The steamer was soon surrounded by a fleet of small boats, of which the first to be attended to was the mail-boat; next came the hotel-boats, in one of which we landed. We succeeded in securing pleasant rooms overlooking the harbor.

It being late in the afternoon, we could do little but take a short walk. On our return we sat down to talk and read, until at last it began to dawn upon us that in those latitudes there was no prospect of its getting dark, and that if we intended to retire it must be done by daylight.

The town was crowded in great part by fishermen, whose costumes were sometimes picturesque, generally dirty.

In answer to our inquiries we had learned that it was St. John’s eve, and that the gay fishing-vessels were Dutch jagers whose crews had come to celebrate on the morrow.

Lerwick has two principal streets, one old and near the harbor, the other newer and upon the crest of the slope on which the town stands. The houses in the old street are as a rule crowded with their gable ends to the street, though occasionally one is set cornerwise, while only a few of the newer buildings, generally banks or hotels, face in the modern manner. The old street is flagged throughout, having no sidewalks, or rather being all sidewalk; it varies in width from eight to twenty feet, and is intersected by lanes or closes which separate the houses. These appeared anything but clean and had most curious names, one of which, Hangcliff Lane, clings to my memory.

In summer the islanders fish, in winter I know not what they do,—possibly smoke. The women in summer carry peat from the hills to the town in baskets which they bear on their backs, knitting industriously as they go. The products of their work are the much-prized Shetland shawls. The wool of which they are made is not sheared, but pulled from the backs of the sheep, and is never dyed. It is said that it is a good test of the quality of a shawl if it can be pulled through a finger ring.

The lack of trees on these islands is noticed by the stranger. A few stunted bushes barely existing behind a wall and cut off level with the top of it are all that can be found; even these are the result of great care, since Orkney lies north of the tree limit.

The fine harbor of Lerwick is formed by the island Brescia, on which are the remains of a Pictish village. A short distance from Lerwick is a Pictish fort. It consists of a rudely circular building resembling a heap of stones placed in a lake, and joined to the shore by a stone pier. There is another of these forts with a round tower on Mousa, an island in this group.

On the east side of Brescia there is a grand cave, but as it requires a smooth sea to enter it, and as it had been blowing from the east since we arrived, it was too rough for us to visit it.

We drove across the island to Scalloway, where there is a ruined castle built by the earls of Zetland. The country we drove through seemed divided into peat-mosses, pasture, and arable land. The cultivation on the farms seemed to be good and was chiefly in the valley of Tingwall. I was told that the more northerly island, Unst, is also well cultivated. The valleys contain numerous lochs which abound with trout, but are seldom fished. The islands are indented by arms of the sea, called voes, which at one place reduce the width of Mainland to a few yards.

The herring-curing establishments of Shetland are started with foreign (that is to say, Scotch) capital, the natives being held down by the injurious system in which the landlord says, “You fish in my boat, with my lines, sell me the fish you catch, and buy everything of me.”

Our steamer was posted to sail at six p.m., and we were told that a gun would be fired one hour before she sailed. Eight came and no gun was fired; on inquiring as to the cause of the delay, we were told that we were waiting for a steamer from the north. The steamer arrived at nine and we left at half past eleven.

It was still quite light, and as we left the harbor we got a view of the rocks on the east side of Brescia, especially the Giant’s Leg, a