

hands of a few leading godar, and as in this manner the geographical character of the godords became more and more fixed, the relation of godar and thingmen was marked by an ever increasing subordination of the latter.

The extent of power of the assemblies or *Things* varied considerably. There were 13 district assemblies (i. e. spring and autumn assemblies), each comprising 3 godords; 4 quarter-Things, one for each quarter of the country, but they soon disappeared; and lastly there was *Althingi* (the general assembly) for the whole island. *Althingi* was not a mere tribunal exercising legal jurisdiction for the whole island; it was a legislature for the whole country as well. *Althingi* thus possessed both legislative and judicial powers, but the executive authority was weak and inefficient, for the godar or priests retained this power in their own hands. The permanency of the Icelandic republican state system was thus necessarily conditional upon the balance of power (equality of the godords) being maintained among the godar, and on none of them becoming so powerful as to be able to lord it over the others. But this balance of power was disturbed when the *godords* began to accumulate in few hands, the consequence being bloody feuds among a few powerful families who aimed at nothing but self-aggrandizement. These quarrels gave the Norwegian king, Hákon Hákonarson († 1263), an opportunity of interfering in Icelandic affairs, and at last, in 1262, he persuaded the Icelandic nation to take the oath of allegiance, and the commonwealth had come to an end.

On the Treaty which the Icelanders made with king at *Althingi* in 1262 were based the *relations of Iceland with Norway* and with Denmark later on, and the new constitution of Iceland. By this Treaty of Union the Icelanders swore allegiance to the king and his descendants and promised them permanent annual taxes, the king on his side promising them various privileges. — As to the real substance of the union agreement opinions have been greatly divided: The Icelanders have always maintained that it established a personal union between Iceland and Norway, nothing more. The Danes, on the other hand, in the controversy which arose later on regarding the relation between Iceland and Denmark, contended that the agreement had brought about a real union between the two countries, and they even went so far as to say that Iceland had become an integral part of the Norwegian kingdom. The treaty of union was renewed several times, but no such changes were ever introduced as to affect materially the relation between Iceland and Norway. Nor was there any change of this