

But the Icelanders are proudest of the little mine from which the famous Iceland spar may be obtained. Two or three miles east of the trading station, a little brook, the *Silfurlækur*, falls into the fjord, and in its bed, a few hundred feet above sea-level, occurs the cavity or vein in which this curious mineral is embedded. It is a colourless, transparent, calcareous crystal, no doubt derived by long continued action from the greenstone, in which the cavity is found. Carbonic acid, water, heat and minerals of special composition have been united in its manufacture. The spar itself is not of any special value, except for use in certain instruments of the optician, but it is highly prized by mineralogists, because its great transparency permits



A MINE OF ICELAND SPAR.

the double refraction, which it exercises in common with several other kinds of spar, to be so clearly seen. If a piece of it be laid upon a sheet of paper on which some letters have been traced, these letters will appear twice over on looking through the spar, because the rays of light in passing through are split in two.

The fjord is entirely shut in on north and west by lofty mountains, over which a difficult pass leads to the interior. An elevation of two thousand feet is attained in about three miles, and here is a vast amphitheatre surrounded by mountain pyramids, between which are huge semi-circular chimney-like valleys. The descent from this valley is often very awkward, on account of the steepness of the snow slopes, which at this height are almost permanent.

Re-embarking, a few hours' sail to the northwards brings one round to