

From Rambles in Iceland.

BY PLINY MILES

Iceland was first discovered by Naddod, a Norwegian pirate, in the year 860, almost one thousand years ago. He was thrown on the coast in the winter, and from the appearance of the country, he called it *Snæland*, 'Snowland.' Four years after, Gardar Swarfarsen, a Swede, circumnavigating it, found it an island, and named it 'Gardar's Holm,' or Gardar's Isle. His account of the country was so favorable, that Floki, another sea-rover, went there to settle; but neglecting to cut hay in the summer, his cattle perished in the winter. From the vast accumulations of ice on the west coast, ice that was driven over from Greenland, he called the country 'Iceland,' a name it has ever since borne. In 874, the first permanent settlement was made in Iceland, by Ingolf, a Norwegian chieftain. Greenland was discovered in 980, one hundred and twenty years after the discovery of Iceland. In 982, Eric surnamed the Red, sailed to Greenland, and, in 986, established a settlement there which flourished more than four hundred years. To induce settlers to go and reside in a new country, the most fabulous accounts were given of the climate and productions. The face of the country was represented as clothed in green, and it was even stated that 'every plant dropped butter.' The name of 'Greenland' thus given to it, was as great a misnomer as 'Iceland' applied to the neighboring isle. In reality, the two countries should change names; for Iceland is a country of green fields and fair flowers, while Greenland is covered with almost perpetual ice and snow. Eric the Red had a companion in his Greenland settlement, whose name was Heriulf. Biarni, the son of Heriulf, sailed from Iceland to join his father in Greenland, was driven south, and landed on the American coast—probably Labrador. Thus, the first discovery of America by Europeans was in the year 986, by Biarni Heriulfson, a native of Norway, though he sailed from Iceland. He returned north, and landed in Greenland, and gave an account of his discovery.

Subsequent voyages to the American coast, were made by Leif and his two brothers, sons of Eric the Red, who after the style of names in Iceland were called Iricsson. I am speaking on good authority in saying that a gifted Swede, now an American citizen, and most prominent before the world, is a direct descendant of Eric and his son. I allude to Captain Ericsson, the inventor of the Caloric ship, a pioneer in American discovery, and a worthy descendant of America.

Another interesting fact may be noted. Among the early settlers in America—for a settlement was formed, that continued several years—some of the men had their wives with them. One of these, the wife of Thorfin, while in America, gave birth to a son, who was named Snorre.

This Snorre Thorfinson was the first native-born American of whom we have any account, and may be set down as the first Yankee on record. From this Thorfinson was descended Thorwaldsen, and also Fin Magnusen the historian and antiquary, so that we can almost claim the great sculptor of the North and the great historian as Americans.

These facts I gathered from Icelandic genealogical tables; and all who have investigated the history of the northern nations, know with what accuracy these tables are compiled. To return a little in my narrative. Lief Ericsson having purchased the ship of Biarni Heriulfson, sailed from Greenland in the year 1000. The first land he made he called 'Helluland,' or 'land of broad flat stones.' This was doubtless the coast of Newfoundland. The next coast he saw was covered with forests, and consequently he named it 'Markland,' or 'Woodland.' This was probably Nova Scotia. The next land he discovered, still farther south, produced vines and grapes, and this he named 'Vinland,' a name the Icelanders ever afterwards used in speaking of the American continent. We have the best of proof in their account of the climate and productions, in the length of the days, as well as in their maps and drawings, that their settlement was on some part of our New England coast, probably Massachusetts or Rhode Island. In subsequent voyages, these adventurous navigators sailed farther south; and it is supposed from the account they gave, that they proceeded as far as Virginia and the Carolinas. Timber, furs, and grapes, were the most valuable articles the country produced; and for these, several voyages were made to Vinland, from Greenland, houses were built, and settlers settled in the country for at least three years; from 1011 to 1014.

Sebastain Cabot.

John Cabot, the father of Sebastain, of whom we have no portrait, was a Venetian by birth, but a resident of England at the time of the birth of the subject of this memoir. Under the patronage of King Henry VII. he sailed on a voyage of discovery in 1497, accompanied by his son Sebastain, when only twenty years of age.

The elder Cabot had three sons, whom he educated especially as navigators. Sebastain was the second son. In this voyage, the continent is said to have been seen for the first time, and was explored from the sixteenth degree of latitude to Florida.

Sebastain Cabot was born at Bristol, England about 1476-7. As we have seen, he accompanied his father on the first voyage in 1499.—He sailed again under commission from the

court of England, in 1517. His object, like that of Vesputius, was to discover a new passage to the East Indies. In this he was disappointed, and returned to England without having added to the amount of knowledge obtained on the former voyage.

In 1525, Ferdinand and Isabella, of Spain, invited him to court, showing him many flattering attentions, and put a fleet under his command, which sailed in April of the same year. He visited the coast of Brazil, and entered a great river, to which he gave the name of Rio de la Plata, running up its course between three and four hundred miles. He consumed six years in this voyage, and made many valuable additions to the geography and natural history of the country. On his return to Spain in 1531, he experienced, like all others who shared the patronage of that court, the fickleness and perfidy of the weak and vacillating Ferdinand.

Cabot made several other voyages of which we have no veritable records, and at length retired to Seville, holding the commission of chief pilot to the court of Spain. In this capacity he drew many valuable charts, in which he delineated not only his own, but all others' discoveries. It fell to him, also, to draw up the instructions of those who sailed on new voyages of discovery, some of which are still extant, and exhibit an unusual sagacity in their conception.

In his old age he returned to England, and resided once more at Bristol, the place of his birth, supported by a pension from King Edward VI. He was also appointed governor of a company of merchants, associated for the purpose of making voyages of discovery to unknown lands—an office for which his vast experience and knowledge eminently fitted him.—Perhaps no man of his age did more to give an impulse to the commerce of England than Cabot. He was the founder of the 'Russian Company,' and the projector of several commercial enterprises, from which England derived no inconsiderable importance. He cherished a belief that a north-east passage to China might yet be found, and died in the faith.

The last account we can find of him is in the relation of a pleasing and characteristic incident, which occurred just previous to his death. The company had fitted out a vessel, which was just ready to sail on a voyage of discovery; and as was his custom, he visited the ship in person to see if every thing was in accordance with his instructions. He mingled freely with the seamen and passengers, having a cheerful word for each, and a smile and benediction for all. 'The good old man Cabot,' says the journal of the voyage, still extant, 'gave to the poor most liberal alms, wishing them to pray for the good fortune and prosperous success of our pinnace. And then, at the sign of St. Christopher, he and his friends being rested, and for very joy, that he had seen the towardness of our intended discovery, he entered into the dance himself among the rest of the young and lusty company; which being ended, he and his friends departed, most gently commending us to the governance of Almighty God.' It is a pleasant picture of the greenness and freshness of his soul, although encumbered with the decaying tenement in which it had been inclosed for nearly eighty years.

Cabot lived but a year after this event, and died at Bristol, in 1557, aged eighty years. He was a most remarkable man. Sagacious, methodical, thorough and persevering, he was just the man for this office, whether he trod the quarter-deck of his vessels, or presided at the board of commerce and navigation, of which he was governor for so many years. He is said to have been a mild and gentle person in all his relations on shore, although he was a rigid and even severe disciplinarian at sea; and there are some intimations that he was even cruel in his treatment of offenders against the regulations of his squadrons.

He is supposed to be the first navigator who noticed the variations of the magnetic needle, and he published a work in Venice on the subject. He also published a large map, which was engraved by Clement Adams, and placed in the King's Gallery at Whitehall. On this map was inscribed, in Latin, an account of the discovery of Newfoundland.

[From the Zanesville Gazette.]

Do Snakes Lay Eggs?

"Do they?" "Of course they do!" exclaims some old backwoodsman, whose eye happens to catch the query. And thereupon he will recount to you, or whoever happens to hear him, various items of proof which have fallen under his own observation. He considers the question settled, and if you take the negative, you do it at the peril of being regarded as a man of very limited experience, and will fall immediately in the estimation of the "old settler," who will conclude at once, that you are one of the unfortunate ones whose boyhood must have been passed in the crowded precincts of some large city, where all the adventures, escapes, and discoveries, common, in general, to boys more favorably situated, were among the list of impossibilities.

But you are both too fast—you and your old friend. You are both wrong, both of you, and yet—you are both right. Before we solve the paradox, let us explain how we happened to state it:

Harper's Magazine for March, contains an article on "The Rattlesnake and its Congeners." In addition to its horrible, yet fascinating illustrations, it is a repository of the most marvellous of snake stories. Among other statements, concerning the natural history of the reptile under consideration, is the following:

"In warm climates the rattlesnake trusts to the heat of the atmosphere for the development of its young in the egg, although it would seem that, in

extreme northern climates, the production of the egg is followed by the instant appearance of the young breaking from the membranous shell."

This was more than our friends of the *Sandusky Register* (one of the best of our exchanges, by the way) could stand; and accordingly it cries out: "Rattlesnakes lay eggs!" and continues, "the very sentence shows that these 'original' articles are but a relish by some back who knows as much of herpetology as of the sweet influences of the Pleiades." And it agrees to teach the writer something of "snaix" if he will emigrate to that vicinity. But a correspondent, signing himself "Backwood," sustained the writer in Harper, having himself discovered young reptiles in the egg.

This, and some additional information, led the *Register* to modify, if not retract its statement, and we presume it is now rather of opinion that rattlesnakes do lay eggs. The *Buffalo Democracy* is somewhat more severe upon the magazine than our Sandusky friends, getting off a capital burlesque suitable to the occasion. What is the present state of its belief upon the subject, we have not heard, but it would not be strange if overwhelming proof, in the shape of evidence from personal witnesses, had convinced it too that snakes have this fowl propensity and do lay eggs.

The *Register* was right in its first opinions on Herpetology, and the writer in Harper has undeniably committed a *faux pas* in his statement concerning the operation of egg-hatching by the rattlesnake; for rattlesnakes do not lay eggs, but—and here is the solution of our paradox—some other snakes do.

Cuvier classifies serpents under the heads of *venomous* and *non-venomous*. The latter class is *oviparous*—egg-producing; the former *ovoviviparous*, a term which can only be translated by circumlocution; but it amounts to this, all the venomous species of serpents bring forth their young alive, in consequence of the egg being hatched internally before it is laid. Natural history styles the whole class of venomous serpents *viperidae*, or vipers, evidently a contraction of *viviparus*.

It is a common error, to suppose that all snakes are produced in the ordinary way from eggs. The fact of finding a young serpent in the egg—as is frequently done—would seem to render this a foregone conclusion; it proves something, but not thus much. Only the non-venomous are produced in this way; the venomous never are. It is, perhaps, not an error, the common belief, which maintains that on some occasions young reptiles take refuge in the stomach of the mother. The books, we believe, discountenance the idea, but there are well attested cases where they have been thus found, in snakes of the egg-producing kind; and upon what hypothesis shall the phenomena be accounted for, if not on this?

The Animal Called a Boy.

'A very uncertain, mysterious, inexplicable creation is a boy—who can define him? I will try. A boy is the spirit of mischief embodied.—A perfect teetotum, spinning round like a jenny, or tumbling 'heels-over-head.' He invariably goes through the process of leaping over every chair in his reach; makes drumheads of the doors; turns the tin pans into cymbals; takes the best knives out to dig worms for bait, and loses them; hunts up the molasses cask, and leaves the molasses running; is boon companion to the sugar barrel; searches up all the pie and preserves left from supper, and eats them; goes to the apples every ten minutes; hides his old cap in order to wear his best one; cuts his boots accidentally if he wants a new pair; tears his clothes for fun; jumps into the puddles for sport, and for ditto tracks your carpets, marks your furniture, pinches the baby, worries the nurse, ties fire crackers to the kitten's tail, drops his school books in the gutter while he fishes with a pin, pockets his schoolmaster's 'specs,' and, finally, turns a sober house-hold upside down if he cuts his little finger. He is a provoking and unprovokable torment, especially to his sisters.

He don't pretend to be much until he is twelve. Then begins the rage for frock coats, blue eyes, curly hair, white dresses, imperfect rhymes and dinkies. At fourteen he is 'too big' to split wood or go after water; and at the time these interesting offices ought to be performed, contrives to be invisible—whether concealed in the garret, with some old worm-eaten novel for company, ensconced on the wood-pile learning legerdemain, or bound off on some expedition that turns out to be more deplorable than explorable.

At fifteen he has a tolerable experience of the world; but, from sixteen to twenty, may we clear the track when he's in sight. He knows more than Washington; expresses his opinion with the decision of Ben Franklin; makes up his mind that he was born to rule the world, and new lay the track of creation; thinks Providence is near-sighted; understands theology and the science of the pronoun I; informs his father that General Jackson fought the memorable battle of New Orleans; asks his minister if he don't consider the Bible 'a little too orthodox.' In other words, he knows more than he will ever know again.

Just hail one of these young specimens 'boy' at sixteen, and how wrathly he gets. If he does not answer you precisely as the little urchin did, who angrily exclaimed, 'Don't you call me boy, I've smoked these two years,' he will give you a withering look that is meant to annihilate you, turn on his heel, and, with a curl of the lip, mutter disdainfully, 'Who do you call boy?' and oh, the emphasis! But, jesting aside, an honest, blunt, merry, mischievous boy is something to be proud of, whether a brother or son; for, in all his scrapes, his good heart gets the better of him, and leads him soon to repentance, and be sure he will remember his fault—at least five minutes.

Shaping Trees and Shrubs.

Who has not observed the great difference in beauty between a handsomely dressed tree, and one of uncouth or distorted form of the same species? How often do purchasers of ornamental shrubs and trees anxiously search for symmetrical specimens—forgetting; or not knowing; that the most irregular may be easily pruned into any desired shape. If the Dutch gardeners display so much skill in training vegetable growth in peacocks and hedgehogs, American gardeners may find an appropriate exercise of their skill in imitating the graceful and beautiful in nature.

At the present season, or during the commencement of vigorous growth, this desirable object may be most easily accomplished. By occasionally removed a needless shoot, but more frequently shortening back such as are overgrown, or pinching in those that threaten to become so, and by lopping certain portions to induce dormant buds to push where branches and foliage may be deficient, a degree of skill may be exercised, not unworthy of comparison with that of the artist who develops a beautiful statue from a shapeless block of marble.

Even small plants, which grow tall and meagre, may be made to assume a bushy and thick appearance, by pinching off the ends of the leading shoots while they are young. The English gardeners have acquired a skill in managing in this way their pot plants intended for exhibition, that it is really astonishing to those who first witness the rich and symmetrical masses of flower and foliage which they are thus enabled to present to view.

A great error is often committed when flowering plants are often placed in open ground, by crowding them too closely together, giving them too much the appearance of weeds. They are much the best when every plant is allowed full room to expand. When crowded, the flowers are fewer and more imperfect, and the plants and foliage slender, and greatly inferior in beauty to the dense and rich mass of well developed leaves and bloom of a freely grown uncrowded plant.—[Albany Cul.]

EVILS OF BEING NEAR-SIGHTED.—'I was passing down Broadway one pleasant morning, when my dog—as I thought, but, alas! it was another's—rushed between my legs, and nearly threw me down. Although naturally, or rather commonly, a good-natured man, I was not, at that precise moment, in my smoothest mood.—The tranquil current of my mind had been agitated by more than one circumstance that day, and the little dog rendered me absolutely angry. With an exclamation of wrath I gave this member of the canine race a kick, which sent him howling to the opposite side of the street.

'Sare!' said a tall, swarthy, Frenchified, ferocious-looking personage, bowing until his very mustaches brushed my nose; 'you 'ave kick my dog! What for you 'ave done dis for, eh?'

'My dear Sir, I exclaimed, terribly discomposed, 'I beg ten thousand pardons! I really thought it was my own dog.'

'Ah! you 't ought it was your dog, ah? No, Sare! it vas my little dog zas you 'aves kick!'

'Sir, I am exceedingly sorry; I mistook him for my own dog. I assure you I thought it was my own dog at the time.'

'But, by gar, Sare, dere is not de resemblance dere. De one dog is of ze white, and de oder dog is of ze black color. Besides, Sare, de one 'aves got ze ear ver' wide, and de oder ver' short. Yees; and ze one 'aves got de tail ver' moch, and ze oder 'aves lose de tail ver' moch! Dere is not r-r-e-z e-m-blance, Sare! Non!'

'But, Sir, I am near-sighted; my eyes are impaired. I could not see the difference between the dogs.'

The foreigner looked steadily in my face for a moment, but perceiving nothing there but truth, his countenance became calm and comparatively pleasant.

'Ah! you 'aves den, Monsieur, ze vision not very far, eh?'

I assented.

'Ah! den zat is all de apology zat I shall demand,' and, with a graceful adieu, he passed on.

'How fortunate for me,' soliloquized I, 'that he was a Frenchman! Had he been one of 'our folks,' I might have figured in the gutter before I could have an opportunity to explain, or excuse myself. My apology would have been laughed at by a Yankee. Alas!' sighed I, pausing, and wiping the glasses of my spectacles, 'who ever pitied a near-sighted man?'

ABSTRACT OF THE NEW YORK PROHIBITORY LIQUOR LAW.—The New York Legislature has adopted a Liquor Law, the leading features of which are as follows:

Intoxicating liquor, in any shape, must not be sold, or kept for sale, except by regularly authorized persons, for manufacturing, medicinal, chemical, and sacramental purposes.

It must not be given away, nor kept at all, except in dwelling-houses not connected with any shop or place of amusement, in churches, in manufactories, and in actual transportation.

Any person may be authorized to sell for the above purposes, provided he does not use liquor as a beverage, is an elector, is not interested in any shop, boat, or place of entertainment, can prove good moral character, and give \$1,000 security not to sell for any other purpose. He must sell only to persons over 21 years old, whom he has reason to believe will use it for one of the above purposes. He must keep a list of his sales, which he must file, and swear to, in the county clerk's office every month.—This list is to be open for public examination.—If he violates any of these regulations he forfeits