A Trip to Orkney and Shetland.

DURING the past summer I made a short trip to the islands lying to the north of Scotland. The vessel in which we sailed was the "St. Magnus," and the place of departure Leith.

It was a beautiful morning, the water without a ripple, the sun breaking through the morning mists. Our course lay along the north shore of the Firth of Forth, which is dotted with villages, whose red-tiled roofs and crow-stepped gables retain the quaint look that has in great measure vanished from less retired places. Leaving the Firth and entering the North Sea, we passed the Bell Rock lighthouse, then skirted the coast till off Aberdeen, at which place we were advertised to call.

Finding that the ship would remain for some hours, we determined to visit the town On account of the difficulty of working the gray granite of which the city is almost entirely built, there is but little ornamental stone work. The prevalence of plain sills and lintels gives an appearance of straightness and stiffness that is not altogether pleasing. In some of the churches there is fine wood carving, but still the lack of carved stone The whole look of the city is somewhat cold and gray.

During the afternoon we sailed along the Aberdeenshire coast and retired early, after a long and tiring day. The accommodations on board these boats are not by any means palatial. I was in a deck cabin, about fourteen feet by eight, in which there were eight persons. There seemed to be no arrangements for ventilation, and it was impossible to open any of the ports.

When I came on deck next morning the coast of Mainland (as the Orknadians call the largest island of the group) was close on our port side. The islands are not so rugged on the east side as on the west; still the rocks we passed looked sufficiently forbidding. After two hours' steaming we arrived at Kirkwall, the capital of the Orkney Islands.

The Cathedral of St. Magnus is a striking object as the town is approached from the sea, standing out above the surrounding houses. It is a fine specimen of the Roman style of architecture. Part of it is still used as a place of worship, but to this we could not gain access. It is curious to see this great church among these lonely islands, and to think of the power that brought it there. The other chief object of interest is the Bishop's Palace. It is about as old as the cathedral and has a warlike appearance. On the front of the main tower there is a niche with a statue of some saint, which looks a little out of place.

Well pleased with what we had seen and only regretting that we had not time to visit the Stones of Stennis, which, after Stonehenge, are the most extensive Druidical remains in Great Britain, we returned to our steamer.

While winding our northward course through the narrow channels that divide the islands, I asked the captain if he considered the tide strong He replied that it was slack tide, and that the current was not over four knots, but that at flood tide it would run eight knots. Leaving the Orkney Islands the scene was beautiful, as we looked back upon the group set in a smooth and sparkling sea and bathed in sunshine.

But we had not long to enjoy the picture, as we soon left the most northern point of Orkney and entered the Roost, the troubled strait that separates it from Shetland. Half-way across we passed the Fair Island, which is said to be inhabited by descendants of some of the shipwrecked Spaniards of the "Armada." North of this we ran into a fog-bank, which retarded our progress. Creeping along the east side of the islands, now and again heading due east into the North Sea as the fog thickened, we arrived off Lerwick, our goal. The captain failed to cheer us by saying that if the fog did not clear off we should spend the night rolling about outside the harbor. However, in half an hour we got in, the fog lifting for a few minutes, only to close more densely when we were safely at anchor. We found the Roadstead crowded with fishing-vessels bedecked with flags, among which we threaded our way until we brought up close to the town.