

## FINE ARTS

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The fine arts of painting and sculpture in Iceland do not afford a fruitful field for their historian; for in a country with only 106 000 inhabitants, mostly farmers, scattered over a large area, these arts cannot be expected to thrive; they can only develop where there is a large class of wealthy people able and willing to spend money on works of art. But various branches of art industry show that the artistic talent has not been lacking, though at times such activities have declined, owing to the poverty and misery of the people, especially during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

*Wood-carving* has been practised in Iceland from the earliest times, for the purpose of decorating temples, churches, articles of furniture, etc. Of special interest in this respect is the *door* from the church of *Valthjofsstaður*, now in the National Museum, Copenhagen; but negotiations have recently been opened for the restoration of this and other Icelandic articles of art to the National Museum, Reykjavík.

*Tapestry-weaving* which was much in vogue in the olden time is now being revived; and the beautiful *initials* in many of our old MSS show that the *art of drawing* must have been known in Iceland at a comparatively early date. The festival costumes, especially those worn by females, used to be richly embroidered and ornamented with gold and silver; hence *artistic needlework* and skilled *metal-workers* were in great demand. — A tolerably representative collection of all these articles is to be found in the National Museum, Reykjavík.

*Painting.* Almost down to the end of the nineteenth century the art of painting was very little cultivated in Iceland. There had, indeed, during the last three centuries appeared a few portrait-painters; but those of them who did not make their homes abroad were clergymen, who could only apply themselves to painting in their leisure hours, be-