorn the heavens
Twinkling high above,
Are the tears God first shed for us,
When He wept with joy and love.

He had felt that all was for nothing,
No peace nor joy could be;
That all was nonsense and humbug,
In heaven, on earth and sea.

Then once in a midnight hour,
He was in the distant world,
The look of a loving mother,
Her babe at her bosom curled.

Then filled with a joyous wonder,
God wept in His thankfulness,
For the love of the kind young mother,
Portrayed His perfectness.

Those tears of joy's fulfillment,
That He wept on that clear night,
Are the stars which adorn the heavens,
And twinkle their joyous light.

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READERS' FORUM

Dear Mr. Vopnfjord:

The Icelandic Canadian has done so much to popularize Icelandic State Park that I want you to have a copy of the enclosed letter and other items to Mr. Thor. This tells about extensive developments now under way by the State Parks, Recreation Department, and other groups.

This complex consists as you know of the park, a science and nature area and the old homestead site where most of this development is taking place. The buildings are being equipped with sound facilities and a new structure will be built.

This Heritage Center will provide a great opportunity for telling about the early settlers and the whole North Dakota story. This Heritage Center and adjoining facilities could become the most highly popular center in America identified with the Icelandic people.

With kindest regards,

G. B. Gunlogson

P.S.: A special Icelandic Foundation is now being formed to participate in these developments.

* * *

The credit for the inclusion of this column in our quarterly belongs to MRS. GRACE WILLIS of Victoria, B.C., daughter of Gudny and the late Sumarlidi Matthews of Winnipeg. We hope that the receipt from time to time by the editor-in-chief of suggestions and constructive criticisms will warrant a permanent place for this column in our publication. Mrs Willis' letter follows:

I like *The Icelandic Canadian*. I like the title, I like the imaginative covers, and I especially like the format. It is not too long to read in one sitting, but long enough to carry good articles. I like the use of people

pictures, and I thoroughly enjoy reading about their accomplishments. To me it's a "good news" magazine, contrary to the reputation of a modicum of pessimism some Icelanders have been handed by their forefathers!

Probably the only suggestion I might have, since you asked, is for a "Members Forum" for subscribers to write letters regarding published articles. To keep this to a minimum, possibly a short paragraph could appear explaining that not all letters will be used and those that are might be edited. Out of this could come some interesting ideas.

Judge Roy St. George Stubbs' article, "A Toast to the Vikings" (Summer Issue, June 1982), was most outstanding. How lucky the Icelanders are to have such a man, so knowledgeable and erudite, feel that . . . "there is something special about Icelanders!" Could we have more articles by him?

By the way, if any Americans of Icelandic descent feel that the name of the magazine should somehow include them, I would give them full marks for wanting to be a part of the Icelandic community and the magazine. However, it's like changing the National Anthem — what's wrong with the original? Who thought of the name in the first place? He must have felt good about it — or was it a she?

* * *

Excerpts from other letters follow:

From an American lady of Scottish-English descent, Mrs. Elizabeth Stewart, of Rochester, New York, author of "Aud the Deep Minded". The present name is a good one if the magazine will be primarily about Icelandic Canadians especially in Manitoba. If the scope is broadened, as some items in recent issues suggest is

happening, the title should, ideally, reflect this. If *The Icelandic American* would suggest that it's about only United States Americans, that would be most unfortunate.

How about *The Icelandic Review? Icelandic News? Iceland Overseas?*

* * *

From an American, Harold Johnson of Seattle. No, you should not change your name. I believe some things should be left alone. This is one of those times.

* * *

From a former North Dakotan now resident in California. The Icelandic Canadian was founded in the Icelandic centre of North America, Winnipeg. I don't see why the title should change, as long as it recognizes people of Icelandic descent on both sides of the border, and accepts contributions of literary merit from both the U.S. and Canada.

* * *

From Valdimar Björnson of Minneapolis. If a change is to come in the magazine

name, a simple, broadly inclusive label would be *The Western Icelander*.

* * *

From Mrs. Grace Hykawy of Winnipeg, Secretary of the Ethnic Press Association. This is the best ethnic publication, with Chinatown News, Vancouver, coming second. I'll read it no matter what you call it.

* * *

From Mrs. Ruby Dawson of Winnipeg. Last summer my son, Gerry, was visiting for a few days. That night, after I had gone to bed, Gerry read the summer issue of *The Icelandic Canadian* from cover to cover. The following morning he was so enthusiastic, had been so thrilled reading about the Vikings, integrity and honor before all, and other things too numerous to mention. He said he wished to subscribe to the magazine. In view of this I decided all three of my children should learn of their heritage and ordered subscriptions starting with the summer issue.

Further comments by our readers will be published in our autumn issue.




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PEOPLE

REGENT



Elma Gislason

Elma Gislason, the well-known Winnipeg musician, is the new regent of the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter of the I.O.D.E. of Winnipeg.

Elma was born at her parents' (Ingolfur and Maria Arnason) homestead in the beautiful Assiniboine Valley near Glenboro and Cypress River. She received her academic education in that locality.

She studied piano under the tutorship of S. K. Hall. She received instruction in singing from Peter Magnus, Sigrid Oleson, Nina Dempsey, J. Roberto Wood, Bernard Naylor, Dr. Ernesto Vinci, and Therese Deniset. She has been adjudicator at many festivals in Manitoba.

She did six full evening recitals, three in Winnipeg, and three out of town during the forties and early fifties. She did solo work with the Philharmonic and Symphony in Handel's Messiah in 1949.

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN wishes to commend the JON SIGURDSSON CHAPTER for its altruistic service to the community, and to congratulate Elma to a position so faithfully and capably rendered by Jo Wilson and her predecessors.

APPOINTED CHAIRMAN OF THE MUNICIPAL BOARD



Leifur Hallgrimson, Q.C.

Leifur Hallgrimson has been appointed chairman of Manitoba's Municipal Board, effective May 1, 1983. Born and raised in Riverton, Manitoba, son of Thorleifur and Elinborg Hallgrimson, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Winnipeg and a law degree from the University of Manitoba. He was called to the bar in Manitoba in 1953.

He practiced as a tax counsel with the federal department in Ottawa from 1953 to 1958, and served in the Manitoba Attorney-General's Department from 1958 to 1971 as director of civil legislation. He was appointed a Queen's Council in 1969.

In 1971 he was appointed receiver manager of Churchill Forest Industries. When the complex was converted to a crown corporation in 1973 under the name Manitoba Forest Resources (Manfor), he assumed responsibility for its operations, having been named its chairman.

Energy and Mines Minister, Wilson

Parasiuk, the minister responsible for Manfor, said that Leifur had done a "highly creditable" job in directing the crown agency during its reorganization and subsequent operations.

Leifur has taken an active part in Winnipeg's Icelandic affairs. He served some years ago as President of the Icelandic Canadian Club.

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN congratulates Leifur, a small town boy, who has come a long way along the road to a successful and rewarding career, having made a substantial contribution to the community at large, and undoubtedly will continue to do so in the years to come.

* * *

FORTY YEARS WITH EATON'S



Hannes and his wife, Kristin.

Hannes Thomasson was honoured recently by the T. Eaton Co. at a dinner reception held on Wednesday evening, February 9, 1983, at the Grill Room in Eaton's Downtown Store in Winnipeg, in appreciation of his forty years with the company. For this most memorable evening for Hannes and his wife Kristin, the room was filled to capacity with business

associates — past and present, friends from all walks of his life, and family.

Born ninth out of a family of ten to parents Arni and Ingunn Thomasson, Hannes grew up on a farm in the 1-6 district close to Morden, Man. He graduated from high school; taught "on permit" for one year; then joined the staff at Eatons.

Courtesy of Lögberg-Heimskringla

* * *



Stephen Kristinn Matthiasson

The Board of Directors of the 88-CRIME program of the Pima County, Arizona, Attorney's Office presented its "Outstanding Citizen Award" to 14 year old Stephen Kristinn Matthiasson on April 12, 1983 in Tucson. Stephen was honored with a plaque and a cheque for \$100 during a meeting of the crime prevention program's board held at the Tucson Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, for "his quick thinking and fast action on February 25, which led to the arrest of a bank robbery suspect." According to Susan Moore, the program's director, the Pima County Attorney's Office presents its Outstanding Citizen Award "whenever a citizen goes

out of his or her way to help solve or help stop a crime.”

In a press release issued by the county attorney's office, the incident which earned the award was described in the following way. "At the time the Western Savings and Loan on East Grant Road was being robbed, Steve spotted a car in the desert area in the vicinity of the Savings and Loan Association. The engine was running, and no one was in it. He felt something was wrong and wrote the license plate number on the only thing he had handy, his tennis shoe. Steve ran to a phone and notified police. As a result, detectives traced the license to the suspect, who was subsequently arrested for the robbery. 88-CRIME Program Director Susan Moore said, 'People often ask how they can get involved. Steve's actions demonstrate the importance of noting unusual circumstances and alerting the police. He set a fine example for others to follow.'"

Stephen is the son of Dr. John S. Matthiasson, of Winnipeg, and Dr. Carolyn J. Anderson, of Tucson, Arizona.

* * *

Dolores Lawler, the eldest of the children of the late Reverend Doctor Valdimar and Lilia Eylands, was in 1982 elected president of the United Nations Women's Guild Coordination Board in New York City. The U.N.W.G. is a voluntary charitable organization comprising four groups in the New York area, and some fifty groups around the world, working in centers from Kabul to Bangkok to Addis Ababa to Seoul and points between. The purpose of the Guild is to help destitute children in various parts of the world, and also to develop friendship and good will within its own international and multiracial membership. To be elected President of this organization is considered to be a great honor.



Sigrun Dolores Eylands Lawler

Dolores was raised to be proud of her Icelandic heritage. She has often worn her mother's national costume (peysuföt) while lecturing to United Nations groups about Iceland and its history. She is also delighted that her father has written his autobiography so that her four children may be able to appreciate their background.

Dolores received her education in Winnipeg, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Manitoba. She worked in the Pathology Department of the Winnipeg General Hospital for three years before she married William R. Lawler, a pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force. She and her husband travelled to various postings across Canada and in Europe. Their many transfers were highlighted by three years spent at the NATO base in Sardinia, Italy, where the youngest of their children was born. After returning to Montreal Dolores taught biology at Sir George Williams University, and subsequently at Ottawa, at Clarton University.

She moved to New York in 1975 when

her husband took up his present career with the United Nations International Secretariat, as Senior Political Affairs Officer in the Department of Disarmament affairs. The three other Lawler children are in Toronto: Daniel is a chemical engineer, Lucinda an actuarial assistant, and Lilia a student of Law.

Dolores was warmly received when she took office as president of the Guild. She concluded her introductory remarks as follows: "... it is evident that our Guild has prospered and is thriving with the help and encouragement of each of you ... I will also do my best with your cooperation to make it continue to thrive and strive toward its ultimate objective."

—United Nations Women's Guild,
23rd Issue 1982

* * *

AWARDED A SCHOLARSHIP



James Lindal

The Canada Iceland Foundation has awarded the Thorvaldson Scholarship to James Lindal who is enrolled in the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Manitoba. Parents: Joseph and Emily Lindal, Fisher Branch, Manitoba.



Diane Norberg

Dianne Norberg had a very good year at the Brandon Festival of the Arts.

She earned the following: 3rd — Baroque Class, Grade VI; 1st — Sonatina, Grade VI Piano (tie); 1st — Contemporary Grade VI Piano; 1st — Piano Duet with Marie Shabits; Level 5 and 6 — 1st, Clarinet Solo (Junior).

She was also the recipient of the Anna Hughes Memorial Scholarship awarded to an outstanding student at the Grade VI level sponsored by the Quota Club of Brandon.

Dianne is the daughter of George and Olive Norberg and granddaughter of Ingi and Liney Swainson and Maria Norberg.

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NORTH AMERICA'S UNKNOWN MASTER POET

by Roy St. George Stubbs



Judge Stubbs and Rosa Benediktson, Stephansson's daughter, at the Memorial Cairn in the park at Markerville, Alberta.

Over the years, four of my friends, Dr. Siggí Jul. Johannesson, Professor Skuli Johnson, Dr. Watson Kirkconnell and Will Kristjanson, assured me that Stephan G. Stephansson, the Icelandic Canadian poet, who died 'leaving great verse unto a little clan,' stood in the front rank of the poets of the world. His work is known to me only in translation. I am fully aware of the shortcomings of translation.

"Repeat me these verses again slowly and deliberately," says Sir Henry Lee, in Scott's novel, *Woodstock*, "for I always love to hear poetry twice — the first time for sound and the latter for sense." This is the way the Icelanders of old read, or spoke, their poetry: first for sound and second for sense. The old tradition still prevails. Translation, however well it may capture the sense of the original, fails to reproduce its sound. As George M. Trevelyan, the great historian, once said, "Nevertheless in poetry of the highest order you cannot experience, even in the

best of modern translations, that grip of the vitals, that disturbance of the whole being, which the sound of very great poetry alone can give."

But we are all bound by our limitations. If we cannot read the original, we must make do with a translation.

Watson Kirkconnell contributed an article to the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, in 1936, which he entitled 'Canada's Leading Poet, Stephan G. Stephansson, (1853 - 1927)'. Kirkconnell once told me that E. J. Pratt was the only Canadian poet worthy of being mentioned in the same breath as Stephansson.

In paying tribute to Stephansson, Skuli Johnson made a surprising statement. "There is nothing in the antecedents," he said, "or in the circumstances of Stephan G. Stephansson to account for him." Begging his pardon, surely these words strike far from the centre of truth. Perhaps, Professor Johnson, as an Icelandic Canadian, was too modest to state the truth categorically. There is no mystery as to where Stephansson's impulse to write poetry came from. He was born an Icelander. Every Icelander is, to a greater or lesser degree, a poet. Stephansson sprang from a race that takes the writing of poetry for granted as a normal function of daily life — like eating bread, or taking rest after heavy labour. He absorbed with his mother's milk the spirit of Icelandic literature, in particular the sagas. (In one of his poems, he has this line: "Your Golden Age and Sagas they dwell in my heart.")

Stephan G. Stephansson was born on October 3, 1853, on a farm in the north of Iceland. At his birth, his parents, Gudmundur Stephansson and Gudbjörg Hannesdóttir, were struggling hard to wrest a

living from a marginal farm which they finally had to abandon. They were poor, indeed, in this world's goods. But they were intelligent and cultured, and took delight in the things of the mind. They might well have asked their affluent friends Santayana's question: "What riches have you that you deem (us) poor?"

Through his mother Stephansson claimed kinship with Benedikt Grondal, a considerable poet, who sat as a superior court judge on the bench in Iceland for seventeen years.

When Stephansson was born, Iceland was under foreign domination — a fact which did not go down well with him. He never attended school for a single day. His parents, in the traditional Icelandic fashion, taught him to read and write, and to do sums. In his late teens, while working for a well-to-do uncle, as a farm labourer, he was given a month's leave of absence so that he could take some instruction in English from an itinerant teacher, Rev. Jon Austmann. This was the only formal education that he ever received. "But every man," says Gibbon, "who rises above the common level has received two educations; the first from his teachers; the second, more personal and important, from himself." Stephansson gave himself this second kind of education. It was a process which was not completed until the last day of his life.

Watson Kirkconnell comments that Stephansson rose above his meagre opportunities for a formal education "by virtue of the inherent instincts of a scholar and the fundamental sanity of a man living close to the soil." Nearly fifty years ago, I was a student in Professor Kirkconnell's English classes, at Wesley College, in Winnipeg. One day he said, in the classroom: "The trouble with most people today is that they don't put enough into their minds to be able to get anything out." Stephansson had a facility with languages.

He put into his mind an amazing knowledge of the literature of six countries — Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, England and Germany. There was plenty in his mind for him to get something out.

In 1873, with his parents and other kinsfolk, he decided to seek a better and freer life beyond the seas. He was one of the first main group of Icelanders who emigrated to North America. He settled in Wisconsin where, for a year, he worked as a day labourer on a farm near Milwaukee. Trained in a hard school, he saved every penny that he earned and, in 1874, took up farming on his own in Shawano County. In 1878, he married his first cousin, Helga Jonsdóttir, with whom he had grown up. "At that time I nominally owned 160 acres of land, 148 acres being virgin forest and twelve acres cleared, also a fairly good house and 3 or 4 cattle." (The translation of these words from Stephansson's brief 'Reminiscences' is by Axel Vopnfjord.) His marriage was highly successful. He knew domestic happiness. He and his wife raised a large family — five sons and three daughters. Mrs. Stephansson stood behind him in all that he did, or tried to do. She was truly a helpmate as well as a wife. She carried her full share of the hard work on a pioneer farm, and, as the Canadian writer, Kerry Wood, who was a neighbour for many years, says, "Mrs. Stephansson always managed to maintain the peaceful, quiet climate necessary for her husband's creative talent."

In 1880, the Stephansson family moved to a farm near Gardar in North Dakota. In 1889, Stephansson became a pioneer for the third time. The family moved to a homestead near Markerville in Alberta, in the centre of a district of Icelandic settlers.

No claim can be made that Stephansson's limbs were forged in Canada. He spent the first twenty years of his life in the land of his birth. This is the period when a man accumulates the inner riches that he

lives on for the rest of his life. From the age of twenty, until he reached the age of thirty-six, he lived in the United States. From the age of thirty-six, until his death in 1927, he lived in Canada. More than half his life was spent in this country. It cannot be denied that each year of his life in Canada added a ring of growth to that mysterious part of him that fashioned his great poetry. "It was in Alberta," says Professor Haraldur Bessason, "that Stephansson wrote most of his poems, some of which rank among the finest attainments in both Icelandic and Canadian letters."

Stephansson had divided loyalties. Canada never claimed him completely. The strength of his ties with his homeland is evident in his poem Remembrance; (the translation is Watson Kirkconnell's)



Rosa Benediktson and Judge Stubbs at the renovated Stephansson home.

Though you have trodden in travel
All the wide tracks of the earth,
Bear yet the dreams of your bosom
Back to the land of your birth,
Kin of volcano and floe-sea!
Cousin of geyser and steep!
Daughter of downland and moorland!
Son of the reef and the deep!

High over heaven and landscape,
Haunting your thought as it strays,
Torrents and towering summits
Tremble once more to your gaze.

Far in the outermost ocean
The isle of your heart is awake,
Shining in shadowless summer,
Showered with light for your sake.

Vivid that Icelandic vision
Viewed in your dreams as they run —
Granite rocks growing with flowers,
Glaciers warm in the sun,
O kin of volcano and floe-sea,
Cousin of geyser and steep,
Daughter of downland and moorland,
Son of the reef and the deep.

Icelandic Canadians meet yearly, on August 2, to celebrate 'Icelanders Day'. In song and story, they recall memories of their homeland. During his lifetime Stephansson took an active part in these celebrations. The poem 'Remembrance' was his contribution to one such occasion. This poem, says Stefan Einarson, is "a song which long has taken its place in the repertoire of singing Icelanders with the most valued patriotic poems." It has been set to music by several composers.

Another poem which expresses Stephansson's sense of living in an alienated world is 'Exile', which has been admirably translated by Paul Sigurdson, of Morden, Manitoba. Here are the first two of its four stanzas:

Somehow it has come upon me,
I've no fatherland:
Though my heart with love is bounded
With a lasting band
To my native soil that blessed me
As a growing boy,
When the world its shining glory
Gave me hope and joy.
Never could my foster mother
Take my mother's place,
Always there was something lacking,
She could not replace.
I have yet to know the meaning
Of her legacy,
Always there's an awkward feeling
'Twixt herself and me.

Dr. Johnson once asserted, in his forthright way, that no one but a blockhead ever wrote except for money. Stephansson cannot be measured by this criterion. He never wrote a line for financial gain. In his writing, he set himself firmly against Mammonism. He could not have lowered his sights to hit the commercial market. Why did he write poetry? To borrow Keat's words, he wrote poetry because poetry came to him as naturally as leaves to a tree.

He held that a poet should not be a preacher, a partisan, or a propogandist. He did believe, however, that poetry should have a message, a positive one — that it should act as a sort of social cement to hold men together and make the world a better place in which to live. In his view, the poet is the custodian of the permanent values of life; the standard bearer in the first and final lines of defence of all that makes life most worth living. "Essentially a man of the nineteenth century," says Jane W. McCracken, "he believed in the power of words. A true romantic, he was sure that ideas and ideals, given the wings of verse, could overcome the problems of the human race."

As a true poet, he was in the rebel tradition. It is the poets of rebellion, not the poets of the establishment, who are unacknowledged legislators of the world. In all his work, Stephansson tried to give the world a push forward.

His poetic imagination ripened young. He began writing poetry at the age of fifteen years. Two things worked in his favour. He had a deep love of the earth and of his fellowmen. He was never at a loss to find material for his muse. On his way to America from Iceland, he passed through Edinburgh and wrote a poem to the statue of Sir Walter Scott.

"Whatever I do I must do in the open air, or in the silence of the night." These words were written by Walter Savage

Landor. They might have come from Stephansson's pen. His first book, which was published in Winnipeg, in 1894, was entitled 'Out in the Open Air'. His Collected Poems (in six volumes) bear the title 'Andvokur', which means 'wakeful or sleepless nights'.

Much of his work was done at night on time stolen from sleep. In his later years at Markerville, he had a study in his small home, in which he wrote his poems. Kerry Wood says of him: "He wrote at night because he could not sleep. A small wood-burning stove was in his study. He would sit writing, wrapped in a blanket, a coal oil lamp beside him to provide light. When his fingers became numb he would realize that he had allowed the fire to go out."

The face that looks out from photographs of Stephansson is the face of a farmer, a farmer who might be worrying about his current year's crops; not the face of a poet who has written immortal verse. It is the face of a strong man, a strong-willed man; who, within the narrow circle of the possible, wants to be the master, not the servant, of his fate; who means to take a hand in the shaping of his life. He knew that he was not in full command of his destiny, but he might have said with Meredith:

The wind that fills my sails
Propels, but I am the helmsman.

His features are rugged, stern, almost forbidding. Only in his eyes is there any suggestion of the soul, the heart, the mighty intellect, that were housed in his garment of flesh and bone.

Watson Kirkconnell has presented a brief thumbnail picture of him. "As to appearance," he says, "he was five feet seven inches in height, slender in build but very rugged and wiry. His eyes were a deep Nordic blue, very lustrous and very piercing but the black hair of his earlier years indicated that blending of Celtic blood with the Scandinavian which tends to differentiate

the typical Icelander from his Norwegian cousin. Stephansson wore a heavy mustache but no beard; his countenance was lean and lined; and wrinkles of good nature lurked at the corners of his eyes and mouth."

When Stephansson homesteaded in Alberta (four years after the revolt in the West led by Louis Riel), he had no easy path to follow. There was a shelter to be built for his family. There was land to be cleared and food to be grown. There was no corner store at which supplies could be bought. The territory was unorganized. The nearest post office was seventy miles away. Mrs. Stephansson lived in Calgary while her husband was building a shelter for them on his homestead. When this task was completed, Stephansson went to Calgary to take her to her new home. They had to



The renovated Stephansson House.

cross the Red Deer River. Stephansson was leading a team of oxen. Mrs. Stephansson and three of their sons were sitting in a wagon which contained their personal belongings. Fed by waters that the summer sun had melted from snow and ice in the foothills of Alberta, the Red Deer River was in flood. In midstream, Stephansson slipped and lost his balance. As he was struggling to regain his footing, he turned

to look at his wife. She smiled at him. Years later, he wrote a poem in which he said that that smile had saved his life. It inspired him to make a desperate effort. He found a firm footing and the river was crossed in safety.

Stephansson was not a private man. He had an active civic consciousness. He pulled his full weight in the community. In a speech delivered on New Year's Eve, 1891, he said (the translation is by Bjorgvin Sigurdson) . . . "If we feel our community lacks some amenities needed to make it a more pleasant place, we can do something about it. We know Nature did not corral all hardships to leave them near Red Deer . . . So, if we feel something is amiss, let's get our hands out of our pockets and do something about it . . . We who have settled in this district and have been together for some time have a duty to our community. That duty is to create a thriving neighbourhood out of the wilderness . . . If I am proud of my Icelandic heritage, I will be even prouder to be known as one who has developed a first class farm from virgin land."

Stephansson never kept his hands in his pockets. He was one of the organizers of the Markerville school-district. The first school in the area was built on his farm and six of his children attended it. He was a moving spirit in the establishment of a creamery which served the community well until it was closed in 1967. No neighbour

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ever sought his help in vain. From his slender purse he contributed to every good cause. The community came to look to him for leadership in all personal and civic concerns. He once wrote an Icelandic quatrain about his various activities in a pioneering district. It is one of the few poems from his pen that shows a gleam of gaiety:

For years 'twas I that had to preach,
To read the law and act the nurse;
I ran the forge, ruled, had to teach —
Was not just cart and plough, but horse.

While struggling with the problems of pioneer life, the settlers in the Markerville area did not forget that their minds had a claim on them. Stephansson sponsored a community-hall and a library, and he organized the Icelandic Reading Club which followed the pattern of a Reading Club he had belonged to in Dakota. He addressed this club frequently on a variety of subjects. Here is a passage from an

address he gave, in 1894, on the subject 'On Reading Books', in a translation by Dr. Finnbogi Gudmundsson:

"There are those whom reading has educated, men who have not only acquired amusement and knowledge from books, but much rather sharpened and increased the power of their own spirits: have drunk spiritual strength from books as the grass drinks a spring shower. Of course, I realize that culture, thus understood, is not of much weight in the pocket, unrelated as it is to position and wealth: it can neither be weighed on a commercial scale nor sold in gallons; there is some doubt that because of it you will get more butter from the milk or dozens more eggs from the henhouse, since culture cannot be thus measured.

But one thing is certain: it makes man himself more suited for all useful undertakings, more human than if he

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had to do without it. It makes him more sensitive and keener for all that is beautiful and good, and connects him more closely and intimately with his race and nature. It interprets to him the runes of the past, explains the tongues of the present and shows him the future in a clearer vision. It prevents his life from becoming barren and isolated from everything like a rock which has rolled forth upon a grassy field and lies there motionless until it sinks into the earth. It prolongs the short life of man by ages, because the perception and sensitivity of a truly educated man reaches far beyond the span of experience of any single generation."

With most of us what we have to do conflicts with what we would like to do. Skuli Johnson once said that Stephansson's "entire life was spent in a struggle between the compulsions of duty and the claims of poetry". Stephansson wrote a poem in which he has a dialogue between himself and the muse. The muse complains to him that he has given her only the tired margin of his time:

To toil you hallowed your day and
your might;

To me you gave tempests, tiredness,
night.

The poet acknowledges the validity of the complaint. He knows that poetry should not be relegated to a corner in a busy life, that it should be a full time occupation:

For the lord of your art
Owns alone your whole heart;
When to duty bow you,
Then your faith turns untrue.

The cardinal mystery is that Stephansson, as a poet, was able to accomplish what he did.

In speaking of Stephansson's career, Dr. Richard Beck, in 'American-Icelandic

Poets', says: "Considering the conditions under which Stephansson did his writing, his literary achievements are astounding; they presuppose unusual genius, irresistible creative urge, and an untiring devotion to the poetic art." His words are not an overstatement. Stephansson was a good caretaker of his genius. His published poems fill 1800 pages, and his work in prose (articles and letters) another 1400 pages. "In sheer bulk of output, no other Canadian poet is comparable to Stephan G. Stephansson," says Watson Kirkconnell. "He has published more verse than Bliss Carman, Charles G. D. Roberts, and Wilson MacDonald combined."

These words of Kirkconnell's do not give the complete picture. A poet's work must be measured by a qualitative, not a quantitative, standard. "Stephansson's productivity, great as it was," says Dr. Richard Beck, "is not, however, the most amazing thing about him: the range and variety of his themes are no less impressive — his sweep, wide horizon, and great store of knowledge."

Stephansson's poems were published in the Icelandic papers — Framfari, published in Riverton, Manitoba from 1887 to 1880; Heimskringla, established in Winnipeg in 1886; and Lögberg, established in the same city two years later.

The Icelandic newspapers were always pleased to receive contributions from Stephansson; but, understandably, he could not find a publisher who would accept his work for publication as a commercial venture. His reputation as a poet was consolidated by his fugitive verses. In 1906, thirty-four of his admirers* in Canada and the United States, decided that it was time for Stephansson's collected works to be published. They undertook to finance the venture. They asked him to get a manuscript ready for publication. In 1908, when the manuscript was ready, one of the admirers took it to Iceland. It was pub-

* Their signatures appear on page 43.

lished by the Gutenberg Press, Reykjavik, in three volumes, in 1909 and 1910. His thirty-four admirers had a set of proofs bound into one volume. They inscribed their names in this volume and presented it to Stephansson. This volume, a magnificent example of the bookbinder's art, is now in the Archives of the University of Manitoba, under lock and key.

In 1923, the Heimskringla Press, in Winnipeg, published two more volumes of Stephansson's collected works, 'Wakeful Nights'. A sixth volume was published in 1938, under the good offices of his literary executor, Dr. Rognvaldur Petursson.

What a man reads proclaims what he is. I have examined Stephansson's library which is presently lodged in the Archives of the University of Manitoba. It is a small library. Watson Kirkconnell, in his North American Book of Icelandic Verse, refers to it, in these words: "A small library, laboriously gathered and affectionately studied, (which) nourished in him an unusual gift of expression."

It could not be classed as a select library. It contains books, which Charles Lamb would have characterized as things in book's clothing, which were donated to Stephansson by well-meaning friends.

Ruskin said that 'if a book is worth reading, it is worth buying.' A most noble sentiment! If Stephansson had inherited a fortune from his father, as Ruskin did, he would have been delighted to take this advice. But, in this practical world, bread and butter must come first. Food for his family had to come before food for his own mind. To balance the family budget, Stephansson was compelled, several times, to work on a survey crew, for the C.P.R., for \$1.25 a day. On the last occasion when sheer necessity caused him to seek work away from his farm, he was fifty-nine years of age. He never complained. He took whatever the gods that govern the lives of

men sent his way with a good grace. He was not made tame by fortune's blows. His poem 'September Snow' (as translated by Thorvaldur Johnson) makes this fact evident:

I ken not this fathomless, ill-omened
life.

And yet — I have never succumbed in
the strife

To terrors and dangers uncounted —
It freshens my courage, refreshes my
mind

To recall, when the world is not overly
kind,

The perils that I have surmounted.

His few books did not grow dusty on the shelves. They were in constant use. But he read far beyond the bounds of his own library. Both in North Dakota and in the Markerville area, he was an organizer of Cultural Societies and books were passed around among their members. The platform of these societies consisted of the three words — Humanity, Research and Liberty.

Professor Bessason has translated, into English, the preamble of the Dakota Society's constitution. This document was prepared by Stephansson. It is a good statement of nineteenth century humanism. It reveals him as a free soul who insisted in dealing with the important issues of life, which confront all men, with his own mind:

This society has adopted as its avowed objective the promotion of good morals and culture and the cultivation of the kind of faith which is based on objective research. Instead of lending support to growing discontent within the Church, this society wishes to strengthen the idea of fellowship and a humanitarian outlook among men. The society will emphasize that unimpeded assessment of spiritual values must replace uncritical acceptance of con-

ventional dogmas. Further, it is the aim of this organization to let personal conviction replace blind faith and to force narrow-mindedness and prejudice to give way to unrestricted spiritual freedom and progress.

Stephansson once wrote: "one must read or otherwise become nothing but a stomach and a mouth." But for him reading was only part of the equation. "People read and read until they almost lose their power of thought," said Gandhi. Stephansson never fell into this pit. His hours of reading were balanced by hours at which he drank deeply from the well of silent thought. Then, to complete the equation, after his reading and his thinking, came discussions with his friends, who were reading and thinking men, about what he had read and thought.

Where did Stephansson gather the strands which he wove into his working philosophy of life? Who were his lawgivers — the men from whom he took direction in formulating his own convictions and beliefs. I

Greetings

from

A Friend

will venture to name several: William Morris, poet, socialist, lover and translator of the sagas, who defined art as the expression of pleasure in work; who held that the province of art is to make man realize that the perception and creation of beauty is as necessary to him, for a full life, as his daily bread; who believed that beauty exercises the soul, making it strong and healthy. Stephansson's mind marched in step with these thoughts. He has a line in one of his poems: 'beauty is the universal language.'

Ruskin said that man is richest when he perfects the function of his life to the utmost. In this sense Stephansson was rich. His function was to write poetry and he fulfilled this function to the utmost. He once wrote:

Life is a growth
Progress is life's true happiness.

Surely a spark from Ruskin's anvil.

Carlyle wrote in his essay on Robert Burns, "Let me make the songs of a people and you shall make the laws." Stephansson knew that poetry by strengthening man's moral nature is a greater force for civilization than any laws devised by man.

Whitman, who said to a prostitute, "Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you;" who declared, "By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms" — thoughts which were in harmony with Stephansson's thinking and with his actions. Stephansson was a humanitarian. When he looked into the future, he visualized a state of society in which all men were equal and all men were free. Leigh Hunt's words, "Write me as one who loves his fellowmen," found an echo in his heart. This stanza from his poem 'At Close of Day' (beautifully translated by Jakobina Johnson) gives the quintessence of him;

And when the last of my days is over,
The last page turned,
And what-so-ever shall be deemed in wages
That I have earned,
In such a mood I hope to be composing
My sweetest lay —
And then extend my hand to all the world
And pass away.

Emerson said, "he, who would possess his own soul must be a non-conformist." Through all the chances and changes of a difficult life, Stephansson possessed his own soul. From first to last he was his own man. He sought nothing from life that must be won by kneeling.

Henry George held that the man who owns the earth owns the people for they must buy from him the privilege of living on his earth. Stephansson, who was three times a pioneer, well knew the necessity of land for the people.

Robert Green Ingersoll — Royal Bob, who said: "I do not claim that I have floated level with the heights of thought, or that I have descended to the very depths of things. I simply claim that what ideas I have, I have a right to express; and that any man who denies that right to me is an intellectual thief and robber." It was largely under Ingersoll's influence, that Stephansson left the ranks of the many who said "Believe", to join the ranks of the few who said "Think". Ingersoll's formal education was only a little more extensive than Stephansson's. Like Stephansson, he was self-educated. He once declared that universities are places where pebbles are polished and diamonds are dimmed. Stephansson had no more need of a university than did Ingersoll. He was no pebble who needed polishing. He was a diamond of the purest ray. Did he regret his lack of formal education? Apparently not: In his 'Reminiscences' (as translated by Axel Vopnfjord), he wrote: "I have no regrets,

however, that I was deprived of a formal education. Had I later undertaken the arduous task of 'working my way through college', I would not have been able to render assistance to my parents in their old age. It may have been my good fortune that the halls of learning were closed to me. I am quite content now that circumstances have unfolded as they did." He once pointed out that he was not Ingersoll's subject or disciple, only his less vigorous and younger brother. He gave many lectures on Ingersoll's humanistic philosophy and his biblical criticism, which did not make him popular with those who have never questioned the literal accuracy of every word in the Bible.

Eugene Victor Debs, who spoke these magnificent words to the judge who sentenced him to ten years in prison on a charge of sedition which arose out of his opposition to the waste and folly of war: "Your Honour, years ago I recognized my

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kinship with all living things, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest of the earth. I said then, I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free." Debs seems to have been one of Stephansson's special heroes. He wrote a poem to commemorate him. He was the same brand of uncompromising pacifist as Debs.

Laurier, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, of glorious memory, the highest manifestation of political life that Canada has yet produced; that political warrior of the white plume which he never allowed to descend into the dust of the political arena, who said "I may be defeated but I will not be dishonoured"; that statesman by whom the little politicians, who come with the wind from obscurity and who go with the wind into oblivion, must be measured. In January, 1918, Stephansson wrote of Laurier: "He was and is the fairest and most idealistic statesman 'of the old school' in Canada, resembling Gladstone in many ways."

And finally Ibsen, that giant warrior of the pen in whose veins flowed the blood of Vikings, whose short answer to the question, "what's a man's first duty?" was "To be himself". Stephansson did not want to live on other people's ideas. He did his own thinking. He wanted no second hand wares. He was himself. By taking thought, he escaped from the bondage of orthodoxy in religion and in politics.

These then were some of the lawgivers of Stephan G. Stephansson, who wrote his name in fadeless letters in the book of world poetry. In passing, it is interesting to note that Stephansson never came under Shakespeare's magic spell. Skuli Johnson makes this comment: "His only poem on an English writer is a peculiar one of Shakespeare entitled 'The Robber'." In a letter dated 1902 (when he was approach-

ing his 50th year), Stephansson wrote that he had "once read Shakespeare twenty years ago."

With just a touch of malice, the American critic, Van Wyck Brooks described T. S. Eliot (the predestined herdsman of the sick herd) as a Christian "with little faith, less hope and no charity." Stephansson stood at the opposite pole from Eliot. He was an ardent humanist of great faith, abundant hope and much charity. His philosophy of life was positive. He was an apostle of happiness. That life is worth living, that man is basically sound, were essential articles in his creed. He had a firm belief that the world at bottom is good. He was not a Christian in the accepted sense — not one with a capital 'C'. A critic once complained that Stephansson's religion was "obscure". Stephansson replied: "This misses the point, because any Christian can see that I am a heathen and an atheist." Because there are still many benighted souls who think that a pagan or an atheist cannot be an honest man or a good citizen, it must be explained that Stephansson used these words in a special context. They must be given a special definition. As Stefan Einarsson points out, Stephansson reacted against orthodox Christianity but "he was no enemy of the Master from Nazareth". He once wrote: "In my eyes, it is not the greatest sin of the Lutheran Church to have ancient doctrines, rather that it is without spiritual life and that spiritual darkness lies over it." He was a lifelong student of the Bible. His family Bible stood at his elbow when he sat at his desk in his study at Markerville. He read the Bible, in the manner recommended by Tolstoi, not as "the word of God or Christ", but "as the neatest, simplest, most comprehensible and most practical doctrine on the ways in which man ought to live." In short, he eliminated the supernatural elements from Christianity. He accepted Christ's teaching but he could not accept His divinity.

Skuli Johnson once declared that Stephansson could not accept orthodox Christianity because it freed man from responsibility for his actions. He quotes these four lines, in his own translation, in support of this view.

That I believe this folly, friend, think you,

That I my earlier debts can wipe away
With the performance of duty new?

No kindly acts the older sins repay.

In other words, Stephansson believed in the old Viking idea that a man should stand up and face the music. He repudiated the notion that a man by making foxy calculations could pay off his bad debts of misconduct by mending his ways to pursue a course of good conduct. He believed that good deeds are their own reward, not an investment for another world. He took no stock in "Threats of Hell or Hopes of Paradise".

In his view good conduct was not dependant on a belief in revealed religion. He held that a man should do good, without any expectation of being rewarded, directly or indirectly, either in this life or in a hereafter. In fact, he had no belief in an after life. The race is immortal, the individual is not.

In 1910, he wrote in a letter: "As far as one can see, life is eternal; it was and it will be. It is of the greatest importance that all the circumstances that surround life be favourable. What each and every individual has in common with the life of the living will live on after he ceases to exist." Shakespeare would have it that the evil men do lives after them. Not so Stephansson: he held that it is the good that men do which lives after them.

The best that was in me for ever shall live,

The sun over darkness prevail.

His attitude to death may be summed up in the words of George Meredith:

Into the earth that gives the rose,
Shall I with shuddering fall.

Judging by his frequent references in his poetry to the rose, it must have been his favourite flower. He planted wild roses in front of the first house he built at Markerville. They could be seen from the windows. Later he planted lilacs and honeysuckle. The lilacs and the honeysuckle are flourishing today, but the roses have long since scattered their last petals upon the grass.

Stephansson lived at peace with his neighbours, but not with society. He could not shut his eyes to the injustice of social conditions and the disorder in the economy. He was born with a sense that the world need not be a capitalistic jungle. He became a socialist, though he did not take an active part in politics. He was too independant to wear the collar of authority of any political party. There are as many different kinds of socialists as there are Christians. Stephansson could not accept a closed system of dogmatic political principles. He was a socialist in the tradition of Eugene B. Debs. His passion for social justice was the mainspring of his socialism. Here are some lines, from his poem 'Evening', translated by Jakobina Johnson, which give a hint of his brand of socialism:

When wealth that is gathered by taxes
or tolls

Or tariffs — is counted as vain.

Where no man's success is another
man's loss,

Nor power the goal and the gain,

— The first of commandments is justice
to all,

And victory causes no pain.

Stephansson had a ready eye for observation and a ready pen to describe what he had observed. Listen to this fragment from his poem 'En Route', as translated by Watson Kirkconnell:

By prairie and slough-side the train
that we rode
Drove ever relentlessly north.
To our left the great River lay turbid
and red
And sprawled itself sullenly forth.
Its breast never quickened in rapid or
fall,
Its dull heavy waters were fain
To waddle forever with arms full of
mud
And the slummocky clay of the
plain.
The landscape unchanged and un-
changeable stood,
Save only were dryads of grace
Had woven on edges of wandering
brooks
A leafy embroid'ry of lace
But the land itself lay like an infinite
board,
Unslivered, unknotted, and clean
As if all of the stuff of Creation were
smoothed
And stained an ineffable green.

These lines smell of the Manitoba earth. They make pictures which anyone who has ever lived in the Red River Valley cannot help but appreciate, though poetry may not be one of his special delights. To read them is to endorse Kirkconnell's bold assertion: "No other Canadian poet in any language presents a comparable picture of Western Canada." Kirkconnell's right to make this statement is founded on his qualifications as a linguist. He translated from more than fifty languages.

Sometimes Stephansson employed symbolism to convey his poetic message; as, for example, in his poem 'The Brothers Destiny'. This poem has been translated by Paul Bjarnason, who incidentally was one of the thirty-four admirers who paid for the publication of the first three volumes of Stephansson's collected poems.

Two brothers inherited a farm that earlier

generations had turned into a wasteland, by taking everything from the soil and putting nothing back. Both brothers agreed that they would have to reclaim the farm. They employed different methods to achieve this purpose. One brother anxious to get rich quickly began looking for gold. The other brother bent his back in improving the land.

They parted; for pride and ambition
So pull at the ties of the clan.
No other enticements can answer
When Honor has called to the man
Who gears not his work to his wages,
But wills the result to the ages
And plans to improve what he can.

The moral of the poem is that man has as duty to leave the world better than he found it; that each generation must build a bridge to the future:

We see in each fact, not the fable,
As feebly we search and appraise,
That law, if illucid, is stable

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And leaves but one prospect to face:
To think not in hours, but in ages,
At eve not to claim all our wages,
Will bring out the best in the race.

Through sins that may seem to enfeeble
The sharp will instinctively lean
To change what is best to a better
In building the future we earn —
It isn't today, with its dancing
And dreams, but the art of advancing,
That buys what the seers can discern.

Professor H. Milnes interprets the symbolism of this poem in these words: "It is probably his most profoundly 'un-American' poem, because I have a feeling it is aimed at the profit motive itself. It relates how one brother dies prospecting for gold which is under a curse, while the other brother works the land and prepares abundance for future generations. The poem then becomes visionary, and looks to a time when people in general will be free to follow the example of the second brother."

The poet who wrote this poem now sleeps under a grave-stone near Marker-ville, on which have been carved in English, French and Icelandic, these words:

To think not in hours, but in ages,
At eve not to claim all our wages,
Will bring out the best in the race.

Another of Stephansson's poems which employs symbolism is 'O, Lord, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me'. Its message is the old one — mankind always martyrs its saviours. Society throws stones, or burns at the stake, or crucifies on the cross, those who follow a different path than the herd, who try to jog humanity out of its accustomed ruts. Stephansson knew the story. He had a few stones thrown at him, for his humanism and antagonism to war. But, 'say not, the struggle naught available'. Because of the men who stand out from the crowd, the world does get better. In the

words of one of Stephansson's favourite English speaking poets, John Greenleaf Whittier:

And step by step since time began
I see the steady gain of man.

The process is slow, but it is sure.
Here are six, of the twenty-seven stanzas of 'O, Lord', in Paul Bjarnason's translation:

And even yet our age is blind
To excellence in humankind.
But somewhere Nature's twirling Tide
Will tender payment, multiplied.

Amid those scenes there came the call
That comes to leaders, one and all:
To mend the ills that cause decay
And cure the blunders of the day.

He preached that human love, alone,
Could lead the way to Heaven's throne;
That all our deepest wisdom went
To waste, if lacking good intent.

To fail in building brotherhood
Embittered Him upon the rood.

It broke His heart to see
How hopeless such a task would be.

And His complaint upon the cross
Comes peeling down the years to us,
When Bigotry and blinded Hate
About His standard congregate.

And even the peasant pioneer,
Who plows the glebe beside the mere,
Succumbs ere he, himself can see
His service to humanity.

On July 6, 1909, Stephansson's son Gestur was killed by lightning. That night Stephansson wrote a poem to relieve his sorrow. In this poem he makes no direct assault on his readers' emotions. He does not shout his grief: he whispers it. His low key but makes his grief more manifest.

The poem 'Gestur' has been admirably translated by Paul Bjarnason. It is a poem of nine stanzas of six lines each. Here are four of the stanzas:

It helps the lorn to bear what has to be
 If bitterness and fear are held at bay.
 Benevolence could have no hate for
 thee,
 Nor heave the bolt that took your life
 away:
 And Love could never cause such
 cruelty
 To countless hearts that mourn your
 destiny.
 Thy kindness never will be spoiled or
 spent;
 The spool of time will keep the thread
 intact.
 Though visions for thy glory with thee
 went,
 The ones you gave inspired so much
 I lacked.
 And when I pass from out the sphere
 of song
 The soul of life their essence will
 prolong.
 O dearest child! Thy kind and helping
 hand

Greetings

from

A Friend

Gave hope and strength, in my declining
 days,
 To save the lines that I with pain had
 penned
 And piece together half-forgotten lays.
 That treasure, jointly ours, I'd alienate
 Could I have dared to bargain with thy
 fate.
 And yet it will be sweet to sing to thee
 A song of greeting from a heart at
 peace,
 Until the final sun has set for me
 Beside thy greening hill amid the trees.
 And so will be ensanctified the ground
 In songs that to thy memory redound.

At his son's grave Stephansson delivered
 a funeral oration which challenges Inger-
 soll at his best. Here is a line from it (in a
 translation by Bjorgvin Sigurdson): "He
 has enriched our memories, and although it
 is so very painful to lose him, the void in
 my life would have been far more grievous
 had he never been mine and if I had never
 known the enjoyment of his company."

Some of Stephansson's work is rough-
 hewn. Judge Walter J. Lindal once told me
 that Stephansson was the Robert Browning
 of Iceland. I think a better comparison
 would be with either of those masculine
 poets, George Meredith or Thomas Hardy,
 who sometimes did not give too much
 attention to finish and polish. Stephansson
 had no time to devote to, what Horace
 called, the labour of the file. He could not
 spend a morning, as Oscar Wilde did, in
 deciding whether to take out, or leave in, a
 comma in a line of his verse. With potatoes
 to be hoed, and cows to be milked, he had
 no time to roll on the floor, as Flaubert did,
 in an agony of frustration, until he found
 the right word.

Thorvaldur Johnson once made an in-
 teresting comparison between Stephansson
 and Thomas Hardy. "Both were basically
 realists," he said, "but with romantic over-
 tones. In both, sympathy for living things

was strong. The sympathy for struggling
 and ill-treated humanity predominates but
 the same feeling is also expressed for ani-
 mals, especially in poems about birds. Both
 have a strong affinity with nature."

Hardy had more strings to his literary bow
 than Stephansson. Comparing them as
 poets, it seems to me, that the main dif-
 ference between them was that Stephansson
 looked on the positive side of the spectacle
 of life, and Hardy on the negative side.

When the Viking subdued his primitive
 instincts and gave up the pursuits of pillage
 and slaughter, he became a man of peace.
 Iceland has not indulged in the childish
 pastime of war for over a thousand years.
 Children born in Iceland are born into a
 world of peace. Their environment fosters in
 them strong pacifist sympathies. From his
 cradle Stephansson had a passionate horror
 of war.

When the war drums were sounded for
 the Boer War, he did not let his emotion rule
 his reason. He did not cast aside honest
 belief to fall in step with the popular mood.
 He spoke out, with his full voice, against the
 war. He saw Great Britain in the role of a
 bully, a giant battling with a pygmy for
 commercial gain. His poem 'Transvaal'
 ends with these two lines:

English gold will rot before
 The fight for freedom can be stilled.

For the forthright expression of his opinion,
 he came under a cloud of disapproval. But
 when he took a similar position in regard to
 the First World War, he came under the
 shadow of a much darker cloud. In 1915, he
 wrote a poem which Paul Bjarnason has
 translated under the title 'Armistice'. For a
 more powerful indictment of war one would
 have to go backwards in time to the year 416
 B.C., when Euripedes staged his play 'The
 Trojan Women', in ancient Athens.

Two armies face each other across a
 battlefield. The battlefield is piled high with

rotting corpses. An armistice is called so
 that the corpses may be cleared away.

The shooting for the moment had
 abated,

The sound of battle faded to a whisper.
 The dead and dying o'er the field
 enscattered,

In no-man's-land, prevented further
 action.

Two men, one from each army, crawl out
 of their shell-holes: one of them is young,
 the other is old enough to be his father. They
 begin talking together. They find that they
 are both pawns on the chessboard of the
 nations, that they both belong on the same
 side of the street. In peace time, they both
 trickled sweat for a daily wage. Had they
 met in a pub, in normal times, they would
 have sat down together, and had a drink.

The older man speaks:

For ages all my kin were serfs and
 tenants

Without domain. A haughty native
 chieftain

Deprived us of our goods and lands and
 houses

And gave them as a present to a crony
 To hold in fee forever. So the story
 Is told by those who to their sorrow
 know it.

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Of one thing I am certain: that my
 master
 In peace and quiet dwells within his
 castle
 While I and mine for him like this are
 dying.
 No doubt you own a home that needs
 protection?
 The young man replies:
 A house and home? No, I live in a city
 And am for sale from day to day to
 masters
 Who set the rates of pay, decide the
 hours
 And own the tools, the shops and
 vacant spaces.
 They discuss the propaganda for peace in
 both their countries before the war cry
 sounded.
 The young man says:
 Your spokesmen were, it seems then,
 like our poets
 Who sang to us for half an age in
 concert
 Of peace on earth, of charity and friend-
 ship
 Like Christian men; they gladly took
 to screaming
 The martial anthems, each in his best
 measure,
 As quickly as the first loud cannon
 sounded.

Stephansson's indignation burned at
 white heat at the spectacle of the ministers
 of the Gospel in both countries, convinced
 of the righteousness of their cause, praying
 to the same God for victory.

He gives these words to the old man to
 speak:

Our preachers are, as one, devoutly
 praying
 For more and better weapons for the
 nations —
 Among the lot my own revered con-
 fessor,

Who had for fifty years at every
 Yuletide
 Announced in many oily words of
 welcome
 The Prince of peace — the while there
 was no fighting.
 Conversely, maybe, in your land the
 clergy
 And church — no doubt as powerful
 as ours is —
 Have prayed for peace and deprecated
 warfare?

To this question, the young man makes
 this reply:

Not so! Our church in every phrase
 and manner
 Resembles yours, and many a leading
 shepherd
 Who taught the members all the
 Christian virtues.
 Himself has fallen on the field of battle.

The two men ask each other how it came
 about that they became soldiers.
 The young man gives his reason:

Dire poverty within a world of plenty
 Has now become the major cause of
 warfare.
 But few there were who foresaw all the
 horror!
 When keyed to war and all it meant,
 the nation
 Ignored the need for civic rights and
 welfare —
 The work and wages that sustain the
 masses.
 The owners stopped production for the
 people
 And offered half a wage to all the
 healthy
 And young who would enlist and join
 the army
 To save the fatherland. The state
 would feed them.
 For me it was the practical solution,

That I might eat and help to feed my
 mother,
 Who is a widow from a former blood-
 bath.
 The old man tells the selfsame story:
 Nor am I in this mess because last
 August
 A countryman of mine was seized with
 panic
 And shot a noted duke. The cause lies
 deeper.
 A while ago you named a truer reason
 For all this long and murderous
 disaster.
 The people, after long and painful
 thinking
 About their plight, in spite of toil and
 pinching,
 Suspected there was something topsy-
 turvy.
 The doubting spread and all the props
 of power
 Began to tremble o'er the gloomy
 prospect.
 And so they planned — the native and
 the foreign,
 Who always stand together for sur-
 vival —
 A remedy to still the bitter grumbling.
 A nation locked in struggle with
 another
 Forgets in time her daily civic worries.

Does violence produce good, or only
 more violence? In putting these words in
 the old man's mouth, Stephansson was a
 true prophet:

I care not for the victory you speak of.
 A state that wins is not for long the
 victor.
 The vanquished, glum and restive, live
 for vengeance
 And prosper on the sweet anticipation.
 And soon or late the victor in his
 triumph
 Will fall a victim to the snare it bought
 him.

When Rome had spent herself in
 winning battles
 And lost, the while, the flower of her
 manhood,
 The slaves and misfits left to reap the
 glory
 Had neither wit nor will to save the
 pieces.
 Just such a fate awaits our own
 successes.

Let us hope that these words, spoken by
 the old man, are not a true prophecy. (At
 this stage in human events the odds are
 about even that they may well be.)

Our culture and our much admired
 inventions,
 Applied by misfits in a planless era,
 Instead of blessing us with peace and
 plenty,
 Have brought the sorry mess we see
 about us.
 And will perhaps the destiny of
 mankind,
 With all its pride, at last be self-
 destruction?

As a pacifist, Stephansson suffered
 abuse from super-patriots in Canada. What
 about pacifists in other countries? The
 older man has some words about their fate:

And what has been the fate of faithful
 leaders,
 The few who would not break their
 solemn pledges
 For peace, and gamely stood by their
 convictions?
 One simply falls a prey to the assassin.
 Another is maligned among his fellows
 And duly charged with treason and
 convicted.
 A third, gone mad, avoided and
 abandoned,
 With aimless tread is hobbling to
 oblivion.

"War, teaching man by violence," says Thucydides, "fits their characters to their condition." The armistice is over. Friendly talk between the two men ceases. Their training in violence asserts itself. It is now their duty to kill each other.

Our momentary time of truce is ended.
I hear our trumpets calling loud for action.

Our drums are droning orders for resistance!

Beware! My hand is on the weapon, father.

Then welcome, son, into the grave here with me!

The poem 'Armistice', in Bjarnason's translation, runs to twenty-five pages. Stephansson has a shorter poem, a four-line Icelandic epigram, on the same theme, which gives the essence of his longer poem.

It has been translated by Kirkconnell:

In Europe's reeking slaughter-pen
They mince the flesh of murdered men,
While swinish merchants, snout in trough,

Drink all the bloody profits off.

Kirkconnell's comment on Stephansson's resistance to the First World War bears repeating: "The essential sanity of Stephan G. in the face of the mass emotions that had been whipped up by the wartime press was one of the most notable qualities of this man of granite." To swim against the current, when emotions are running high, takes rare courage. His poem 'The Challengers' proves that Stephansson was well aware of this fact. Here it is in a translation by Paul Sigurdson:

When every fool and dolt was fired
To fight by silliness inspired
Keen to save his neck and treasure,
Stayed at home, enjoyed his leisure,
Stirred the masses to a passion,
To die for their adopted nation;

Hoped to fill his purse with lucre
From the life-blood of his brother.
Empty heads with throaty valour
Bought their name and people's favour;
It took a man with will of stone,
To dare to stand alone.

In the winter of 1917-1918, some of the Icelandic settlers in the Markerville area were threatening to prosecute Stephansson on a charge of treason. He was not without friends and, through their efforts, wiser counsels finally prevailed.

Only once did Stephan G. Stephansson return to his native land. In 1917, a number of Youth Societies, as a measure of their honor, esteem and respect for him, invited him to Iceland to tour the country and to give readings from his work. His modesty made him hesitate to accept this invitation. Dr. Johnson was asked by a Mrs. Cotterell to introduce her to a celebrated author. "Dearest madam," he said, "you had better let it alone: the best part of every author is in general to be found in his book." Stephansson was afraid that the Icelanders would think that he had put the best part of himself in his books. His friends, who knew the charm and warmth of his personality, had no doubt that his visit would be an unqualified success. They were determined that he should go to Iceland. Eggert Johannsson wrote to him: "The Icelanders, or the paternal nation, owe you much, no less than the Icelanders in America. None of the nation's poets has before or later given her as much of new and hitherto utterly unknown material, as you have done, the novelists as well as the lyrical poets included. All this you have accomplished without remuneration, had it as a hobby all your life, in the evenings and in the nights while nature demanded that you take a rest after the toil of the day."

They know how to treat poets in Iceland. They give them the acclaim that we, in Canada, reserve for hockey stars. Stephans-

son's visit to Iceland was a triumph. He spent the summer visiting towns and villages, making new friends everywhere. The poet measured up to his books. One of the fruits of his visit was a volume of poems 'Homeward Bound', published in Reykjavik in 1917, which critics say contain some of his best work.

This pioneer farmer, who had found the secret formula for writing great poetry, died on his farm, on the east bank of the Medicine River, three miles upstream from the town of Markerville, on August 10, 1927. In Stefan Einarsson's words, he died 'with no worldly honors but recognized as one of the greatest poets and personalities of his race.'

Since his death, he has received some worldly honors. On September 4, 1950, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada unveiled a monument in the public park, in Markerville, in honour of his poetic achievement. The unveiling was done by his last surviving son, Jakob K. Stephansson. The monument is a cairn ten feet in height. It bears this inscription:

Stephan G. Stephansson
Icelandic Canadian Poet

Born in Skagafjord, Iceland, on 3rd October 1853, he settled in 1889 in the Markerville district, where he lived until his death on the 10th of August, 1927. Ranked among the great poets of Scandinavian literature he endured the hardships of the pioneer, and in much of his work depicted the life and scenery of Western Canada, which shared his affection with the land of his birth.

Professor Skuli Johnson was the principal speaker at the dedication ceremonies. He did full honour to the occasion. Approximately one thousand people attended the ceremonies.

On July 19, 1953, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Stephansson's birth, a

monument was unveiled at Arnarstapi, in the county of Skagafjord, in Iceland. This monument stands on a hill not far from the poet's birthplace. It was unveiled by Stephansson's daughter, Mrs. Rosa Benediktson, who visited Iceland for the occasion as the guest of the Icelandic government. Two thousand people were in attendance for the unveiling. The memorial is a tapered three-sided cairn of native Icelandic stone. It is about 15 feet in height and has a perimeter at the base of 26 feet. On each side is a bronze plaque, showing a likeness of Stephansson, and an inscription from his verse. The plaques were made by the Icelandic sculptor Rikhardur Jonsson.

The premier of Iceland, Steingrímur Steinthorsson, delivered the unveiling speech. He stressed the part played by the youth of Iceland in perpetuating Stephansson's fame as a poet. "It was incumbent on no one more than the youth of the country," he said, "to show him honour, esteem and respect. It is still the younger generation in Iceland that keeps alive the fame and memory of his work. It is the youth of Skagafjord — the Federation of Youth Societies — that has erected to the great poet the memorial which will be unveiled here today at Arnarstapi, one of the incomparable beauty spots of this inspiring country. I offer my thanks to the young men and young women who have worked at this task. They and this country may pride themselves on having taken the lead in recognizing this son of Skagafjord in a manner that future generations will long remember."

On a different level, a higher one, another tribute has been paid to Stephansson. The great scholar and critic, His Excellency Sigurdur Nordal, who was born in Selkirk, Manitoba, and whose varied career included a teaching post at Harvard, and service as his country's ambassador to Denmark, wrote a full length critique of the six volumes of Stephansson's 'Wakeful

Nights'. Nordal also wrote an introductory essay to a selection of 'Wakeful Nights', published in 1939, in which, in Stefan Einarson's words, "for the first time this Canadian-Icelander receives the critical attention due his great stature."

Not granite cairns, but words — words which interpret and explain to generations yet unborn his own words, words which will outlast the marble tombs of kings — this would have been Stephansson's delight. He once wrote:

Monuments crumble. Works of the
mind survive
The gales of time.

To have the works of his mind survive the gales of time, until the world ceases to exist, would have been his reward for his 'Wakeful Nights'.

On August 7, 1982, Stephansson's old home, near Markerville, carefully restored by the Stephan G. Stephansson Homestead Restoration Committee, was officially opened as an Historic Site of the Province of Alberta.

On August 30, 1982, in company with Mrs. Rosa Benediktson, Stephansson's only surviving child, my daughter, Mrs. Audrey Dean and my granddaughter, Tammy Dean, I visited this site. On the previous day (a Sunday) there had been 107 visitors to the old home. It is to be hoped that some of this number were pilgrims to the home of the poet who gave the gems and the jewels of his mind to the world, not idle curiosity-seekers.

Most devotedly, it is to be wished that Stephan G. Stephansson will not be placed before the nation as a tourist attraction. Tourists generally are not concerned with poetry, which was the first concern of his life. The fittest honor that can be paid to him is for 'the passionate few' who love great poetry to try to make him a living force in the nation's life; to strive to enlarge the cultural horizon of Canadians, of all

racial origins, by making his work known to them.

The government of Alberta has lent a helping hand in this design, recently, by sponsoring the publication of two books — Stephan G. Stephansson: 'The Poet of the Rocky Mountains', No. 9 in the Historic Sites Service, Occasional Papers, by Jane McCracken; and Stephan G. Stephansson, 'Selected translations from Ankvokur' by ten skilled translators, Paul Bjarnason, Ninna Campbell, Hallberg Hallmundsson, Helgi Hornford Sr., Jakobina Johnson, Thorvaldur Johnson, Watson Kirkconnell, Bjorgvin Sigurdson, Paul Sigurdson and Sigurdur Wopnfjord, who have translated into English selected passages from Stephansson's poetry and prose.

Stephansson's values were his own. They were not the common values. He never related all things to the dollar. He was more concerned with 'being' and 'doing', than with having. In the final count the things that mattered most with him were not bought and sold in the markets of the world. In his view grain elevators and trans-continental airlines do not constitute the real wealth of the nation. He once wrote:

Of assets for a nation to acquire
The fairest are: the saga and the lyre.

He deserves a better fate than to become a tourist attraction. Politicians, and others of that ilk, can fulfill that role much better than poets.

On the day that his last sun set for him, and his life's work was finished, Stephansson might have drawn a bill upon posterity, after Oliver Goldsmith's example:

Sir: Nine hundred and ninety-nine
years after sight hereof pay the bearer,
or order, a thousand pound's worth of
praise, free from all deductions what-
soever.



On second thought, Goldsmith died in 1774; and, at that time, 1000 pounds was a respectable sum. In view of the debasement of currency, Stephansson's bill should be for at least 10,000 pounds of praise; and, why should he have to wait nine hundred and ninety-nine years for it to become due?

Rosa Benediktson and Judge Stubbs at Stephansson's grave.

LADY WITH A LOVE FOR PEACE

by Denis Taylor

The world is getting used to the idea of women leading governments. Israel, India, Sri Lanka, Portugal and Norway, as well as Britain, have all had female Prime Ministers. But President Vigdis Finnbogadóttir of Iceland, who begins an official visit to Britain today is the first woman to be democratically elected as head of state.

She has never been a member of a political party. "I would never be able to accent the rules", she told *The Times* in Reykjavik earlier this month. She disclaims any long-term ambition for the office. When it was first suggested to her in 1979 that she should run for the presidency, "I thought it was a joke. But you never know how people see you."

A late entrant in the 1980 presidential race against three male candidates, Vigdis Finnbogadóttir was taken to task by the Right for having in the past opposed the American-manned Nato base at Keflavik, outside the capital.

But her office precludes any involvement in party political issues, although the presidency itself is not purely ceremonial.

The president has a right to veto any parliamentary Bill, but this sanction can only come into effect if upheld by a referendum. Such a presidential prerogative has never been exercised since Iceland gained its independence from Denmark 38 years ago.

She described the role of president as being that of a kind of midwife to the political parties who have to agree on forming a government after every Icelandic general election. Not since the 1931 poll has a single party won a majority of seats.

President Vigdis confines herself now to saying that in her advocacy of peace she is a realist and is aware that the world is divided into different camps. But she was preoccupied with the danger of people's attention drifting away from the necessity for peace. "Think about it from day to day, that's the main thing", she said.

Where she feels no inhibitions is an arena into which British candidates for high office would hesitate to venture. To have intellectual interests is as natural in Iceland as going fishing.

"I believe I was elected because I talked culture, culture and history", she said. "This society as an industrialized society, is so young. All the banks and big institutions date from this century. I am of the generation that has worked with these corporations, and this has required so much time that there is less time for passing on all the legends of the sagas. We don't have any castles, we have no cathedrals, but we have an art that is passed on through a tremendous lot of stories and poetry."

President Vigdis, who is 51, speaks of herself as someone capable of bridging the generations. She was brought up with the tradition of the sagas passed on to her by her parents and grand-parents, has experienced the rise of post-war prosperity, the scattering of families and the advent of television.

She says that the young, old people, farmers, fishermen and intellectuals voted for her. In Iceland, farmers' wives had great responsibilities, and fishermen were used to leaving their women in charge when they were away at sea. But she readily concedes that many women voted against her, otherwise she would have carried much more than 33.8 per cent of the poll.

This was the first time that a woman had come forward as a presidential candidate. In the Middle Ages Icelandic women had equal rights to divorce and an automatic half share of the property if a marriage was dissolved.

But today only three of the 60 MPs sitting in the Icelandic Parliament (the Althing) are women, and it is said to be difficult to persuade them to stand. The president said she thought that many women had a preconceived idea that their head of state should be a man with a wife at his side.

Vigdis Finnbogadóttir was married early to a former schoolfriend and divorced 20 years ago. She has a young adopted

daughter, Astridur. This is another sign of a lack of convention, for this was one of the first cases in the country of a child being adopted by a single person.

President Vigdis believes that Icelandic girls should concentrate on reaching the same educational standards as men. When they do, "equality will come automatically."

She studied in France, Denmark and Sweden as well as at the University of Iceland. The subjects covered during these years included French and English, philosophy and the history of drama. She has taught Icelanders French both in school and through television, and lectured on French drama at the university. Like many Icelanders, she has done two jobs at the same time, in her case teaching and working first at the National Theatre and then at the Reykjavik Theatre, where she was the director from 1972 until 1980.

For a number of years, she has been involved in Nordic cultural affairs, and in September she is to open the "Scandinavia Today" exhibition in Washington, New York and Minneapolis at the invitation of the other Nordic heads of state.

"I always project Scandinavia as much as possible, especially Icelandic culture. I have travelled relatively often to France and Britain, and it's extremely difficult to find literature and art from the Scandinavian countries. Ibsen is always on the stage in Britain, but nothing has been translated since Ibsen and Strindberg."

"My ideal would be to have a special fund for scholarships for people from Britain, France, Germany and other nations who could spend a year or two in one of the Scandinavian countries as a preparation for specializing in translating literature." Her suggestion was that the costs of such a scheme could be split equally between the student's home and host country.

Courtesy of the London (England) Times

THOR'S HAMMER

(from the Poetic Edda)

Translated by Jacqueline Simpson

When Thor awoke, his rage was great
To see his hammer was lost:
He shook his beard, he groped around,
His red hair he tossed.

And these were the first words he spoke:
'Listen, Loki, to what I say —
A thing unheard-of in heaven or earth —
A god's hammer stolen away!'

Then they went to Freyja's fair home,
And these first words he spoke:
'Freyja, to find my hammer again,
Will you lend me your feather-cloak?'

'To you I would give my feather-cloak,
Though of gold it were;
To you I would grant my feather-cloak,
Though of silver it were.'

Then Loki he flew, and on he flew
(The feather-cloak whistled shrill)
Till he left the land of the gods, and came
To the world where giants dwell.

There Thrym, the lord of the giants, sat:
He sat on a burial mound,
Twisting a chain of shining gold
As a leash to hold his hound.

'How fare the gods?' asked the giant
Thrym,
Trimming his horse's mane;
'How fare the elves? And why come you
To Giant-Land alone?'

'Ill fare the gods now, ill fare the elves',
Loki replied again:
'Have you hidden the hammer of
Thundering Thor,
Sender of Storm and Rain?'

'I've hidden the hammer of Thundering
Thor
Eight leagues beneath the ground;
Unless he brings Freyja to be my wife,
By no man shall it be found.'

Then Loki he flew, and on he flew
(The feather-cloak whistled shrill),
Till he left the world of giants, and came
To the homes where high gods dwell.

There he met Thor in the high gods' home,
And these first words Thor spoke:
'Have you won any news for all your pain,
For the toil you undertook?'

'Tell me whatever long tale you bring,
But tell it as you fly,
For a man who sits down will forget his
news,
And one who lies down will lie.'

'Thrym has your hammer, the giants' lord,
(This news I won for my pain):
Unless he brings Freyja to be Thrym's
wife,
No man shall find it again.'

So then Thor went to Freyja the fair,
And these first words spoke he:
'Freyja, bind on your bridal veil,
Come to Giant-Land with me.'

Then Freyja gave such a snort of rage
That all the gods' halls shook,
And the great necklace the Brisings made,
About her neck it broke.

'I'd know that I must be running mad
With lusting for a man,
If ever I did set out with you
To go to Giant-Land!'

The high gods then in council met,
And goddesses in talk;
They sought a plan, the mighty lords,
To win Thor's hammer back.

Then up and spoke Heimdall the white
(The future he could see):
'Put a bridal veil on Thor himself,
And a skirt about his knee;

'Let him have the necklace the Brisings made,
Broad jewels on his breast;
And on his head a pleated coif
Most cunningly we'll twist.'

Then up and spoke the valiant Thor:
'How unmanly you'd call me,
If I let you dress me in bridal veil,
With a skirt about my knee!'

'But giants will live in Asgard soon',
Said Loki, Laufey's son,
'Unless you win your hammer back,
So, Thor, now hold your tongue!'

So they dressed Thor then in the bridal veil,
With a skirt about his knees,
And from his belt they hung a bunch
Of rattling, jingling keys.

They gave him the necklace the Brisings made,
Broad jewels for his breast,
And on his head a pleated coif
Most cunningly did twist.

Then up spoke Loki, Laufey's son:
'I'll travel by your side;
I'll go to Giant-Land with you,
As handmaid to the bride.'

Thor's goats were fetched and harnessed fast,
And well and fast they ran;
The mountains split, the wildfire flashed —
Thor drove to Giant-Land.

Then up spoke Thrym, the giants' lord:
'Up, ogres all!' he cried,
'Adorn the hall, for Freyja comes,
Njord's daughter, as my bride!'

'Bring here, bring here the gold-horned cows,
Bring here the oxen black,
And slaughter them for our delight,
That no joy we may lack.

'Much is my treasure, many my gems,
Much gold as well I own;

I think there is nothing that now I lack,
Excepting Freyja alone.'

So early, as the evening fell,
The guests came to the hall:
Before the giants horns were placed,
Filled with bridal ale.

But one there was, the bride herself,
Who ate a huge ox whole,
Eight salmons too, and all the cakes,
And drank three vats of ale.

'Who ever saw', cried giant Thrym,
'So keen an appetite?
No girl I've seen could drink so deep,
No bride so hugely bite!'

But the crafty handmaid sat near by,
And she an answer found:
'For eight days Freyja never ate,
She longed for Giant-Land.'

Thrym raised the veil to beg a kiss,
But reeled back through the hall:
'Oh why are Freyja's eyes so fierce?
Fire darts from her eyeball!'

But the crafty handmaid sat near by,
And she an answer found:
'For eight nights Freyja never slept,
She so longed for Giant-Land.'

In came the giant's foul sister,
Who dared a gift to crave:
'Give me the gold rings from your hands,
And my friendship you will have.'

'Bring in the holy hammer now!'
Thrym, lord of giants, cried,
'Lay Mjollnir on this maiden's knee,
As blessing to the bride!'

Then Thor the Thunderer laughed aloud
When he his hammer saw —
With the first blow laid the great Thrym low
And felled him to the floor.

He slew the giant's foul sister,
Who'd dared a gift to crave:
She got a blow instead of rings,
Instead of gold, a grave.

And one by one he struck them down,
Slew all the giant's kin;
And thus the son of Odin won
His hammer back again.

*From the book "The Northmen Talk,"
courtesy of the University of Wisconsin
Press, P.O. Box 1379, Madison, Wis-
consin 53701.*

THE NARROWS — SIGLUNES SETTLEMENT

(Continued from the spring issue)

by William Friesen

Björn Mathews

Björn Mathews came with his parents from Iceland to Manitoba in 1887. Their first location was the Swan Lake district. From there they moved to The Narrows, 1893, and then to Siglunes in 1895. While still at Swan Lake Björn joined a group of men who went fishing on Lake Manitoba. One year there were ten men in the fishing expedition. They built a log cabin on one of the islands in the lake and used it as their fishing camp.

Shortly after settling in Siglunes, Björn started a small store on his father's farm. It failed because he was too soft-hearted in giving credit. He left for the United States and worked there for a few years. He married Gudrun Lundal, described as a "charming woman" and came back to Siglunes. The couple started farming on nearby Beach Island, raising sheep and cattle. In the winter Björn operated a fairly large fishing outfit. He encouraged the Icelanders to fish and helped them to acquire the necessary equipment. In the story of the settlement he is described as a "self appointed administrator for all who were needy". Björn's family stayed on the island farm till 1908. Then they moved to Siglunes so that the children could attend school. In 1905, while still living on the island, Björn had set up a saw mill on his father's farm.

Björn's fishing and saw mill operations

were of great benefit to the community. Both industries provided extra jobs close to home for the settlers. The saw mill provided building material and it was not long before the farmers replaced their original log cabins with substantial frame houses. There was an excellent stand of white poplar nearby which kept the mill busy for two years, 1905 and 1906. In the third year, Björn, in partnership with a Mr. Hall, moved the mill 12 miles east. Here spruce was the most suitable wood. In the winter they hauled a large quantity of spruce logs to Birch Island and piled it on a skerry. In spring the partners put a steamboat, the Lady Ellen, on the lake with a large barge in tow. The lumber was loaded on this barge and towed to Oak Point. There they took into the company with them, Robert Smith, a former sea captain. He looked after the sale of the lumber in Oak Point. Stefan Mathews operated the boat for the first few months. After that Asi Freeman served as captain as long as the boat was on the lake.

In 1908 the saw mill was back at Siglunes; this time on Björn's newly acquired farm close to the lake shore, and Asi Freeman replaced Hall as Björn's partner. They logged for a time in the Siglunes area and then moved the outfit to Crane River 50 miles northwest of Siglunes. Not long after that Asi sold his share to a Jewish firm, The Lake Manitoba Trading Com-

pany, which had its headquarters in Winnipeg. The company started a store in Siglunes with Gabriel Sirkau as manager. He also became a shareholder in the company. Later, after the railroad was extended to Gypsumville, this company opened stores at Oak Point, Lundar, Eriksdale, Mulvihill, Ashern, and Moosehorn.

After a year and a half the partnership was dissolved. Björn for his share kept the saw mill and the store. Unfortunately, the saw mill burned down within a year. After this tragic event all that he had left was the store. In 1914 he sold the store and it was moved to Dog Creek (Vogar). Björn quit as manager of the store, but he continued as fish buyer for the Armstrong Trading Company till 1920.

In 1910, Björn had built himself a huge two-storey house 60 feet long and 30 feet wide. He built the walls out of cement blocks. In order to do this at reasonable cost he had purchased a cement block mold. With this mold he was able to produce all the cement blocks used in the house. The mold continued in use elsewhere for many years. The new house was modern in all respects and was heated by steam with radiators in every part of the building.

Björn, like his short-time partner Asmundur Freeman, also qualified as an entrepreneur. He had drive and initiative and employed many men. He served his community well and it was said of him that he was motivated more by the needs of the community than by egotistical interest.

ICELAND HAS A WAY WITH WOOL

by Judi Hunt

Icelanders tell the story of a young fisherman who is washed overboard on a cold and stormy winter morning into a sea that is nearly freezing.

He resigns himself to death, but suddenly a hook from one of the boat's fishing lines catches his thick seaman's sweater and within five minutes he's back on the boat.

Five minutes can be too long in icy waters (as many Puget Sounders have found to their dismay), but in this case the young man is wearing outer and undergarments of pure Icelandic wool.

And within a day he has recovered from his ordeal.

Probably few of the Pacific Northwesters who attended a buffet-fashion show in honor of Iceland's President Vigdis Finnbogadottir on Tuesday were thinking about the weather-resistant qualities of garments made of Icelandic wool.

It was, after all, a warm day and the sun was turning the 40th floor of the Rainier Bank Tower into a glittering viewpoint of Puget Sound, so that no one wanted to leave.

And besides, it was much more fun to concentrate on the beauty, the softness and the designs of the lovely Icelandic sweaters that were worn by equally beautiful Icelandic models (three of them former Miss Iceland).

The garments ranged from the more traditional designs that are recognizable as Icelandic — the handknitted, soft, naturally colored sweaters of light gray, light brown or almost charcoal brown wool — to the newer, more contemporary looking sweaters and coats, as in the vanilla coat sweater with the stand-up collar.

Some were belted, some hung straight and many had zippered closures; shawls or matching knitted hats were the accessories.

The sweaters were worn over the very latest in leather pants, most of them black, underscoring how far these lovely garments have come in the fashion world — a long way from the icy waters of Iceland.

—Courtesy of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer

IN THE NEWS

GUNNLAUGSON MAKES CURLING HISTORY



Lloyd Gunnlaugson

Lloyd Gunnlaugson made Manitoba curling history when he skipped his Valour

Road rink to the senior men's championship. Thus he became the first man to capture two major curling championships in the same year. Previously he had won the Provincial Men's Tankard Championship with different personnel.

In Sudbury, Ontario his rink, consisting of Bob Davidson, Gord Paterson, and Lloyd's nephew, Harold Johannesson, took part in the competition for the Canadian Championship.

At Sarnia, Ontario, Lloyd with Loru Suzuki, Albert Olson and Dennis Reid successfully defended his Senior Men's Canadian Curling Championship, thereby joining Dr. Wendell MacDonald of Prince Edward Island as the only other two-time senior champion.

Congratulations, Lloyd, and the other members of the two rinks.



A GRAPHOLOGIST'S ASSESSMENT OF VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON

by Dr. E. Leigh Syms

Vilhjalmur Stefansson wrote the following on the inside leaf of his book, *Hunters of the Great North* (1922):

Mrs. Erla Windmiller, a certified graphologist, noted this sample of his writing on the book that was owned by her son. On the basis of this brief sample, she ascertained that Stefansson's writing revealed "the personality of a rugged individualist — a perceptive person with a logical investigative mind. He was a man of moods but, he had self-control. He also had a fine sense of rhythm and may have been a good dancer."

In a more detailed, but nevertheless brief assessment, she determined that:

"He couldn't stop searching and learning. He had a good memory for details, great mental speed, and good judgement. He was direct and efficient. He had learned to eliminate unnecessary details and to get right down to essentials. He was visionary, yet his practical good sense prevailed in his work.

He was action-minded, liked change, was decisive and was optimistic. He had a sense of humor and was a good conversationalist, yet was sometimes abrupt. Although a kindly person, he could be critical of others, on occasion, especially where moral issues were involved. He was affected by emotional situations to a large degree, but he made a conscious effort at self-control. He also curbed his impulsiveness. Once in awhile, he was assertive where least

expected, when his knowledge may have been superficial.

Stefansson had pride and dignity. He was not ostentatious. He had plenty of energy, yet he didn't need a lot of physical space in which to work. He loved homelife, had a favorable self-image, and liked to read."

While this evaluation may seem to be a detailed depiction on the basis of a very brief sample, Mrs. Windmiller emphasized that this represents only notes that were jotted down. She is a certified graphologist from Elk Grove, California who is a private consultant trained through Handwriting Analysis Workshop Unlimited. She now serves on the Board of Directors of the American Handwriting Analysis Foundation as well as the Board of Directors of the Council of Graphological Societies in Park Ridge, Illinois. In addition she teaches classes, lectures, and writes articles on graphology.

Mrs. Windmiller does all types of handwriting analysis including personality evaluation, career planning, child development, compatibility, and historical analysis. This assessment of Stefansson's work is an example of the latter. Graphology is based upon the premise that each stroke in a person's writing is a "delicate seismograph" tracing out not only ideas, but also a graphic portrait of the writer's entire muscular-nervous-mental state. Mrs. Windmiller states, "A detailed analysis is capable of revealing basic temperament and character traits such as ambition and sociability as well as activity needs, types of guilt, and fears."

This evaluation comes to us as a personal experience rather than a professional consultation. Mrs. Windmiller's son, Ric, was

a graduate student in archaeology at the University of Manitoba in the 1960's; he was a classmate of one of our Board members, Leigh Syms, and a student of a second Board member, John Matthiason. Ric renewed old Manitoba ties and decided to send Stefansson's book, which he had picked up for 50c at a garage sale, to his old classmate. Mrs. Windmiller added the analysis as an exercise of interest.

Finally, as we turn to Mrs. Windmiller's own background, we find evidence of some Scandinavian ancestry. Although she has mainly a Germanic background, her father was part Swedish.

IN THE NEWS

G. B. GUNLOGSON WAS HONORED AT PRESS CONFERENCE

G. B. Gunlogson, who grew up on a farm in northeastern North Dakota near Cavalier, has been selected for the Governor's Award for his contribution to the American countryside.

In making the selection, Gov. Allen I. Olson said, "Your success in your chosen profession, your contribution to agriculture, your founding of the 'Countryside Foundation' and your obvious love of North Dakota, its people and resources make you a natural recipient of this award."

The governor's remarks were in a letter to Gunlogson, who is 96 and now lives in Racine, Wisconsin.

Doug Eiken, director of the state Parks and Recreation Department, will make the presentation of the award in the governor's behalf to Gunlogson at Racine on Tuesday, May 24, 1983.

Earlier this month, Eiken announced that his department had received stock valued in excess of \$8,500 for the Icelandic State Park Foundation. The stock will be sold and the proceeds used to set up an on-going trust fund administered by the statewide North Dakota Communities Foundation for park interpretive programs.

However, Gunlogson was honored by the governor for his contributions to what Gunlogson calls the American countryside, which he has described as "the greatest producer of wealth in the world."

Gunlogson is a former consulting engineering and business executive and founder of the countryside Development Foundation. He was the first engineering graduate of the University of North Dakota and is a member of the society of Automotive Engineers and a life fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Early in his career he was associated with the J. I. Case Co., manufacturer of farm machinery and later moved to the Western Advertising Agency in Chicago, which was agent for Case for many years. At the time Case dominated the threshing machine market.

The advertising agency aided in the introduction of many products over the years including hybrid seeds, chemicals, livestock feeds and represented a number of the major agricultural companies.

After his retirement from the advertising business, Gunlogson organized the Countryside Development Foundation Inc., which was devoted to perpetuating the concept of expansion in rural America.

As part of the foundation's work, Gunlogson created the Countryside Engineering Award which is given annually by the American Society of Agricultural Engineers to an ASAE member who has developed techniques, plans, programs or other leadership activities which promote rural development.

In addition he has established the Gunlogson American Horticultural Award to improve and encourage the production of food. The award is given each year to someone who has contributed to home gardening, plant breeding, production, harvesting, processing, distribution or in any way assisting in increasing food through family gardens or commercial veg-

etable production.

The dedication of his homestead and family have established the Icelandic Park in Pembina County and the Arboretum there.

The Icelandic State Park Foundation and the North Dakota Council on the Arts will coordinate Heritage Days activities there with their Parks and Recreation Department on June 18 and 19.

The foundation's ultimate objectives are to build a heritage and cultural center at the park and to assist in park programs and activities.

In his letter, the governor said, "... the reason I felt that you were an especially worthy recipient of this high honor is that through your own personal efforts, you have promoted the social and economic benefits derived from the re-establishment of the economic base of the small town thereby encouraging the movement of the nation's population back into the countryside.

"In addition, the prestige that you have brought to the state of North Dakota as a native son by your work and your obvious love of this state is also being recognized."

* * *

THE ICELANDIC TRADITION IN UTAH STILL ABIDES

In a letter from Margaret S. Bearnson

Editor's Comment:

Although a century and a quarter has elapsed since Icelandic immigrants began to arrive in Utah, their thoroughly American descendants, one-half, one-quarter, one-eighth, even one-sixteenth Icelandic, still cherish the memory of their ancestors. In so doing they are not following in the footsteps of their Norse kinsmen who under Göngu-Hrolfur (Rolf the Ganger or Rollo) conquered Normandy twelve centuries ago. Within a century, according to historians, their descendants had become more French than the French themselves, their Norse heritage more or less forgotten.

The following is a partial list of the professions of Utah Icelanders: state architect, state director of hospitals, postmaster, librarians, lawyers, judge, veterinarian, mining engineer, army officer, director of forest service, geologist, airplane pilot, farmers, housewives, interior decorator, school principals and teachers, members of the legislature, college professors, musicians, historians, business men, newspaper columnist, plumber (a stately, blonde lady).

Utah's first doctor was Vigdis Björnsdottir Holt. She was born in Iceland and educated in Copenhagen. she practiced medicine for forty-seven years.

In 1955 two people in Utah, Kate Bearnson Carter and John Y. Bearnson, received Iceland's ORDER OF THE FALCON.

The Icelandic Association of Spanish Fork meets once a year for a picnic and a program.

* * *

A PROPOSED SCHOLARSHIP FUND IN MEMORY OF GUNNAR SIMUNDSON

A few of Gunnar's friends have organized a committee with the intention of establishing a scholarship fund in his memory. Insofar as Gunnar devoted so much of his time to public service, especially in promoting Icelandic culture, the members of the committee are confident that the Icelandic and other local organizations, as well as individuals, would be willing to contribute to such a fund.

Anyone who has any questions with regard to this matter could contact Neil Johansson of the law firm of Tallin and Kristjansson, 300 - 232 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba. Phone 942-8171.

The Canada Iceland Foundation, c/o Norman Bergman, Treasurer, 532 Lindsay St., Winnipeg, Man. R3N 1H6, would be pleased to receive donations, *income tax deductible*, in memory of Gunnar.

SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED

CANADA ICELAND FOUNDATION

We invite students of Icelandic or part-Icelandic descent to apply for the following scholarships which are offered or processed by The Canada Iceland Foundation.

Emilia Palmason Student Aid Fund

Two awards of \$500.00 each to be given annually. The recipients must be of good moral character, Icelandic descent, college calibre and primarily in need of help to continue their studies in high school, college or at University level. They are asked to sign a pledge that "somewhere along the highway of life" they will try to provide comparable help to another needy student. Closing date for applications **June 30th**.

Thorvaldson Scholarship

One scholarship of \$500.00 to be awarded annually. This annual scholarship will be awarded to a student in University or proceeding into a University in Canada or the United States. The recipient must demonstrate financial need and high scholastic ability. Closing date for applications **September 15**.

Einar Pall and Ingibjorg Jonsson Memorial Scholarship

One scholarship of \$500.00 to be awarded annually. Award to be determined by academic standing and leadership qualities. To be offered to a High School graduate proceeding to a Canadian University or the University of Iceland. Closing date for applications **September 15**.

The Canadian Iceland Foundation Scholarship

One scholarship of \$500.00 to be awarded annually. Award to be determined by academic standing and leadership qualities. To be offered to a University student studying towards a degree in any Canadian University. Closing date for applications **September 15**.

Students wishing to apply are asked to submit applications with supporting documents indicating which scholarship they wish to apply for. Information and application forms are available by telephoning 475-8064 or contacting:

Canadian Icelandic Foundation
c/o M. Westdal, Secretary
40 Garnet Bay, Winnipeg Manitoba
R3T 0L6

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