



AN ANCIENT SILVER BROOCH.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WESTERN CLASSIC LAND.

FROM Reykjavik to the North many routes present themselves. We may swiftly pass from point to point on the deck of the mail boat, or secure a passage in a smaller native steamer. On the other hand, there is the post road through Mosfell, or the Stórisandr way to the central north. The best way of all is to take a boat across the bay to the Hvalfjörthr, buy one's ponies there, and then work north among the many points of interest which everywhere abound. Famous for its birds, and beasts, and fishes, and its thickly-peopled bogs and mountain slopes, which offer such a striking contrast to the rugged lavas we have quitted, the district every year receives its quota of sportsmen, fishermen, and travellers, who wander in the footsteps of those early colonists whose memory yet remains in mound and tomb, in place name, song, and saga.

We enter the fjord between the stately piles of Esja and Akrafjall, which rise some two or three thousand feet on either hand. Beneath the former are the limestone rocks of Kollafjörthr, and two shrines of widely different moment. The first, at Kjalarnes, is that of the ancient *hof*, or heathen temple, where the chiefest of the local *things* was wont to meet before the establishment of the Althing at Thingvellir. Nothing, however, now remains except the site. These *hofs* were numerous in Iceland. They differed from the *hörgs*, which were enclosures open to the sky, in being covered buildings, at one end of which was the place of sacrifice, an arrangement betraying the pagan origin of the 'chancel,' which in the hands of Romanists and their imitators reverts to its heathen use.

Nor of the other shrine, at Esjuberg, can more be seen, yet it marks the most sacred spot in Iceland, for here its earliest Christian church was built by Örlygr Hreppson, a disciple of the Hebridean Bishop Patrick. It