

"*Háttatal*" (Tale of Metres, Metre-List) on king Hákon Hákonarson and earl Skúli Bárðarson. This is a poem consisting of 102 stanzas each of which is different in metre or style from all the others. Again in the fifteenth century *Loptur Guttormsson* (d. 1432), one of the greatest chiefs of that century as well as the greatest poet of his time, made his "*Háttalykill*" (Key to Metres) on his lady-love; it is a love poem of 90 verses in as many different metres. Since then so many keys to metres (*Háttalyklar*) have been composed at different periods, that they number several scores. This shows among other things that the interest in the variations of metre has at all times been very keen in Iceland.

When the court poetry comes to an end at the close of the thirteenth century, the poets apply themselves with so much the greater energy to composing drapas (encomia) on the heavenly court: The Virgin Mary, the Apostles, and other holy men. A great number of Saints' lays was composed down to the Reformation (1550), and even later, similar in metre and diction to the court poetry of old. The most famous of these lays is the poem "*Lilja*" (The Lily) by the greatest poet of the fourteenth century, Brother *Eysteinn Ásgrímsson*, some time officialis at Helgafell (d. 1361). It is a perfectly finished poem of one hundred stanzas in an elaborate metre, and so full of beauty and poetic inspiration that, "all bards would fain have sung the Lily". The themes of the poem are in brief as follows: The creation of the world and of man; the fall of man; the birth of Christ; his teachings and miracles; his death on the cross; his resurrection and ascension; and the last judgment; but at the same time the poem is a song of praise to the Holy Virgin. The second best poet in this field, and equally famous for his secular poetry, was *Jón Arason*, the last catholic bishop in Iceland, a national hero and the greatest man of his age. He was put to death in 1550.

In the latter part of the fourteenth century there arises a new school of poetry, the so-called *rímur*, of which there is a continual succession down to our own days. They are epic narrative poems and have at first probably been sung and danced to as the dance-songs (a kind of ballads) which are mentioned in the Sagas before the days of the *rímur* and of which there are now extant but the merest fragments. The *rímur* of which several hundred cycles have been composed, are based on mythical or heroic tales, the Icelandic Sagas, or most frequently, on translations or imitations of chivalric romances and stories of adventure. As a general rule the *rímur* follow the tale